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"Revolutionising" Subcultural Theory: The Cases of Cuban Underground Rap and Cuban Reggaeton

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Abstract

This thesis is focusing on issues of power and resistance in two contemporary Cuban subcultures, namely Cuban underground rap and reggaeton during 2008-2012. Using data gained from a five month ethnographic research in Havana during 2009-2011 with cultural producers of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton, I explore some of the paradoxes occurring within Cuban culture and power relations. Specifically, Cuban underground rap is revolutionary in its ideals and supported in official governmental discourses. However, in everyday reality it is censored and criminalized by Cuban authorities. Simultaneously reggaeton with its explicit focus on hedonism, apolitical sentiments and consumerism is subverting and challenging Cuban ideology and morality. Although reggaeton is dismissed and not supported in official discourses, in everyday reality it is promoted and commercialized. Through the exploration of Cuban rap and reggaeton I attempt to illustrate that a bridging of the CCCS (Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies) with post-subculture theory is necessary to be conducted in order to interpret the complex interplays of power and resistance in these two subcultures. Explicitly, issues of power and resistance were of high interest to the CCCS's interpretation of subcultures. With the post-subcultural turn there has been an explicit aim to move away from the CCCS's analysis of subcultures and its Marxist paradigm. While the CCCS was focusing mainly on "grounding" everyday life to class, ideology, structural changes and politics, the post-subcultural focal point is on fluidity, heterogeneity, hedonism, individual choice, apolitical sentiments, affects, consumerism and the intersection of the local with the global. Despite the fact that both approaches incorporate both micro (everyday life) and macro elements, the so called "obsession" (Griffin, 2011) of post-subcultural theory to move away from the structural approach of the Birmingham School, has

positioned these two perspectives in rather oppositional terrains. Particularly, the post-subcultural perspective argues that the Gramscian notion of hegemony is no longer adequate in explaining the complex interplays of power and resistance within late-modern contemporary societies (Beasley-Murrey, 2003). Rather drawing on Spinoza's notion of *potentia* (Maffessoli's (1996) puissance: power from below, the inner energy of people), Beasley-Murrey (2003), Lash (2007) and Thoburn (2007) argue that we have entered into a post-hegemonic period and thus, we should focus on the micro-politics of power and resistance, which are experienced and realised in everyday life. It will be illustrated that both approaches on power, resistance and subcultures despite the tensions, are compatible with one another. Specifically, drawing on the new developing stream of cultural criminology, this thesis aims to demonstrate that despite the existing tensions between the CCCS and post-subculture theory the two perspectives complement one another. Hence a bridging of the two perspectives is not only required but necessary in order to gain a better understanding on issues of power, resistance and subcultures in contemporary societies. Additionally, this thesis adopts the de-colonial perspective of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2000:84) which calls us to think both from western and local (Cuban) traditions of knowledge. Though this perspective, the thesis will demonstrate that a bridging of local, modern and postmodern theories is required in our interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures in Cuba. By incorporating a de-colonial perspective, this thesis will illustrate on the one hand, the value of incorporating locally (Cuban) produced knowledge; and on the other, that a reconciliation of modern and postmodern theories is required in our interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures. Thus, despite the fundamental differences of Cuba to the rest of the world, a more fulsome consideration of the Cuban case

shows the existing opportunities and importance of reconciling these perspectives in more general global level. Hence by investigating Cuban rap and reggaeton I aim to drive further subcultural theory and cultural criminology in their interpretations of power, resistance and subcultures.

Acknowledgments

Dedicated to my Greek and Cuban Family

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The concert featuring Escuadrón Patriota, accompanied by various guests from the underground rap scene in Havana, was about to take place in a couple of hours. I arrived in the Madriguera[1] at approximately seven o'clock in the evening. Standing only a couple of metres away from the entrance of the single-roof building of the Madriguera - a twenty to thirty metre long sandy-coloured building (due to its exposure to the sun) with barred windows - I spotted some groups of young Afro-Cubans who had started arriving. They were gathering under the shadow of the scattered trees around the entrance, in order to find shelter from the sun's heat.

- *Ele!!![2]*

I heard someone calling my name and I turned around. Raudel (Escuadrón Patriota) waved at me, as he was approaching the entrance with his wife and his five year old daughter. I hugged and kissed them on the cheek as is costumary in Cuba. "How are you feeling?" I asked. He replied while wiping the heat-caused sweat from his face with a handkerchief: "I am very excited that finally this concert is going to be realised but I feel a bit hoarse today. I hope my voice won't shut down completely before the end of the concert. Let's also see if we are going to complete the concert without any 'unexpected' problems. I am still quite worried". I nodded and we all headed towards the entrance. We

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[1] The Madriguera is a space provided by one of the Cuban cultural institutions, the Brothers Saiz Association (Asociación Hermanos Saiz- AHS). It is perceived to be one of the most culturally independent spaces in Havana and the "home" for alternative and/or underground forms of art, such as rap.

[2] The letter L is pronounced as "ele" in Spanish. Apart from the nickname of Helen of Troy that was given to me (see chapter two) some of the rappers were also calling me "ele" as a shortcut for my name Elena.

passed through the iron-barred door, into a hallway embellished with beautiful pieces of graffiti, and continued through another barred-door which led to the rear side of the building.

The back of the building resembled a big yard. The space between the building and the concert's stage seemed to be big enough to have a capacity of about 100 people. Tall trees surrounded the stage and on its right side, beneath some of the trees, the organisers had placed tables and chairs to seat, for the artists and their families. The stage was placed in the centre and was decorated with banners of drawings. Raudel, being a Rastafarian himself, would perform live with a reggae band that evening. The band was already on the stage sound checking while the dj and the sound engineer were checking the last details of the dj set and the overall sound of the concert.

There was a simultaneous sense of movement, joy and relaxation in the air. About twenty people, helping in organising the event, occupied the space under the stage. Some were smoking and talking while others were eating bocadillos (small sandwiches). Three people were taking photographs, while four people were lifting a banner which read "we are the root of change", a phrase taken from Escuadron's latest music compilation.

As we walked across the area, smiling faces and sparkling eyes filled with respect and excitement were directed towards Raudel and his family. We started mingling and hugging and kissing on the cheek with everyone. It was as if they all belonged to an extended kinship network rather than just collaborating for a concert to be realised.

As the time went by and the sun set everybody started taking their positions on and around the stage. At this point all rappers had arrived. "Que bola asere?" (What's up friend) you could hear everyone say as they greeted and hugged one another. They are all old friends, "brothers", "aseres" and their desire and energy to perform that night was distilled in the air. The concert was about to begin. The loose chords of the musical instruments and the dj's experimentations with the dj set, announced the opening of a night filled with rap.

The public was allowed to enter free of charge in order to permit those with limited economic abilities to attend. Thus it was expected that the Madriguera would reach its full capacity that evening. A group of five friends and I had left the tables where the rappers and their families (mothers, aunts, girlfriends, wives, and children) were sitting and tried to locate a better area to stand in order to have a better view of the stage. "Let's go up on the roof"! one of the guys said, as he pointed to the wooden ladder that was placed next to the entrance door. People had already started climbing the ladder, so we all waited for our turn.

Soon enough both the rooftop and the space bellow were full of people. They were all dressed in casual clothes and although some women were visible in the crowd, the majority was mainly young Afro-Cuban males. Shortly after, cigarettes were lit and bottles of rum started circulating among our group and the groups of people around us. You could feel the anticipation and happiness of the crowd for being able to attend such a concert. "What we will experience today is a historic landmark! We are fortunate to witness it" a friend of mine said to me with excitement. We both smiled and patted each other's backs.

The crowd started cheering and whistling as soon as Escuadron Patriota and the reggae band began performing. Everything was going great until suddenly a fight broke out at the left side of the rooftop. It created panic and people started jumping off the roof to the space below. Raudel interrupted the course of the concert and addressed the crowd: "Brothers! We are here to resolve our differences and find solutions. We all love our island and we want to secure for everyone to have a life of harmony, tolerance, progress, equal opportunities and spiritual revolution. Violence is not the solution. Our compromise is for love, freedom of expression and faith that we can construct a better world. We are the root of change! So we have to start acting like it!" The crowd started cheering and the fight stopped. The concert then continued and the crowd passionately sang along to the songs that were being performed.

The songs exposed the harsh everyday reality in Cuba. Racism, inequality, prostitution, fear of expressing oneself freely, poverty, social depression, state coercion and distrust were among the themes that were being touched on by the songs. At the same time the songs were calling for peaceful action to transform that harsh reality by cultivating critical consciousness, love for liberty and freedom of expression and respect and tolerance of difference among other things. There was a growing, positive, effervescent energy filling the air as the rest of the rappers Silvito el Libre, Los Aldeanos, Mikel Xtremo, Anonymo Consejo and Franko consecutively took their turn on the stage next to Escuadron Patriota. The guest rappers performed to music backgrounds reproduced by the dj set. Each of the rappers brought something different to the stage, with Los Aldeanos and Silvito el Libre playing and mixing their flow with what is considered to be "bad words", in their social critique of the

government. Their lyrics and passionate performance expressed and described in a very crude way their observations and experiences of everyday life in Havana. Despite the heterogeneity of the rappers in terms of style, flow, race and age they all blended into a united voice of protest, calling for freedom of expression, liberty, equality, progress for Cuba and an emotional and intellectual revolution of its people.

The crowd was waving their hands in the air and lifting their fists up in a gesture of identification with the songs that were being performed. Despite the darkness of the night there was a peculiar light, force and warmth stemming from the rappers performance that was filling our hearts and souls. It was as if the youth that usually occupied the streets of Havana, men and women, blacks, mulattos and whites, were united within that space into a sole energy. It was a very powerful and elevating feeling, which was extremely different from what I had experienced in a reggaeton concert a couple of weeks before.

It was the end of July and the reggaeton concert would take place in the Hemmingway marine. Some acquaintances from the upmarket area of Miramar in Havana had invited me to join them. As it was an early evening session, it would take place at about six o'clock; I was casually dressed wearing a pair of jeans, sneakers and a plain top. However I was surprised when I met with the girls of our group. All three of them, in their late-teens, were dressed with tight, low-waist, capri trousers, short tops revealing their waists and high heels. The three males in our company, of a similar age, were dressed with good quality T-shirts, brand shoes, jeans and thin golden chains around their necks.

We arrived by taxi at the marine at about a quarter to six. The entrance fee was 10 convertible pesos (approximately $10), a fee that seemed to me to be very expensive for Cuban standards, as the average Cuban salary is approximately $15 per month. We made our way into the concert space, which resembled a beach club. It had a capacity of about 200 people and was an open air venue beside the sea. Tables sheltered by straw umbrellas were scattered around a bar that was placed in the middle of the venue. The stage was situated at the far right, leaving a ten metre space between the tables and the stage as a dance floor. The dj was already playing American gangsta rap, while the videos of the songs were being projected onto the back of the stage.

We headed to the bar and bought Bucaneros, a brand of Cuban produced beer for $3 each. This price made me a bit uneasy in terms of money as I had only taken $20 with me for the night. Usually $20 was more than enough to finance a whole day and a night out with the Cubans that I used to hang out with. Apparently this would not be the case in this specific venue. I left my thoughts aside and joined the rest of the company at the table where they were sitting. As we started chatting, some women entering the venue caught my attention. They were in their late teens or early twenties. Most of them were light skinned and were dressed with mini dresses and high heels, very nicely applied make up and golden jewellery. The venue was reaching its full capacity and in contrast to the rap concert, women were the dominating population of the public rather than men.

"Your beer is warm!" I heard Pedro, one of the guys, saying to me and before I had a chance to react he threw my beer away and bought me a new one from the crowded bar. This occurred two more times during the course of the

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evening and although I tried to explain to them that I did not mind drinking my beer a bit warm, they would not take no for an answer and continued to buy me a new can. I was very surprised by this form of conspicuous consumption, as in my encounters and gatherings so far with the Cuban rappers and their friends we all used to chip in, in order to buy a bottle of rum.

As I was trying to process what I was experiencing, my thoughts were interrupted by female shouting and cheering, similar to those encountered at an American or British pop concerts. Baby Lores, one of the most prominent reggaetoneros in Cuba, was on the stage and started singing to the seductive beat of reggaeton. He was wearing a black shirt, black tight trousers and trendy blue-coloured sunglasses despite the fact that the sun had already set. Two female and one male dancer accompanied him on the stage and danced to the beat and one more reggaetonero vocally supported him at the choruses of the songs. The lyrics were overtly sexual, praising the seductive power of the female body, glamorising material goods and describing both men and women as crazy and driven by sexual desires.

"Let's go in front!" Lydia, one of the girls, said to me and we all moved towards the stage. The first row of the public was filled with women dancing and shouting while the men were at the back of the women, merely as observers, swinging to the rhythm given by their female partners. I turned to Lydia to ask her about a song that was being sung, but I was lost for words, when I noticed how she was dancing with Pedro. Their bodies were very close together with her back facing his chest. She was moving her waist and the bottom part of her body with an incredible ability. Pedro was hugging her from behind and had slipped his hand in her trousers, as he followed the rhythm that she was setting

with her body. They had introduced themselves to me as friends and nothing more but this way of dancing could be perceived as sexual foreplay.

Forty minutes into the show everyone was still dancing and singing to the choruses. Suddenly I realised that none of my friends were beside me. I looked around but could not find them. I felt quite uneasy as two men that were behind me started touching my hair, sending a subtle invitation for me to dance with them. I left and headed back to the table where Adonis, one of the guys in our group, was sitting by himself and in a relatively bad emotional state. "What happened?" I asked. "Where is everybody"?

A: Well you know… Lydia was dancing on my lap and her boyfriend came at exactly that moment. So he thought that there was something going on between us.

E: But is there something going on between you and Lydia?

A: No, no! We are just friends. We were just having fun. But he took the whole thing wrong. So they started quarrelling. Pedro, Javier and the other girls are with them to try and calm things down. But I think we should go soon.

I agreed. Javier came and found us after a couple of minutes saying that the quarrel would not be easily resolved that night. We made our way towards the exit and headed back home (Field-notes, Havana, July-August 2010)

This thesis focuses on two contemporary urban youth subcultures: Cuban underground rap and Cuban reggaeton (cubaton) during the period 2008-2012. Particularly it focuses on the cultural producers of the two music genres within Havana. Ethnographic research methods were deployed in order to investigate the

meaning that these subcultures hold in contemporary Cuba. As will be detailed in Chapter 2, a five month participant observation in Havana during the period 2009-2011, discourse analysis of selected songs and in depth interviews with rappers and reggaetoneros, were used in order to come to a better understanding of Cuban rap, reggaeton, power and resistance. Ethnography allows for an in depth understanding of a particular and small-scale reality as it is lived and experienced by social actors (Guber, 2005). By understanding discourses and actions in everyday life, of what people and governments say they do and what is actualy done in everyday "reality" (Guber, 2005, Jaimes, 2012), ethnography intends to illuminate marks of interpretation, "common sense" values and discourses, under which specific actions obtain a particular significance (Geertz, 1973). Ethnography allowed me to immerse myself in the worlds and spaces of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton. The assistance of my participants (eleven rappers and six reggaetoneros), their mothers, aunts and friends and the relationships of trust and rapport that was built with them, allowed me to understand not only the meaning that rap and reggaeton carry in contemporary Cuban culture, but also to comprehend the complexities of everyday life in Cuba.

By aiming to understand the political importance of the two subcultures this research deals with issues of power and resistance in young people's everyday life. This includes young people's daily practices, problems, relationships, structural and cultural obstacles, desires, ideologies, emotions, pleasures and how these are expressed in narratives, everyday actions, style and performance. The thesis focuses on youth subcultural practices in order firstly, to understand the meaning that these practices have for subcultural members themselves and what problems they "magically" or literally solve; and secondly, to investigate whether and to what

extent these practices shape unconscious and/or conscious forms of resistance to power relations (see chapter four).

During the time of the research there were approximately 20 rap groups and individual artists in Havana. The most popular and radical ones at the time were Los Aldeanos, Silvito el Libre, Mano Armada and Escuadron Patriota. As described in the aforementioned vignette Cuban rap is a highly masculine subculture both in terms of its music producers and fans. The subculture is composed of individuals between the ages of 20-34 (see chapter six). The subculture is quite heterogeneous in terms of race encompassing "mulattos" (mixed race), blacks and whites, while (despite the fact that they are all dedicated to the production of rap) there is a wide heterogeneity in terms of music tastes within the group, ranging from reggae and rock to punk and electronic music (see chapter six for detail). The unity in this subculture is solidified by ideals and values of liberty, equality, freedom of expression and love for their country and its people. They seek progress for their island and equal opportunities for all Cubans. A second cohesion factor is the meaning that they attribute to rap: *"Rap means everything to me"* says rapper Ernesto[3] (interview 21/8/2010).

> *"It is my life-partner. When I first listened to it, rap expressed what I was feeling and it gave me the means to express my feelings and release my frustration. When I am feeling sad, when I feel empty and I have something to say and I do not know how to express it, rap helps me to move forward. It is like a weapon. When I am writing I am expressing everything that I am feeling inside. It helped me discover myself and discover values. It is the mean that gives me the power*

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[3] The names of my participants have been altered in order to protect their privacy and secure their confidentiality, well-being and safety (see chapter two for details).

to say to the world what I am thinking, what I am feeling and what I desire"
(ibid).

While Tafari (interview 20/08/2010), another rapper in a similar vein argues:

"Rap has given meaning to my life and to those that are following us. It is a way to see, interpret and re-interpret life, our society and the historical moment that we are living in [...] we are discovering and openly discussing our everyday experiences and problems in Cuba, in order to resolve them".

Rap provides a space where everyone shares a love for liberty and freedom of expression, action and thought, breaking away from socio-cultural taboos of what can and cannot be said publicly. It has offered a space where everyone can be and re-discover themselves, their lives and their society. The third unifying factor, as described in the vignette, is the idea of friendship and family, where relationships of love, loyalty and trust bind the group together. However these affective relationships, common shared experiences and ideals of liberty and freedom of expression, extend beyond the limits of the specific subculture to other subcultural groups such as reggae, rock, electronic music and punk producers and fans. As depicted in the vignette, the unifying factors of friendship and common shared values and experiences, on occasions, lead to collaborations between the groups.

The loose affective and ideological network of what is called the "underground movement" was mainly evident in one of the top research sites, the Park G in Havana. In this park, fans, friends and producers of all the aforementioned subcultures, gather and hang around together during the night-time (see chapter six). As a result, Cuban underground rap is both a cohesive and flexible space for its producers and fans. The discourse and narrative of underground rap challenge in a

profound way social conventions, stereotypes and the culture of silence of mainstream Cuban culture. However, when affective relationships of trust and loyalty inside the rap group are broken, the unity and, subsequently, the collective power of the group to push for changes diminish (see chapter six). As a result, narratives and discursive struggles for freedom of speech and positive change go side by side with practices that re-produce the existing social order.

Concerning reggaeton, due to the popularity of this music genre, it was difficult to have a clear view on how many reggaeton groups existed in Havana during the time of the research. As Nicolas (interview 1/08/2011) one of the reggaetoneros explains: *"It is crazy what's going on now with reggaeton. You give a shout and you have at least 40 groups of reggaeton coming forward"*. The most popular ones at the time of the research were: Los 4, Gente de Zona, Chacal y Yacarta, Los Desiguales, Baby Lores, El Insurecto, El Micha, Osmani Garcia La Voz, William el Magnifico, Kola Loka and Dj Unic with Dj Conds were the most prominent producers of music backgrounds for reggaeton.

As described in the vignette, although the majority of reggaeton artists are males, females dominate the spaces of reggaeton fiestas. In terms of age and race the subcultural group shares the same heterogeneity as rap. The unity in this group is solidified through affective relationships of friendship, love for creativity and commercial values.

Nicolas (interview, 1/8/2011) a reggaetonero says:

"We are producing our music in the studio of Dj Unic. He is a great person with an amazing talent in producing the music backgrounds. He is mixing reggaeton

with electronic music and timba[4]. Chacal and Yakarta, William el Magnifico and all the big names right now in reggaeton work with him. So do reggaetoneros from Miami, Spain and Italy".

Reydel (interview, 23/8/2011) demonstrates the creative nature of reggaeton by saying:

"I began with producing rap music because I wanted to learn how the music is produced. But when I first heard reggaeton, I was immediately hooked up. I wanted to be versatile; so when someone would say to me 'I want a timba', I could produce a timba. 'I want reggaeton with rap' I could produce that as well. Reggaeton is a genre that provides an immense space to fuse it with any type of music. This is what I really like".

As implied in his words, several rappers converted to reggaeton due to reggaeton's popularity or due to music tastes (see chapter six and seven). Particularly, Sergio (interview 12/08/2011) in response to why he chose reggaeton *states: "Reggaeton is one of the most popular sounds and we are opening up the market! It is a universal sound right now. I already have my disc sold in an Italian music company".* As a result there are frequent collaborations between reggaeton artists in order to produce hit songs. Another unifying factor of the group is to produce music for people to have fun, dance, enjoy and lose themselves in pleasure and hedonism:

"I like to see people dancing and enjoying the music [...] especially when I sing and the women start dancing! This is when everything starts! And then the men start dancing and everyone whistles and shouts and applauds! It is really

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[4] Cuban sound of salsa

emotional and I want to continue singing until my voice shuts down completely"
(Nicolas, interview 1/08/2011).

As described in the vignette, the main characteristic of reggaeton is the overt sexuality of the song lyrics and its dance. It provides a space where people can satisfy their bodily desires (conspicuous consumption of material goods) and express their sexual liberation. It constructs a highly apolitical space where people can enjoy themselves, laugh, drink and dance. The explicit directness of reggaeton concerning sexual liberation, hedonism, commercialism, individualism and avoidance of politics, arguably challenges Cuban morality and its highly politicised mainstream culture. Simultaneously though, it serves political and economic interests of the regime and reproduces patriarchal values of machismo (Cuban hegemonic masculinity), of male domination over women (see chapter seven).

By investigating the complex status of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton, the main objective of the thesis was to attempt to comprehend the meaning that these music subcultures obtain in Cuban cultural politics. The general objective was a desire to understand manifestations of power and how they become resisted or "naturalised" in these two subcultures. Hence, this research is an endeavour to understand issues of power, resistance and subcultures as well as, their dynamic interrelations in the Cuban context. As a result the ethnographic part of the research specifically aims to grasp the meaning and effects that the "common sense" words revolutionary and counterrevolutionary, have in the everyday lives of these cultural producers, as well as, in processes of labelling, criminalisation, commodification and commercialisation.

Particularly there is a paradox occurring in Cuban cultural relations concerning these two subcultures. Cuban underground rap emerged in Alamar (a suburb of Havana) in the early 1990s during the midst of an economic crisis that hit the island after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is highly revolutionary in its ideals and discourse and since the late 1990s has been officially supported by government's discourses and two cultural institutions (The Brothers Saiz Association and the Cuban Rap Agency). However, in everyday life it is censored, labelled as counterrevolutionary and criminalised by Cuban authorities (see chapter six), since it is characterised as a sound from the U.S. but, principally because it manifests as protest and a critique of the regime. *"Cuban rap is the black sheep of Cuban music right now"*, says José, one of the most prominent rappers and Alejandro (one of the youngest rappers) adds:

"This is partly because the sound is not Cuban but mainly because of its message. We do not use metaphors as they did in the past. Rap's message is crude, profound, strong, direct and honest about Cuban reality and this is not convenient for the government".

Juan, a rapper since the mid-1990s, explicitly states:

"So we have this problem, to be labelled as counterrevolutionaries, because we push for positive change, for dialogue and we talk about the lived everyday reality of the Cuban. But we are not counterrevolutionaries. We are more revolutionaries than the revolutionaries!"

As chapter six will demonstrate, processes of labelling, censorship and commodification, however, are far from clear cut in the Cuban context due to: 1. the high complexity and contradictions of Cuba's cultural policy and bureaucratic system,

2. individual perceptions of what it means to be revolutionary or counterrevolutionary, 3. informal networks and negotiations in order to "get things done" and 4. the role of emotions and affect, specifically of fear and distrust towards rap by government administrators and authorities. Hence the dynamic nature, contradictions and tensions between the state's power structures and the specific subcultural group, will be revealed in chapter six.

Simultaneously, reggaeton is a hybrid dance music, which combines a fusion of Jamaican dancehall, rap, traditional Puerto Rican drum based sounds, traditional Cuban sounds like *timba* (widely known as salsa) and electronic music among others. Reggaeton entered the island in the early 2000s and since then has met a great expansion, commercialisation and popularity in Cuba. *"Reggaeton is the music genre that is in fashion right now. It is everywhere! Clubs, shops, TV, radio, buses, schools, people's houses, everywhere!"* says Nicolas (interview 1/08/2011), a reggeatonero, while Enrique (interview, 7/08/2011) one of the most prominent music producers of reggaeton corroborates:

> *"All types of people listen to reggaeton. From the poorest to those that have good economic conditions. There is no limit…The majority of people follow reggaeton, because it's a monotonous and catchy rhythm that sticks. And this is exactly what makes people dance. It feels like a very danceable rhythm and nothing more".*

Reggaeton, as depicted earlier, mainly reflects consumer and materialist values and is closer to capitalist cultural values and lifestyle. Due to its stress on hedonism, drunkenness, vulgarity, "senseless" discourse, overt sexuality, apolitical sentiments, commercialism, individualism and consumerism it has created various social

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reactions in Cuba; as arguably it poses a threat to the established morality and culture of Cuban society. As Nicolas explains:

"Many, usually from the older generation, say that reggaeton is not music. It seems very vulgar to them, both for its lyrics and its sound. They (older generations/ government) are stuck in the past. They want for young people to listen to what they were listening. But a young person of the 21st century cannot be listening to the Beatles or danzon[5]. Reggaeton is what young people like right now, so they have to accept it".

As a result reggaeton is officially dismissed in government's and media's discourses. However in everyday reality it is promoted and commercialised (see chapter seven).

The paradox therefore, appears to occur in the fact that Cuban underground rap, which is revolutionary in its ideals, is criminalised, whereas reggaeton that apparently follows capitalist, consumer cultural values is legal and commercialised. By examining power, resistance and subcultures in Cuba the thesis intends to retool and expand existing theoretical knowledge concerning these concepts. Largely this thesis aims to revisit and re-conceptualise the way we think about subcultures and their continued importance in contemporary societies. It will revive the tradition of the Birmingham School (Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies - CCCS) in its interpretation of subcultures, and will address the theoretical challenges posed by post-subcultural theorists, using contemporary socialist Cuba to illustrate the argument. In doing so it contributes to ongoing theoretical debates and provides a mode of analysis that can be applied in wider contexts throughout the world.

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[5] A traditional form of Cuban music which developed into the salsa sound.

1.2 Why Cuba? The De-Colonial Perspective of Border Thinking

It is a common aim among researchers to attempt to demonstrate the uniqueness of their research. By discussing in the following lines the importance of examining subcultures in Cuba, I aim to illustrate the empirical and theoretical originality of this thesis.

Primarily, the 1959 Cuban Revolution has demonstrated a remarkable and unexpected continuity for over fifty years, despite the economic sanctions by the US, isolation, hardships and severe economic crisis after 1989 with the collapse of the Communist Bloc (Kapcia, 2008). It remains one of the few socialist regimes to endure in contemporary times; a fact that has surprised most Cubanologists (Corrales, 2002). As a result, over the last decades observers, academics and politicians have attempted to interpret this unique endurance through preconceptions of the Cold War, knowledge of the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, or of other Latin American traditions (Kapcia, 2000). These preconceptions, interpretations and stereotypes, despite their usefulness, do not reach to the heart of the uniqueness of the Cuban case nor of the constant process of transformation that has characerised the island since 1959 (Kapcia, 2000). Particularly the cultural history, geographical location and experiences of colonialism and U.S. imperialism that have shaped Cuba's cultural politics, are different from the history of other Communist regimes and Latin American countries (see chapter five).

Specifically, culture and the arts played a fundamental role in the construction of a socialist society and also in rescuing Cuban cultural roots (Moore, 2006). Thus, arts and politics in Cuba have the same aim, "the betterment of society, the establishment of moral guidelines, the regulation of civic activity" (Moore, 2006:13)

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as well as, the search and construction of a proud Cuban identity away from colonialist biases (Kapcia, 2000). As a result, among other reasons (see chapter five), everything in Cuba is interpreted as political, especially the realm of music and arts. Also, up to 2012 the regime continued to enforce political conformity to its critics within the island, through arbitrary arrests, short term detentions, spying, forced exile, denial of the right to assemble and move freely, beatings, public acts of repudiation and travel restrictions (Human Rights Watch, 2013). What is of interest, therefore, about Cuba is the explicit power of the state and mainly of state's institutions to people's lives (especially, in this thesis to young people's lives that develop subcultural forms of music and lifestyle).

Moreover as Greener and Hollands (2006: 415) argue, much theorising of the subcultural and post-subcultural debate is "in fact, UK based, if not western in its orientation". As a consequence the majority of literature concerning issues of power, resistance, subcultures and post-subcultures were and are focusing on western-capitalist societies and on western perspectives of interpretation (Greener and Hollands, 2006; Connell, 2007). Thus, there is a current lack of literature concerning these issues in the context of a socialist country such as Cuba. Additionally, by solely applying western theoretical approaches to interpret social phenomena in non-western settings, social sciences tend to neglect the local knowledge that exists in these contexts (Mignolo, 2000). This thesis introduces the de-colonial perspective of *border thinking* in our effort to research and interpret the Cuban case (Mignolo, 2000).

Particularly, despite the contributions of postmodernism, the criticism produced (coming either from left or right-wing approaches) and the deconstruction process of knowledge established during modernity, the critique largely remains a "Eurocentric

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critique of modernity" (Mingolo, 2002: 57). In other words, social sciences are still blind, not to colonialism as an object of research, but rather to the "subalternization of knowledge that was built into it" (Mignolo, 2000: 4). What Mignolo (2000: 38) calls the "colonial difference". Explicitly, since during the long process of colonisation in the late 15th century up until the contemporary state of globalisation, the European frame and conception of knowledge has "subalternized other types of knowledge" (Mignolo, 2000:13). Consequently, although colonialism has ended, coloniality- the hegemony of Western knowledge over other types of knowledge- has not (Quijano, 2000).

Dussel (1993) argues that the concept of modernity and its critiques occlude the role of the European Iberian periphery (Spain) and specifically of coloniality (hegemony of Western knowledge), as a constitutive element of modernity itself. The 16th century commercial circuit that connected the Mediterranean with the Atlantic, placed the foundations "for both modernity and coloniality" (Mignolo, 2000: 51) as well as, capitalism. Capitalistic expansion obscured the colonial difference, as it manifested not only through physical power but also through epistemic knowledge (Mignolo, 2002). As Ribeiro (1968:63) argues:

In the same way that Europe carried a variety of techniques and inventions to the people included in its network of domination [...] it also introduced to them its equipment of concepts, preconcepts, and idiosyncrasy which referred at the same time to Europe itself and to the colonial people. The colonial people, derived from their riches and of the fruit of their labor under colonial regimes, suffered furthermore, the degradation of assuming as their proper image the image that was that was no more than the reflection of the European vision of the world.

Thus, although postmodern critiques and deconstruction are valuable perspectives and insights of modernity itself they neglect the colonial difference built on the experiences, legacies and memories of colonialism (Mignolo, 2000). Moreover, current postcolonial research has, as its starting point the 18th century, omitting the constitutive relationship between modernity and coloniality that was founded in the 16th century (ibid). Hence, stemming from Mignolo's (2000:83) "border thinking" the thesis aims to provide knowledge *from* the subaltern perspective. Border thinking is the intersection, re-articulation and appropriation of global designs "by and from the perspective of local histories" (Mignolo, 2000:39). Therefore, border thinking entails thinking *from* and *within* the intellectual power of Cuba, rather than imposing a *top-down* western perspective (ibid). By bringing to the surface subaltern knowledge, the Cuban case, (as well as any other case of colonial difference) is of importance to the production of knowledge. In other words, border thinking is argued to be a process of decolonising social sciences (ibid).

Specifically, border thinking occurs through a process of a "double critique" (Mignolo, 2000:84). This is manifested by adopting the internal critiques of modernity (postmodern perspectives), followed by a critique from the Cuban perspective (colonial difference) (Mignolo, 2000). Therefore, in this thesis, an internal critique of subcultural theory by post-subcultural theory will be provided, followed by a second critique from the colonial difference of Cuba. This process is summarised in figure 1:

1. Figure of Border Thinking

BORDER THINKING DIAGRAM

Modernity		Late or Post-Modernity
Subculture Theory (CCCS''s perspective) Gramsci's Hegemony	**Double Critique**	Post-subculture Theory Spinoza's Politics of Affects Bataille's loss, excess, eroticism and festival

Colonial Difference of Cuba
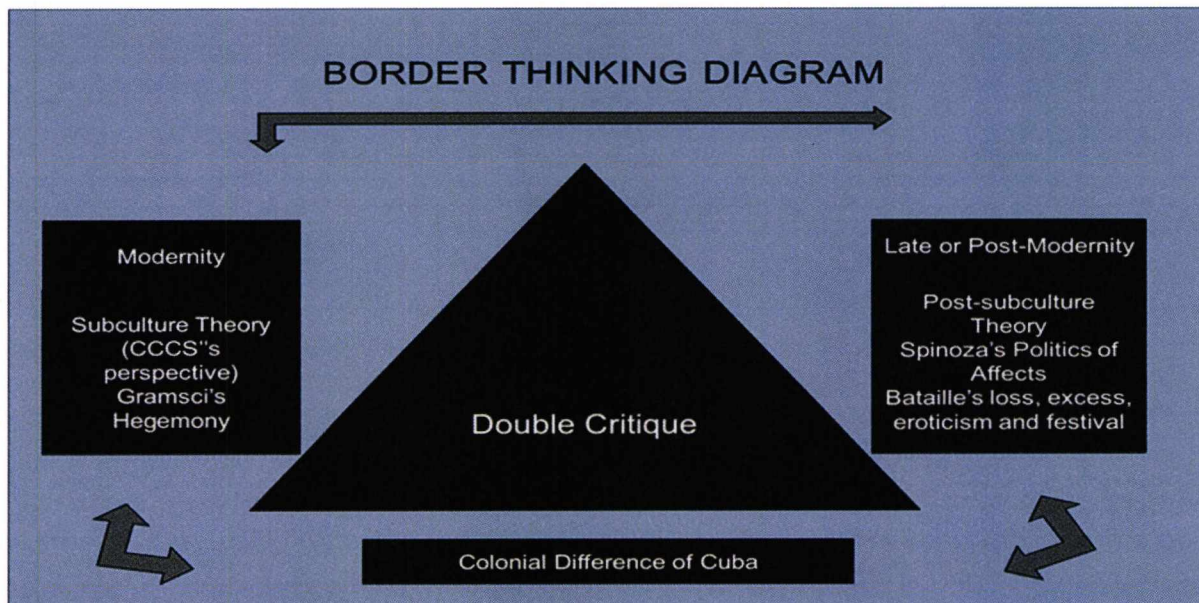
Hence the thesis draws, not only on western perspectives but also on existing theoretical knowledge from Cuba. Specifically (see chapter five), the works of Fernando Ortiz, José Martí and Che Guevara are essential to understand Cuban culture and its politics. Moreover the compatibility of these writers to western perspectives will be highlighted in order to show that a bridging of modern, postmodern and local perspectives is necessary in order to come to a better understanding of power, resistance and subcultures.

The purpose of exploring power, resistance and subcultures in Cuba is not to give rigid recommendations on how or where we should explore these issues. Rather my intent is to establish a dialogue with the existing hegemonic western knowledge by illuminating the knowledge that exists at the periphery of western thought. Consequently, it is of importance to look at the colonial difference of Cuba in order to draw and expand the lines of our knowledge concerning the notions of subcultures,

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power and resistance. The following section focuses on the theoretical considerations of this research and aims to demonstrate further its theoretical contributions.

1.3. Theoretical Considerations

1.3.1 Subcultures, Post-subcultures, Power and Resistance

A change to a new type of music is something to be aware of as a hazard of all our fortunes. For the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling the most fundamental political and social conventions (Plato, *The Republic,* 424b-c).

Music has given occasion to a general conceit of universal knowledge and contempt for law, and liberty has followed in their train [...] So the next stage of the journey toward liberty will be refusal to submit to the magistrates, and on this will follow emancipation from the authority and correction of parents and elders (Plato, *Laws*, 700a-701c, in The Collected Dialogues of Plato).

Since the time of Plato there has been a continuous controversy over the "dangers" that new forms of music and youth cultures can inflict on a society. As implied in Plato's texts the thirst for liberty that new forms of music may invoke encourages resistance to authority, which could manifest against social order, older generations or governments (McClary, 1994). Hence youth cultures and new forms of music have historically been seen as a sign of "crisis" for those in power (Clark et al, 1976). Accordingly notions of power and resistance have been embedded within the concept of youth subcultures (ibid). As a result these concepts and their

interconnection have been among the interests of social sciences and of contemporary cultural criminology (Hayward & Young, 2004).

During the last two decades there has been a shift within cultural studies on how we come to approach and theorise subcultures. Primarily, issues of power and resistance were of high interest to the CCCS's interpretation of subcultures. Subcultures were interpreted as sites of conscious (in counter-cultures) or unconscious resistance; as "magical" and temporary response to the hegemonic culture, within a specific historical conjuncture (ibid). As Hall and Jefferson (2006) argue, the main goal of the Birmingham School was to empirically "ground" subcultures in relation to the historical, socio-cultural, economic and political context. Thus, the CCCS project aspired to make connections "between lived experience and structural realities" (Hall & Jefferson, 2006: xiv). From this perspective subcultures are linked to the way that significant historical changes are experienced by ordinary people. Moreover, subcultures have an ideological dimension in the way they negotiate their collective experience with the hegemonic culture (Clarke et al, 1976). Consequently, lived experience, class, economic structures, hegemony, ideology and politics were highly significant in the CCCS's analysis of subcultures.

With the post-subcultural turn there has been an explicit aim to move away from the CCCS's analysis of subcultures and its Marxist paradigm (Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 2000). Briefly, post-subculturalists such as Muggleton (2000), Bennett (1999) and Redhead (1990) explicitly criticise the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies (CCCS). Some of the criticisms of the CCCS are: its use of semiotics, its focus mainly on male and white working class youth and its holistic framework (ibid). Further critiques include that the CCCS perceived too much politics in subcultures, its perception that all subcultural members had high levels of commitment to the

subculture and its depiction of subcultures as being definite in their boundaries, consistent in their members and homogenous in terms of group identity and style (Muggleton, 2000; Muggleton& Weinzierl, 2003; Williams, 2007).

Post-subcultural theory tends to focus on micro-level stories, which are correlated with local creativity and localised struggles in everyday life (Muggleton, 2000). Emphasis is placed upon macro-cultural changes of heterogeneity, fragmented identity and style, apolitical sentiments of subcultures, hedonism and the intersection of global with local among others (Muggletton, Redhead, 1990). They stress the importance of ethnography and interviews to give greater priority to the interpretation of the subjectively held meanings of the subcultural members themselves, outside the holistic and total narratives of Marxism (Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000). Despite the fact that macro-cultural elements related to postmodernity are evident in this approach -due to its explicit aim of moving away from the CCCS's Marxist paradigm- subcultural resistance is not being linked to macro-economic, structural changes within a specific historical context (Blackman, 2005). Thus, for post-subculturalists, subcultures are not a site of ideological struggle with the hegemonic culture (Redhead, 1990).

It has, furthermore, been argued, that the notion of hegemony -as power-, which was central to the ideas of the CCCS, is no longer adequate in explaining the complex interplays of power and resistance within late-modern societies (Thoburn, 2007). Rather, drawing on Spinoza's notion of *potentia* (Maffesoli's (1996) puissance- inner energy of the people, power from below), Beasley-Murrey (2003), Lash (2007) and Thoburn (2007) argue that we have entered into a post-hegemonic period, where ideology is no longer important. They argue that we should focus on the micro-

politics of power and resistance; on feelings and affects, which are experienced and realised in everyday life (ibid).

Despite the valuable contributions of post-subculture theory (see chapter three), some problems appear. Firstly, post-subculturalists do not acknowledge the heterogeneity and divisions within the Birmingham School (Griffin, 2011). Further, post-subculture theory rendered Birmingham School's theorisation as an orthodoxy and has not taken into consideration the later auto-critiques of CCCS's scholars, such as Hall and Jefferson's (2006). Lastly, post-subculture theory, although focusing on people's everyday life and practices, it tends to under-emphasise structural factors and how these affect young people in their daily "realities" (Blackman, 2005).

As chapter three will demonstrate, despite tensions between subcultural and post-subcultural theory, they are not necessarily in opposition. Both approaches include micro and macro elements, however their focus is different. The CCCS mainly focuses on grounding everyday experiences to the macro-level (economic, structural, historical context). While, post-subculture theory demonstrates an awareness and exploration of macro issues correlated with postmodernity such as: globalization, the intersection of global with local and macro cultural trends like fluidity and hybridization of contemporary identities. Thus, by illuminating the compatability of the two approaches, this research aims to bridge them by merging the hybridity, heterogeneity, hedonism, affects, apolitical sentiments and micro-level stories with politics, ideology and structural changes within Cuba's contemporary context. Similarly chapter four will demonstrate that hegemonic and post-hegemonic interpretations of power and resistance can be bridged. By bridging modern and post-modern perspectives on power, resistance and subcultures, this research aims

to "energise" subcultural theory and to give structure to post-subculture theory. Moreover by applying a further critique to these western perspectives from the Cuban context, this thesis aims to contribute to the existing knowledge both at a specific and general level. By looking at the complex manifestation of power, resistance and subcultures in Cuba, it will be illustrated that a more fulsome consideration of the Cuban case can provide valuable insights on how to approach, power, resistance and subcultures in a more general, global level. This thesis culminates in aiming to contribute to the realm of cultural criminology.

1.3.2 Cultural Criminology

This thesis could be classed as a study that falls within the newly-developing area of cultural criminology (Ferrell et al 2008; Young 1999; Ferrell et al 2004; Presdee 2000). Insights can be drawn from this sub-discipline on theoretical approaches to power, resistance and subcultures.

Exploring the variable ways in which cultural dynamics intertwine with the practices of crime and crime control, the field of cultural criminology has revived and enriched traditions of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, labelling theory, critical criminology and subcultural theory (Hayward &Young, 2004). Therefore subcultural theory among others has been one of the constitutive elements of cultural criminology. Therefore subcultures are of high interest to cultural criminology. The perspective used, stemming from subcultural theory, is that subcultures are organised through individuals' collective behaviour around a network of symbols, language, meaning, way of life, presentation of the self and knowledge that constitute the specific subculture (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995). Style within subcultures is of paramount importance for the production of meaning, identities and status, as

well as, for understanding how the members of each subculture come to comprehend and value themselves (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995). It will be illustrated that the style adopted by Cuban rappers and reggaetoneros not only reflects a specific way of life and a specific construction of Cuban identity, but also indicates the conflict between socialism and capitalism in contemporary Havana.

Furthermore cultural criminology is influenced methodologically by anthropology and thus stresses the importance of culture and the production of meaning that is embedded within criminal activities, crime control practices and societal reaction (Ferrell et al, 2008). It situates crime and its control within the realm of culture and subsequently perceives crime (and the formal/informal reaction towards it) as cultural products and continuous creative constructions, which must be read in terms of the meanings they carry (Hayward &Young, 2004). By prioritising culture, cultural criminology facilitates in understanding human behaviour as a dynamic and active essence rather than, as a determined and passive one (Presdee, 2004). Consequently it broadens the possibilities of alternative vistas in interpreting transgressive or criminal behaviour, subcultural practices and subterranean values (Presdee, 2004).

This cultural perspective on processes of labelling and criminalisation of subcultures is of high value in the case of Cuba. As chapters five and six will demonstrate there is no specific legislation concerning what forms of musical expression are revolutionary or counterrevolutionary. Rather, the meaning of these words is disseminated through culture. The multiple meanings and interpretations of these two "common sense" words will be proven to be the principal factor of criminalisation of subcultural forms of expression and practices. Therefore, by using a cultural

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criminological perspective a deeper understanding on power, resistance and subcultures can be gained.

Focusing in cultural terms on how crime and crime control is constructed or mediated, cultural criminology engages in understanding late-modern transformations occurring from: the global connectedness and disconnectedness, the rise of risk/control and exclusive societies, networks and flows, media saturation, consumer culture and immediate gratification, individualisation and heterogeneity of identities, motives, emotions and meanings of human behaviour (Aas, 2007; Hayward &Young; 2004; Ferrell et al, 2008). Subsequently in contemporary societies, the variety, plurality and contradictions of interplays between cultural and criminal flows make us rethink the previously distinct concepts of culture and crime in our theorisation, research and analysis (Ferrell&Sanders, 1995). Hence, for cultural criminology culture constitutes:

> -the symbolic environment occupied by individuals and groups- [which] is not simply a product of social class, ethnicity, or occupation; it cannot be reduced to a residue of social structure. Yet culture does not shape without these structures either (Ferrell et al, 2008: 2)

Thus, there is an interplay between culture and structures but not a linear, causal and determined relation per se. Arguably cultural criminology bridges postmodern socio-cultural phenomena to economic structures. This research appropriates a cultural criminological perspective concerning the relation of rap and reggaeton to socio-economic structures in Havana. Specifically it will be illustrated that the emergence of both Cuban rap and reggaeton correlate to structural changes that have occurred on the island since the 1990s. Moreover, it will be shown that the

post-subcultural elements that both subcultures exhibit cannot be differentiated from political issues and hence from power and resistance.

Additionally Ferrell et al (2008:51) argue that "[...]- exclusion and inclusion, crime and control, human identity itself - cannot be understood apart from issues of emotion, meaning and power". Therefore emotions and power are of high significance for cultural criminology. As Presdee (2004) argues, crime on the one hand constitutes the product of power relations (in terms of who has the power to legislate or to culturally term specific actions as criminal, antisocial or transgressive), and on the other, crime is a reaction (conscious or unconscious) of people to these specific manifestations of power. Subsequently, by investigating culture "the search for meaning and the meaning of the search itself" (Ferrell et al, 2008: 2) is of main focus, as well as interconnecting issues of power, emotions, identity, presentation and representation (Ferrell, 1999).

Under this perspective the notion of resistance is also of high importance. Cultural criminology acknowledges, from previous traditions of subcultural theory, the way in which people understand and often resist established or developing social structures (Presdee, 2004). Cultural criminology advocates a bigger recognition of the dynamic interrelation and tension that "exists between forms of control and resistance to that control" (Fenwick, 2004: 378). It attempts to comprehend the interactions and links between political resistance, activism, youth subcultures and crime under late-modern circumstances (Ferrell et al, 2008). Subsequently it focuses on the exploration of how new and frequently transgressive forms of illegal, "legal and political engagement emerge from the fluid cultural dynamics of late capitalism" (Ferrell et al, 2008: 17). By bridging the micro (daily practices) and the macro (structural) levels this thesis aims to explore whether, and to what extent, reggaeton

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and rap conform, resist or reproduce the power structures of the Cuban regime (Willis, 1977).

Specifically, a central theme for cultural criminology is the experiences of everyday life (Presdee, 2004). It focuses on understanding the controversies between rationality, morality, spontaneity, excitement, irrationality, desire and emotions that characterise everyday lives and experiences (Hayward &Young: 2004). Specifically:

> as everyday life becomes characterized by the end of rational life, and the 'death of God' and the irrational becomes more relevant, so transgressive life emerges to reveal the tensions present within the social and economic structures of late modernity (Presdee, 2004: 277)

As the chapters on rap and reggaeton will demonstrate their resistance cannot be fully interpreted without understanding the pleasures of everyday practices. Thus fun, laughter, intoxication and experience of momentary liberation through dance and freestyle are equally as important as their lyric discourse. By understanding the pleasures of subcultural practices, the interaction and interplay of socio-economic structures and everyday life (of making and braking rules, of hedonism and control, of excitement and boredom, of rationality and irrationality) a better understanding of power and resistance will be brought to light. Moreover it will be illustrated that affective relationships and emotions play a fundamental role in the resistance or conformity of these two subcultures.

Despite the valuable contributions of cultural criminology, its de-constructivist and critical perspective, it remains largely a western late-modern discipline. Therefore, although cultural criminology places a strong emphasis on culture, on the cultural meaning of subcultural activities and subterranean values, it omits the knowledge

that can be gained from non-western perspectives and non-western settings. By incorporating the de-colonial perspective of border thinking into the "intellectual kaleidoscope" (Ferrell et al, 2008: 6) of cultural criminology, this thesis aims to place more lens into the interpretation of subcultures, power and resistance. By investigating these issues *from* the perspective of the colonial difference of Cuba, this research endeavours to re-tool subcultural theory and hence contribute to the developing field of cultural criminology in its interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures.

1.4 Summary of Chapters

The following chapter will illustrate that a constructivist epistemology, an interpretivist ontology and the de-colonial methodological perspective of border thinking, were the most appropriate to investigate the research questions and fulfil the objectives of this thesis. Taking into consideration the epistemological and ontological perspective of this research, qualitative methodological tools were used to explore power, resistance and subcultures in the Cuban context. Thus participant observation, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis of lyrics were regarded to be the most suitable tools for investigating these issues. In addition the chapter will provide the ethical, practical and reflexive considerations of this research, as well as its limitations. Setting up the background for conducting this research, this chapter will provide the reader with a better understanding of how subcultures, power and resistance in Cuba were investigated.

Following the perspective of border thinking, the third chapter explores subcultural (CCCS) and post-subcultural theory in their interpretation of youth cultures. This discussion will constitute the *first* internal critique of modern Western thought by

postmodern approaches. Through a critical exploration of both perspectives the valuable elements of these approaches will be highlighted. Despite the tensions between the two theories it will be illustrated that a bridging through a "double sidedness" perspective, of "acknowledging the new without losing what may be serviceable in the old" is required in our interpretation of subcultures in contemporary society (Hall & Jefferson, 2006: xii). Thus a bridging of the two perspectives is suggested in order to reach a better understanding of subcultures and the meaning of their practices, political or not. Although examples from Cuba will be used, the theoretical argument made will contribute to a more general basis. By bridging these two perspectives the thesis aims to contribute to subcultural theory concerning its interpretation of youth subcultures.

Moreover post-subculture theory dismisses the Marxist paradigm used by the Birmingham School, without engaging into evaluating what type of Marxism influenced the CCCS (Blackman, 2004). In addition contemporary cultural studies dismiss the notion of hegemony and argue that power today is post-hegemonic. Thus the fourth chapter discusses modern and postmodern debates concerning power and resistance. Specifically the Gramscian notion of hegemony that was used by the Birmingham School will be bridged with post-hegemonic notions of power and resistance that are implicit in post-subculture theory (Foucault, Spinoza and Bataille). I will attempt to demonstrate that despite the tensions between these perspectives, they are not necessarily in opposition. While illustrating the usefulness of Gramsci's theory I will incorporate into his perspective Spinoza's postmodern approach on affects, the body and *potentia* (inner power energy of people- Maffesoli's (1996) *puissance*), as well as Bataille's heterogeneous realm of society (that of loss, momentary liberation, drunkenness, excess, subterranean values and emotions). By

bridging these perspectives my objective is to expand subcultural theorisation on power and resistance. It will be argued that we need to understand these concepts in both micro and macro levels. Following the perspective of border thinking this debate will constitute the *first* internal critique of modern Western thought by postmodern perspectives. Although the theoretical argument made has a wider application, I will draw on ethnographic data and existing literature on Cuba to explore whether this bridging of western perspectives on power and resistance can be applied in Cuba.

The fifth chapter draws on existing literature on Cuba and ethnographic data in order to provide a social, historical, economic and cultural view *from* the Cuban perspective. This chapter aims to bring to the surface existing knowledge from the colonial difference of Cuba. The works of Martí, Ortiz and Guevara will be highlighted in order to provide an in depth understanding on Cuban culture, structures, politics, power and resistance. Moreover the compatibility of these writers to Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille will be shown in order to demonstrate that structures, ideology, affects and the body are of equal importance in understanding power and resistance in Cuba. In addition the influence of external powers (Spain, U.S.A. and Russia) to the shaping and re-shaping of the Cuban regime's power will be highlighted. It will be argued that one cannot understand issues of power and resistance in Cuba without taking into consideration the power of external forces on the island. Furthermore an exploration of Cuba's ideology, of emotions and "siege mentality" to the structuring of power in Cuba will be given in order to provide insights on how power operates in the specific context.

Following the CCCS's historical conjuncture analysis, the chapter on Cuba will show the massive structural changes that have occurred on the island since the 1990s.

Through this discussion I will demonstrate that Cuba, despite the fundamental differences, shares similarities with the rest of the world (i.e. social exclusion, racism and relative deprivation). Moreover the informal and heterogeneous part of Cuban civil society will be illustrated to show the importance of conscious and unconscious forms of resistance to the regime's power. In its entirety this chapter will argue that ideology, structures, affects, the body and transnational forces are all important in understanding power and resistance. By bringing to the surface the complex manifestation of power and resistance in Cuba (both micro and macro levels), the thesis does not endeavour to provide any solid answers concerning these questions. Rather the aim is to demonstrate the knowledge that exists at the periphery of western-focused social sciences and hence, to open up new ways of interpreting issues of power and resistance. Additionaly, by illustrating that (despite the fundamental differences) Cuba shares similarities with the rest of the world, it will be shown that a bridging of the micro with the macro is required to come to a better understanding of power and resistance on a more global level.

The sixth chapter presents ethnographic data gained from research with contemporary Cuban underground rap groups. It aims to demonstrate some of the paradoxes occurring within the Cuban culture, cultural policies and power relations. As described at the beginning of the introduction, Cuban underground rap is highly revolutionary in its ideals and is officially supported by two state cultural institutions and government's discourses. However in everyday life it is censored and criminalised by Cuban authorities. It will be explicitly shown that issues of criminalization, commodification and censorship are highly inconsistent and complex in Cuba. It will be argued that state power towards rap operates between the lines of both support and coercion (Baker, 2011). Moreover, it will be demonstrated that

subcultural elements (structural changes, politics, hegemony, ideology, appropriation of subcultures through commercialism and collective identities) run in parallel with post-subcultural features (global and local flows, hybridity, heterogeneity, affects, *potentia*, momentary loss, emancipation through the consumption and use of technological commodities). It will be shown that a bridging of local, CCCS and post-subcultural perspectives is required to understand power and resistance in Cuban underground rap. In its entirety this chapter will show the value of reconciling subcultural and post-subcultural theory in a more general global level. Simultaneously it will illustrate that neither of the two approaches can fully interpret rap's resistance. Consequently the value of thinking from the colonial difference of Cuba will be highlighted.

The seventh chapter presents ethnographic material and interviews concerning reggaeton. It will demonstrate that reggaeton presents explicit post-subcultural elements such as construction of identities through consumption, apolitical sentiments, emancipation through the use of technology, global flows, fluidity and heterogeneity in terms of class, race, age and momentary loss and liberation through dance, intoxication and sexuality. Thus the "politics of pleasure" that post-subcultural theory has stressed is prominent in reggaeton. It will be illustrated however, that these post-subcultural characteristics cannot be differentiated from the forging of collective identities, societal reactions, gender power relations, issues of exploitation, structural changes, appropriation through commercialism, politics, power and resistance that the CCCS was focusing on. It will be argued following the CCCS perspective that the body-centred, "symbolic resistance" of reggaeton actually reproduces hegemonic power relations. Hence it will be shown that a bridging of local, subcultural and post-subcultural theory is necessary in order to understand

how power and resistance are shaped and re-shaped in apolitical and hedonistic subcultures such as reggaeton. Similarly to the chapter on rap, this chapter will again demonstrate that western approaches on subcultures cannot fully interpret reggaeton's resistance. Hence the value of incorporating Cuban knowledge will be again highlighted.

This thesis will conclude that a bridging of local, CCCS and post-subcultural theory is required to interpret subcultures in the Cuban context. While, in its entirety this thesis advocates for a reconciliation of subcultural and post-subcultural theory on a more general, global basis.

Second Chapter: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates the methodological considerations that were taken into account in order to fulfil the research objectives (see section 2.2.1). The first part of the chapter introduces the objectives of the research together with the research questions that guide the thesis. By considering the research's objectives and questions it will be demonstrated that the relationship between theory and data is both deductive and inductive. Moreover, the philosophical and ontological standpoints of the thesis will be provided, as well as, the reasons behind employing a qualitative research strategy (ethnography, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis). It will be illustrated that the methods adopted locate this research into a rich tradition of ethnographic inquiry in cultural studies and cultural criminology. The second part of the chapter focuses thoroughly on the research process, including the practical, reflexive and ethical issues, as well as the limitations of this study. In its entirety this chapter endeavours to illuminate the process which generated the data that the thesis is based on.

2.2 Core Methodology

2.2.1 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on power, resistance and subcultures by driving further the tradition of subcultural theory and increasing the scope of cultural criminology. Particularly this research attempts to explore matters of power, resistance and subcultures within the Cuban context. It endeavours to investigate these concepts in both macro and micro levels. As demonstrated in the introduction this study could be classed as research that falls into the newly-

developing area of cultural criminology, which is characterised largely as a multidisciplinary field (Ferrell et al, 2008). Accordingly, this thesis moves among philosophy (Spinoza and Bataille), politics (Gramsci), cultural studies, criminology, anthropology and sociology. This research follows the sociological and criminological tradition concerning the study of subcultures. It moves critically in the footsteps of the Birmingham School in its analysis of subcultures in terms of deviance, power and resistance. Particularly, the research's theoretical framework engages with modern and postmodern perspectives of power and resistance and subcultures. The principal theoretical objective is to demonstrate through a critical discussion of the literature (chapters three and four) and the ethnographic data provided (chapters six and seven) that despite the tensions between modern and postmodern subcultural theories, a bridging of these perspectives is not only possible but required in order to come to a better understanding of power, resistance and subcultures.

Furthermore by examining these modern and postmodern theories *from* the colonial difference of Cuba the thesis aims to decolonise social sciences by pointing at the knowledge that exists at the borders of western thought (Mignolo, 2000). As Connell (2007) argues the history of social sciences and the viewpoint from which specific matters and problems are discussed are largely Eurocentric and North-American in their core. This thesis is a gesture to break from the "coloniality of power" (Quijano, 2000), which has depicted the hegemony of a European frame of knowledge over other types of knowledge since colonialism (see chapter one). Hence, this research acknowledges the significance of the intellectual power of the colonial difference of Cuba in not only examining Eurocentric theories but also in generating theory.

Specifically the chapter on Cuba draws on the works of Ortiz, Martí and Guevara in order to demonstrate the importance of thinking *from* the perspective of the colonial

difference. As Mignolo (2000) argues the double critique in border thinking (internal critique of modernity by post-modern theories followed by a critique from the colonial difference -see chapter one), is to be critical of both western and local (Cuban) knowledge and to think from both traditions. In particular, the work of Ortiz is indispensable in understanding Cuban culture at both micro and macro levels, while the works of Martí and Guevara are essential in the formation of Cuba's ideology, structures and politics. Hence if the research was to provide an interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures by solely applying western modern and postmodern standpoints, it would remain blind to the critical perspectives stemming from Cuba itself. Therefore it is precisely at this point that border thinking gains its intellectual force.

By using the double critique method of border thinking, knowledges that have been subalternised are revealed and this makes possible "an other thinking" (Mignolo, 2000: 67). In other words "'an other thinking' is possible when different local histories and their particular power relations are taken into consideration" (Mignolo, 2000: 67). Specifically, chapter five will show that Cuba's cultural politics cannot be differentiated from the regime's foreign policies and continuous threats of subordination through experiences of colonialism and U.S. imperialism. Therefore, by incorporating Cuba's critical perspectives, a better understanding of power and resistance in underground rap and reggaeton will be gained. Hence by looking at the colonial difference of Cuba the thesis aims to drive further subcultural theory and cultural criminology.

It could be argued thus, that the relationship of theory to the data in this research is both deductive and inductive. The thesis draws strongly on the existing literature concerning power, resistance and subcultures (deductive strategy); while the data

gathered form fieldwork and the existing literature on Cuba helps generate theory (inductive strategy). As Bryman (2008) argues inductive strategy of linking data to theory is primarily associated with qualitative research. However, induction could also contain a deductive element (ibid). Consequently, despite having a deductive aspect, the inductive strategy of the research will be the main point where concepts and theory will be developed (Emerson et al, 1995). As a result, the research questions are derived both from the review of literature and fieldwork. The thesis consequently asks:

- **How do we understand power and resistance in the subcultures of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton?**

Following subsidiary questions:

- What implications will our understanding of power and resistance in Cuban underground rap and reggaeton, have for the general theories of subculture, power and resistance used in criminology?

- Taking into account the peculiar nature of the resistance of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton to the power of the state, can they be regarded as revolutionary or not? Can they be regarded as counterrevolutionary or not? If yes, what makes them revolutionary or equally what makes them counterrevolutionary?

- What is the importance of ideology, affects, structural changes and commercialism in the legitimisation or criminalisation of subcultures in Cuba?

It is important at this point to discuss the research approach that was followed in order to investigate these questions. The next section introduces the philosophical

and ontological standpoints that were followed in this research. Moreover the reasons behind employing a qualitative research strategy will be provided.

2.2.2 Research Approach and Research Strategy

The thesis follows an interpretivist, non-positivist epistemology and constructionist ontology. The central point of positivism is that it views reality as objective or tangible to the researcher, external and independent of social actors (Bryman, 2008). Hence reality is seen as measurable and quantifiable (ibid). In contrast the interpretivist standpoint perceives reality as subjective and socially constructed through beliefs, perceptions, individual actions and the meanings that people attribute to their behaviour and the behaviour of others (ibid). Thus, interpretivism views reality as dependent on social actors and as a continuous constructed process (ibid). Accordingly, constructivist epistemology stresses human creativity, subjectivity and pluralism and focuses on the dynamic interaction between the researcher and its subject (Crabtree & Miller 1999).

Interpretivism and constructivism are associated to symbolic interactionism and to Weber's *Verstehen,* which literally means "human understanding" (Bryman, 2008; Muggleton, 2000:10). The Verstehen is central to the rejection of positivist social sciences and associated in privileging "the subjective meanings of subculturalists, rather than deriving these form a pre-given totalizing theory" (Muggleton, 2000:9). Particularly, the Verstehen is an attempt to see the world "through the eyes of the people being studied" (Bryman, 2004: 293), of understanding the meaning of action from the point of view of the actor himself (Muggleton, 2000). By attempting to understand how individuals create and re-shape the world through forming their own

understanding of it, as well as attempting to understand the meaning of their actions and conduct, this thesis treats participants as subjects and not as objects (ibid).

Concerning therefore, the ontological and epistemological standpoint of the research it would have been almost impossible to apply a positivist strategy. In particular, as chapters three and four will demonstrate, there is no solid definition on power, resistance and subcultures. Thus it would have been very difficult to attempt to measure and quantify concepts that do not have a common shared meaning not even within academic realms. Moreover, although the research has an element of critical realism (see Bryman, 2008:14-15) in terms of acknowledging the power of state's institutions; by following a Gramscian perspective it demonstrates how individual initiatives, everyday struggles and negotiations with the state's apparatus actually shape and reshape state's power (see chapters four, six and seven). Consequently, understanding the meaning of these practices in everyday life becomes of high significance and demonstrates that individuals and their actions is not simply the product of external incontrollable forces (Bryman, 2008).

Furthermore, this research focuses on understanding the resistive nature of youth cultural practices through music and dance. It will be illustrated that both rap and reggaeton encompass cultural and social history, social constructions of everyday reality, emotions, attitudes, beliefs, struggles, symbolic codes and values. In the case of rap it will be shown that multiple meanings of "common sense" words such as revolutionary and counterrevolutionary, play a fundamental role in rap's resistance as well as its labelling as counterrevolutionary. In the case of reggaeton, which is a dance genre with an explicit embodied and non-verbal language, it will be illustrated that the introduction of new moves, style and the popularity of reggaeton carry a strong meaning on changing economic structures, as well as gender power

roles. Hence, to have attempted to understand the meaning of common sense words and of a highly body-centred music genre through positivism would have been extremely difficult. Subsequently it would have been problematic to attempt to quantify dance moves, emotions, ideology and multiple meanings of common sense values, which the performers of reggaeton and rap attribute to their cultural expression.

From this perspective, the research methodology that is suitable is a qualitative strategy. As Silverman (2000: 8) argues there is a "common belief" that qualitative methodology "can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data". Consequently, a qualitative research methodology is required to fulfil the objectives of this research. As culture is in a constant process of shaping and reshaping through individual practices, qualitative research enables a holistic approach top be applied in order to understand how social relationships and activities affect and are affected by cultural, political and economic circumstances (Cohen S., 1993). Thus, contextual analysis is used in this research in terms of connecting reggaeton and rap to specific historical, geographical, socio-cultural and economic contexts (ibid). Following the tradition of the Birmingham School, this research is investigating subcultures within a specific historical conjuncture (Hall &Jefferson, 2006). From this perspective the thesis aims to come to a better understanding of what issues of power and resistance occur in the specific context.

It is important to mention the methodological tools that were used in order to understand the subjective meanings of rappers and reggaetoneros within the specific socio-cultural and historical context. In the next section the research design will be discussed along with the reasons for using ethnography.

2.2.3. Research Design and Ethnography

In order to explore the principal question of the research on **how do we understand power and resistance in the case of Cuban rap and reggaeton**, a research design of two case studies was applied. Specifically the first case study focuses on Cuban underground rap and the second on Cuban reggaeton. As Yin (1991: 23) argues, a case study:

> is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

Hence, the two case studies were chosen due to the explicit contradictions that these two subcultures reflect on contemporary Cuba (see chapter one, six, seven). By examining these two subcultures the complexity of Cuba's power relations will be demonstrated (see chapters six and seven). Following Yin's perspective the research model of the case study involves a number of methods applied for the data collection and their analysis. The methodological tools used in this research were the ethnographic element of participant observation, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis of rap and reggaeton lyrics.

Here I would invoke my criterion of validity of investigating subcultures through ethnographic methods. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue, ethnography is considered to be a key method in studying, understanding and interpreting cultures and subcultures. It aims to understand how social actors produce their own meanings, which could reject, resist or reproduce dominant ones (Gobo, 2011). Also, by understanding discourses and actions in everyday life, of what people and governments say they do and what is actually done in everyday "reality" (Guber,

2005), the value of ethnography lies in observing actions and behaviour instead of discourses and opinions only (Gobo, 2011). As a result, ethnography highlights the impact of micro-politics to macro-phenomena, the motivations and practices (political or not) of social actors, the shaping and reshaping of meanings as well as, the complexity of everyday life (ibid).

There has been a long tradition in criminology of using ethnographic methods and case studies with small sample groups in order to interpret youth deviancy and youth subcultures. The works of Chicago School, Becker (1963), Young (1971) and Ferrell (1993) are representative examples. Moreover the CCCS had prioritised ethnography as the most valid method of understanding the meaning of working class subcultures[6]. The most representative example of that tradition is Willis's (1977) ethnographic study with a small sample of working class boys in a school environment. Ethnography has been the main method used by post-subculture theory. Typical examples would be Thorton's (1995) work on club cultures, Muggleton's (2000) on punk and Hodkinson's (2002) on Goth culture.

Furthermore ethnography has been used to study body-centred music genres such as kwaito (Impey, 2001; Coplan, 2005) in South Africa, funk (Yúdice, 1994) in Brazil and Jamaican dancehall (Stolzoff, 2000). In addition ethnography has been used to investigate Cuban rap and reggaeton such as the works of Fernandes (2006), Fairley (2006) and Baker (2011) demonstrate. Hence this thesis follows the rich tradition in criminology and cultural studies, of employing ethnographic methods in the studying of youth subcultures. Particularly the research follows the steps of CCCS on critically grounding youth cultural expressions and everyday social

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[6] Although not all members of the CCCS used ethnographic methods (see chapter three).

practices and struggles to macro-structural changes (Hall and Jefferson, 2006). In the following section the overview of the research process will be discussed along with the reasons for utilising semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis.

2.2.4 Overview of the Research

As presented in the first chapter the focus of the research was on cultural producers of Cuban rap and reggaeton during the period 2008-2012. Data collection consisted of fieldwork conducted in Havana over three periods of time: November 2009, July and August 2010 and July and August 2011. A total of five months of participant observation was spent in Havana. The decision to break the fieldwork study into three periods was mainly practical, as due to economic constraints it was not possible to stay more than two months in the field at any time. Leaving and revisiting the field however was very fruitful, as it helped me see changes occurring to the groups in focus within periods of time.

The main sites of the research were the spaces of reunion among rappers: The Malecon (main seaside avenue of Havana), Park G (where most youths and various subcultural groups gather at night), Alamar (a suburb of Havana), El Karatsi (the only club in Havana during the time of research that hosted live rap gigs), houses of rappers, independent from the state institution's recording studios, rehearsals and private celebrations after rap concerts. In total I attended to 10 rap and 8 reggaeton concerts/gigs. As will be further demonstrated later, the access to the rap subculture was a lot deeper and with a lot more insight arising from participant observation of this group in day to day life. Whereas with reggaeton, due to problems of access (see section 2.3.2), the data was gathered through interviews with a smaller group of individuals, participant observation of concerts and everyday experiences in Havana.

The research was overt in character and all participants were informed about the objectives of the thesis (see section 2.4). Considering the selection of participants, the research followed purposive sampling. This approach is mostly used in ethnographic research, as it is practically difficult to have a large amount of participants and obtain an in depth understanding of their particular reality (Higginbottom, 2004). Accordingly the research sampled a small number of music producers from both subcultures. As presented in chapter one, during the time of the research there were approximately twenty rap groups and individual artists. While due to the popularity of reggaeton it was difficult to grasp how many reggaeton groups existed. As Bryman (2008) argues purposive sampling can be used on the one hand, when the researcher faces problems in defining the number of the population that he/she wishes to investigate; and on the other hand, when the researcher faces problems in accessing and contacting the part of the population that he/she is interested in researching. Therefore, purposive sampling was adopted where participants were selected during fieldwork according to the research agenda.

Particularly, a specified number of participants were selected according to characteristics that served the research's purposes (Higginbottom, 2004). One of the main criteria was the selection of individuals that identified themselves as reggaetoneros or underground rappers, but also the popularity of specific rap and reggaeton artists. Consequently my key participants were eleven of the most prominent rappers in Cuba during the time of the research: El Aldeano, Silvito El Libre, Escuadron Patriota, Papa Humbertico, Charly Muchas Rimas, Etian Brebaje Man, Franko, Soandry, Barbaro el Urbano Vargas, Mikel Xtremo and CP. While six reggaetoneros comprised my key participants within the reggaeton scene: William el Magnifico, Nelso el Muñeco, Dj Unic, Robinson from Kola Loka, Marlon Cooperfield

and Dayron. Moreover, an additional key participant was a state official from a Cuban cultural institution, which provided valuable insights on how cultural institutions operate concerning rap and reggaeton.

Additionally, for both samples of rappers and reggaetoneros the aim was to obtain a "maximum phenomena variation" (Higginbottom, 2004: 16). Hence the main endeavour was to ensure "that many different variations of the data in a given case are explored" (Higginbottom, 2004: 17), creating therefore, a heterogeneous sample (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). As a result, the sample of this research obtains (for both subcultures) participants that were affiliated to cultural institutions, participants that were not affiliated to cultural institutions; participants that had a long career in the specific music genre and participants that had a 2-3 years career; participants that were censored and participants that were not censored in order to ensure the maximum variety of informants in the specific subcultures.

Access to the rappers was facilitated by a Cuban dj and documentary producer on Cuban underground rap, who, during the time of the research, was residing in London (see section 2.3). His role as a gatekeeper provided me access (during my first field trip to Havana), to one of the most prominent rappers at the time: Escuadron Patriota. The latter acted as a key informant and gatekeeper to the rap scene, ensuring greater access to the group under investigation (see section 2.3.2). Thus, access to underground rap was obtained during the first trip to Cuba, while the interviews with the rappers were conducted during the second and third visits. Access to reggaeton proved more difficult despite the fact that access was "guaranteed" by a Cuban friend that was affiliated to the scene, during my second visit (see section 2.3.2).

Due to problems of accessing reggaetoneros every effort was made in these circumstances to gain information through more informal means. Hence besides the six interviews conducted with reggaetoneros and music producers, the views of the rappers and of the state's cultural official, were used in order to come to a better understanding of reggaeton's resistive nature. The selection of rappers in their interpretation of reggaeton is not without justification. As implied in the introduction reggaeton emerged from the realms of rap. As a result one of the aims of the fieldwork was to obtain the views of the rappers towards reggaeton and of reggaetoneros towards rap. Additionally facebook was used to keep in contact with developments occurring in reggaeton and rap scenes. Specifically facebook was rendered from the interviews with the reggaetoneros as one of the main exponents of their music to the rest of the world.

Principally, participant observation and fieldwork notes provided the major bulk of data. Countless informal conversations, with the rappers, their friends, family members and other Cuban friends were recorded in the fieldwork notes, as well as, observations from everyday experiences. The in depth access to the rap scene permitted me to obtain an extensive understanding and insight of the day-to-day lives of this group. Whilst field relations with the reggaeton group were not as strong, still the opportunity to be present as artists performed and to see how their music was received within the day to day lives of ordinary Cubans, provided useful insights on the role that reggaeton plays in contemporary Cuban culture.

The fieldwork notes were combined with eleven formal interviews with rappers, six formal interviews with reggaetoneros and one formal interview with a cultural official. The interviews were semi-structured in character and were conducted in Spanish and then transcribed and translated into English. All interviews were conducted by

using an audio-recorder and took place in the houses of the rappers and reggaetoneros. The decision to conduct semi-structured interviews was based on the premise that it allows for the interview process to be flexible (Bryman, 2008). In this way, new concepts were revealed during the discussion (ibid). The emphasis of the interviews was given on what meaning the participants themselves attribute to their musical expression. The notions of "revolutionary" and "counterrevolutionary" kept re-emerging during the interviews and informal discussions with the rap group, while these words were not mentioned during the interviews with the reggaetoneros. This fact led to a gradual understanding of the importance of these two "common sense" words in the interpretation of power and resistance concerning the two subcultures. Hence, both the interviews and fieldwork notes permitted me to understand, reflect and give meaning to observations and practices of the two groups, in relation to the wider Cuban culture.

Furthermore, I intend to construct the narrative and discourse of Cuban rap and reggaeton through the interviews and analysis of song lyrics. Specifically, purposive sampling was used in the selection of rap and reggaeton songs. Thus, the selection of songs was conducted via their notional structure. Songs were selected according to what values, norms of social life, lifestyles, experiences, collective representations, practices, emotions and ideas they reflect. Through the lyrics narrative, the way that reggaeton and rap transgress and/or reproduce social stereotypes and conventions will be revealed.

Particularly, the analysis of song lyrics and interviews were conducted through discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is the analysis;

of language in use, but it also expands beyond language in use. [Thus] discourse is language use relative to social political and cultural formations - it is language reflecting social order [culture and structures] but also language shaping social order, and shaping individual's interaction with society (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999: 3).

The aim of the discourse analysis is to portray, understand and interpret the phenomena that are under investigation (Howarth, 2000). Discourse relies on linguistic meanings within specific contexts and is highly correlated to qualitative methods and ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Through this procedure it can bring together micro and macro perspectives by demonstrating how broad institutional, cultural and social norms are understood by individuals (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). In other words, discourse, constitutes the social; it is embedded within ideologies and formed through power relations (Fairclough, 1999). Consequently discourse encompasses the "interpersonal" function of language, which involves the language used in the construction of social identities, practices and social relationships within specific contexts (Fairclough, 1999:202).

Moreover discourse analysis does not confine itself to the interpretation of verbal discourse and texts, but also expands in construing non-verbal and non-vocal communications (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). Therefore discourse analysis can be utilised to interpret the embodied cultural expressions, which accompany or replace oral or textual speech (i.e. music and dance) (ibid). As a result according to Jaworski & Coupland (1999: 7-9) discourse is:

1. multi-structured as it accomplishes many functions simultaneously

2. multi-modal as it incorporates verbal and non-verbal performances and also,

3. multi-voiced, meaning that the same text can reflect different voices and competitive discourses, that may be representing different interests and ideologies.

From this perspective the exploration of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton entails the investigation of diverse practices, activities, rituals, verbal and non-verbal performances through which a certain sense of reality and understanding of society is constructed (Howarth, 2000). By using discourse analysis the aim is to understand whether, how, and, to what extent reggaeton's and rap's resistance challenge or reproduce the regime's hegemony.

The analysis of data was conducted manually. Specifically the analysis of data was carried out by separating them into four main categories: underground rap, reggaeton, revolutionary and counterrevolutionary. The first two categories incorporated all narrations and discourses (interviews, lyrics, conversations) and observations of practices that correlated them with aspects raised by subcultural and post-subcultural theory. The second two incorporated issues of power, resistance, aspects of mainstream Cuban culture and deviance.

The following section focuses on the relationship between the researcher with the choice of research area and the emotional, ideological, embodied, personal and identity dimensions before, during and after the fieldwork experience (Coffey, 1999). The following piece is written in the first person. It aims to highlight the researcher's values and to provide a basis for the reader on how to assess the ethnographic material of the following chapters. In other words it aims to provide the internal validity of conducting this research.

2.3 Confessional

One of the main criticisms of ethnography and qualitative methods is the impact that personal values, beliefs and feelings of the researcher have an impact on the objectivity of the research (Bryman, 2008). Although it has been acknowledged by recent developments that "pure" objectivity cannot exist in social research, it has been quite common for participant observation and qualitative interviews to be criticised to the extent that the researchers might "find it difficult to disentangle their stance as social scientists from their subjects' perspective" (Bryman, 2008: 25). It is important therefore, to provide a "confessional" section in order to present the reflexive elements of conducting this research. In doing so, the embodied, ideological, experiential and emotional aspects of the research will be illustrated (Coffey, 1999).

As Lofland and Lofland (1995) argue, a stimulus for the choice of research area emerges out of the researcher's personal biography. While Coffey (1999) in a similar line of thought argues, that personal, emotional and identity dimensions affect the researcher before, during and after fieldwork. One of the most common questions that I am asked (as soon as I describe to someone what the topic of my PhD is) is: why Cuba? Being from Greece it was seen as peculiar not to investigate my own country or the UK, as it would have been more practical in economic terms. It was also seen as more practical in cultural terms as many thought that I would be more familiar with the Greek and British cultures. These constantly emerging common questions in casual conversations made me reflect on why I had chosen Cuba.

Primarily I grew up in a leftist family in Greece. Members of my family were members of the Greek Communist Party and I can still remember, although I was at a very

young age, being on the shoulders of my uncle at the Party's events and a sea of red flags expanding in front of me. One of the humorous anecdotes that my parents tell me is that up to the age of four, when someone asked me my name I would respond "Eleni the Communist". As a result I have grown up with leftist values such as solidarity, fraternity, social justice and equality highly embedded in me. Until I came to the UK there was no march that I would not participate in and up to the point of commencing this thesis, I always dreamed of Cuba as a place where the utopia of socialist values were being put in practice.

Besides the ideological motivations, a catalyst factor was that during the last years of my Bachelor in Sociology in Greece I started working in a Cuban club-restaurant in Athens. The club had a live program with musicians and singers brought over from Cuba. Two of the female singers became close friends of mine and due to language barriers (they could speak neither English nor Greek) I got to learn Spanish through interaction with them. As a result I became more familiar with the Cuban accent and forms of expression rather than the formal Iberian Spanish. The three years of experience in *Cubanita* (club-restaurant) offered me not only to learn a new language but also an insight into the Cuban modes of conduct as well as, the festive and more commercialised part of Cuban culture, such as its music and dance.

Specifically from all music genres I loved dancing to reggaeton and I remember insisting to the Cuban Dj to play the song "Yunai, Yunai, you like the foreigners"[7]. He hated it and he had told me several times that it was no good but would not give me the reasons for his views. It was only after conducting this research that I understood that the song refers to prostitution, sex tourism and changing values in Cuban

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[7] "Yunai Yunia a ti te gustan los Yumas" by Calle 35

society (see chapter seven). Due to these experiences choosing Cuba for a PhD thesis seemed very natural to me.

When I began the thesis my focus was mainly on reggaeton. However, I was also a big fan of hip hop and of all hip hop events in Greek clubs that I attended there was always a part in the night where Puerto Rican reggaeton was played. Thus, I had an idea shaping in my mind that the two genres might be interconnected in Cuba also. The answer came in the first year of my PhD when I met Juan[8], an Afro-Cuban Dj and co-producer on a documentary for Cuban underground rap, in London. Juan introduced me to the underground rap scene by encouraging me to listen to Los Aldeanos, Escuadron Patriota, Silvito El Libre and Mano Armada. He also explained to me how reggaeton and rap were linked[9], but most importantly as he was friends with most of the vanguard rappers in Havana, he acted as the principal gatekeeper of access for the rap scene. Juan provided me with the phone numbers of rappers and in order to ensure my access, he advised me to use his name when I came in contact with them.

This part served to illustrate how my experiences and identity traits, prior to conducting this research, affected my decision and motivation of investigating Cuba, Cuban rap and reggaeton. The following section focuses on how emotions, friendships and experiences affect the perspective and values of the researcher during fieldwork.

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[8] The name of the Dj has been altered in order to ensure his confidentiality, safety and anonymity.

[9] Many rappers converted to reggaeton when the reggaeton sound entered the island (see chapter seven).

2.3.1 Entering the field

As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 8) argue:

> The need to learn the culture of those we are studying is most obvious in the case of societies other than our own. Here, not only may we not know why people do what they do, but often we may not be able to recognise *what* they are doing (stress in original).

The views of Hammersley and Atkinson are of high value in my case. Despite having a small taste of Cuban culture from my Cuban friends in Greece and having read relevant literature on Cuba, being in the field was a remarkably different and many times contradictory experience. As Moore (2006:xiii) states "no country is easy for foreigners upon first arrival, but socialist Cuba presents special challenges". The amazingly complex cultural traditions, the high politicisation of its culture, and the control of state institutions to Havana's civil society are very different from what many Westerners are accustomed to (ibid) (see chapter five).

Specifically, the first visit in 2009 to Cuba served mainly as a pilot study to slowly start to understand Havana's culture in everyday life and also, to secure access to the rappers. My focus during the first visit was mainly in Alamar (a suburb of Havana); the place where rap emerged in the early 1990s (see chapter six). Spending most days in Alamar and interacting with people gave me the opportunity to understand the living conditions that many Cubans face in this impoverished area.

Walking during day time on the soil-streets of Alamar, one could feel the pain in people's eyes from their constant struggle to make ends meet. Power and water cuts were part of the everyday routine. To obtain a land-line phone was a

true luxury, communal and entertainment spaces were non-existent, transportation to Havana was a frustrating everyday routine, while in terms of food, rice and beans was largely the only option available (Field-notes, Havana, December 2009)

Although I was trying to understand what was going on (as I did not expect that poverty conditions would exist in Cuba), I was in a constant state of not being able to understand the situations that I was experiencing. Thus, looking back to my field notes constant questions emerged:

Why is it illegal for a Cuban to obtain or sell lobsters? Why do families of seven members live in a two bedroom apartment? Why are women in their early seventies selling maní (peanuts) in the Malecon[10]? Why would a doctor practice his profession in the morning and at nights play guitar for tourists in the Malecon? Why can't the average Cuban survive with his work salary in a socialist regime? Why does Cuba have a double currency? Why would Cubans be fined by the police for not wearing their T-shirts? Why are young Habaneros so obsessed with brands? Why would a car engineer that chose not to work for the state but as a private entrepreneur be visited by the CDR (Comitees for the Defence of the Revolution)[11] and the police, with the only reason being him not working for the state? (Field-notes, Havana, December 2009)

Also two experiences that seemed to me as very peculiar were:

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[10] Malecon is the seaside highway of Havana where many Cubans and foreigners gather at nights.

[11] The CDRs are neighbourhood committees constituted by Cuban civilians. They serve the role of being the "eyes" and "ears" of the regime in the very micro-everyday level (see chapter five)

Through the widespread black market (underground economy) Cubans rent and watch American and Latin American cartoons, TV series and shows. I could not help but wonder if this contact with luxurious lifestyles of capitalist countries did not cause them frustration in their living conditions. Secondly, the day of my departure coincided with heavy snow in the UK. Because of the twelve hour flight delay all passengers were moved to a five star hotel in Havana. The free dinner that was offered to us included a buffet with everything that the human appetite could crave for. After one month eating rice and beans and watching people in their everyday struggle to make ends meet, to experience this excess of food gave me a very painful feeling. If such luxury existed to serve the tourists, surely a true socialist regime would do anything in its power to equally distribute the wealth from the tourist economy to its citizens. (Field-notes, Havana, December 2009)

As this appeared not to be the case, Cuba from that experience onwards seemed to me very detached from what I had been dreaming of. These examples explicitly depict Coffey's (1999) argument that emotions stemming from fieldwork experiences facilitate in sharpening the ethnographer's gaze and re-shaping previous pre-conceptions. According to Blackman (2007), the reluctance of sociology (due to fear of losing legitimacy or being discredited) to critically explore the value of emotions between the researcher and the field, should be surpassed. By critically reflecting on and understanding the emotional aspect of the relationships created between the researcher and the researched, power structures of inequality can be revealed (ibid). Thus, friendships created during fieldwork can also "help to clarify the inherent tensions of the fieldwork experience and sharpen our abilities for critical reflection" (Coffey, 1999:47).

Specifically the issue of social equality kept emerging during all my fieldwork visits. In my second fieldwork visit I stayed in a *casa particular*[12] in Miramar, an area which is considered to be middle and high class. One of my neighbours, Maria[13] an Afro-Cuban, single-mother in her early forties, gradually became a close friend of mine. By residing in Miramar and interacting with Maria and her family, it was possible to observe the existing class power structures and economic strain in Havana:

Neighbours of Maria had a $200 annual subscription to a hotel's swimming pool. This caused a big strain on her, as her nine year old daughter was close friends with the couple's daughter and she also wanted to be able to go to the swimming pool throughout the year. In addition, the couple with their daughter would go to Varadero for a two week vacation, one of the expensive tourist zones of Cuba and their daughter would go to school every day with a different back-pack and sneakers. As a result, Maria's daughter also desired this lifestyle. My friend was severely troubled as her income was the average Cuban salary of $20 per month and was struggling to make ends meet. Despite having long conversations with her child and explaining to her why she could not provide her this type of life, Maria was experiencing a constant strain of not being able to fulfil her daughter's desires (Field-notes, Havana, June 2010)

Furthermore, friendships created during my fieldwork and personal experiences facilitated in understanding socio-cultural aspects relating to gender and race. According to Coffey (1999), "the self" of the ethnographer becomes part of the complexities and relations of the specific cultural setting. Being a white, brunette,

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[12] Cuban houses that are rented to tourists with the approval of the state.

[13] The name of my informant has been altered in order to secure her safety and anonymity.

Greek woman in my late 20s, my presence in the field was an embodied one, engaging and interacting in the social worlds and values of the people in the field (ibid).

Maria with her brother Adrian[14], both Afro-Cubans, explicitly told me that they were happily surprised to see that I did not mind the colour of people in creating bonds of friendship with them. Rita, an Afro-Cuban female friend in her late thirties, did not want to have children because they would be black. While Alejandro an Afro-Cuban male rapper, in his early twenties, had severe problems with the mother of his white girlfriend, as she did not approve of interracial relations. (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

Due to these conversations, experiences and interactions with Cuban friends, my preconception of racial equality, which in theory runs through the socialist ideology, was re-shaped as I came to understand that racism existed in Cuba (see chapter five). Hence race issues could not be omitted from this research. Thus, despite the fact that the research in its initial stage did not focus on race and gender, my interactions and experiences with my Cuban friends during fieldwork, made me reconsider. Specifically, as Coffey (1999) argues the ethnographer is not an asexual and a genderless presence in the field. "The sexual self is part of our being and part of the way we experience our lives" (ibid: 96) and the fieldwork. Arguably, the most striking experience that made me reflect on my sexual and gender role in the field

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[14] The names of my informants have been altered to ensure their confidentiality and safety.

was a day that I was waiting for three hours in the Capitolio[15] of Havana for a rapper to appear at our meeting[16].

While waiting, an Afro-Cuban man in his fifties approached me and told me "I apologise to bother you. I am a respectable general and I have my birthday today and I would really love it if you could join me. Don't worry about the money I have everything covered". Due to my appearance, if I did not speak a lot I could pass as a Cuban. So clearly he thought that I was from Cuba. I told him that I was not interested. He insisted for about fifteen minutes and when he finally understood that I would not join him he moved on to another woman. After a while, two French tourists approached me and asked me if I knew any nice clubs and if I would like to join them and have a nice time together. They were willing to buy me all drinks and pay for the club's entrance fee. As soon as I told them that I was not Cuban but Greek, they disappeared. (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

The experience in Capitolio gave me an insight into gender relations and issues of exploitation through prostitution and sex tourism (see chapter five and seven). This experience and similar others were of high value in the interpretation of reggaeton's resistive nature (see chapter seven). Most importantly this experience taught me that even on occasions where you expect nothing to happen, small details like the one mentioned really change your point of view on how to interpret things. Moreover, it made me reflect on my embodied, racial, gendered and sexual presence in the field (Coffey, 1999).

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[15] One of the most central parts of Havana

[16] The problem with the transportation in Havana leads many times to people being late for meetings, despite their best intentions to be punctual.

2.3.2 Member of La Aldea[17]: Identity, affective and Ideological Dimensions During and After the Fieldwork

This section focuses on emotions, values and identity dimensions, through the relationships created with the rap group. By critically reflecting on these issues the positive aspects and the challenges of undertaking this research, will be revealed (Blackman, 2007). This critical reflection will provide an advanced understanding on how this research was carried out (ibid). As mentioned earlier, my first trip to Cuba aimed to provide me with access to the rap scene. Consequently I came into contact with the vanguards of the rap scene, explaining to them what the research was all about and if they would be willing to spend some time with me during my second visit and be interviewed. As Bryman (2008) argues some of the key informants of the research often function as gatekeepers. Thus although access was promised by the rappers in the first visit, a pivotal factor was the friendship built with the vanguard rapper Raudel (Escuadron Patriota). Frequently, during fieldwork "we develop relationships with key individuals" (Coffey, 1999:41) that serve the purposes of the research. However what begins as a research motivated relationship can become a meaningful friendship by providing someone to rely upon and trust, during the fieldwork experience (Coffey, 1999). Raudel took me under his wing and facilitated the participation of all the rappers. Thus a snowballing effect took place in terms of my access to the scene (Higginbottom, 2004).

Moreover, "fieldwork is itself a 'social setting' inhabited by embodied, emotional and physical lives" (Coffey, 1999: 8). The importance of understanding the role of

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[17] Aldea means the village in Spanish. The word is used to denote the artistic, social and intellectual network built around the rap duo Los Aldeanos

emotions to the lives of the rappers was paramount in my access to the subculture (Coffey, 1999).

It was approximately 1 o'clock in the morning. Alejandro and José[18], two of the rappers, a friend of theirs Yuso and me were hanging out at the Malecon. A couple of days earlier the three day Rotilla festival had taken place, where all artists from the underground and alternative scenes in Havana participated. However, this year it was the first time that the State's Security[19] was one of the main sponsors of the event. Although nothing happened during the event in terms of censorship or coercion of the artists, José was emotionally stressed and very worried that night.

J: I have heard that those on top (government) got annoyed with Tafari's songs. I am worried that he is going to have problems again.

A: But why man? Why him? Your performance was much more direct and challenging than his.

J: Fuck! I don't know! I don't understand them! Imagine (he looked at me, with a simultaneous sorrow and frustration stemming from his eyes), we have to feed our families, I have two children you know that, and on top of this to have to endure this pressure. But, what really worries me is that it seems that they have an infiltrator close to Tafari. We definitely have a 'snitch' inside our group.

E: But how do you know that?

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[18] The names of participants have been altered in order to ensure their safety and confidentiality.

[19] A section of the Ministry of Interior that is dedicated to identifying, spying and tackling counterrevolutionary movements on the island (see chapter five)

J: Trust me, I know. I am thinking that it is Emmanuel, the guy that is doing the support for Tafari's songs.

A: No, man. I don't think so. He is a great guy.

J: Well you never know. We will see. The sure thing is that we have a 'snitch' (field-notes, Havana, August 2010).

Despite Raudel's valuable help the main challenge was to work on a relationship of trust and rapport with the rappers. As will be demonstrated in chapters five and six and is implied in the vignette, trust is a fundamental issue in social relationships in Cuba. Due to the problems that the rappers face with the Cuban authorities and Miami media representations (see chapter six), my main aim was not to be seen as an informant for the Cuban state or as an agent of the Miami community. As depicted in the vignette, the relationship of trust was gradually built during my second fieldwork trip. The rappers slowly understood my genuine interest in their work and mutual relationships of rapport, trust and respect were created. Thus, whenever they would record, perform or just wanted to have fun together they would invite me. Specifically, one of the main reasons that I chose to stay in Miramar was that it was closer to spaces where the rappers performed and hung around such as Park G and the Malecon. By staying in Miramar it gave me the opportunity to be with the guys until late and experience everyday practices, views and their emotions concerning their everyday reality.

Furthermore, as Coffey (1999) argues fieldwork engages the ethnographer in identity work. While the production and re-construction of identity for the researcher occurs during and after fieldwork (ibid). In particular, the close interaction and common shared values with the rappers helped to develop a better understanding of what

they represented (see chapter six) and most importantly of Cuba's highly contradictory social condition.

I met with Tafari in front of the Capitolio of Havana at 11 o'clock in the morning and we made our way towards the Malecon. The heat of the sun was really strong, so we decided to find comfort under the awning of a canteen that was placed next to the sea-bank of the Malecon. We ordered refreshments and sat at one of the tables. While trying to recover from the heat and wiping our sweat with our handkerchiefs, we started talking about Cuba and Communism.

T: Look, Communism in theory is a very beautiful philosophy, economic organisation and way of life. The problem is that in Cuba there exists a great gap between that theory and how it is implemented in practice. Nothing from what we learn in schools about the Revolution and the ideals of fraternity, equality, non-discrimination and solidarity are being implemented in practice. There must be a Communist system where its actions and policies are loyal to its theory. Here all government and military officials have a very good and luxurious quality of life, while people are suffering. It should not be like that. And we talk about 50 years of being constantly under the propaganda of the revolution, but we see nothing of the revolution in practice now. That's why people and many of the youths do not bother any more with the problems of the system. Either because they are afraid of openly expressing what they think is right to do, or because they do not care. Most of the people care about making ends meet, having food on their table and having a nice time, which of course is understandable. The people are tired of politics. I know that capitalism causes even more extreme problems and inequalities. Perhaps the solution still lies in Communism or somewhere in between the two systems. I don't know...

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What I know is that we should seek for changes in favour of Cuba's people.

(Field-notes, Havana, July 2010)

Viewing Havana through their eyes and experiencing everyday life in Cuba's capital, my main struggle when I left the field after the second and third visit was to come to terms with the distance between official socialist discourses and everyday reality in Havana. My involvement with the rappers and the field experience was a life changing experience for me in ideological terms. I recall being in a state of depression for approximately two months after my second visit as I no longer knew what I stood for. Communism in the way that was put in practice in Cuba was very far from racial and social equality and failed to provide a good quality of life for all its citizens. Gradually I began to feel closer to what the rappers represented, of keeping the positive elements of socialism such as free health and education but also changing anything that needs to be changed. This realisation of my "changing selfhood" (Coffey, 1999:26) demonstrates how the identity of the researcher is crafted and re-shaped through his/hers dialectic and interaction with the researched (Coffey, 1999). While the critical reflections on the changes of the researcher's "self" are of pivotal importance in understanding firstly, the cultural context that is under investigation and secondly, in facilitating in generating theory (Coffey, 1999; Blackman, 2007).

Moreover, as stated in the previous section my presence in the field was neither a gender-neutral nor an asexual one. As "the erotic is quickly associated with the exotic" (Coffey, 1999:94), it is both revealing and epistemologically valuable to critically reflect upon issues of sexuality and gender in ethnographic research (Coffey, 1999). Specifically, the point when I understood that I was considered a member of the Aldea was when Silvito El Libre started saying to me *"sister, you are*

one of us", but most importantly when El Aldeano gave me the nickname of *"Helen of Troy"* that all the rappers gradually used. For my part, it seemed very peculiar to the rappers that a woman from Greece was interested in Cuban rap. Hence, in most parts I was the "exotic" and the "Other" rather than they to me. Arguably my nickname reflects that although I was considered a member, my "otherness" was maintained.

Additionally, as Miller and Mullins (2011: 218) argue "gender is not a natural fact but a complex social, historical and cultural product". Gender is perhaps one of the most "invisible" aspects of social life, in the sense that it is embodied, constructed and reproduced through everyday actions and interactions (Bourdieu, 2001). The embodiment of gender in everyday social practices becomes so "natural" and "takes place below the level of consciousness" (Bourdieu, 2001:42) in most occasions.

It was approximately 12 o'clock at night and we were returning by bus from a concert that took place in the centre of Havana. Our group of 15 people (three rappers, female family siblings, girlfriends and male friends) had decided to head back to the house of one of the rappers to share drinks, laughs and enjoy the rest of the night. At some point, while on the bus, five seats became empty. The four women in the group directly went and sat down. José and Alejandro seeing that I was still standing, suggested that I go and sit down too, next to Jose's mother. I explained that I was not feeling tired and I preferred to stand. They looked at me with a sense of wonder in their eyes and went back to discussing about where we should get off the bus and buy some bottles of rum. The seat got taken by a male, middle-aged Cuban, who 10 minutes later stood up to get off. Again the guys suggested that I go and sit down. Although I did not want to sit down, I felt a bit uneasy as people on the bus started staring at

me. I realised that I was calling too much attention to myself so I went and sat down. When we arrived at our destination, everybody in our group started getting off the bus. José stood outside, on the right of the bus-doors, and offered his hand to me in order to help me get off. I did not pay attention to the gesture so I got off the bus without reaching for his hand. He kept staring at me with a clear sense of wonder, while simultaneously helping the rest of the women. Although he did not say anything to me, I realised that I was not acting according to gender expectations in the specific context. From that time onwards, I would sit whenever there was a seat available on the bus and take the hand offered to me by a man when getting off. (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

As implied in the vignette, the gendered body is a "key characteristic of our field roles and relationships" (Coffey, 1999: 72). Learning gendered embodied skills according to norms and expectations of the fieldwork context is an important part of understanding everyday social life (Coffey, 1999). The specific experience illustrates the embodied, "natural" and "invisible" everyday gendered actions and behaviours, which I had to learn and perform as a female researcher. It also shows, the unconscious construction of masculinity as active and physically strong and femininity as passive and physically weak (Miller and Mullins, 2011).

Additionally, all too often empirical data from ethnographic studies with young people are not published, because they might be perceived as too controversial (Blackman, 2007). Usually it is the concealing of emotions, sexuality and of "guilty knowledge" (Polsky, 1967:138) (being complicit in deviant activities carried out by the groups in focus). These unpublished data comprise the realm of what Blackman (2007: 699) calls "hidden ethnography". As Coffey (1999: 77) argues it is hypocritical to "cast the

researcher as [an] asexual" presence in the field. The fieldworker is an embodied and emotional being as are the researched (Coffey, 1999). Thus, by incorporating a sexual perspective of conducting fieldwork it is epistemologically productive and illuminating with regards to the challenges that the researcher might face during his/hers interactions with the participants (Coffey, 1999). Additionally, it is fruitful in indicating the heterosexual parameters in everyday practices of the groups in focus (ibid). Consequently, sexuality and sexual status (single or married) of the researcher is important in fieldwork and it should be critically reflected upon (ibid).

Entering into a highly masculine/heterosexual culture such as rap (although the guys knew that the reason I was there was to conduct the research), after a month of being with them your identity as a researcher fades away and you are seen mainly as a friend and potential girlfriend.

It was approximately 11.30 at night and I was returning with one of the rappers from a birthday party of a female friend of theirs. Two friends of ours were expecting us in Havana in order to go and hang out either at Park G or the Malecon. We were waiting for half an hour for the bus to arrive, but it seemed that we would have to wait for more than an hour, so we decided to go on foot. We bought some beers on the way and started chatting about several issues. After 20 minutes the rapper asked me:

R: So how is it going with Tafari?

E: Great! But wait, what do you mean?

R: You are together right?

E: No, no! He is married! Why did you think that?

R: Well, you spend lots of time with him. So I thought that there was something going on between the two of you.

E: You know that I am here to do my research, not to find a boyfriend. Tafari is one of my favourite people. I really love and respect him but as a friend, nothing more.

R: He feels the same way for you too. (There was silence for a couple of seconds).

R: You know, I could fall in love with you.

E: But you have a girlfriend!

R: No, I do not.

E: But I have seen you together.

R: No, she is not my girlfriend.

E: Look, it doesn't matter. I really respect you and you know that each one of you is very special to me. But I can offer you only my friendship, nothing more than that. I hope you understand.

He smiled positively and we changed the subject. (Field-notes, Havana, August 2010)

Although I constantly needed to negotiate in these terms, I never felt harassed by my participants and in the end the guys were just happy to have me around. The above experience is on the one hand illuminating of the challenges and negotiations that a heterosexual, single woman ethnographer might face during fieldwork with a highly masculine subcultural group. On the other hand, it shows that although rap's

discourse is about gender equality, women's emancipation and respect between genders (see chapter six), some of the rappers, through their everyday practices actually reproduce existing gender power relations. Hence, by critically reflecting on issues of sexuality and the sexual aspect of fieldwork it can advance our "understanding of how studies are carried out and theory constructed" (Blackman, 2007:699).

Additionally, when leaving the field I was able to reflect on the importance of affective relationships and emotions in conducting the research (Coffey, 1999). Arguably affective relationships can lead both to advancing the research and to restraining it. Specifically during my second visit to Cuba my aim was also to obtain access to reggaeton. A friend of mine that had connections to the reggaetoneros had promised me access. However when I arrived in Cuba in the summer 2011I understood that he was expecting more of me. As soon as he realised that his expectations would not be met he left me stranded. The rappers and other friends tried their best to bring me into contact with the reggaetoneros. I managed to gain some access to the scene a month after I had arrived on the island, through the photographer and video-producer Wilberg Hernández Monterde. Due to limited time left and the fact that many of the vanguard reggaetoneros were either on tours in Cuba or abroad I managed to obtain six interviews.

One of the most important affective relationships that advanced the research was my relationship with the mother of a vanguard rapper, Aphrodite[20]. She started emailing me after my second visit to Cuba and up to the point of writing these pages we are in communication at least three days per week. The contact with her has really offered

[20] The name of my participant has been altered in order to ensure her well-being and confidentiality

me the opportunity to remain informed with developments occurring in rap, but most importantly she has supported me psychologically and emotionally through the lonely process of writing a PhD. Moreover through the relationship with her, during my third visit, I was able to pass more time in the house of the rapper. This development gave me an insight into the everyday practices of the rappers. Hence I came to understand the pivotal role that mothers and female siblings play in the rap scene and also the difficulties that these women face (see chapter six). Furthermore she joined me in all reggaeton fiestas that I needed to attend in order to gather as much data as I could. I would argue that the highly personal aspect of affective relations played one of the most important roles for this research to be conducted.

Moreover, as stated earlier, another aspect of "hidden ethnography" (Blackman, 2007: 699) is concealing "guilty knowledge", especially when investigating deviant subcultures (Polsky, 1967:138). Similarly to emotions and sexuality in fieldwork relationships, the witnessing or participation of the ethnographer in deviant activities carried out by the groups in focus, is all too often concealed due to ethical considerations (Blackman, 2007). During my fieldwork experience and interactions with the rap group, I did not witness nor participated in any deviant activities. Freedom of expression and liberty of thought and action that the rappers advocate through their discourse and actions are basic human rights. However, this demonstrates very effectively the social construction of deviancy and crime (Becker, 1963), as it is considered deviant and counterrevolutionary to express your opinion as freely and openly as the rappers do (see chapters five and six).

Additionally, ethnographic studies with deviant groups demonstrate the dangers for the ethnographer (problems with law enforcement, physical dangers, being complicit in criminal knowledge and lack of safety among others) that this type of research

entails (Polsky, 1967; Ferrell and Hamm, 1998). I did not face any problems with the law, but I witnessed the problems that the rappers and many ordinary youth in Havana are facing with the police, the state security and the CDRs (Commitees for the Defence of the Revolution) (see chapters five and six).

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in conducting this research was that of physical and bodily exhaustion (ibid). Food poisoning, immense amounts of walking under the heat of the sun or during night-time, waiting up to three hours on occasions for a bus and falling ill were part of the fieldwork experience.

A rapper from Venezuela that collaborated with the guys arrived in Havana towards the end of August. He was staying for two weeks and he had brought all the necessary equipment for recording. On the second day of his visit they all transferred the recording equipment to Juan's[21] (one of the rappers) living room. The equipment comprised of a computer-laptop with a recording programme installed, a microphone that was attached by the guys to a wooden ladder and two big loudspeakers. This improvised "recording studio" was humorously named by the guys as "escalera records" (ladder records), due to the fact that they were recording on a ladder. For two weeks Antonio, Ernesto, Tafari, Alberto and Paolo together with a group of friends met at approximately 11-12 o'clock at night at José's house and then we would all go to Juan's house for the guys to record. The recordings lasted until 8 o'clock in the morning on most occasions; while the content of these night-gatherings included massive amounts of alcohol and tobacco consumption, laughter, jokes, joyful conversations, free-styling, experimenting with music backgrounds,

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[21] The name of my participant has been altered in order to ensure his confidentiality and well-being.

writing and revising lyrics, and experimenting with their flow and recording. After two week of this timetable I was feeling completely exhausted but simultaneously very excited to be witnessing this tireless will and joy for music-creation by the rappers. (Field-notes, Havana, August 2011).

As the vignette demonstrates, physical exhaustion was the main challenge when trying to keep up with the rap group activities and practices. At the same time it gave me an insight into the improvising techniques that the group used in order to record. Providing the most basic material for recording they would record everywhere given the chance. This feature also presents the post-subcultural perspective on the emancipatory value of technology to young people's lives (see chapter three). Through the use of technology the rappers are able to produce their music outside of the paternalism and restrictions of state cultural institutions (see chapter six). Thus the use of technology as an instrument of liberty cannot be differentiated from issues of power and resistance that the CCCS was focusing on. This aspect again demonstrates how theory can be generated through ethnography. In addition my attendance in recording session gave me an insight into the difficulties of recording and the process of music creation. Lastly it offered me an understanding of everyday practices of joy, laughter, free-styling and alcohol intoxication that were widely practiced by the group. These experiences made me reflect on the importance of understanding both recorded lyric discourses as well as, the embodied everyday practices of the group.

It should be stated that despite my common shared values and affective relationships of friendship with the rappers, I was not faced with the problem of "going native". In my relationships with my participants I could see both the positive and the negative aspects. As depicted earlier and will be further demonstrated in

chapter six, some of the rappers reproduced gender power relations. Moreover, going away and revisiting the field gave me the opportunity to reflect more on several issues occurring in the rap scene. Specifically the disunity between the rappers that I encountered during my third visit, made me understand that human affective relations (micro-level) are equally important to state's intervention (macro-level), in limiting the collective resistive nature of subcultures.

Through this confessional section my main aim was to highlight the value for the ethnographers to critically reflect on their personal, emotional, ideological and embodied aspects of the "self" before, during and after conducting the fieldwork (Coffey, 1999). By reflecting and illuminating these aspects an advanced insight of how ethnographies are carried out and theory constructed, is demonstrated. Simultaneously it provides an in depth understanding for the reader on how to assess the ethnographic material of the following chapters. The following section discusses the ethical issues that underpinned this research.

2.4 Ethics

Primarily, this research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Kent University. Moreover the research was supported by a chief administrator of a Cuban cultural institution. Due to the fact that this research involves human subjects, ethical awareness was essential for the whole process (David & Sutton 2004). Hence this study followed the responsibilities set by the British Society of Criminology, considering the matters that the researcher should consider and apply towards the participants of the research (BSC, 2006). Respect for my participants and protecting the privacy of any data collected, by means of anonymity or confidentiality, was one of the main moral positions that the project took into consideration (AAA, 2009). My

main priority was to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of my participants would not be negatively affected by his/hers participation in the research (BSC, 2006). It was part of the integrity of the research to take under serious consideration my obligation to ensure the confidentiality of any sensitive information that was gathered along the research process (AAA, 2009). Consequently the rights, confidentiality and privacy of the participants were respected and protected (BSC, 2006).

In terms of anonymity, the participants that wished to remain anonymous were of high priority. However the majority of my participants requested not to remain anonymous. This arguably occurred because on the one hand the rappers aim is to provoke and disseminate their message and views on Cuban social reality all around the world. Thus, what was discussed in the interviews is already printed in their lyrics, with the latter usually expressed in a more crude and challenging way. Consequently they largely saw this research as a means that would serve their cause and represent Cuba through their eyes. On the other hand, the reggaetoneros aim is to make an impact in the global music industry. Therefore the reggaetoneros saw this research as another means that would promote their music in more commercial terms. Moreover as reggaeton focuses on pleasure, fun and making people dance the interviews conducted were focussed precisely on these features and no sensitive issues were touched.

Additionally the identities of both rappers and reggaetoneros are known due to audio-visual material (documentaries, photos, video-clips and live performances), which are widely available on youtube and myspace. Thus, a description of the characters in order to set the scenes will be provided and the name of the songs and artists will be given when song lyrics are discussed, in order to avoid copyright

infringements. The photographs cited were taken with the kind permission of my participants and the permission of Wilberg Hernández Monterde. However, where samples of interviews and fieldwork extracts are used the value of anonymity is kept in order to protect my participants. Despite the fact that the majority of participants did not wish to remain anonymous, the choice of maintaining their anonymity was made under consideration of not causing any harm to them. Moreover names and places will be changed, where deemed appropriate in order to ensure that no harm will be caused to them.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. In particular, in the case of reggaeton each participant was informed about the research's purpose and objectives before the interview. Moreover Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that the continuous negotiation of consent and access is a fundamental part of participant observation. The process of consent is a dynamic and continuous one that is achieved through a constant dialogue and negotiation with the participants (AAA, 2009). Thus in the case of rap a reminder of the research's objectives was conducted before the interview. The reason for that was that the interviews were conducted during the last weeks of my fieldwork, while the informed consent was obtained during the first week of my arrival on the island. Moreover there had been cases where some rappers wanted to know more details about the research. These informal conversations led to open discussions of many topics and led me also to reflect more on social issues and circumstances occuring (such as characteristiscs of Cuban culture, class, race and gender). The following section will demonstrate the limitations that underpin this research.

2.5 Limitations

Principally, Yin (2003) argues that the valuable and detailed insights that participant observation and qualitative methods can provide in specific case studies, are limited in terms of external validity. Thus, it is difficult for the findings of a case study to be generalised beyond the immediate study (ibid). However, if we can trace post-subcultural elements in a highly political subculture such as rap, while simultaneously finding traditional CCCS elements in a highly apolitical and hedonistic culture such as reggaeton; this research, by using these specific case studies, aims to show the opportunities that exist in bridging subcultural and post-subcultural theory in a more global manner. As Higginbottom (2004) argues the genarisability in ethnographic research can be achieved in theoretical terms. Therefore, an extension of the findings of an ethnographic research can be applied in groups that are relatively similar to the original study. Typical examples of generalisability in ethnographic research with youth subcultures, would be the works of Becker (1963), Young (1971) and Willis's (1977) which are widely used in sociology and criminology as textbooks of understanding youth subcultures and the social construction of deviancy.

A source of limitation in this research is the use of translated data (Fairclough, 1999). The main reason is that linguistic problems might occur, as it is not always possible to find a precise English equivalent that can capture the exact original meaning (ibid). The best option would be for the interview texts and lyrics to be analysed in their original form and language (ibid). However, as this is not possible in the current study I will try to provide the meaning as close as possible to the original meaning of the participants' words and lyrics.

Additionally as Young (2011) argues, ethnography captures people at a specific point in time and a historical conjuncture. Ethnography is a photograph that might change or fade (ibid). The choices, practices, discourses and attitudes that ethnography catches in its photograph may change in the future. Hence in this research I would rather not give any deterministic representations of the two subcultures, as things may be changing while writing these pages. The main purpose is to provide a critical and reflexive analysis on Cuban cultural politics concerning these two subcultures during a specific period of time (2008-2012).

Furthermore, due to the limited access to the reggaeton group, I am aware that the data collected from the interviews are also limited. However, using the views of the rappers, information gathered from casual conversations and everyday experiences and attending reggaeton events, proved to be sufficient to construct and support my argument (see chapter seven). Lastly, although this research recognises the importance of race and gender in power structures and everyday interactions, it is not extensively focusing on these issues. Specifically gender is not the focus of this research. My inquiry reflected my own values and interests in exploring and understanding what is considered "revolutionary" and "counterrevolutionary" in Cuba. However, gender issues cannot be ignored as both subcultures are highly hetero-normative. Thus, some information will be provided concerning gender power relations but this is by no means a thorough investigation of gender, as this aspect goes beyond the interests of the thesis. Consequently, further research is required on that topic.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research methodology of this thesis. The first sections of the chapter illustrated the philosophical underpinnings and the methodological rationale behind applying a qualitative strategy (Guba and Lincoln 1994). In order to explore **how we understand power and resistance in the subcultures of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton**- the chosen philosophical perspectives were those of interpretivism and constructivism. The choice of an interpretivist approach encouraged the adoption of qualitative methods as the most suitable to fulfil the objectives of the research. Qualitative methods were therefore chosen to explore firstly, the multiple definitions that the common sense words revolutionary and counterrevolutionary carry and secondly, the role that the subcultures of rap and reggaeton play in contemporary Cuban cultural politics. Following a cultural criminological approach and the de-colonial perspective of border thinking, a case study strategy, participant observation, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis seemed to be the best choice for interpreting power relations and socio-cultural structures that are reflected in these two subcultures (Feagin et al, 1991).

Moreover it was illustrated that common shared values and affects proved to play a definitive role in the research process and the gathering of data. This was the principal reason why the second section of the chapter focused on the importance of ideology, embodiment of the fieldwork, sexuality and affective relationships before, during and after the fieldwork experience. By reflecting on personal, ideological and emotional aspects of conducting the fieldwork research, this chapter aimed to illuminate the background experience out of which this thesis emerged. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical approaches of the Birmingham School and post-

subculture theory in order to show that the two perspectives, despite the existing

tensions, are compatible.

Chapter Three: Bridging Subcultures to Post-Subcultures

3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introductory and methodological chapters, this thesis follows the perspective of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2000:84) which is manifested through a process of "double critique" (ibid). This chapter will explore the theoretical discussion between the CCCS and post-subculture theory, in their interpretations of youth cultural groups. Through this discussion this chapter will conduct the first internal critique to modern perspectives by postmodern approaches. This first critique will be then examined by a second one, which will be conducted *from* and *within* the colonial difference of Cuba (Mignolo, 2000). The second critique will be more explicitly demonstrated in the following chapters on Cuban underground rap and reggaeton. However some information will be provided in this chapter in order to illustrate the argument. In its entirety this thesis suggests that a bridging of the two perspectives is required in order to interpret subcultures, power and resistance not only in the case of Cuba but also on a more global scale.

Specifically, this chapter focuses on contemporary debates around the politics of youth subcultures and the way in which modern and postmodern theories interpret youth groups in terms of their culture, style, music tastes, identity formation, performances, daily practices, power and resistance. It will be argued that despite the tensions between the two perspectives (CCCS and post-subcultural theory), they are not necessarily in opposition with one another. I want to demonstrate, that a reconciliation of the CCCS with post-subcultural theory is not only possible, but a strategy to be followed when investigating subcultures in contemporary societies. I adopt Hall and Jefferson's (2006: xii) "double sidedness" perspective, which entails

"acknowledging the new without losing what may still be serviceable in the old" (ibid).

Thus, a bridging of the two perspectives (both the micro and macro analysis and the interactions between the two) is required, in order to come to a better understanding of young people's cultural formations, every day practices and their relation to power and resistance. By reconciling these two perspectives I aim to drive further subcultural theory in its interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures.

Initially this chapter discusses the CCCS's perspective on youth subcultures. It focuses mainly on the key text *Resistance through Rituals (RTR)* (1976), since it has been rendered as a benchmark against which the current post-subcultural debate is mainly situated (Muggleton, 2000; Hall and Jefferson, 2006). Thus, the main concepts of the CCCS will be highlighted and especially its interpretation of resistance in youth subcultures. Arguably, the majority of scholars of the CCCS placed emphasis upon the collective identities of white, male, heterosexual, working class youth (Griffin, 2011). Youth subcultures were seen as definite in their boundaries, consistent in their members and homogenous in terms of group identity and style (ibid). Moreover, subcultures were perceived as a response to wider structural changes and contradictions of the hegemonic culture that these youths faced in their everyday lives (ibid). Although everyday lived experience was important in the CCCS's analysis, arguably their central focus was to ground these experiences to issues such as class, structures, hegemony, ideology and politics of subcultures (Hall and Jefferson, 2006).

The second part of the chapter focuses on contemporary critiques of the Birmingham School. In particular, post-subcultural theory is preoccupied with heterogeneity, hybridity, fluidity, fragmented identity, hedonism, consumerist lifestyle choices and

apolitical sentiments of youth cultural groupings (Redhead, 1990; Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000). Although some macro elements (i.e. intersection of global with local and global cultural changes) are apparent in post-subcultural analysis, arguably its focus is placed largely on the micro level. Therefore, this perspective mainly focuses on agency, individual choice, consumerism and the meaning that subculturalists themselves attribute to their practices (Bennett, 1999, 2002; Muggleton, 2000). From this approach the notions of 'neo-tribes' (Bennett, 1999; Malbon, 1999), 'lifestyle' (Miles, 2000; Bennett, 1999), 'club-cultures' (Thornton, 1995) and 'scenes' (Straw, 2001; Bennett, 2004) have been suggested in order to replace the concept of subculture. Along with the main concepts of the post-subcultural perspective, the interpretation of power and resistance in this approach will be illustrated. Most importantly this section will serve to show that the two approaches have a different focus in their exploration of youth cultures and hence, despite tensions they are compatible.

The third part of the chapter critically assesses post-subcultural theory. This research is particularly interested in issues of power and resistance (on the interplay between micro and macro issues) and therefore on the politics of youth subcultures. Both theories have been criticised on this issue. The Birmingham School has been accused of putting too much politics in youth subcultures, whereas the post-subcultural perspective might be found equally guilty "of under-politicizing them" (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003: 14). It will be demonstrated that while the postmodern perspective offers a variety of critical insights and tools, it misses a critical examination of young people's structural, cultural and economic realities (Blackman, 2005; Hall and Jefferson; 2006). It will be argued that power in forms of exploitation and subordination still matters as well as, issues of class, gender, ethnicity,

individual choice, affects and hedonism. Hence, a bridging of the two perspectives will allow to interpret the politics of youth cultures at both the micro (everyday-unconscious, symbolic resistances) and the macro (conscious resistances and mobilisation) levels. Through this literature review, as well as, examples from the Cuban case, it will be demonstrated that a return to the notion of subcultures is feasible through a "double sidedness" perspective (Hall & Jefferson, 2006: xii).

It should be stressed at this point that by debating subcultural and post-subcultural theory, I do not aim to discredit any of the theoretical approaches presented. Rather, by demonstrating the tensions and resonances between these approaches my intention is to demonstrate that we should not consign them into antagonistic camps, as they are not necessarily in opposition. Despite the differences and the distinctive paths of each perspective, a bridging of the two is feasible and necessary in order to interpret issues of power, resistance and subcultures in contemporary societies.

3.2 Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS): Subcultural Magic, Conjectural Analysis, Resistance and Hegemony

Primarily, the dominant trend in the UK up to the 1970s was to interpret working class youth in negative terms, through a positivist and psychoanalytical model (Griffin, 2011). These approaches tended to view youth that formed delinquent subcultures as lacking intelligence (Friedlander, 1947), being deprived of maternal affection (Bowlby, 1946) and were generally described in terms of pathology and inadequate socialisation (Fergusson, 1952; Trasler, 1962). Arguably the emergence of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s was a reaction to mainstream positivist criminology and attempted to move away from pathological interpretations of youth (Carrabine et al, 2004; Ferrell et al, 2008).

Specifically, the Birmingham School merged and renovated American subcultural theory (Merton, 1938; Merton, 1949&1968; Cohen, 1955; Matza & Sykes, 1957; Matza &Sykes, 1961; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960) and labelling theory (Becker, 1963). This trend of American subcultural theory endeavoured to understand and give meaning to acts that were perceived to be irrational, meaningless and transgressive (Matza &Sykes, 1961). Hence, it attempted to investigate "how human action invokes the creative generation of meaning" (Ferrell et al, 2008: 32). Therefore, it aimed to give meaning back to deviancy by approaching subcultures, as different forms of culture that needed to be examined, understood and appreciated as such (Young, 2009; Young, 2010).

Additionally, labelling theory tried to explain how the courts, police, penal system, media and official "experts" had the power to take meaning away from deviant behaviour (Young, 2009). It aimed to explore how crime was created via the power of some groups to define behaviour as deviant and illegal (Becker, 1963; Young, 2009). Arguably, deviance for labelling theory was an issue "of power, the cultural imposition of meaning from above" (Ferrell et al, 2008: 37). As depicted in the introduction and will be further demonstrated in chapter six, the power of labels such as revolutionary and counterrevolutionary, are highly important in processes of criminalisation of youth subcultures and subsequent marginalisation of youth groups. Furthermore, labelling and subcultural theory were limited as they did not take into consideration the political, socio-historical and economic context within which specific subcultures took shape; and where, specific labels were constructed and preserved (Muncie, 2004; Ferrell et al, 2008). Thus, what occurred on the other side of the Atlantic in the late 1960s and 1970s was a synthesis of the micro analysis of

the U.S. theoretical tradition of subcultures and labelling theory, with a macro analysis of social structures (Ferrell et al, 2008; Young, 2009).

Particularly the CCCS aimed to reinvent previous traditions, fusing discourses of leisure, deviance and subterranean values[22] with structural, class-based material conditions and conflicts (Ferrell et al, 2008). Particularly the CCCS moved away from the study of youth delinquency and gangs towards the analysis of youth, style based "spectacular / heroic" subcultures in post-war Britain (Clarke et al, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). The cornerstone collective volume that emerged from the CCCS was Clarke et al (1976) "Resistance through rituals" (RTR). This volume paved the way for subsequent key works on cultural studies to be produced: Paul Willis's (1977) "Learning to Labour" and "Profane Culture" (1978), McRobbie's (1978) "Working class girls and the culture of femininity" and "Setting accounts with subcultures: a feminist critique" (1980), Hebdige's (1979) "Subculture: the meaning of style" and Hall et al (1978) "Policing the Crisis", among others.

Arguably, the CCCS was forged through a contestation of debates and ideas, although few of these disputes came to be published in texts (i.e. McRobbie & Garber, 1976; Powell & Clarke, 1976; McRobbie, 1980; Clarke, G. 1982). However, the diverse and even oppositional body of work produced by the CCCS came to be constituted as a uniform "intellectual hegemony" and even orthodoxy within cultural studies (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003; Griffin, 2011). As a result, especially the

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[22] According to Matza & Sykes (1961) subterranean values are embedded in the leisure values of society, which simultaneously oppose and coexist with the dominant work values and morality. The most prominent subterranean values are: hedonism, spontaneity, individual expression, autonomy, taking risks, tasting new experiences, breaking limits, contempt towards the value of work and the perception of violence as a problem solver (Young, 1971).

RTR[23] project has been rendered as a touchstone against which to outline and analyse contemporary developments of what has been termed as the "post-subcultural turn" (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003). Therefore it is important to mention the essential elements in CCCS's theory in order to be able to understand and assess the criticisms posed by post-subculture theory.

Principally, the CCCS was not a homogenous school of thought (Jenks, 2005). Implicit though was a common ground of politically informed theoretical frameworks (stemming from Marx, Althusser and Gramsci), which gave a sense of coherence to the collective works that emerged (Griffin, 1011). The CCCS in its attempt to capture the lived experience of being a subcultural member, the meaning of subcultural style and the formation of subcultures, used a variety of methodological approaches (ethnographic forms of research, semiotic analysis) and an inter-disciplinary "mix" of theoretical approaches such as: the Gramscian notion of hegemony, Barthes and Levi-Strauss's bricolage, Althusser's "relative autonomy", Marx, Durkheim, Mauss, Weber and the German *verstehen* tradition, along with subcultural and labelling theory (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). As a result the CCCS was interested in everyday lived experiences of subcultural groups and aimed to ground these experiences to macro-structural changes (ibid). Moreover, the RTR was self-reflective and it cautioned the readers on the limitations of an ideological approach on subcultures (Blackman, 2004). Hence it endeavoured to indicate a (by no means absolute) theoretical and methodological approach on how to interpret youth subcultures (Clarke et al, 1976).

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[23] As well as Hebdige's "Subculture the meaning of Style" and Willis's "Profane Culture".

In detail, the CCCS was interested in understanding the relation of youth subcultures (teds, mods, rockers, bikers, punks and skinheads, black Rude-boys and Rastafarians) to their class culture, and the way in which "cultural hegemony is maintained, structurally and symbolically" (Clarke et al. 1976: 5). The dominant discourse of the post-war period on affluence, embourgeoisement and consensus celebrated the disappearance of class[24] (Clarke et al, 1976). A major urge for the RTR was "the *stubborn refusal of class* [...] to *disappear* as a major dimension and dynamic of the social structure" (Clarke et al, 1976: 25 stress in original). For Clarke et al (1976:41) "class conflict never disappears", as hegemony can never fully incorporate the working class into the dominant social order. Class conflict (more or less openly) takes place into the realm of culture through a network of institutions (ibid). These institutions structure, how the hegemonic and subordinate cultures negotiate, "coexist, survive, but also struggle, with one another inside the same social formation" (ibid). This approach, as will be demonstrated in chapter 6 is highly important in order to understand issues of power and resistance, as in Cuba anything related to arts and culture is run through state's institutions.

The RTR used a class conflict model that approached youth subcultures as a working-class phenomenon, which stemmed from the experience of collective feelings of subordination (Blackman, 2005). Working class youth cultures, their music, style and "rituals", appeared to construct a "collective response to the material and situated experience of their class" (Clarke et al, 1976:47). Similar to Cohen (see 1972), they argued that youth subcultures do not actually change or solve fundamental structural and material realities (ibid). Rather they offer "magical

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[24] Arguably, as will be demonstrated later on, this celebrated disappearance of class is apparent in post-subculture theory.

solutions" to their problems through innovative styles, leisure and the specific subcultural construction of self-identity (ibid). This "imaginary solution", was seen as resistance that sometimes consciously (in counter-cultures) and sometimes unconsciously (in subcultures), negates or counters the subordination and ideological contradictions faced in youths' everyday experiences (ibid). Therefore, "heroic" working-class subcultures were viewed to be engaged in "semiotic guerrilla warfare" (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003: 4). They were a site of resistance and symbolic politics to specific cultural and class experiences (Blackman, 2004). Hence the CCCS explored the cultural and political significance of subcultural style, popular culture and music to the hegemonic culture (Griffin, 2011). Consequently ideology, class relations, power and resistance were of high importance to the interpretation of subcultures by the CCCS. Subsequently the CCCS's approach highly politicised youth subcultures. This approach became a basis for subsequent critique.

Additionally, following Gramsci and Althusser, the RTR argued that it is vital to interpret youth subcultures in the historical conjuncture within which they occur (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). The main aim of the RTR was to empirically "ground" everyday lived experiences of subcultures in relation to their historical, socio-cultural, economic and political changes of their respective time (ibid). Therefore, the CCCS project aspired to make the connections "between lived experience and structural realities" (Hall & Jefferson, 2006: xiv). Subsequently, subcultures were linked with how significant historic changes are experienced by ordinary people (namely working-class, male, heterosexual, youth). Subcultures, were seen thus as a product of such changes, as well as, a forerunner of strong future changes (ibid). Arguably then, the CCCS attempted to understand subcultures, power and resistance in both micro to macro levels within a specific historical conjuncture. Typical examples of the

micro analysis of everyday experience of subcultures by the CCCS would be "The meaning of Mod" by Hebdige (1976) and "Doing Nothing" by Corrigan (1976).

In summary the main concepts used by the CCCS were:

- *Style*: stemming from Barthes subcultural style was viewed as decodable "text to be read" (Ferrell et al, 2008: 46) and a collective force of human creativity. Through a complex semiotic analysis they aimed to reveal the hidden meanings of subcultural practices (Blackman, 2004). Nevertheless, Hebdige (1979) stresses the elusive, polysemic and transformative nature of meaning in style. Subsequently he argued that we cannot have a fixed meaning of subcultural style, since the subcultural 'text' creates an infinite spectrum of meanings (Hebdige, 1979). Style was also important for Clarke et al (1976) in terms of labelling and social control imposed over subcultural groups. In their perspective style and the subsequent distinctive visibility of subcultures, had negative consequences on the stereotyping, labelling, criminalisation and stigmatisation of these groups, by moral entrepreneurs, powerful groups and the prevailing culture of the hegemonic social order (Clarke et al, 1976)[25]. This approach will be of high value in the interpretation of Cuban rap and reggaeton's resistance.

- *Bricolage*: was used to explain how specific objects are symbolically appropriated by subcultures (ibid). Objects are used within subcultures in a way that transforms and challenges their original meaning. Hence objects are attached with a new value and meaning, different that used by the hegemonic

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[25] This approach was mainly elaborated in Policing the Crisis (1978).

culture. The aim of these practices is to make a statement and cope with working class economic conditions (Clarke et al, 1976; Hebdige, 1979)

- *Homology*: was used to highlight how the internal structure of subcultures was defined by order, despite the dominant perceptions of subcultures as lawless (Willis, 1978). Specifically it demonstrated how different elements of style and subversive practices conjoined into a meaningful unifying whole and a signifier of subcultural collective identity (Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1979). As implied in the first part of the introduction both rap and reggaeton subcultural groups forge collective identities. For the rap group the collective identities are forged through affective relationships of friendship, love for their art and shared values of freedom of expression, thought and action. For the reggaeton group the collective identities are forged through affective relationships of friendship, love for music and commercial values (see chapters six and seven).

- Elaborating on Althusser, subcultures were seen as a site of space, which holds the potential to transform, provoke, create, negotiate or win *relative autonomy* and self-fulfilment (Clarke et al, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; Blackman, 2004). Through the formation of subcultures, working-class youth created new forms of solidarity in an attempt to retrieve some of the cohesive features of the parent culture and community (Cohen, 1972). Hence subcultures were regarded as a means of winning space and simultaneously a form of collective defiance to power structures (Hodkinson, 2007). This approach will be again of high value in interpreting rap and reggaeton.

- *Resistance*: Arguably the notion of resistance was interpreted in two main ways within the CCCS.

  1. Resistance through *appropriation* (bricolage) (Raby, 2005): stemming from Gramsci subcultures were seen as a site of resistance to hegemony. This was manifested indirectly, "symbolically" through subcultural styles and rituals. Resistance took shape at the level of signs, which needed to be decoded in order to understand how meaning was performed, articulated and constructed inside subcultures (Hebdige, 1979). Hence, style was interpreted as an unconscious form of political expression.

  2. Resistance as *deviance* (Raby, 2005): Arguably Willis's (1977) "Learning to Labour" is the most representative example. Willis examines how "working-class lads" within the school context subvert middle-class values, expectations and standards (obedience to authority and social mobility through academic qualifications). The lads developed a counter-culture where symbolic and physical violence, sexism, racism, disobedience, rejection of intellectual success, masculine self-presentation, search for excitement, "having a laugh" and elevation of solidarity rather than social mobility were some of its main characteristics. However, Willis argues that these resistive practices should not be romanticised. As, while the lads momentarily oppose the institution's power to integrate them into the middle-class, yet their subcultural creativity aids the reproduction of hegemonic power relations (Raby, 2005). Their creative and deviant culture is, in that sense, the key element that aids to their willed subordination and their further exploitation by the capitalist system (Downes & Rock, 2007; Ferrell et al, 2008). Hence, the

system and the dominant culture won, despite the fact that "certain autonomy at the cultural level was salvaged" (Downes & Rock, 2007: 142)

- *Hegemony* as power: stemming from Gramsci hegemony is an ongoing process that is constituted through conflict, negotiations and resistances within the civil society. Thus, subcultures were interpreted as a site of negotiation and dialogue between forces of resistance and incorporation/ commodification (Habdige, 1979). The latter occurs in two ways. Specifically spectacular subcultures usually cause a wave of moral panics in the media, which leads on the one hand, to harsher measures of social control, labelling and marginalisation of the subcultural group (ideological form of incorporation to the system); and, on the other hand, to the commodification of subcultural style such as dress, language, use of symbols and music into mass-produced and mass-consumed objects (the commodity form of incorporation to the system) (Hebdige, 1979). In the second form of incorporation the "authentic" meaning that is produced by the subculture is diffused and corrupted within popular culture (ibid). Hence, the CCCS used a binary approach between authentic/underground subcultures and mainstream/popular/commercial youth cultures, which later became a subject of critique.

Furthermore, it should be stated that Clarke et al (1976) differentiated between working-class subcultures and middle-class countercultures. Particularly:

Working-class subcultures are clearly articulated, collective structures [...] Middle-class counter-cultures are diffuse, less group-centred, more individualised. The latter precipitate, typically, not tight sub-cultures but a diffuse counter-culture *milieu* (Clarke et al, 1976: 60 stress in original).

From this perspective, while working-class subcultures are definite in their boundaries, consistent in their members and homogenous in terms of group identity and style, middle-class counter-cultures are more diffused, flux, heterogeneous, fragmented and individualised. This detail will be of high importance when addressing post-subcultural critiques.

Additionally, counter-cultures express a *crisis* of hegemony in their respective time and geographical context (Clarke et al, 1976). The RTR spoke of countercultures in order to describe practices that express conscious, counter-ideologies concerning the way that social relationships, institutions, social order and social structure should be shaped, organised and upheld (ibid). Therefore, counter-cultures "take a more overtly ideological and **political** form" (Clarke et al, 1976: 61 stress in original) through active mobilisation. Similarly to working class subcultures they owe their existence to the very same dominant values of their parent and hegemonic culture that they resist (Clark et al, 1976). They too in the end reproduce "the position of the 'parent' classes to which they belong" (Clarke et al, 1976: 60). Hence, counter-cultures run the danger of their counter-hegemonic potentials to be incorporated, during their evolvement, into the hegemonic culture (ibid). This interpretation of counter-cultures will be proven to be of high value in understanding Cuban rap's resistance.

Arguably then, the CCCS was interested in exploring and connecting lived experiences of subcultures to structural realities (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Hence their main focus was to ground micro-everyday reality of subcultures to macro-structural realities and changes (class, economic structures, hegemony, ideology and politics of subcultures). It is important hence to discuss the post-subcultural approach to

youth cultures, in order to demonstrate latter, that the two perspectives are not necessarily in opposition and that a bridging can be achieved.

3.3 Emergent Criticism to the CCCS: The Post-subcultural Turn

From the early 1980s an extended body of criticism emerged against what was termed as the CCCS's "orthodoxy" (Griffin, 2011). The most recent development of this criticism is what has been termed as "post-subcultural" approach (Muggleton, 2000; Muggletton & Weinzerl, 2003). In the post-subcultural responses to the CCCS there has been a shift away from structural approaches, as well as a dismissal of the use of the term 'subculture' (Bennett, 1999; Muggletton, 2000; Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004). It should be stressed that the first criticisms on the notion of subculture came from within the realms of the CCCS (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). In particular Willis (1972: xlv-xlvi) was critical of the notion of subculture as a subordinate form of youth culture to the hegemonic social order. He argued:

> There has not been a vigorous analysis of the status of the culture a subculture
> is supposed to be 'sub' to. The notion implies a relative positioning which
> seems to give an altogether misleading sense of absoluteness and dominance
> of the main culture.

This was the reason why Willis preferred the use of counter-cultures rather than the term subcultures (Blackman, 2005). Moreover, another internal critique stemmed from Gary Clarke ([1982] 2005: 170), who stressed that subcultures are flux and diffused in their boundaries, not only in terms of membership but also in relation to the popular and consumer culture.

Particularly, post-subculture theory emerged from the currents of postmodernism and is largely preoccupied with the *micro levels* of politics in everyday life (Muggleton, 2000; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003). Although some macro elements (i.e. intersection of global with local and subsequent macro-cultural changes) are apparent in post-subcultural analysis; this perspective tends to focus on local creativity and localised struggles in everyday life, outside the holistic and total narratives of Marxism (Muggleton, 2000). This tendency, however, is associated with a rejection of macro-level structural analysis, in many cases (Blackman, 2005). According to post-subculturalists previous factors of security and cohesion such as religion, place, class, nuclear family have declined in significance "leaving individual biographies increasingly unpredictable and subject to changing tastes, circumstances and choices" (Hodkinson, 2007:8). Emphasis then is placed upon heterogeneity, hybridity, classlessness, the search for pleasure, fragmented identity and style, self-fulfilment through consumption and fashion, and apolitical sentiments of subcultures (Redhead, 1990; Thronton, 1995; Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000).

Under the post-subcultural perspective, the CCCS has been criticised for its methodological and theoretical tools (mainly its Marxist orientation and the use of semiotics and phenomenology in the interpretation of subcultures) (Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 2000). Specifically Redhead (1990: 25) argued, that "subcultures were produced by subcultural theorists not the other way around". Hence, according to post-subculture theory the CCCS did not privilege the subjective meanings of the social actors, which could illuminate the motivations of their actions, political or not (Muggleton, 2000; Williams, 2007). As Muggleton (2000:12) argues, the CCCS "imposed a holistic framework upon the phenomenon [of subcultures] with the 'answer' known in advance". Therefore despite the fact that the CCCS placed

emphasis on ethnographic methods of research, the majority of the works produced did not use an ethnographic methodology [apart from Willis (1977)] (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Thus ethnographic evidence on how subcultures emerged and how youths were recruited and transformed is absent in the CCCS's approach (Hodkinson, 2007). Consequently, the main criticism attributed to the Birmingham School was that it did not wonder "how the subculture is actually lived by its bearers" (Cohen, 1980: xviii).

Largely, the post-subcultural turn coincided with the emergence of rave and party scenes in the late 1980s, which developed into a wide global phenomenon (Redhaed, 1990; Malbon, 1999). More specifically, rave and club-cultures bore little resemblance to the clearly demarcated in terms of class, race, gender, age subcultural groups, of the CCCS's analysis (Griffin, 2011). These late-modern youth cultures were characterised by plurality, individualism, hedonism, fragmentation, floating/flux memberships, alleviated sensibility and heterogeneity (Muggleton, 2000), "in which styles, tastes and clienteles [were] loosely combined, overlapped and proliferated" (Hall & Jefferson, 2006: xxix).

Moreover, youth cultures were increasingly commercialised and integrated into the new cultural and music industries (proliferation of media, emergent technologies, commercialised leisure, and a rise of youth consumer market) (Hall & Jefferson, 2006; Griffin, 2011). Corresponding to this, post-subcultural theorists note that the ascertained oppositional nature of CCCS's subcultures fails to recognise the involvement of these groups in capitalist economic processes (Weinzierl & Muggleton 2003). Hence the Birmingham School neglected how "commodity-oriented subcultures […were] living out consumerist ambitions since their very

beginning" (Weinzierl & Muggleton 2003:8). This approach will be of high value in order to interpret the meaning of the highly consumer driven subculture of reggaeton.

Under this perspective it has been argued that the notion of subculture is no longer adequate to respond to the new conditions of high pluralism, heterogeneity, individualism and hybridity of identities, which characterise the current state of late modern societies (Redhead, 1990; Thornton, 1995; Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000). For post-subculturalists the term subculture homogenises youth practices, local variations and simplifies the complex relationship between cultural production and consumption (Thornton, 1995; Bennett, 1999; Muggletton, 2000). As Muggleton & Weinzierl (2003) stress, the clear delineation between the "authentic" subculture and hegemonic/mainstream culture has led the CCCS to neglect the osmotic processes occurring in social groups through time and space. Therefore the dichotomy between authentic, underground and commercial is in many ways erased in post-subculture theory (Redhead, 1990; Thornton, 1995; Muggleton, 2000).

Particularly, Thornton (1995) argued that despite the fact that the dichotomy between underground and commercial play an important role in the construction of identity, they are unlikely to be useful analytical tools in academic analysis, as these terms do not express any real differences (Thornton, 1995). In this perspective the media, along with capitalist processes of commerce, play an instrumental role in both defusing and diffusing subcultures (Muggleton and Weinzerl, 2003). Hence, the role of the media in post-subculture theory is seen as an initiator of youth cultures, which legitimates their authenticity, radicalisation and difference (Thornton, 1995). It is argued thus, that the CCCS's approach on the media as reactionary (construction of moral panics) and manipulative of peoples' perceptions as well as, the interpretation of youth subcultures as innovative and authentic expressions of symbolic resistance,

was over-simplified (Thornton, 1995; Muncie, 2004). For Thornton the various forms of media (flyers, music and youth magazines, sensationalising tabloids) actually serve for diverse and diffused youth cultures to become coherent, distinct and recognizable subcultures; "effectively emphasizing their rebellious status and prolonging their existence" ((Muggleton and Weinzerl, 2003:8). In other words, she argued that the media formed an essential part in subcultural resistance, since it had an active role in the formation of subcultural identity, practices and longevity (Thornton, 1995).

Similarly, Steve Redhead drawing on Baudrillard, used the dance rave scene in order to apply a "postmodern critique of the CCCS's work" (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004: 11). He argued that due to the saturation of media technology and cultural music industries contemporary youth do not have the same attachment to a particular place as previous generations (Redhead, 1990). Hence, he rendered it problematic to view music as a particular expression of a specific subcultural community (ibid). Therefore, he criticises the notion of homology used by the CCCS, since postmodern subcultures are "free-floating [...] with no (real) referent at that moment of historical time" (Redhead, 1993: 17). He stresses hence, the differentiation of individual choice and experience, as well as the non-significance of historical conjunctures.

Specifically, according to Redhead (1993: 23), there are no "authentic subcultures" and the macro, social structure model is too deterministic and no longer adequate to explore and analyse "the surfaces of (post) modern culture, a culture characterized by depthlessness, flatness and 'hyperreality'". Consequently, he suggests that we should move away from the CCCS's clear, conventional, binary distinctions that classified subcultures in 'authentic and synthetic', 'underground and commercial',

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'high and low', 'true and false' and instead should focus on how the global interacts with the local (Redhead, 1990). Thus, in how world music influences, affects and intersects with local music, mobilising and creating in that way a number of complex and diverse youth cultures (Longhurst et al, 2008). This perspective will be of high importance in the interpretation of Cuban rap and reggaeton. However it will be demonstrated that the intersection of the global with the local, cannot be differentiated from structural changes and politics in the case of Cuba.

Moreover, "part-timers" in subcultures were either excluded in the CCCS's analysis or dismissed as being corrupted by the culture industry (Hodkinson, 2007). Thus the tendency to view subcultures as fixed cultural boundaries between youth groups sought to disregard the variation of styles within the same subculture (Muggleton, 2000; Hodkinson, 2007). Additionally, the CCCS seemed to neglect the level of commitment of individuals in the subculture; hence how much the members drifted in and out of subcultures (Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000). Furthermore, Muggleton, following the premise of giving priority to the "subjective meanings of subculturalists", asserts Redhead's and Baudrillard's approach and gives emphasis to the "surface qualities of the spectacle at the expense of any underlying ideologies" (Muggleton, 2000: 49).

As Blackman argues (2005: 11), the "emphasis on 'surface qualities' and diverse affiliation is suggested to give priority to subjective meaning allowing individuals agency". Thus, by stressing the individualistic nature of contemporary subcultures Muggleton (2000:49) argues that these youth groups "are just another form of depoliticized play in the post modern pleusuredome". Subcultures are no longer centred on class, gender, ideology and ethnicity. Rather they articulate through self-

authentication and individual choice (Muggleton, 2000). Hence ideology, historical conjunctures and class are no longer important, according to the post-subcultural approach (Redhead, 1993; Muggleton 2000).

From this perspective, one of the most significant criticisms to the CCCS is that it placed class at the centre of its analysis (Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000). By giving primacy to class over issues of gender, sexuality and race, the CCCS neglected the potential impact of these factors to various sets of youths' social relations (Griffin, 2011). Race was mainly considered in terms of black youth's influence to white subcultures (Hebdige, 1976), as targets of racist violence or as subjects of moral panics in the media (Hall et al, 1978). By focusing mainly on working-class, white, heterosexual males it was difficult to differentiate potentially 'resistant' facets of their cultures "from their sexist, racist and/or heterosexist elements" (Griffin, 2011:247). However, it should be noted that these criticisms were set out from the beginning within the realms of the CCCS (McRobbie & Garber, 1976; Powell & Clarke, 1976). McRobbie and Garber (1976), within the RTR project, had argued that the CCCS, by focusing mainly on outdoor 'spectacular' male subcultures, largely excluded female youth cultures that were taking place in the more mundane space of young female bedrooms.

Additionally, Melechi (1993) and Rietveld (1993, 1998) looking at the rave scene in the late 1980s and 1990s, talk about the "subcultural disappearance", stressing the importance of the body and hedonism. They adopt Baudrillard's notions on depthlessness of the "tourist gaze" (Melechi, 1993:31), where "the concept of the self has been untied [the self is lost], losing its socially constructed identity like some unnecessary luggage" (Rietveld, 1998: 196). From this perspective, subcultural

practices "surrender in a complete void of meaning" (Rietveld, 19993: 65) and are perceived as means for young people to "implode with the pure joy of individualistic consumerism" (Blackman, 2005: 10). In the rave scene everything is centred on "the ecstasy of disappearance" (Melechi, 1993:32), the disappearance of identity through pleasures of loss, abandonment, liberation, escapism, selflessness and oblivion through dancing (Melechi, 1993; Rietveld, 1993). Subcultural "disappearance" is perceived as a form of temporary resistance, which is based only at the individual level (Melechi, 1993). Resistance then is fused within hedonism, sexuality, intoxication, dance, the body and music, where the only sign of overt resistance is the "right to party" (Rietveld, 1993:69). It will be shown that this perspective is of high value in the interpretation of reggaeton's momentary and hedonistic resistance. Simultaneously though it will be demonstrated that the highly apolitical, "symbolic", and hedonist form of resistance that reggaeton expresses cannot be differentiated from structural issues occurring on the island.

Arguably post-subculturalists counter the linear approach to power as a force from above and subcultural resistance as a force from below which opposes it (Raby, 2005). More explicitly, they argue that the CCCS presented subcultures as passive puppets of history and structures, with their lives being moulded by grand narratives beyond their control and consciousness (Muggleton, 2000; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003). Hence, resistance in post-subcultural analysis is not "always driven by material forces" (Raby, 2005: 162). Therefore, power is interpreted in more Foucauldian terms, as a perpetual and multi-directional flow of forces within social relations (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). Hence, agency and resistance are fragmented, fluid, contradictory and constructed within local and individual activities (Raby, 2005). Moreover they stress the importance of the body, affects, pleasures, desires and

emotions in the formation of subcultural groups (Redhead, 1993; Melechi, 1993; Maffessoli, 1996; Bloustien, 2003). Such accounts, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, are very valuable but fail to interpret more organised, collective and conscious forms of resistance as well as, to identify the origins of such resistance (Raby, 2005). Hence this thesis suggests a bridging of modern and postmodern perspectives in order to interpret and understand the impact of both conscious and unconscious forms of resistance (see chapter four).

Additionally, Marchant (2003) challenges the CCCS within its structural premises, arguing that the Birmingham School did not enter into a discussion of how subcultures can become counter-cultures. Hence, how they can surpass the largely unconscious symbolic resistance within the cultural realm (micro-political level of resistance through deviance and style) and evolve into more overtly conscious actions of resistance (i.e. protest and mobilisation) at the macro-political level (ibid). As will be demonstrated post-subculture theory also fails to address this issue. However it will be illustrated that this post-modern critique is of high value in order to understand how power functions in Cuba. Specifically it will be shown that the main efforts of Cuban cultural institutions, is to assure that subcultural resistance remains in the cultural realm and does not transcend into the political sphere.

Arguably, the postmodern theorisation on youth cultures could be summarised as such:

> For postmodernists, subcultures react imaginatively through consumption and identity to construct creative meanings that can be liberating from subordination. Postmodern subcultural theory seeks to move away from models of social constraint and places greater emphasis on agency in the search for

individual meaning in subcultural practice. The postmodern milieu of spatiality and cultural pessimism valorises locality and the power of individuals in subcultures to imaginatively reappropriate global commodities for emancipation (Blackman, 2005: 8)

Moreover, post-subculturalists suggest the terms neo-tribes, scenes and lifestyle as more adequate to reflect the fluidity and plurality of youth cultures (Redhead, 1993; Thornton, 1995; Bennett, 1999). It is important hence to mention the meaning of these concepts in order to demonstrate that, despite the tensions, post-subcultural theory is not necessarily in opposition to the CCCS.

3.3.1 Neo-tribes, Scenes and Lifestyle: Assessing Post-subcultural Theory

The work of Michel Maffesoli (1996) on neo-tribalism and neo- tribes, has been highly influential, as the concept of neo-tribes constitutes one of the most prevailing terms for substituting the term subculture (Bennett, 1999; Malbon, 1999). The term neo-tribe is used to describe the fluidity and mobility in the construction of identities within late modern "sociality" (Bennett, 1999:599). Specifically, according to Maffesoli (1996: 11, 76, 96) within the conditions of postmodernity, freedoms of choice and consumer practices highly intersect with the construction of neo-tribal identities. This fact renders the group's attachment very ephemeral, fluid and partial (Hodkinson, 2002). Thus individuals constantly move and shift between different spots of collective expressions and hence, 'reconstruct' themselves accordingly (Bennett, 1999: 606).

From this viewpoint individuals do not place their community as priority "but use the group to satisfy their individual needs" (Muggleton & Weinzerl, 2003: 12). Hence group identities, according to Maffesoli (1996) are no longer forged around traditional

structural factors like class, gender and race. Rather consumption, lifestyle, individual choice and individualism are the key determinants in identity formation and the creation of 'new' forms of sociality (Muggleton & Weinzerl, 2003; Blackman, 2005). Subsequently, neo-tribes are affective communities, which attain pleasure through hybrid consumption and are able to participate "simultaneously in the activities of two or more such network socialities" (Muggleton & Weinzerl, 2003: 12). As a result, Bennett (1999) suggests that the concept of neo-tribes is more adequate than that of subcultures, to describe the pluralistic, heterogeneous, dynamic and temporal nature of youth identities in contemporary mass-consumer society. However, Bennett is at pains to explain Maffesoli's reference to counter-cultures "a stable, coherent cultural entity" (Bennett, 1999: 606).

It could be argued that Bennett neglects that Maffesoli preserves the structural power of class as influential (however, renders it less important in the everyday life and social interaction) (Shileds, 1996). Moreover Maffesoli sees politics in neo-tribes. Specifically he argued that neo-tribes are a way of re-appropriating one's existence, an "explosion of life, even and especially if this life is exploited and dominated" (Maffesoli, 1996: 51). Hence, neo-tribes in Maffesoli's view are not reduced to a "narcissistic individualism" (Blackman, 2005), but rather they can challenge forms of oppression and domination. Arguably then, Maffesoli's approach asserts some of the principles of the CCCS, while simultaneously advancing it in new ways. However, the collective and resistive nature of neo-tribes is down-played by post-subcultural theory, in order to stress their distinction from the CCCS and to prioritise individualism (Blackman, 2005).

Similarly, despite the fact that Muggleton (2000) embraces the view of the end of subcultures, he acknowledges that contemporary post-subcultures demonstrated

some aspects of commitment and a sense of belonging to a particular group (homology/collective identities). More explicitly:

Yet there is no evidence here of some or the more excessive postmodern claims. Informants did not rapidly discard a whole series of discrete styles. Nor did they regard themselves as an ironic parody, celebrating their own lack of authenticity and the superficiality of an image saturated culture. On the contrary, attitudes were held to be more important than style, while appearance transformation was anchored in a gradually evolving sense of self. Subcultural sensibilities were, in other words, informed by a combination of a modernist depth model of reality and a postmodern emphasis on hybridity and diversity (Muggleton, 2000:158).

In other words he affirms some of the aspects of the CCCS's approach, as well as, advancing it in new ways (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Moreover, similarly to the notion of neo-tribes the concept of "lifestyle" is suggested to replace the term subculture (Bennett, 1999; Miles, 2000). The concept is regarded to give a better understanding of "how individual identities are constructed and lived out" (Bennett, 1999:607). Specifically lifestyle is perceived to be a "freely chosen game" (ibid) of employing global commodities and patterns of consumption into local settings (Blackman, 2005). Within the local settings these commodities are transformed and given new forms of meaning and authenticity (Bennett, 2000). Bennett (1999:608) stresses the emancipatory power of commodity in local and global interactions by arguing:

A fully developed mass society liberates rather than oppresses individuals by offering avenues for individual expression through a range of commodities and

resources which can be worked into particular lifestyle *sites* and *strategies* (stress in original).

Arguably Bennett's approach resembles the CCCS's notion of bricolage, but drives it further by stressing the cultural flows of commodities between global and local settings (see also Blackman, 2004). It will be illustrated in the chapters on Cuban rap and reggaeton that the consumption and use of new means of technology in independent recordings has provided a realm of freedom for these artists (see also chapter two). However the power of technological commodities runs in parallel with structural issues, power and resistance.

Lastly the concept of "scene" (Straw, 1991; Bennett, 2004) has also been suggested to replace the term subculture. The term is used to signify "the clustering of musicians and/or fans around particular focal points, whether these are related to local identity or musical genre" (Hodkinson, 2007:10). Hence scenes, like lifestyle are simultaneously local and global/ trans-local phenomena (Straw, 1991). Scenes are too, fluid; encompassing a diverse range of sensibilities and practices in a way that subcultures cannot (Bennett, 2004). Class, genre and ethnicity, although important, do not seem to restrict scene participants in a significant way (Straw, 1991). Arguably the scene "seems able to evoke both the cozy intimacy of community and the fluid cosmopolitanism of urban life" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 30). Therefore, the term has been used in various different ways in explaining isolated musicians, local and global music communities and occasional fans (Hodkinson, 2007). As with the previous concepts and perspectives it celebrates inclusiveness, individualism, consumerism, fluidity and fragmentation of identities.

After providing this literature review on subcultural and post-subcultural theory, it could be argued that both theories have micro and macro elements; however there is a different focus between these perspectives. As demonstrated, the CCCS was interested in exploring what particular "ways of life" meant within a specific historical and geographical conjuncture (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Thus they were interested in the political significance of subcultures and their everyday practices, as well the interconnections between culture and power (Griffin, 2011). Post-subcultural theory focuses on technological advancements, plurality, fluidity, individualism and heterogeneity in contemporary societies, global and local interactions and everyday lived experiences of subcultures. Specifically, Thornton (1995) focuses on the "social processes that produce and deploy subcultural value" (Hall & Jefferson, 2006: xx). Redhead (1990, 1993), Melechi (19993) and Rietveld (1993) are interested in how it feels to be part of the rave scene, as well as processes of cultural diffusion and interconnection of global and local music genres. Muggleton (2000) and Bennett (1999) focus on issues of widespread tastes of "musical and stylistic sensibilities" (Bennett, 1999: 599) on fluidity, individualism, fragmentation and hybridity of identities. Consequently there is not necessarily an opposition between the two approaches as they focus on different aspects in their interpretation of youth subcultures.

As implied in this section, post-subcultural theory, due to the different focus from the CCCS, advances rather than opposes the Birmingham School's perspective. Additionally Muggleton & Weinzerl (2003) and Bennett (2011) have explicitly argued that post-subcultural theory by no means aimed to displace CCCS's theory. Also it could be argued that post-subculture theory, similarly to the CCCS project, is also fragmented and interdisciplinary with approaches ranging from an explicit rejection of

the CCCS, to perspectives more sympathetic to the Birmingham School. The volume by Muggleton & Weinzerl (2003) would be a representative example of that fragmentation. Hence, in the following part of the chapter I will critically assess further post-subculture theory in order to demonstrate that the two perspectives, despite the tensions between them, are not necessarily in opposition with one another. Therefore a bridging is suggested to be followed not only in the specific case of Cuba but also on a more global level.

3.4 Critically Assessing Post-subculture Theory: A Return to Subcultures with a "Double Sidedness" Perspective?

Postmodern subcultural theory has been very valuable in "unfixing fixities, breaching boundaries and collapsing categories" (Hall &Jefferson, 2006: xx), as well as, acknowledging the multiplicity and flexibility of subjectivities (Muncie, 1998). However, according to Hall & Jefferson (2006: xx) what they miss is: where do all these things come from? Why did they occur at this specific point in time? "[H]ow and why they arise, and to what wider social and cultural processes they are related"? Hence, due to the tendency of post-subculture theory to celebrate individual choice, surface appearances, self-authentication and liberation from previous restricting factors such as class, gender and ethnicity, it highly neglects a critical reflection to more macro-structural issues that are taking place (Blackman, 2004). Consequently this research suggests that a bridging of post-subculture theorisation to the CCCS's macro-structural approach is required in order to come to a better understanding of subcultures, power and resistance.

Particularly, post-subculture theory does not engage into evaluating what type of Marxism influenced the CCCS (in particularly Gramsci's theory) (Blackman, 2004). This fact (as will be demonstrated in chapter four) will prove to be of high

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importance. It will be shown that there are elements in Gramsci's theory that are still useful in our interpretation of power and resistance. Moreover, it will be illustrated that Gramsci's perspective is compatible to postmodern perspectives concerning these two notions. Additionally, the postmodern reluctance to incorporate within its theorisation issues of class and structure, under-emphasises or devalues the importance of marginalisation, inequalities of power and social divisions, that still play an important role in peoples' lives and the construction of their identities (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). Thus it fails to recognise that consumer goods are not equally available to all (see Bennett, 2005). As Griffin (2011:255) argues the emphasis and celebration of "consuming yourself into being" within neo-liberalism places a significant strain on lower-class youth to access the 'right' and 'cool' stuff, due to their economic conditions and processes of social exclusion (see also Young, 1999). Thus post-subculture theory "fails to give voice to different young people's experiences of marginality" (Blackman, 2004: 120).

Arguably, post-subculture theory does not take into consideration how individual choice is also affected by structures, material conditions and institutions (Blackman, 2004). Thus as Shildrick & MacDonald (2006) argue, some post-subculture theorists have discarded the CCCS's approach, without considering that this earlier intellectual work continues to offer a critical insight and understanding of social and power relations. Subsequently, post-subcultural theory remains highly descriptive rather than critical and analytical on what wider structural, cultural and political processes are articulated in the formation of youth cultures (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). This chapter suggests that we should combine both descriptive and critical elements in our interpretation of subcultures, power and resistance.

As Blackman (2004) argues, the weakness of post-subculture theory to engage into a more critical understanding of youth cultures derives from the ideology of postmodernism. Specifically the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and globalisation processes have led to a denial of grand narratives such as Marxism within postmodernism (Sarup, 1993). According to Muncie (1998) the decline of Marxism is perceived to be the turning point of the crisis of critical thinking within social sciences (Muncie, 1998). Therefore the current criticism against what has been termed as the CCCS's 'orthodoxy' reflects ideological conflicts between post-subcultural theory (postmodernism) and the Birmingham School (Marxism) (ibid). As Jameson (1984: 53) states, postmodernism constitutes the "cultural logic of late capitalism".

In particular, the postmodern focus on surface and not depth, its emphasis on the micro and rejection of the macro (structural), has been a source of neoconservative and right wing rhetoric who argue that "society works much better in terms of micro-events; a society that is left to market force is better than a consciously planned society" (Sarup, 1993:145). Hence postmodern ideology prioritises the celebration of depoliticised youth and emancipation through individual choice and consumerism, while ignoring or obfuscating collective forms of resistance and oppression that are taking place. As a result post-subculture theory has been criticised for under-politicising youth cultures (Muggleton & Weinzerl, 2003). Hence, this chapter suggests that we should not neglect issues of power and resistance that are taking place in contemporary youth subcultures.

Specifically post-subculture theory neglects how the momentary freedom and loss within hedonism in rave cultures can reproduce existing power relations and

exploitation (see chapter four and seven). Furthermore Redhead (1990), Melechi (1993) and Rietveld (1993) do not acknowledge that policing and various moral panics on the rave culture were apparent (see Blackman, 2004:119). They also neglect that sometimes taking drugs, apart from losing yourself into hedonism, could be a form of resistance to authority and a sense of forging collective identities (homology) (Blackman, 2005). These theorists, by rejecting the issue of collective identities that was embedded in the notion of subcultures, neglect that various forms of collective protest, which stemmed out from the rave scene (Do It Yourself - forms of protest and practices) (ibid). By defining contemporary subcultures as totally hedonistic, apolitical, classless and completely immersed in surface appearances, they define young people as being superficial or as lacking agency in claiming their rights (ibid). Thus elements of the CCCS's approach should not be omitted. Rather they should be incorporated and complemented by post-subcultural features.

Corresponding to the above, by celebrating classlessness post-subculture theory missed the opportunity to investigate class reconfigurations that have been taking place from the 1990s onwards (Griffin, 2011). Griffin (2011: 251) argues on her critical assessment to Thornton's work, that "she overlooked the extent to which class was everywhere and nowhere in clubbers discourse, lurking in and behind the facade of PLUR [peace, love, unity and respect]". Hence Thornton (1995) neglected to explore the relationship of the PLUR to other coexisting sets of values and practices that implied class, racial and gendered distinctions (i.e. the use of derogatory term 'techno Tracys') (Griffin, 2011). Moreover, she overlooked how young people in the club-scenes attempted to conceal their class background (ibid). For example, upper-middle class youth tried to pass as working-class 'hip', 'authentic', 'underground', in order to avoid being perceived as part of the inauthentic

mainstream (ibid). It could be argued that Griffin's (2011) criticism is applicable to post-subculture theory in general and it demonstrates further, that elements from both the CCCS and post-subculture theory are equally important in our interpretation of contemporary subcultures.

Additionally, as demonstrated, post-subculture theory dismisses binary distinctions such as underground/authentic versus mainstream/commercial. I would argue that we should neither dismiss them nor take them for granted. Rather we should examine them critically in order to explore the complex interconnections between the two, as well as the meaning that these notions carry in non-western settings. Hence we should keep these notions alive in academic discourse. Specifically in the case of Cuba there are differences between underground and mainstream groups, in terms of music, style, space and audience composition (Baker, 2012). In particularly Anna Szemere (2001:16) writing on underground rock in socialist Hungary describes underground culture as:

> [it] emphasised recalcitrance toward the dominant (official) culture. The metaphor 'underground', widely used by the musicians as a self-reference, suggested a position underneath a more powerful and more visible entity. The political connotation of the term was obvious [...a] force or compulsion [was] connoted by 'underground' [. . .] The local underground of the 1980s formed a close-knit and cohesive social world, an art world with solid boundaries.

The same could be argued for the underground subcultures in Cuba. As implied in the introduction, the term underground is used to denote a sense of community that involves several art groups ranging from rappers, to punk, rock, reggae, electronic music, poets, writers, visual producers and independent groups from the state's

institutions such as Matraka and the project Omni[26]. It could be argued then, that the term underground is not limited within the boundaries of one specific subculture as the Birmingham School had interpreted it. Rather it connotes a much wider, cohesive social network where solidarity, common shared values (ideology), affective relationships of friendship and trust as well as, the sense of community are of high importance. Therefore, while post-subcultural elements on the fluidity of the boundaries of a specific subculture are evident, they run in parallel with issues of community, collective identities, ideology, solidarity and politics that the CCCS has stressed (see chapter six).

Furthermore, post-subcultural theory arguably has not taken under consideration the CCCS's auto-critique on their project. Specifically, Hall and Jefferson (2006: xv) argue in their latest auto-critique of the RTR is that:

> Perhaps class was too unproblematically 'given' [...] However, it has to be insisted that a simple class explanation of the subcultural phenomenon was never part of the project.

They move on to argue that their "blindness" on gender issues now seems "embarrassing obvious" (Hall & Jefferson, 2006: xvi). They do recognise that they tended to stress the "authenticity" of subcultures, their cohesiveness and homogeneity (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). They stress however, that from the realms of the CCCS works on gender developed [McRobbie, (1980), Skeggs (1997)] as well as race, with representative example being Gilroy's (1993) Black Atlantic. Furthermore as demonstrated earlier, the notion of counter-cultures (although mainly a middle-class phenomenon) reflects cultural groups in action as well as diffused,

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[26] These two groups will be further investigated in chapter six.

heterogeneous, flux, individualised and hedonistic[27] participation of their members. Arguably hence, postmodern youth cultures exacerbate characteristics that were already depicted in the CCCS's interpretation of counter-cultures, but were somehow neglected in their approach on subcultures.

Additionally, there has been an affirmation by some post-subcultural scholars (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003) that specific subcultural groups can still entail and express political orientation. Hence, some postmodern theorists do not totally dismiss the CCCS approach. For example Marchant (2003) (although perhaps a marginal approach in post-subculture theory) argues that a return to the study of the state's institutions within cultural studies is necessary. Specifically he calls for a return to Gramsci within post-subcultural theory (Marchant, 2003). However he argues that this model of power and resistance should be compatible to contemporary late-modern society, its lived realities, subjectivities and experiences (ibid). In the following chapter it will be demonstrated, that Gramsci's approach is compatible to postmodern approaches on power and resistance. By reconciling these approaches, a better understanding on these notions within late-modern societies can be achieved.

It could be argued then, that post-subcultural perspectives and the CCCS approach are not necessarily in opposition with one another. Therefore a bridging of the CCCS to the post-subcultural perspective is suggested to be followed, in order to provide insights into power and resistance of contemporary subcultures.

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[27] Young (1971) describes the Hippie culture as a Dionysian Culture, which means that it put emphasis on immediate pleasure, euphoria and enjoinment.

An example that provides a bridging of these perspectives would be the following. Arguably Redhead, Melechi and Rietveld take a more Batallean and Foucauldian approach on resistance that seeks to reinvent the body by producing new forms of desire and pleasure (Best & Kellner, 1991). Within these practices bodies are lost in intoxication and excess, their identity is "torn" apart and the self is lost and disrupted (Bataille, 1992; Raby, 2005). According to Foucault (1965) these experiences can provide insights into the workings of power. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter Foucault's approach under-emphasises issues of struggle and oppression as well as, more overt forms of political resistance. Hence a Batallean approach is suggested, as it takes under consideration both thin (unconscious, hedonistic, fragmented everyday life practices) and thick (macro-structural conscious) forms of resistance (see chapter four) (Raby, 2005).

Concerning the debate on the concept of subcultures versus club-cultures, neo-tribes, scenes and lifestyle, Hodkinson (2002: 23) has argued that "it is not readily apparent what to make of this remarkable plethora of concepts and explanations". As Muggleton & Weinzerl (2003:6) state, each term is used to describe different aspects of youth practices. For example club-cultures

> can be employed substantively to refer to a designated set of 'tastes' that are consumed within specific spatial locations [...] 'Neo-tribe', however, is mainly used analytically (for example, Bennett 1999, 2000) to capture the sense of fluidity and hybridity in the contemporary urban club-scene.

I would argue that the notion of subculture should be preserved, as the suggested notions of lifestyle, neo-tribes and scenes fail to capture issues of struggle, power

and resistance that are taking place in the cultural-structural nexus. Therefore the notion of subcultures used by the Birmingham School, remains the most adequate to explore these issues. Hence, it could be argued that if someone is interested in exploring the political significance of youth cultures within a specific historical conjuncture, then the concept of subcultures is the most appropriate. Moreover a further answer on the concept of subcultures is given by the early work of Downes (1966:4-5) who argued that:

[N]o culture can be regarded as a completely integrated system. Most cultures, like personalities, can be regarded as permeated by apparent contradictions.

The concept of the 'subculture' embodies one such contradiction. What constitutes the 'culture' of a complex society: all its subcultures, their uniformities only, or the dominant subculture? Where, to put it crudely, does culture and subculture begin? Does subculture merely refract or totally displace culture? Any vagueness over the boundaries of the overall culture will automatically extend to subcultures.

In other words, there is no dividing line between hegemonic culture and subcultures. Rather they are overlapping and interconnected. As Ferrell et al (2008) argue, all people form subcultures (even more than one through their life time), in their everyday practices and encounters with groups of people. From pensioners, musicians, athletes and dancers, to plumbers, police officers and gang members, they all produce and constantly develop "collective rituals, styles and codes in their daily round" (Ferrell, et al 2008: 34). Consequently, we do not need to think of subcultures as highly static and fixed entities clearly demarcated from the mainstream culture. On the contrary, we should perceive such formations as meaningful, collective, flux and intricate solutions to common experienced problems

of everyday life (Ferrell et al, 2008). This depiction of subcultures as flux, although it was referring principally to counter-cultures was not absent from Hall's and Jefferson's RTR (1976).

Moreover the interpretation of subcultures as "symbolic problem solutions", not only to experiences of marginalisation, oppression and social exclusion, but also to more mundane everyday problems is still important. Furthermore issues of race, class and gender and processes of power and resistance should neither be dismissed. Equally significant though, are all the issues that post-subcultural theory has stressed. Hence this research will follow the latest suggestion by Hall and Jefferson (2006: xii) on the "double sidedness" perspective, which means "acknowledging the new without losing what may be serviceable in the old" in our interpretation of subcultures (ibid). Thus a bridging of the two perspectives is suggested in order to understand subcultural formations, practices and their relation to power and resistance.

3.5 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to demonstrate that, despite the tensions between the Birmingham School and post-subculture theory, the two perspectives are compatible with each other both at the micro and macro level. Due to the different focuses of these perspectives, it was argued that post-subcultural theory, rather than opposing, actually drives further the CCCS's interpretation of subcultures. In particular the discussion of the two approaches sought to illustrate that the CCCS's approach on youth subcultures is still a useful tool in understanding the relation of youth groups to power and resistance, as well as to wider historical, structural and cultural changes. Equally post-subcultural theory has provided valuable insights (fluidity, fragmentation, heterogeneity, individualism consumerism, affects, the body,

hedonism and the intersection of the global with the local among others), that arguably drive CCCS's depictions of subcultures even further. Hence the thesis suggests an intersection of the CCCS and post-subcultural theory to be employed in our interpretation of subcultures. Furthermore it was argued that the concept of subcultures is the most adequate to be used in order to interpret manifestations of power and resistance.

Additionally, as was briefly illustrated, elements of both theories are relevant in the case of Cuba. Therefore an incorporation of both perspectives is suggested to be followed in the colonial difference of Cuba. Moreover, despite the fundamental differences of Cuba to the rest of the world the thesis aims to illustrate the existing opportunities to bridge these perspectives on a more general, global basis. Hence while keeping the tensions alive between the Birmingham School and post-subculture theory, the thesis suggests, that by following the "double sidedness" approach, a better understanding of youth groups' everyday reality, experiences and practices in relation to power and resistance can be attained.

In the following chapter a discussion on modern and postmodern perspectives on power and resistance will be conducted to show that a bridging of Gramsci's hegemony to Spinoza and Bataille is not only feasible but necessary, in order to understand conscious, unconscious, affective and body-centred forms of resistance.

Chapter Four: Hegemony, Post-hegemony and the Colonial Difference of Cuba

4.1 Introduction

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, under the CCCS's perspective, class, structures, ideology, historical context, culture and politics were of high importance in their attempt to understand youth subcultures. Explicit in the majority of literature produced by the CCCS was the use of Gramsci's hegemony as power, in order to interpret forms of resistance (unconscious - symbolic resistances through rituals and style) in subcultures and (conscious resistance) in counter-cultures (Clarke et al, 1976). Contemporary post-subculture theory has posed several criticisms on CCCS's approach, rejecting the Marxist paradigm (Muggleton, 2000; Bennett, 1999 and 2000). Thus, in recent years contemporary cultural studies and post-subculture theory dismiss the notion of hegemony, as it is perceived to be no longer adequate in interpreting power and resistance in late-modern societies (Beasley-Murray, 2003; Lash, 2007; Thoburn, 2007). According to Beasley-Murray (2003:117) the concept of hegemony had a great "truth-value" for a specific epoch, which has now begun to "draw to a close", as power today is post-hegemonic. Consequently there has been a shift within cultural studies concerning the conceptualisation of culture, society, subcultures, power, politics, identity, ideology, resistance, deviance, as well as their dynamic interrelations (Ferrell et al, 2008).

This chapter focuses on a discussion between hegemony and postmodern conceptualisations of power and resistance. By exploring the resonances and tensions between hegemony and post-hegemony it will be illustrated that the differences between the two approaches are not irreconcilable. Thus a bridging of

the two, the macro (structures, ideology, civil society, common sense, culture) with the micro (interactions, affects and practices in everyday life) is suggested in order to provide a better understanding of power and resistance. Furthermore, it will be illustrated that Gramsci, despite the significant tensions, is compatible to post-hegemony at both the macro-political and micro-political levels. Therefore, by debating hegemony and post-hegemony I do not aim to discredit or devalue any of the theoretical approaches presented, rather the contrary. By demonstrating that there is not necessarily an opposition between these two perspectives, this chapter aims to drive further subcultural theory in its interpretation of power and resistance.

Additionally, by following the perspective of "border thinking" (Mignolo, 2000:84), this chapter will firstly explore the debate between hegemony and post-hegemony in their interpretations of power and resistance (the western internal critique to modern perspectives by postmodern perspectives). This first critique will then be scrutinised by a second, which will be conducted *from* the colonial difference of Cuba (Mignolo, 2000). The second critique will be mainly provided in chapter five, where the compatibility of western knowledge to Cuban (local) knowledge will be demonstrated. Principally in this chapter I aim to investigate (after bridging modern and postmodern perspectives on power and resistance) whether or not modern and postmodern conceptualisations of power and resistance could be applied in the colonial difference of Cuba. In its entirety this chapter will argue that power and resistance must be understood at both micro and macro levels.

Initially this chapter will explore the basic premises of the post-hegemonic debate, accompanied by arguments that, despite the tensions, there is not necessarily an opposition between Gramsci's *philosophy of praxis* and post-hegemony. For the purposes of the thesis, however, the debate between hegemony and post-hegemony

will be placed directly within a discussion of power and resistance. It is not the objective of this research to enter into a detail analysis for example, of the notion of the multitude, the problem of its organisation or other preoccupations of contemporary social and political theory on power and resistance. Rather, my aim is to illustrate that there are potentials in Gramsci's theory that have been somehow neglected by contemporary post-subcultural criticisms. Therefore, the first part of the chapter will be mainly concerned with an exploration of Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony followed by postmodern perspectives on power and resistance; namely that of Foucault (governmentality, biopower) and the rediscovery of Spinoza's (1985) *potentia* (Maffesoli's (1996) puissance: inner power of people to act).

It will be demonstrated that Gramsci's perspective runs parallel with Foucault and Spinoza and that their approaches complement rather than counteract the notion of hegemony. It will be argued that a combination of both approaches to power and resistance (both the conscious and the unconscious forms), could be used, but always under the frame of resistance as a reaction to multidimensional, contextual and diverse practices of power and domination. Thus, while illustrating the critiques on the notion of hegemony I will be readdressing the criticisms by adding to Gramsci post-hegemonic uses of Spinoza's depiction of power and the importance of the body. Moreover Bataille's conception of the heterogeneous realm of society (that of loss, non-productive expenditure, excess, intoxication, hedonism, festival, eroticism and death) will be incorporated in order to interpret unconscious forms of resistance that are found in these experiences.

In the last part of the chapter both approaches will be explored *in* the colonial difference of Cuba. The importance of Gramsci's theory in Cuba will be illustrated followed by an exploration into the importance of feelings, desire and the informal

part of everyday life in Cuba. The latter will be conducted through the lens of Spinoza (affects, feelings, desire) and Bataille (festival, intoxication, excess, loss and eroticism). It is important to stress that this chapter will look at some of the most important theoretical influences on cultural studies and cultural criminology, concerning the issues of power and resistance. However, although all approaches could be used in the context and analysis of power and resistance in Cuba, it would be impossible to incorporate them all. Thus a selection of approaches will be applied, accompanied by an adequate justification for this selection.

4.2 Conceptualisations of Power and Resistance

4.2.1 Hegemony and the Condition of Post-Hegemony

Gramsci's concept of hegemony has been rendered to be his most preeminent contribution to cultural studies and political theory (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). However Gramsci's (1971, 321-377) main concern was the *philosophy of praxis* (in his case Marxism). In short, this means how a philosophy can mobilise action and hence stimulate social change (ibid). He argued that in each historical period and society coexist multiple philosophies or ideologies (Gramsci, 1971). In order for a philosophy to become praxis (action) it should create an "ideological unity between the bottom and the top, between the simple and the intellectual" (Gramsci, 1971:329). In other words, "'philosophy and politics', thought and action, that is a philosophy of praxis [...] and the only "philosophy" is history in action, that is life itself" (Gramsci, 1971: 357). For Gramsci then, a big concern is the distance between the intellectuals and everyday life. He calls for an active relationship between the two if the intellectual of

each specific philosophy wishes to modify the specific cultural environment and resolve existing problems (ibid see for example 350-351)[28].

Hegemony therefore, should not be understood just as a theoretical tool that only analyses systems of ideas and material structures, but rather a means to understand practical matters in everyday life and political action of active rather than passive agents (Gramsci, 1971; Fontana, 1993; Pessoa, 2003). For example, in terms of winning consent, it was not only philosophies, ideologies and discourses that Gramsci was interested in investigating (Johnson, 2007). Rather he was mainly concerned in understanding what moved subjectivities in conformity, faith, "localism or provincialism, and in consciousness or unconsciousness of the past and of a future role" (Johnson, 2007: 99). As will be demonstrated in more detail in the following pages, he was interested in power and resistance at both micro and macro levels.

In recent years it has been argued that we have entered a new era; the era of post-hegemony (Beasley-Murray, 2003). Deriving from Deleuze and Guattari, Beasley-Murray (2003: 117) claims "that there is no hegemony and never has been". He bases his argument on four core aspects and premises that are attributed to the condition of Post-hegemony:

1. The decline of ideology within contemporary societies,

2. The shift from the (conscious) discourse and effect, to the (unconscious) affect.

3. The formation of the "multitude"[29] as the main subject and mobilisation force of society as opposed to the people and collective consciousness, and lastly

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[28]For example, he describes how religion and nationalism achieved unity between their intellectual realms and ordinary people and thus transformed modes of conduct and worldviews (Gramsci, 1971).

4. The problem of organisation displaces that of solidarity or critique (Beasley-Murray, 2003).

Principally it could be argued that Gramsci, as well as, post-hegemony theorists are concerned with how to mobilise the masses, the people or the multitude into an organised political force. Moreover, the problem of organisation runs through both perspectives and is not given a solution in either of the two[30]. Implicit though, in much of postmodern literature on power and resistance, is an oversimplification of Gramsci's notion of hegemony (Johnson, 2007). As Foucault (cited in Buttigieg, 1991: xix) has argued, Gramsci is one of the most cited theorists, but at the same time, the least read. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, post-subculture theorists explicitly criticise the Marxist perspective of the CCCS (Redhead, 1990; Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000), without taking into consideration the paramount importance of Machiavelli's influence on Gramsci's writings[31]. This fact, as I will demonstrate, is very important as Machiavelli had also influenced Spinoza (Del Lucchese, 2009), whose approach to power and resistance resembles that of Maffesoli (1996) and features prominently in postmodern perspectives concerning these two concepts (see Lash, 2007).

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[29] For reasons of clarity the multitude is defined as such: "The multitude gains power only through establishing affective relations and combining powers with other bodies. At the same time the organization of the multitude has nothing to do with homogeneity, resemblance, or equivalence: the multitude is a collection of singularities, with a tendency always to add more singularities towards the goal of uniting singularities in a relation of continuous variation" (Beasley-Murrey, 2003: 123 see also Negri, 2002: 3).

[30] In post-hegemonic theory there is an unresolved concern with the multitude's organisation (see Pessoa, 2003 and Havercroft, 2010). Gramsci (1971) was also concerned with how to unite the peasants of Italy's countryside with the industrial urban proletariat of Italian cities.

[31] Whilst mentioning that Marxism is a terrain of debate in itself and not a harmonious perspective (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). An explicit example would be that Marx himself, up until he died, refused to be called a Marxist (ibid).

Arguably, postmodern approaches seem to neglect that Hoare & Smith (1971)[32] have warned against considering Gramsci's work as a definitive and solid canon. The highly fragmentary character of Gramsci's writings provides only a speculative and ambiguous character in Gramsci's intentions when writing the *Prison Notebooks* (ibid). In other words, Gramsci's work should be seen as an intellectual and theoretical development in progress and not as a completed project or consistent "grand narrative" (Ransome, 1992). Also, Gramscian theory is less dogmatic than how it is frequently represented. Specifically, Gramsci himself rejected dogmatism by arguing that "there does not exist, historically, a way of seeing things and of acting which is equal for all men, no more no less" (Gramsci, 1971: 352). In other words, Gramsci had recognised that no theory or author should be treated as Messiahs that provided a universal panacea once and for all (Davidson, 2008).

As mentioned in the introduction the premises of post-hegemony and its resonances and tension with Gramsci's theory will be placed directly within a debate of modern and postmodern interpretations of power and resistance[33]. Thus, in what follows, I will provide the Gramscian perspective of hegemony as power and postmodern approaches to power and resistance, namely those of Foucault and Spinoza. The discussion provided on Gramsci and Foucault will also demonstrate the reason why a Foucauldian postmodern perspective is not applied in this research.

4.2.2 Gramsci's Hegemony and Foucault's Governmentality and Biopower

With regards to the notion of hegemony Gramsci did not use a concise definition of the term; as he seems to apply it in various different ways and levels, depending on

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[32] Editors of Prison Notebooks

[33] For a direct criticism to the premises of post-hegemony see Pessoa (2003)

which social relationships or forces he is addressing (Ransome, 1992; Fontana, 2000). For reasons of clarity, however, it is important to provide a definition of hegemony that is closer to Gramsci's usage of the term (Johnson, 2007).

The notion of hegemony according to Gramsci (1971: 60, 258, 261, 276, and 349) is a way of conceptualising the dialectic relationship between culture, power and economic structures. Hegemony is manifested differently in every country depending on the historical, structural, socio-political and intellectual context, although the content of hegemony is actually the same (to maintain leadership over subordinate groups that seek hegemony) (ibid: 161, 182, 210). Thus, despite post-hegemonic views of hegemony as domination (see Lash, 2007), hegemony means leadership, which is fundamentally distinct from domination (Sassoon, 1982, Smith, 2010). Under Gramsci's (1971) perspective hegemony is always a process of becoming; its objective is to adjust to changes and to move forward corresponding to changing times. Thus, hegemony is constituted through a process of constant conflict with subaltern groups, which takes place throughout the civil society-state nexus (Gramsci, 1971; Ekers & Loftus, 2008).

Specifically, hegemony is used to denote a form of social and political control, which combines on the one hand, physical force/coercion (the State's coercive mechanism, penal system, military and police) and on the other, intellectual, moral and cultural persuasion/consent (civil society which includes the whole realm of culture, private initiatives and activities of people as well as, private institutions such as the schools, media, trade unions, political parties and the Church) (Gramsci, 1971; Ransome, 1992). Gramsci (1971) perceived that the institutions of both civil and political society are intertwined and hence, they both have an ideological and practical influence on

people (Ransome, 1992). The synthesis of the two spheres is what Gramsci saw as the State (Fontana, 2000). Through the dialectical relation between the State and civil society Gramsci demonstrates that the state is both centralised and diffused (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). Consequently, if hegemony contains a certain amount of unity it is on the premises of "difference and the result of an educative process" (Johnson, 2007: 100). This approach, as will be demonstrated, arguably brings Gramsci closer to Foucault's dispersed forms of rule (Ekers & Loftus, 2008).

Moreover, Gramsci (1971) used the allegory of Machiavelli's Centaur in order to express the duality and dialectic relationship between coercion and consent, where coercion is the part of the beast, while the human part is depicted through the construction of ideological consent. The latter means establishing the legitimacy of leadership by developing and translating shared ideas, meanings, beliefs and values into "common sense" shared culture (Ransome, 1992; Jones, 2006; Longhurst et al, 2008). For Gramsci (1971:80 note 49) social control must be exercised as a combination and balance between force and consent, without force ever prevailing too strongly over consent (Gramsci, 1971; Fontana, 2000). In order to express exactly the duality and unity between force and consent he argued:

The dual perspective can present itself on various levels from the most elementary to the most complex [...] corresponding to the dual nature of Machiavelli's Centaur-half-animal and half-human. They are the levels of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilisation, of the individual moment and of the universal moment (Gramsci, 1971: 169-170).

The importance of this passage is that Gramsci, following Machiavelli, situates this dual nature not only at a State level but also at an individual one. Both the micro and the macro levels are woven together. Specifically, for Gramsci (1971), human beings are not "essences" whose existence is fixed and determined by structures and State power. Individuals are not passive (ibid). Rather lived experience and daily practices are essential in reshaping "common sense" reality, established ideologies and hence power (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). Therefore agency is important to Gramsci. As, Ekers & Loftus (2008: 704 footnote 4) argue, Gramsci

> utilized the analytics of consent and coercion to describe multiple social relations ranging from the influence of one individual on another, to relations associated with religion, education and policing. In addition, Gramsci's treatment of consent and coercion did not exclusively revolve around organizing the legitimacy of the sovereign of the state.

Arguably then, hegemony does not exist only on one level but on multiple facets of the civil and political society, as well as at the individual level and everyday social relations[34] (Gramsci, 1971). According to Smith (2010), Gramsci viewed that hegemonies also stem from below, at a personal level. They originate in the thoughts, values, actions and beliefs of everyday people who might or might not perceive themselves "as part of organized groups" (Smith, 2010: 39). Gramsci hence, invites us to consider power mainly as a force from above, that functions in various different ways and has "diverse levels of force at all levels" (1971:182). Arguably then, Foucault's (2003) depiction of governmentality as a form of dispersed rule, does not necessarily contradict Gramsci. The reason for discussing Gramsci and Foucault's depiction of power is because the latter has influenced the

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[34] See Gramsci (1971:352) for an example concerning the individual level.

postmodern perspective concerning power and resistance (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). By illustrating that there is not necessarily an opposition between the two, it will be shown that a bridging of Gramsci (modern) to postmodern perspectives can be achieved.

Specifically, for Foucault (1979: 93) "power is everywhere"; it is always present and is hence "ubiquitous" (Navarro, 2006:11). More explicitly:

> Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. [...] power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society (Foucault, 1979: 93)

In other words, power for Foucault is not "wielded"; nor concentrated but rather diffused, it is not solely coercive but rather discursive, it is not purely possessed but rather enacted and embodied and it is not simply being deployed by agents but constitutes the agents themselves (Gaventa, 2003). Hence, his depiction of power is a set of forces that flow, from above or from below or horizontally (Longhurst et al, 2008). Accordingly, as "power is everywhere", then also resistances will be manifested everywhere, "in attempts to evade, subvert or contest strategies of power" (Gaventa, 2003:4).

Moreover, for Foucault (1979) discourse is crucial not only for the exercise of power but also for the constitution of individuals and knowledge. The importance of discourse for Foucault addresses the second premise of post-hegemony that discourse is no longer important. It should be noted that Deleuze and Guattari themselves were also in favour of maintaining the importance of language as

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essential in politics (Johnson, 2007). In Foucault's perspective then, discourse is a vital element of resistance:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it [...] we must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart. (Foucault, 1979: 100-101).

Consequently, through discourse everyone interacts in their social relations with different aspects of power and is able to reshape them. Importantly for Gramsci hegemony manifests itself through all forms of language and the contestation over meaning (Jones, 2006; Smith, 2010). Explicitly Gramsci also perceived the vital importance of discourse in the creation and formation of historical subjects that takes place within a continuous struggle over culture and meaning (see Gramsci, 1971: 348; Fontana, 1993; Smith, 2010). Therefore, Gramsci's use of discourse has important resonances with that of Foucault, in terms of understanding formulations and reformulations of power and resistance.

Additionally, as stated earlier, Gramsci thought of the civil society, private activities and initiatives as a fundamental realm for the exercise of hegemony where meanings, identities, values, ideas and hence power, become the object of contestation (Ransome, 1992; Jones, 2006; Smith, 2010). An example, which reflects the importance that Gramsci gave to the individual initiatives and has significant resonances to Foucault, is:

Every man, in as much as he is active, i.e. living, contributes to modify the social environment in which he develops (to modifying certain of its characteristics or to preserving others); in other words, he tends to establish "norms", rules of living and of behaviour [...in so doing he/she] reacts upon the State and the party, compelling them to reorganize continually and confronting them with new and original problems to solve (Gramsci 1971: 265, 276).

For Gramsci then, when an individual is conscious [has a knowledge "to whatever degree of profundity" (1971: 353)], of the ensemble of the complex social relations that he/she is part of, he/she already modifies these relations. "In this sense, knowledge is power" (Gramsci, 1971:353). Hence Gramsci shows how everyday conscious struggles of individuals can shape and reshape their everyday reality as well as, hegemony. Therefore, it could be argued that for both Gramsci and Foucault knowledge and discourse are a fundamental element for resistance.

Moreover Foucault argues on the positive aspects and the productive nature of power:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (Foucault, 1977: 194).

It becomes evident then, that in both perspectives the individual factor is crucial in reshaping social power relations. What needs to be clarified at this point is that Foucault interprets ideology as power that "abstracts", "masks" and "conceals". Thus his notion of power opposes the "Marxist" term of "false consciousness" (Ekers &

Loftus, 2008)[35]. Arguably this interpretation of ideology runs through the whole post-hegemonic debate (Pessoa, 2003). Hence by demonstrating that Gramsci's approach on ideology escapes Foucault's critique, the post-hegemonic critique on the decline of ideology will be addressed. Arguably the post-hegemonic critique neglects Gramsci's use of the term.

Indeed hegemony for Gramsci is constituted through ideology or "common sense". However, Gramsci approached the notion in a very different way that escapes Foucault's post-hegemonic criticisms. Specifically, Gramsci was more interested in ideologies or philosophies, as he uses both terms interchangeably (Johnson, 2007). For him ideologies are not true or false but rather a terrain of contestation in a particular historical context (Davidson, 2008). Most importantly he was in favour of an "investigation of the origin of ideas" (Gramsci, 1971: 375) where emotions and passions played a very important role to their formation (ibid). Specifically for Gramsci there are two distinguishable conceptions of ideology:

[Firstly] the historically organic ideologies, those, that is, which are necessary to a given structure[...] to the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is psychological; they 'organise' human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle [...] and manifest the same energy as 'material forces'" [and secondly] "the ideologies which are arbitrary, nationalistic or 'willed' [...] they only create individual movements, polemics and so on (Gramsci, 1971, 376-377).

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[35] See Ransome (1992:120) for a definition on false consciousness.

The importance of organic ideologies for Gramsci is crucial for reshaping reality, as ideas acquire the same force with structural material forces[36]. Most importantly ideologies, philosophies and theories cannot be in opposition with the feelings of the masses, as they are "formed through everyday experience illuminated by common sense" (Gramsci, 1971: 199). Thus everyday experiences to the formation of ideologies were of high importance for Gramsci. Furthermore for Gramsci common sense is not something monolithic, coherent and univocal but an amalgam of fragmented historical ideologies, residues from previous hegemonies, values, traditions, social mythologies and scientific principles (Rupert, 2005; Johnson, 2007). Particularly:

> Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. 'Common sense' is the folklore of philosophy (Gramsci 1971:326, note 5). [...] even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential (Gramsci, 1971: 419).

Therefore, common sense is an object of struggle, process, contestation and change, which could be interpreted by each person in various different ways and could support different types of socio-political projects and visions (Rupert, 2005). However, common sense may include elements of truth, in so far as these elements are diffused throughout the people (Fontana, 2000). It will be illustrated in chapter five that Cuba's organic ideology is *cubanía*[37] (which translates as the belief in Cubanness) and plays a fundamental role in cultural politics (Kapcia, 2000). Cubanía

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[36] Structures and superstructures (culture) are always in a dialectic relation for Gramsci. This perspective was already embedded in Marx but Gramsci made it more explicit (Gramsci, 1971)

[37] See chapter five

has gradually been shaped from continuous historical experiences of subordination through Spanish colonialism and U.S. imperialism (ibid). The objective of this ideology is to construct a proud and sovereign Cuban culture and state (ibid). Hence it is important to keep the discussion about ideology alive. Moreover, it will be demonstrated in chapter six that the multiple meanings, which the common sense words revolutionary and counterrevolutionary acquire, render Gramsci's interpretation of "common sense" of paramount importance in the interpretation of labelling and criminalisation of Cuban rap.

Additionally, from Gramsci's perspective of ideology and common sense, it could be argued that Foucault's (1982: 220-221) "conduct of conduct" as a way to describe *governmentality*, is not so distant form Gramsci's conceptualisation. As Ekers & Loftus (2008: 703) point out,

> acts of governing are intimately tied to *rationalities* of the government that provide a *dominant logic* which is repeatedly enacted and challenged: hence the term governmentality (stress by the author)

The resonances between Foucault's governmentality and Gramsci's hegemony are explicit, as governments for Foucault just like hegemonies, have as a main concern to direct and shape the conduct of their civilians. Foucault (2000:133) actually recognised that various relations, forms of truth and power were operating within a more extended form of cultural, social and economic hegemony. Hence, despite the fact that the dichotomy between structures and agency in Foucault's theorisation is in a great extent erased, it could be argued that Foucault actually acknowledged the historical connection between the growth of capitalist modes of production and bodily disciplines (Foucault, 1977: 218-221; Cronin, 1996; Gaventa, 2003). However, for

Foucault (1977) it was biopower that led to the development of capitalism and not the other way around (Ekers & Loftus, 2008).

What becomes explicit then in Foucault's understanding of power, is that in contrast to Gramsci, whose starting point was the State, Foucault argued, that it is "the dispersed practices and knowledges that constituted everyday forms of rule" (Ekers & Loftus, 2008:703) that compose the State. Hence it is the starting point of the two perspectives which is different. Gramsci's is simultaneously centralised and diffused whereas Foucault's is decentralised and dispersed (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). This difference is the main reason why a Gramscian approach is followed in this research. It will be illustrated in chapter five that the high institutionalisation of Cuban civil society permits the state to exercise control over everyday life. Thus Cuban structures are highly centralised, as everything in Cuba is controlled by the state. At the same time though personalised politics, everyday struggles and negotiations with state officials shape and reshape hegemony (see chapters five and six). In other words the importance of both structures and agency will be explicitly demonstrated.

Additionally a significant difference taken into consideration in choosing Gramsci over Foucault, is that in Gramsci's (1971) *philosophy of praxis,* struggle and conflict were seen as a constitutive element of social and cultural life[38] and hence of politics. Resistance for Gramsci constitutes an intentional, conscious and oppositional ideological framework and set of practices that consciously negate the leading cultural practices of the established society (Gramsci, 1971; Rose, 2002). However, for Foucault (as resistances are everywhere), there is no clear demarcation between conscious and unconscious forms of resistance. Therefore in Foucault, and in much

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[38] He did not approach the term struggle only in terms of class and hence in terms of economic production. For example he was also interested in religion and nationalism (Gramsci, 1971)

of postmodern literature, (see Rose, 2002 and chapter three), the notions of struggle and conscious resistance are under-emphasised or even dismissed (Ekers & Loftus, 2008). According to postmodern perspectives the social is never solid, structured and normalised and as power is everywhere so will be resistances manifested in multiple realms, levels and directions of everyday life (Rose, 2002; Ekers & Loftus, 2008). Indeed it is difficult to measure intent, consciousness and will in practices of resistance, but I would argue that we should keep the notions of struggle and conscious resistance alive in order to understand the level of impact that conscious and unconscious forms of resistance have in everyday social life. The interconnections and impact of both conscious and unconscious forms of resistance will be demonstrated in the cases of Cuban rap and reggaeton (chapters six and seven). Hence the research will follow a Gramscian perspective in order to understand more intentional and conscious form of resistance, whereas for the more unconscious forms a Spinozean and Batallean approach will be conducted.

In the following section the importance of Spinoza in post-hegemonic (post-subcultural) theory will be demonstrated. By showing the compatibility between Gramsci and Spinoza I aim to bridge hegemony with post-hegemony in their interpretation of power and resistance.

4.2.3. Spinoza's *Potentia* and Gramsci

The post-hegemonic theorisation of power in cultural studies reinvents Spinoza's notion of power (Lash, 2007). For Spinoza there were two kinds of power, which he named as *potestas* (again a negative power from above, that suppresses and separates the subject from what it can actually do) (Ruddick, 2008), and *potentia* as an inherent, immanent power energy and dynamism of people; a vital inner force of

human beings (Viljanen, 2007; Steinberg, 2008). *Potentia* as a form of power has a deep correlation with feelings, desire and affects and could be perceived as power from below embedded in everyday life practices of people (Newton, 2006). As Spinoza (1985: 418) argues "to be able not to exist is to lack power, and conversely, to be able to exist is to have power". *Potentia* is thus seen as the natural, active drive (*conatus*, desire) for resistance (Del Lucchese, 2009). In other words it is what Michel Maffesoli (1996) describes as the power *of* the people (*puissance*) and is widely used by post-subculture theorists (Bennett, 1999).

Briefly described, Spinoza's *parallelism* was used to denote that there is not a primacy of the mind over the body, rather the two are in parallel (Deleuze, 1988). For example if the mind acts, so will the body and if the body is affected with strong passions so is the mind (Del Lucchese, 2009). Furthermore, he questioned the dominant (at that time) Cartesian perspective of the superiority of the mind to the body (Deleuze, 1988), by asking how we can speak of consciousness and will, when "we do not even know what a body can do" (Spinoza, 1985: III, 2, schol.)? For Spinoza, the consciousness is able to register the effects of social relations and not its causes which are the affects (Deleuze, 1988). Hence, affects for Spinoza were of paramount significance, as negative affects (sadness, hatred, fear, distrust) diminish our power to act (*potentia*) whereas positive affects (joy, love) increase that power (Del Lucchese, 2009). Therefore, for Spinoza there is not Good and Evil in terms of morality (Deleuze, 1988). Rather, good is anything that maximises our power to act and bad is what reduces it (ibid). Negative or positive affects are generated through our encounters with other bodies (Deleuze, 1988; Del Lucchese, 2009). We drive towards encounters that reduce sadness/pain and maximise joy (Ruddick, 2010).

Therefore, as Wilson (1996) argues, Spinoza defined our emotions and our human nature in terms of power.

According to Spinoza the more men are dominated by their passions "the more conflictual their relations will be; conversely when men are guided by reason, their relations will move towards harmony" (Del Lucchese, 2009: 74). Thus, Spinoza calls for men to deploy their reason in order to be able to understand and control their affects and passions. Nevertheless, he moves on to argue that to think of men freed from their passions and guided only by reason would be an illusion (Del Lucchese, 2009). Consequently, absence of conflict within human nature and in turn in politics cannot by conceived (ibid). From his perspective emancipatory politics should be constituted through knowledge and action that consider the instability of human nature and behaviour (ibid). Therefore, Spinoza urges us to also look at the unconscious, embodied, affective part of human nature when investigating issues of power and resistance.

Arguably Spinoza's framework complements and drives further Gramsci's perspective. Gramsci[39] was aware of the importance of emotions and affects and he called for their investigation and understanding:

> [it] is the pedantic reflection of what is, however, a real need: for popular feelings to be known and studied in the way in which they present themselves objectively and for them not to be considered something negligible and inert within the movement of history (Gramsci, 1971: 419)

Moreover, similarly to Spinoza he had cautioned for the error of intellectuals that aim for emancipatory politics (philosophy of praxis) to neglect the feelings of the people:

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[39] See also p. 139-141

The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned [...]; in other words [...in believing that one can know] without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them [...]. One cannot make politics-history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation (Gramsci, 1971: 418).

For Gramsci then, in order for an intellectual to develop a political and social knowledge (in order later to diffuse this knowledge to the people who mainly feel) it is necessary for him/her to also feel the passions of people (Gramsci, 1971). Only by feeling how people feel the intellectual will be able to understand and interpret these feelings and passions and build them up into knowledge. As Fontana (2000: 306) argues "the merely abstract knowledge of the intellectual becomes life and politics when linked to the experiential and passionate feelings of the people". Thus, affect and feelings for Gramsci were of high importance. This is a rather overlooked perspective of Gramsci's theory by postmodern approaches. By demonstrating that Gramsci was aware of the importance of affects, the second premise of post-hegemony is addressed (see 3.2.1).

Arguably what has been somehow neglected in contemporary criticisms of Gramsci is that Machiavelli had strongly influenced both Gramsci and Spinoza (Gramsci, 1971; Del Lucchese, 2009). Importantly on the notions of power and resistance, Machiavelli stated that no form of power can ever "strip human life completely bare" (Del Lucchese, 2009:47). Rather the primary and immanent desire of people is to resist and drive towards freedom (ibid). Similarly to Spinoza's *potentia* (the inner

power of people to act), he used the concept of individual *virtue*, which Gramsci explicitly acknowledges (see Gramsci, 1971: 413 note 59 and 413-414).

Following Gramsci's (1971: 323-324) perspective that each individual should drive towards cultivating his/hers critical consciousness of social reality and relations, it could be argued that Spinoza is compatible to Gramsci in this aspect. As stated earlier, one of the main desires that Spinoza attributes to human nature is to acquire knowledge and have love for wisdom (Del Lucchese, 2009). Rationality or the cultivation of adequate ideas was rendered important for Spinoza in order firstly, to come to an understanding of affects and the body, and secondly, to surpass the first type of knowledge; that of inadequate ideas, superstition and imagination (Del Luchesse, 2009). In other words he urged for the cultivation of rational and affective knowledge, in order to understand the embodied aspects of human life in specific historical and social relations (ibid). By opening a dialogue between Spinoza's affective politics and Gramsci's more conscious forms of politics in the case of Cuba this research bridges modern to postmodern understandings of power and resistance.

Through Spinoza's perspective then, power functions through affects that often reside below the level of consciousness and are highly embodied (Deleuze, 1988). Equally there are always resistances that are "more subtle, mundane, individual, [unconscious, affective, embodied] and hidden and take place as part of the practices of everyday life" (Cupples, 2009: 370). Thus, in addition to the intentional Gramscian forms of resistance there are also unintentional forms, which encompass:

acts that have subversive and potentially emancipatory effects but which are not conceptualized in terms of conscious ideological struggle [...] Given that a

wide array of motivations and desires inspire unintentional resistance, such practices usually take very personal and momentary forms [...] they can have powerful unintended effects or [...] can barely be noticed (Rose, 2002: 385).

Also, as Routledge (1997: 361) claims (and probably both Spinoza and Gramsci would agree upon), "resistance cannot be separated from practices of domination: they are always entangled in some configuration". This thesis advocates that we should combine both approaches on power and resistance (both the conscious and the unconscious forms), but always under the frame of resistance as a reaction to multidimensional, contextual and diverse practices of domination, in order to understand how relationships of power and resistance are manifested within the Cuban context and beyond (Routledge, 1997; Rose, 2002).

Furthermore, it could be argued that Spinoza himself was in favour of the macro-political (superstructure and economic structure of society):

> Thus the quarrels and rebellions that are often stirred up in a commonwealth never lead to the dissolution of the commonwealth by its citizens (as is often the case with other occasions) but to a change in its form – that is, if the disputes cannot be settled while still preserving the structure of commonwealth. Therefore, by the means required to preserve a state I understand those that are necessary to preserve the form of the state without any notable change (Spinoza cited in Del Lucchese, 2009:62).

Through this quote it could be argued that Spinoza describes how hegemony is able to adapt to constant changes and preserve its power. The crisis and struggles in the realm of civil society can lead to a system change only if the change occurs throughout the structure of the system (both structural and cultural). As a result, I

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would argue that Gramsci's theory is compatible with Spinoza and with post-hegemony in general, at both macro and micro-political levels.

It is important to highlight that Spinoza used the perspective of Nature to develop his philosophy (Deleuze, 1988). In his approach, human practices such as intoxication are bad because they reduce the human power to act (ibid). While the ultimate power that completely diminishes our *potentia* is death (ibid). Arguably Bataille (1985a) drives Spinoza's approach further, by arguing that a significant amount of life in nature and hence, in human life is about excess of energies and loss. Specifically, Bataille (1985a) understands passions, desires and non-economic elements of human existence (such as intoxication, laughter, the festival, death, taboos and eroticism) as essential to human life. Bataille's approach is essential to post-subculture theory. As demonstrated in the previous chapter the resistance in rave cultures is interpreted through momentary loss and liberation in experiences of intoxication and hedonism. Thus by showing the compatibility of Bataille to Spinoza and Gramsci this section aims to demonstrate that a bridging of these approaches is necessary in order to interpret both conscious and unconscious forms of resistance in subcultures.

4.2.4. Taking the Dialogue Further: Bataille

Experiences of anguish, pain, laughter, drunkenness, eroticism, ecstasy, death, horror, pleasure and excrement were only some of the extreme states that Bataille was concerned with; precisely to the level that they cannot be controlled, as they crash down "the composed rationality of the isolated individual" (Botting & Wilson, 1997:1). Bataille (1979) resonates then with Spinoza that human consciousness does not know what a body can do by arguing:

but what is reason to do when it encounters what it excludes? When it comes into contact with paroxysms of laughter, weeping, screaming, orgasm, or exultant destruction? What can it do when, having admitted the inadmissible, in the ecstatic pursuit of "clear consciousness", these paroxysms surge through reason itself? (Bataille, cited in Wernick, 1999, online source).

From this perspective, Bataille arguably drives further Gramsci's argument (that the intellectuals should feel the passions of the people) and Spinoza's perspective, by urging intellectuals to embrace both the dark, uncalculated side of man's existence, and the economic and political organisation of society (Botting & Wilson, 1997). Specifically, he was in favour of an exploration of both micro and macro levels. More explicitly, Bataille (although he took a quasi-Marxist position[40]) challenged the belief in the primacy of the economic sphere - the realm of production - that was held by both communism and capitalism (Hegarty, 2000). The resonances here, with Gramsci, are apparent as for the latter the struggle over consensus takes place mainly within the civil society (Smith, 2010). Gramsci reconfigured the "superstructural" (realm of civil society, institutions, individual initiatives, culture and political society) as not being determined by the economic base (Gramsci, 1971). By highlighting the dialectical relationship between structure and superstructure (culture, civil and political society) he stressed that the role of civil society is a core element for the shaping of power and therefore, a component which can challenge that power (Howson, 2005; Smith, 2010).

Arguably, Bataille's (1979) "general economy" invites us to consider the importance of civil society even further. Specifically his "general economy" talks about

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[40] And he was overtly in favour of Stalinism (Bataille, 1993)

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heterogeneous economies, those of loss, excess, waste and non-productive expenditure. Bataille argues that "economy is never considered in general" (Bataille, 1991: 22). He encourages us to rethink the economy in its restricted structural sense (production, accumulation, preservation, money as primary value) and its connection with everything else (Bataille, 1991). He urges us to reconsider the economy of everything else; of excessive energies that cannot be reduced in conceptions of utility and profit, but are functions of waste and loss (Bataille, 1991; Hegarty, 2000). In other words, Bataille's general economy is about the cultural realm of excess but also about the processes of appropriation and interaction of heterogeneous elements (subterranean values) with the homogenous realm (Hegarty, 2000).

Specifically he argued that each society contains two realms that interact and are in contact with one another (Botting & Wilson, 1997). Firstly, the homogenous sphere of society includes: the realm of work, progress, duration, acquisition, utility, politics, laws, taboos, religion, production, reproduction; the conservation of human life, pleasure in a moderate form and against pain, science, truth and knowledge (Bataille, 1979; Bataille, 1985a). For Bataille the principle of the homogenous society is that of unification, hence of adaptation and the reduction of differences through compromise (Bataille, 1979). Arguably the homogenous realm is the manifestation of the hegemonic established culture and structures. Secondly, the heterogeneous sphere of society "indicates elements that are impossible to assimilate" (Bataille, 1979: 125) such as: violence, drunkenness, anguish, crime, excess, eroticism, festival, laughter, death, play, excrement, hedonism, spectacles, the dissolution of knowledge, poetry and arts (Bataille, 1985a). The principle of the heterogeneous realm is one beyond utility and mainly of non-productive expenditure and loss (Bataille, 1985a).

Bataille's perspective contributes to Gramsci's theory by illustrating a broader dialectic relation within the realms of civil society, culture and structures. By illustrating the dialectic relationship between the homogenous and heterogeneous parts, Bataille demonstrates how hegemony functions towards the heterogeneous sphere. Particularly, hegemony either incorporates in its realm anything that poses a threat to its leadership or tries to oppress and confine it within taboos, morality and legislation (Bataille, 1993). Additionally, Bataille contributes to Spinoza's perspective by demonstrating that practices in the heterogeneous realm are not actually "bad" in terms of reducing our power to act. As arguably through experiences of loss individuals acquire momentary joy (see chapter seven).

It is important to stress that Bataille (1991), although not aware of coloniality (see chapters 1 and 2), attempted to bring subalternised knowledge back to the surface by drawing on Aztec philosophy. Specifically Bataille's general economy, aimed to demonstrate that value and life, are not a thing (Bataille, 1991; Bataille, 1992). By using the importance of the sun in Aztec philosophy he challenged the notion of utility in terms of what is rendered useful to men (Bataille, 1985a). Thus, through the example of the sun, he argued that life and human existence are constituted through an amalgamation of energies that grow up to a certain level, but then need to be expended (Hegarthy, 2000). Specifically,

> The origin and essence of our wealth are given in the radiation of the sun, which dispenses energy – wealth – without any return. The sun gives without receiving [...] in former times value was given to unproductive glory, whereas in our day it is measured in terms of production: precedence is given to energy acquisition rather to energy expenditure (Bataille, 1991: 28-29).

As with the sun, when human life and social systems reach a point that can no longer grow, or, if the excess of energies cannot be completely absorbed by the system, they, must spend these energies, without profit "willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically" (Bataille, 1991:21). However, most men do not recognise that "a human society can have, just as [they] do, an *interest* in considerable losses" (Bataille, 1985a: 117); and that "human life cannot in any way be limited to closed systems assigned to it by reasonable conception [...rather] life starts in the deficit of these systems" (Bataille, 1985a: 128). Consequently economically, there exists and emerges an "otherness" of human activity which cannot be reduced to closed systems of production and use (Botting & Wilson, 1997). While homogenous social activity absorbs the principal part of living energy, there remains a space which needs to be spent and lost and which is outside and indifferent to rules, morality and work (Bataille, 1985a; Bataille, 1991; Botting & Wilson, 1997). Arguably Bataille depicts unconscious forms of resistance or in subcultural terms "subterranean values" (Matza &Sykes, 1961) that are experienced in subcultural practices of loss, drunkenness, hedonism and pleasures of transgressive experiences.

For Bataille, in contrast to Spinoza, death is the loss that actually ascertains our existence (Bataille, 1991: 34-35). Life and death are in a dialectical relationship (Bataille, 1993), where death is part of the inherent expenditures of loss that manifest life (Bataille, 2006). Arguably, Bataille takes a more cultural and affective approach to death by arguing that everything which threatens the individual's "unitary existence"[41] (Hegarthy, 2000: 58) provokes horror, fear and repulsion (Bataille, 1993). Consequently, repugnance for death and corpses, excretion, filth, decay, and

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[41] Meaning anything that surpasses use-value and is involved in the loss of the self (Bataille, 1993)

eroticism are all caught within taboos and prejudices and are a site of prohibition (ibid). For Bataille then, taboos, prohibitions and transgression are inextricably linked (Hegarthy, 2000). However, the transgressive moments always surpass controls and prohibitions (Bataille, 1992). Thus Bataille demonstrates how trangsressive forms of unconscious resistance have the power to surpass state control even momentarily.

In contrast to Spinoza, who saw the affect of fear as negative, Bataille argues that fear could be creative when it encounters death or in other extreme states that brings humanity close to death (i.e. laughter, eroticism, drunkenness, festival) (Bataille, 1993). Hence, he demonstrates how these practices can lead to joy and subsequently do not diminish our *potentia*. More specifically, "horror *increases* the object's power to charm. Danger paralyses; but, when not overpowering strongly, danger can arouse desire" (Bataille, 1989: 225). Therefore, he demonstrates that desire and joy can move towards states of horror and death, as humanity is both repelled and attracted by death at the same time (Bataille, 1989). Arguably Battaile's perspective is of high value in order to interpret subcultural practices that evoke joy from experiences of crime, adrenaline, thrill, risk taking and intoxication with illegal substances.

Additionally eroticism has a fundamental role in Bataille's philosophy, as eroticism also involves a violation of individuality (Bataille, 1993). Consequently like death, eroticism on the one hand shapes life and on the other, is charged with danger and triggers anguish (Bataille, 1993; Bataille, 2006). In this perspective eroticism always has a component of sacrifice and loss, as it does not preserve energy but rather discharges it (ibid). Thus, eroticism is an embodied creative power where life becomes meaningful (Shilling & Mellor, 2010). It demonstrates the anguish, joys,

pain, violence and desire of coming in contact with the eruptive effervescent continuity of things and of losing one's self within this experience (Botting & Wilson, 1997). It will be demonstrated that Battaille's interpretation of eroticism will be of high significance in the interpretation of reggaeton's resistance.

Bataille illustrates that eroticism could be a positive force, which can break down established patterns of regulative and controlling social order by transferring and linking individuals beyond the routine of daily, isolated life (Bataille, 2006; Shilling &Mellor, 2010). Arguably, from Bataille's and Spinoza's perspective, eroticism could be a bodily form of resistance. This perspective of bodily-resistance will be further explored in the investigation of Cuban reggaeton, where eroticism, dance and sexuality are some of its core characteristics. However, eroticism could be a negative force as it can be "socially disruptive and personally damaging" (Shilling &Mellor, 2010: 442) especially for women (Bataille, 2006). Hence, Bataille also demonstrates the consequences of negative affects embedded in eroticism and subsequently is compatible with Spinoza. It will be illustrated in chapter seven, that reggaeton is seen as socially disruptive to Cuba's morality. Simultaneously exploitation of women through prostitution (eroticism) in reggaeton needs to be considered when interpreting reggaeton's unconscious, symbolic, and largely hedonistic resistance.

Moreover, Bataille's interpretation of the festival is of high importance to the interpretation of reggaeton's resistance. For Bataille

escaping the limits of things without returning to the animal slumber receives the limited solution of the festival [...] The festival assembles men [...and] opens up to a conflagration, but one that is limited by a countervailing prudence: there

is an aspiration for destruction that breaks out in the festival, but there is a conservative prudence that regulates and limits it (Bataille, 1992: 215).

Consequently, the deliberate violation of sanctified rules that takes place in the excess of the festival, accumulates and fulfils "an order of things based on rules; it goes against that order only temporarily" (Bataille, 1993: 90). The festival simultaneously negates and conserves the established system (Botting & Wilson, 1997). It is tolerated and permitted exactly to the extent that it serves and sustains the necessities and the order of things (Bataille, 1992). As a result, the momentary liberation and freedom from constraints that the festival provides, serves to reproduce existing power relations. Furthermore for Bataille (1992, 1993) the free play of effervescent forces of excess (drunkenness, violence, laughter, sexual orgy) that takes place during the festival, has a meaning for the human world; but it is "meaningful only in that context" (Bataille, 1993: 90). Consequently we should explore such extreme states in the context where they are taking place in order to understand the meaning of such practices. The function of the festival will be explored mainly in reggaeton to investigate its meaning on contemporary Cuban culture and society and the emerging issues of power and resistance.

Accordingly, it can be argued that Bataille is compatible with Spinoza and Gramsci at both the macro and micro political levels. Bataille's perspective drives further Spinoza's unconscious, affective forms of resistance, through the notion of "inner experience" as a process of joy through loss rather than accumulation (Bataille, 1988:3). For Bataille, inner experience can be found in moments of rapture, ecstasy or any kind of "mediated emotions" (Bataille, 1988: 3), such as laughter, nausea, anguish, without them leading however, to a predetermined end (Bataille, 1988).

Echoing post-subculture theory the resistance found in these experiences is largely unconscious and does not aim to subvert the system. Rather, "being lost" is an end in itself. Through Bataille's perspective the resistive nature of Cuba's dancing and festivity culture will be investigated in order to see if this form of unconscious resistance can have any powerful unintended effects on Cuban society and culture. As implied, Bataille's perspective can be applied to the interpretation of largely hedonistic and apolitical subcultures that post-subculture theory is focusing on (see also chapter three).

Through his general economy and the "uncontrollable" aspects of human nature, Bataille, drives further affective politics and hegemony. As demonstrated, Bataille was in favour of the macro-political level. Specifically, he shows how processes of exclusion and inclusion have a fundamental role in the function of societies and cultures (Botting & Wilson, 1997). He argued that the exclusive forces are not just an issue that can be solved by a simple reorganisation of society, "as the terrible condition of the working class (and their exclusion) is self-perpetuating" (Hegarthy, 2000: 62-63). Hence he also took into consideration class relations and his approach is compatible to the CCCS interpretation of subcultural resistance, as reproducing existing power relations (see chapter three). Thus, in both Bataille and Gramsci, while hegemony is seen as a process of bringing and uniting all contradictory social elements within a specific formation of society, there will always be elements that stay outside and are expelled from the established culture (Pessoa, 2003). The very condition of hegemony necessitates certain actors and aspects to be expelled from its social formation (ibid). It is exactly this condition that fosters cultural and structural changes to be claimed and emerge (ibid). By looking at processes of inclusion and

exclusion in Cuban culture and social structures, issues of power and resistance will come to light.

Corresponding to the continuation of subalternity within hegemony, Bataille argued that the heterogeneous realm can lead the masses to revolution towards socialism; but he also perceived that this could happen only if individuals became aware of themselves as revolutionaries (Bataille, 1985b). Thus Battaile also saw the importance of cultivating critical consciousness. Hence it could be argued that his perspective is not in contrast with the Gramscian perspective on power and resistance. Rather it provides an understanding on the uncontrollable realm of feelings, passions, desires, loss, excess and non-productive expenditure, that are highly important in order to understand transgressive subcultural practices, but also for emancipatory forms of resistance to emerge. Consequently by calling to understand these largely unconscious forms of resistance he saw how more conscious forms of resistance could take place, by cultivating critical thinking. It becomes evident then that modern and postmodern approaches on power, resistance and subcultures are compatible with one another.

The objective of this theoretical debate was on the one hand to conduct an internal critique of postmodern to modern conceptualisations of power and resistance and on the other, to demonstrate that despite the tensions there is not necessarily an opposition between these approaches. Hence a bridging of Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille is suggested in order to come to a better understanding of the notions of power and resistance. Thus conscious politics, affective politics and politics in experiences of loss and hedonism will be used in order to interpret conscious and unconscious forms of resistance in Cuban subcultures. However, as implied this

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bridging can be achieved on a more general global level, as modern and postmodern approaches are compatible.

In the following part of the chapter I aim to explore whether these theorists and hence their perspectives can be applicable in the Cuban context. This is important in order to demonstrate later in chapter five, the value of thinking from both traditions (Western and local) in our interpretation of power and resistance. By bridging subcultural and post-subcultural perspectives on subcultures, power and resistance and further incorporating knowledge form the colonial difference of Cuba, the thesis aims to drive further subcultural theory in its interpretation of these concepts.

4.3 Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille in the Colonial Difference of Cuba

When the consolidation of the Revolution occurred in Cuba in 1959, the Soviet Union argued that Cuba was not ready to be a communist country due to its economic structures (mainly agricultural) and class relations (an industrial proletariat was not formed in Cuba and the revolution was mainly fought by the peasantry) (Kapcia, 2000 and 2008). Under these conditions, Che Guevara, drawing on Gramsci's dialectic relationship between structure and superstructure, advocated that by enhancing revolutionary consciousness among Cuban people it would accelerate the transition to socialism and then communism, even if the 'right' economic conditions were not there (Kapcia, 2008). As a result, up to contemporary times Cuba is characterised by a massive superstructure and a thin, insubstantial economic structure; despite the fact that Gramsci (following Marx) argued that the economic structure should develop accordingly, in order to meet the needs of the superstructure (Gramsci, 1971; Moore, 2006). However, the influence of Gramsci to Cuba's system is explicit on this point.

Moreover, it is reasonable to ask whether Gramsci's theory can be applied in a classless society such as that of Cuba[42]. As implied in the methodology chapter and will be further demonstrated in the chapter on Cuba, since the fall of the Soviet Union massive structural changes and economic reforms have occurred on the island (Eckstein, 2008). Through these economic reforms it has been argued (De la Fuente, 2001) that Cuba tends to be divided along class lines between those that have access to hard currency (Cuban dollars) and those who do not. Consequently Gramsci and the CCCS's approach are applicable at that level.

With regards to the importance of superstructures to the revolutionary project, culture, music and arts became crucial for galvanising revolutionary consciousness to Cuban people (Moore, 2006). Specifically, art was seen as a weapon of the Revolution, as is depicted in the infamous quote 'El arte es un arma de la Revolución' (The art is a weapon of the Revolution) (Kumaraswami, 2007: 74). In this respect, following Gramsci, the role of the intellectuals became of paramount importance (ibid). Specifically, for Gramsci (1971) the intellectuals were seen as the organisers of a new culture. They were the ones assigned to disseminate philosophical ideas and consciousness and therefore to prepare and organise a moral and intellectual reform (a new hegemony) (Fontana, 1993). This was the reason why Gramsci (1971) found it necessary for the organic intellectuals to originate from within the lower classes, rather than being enforced from outside or from the bourgeoisie (Ransome, 1992; Fontana, 1993). Consequently an intellectual could be anyone who can uncover the established cultural, moral and ideological structures and develop to contribute to the formation of a political consciousness in

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[42] Although it was demonstrated that Gramsci was not only focusing on class struggle but in the function of ideologies/philosophies in general.

the lower classes; challenging hence, in that way, the established social structure (Fontana, 1993).

In the case of Cuba then, the result of prioritising intellectual cultural activity was an explosion of cultural creativity at the beginning of the revolution up to contemporary times (Brenner et al, 2008). The historical irony however, is that since the beginning of the revolution, cultural creativity has been a battlefield of struggles and contestations over the limits of artistic freedom of expression (Chomsky et al, 2003). Arguably hence, Gramsci's interpretation of the civil society as a site of constant conflict and struggle is very much relevant in the case of Cuba. Consequently, various debates have taken place in Cuba over the values and functions of revolutionary art, and "were accompanied by a similar dialectic over the values and function of the intellectual or artist in revolutionary society" (Kumaraswami, 2007: 70). This was manifested explicitly in the 1960s (Brenner et al, 2008).

Specifically Fidel Castro, saw the risks that artistic expression had in challenging the government's aim for unity and conformity (Moore, 2006). His talk, "Palabras a los intelectuales" (Words to the Intellectuals), in 1961 set the limits of tolerance (Brenner et al, 2008). On the one hand, he argued that the revolution would be committed to artistic freedom by giving the opportunity to all artists and writers (even those that were not "genuine revolutionaries"), to use their "creative spirit" and express themselves freely (Chomsky et al, 2003; Brenner et al, 2008). But on the other, this freedom would only be possible if their work would be true to the Revolution (Brenner et al, 2008). More explicitly, Fidel expressed that

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the artist's rights must be balanced against his social responsibilities and, if necessary, he must be willing to sacrifice his own artistic desires to the needs of the Revolution (Kumaraswami, 2007:73).

As a result, since the 1960s Cuba's cultural policy on artistic works has been based on Fidel's (1961:10) words "within the revolution, everything; against the revolution nothing". The problem however, with this statement is that it did not set specific boundaries of what exactly lays "within" or "against the revolution" and left much space for interpretation (Chomsky et al, 2003). Without specific recommendations, enforcement became arbitrary, leading to artistic works being censored, artists and writers being labelled as counterrevolutionaries and treated as such (periods of harassment and incarceration), and recognition denied (Chomsky et al, 2003; Brenner et al, 2008). Many of these artists and writers remained in Cuba and struggled for their rights and freedom of expression, while others chose to leave the country and continue their work abroad (Chomsky et al, 2003). What becomes clear at this point is the importance that the "common sense" words revolutionary and counterrevolutionary have in cultural policy, labelling and censorship in the Cuban context. As mentioned earlier, the research will focus on this aspect in its investigation on power and resistance in Cuban rap and reggaeton.

Moreover, as demonstrated, Gramsci (1971) had urged intellectuals to feel the same passions and emotions with the people in order to mobilise these feelings and passions in everyday life and practice. Che Guevara understood the importance of affective politics when arguing that:

The true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality [...] Our vanguard

revolutionaries must make an ideal of this love of the people, of the most sacred causes, and make it one and invincible. They cannot descent, with small doses of daily affection, to the level where ordinary men put their love into practice (Guevara, 2009: 24).

In this respect, Spinoza's affective politics have been crucial in the struggle and consolidation of the Revolutionary regime. As Fernández (2000:42) argues "the emotional and the political can never be divorced". Emotions shape politics, in the sense that they can be both destructive and constructive to political order, as people need also to feel, desire, expect and hope if the "theories" are to function in practice (hence to become *philosophy of praxis*) (Fernández, 2000). However, emotions are also shaped by politics, socioeconomic structures and culture, as they are inextricably related to beliefs, "common sense" values and criteria that are frequently not verbalised (ibid). Thus, emotions are socially constructed and inseparable from "common sense" beliefs, ideas, desires and passions (ibid). Consequently Spinoza's affective politics are of great significance in the interpretation of power and resistance in Cuba and beyond.

Additionally, as common sense is not a rigid concept for Gramsci and is both an individual and collective phenomenon, the same applies to that of emotions (ibid). In this regard, the organisation and establishment of a revolutionary *cubanía* (Cuba's hegemonic ideology) and socialism in Cuba did not need only a new structural and economic system, but also a "new emotional infrastructure, much different from the one on which capitalism was based" (Fernández, 2000:6) throughout the history of pre-revolutionary Cuba. For example, the values of collectivism, equality and

solidarity[43] that the Revolution promoted, were underpinned by contradictory morals, values and emotions that were fundamental elements of the Cuban character and of Cuban popular culture (ibid). Particularly, the cultural heterogeneous elements of el *machismo* (a hegemonic form of masculinity, that represented the self–respected Cuban male as a sexual predator, untameable, incorrigible and undisciplined), and *el choteo* (mockery) (ibid). The latter describes manifestations of contempt for and cynicism about any type of authority, hierarchy or institutions of society and undermined any type of collectivist ethos in pre-revolutionary Cuba (Fernández, 2000; Kapcia, 2000). Specifically, the *choteo*, means, among other things, mockery, jest, fun and in part is *relajo* (to relax): to have fun, to kid around, an element of a carnivalistic spirit of life (Solaun, 1998). In this case then, Spinoza's desire for joy and Bataille's heterogeneous realm become explicit.

In a similar vein, Che Guevara had described the Cuban revolution as socialism with "*pachanga*" (Moore, 2006: 107). In that way he denoted the prominent dancing feature of Cuban culture as well as those of fan, humour, drunkeness and sensuality (ibid). Hence, Bataille's heterogeneous realm of society (excess, loss, intoxication and eroticism) and the importance of the desires of the body are extremely relevant in the case of Cuba. It should be noted that these contradictory morals, emotions, values and practices underpin the Cuban culture up to contemporary times (Fernández, 2000). These factors demonstrate on the one hand the importance of feelings in politics and on the other, that hegemony is a perpetual process of conflict between antagonistic (homogenous-heterogeneous) elements of a given culture. The latter shows the importance of exploring the impact of unconscious forms of resistance, which are found in hedonism, eroticism, dance, mockery (choteo) and

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[43] A more detailed exploration of Cuba's ideology and values will be conducted in chapter five.

laughter. Consequently this demonstrates the value of incorporating Bataille's perspective in interpreting the meaning of subterranean values in subcultural resistance.

Moreover, Gramsci (1971) had stressed the importance of international relations in a specific country. This view is crucial in Cuba both in terms of the notion of hegemony and for affective politics. More specifically José Martí[44] used the metaphor of David and Goliath in order to denote the imperialist tendencies of the United States and Cuba's resistance (Gott, 2004). This metaphor of the mythic struggle between David fighting the imperialist Goliath, has been repeatedly used by the Castro regime in order to denote and legitimate, the historical rightness of the solitary and continuous struggle of Cuba against the U.S. (Kapcia, 2008). In other words, Cuba is depicted as counter-hegemony to the United States hegemony. Bearing in mind Cuba's contradictory cultural policy, it could be argued that, despite the fact that Cuba is represented by its leadership as a counter-hegemony to the U.S., at the same time it does not accept that a counter-hegemony can exist within Cuba. This fact however cannot be separated from Cuba's foreign affairs and affective politics.

More explicitly, since 1961 Cuba (after the unsuccessful attempt of the US to overthrow the regime in the Bay of Pigs), has been designated as one of the countries in the "axis of terror", and through several U.S. laws it is formally considered as a U.S. enemy (Brenner et al, 2008). The approximate five decade economic-trade U.S. embargo forced on Cuba and the constant threat of a U.S. military invasion (combined with a condition of permanent crisis especially after the

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[44] Jose Marti has been one of the most important political thinkers of Cuba and the whole of Latin America. (Kapcia, 2000). He fought and gave his life for the independence of Cuba from Spain (Gott, 2004). See chapter five.

collapse of the Soviet Union) has led to what Kapcia (2000:12) terms as "siege mentality". Siege mentality could be described at a governmental level as the persistent fear of being attacked by the U.S. (ibid). While at everyday life it manifests through the constant feeling of distrust and fear in case someone is serving the interests of U.S. counterintelligence on the island, combined with feelings of insecurity due to the continuous economic crises in Cuba (Kapcia, 2000). Hence the affects of fear and distrust and structural conditions are of paramount importance in Cuba's politics in general and cultural politics specifically. Arguably these interconnected issues have a strong impact on what is perceived to be revolutionary or counterrevolutionary artistic forms. As Juan, one of the vanguard rappers states (interview 19/08/2010):

"[…] so, we are not going to fix the problems in this country because the U.S. is going to attack us? […] Because you cannot live your entire life thinking that they will attack us […] it cannot be this way. You cannot impose ideas like that for fifty years, saying that you cannot say what you think or the truth that you believe in, because another country is going to use it as an excuse to attack you. You cannot say to the people that they cannot speak openly because then U.S. will attack us, or they can use it to attack us. So imagine what the situation is! You have to endure all the hardships and all the mistakes and errors of the system because you cannot speak! So with this discourse they drug you from the feet. And it's a way of trying to suppress what one thinks".

He moves on arguing about the feeling of distrust that:

"in Cuba all the people feel distrust about all the people. I distrust you because you could be from the counterintelligence. And everyone is waiting to see if

someone from us[45] is from the counterintelligence. Man! I am not selling drugs!

I am disseminating ideas"!

Through the rapper's words, the importance of discourse, ideology, common sense words (revolutionary, counterrevolutionary) and affects of fear and distrust in Cuba's politics become apparent. Moreover the conflict that takes place in the realm of civil society, culture and the role of the artists (as organic intellectuals) that claim their freedom of speech becomes explicit. Consequently, in order to understand power and resistance in Cuba both macro and micro features are necessary to be considered. As demonstrated modern and postmodern approaches on power and resistance complement rather than oppose each other. By bridging the two perspectives a better understanding of subcultures, power and resistance can be gained not only in the Cuban context but also on a more general global level.

4.4 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to demonstrate that despite the tensions between hegemony and post-hegemony the two perspectives are compatible in both micro-political and macro-political levels. The discussion of the two approaches sought to illustrate that (despite the implicit or explicit postmodern criticisms to Gramsci's theory) his notion of hegemony is still a useful tool in understanding issues of power and resistance. This thesis suggests a bridging of hegemony (power from above that functions in various different ways and levels) and conscious-intentional forms of resistance, to the politics of affects and more unconscious forms of resistance that are embedded in experiences and practices of hedonism, eroticism and loss.

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[45] The rappers

Moreover it was illustrated that the approaches of Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille are applicable in the case of Cuba and hence a reciprocal alliance of their perspectives on power and resistance is suggested to be followed in the colonial difference of Cuba. Moreover, despite the fundamental differences of Cuba to the rest of the world the thesis aims to illustrate the opportunities that exist for a bridging of these perspectives on a more general, global basis. By linking Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille, the thesis suggests an open dialogue between these approaches, in order to understand how specific forms of power (affective, ideological, material) are linked to everyday life and hence to issues of struggle and resistance (conscious or unconscious). In the following chapter a bridging of western to local (Cuban) perspectives will be conducted and along with an exploration of Cuba's ideology, culture, structural conditions and manifestations of power and resistance.

Chapter Five: Power and Resistance in the Colonial Difference of Cuba

5.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters I provided an internal critique of postmodern approaches to modern theories, concerning the notions of power, resistance and subcultures. It was demonstrated that despite tensions between the two perspectives there is not necessarily a contradiction between them. Thus it is suggested that, a bridging of the two approaches is followed, not only in the case of Cuba but also on a more general global basis.

This chapter aims to bring to the surface the intellectual power of the colonial difference of Cuba, in our conceptualisations of power and resistance. It will illustrate that the work of Fernando Ortiz is indispensable in understanding Cuban culture, while the works of José Martí and Che Guevara are crucial in understanding the shaping of Cuban ideology and structures. Additionally the compatibility of these intellectuals to Gramsci, Spinoza and Battaile will be shown. By bridging local to western perspectives, this thesis aims to expand our interpretations of power and resistance and encourages thinking critically from all three perspectives. Specifically it will be demonstrated how issues of coloniality (see chapter 1 and 2) and colonialism have affected Cuban politics, culture and academic discourse. It will become clear that Cuba's internal policies are formed, at large, by external factors (Halebsky and Kirk, 1992). By using Mignolo's (2000) border thinking the thesis aims to decolonise social sciences and to demonstrate how Cuban culture and politics have been shaped as a response to the power of coloniality and colonialism up to the current point in time.

In particular this chapter aims to bridge macro and micro perspectives in the case of the colonial difference of Cuba. Therefore I will attempt to demonstrate the importance of political, structural, affective, socio-economic and cultural policies in the life of Cuban people, but also the importance of everyday life in reshaping politics. It will be illustrated that Cuba is too complex, its historical trajectory and geopolitical position too unique, for a one dimensional approach to apply (Halebsky and Kirk, 1992). Thus by bridging the micro with the macro form both local and western perspectives, I aim to illustrate how power is enacted by the state's institutions to Cuban citizens. Through existing literature, and data from my fieldwork in Havana, I will attempt to illustrate the importance of the informal part of everyday life in shaping, re-shaping or conforming to this power. In other words I will examine how resistance manifests in Havana's civil society. Therefore, the realm of feelings, affects and everyday practices will be investigated interchangeably with that of ideology, structures and politics. This is important as frequently the informal part (of social relations, practices and everyday interactions between individuals and institutions) is often neglected (Fernández, 2000).

Particularly, the exploration of Cuban culture and the socio-political role of emotions will be investigated together with the heterogeneous realm of Cuban society and the way that the latter intersects with the homogenous part (see chapter 4). In other words this chapter, as well as the whole thesis, will attempt to bring together the material/structural (economic infrastructure, historical and international context, institutions, civil society) with the non-material and cultural (ideology, morality, emotions, affect, loss and excess) elements of everyday life. By bridging modern, postmodern and local perspectives this chapter aims to expand our knowledge on issues of power and resistance.

The first part of the chapter discusses the works of Ortiz, Martí and Guevara in order to provide an understanding from a Cuban perspective on the characteristics of Cuban culture, politics and ideology. It will demonstrate that, due to the extermination of the indigenous population and its culture by the Spaniards, Cuban culture has been formed mainly by exogenous ingredients that gave it a provisional, flux, transnational and makeshift character (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). Hence post-subcultural elements have been apparent in Cuba since the time of colonialism. However, these elements cannot be differentiated from issues of power and resistance. Thus the historical trajectory of Cuba up to 1959 will be provided in order to show how continuous experiences of subordination and domination by external forces (Spain, U.S.A.) have shaped Cuba's ideology (cubanía), economy and culture. This section will show that Cuba's internal policies cannot be differentiated from its foreign affairs. Furthermore by drawing on the values of *cubanía* the hegemonic model of what is perceived to be a good Cuban citizen will be illustrated. This is of high importance in order to explore in the following chapter whether the rappers are counterrevolutionaries or not. Also through this discussion the compatibility of Ortiz, Martí and Guevara to Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille will be provided. Largely this section will demonstrate that ideology, structures, internal and external forces, affects and the body are equally important in our interpretation of power and resistance in Cuba.

The second part of the chapter discusses how power is shaped in Cuba. It will illustrate that due to the high institutionalisation of Cuba's civil society, the state exercises control in peoples' everyday life. Moreover the importance of "siege mentality" will be further highlighted in order to show how ideology, structures and

affects are of high value in labelling processes and hence in the understanding of power and resistance. Specifically, as illustrated in the previous chapter the growing tendency for conformity and uniformity of the people and artists to the system led to a criminalization of music subcultures and arts, especially those with origins from the U.S. This is important in order to comprehend the relationship between the state and music subcultures (see chapter 1 and 6). Moreover the three axis of power of the Cuban state (Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence and Bureaucracy) will be highlighted in order to show that the state's hegemony lies mainly on its coercive mechanism.

The third part of the chapter focuses on the substantial structural changes that have occurred on the island since the 1990s. Issues of racial and social inequalities will be touched upon, as well as, matters of relative deprivation and subordination in everyday life. Thus the gap between official socialist discourses and everyday reality will be highlighted. This discussion will show that, despite the fundamental differences, Cuba shares similarities with the rest of the world. It will also illustrate the importance of examining subcultures within a historical conjuncture. As will be shown in the following chapter, Cuban rap emerged during the summit of economic crisis in the 1990s. Similarly, reggaeton reflects the slow transition from socialism to socio-capitalism during the 2000s. Furthermore the informal and heterogeneous part of Cuban culture will be demonstrated in order to explore conscious and unconscious practices of resistance in everyday life.

5.2. Cuban Culture, Ideology and Politics

This section will highlight the value of the work of Ortiz, José Martí and Che Guevara in order to provide knowledge on issues of Cuban culture, power and resistance from the Cuban perspective. Also, this discussion will show the compatibility of these writers to Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille.

5.2.1 Ortiz: Transculturation, Ajiaco and Counterpoints

It was approximately 10 o'clock at night at park G, the space where most subcultural youths in Havana gather at nights. I was with Ernesto and Alejandro, two of the rappers together with five friends of theirs. I got to meet Ruslan, an Afro-Cuban friend of the guys in his late 20s. Although in the course of my fieldwork we hung out constantly with him and the rappers I could not recall his name. Something did not fit in relation to his racial characteristics and his name, but I could not pin down what it was. After two weeks of hanging out with him I still had problems remembering his name. In the end I asked him where his name came from. He replied "It's Russian! You see… during the 1980s it was frequent for Cubans to give Russian names to their children". I also got to meet Yasser, another Afro-Cuban friend of the rappers and again I was wondering why he had an Arab name. He replied when I asked him: "My parents gave me this name because they are big admirers of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader". I could not help but wonder if this improvisation with Cuban names had something significant to say about Cuban culture (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

Cuba, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union (early 1990s) and the tightening of the U.S. embargo, has been frequently described as an isolated island (Brenner et al, 2008). As depicted in the vignette, a closer look at the island's cultural trends might reveal a different picture than that of isolation. The history of Cuba is the history of continuous and various transculturations (Rojas, 2005). Ortiz used the term transculturation to describe the synthesis of cultures in Cuba, which is in a perpetuate process of transition and becoming (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). Specifically, he used the metaphor of the Cuban dish *ajiaco* (a traditional Amerindian stew), to describe the process of blending European, American and African ingredients from the fifteenth to nineteenth century onwards (Catoira, 2005). This process of cooking of new cultural ingredients has continued up to contemporary times with the gradual addition of North Americans, Chinese, Italians, Jewish, expatriate Cubans, Russians, Venezuelans, Canadians and various types of tourists that currently visit the country.

Most importantly, power and resistance are inextricably tied in Ortiz's work. The main aim of Ortiz was for Cubans and South Americans to speak for themselves and to claim their cultural independence from colonialism and coloniality (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). He was aware of the acute types of colonialism hidden behind hegemonic and Eurocentric conceptual frameworks (Mignolo, 2000). Thus, in order for Cuba to speak for itself, it had to find substitutes for western hegemonic terms imposed to describe the Cuban condition (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). Ortiz, in an effort to decolonise the discourse of social sciences, used transculturation as a substitute for Malinowski's acculturation and *ajiaco* as a substitute for the melting pot (Catoira, 2005). He attempted therefore, to open a space of resistance within language and to bring to the surface the uniqueness of Cuba's cultural composition (ibid). Specifically, the difference between the ajiaco and the melting pot lies in that the former is a

constant process of cooking by combining a variety of ingredients that are available in specific historical contexts; rather than a concrete amalgam that the latter suggests (Ortiz, 1940a). As a result the composition of Cuban-ness (*cubanidad*[46]) changes and has a different taste

> and consistency depending on whether one tastes the stew by taking from the bottom or by skimming from the top, where the ingredients are still raw and the liquid is clear (Ortiz, 1940b: 169)

By using the notion of transculturation and the metaphor of ajiaco Ortiz attempted to reveal the unique case of Cuba. Specifically Cuba lacked the indigenous base that still has a strong presence in the rest of ex-Spanish colonies in the Americas (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). With the extermination of Cuba's indigenous population and the rendering of Cuba as a focal entering point to the New World, Cuba became a crossroad which travellers used to go to or return from the mainland (ibid). Hence the term transculturation is inextricably tied to the Cuban context in order to demonstrate the constant up-rootedness, displacements, transitions, mutability, flows and the continuous dialogue between old and new, global and local (Catoira, 2005; Pérez-Firmat, 2006). Arguably elements that post-subcultural theory has stressed on late modern western cultures were apparent in Cuba since the Spanish colonialism and were depicted under the term transculturation.

Moreover, for Ortiz the failure to understand this mutability and transitory essence of Cuban culture would prevent one from understanding

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[46] *Cubanidad* is used to denote what it means to be Cuban (characteristics of Cuban identity), while *Cubanía* is Cuba's ideology (these will be explored in more detail later)

The evolution of the Cuban people, in the economic as well as the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, and the rest of its aspects (Ortiz, 1995:137).

By understanding these multiple transculturations that form the Cuban ajiaco (counterpoints between the local and the global) it helps interpret, everyday life experiences (such as the one described in the vignette) and macro matters (Stubbs, 2005). It should be stressed that for Ortiz counterpoints are not a canon of "true and false", "original and inauthentic", "for and against" (ibid). Rather they are sites of contact, tensions and dialogue (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). Especially in the realms of art and music that this research is interested in, Ortiz's framework is of high importance. From his perspective, Cuban artists by repossessing European and North American traditions and fashions, aim "to infect, rather than efface" (Pérez-Firmat, 2006:12) these cultures. Hence, they endeavour to provide an "original" Cuban version of specific music forms (ibid). This aspect will be illustrated in the following chapters on Cuban rap and reggaeton, where issues of "authenticity" are discussed.

As with the notions of transculturation and ajiaco that were used to describe the heterogeneity of Cuban culture, the counterpoint (*contrapunteo*) was also used to illustrate the contradictory and oppositional aspects of Cuban culture (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). This cannot be neglected, as it embeds issues of domination and subordination as well as, correlations to Bataille's homogenous and heterogeneous realm. Specifically, Ortiz (1995) used a metaphor of contrasts between tobacco and sugar in order to describe Cuban counterpoints. Particularly, the contrast between the two commodities was: sugar was white, tobacco was black; sugar was exogenous (as it was brought to Cuba by the Spaniards), whereas tobacco was native; sugar was female, tobacco was male; sugar was reason and prudence

whereas tobacco was intuition, seduction and devilish; sugar was Apollonian whereas tobacco was Dionysian (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). In other words, sugar signified the homogenous realm of society, that of order, uniformity, discipline, production, reason, measure and central organisation; whereas the tobacco represented the heterogeneous part, that of loss, excess, fun, non-conformity, individualism, diversity, inexactness, *choteo* (mockery- tobacco's social dimension), carnival and in one word what is called *relajo* (relaxation) (ibid). Importantly, Ortiz criticised the *choteo* as being a double-sided form of resistance (Almodóvar, 2005). Similar to Willis's interpretation of the lads counter-culture, and Bataille's interpretation of the festival, el *choteo* while subverting power relations momentarily, it ended up reproducing them (Mañach, 1995). This perspective will be of high importance in the interpretation of reggaeton's resistance where the heterogeneous realm of *relajo* is explicitly expressed.

Arguably then, this contrapuntal perception of the Cuban culture appears throughout the trajectory of Cuban history up to contemporary times. Particularly, the counterpoint implies two aspects within the same culture, where the one "counters" the other (homogenous and heterogeneous realms) (Pérez-Firmat, 2006). However, both sugar and tobacco fulfil different types of pleasure and indulge different senses (Ortiz, 1995). Thus, despite the contrast and conflicts there is an underlying affinity between them that makes them compatible (Catoira, 2005). The compatibility of the two commodities is achieved with the marriage of sugar and tobacco and the birth of their child, which is alcohol (Ortiz, 1995). Ortiz subverts the Holy Trinity by claiming that the Cuban Trinity is sugar, tobacco and alcohol (Ortiz, 1995). The correlation with Bataille is explicit in the profaneness of Ortiz's "unholy trinity" (Pérez-Firmat, 2006: 64), where intoxication, loss, excess, frenzy and fire are its rule (ibid).

However, as Catoira (2005) argues the transculturation, ajiaco and counterpoints actually mirror the cultural, social and economic hierarchy of power that existed in Cuba up to the consolidation of the revolution.

Specifically, in the following pages I aim to show how these post-subcultural elements of Cuban culture reflect structural, political and ideological issues and hence the shaping of power and resistance. In order to discuss these aspects, it is necessary to mention the historical context within which Ortiz and José Martí[47] developed their works. Within this context the vision and ideology of Cuba Libre (free Cuba) evolved. Through this discussion I aim to demonstrate that while Ortiz is essential in understanding the Cuban culture at both its micro and macro levels, Martí is indispensable in understanding the island's political culture, its formation and evolvement. I will illustrate that issues of power and resistance, colonialism and coloniality, domination and subordination have continuously underpinned Cuban politics and culture. Specifically, as Brenner et al (2008) argue, two patterns have repeated themselves during the last five centuries in Cuba: Firstly, a foreign power (Spain, U.S., Russia) has endeavoured to dominate Cuba; and secondly, Cubans have perpetually struggled for their independence against these external powers. Consequently in order to interpret power and resistance in Cuba it is necessary to provide the historical trajectory and context within which, these intellectuals developed their works.

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[47] Fernando Ortiz has been described as 'Cuba's third discoverer' and Marti as the 'Father of the Cuban nation' (Pérez-Firmat, 2006; Kapcia, 2000)

5.2.2 Power of External Forces, Local Resistance and the Formation of *Cuba Libre*

"The rappers are poets of war (guerra)! They are the mambises of the 21st century"! Odalis[48], a female friend of the rappers said to me during a recording session. It seemed extraordinary to me that she used the discourse of war and of the mambises to describe their music. (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010)

Since 1492 when Columbus discovered Cuba, the island remained under Spanish jurisdiction until 1898 (Fernández, 2000). There were three wars of independence (Brenner et al, 2008; Kapcia, 2000), during which the most important symbols and figures of the Cuban ideology emerged, such as: José Martí, Antonio Maceo, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and the *mambises* (Cuban guerrilla rebels) among others. The struggle, life and sacrifice of these Cubans developed to shape Cuba's national ideology (*cubanía*) and identity of *cubanidad* (Cuban-ness). Specifically they all fought for Jose Marti's vision of *Cuba Libre* (free Cuba): a socially and racially equal society, sovereign and liberated from any type of subservience to imperialist forces (Kapcia, 2000). These figures, as depicted in the vignette, are of importance for the interpretation of Cuban rap's resistance. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter the rappers draw explicitly on them in their discourse. Additionally this discussion on Cuba's history before the Revolution took place, will serve to illustrate that post-subcultural elements featuring in Cuban culture could not be differentiated from issues of domination and social exclusion.

Specifically, in the last war of independence, while Cubans achieved their separation from Spain, this did not signify their independence and sovereignty (Brenner et al,

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[48] The name of the participant has been altered

2008). In particular the war turned out to be Spain versus the U.S. (Kapcia, 2000). The intervention of the U.S in the war, arguably stole the fruit of independence that Cubans had been fighting for thirty years (Brenner et al, 2008). Furthermore the U.S. signed a peace treaty in 1898 with Spain without any Cuban participation; fact that illustrates that the U.S. disregarded and suppressed Cuba's aspirations for full independence (ibid). This led to a U.S. military occupation of the island and for Cuba to become a protectorate of the U.S during 1898-1902 (Kapcia, 2000; Fernández, 2000). Therefore, as Kapcia (2000) argues neo-colonisation was experienced in Cuba way before the term was relevant in other parts of the world.

Corresponding to the above, although Cuba gained its independence from 1903 to 1959 it was in reality a colony of the U.S. (Brenner et al, 2008). Specifically the Platt Amendment that was imposed in the 1902 Constitution conditioned unambiguously Cuba's sovereignty (Pérez-Stable, 2005). With the Amendment the U.S. retained the right to militarily intervene in Cuba's domestic affairs when deemed necessary, in order to maintain peace and U.S. interests on the island (Fernández, 2000). Consequently, sovereignty was not formally consolidated until 1934, when the Platt Amendment was abrogated (ibid). During the period of 1934-1952, a limited form of democracy did occur on the island. However it was associated with widespread corruption, gangsterism, prostitution, gambling, *el choteo*, sex tourism and also disgrace from the repeated "betrayals" of the governments, since they were serving U.S. interests (Valdés, 1992; Kapcia, 2000). Consequently, the U.S. dominated in the cultural, economic and political realms (Brenner et al, 2008). This, "subtle" domination eventually led to the U.S. support of Batista's coup in 1952, as throughout the years he had been a true surrogate of U.S. interests in Cuba (Brenner, et al, 2008). Hence, drawing on Gramsci's (1971) perspective on the

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importance of international relations in a country, the influence of a foreign country's power to Cuba is of high importance to understand the shaping of power and resistance within the island. This also demonstrates that the post-subcultural elements that this period demonstrated cannot be differentiated from issues of domination and social exclusion.

Specifically, under these conditions racial discrimination (even after the abolishment of slavery in 1886), was widespread and severely affected blacks and "mulatto" (mixed race) in many aspects of public and private life (education, employment, housing and access to private or public recreational spaces) (Moore, 2006). Moreover, depictions of what it means to be Cuban stemmed from outside (either Spain or the U.S.) (De la Fuente, 2001). Particularly, there was an on-going perception by the external powers that Cubans were incapable of autonomy, good-government and self-government (Pérez-Stable, 2005). Cubans were seen as lazy, unruly, promiscuous, immoral, corrupt, disorganised, inferior and worthy of contempt (Gott, 2004). Hence, an imposition of meaning from above (cultural power of external forces) on Cuban identity was widely occurring during that period (Ferrell et al, 2008).

These persisting portrayals, throughout all these decades, resulted in many Cubans experiencing self-depreciation and self-doubt seemingly adopting the Spanish or American prejudices against them (Kapcia, 2000). Thus, cultural pessimism, not only in the informal part of society, but also at the intellectual level, was taking place, depicting qualities of the Cuban culture as undermining elements, that a modern society seeks to eradicate in order to develop itself (Fernández, 2000). Ortiz had explicitly claimed that the term "bad life" (mala vida) was used by the Spaniards or

North Americans to "marginalise or contain a way of life that was different from, or could challenge theirs" (Catoira, 2005: 184). Arguably hence, Ortiz's and José Martí's works and visions were resistive attempts to counter racial divisions, social exclusion and foreign interpretations of what it means to be Cuban.

Particularly Ortiz identified with Martí's ideals of *Cuba Libre* and patriotism (Almodóvar, 2005). For both intellectuals good government was essential for Cuba's anti-colonial struggles (Pérez-Stable, 2005). According to them, self-government should depart from political corruption, personalised politics, racism, imperialism, arbitrariness, despotism, exploitation, repression and social exclusionary politics (ibid). However lack of unity, ignorance and what is commonly called, even nowadays, "hacerse el bobo" (playing the fool, being passive and compliant without a mind of your own) should be eradicated in order for the dream of *Cuba Libre* to be fulfilled (Pérez-Stable, 2005; Pérez-Firmat, 2006). Consequently, the cultivation of critical consciousness was essential for these intellectuals. Both believed that political and economic independence and liberation could be achieved through a national unity based on education and culture (Gott, 2004; Catoira, 2005). Thus, the hybrid and heterogeneous Cuban culture and identity were necessary to be united into a more homogenous whole, in order for Cuba Libre to be achieved[49].

Specifically individual freedom through culture and education was a fundamental premise in order for men to build the *patria* (homeland) of their dreams[50] (Kapcia, 2000). Moreover, Martí in a similar line to Ortiz on the heterogeneity of Cuban culture had called for a colour blind Cuba (Kapcia, 2000). He argued that "Cuban means

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[49] The compatibility with Gramsci is explicit

[50] In Cuba the term patriotism is more frequent than that of nationalism, correlating it explicitly with Marti's views of the nation as people and homeland (Kapcia, 2000).

more than white, more than mulatto, more than black" (Martí in Kapcia, 2000: 160). As will be demonstrated in chapter 6, this view on Cuban race relations has predominated up to contemporary times. Most importantly Martí and Ortiz highlighted the power of culture against imperialism[51] (Pérez-Stable, 2005) and arguably sought to shape counter-hegemony to U.S. hegemony on the island. As will be further demonstrated the blending of Martí's and Ortiz's perspectives has highly influenced the political ideology of the Castro regime. From the so far discussion, it becomes explicit that the post-subcultural elements that this period demonstrated cannot be differentiated from issues of labelling, social exclusion, power and resistance.

Corresponding to the above, it is important to mention briefly the important symbols of the *mambises* and Antonio Maceo in order to highlight further issues of power and resistance during that period. As implied earlier in the vignette, these figures have highly influenced Cuba's ideology and loom large in the rappers lyrics. Particularly, Martí's perception on the Cuban race is represented in the *mambises*. The bulk of the *mambises'* (Cuban guerrilla rebels) Liberation Army that fought in all wars of independence, was constituted mainly of black and mulattos (Retamar, 1989). The appropriation of the word *mambí* illustrates another type of transculturation and resistance through language, used by Cubans to counter western interpretations of their identity (Retamar, 1989). The word *mambí* was firstly used pejoratively by the white Spanish troops against the black rebels in the Dominican Republic, in order to denote their African origins, suggesting that they were all criminals and bandits (Gott, 2004). The term was used by Spaniards in a similar way against Cuba's Liberation Army as a sign of degradation for its black composition (Retamar, 1989). Cubans

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[51] The compatibility with Gramsci is explicit

reclaimed the term as a badge of honour (Gott, 2004). They considered themselves as descendants of the *mambi*, the independent, fighter, runaway and rebel black and not descendants of the slave holders (Retamar, 1989).

The *mambises* were devoted to social revolution, racial equality, emancipation and egalitarianism, and were loyal to each other and their leaders (Kapcia, 2000). The principal figure of the *mambises* was the mulatto general, Antonio Maceo; "the Bronze Titan" as he was called (Afrocubaweb, 2010). "The protest of Baragua" in 1878, where Maceo refused to surrender, still symbolises Cuba's perpetual desire to resist (Gott, 2004). This action has been repeatedly evoked by Castro in the post-Soviet period (1990s) to confront the harsh reality of Cuba's severe crisis at that moment (ibid). Moreover, Maceo has been a symbol of racial equality (as he principally fought for the abolition of slavery), mobilisation, activism and Cuba's nationhood and sovereignty (ibid). Maceo and Martí were both killed on the battlefield after having devoted their lives to the Cuban independence (Afrocubaweb, 1997). Thus, the *mambises* and the lives of Marti and Maceo represent a path of struggle, oppression, uprooting, freedom, rebellion, opposition, radicalism, self-liberation and self-sacrifice for a free Cuba (Kapcia, 2000). One cannot understand the shaping of Cuban ideology without taking these struggles into consideration.

Specifically, these experiences of subordination by external powers and resistance to them have formed Cuba's ideology and are evoked constantly by the Castro regime. Moreover, the values of independence, liberation and unity through culture and education have run through Cuba's hegemonic ideology (*cubanía*) from the wars of Independence against Spain until the current point in time. Therefore, the Revolution's project was, and still is, an attempt to save the nation (patria) following

Martí's values of independence, liberty, egalitarianism, democracy, social welfare, social justice, struggle, honesty, dignity and sovereignty (Fernández, 2000; Kapcia, 2000). As Kapcia (2000) argues, the Cuban revolution is predominantly "Martiana" and is inextricably linked to the 19th century struggles for independence of Martí, Maceo and the *mambises.* Hence if we are interested in investigating power and resistance in contemporary Cuba, the importance of these struggles should not be omitted.

This section served to show the importance of examining the influence of external powers on Cuba and the resistance against them. It was demonstrated that the post-subcultural elements that this period reflected could not be differentiated form issues of domination, ideology, power and resistance. In the following sub-section the emergence and consolidation of the revolutionary regime will be illustrated in order to give an understanding on how the regime became hegemonic. The alliance of Marxism–Leninism to Cubanía will be illustrated as well as the forging of Cubanía as Cuba's organic ideology.

5.2.3 1959 Revolution: Building the Patria

During this experience of continuous foreign subordination and dominance the 1959 Revolution occurred. The revolutionary victory signified an end to an era of oppression and suggested that independence and sovereignty would soon be realised (Moore, 2006). The battle against Batista represented the struggle for independence against U.S. domination (ibid). Additionally, when the revolution occurred, the U.S. intelligence was not sure whether the Castro regime would take severe reforms that would change internal power structures or power relations with the United States (Brenner et al, 2008). The answer came rapidly with massive

changes taking place in the social, political, economic and cultural realms during 1959 -1960 (ibid). It is important to mention the structural changes that were followed by the Cuban regime in order to show how it established its hegemony.

Specifically, the new regime passed legislations to combat all types of corruption and banned any type of discrimination in terms of race and gender (Moore, 2006; Brenner et al, 2008). They initiated a series of legislative measures to benefit the dispossessed and poor parts of the population (Moore, 2008). Women, Afro-Cubans and the poor benefited most from these changes (Pérez-Sarduy & Stubbs, 2000). Additionally, with the Agrarian reform, land was distributed to landless farm workers (Brenner et al, 2008). With the Urban reform, Cubans with more than two houses were obliged to hand over the excess to the government, which became social property, used for day care centres or housing for the homeless population (ibid). They reduced rent prices up to 50%, erected buildings for the housing problem, lowered federal taxes, reduced phone rates and rendered education and health care as universal rights for all Cubans (Moore, 2006; Brenner et al, 2008).

Moreover, new opportunities for employment were given and segregation was outlawed by closing private schools and clubs (Moore, 2006). Simultaneously they gave access to previous private beaches, hotels and cabarets to all Cubans (ibid). They banned prostitution and began programs to find alternative professions for these women (ibid). Additionally the massive literacy campaign in 1961 resulted in reducing the illiteracy percentage rate, in less than one year, from 23.6% to 3.9% (Kapcia, 2000). Following Guevara's aspirations, society had "converted into a gigantic school" (Guevara, 2009:14). Through the literacy campaign the government

sparked the revolutionary idealism[52] of Cubans and made them aware of the massive inequalities that existed in their country and in the outside world (Brenner et al, 2008). Furthermore, the government started to sponsor mass music celebrations and outdoor dance events such as carnivals, in order to correspond to the *pachanga* (festive culture- tobacco realm) of Cubans (Moore, 2006). All of this resulted in higher standards of living for the masses and made the new government very popular (ibid). Hence, through these reforms the regime established its hegemony.

Simultaneously though, the U.S. embargo was enforced, leading to an overall decline of the Cuban economy, increasing isolation, counterrevolutionary incidents taking place and a subsequent militarisation of the island was increasingly occurring (Moore, 2006; Brenner et al, 2008). In the search of political and economic allies Castro declared in 1961 that the Cuban regime was Marxist-Leninist government, allying thus, with the Soviet Union (Kapcia, 2000). Apart from the political and economic practicalities that this declaration signified, ideologically Marxism-Leninism and socialism were closer to *cubanía* as it "had long proposed reforms such as agricultural rationalization, planning, national control, redistribution and industrialization" (Kapcia, 2000: 101). Thus, the two ideologies were compatible with one another.

Cuba's hegemonic ideology is therefore cubanía. It draws upon heroes, events and myths of the 19th century (*mambises*, José Martí, Antonio Maceo) and experiences, pressures and interactions with the outside world especially the colonisation period

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[52] massive mobilisation; collectivism driven by moral incentives; it secured commitment of the young volunteers (both men and women) to the revolution, as through their participation to the Campaign, they changed their perspectives and felt that they had an important role and duty for the triumph of the revolution (Kapcia, 2000). Also, for the first time illiterate people were incorporated to a national/political programme and were given the tools to be educated and empower themselves (Kapcia, 2008).

of the Spaniards, the continuous struggle with U.S. power, and, the relationship with the Soviet Union (Kapcia, 2000). Not least it draws upon the highly influential figure (for the Revolutionary regime) of Che Guevara and his writings on "The New Man" (ibid). Henceforth, *cubanía* postulates a past in order to explain the present and to foster "hope for a consensual future" (Kapcia, 2008: 107). It also represents the realm of emotions: the anguish, tears, love, honour, spiritual values, struggles, sweat, love and dreams of the Cuban people for their patria (homeland) and their desire to determine "the constitutive essence of a fully defined nationality" (Fernández, 2000: 33). Consequently both ideas and affects were equally important in the construction of the new revolutionary order (see chapter 4).

Cubanía thus, is both macro (national) and micro (individual). In the micro level, as Ortiz argued, cubanía is the consciousness of being Cuban and is "identified by an act of the will, one that is fundamentally a desire, a wanting" (Pérez-Firmat, 2006: 30). The affective desire depicted in cubanía renders the works of Ortiz and Martí compatible to Spinoza's affective politics and Gramsci's conscious politics. Moreover, according to Kapcia (2000) *cubanía* is a searching of "lost" history in an endeavour to rescue the Cuban identity. At the macro-national level then, *cubanía* (the belief in Cubanness - *Cubanidad*) evolved into "the particular Cuban manifestation of a radical and then revolutionary, nationalism" (Kapcia, 2008:89). It aimed to break away from the continuous pejorative foreign interpretations of what it means to be Cuban (Kapcia, 2000).

This section served to demonstrate how the revolutionary regime achieved its hegemony and also how ideology, structural changes and affective politics go hand in hand in re-constructing the homeland (patria). The following section explores the

values of Cuba's ideology, in order to demonstrate the hegemonic mode of conduct of a good Cuban citizen. This is of high value in order to investigate in the following chapter whether the rappers are counterrevolutionary or not.

5.2.4 Cubanía and Building the "New Man"

According to Kapcia (2000) there are eight values that comprise the Cuban ideology. The first is *agrarianism*. This value places the peasantry, humility and stamina of the countryside as the true heart of Cuban identity. It is opposed to the 'unreal', often corrupt, distorted urbanism contaminated by shallow materialism and commercial temptations (ibid). Moreover it depicts the agricultural mode of production, mainly tobacco and sugar, with the latter being the main source of wealth for the Cuban economy until the collapse of the Soviet Union (Brenner et al, 2008).

Secondly *activism* is the belief system built around political action, honour, collective solidarity, struggle (*lucha*), self- sacrifice and martyrdom for higher moral values (Kapcia, 2000). It can be summarised to what Valdés (1992:221) calls the "politicization of Thanatos" (death): the willingness to die and struggle (*lucha*) for the political ideals of Cuba Libre. As seen in some of the Revolution's most famous quotes: "Patria ó muerte" (Homeland or Death), "Revolución ó Muerte" (Revolution or Death). Hence Bataille's perspective, the realm of emotions and the body are highly relevant in the Cuban context. The Cuban culture, society and hegemonic ideology are largely revolved around the realm of death and sacrifice for a cause beyond material utility. Specifically suicide is seen as a way of "knocking at the consciousness of Cuban people" (Valdés, 1992: 222). Thus, the highest good of life should be sacrificed to the needs of the nation (Valdés, 1992). Consequently death has a very strong meaning and impact if it serves a national purpose (ibid). The

importance of the body and taking one's life is of high significance in contemporary Cuba. Due to the limits of freedom of expression, the most effective means for political prisoners to be heard have been hunger strikes, resulting in many cases in death. Consequently the body, as a site of conscious resistance, is of paramount importance in the Cuban context.

Activism, also involves performing tasks that would defend Cuba or improve Cuban society (voluntary work and individual initiatives) (Kapcia, 2008). To be active (*ser vivo-* to be alive) is seen as essentially Cuban and heroic, whereas inaction is seen as unpatriotic or as collaboration with imperialism (Kapcia, 2000). Hence activism represents a challenge to previous experiences of resignation, passiveness and self-depreciation that was long cultivated under the experience of slavery, Spanish and American occupation and Soviet pressures (ibid). Accordingly, being passive, inactive and cynical (*hacerse el bobo*) is no longer a Cuban response to experiences of subordination (ibid).

Additionally what many have interpreted as militarisation of the Cuban society was in fact a manifestation of the far-reaching effects of *guerrillerismo* (guerrilla fighting) (Kapcia, 2000). A value highly correlated with activism and Che Guevara (ibid). *Guerillerismo* clearly entered the cubanía values post-1959 and created a mood for radicalising the revolution against institutionalisation and bureaucracy (ibid). With *guerillerismo* the revolutionary struggles, as well as, the political programmes that the new regime followed were all presented in military terms: "battles" and struggles (*lucha),* against bureaucracy, corruption, private enterprise, dependence, imperialism or economic crises (Kapcia, 2008). Consequently, together with the "military" structures, the establishment and growing influence and power of the FAR (Fuerzas Armadas Revolutionarias - Revolutionary Armed Forces), the whole "Cuban society

was militarised in image, uniforms and structures" (Kapcia, 2000: 184). The government hence fused a guerrilla mentality and ethos into all aspects of everyday life (Kapcia, 2000). Henceforth, an organic amalgamation between the military and civil society have occurred in Cuba since the mid 60s.

Thirdly, *morality* constitutes one of the core values of Cuba Libre that rejects betrayal, corruption, fraud and venality (Kapcia, 2000). Morality is addressed to both individual/spiritual levels of Cubans as well as at the political level (Kapcia, 2000). The manifestos of the Cuban morality are, on the one hand Guevara's "New Man" a conscious communist, selfless, educated, 'pure' in terms of honesty, committed to the Revolution and loyal to his fellow men (Kapcia, 2008). And on the other, Che's "moral economy" which was based on solidarity, collectivism, egalitarianism, social duty, critical consciousness, voluntarism and moral incentives rather than material motives in work (Brenner et al, 2008; Guevara, 2009). Thus, he advocated that men are capable of surpassing individualism and selfishness, and that with the proper social conditions can act purely out of moral incentives (Guevara, 2009). He argued for a social character of material incentives, which would meet all the basic needs of Cubans in terms of education, food, housing, health care, transportation and social services (Brenner et al, 2008). Moreover, as has been demonstrated in chapter four he also, gave high priority to feelings in the process of building the "New Man".

Additionally the means to reduce the influence of the heterogeneous elements of Cuban culture that Ortiz depicted (*machismo* and *choteo,* see also chapter four) was through education and culture. Thus stemming from Martí, Ortiz and Guevara, the fourth prominent value of cubanía is *culturalism* (Kapcia, 2008). Mainly it represents "the belief in the power and centrality of education and culture, as the keys to both

individual and collective liberation, and unity" (Kapcia, 2008:92). It aims to provide a proud Cuban culture (Kapcia, 2000). Specifically culture was seen as

> broadly or narrowly, as essential to the 'struggle', expecting patriotic Cubans to be proud of their identity through culture; reading Marti [Che Guevara, manifestos or Marxist texts] was a patriotic a duty as dancing the *son* (Kapcia, 2000: 89)

In that sense, liberation though critical consciousness can be obtained via education and art (Kumaraswami, 2007). Moreover, dancing the *son* (salsa) was seen as performing Cubanness. Hence the body and performativity were rendered as equally important in forging the Cuban identity as that of the mind. Thus the body, emotions and consciousness are evenly important in constructing the Cuban identity. The correlation hence of culturalism to Spinoza's affects, Gramsci's perspective on the importance of cultivation of critical consciousness and Bataille's perspective on the value of hedonistic practices such as dance, are explicit at this point.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, art and cultural expression were seen as products, observations, commentaries and active players in the social revolution (Chomsky et al, 2003). The explosion of cultural creativity since the beginning of the revolution led to a battlefield of struggles and contestations over the limits of artistic freedom of expression[53] (Chomsky et al, 2003). Fidel's "words to the intellectuals" became part of the Cuban constitution. Specifically article 39 of the Cuban Constitution states that artistic creation is free and independent as long as its content does not counter that of the Revolution (Constitución de la República de Cuba). As demonstrated in chapter 4 this ambiguous law of what lies within or against the

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[53] See chapter four

revolution had and has severe implications for artistic freedom. Without specific recommendation censorship and labelling of artists as counterrevolutionaries, became arbitrary, with severe implications for the artists lives (see chapter six). Hence ideology is of high importance in the interpretation of subcultural resistance in Cuba. The importance of what it means to be revolutionary or counterrevolutionary in Cuba will be explored later in this chapter.

Furthermore, the fifth value of cubanía is *generationalism* (Kapcia, 2000). The younger generations are perceived to be the future for the continuation of the revolution, as they would regenerate the political system, casting off the weaknesses of the previous systems (Fernández, 2000). Moreover stemming from Martí, Guevara and arguably Ortiz, the sixth value of cubanía is *internationalism* (Kapcia, 2000). This code, rather than originating as anti-imperialist, gradually extended solidarity to the oppressed people of the Third World (Kapcia, 2000). Cuba's anti-imperialism was manifested by disseminating revolutionary consciousness and liberation through armed struggle not only in Cuba but also in the rest of Latin America, Africa and Asia (Brenner et al, 2008). The value of internationalism will be of high importance in the understanding of state's power towards Cuban rap.

Cubanía's seventh value is that of *revolution* (Kapcia, 2000). Revolution is seen as a continuous process of purification, change and renewal (Kapcia, 2008). Lastly the eighth value is *statism* (Kapcia, 2000). It represents mainly the belief in a welfare state that would protect the poor and the weak; enact solidarity and egalitarianism and eliminate discrimination and corruption (a legacy of Spanish and American occupation and influence). *Statism* thus, represents the vision of a strong sovereign and economically independent state that would help achieve dignity, morality, non-dsicrimination and unity within Cuban society (ibid).

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As Kapcia (2000) argues the vision Cuba Libre was based on all these inter-connected cultural values that were compatible with socialism. Furthermore these values are not static. Rather they are shaped and reshaped at various layers of society, where different interpretations of cubanía take place (ibid). As Rojas (2005) argues there is not one type of patriotism but multiple ones. Thus notions of cubanía depend on individual interpretations of what it means to be Cuban, official discourses and influences of experiences of crisis, siege or other internal and external circumstances (Kapcia, 2000). Hence, common sense beliefs, ideas, desires, emotions and passions are not rigid and are placed both at an individual and collective level (Gramsci, 1971). This perspective will be of high importance in the interpretation of Cuban rap's and reggaeton's resistive nature.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, this research is interested in individual and collective interpretations of what it means to be revolutionary and counterrevolutionary and the effects that these interpretations have in processes of labelling and criminalisation of subcultures. Hence what the hegemonic model is of a good revolutionary Cuban citizen should be clarified.

As demonstrated, the values of cubanía were addressed at both micro (individual/spiritual) and macro (governmental policies and political ethos) levels. At the individual level they aimed to provide the model of a good Cuban citizen. Hence the ideal Cuban citizen was rendered to be an educated (culturally and literally) person and a bearer of critical consciousness. He/she should prioritise moral incentives (dignity, honour, sacrifice, solidarity) rather that material ones. He/she should be active and mobilised in disseminating revolutionary consciousness but also in performing tasks that support the revolution. He/she should have anti-imperialist, non-racist, egalitarian values and a wide awareness of international

issues. He/she should believe in the revolution as a process of evolvement and purification mainly through the important role of the youth to continue the revolutionary project. Lastly he/she should believe, strive for and feel Marti's vision of Cuba Libre. At the macro level, the government should fight corruption and bureaucracy and should promote an egalitarian, economically independent and sovereign state.

It should be noted that the revolutionary regime carried out massive changes in the realm of civil society in order to consolidate its power. These changes, as well as the political, ideological and economic policies that followed, were shaped, adjusted and transformed according to internal political and economic needs and external challenges and pressures (Eckstein, 2003). In other words, many of the policies and political directions followed by the Cuban leadership were not only a matter of ideology but also of practicality (Kapcia, 2000). The same applies to Cubans as well, that at points put ideology aside in order to find solutions to their problems in more practical terms (Eckstein, 2008). Thus, emotions, ideologies, structures, internal and external influences and policies are inextricably interconnected with one another and are formed and reshaped according to the needs and problems faced by the regime or in everyday life.

The next part of the chapter discusse how power is enacted in Cuba and what factors have led to that specific shaping of power. The issues highlighted will help explain in the following chapter the resistive nature of underground rap.

5.3 State's Power and Civil Society: Internal and external pressures

It was approximately two o'clock in the afternoon. I was with Ramon[54] at his house together with some of his friends. After an hour of joyful discussion, the conversation was suddenly interrupted when an Afro-Cuban woman in her early fifties burst through the door.

W: Who is Ramon?!

R: I am (he said while lifting his hand). What do you want? Who are you? You know that you should knock and say hello first before bursting in like that to people's spaces! (His questions and comments were completely ignored by the woman, as she started asking everyone in the room):

W: Who are you? Are you his wife? (she asked me because I was sitting beside him). Before I even realised what she asked me I just nodded positively.

W: And who are you? What are you doing here? (She asked the four people in our group). Alina one of the Afro-Cuban women in our group answered:

A: We are just friends of Ramon. Who are you, asking all these questions?

W: I am the president of the CDR (Committee for the Defence of the Revolution) and I need to speak to Ramon. Come outside with me (she said to Ramon).

We were all very frustrated and at the same time worried about Ramon. Although I could not hear very clearly what they were discussing outside, the

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[54] The name of my participant and space have been altered in order to protect the well-being of my participant and his family

conversation was really tense. Especially when Ramon's mother arrived, a lot of shouting took place, with Ramon's mother saying at one point:

"No one cares about your stupid politics! You know the struggle that we have to endure in order to make ends meet! So stop preaching to me about politics! This has nothing to do with politics or counterrevolution"!

What had happened is that Ramon, a few months earlier, had attempted to leave the island for economic reasons with a handmade raft, together with a dozen other Cubans. However, the raft broke as soon as they left the shore. The police arrested them around five o'clock in the morning, when they were returning to their homes. Apart from the fact that they were soaking wet, the police did not have any other evidence that they were attempting to leave the island, so they had to release them. As a result the CDR took over to provide information about the "counterrevolutionary" tendency of Ramon to leave the island (Field-notes, Havana, July 2011).

As demonstrated in chapter four, hegemony is constituted through a process of constant conflict with subaltern groups, which takes place throughout the civil society-state nexus (Gramsci, 1971). Whilst civil society includes the realm of culture, institutions (school, media, trade unions, political parties and the Church), private initiatives and activities of the people (ibid). With the consolidation of the Revolution that was aiming at unity, the realm of civil society became state controlled (Lutjens, 1992).

The creation of a single unified party (PCC), the establishment of state institutions such as the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR), the Federation of Cuban Women, Confederations of Cuban Workers, the Union of Communist Youth,

the Association of Small Farmers and the banning of religion, among others are prime examples of state's control over the civil society (Lutjens, 1992; Wirtz, 2004; Fernández, 2008). Hence, in Cuba the certain existing autonomy of western civil societies on activities and initiatives taken by NGO's, the Church, political parties/groups, do not exist (Fernández, 2008). Consequently, in Cuba it is difficult to differentiate the state from the civil society (Fernández, 2003). Specifically, the majority of "State Controlled Organizations" follow the Party line (Fernández, 2008: 98). As a result they are "pro-governmental" organisations assigned to secure conformity and loyalty to the Party (Estado de SATS, 2012a). As depicted in the vignette, the control of state's institutions to Cuba's civil society is of high importance in order to understand how power is shaped in this context.

Specifically, the role of the CDRs is of paramount importance to state's power. The CDRs are neighbourhood volunteer citizen committees that report to the Ministry of Interior (UNHCR, 2003). On the one hand, they are assigned to promote volunteer work and social welfare such as vaccination campaigns, cleaning the neighbourhoods, recycling, blood banks, practicing evacuations for hurricanes, backing up the government in its fight against corruption and dealing with everyday problems or conflicts between neighbours (Sanchez, 2010). On the other, their main function is to monitor and control public opinion (UNHCR, 2003). As Sanchez (2010) argues they are "the eyes and ears" of the regime at the very micro-local everyday life level. They aim to track and report any dissident or suspicious activity, conspicuous consumption, "unauthorized meetings, including those with foreigners; and defiant attitudes towards the government or the Revolution" (UNHCR, 2003). As implied in the vignette this has severe implications for basic citizen rights such as

freedom of expression, movement, organisation, gatherings and interacting with foreigners.

Moreover, in the cultural realm, with the growing tendency and demand for revolutionary conformity, any deviations from the 'norm' were considered as treason, un-revolutionary, anti-Cuban or even counter-revolutionary (Fernández, 2000; Kapcia, 2000). As Kapcia (2000: 116) argues in this context "deviation could, of course, easily be translated into a rejection of 'deviancy', of 'abnormal' dress, hairstyles, sexual orientation or behaviour". Stemming from Fidel's "words to the intellectuals" music subcultures and their distinctive style soon became the focus of criminalisation and labelling. The stress on unity and integration under the regime's hegemony (in an effort to eliminate capitalist tendencies through social changes), led "to view any cultural expressions that stressed the distinctiveness of any group as suspicious at best and dangerous at worst" (Kapcia, 2005:148).

As a result a severe criminalisation of youth subcultures took place. The cases of nueva *trova* and rock are prime examples. As Moore (2006) argues nueva trova is the music genre mostly associated with the Cuban Revolution. It is a highly conscious and critical music, that had its origins in protest songs of Latin America and was influenced by rock and folk rock by the U.S. and Britain. It emerged in Cuba during the 1960s and was highly suppressed during the so called *quinquenio gris* (grey five years 1971-1976), which was the worst period in Cuba's history in terms of suppression of individual freedom of expression and artistic liberties. The suppression involved public condemnation of the artists work, "blacklisting and time served in jail "re-education camps" or in "voluntary" labour camps" (Moore, 2006:149). However, in the late 1970s the popularity and foreign interest to nueva

trova led, within a couple of years, for this genre to move from the margins of Cuban music to the mainstream (see Moore, 2006:135-169).

The trajectory of nueva trova is of high significance in the interpretation of Cuban underground rap. Firstly because the rappers claim that they continue what nueva trova had started in the 1960s (see chapter six). However they reject using metaphors and double meanings in their message, that nueva trova adopted (this resulted in various interpretations of the songs). The direct and challenging discourse of the rappers arguably poses more threats to the Cuban government than nueva trova did. Secondly it will be explored whether the appropriation of rap by the regime takes place due to its commercial appeal outside Cuba.

Similarly rock, as with every cultural element that was imported from the U.S., was viewed as subversive by the Cuban government due to its connections with the "decadent" lifestyle of western capitalist countries and alternative dressing styles that did not "conform to established norms" (Moore, 2006: 150). For the leadership and officials of cultural policy the use of the English language in Cuban rock songs, and its emphasis on physical gratification, liberation, transgression, "excess and pleasure, run contrary to the disciplined and self-sacrificing socialist mentality" of the Revolution (ibid). Rock was thus banned in the 1960s and only gained its "legality" by the state during the 1990s (Moore, 2006). As implied the post-subcultural elements (pleasure, excess) that rock presented cannot be differentiated form issues of power and resistance that the CCCS was focusing on. Thus taking into consideration the policies towards rock will help explain issues of power and resistance in rap and reggaeton.

Corresponding to the above, Fernández (2003) argues repression and intolerance, not only to dissidents but also to citizens that claim their right of freedom of speech or being different form the "norm" have been the main characteristics of power manifestation in Cuba. Hence the coercive part of hegemony has always been very visible in order for the Cuban regime to stabilise and maintain its power. This fact had severe impact in the realm of emotions for Cuban citizens. Specifically fear to raise your own voice, as well as fear and distrust towards other Cubans, in case they are informants of the state or working for the U.S. counter-intelligence, have been rampant (Kapcia, 2000; Fernández, 2003). These feelings and Cuba's internal control policies have been shaped and further exaggerated by the "siege mentality", as well as other internal and external factors (Kapcia, 2000).

As demonstrated in chapter four, siege mentality implies a feeling of isolation relating to both external and internal factors (Kapcia, 2008). The continuous external factor has been the constant threat of a U.S. military invasion and the promotion of counterrevolutionary movements on the island (i.e. continuous attempts by the U.S. to assassinate Castro, the collaboration of Cuban counterrevolutionaries in the Bay of Pigs event) and continuous economic crises (the U.S. embargo and the collapse of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s left Cuba stranded from its principal economic and political ally and augmented the feeling of isolation and crisis) (Gott, 2004; Kapcia, 2008; Brenner et al, 2008). It should be noted that "siege mentality" was not reduced during the alignment with the Soviet Union. Specifically Cubans where highly disillusioned during the 1962 Missile Crisis event, where the Soviet Union refused to keep its pledge and defend the Cubans (Brenner et al, 2008). These feelings of isolation and vulnerability were expressed by Castro: "We realized how alone we would be in an event of war" (cited in Brenner, 2008: 15). This

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is explicit in demonstrating the importance of feelings and affects in the shaping of politics at a macro-level.

Additionally internal factors related to the radicalisation of the "siege mentality". Firstly the emigration of thousands of Cubans from the beginning of the Revolution for political and economic reasons deprived Cuba of the bulk of professional labour such as doctors, engineers and skilled technicians (Eckstein & Barberia, 2008). It was calculated that around a million Cubans had fled the island up until the 1990s (ibid). While, at the summit of the economic crisis in 1994 the U.S. feared a massive and uncontrolled influx of Cuban migrants and hence, signed an agreement with Cuba, where the U.S. would accept up to 20,000 Cuban immigrants per year (ibid). As a result a form of double exclusion occurred both towards the U.S. and the Cuban emigrants, who were usually depicted as worms (gusanos), counterrevolutionaries and unpatriotic (Kapcia, 2000). Hence Ortiz's counterpoints on the interactions between the local and the global are of high relevance at this point, in order to understand issues of labelling. What is important to stress is that "siege mentality" resulting from all these factors, pervaded all layers of social life (Kapcia, 2000). This led at several points to Cuba's revolutionary trajectory to political introversion out of necessity, rather than on just ideological motives (Kapcia, 2000).

Corresponding to the above, values of cubanía at points in the history of the Cuban Revolution were under-emphasised as they were rendered impractical within specific conditions. For example *guerillerismo*, Marti's writings and Guevara's "New Man" were out of date during the 70s up until the mid 80s (Kapcia, 2000). During that period material incentives rather than moral ones were promoted (due to the trading

system and collaboration with the CMEA[55]) as well as consumerism, institutionalisation and bureaucratisation following the structure of the Soviet Union (Kapcia, 2000). However after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the condition of siege again necessitated sacrifices from all Cubans and state reforms in order to save the revolution (Eckstein, 2003). This is an explicit example, of how hegemony is always a process of becoming and being flexible to adjust to both internal and external factors. Hence it is able to correspond to specific conditions by adopting or dismissing parts of its ideological reservoir according to how these ideas and values help to address specific problems faced (Gramsci, 1971). This perhaps, could be a factor why the regime has survived throughout its fifty years. It is important to mention in the following sub-chapter which are the main axis of power for the Cuban state, in order to be able to interpret matters of resistance in the specific context.

5.3.1. State's Axis of Power: Ministry of Interior, the FAR and Bureaucracy

"Cuba's society is characterised mainly by militarism and bureaucracy" (Tafari, Field-notes, Havana, July 2010)

Arguably these constant conditions of siege and crisis, due to external and internal factors, have shaped the power of the Cuban state. As Petras & Morley (1992) argue the principal institutions of state power are the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence (the FAR) and Bureaucracy. As demonstrated earlier, one of the principal pillars of power of the Interior Ministry are the CDRs. Additionally, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior lies the police as well as what is commonly called in Cuba as "la seguridad del estado" (the state security). Specifically the "state security" is assigned to track and combat counterrevolutionary movements on the

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[55] The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) was the socialist trading bloc (Brenner et al, 2008).

island. However the Ministry of the Interior is not independent. Rather it is under the command of the FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces) (Klepak, 2008). Therefore, while the Ministry of the Interior is a key player in controlling popular discontent the FAR has a key role in the "maintenance of domestic order and peace" (Klepak, 2008: 70).

As Klepak (2008) argues the FAR has been a very essential element of the state's apparatus. Specifically Raul Castro since the consolidation of the revolution up to the current point in time is the Minister of the FAR, demonstrating that the Party and the military are inextricably tied (ibid). Although FAR's main responsibility is to deter U.S. military attacks its function extends to non-military tasks (ibid). As Klepak (2008) argues military officers began to occupy posts and undertake tasks that are normally conducted by civil authorities, like managing the national economy. Currently the FAR controls all foreign exchange businesses such as tourism, telecommunications, real estate assistance, clubs, restaurants, shopping centres, taxi companies, internal airline services, construction and management, arms and ammunition production among others (ibid). The reason for the extension of its responsibilities is the blind loyalty and devotion to the Party leaders (ibid). Moreover it was used to disseminate military discipline in economic businesses and production as well as, to combat corruption (ibid). Hence the Ministry of Defence has paramount influence and power in Cuba. Particularly, all Cubans are aware of the FAR's power and its loyalty and devotion to the regime (ibid). Moreover they are aware that the FAR would act to save the revolution as it stands (ibid). This awareness of the general population functions as a central feature of domestic order (ibid).

Furthermore, from the late 1970s until the mid 1980s there was an increased Sovietisation and institutionalisation of the Cuban structures, as well as a growing

economic and material dependence of Cuba to the Soviet Camp (Kapcia, 2000). The result of the massive institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of Cuban structures have led to what Harris (1992a: 80) calls bureaucratic centralism:

A system of decision making in which all meaningful decisions are made at the top of the party and state bureaucracy, with little or no input from the people" (Harris, 1992a: 80)

As a result people's organisation and participation have been blocked by the institutionalisation of the civil society. The vertical top-down approach of decision making, personnel selection with the main criteria being that of blind loyalty to the Party, personalised politics and the use of the coercive hand of the state in case of opposition and control of the civil society, characterise state power in Cuba (Harris, 1992b). Additionally, similarly to the high ranks of the FAR, high level bureaucrats and managers enjoy advantages such as access to hard currency and prestige (Petras & Morley, 1992). Arguably, hence the ruling class in Cuba are the high officials of the Military, the Ministry of Interior and high level bureaucrats. Simultaneously though, the faith and hence the legitimacy of the Cuban government still lies in the fulfilment of Cuba Libre and also in the charismatic figure of Fidel Castro. However, due to the severe economic crisis after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the legitimacy of the state's hegemony has been put to question by Cuban citizens. In the following part of the chapter the severe structural changes that occurred on the island will be highlighted. This is of high importance as following the CCCS perspective it will be demonstrated that Cuban rap emerged during that period.

5.4 Special Period Onwards: Economic Reforms and Structural Changes

"Life in Cuba before the collapse of the Soviet Union was of a good standard, because we received material and economic support from them. After the collapse, life just became a struggle to make ends meet". (Tafari, Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

Imagine your reaction if you had to substitute sugar water for food every third day for a year, and as a result you lost your eyesight because of vitamin deficiency (as happened to fifty thousand Cubans temporarily), and lost twenty to twenty-five pounds (the average for Cubans in 1993-1994). Imagine oil imports dropping by 70 percent over a four-year period (1989-1993), so that you could not drive your car and buses ran infrequently because of gasoline shortages. Picture yourself undergoing an operation at a formerly reliable hospital, where now several doctors and nurses were absent because of transportation problems, and there were hardly any anaesthetics, medicines and bandages. In 1990, few Cubans imagined they would ever live this kind of life, even when Cuban President Fidel Castro announced that the country was entering a "Special Period in a Time of Peace" (Brenner et al, 2008: 1).

The remarkable accomplishments of the revolutionary regime in the areas of health care, education, housing, agrarian reforms, arts and sports are undisputable (Fernández, 2000). Additionally, the eradication of any type of discrimination (gender, race) and unemployment or under-employment as well as, the strengthening of equality by eliminating class divisions, through a more equal redistribution of wealth, were some of the major goals of the Revolution (Pérez-Sarduy & Stubbs, 2000). It is a fact that blacks, women, unemployed, the poor and

the peasants were the ones that benefited the most from the revolutionary project (ibid). However these accomplishments, as well as constant promises of the Revolution for material and spiritual well-being, equality, social justice and non-discrimination came also at costs, as they heightened the demands and raised the expectations of citizenship of the younger generations towards the state (Fernández, 2000).

As becomes apparent from the earlier passage, the rapid economic changes that occurred in Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union affected all aspects of social life (Pérez-Sarduy & Stubbs, 2000). The severe austere conditions that followed led Fidel to declare that Cuba was entering into a "Special Period in times of Peace" (Brenner et al, 2008:1). Additionally, "option zero" (Halebsky & Kirk, 1992: 1) meant zero assistance and trade. Specifically the Special Period was characterised by job insecurity, the tightening of U.S. embargo, scarcity and rationing of food, lack of medicine and basic domestic supplies, power-cuts, problems with the transportation system, rise of racism and the marginalisation of urban Afro-Cubans among others (Pérez-Sarduy & Stubbs, 2000; De la Fuente, 2001). This resulted in Castro in 1994 encouraging an exodus of those who wanted to leave the country, in order to ease socio-political tensions and crisis (Eckstein & Barberia, 2008). A massive migration of 38, 560 Cubans occurred at that time (ibid). It is currently estimated that around 1.4 million Cubans live abroad, with an approximate 1.2 million living in the U.S. (Azicri, 2000). The impact of the Cuban expatriates to the economy and culture of Cuba has been of high significance as will be demonstrated in this, as well as, the following chapters.

Furthermore, the shortage of food led to the reintroduction of the rationing book (*libreta*), which guaranteed a minimum provision of food for everyone (Kapcia, 2008). In addition, while the material conditions in the health system and education worsened, the government kept foreign investment away from these sectors, securing equal access to these services for all Cubans (Kapcia, 2000). However due to the austere conditions the quality in food provision, health, medicine and education was severely worsened (Fernández, 2000):

One of the main anecdotes from the Special period that reflects the scarcity of food is mincemeat with banana. Banana with tomato salsa was the mincemeat with tomato sauce. Additionally common everyday expressions, which stemmed out from the Special Period are: "no hay mas nada" (there is nothing more) and "hay que luchar" (you have to struggle) or "estoy aquí en la lucha" (I am here in the struggle). (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

Arguably the first everyday-life common expression reflects the condition of austerity but also issues of conformity to the system, implying that there is not anything one can do to change his/hers reality. While the latter expressions demonstrate the appropriation of the word struggle (lucha) by ordinary people to denote the struggle to make ends meet.

Moreover, the government legalised a limited range of self-employment jobs, such as bike-taxi drivers (which however are prohibited from carrying tourists), the *paladares* (house/family-run restaurants) and room rentals (Kapcia, 2008; Sharpley & Knight, 2009). This decision was partly because these unofficial enterprises pre-

existed in an illegal state and also because the government could not economically afford to sustain all its population in the public sector or the state industries (Kapcia, 2008; Sharpley & Knight, 2008). What should be stressed is that many of the economic reforms that the government has implemented have been mainly practical decisions (Eckstein, 2008). Specifically economic reforms are pushed by the informal part of civil society and the pervasive black market that characterises Cuban society (ibid). Arguably the, despite the high institutionalisation, the struggle between the civil society-state nexus affects economic decisions by the government.

One of the most crucial economic reforms that the government implemented at that time was the introduction of a double currency (Cuban pesos and convertible pesos-CUC) (Eckstein, 2008). In 2011, 23 Cuban pesos equal approximately one CUC ($1. 10). The average Cuban salary, which is paid in Cuban pesos ranges from 15- 20 CUC per month and does not even cover basic needs. Similar to the legalisation of self-employment jobs this economic reform was a practical decision by the government as the use of dollars had become a pervasive element of the informal economy (Eckstein, 2008). Additionally, taxes were introduced for the first time after the beginning of the revolution (Kapcia, 2000). Taxation currently ranges up to 60% of the citizen's income (Moore, 2006).

Some scholars (Fernández, 2000; Moore, 2006) have argued that (despite the official discourse of the state of defending socialism to "death") Cuba is slowly embracing a capitalist or socio-capitalist economic system. Specifically the Cuban state has implemented the double currency in order to adjust to the hard currency-based global economy (Eckstein, 2008). Also, in an attempt to seek foreign

investments, it opened up its doors to tourism and joint ventures associations with foreign tourist companies (Sharpley & Knight, 2009). As a result, tourism, since the 1990s, has been one of the principal resources of hard currency for the Cuban economy (ibid). It could be argued that since that period Cuba has entered into a post-Fordist mode of production[56]. Specifically it downsized its sugar industry in favour of the tourist service sector (Peters, 2008).

Moreover, in the search of political and economic allies in the 2000s Cuba forged new economic ties with Venezuela and China (Brenner et al, 2008). Specifically its alignment to Venezuela[57] is seen to continue the "South to South" counter-hegemonic policies against the U.S. (ibid). Simultaneously though, its growing foreign dept implies that the vision of an economically independent Cuba has still not been fulfilled (ibid). Additionally in 2006 a "soft" transition of power occurred with Fidel Castro passing his presidency to his brother Raul, with Raul Castro maintaining the position of Commander –in-Chief of the FAR (ibid).

The latest economic reforms that further demonstrate the shift towards socio-capitalism are: the government fired half a million Cubans from the public sector in 2010 and in 2011 legalised the sale and purchase of private property such as houses and cars (Shank, 2011). Once more these reforms have been a practical decision by the government as purchasing and renting houses and cars have pre-existed in an illegal state in Cuba's civil society. Additionally, many Cubans, due to the low salary in the public domain, have been simultaneously working "illegally" as

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[56] Although it was never a highly industrial country

[57] Cuba's currently "main trading partner and fuel supplier" (Parrondo, 2008: 133)

private entrepreneurs in the black market or as car engineers, painters and constructors among others. These arguments are demonstrated by the following experiences:

Adrian, an Afro-Cuban in his early forties, resided with his wife and son in the countryside, approximately two hours from Havana. However, his job was in Havana. As a result, he was trying to "permutar" (exchange) his house in the country side for a house in Havana. These "exchanges", were legal and were conducted between individuals. However they frequently involved a sum of money in CUC, depending on the size of the houses that were to be exchanged and their location. Adrian had to "invent" (inventar) or "resolve" (resolver) (everyday common used words that describe ways to "invent" money and make ends meet) $100 in order to be able to move to Havana with his family. At the same time, Gemma, a mixed-race woman in her early forties was renting her Lada car to a friend of hers in order to make ends meet. Simultaneously, Fernando, an Afro-Cuban in his late fifties, had left his job in the state-owned car-maintenance facility and was working as a private entrepreneur in refinishing and refurbishing cars. Despite the problems that he faced with the CDR frequently visiting him, he thought that it was worth the risk, as he was able to earn more than he was earning before. (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

These illustrate how Cubans in their everyday practices take practical decisions in order to "resolver" (make ends meet) and invent ways (*inventar*) to adjust between the hard structural conditions and the demands in the official part of life, to support the Revolutionary regime. It is important to highlight at this point the impact that

these reforms had and have on Cubans in terms of social exclusion, discrimination and feelings of subordination. These issues will show that Cuba, despite the fundamental differences, shares some similarities to the rest of the world.

5.4.1 Cuba's Similarities to the Rest of the World: Class Division, Social Exclusion and Race Discrimination

When someone takes a walk in central parts of Havana he/she will observe that Convertible pesos are needed in order to buy gasoline. In super-markets or commercial stores with clothes, cosmetics and shoes everything is sold in CUC. In hotels, clubs and the majority of restaurants and cafes you are charged in CUC. Also, during my summer visit to Cuba in 2010, the industry that provided women's sanitary products had closed. As a result, it was extremely difficult for women to obtain them, because the prices of these products in Havana's commercial shops were the same as the ones that one would be found in Boots, Tesco's or other similar shops in Britain and Europe. With an average wage of $ 15-20 one cannot afford to pay $ 2.5 to buy women's sanitary products. Maria my Afro-Cuban friend said to me one day, when I asked her how much she earns:

"You know that I am working at the Ministry of Social Welfare 9am-5pm everyday and then I am attending to a Masters degree in the evening. You know the problems with the transportation here. So, I usually wake up at 6.30 a.m. in order to make sure that I will be in work on time. Simultaneously, I have to take care of my daughter. And for all these, what do I receive? $20 per month that is not enough to cover anything! Whereas my neighbours, one of them is working in the airport and the other in the tourist sector, so they have

more easy access to hard currency and to 'resolve' things. It is no secret that a
person selling ice-cream to tourists in Varadero (tourist area) earns more (due
to the tourist tips) than a doctor in the public sector" (Field-notes, Havana,
August 2010)

It has been argued that the implementation of the "double currency" had severe implications for Cuban social equality and gave rise to class divisions (Jiménez, 2008). As implied in the vignette, those that do not have access to CUC, often find it really hard to make ends meet and be able to cover their basic needs (ibid). According to Jiménez (2008), this is also a consequence of the decreases in the public-sector wage; the weakened purchase power of Cuban's paid in Cuban pesos, along with the reduced monthly rations and state subsidies. Since this economic reform, as De la Fuente (2001) argues, Cuba tends to be divided along the lines of those who have access to CUC and those who have not.

A consequence then, of the implementation of the double currency is for class relations to re-emerge along the same lines of access or not to hard currency (Jiménez, 2008). Additionally, class division is inextricably related to the augmentation of racial inequality and racial discrimination (Pérez-Sarduy & Stubbs, 2000). Specifically, there are two main sources of access to CUC: firstly, family remittances sent by the expatriate Cuban community to their families in Cuba and secondly, access to the tourist sector (De la Fuente, 2001). However, as De la Fuente (2001) argues, white Cubans are the ones who benefit the most from the remittances sent by their families abroad, since the vast majority of migrants (from the beginning of the Revolution) were white. Thus, in 1997 it was calculated that

from the approximately $800 million that enter the island each year, $680 went to white recipients (ibid). If we take into consideration that 60%-70% of the Cuban population is estimated to be "black" then class divisions in terms of race are extremely important (Sarduy & Stubbs, 2000).

Moreover, while Afro-Cubans have limited access to remittances, they are also largely excluded from legal access to the lucrative tourist sector (Kapcia, 2008). This was partly because the tourist sector became highly attractive and competitive, as many professional Cubans abandoned their previous professions in order to work in this sector (De la Fuente, 2008). Arguably though, the exclusion of Afro-Cubans from the tourist sector was due to obvious racial discrimination in employing or promoting black-Cubans in tourism (ibid). Specifically, in the late 1990s 60% of those employed in the tourist sector were "light skinned" (Jiménez, 2008). Some have argued (De la Fuente, 2001; Kapcia, 2008) that this discrimination was partly due to foreign enterprises avoiding hiring Afro-Cubans. However, others have argued (Corrales, 2002; Sharpley and Knight, 2009) and was demonstrated earlier, that state tourist enterprises are under the jurisdiction of the Party and the FAR. Hence, these institutions are the "gatekeepers" to the tourist sector (ibid). Consequently they define which citizens have access to it or not (Corrales, 2002). According to Sharpley and Knight (2009: 251):

Cuban employees working for internationally managed hotels are selected not by the international partner but by the Cuban state, usually on the basis of patronage or relationships with the Communist Party. Individuals without links to the Communist Party/state machinery are unlikely to have access to the tourism sector other than through informal or illegal occupations.

In other words, access to the state mechanism, though informal bonds or conformity to the dominant dogma, represents an avenue to the tourist sector and thus to economic security. Whatever the criteria for the selection of the personnel in the tourist sector, the outcome is that Afro-Cubans are excluded from the main legal source of hard currency.

Importantly, as McGarrity (1992) argues it was evident from the 1990s onwards that racism was an ingrained ideology in Cuba (at both micro and macro levels) despite the regime's efforts to eliminate it. Thus racist stereotypes that identified Afro-Cubans with criminality, promiscuousness, marginality and social dangerousness have not been eradicated (De la Fuente, 2001). These, stereotypes are further augmented through media representations of Afro-Cubans as criminals, jineteros/as (prostitutes), servants, slaves or other marginal characters (Pérez-Sarduy & Stubbs, 2000). Additionally, the government has been accused of "institutional racism" as there was a very small representation of Afro-Cubans in significant power positions, not only in the Cuban Communist Party but also throughout the structures of the state's apparatus (De la Fuente, 2001). There have been some attempts for an equal representation of Afro-Cubans in higher positions of the state's structure, but the changes in the racial composition of leadership have been extremely slow (ibid). It can be argued hence, that the revolutionary regime has not managed to eradicate racism. This is also evident in everyday expressions such as *"mira que prieta esta ella"* (look how black she is), experiences, anecdotes and patterns of social interaction (McGarrity, 1992). The exclusion and discrimination of Afro-Cubans is of high importance because as will be demonstrated in the chapter on Cuban rap it was

mainly poor Afro-Cubans that found rap as a means to express their feelings, experiences and restore their identities.

Another consequence of the exclusion of Afro-Cubans from the tourist sector and the promotion of tourism was the re-emergence of *jineterismo* (mainly prostitution) as well as sex-tourism (Jiménez, 2008). Aspects, that the Revolution had put severe efforts in eradicating since its consolidation (ibid). *Jineterismo* actually means "riding". It implies a person (*jinete*) that has the ability "to develop social relationships that will lead to being able to obtain goods and services in short supply" (Pérez-López, 1995: 97). It involves begging from tourists (food, money, toothpastes, clothes and more), offering guiding services, selling goods (sometimes even stolen) such as cigars at below market-prices, engaging in black market activities and prostitution, which involves both genders and homosexuals (Trumbull, 2001). In these activities the black population, deprived from the legal accesses to hard currency, tends to be overrepresented (Kapcia, 2008). The same overrepresentation of the black population is encountered both in the rise of petty crime, as well as the prison population (De la Fuente, 2001). Furthermore,

Despite the heat and the high levels of humidity during summer time, Cubans are not permitted to walk around without their T-shirts on (for issues of decency and morality) even if it is just to go from their homes to the grocery store to buy a pack of cigarettes. As a result, many Cubans carry a T-shirt on their shoulder and as soon as they see a police car they put it on. That was the case when myself and Alejandro (one of the Afro-Cuban rappers) were walking towards the state's grocery store, when a police car approached from the back without us realising it. They stopped him and asked for his identification papers, castigated him for being indecent in public and gave him a fine. If he had not

had identification papers with him this could have lead to spending a night at the police station, just for not wearing his T-shirt (Field-notes, Havana, August 2010).

The vignette depicts what De la Fuente (2001) argues, that police discrimination towards the Afro-Cubans is widespread. Specifically, the contemporary enforcement of the 1979 Act on "social dangerousness"

> still allowed for the repression (including re-education through internment) of individuals with 'a special proclivity' to commit crimes. In other words, a person whose conduct was deemed to be 'manifestly against the norms of socialist morality' could be deprived of freedom without committing acts defined as crimes in the law (De la Fuente, 2001: 315).

These acts include all types of antisocial behaviour, such as drunkenness, vagrancy, and drug addiction and gave much space for arbitrary enforcement (ibid). Again the proportion of Afro-Cubans labelled as antisocial is significantly higher than the whites (ibid). As Pérez-Sarduy & Stubbs (2000: 7) have argued "the black goes from being a slave (rebel) to a member of the underclass (criminal)". Arguably then, similar to western countries, race discrimination and class divisions are evident in contemporary Havana. In the following section issues of relative deprivation and social exclusion will be further highlighted.

5.4.1.1. Colonialism and Relative Deprivation

It was approximately 10 p.m and we were at the Malecón where I, two Italian friends, Alejandro (one of the rappers) and a female Afro-Cuban friend, were talking about police harassment in Havana. Suddenly we realised that there was a young man next to us, looking and listening closely to the conversation.

The two Cubans in our group felt quite agitated as they were not sure if he was listening because he was interested in the conversation or because he was a chivato (snitch) that could potentially cause them problems. Thus in the end, Alejandro asked him if he was irritated by our conversation and if not, if he wanted to join us. The young Cuban said that the reason why he was there was because his girlfriend was with a tourist, a couple of metres away and he was keeping an eye on her. She would then go with the tourist to a hotel and then would meet him in order to enjoy the money earned together.

A couple of weeks earlier, I was hanging out at night at the Malecón, together with José, Alejandro (two of the rappers) and Yuso, a friend of theirs. At a point I needed to use the toilet. So we decided to head towards one of the 5 star hotels by the Malecón. We entered and I moved on to the toilet without facing any problems. When I returned the manager of the hotel accompanied by two security guards was talking to the guys at the entrance of the hotel. The conversation went as follows:

J: So you are saying to me that there is no problem for Cubans entering the hotel?

Manager: Yes of course anyone can enter.

J: Well then ok, we will go and sit over there (he indicated to some big leather couches in the hotel's reception) came on guys!

Manager: Well you cannot exactly do that...

J: I know... and I know as well that you are just doing your job and get paid an average Cuban wage... But don't come to me and tell me that all Cubans can enter freely the hotel!

So we left. Everyone was feeling frustrated. The conversation was emotionally

driven for the rest of the hour, as they were saying, "this hotel is ours! The sea

is ours! The beach resorts are ours! The clubs are ours! Why on earth are we

deprived of enjoying them?!

What was also clear is that if, instead of me, there was a Cuban woman that

wanted to use the bathroom, they would have either not let her enter or the

security would have accompanied her to the ladies room, just to make sure she

did not steal anything (Field-notes, Havana, August 2010).

As depicted in the vignette an important consequence correlated to the promotion of tourism is the segregation between tourists and Cubans that has been imposed by the government (Jiménez, 2008). This has been termed as the "tourist apartheid" (ibid). According to Pérez-Sarduy, Stubbs (2000) and Jiménez (2008) this term mainly refers firstly, to the prevalence of white employees in the sector and secondly, to the "gated community" structure of tourist beach resorts and hotels. Despite the fact that now Cubans are generally permitted to enter tourist resorts they are excluded due to their economic conditions, restrictions in the freedom of movement and legislations that aim to restrict the interactions between Cubans and tourists (Pérez-Sarduy &Stubbs, 2000; Jiménez, 2008). This has arguably rendered the average Cubans as "second class citizens": tourists can enjoy all the beauties of Cuba whereas the majority of Cubans, due to their economic conditions and state control measures, cannot (Jiménez, 2008).

It is explicit in the vignette that Cubans are currently experiencing a more "subtle" form of colonialism through tourism. The majority of Cubans do recognise that

foreigners can enjoy more liberties, rights and power than Cubans. Additionally, the vignette illustrates that jineterismo is seen as one of the solutions to make ends meet and shows forms of exploitation between men and women. Arguably though, it also demonstrates feelings of subordination towards the tourists and strain, as Cubans (especially Cuban men) cannot provide any more the means to satisfy their needs or those of their beloved ones. Thus, feelings of subordination in comparison to tourists, gender exploitation and relative deprivation (see Young, 1999) have also been some of the consequences of the economic crisis and governmental policies.

Furthermore, it could be argued that relative deprivation can be seen as a historical memory of issues of domination and subordination as well as, lifestyle. As Adrian explained to me when I asked him how life was in Havana before the Special period:

"Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, with a 300 pesos monthly salary (what today corresponds to approximately $12), a Cuban could have a good quality of life and a decent lifestyle, with access to material goods and ability to go out at nights for a drink or dinner. This capacity is very limited today for the majority of Cubans" (Field-notes, Havana, July 2011).

Largely what is highlighted in these fieldwork episodes is the gap between official discourses of socialism, racial and social equality and everyday life. Arguably relative deprivation relates also to the non-fulfilment of promises and raised expectations that followed the consolidation of revolution (Fernández, 2000). Specifically, together with social exclusion, class divisions, raise of discrimination and subordination to tourists there have also been increased levels of corruption, rise of machismo and the spread of consumer values and materialism (Kapcia, 2000). As demonstrated earlier,

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the faith in the revolutionary regime was not so much material but rather spiritual and moral. The Cubans desired the long-denied completion of the dream of Cuba Libre, where experiences of subordination, self-depreciation and domination by external forces would be eliminated. Hence although Cubans have not lost their faith in the vision of Cuba Libre they have lost their faith (especially the younger generations) in the regime's ability to fulfil it (Fernández, 2000). As will be further demonstrated in chapter seven, under these conditions, the state's legitimacy was and is at stake. So what do Cuban citizens do in their everyday hard reality and their interactions with the state power? It will be demonstrated that conscious and unconscious resistances have started to appear more within Cuba's civil society.

5.4.2 Lo informal: Resistance in Everyday Life

It was approximately 10 pm. at the Malecón and I was with Ernesto, one of the rappers and seven more friends of his. At some point I asked him:

El.: Do you live from your music?

Er.: No.

El.: So how do you make ends meet?

Er.: I "invent" as everybody else in this country.

"Let me give you an example", said Miguel one of the Afro-Cuban friends in our group.

M: A couple of years ago we wanted to go with José (one of the rappers) to the state-owned camping site for a vacation. The camping facilities are where the majority of Cubans go on vacations because it is significantly cheaper in comparison to tourist-hotels. Me and José had to sell our clothes and shoes in order to afford to go for a five day camping trip. This is how you "invent".

Supposedly this is illegal; if they (police) catch you selling your things, but everyone does it. (Field-notes, Havana, July, 2010)

Despite the aforementioned conditions and economic reforms, the regime's doctrine has not changed. It still calls for 'Socialismo o Muerte' (Socialism or Death), for sacrifice and daily struggle in order for the Revolution and its values to be maintained (Fernández, 2000). At the same time, conformity to the official dogma and the awareness that the state rewards obedience rather than actual skills is widely known to the majority of Cubans (Morin, 2003). Also, despite some slow changes and opening of spaces, the fear to express yourself freely still prevails in many areas (Fernández, 2000; Kapcia, 2008). For example *actos de repudio* (public acts of repudiation) harassment, intimidation or even incarceration still occur (Fernández, 2000). Consequently, the affect of fear still corrodes social trust and autonomous collective action is still very difficult if not impossible (Fernández, 2003).

As demonstrated earlier, due to worsening economic conditions and their consequences, power abuse, corruption and suppression, bureaucratic inefficiencies and widespread mistrust and frustration, Cubans have lost their faith in the government to keep its promises (ibid). This has led to an increase and predominance of the informal part of civil society as well as, to the re-emergence of *choteo* (Fernández, 2000). What predominate are the informal values

the personal touch, the role of person-to-person contact, and the bond among family members and friends above the impersonal norms of the state (Fernández, 2003: 8)

These smaller scale networks provide a safety net and cover the needs that the state is no longer able to provide (Fernández, 2000). Informal associations are mostly

based on feelings, affections [mainly love, trust, liability, honour, *ser buena gente* (to be a good person)] and "personal exceptionalism" (Fernández, 2000: 30). The latter implies to break the rules momentarily by prioritising the personal needs (material and spiritual) and of the beloved ones (Fernández, 2000). Also, flexibility, relaxation, affection and spontaneity towards the official norms are required in order to serve particular needs, wants and desires (material and non-material) (ibid). In other words, personal exceptionalism reflects what has been termed as "double morality" (Wirtz, 2004:414). Mainly, this term is used to describe:

> the problematics of taking contradictory public and private stances, namely espousing revolutionary values while discretely subverting those values in the name of economic survival (Wirtz, 2004: 414).

As implied in the vignette, the spread of double morality had as a consequence for the majority of Cuban citizens to live outside the boundaries of the law (Henken, 2008). This fact is reflected in everyday Cuban phrases like "inventar" (to invent money), "resolver" (to make ends meet), and "todo está prohibido pero todo vale" (everything is prohibited but anything goes). It could be argued that "double morality" and the informal part of civil society is a site of unconscious resistance against the constraints of the regime (Fernández, 2000; Wirtz, 2004). By subverting the law and prioritising the well being of their family and friends Cubans demonstrate their disillusion to the system as it stands (Fernández, 2000).

Furthermore, through the expansion of double morality traditional values of the revolution, like solidarity and collective action "gave way to individualism, with everyone operating in the informal sector and with family networks replacing the state systems" (Kapcia, 2008:163) Nevertheless, it is important to stress that all these elements co-existed with the predominant revolutionary ideology

(counterpoints) within the realm of civil society (Fernández, 2000). However they were subtler until the mid-1980s (ibid). During the 1990s crisis they started to take precedence (Fernández, 2000). This occurred because, under all these transformations, kinship and family bonds proved stronger than state's commitments (Eckstein, 2008).

Additionally, as demonstrated earlier many of the economic reforms that the government implemented were already widespread in the informal part of civil society and the black market. Arguably then the unconscious resistive nature of the informal part of society has a strong impact on reshaping state policies and hence on reshaping state power. Simultaneously though, double morality demonstrates a form of conformity to the system as it assumes loyalty to the regime in the public sector while subverting this conformity in the private informal sector in order to make ends meet. Consequently, drawing on the CCCS's perspective, while these practices subvert power relations momentarily they reproduce them in the long run. Most importantly,

What one observes when visiting Havana is the difference between people during daytime and night-time. During the daytime the majority of faces are marked with the hardship of the day to day struggle to make ends meet. This image completely transforms at night, when people gather at the Malecón or at parks, music fiestas and carnivals organised by the state in main squares of Havana, or at individual fiestas in houses. During these gatherings people get drunk, laugh, dance, they fall in love and in general they lose themselves from the everyday hard reality, responsibilities and prohibitions (Fieldwork notes, 2010, 2011).

This illustrates, that the *tobacco*-heterogeneous element of Cuban culture is still prominent in everyday life. Through the re-emergence of *choteo* and the element of *pachanga* (festive culture, dance and carnival) Cubans arguably escape from their everyday hardships through drunkenness, dance, laughter, eroticism and momentarily loss. As Fernández (2003:15) argues "exit (physical or symbolic) from the island" seems to be the most desired option in contemporary Havana.

Through these practices Cubans unconsciously and momentarily resist the system by experiencing an "illusion of freedom, in an orgy of ritual, dance, music" (Ortiz, 2001:1) and songs. Under the hardships of everyday life in Havana, Cubans try to disengage themselves from politics (Fernández, 2003). The tobacco realm and the a-politicisation, especially of youths will be explicitly demonstrated in the chapter on reggaeton. However, as demonstrated earlier, the hegemonic model of the ideal Cuban is to be active and critical, because if they are inactive they are not perceived to be truly revolutionaries. Simultaneously though, if they are active and criticise the problems existing in contemporary Cuba, they can be labelled as counterrevolutionaries. This contradictory element on Cuban conduct will be explicitly demonstrated in the following chapter.

Moreover, the heterogeneous-informal realm demonstrates the importance of feelings and of the tobacco realm (subterranean values), which oppose the mainstream values of discipline and work. Thus, hedonism, spontaneity, individual expression, autonomy, fun, laughter and contempt towards the value of work and in some instances violence (especially in reggaeton fiestas violent events between the audience is not rare), could be seen as forms of momentarily and unconscious resistance that subvert power relations, within the specific context. However, similar

to *choteo* this festive culture, although it gains a temporary from of liberty and autonomy, as soon as the fiestas and the carnivals end, everything goes back to normal (Ortiz, 2001). According to Ortiz (2001) it is a double-sided form of resistance that in the long term reproduces power relations. This will be further explored in the chapter on reggaeton.

What should be stressed at this point is that despite the disenchantment with the regime, cubanía (Cuba's hegemonic ideology) still plays a very important role in people's lives. As Fernández (2000: 41) argues:

The irony is that the Cuban people, although disenchanted, do not abandon totally their aspirations for a new and improved polity and yet continue to act in everyday life in ways detrimental to the normative models they so desire. While seeking in the informal practices of the politics of affection satisfaction for their immediate needs and wants, they also pursue the utopia implied [in Cuba's revolutionary ideology (*cubanía*)].

Thus the fulfilment of Cuba Libre is still at the hearts and minds of Cuban people. However the gap between theory and practice in the regime's policies has undermined the belief and fervour of the revolutionary project (Fernández, 2000). It has also hurt the feelings, aspirations and desires of the younger generations for the completion of the dream of Cuba Libre (Fernandez, 2000). Consequently, many of the youth tend to reject the *"double morality"*, meaning that they do not take a different stance between public and private realms. Rather, as depicted in the vignette at the beginning of this section, they talk openly about everyday life and practices in Havana.

Furthermore, they adopt innovative styles, form subcultures and subcultural music genres in order to express themselves more freely, to create spaces for their own needs (material and spiritual) and to provide solutions to their problems faced in everyday reality. These solutions can be unconscious forms of resistance (like the one depicted in choteo or Cuba's festive culture of tobacco, see also chapter seven) or might take more conscious forms (see chapter on Cuban rap).

Specifically, despite the severe suppression of the civil society there have been independent groups that are making valuable efforts to gain space and achieve changes (Estado de SATS, 2012a). Thus religious groups, human rights activists, the Women in White (las Damas de Blanco)[58], the Legal Association[59], the Movement for Racial Integration and most importantly independent artists, bloggers[60] and journalists are pushing forward the limits of civil society (Estado de SATS, 2012a). Hence, they consciously resist state's practices and call for changes in order to improve the living conditions of Cubans. As will be demonstrated further in the chapter on rap, due to the advancement of technology (although in Cuba it is still at an embryonic state) independent artists, with the material help of tourists in many cases, have found avenues to produce their art independently from the state's institutions and control (Estado de SATS, 2012a).

Moreover the provision of internet through the black market has given the opportunity to bloggers to express themselves and also to inform Cubans and the outside world on the developments on the island, that are not to be found in the

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[58] Women who fight for the liberation of political prisoners (Las Damas del Blanco, 2003)

[59] It consults citizens on their civil rights or in case they have problems with the law (Estado de SATS, 2012a)

[60] although the access and use of the internet is still very limited and restricted

official state sponsored media (Estado de SATS, 2012c). The fear of the state to these developments in the civil society and its efforts to suppress independent media, activists and arts became apparent during the visit of Pope Benedict XVI in March 2012 (Estado de SATS, 2012b). In what was termed as operation "Vote of Silence", around 300 artists, activists and bloggers were arrested, telecommunications were interrupted and severe harassment and suppression by the "state security" took place (ibid). Hence the "Vote of Silence" was an explicit demonstration on the ultimate reliability of the regime to its coercive mechanism (mainly the FAR).

It could be argued that despite the belief of the people in Cuba's hegemonic ideology, the regime's manifestation of power is based more on hegemony's coercive mechanism, than that of consent. As demonstrated militarisation, violence and suppression of civil liberties, as well as spreading fear and distrust among the citizens have been the main characteristics of the regime's maintenance to power throughout the years. Whether this condition will change due to international or internal factors still remains to be seen. Most importantly this chapter aimed to demonstrate that local knowledge, ideology, structural changes, affects, global and local interactions, the homogenous (sugar) and the heterogeneous (tobacco/relajo) part of civil society are all equally important in order to understand power and resistance in Havana.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to bring to the surface the intellectual power of Cuba, through the works of Martí, Ortiz and Guevara. It was demonstrated that their

perspectives are or paramount importance in the interpretation of the Cuban context. Moreover their perspectives are compatible with Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille. It was also illustrated that their works were principally an act of resistance to coloniality, colonialism and U.S. intervention on Cuban affairs. Furthermore the importance of Cuba's hegemonic ideology, together with Cuba's power structures, was illustrated. The interconnection between the state and civil society was shown in order to demonstrate the high institutionalisation of Cuba's civil society, as well as the importance of feelings, structures, external forces and the condition of siege in shaping the regime's power.

Principally I have attempted to demonstrate the unique and complex case of Cuban politics and culture. It was shown that Cuban politics and culture cannot be differentiated by external affairs and previous experiences of colonialism and neo-colonialism. In order to understand and interpret the complex shaping of power and resistance in Cuba, internal and external factors, western, local, macro and micro perspectives should be applied. Hence feelings, affects, ideologies, politics, economic structures, internal and external influences are interconnected in the shaping of Cuban culture and politics. Arguably despite Cuba's fundamental differences with the rest of the world the bridging of the micro with the macro is suggested in order to understand structures of power and forms of resistance on a more global scale.

Corresponding to the above I have attempted to illustrate the corrosive impacts that the economic crisis of the 1990s had for Cuba's society. By doing so I aimed to illustrate that Cuba shares some similarities to the rest of the world. Specifically issues of social exclusion, discrimination and relative deprivation were demonstrated

in order to show on the one hand, the gap between the official discourses of socialism and everyday reality. On the other hand it aimed to show that Cubans are again experiencing feelings of subordination through a "subtle" form of colonialism through tourism. In the last part of the chapter I have highlighted manifestations of both conscious and unconscious resistance in the civil society. I attempted to illustrate the importance of unconscious forms of resistance in the informal realm, as well as the difficulty of organised action and activism as a form of conscious resistance in Cuba. These issues of resistance will be further scrutinised in the following chapters on rap and reggaeton.

Chapter Six: Cuban Underground Rap, Power and Resistance

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters we saw that subcultural and post-subcultural theories, despite tensions, are compatible at both micro and macro levels. Similarly it was demonstrated that a bridging of hegemony with post-hegemonic aspects of affects, loss and excess is not only possible but also required in order to provide a better understanding of the relationship between power, resistance and subcultures. By investigating the colonial difference of Cuba I aimed to illustrate that a broader canon of thought is needed than simply a western one, in order to understand the manifestations of power and resistance in Cuba. Hence it was shown that colonialism, imperialism and the works of Ortiz, Martí and Guevara are necessary to be considered when investigating Cuban culture and politics. Furthermore the compatibility of those writers to Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille was also illustrated. Consequently by showing the compatibility of local and western theories and that contemporary Cuba shares some similarities to the rest of the world, I aimed to show the importance of thinking from both local and western perspectives. Largely this thesis advocates a bridging of modern, postmodern and local perspectives on power and resistance on Cuba and a bridging of the first two western perspectives on a more general global basis.

Using ethnographic data from research into contemporary Cuban underground rap groups, I will explore some of the paradoxes occurring within Cuban culture and power relations. The nature of ideology in Cuba creates an extraordinary paradox that is explicit in the realm of arts. As demonstrated in the previous chapter arbitrariness characterises the rule of law concerning the freedom of arts and the

conduct of citizens. If Cubans follow the conduct prescribed by the hegemonic ideology they might be accused of being counterrevolutionaries. If they are passive and conforming they are accused of not being revolutionary enough and hence of not being "Cuban". Cuban underground rap is revolutionary in its ideals and is officially supported in governmental discourses and by two cultural institutions [the Cuban Rap Agency (ACR) and the Brothers Saiz Association (AHS)]. However in everyday life it is censored and criminalised by Cuban authorities and marginalised in state-media and venues. It will be shown that while the rappers perform according to the hegemonic model of conduct they are driven underground because they constitute a challenge to the regime.

Specifically, I will illustrate that structures, ideology, collective identities and politics (CCCS perspective) are of high importance in the interpretation of Cuban rap. Equally post-subcultural elements of cultural flows, hybridity, heterogeneity in subcultural groupings, individual choice, affects, emancipation through the consumption of technology and appropriation of global music genres are also of high significance. I will also demonstrate that post-subcultural approaches of momentary liberation, pleasure and loss through performances of freestyle, fun, hanging around and alcohol intoxication are of paramount importance in the everyday life of the rappers. However the latter issues cannot be differentiated from matters of power and resistance (conscious or unconscious) and of forging collective identities between the rappers. Thus, I will show that a bridging of subcultural and post-subcultural theory is needed in order to interpret issues of power and resistance.

Specifically it will be argued that the rappers engage in a conscious form of resistance by claiming their right of freedom of speech and challenging the government by explicitly showing the gap between official socialist discourses and

everyday reality in Havana. Concerning power, it will be shown that state power operates through institutions (cultural institutions, bureaucracy and coercive institutions-see also chapter 5). It will be argued that throughout the trajectory of rap, the relationship of the rappers to the state has been characterised by both support and suppression (Baker, 2011).

In the first part of the chapter the key players of Cuban underground rap will be demonstrated as well as, their main characteristics in terms of age, race, class and gender. This will serve to illustrate the current heterogeneity of the rap scene in terms of participation in the specific subculture. It will be argued that the post-subcultural elements that Cuban rappers exhibit go hand in hand with power, resistance, politics and collective identities (homology) as well as, the reproduction of gender power structures and roles. Through the discussion of the distinctiveness-authenticity of Cuban rap, it will be demonstrated that post-subcultural transnational flows cannot be differentiated from issues of power and resistance and from constructing a proud Cuban identity. Thus modern, postmodern and local knowledge is needed in order to interpret rap's resistance.

Following, the emergence and trajectory of rap up to the current point in time will be briefly illustrated. This part will serve to show that CCCS and post-subcultural elements were apparent from the initial phase of Cuban rap. The cultural and political context within which the rappers live, work and claim their sense of identity will be provided. Specifically despite the efforts of several intermediaries to "legitimize" rap, Fidel Castro's personal interest in rap and its institutionalisation, the rappers still face issues of marginalisation and criminalisation. Specifically it will be illustrated that the heterogeneity, affective relationships and fluidity that

characterises the loose network of contemporary underground subcultures cannot be differentiated from issues of power and resistance.

A discussion of the two main state institutions that support rap will be conducted in order to show the importance of structural issues, everyday struggles and negotiations, affective relationships and state intervention (appropriation) of the specific subculture. It will be shown that similar to Hebdige's (1979) approach, an appropriation of rap to state's hegemony is occurring through commercialism. By exploring these subcultural and post-subcultural elements it will be deducted that both state policies and individual practices are important in our understanding of power and resistance. This part will also demonstrate some of the paradoxes occurring in Cuba's cultural and power relations.

Additionally I will explore (through discourse analysis of rap's lyrics) the relationship between Cuban rap and the Cuban ideology (*cubanía*). This will serve to demonstrate whether the rappers are revolutionaries or counterrevolutionaries. It will be proved that they are Martianos in their discourse and values, or in Baker's (2011: 51) terms "hyper-revolutionaries". It will be demonstrated, how feelings and affects shape ideology and conversely how ideology shapes feelings and affects. Furthermore although the rappers place themselves "inside" the Revolution, they explicitly show the gap between the official discourse of the government and everyday reality in Cuba. Thus their social critique poses a challenge to the goals of uniformity and conformity sought by the State. In other words they engage in a conscious form of resistance to the government's policies. It will be shown that ideology, structural changes, cultivation of critical consciousness go in parallel with affects, personal choices and *potentia* (inner power energy of people).

Following, I will explore the complexity of Cuba's cultural policy in order to show how power and resistance are shaped and reshaped. In particular I will explore the complex relationship of the rappers to state institutions (bureaucracy, cultural institutions and the coercive mechanism). Specifically while tolerance towards arts and freedom of expression has been encouraged, any expression that can be interpreted as counterrevolutionary cannot be permitted. Thus the importance of common sense words (revolutionary and counterrevolutionary) will be illustrated as a key element in issues of marginalisation, suppression and labelling. Moreover it will be shown that affects such as fear and distrust, as well as "siege mentality" play an important role in the marginalisation of rap. Furthermore it will be shown that the informal parts of life (affective interpersonal relations, momentary pleasures and desires) have a fundamental function both to the development of rap into a movement but also to its decline. At the end of the chapter a clarified analysis of power and resistance in the case of Cuban rap will be provided.

6.2 Cuban Rappers

This section will present the main characters that guided my research on Cuban rap. They are the main protagonists of this research because their voice was constant during my fieldwork in Havana over the period 2009-2011. I will show that the idea of friendship and family (affects of love and trust) characterises this subculture and plays a very important role in forging collective identities. Moreover issues of race, age, class, gender, power and resistance will be discussed. The first part of this section will be descriptive followed by an analysis of the characteristics of the subculture, where CCCS and post-subcultural elements will be shown to run parallel.
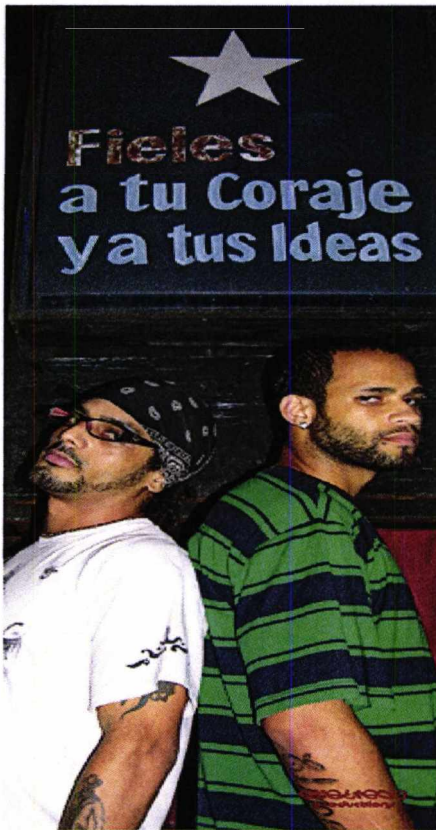
Los Aldeanos (on the left Aldo- El Aldeano on the right Bian-El B): "Faithful to your courage and your ideas"). Photo by Emetrece Productions online at: http://www.emetreceproductions.com/Aldeanos_a_veces_sueno.html, accessed on 17/5/2012. All rights reserved.

Aldo (El Aldeano or Al2 born in 1983) and Bian (El B born in 1984) comprise the duo los Aldeanos (the villagers), which is currently the most popular underground rap group in Cuba[61]. Aldo's only profession is his music, whereas Bian is also a schoolteacher and is doing a Masters degree in psychology. They began their career in 2003 and they are one of the most censored groups in Cuba. While belonging to the cultural institution of the Brothers Saiz Asociation (AHS)[62] they have fundamentally shifted and affected the rap scene by extending the limits of critique and following an increasingly independent path to produce and disseminate their music. By using new means of digital technology they have achieved reaching the

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[61] The often repeated 26 or the 26 Muses (26 Musas) in their songs or songs of other rappers when Aldo is producing the music, stems from the street number where Aldo resides.

[62] . For reasons of clarity there are two state-cultural institutions that currently support rap: The Brothers Saiz Association (AHS) and the Cuban Rap Agency (ACR). A discussion of the cultural institutions will be conducted later on in this chapter

masses like no other rap group had attained before (Malcolm, interview 17/8/2011). In that way they also reduced their dependence on the state's media and other cultural institutions (Baker, 2011). This fact has resulted in the remarkable production of 32 albums within 10 years (more than any other rap group in Cuba, which have an average of 3 albums).
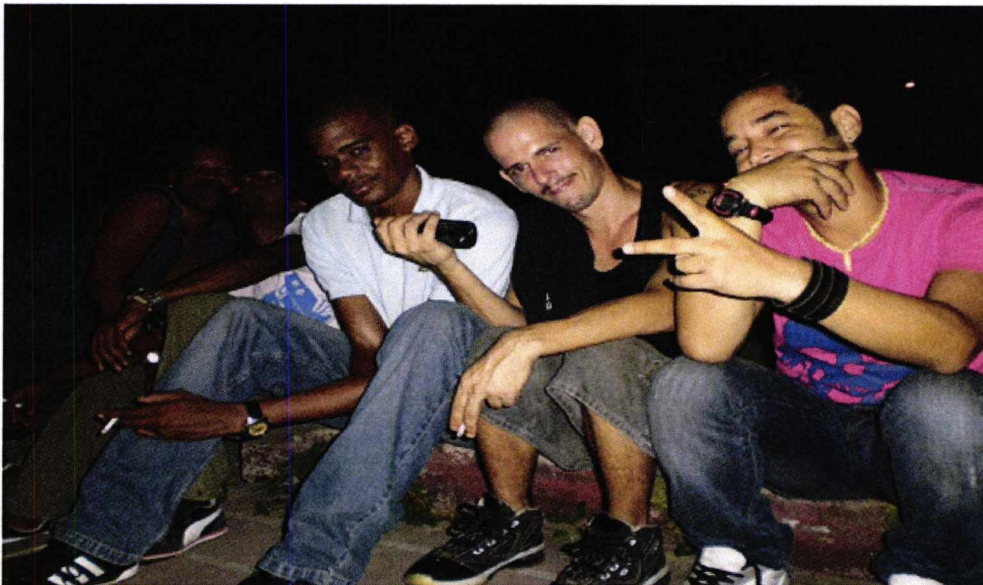
From the right to the left: Carlito (Charly Muchas Rimas- Charlie Many Rimes), Silvio (Silvito El Libre) and Barbaro (Barbaro Urbano Vargas). Photo taken by the author.

Carlito (Charly Muchas Rimas born in 1979) is a member of the group Cuentas Claras (Clear Talks). He began his career in 1995. Apart from being a rapper he is also working for the state as an electrician. He is closely collaborating with Los Aldeanos. He belongs to the AHS and in 2010 he entered the ACR (Cuban Rap Agency) with his group.

Silvio (Silvito el Libre- Silvito the Free, born in 1982) began his career in 2003 and in 2005 joined *la Aldea*[63]. He does not have any institutional bonds[64] and is highly

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[63] It means the village. This notion is used to describe the artistic and intellectual world built around Los Aldeanos. This notion arguably depicts post-subcultural elements like fluidity and heterogeneity. It will be also demonstrated that this notion is highly correlated to Cuba's ideology.

censored. It should be stressed that Silvito is the son of Silvio Rodriguez one of the most notorious singers of Cuban revolutionary music, nueva trova. This detail will become important later.

Barbarito (Barbaro Urbano Vargas born in 1988) belongs to the "new school" of rappers that were highly inspired by the work of Los Aldeanos, Silvito el Libre and Escuadron Patriota (Patriot Squad). He has a BA in Graphic Design and started his career as a rapper in 2009. He is mainly interested in the production of music backgrounds and does not have any institutional bonds.[64]

Soandry (recording in what was named as "Escalera Records- Ladder Records"). Photo taken by the author.

Soandry (born in 1976) from the group Hermanos de Causa (Brothers in Cause) is considered to be the father of Cuban rap. The other member of the group resides in

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[64] When said that the rappers do not have any institutional bonds I mean cultural institutions. They are all obligatory registered to the CDRs regardless that they do not participate in them.

Spain. He has studied psychology and started his rap career in the early 1990s in Alamar. He belongs to the AHS and in 2010 entered the ACR. He is currently the director of the independent rap nominations Puños Arriba[65] (Fists Up).

Escuadron Patriota (in Escalera Records). Photo taken by the author

Raudel (Escuadron Patriota born in 1976) resides in the countryside and started his rap career in 2000. It should be noted that his name is Raul and Fidel and from the mixing of the two names came out Raudel. He is highly affiliated to the *aldea* and he is the most censored rapper of all in Cuba. He used to belong to the AHS from which he was expelled in 2004. He was a psychologist in a school for children with disabilities until September 2011 when he got fired, with the state security playing a big part in his dismissal. He is also a Rastafarian in terms of religion and closely affiliated to the reggae scene (see chapter one).

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[65] These awards will be discussed in more detail later.

From the right to the left Papa Humbertico and El Discípulo, in La Madriguera (space provided for concerts by the AHS). Photo taken from Etian Brebaje Man's facebook account, with the kind courtesy of the participant.

Papa Humbertico (Father Humbertico born in 1983) started his career in the mid-1990s. He belongs to the AHS and in 2010 he entered the ACR with his partner El Discípulo (the Disciple). Together they comprise the duo Mano Armada (Armed Hand) and they have been highly affiliated to the Aldea up to 2010. Humberto has left a benchmark on the rap scene. Specifically up to the late 1990s Cuban rappers used to use American music backgrounds for their songs. Humberto saw this gap and started producing music on his own. He constructed his own studio for recordings in his house. Since 2000 Humberto's recording studio, namely Real 70[66] has been the principal space of recording for Cuban rappers.

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[66] like the 26 Musas the number denotes the street number where Humberto resides

Etian Brebaje Man at the peña (live performance, gig) in the house of David de Omni. Photo taken by the author.

Etian (Brabaje Man- Man of Magic Potion born in mid 1970s) began his career in the early 1990s with the group Explosión Suprema. He resides in Alamar together with another member of the group, whereas the other two members live outside Cuba. He belongs to the AHS and entered the ACR in 2010.

From the right to the left: Yoryi Mala Bizta (Yoryi Bad View), Maikel Xtremo (Maik the Extreme) and Cepero (CP). Photo taken from Maikel Xtremo's facebook account with the kind courtesy of the participant

Maikel (Maikel Xtremo born in 1983) began his career in early 2000. He has a degree in Sociology and Cultural studies. He is affiliated to the Aldea and he has been the director of the Puños Arriba for the past three years. He does not have any affiliation to state institutions. He is also a big fan of rock, which has led to his colour of voice in his songs to resemble that of a hard-rock or metal singer.

Cepero (CP born in the mid-1980s) together with two more rappers comprise the group Invasión (Invasion). He resides in the countryside on the West of Havana. His group is affiliated to the Aldea. He is highly censored in his hometown and does not belong to any institution.

From the right to the left: Escuadron and Franko at the house of Franko. Photo taken by the author.

Franko (born in 1991) is one of the few cases that began his career from reggaeton and then converted to rap in 2009. He is also part of the "new school" of rappers and does not have any institutional bonds. He was expelled from school and later from

university for listening to the songs of los Aldeanos and Escuadron Patriota and for expressing himself freely. Due to the intervention of a family friend that had contacts in the University authorities Franko re-entered and continues his studies in languages and literature.
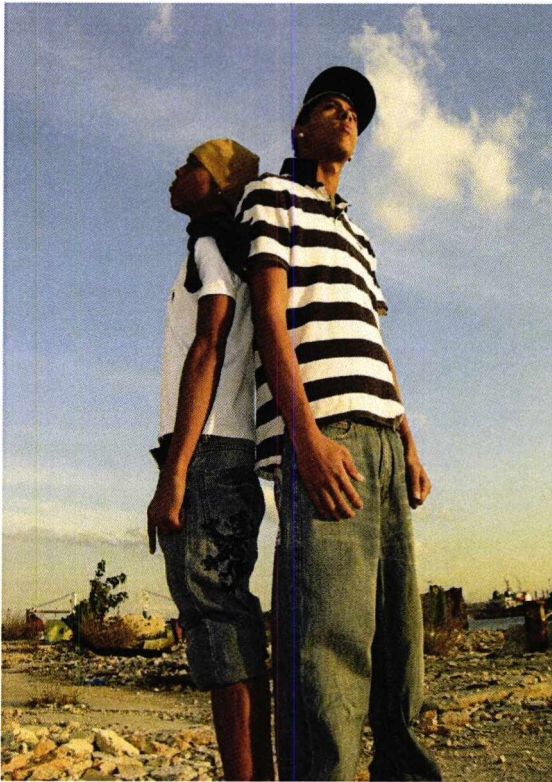
Marlon with his brother Dayron: Photo taken from Marlon's facebook account, with the kind courtesy of the participant.

Marlon (born in 1983) he is the founder and general coordinator of Champion Records. After Real 70, Champion Records is the principal independent studio where rap songs are recorded, as it is situated in the heart of Havana. It should be noted that in contrast to Real 70, Champion Records also record reggaeton songs. Hence it is a space where the two music genres meet. Specifically Marlon is also a reggaeton singer (as is his brother) but aims to be a rapper, as he finds Cuban rap to be superior to reggaeton in terms of lyrics and for the objective[67] that rap is fighting for.

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[67] The objective of rap will be discussed later on (see also chapter 1)

6.2.1 Collective Identities, Heterogeneity, Technology, Age, Race, Class and Gender

From the description of the main characters the heterogeneity of music tastes and the mixing of music genres (even in the case of reggaeton which is perceived to be in a rivalry position to rap), becomes apparent. However, as depicted in chapter one, the unity in this subculture is achieved through affective relationships of friendship, trust and love. As Ernesto[68] (interview 21/8/2010) affirms *"I never expected, when I began as a rapper, that this big family would open its arms for me"*. Hence, the first characteristic of the subculture is that it is a relatively small group of individuals, where everyone knows one another and they highlight the importance of friendship as a unifying factor. The day to day words "asere" (friend) and "hermano" (brother) as well as, hugs that the rappers use when they meet one another, creates a sense of family and brotherhood within the rap realms (Paolo, interview 23/8/2011) (see also chapter one). Thus although fluidity and heterogeneity in terms of music tastes is present, these affective relationships do construct a cohesiveness within the subculture. The issue of affects will become very significant in the latter discussion on whether rap can evolve into a movement or whether it reproduces the existing social order.

As demonstrated in the first chapter, the second unifying factor is the meaning that they attribute to rap. Roberto (interview, 22/8/2010) argues:

"Rap is everything to me. It's my religion and my life. Thanks to rap I moved away from the world of my neighbourhood that was quite violent and marginal.

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[68] As demonstrated in the methodology chapter the names of my participants in the interviews and field-notes have been altered in order to protect their confidentiality and ensure their well-being

Thanks to rap I got to know all my great friends. All the good things that have happened in my life are connected to rap. For this I am eternally grateful".

While Juan (interview, 19/08/2010) corroborates:

"Underground rap is a way of life. I have changed and many rappers that were taking a bad route in their lives before have changed. Many people in Cuba that were connected to delinquency have changed their way of life due to listening to or singing rap. Because they are focusing on how to deal with their everyday problems and openly discuss them. Rap gives an alternative of how to deal with your problems in a more positive way. This, I believe is what rap is achieving; to make people express their opinions without fear. Because it's not the same to be in a state-reunion where someone says that things are "red" for everyone and everyone has to agree. No! Things are not only red! They are also blue, yellow, orange and green! So rap advocates being able to express your opinion freely".

It becomes clear hence, that rap is seen as a vehicle of liberation and a means of claiming their citizens' rights for freedom of speech. Additionally, common shared experiences of marginalisation, everyday realities, problems and common shared values and ideals (rap as religion-ideology) [69] of liberty, equality, freedom of expression and love for their country and its people, play a very important role in constructing collective identities within the subculture. As a result the heterogeneity in terms of age reflects the forging of collective identities through rap. Specifically, the word "youth" that all the rappers used in the interviews ranges from 20 to 37 years old. Arguably this extension of youth age-limit demonstrates that rap, for the

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[69] This will be further demonstrated in more detail later. See also chapter one

rappers, is a way of life. Hence affective (post-subcultural) ideological and structural (CCCS) aspects are all of high importance in terms of forging collective identities and unity within the subculture.

Furthermore the emancipation through the consumption and appropriation of technology that post-subculture theory has stressed is also evident in the aforementioned description of the main characters of this research. Independent studios and recordings have given the rappers a space of freedom and independence from cultural institutions (José, interview 15/8/2010). Similarly all music is distributed by hand (through USB's and burned CDs) (ibid). This relative development of technology has also given opportunities to rappers to reach a very large part of the population. Therefore emancipation through the use and consumption of technological commodities is of high significance in rap's resistance.

In terms of race (a very complicated issue in the case of Cuba), it is fact that rap emerged as a main expression of Afro-Cubans due to the rising of marginalisation and racism during the Special Period (Fernandes, 2006). As illustrated though, currently the subculture is relatively balanced between black and more light-skinned participants. Arguably the composition of the group echoes, Marti's words: "Cuban means more than white, more than mulatto (mixed race), more than black", which has characterised race relations in Cuba since the consolidation of the Revolution. Therefore, while race still plays an important role to underground rap's discourse and the majority of the audience at rap concerts is blacker in its composition (see chapter one), many of the rappers now support that Cuban rap has no race. As Tafari (interview 20/08/2010) argues:

"The issue of race and racism in Cuba is a matter that has still not been resolved. I talk in my songs about consciously realising the importance of resolving this phenomenon, which in the end is everybody's problem. It is a problem of the whole society so all of us have to resolve it together. So it is everyone's responsibility to try and resolve it right? But I don't see rap as an Afro-Cuban thing or as part of a racially determined group. No, it forms part of the whole society".

Similarly, Alain (interview 12/8/2010) highlights:

"At this moment rap doesn't have a race. Hip Hop is for everyone who loves it and feels it his/hers. Because between us we don't have the black rappers, the white rappers [...] the rappers are the rappers. If your work is good and serious and it's committed to reality, then it is welcomed. Nothing else matters".

What should be stressed at this point is that the existing literature (Perry, 2004; West-Duran, 2004; Fernandes, 2006) has overstressed the issue of race in the initial phase of hip hop in Havana. Despite the fact that these scholars acknowledge the difference of race issues between Cuba and the U.S. they end up reproducing a U.S. view of race; depicting Cuban rap as a "black space" and neglecting the fact that mixed race, white and black[70] youths were all involved at the initial phase of hip hop in Alamar (Baker, 2011). Therefore they have highly led to a reproduction of coloniality and creating the "myth" of rap in Havana as a "black space". This highly illustrates the importance of thinking from the perspective of the colonial difference rather than imposing western hegemonic views on the subject of research; especially

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[70] Black in Cuba means very dark skinned. Thus while mixed race youth would be classified as black from a U.S. perspective in Cuba they are not perceived as such (Baker, 2011).

in a field where the majority of the existing literature on Cuban rap has and is being conducted by foreigners (Baker, 2011).

Considering gender, rap is a predominantly masculine subculture both in terms of performers and audience (see chapter one). There are currently four women rappers in the specific subculture. Without wishing to downplay the role that the female rappers play, I would argue that the most important role of women in rap is that of mothers, siblings, wives, daughters and friends. Specifically the majority of the rappers come from single parent families. Arguably then, the role of the mother becomes highly significant. These women are the ones that stand by the rappers side during both good and bad experiences. There are various songs dedicated to them. A typical example is Escuadron Patriota's "Madre" (mother), where he clearly states the worries and fears that the mothers are facing by saying:

mother don't ask me to abandon it/ I know that you tremble for what might happen to me but sleep relaxed/ no more tears, I understand you but I need your strength and energy to keep me standing strong.

The importance of affects and family relationships are again highlighted in the rappers words. Additionally, these women's opinions matter when new songs are produced and they even participate in some of the productions. Thus the active role that these women play on the subculture should not be underestimated. Similarly reproduction of gender power roles within the group should neither be neglected:

"I didn't know that you were going to be there! I thought that there would only be males[71]" said Anna, the wife of one of the rappers in response to my

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[71] The everyday common used word "baron" means male in Spanish.

question, on why she did not go the previous night to the independent recording studio. Although, I never heard any of the guys saying to their wives or girlfriends that they could not join, most times the recording sessions were a male dominated space. Once the women in our group knew that I was there they would frequently attend. Sometimes though, they would leave to enjoy their time with friends in other places in Havana. While at the house of one of the rappers that I passed most of the days during my third fieldwork visit, the spaces occupied by women and men were clearly demarcated. The room of the rapper was the space where all men used to congregate in order to write lyrics, free-style, play with music backgrounds and drink alcohol. Whereas, the kitchen and the balcony was where the women used to gather and pass most of their time (Field-notes, Havana, July 2011).

As Miller and Mullins (2011) argue gender is not a natural aspect of social life. Rather it is embedded in everyday interactions of social life and in common-used words (ibid), such as the word "male" used by Anna in the vignette. Taking a Gramscian approach on the use of common sense words but also a Spinozean on the embodied, affective aspects of gender relations, it can be argued that gender power relations become so invisible, "gentle" and embodied that they lie below the level of consciousness on many occasions (Bourdieu, 2001). Consequently gendered forms of power perhaps become more easily perpetuated than any other form of power, due to their highly affective nature in relationships of friendship and love. Thus, despite the fact that the rappers through their practices construct "autonomous" spaces of liberty and equality, these spaces simultaneously reflect gender power structures, through the production of explicit gendered spaces.

Concurrently though, as depicted in the vignette, women themselves corroborate in this reproduction of gendered spaces. Although it is not clear if they do it consciously or unconsciously (i.e. perhaps not feeling comfortable being surrounded by ten men or not interested in joining the recording sessions or informal activities of the rappers) they facilitate in the reproduction of gendered spaces and roles. Additionally, the rappers praise women and call for their emancipation and liberation from consumerism, prostitution and machismo in their songs. However as presented in the confessional part of the methodology chapter, the way that some rappers behave towards women actually reproduces patriarchal power relations and single parent families. As illustrated in the methodology chapter although gender power structures are recognised in this thesis, gender is not the focus of this research. Arguably though, further research is needed on this matter in order to explore gender power relations in the specific subculture.

In terms of class it would be highly problematic to try and classify the rappers, as the classification of class in Cuba is more complex than in Western societies. As illustrated in the previous chapter class divisions are correlated to those who have access to hard currency (CUC) and those who have not (De la Fuente, 2001). As depicted in the description of the characters, some of the rappers work for the state and are well educated. Consequently, the average state salary that they receive does not cover even basic needs (see chapter five). Thus all the rappers, as is the general population in Havana, are engaged in the informal economy, trying to survive and make ends meet[72].

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[72] See chapter five. Arguably, the other option is to try and leave the island as many have done in the past.

Moreover from 2006-2008 small commercial clubs[73] (namely Karatsi, Barbaram and Atelier) at the centre of Havana, provided an alternative space for the rappers, where they could earn some money from their art and sell their CDs to tourists (Baker, 2011). So perhaps there was a relative social mobility during that phase. However, during my fieldwork visits in 2010 and 2011, only the gig in Karatsi had not stopped taking place, where not all rappers could perform[74]. During my fieldwork the most important shift in terms of social mobility for the rappers occurred from 2010 onwards. Since 2010 many of the rappers have been given permission to travel and perform abroad. In that way they can access hard currency and better their living conditions in Cuba[75]. Therefore, it could be argued that they are lower to middle class.

This section served to illustrate the main characters and features of the rap subculture. It was demonstrated that post-subcultural elements such as fluidity, heterogeneity, liberation through technology and affects are equally important to ideology, politics, collective identities, resistance, structural issues, class, gender, age and race. In the following section the issue of authenticity and collective identity in relation to global and local interactions is addressed. This will illustrate that the CCCS's approach runs parallel with post-subcultural theory but also, that the local Cuban perspective should be incorporated in order to interpret rap's meaning in the specific context.

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[73] The role of these clubs will be discussed in more detail later in relation to politics.

[74] For example El Aldeano could not enter not even as a spectator.

[75] This fact will be discussed later on in terms of politics, power and resistance.

6.2.2. Global Flows, Cuban Identity and Rap as a Site of Resistance to both Internal and External Forces

> *Thank you hip hop, for understanding me, for opening my eyes and permitting me to be [...] you are much more than music. You are my liberty, my wings of light in darkness, my creator, my religion and my need [...] with you I learned that life is worth nothing if you don't fight until the end [...] You are the prohibited fruit at a cultural level, where they only value what the king asks you to sing (Soandry from Hermanos De Causa, Gracias Hip Hop).*

Arguably rap all around the world has been an urban cultural expression of disenfranchised and excluded youth with often strong responses and criticisms by the governments, the media and the police (see Rose, 1994). Hence globally, issues of power and resistance are embedded in hip hop. Cuba presents a unique example that nonetheless has some common-shared characteristics with the rest of the world (see chapter five). By exploring the overt and complex nature of Cuba's state power, it will be further demonstrated that Cuba emerges as fertile territory for exploring the link between subcultural theory and post-subcultural theory.

Principally the high ideological context, within which the rappers live and work, is of high importance in order to understand issues of power and resistance that are taking place. As becomes apparent from Soandry's lyrics and was depicted in the

previous section, rap has been a vehicle of liberation for Cuban youth. A means by which they have cultivated critical consciousness and a place where they can be and discover themselves as well as, re-discover their own sense of Cuban identity. This last factor, as shown in the previous chapter, is of high importance in a nation that has been denied its own identity by external forces, economic dependency and foreign interpretations of what it means to be Cuban. Moreover, it was demonstrated that culture from the beginning of the Revolution has been a cornerstone for discovering, building and asserting national identity and unity (Kapcia, 2000). Consequently music has been an essential part of constructing the Cuban identity (Kapcia, 2005). With rap being an explicit U.S. cultural product, it will be illustrated that the process of legitimisation of the genre in the Cuban context has been a constant site of struggle and negotiation.

As Soandry's lyrics imply, in a context where state institutions act as gate-keepers, assigned with the task to direct, define and establish the canon of what Cuban revolutionary culture should be; and sanction cultural forms that break away from these boundaries[76], to simply talk in post-subcultural terms of fusion, plurality, hybridity and consumption of global sounds and technology, would be highly problematic. Therefore, while the diffusion of hip hop in Cuba represents the global cultural flows, hybridisation and fluidity that post-subculture theory has stressed (or in Cuban terms transculturation and counterpoints) these elements cannot be differentiated from matters of inclusion and exclusion and hence, power and resistance.

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[76] See chapter five

Specifically, the creation of collective identities through rap is directed not only towards the internal cultural hegemony of the revolutionary regime but also hip hop's origins, the United States. Internally, as demonstrated earlier, through rap the rappers seek empowerment by making choices that are worth fighting for and creating space for themselves and other marginalised Cuban youths. Externally the rappers following the cultural tradition of Havana, which has always been a point of fusion between the local and the global[77] (Pérez-Firmat, 2006), aim to infect, evolve, contribute and be part of the international "Hip Hop Nation". Therefore, to be "authentic" for the rappers is to mark the hip hop culture with a message that is highly

> "compromised to the social reality of the world. Because in the Spanish speaking world there might exist a revolutionary discourse, but it is in one group among 100. Whereas the general tendency of Cuban rap is to produce revolutionary music with a socially determined content" (Antonio, interview 13/8/2010)

Hence cultural flows cannot be differentiated from building of a proud national Cuban identity. Through their conscious message rappers assert who they are and how they see themselves in comparison to the rest of the world. While acknowledging their belonging to hip hop's international community, they claim their distinction and contribution to the genre, through the production of explicitly revolutionary music. Thus it is the message that is distinct rather than the music.

Moreover, as will be demonstrated, there have been significant efforts to legitimise or in Baker's (2011:33) terms to "nationalize" rap in Cuba. Within this process there was

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[77] See chapter five

a wide attempt by intermediaries to guide the rappers to use more sounds from the Cuban musical tradition (i.e. rumba and salsa beats). Their main aim was to make it sound Cuban also in terms of music production and composition (ibid). According to Michell (2001) the issue of localisation of sound or "indigenization" is seen as resisting the homogenising and oppressive forces of globalisation. However Medina (2007) (taking a perspective similar to Willis's (1977) but on a more macro scale), argues that global capitalist economy counts on the production of differences. Hence the indigenisation of music actually, reproduces global capital forces rather than subverts them (ibid). Consequently, the "un-Cuban" sounds of Cuban rap that have been explicit on the scene since 2004, should not be seen as inauthentic, less creative or imitative to American rap in terms of music composition. As Baker (2011: 236) argues, "sameness might be the only way to resist" to the global capitalist appropriation of difference[78]. I would argue though that this resistance is mainly addressed towards Cuban cultural politics. In the song "andate chie" El Aldeano explicitly states his resistance and rebelliousness towards the nationalisation of hip hop in terms of its sound: *"they are saying to me, mix your hip hop with chachacha and guaguanco[79]. I am responding: look the owner of this finger is I; you have all my permission to go fuck yourself"*. In other words the interaction and flows of the global with the local cannot be differentiated from issues of power and resistance.

This section served to demonstrate that the local cultural tradition of Cuba goes in parallel with post- subcultural elements of global flows, personal choice and music tastes as well as, with authenticity, collective identities and politics that the CCCS

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[78] Although it could just be a simple matter of taste by the rappers of what music samples they use.

[79] A sub-genre of Cuban rumba.

focused on. Hence all three traditions of knowledge are necessary to interpret Cuban rap.

It is important at this point to illustrate how Cuban rap emerged and developed in order to shed some light on the paradoxes occurring in Cuban power relations. Through this discussion the importance of micro-level everyday struggles in the legitimisation of rap in its initial phase will be highlighted. Consequently it will be illustrated that Cuban rap from the early beginning up to contemporary times reflects both post-subcultural and CCCS elements.

6.3 Emergence and trajectory of Cuban underground Rap: Structural Changes, Hegemony, Emotions and Low-level Struggles

As the Birmingham School pointed out, subcultures are to be understood within a specific historical conjuncture and the emergence and development of rap is connected to the structural changes on the island since the 1990s. Following the CCCS this section will "ground" every-day practices of subcultural groups to macro structural changes. Specifically Cuban underground rap emerged in the summit of the Special Period (early 1990s) in Alamar, a suburb of Havana with a high density public housing complex (Fernandes, 2006). Alamar arguably houses the poor, there are few job opportunities and conditions of living are poor. Lack of adequate social facilities, transport connections and monotony characterises the quality of life in Alamar (Kapcia, 2005).
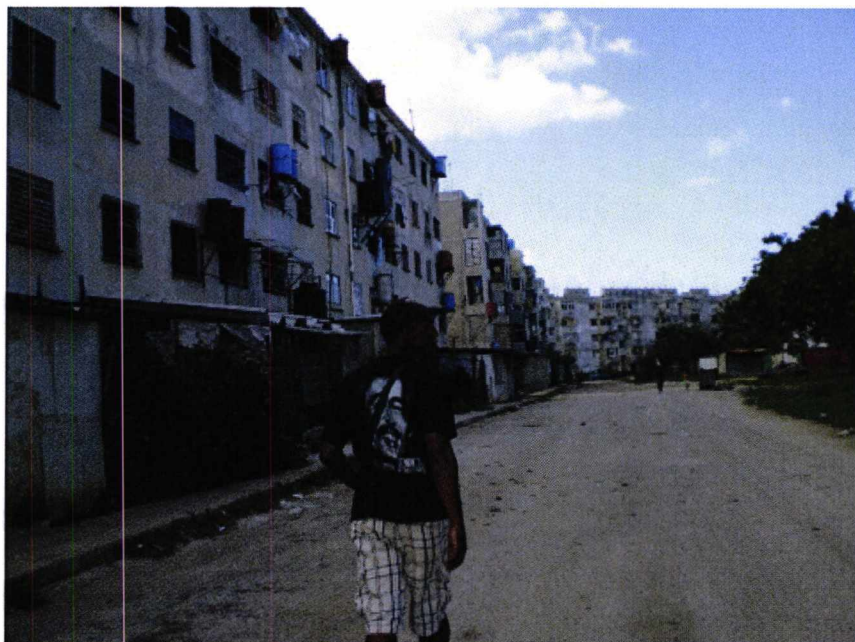
Alamar: photo taken by the author

As Fernandes (2006) argues, although people from all socio-economic levels were allocated to Alamar, the majority was from black marginalised communities. The geographical location of Alamar enabled young Afro-Cubans to listen to Miami radio stations that often broadcasted American rap songs (ibid). Arguably, hence the emergence of rap for Cuban youth, similarly to the U.S. was a vehicle to rebuild their sense of community and collective identity (see Rose, 1994; Fernandes, 2006). These youth, in contrast to the generation of the 60s that lost its adolescence overnight, through mobilisation in literacy campaigns and other revolutionary responsibilities now had space (relative relaxation of the CDRs in Alamar), time (nothing to do) and reasons to rebel (conditions of austerity in the Special Period) (Kapcia, 2005; Fernandes, 2006). Frustrated by lack of opportunity, highly disillusioned by the state's inability to fulfil its promises, restraints on self-expression and experiences of deprivation, poverty, marginality, race discrimination and diverse forms of exclusion; these youths found in hip hop a means of liberation and self-expression (Manolo, interview, 1/8/2010). According to Manolo, one of the rappers,

"since its early beginnings rap was a vehicle of resistance to everyday experiences of subordination". The correlation then, to the CCCS interpretation of subcultures is explicit.

As Manolo (interview, 1/8/2010) argues, *"the hip hop culture entered in Cuba in the late 1980s through break-dancing"*. For the rapper this fact reflected *"the dancing and festive idiosyncrasy of the Cuban culture"*. Break-dancing was also accompanied with the particular dressing style (baggies, bandanas and long sleeve jackets), which frequently contradicted with the high temperatures of the island (Baker, 2011). Manolo argues that this form of dancing demonstrated *"how feelings of marginality, exclusion and racial discrimination were felt and lived through the body"*; especially as Cuba entered into the Special Period when contradictions of a society in spiritual crisis gave rise to diverse forms of alienation. Therefore the body, performativity and feelings as sites of resistance run parallel with structural issues in a specific historical conjuncture. Specifically:

> *"To move as if you were electrocuted (or simulating the movement of a robot or a marionette), the excessive acrobatic performance of the movements in the floor, or the 'choteo', of walking as if you were asking permission of the feet to move [...] these moves construct and transform gestures and dance moves into a protest, unease, mocking and denunciating the conscious frustration of their performers, of a white-centred society that rejects them and also of those that detain the power of culture"* (Manolo, interview 1/8/2010).

Thus, *el choteo* (mockery towards any kind of authority), *was* first manifested within hip hop through a corporeal expression. Manolo sees that the body politics of the break-dancers were a conscious protest against discrimination and suppression. I

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would argue that break-dancing was more about momentary liberation, having fun, forging collective identities and being "fly", rather than expressing a conscious form of resistance. For example, Manolo in another point of the interview told me that this urge of being "fly" by following the dressing style of North American hip hoppers, *"jeopardized to lose the main element of hip hop culture, as a way of being, thinking and living"* (Manolo, interview, 1/8/2010). Thus consuming hip hop and appropriating foreign styles was perhaps much more the issue in this phase than consciously expressing their class and race marginalisation. However, if actually the body, as a conscious manifestation of politics through dancing, preceded the conscious lyrics of Cuban rap, needs to be further examined.

Also according to all the rappers that I interviewed, they acknowledged that at that time Cuban rap was passing an imitating phase towards American rap. As Antonio (interview 13/8/2010) explains *"at the beginning Cuban rappers were expressing issues of violence, guns and themes that did not reflect Cuban reality. They were imitating the Americans"*. Steadily, also due to the intervention of some intermediaries namely political exiles from the US[80], guided the rappers to stay "old school"; and to maintain a conscious and revolutionary message, compatible to Cuban ideology and everyday realities (Baker, 2011). Furthermore, with the help of some Cuban intermediaries (that had connections to state's institutions and were genuinely interested in rap) there were significant efforts in "legitimizing" the specific culture (ibid). This was done in order to avoid previously bad experiences of socially critical music with foreign origins, like nueva trova and rock[81] (ibid). Hence they

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[80] Namely Nehada Abiodum a former black liberation fighter and member of the Black Panthers and Assata Sakur the aunt and godmother of Tupac Shakur

[81] See chapter five

strongly advocated hip hop to state officials and leadership (ibid). They represented Cuban rap as a culture with a positive message and constructive criticism that lies 'within' the revolution and not 'against' it (ibid). Therefore individual initiatives (micro level struggles) played a fundamental role in legitimising rap and hence reshaping hegemony.

Moreover Cuban intermediaries needed the consent of North American informed observers on hip hop, as well as American rappers to "legitimize" the Havana scene as "old school" (Baker, 2011). This would allow the connection with the socially critical elements of hip hop and simultaneously a distancing from the materialism, consumerist lifestyles, misogyny and violence of American gangsta rap (ibid). It was necessary to establish this reversal, if the incorporation of rap into the Cuban nationalist and socialist politics was to be achieved (ibid). The confirmation came from Nehada Abiodum and from the forging of the Black August Hip Hop Collective in 1998 (see Fernandes, 2006:91).

Arguably, the views of foreign artists, journalists and activists helped to legitimate Cuban rappers as continuing the true essence of conscious political rap (ibid). Furthermore in the late 1990s Fidel Castro took an explicit interest in the role that Cuban rap could play in disseminating revolutionary consciousness all around the world (Baker, 2011). These factors combined, gave institutional support to rap by the Ministry of Culture and the institution of Brothers Saiz Association (AHS). Moreover, they led to the establishment of the annual hip hop festival in Alamar from 1997 up to 2004, the creation of the Cuban Rap Agency (Agencia Cubana Del Rap-ACR) in 2002 and the blossoming of the rap scene until 2004 (ibid). Thus, as Baker (2011) argues the "state" should be given some credit for the development of rap, rather than just depicting it in terms of control, assimilation and incorporation of rap to its

hegemony. From this perspective power could also be seen as facilitation and not only in terms of restriction. However I would argue that it was mainly personal initiatives and struggles in everyday life that led to an opening for Cuban rap (Gramsci, 1971).

Specifically, the importance of *lo informal*[82] should be highlighted here. As Kapcia (2005) argues to "invent" (inventar) and to "resolve" (resolver) (get things done, solve one's problems) have acquired multiple meanings and pervade the economical, political and cultural realms. As demonstrated in chapter five, the civil society and the state are inextricably tied in Cuba, due to the high institutionalisation of the latter. However, as Moore[83] (2006) argues the control over civil society does not mean that people cannot claim spaces or even challenge and reshape state's policies and actions. Hence, the significance of personalised politics, of informal and formal networks (global and local) in the process of legitimisation and nationalisation of rap should not be neglected. It is reflected through these practices how the sphere of civil society is a realm where power is negotiated, shaped and challenged (Smith, 2010). In other words everyday struggles, low-level negotiations and flexibility with institutions of power were of high importance in legitimising Cuban rap. Thus agency has an active role in shaping and reshaping hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). These issues will be of high importance in the latter discussion of the relationship between the institutions, state administrators and the rappers.

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[82] See chapter five

[83] echoing Gramsci (1971) on private initiatives

As a consequence of these low-level negotiations, the official support of rap led to the blossoming of the rap scene up to 2004. Until 2007 the scene had faced a severe decline, with the suspension of the annual festival in Alamar in 2005, and its substitution with the annual Hip Hop Symposium (Baker, 2011). This was combined, with the massive rising popularity of reggaeton in Cuba since 2002 (ibid). However, after 2007 the scene blossomed again with artists such as los Aldeanos, Papa Humbertico, Silvito el Libre and Escuadron Patriota taking the lead and reviving both the Old School (vieja escuela) of rappers, as well as, inspiring the New School (nueva escuela) of younger rappers. Specifically in the Comisión Depuradora (Purifying Commission) Los Aldeanos gathered all underground rappers that did not belong to the ACR and compiled a double CD followed by two concerts in La Madriguera[84](Malcolm, interview 19/8/211). The Comisión Depuradora has been rendered as a hallmark of the scene, making a clear statement against institutionalisation and in favour of more independent production and activities (ibid).

Additionally La Comisión Depuradora coincided "with the forging of new musical and social connections" (Baker, 2011:274) between different underground subcultures such as punk, rock, reggae and electronic music[85]. This loose connection between the underground subcultures or "movement" as it is frequently called, led to frequent collaborations between artists. An explicit example of that fusion is the collaboration of Los Aldeanos with the highly controversial punk group "Porno Para Ricardo"[86] in "A mi no me gusta la politica" (I don't like politics). This demonstrates that post-

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[84] Main space of performance for rap that is under the jurisdiction of the AHS

[85] See chapter one

[86] The singer of the group has been incarcerated and harassed several times because of the controversial lyrics of his band.

subcultural elements on the heterogeneity, fluidity and flux boundaries of subcultures are prevalent in Cuban rap. However, as will be illustrated in the following section the post-subcultural elements in Cuban rap cannot be differentiated from forging collective identities and issues of power and resistance

6.3.1 The "Underground" Movement: Heterogeneity, Fluidity, Power and Resistance

It was approximately 10 pm and I had just arrived at Park G for the first time in order to meet with Ernesto, Antonio and Alejandro. Park G is about 2 kilometres long, with benches wide pavement with tall green bushes, in between the main avenue of Vedado in Havana. As soon as I arrived the mixing of subcultural youths amazed me. Rappers, reggae artists and fans, young trovadores, frikies (this name is used in Cuba to describe the punk, metal and rock fans and artists and arguably it denotes their dressing style) and miquies (mainly used for electronic music fans and middle-higher class youth) were all sitting next to one another, sharing bottles of rum, chatting and enjoying their night out. At the same time, police units of approximately 20 officers were in some of the corners of the Park watching the youths (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010)

As Baker (2011) demonstrates in 2006 the rap scene was highly marginalised. Many of the rappers started performing in more central places of Havana, in an attempt to both revive the scene but also to attract tourists (ibid)[87]. Therefore there was a shift in geographical space from Alamar to more central spaces of Havana (Vedado and Nuevo Vedado), which are considered to be more middle class and lighter skin areas

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[87] The issue of commercialisation and state administrator attitudes that manage these clubs will be discussed later.

(Kapcia, 2005). The main aspect that should be highlighted by this shift is that as soon as the peñas (live performances or gigs) ended, the rappers and their audience gathered at Park G (Parque G) in Vedado (Baker, 2011). As implied in the vignette in Park G, due to the lack of access for the majority of Cuban youths in Havana's night-time economy, what occurs is for various subcultures to gather, mix and interact. Additionally as depicted in the word *miquie,* youths from all social backgrounds tend to gather in Park G. Arguably this shows that post-subcultural characteristics on the fluidity and heterogeneity of subcultural boundaries are explicit in the case of Cuban rap.

As demonstrated in the first and third chapter (on the term underground in Cuba), this social networking of underground subcultures is forged through affective relationships of friendship and love but also through common shared experiences of labelling and marginalisation. Specifically in the rap song "friki inconprendido" (the misunderstood friki) El Aldeano exhibits explicit sympathy for the rock subcultural members that no one seems to understand them. While Papa Humbertico in his song "tengo una novia friki" (I have a friki girlfriend) illustrates the interaction through affective relationships between the two groups. Therefore despite the fluidity, heterogeneity and the non-fixity in the boundaries of subcultures, that post-subculture theory has stressed, the affective relationships of friendship and romance within the groups actually construct a more cohesive but simultaneously loose network of subcultures.

At the same time this loose affective network of subcultures cannot be differentiated from issues of social exclusion, control, power and resistance (tCCCS interpretation). Firstly, the majority of these youths are excluded (due to their economic condition) from the night-time economy of Havana that is mainly focused on tourist

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consumption (see chapter five). As Malcolm (interview 19/8/2011) states: *"In Cuba there does not exist a night-time economy for the average Cuban. For Cubans right? Because for tourists it surely exists".* Thus, the Malecón and Parque G are the only option available. As depicted in the vignette, Parque G is a cause for alarm for the authorities and it tends to be highly policed. Thus it could be argued that Park G reflects the contestation over public space. It constitutes a site of symbolic resistance by these youths to their marginalization by the tourist driven economy of Havana.
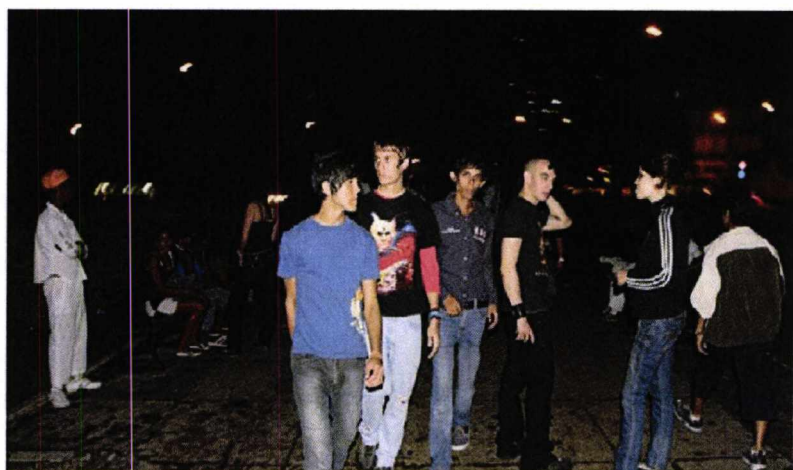
Parque G: photo by G. Jorge Luis Baños.

Secondly, these groups are driven underground, as they seem to constitute a challenge to the unity, uniformity and conformity posed by the regime[88]. It could be argued therefore, that collective identities are being forged in a wider social-network of subcultures as a "collective response" and a "magical solution" to common shared problems and experiences in their everyday realities. As depicted in the definition of the underground in chapter three, this underground network of subcultures cannot be differentiated from ideology and issues of power and resistance. A development that reflects the aforementioned issues and most importantly the struggle for institutional

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[88] See chapter five.

independence of these subcultural groups is the association of the rappers (from 2008 onwards) with the underground electronic music collective of Matraka.

Specifically the project of Matraka is an independent, cultural, non-profit organisation that dedicates itself to promote artists that are less supported by the media or institutions (Arturo De la Fe in Rotilla documentary, 2010). Matraka has opened two new important spaces for rap. Until 2010 in Rotilla, by the beach of Jibacoa, around 20,000 young people could enjoy a three day festival of electronic music and live performances of underground rap, rock and punk groups. The massive appeal of the independent (from state institutions) festival to young people nationally and internationally, arguably led in 2011 to be taken over by the Ministry of Culture without any notification to its organisers[89]. This in turn resulted in reggaeton, timba and salsa groups becoming the substitute of the underground artists[90]. Arguably this event shows how institutionalisation functions not only in positive ways, but also as a source of incorporation, appropriation and control of this underground social network to the regime's hegemony. Echoing thus the CCCS, this incident demonstrates how power works at an institutional level.

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[89] There were multiple scenarios during the summer of 2011 on why this occurred. The most predominant one was that Matraka is being funded by an NGO (US-AID) serving the interests of the U.S. for promoting counterrevolutionary movements on the island through the influence of arts and dissemination of technology. It is still not clear whether these accusations are accurate or not. However the "siege mentality" is apparent at this point. The second scenario was that the Matraka organisers had stated in a meeting with the Ministry of Culture that they were planning to open the festival with Los Aldeanos. The rap duo had closed the festival in 2010 in a very explosive way (this will be demonstrated later). Thus some were saying that the Ministry was very worried if Los Aldeanos opened the festival, what would follow next (field-notes , Havana, July 2011).

[90] Rap groups from the ACR (mainly the most politically correct ones) and rock groups also performed but they were placed on a stage at the very edges of the beach, close to the police and the state security facilities. This contradicted the previous year where rap and rock were placed on the main stage. The state organisers had excluded the vanguards of rap (Los Aldeanos, Silvito, El Libre, Escuadron Patriota). While some of the most critical rappers of the Agency (those that entered the Agency in 2010) did not accept the invitation to perform, in a gesture of protest for the institutionalisation of the festival; despite the fact, that they were offered a very much appealing, for Cuban standards, fee in order to sing (field-notes, Havana, August 2011).
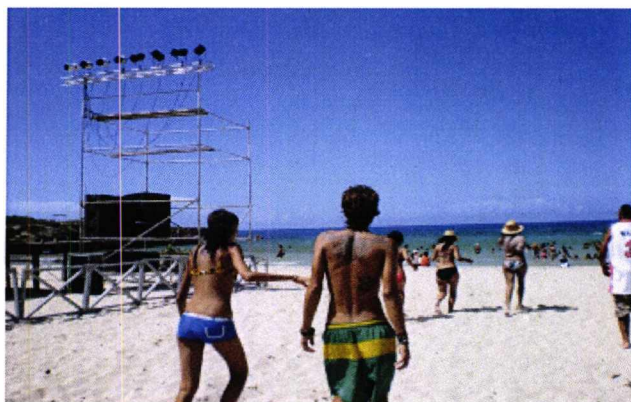
Jibacoa beach during the Rotilla festival: Photo taken by the author

Moreover, this latest incident of Rotilla had created strong worries among the rappers, in the fear that the Ministry would also suspend the awards of Puños Arriba (Fists Up). The annual event of Puños Arriba is the second space provided for rap by Matraka since 2008. It should be noted that there are currently two main annual events for rap. One is the Cuban Rap Symposium organised by the Cuban Rap Agency, where artists like Los Aldeanos, Silvito El Libre and Escuadron are never invited. The second is the Puños Arriba organised by Matraka, with the help of the AHS and with close observation by the state security.

This event is arguably the most important one, as all artists are invited to perform and be awarded for their work. Despite the fact that the event gets official approval through the intervention of the AHS and personal negotiations of the rappers and organisers with institutions and the Ministry of Culture, it has not been trouble free. The latest example of the problems faced was in 30th of May 2012. Specifically an officer from state security threatened the life of rapper Soandry (the current director of the awards), after the event finished, because he did not accept the demands of the Cuban police to censor Los Aldeanos, Escuadron Patriota and David De Omni during the event. It is reasonable hence to ask why do the rappers face this kind of oppression while having official approval of a cultural institution to conduct the event?

Specifically, relationships between people and institutions are complex in Cuba. At the same time that cultural institutions and individual initiatives of intermediaries and rappers were/are negotiating and attempting to establish a harmonious relationship, the state's coercive mechanism was/is demonstrating a rather different reality. As Antonio (interview 13/8/2010) reports:

"At the beginning (1990s) I saw people that were singing being handcuffed on the scene and dragged down by the police [...] things that they do not do now of course. Cuba has changed a lot. [...] People think that hip hop is difficult to realise now [...] before performing hip hop was much more difficult! Only to say in the 1990s, that Cuba has problems and nothing more, directly meant that you should look for rescue afterwards.

Arguably this demonstrates the complex relationship of oppression and support between the state institutions and the rappers. This contradictory relationship has characterised the rappers and the state since the early beginnings. It is reasonable then to ask, why is it that the rappers, despite having the official support even of Castro himself, to face suppression, marginalisation, censorship and non-representation in the media?

Before I provide an answer to this question it is important to illustrate the cultural institutions that support and promote rap: the Brothers Saiz Association (AHS) and the Cuban Rap Agency (ACR). Through the discussion of these institutions the complexities of power in Cuban institutions will be further highlighted. Moreover the significance of both micro and macro-forces in terms of power and resistance will be illustrated, as well as that similar to western countries an appropriation of rap is occurs through commercialism.

The main purpose of this section was to demonstrate a social and artistic network that is not confined to the boundaries of one subculture but it is highly characterised with confrontation and resistance to the hegemonic culture and the state's coercive apparatus. Thus politics, resistance, collective identities, individual initiatives, personal choice, heterogeneity and fluidity between the members of the underground subcultures in Cuba (ravers, punks, rockers and rappers) cannot be differentiated.

6.4 Brothers Saiz Association (AHS) and Cuban Rap Agency (ACR): Power, Structural changes, Affective Relationships, Personal Choices and Commercialism as Appropriation

As demonstrated earlier, the AHS started supporting rap from the late 1990s. Although it is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and the Union of Young Communists (UJC), it largely acts with certain autonomy (Malcolm, interview 19/8/2011). Thus it could be viewed as an "NGO" that focuses on youth and youth underground artists and is dealing with the socio-cultural problems that these artists might face (ibid). Specifically it is perceived by the rappers as a home and a shelter that supports them as much as it can. As Juan *(interview 19/8/ 2010) argues:*

"Look the AHS is one of the institutions that has supported rap more than anyone else. It's one of the institutions that counters -it is incredible that inside the institutions there are some that are in contrast with others-[...] In reality the AHS is like the opposite of the rest of the institutions. No institution actually supports the rappers. The AHS does! It has a lack of resources and shortages and at times it cannot help as it would like, but it helps to the extent that it can".

In a similar vein José (interview 15/8/2010) stated that the artists that belong to the AHS are the ones that do not have any institutional support. By entering into the

institution they have some benefits, like the provision of a trip abroad in order to perform or organise a concert in the spaces provided by the AHS (ibid). As, Malcolm the AHS cultural official explains: *"The role of the institution, despite its economic shortages is to protect alternative or underground arts that do not find support in any other institution"* (interview 19/8/2011). Hence it has provided a relative freedom of space for rap[91], despite the pressures from senior institutions. Moreover, the *"AHS prioritizes aesthetics, talents and making art for the love of art, instead of commercialization"* (ibid). Thus, although *"it provides chances to travel abroad, the artists that belong to the AHS cannot usually live from their art"* (ibid).

Importantly, the AHS and specifically the key figure of Malcolm played a significant role in the rehabilitation of Los Aldeanos in 2010 (the group was censored and blacklisted from performing in venues in 2009). Arguably he is the principal figure that fights within the institutions for the "legalisation" of the most controversial rap artists. The rehabilitation of the rap duo was forged with a concert with various rap artists, in May 2010 in the cinema Acapulco where around 3000 fans attended. It is evident hence how individual initiatives and choices can reshape official policies. However, it will be demonstrated that the concert and latter performances by the rappers had not been problem free.

Furthermore José (interview 18/8/2010) expressed the limitations of the institution by saying *"no matter how we would like it to be different they report to those on top [...] So in the end all the permissions and all the files are moved and made like that"*. Thus although occasions of censorship have been really rare in the AHS, the most prominent cases had been those of Papa Humbertico (he was sanctioned for 6

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[91] Prime examples being the annual hip hop Festival in Alamar until 2005, the space of la Madriguera and its collaboration with Matraka for the event of Puños Arriba.

months of non-performance) and Escuadron Patriota (he was expelled in 2004 from the AHS). It will be shown that restrictive measures are applied to some of the rappers, not all, the reasons for which will be discussed shortly. This again shows the complex relationship between support and suppression of the rappers to state power.

Additionally, the Cuban Rap Agency (ACR) was created in 2002 with *"the main objective to promote, record, commercialize rap and help the artists to live from their music"* (Malcolm, interview 19/8/2011). Arguably the Agency functions as a music industry and responds to government's interests, which are seen in more economic terms. As Alain argues, *"The Cuban Rap Agency is different from the AHS. Because there is money involved. And when there is money involved, things are different"* (interview 14/8/2010). Arguably the creation and politics of the ACR reflect the shift to socio-capitalism in government's policies. The difference in the priorities between the two institutions arguably reflects the conflict between the "old" revolutionary culture (distant from material incentives) and commercialism. Hence structural changes are important to be considered in our interpretation of state power towards music subcultures. Arguably the ACR reflects Hebdige's (1979) analysis on the appropriation of subcultures by the system through commercialisation (see chapter three).

The effects of this appropriation are important to be discussed. As Malcolm, the cultural official (interview 19/8/2011) argues *"the Agency has not fulfilled the expectations of the rap movement"*[92]. The responsibility for this according to him lies both to the Agency and the rappers. Specifically *"since its creation no specific*

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[92] The term movement is frequently evoked for rap. It will be demonstrated later on whether rap can evolve into a movement.

guidelines were given on the functions the Agency would serve, apart from the commercialization of the genre" (ibid). Consequently, *"the Agency was never seen as a space that would resolve the socio-cultural problems of rap"* (ibid). Moreover the first signs of disunity appeared among the rappers: *"the state is not responsible for everything [...] when the Agency was created the rappers could not agree who would be the director of the Agency" (ibid).* As a result a state official took the position up to 2007 when Magia the female rapper from the duo Obsesión took over the directorship (ibid).

Furthermore, the commercial priorities of the ACR led to three converting to reggaeton from the eight rap groups that entered the Agency (see chapter seven) (Baker, 2011). The popularity of reggaeton presented (until 2012) the leading genre on generating money through music[93] (Manolo, 1/8/2010). This led to a rivalry within rap realms, with rappers accusing the reggaetoneros of selling out (Alberto, interview 17/8/2011). Furthermore, there were widespread rumours during my fieldwork that Magia was using the Agency as a means to promote her group, leaving the rest of the groups aside. As Malcolm (interview 19/8/2011) states

"many think that Magia has betrayed the rap movement, because she was interested more in promoting her group rather than promoting and dealing with the socio-cultural problems of rap in general".

Arguably, *"since its establishment the Agency showed problems and inconsistencies in the direction of the movement"* (ibid). As Baker (2011) argues, the Agency led to the division of the rap movement and perhaps to its decline. It could be argued that the division and decline of rap had to do with personal choices (choosing the more

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[93] This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter

commercialised genre of reggaeton), affective relationships between the rappers (distrust/ disillusion towards Magia) and state intervention ("divide and conquer" strategy through commercialism). Consequently affective relationships among the rappers play a very important role and it will be illustrated that the disunity in the rap subculture stems both from state policies (macro) but also from the rappers (micro everyday relationships). Hence both traditional CCCS elements and post-subcultural should be considered in our interpretation of power and resistance in the specific context.

Due to these factors, the *"Agency lost its credibility and became very unpopular among the rappers"* (Malcolm, interview 19/8/2011). This was also due to its inability to fulfil the expectations of promotion and to give the ability to the rappers to live from their music. As Juan (interview 19/8/2010) states *"I don't believe that the Agency has accomplished for the artists to live from their music. And this is something that the Agency has to achieve".* While Ernesto reflects the loss of credibility of the ACR by saying: *"Definitely I would love to enter [...] But when there isn't a direction, as it is now with the Cuban Rap Agency, I am not going to participate in something like that"* (interview 21/8/2010). However in 2010 signs of change appeared, as, after eight years, the Agency opened its doors for new rappers to enter. Namely, Soandry, Cuantas Claras, Mano Armada and Etian Brebaje Man entered the Agency.

As demonstrated earlier, these rappers "had a long tradition in the scene but were left outside for all these years" (Roberto, interview 22/8/2010). This opening was seen by the rappers both as a battle gained and a practical decision from the Agency: *"on the streets were some of the best rappers, whereas within the Agency were some of the worse"* Roberto explains. Juan underlies the economic function of this opening by stating that because very good groups were outside the Agency *"this*

had an impact on the popularity of the events that the Agency organises. Thus it took the decision to incorporate groups that have a wide appeal to people" (interview 19/8/2010). Arguably this demonstrates on the one hand, the importance of micro-level struggles of the rappers and on the other that economic motivations play a very important role in the institutionalisation and state appropriation of rap. Hence the CCCS interpretation of how subcultures get incorporated into the system runs parallel with everyday struggles of subcultural members' themselves.

In terms of power, although occasions of censorship are very rare in the Agency, what frequently occurs is auto-censorship. As Roberto (interview, 22/8/202) explains

"I always knew that there are places where I can sing one thing and other places that I can sing another [...] I always knew that there is a public that I owe to it to sing specific type of songs and a public that I will sing other types of songs".

Thus, it can be argued that the rappers show great awareness and flexibility on how to "play it safe" within the authoritarian socio-cultural climate that they work in. Arguably auto-censorship is followed in order not to jeopardise the space that they have gained after years of struggle. Also it is really important to observe the importance of the space and the audience in terms of what can be said and what cannot. As a result the songs are usually softer at the concerts organised by the Agency. As Alejandro (interview 12/8/2010) states:

"The Agency responds to the government. So it cannot (although it would like to) give a concert were the artists of the movement would participate, to permit them [...] to say these strong messages because it would be detrimental for those that direct the Agency. So that's why the messages in the Agency's

concerts are more superficial. Ok they always say something because rap generally is critique. But you won't find the same content, as for example in a concert of Escuadron. You will notice the differences in the songs that are sung. They are more radical than in the events organised by the Agency".

The rapper arguably touches on a very important point. Specifically what needs to be understood about Fidel's "words to the intellectuals" (see chapter four and five) is that a critique to the regime can be made, but up to a certain limit (Kapcia, 2005). In western terms this would be *"called political correctness"* (Malcolm, interview 19/8/2011). Thus the critique in the Agency's concerts does not surpass these limits in contrast to the concerts of Los Aldeanos, Silvito el Libre and Escuadron[94]. Moreover it should be noted that the *"first groups that had entered the Agency in 2002 (Obsesión, Anonimo Consejo and Doble Filo) are the most politically correct groups in their discourse"* (Malcolm, interview 19/8/2011). Thus it could be argued that the Agency functions as a form of incorporation and commodification of the subculture into the system by softening previous radical discourses within its realm (Hebdige, 1979). Consequently the CCCS perspective on how hegemony incorporates into its system subversive subcultures is as important as, personal choices and practices that the rappers appropriate in order to survive in the specific socio-cultural context.

Most importantly, through the information provided so far, it is implied that the rappers face problems of censorship and coercion mainly because they surpass the set limits of critique and hence they are perceived to be counterrevolutionaries. It becomes important then to explore whether the rappers are actually revolutionaries

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[94] This also illuminates why Escuadron was so harshly censored by the AHS.

or counterrevolutionaries. Thus, do they oppose Cuba's ideology or do they embrace it? Moreover the explicit links of ideology, structural issues, affects and the interconnection of the micro to the macro will be demonstrated.

6.5 Cubanía, affects and Cuban Underground Rap: Conscious Resistance to Power

It was approximately four o'clock in the morning. I was with Alejandro one of the rappers, and a group of his friends at the Rotilla festival. Los Aldeanos were on stage and approximately 20,000 youths were surrounding us, on the sandy beach of Jibacoa. El B had taken the microphone and in a poetic monologue called "Pinga pa' todos" (Fuck you all) he threw an explosive challenge to the legitimacy and hypocrisy of the regime by saying "you are so imbecile that you only listen to bad words in our songs/ well fuck you, fuck the Ministry of Culture, fuck the government [...] fuck all the snitches that exist in Cuba!" the crowd was cheering constantly and a feeling of upraising was felt during the moments of his talk (field-notes, Jibacoa, August 2010).

As illustrated in the chapter on Cuba there are eight codes that comprise Cuban Ideology (agrarianism, moralism, activism, culturalism, internationalism, statism, generationalism and revolution). I will now illustrate the explicit links between these codes and underground rappers.

As rap is an explicit urban phenomenon it would have been expected that *agrarianism* would be largely marginalised. However it still has an explicit role and arguably it is constructed in new ways by the rappers. Specifically, as I have already demonstrated, some of the rappers reside in the countryside. Moreover the name of Los Aldeanos, which means the villagers, evokes their ideological connection with

the purity of values and feelings (honour, honesty, pride, love) to the countryside. This theme is evoked in various songs like Los Aldeanos "guajiro", where by "making rap from the land" (desde la tierra haciendo rap), they represent themselves as pure and not contaminated by the corruption and shallow materialism of the city. At the same time though, the code of agrarianism is constructed in negative terms when the police are addressed. In the song of el Aldeano "cerebro de tivol" (shit-head) the repeated terms guajiro (peasant) and palestino[95] are used to describe uneducated, abusive, uncritical, and conservative individuals. Similar issues are evoked in Silvio's and Aldo's song "policia singao" (fuck the police) such as the intimidation, repression, abusiveness and humiliation that characterises police practices towards the Habaneros (habitants of Havana). Here police officers are described in even more provocative terms like sons of bitches, abnormal, violators of the law, corrupted and delinquent.

Arguably the reconstruction of agrarianism reflects the tensions between the urban and rural in everyday life in Havana. Specifically in all the interviews the rappers argued that the "state recruits police officers from the countryside with the only criterion being their loyalty and zeal to the regime" (Ernesto, interview 21/8/2010). As a result the police are very intolerant to diversity of youth-subcultural styles in Havana, targeting them as delinquents. As Alejandro (interview 12/8/2010) stresses:

"What happens here is that the relationships between the people in the countryside and Habaneros are quite tense. There is a conflict between the two. Also respect for diversity does not exist here. So if they see you having

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[95] The term palestino is used from Havana citizens to negatively denote those coming from the countryside (usually from the eastern part of the island). Arguably it stems from the imagery of Palestine that does not have a recognised country of its own.

many tattoos or if you have dreadlocks or braids or simply if you are black, they

see you as an anti-social element [...] and as I told you before they abuse their

power [...] So they just drive us crazy in Havana! That's why no one in Havana

wants to be a police officer".

This largely depicts what was demonstrated in the previous chapter about the rise of racism and the continuous police discrimination towards Afro-Cubans. It also illustrates the importance of style in processes of labelling and criminalisation that the CCCS was focusing on. As a result of the widespread police abuse El Aldeano in "la bandera de tu alma"[96] (the flag of your soul) gives emphasis to affects by showing the hatred that is accumulating in many people in Havana. The rappers enter into what El Aldeano calls ""operation rehabilitation of feelings"[97] and values. Arguably then, they are promoting rural values and emotions in the dehumanising reality of capitalist Havana, while simultaneously claiming for urban freedoms (Baker, 2011). Thus affects and values for the rappers are of equal importance.

Additionally the reconstruction of agrarianism is highly depicted in the notion of *la aldea* (the village). *La aldea* represents "a small place where everyone – though it may seem utopian- helps and collaborates with each other, where everyone has the same objective" [98](El B in the documentary Revolution, 2010). Specifically the *aldea* is highly associated with the social, intellectual, activist and artistic world built around the rap duo Los Aldeanos[99] (Baker, 2011). Arguably it denotes the ability of music to

[96] Another song dedicated largely on police abuse

[97] In Aldo's song "Aldito el gusanito". Gusano means worm in Spanish and is used in Cuba as an alternative word for counterrevolutionaries.

[98] To attain urban freedoms, claim their citizens' rights and fight for social equality and a better quality of life for all. The objectives of rap will be demonstrated in more detail later.

[99] Depicting again post-subcultural elements on the fluidity of the boundaries of the specific subculture.

construct communal spaces of interaction and "create a social village within the city" (Baker, 2011: 220). Hence, collective identities, ideology, affects and fluidity in subcultural boundaries are very much interconnected.

In the "operation of rehabilitation of feelings and values" *moralism* and *culturalism* play a very important role. Specifically in many songs the residents of Havana are described as robots (la niña robot), marionettes (un provinciano), crazy (mi barrio es loco), blind (la rima contra la ceguera), patients (milliones de casos sociales), ghosts (el joven fantasma), and androids (vivencias)[100]. These metaphors are used to imply firstly, the corrosive effects of capitalism and materialism in Havana, which have led to the rise of individualism and the loss of values and emotions such as love and friendship. Papa Humbertico in "en esta ciudad" (in this city) depicts the dehumanising effects of capitalist Havana:

Almost everyone is acting like a robot, manipulated by leftist mode propaganda/ in this city where it's all about having and not being/ where what was love yesterday, today is business[101] / where emotions and consciousness are something absurd

Thus, the second sense that the rappers use these metaphors for are to show the control of the state over its citizens through the function of ideology. The rappers view Cuban citizens as having lost their emotions and their revolutionary and critical consciousness. Culturalism hence, is explicit as the rappers take the role of organic

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[100] Translation of the song titles as appeared on the document: the robot girl (los Aldeanos), a provincial (Escuadron Patriota), my barrio is crazy (Los Aldeanos), the rime against blindness (El Aldeano), millions of social cases (El Aldeano, Silvito El Libre and Escuadron Patriota), the young ghost (Los Aldeanos), experiences (Papa Humbertico).

[101] He is making clear links to prostitution.

intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971). They use rap as a means to liberate and emancipate the people from the "virus"[102] of increasing materialism, bureaucracy, consumer ethos, double morality, silence and fear. They aim to bring back cubanía's lost values and feelings such as solidarity, honesty, action, love and friendship. Thus they aim to revolutionise and set free the Cubans from "the emotional, intellectual and material poverty"[103]. Specifically Escuadron in "un provinciano" says:

Brothers it's the time to revolutionise the mind, the soul and the heart. Think for yourself, act for yourself! From a small age they educate us all the time to be like marionettes whenever they say it, but now it's the moment of liberation!

Similarly, El Aldeano in "eso es mucho" (this is a lot) raps "I am the Jesus that brings light into you virus" and in "Equipo" El Aldeano with Papa Humbertico take the role of doctors "injecting the people with intelligence". The interconnection of affects and ideology (body and mind) is seen in "touching hearts with the mind"[104], "reaching the consciousness and the hearts of the people"[105] and in "we must give more participation to the heart and less to money, first comes reason"[106]. Specifically the notion of *potentia* is evoked as a key feature of liberation at the very micro-individual level:

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[102] El Adeano in "miseria Humana" (Human Misery) and "el virus" (the virus) by El Aldeano

[103] Escuadron Patriota in "lloran" (they cry) feat. El Aldeano

[104] El Aldeano "pesima conducta" (terrible behaviour)

[105] El Aldeano and Escuadron in "por si mañana" (if tomorrow)

[106] El Aldeano "llorar es un lujo spiritual" (to cry is a spiritual luxury)

It's because life is like that, it calls you to run without being able to reach her/ sometimes she is a bit hard and difficult to understand but in front of the obstacles we have to grow and evolve/ find the power to know yourself[107]

Thus structural issues, ideology, inner power, energy of people and affects are highly linked when it comes to Cuban rap. Moreover, *moralism* is very prominent within rap songs. Specifically Mano Armada in "rap del bueno" (good rap) echo Guevara's New man and the prioritisation of moral incentives rather than material ones:

Good Rap, no merchandise music/ spiritual compromise, urban poesy/ rebelliousness, force, discipline, youth/ good rap in me, the greatest virtue /...the ideals will never be sold again/ the content of our songs is honest/ and like that we create and move on, clandestinely/ powerful revolution, musically and ideologically/...thought and soul are put in every song/ marginal expression where the songs prohibit lies

Thus rap is presented as the greatest virtue and a way of life that reproduces the values of honesty, critical consciousness, commitment to the ideals, mobilisation despite all obstacles, with main objective to revolutionise both mind and soul. Hence cubanía's values of *activism* and *moralism* go hand in hand for the rappers. At the same time though, as depicted in the vignette at the beginning of the section, they subvert moralism by using bad words. Hence, although the rappers stay loyal to the value of moralism, their sameness rhetoric puts a strong challenge on Cuba's morality. Specifically, during my fieldwork various people told me that they were more shocked by the "bad" language used by the rappers than by the reggaetoneros (see chapter seven).

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[107] El Aldeano Feat Silvito el Libre "la vida es asi" (life is like that)

Additionally stemming from Martí the rejection of betrayal, corruption, fraud and venality is explicit not only in songs but also in tattoos:

El Aldeano's tattoo La traición es muerte (treason is death). Photo taken by the author
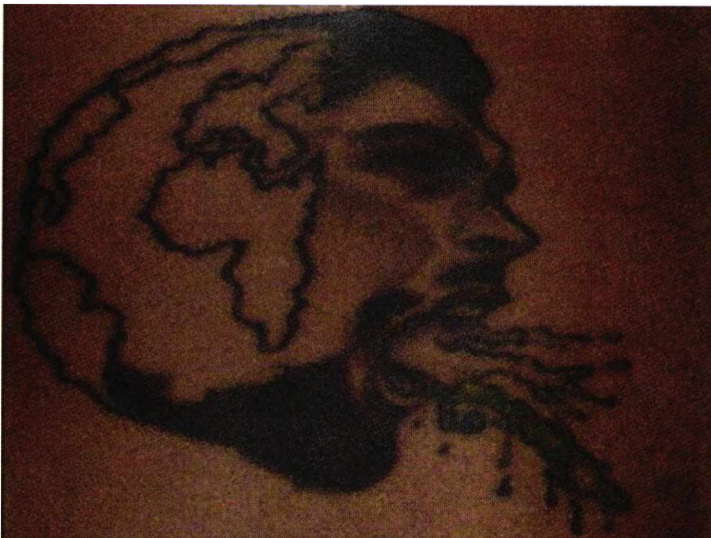
In this tattoo of El Aldeano Che Guevara is seen to vomit Cuba, for the direction that the island has taken and the conditions of living of the Cuban citizens. Photo taken by the author.

Arguably Aldeano's tattoos demonstrate the disillusion of the youth towards the inability of the government to fulfil its promises. Simultaneously in the song "amigos"[108] "treason as death" is directed at the micro-level towards friends that

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[108] El Aldeano, Escuadron Patriota and Silvito El Libre

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betray. Moreover, *moralism* and *activism* (luchar) are also apparent in rap songs. Specifically the continuation of the discourse of death and sacrifice for the dream of Cuba Libre to be fulfilled is very much apparent in:

> *They are going to lock me up in the prison of the sincere/ there is no back reverse, as I am, I will die/... This struggle has not finished yet (Not yet)!/ To struggle in honour for (Struggle)/ For this they sacrificed (For sure)!/ You only have to be brave (If we unite)!/ Without the necessity of using a gun (against them)[109]*

Guerrillerismo is evident in the last verse although the battle of the rappers is not with guns but with music. Thus guerrillerismo is used not as a literary armed struggle but rather as a battle of discourse or what Los Aldeanos call "los guerreros de la tinta" (the warriors of ink). *Guerrillerismo* has a prominent place in rap songs such as "la mission" by Xtremo and Escuadron and "el rap es Guerra"[110] (rap is war) by Mano Armada, Anderson and Los Aldeanos. Moreover Martí, Maceo, the *mambises*, Camilo Cienfuegos[111] and Che Guevara are frequently evoked as being either the rappers' Commanders-in-Chief or for the rappers to be continuing their tradition and struggle. In "los mambises" Silvito, Escuadron, Charly, Muchas Rimas, El Aldeano and CP claim to be the mambises of the 21st century, while Aldo in "los Aldeanos" states:

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[109] El Aldeano "la bendera de tu alma" (the flag of your soul)

[110] This phrase has also become a tattoo that both El B and el Aldeano carry on their right arms, below their elbows.

[111] Camilo Cienfuegos was one of the most important figures in the 1959 revolution, who died after its consolidation under non-clarified circumstances.

now I am going to die, when I get there (heaven) I will ask for Camilo and Martí/

and I will tell them about all the injustices that I have seen.

Moreover El B in "viva Cuba Libre" (long live free Cuba) states that the dream of a truly free, sovereign and independent Cuba has not yet been fulfilled. He takes the role of Maceo, willing to die for his country and the liberation of Cubans by fear and oppression:

Brave like Maceo, I represent the entire island!/ you have to kill me to take the flag from me! Enough! No more oppression let the machete tremble/ Cuban! Get free from your shackle! Long Live Free Cuba!

He finishes the song by saying:

"The only feeling that is stronger than love for liberty, is the hatred for the one that denies it to us", said Ernesto Che Guevara a true leader/..."Homeland or Death", you have demonstrated that to us. But we don't believe you any more the deception has ended. Enough time of silence and fear, come down from the platform. Revolution is to change what needs to be changed!

Thus by identifying with Guevara he demonstrates the interconnections of affects with politics and ideology. Moreover, although he recognises the struggles of the revolutionary regime he explicitly shows the current dissolution of the youth to the government. What needs to be stressed is that El B ends the song by repeating the words of Fidel himself "revolution is to change anything that needs to be changed". Arguably cubanía's code of revolution is stated, but also by appropriating Fidel's slogans he explicitly shows his patriotism and places himself "inside the revolution" and not against it. The same could be argued for all the rappers. By drawing on

Cuba's revolutionary history and ideology and identifying with its key figures, they are legitimising their position towards the regime. Hence it could be argued that the rappers are Martianos in their values and discourse. Their identification to Guevara offers them a sense of "safe radicalism" (Kapcia, 2000: 212), a way of articulating both commitment and opposition (Baker, 2011). This will be explicitly demonstrated in the code of statism.

Moreover, the code of *revolution* and *generationalism* are very much interconnected. This is demonstrated in the song by Escuadron and Franko "revolución" (revolution): "One! We are the revolution/ Two! We are going to restore a broken down country!" As a result rap is seen as a *"revolution inside the revolution"* (Roberto, interview 22/8/2010). Additionally the code of revolution is directed towards the micro-individual level with El B in "soy ese" (I am that) reflecting again the notion of *potentia*:

> *The best thing is to be able to know yourself/...the revolution begins from inside to outside/ if you don't change, you won't be able to change the world that surrounds you.*

Furthermore, *internationalism* is highly depicted in the notion of la *aldea*. The virtual village is not confined to the boundaries of Cuba. Specifically there have been various collaborations with rappers from Venezuela, Chile, Puerto Rico and Spain among others. This again demonstrates post-subcultural elements on the cultural flows between the local and the global. However this interconnection cannot be differentiated from politics. Specifically international problems and politics preoccupy the rappers. In the song "por Haity" (for Haiti) El Aldeano, Escuadron and Sekou[112]

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[112] Sekou is one of the oldest rappers, member of the group Anonymo Consejo (anonymous advice).

explicitly show their solidarity to the people of Haiti during the 2010 earthquake. In "crisis de fe" (crisis of faith) el Aldeano states that "it is more about a crisis of faith rather that an economic one", addressing it both internally and externally in order to express the global disillusion of youth to their political representatives. Moreover, El B in "deja que hable el corazon" (let the heart talk) raps:

don't forget you are alive and this is another opportunity to change your reality/it doesn't matter if you are in Havana or Rome since we all laugh and suffer in the same language.

Hence he shows the *potentia* that lies within every person and the transnational language of affects. Thus transnational flows, affects, inner power energy of people, politics and structural issues are interconnected in Cuban rap.

Arguably the code that becomes a realm of contestation is that of *statism.* The rappers stay faithful to the code by advocating liberty, sovereignty, independence, egalitarianism, social welfare, social justice, and social and racial equality. However they address strong criticisms to the government by showing the gap between official discourses and everyday reality in Cuba. Specifically El B in "Viva Cuba Libre" raises the issue of the continued economic dependence of Cuba, first to the USSR and now to Venezuela and China, arguing that Cuba is still not independent. He challenges the government to tell him what communism is when, while there is free healthcare for everyone, deteriorating conditions mean many Cubans are not treated properly. Thus, he does not disavow the slogans used by the government, but rather advocates that they be enforced. Moreover, bureaucracy is attacked as one of the principle plights of the system.

Furthermore, by using the metaphor of Pinocchio silencing his consciousness (that is, the cricket), he makes obvious the disillusionment and frustration stemming from the gap between the government's official discourse and everyday reality in Cuba. Additionally, he stresses the corrosive effects of the double currency for social equality and the inability of the state to provide a good quality of life for its citizens. He challenges the government not only to ask itself: "how do people that do *not* work, live?" (by implication referring to the black market) but also "how do people that *work*, live"? Demonstrating in that way that it is impossible to live with the state salary that is in Cuban pesos while Cubans need to pay in CUC almost everywhere in Havana.

Moreover, the "tourist apartheid" and the subsequent rendering of Cubans as "second class" citizens is depicted in the song of Papa Humbertico "La Habana que tu no conoces" (the Havana that you don't know[113]) where he raps "this is my Havana, the Havana you don't know/ The Cuban capital after midnight. Enjoy it if you are foreign, struggle if you are from here". While el Aldeano shows the growing inequalities to tourists and the selling off of values by saying "one day sadly the values said the foreigners come first"[114]. He also asks the government to tell him "I want to know whether communism is based on equality or the development of tourism"[115]. Additionally, in NS el Aldeano asks the government to ask itself "why the majority of Cuban youth want to leave the island"? Reflecting the fact that the main dream of youth in today's Havana is to leave the country (see chapter seven).

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[113] Addressing it to tourists

[114] La vida es asi feat Silvito el Libre

[115] Chico pillo (cunning boy)

Furthermore in "veneno" (poison) the same rapper reconstructs the slogan of "Patria o Muerte, venceremos" by saying "Patria o muerte, chacalismo" (homeland or death, jackals) referring to the widespread corruption and double morality. In "delito" (offense) he reformulates "Viva Cuba Libre" by saying "Viva Cuba Muerta" (Long live Dead Cuba) and in NS by saying "Viva Cuba en nota" (Long Live Drunk Cuba). By doing so he expresses in the first case the death of the revolutionary spirit in the island, while in the second he reflects the excessive alcohol consumption among the residents of Havana, which is seen to contribute to the rise of violence among youths. At the same time Escuadron in "imágenes" (images) and Soandry (sale a caminar) (take a walk) see alcohol consumption and dance as a form of momentary liberation from the burdens of everyday life. This will be explicitly demonstrated in the chapter on reggaeton.

Discrimination and inequalities are a constant theme. Aldo in "Nuevo Vedado" says "only for being poor you become a synonym to shit", while in "abusando de tu oreja" (abusing your ear) he asks: "why do the generals move in Mercedes Benz's and the people in buses?"[116]. Soandry in (sale a caminar) states "a better world is possible sure! But those who say it live better than the rest". Thus they explicitly show that the higher strands of the regime are economically prosperous in contrast to the majority of the Cuban population. Additionally Escuadron in "no más discriminación" (no more discrimination) argues that there is no justification for the racial segregation on the island; especially when Afro-Cubans grow up in a system that advocates that they have the same rights and opportunities as the rest, but this is not materialised in practice. As Antonio (interview 13/8/2010) in a similar vein states:

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[116] The problems with transportation are also a significant topic for the rappers.

"Here in Cuba we have an extremely complex race situation. Because in the constitution it says that we are all equal, but in practice everybody perfectly knows that the lighter you are, the more benefits you will get in society".

All the rappers are aware that racism exists all around the world. But the difference is that in the "*outside world there has not been a fifty-year revolution and a subsequent racial equality propaganda, as there has been in Cuba*" (ibid). Thus they demonstrate the disillusionment with the regime by showing the gap between official discourses and everyday life in Cuba. Moreover the problem of freedom of speech in Cuba is depicted in various songs. Specifically Escuadron in "decadencia" (decadence) raps:

Decadence, how much destruction, frustration and sadness/ Decadence, how much necessity to shout and demand but the fear lies ahead of us/ ... they separate us in two groups and we live worrying, paranoid and distrustful

Escuadron clearly shows the corrosive effects to social capital through both ideology (being separated to revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries) and affects (fear), which have led people not to claim their rights and most importantly not to trust each other[117]. Specifically the labelling of rappers as counterrevolutionaries is explicit, as in many songs the rappers try to clarify their position: el Discípulo in "no soy el enemigo" (I am not the enemy) says "my word is decent but you see me as a worm[118]", Aldo in "la vida es asi" raps "you are saying that we are counterrevolutionaries, but I am saying to you that we are all the contrary". Similarly Silvio in "hablame" (talk to me) asks the government why it censors their concerts

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[117] These issues will be discussed in more detail in the last part of the chapter

[118] The term gusano (worm) is frequently used as a synonym for counterrevolutionary

"only for being awake and with their eyes open", while in the same song Charly Muchas Rimas asks again "why there is so much oppression and why there needs to be only one way for doing the Revolution[119]"? Thus it becomes apparent that although the rappers follow the hegemonic conduct of being Cuban (being critical and active) they are labelled as counterrevolutionaries only for claiming their rights of freedom of speech and hence challenging the uniformity and conformity of the people to the system.

In particular the most provocative challenge is when the rappers reverse the labels of counterrevolutionary to the government officials, depicting them as traitors of their own values. A typical example is "Aldito el gusanito" (Aldo the little worm) by el Adeano:

> I would be a worm if I would take advantage of a supposed position and robbed my people/ if I repressed and silenced a whole generation and cut off at their roots the wings of their imagination/ I would be a worm if I would beat up without reason the Cuban youth after selling them rum. If I spoke of revolution and violated rights.../ look I don't want to be the leader of anything nor do I want anyone to change his post/ the only thing that I want is for you to understand us and to respect us/ this is proposed by a revolution of thoughts and the operation and recuperation of feelings/ ...you are the worm, my brother so stop disrespecting me.

As Fernández (2000) stemming from Scott (2000) argues, hegemonies are more vulnerable for critique in the values that they are supposed to represent and in the goals and promises that they are set to deliver. Thus the challenge to the legitimacy

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[119] Arguably he means the blind loyalty to the regime

of the Cuban regime by the rappers stems from the fact that they claim that they take the values of cubanía seriously, whereas the government and the upper classes do not (Baker, 2011). As a consequence, they deny the labelling processes that depict them as counterrevolutionaries, gusanos (worms-dissidents/traitors) and psychopaths and they turn it against the government.

Moreover, El Aldeano, in the aforementioned song, states that his aim is not to subvert the system. His aim is respect for diversity to be applied and claims again the notion of revolution as a constant process of critical thinking and recuperation of feelings (love, solidarity, trust). Hence the rappers want "proposals not empty answers"[120], they state that "they are not the problem but the consequence"[121] of the revolutionary experiment and they are trying to find "solutions not the culpable ones"[122] in order to "achieve prosperity for all Cuban people"[123]. Thus they claim to be "the consciousness of the presidents"[124]. It is evident hence that Cuban rappers are not counterrevolutionaries nor counter-hegemonic, as they stay loyal to the values of cubanía. Rap battles to claim, maintain and evolve all the values that are being jeopardised in contemporary Cuban society. As stated earlier, the rappers are Martianos or in Baker's terms (2011: 51) "hyper-revolutionaries" in their discourse and values. Their conscious discourse stays loyal to cubanía, while their criticism and actions are always expressed in positive and constructive terms to make Cuba a better place to live for Cubans. Therefore Cuban rap lies "within" the Revolution and not against it.

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[120] "abusando de tu oreja" El Aldeano

[121] "no soy el enemigo" Disipulo Feat El B

[122] "nos achicharraron" (they have burned us) El Aldeano

[123] "Miseria Humana" El Aldeano

[124] "Que nos devuelvan la fe" El Aldeano

Additionally it was demonstrated that the rappers focus on both macro and international issues as well as, on the micro level and affects. At the same time they challenge how meanings, beliefs, symbols, emotions and values are constructed and disseminated by the government. Thus, while the discourses of rappers (revolution, rebellion, resistance, battle, critical consciousness) show a strong linkage to state's discourse since 1959, the meaning of these words "suggests confrontation" (Baker, 2011: 62). Cuban rap shares the same language with the revolution but by showing the gap between official discourses and everyday reality, they pose a threat to the goals of unity, conformity and uniformity of the people to the system. Consequently, they engage into a conscious form of resistance towards government policies. It is evident hence that affects, structural changes, ideology and *potentia* play a fundamental role in rap's conscious resistance. This is an explicit example of the usefulness of incorporating a local and a "double sidedness" (Hall & Jefferson, 2006) perspective (CCCS and post-subcultural theory), in interpreting subcultural resistance.

Most importantly what should not be underestimated are the difficulties that the rappers face in articulating an open and direct criticism about their society (Pacini Hernandez & Garofalo, 2000). Although it is theoretically acceptable nowadays in Cuba to expose the gaps between official discourses and everyday realities, in practice it will be demonstrated that due to reasons of fear, conservatism or blind loyalty to the Party, this can occur only in specific places and frequently not without problems. Thus it is important at this point to critically analyse Cuban cultural policies towards rap in order to have a more fulsome understanding of how power and resistance are formed and reshaped at both micro and macro levels.

6.6 Complexity of Cuba's Cultural Policy: Power and Resistance

As demonstrated in the previous chapter the main axis of state powers are the institutions (including the CDRs), bureaucracy, the police and the state security[125]. Stemming from Gramsci (1971) the state should not be seen as a monolithic and homogenous entity but rather, as a diverse and complex realm which "incorporates divergent ideological tendencies, and this lack of uniformity is reflected in cultural policy" (Baker, 2005:371). Therefore, it is not possible to generalise on Cuba's cultural policies, as there is no coherent official policy towards music and arts (Moore, 2006). Hence an exploration of the complex relation between the state's institutions and rap is suggested in order to come to an understanding of how power and resistance are shaped.

Although it is not possible to generalise on Cuba's cultural policies, the policy is arguably based on Castro's talk in 1961 "Words to the Intellectuals". However, as presented in chapters four and five, he did not set any specific recommendations on the limits of what critique lies within or against the revolution. I will demonstrate that the enforcement lies largely on individual interpretations of what it means to be revolutionary or counterrevolutionary. Arguably then, what is neglected by the existing literature (Pacini Hernandez & Garofalo, 2000;Perry, 2004; West-Duran, 2004; Fernandes, 2006; Baker, 2011) is the multiple interpretations of state administrators, officials and common citizens of what it means to be revolutionary and counterrevolutionary. Moreover the key aspect of affects, especially of fear and distrust has been highly omitted. Also, the "condition of siege"[126] is still evoked (as

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[125] Also the FAR.

[126] See previous chapter

was illustrated in previous sections of the chapter) and has a strong effect on cultural policies. In particular the continuous antagonism with the Miami community and the political dissidence within the island creates more problems to the rappers. It will be shown that the rappers are caught in the middle of this antagonism between the two communities.

6.6.1 Media, Bureaucracy, State administrators and Censorship: Power of Common Sense Values, Affects, Coercion and Local and Global Interactions

Cuban underground rap is, as we have seen, revolutionary in its ideals. Moreover it has the official support of the Ministry of Culture and of two state institutions. As implied though previously in this chapter, in every-day reality it is censored, criminalised and marginalised by Cuban authorities and the media. This could be explained by the fact that since the consolidation of the Revolution it was seen that protest songs were perceived not to be needed within the Revolution (Moore, 2006). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, since the Revolution took place, Cuba is seen by its government as counter-hegemony to the U.S. but it does not accept any protest or severe critique within the island. Hence Castro's interest in rap and its legitimisation stemmed from the expectations that it would address its criticism towards the outside capitalist world and not internally (Baker, 2011).

Furthermore, as Moore (2006) and Baker (2011) argue there is little to no communication between institutions. As Malcolm, the cultural official (interview 19/8/2011) explains:

"It is one thing how policies function on the top; another thing how the Ministers understand them and another thing how the directors and presidents of the institutions, the media, commercial clubs and your neighbour that is the

president of the CDR interpret them. That's to say how the people interpret rap and also the idiosyncrasy of some people that do not have independent judgement that they say "no this is counterrevolution". So it depends on personal interpretations of each person if they are going to let these rappers to sing. For example the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Cuba approved the concert in Acapulco. This is the maximum ideological entity of the island! And suddenly a day before the concert the state administrator of the cinema told us "no, these people cannot sing here"!"

Hence processes of censorship and labelling depend on individual interpretations of state administrators (on both high and low levels) of what revolutionary, communist and/or counterrevolutionary actually mean. Therefore, Gramsci's (1971) notion of common sense values as a site of struggle, contestation and change, which could be interpreted by each person in various ways, is of paramount importance in the case of labelling of subcultures in Cuba. The contestation of the meaning of the notions of revolutionary, communist and counterrevolutionary are demonstrated explicitly in Roberto's (*interview 22/8/2010*) words:

"Those that say that the rappers are counterrevolutionaries they do not know the meaning of the word revolution. Because in Cuba, being a revolutionary means to be a Communist. So revolutionary in Cuba means the guy that is in favour of the system as it is. What happened in Cuba at the beginning was a revolution. A positive and necessary change for that time but now in Cuba we don't live anything of that revolution".

While Antonio, another rapper (interview 13/8/2010) in a similar vein argues that state administrators see it as *"dissident form of music of contemporary times"*. He

adds that *"anyone that says for example "look I think that this is not good", directly you are the enemy".* Consequently because of rap's explicit critique to state policies and corruption, the rappers are perceived to be dissidents and counterrevolutionaries (ibid). In addition, the labelling of the rappers as counterrevolutionaries has the censorship of their music as a consequence. Despite the efforts of legitimisation of this foreign type of protest music, state administrators in the media and bureaucratic positions still view it as an American type of music. As Roberto (interview 22/8/2010) explains:

"The people behind the "buro" (bureaucrats) continue to view it as a foreign form of music. And the directors of the media still think that it's a foreign type of music. So they stay "blind" and shut off their ears when it comes to rap".

The rapper corroborates with Baker's (2011) arguments that the media and especially the television is one of the most conservative sections of the state mechanism. As Baker illustrates, the majority of TV directors have an "old-fashioned, archaic, nationalist mentality" (Baker, 2011: 83) and they are "mainly older, white people who listened to son and salsa and distrusted what they perceived as a black youth culture" [127](Baker, 2011:84). Similarly the bureaucrats, although some of them are well educated and culturally progressive, many are allocated according to their blind loyalty to the Party (Moore, 2006). This detail is important, as those that make the decisions concerning issues of censorship are usually low and mid-level bureaucrats (ibid). However, what should be noted is that the process of censorship

[127] There had been two radio broadcasts and one TV show that broadcasted rap. These shows were again obtianed through personal contacts of the rappers with media administrators. Currently though only one radio broadcast is taking place. The main genres that are disseminated by the media are reggaeton and timba (field-notes, Havana 2010-2011).

is far from clear-cut. As José, one of the most censored rappers (interview 15/8/2010) states:

"We are and we aren't censored [...] because they say to us that we cannot sing and then they throw us three concerts. It's a bit strange. I don't know what to tell you [...] We did the concert in a cinema theatre and then they didn't let us sing in many places [...] so you don't know if you are censored or not".

Arguably the process of censorship largely depends on international and personalised politics, and also on negotiations between rappers and state officials. As Tafari (interview, 20/8/2010) explicitly argues, *"yeah, I am censored. The problem with censorship though, it is quite a complicated one here".* For the rapper, the government has to provide a space for rap in order to promote a good image to the international community, *"but behind any kind of event there is a lot of pressure applied by authorities and state officials to the rappers"* (ibid). It is explicit hence that global and local interactions cannot be differentiated from politics in the case of Cuba.

Moreover, the constant low-level struggle with state officials becomes evident in the rappers efforts to organise a concert:

It was one and a half months before Escuadron Patriota's concert in La Madriguera, when he told me that he was trying to organise a concert. However all official and institutional doors that he was knocking on in order to get the licence for the concert were closed, as soon as they heard his name. Two weeks before the concert a friend of his that had influence on higher official positions and decision making for cultural events, managed to get him the approval for the concert. However up to the last day before the concert,

Escuadron was still negotiating in constant meetings with the people
responsible for the concert about the purpose of the concert, the songs, the
participation of other artists and any kind of detail relating to those matters; in
order to persuade them that it would not develop into a demonstration. As he
told me there is a constant fear of state officials in relation to rap, regarding
what might be said and what might happen; so they need to have everything
under control (field-notes, Havana, August 2010).

It becomes apparent then, that micro level, everyday struggles and personal choices are very important in the rappers efforts to gain space. Additionally, the processes of criminalisation depend on the role of affect within Cuban culture, especially of fear and distrust towards rap. On the one hand, rap is a subculture that originates from the United States and on the other, it manifests as protest and critique towards the regime. As Ernesto (interview 21/8/2010) noted:

"But why on the television do they not broadcast what we are doing? What is
the fear? What is the fear in Cuba for what we are doing? For the Cuban, to
open his eyes and see what is really happening"?

In order to understand this fear and distrust towards rap another factor should be considered, that arguably has been neglected by the existing literature on the specific subculture. As demonstrated in chapter five, Cuba's domestic cultural policy cannot be differentiated from its foreign policy and what has been termed a "siege mentality" (Kapcia, 2000:102). "Siege mentality" refers to feelings of constant fear of being attacked by the U.S. combined with feelings of distrust between Cubans, in case someone is serving the interests of counterintelligence (Kapcia, 2000). Hence, as rappers form an open criticism towards the government, many state

administrators in leisure venues, refuse to organise rap concerts for fear of personal repercussions such as job loss or being perceived as counterrevolutionaries. As Roberto (interview 22/8/2010) states:

"For rap there are 70% negative and 30% positive answers to give a concert, because of the bad fame, in the political sense, that they attribute to rap. "The rappers are counterrevolutionaries"".

So, when it comes to everyday reality, the majority of state administrators, in bureaucratic positions, in media and leisure venues are afraid of the repercussions to promote a protest genre with high revolutionary discourse. This becomes clear in the following fieldwork incident:

I called the house of José in order to arrange a meeting with him. His mother answered the phone and told me that they would perform that night clandestinely in a bar named Manolia[128], after personal negotiations of the rappers with the manager of the bar. She kindly asked me (at least three times) not to mention the event to anyone, because they were afraid that "if the word spread" the police would come and cancel it. I assured her that I would not say anything to anyone. So I went that night to Manolia and sat in a table in front of the stage. The place was a really cosy one with a capacity of 30-40 people. When the rappers started to sing I took my camera out and started taking photos and shooting small videos. The waiter came and told me that it is forbidden to shoot videos or to take photos and he stood beside me, until the end of the performance. I could not understand at that point why this happened. Later on, the mother of the rapper told me that the manager did a favour to the

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[128] The name of the club has been altered in order to protect the working personnel of the club.

duo to let them perform there. Photos and videos were not allowed to be taken, in case they fell in the hands of the authorities, who then would be able to identify the venue in which the event took place, and consequently this could lead to the firing of the manager and the personel[129]" (field-notes,Havana, December 2009).

Furthermore, the condition of distrust and fear towards rap is further exaggerated by the manipulation of the Cuban rappers by the Miami media that generally depicts them as dissidents that want to overthrow the regime. As Antonio (interview 13/8/2010) states, *"they also distort our message. They use it to serve their economic interests too".* Similarly Ernesto (interview 21/8/2010) noted:

"In certain forms our message is used and is manipulated to serve their interests. So they use it as a counterrevolutionary music [...] they speak about us, as if we are their brothers in cause. And this has brought us problems here. They have shut us down spaces (like the Barbaram) because they (authorities) have seen us as counterrevolutionaries; they see us as a threat".

Consequently the representation by the Miami media gives a justification to state administrators and the state's coercive mechanism to treat them as dissidents, despite the fact that the rappers in various songs clarify their position and distance themselves from the Miami community. Hence the post-subcultural perspective on the role that the media can play in the formation of subcultural resistance is explicit at this point, along with the CCCS's approach on manipulation and labelling. As the same rapper states:

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[129] This fear was justifiable as the whole personnel of Barbaram, where los Aldeanos had a weekly gig up to 2009, got fired.

"I don't believe in this bullshit here, but I am not on the side of these people either! We do not do rap for the dissident mafia, nor do we have any relationship with them, nor do we receive any money from them! So, yeah, they have brought us troubles and many problems, because they use us as a weapon of theirs".

Moreover the opposition on the island manipulates the rappers. The event in Holguín in the spring of 2011 is a representative one:

A woman from Holguín called the house of José to tell him that her two sons were arrested for listening to his music. José with Ernesto and two more friends travelled for an entire day in order to meet these youths and give a concert for the people in Holguín. However when they visited these youths in prison they realised that they were dissidents and were arrested because they had burned the Cuban flag and not for listening to their songs. José had been widely disillusioned after this event (Field-notes, Havana, August 2011)

Arguably, then the rappers also face issues of trust and fear of being manipulated by Cubans on the island. Consequently the function of common sense words, affects, interaction of global media to local politics and low-level struggles and negotiations are all interlinked and should be considered when looking at state attitudes towards rap; especially when it comes to aspects of control and censorship.

Consequently for the most independent rappers the issue of space to perform is of high importance. As a result they claim the urban streets of Havana as theirs. Whenever they hang around free styling takes place, as well as high levels of alcohol consumption. Arguably the "politics of pleasure" that post-subculture theory has stressed predominate on these occasions. The rappers through freestyle, laughter

and alcohol intoxication attain momentary freedom, liberation and loss from everyday problems and difficulties. Consequently the importance of unconscious forms of resistance through the "politics of pleasure" should not be underestimated, as they characterise everyday practices of the rappers.

Space though is important for one more reason. Baker (2011) argues that the principal axis of power towards rap is bureaucracy. More specifically the bureaucratic system has constantly denied giving permission for the rappers to travel abroad (ibid). However since 2010, the rappers have been widely allowed to travel abroad and perform. Thus, despite the fact that these artists are denied space to perform in Cuba, they have been travelling outside the island to promote their music and perform in concerts. Consequently, an increasing commercialisation and demand of Cuban underground rap is occurring outside Cuba. This is evidence how the global music market intersects and influences the local. Moreover it shows that despite the fact that these rappers do not incorporate Cuban beats in their music, global capitalism absorbs them.

This development however should not be differentiated from issues of power and politics. Specifically by allowing the rappers to travel the government achieves in releasing their frustration by letting them perform, earn money and international recognition. Arguably, this policy also fulfils Castro's aspirations for Cuban rap's internationalism. Moreover, by letting them perform outside Cuba the regime *"demonstrates to the international community that there is freedom of expression on the island"* (Malcolm, interview 19/08/2011). Most importantly, by allowing the rappers to *"perform mainly outside the island, the government achieves in distancing the artists from their audience in Cuba"* (ibid). Additionally state officials entertain the hope that the rappers will choose in the end to stay outside the island, as many have

done in the past (ibid). Hence, it is evident that global flows cannot be differentiated from power and politics. It will be interesting to see in the following years if this global appeal towards Cuban rap will contribute to a wider legitimisation and opening of spaces for rap in Cuba[130]. It will be of great value to subcultural theory to investigate further in the years to come, whether the commercial appropriation of Cuban rap by global capitalism will lead to a wider acceptance of rap in the Cuban context.

As becomes evident, local context, CCCS and post-subcultural characteristics (ideology and affects, structural issues and everyday realities, global and local interactions, "politics of pleasure", individual choice and the informal part of life) are equally important in our interpretation of subcultures and power and resistance in Cuba. It is important at this point to mention the role of hegemony's coercive mechanism in order to conclude into a definition of state power and rap's resistance.

6.6.2 Power and Resistance

As demonstrated earlier, the rappers constantly need to negotiate in a "low level struggle" with state officials and venue administrators in order to gain space. Baker (2011:104) argues that "only in extreme cases are critical voices actually silenced" showing in that way "'the strange symbiotic relationship' between power and resistance". However, if these "critical voices" are the most popular and radical rappers, then the issue of coercion especially in the rappers' personal life should not be underestimated. The three following fieldwork experiences and examples are representative:

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[130] One of the main reasons of a wide opening to nueva trova had been its international appeal (Moore, 2006) see also chapter five.

In September 2009 the singer Juanez organised in Cuba the international concert of "Peace without Borders". Los Aldeanos and Silvito were invited to perform but in the end they were not allowed to participate. At the end of the concert Juanez ifted his fist and shouted the names of the rappers, in order to show his solidarity. The next day the police evaded to Aldo's house, confiscated his computer[131]and arrested him under the accusation of distributing pornographic material. After the intervention of Silvito's father (Silvio Rodríguez) Aldo got released[132] (field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

This arguably demonstrates how personalized politics make a difference even in severe cases like the one above. Furthermore,

Miguel, one of the closest friends of José, was kidnapped for two weeks in the summer of 2010. The state security interrogated him constantly about their plans for creating a counterrevolution. José at the same time constantly visited a central police station asking for his friend to be returned. When he threatened that he was going to create a scandal out of this, Miguel was returned after two days. One year later I, Paolo (one of the rappers) and Miguel went to Rotilla festival and were exploring the stage where rap and rock groups would perform[133]. A man in his forties approached us, hugged and kissed Miguel. He asked him how things were going, if he continued his work in producing independent videos and also that he heard that Miguel's wife had given birth. Up to that point I thought that this person was a friend of Miguel, but when the

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[131] You need to have a license in Cuba in order to obtain a computer

[132] This event is also described in songs i.e N1H1

[133] As stated earlier in 2011 the festival was taken over by the Ministry of Culture. So we were there to see differences or similarities to the previous year.

man asked him if he still had the same phone number and Miguel said no, I

realised that this person was from the state security. Miguel told me that this

person was one of the two state officers that had kidnapped him and was

playing the role of "good cop". However Miguel was worried that the officer had

referred to his wife and daughter, in order to imply that if he is to continue his

independent work, his family might be harmed (Field-notes, Jibacoa, August

2011).

Hence it is important to understand how power operates in Cuban society,
specifically at the everyday micro-level. It is significant to observe that the state
security knows everything about the personal life of the rappers and their friends.
Moreover the importance of affects is depicted in the emotional blackmail conducted
by the officer to Miguel. These issues need to be considered in order to interpret how
power and resistance are shaped at both micro and macro levels. The following
fieldwork example is even more illuminating on how the coercive power of the state
functions in the everyday personal relationships of the rappers.

In summer 2010 when I visited Cuba, a couple had approached the rappers

and had become very close friends for about 6 months. In April 2011

Escuadron with Franko wanted to shoot a video of the song Revolution in the

barrio (neighbourhood) where this couple lived, as it is one of the poorest

places in Havana. When everything was arranged and they were about to

begin the shooting the police invaded and arrested the Mexican directors and

cameramen. It was found out later on that this couple were working for the state

security in order to spy on Escuadron, Los Aldeanos and Silvio (Field-notes,

Havana, August 2011).

This explicitly demonstrates how the coercive mechanism affects the everyday reality and personal relations of the rappers. Hence, there have been kidnappings, spying, arrests and emotional and psychological blackmail; not only directed towards the rappers but their close family and friends also. It is important therefore to understand the importance of affects in how power functions. Arguably it creates a sense of paranoia to the rappers on who to trust. Consequently although the state cultural institutions have supported and given opportunities to the rappers simultaneously the coercive measures of control are of high importance to be considered.

It could be argued therefore, that state power could be interpreted as a form of *social exclusion*. The rappers are officially and culturally included but structurally and practically excluded (Young, 1999). In Sawyer's (2006) and Baker's (2011) terms "inclusionary discrimination" is the most appropriate way to describe state policies towards rap:

> the combination of support and restriction, of discursive enthusiasm and practical obstacles, of funding and expanding an international festival and largely excluding hip hop from the domestic media (Baker, 2011: 97).

I would add to these aspects: an official discourse of support but high restrictions at the practical level and in the everyday lives of the rappers, and also the gap between officially supporting the revolutionary non-materialistic rap culture, but in practice funding and promoting the money driven dance music culture of reggaeton (see chapter seven).

Moreover, Baker (2011: 105) argues that:

In socialist systems the resistance of hip hop needs to be rethought: there are still oppositional discourses, but the deep ideological alignment between rappers and the state in such contexts warns against regarding hip hop as an oppositional template that can be used with minor recalibration almost anywhere in the world.

However after all the information provided I would argue that the oppositional template fits very well in the case of Cuban rap. It was demonstrated that there have been efforts to silence the rappers through subtle and more coercive ways. Moreover it was demonstrated that the rappers, by showing the gap between official discourses and everyday reality in Cuba, pose a threat to the conformity and uniformity of the people to the system. In addition they explicitly resist the culture of silence and fear by claiming their citizen's right for freedom of speech. Nevertheless rap, due to its close affiliation to cubanía, is not a counter-culture as the CCCS, would perceive this type of conscious resistance. Thus Cuban rap's resistance could be interpreted as "*loyal opposition*" (Pacini Hernandez & Garofalo, 2000: 31).

According to Pacini Hernandez & Garofalo (2000: 31) the rappers are "aware that they are a part of a social experiment that has provided both opportunities and hardships [and that their criticism] is made with love". Their conscious discourse stays loyal to cubanía and their criticism and actions are always expressed in positive and constructive terms to make Cuba a better place to live for Cubans. At the same time though they challenge how meanings, beliefs, symbols, emotions and values are constructed and disseminated by the government. Consequently it could be argued that conscious practices and discourses combined with emotions, dreams

and individual choices are equally important in our interpretation of the resistive nature of Cuban rap.

Moreover their resistance does not reside only on the cultural (micro-political) realm but extends to the macro-political through mobilisation and action.

Specifically El Aldeano together with other independent groups and artists organised the peaceful "March against Violence" in November 2009, where aproximately 200 people attended. According to the rapper not many people attended because of the fear that still exists in Cuban society regarding expressing oneself openly against the problems that the Cubans face in their everyday reality (Field-notes, Havana, July 2010).

Hence the importance of affects such as fear is of high importance when we look at issues of mobilisation in Cuba. It is important to stress though, the significance of going back to the field as things are constantly changing. During the summer of 2010 there was much more unity between the rappers and I had the feeling that rap could evolve into a movement. However, in 2011 there was much more disunity between them due to personal issues as well as state interventions. Specifically the fact that many of the rappers spend a large amount of time outside Cuba distances them not only from their audience but also from their rap groups in Cuba. Antonio (interview 13/8/2010) concerning the relationships within the subculture says:

"Rap is intending to do a revolution. But still there is a lack of consciousness and unity within the rap circles. Until we achieve this unity we are just "playing" in actually doing a revolution. A revolution is not done with three or four persons. You need a lot of people. Rap since always had a lot of disunity that is not seen on the surface but it is there. You will see us drinking all together a

bottle of rum but when some are given the opportunity they will start gossiping

shit about you".

Although beefs between rappers as happens in the U.S do not occur in Cuban rap, what usually happens is for the groups or individual artists to distance themselves from one another. As Alberto (interview 17/8/2011) explains

"Up to some years ago rap was much more united. As you see now there is great disunity. At this point rap is separated in small groups. I get along with everyone but it is not like before. Perhaps it's because of envy. But some are really gossiping in bad ways behind ones back. So I understand why some have distanced themselves from other rappers that before they used to be close friends".

While Malcolm (interview 19/8/2011), the cultural official explicitly states:

"People say "No! The rap movement is united"! But human beings are not. Men and women that are human beings comprise rap. Today in the whole world we all are disunited. So one cannot pretend that rap is united only because he/she would like it to be so. Unity has been achieved neither in Cuba nor in the whole world".

Arguably then, ordinary human behaviour is important to be considered in order to assess the impact of resistance in subcultures. Specifically, when affective relationships of friendship trust and loyalty within the group are broken; its collective ability to push for changes is weakened. It can be argued hence, that affective bonds are perhaps more important than conscious discourses in resistive practices of subcultural groups. Hence by combining the affective politics of post-subcultural

theory to Willis's (1977) interpretation it can be argued that if unity within the group is not achieved they will end up reproducing the existing order of things. Arguably further research in the following years is needed in order to explore further whether rap can evolve into a movement or whether it will end up reproducing the system and existing power relations (Willis, 1977).

Importantly though, many of the rappers have been disillusioned with Cuban people, in the sense that no one actually cares or is going to manifest in case something happens to them. As Malcolm (interview 19/8/2011) argues:

"Look there is a great percentage of the population that is not interested in anything. They are not interested in anything! It's what Ernesto says, that people "discharge" by and enjoy listening to Los Aldeanos, Silvito el Libre and Escuadron. But they don't care about Aldo, Silvio and Raudel as people. So they don't care if something is going to happen to them or to their families and children. This is the painful reality that they are living in and continue to sing the things that they sing. But when they realised that, they got frustrated and even broke down at some points, as anyone would".

It can be argued therefore, that affects play a very important role not only within the realms of rap but also between the dialectic relationships of the rappers with the rest of Cuban society. Subsequently, one cannot romanticise a music group of individuals to push for social change by itself. Their music serves its purpose by making explicit demands to the government and galvanising critical consciousness to Cuban people. However, if social change for the betterment of living/social conditions for the average Cubans is to be achieved, then every Cuban should take their responsibility

and stance towards this change. As Antonio said earlier a revolution is not done with three or four persons; you need the support of a big amount of people.

6.7 CONCLUSION

The complex and overt manifestations of power in the Cuban context ask us to rethink the way we theorise about subcultures, power and resistance. Traditional issues of subcultural theory in which, hegemony and ideology function in multiple layers in civil society appear side by side with issues of affect and personal choice that post-subcultural theory has stressed. Moreover structural issues, collective identities, appropriation through commercialism and the state's coercive mechanism go hand in hand with fluidity, heterogeneity and the influence of global media and global music industries on local scenes. Furthermore we have seen that the term counter-culture (used by the Birmingham School to describe conscious forms of resistance) is not adequate to describe the resistive nature of Cuban underground rap. Therefore the importance of incorporating local knowledge in our interpretations of power and resistance in subcultures was also demonstrated. Additionally post-subcultural elements of resistance through the appropriation of digital technology and momentary liberation and loss through free-styling and alcohol intoxication were demonstrated to be very important. Lastly the importance of affects was illustrated to be of high significance in the interpretation of rap's resistance and its impact for social change.

Moreover, as will be illustrated in the following chapter, the coexistence of a highly political subculture, such as rap, with a highly apolitical, hedonistic subculture such as reggaeton, creates a really fertile ground for further research that develops a bridge between local, subcultural and post-subcultural perspectives. Whilst the

specific case of Cuban rap demonstrates that elements of the two latter perspectives are necessary to understand the interplay of power and resistance, a more fulsome consideration of Cuba's case can provide opportunities to reconcile these perspectives on a more general, global basis.

Chapter Seven: Reggaeton, Power and Resistance

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw that local knowledge, CCCS and post-subcultural theory are all necessary to interpret power and resistance in Cuban rap. In this chapter a further bridging of local knowledge, subcultural and post-subcultural theory will be conducted.

As demonstrated in chapter five, Guevara described the Cuban revolution as "socialism with pachanga"; reflecting the festive and dancing element of Cuban culture (Moore, 2006). As illustrated, dancing to Cuban music was seen on the one hand, as revolutionary as reading Martí's and Marxist texts (Kapcia, 2000). By dancing Cuban people seemed to forge collective identities and unity (ibid). Thus the performativity of dance facilitated the construction of Cuban identity, while simultaneously it offered an "escape valve" from difficulties of everyday life (Moore, 2006). On the other hand though, dancing, in the official perceptions of the Ministry of Culture, was seen as corrosive to revolutionary goals (ibid). It seemed to contribute to "crudeness, bad taste, insolence, cheap sensualism or sexual ambiguity" (Ardévol, 1966 cited in Moore, 2006: 109). Therefore, dancing represented the "tobacco" or heterogeneous realm of society that prioritised pleasure and countered the realm of "sugar" (the homogenous part of society), that of moralism, discipline, culturalism and activism. As a result dance music was quite marginalised for a while (Moore, 2006). However, due to the popularity of Cuban dance music (son, cha cha cha, mambo, salsa, rumba, timba, cumbia) within and outside the island and its subsequent ability (especially since the Special Period) to generate hard currency, there has been a wider opening and tolerance towards

these body-centred forms of music (ibid). As will be demonstrated in the case of reggaeton, economic motivations rather than ideological ones dictate government policies.

It should be highlighted at this point that Cuban rap, due to its explicit conscious lyrics and resistance has drawn the attention and admiration of Cuban and foreign intellectuals, activists and researchers (Baker, 2011). Simultaneously, despite the popularity of reggaeton in Cuba, Latin America, the U.S. and the rest of the world, almost nothing has been written about it (ibid). As Baker (2011) argues this fact could be a form of moral bias and dismissal also from academics to engage with a highly hedonistic, consumerist and dancing genre such as reggaeton. This negative response towards reggaeton should be surpassed. Specifically it will be illustrated that there are important issues at stake if someone examines the genre and its massive popularity more closely. As McClary (1994: 34) argues:

> The musical power of the disenfranchised [...] more often resides in the ability to articulate different ways of construing the body, ways that bring along in their wake the potential for different experiential worlds. And the anxious reactions that so often greet new music from such groups indicate that something crucially political is at issue.

Hence "dance sets politics in motion" (Delgado & Muñoz, 1997: 10). Bodies articulate a site of racial, gendered, cultural and economic conflict to hegemony (ibid). Consequently body politics and body-centred music forms are equally important to investigate as conscious discourse lyrics. It will be illustrated that a largely apolitical and pleasure-centred post-subculture reflects significant political issues and power relations that are taking place in contemporary Havana. Therefore

local, subcultural and post-subcultural perspectives are required in order to investigate power and resistance in reggaeton.

Specifically it will be illustrated that the dance and body-centred genre of reggaeton explicitly entails post-subcultural elements. Reggaeton mainly focuses on hedonism, drunkenness, fun, humour, vulgarity, "senseless" discourse, overt sexuality, apolitical sentiments and consumerism. Instant gratification, temporary loss and sexual liberation through dancing and intoxication are key features of reggaeton's resistance. Furthermore, emancipation through the consumption of technology and hyper-commercialism (mainly through tourism and the growing interest of global music industries to reggaeton) provide a literal realm of freedom and social mobility for the reggaetoneros (reggaeton artists). Additionally conspicuous consumerism that reggaeton highlights, is for the majority of its audience imaginary rather than real.

It will be argued that reggaeton expresses a symbolic type of resistance and "imaginary solutions" to everyday experiences of class subordination (Clarke et al, 1976). Specifically stemming from Ortiz's perspective, reggaeton's resistance will be defined as the realm of *relajo* (relaxation) and *choteo* (mockery), which as we saw in chapter five, is a double double-sided form of resistance (Almodóvar, 2005). Similar to Willis's interpretation of the lads counter-culture, and Bataille's interpretation of the festival, el relajo and el choteo while subverting power relations momentarily, end up reproducing them (Mañach, 1995).

It will also be suggested that the appearance and popularity of reggaeton cannot be differentiated from structural changes occurring on the island. In particular it reflects the tensions between traditional socialist and contemporary capitalist forces that are

taking place in Havana. While rap shapes a conscious critique to capitalist driven policies and consumer lifestyles as a way of being, reggaeton embraces and celebrates these changes. Further correlating with the CCCS, reggaeton has caused elements of moral panics in Cuba's cultural, intellectual and political realms (Cohen, 2002). Its focus on materialism, hedonism, sameness and apolitical sentiments has been seen as a threat to the established morality and culture of Cuban society. Reggaeton is usually represented in official discourses as anti-cultural, obscene, pornographic, trashy, materialist, shameful, individualist, banal and therefore corrosive of Cuban youth (Baker, 2011). Therefore reggaeton is perceived in these discourses as opposing or rejecting Cuba's revolutionary ideology and any type of politics.

However, despite these criticisms, almost next to nothing has been done in order to limit its diffusion. Thus no coercive measures have been taken by the government to suppress reggaeton. This is the reason why reggaeton presents some elements of moral panics. Specifically, the discourses of moral entrepreneurs and media are not accompanied by police suppression and marginalisation of the subculture (Cohen, 2002). It would be reasonable to ask why this is occurring, especially in a country where censorship is exercised. Thus it becomes significant to investigate how power and resistance are shaped in the case of reggaeton. It will be illustrated that while reggaeton is dismissed in official discourses of the government and the state press, in everyday reality it is promoted and commercialised. By looking at the colonial difference of Cuba it will be illustrated that local, subcultural and post-subcultural theory are required in order to interpret issues of power and resistance in the specific context.

The first part of the chapter will briefly provide the characteristics of the reggaeton group that guided my research. It will be illustrated that similar to rap there is a current heterogeneity in terms of age, race and educational background. However collective identities are forged through affective relationships, music creativity and commercial values. Following, reggaeton's post-subcultural and subcultural characteristics will be further explored in order to interpret reggaeton's resistance. By bridging local, post-subcultural and subcultural theory it will be demonstrated that the body constructs both a metaphorical/temporary realm of liberation (the realm of *relajo*), as well as a literal one.

Specifically the political disengagement and materialism of reggaeton has strong parallels with the emergence and expansion of other dance genres like kwaito (Impey, 2001; Coplan, 2005) in South Africa, funk (Yúdice, 1994) in Brazil and Jamaican dancehall (Stolzoff, 2000). As Coplan (2005:20) argues the urban youth through kwaito claim for a society that fulfils their material desires and "accepts their pleasure principle as a valid replacement for the now painfully passé politicized ideology of social sacrifice". Arguably the emergence of reggaeton in Cuba with its explicit materialism, hedonism and individualism reflects the desire to disengage with the "politics of sacrifice" for the revolutionary goals to be fulfilled (see chapter five). Hence its apolitical sentiments demonstrate the wide disillusion of contemporary generations to the government's inability to fulfil its promises. Thus reggaeton's body centred resistance is indicative of political shifts occurring in contemporary Havana. It will also be demonstrated that reggaeton, despite providing a realm of momentary sexual liberation (relajo), ends up reproducing gender power roles.

In the second part of the chapter a further bridging of the CCCS to post-subcultural theory will be provided. Specifically the controversies that reggaeton has created in

the intellectual and official realms, will serve to show how resistance and power are shaped. Despite the fact that reggaeton subverts and dismisses cultural norms and cubanía's ideological values, nothing is practically done by the government to suppress it. It will be demonstrated in the third part of the chapter that reggaeton is tolerated as it serves both economic and political interests of the government. At the end of the section a definition of reggaeton's resistance and state's power will be explicitly articulated. Hence by looking at the colonial difference of Cuba through the explicit post-subcultural genre of reggaeton, it will be illustrated that a bridging of local, CCCS and post-subcultural theory is required in order to understand the complex manifestations of power and resistance.

7.2 Reggeatoneros

Reggaeton arrived on the shores of Santiago[134] de Cuba in the beginning of 2000. It is a hybrid form of music that has its roots in Panamanian ragamuffin, Jamaican dancehall, and rap (Boudreault-Fournier, 2008). Reggaeton, like rap, emerged from the urban streets of Havana with the main influence being its Puerto Rican counterpart (ibid). It rapidly swept the island and is currently the most favourite music for young Habaneros. Presently there is a wide range of reggaeton groups. Some of the most prominent ones are Gente de Zona (people from the zone), Los 4 (The four), Insurecto, Osmani García, Kola Loka, Baby Lores, El Chacal (the jackal), Yakarta, El Chocolate (the chololate), El Micha, William El Magnífico, El Yonki (the junky) and Patry White La Dictadora (Patry White the Dictator). While the music producers Dj Unic and Dj Conds are the most high profiled.

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[134] Santiago is placed at the Eastern part of the island with proximity to Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. There has been a long tradition of musical influence and fusion of sounds between these islands, with a special note on Puerto Rico and Cuba being described as the "two wings" of the same bird (Riviere, 2010).

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As implied in chapter one, this subcultural group is highly masculine and heterogeneous in terms race, educational background and age. In detail:
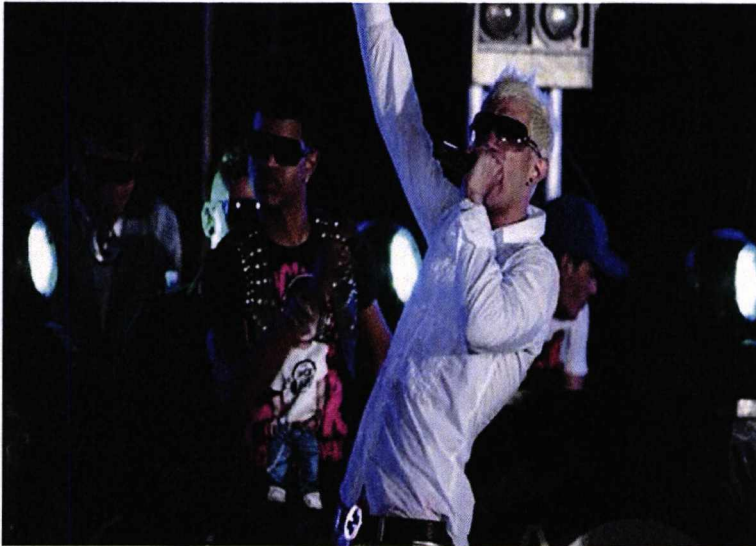
William El Magnifico. Photo taken by William's facebook account, with the kind courtesy of the participant.

William el Magnifico (William the Magnificent) born in 1984 in the countryside of Santa Clara. He studied violin and saxophone in the National School of Arts (Escuale Nacional de Artes-ENA). His main wish though was to sing, so he moved to Havana in the early 2000s with his group "Centro Latino" (Latin Centre). Despite the fact that they were from the countryside, his group started to be diffused and promoted on state TV and radio. He has currently separated from his group and follows a solo carrier.
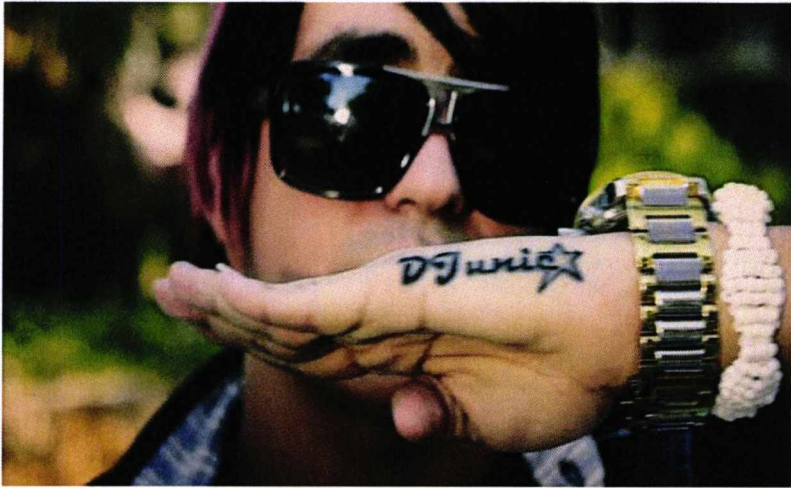
Dj Unic. Photo taken from Unic's facebook account, with the kind courtesy of the participant.

Dj Unic (Unique) born in1990. He has not studied music and he started his carreer in 2003 by mainly experimenting with music sounds. He is one of the most prominent reggaeton music producers in contemporary Havana.

Kola Loka, Photo by Wilberg Hernández Monterde.

Robinson (the Afro-Cuban in the middle of the photo) born in the early 1980s is the leader of one of the most popular reggaeton groups Kola Loka. The group started with the name Cola Activa but because it was not a commercially catchy name, the manager of the group suggested changing it to Kola Loka. He has studied and

graduated in music singing and started his carreer with the group in 1999. Since the beginning their main aim was to fuse Caribbean rhythms to reggaeton.

Nelson el Muñeco: Photo taken from Nelson's facebook account with the kind courtesy of the participant.

Nelson el Muñeco (Nelson the Doll) born in the early 1990s. He has studied piano, guitar and singing in a music conservatory of Havana. He started his carreer as a reggaetonero in 2007 and is perceived to be one of the rising starts in the years to come.

Marlon Copperfield and Dayron (see also previous chapter) have not conducted any musical studies and started their carreers in reggaeton in mid-2000s.

As it becomes apparent, similarly to rap, reggaeton is heterogeneous in terms of race ranging from Afro-Cubans to more light-skinned participants. It is also heterogeneous in terms of age with artists ranging from early 20s to early 30s. The heterogeneity of the group is further reflected in educational background with participants ranging from extensive studies in musical instruments and signing to participants whose knowledge stemmed from empirical learning and experimentation. It is also a highly masculine subculture as the majority of the producers are males. The gender aspect in this subculture will be discussed in more

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detail later. As demonstrated in chapter one the collective identities in this group are forged through affective relationships of friendship, love for music creativity and commercial values. As Marcelo[135] (interview 20/8/2011) says:

"We (reggaetoneros) are open to any rhythm or music tendency that appears. Today is reggaeton, yesterday was merengue, and tomorrow is electronic merengue. All these tendencies move us. We are not static in only one rhythm. But reggaeton is the most commercialised rhythm of all right now".

While Reydel (interview, 23/8/2011) in a similar vein argues:

"Reggaeton is closer to Cuban music and idiosyncrasy of Cuban people to dance, because people want to enjoy and party. You can fuse it with traditional Cuban sounds like timba, son and any other rhythm. Reggaeton is in a very high commercial level everywhere in the world. So from my experience there is more commercialisation towards reggaeton right now. There are more opportunities to advance as an artist and make ends meet".

It becomes apparent then, that collective identities in this subculture are constructed mainly through music creativity and commercial values. As a result there are frequent collaborations between the groups or individual artists in order to produce hit songs. An explicit example would be the hit song during 2011 "Chupi Chupi" (chupar means to suck in Spanish. The song implies the action of oral sex) by Osmani Gracia la Voz, feat El Chacal, El Chocolate, Patry White, Blad MC, Insurecto, William el Magnifico, Jacob Forever and Eric White. While the slogans "Music Massacre" (La masacre musical) by Chacal and "The Fabric of Success" (La

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[135] As stated in the methodology chapter the names of my participants in interviews have been altered in order to protect their confidentiality and ensure their well-being.

Fabrica de Exitos) by Osmani Gracia and Dj Unic demonstrate further the values of commercialisation, which underpin the group. It can be argued therefore that CCCS elements of collective identities go hand in hand with post-subcultural features of heterogeneity, commercialisation and individualism. Moreover as implied in the aforementioned title of the song, the lyrics are overtly sexual but at the same time the genre is highly commercialised and diffused in contemporary Havana. In the following part of the chapter hence, an exploration of the resistive nature of reggaeton will be conducted.

7.3 Tobacco (heterogeneous) realm of society with a touch of "bling bling": Politics of pleasure and the body as a site of momentary liberation and resistance

We entered the Cafe Cantante, one of the clubs placed close to impoverished areas of Havana. Kola Loka, one of the most popular reggaeton groups was performing. The space was dark with blue, red, white and yellow lights scattering interchangeably into the scene and the packed audience. The people, mainly Afro-Cuban youth were dancing to the seductive beat. Couples were dancing the perreo (doggy-style) move, four women were dancing together in a horizontal line with an explicit synchrony, others in a "sandwich" of two men and a woman between them and conversely of two women and a man between them, while a group of ten had formed a line with men and women being tightly placed in turn and were "rubbing" one against the other. There was an explicit "smell" of eroticism, alcohol consumption, "loss" into pleasure and a seduction of the senses, where women seemed to rule. There was a very different type of energy in the air from the reggaeton fiesta that I had attended a

few days before, in the seaside club of Don Cangrejo in Miramar[136]. One of the new-born stars of reggaeton, William el Magnifico (William the Magnificent) was performing. The audience although again female centred, was dancing in similar ways but it was whiter in its composition. Moreover the audience was dressed in the latest fashion. It was definitely a more "cleaned up" and commercially driven fiesta than the one in the Cafe Cantante, in which the tobacco realm was being performed in a more explicit way (Field-note, Havana, July 2011).

Youth dancing the perreo in the reggaeton fiesta of William el Magnífico in Don Cangrejo. Photo taken by the author

This section will demonstrate that the post-subcultural perspective on the "politics of pleasure" is of great value in understanding reggaeton's resistive nature. Arguably both verbal and non-verbal expressions in reggaeton articulate a specific cultural

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[136] Miramar is perceived to be a more middle and upper class area.

script, that of the *relajo* (tobacco/heterogeneous) realm of Cuban culture. Consequently post-subcultural and local perspectives are of paramount importance to be considered when investigating reggaeton. Specifically the genre is characterised by a "senseless" and vulgar discourse. A typical example of reggaeton "senseless" discourse is presented in the hit song of Los Confidenciales "aceite y agua" (oil and water) where they sing *"oil and water, I am a bus. Be careful of not getting under the wheel"*. Arguably reggaeton explicitly reflects the *choteo*, of not taking anything seriously and of entering into the sphere of relaxation (*relajo*). As Clon Latino sing in "partete" (break) *"The relaxation has started"!* Particularly, Juan (interview 19/8/2010), one of the rappers states:

"The idiosyncrasy of the Cuban is to have fun and dance a lot. This is demonstrated in reggaeton. They dance but they don't listen to the lyrics. Reggaeton is chorus, chorus, and chorus. You listen to it and repeat it mechanically. So it sticks".

The rapper's statement corroborates with Fairley's (2006) and Baker's (2011) arguments that one of the fundamental elements of reggaeton is to *pegar* (to stick) with simple and easy to repeat phrases, which function very well in a dancing driven public. Another way to stick is to shock through linguistic violence (Baker, 2011). As Reydel (interview, 23/8/2011), one of the reggeatoneros explains,

"When someone wants to do a song about sex is because ok, he likes sex but also because a vulgar song is much more controversial. And the people love it because it's much more danceable and popular".

A typical example of the vulgarity of reggaeton would be: *"baby where do you want me to put it? Baby put it in my mouth"*[137]. Reggaeton then talks about everyday reality and human desires in a different way than rap does. The realm of relajo that reggaeton expresses, describes that people are not only disciplined machines of production and accumulation but they also smoke, drink, laugh and have sex. The reggeatoneros deny following the hidden and limited sexuality and pleasure imposed by the morality of mainstream society, which denies individuals the dominance over their bodies, pleasures, and desires. Arguably then, when someone listens to the direct honesty of reggaeton songs on human desires and pleasures it generates a shock. Hence the explicit vulgarity and senseless discourse can be seen as an act of resistance to the established Cuban morality, social values, taboos and prejudices.
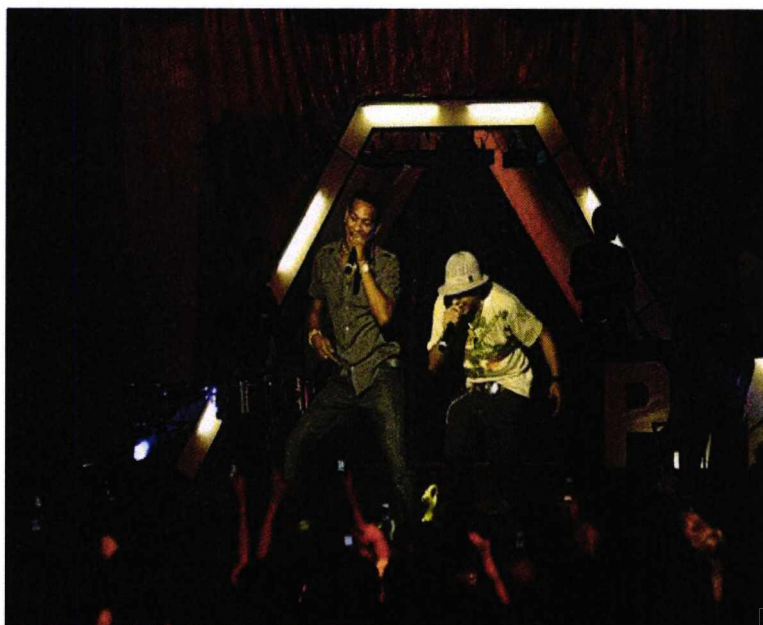
Gente De Zona in a P.M.M. event (Por un Mundo Mejor- For a Better World). Photo by Wilberg Hernández Monterde. All rights reserved.

Arguably then, the body-centred music of reggaeton contructs the tobacco realm and transgresses the mind-centred national revolutionary culture of the homogenous realm of sugar. In a cultural context, where music is deemed to play a fundamental

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[137] El Chocolate y El Chulo feat William El Magnífico y el Kuate: Pa que te Alda

role in disseminating revolutionary consciousness by elaborated ideas in lyrical discourse, the banality, vulgarity and hedonistic focus of reggaeton songs arguably pose a strong challenge to the hegemonic culture (Moore, 2006; Baker, 2011). It will be demonstrated later on that reggaeton has caused various controversies in official discourses concerning its lyrics (elements of moral panics). Arguably the focus of reggaeton to distract attention from the mind and the spiritual realm and direct it back to the body is rendered highly political in the case of Cuba. Thus politics and hegemony (CCCS) run parallel with hedonism and mockery (choteo) that local and post-subculture theory talked about. All perspectives then (local, CCCS and post-subcultural theory) are required to interpret the role of reggaeton in contemporary Cuban culture.

Moreover, reggaeton expresses the current obsession of youth in Havana with consumer lifestyles (Baker, 2011). As Sergio (interview 12/8/2011) one of the reggaetoneros sang to me during the interview

"I really like how this Cuban woman moves her bottom, with her purse, heeled shoes and silicon boobs [...] she drives a Mercedes with a portable roof and her D&G perfume spreads in the air".

This promotion of consumerism by reggaeton has "shaken" Cuban morality as it used to be a taboo to demonstrate that you have a better quality of life than others (Baker, 2011). Thus conspicuous consumerism that post-subculture theory stressed goes hand in hand with resistance to hegemonic morals of Cuban culture (CCCS). As Baker (2011) argues reggaeton aims to shock either in terms of commercialism and materialism or in terms of sameness, hedonism and promiscuity. Accordingly in terms of style, the reggaetoneros adopt the "bling bling" aesthetic of American

commercial gangsta rap (Moreno, 2009). The reggaetoneros stand out with golden necklaces, clothes (usually really tight), sun-glasses and watches of brand, cell-phones, cars, eyebrows shaved in shape and expensive baseball caps. The blending of overt sexuality, American gangsta rap's urban aesthetic and consumerism is an essential part of reggaeton and of many youths in Havana (Baker, 2011). Following the post-subcultural perspective, identities are forged through consumption in the specific post-subculture. Simultaneously, the parallels of reggaeton to Hebdige's (1976) depiction of the mod culture as "narcissistic" and elevating style, consumption and commodity to a new level, is also explicit at this point.

Corresponding to the above, the cell-phone has become an important status symbol. Besides buying the device (which Cubans can also obtain as a gift from foreigners) the mobile sim-card costs 40 CUC. Additionally every two months you have to recharge a credit of 10 CUC at least (no matter if you have credits), otherwise the state owned telecommunications company cuts off the line. Thus in a context where the average salary ranges from 13-20 CUC, to be able to obtain and maintain a mobile phone demonstrates your economic status and your access to hard currency. A typical example of the celebration of the cell-phone could be seen in the song "Motorola" by los 4. In other words, "reggaeton in Havana is about wearing money, spending money and dreaming of money" (Baker, 2011: 140). Consequently, while the rappers criticise conspicuous consumption as a way of being, the reggaetoneros embrace it and celebrate it. Thus the post-subcultural perspective of emancipation through the consumption of commodities is very much present in reggaeton. This cannot be differentiated however, as demonstrated earlier from the challenging of hegemonic culture and morality that the CCCS was focusing on.

Cover of the official web-site of reggaeton Cuban Flow: Photo taken with the kind courtesy of Andy Fernández

Furthermore, considering the economic constraints that the majority of Cuban youth face (see chapter five), the incorporation of reggaeton's style could be seen as a site of "symbolic resistance" and "magical solution" to their real living conditions (Clarke et al, 1976). As Carlos, one of the reggaetoneros (interview 3/8/11) says

"Many reggaetoneros do not have the money that they appear to have. So many of them are borrowing golden chains or brand clothes in order to perform and pass this image to their audience".

Thus the appearance of success seems to be the root to success in reggaeton (Baker, 2011). However, due to the extensive commercialism and popularity of the genre inside and outside Cuba, reggaeton offers the possibility for a better quality of life. Many reggaetoneros have been allowed to perform outside of Cuba the last few years, while during my fieldwork research many venues hosted reggaeton with entrance prices ranging from 5CUC to 100 CUC[138]. Therefore reggaeton can offer a

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[138] ($5- $100)The latter took place in hotel venues

literal site of economic and social mobility for its performers. As depicted earlier and in chapter one, from the interviews conducted all reggaetoneros and producers explicitly stated that one of the reasons for choosing reggaeton is because it is in fashion and it is highly commercialised. As Marcelo states, *"I chose reggaeton because it is the music movement that functions right now commercially. You cannot go against the current"* (interview 20/8/2011). Arguably the overt embracement of materialism and commercialism in reggaeton dismisses the revolutionary culture of prioritising moral values and incentives over material ones. It transgresses through its practices and discourse the legitimate order and morality. Hence post-subcultural elements (commercialism, materialism) could be seen as a site of "symbolic resistance" to cubanía's value of moralism and sacrifice.

Additionally, reggaeton's heterogeneous realm of *relajo* is frequently correlated with alcohol consumption *"drinking through so that you can relax"*[139], drug use and explicit sexual promiscuity. As Chacal and Yakarta in one of their most popular songs[140] sing:

tell me if you drink, if you smoke and if you would like to leave here and get there/ It can be with one, it can be with two/ with two it's better! I like the cuchun and I like the cachan/ quaquaquaqua qua qua

Arguably the lyrics reflect a sense of post-subcultural escapism through intoxication and sexual intercourse. Reggaeton is purely music of pleasure, overt sexual overtones, dance and fun, where the body functions as a site of escapism and momentary freedom. As Nicolas, one of the reggaetoneros says *"It is a form of*

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[139] El Chocolate Y el Uni-ko "el campismo, parampampampam" (the camping)

[140] La corupción (the corruption)

escape from the problems. It is like a 'standby'" (interview 1/8/2011). Moreover the visual element of the song's video, where women and men are having sex either in threesomes or in pairs, resembles the dancing style that characterises reggaeton and was described in the vignette at the beginning of the section. It could be argued that what the rappers criticise about the condition of Cuban society – of being crazy, lost and ill – the reggaetoneros embrace it and celebrate it. As Osmani García[141] sings *"they say that I have an illness called promiscuity and that I have it rising because I see all people ill with promiscuity/ I am ill but with happiness"*. Thus happiness is a key issue for reggaeton. As Marcelo (interview 20/8/2011) states

> *"Our themes treat socio-cultural issues and everyday experiences. We focus in giving a positive message but always in a comical sense so that the people can dance, laugh, enjoy it, understand it and internalize it".*

Thus the "positive message" that all reggaetoneros used in the interviews, arguably reflects reggaeton's ability to affect the body with joy. This strongly echoes Spinoza's notion of *potentia;* the inner driving force of people, which is increased with experiences of joy. It could be argued that the search for joy expressed in reggaeton's *choteo* and *relajo* shapes an unconscious type of resistance towards the negative affects of sadness that are experienced in everyday life. The affective experience of joy, that reggaeton generates, is celebrated as liberating bodies from economic and political constraints of Cuban society. Thus the relajo (local), *potentia* (post-subcultural) and socio-political (CCCS) issues are coexisting in reggaeton. Specifically, as Nicolas (interview 1/8/2011) argues:

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[141]Song : La puterí

"Here with the extreme quantity of problems that exist and everybody knows that they exist, reggaeton makes people not to think that much about their problems. Because daily, people think a lot about how to make ends meet. Because every day, from the moment that you wake up until you go back to sleep you feel upset and displeased".

Hence, to escape in the heterogeneous realm of relajo and forget daily problems does not mean not to recognise everyday experiences of subordination and struggle to make ends meet. Rather it means to create in turn a metaphorical realm of momentary liberation. Thus following a more post-subcultural perspective, resistance in reggaeton is linked with pleasure and hedonism as a new form of self-expression and a means to construct a "different experiential world" (that of the heterogeneous realm of society) (McClary, 1994: 34). It breeds the desire for the rhythm and the dance not to stop, "even if civilization itself is at risk" (McClary, 1994: 37). From CCCS's perspective it provides a space, which holds the potential to transform, provoke, create, negotiate or win relative autonomy and self-fulfilment (Clarke et al, 1976).

Furthermore, the escapism of reggaeton is reflected in new vocabularies introduced. As Los 4 with el Micha sing in "llámame" (call me) *"I am in the party baby, I am in the fiesta".* The English word *party,* one of the new vocabularies that reggaeton introduced combines the festivity and liberation of Havana's night-time economy with the imagery of the outside world. As Malcolm, the cultural official (interview 19/8/2011) states:

"The main dream of the average Cuban is to travel [...] to be able to travel for the Cuban is much more than an utopia, it is the main goal of his/hers life. All Cubans currently sacrifice for that dream".

As Fernández (2003:15) argues "exit (physical or symbolic) from the island" seems to be the most desired option for the average Cuban. Thus the escapism of reggaeton is both metaphorical and real. This again asserts that the "different experiential world", or in CCCS's terms the construction of a relative autonomous and self-fulfilment spaces (Clarke et al, 1976) in reggaeton, articulates a symbolic realm of resistance and a magical solution to the political, economic and social constraints experienced in contemporary Havana (ibid). Hence the post-subcultural elements (loss, instant gratification, individualism, apolitical sentiments, hedonism and materialism) that reggaeton exhibits, go hand in hand with CCCS's characteristics of structural changes, symbolic resistance and the depiction of subcultures as a sign of crisis to hegemony's legitimacy.

Furthermore, dancing in Cuba is rarely seen as transgressive or frowned upon and Cubans learn how to dance from a young age (Fairley, 2006). Thus in a context where verbal expression is restricted through censorship and control over media content, perhaps bodily forms of expression, such as dancing, can be seen as a realm of freedom of speech (Baker, 2011). In other words it is difficult to censor and restrict the body (ibid). Thus the unconscious resistive nature of the body in the case of reggaeton should not be underestimated over more conscious forms of resistance such as rap. The unconscious resistance through hedonism, escapism and dismissal of political correctness in reggaeton challenges the Cuban state and its revolutionary culture. Therefore, it could be argued that its resistance is largely unconscious and symbolic; representing "noise" to use Hebdige's (1979) words, to the hegemonic

culture of Cuban morality. Arguably then, reggaeton provides a space of sexual liberation and a form of collective defiance to power structures (Clarke et al, 1976). Hence, the scandalous in nature and explicitly pornographic reggaeton lyrics as well as, the sexual overtones of the dancers are challenging Cuba's morality (homogenous-sugar counterpart), based on discipline, order and self-sacrifice for the goals of the revolution. In other words the *relajo* realm of reggaeton reflects that post-subcultural characteristics go hand in hand with traditional CCCS elements.

Kola Loka. Photo by Wilberg Hernández Monterde.

As implied so far, the post-subcultural elements of temporary liberation and escapism in experiences of joy, consumerism and commercialism raise important matters on structural changes, political issues and peoples' experiences of subordination and everyday struggle. In the following section it will be further demonstrated that a CCCS approach is valuable in order to understand reggaeton's resistance. Moreover, it will be explored whether the realm of relajo, as a site of momentary liberation and unconscious resistance is actually reproducing existing gender power structures.

7.3.1 Tobacco (heterogeneous) realm of society: Politics, Class, Construction of gender and the body as a site of resistance to structural changes

She likes it on top, she likes down, she likes it wherever, as long as you pay her because this is her job. Break in two, break in three, break in four and your man has come to get you deep and fix your "bucket" (Clon Latino "partete").

Besides the sexual overtones of the song, it also entails clear connotations of prostitution. So it could be argued that reggaeton is not detached from Cuban reality but is more descriptive rather than analytical and critical in relation to rap (Baker, 2011). Specifically reggaeton describes a generation that was mainly born during the Special Period (ibid). As demonstrated in chapter five this was a period where Cubans retreated to the private and informal sphere, trying to avoid politics (Fernández, 2008). This generation grew up in an environment of extreme austerity, where the economic was prioritised over the political in order to be able to survive (Fernández, 2000). Hence this generation has not experienced the Revolution's early achievements or socialism put into practice. Rather they were caught up in Cuba's transition from socialist to socio-capitalist forms of economy (see chapter five). Arguably, as the state has abandoned in practice (not in discourse) key socialist priorities and capitalist driven economy is evident daily in the streets of Havana, it is not a surprise that Habaneros have also prioritised the material over the spiritual well-being (Fernández, 2000). The expansion of hustling through the informal economy and *jineterismo* are prime examples of that shift. Hence the development and expansion of reggaeton cannot be differentiated from structural changes occurring.

Arguably the overt sexual connotations of reggaeton songs reflect the re-emergence of *jineterismo* as a site of "struggle with the state in order to access the benefits of tourism: hard currency, material goods, foreign travel" (Baker, 2011: 136). With prostitution the bodies of young Habaneros became a realm of freedom from economic constraints and a site of social mobility (Baker, 2011). Moreover this again reflects the state's inability to control the body (ibid). It could be argued then, that the resistance of the body can be both a metaphorical and a literal sphere of freedom from political and economic compulsions.

Reggaeton, similarly to all dance music in Cuba, cannot be differentiated from a specific way of dancing. Hence the performative and visual elements of reggaeton are of high importance when investigating the specific genre. In reggaeton the seduction of the beat outweighs the impact of the lyrics (Fairley, 2006). As implied in the previous section and was corroborated by all the interviews conducted, both rappers and reggaetoneros stated that reggaeton's focus is to make people dance. Thus drawing on McClary's (1994: 38) argument, to assess music only in terms of lyrics "is to fail to locate its pleasures, its means of manipulation and hence its

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politics". Particularly, as statted earlier, in reggaeton bodies are "lost" in hedonism, drunkenness and frequently also violence:

"Reggaeton makes people much more active, much more heated up. They get so much heated up that you have fights with bottles flying in the air. I was in a reggaeton concert with loads of people. And from one moment to the other, the sky filled with bottles of Cristal (Cuban beer)! And everybody was running" (Alain, interview 14/8/2010)"

Hence, in Bataille's (1993) words, reggaeton is the free play of effervescent forces of excess (drunkenness, violence, laughter, sexual orgy) that take place at the festival (relajo) or in Bakhtin's terms the carnival. Therefore reggaeton reflects post-subcultural liberation from all cultural norms with its focus on instant gratification and experiences of "loss" in its performances. Moreover, besides the violence aspect in reggaeton fiestas what is important to note in the participant's words is another interpretation of what it means to be active. Hence, Gramsci's notion of common sense values that can be interpreted in multiple ways by each person becomes of high significance. In reggaeton being active correlates with performing masculinity.

Specifically the Cuban slang terms used in reggaeton like guapo (tough) and guapería (aggressiveness, violence) stress the celebration of machismo and virility. As El Micha sings in "loco no, loquisimo" (crazy no, the craziest): "crazy no, the craziest/ tough no, the toughest/active no, the most active/ devil no, the most devilish/ Cuban no, the most Cuban". Arguably el Micha describes the heterogeneous side of being Cuban, in which the craziest and the toughest you are the better. Thus reconstructing ideological common sense words through practices of dance, fun and aggression reflects how collective identities of masculinity are

constructed in the heterogeneous cultural realm. Hence post-subcultural and CCCS elements are apparent in reggaeton.

Specifically, the representations of masculinity in reggeatons songs, style, dance and performances construct a specific kind of man and reproduce the hegemonic masculinity of machismo (Moreno,2009). From the "bling bling" style adopted by the highly commercialised American gangsta rap, combined with male dance moves, hyper-sexual lyrics and the praising of toughness and aggression, emerges an exaggerated form of heterosexual hyper-masculinity (ibid). As Moreno (2009:255) argues the content, performance and aesthetics in reggaeton glorify the superiority of the "barriocentric macho". A masculine identity organised around the objectification of women, gangster logic and an omission of messages that "acknowledge the value of education" (ibid:276).

Particularly Perna (2005), in the case of timba[142] argues that the development of new moves in dancing reflects the changing gender dynamics linked to the social and economic changes from the Special Period onwards. Thus despite the fact that most performers are male, women are at the centre of reggaeton. As Enrique (interview, 7/08/2011) says:

"Reggaeton is based on women. The majority of lyrics in the songs are based on women. There are very few female singers in reggaeton, but women are at the centre of it".

While Carlos (interview 3/8/11) corroborates:

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[142] Timba is a form of modernised *son* (commonly known as the roots of salsa bit) and rumba. It is dance music with influences from Latin America and African-American rythms such as jazz, funk and rap (Perna, 2005).

"Reggaeton is mainly danced by women. They are leading the men and not the other way around. The reggaetonero usually sings to and for women. This makes women dance more".

In reggaeton then both the lyrics and the dance appear to be led by women (Fairley, 2011). Specifically, reggaeton is the first type of music in Latin America to be danced "back to front" (Fairley, 2006: 477). Thus, it moves away from conventional and traditional forms of dancing (including timba) in couples where the man used to lead. Consequently the dance is overtly women centred where men are frequently reduced to the role of the observer (Baker, 2011). As Alexander from Gente De Zona sings *"women go in front and men at the back"*[143].

Particularly, the most frequent description of reggaeton dancing is Puerto Rico's *perreo* (doggy style in Latin slang), where it imitates a sexual position (Fairley, 2006). Again the connection between doggy dancing and porn is explicit (ibid). Additionally, a further development of the female moves that started in timba has occurred in Cuban reggaeton. Therefore the most prominent moves that define a solo female driven dance style are: the *despelote* (chaos, frenzy, all-over-the-place in Latin slang) and highly sexual pelvic moves such as the *templeque* (shaking as in the effects of electrocution), *la batidora* (the blender) and the *subasta de la cintura* (waist auction) (Perna, 2005; Fairley, 2006). Hence reggaeton could be seen as a liberation dance away from conventional forms of dancing. However, as stated earlier the performativity of the dance can tell us a lot about gender power relations (Fairley, 2006).

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[143] Gente de Zona "que bola" (what's up)

In particular reggaeton, like timba, is highly associated with jineteras (prostitutes), as the venues in which it takes place are the prime venues for foreigners to come into contact with Cubans (Fairley, 2006). As stated by Alberto, one of the rappers: *"the reggaetoneros sing for example in Capri[144]. All women are going there with the intention to find foreigners"* (interview 17/8/2011). As illustrated earlier jineterismo, since the Special Period, has become a site of economic and social mobility. The jineteras by being able to feed their family during economic hardships were and are emerging as more independent in the public and economic sphere (ibid). Thus in reggaeton fiestas demonstrating your "assets" to men, has become the norm (ibid). Moreover, according to Fairley (2006: 486) there is a sense of empowerment from the "idea that women are in control, turning their man on, capable of being what men want". Therefore, women challenge dominant stereotypes of female sexuality and explicitly demonstrate their sexual liberation as men do. From this perspective reggaeton demonstrates the sexual empowerment of women in today's Havana.

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[144] One of the prime venues that hosts reggaeton fiestas.
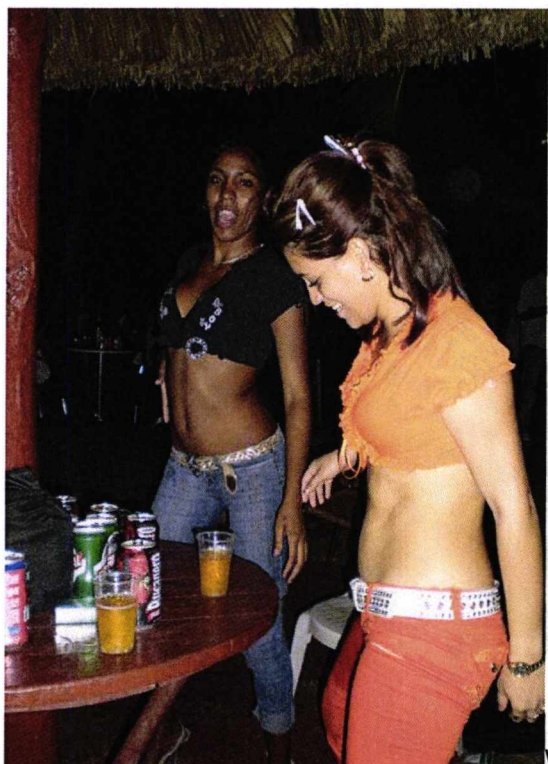
Women dancing at the concert of Baby Lores in Hemingway's Marine. Photo taken by the author.

However appealing this empowerment perspective might appear, it arguably neglects issues of exploitation and the reproduction of machismo as a form of patriarchal domination. As Moreno (2009) argues the dance move of *perreo* reflects the superiority of masculinity and the submissiveness of the female body to male desires. Moreover, as the majority of reggaetoneros are men, it is the voices of men that talk to women and narrate their desires about sex, pleasure and how women should act (Jaimes, 2012). Therefore, sexual desires are narrated from the eyes/perspective of men. Women seem to be an inspiration but not in a way that praises their thoughts, actions or decisions (ibid). Reggaeton's description of women actually contributes to reinforce women representations as bodies, objects of desire and of men as the creators and actors (Moreno, 2009; Jaimes, 2012). Women do not have a voice for expressing if they agree or disagree with these desires or even to express their desires in their own terms (Jaimes, 2012). Arguably then, the hyper-sexual and hyper-feminine dancing to these song lyrics actually reproduces and

reinforces male domination and gender stereotypes (masculine as active, aggressive, dominant and female as passive and submissive sexual objects), representing women as passive recipients of men's desires (Moreno, 2009; Miller and Mullins, 2011).

Explicitly, as Yonky, Nelson el Muñeco and Amikele sing *"pay what you have to [...] if one does not pay me the other two will [...] you got angry because you have to pay me and I don't want Cuban pesos[145]"*. The song reflects the current trend for Cuban women to enter into prostitution and then give the money to their Cuban boyfriends (see chapter five). As Alberto, one of the rappers (interview 17/8/2011) highlights:

> *"This is a new tendency in Cuban society that is reflected in reggaeton. In my area, that is one of the poorest areas with millions of problems, young people are listening for example to Chacal that says that he has a woman that pays everything for him and gives him money and cars and I don't know what else. So with the economic condition that this country has, all men want to have a woman to work for them [...] All the friends of my brother are focusing on that, how to get money from women and they are achieving it. This is severe. I am not talking to you about youth in my age. I am talking to you about youth of 17-18 years old".*

Thus reggaeton not only reproduces the widespread culture of machismo (Fernández, 2000) but also reflects issues of exploitation and victimisation of women. Although Fairley (2006) takes under consideration the ambiguity of women's positions between empowerment and subordination from the 1990s onwards, she does not engage in exploring gender relations in the private realm. In particular with

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[145] Meaning that they want to be paid in hard currency (song "toma el chocolate")

the rise of the role of women in the economic sector (through prostitution) there was a simultaneous rise of domestic violence during the Special Period (Duran, 2006). Despite the fact that many men accept their women to go into prostitution, at the same time they feel their manhood handicapped, which augments their insecurity and may lead to violence in the domestic sphere (ibid). Thus, the celebratory perspective of post-subcultural theory, of empowerment and self-fulfilment through intoxication, individual choice and hedonism, arguably can lead us to neglect important issues of the reproduction of gender power structures, gender exploitation, practices of male domination as well as class divisions or class reconfigurations that are taking place. In other words reggaeton's realm of *relajo* is a double-sided weapon of resistance. It provides a momentary realm of sexual liberation but simultaneously it reproduces gender power structures.

Additionaly, reggaeton reflects another post-subcultural element, of having crossed over class, age and racial boundaries. As Marcelo, one of the reggaetoneros (interview 20/8/2011) states: *"right now reggaeton does not have limits in terms of race, class or age"*. At the same time though, all reggaetoneros drew a line between *"good and bad reggaeton"* (Enrique, interview 7/08/2011). For them bad reggaeton is responsible for the *"negative attributes to the genre by official discourses"* (Nicolas, interview, 1/8/2011). The classification of bad reggaeton was depicted by the reggaetoneros through two characteristics: firstly that it promotes violence and secondly that the audience that follows it is predominantly from the lower strata of society (ibid). Hence from the interviews and personal observations it was deducted that reggaeton is directed towards: *"the tourists, the farándula"* (usually women fans from upper and middle class families) and *"las personas mas humildes"* (more humble persons), *"los reparteros* (thugs, chavs) *and los guapos"* (Nicolas, interview

1/8/2011). Thus it could be argued that reggaeton actually reflects contemporary class reconfigurations in Cuba with the third category representing something similar to the western debates on the underclass.

Moreover, space is important concerning the access of specific youth to commercial venues. Hotel venues and clubs in Miramar, where the entrance ranges from 5 up to 100 CUC, are usually filled with tourists and upper class Cubans. Whereas in public reggaeton fiestas organised by state institutions, where the entrance is free, clubs in the centre of Havana and close to the Square of Revolution, with an entrance of three CUC, are the places where the majority of lower class and predominantly Afro-Cuban youths gather.

Furthermore, as demonstrated earlier the "senseless" discourse of reggaeton rejects messages "that acknowledge the value of education" (Moreno, 2009:276). Thus, one of the principal elements of *choteo* (mockery) that reggaeton reflects, is not taking seriously any type of authority (Mañach, 1955). There are extremely few cases where political issues are expressed in reggaeton songs. Echoing post-subculture theory, apolitical sentiments characterise its songs and performances. As Marcelo (interview 20/8/2011) states:

"To connect reggaeton with politics is quite difficult, because it avoids anything political. Reggaeton is something more commercial. Rather than listening to a reggaeton song and connecting it to the political it is better to listen to rap in order to have a more precise view of what is going on".

However, using the Birmingham's School perspective that everything is political; by stating in a highly political context, that you are apolitical, actually does make a high political statement. Namely, that the youth are greatly disillusioned by the

government representatives and their policies. As Stolzoff (2000:103) argues on Jamaican dancehall the new ethic of instant gratification signified that "after years of frustration, it became increasingly difficult for the masses to sacrifice their worldly desires to the high ideals of Rastafari and socialism". Similarly young urban Habaneros, frustrated from their living conditions from the Special period onwards, prioritise their material desires over the struggle for socialist ideologies to be realised. As Malcolm the cultural official (interview 19/8/2011) highlights:

"Cuba is marching towards an apolitical posture similar to the rest of the world but for different reasons. The apolitical posture is a reaction of the people that they have been for fifty years under the pervasive doctrine of "Homeland or Death" and of "With the Revolution everything against the Revolution nothing". They (government officials) still repeat the doctrine but the people say enough and laugh about it".

Thus the "crisis of faith" that los Aldeanos verbally express is explicitly demonstrated in reggaeton. Individual freedom through materialism, hedonism, dance and pleasure shows an explicit resistance to Cuba's hegemonic ideology of sacrifice for higher goals and the dismissal of activism, culturalism and moralism. Hence, the unconscious resistance of the tobacco realm is a sign of "politics of subversion" (Baker, 2011:163) from any cultural norms and political sacrifices. It is evident hence that the realm of *relajo* and *choteo* that reggaeton expresses, highlights that a local, post-subcultural and CCCS analysis are required to be conducted in order to understand issues of resistance or reproduction of existing power structures, in apolitical and hedonistic subcultures such as reggaeton. It also demonstrates how unintentional forms of resistance, which encompass:

acts that have subversive and potentially emancipatory effects but which are not conceptualized in terms of conscious ideological struggle [...] Given that a wide array of motivations and desires inspire unintentional resistance, such practices usually take very personal and momentary forms [...] can have powerful unintended effects (Rose, 2002: 385).

Hence the realm of relajo that reggaeton expresses, actually demonstrates the impact that these unintentional forms of resistance can have in a specific cultural context. However, reggaeton's resistance "cannot be separated from practices of domination: they are always entangled in some configuration" (Routledge, 1997: 361). It was demonstrated that although it subverts momentarily Cuban ideology and morality, it actually reproduces gender and class power relations. In the following part of the chapter state's and society's reactions to reggaeton will be discussed in order to investigate whether reggaeton's symbolic resistance challenges the government more than rap's conscious resistance. It will be further illustrated that the post-subcultural characteristics of reggaeton run parallel with traditional CCCS perspectives such as societal reactions to the genre by moral entrepreneurs, the media and musicians (Hall et al, 1978).

7.4 State and societal reactions to reggaeton

As demonstrated, reggaeton focuses mainly on pleasure, apolitical sentiments, vulgarity, sensuality and materialism. As a result of its popularity it has created various controversies in multiple levels of Cuban society. By exploring the conflicts that reggaeton has created, the politics of reggaeton in both macro and micro levels will be illustrated.

Primarily in order to be recognised as a musician in Cuba you need to be musically educated from the National Schools of Art (ENA- Escuela National del Arte). With the relative proliferation of digital and music technologies in Cuba the reggaetoneros, similar to the rappers, only need to possess a computer to produce their music, without necessarily having a musical education. As with rap, the reggaetoneros, no matter if they belong to an institution or not, move away from the paternalism of the institutions by recording and producing their videos and music independently (Marcelo, interview 20/8/2011). Similar to the rappers, their music is distributed through the black market and piracy that has the ability to *"disseminate their music in every part of the island [...] independently from the state's mass media, like the radio and the television" (ibid)*. Hence for reggaeton the consumption of the new means of technology has given them a literal vehicle of liberation from the state controlled cultural institutions.

Furthermore, the popularity of reggaeton has challenged hegemonic definitions of what constitutes a musician (Baker, 2011). Until recently it was almost impossible in Cuba to have a concert without musicians. In many reggaeton fiestas the necessary elements are the singers and the computer reproducing the music backgrounds. Thus due to its popularity reggaeton has really shifted the hegemonic boundaries of what it means to be a musician in Cuba. Moreover it is the first genre that has offered the possibility to its artists for rapid economic and social mobility. As Marcelo (interview, 20/8/2011) reflects, *"generally not all musicians live from their music no matter if they have studied music or not. Reggaeton is the most commercialised sound right now, so it offers more possibilities"*. Hence reggaeton has shocked the long-established music system in Cuba, where slow mobility and economic hardship are the rule (Baker, 2011). This fact has led to the resentment of reggaeton by other

musicians like salsa and timba artists, as they found their music and its popularity being displaced by uneducated reggaeton artists (ibid). As the same reggaetonero argues, *"they are saying that reggaeton has displaced other music scenes. The people are going to listen to what they like. So one has to produce what people want and like"*. Consequently the controversy that reggaeton has created in the musical spheres demonstrates a challenge to the established musical culture of Havana.

Additionally, as illustrated in the previous chapter, reggaeton emerged from the realms of underground rap. As demonstrated in chapter six the creation of the Cuban Rap Agency (ACR) created strong frictions within the rap scene. However, the hardest hit to underground rap was *"that many of the rap groups within the Agency shifted to reggaeton"* (Malcolm, interview 19/8/2011). Due to the Agency's priority to generate money, the popularity of reggaeton provided the most viable way for the sustainability and economical well being of the ACR (Baker, 2011). As a result up to 2010 reggaeton groups seemed to predominate within the ACR (see Baker, 2011: 158). Hence reggaeton has had institutional support from the beginning of its trajectory. This also demonstrates that reggaeton reflects structural changes from socialism to socio-capitalism occurring within the realm of institutions since the early 2000 (see chapter six). Therefore the CCCS's approach on exploring subcultures in a specific historical conjuncture is of significance in order to understand state policies (power) towards subcultures.

Additionally the shift of previous conscious rappers to commercially driven reggaeton, created strong reactions in the underground rap circles. Thus rappers that turned to reggaeton were seen to be "selling out" to the market and following the "easy way" (*facilísmo*) in order to become popular and be able to live from their music (Ernesto, interview 21/8/2010). As Roberto one of the rappers (participant 2,

interview, 22/8/2011) argues: *"these people only want to make money. The day that reggaeton does not sell and what sells is cumbia, they will turn to cumbia"*. However as with American rap that incorporated commercial elements from the beginning (see Eithne Quinn, 2005), similarly in Cuba there were some rap groups that followed the cars-money-women content early on (West-Duran, 2004). A prime example would be Primera Base, a member of the ACR that became the reggaeton group Cubanito 20.02. Hence reggaeton brought to the surface already existing tendencies of rap (Baker, 2011).

Currently though, although some of the rappers still dismiss reggaeton, others recognise that it is the seduction of its beat that appeals to the people (Juan, interview 19/8/2010). Rap in Cuba was rendered as music directed towards the mind and not the body (Baker, 2011). Hence it has lost its dancing and festive element (ibid). Alberto, another rapper (interview 17/8/2011) recognises that reggaeton is popular because its message as simplistic as it may be, gives to people what they want to listen to. He argues:

> *"People might identify with a song of Aldo or Escuadron because they are expressing everyday realities. But you cannot be twenty four hours per day listening that you don't have olive oil. You know that you don't have it. So people prefer to listen to el Micha singing 'I take her passive and with money'[146] and they say I will take her the same way [...] Also if you are a prostitute you won't go to a rap gig that will make you feel bad about yourself".*

Hence some of the rappers recognise that they should bring back rap's dancing and fun element in order to reach more people. One of the proposals posed was to also

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[146] El Micha "Yo me la llevo con dinero y pasmao".

produce songs with danceable beats and funny lyrics or to use reggaeton beats with conscious lyrics (Juan, interview 19/8/2010). Thus they do recognise that the "politics of pleasure" are also an important aspect of life that should be incorporated into their music. In 2011 there was some experimentation with reggaeton with a typical example being "Ahora el Fula soy yo" (I am the shit now) by el Aldeano and Silvito, that combines conscious lyrics over the sound of the Puerto Rican hit song of Don Omar and Daddy Yankee "hasta abajo" (until the bottom). In general terms though, as Baker (2011) argues the conflict of values between rap and reggaeton could be seen as the micro-level battle and contradiction between socialism (cubanía) and capitalism in today's Havana. Simultaneously, this conflict could be seen as a battle between more "conscious" and "unconscious" forms of resistance, as the rappers consciously confront their everyday reality, while reggaetoneros attempt to escape it.

Most importantly the strongest reactions to reggaeton came from official and intellectual realms depicting reggaeton as a problem that needs to be resolved. Strong debates concerning reggaeton have been presented in *Juventud Rebelde* the newspaper of UJC (Union De Jovenes Comunistas- Young Communists Union). A typical example would be Castro-Medel's (2005) article "¿Prohibido el regueton?" (Prohibit the reggaeton?), where he draws on the views of the AHS[147] president Alpidio Alsonso and criticises the genre for its banal discourse, repetitive beats and the promiscuity of its dance, which resembles having sex with your clothes on. He also argues that reggaeton promotes vulgarity, luxury, vices and drug consumption. Although he is not actually recommending the prohibition of reggaeton, he strongly argues that something should be done about it. In a similar vein Caballero (2008) in

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[147] The AHS is under the jurisdiction of the UJC and are both under the control of Ministry of Culture (see chapter 6).

his article "Dinero" (Money) for the same newspaper, seems excessively preoccupied after attending a reggaeton fiesta, where the artists referred to money as a holy value, as an ideal and a model of life. He asks "where did we go wrong"?

Moreover, there have been discussions in the press concerning the loss of "children's music" in public and private spheres, as reggaeton is reproduced at school parties, house fiestas and spontaneous street fiestas (Fairley, 2006). Both government officials and the press depict the genre as non-Cuban (Fairley, 2006; Baker, 2011). Specifically the current Minister of Culture Abel Prieto has described it as a "pseudo- culture", in the sense that it is a foreign form of expression that focuses mainly on consumerism (Boudreault-Fournier, 2008:337). He attributes reggaeton's entrance and expansion on the island to globalisation forces that lay beyond his power to be stopped (ibid). Hence similarly to rap, post-subcultural global cultural flows cannot be differentiated from issues of power and resistance in the case of Cuba.

Additionally, the report from intellectuals of CIDMUC (Centre of Investigation and Development of Cuban Music, 2005) although taking a more objective view on reggaeton, struggled to find its positive aspects and solutions to the problematic forms of the genre. Some of the solutions proposed in the report were:

- The cubanisation of the genre by a further incorporation of timba to reggaeton songs and live performances

- Selecting the best examples for diffusion in the media

- Increasing the number of state-sponsored dance venues, emphasising variety and quality in the music reproduced, as an alternative to street fiestas where the most problematic forms of reggaeton take place.

Issues of appropriation and incorporation of subcultures by the mainstream culture, which the CCCS was focusing on, are explicit at this point. Furthermore, in terms of music quality, content and the drive of the artists to sexual pleasure, consumerism and sameness the report was highly dismissive, although it recognised that some of its aspects had occurred in previous genres such as *timba*. What should be noted is that reactions by moral entrepreneurs (Hall et al, 1978) concerning dance music are not a new phenomenon. Similar controversies occurred with previous Afro-Cuban musical expressions such as son (Moore, 2006), *timba* (Perna, 2005) and *danzón* (De la Fuente, 2001) before they were "cleaned up" and became national and traditional forms of Cuban music (Perna, 2005; Moore, 2006).

Specifically *timba* occurred during the 1990s and demonstrated similar issues to reggaeton such as overt materialism, individualism, self-fullfilment and hedonism (see Perna 2005). Hence as reggaeton brought to the surface already existing tendencies in rap, it accelerated the ones associated with *timba*. It could be argued that the social reaction to reggaeton reflects the fear of a possible discontinuity of Cuba's spiritual legacy and a severe crisis of socialist and revolutionary values (Baker, 2011). Hence the CCCS's perspective on historical conjunctions, commodification of subculture into the mainstream culture and crisis of hegemony becomes significant in interpreting issues of power and resistance.

As demonstrated the debates concerning reggaeton stemmed from both the part of primary definers (politicians, media, intellectuals) and secondary definers

(professional musicians and the rap scene) (Hall et al, 1978). The strong reactions from cultural institutions to reggaeton led in 2006 to officially marginalise the genre with less reggaeton being heard openly in the streets (Fairley, 2006). However, during the period of research (2009-2012) reggaeton was heard everywhere in Havana (bicycle taxis, media, buses, houses, restaurants, clubs).

Arguably the most recent state reaction towards reggaeton took place at the end of 2012, with rumours spreading all around the world that was going to ban reggaeton. A typical example of global media's preoccupation on Cuban cultural policies towards reggaeton would be the Guardian's article "Cuba cracks down on 'vulgar' reggaeton music" (Tremlett, 2012). It all started at end of September 2012, when Chacal, one of the most prominent reggaetoneros allegedly said during a state sponsored concert for children that "José Martí, while being drunk, said that all children are born to be happy" (El Nuevo Herald, 2012). To name José Martí (one of the most important symbols of Cuban ideology) drunk in front of children, led for Chacal to be sanctioned from live performances for a short time.

Most importantly in late November this incident led to the president of the Cuban Institute of Music Orlando Vistel Columbié, to state that they were going to "reduce the reproduction of this type of music in public spaces, like state fiestas and the media" (Hoz, 2012). Similar to previous discourses on reggaeton he accused it of being a pseudo-culture, obscene and vulgar, that objectifies women and counters the ethics of Cuban culture and the rich tradition of Cuban music (ibid). However, despite these strong discourses, nothing has actually been done in practice to reduce its diffusion since then (Malcolm email correspondence 8/3/2013). The only places that reggaeton diffusion has been limited are at schools (ibid). According to

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Malcolm this discourse was simply a way to ease the older members of cultural institutions, while in practice everything continued the same. Arguably then, this again shows the distance between official discourses and everyday practices. Most importantly it demonstrates, following the CCCS that a generational conflict is occurring between the younger generations and the older generations that mostly comprise the high official positions of the regime. As Enrique, (interview 7/08/2011) one of the reggaetoneros explicitly states:

"Since the beginning they (officials) thought that reggaeton would not last for long. But look at us now! Nothing can stop it because people love it. The youth is the majority that follows reggaeton. Those that have problems with it are the old people. When they were young they enjoyed other types of music; but they are stuck in the past. One has to experiment musically, not just reproduce what they old people like. So it is a change between generations".

Moreover, in contrast to rap, during my fieldwork, there was no occasion of young people being incarcerated or expelled from their schools for listening to reggaeton. Furthermore none of the reggaetoneros are labelled as counterrevolutionary, despite the fact that reggaeton does counter the revolutionary values of the regime. Additionally none of the reggaetoneros are closely watched by the state's security. While no personnel of any commercial club where reggaeton is performed has been fired for hosting a reggaeton fiesta. Therefore there is an explicit relaxation of the state's coercive mechanism and backstage pressure to reggaeton artists.

The only problem that the reggaetoneros face is that of bureaucracy in terms of obtaining official papers that they are musicians (Nicolas, interview 1/8/2011), travel visas in order to perform in other countries and the recognition of reggaeton as a music genre (Marcelo, interview 20/8/2011). It is reasonable to ask, why it is that

reggaeton, despite subverting revolutionary values, is not suppressed, censored and marginalised by Cuban authorities.

7.5 Cubanía as "Postcard Nationalism": Cultural Policy, Power and Resistance

It was approximately 5 pm in the afternoon and I was at Jose's living room together with five rappers and four more friends of theirs, chatting and listening to music backgrounds. Suddenly,

-Elena! Come! Come and see! It's the chupi chupi!

Jose's aunt Manuela called me from her room. The reggaeton song of chupi chupi was on TV and she was dancing to it. (Field-notes, Havana, July 2011)

In terms of cultural policy, similar to rap, the promotion of reggaeton in the media (radio and television) and commercial venues demonstrates the miscommunication between institutions. Most importantly, it illustrates the shift to capitalist practices in cultural institutions and Havana's nigh-time economy. Thus a CCCS structural approach is of high value in order to interpret both the politics and the manipulation of reggaeton.

Specifically, as illustrated in the chapter on rap the state has no control over the media. According to Malcolm, the cultural official (interview 19/8/2011) *"the media and the state owned leisure venues disseminate what people want to listen to".* Similarly, Antonio one of the rappers (interview 13/8/2010) stated that the directors of the commercial venues or theatres *"will allow performances that generate money because they report to the government in terms of their gains. So they have an economic interest".* While, Marcelo a reggaetonero (interview 20/8/2010)

corroborates with the CIDMUC' (2005) report that argues that EGREM[148] (Empresa de Grabaciones y Ediciones Musicales – Company of Music Recordings and Editions) focuses on groups that guarantee the institution a success in the national and international market. Specifically Marcelo stated that "*the promotion and tours are determined by the quantity of audience that a reggaeton group is capable to gather*". Additionally the institution serves "*to promote reggaeton groups on the television or radio*". Hence it is the popularity and commerciality of reggaeton that has opened the doors of the media, institutions and commercial venues. Thus economic motivations surpass ideological ones in the case of reggaeton. Consequently similar to western countries an appropriation and commodification of subcultures occurs through commercialism (Hebdige, 1979).

Additionally Boudreault-Fournier (2008: 347) argues:

> Reggaetoneros articulate alternative forces represented by ideals of nationalism; however, they do it in conjunction with other alternative ideological principles, such as consumerism and individualism.

Thus, despite the fact that reggaeton subverts the codes of cubanía in an explicit way, it could be argued that it blends internationalism with commercialism. What was stressed in all the interviews with the reggaetoneros was a focus on commercialism in both the national and international market. The reggaetoneros presented reggaeton as a "*musical revolution*", which rather than aiming to disseminate revolutionary consciousness focuses on "*infecting global music industry with a Cuban version of reggaeton*" (Sergio, interview 12/8/2011). The cubanising turn in reggaeton (it's mixture with timba) that is currently occurring has also to do with

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[148] It is the institution that most prominent reggaetoneros belong to.

issues of commercialisation in the international market. The rebranding of Cuban reggaeton for example, as Cubaton by a Swedish music production company, aimed exactly to create a new Cuban genre for the global market (Baker, 2011). Hence an "*incorporation of timba in reggaeton's sound*" is taking place and "*prominent reggaeton groups are using in their live performances timba musicians*" (Nicolas, interview 1/08/2011). Moreover the Cuban slang used in reggaeton songs distinguishes it from other types of reggaeton made in the rest of Latin America. Therefore the global flows and global music industries that post-subcultural theory has stressed but also the impact that wider macro-structural changes have in youth lifestyles that the CCCS talked about, are explicit at this point.

Osmani García. Photo obtained from http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2011/11/23/cultura/artic01.html, accessed on 12/7/2012

In addition, the case of the song "chupi chupi" (suck suck) by Osmani García is a representative example of reggaeton that is directed towards both the national and international market. Specifically the chorus of the song combines Spanish words with Italian endings. Italy has been one of the principal countries showing explicit interest in Cuban reggaeton, with Italian music companies contracting Cuban reggaetoneros to promote their music globally (Sergio, interview 12/8/2011).

Furthermore during the European tours of reggaetoneros Italy and Spain are the main countries in which they perform. Additionally both countries are important for Cuba's tourism. This detail will become significant shortly.

Moreover the case of Baby Lores, one of the most prominent reggaetoneros is important to be considered. He has a tattoo on his arm with the face of Fidel Castro and he has also dedicated the song "Creo" (I believe) to Fidel, in order to show his fidelity to the leader and to stop rumours that wanted him to defect to another country. Hence although discursive practices relative to cubanía are absent in reggaeton the artists show their patriotism in different and often contradictory ways.

Furthermore from the interviews it stemmed that cubanisation is one of the many options available. As Enrique (interview 14/8/2011) one of the reggaetoneros stated: *"reggaeton is a genre that you can fuse it very easily. So you can mix it with merengue, timba, electronic music or other sounds from the Caribbean".* As the CIDMUC (2005) report states the fusion of sounds in reggaeton can be seen as a continuity of the musical interaction between Cuba and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. Speciffically as Pacini Hernandes (2005) argues "it is precisely reggaeton's hybridity that gives it the flexibility for artists to incorporate national flavours without compromising the genre's pan-national inclusiveness" (Pacini Hernandez, 2005 cited in Fairley, 2006: 484). Hence what reggaeton expresses is a Pan-Latin identity. In other words, collective Latin identities are forged through reggaeton. As Antonio, one of the rappers (interview 13/8/2010) corroborates:

"The merit that reggaeton deserves and is incredibly important for me, is that it reached United States [...] it achieved to reach United States and to be played in many places. This had never happened before to that extent with any other

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Latin rhythm. Neither con salsa this had happened. Reggaeton gave to Latin identity an icon at the heart of the empire, as we say it here. And as you know the U.S. in general controls anything that is in fashion and the majority of music forms that exist. So this is a really important factor and a merit to reggaeton that no one can take away from it".

It is interesting to note how the commercialisation and appropriation of reggaeton by global capitalism is seen in positive terms in this case. Hence reggaeton at its macro scale could be seen as building a proud Latin identity that "shook" the cultural power of the U.S.A. Thus following the CCCS perspective reggaeton could be seen as a space where collective Latin identities are constructed, and as a site of resistance to the global cultural forces of U.S. music industry.

In addition, as demonstrated in the previous chapter there is not one interpretation of patriotism or what constitutes Cubanness. Arguably the reggaetoneros demonstrate another side of Cubanness, which correlates, with the dancing character of Cuban culture. As Antonio (interview 13/8/2010) reflects:

"Reggaeton is a danceable rhythm to let off steam and dance. This is part of the Caribbean. Why should we negate a characteristic that is within us? This is part of us. These are our roots".

Echoing the CCCS collective identities are constructed through dance. Furthermore as demonstrated in the previous chapter the rappers are caught between the politics of Havana-Miami axis. Reggaeton's avoidance of politics makes the relation of Miami and Havana commercial in its core. The majority of leading reggaeton groups have performed in Miami and have been widely embraced by the consumers of the genre

(Marcelo, interview 20/8/2011). Thus, reggaeton commercialises and promotes the dancing identity of Cuban culture.

As Fernandes (2006) illustrates, in the global promotion of Cuba as a tourist destination, Cuba is represented as a paradise with fiestas, dance, fan, beaches, rum and girls with exotic sexuality. Reggaeton songs with prime examples being Osmani Garcia's "Se me va la musa", "Maximo Respeto" by Cuba Sound Forever[149] and "Llegaron los Cubanos" by Eddy-K and Gente de Zona explicitly depict this representation of Cuba. Furthermore, Gente de Zona's song "Bucanero" (Bucanero is a brand of a Cuban beer) demonstrates explicitly the branding of Cuba and its products to the tourist market. Likewise, Cubanito 20.02 and Triángulo Oscuro have contracts with Havana Club rum and their concerts in Europe are also promotional efforts to boost Cuba's brand (Baker, 2011). Thus, national pride in reggaeton tends to be correlated with the market and the tourists, representing Cuba as the best destination at least in the Caribbean; what Baker (2011: 125) calls as "postcard nationalism". Therefore, although reggaeton is oppositional to the codes of cubania it goes hand in hand with the regime's money oriented policies to attract tourists. Thus although reggaeton could be seen as counter-hegemonic, it does not actually pose a threat to the regime as it serves the government's capitalist interests. Hence following the CCCS the commercialisation of reggaeton reproduces the hegemony of the regime. It also shows how hegemony (power) adjusts itself to new conditions.

It becomes explicit then, that reggaeton serves the economic interests of the government. I would argue that it also serves the regime's political interests. As demonstrated, the inability of the state to control the body, offers to the

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[149] Where the majority of the most prominent reggaetoneros appear

reggaetoneros and its audience a realm of momentary liberation from political, social and economic constraints. However, the desire to rebel against the elders and the deliberate violation of rules that takes place in the excess of reggaeton, accumulates and fulfils "an order of things based on rules; it goes against that order only temporarily" (Bataille, 1993: 90). In other words, reggaeton negates and conserves at the same time the established system (Botting & Wilson, 1997). As soon as the reggaeton fiestas end, everything goes back to everyday routine and conformity to the regime. As Malcolm, the cultural official (interview 19/8/2011) states:

"Reggaeton serves for people not to think [...] do you think it is the same to gather 100,000 people to listen to Gente de Zona than 100,000 to listen to Los Aldeanos? Because you know that Los Aldeanos have the ability to gather such crowd if they have the chance [...] as long as the people do not dispute and do not enter in political issues, there is no problem at all for the regime".

Hence the apolitical sentiments and commerciality of reggaeton actually serve to achieve the conformity of the people to the system and hence the reproduction of existing hegemonic power relations (Willis, 1977). Malcolm also stressed during the interview that it is a game of appearances for some institutions to criticise reggaeton while others to promote it. Most importantly though he highlighted, that the main aim of the cultural politics followed by the Ministry of Culture is *"for such things not to transcend the political"* (Malcolm, interview 19/8/2011). Hence as long as reggaeton's resistance remains at the micro-political symbolic realm and does not enter into the macro political level, it is tolerated.

Thus reggaeton's resistance can be defined as the "relajo", which encompasses practices that unconsciously and momentarily resist the system by experiencing an

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"illusion of freedom, in an orgy of ritual, dance, music" (Ortiz, 2001:1). The relajo as demonstrated so far, is a double double-sided form of resistance (Almodóvar, 2005), which while subverting power relations momentarily, ends up reproducing them (Mañach, 1995). Power in the case of reggaeton can be defined as a strategy of "breads and circuses". Reggaeton functions as an "escape valve" to release tensions and frustration but it simultaneously achieves for the rebellion not to be manifested as a direct and conscious challenge to the regime. As a result state's policies towards reggaeton can be described as: officially non-supporting a vulgar and materialist subculture but in practice promoting it to serve political and economic interests. This strategy of "breads and circuses" was explicitly demonstrated in the summer of 2011 where the previously independent festival of Rotilla was taken over by the Ministry of Culture. As demonstrated in the previous chapter the Ministry displaced rap, punk and rock for reggaeton and timba. Thus, reggaeton is tolerated and permitted exactly to the extent that it serves and sustains the necessities and the order of things. Hence the body-centred, unconscious and "symbolic resistance" of reggaeton serves to reproduce the regime's hegemony (Willis, 1977).

7.6 Conclusion

By examining the complex and contradictory manifestation of power in the case of reggaeton I aimed to illustrate how momentary liberation through dance, hedonism, loss, intoxication and consumerism go hand in hand with macro-structural changes, reproduction of gender and class power relations and politics. Moreover we saw that traditional subcultural elements like social reactions to subcultures, generational conflict and the role of capitalist economy in shaping reactive youth styles appear side by side with emancipation through the consumption of technology. Furthermore it was illustrated how the politics of pleasure are used by the Cuban government to

achieve conformity to its hegemony and hence how the "symbolic resistance" of reggaeton reproduces hegemonic power structures. By looking at the colonial difference of Cuba I aimed to demonstrate that a bridging of local, the CCCS to post-subcultural theory is not only achievable but necessary in order to understand how power and resistance are shaped and reshaped. Despite the fundamental differences with the rest of the world I would argue that a more fulsome consideration of Cuba can provide us opportunities to connect CCCS and post-subcultural theory on a more global scale.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion: "Revolutionising" Subcultural Theory

This concluding chapter brings together the insights and analysis developed within the thesis. By *"revolutionising"* subcultural theory this research aimed to show firstly, that a bridging of local, CCCS and post-subcultural perspectives is needed for the interpretation of subcultures in the Cuban context. Secondly it endeavoured to illustrate that a reconciliation of modern and postmodern perspectives on power, resistance and subcultures is required in our interpretation of these issues on late-modern societies. Speciffically this research sought to demonstrate the value of thinking *from* the perspective of the colonial difference (subaltern knowledge to western thought) (Mignolo, 2000). By bringing to the surface the intellectual power of Cuba the thesis endeavoured to de-colonise subcultural theory and to illustrate the importance of thinking from both local (Cuban) and western traditions to the generation of theory (ibid). Drawing on ethnographic data and interviews with contemporary rap and reggaeton groups the thesis aspired to illustrate how a bridging of modern, post-modern and local perspectives, is not only possible but necessary in our conceptualization of power, resistance and subcultures. The following sections will provide analytically the approach that this thesis followed in its interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures in order to illustrate the conclusions and contributions reached by this research. Moreover suggestions for future research will be pointed out in order to investigate further the ideas and concepts explored in this thesis.

8.1 Main Summary and Contribution to Existing Knowledge

This thesis focused on the shaping and reshaping of power, resistance and subcultures. It aimed to explore how we understand **power and resistance in the subcultures of Cuban underground rap and reggaeton? And what implications will our understanding of power and resistance in Cuban underground rap and reggaeton, have for the general theories of subculture, power and resistance used in criminology?** Hence the focus of this research was both specific (socio-cultural context of contemporary Cuba) and general (wider applications of the findings to subcultural theory and cultural criminology). Following a cultural criminological multidisciplinary approach the thesis introduced the de-colonial perspective of *border thinking* (Mignolo, 2000) in a gesture to add more lenses to the "intellectual kaleidoscope" (Ferrell et al, 2008: 6) of cultural criminology. Through the process of *double critique* (first: internal critique of modern thought by postmodern perspectives and second: the critique of western knowledge by local knowledge) it was shown on the one hand, that modern and postmodern perspectives are compatible and on the other hand, that local knowledge is necessary to be considered in order to understand the numerous socio-cultural contradictions taking place in Cuba.

In particular, through the discussion of the CCCS and post-subcultural theory, it was demonstrated that despite tensions the two perspectives are not necessarily in opposition. The Birmingham School was interested in grounding everyday experiences to macro-structural changes occurring in a specific historical conjuncture (Hall and Jefferson, 2006). Ideology, everyday life, class, structural changes, hegemony, politics, power and resistance were of high interest to the CCCS interpretation of subcultures. Post-subcultural theory is focusing on both

macro and micro-level stories and everyday life struggles, heterogeneity, media, affects, fluidity, personal choices, tastes, global and local flows, emancipation through consumption, "politics of pleasure", and apolitical sentiments of contemporary youth cultures (Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 2000). Due to the different focus of the two theories, it was argued that they are compatible at both micro (everyday life) and macro (structural) levels. It was shown that post-subcultural theory drives further the CCCS approach at the micro-level, while the CCCS perspective is still useful in order to understand how experiences of subordination and structural changes affect youth subcultures. Thus the thesis suggests that a "double sidedness" perspective of "acknowledging the new without losing what may still be serviceable in the old" (Hall and Jefferson, 2006: xii) is required to be applied in our interpretation of power resistance and subcultures. Consequently the thesis suggests an intersection of the CCCS and post-subcultural theory to be employed in our exploration of contemporary subcultures. Moreover it was argued that the concept of subcultures is the most adequate one to be used if someone is interested in investigating issues of power and resistance in youth cultures.

In chapter four a discussion of hegemony as power, which was used by the Birmingham School, with post-subcultural and post-hegemonic interpretations of power and resistance was provided. Similar to the chapter on subcultural theory it was shown that despite the tensions, Gramsci's perspective is compatible to Foucault, Spinoza and Bataille. This research was interested in interpreting both unconscious and conscious forms of resistance in subcultures. Thus the justification of not using Foucault in this research stemmed from the fact that there is no differentiation between conscious and unconscious resistances in his perspective. In its entirety this research suggests a bridging of hegemony and conscious-intentional

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forms of resistance, to the politics of affects, *potentia* (the inner driving energy of people) and more unconscious forms of resistance that are embedded in experiences and practices of hedonism, eroticism and loss (Bataille). While the bridging of modern and postmodern approaches has general application to existing theory, it was also shown that Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille are relevant in the Cuban context. In its entirety this thesis suggests reconciliation between modern and postmodern approaches on power and resistance, in order to understand how specific forms of power (affective, ideological, and material) are linked to everyday life practices and resistances (conscious or unconscious).

The chapter on Cuba aimed to show the value of local (Cuban) knowledge to western perspectives. It was demonstrated that the work of Ortiz is indispensable in our understanding of Cuban culture at both micro and macro levels. While the works of Martí and Guevara are necessary to be considered when interpreting Cuba's politics, ideology, structures and the influence of external forces to Cuba's internal affairs. Though this discussion the compatibility of Ortiz, Martí and Guevara to Gramsci, Spinoza and Bataille was illustrated. By demonstrating the complex manifestation of power in Cuba, the importance of affects (siege mentality), ideology, structures and experiences of imperialism and subordination by foreign forces, were highlighted. Thus in order to understand and interpret the complex shaping of power and resistance in Cuba, internal and external factors, macro and micro perspectives should be applied.

Moreover by showing the impact that the 1990s economic crisis had in every aspect of Cuba's society I aimed to illustrate that Cuba shares some similarities to the rest of the world and that a historical conjuncture analysis is necessary to be conducted in order to interpret why rap and reggaeton emerged the time that they did. In

addition it was shown that while state power is remarkably inflexible, people's power (conscious and unconscious resistances) are explicitly flexible and have a strong impact in shaping and re-shaping state's policies and hence the regime's hegemony. Despite Cuba's fundamental differences with the rest of the world the bridging of the micro with the macro is suggested in order to understand structures of power and forms of resistance in a more global scale.

Drawing on ethnographic data, existing literature and interviews with contemporary vanguard rappers chapter six aimed to illustrate the complex and overt shaping of power in the subculture of Cuban underground rap. It was shown that state power has been both supportive and suppressive towards the specific subculture. Moreover it was shown that the rappers' resistance is conscious in its core. Through their discourse they are making explicit demands to the government and its policies and are inviting the regime to give a response. Their clear demands are making propositions for positive change but also by showing the gap between official discourses and everyday reality in Cuba, they are posing a strong challenge to the uniformity and conformity of the people to the regime. Moreover it was shown that the strong affiliation of the rapper's to cubanía renders them as representatives of the hegemonic revolutionary spirit.

It was illustrated that a bridging of the CCCS to post-subcultural theory was necessary to be conducted in order to interpret power and resistance in Cuban underground rap. Thus CCCS characteristics of hegemony, ideology, structural changes, appropriation through commercialism, strong responses from the state's coercive mechanism and collective identities are interconnected with post-subcultural elements of affects, *potentia*, personal choices, heterogeneity, fluidity,

emancipation through the consumption of technological commodities and the influence of global media and music industries on local scenes. Moreover in terms of resistance it was demonstrated that the CCCS term of countercultures was not adequate to describe the resistive nature of Cuban rap. While the "politics of pleasure" that post-subculture theory is focusing on highly describes everyday unconscious forms of resistance in experiences of free-styling and alcohol intoxication. Moreover it was demonstrated that affects are of paramount importance to be considered in increasing or diminishing the group's collective force for social change. Arguably if in a highly political subculture such as Cuban rap post-subcultural elements can be traced, then similar issues might appear in our investigation of subcultures throughout the world.

Similarly though the investigation of Cuban reggaeton it was demonstrated that the realm of *relajo* that reggaeton expresses, entails explicit post-subcultural elements. Specifically reggaeton reflects apolitical sentiments, hedonism, the body as a site of both metaphorical and literal resistance, momentary liberation through dance and intoxication and forging of identities through consumerism. Simultaneously these post-subcultural elements go hand in hand with structural changes, social reactions by moral entrepreneurs and the shaping of "symbolic resistance" and "magical solutions" to everyday experiences of subordination that the CCCS was focusing on. By exploring the complex manifestation of power and resistance in reggaeton it was shown that its symbolic resistance although subversive to Cuban ideology and morality it serves not only the economic interests of the regime but also achieves the conformity of the people to the system. Hence reggaeton has a very valuable function at the political level, as in the end it reproduces hegemonic power relations (Willis, 1977). Similar to rap, if in a highly apolitical, consumer driven and hedonistic

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subculture such as reggaeton traditional CCCS characteristics can be found, then both perspectives are necessary to be reconciled in order to interpret power, resistance and subcultures on a more general global basis.

Furthermore this thesis endeavoured to contribute to existing literature concerning Cuban rap, from which the majority is focusing in the late 1990s to early 2000s Pacini Hernandez & Garofalo, 2000; Perry, 2004; West-Duran, 2004; Kapcia, 2005; Fernandes, 2006). Moreover it sought to contribute to the limited so far literature on reggaeton. As demonstrated in chapter seven, despite the popularity and wide diffusion of the genre almost next to nothing has been written about it. The moral bias of academics in exploring hedonistic and apolitical subcultures should be surpassed. Both rap and reggaeton fulfil different but essential aspects of human life and most importantly they express different manifestations of resistance. Thus the body-centred, unconscious and "symbolic" resistance of reggaeton that is encountered in the "politics of pleasure" should not be underestimated over the more overt and conscious resistance of rap. As demonstrated there are crucial socio-cultural issues at stake when exploring apolitical, consumer driven and hedonistic subcultures such as reggaeton.

In its entirety this thesis aims to demonstrate that if we can bring together modern and postmodern perspectives in a highly political context such as Cuba, then this reconciliation could be applied in the rest of the world. By illustrating the importance of bridging modern, postmodern and local perspectives I endeavoured to contribute to existing knowledge on power, resistance and subcultures. Consequently this thesis aimed to show how from local histories global designs of knowledge can be reshaped (Mignolo, 2000). By bridging these approaches this thesis aims to

contribute to subcultural theory and cultural criminology in their interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures.

8.2. Concluding Remarks: Further Research

Primarily further research is essential in western and non-western settings in order to demonstrate further that a bridging of the Birmingham School and post-subculture theory is required in our interpretation of power, resistance and subcultures. Moreover additional research is needed in the following years on Cuban underground rap in order to investigate whether and what extent the commercialization of rap outside the boundaries of Cuba will lead to an opening of space and a wider acceptance of the genre inside Cuba. Hence to what extent the appropriation of Cuban rap by global capitalism will lead to a harnessing of rap's resistive nature in the island, as occurred in the case of nueva trova (see chapter five).

Furthermore it will of interest to explore further whether these rising opportunities for rappers outside Cuba will lead firstly, for the rappers to defect the island or secondly, due the rising possibilities to obtain a good quality of life in the island (from their ability to acquire hard currency through performances in foreign settings) they will start conforming more to the system. In both cases then it will be of importance to explore the extent to which the appropriation by global capitalism will lead the rappers to reproduce the hegemony of the regime (Willis, 1977). Moreover as stated in the methodology chapter this research was not focusing on gender. Consequently further research is needed to investigate gender in both subcultures. In the case of rap an investigation of gender would be important in order to understand on the one hand, the role and significance of matrifocal families to the rappers' lives and on the

other hand, the extent to which the rappers reproduce hegemonic relations of patriarchy in their relationships with the opposite sex. In the case of reggaeton further research is needed on female consumers in order to investigate what meaning they themselves attribute to reggaeton.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in the chapter on reggeton the majority of the reggaetoneros started as conscious rappers. Reggaeton is a relative young music genre with approximately ten years of trajectory in Cuba. Hence it will be of interest to explore whether the reggaetoneros will start producing music themes with more conscious content, as it has occurred in the case of the Puerto Rican Reggaetonero Calle 13. Thus it will be of importance to investigate to what extent reggaeton's highly unconscious resistance, will evolve into a more conscious form of resistance.

This thesis did not aim to give any rigid answers or to devalue any of the theoretical perspectives presented. Rather following a cultural criminological perspective it sought to demonstrate the value of connecting structural issues to everyday life practices and postmodern socio-cultural phenomena (Ferrell et al, 2008).

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