

# **POLICE REPRESSION AS MORAL SHOCK: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF BRAZILIAN PROTESTERS IN JUNE 2013 DEMONSTRATIONS**

**REPRESIÓN POLICIAL COMO CHOQUE MORAL: UN ANÁLISIS DE NARRATIVAS DE LOS  
ACTIVISTAS DE JUNIO DE 2013**

**A REPRESSÃO POLICIAL COMO CHOQUE MORAL: UMA ANÁLISE DE NARRATIVAS DE  
MANIFESTANTES DE JUNHO DE 2013**

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**ABSTRACT:** Adopting a microinteractional perspective, this article performs a narrative analysis (BASTOS; BIAR, 2015) produced by protesters in the so-called “June Journeys”, which took place in Brazil in 2013. We specifically focus on the development of such events in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The analysis is compatible with the patterns of interpretive qualitative social research (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006), as well with a self-ethnographic viewpoint (REED-DANAHAY; 2001). The data were generated in open interviews with protesters from the main occupying acts from that historical period. The results of the analysis highlight the prominence and relevance of police repression episodes in the narratives, allowing us to interpret that: (i) these episodes were often understood by the protesters as a “moral shock” (JASPER, 1997) which gave meaning and cohesion to demonstrations; and (ii) these episodes played an important role in the presentation of respondents’ positive self (GOFFMAN, 1955). Furthermore, we suggest that, in these narratives, respondents often ascribe polarized identities to the police and the protesters.

**KEYWORDS:** Narrative analysis. Moral shock. Self. Brazilian demonstrations.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo empreende, em perspectiva microinteracional, uma análise de narrativas (BASTOS; BIAR, 2015) produzidas por manifestantes das chamadas jornadas de junho de 2013. Focalizam-se especificamente os desenvolvimentos de tais manifestações no estado do Rio de Janeiro. A pesquisa é de natureza qualitativa e interpretativista (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006), com uma dimensão autoetnográfica (REED-DANAHAY, 2001). Os dados foram gerados em entrevistas abertas com manifestantes

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presentes em ocupações que marcaram o período. Os resultados identificam a proeminência e a centralidade dos episódios de repressão policial nas narrativas sobre os protestos, permitindo a interpretação de que esses episódios: i) foram frequentemente compreendidos pelos manifestantes como “choque moral” (JASPER, 1997) que deu sentido e coesão às manifestações; e ii) tiveram papel importante na construção positiva de si elaborada pelos manifestantes (GOFFMAN, 1955), a partir principalmente da estratégia de distribuição de identidades polares (WOODWARD, 2000) para manifestantes e policiais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Análise de narrativa. Choque moral. Self. Jornadas de Junho.

RESUMEN: En este artículo se lleva a cabo, en perspectiva microinteraccional, un análisis de narrativas (BASTOS; BIAR, 2015) producidas por los activistas de protestas en junio de 2013 en Brasil. En particular, nos centramos en desarrollos de este tipo de eventos en el estado de Río de Janeiro. La investigación es cualitativa e interpretativa (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006), con una dimensión autoetnográfica (REED-DANAHAY, 2001). Los datos se generaron en entrevistas abiertas con activistas presentes en ocupaciones que marcaron el período. Los resultados identifican la importancia y la centralidad de los episodios de represión policial en narrativas sobre las protestas, lo que permite la interpretación de que estos episodios: i) son a menudo entendidos por los activistas como “choque moral” (JASPER, 1997) que aportaron sentido y cohesión a las demostraciones; ii) jugaron un papel importante en la construcción positiva de sí mismos por los activistas (Goffman, 1955), gracias a la estrategia de distribución de identidades polares (WOODWARD, 2000) a los manifestantes y a la policía.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Análisis de la narrativa. Choque moral. Self. Protestas brasileñas.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This work addresses the topic of contemporary popular demonstrations, and reports on a research developed over the course of 2013, when, in many Brazilian cities, a wave of protests known as the “June Journeys” took place. In retrospect, such journeys have often been regarded as reasonably analogous to other demonstrations around the world which, according to Castells (2013), have since 2011 been telltale signs of the so-called crisis of representativity. To mention but a few formal commonalities amongst such demonstrations: (i) they have all resorted to the full-scale use of social networks in order to disseminate information and call for popular participation; (ii) they have all occupied streets; (iii) and they have all claimed forms of ideological grounding utterly divorced from any political party. In Brazil’s specific case, demonstrations began in association with the *Movimento Passe Livre* (Free Fare Movement), in São Paulo, after public transportation fares were raised in June, 2013. Within a very short time span, similar protests spread to other large cities in the country, with substantively broader agendas. These included calls for the end of corruption, for the improvement of public services, and for explanations for outrageous expenses on the occasion of the 2014 World Cup.

In view of such a panorama, our research is born of the (self-)ethnographic insertion of this paper’s first author in the public-space occupying initiatives articulated in the city of Rio de Janeiro from June 2014 onwards. Within such occupation sites, besides the political action of those who were actively engaged in the movement, a series of research tasks were carried out which involved note-taking and open interviews with other protesters. Once data had been generated, we moved on to a micro-interactional analysis which hoped to advance understandings of the relationship between the *self* claimed by protesters in interviewing contexts and the notorious episodes of police repression which characterized such a period. Three initial research questions oriented our analysis: 1) *which narratives and claims of selfhood emerge in protesters’ discourses?*; 2) *what is the narrative role/function played by police repression in the construction of such stories and identities?* and 3) *which meanings are co-constructed with the interviewer, given her ambivalent presence in the interview situation (both as an interviewer and as a social movement activist)?*

For the development of this research, we have aligned ourselves with the qualitative-interpretivist research methodology (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006). More specifically, for the micro-analysis of the data we shall present, we employ narrative analysis (BASTOS, 2005; 2008; BASTOS; BIAR, 2015) informed by the studies of interaction. Taking the Labovian idea of narrative (LABOV, 1972) into account, we identify interviews’ narrative fragments and underscore elements which the protesters themselves highlight in the evaluation they make of narrated characters and actions. Since we also see narrative discourse as a basic form of organizing experience (BRUNER, 1997 [1990]), our analysis is grounded on a socioconstructionist view of discourse and social identities (MOITA LOPES, 2003). We especially discuss the sociological notion of “moral shock” (JASPER, 1997) to try to understand the

function of police repression episodes in the ways narrators narratively recreate protests, construct themselves, and project themselves under favorable light (GOFFMAN, 1955).

## 2 THE 2013 JUNE JOURNEYS

As we have already stated, the 2013 June Journeys began with demands, triggered by the Free Fare Movement, for decreasing public transportation fares. In the movement's agenda, turnstiles were taken as a symbol of workers' restricted access to the product of their own labor: the richness of urban spaces (MOVIMENTO PASSE LIVRE, 2013<sup>1</sup>). In a re-appropriation of the idea of "the right to the city" (LEFEBVRE, 1968), and considering the workers' dependence on public transportation, the movement then propagated itself to other capitals and many suburban cities. While in Porto Alegre, for instance, protests had already taken the streets in March 2013 in reaction to the raise from R\$2,85 to R\$3,05 in bus fares, and had in turn made authorities reverse the increase, it was most markedly after the São Paulo protests, in June, that the movement began to be broadly covered by both corporative and alternative media. In Rio de Janeiro, the specific context of this research, bus fares were raised from R\$2,75 to R\$2,90 on June 1, and protests began on June 10.

As they escalated and spread across the country, such outcries became increasingly complex, and soon the issue of public transportation gave way to a number of other pleas. Fiercely repressed by public powers, protests were commonly announced as peaceful marches, but ended in violent conflict between police officers and demonstrators. Such confrontations were at times prompted by the police attempts to disperse crowds, and at times triggered by police reaction to the destruction of window shops, façades and vehicles by certain groups of protesters. Castells (2013), in analyzing such movements, identifies certain commonalities among a series of similar movements which emerged in different parts of the world, albeit under distinct historical, cultural, economic and political circumstances. In most cases, elements such as the use of social networks, the occupation of public spaces, and the wish for horizontality among participants can be recognized. Assembled around no clear ideological purpose – a quality often justified by the all-pervading dissatisfaction and skepticism towards every known form of government –, participants from such movements express the "crisis of representativity" which has been raising questions about the principles underlying democratic regimes<sup>2</sup>.

Once again, in the case of Rio de Janeiro, the first claims regarding bus fares seemed to have been successful, and the raise was undone on June 19. Still, on the following day, on June 20, 2013, thousands of Brazilians took the streets across the country, because other claims had been integrated into the movement. In Rio, this demonstration was met with severe repression by the military police, with clashes between police officers and demonstrators and the extensive use of police batons, tear gas pumps, pepper spray and rubber bullets. Even after the crowd had dispersed, the noise of rubber bullet shots and tear gas bombs could still be heard downtown.

The historian Lincoln Secco (2013) believes that the police played a fundamental rallying role by increasing popular adherence to the protests. According to his analysis, it was after an episode of violent police repression, on June 13, that a larger number of people took the streets of São Paulo, as if in resistance. Secco maintains that repression, which reportedly includes attacks against journalists, as well as the movement's "middle-class" profile, may have jointly fostered empathy. He also adds that, more than police repression itself, the way such repression was appropriated by the media may have given visibility to the movement and encouraged solidarity.

In that respect, in an attempt to formulate a sociological explanation for the emergence of engagement within social movements such as the ones we witnessed in 2013, Jasper (1997) proposes the notion of "moral shock": a personal or public event which, by means of the emotion it elicits or the indignation it evokes, mobilizes and encourages different individuals to group around a particular cause, despite their lack of previous relationship or planning. In his words,

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<sup>1</sup> Article written by participants from the Free Fare Movement.

<sup>2</sup> Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Ireland, among other countries, have all experienced popular movements which expressed the crisis of representativity.

[...] moral shocks are the first step towards recruitment in social movements: they occur when an unexpected event or certain pieces of information prompt indignation in an individual, who then turns to political action with or without prior contact with interpersonal networks linked to protests or theoretical processes (JASPER, 1997, p. 106).

Moral shocks may be strategically fabricated to recruit people, or they may arise spontaneously. The complex movement which starts with becoming aware of a certain event and advances towards complete engagement with a certain form of uprising has, according to Jasper (1997), a moral dimension (the event is repulsive insofar as it prompts anger and indignation), an emotional dimension (it brings about anger and frustration), and a cognitive dimension (one must become aware of such an event by means of apprehensible signs). The collective consciousness is an effect of the shared focus: if the moral shock hits the collective consciousness, feelings of solidarity are incited; individuals, at first isolated in their exasperation, begin to compose an exasperated crowd.

Additionally, the answer to a moral shock in an ongoing movement may be the mere reaffirmation or radicalization of people's engagement. It is hardly uncommon that ruthless repression against peaceful demonstrations work as a form of moral shock. Part and parcel of the same dynamics, feelings of skepticism and distrust (especially towards authorities) emerge and may lead people to strive to find a villain, an enemy, someone upon whom blame can be laid. In the context of the 2013 demonstrations, we shall argue – and that is the focus of our discursive analysis –, not only public transportation fares, but the heavy-handed police repression experienced by protesters may be understood in terms of a moral shock which steered public indignation towards street-occupying activities. Our analytical section aims to highlight that comprehension on the part of research participants themselves.

What proceeded from the frequent police repression episodes was a substantial decrease in the number of street protesters, paired with the ascent of a smaller group of protesters who remained active throughout. Very few people risked participating in demonstrations, since these often led to direct confrontation. In the web of meanings constructed among lingering protesters, remaining on the streets despite ever-intensifying police repression was taken as a display of something akin to heroism; that attitude was often valued by the larger group. In many cities, smaller groups of protesters began to act in manifold ways against the government. Such groups began to interact, and to construct new contexts and new webs of meaning vis-à-vis their street activities.

The issue of protesters' profile and composition as a group is known to have been widely debated both by corporate media and by intellectuals at the time of the movement's emergence. Such information seemed key to comprehend a popular uprising characterized by the already-mentioned traits, born from contemporary ways of protesting. In that respect, the Data Folha Institute published, on June 21, 2013, a research whose aim was to estimate São Paulo protesters' average income, and to pinpoint their ideological positions. In Belo Horizonte, Innovare Pesquisa<sup>3</sup> carried out similar efforts, and published their findings on June 23. In the city of Rio de Janeiro, Clave de Fá Pesquisas e Projetos hired three companies and, on the Band News cable TV channel, broadcast the results of a research undertaken during the June 20 demonstration. These last two researches point to the fact that protesters were mostly young and working class – a result which directly contradicted the unverified version broadly presented by the mainstream media. In a recent paper, André Singer (2013) sustains that protests were composed by members of a traditional, outraged middle-class, as well as by the “new working class” – workers, most of whom quite young, who had access to formal jobs during the Lula decade (2003-2013), but which suffered from poor remuneration, high rotativity, and poor working conditions. In the author's understanding, the 2013 protests reflect complaints from both groups. Such a perspective stresses the heterogeneity of groups in the movement's constitution, which in turn facilitates the amplification of its agenda and the multiplication of its demands.

### 3 THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT AND THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

In the specific context of Rio de Janeiro, at the time of the first 2013 demonstrations, a particular form of protest gained prominence: the occupations. This research hinges upon the interaction between our first author and participants from two of such occupations.

<sup>3</sup> Innovare Pesquisa is a private opinion-research institution with widespread activity across the country.

The first one was set up in front of the private residence of Sérgio Cabral Filho, the then-governor of Rio de Janeiro; the second one, within the Rio de Janeiro City Council Hall. The latter specifically asked for the urgent establishment of a CPI (Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito – Parliamentary Inquiry Committee) to investigate public transportation. A few days after the installation of this second occupation, protesters were removed from the building and began camping in front of the place, where they remained for about two months.

Occupations like these underscore the intricate dynamics of urban space, and of how access to it is unevenly distributed. The notion of “right to the city”, as explored by sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1986), deals precisely with the right of inclusion to urban spaces on the part of urban society, despite any form socio-economical segregation. In other words, Lefebvre conceives of the right to the city as a movement, carried out by marginal groups who occupy the outskirts of the city and there perform the productive activities which ensure the city’s survival, of collective recovery of the urban space. Occupying tactics, therefore, “show how the collective power of bodies in public space still remains the most effective instrument of opposition when access to other means is blocked” (HARVEY, 2012, p. 61). They are thus understood as pertaining to the category of political articulations which reject traditional institutional spaces.

Alongside such occupations, a myriad of collectives emerged at the time, and continually engaged in the promotion of multifarious cultural activities – debates, lectures, movie sessions, theatrical plays and other forms of alternative media, all thematically linked to the ongoing political and economic discussions. These collectives sought to organize themselves in terms of the aforementioned “horizontality”, that is, by designing and implementing their schedules collaboratively, averting any sort of hierarchical distinctions among members. Each member’s autonomy and decision-making powers were respected: a tribute to the idea of direct democracy, in which each individual represents himself/herself, and decisions are made in general assemblies.

Within that panorama, we would like to focus on two specific individuals – the participants of the present research – whose interviews form the data of this paper: Elaine and Rodrigo (fictitious names). As we shall see, our focus is justified by their participation in the 2013 Journeys.

Elaine was an actively engaged street protester, and an adept of the “black block” tactic. She agreed to grant us an open interview, and she had a personal relationship with this paper’s first author. The intimacy between them can be detected in the interview’s transcription. Elaine lives in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro, a region well-known for being composed of mostly poor and peripheral neighborhoods. While the participant does not elaborate on her belonging to any socio-economical group, her geographical origin and her discursive stylizations allow us to suppose that she belongs to a popular social segment. The interview took place on August 24, 2013, in one of the street occupations she participated in. The most recurring narratives of the interview thematized violent episodes experienced by the interviewee over the course of the demonstrations. In the analysis section, we shall highlight one of such episodes.

Our second participant, Rodrigo, was a well-known activist who belonged to an alternative media collective which was highly popular on the Web. Rodrigo, who was also interviewed by this paper’s first author, was invited to join this research after a theatrical intervention-and-debate in one of the occupations both he and the interviewer participated in. Once he had been informed of our research objectives, Rodrigo also agreed to grant us an open interview. Rodrigo lives in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, and describes himself as a “middle class” individual. The face-to-face interview took place in a snack bar in the city of Rio de Janeiro, on October 5, 2013. In the interview, Rodrigo formulates a series of narratives which exemplify how the police acted in the demonstrations.

As we can see, although they are both aligned to the same popular movement, Elaine and Rodrigo, on account of their respective participations in occupations and alternative media collectives, represent and emphasize distinct forms of protest in the context of 2013. That, combined with a qualitative analysis of their narratives, allows us to understand how different actors produce meaning regarding their participation in the movement.

#### 4 NARRATIVE AS LENS OF DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS

In this work, narrative analysis will guide the production of our understandings concerning how protesters claim identities and how they talk about, give shape, sequence and meaning to, their participation in the June Journeys. We regard the production of narratives as central and recurring in life in society. As they tell stories, people not only transmit the meaning of who they are, but also construct relationships with others and with the world around them (BASTOS, 2005).

The studies of narratives told both in everyday situations and in research interviews were inaugurated by Labov (1972), who believed narrative to be a specific way of recollecting past experiences, through a verbal sequence of clauses which codifies a temporal sequence of events that (impliedly) actually took place. Furthermore, narratives must have a point, that is, there must be some reason for telling them.

Labov outlines a recurring structure for narratives, composed of several rhetorical elements: an abstract (the story's summary); an orientation (an explication of what the story involves, when and where it happened, who its participants are); a complicating action (a temporal sequence of events, with past-time verbs); an evaluation (the narrative's maximum point, which clarifies why the story is being told); a resolution (the description of what happened after the complicating actions); and a coda (which marks the end of the narrative and brings the conversation back to the present).

Labov's proposed structure has been heavily criticized. According to some theoreticians, as he focused on the sequence of events, Labov emphasized the relationship between sentences and their commitment to the chronology of events, thereby disregarding the interactional contexts in which stories are told. Despite massive criticism, Labov's studies helped thrusting narrative-focused research in the field of linguistic studies (BASTOS, 2005). In this paper, for instance, the categories he proposed seem particularly fruitful insofar as they allow us to identify narrative fragments within interviews, and to separate their constitutive parts. We draw on elements from the Labovian structure while also resorting to other theories, which conceive narrative as the very organizing principle of human memory (BRUNER, 1997 [1990]); and which understand narrative itself as a way of organizing experience and constructing knowledge regarding who we are in social life (MOITA LOPES, 2001; BASTOS; BIAR, 2015).

A socioconstructionist understanding of narrative accentuates its social nature, its fabrication for local and cultural purposes. The meaning and the very sequence of the narrated events, in such a conception, are constructed by the joint action of the participants, all of whom are engaged in discursive practices situated in history, culture and vis-à-vis institutions. According to Moita Lopes (2001), there are three defining characteristics of discourse which cannot be overlooked by those who investigate it: (i) its dialogic nature – in Bakhtinian terms, discourse is not an individual achievement, but a link in a long chain of numberless discourses which circulate in society; (ii) its situationality – discourse is always anchored on a socio-historical context; and (iii) its constitutiveness – discourse is the action by means of which individuals construct themselves and the world around them.

By bearing the first two categories in mind, our comprehension of discourse and of what happens in a given social interaction is magnified, since dialogicity and situationality interfere in what is said or not said in interactions; i.e., they entail an understanding that the interviewed protesters construct their identities in relation to the form and shape of our interaction.

The third characteristic is also paramount to our research. As they construct narratives, social actors construct themselves; and viewing identity as a construction implies rejecting essentialist perspectives. Individuals are not given identities as they are born; they construct such identities in the multitude of interactions they partake in (BAUMAN, 2005). Moita Lopes (2003) quotes Gee (1990), for whom each individual is a member of many Discourses, each of which represents one of the multiple constitutive identities of such individuals. Hence the conclusion that, in the contemporary social world, one single subject may interact with many different discourses, and move through them according to the social practices in which he/she is engaged (MOITA LOPES, 2003).

In this work, we shall give prominence to conceptions of identity based on difference. In that perspective, Silva (2000) understands that the idea of identity can be understood positively, in an autonomous, independent fashion (that which someone *is*), or it can be

seen as difference, i.e., that which the other *is not*. Identity and difference are, thus, inextricably linked, and identity claims only make sense once they are seen in terms of their symbolic relationship with their opposites. It is by symbolically marking identities that we ascribe meaning to social practices and relations, for instance by defining inclusions and exclusions by means of an opposition between “us and them” (WOODWARD, 2000).

Given the dynamism of interactions and of the contexts in which each individual circulates, certain identity traits may become more relevant than others in each occasion. In the following analysis, we shall take into consideration not only the provisory nature of identities, but also the way individuals tend to manage impressions so as to construct and sustain favorable images of themselves before others (GOFFMAN, 2008).

## 5 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As previously stated in the introduction of this paper, our analysis is oriented by a qualitative interpretivist perspective (DENZIN; LINCOLN, 2006). We attempt to produce understandings of how forms of social organization relate to individuals’ activities in decision-making processes and in the joint conduction of social action. Our work is also composed of a (self-)ethnographical dimension, i.e., it is a form of ethnography centered on the experiences of the research subject who investigates his/her own social context (BOSLLE & MOLINA NETO, 2009). Such a research tradition brings together the researcher’s personal and cultural experiences (BERGER; ELLIS, 2002), allowing for the description of his/her practice as well as for the reflection about it, since the interpreting subject is also the interpreted one (REED-DAHANEY, 1997).

As participants in the research context, we take up certain positions during interviews, which influence the questions we ask. As will become clear in the forthcoming analysis, the interviewer herself anticipates the centrality of the conflicts between police officers and protesters in the questions she introduces. We do not see that as a methodological flaw; instead, we are interested in how the interviewer and her interviewees co-construct meanings regarding such conflicts. In that respect, the research interview itself is here taken as a social situation subject to interactional analysis (MISHLER, 1986). There lies the (self-)ethnographic dimension of the research, insofar as the subject-researcher who interprets also constructs her own experiences in the protests. Moreover, the data here presented were transcribed according to the Jefferson transcription model (cf. LORDER, 2008).

### 5.1 CONSTRUCTING POLICE ACTION AS MORAL SHOCK: DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, we shall present selected excerpts from the interviews conducted with Elaine and Rodrigo. The structural components described by Labov (1972) will assist us in identifying narrative fragments in participants’ discourses. By means of the interpretation of certain formal resources, such as the construction of a point and of an evaluation, we will see how protesters organize the events they experienced (BRUNER, 1997 [1990]) during the demonstrations. By and large, we will highlight the recurrence and the centrality of police confrontation episodes in the interviews, and we will give particular attention to these episodes, proposing an interpretation based on the notion of moral shock (JASPER, 1997). In other words, we will investigate how the demonstrators (including the interviewer herself) ascribe relevance to police repression in their narratives, and how they construct an antagonistic, negative image for police officers.

#### 5.1.1 Elaine: “After that people didn’t go back to the streets”

Elaine’s interview is defined by the researcher’s interest in eliciting narratives. The opening question itself already creates the need for the interviewee to tell a story on the topic of police confrontation.

Excerpt 1

01 **Etyelle** eu só queria tipo ouvir: ãh: sei lá(.), qual(.) o:  
 02 >maior< embate que você já teve com relação a: >ações<  
 03 da polícia? qual foi, ãhn: sei lá, a: experiência mais:  
 04 tensa, que você já ↓teve

As we have already stated, the intimacy between the interviewer and Eliane stands out in the linguistic-discursive constructions the former makes use of, and which render the interview more colloquial. As she inserts pauses and expressions such as “I mean” (lines 01 to 04) into her question, Etyelle attempts to make Elaine feel more at ease, so that she can construct her experience as if the interaction were not being recorded for further analysis. From that question, Elaine begins her turn by stressing that which she considers to be the worst repression episode she has experienced.

Excerpt 2: “We were really chased”

13 **Elaine** °deixa eu pensar° (3.0) cara, eu acho que o dia mais,  
 14 >que eu fiquei mais assustada com a repressão policial<  
 15 foi o dia 20 (.) da prefeitura  
 16 **Etyelle** aquela do::  
 17 **Elaine** foi o dia da prefeitura  
 18 **Etyelle** ahã, ahã  
 19 **Elaine** °do choque na prefeitura° (2.) foi realmente  
 20 assustador↓  
 21 **Etyelle** por quê?  
 22 **Elaine** foi perseguição mesmo, sabe com a intenção, quer dizer,  
 23 a intenção nunca foi dispersar, naquele dia ficou bem  
 24 claro, é:, qualquer grupo de cinco pessoas que tivesse  
 25 indo embora eram atacadas. é:  
 26 **Etyelle** foi aquele que foram encurralando a gente até a::  
 27 presidente [vargas  
 28 **Elaine** foi, até qualquer lugar]  
 29 **Etyelle** até onde você conseguisse fugir↑  
 30 **Elaine** até a porta da sua casa.  
 31 **Etyelle** É hh exato hh

Elaine begins her narrative by means of an abstract, in which she briefly anticipates the events which will compose the narrative in lines 13 to 15, 22 to 25. Since the abstract is known to be a markedly evaluative part of the narrative, Elaine emphasizes that they “were really chased”, and that she saw people being “attacked”. Such expressions encapsulate her narrative’s point, the reason why she has elected this episode as the worst instance of repression. The interviewee also produces an evaluation of the police’s attempt to disperse the protesters; she sees it as an attack. Between lines 26 and 31, the narrated event is co-constructed in interaction with the interviewer: “that was on that day when they cornered us until” (l. 26). The evaluations in lines 29 and 30 introduce the idea that the police attack was not meant to disperse the demonstration, but to directly inflict damage upon protesters so that people would no longer return to the streets.

Excerpt 3 (04:21): “It was like a film”

99 **Elaine** NA LA:pa(.)foi, é sério, parecia cena de filme, foi,  
 100 aquelas, aquelas bombas de gás lacrimogêneo↑ passando  
 101 pelos arcos, assim, óh (.) eu olhava aquilo↑ sabe?(.)  
 102 >parecia que eu tava num filme< as pessoas sentadas  
 103 nos bares e eles aplicando na cara de todo mundo↑ que  
 104 tava dentro do bar, nesse dia, eu fiquei presa dentro  
 105 do metropolitan, do lado ali da pizzeria araribá  
 106 **Etyelle** Ahã  
 107 **Elaine** eu fiquei↑ eu sentei ainda↑ no chão da lapa↑ tentei  
 108 resistir↑ a galera fechou a via, eles vieram atacando  
 109 Todo mundo↑ mas todo mundo indiscriminadamente, (2.0)  
 110 e aí >quando eles vieram< como eles vieram de moto



111 prendendo↑ e eu tava↑ de de preto↑ né↑ assim, >sem a  
 112 máscara na cara< mas tava de preto, com a máscara de  
 113 gás, (3.0) eu entrei no metropolitan, a galera 'isso  
 114 sim' ainda tinha os donos dos bares, eles não querendo↑  
 115 que o pessoal entrasse↑ mas nesse dia, foi o dia que  
 116 eu vi↑ que eles eles desistiram, que eles num, eles  
 117 tavam se desesperando↑ com o que tava acontecendo] eles  
 118 tavam deixando entrar, chamando pra entrar e fechando  
 119 os bares, depois que a gente botou o maior número de  
 120 pessoas que cabiam, dentro do bar e fechamos, a gente  
 121 ouvia os tiros de borracha batendo mesmo, em direção  
 122 ao bar (1,0), sabe? (2,0) e aí, quando cessava, o povo  
 123 tentava sair do bar pra ver se tinha alguém ferido,  
 124 alguém precisando entrar, cara, eu saía, eu chegava na  
 125 porta do bar e 'pá, pá' os começavam a aplicar de novo,  
 126 eu voltava correndo, aí catava mais dois que eu via,  
 127 desesperados, não tinha, você via o pânico no rosto  
 128 das pessoas, o porque o intuito foi esse, foi logo  
 129 depois da ALERJ, né  
 130  
 131 **Etyelle** Ahã  
 132 **Elaine** eles soltaram, eles deixaram solto na alerj pra poder  
 133 ter um motivo pra repressão no dia vinte, pras pessoas,  
 134 que foi depois disso que as pessoas não voltaram mais  
 135 pras ruas  
 136 **Etyelle** pois é↑ né, é mesmo↑

As she emphasizes the reasons why she thinks of the narrated day as particularly horrid, Elaine brings about the orientations present in lines 99, 100 and 101, followed by evaluations: “it was, seriously, it was like a film” (line 99); “; “I saw that ↑ you know? (.)>it looked like I was in a film” (lines 101 and 102). The development of orientations accentuates the dramatic nature of the episode, and the narrative actions are constructed in a fast-paced, dramatic fashion, which emphasizes the episodes of tension experienced by the narrator. In this storyline, Elaine is positioned as a fearfully threatened heroine.

Once she has evaluated what she witnessed on the occasion of the narrated event, Elaine carries on with the series of complicating actions: “I was ↑ I just sat down ↑ on the floor ↑ tried to resist ↑ people closed the street, they came down” (lines 107 and 108), which is followed by another evaluation: “on EVERYone ↑ but like everyone indiscriminately, (2.0)” (lines 108 and 109). The narrator moves forward in her construction of the police as alterity – not only in relation to protesters, but to people in general. As she underscores the use of violence and the absolute arbitrariness of the assaults, Elaine ultimately constructs policemen as public enemies (SILVA, 2000; WOODWARD, 2000).

The narrative actions in Elaine’s story add to her construction of herself as a demonstrator who heroically resists repression. In a confirmation of such a construction, she also produces the orientation “I was wearing ↑ black ↑ right ↑ like this, >no mask on my face < but I was in black, with the gas mask,” (lines 110 to 112). In the interview, both participants know that the use of black clothes and the covering-up of faces during demonstrations allude to the *black bloc* technique<sup>4</sup>. Elaine’s decision to emphasize that piece of information adds to her self-construction as an experienced and engaged protester who belongs to a resistance group.

When Elaine recalls how she was wearing black and how she attempted to get into a building, she mentions that bar owners attempted to stop her from doing so, but eventually changed their minds, because they were also “desperate” about what was taking

<sup>4</sup> In its origin, the term “black bloc” (from German, Schwarzer Block) was used by the German press, in the 1980s, to refer to groups of people who organized themselves to face police repression in defense of the occupation (squats) of abandoned houses and buildings in big cities; and also against attacks by neo-Nazi groups. As a technique, black blocs organized themselves within demonstrations with the main objective of ensuring participants’ self-defense when met by police repression, which was by rule carried out violently. In the 1990s, in the United States, the technique became even more prominent when, on the occasion of a demonstration against the meeting of the World Trade Organization, in Seattle, mask-wearing groups destroyed façades and offices from McDonald’s, Starbucks, Fidelity Instruments, among other installations from major multinational companies. From that event onwards, the “black block” technique, hitherto a basically defensive instrument against police repression, became a means of a symbolic assault on quintessential capitalist landmarks and emblems (ORTELLADO, 2013; ZUQUETE, 2014).

place. Here, the set of complicating actions once again allows for Elaine's self-construction as a heroine, for, as she tried to get into the building, "people" who were gathered therein said "that's it", thus accepting and encouraging Elaine's presence among them. All the actions narrated between lines 119 and 125 reinforce such a construction. Elaine not only helped bring people into the place, but she actually walked outside and "c[a]me back running" (line 126) with two other individuals in need of help.

On the topic of police repression, Elaine also constructs an evaluation: "they let it go, they let it go at Alerj so they could claim something and come down on us on the 20th, on people" (lines 132 to 134). Such an evaluation also draws attention to her central narrative point: the idea that the repression she experienced was not meant to disperse protesters, but to remove the population from the streets by spreading fear and extreme violence. Elaine ratifies her evaluation by narrating the protest which took place at ALERJ, on June 17, when protesters occupied and ravaged the building. That protest, in Elaine's understanding, was not heavily repressed; hence the justification for an astute police corps to exaggerate on the 20<sup>th</sup>, precisely with a view to avoiding new attempts at destroying public and private patrimony; and to frighten the population so as to prevent people from coming back to the streets. If we problematize the fragment in which Elaine claims that "they let it go at alerj so they could claim something and come down on us on the 20<sup>th</sup>", we might conclude that "they" refers not only to police officers, but to a larger authoritative body. That conclusion is further strengthened by the idea that the Rio de Janeiro Military Police, as a corporation, is commanded by Rio de Janeiro's State Government, by means of its State Safety Department.

Elaine brings her narrative to an end by articulating a coda: "after that people didn't go back to the streets any more". If, by "people", Elaine means regular citizens, not necessarily people who belong to political collectives, her coda performs a double movement. On the one hand, as she establishes a cause-effect relationship between police repression and the sudden dis-occupation of streets, she ascribes a moral shock statute (JASPER, 1997) to the episode. On the other hand, the episode allows Elaine to pull herself apart from "ordinary people", and to construct herself as a special protester who courageously withstands hardships everyday people can only see from a distance.

In a word, we believe that Elaine's narrative constructs herself under favorable light (GOFFMAN, 2008), as an activist who belongs to a resistance group, i.e., who remains on the streets in spite of ever-intensifying police repression. We have also highlighted the set of complicating actions which dramatically collaborate with her construction as a heroine, since she not only resisted, but helped other people to escape from police repression. Likewise, police officers are constructed as violent villains. Such identities become relevant throughout the construction of Elaine's narrative point, as well as by means of the evaluations and orientations she fits into her storyline. It is also worth mentioning that, in Elaine's narrative, remaining on the streets in spite of repression grants a given protester a position of prominence in the fight against injustice. Resistance becomes a token of pride, and police repression is reconfigured as the very element which prompts demonstrators not to surrender.

#### 5.1.2 Rodrigo: a necessary agenda for all the other agendas

In this subsection, we shall analyze how Rodrigo, the second protester we interviewed, constructs himself through a narrative about his own detention during a demonstration. The analysis will once again be oriented by the Labovian structure. We shall observe how the point of the story is constructed, and how certain elements are made relevant through the use of evaluations, which accentuate the interviewee's identity claims.

In the beginning of the interview, Rodrigo constructs meanings regarding his interpretations of police action. His turn is oriented by how the interviewer begins the interaction.

Excerpt 1 (00:52): “Are they right, are they wrong?”

20 **Etyelle** assim, eu queria entender. como que as pessoas estão:  
 21 enxergando o que a polícia tá fazendo., a polícia tá  
 22 certa? a polícia tá errada. tá mais ou me:nos. somos  
 23 nós↑ que estamos errados >na forma como estamos  
 24 conduzindo< as coisas, né. >num sei, assim,< eu  
 25 queria que você falasse sobre as suas opiniões,  
 26 histórias, sentimentos

Seeing that this research seeks to analyze a given social life issue through the perspective of the participants who are involved in the process, what we wish is to understand how Rodrigo constructs the actions of the police corps in the demonstration. The opening turn, highlighted above, contains the central topic of what will later become the interview: the police. For the two protesters in a face-to-face interview situation, this is the most noteworthy matter. Before formulating an open question, in which she asks for “opinions, stories and feelings”, Etyelle anticipates two possible sides of the situation based on the right x wrong dualism; us (the protesters) against the police. Such a polarization regarding “what the police are doing”, however, is engendered by the question itself. Through her use of a first-person pronoun (us/we), the interviewer indexes herself as a participant of the same context as Rodrigo.

Along his answer, Rodrigo briefly elaborates on what he takes to be the police’s functions and everyday corporate activities. We have selected some excerpts from his first turn which, despite not configuring narratives, add to a richer understanding of how Rodrigo conceives of police activity in the demonstrations.

Excerpt 2 (06:16): “Any demonstration you stage, the police will be there”

40 **Rodrigo** qualquer manifestação que você fizer contra o estado,  
 41 contra os símbolos de poder↓ contra as pessoas que  
 42 comandam esses dinheiros e recursos e↓ enfim, tudo, a  
 43 polícia vai estar lá↑ e ela vai estar sempre na mesma  
 44 posição↑ defendendo aquelas pessoas e não o povo, e não a  
 45 população.

Excerpt 3 (06:48): “They’ve become a necessary agenda”

63 **Rodrigo** então, acho que tipo↓ a visão que eu tenho da polícia é  
 64 essa, ela virou uma pauta↑ (.) necessária↑ >pra todas as  
 65 outras pautas<

In the two excerpts above, Rodrigo summarizes his understanding of the fact that the police have become one of the demonstrations’ most important agendas. He constructs the corporation as aligned with a certain group – of rich and influential people (lines 41 and 42) – and, as Elaine did, as opposed not only to the protesters, but to the larger “population”. In other words, police activity in demonstrations can be understood as an attempt to protect the interests of “the other”. As he speaks, Rodrigo ratifies the dichotomy initially established in the beginning of the interview: he corroborates the opposition between the police and the demonstrators.

As he regards the police as a necessary agenda, Rodrigo underscores a fundamental research question: the role of police repression in the construction of protesters’ identities. The police are the alterity against/through which activists construct themselves. As we have been arguing, the centrality of police repression in such narratives justifies its interpretation as a moral shock (JASPER, 1997) in the context of the 2013 demonstrations.

Once he has exposed his understanding of the logic behind police activities, Rodrigo begins a long narrative about his own detention during a protest. We shall look more closely at a fragment in which Rodrigo focalizes his arrival at the police station.

Excerpt 4 (20:47): “It was just me and five other people I’d never seen, like a gang”

- 285 **Etyelle** =ah, é, o que que >aconteceu quando você<. chegou lá?  
 286  
 287 **Rodrigo** não- eu tava gravando↑ eles chegaram. e falaram pra  
 288 delegada, ‘olha, eles estavam jogando essas pedras aqui  
 289 no no carro de polícia. ‘era eu e mais cinco pessoas que  
 290 eu não conheci↑a, uma quadrilha↑(.) e como eu tava  
 291 gravando no celular eu >eu não cheguei a grava tudo<  
 292 porque eu tava com dois com dois celulares. e o tempo  
 293 inteiro eles pegavam meu celular pra ver se tava  
 294 filmando. e o outro que tava filmando ficou no chão↓ e  
 295 >teve um momento< que eles já tinham xingado↑ tanto↑  
 296 que eu pensei ‘eu vou, é melhor eu parar de gravar,  
 297 porque eu já tenho o suficiente,’ tipo:, sei lá:, você  
 298 vai parar de gravar. ou se eles vão descobrir↓ e eu não  
 299 sabia que ia acontecer também↓ que eles iam botar a  
 300 pedra na minha frente. mas de qualquer forma, TEM↑  
 301 gravado eu correndo↑ a camisa balançando↑ num sei o quê.  
 302 e tem um momento↑ que eles mandam todo mundo senta-  
 303 deitar↓ e fala que ‘vamo enfiar uma piroca↑ no cu de  
 304 vocês↑’ e é: ‘mete porrada↑’ e um monte de coisa. e aí,  
 305 cheguei na delegacia↑ e dei para os advoga↑dos, assim↑  
 306 que a gente chegou, falei >‘cara tem um monte de vídeo  
 307 aí< vê aí.’ e aí, ele eles mostraram pra delegada↓ a  
 308 delegada↓ >eles estavam fazendo já <o: que o choque  
 309 ((batalhão da PM))faz uma ficha, que entrega: lá. [ pra  
 310 delegacia.  
 311  
 312  
 313 **Etyelle** [uhum]  
 314 **Rodrigo** de porque que a gente te entregou aqui, pegamos os dados  
 315 de todo mun↑do, pega >o endereço, telefone, nome de mãe<  
 316 e tu↑do (2.0) e tavam pegando os nossos da:dos↑ e  
 317 >enquanto isso a delegada viu< e de repente pararam↑ ((o  
 318 choque, de fazer a ficha)) a: delegada mandou chamar  
 319 eles na sala. dela↑ eu não vi nada, não posso afirmar.  
 320 mas: uma advogada que tava lá disse que >ela< sentou↑ o  
 321 esporro↑ assim, tipo. mostrou o vídeo. e eles voltaram↑  
 322 só terminaram de fazer esses cadastro, e não teve queixa,  
 323 assim, mas <antes o policial da polícia civil↑ tava<  
 324 falando ‘ah, provavelmente vai ser formação de  
 325 quadrilha↑ a: fiança deve ser >setecentos<, ou mil reai-  
 326 ↑’ mas assim, extorsão↑ é extorsão↑  
 327  
 328 **Etyelle** =CLArO↑  
 329 **Rodrigo** e um monte de gente que estava presa ali↑ te↑ve que  
 330 pagar↑ ((inaudível)) e só↑ porque a gente tinha os  
 331 vídeos↑ a gente não precisou

Throughout the interview, Rodrigo repeatedly constructs the police as a disqualified “other” – either because of their behavior during demonstrations, or because of other situations, such as their way of dealing with citizens and law-enforcing bureaucratic procedures. Rodrigo conceives of the police as an agenda, and his narratives corroborate such a disqualifying positioning.

In excerpt 4, Rodrigo narrates an episode of police intervention whose background is the fact that everything was being recorded by him. Right after the interviewer’s question, Rodrigo begins his story with an orientation, “I was recording ↑”(line 287), and then inserts a series of complicating actions related to the accusations levelled at him and other detainees at the police station (lines 287 to 289). Aside from the construction-of-self purposes we shall now explore, the recording plays two key roles in such a narrative: 1) it reasonably explains why the detainees were liberated with no charges pressed against them; and 2) it disqualifies the police insofar

as it denounces a violent intervention. The intervention itself, from a more individualized perspective, also works as a micro moral shock: it produces trauma and breeds solidarity in Rodrigo towards people who would regularly experience similar situations.

Rodrigo then inserts an orientation which familiarizes us with how he arrived at the police station: “it was just me and five other people I’d never se ↑ en” (lines 289 ad 290). In the sequence, he introduces an evaluation: “a gang ↑ (:)” (line 290). At the time, the 288<sup>th</sup> Article of the Brazilian Constitution was in force: it stated that a group of three or more people who committed a crime in association could be charged with gang formation. Rodrigo stresses the fact that he did not know the other people who were being accused; hence, that the accusation was groundless. The word “gang”, prosodically marked, is followed by a micropause; a sense of irony is constructed which reinforces the police’s lack of preparation. It also implies the denunciation of a reprehensible attitude: according to him, the police conducted him to the police station and attempted to frame him as a criminal by planting fake evidence.

As he moves back to the sequence of actions, Rodrigo chooses to return to the moment prior to his arrival at the station: “and since I was recording it on my phone I >I couldn’t record it all< because I had two two phones. and all the time they’d get my phone to see if I was recording it. and the other guy recording was on the floor” (lines 290 to 295). This orientation is part of his self-construction as an experienced, street-savvy, cautious demonstrator. As if he had foreseen the problems he would face, he was in possession of two mobile phones, but only one of them was recording the events – by and large, a strategy to mislead the officers in the room. Rodrigo’s attitude fortifies his characterization as a kind of “professional demonstrator”, in opposition to the police, who had previously been constructed as unprofessional.

Along the sequence of complicating actions, after a brief digression back to the interactional context (lines 297 to 304), Rodrigo narrates his actions as he arrived at the station. At that point, the actions present the narrator himself as an agent: “and then, I got at the station ↑ and told the law yers, the mo ↑ ment we got there, I said, said > ‘dude there’s a bunch of vide@s there< have a look.’ and then, they showed it to the police chief ↓ ” (lines 304 to 308). Such actions, as well as Rodrigo’s protagonism towards them, once again construct him under favorable light, as a fearless demonstrator. Despite having been intimidated by officers who were going through his phone to look for any recordings, Rodrigo handed the videos to the lawyers, so that they could act accordingly. In another moment, the interviewer inserts new orientations which describe what the police officers were doing as they arrived at the station (lines 310 to 312; 314 to 317). Over the course of the protests, people who were detained on the streets by the shock troops were taken to civil police stations, where a form was filled in and a “charge” was established. That form became part of the judicial process involving the individual in question. Rodrigo’s detention, however, came to a different ending, exactly because he was in charge of a video which attested his innocence.

In lines 317 to 319 and 323 to 324, the interviewer inserts a series of complicating actions regarding the police chief’s actions. Afterwards, he evaluates them: “I didn’t see anything, I can’t say it. but: a lawyer who was there said that >she< really told them off ↑ like, I mean” (lines 319 to 321). The rise of intonation in “told them off ↑ ” can be taken as a favorable evaluation of the police chief’s actions, for she promptly reprehended the officers’ attitudes (which Rodrigo himself had already censured). That evaluation leads to what we shall refer to as the narrative’s pre-coda — “no charges pressed” (lines 323 and 324) — which, in this context, also plays an evaluative role: Rodrigo is “clear”. It is also worth emphasizing that, in a flashback — “like, but <a while before the police officer was ↑ was< saying ‘ah, it’s probably for being in gang ↑ the: bail is something around >seven hundred<, or a thous↑ ” (lines 324 to 327) —, Rodrigo constructs an utterance by a police officer which highlights what would happen in case the video did not exist. That flashback works as a justification for the event’s finale. All things considered, despite the accusations, the narrator did not face the consequences which he should have faced, at least according to the police officer at the station. The story of a hero is thus constructed: Rodrigo is positioned as a hero who not only saves himself, but also his companions, subsumed under the first-person references: “and lots of people who were there ↑ had ↑ to pay ↑ ((inaudible)) and only ↑ because we had the videos ↑ we didn’t have to”.

The interviewer then carries on, by means of evaluative flashbacks, and develops the story he has previously told. Among such flashbacks, we would like to draw attention to one in particular. Besides further constructing the police’s disqualification (i.e., the story’s point), it brings about a few more constructions of *self* elaborated by Rodrigo.

Excerpt 5 (23:27): “It’s torture in front of everybody”

- 350 **Rodrigo** é, e e issso, né, um cara com uma arma↑ mandando você  
 351 esfregar, a sua cara, no chão↑ e: falando que vai enfiar  
 352 uma piroca do tamanho de uma coluna no °seu cu°, isso é  
 353 tortura↑ [é tortura↑  
 354 **Etyelle** [É hh, é tortura, é.]  
 355 **Rodrigo** é tortura na frente de todo [mundo↑  
 356 **Etyelle** [tortura psicológica↑]  
 357 **Rodrigo** apenas eu sou tão, eu sou tão:, talvez esclarecido, e  
 358 estabilizado pra, assim, realmente↑ é: causa um certo  
 359 trauma↑ e os pesadelos, que eu tive com isso, foi, muito.  
 360 é é, isso assim que eu tô falando [>porque a minha< é  
 361 leve↑ porque o cara chega falando ‘não. mete. porrada.’  
 362 IMAGIna ↑  
 363 **Etyelle** =quem apanhou. °né°,  
 364 **Rodrigo** quem, quem é pior, sabe, quem, é: >muito bizarro<

In Excerpt 5, the linguistic-discursive choices made by the narrator highlight the police’s lack of control (lines 350 to 353). The police’s approach is evaluated by Rodrigo as “torture”. At this point, the interviewer co-constructs such a meaning and complements his turn (line 356). The centrality of such excesses for both Rodrigo and his interviewer – who is also a demonstrator – adds to our understanding of why police repression would have worked as a form of moral shock (line 359) in the context of the demonstrations.

Police violence generates not only indignation; it produces trauma, and, in truth, the will to keep fighting. In view of identities’ contradictory and mutable character (BAUMAN, 2005; MOITA LOPES, 2001), it is noteworthy that Rodrigo presents himself as crafty and well-balanced, but admits that what he experienced caused him some trauma and even brought about a series of nightmares. Rodrigo also empathizes with those who had to endure greater hardships, i.e., those who became victims of physical aggression. In many cases, unrestrained behavior on the police’s part includes physical violence. That reaction is co-constructed in lines 362 to 364.

In our analysis of this narrative, we have tried to accentuate the fact that Rodrigo’s identity constructions project himself under favorable light, as an experienced demonstrator, a hero, a level-headed and astute individual, whereas police officers are constructed as corrupt (for presenting fake evidence at the police station) and violent (on account of aggressive language and actual threats). Such constructions are given shape as the narrator develops his account of his own detainment. Central to our analysis is the idea that police repression becomes part of the narrative as a form of trauma and moral shock (JASPER, 1997), which justifies street activism and propels people to partake in it.

## 6 FINAL REMARKS

Our study has attempted to enrich the contemporary understanding of popular demonstrations from a discursive perspective. The June 2013 demonstrations, and, more specifically, the narratives elaborated by those who participated in it, are the microcosm upon which our study is grounded. Looking at such demonstrations narratively has allowed us to understand how protesters organize their experiences, attributing meaning to them and constructing relationships with others and with the world around them.

The results of the interpretive analysis of our data suggest that protesters choose to narrate experiences involving police repression in demonstrations. That movement is, indeed, also triggered by how our interviewer-protester chooses to formulate her interview questions. In their stories, participants put together favorable images of themselves. Positive attributes, such as courage and engagement, are sustained in face of the alterity represented by police forces. Rodrigo, for instance, performs such a feat by disqualifying police actions and presenting himself as a peaceful, street-smart and brave protester. Elaine, on the other hand, gives emphasis to an episode which she regards as “the worst day of repression” in order to construct herself as a demonstrator who remains on the streets despite violence, as a heroine. In a complementary manner, the two interviewees ascribe meaning to the police by making use of the us (protesters) x them (police officers) dichotomy. Accordingly, police officers are constructed as the “other”, as violent antagonists, whereas protesters are projected as peaceful individuals. In the two interviews, there are also attempts by protesters to align themselves and empathize with the “larger” population, on whose side they are discursively positioned. Given the relevance which both participants see in police repression, we understand that demonstrators themselves, including the interviewer, tend to comprehend it as a moral shock (JASPER, 1997) – as an element of paramount importance to the movement’s cohesion, and to the production of dissatisfaction beyond the mere issue of public transportation fares.

At last, we would like to emphasize, however briefly, a macro-sociological implication derived from the results of our micro-analysis. Our data suggests that police repression, often seen as a structural problem, was constructed and reproduced in our participants’ narratives; and always in terms of an opposition between the police (who protect the interests of the State and of a dominant class, instead of applying themselves to protecting the population) and the people. Such an understanding of the police force as a State apparatus is compatible with Castells’ (2013) idea of the crisis of representativity. When the State is understood to be guided by interests other than those of the population, a gap between those who represent and those who are represented opens up. Such a distance is richly exemplified in both Elaine’s and Rodrigo’s narratives, and seems key to comprehending how groups such as the ones they belong choose to do politics in contemporary times.

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