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Collective identity in favelas Rocinha and Maré and the use of narratives and community journals in its construction: perceptions of community writers and journalists

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Master in Psychology of Intercultural Relations

Supervisor:  
PhD, Joana Dias Alexandre, Assistant Professor at  
ISCTE- Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

October, 2023



CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS  
E HUMANAS

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Department of Social and Organizational Psychology

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*This thesis is dedicated to all favelas in Rio de Janeiro and all the people who see the beauty in them  
and fight for better lives of favela residents.*



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## Resumo

Este estudo investigou o processo de construção da identidade coletiva nas favelas da Rocinha e Maré (Rio de Janeiro, Brasil), identificando também os fatores que contribuem para o seu fortalecimento e suas expressões em formas de ação coletiva. Além disso, o estudo buscou examinar o significado potencial das narrativas e dos jornais comunitários nesses processos dinâmicos. Para o efeito, foram conduzidas nove entrevistas individuais, semiestruturadas, com moradores das duas favelas. O grupo alvo eram escritores ou jornalistas, pois estão diretamente envolvidos na criação das narrativas. Adotando uma abordagem fenomenológica, esta análise temática dos dados indica que a identidade coletiva nas favelas pode ser interpretada como um recurso valioso, desempenhando um papel fundamental na promoção da ação coletiva. De notável importância foram os papéis desempenhados pela memória coletiva e pelos esforços de organizações não-governamentais (ONGs) na construção da identidade coletiva. Este estudo enfatizou o papel integral da educação como um elemento facilitador no empoderamento dos membros da comunidade. Além disso, o estudo mostrou que as narrativas e os jornais comunitários são elementos cruciais no processo da construção da identidade coletiva, pois desempenham um papel significativo na criação de um senso de pertencimento, no fortalecimento da comunidade, na preservação da memória coletiva, na construção de conexões entre os residentes e na mobilização da comunidade para defender seus direitos.

**Palavras-chave:** Favelas, identidade coletiva, identidade comunitária, identidade cultural, ação coletiva.

Categorias de classificação PsycINFO:

3000- Psicologia Social

3020- Processos Grupais e Interpessoais

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the process of the construction of collective identity within favelas of Rocinha and Maré (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), along with identifying the factors that contribute to its strengthening and its expressions in forms of collective action. Additionally, the study also aimed to examine the potential significance of narratives and community journals in these dynamic processes. For this purpose, nine individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with residents of the two favelas. The target group were writers or journalists, as they are actively involved in the process of creating narratives. Adopting a phenomenological approach, this thematic analysis of the data indicates that collective identity within favelas can be interpreted as a valuable resource, playing fundamental role in driving collective action. Of notable significance were the roles played by collective memory and the efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in collective identity construction. This study emphasized the integral role of education as a facilitative element in empowering the community's members. Furthermore, this study showed that narratives and community journals are crucial elements in the process of construction of collective identity, as they play a significant role in creating a sense of belonging, empowering the community, preserving collective memory, building connections among residents, and mobilizing the community to advocate for their rights.

**Key words: Favelas, collective identity, community identity, cultural identity, collective action.**

PsycINFO Classification Categories:

3000- Social Psychology

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## Table of contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Resumo</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Social and historical characterization of favelas</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 <i>Brief history of favelas</i> .....	1
1.1.1 Before 1900s.....	1
1.1.2 1900s-1950s .....	2
1.1.3 1950s-present time.....	2
<b>Chapter 2. Stigmatization and its impact: the example of favelas</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1 <i>Intergroup relations in urban contexts</i> .....	4
2.1.1 Majority and minority groups, discrimination and oppression.....	4
2.1.2 Stereotypes, prejudice and stigmatization.....	5
2.2 <i>Stereotypes about favelas and their historical transformation</i> .....	6
2.3 <i>The impact of stigmatization and exclusion of favelas</i> .....	7
2.3.1. Police operations in favelas of Rio de Janeiro and “necropolitics”.....	7
2.3.2. Discrimination in terms of limited access to work opportunities .....	8
2.3.3. Barriers in access to quality education.....	9
2.3.4 Human rights violation.....	10
2.3.5. Detrimental impact on mental and physical health .....	10
2.3.6. Cultural oppression.....	11
<b>Chapter 3. Collective identity, cultural identity, and community identity</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1 <i>How collective identity is constructed</i> .....	13
3.1.1 Identity as a dynamic process.....	13
3.1.2 Identity and influence of social and cultural factors.....	14
3.1.3 Identity in connection with power dynamics .....	15
3.2 <i>Components of collective identity and their significance</i> .....	15
3.2.1 Common goals & engagement.....	16
3.2.2 Self-esteem, feeling proud and empowerment .....	17
3.2.3 Sense of belonging, well-being & buffer against stigmatization .....	18
3.2.4 Resistance & fight for rights.....	19
3.2.5 Significance of collective memory .....	19
<b>Chapter 4. The role of narratives in the construction of collective identity and context of favelas in Rio de Janeiro</b> .....	<b>21</b>
4.1 <i>Role of narratives in the construction of identity</i> .....	21
4.2 <i>Narratives in the context of favelas</i> .....	22
4.2.1 Media narratives and their impact on identity .....	22
4.2.2 Community journals and written narratives: some examples in Rocinha and Maré.....	23
4.2.3 Favela museums and preservation of collective memory.....	25
4.3 <i>Culture in the context of favelas</i> .....	25
4.3.1 Resistance in favelas .....	25
4.3.2 Cultural production of favelas .....	26
4.3.2 Case of Rocinha and Maré.....	27
4.4 <i>The goals of this study and research questions</i> .....	28

<b>Chapter 5. Methods</b> .....	<b>29</b>
5.1 Sample.....	29
5.2 Instruments .....	30
5.3 Procedures .....	31
5.3.1 Data collection.....	31
5.3.2 Data analysis.....	32
<b>Chapter 6. Results</b> .....	<b>34</b>
6.1 <i>Base/foundation for collective identity -Shared experience of negative common treatment</i> .....	35
6.1.1 Perceived stereotypes and prejudice against their in-group .....	35
6.1.2 Negative mainstream media representation.....	36
6.1.3 Absence or inefficiency of government .....	37
6.1.4 Experience of oppression and invisibility.....	38
6.2 <i>Base/foundation for collective identity- Sources of positive identification</i> .....	40
6.2.1 Community role models and sources of inspiration .....	40
6.2.2 Collective memory .....	41
6.2.3 Cultural identity.....	42
6.3 <i>Components of collective identity- Affective components</i> .....	44
6.3.1 Sense of belonging.....	44
6.3.2 Affective attachment .....	46
6.4 <i>Components of collective identity- Empowerment components</i> .....	47
6.4.1. Community pride.....	47
6.4.2 Educational background.....	48
6.4.3 Self-esteem and self-agency (collective and individual) .....	50
6.5 <i>Expressions of collective identity- Collective actions of creation</i> .....	51
6.5.1 Importance of collective action in general.....	51
6.5.2 Future directions for public policies.....	52
6.5.3 Community volunteering, participation in projects/NGOs.....	53
6.6 <i>Expressions of collective identity- Actions in form of resistance</i> .....	54
6.6.1 Necessity of resistance and resistance against rights violation .....	55
6.6.2 Fighting disinformation and creating counter-narratives .....	56
6.7 <i>Role of narratives</i> .....	57
6.8 <i>Role of community journals</i> .....	59
<b>Chapter 7. Discussion</b> .....	<b>62</b>
7.1 <i>Limitations of the study</i> .....	69
7.2 <i>Conclusions and directions for future research</i> .....	69
<b>References</b> .....	<b>71</b>
<b>Annex</b> .....	<b>90</b>
A. <i>Interview questions</i> .....	90
Portuguese version .....	90
English translation .....	90
B. <i>Informed consent</i> .....	91

## Introduction

Favelas in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) have received a lot of attention from the media and researchers in the past decades and mostly in a negative way, which contributed to the stereotypical vision of these places (Arias & Rodrigues, 2006; Peixoto, 2007; Valladares, 2009; Rocha, 2010). Research done by “Observatório Mídia” monitored one of the biggest Brazilian newspapers “O Globo”, “Extra” and “Meia-hora” daily for six months and the results showed that only 12% of the content regarding favelas was focused on positive or neutral topics such as culture, entertainment, social projects, and sports; while the rest focused on negative aspects as violence, criminality, drugs or problems with infrastructure (Silva & Araujo, 2012). Another research done by NGO “Catalytic Communities” analyzed content of 8 media vehicles based outside of Brazil and found out that 46% of analyzed articles mentioned negative things such as violence or drugs and only 7% mentioned positive aspects such as culture (Comunidades Catalisadoras, 2016).

Social identity theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals' self-concept is shaped by their group memberships and how these group identities influence their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). According to social identity theory, people strive for a positive social identity, seeking to maintain a positive view of the groups they belong to. When certain group of people are seen in a particular way through lenses of negative stereotypes, they begin to internalize these stereotypes which can lead further on to various detrimental consequences (Crocker et al., 1991; Steele & Aronson, 1995), such as depression or lowered sense of self-worth (Herek et al., 2009). The negative stereotypical image of favelas leads to stigmatization of this population, which affects many areas of their lives in a prejudicial way, for example by limiting their access to work opportunities (Gonçalves & Malfitano, 2020) or in the form of cultural oppression (Garcia & Gil, 2021). It also affects how their social identity is formed and can lead to creation of stigmatized identity (Welter et al., 2021)

Positive sense of identity of favela residents can serve as a buffer and mitigate the effects of discrimination and negative stereotyping (Sellers et al., 2003). Research shown that higher in-group identification predicts better well-being and mental health and can possibly enhance people's self-esteem, promote resilience and foster a sense of belonging (Jetten et al., 2009).

Collective identity, community identity and cultural identity can be all viewed as specific types of social identity and collective identity is used in the context of this study as an over-arching term which is composed of cultural and community identity based on their common characteristics such as shared affective attachment, values, beliefs, shared experience, sense of belonging and collective self-esteem (Sarason, 1974; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Yang et al., 2021; Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023).

Community identity is formed when there is perceived a sense of territorial and socio-cultural distinctiveness between the in-group and out-group and when individuals make personal investments into the community and show commitment and involvement in the community (Puddifoot, 1995). This can be applied to the context of favelas of Rio de Janeiro as there is existent territorial and socio-cultural distinctiveness from the rest of the city (De Luna Freire, 2008) and presence of many projects created by residents which by collective action focus on improvement of living conditions, access to education or leisure (Costa, 2002; Barbosa, 2014; Tommasi, 2016). In favelas, culture is used as a tool of resistance and fight against stereotypes (Lemos, 2018), and a tool for promoting a more positive collective identity.

Community identity together with cultural identity can lead to creation of collective identity in favelas, a type of social identity focused on achievement of common goals. The relevance of research on collective identity of favela residents lies in the potential of collective identity to serve as a mobilization resource (Poletta & Jasper, 2001), which forms subsequent collective action (Richmond, 2015). Favelas deal with a range of problems that are specific for these territories and collective action can serve as a tool to find collective solutions for these problems (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2013).

Language plays an essential role in the construction of identity, as the acts of identity can be seen as communicative actions (Gómez-Estern et al., 2010); therefore it is important to study how narratives can influence the process of construction of collective identity. Despite playing a key role in the construction of collective identity, the study of narratives has not been the focus of much psychological work on collective identity (Ashmore et al., 2004). Community media serve as a key creator of narratives in favelas (Paiva, 2008), and therefore they are also part of the focus of this study in a form of community journals.

Overall, this study aims to explore the creation, strengthening and forms of expression of collective identity in favelas of Rocinha and Maré, and additionally seeks to understand the role of narratives and community journals in shaping and empowering the identities of individuals living in these communities. These specific favelas became the focus of this study, as they are one of the biggest ones in Rio de Janeiro (in the case of Maré a complex of favelas) in terms of population and at the same time they have a rich cultural scene with a strong presence of community media and journals (Cypriano, 2005; Redes da Maré, 2023).

This study has a qualitative character and it adopts phenomenological study approach, trying to understand the subjective experience of participants (Gill, 2020). The aim of this research is to understand the reality that favela residents come from and how different social, cultural and political factors shaped their collective identity.

As for the structure, the thesis comprises eight chapters. The first chapter presents the social and historical characterization of favelas to understand their specificity. In the second chapter, theoretical background of intergroup relationships, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and stigmatization is described and the impact of stigmatization of favelas and their residents is discussed within the context of favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The third chapter delves into collective identity, community identity and cultural identity, describing the theory behind them besides examining the importance of collective identity as well. Role of narratives in creation of collective identity is considered in the fourth chapter together with the context of favelas in Rio de Janeiro in terms of their culture and presentation of Rocinha and Maré is also included there. In the fifth chapter methods including sample, instruments and procedure description are presented. The sixth chapter analyzes the results of the study and the final seventh chapter is comprised of the discussion.





# Chapter 1. Social and historical characterization of favelas

## 1.1 Brief history of favelas

The term “favela” usually refers to irregular, low-rise, and high-density settlements that originated in the past century in Rio de Janeiro, although they can be also found in other parts of the country. According to Santos (2018), these settlements are the product of the unequal development of cities. The significant labor force required during the construction of the city in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries led to mass migration and a demand for housing to accommodate these workers. Favelas have been viewed as a problem for governments and the society since their inception and they have undergone processes of demolition, eradication, regularization, and pacification as governmental efforts to address their existence (Campos, 2005).

### 1.1.1 Before 1900s

After the abolition of slavery in 1888, Brazil underwent rapid transformations that altered its social, economic, political, and cultural structure (Beserra & Lavergne, 2018). Although the abolition was intended to improve conditions for former slaves, it left them jobless and without means to sustain themselves. In the Northeast and other primarily rural regions of Brazil, poverty was rampant during this period.

The city of Rio de Janeiro, the capital at that time, was expanding fast due to industrialization and because of that experienced a rapid urbanization process when ex-slaves and migrants from other parts of the country, mainly from the Northeast, came to the city that offered many labor opportunities, but limited housing options at that time (Silva, 2010). This dynamic created a socially stratified urban structure, segregating different areas of the city.

During this period, and before the inception of favelas, people lived in “cortiços”, apartment complexes that housed a large number of residents. These cortiços often lacked proper infrastructure, sanitation, and basic services (Vaz, 1994). The residents of cortiços faced challenging living conditions, including inadequate ventilation, poor hygiene, and limited access to clean water. Due to the spread of diseases in cortiços, there was a decision made to demolish them and prohibit construction of new ones in the period of “*ideology of hygiene*”, as described by Valladares (2000). This provided a base for creation of what is nowadays known as favelas.

### **1.1.2 1900s-1950s**

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, soldiers who had fought in the War of Canudos<sup>1</sup> in the state of Bahia arrived in Rio where they waited to be paid the rest of their wages from the government. They settled in Morro da Providência (or Morro da Favela as it was originally called), which was considered the first favela constructed in Rio de Janeiro in 1897 (Vaz, 1994). Based on the new city housing regulations established in 1903, any house or building constructed needed to fulfill some technical requirements, both in the center and suburban areas.

This made the construction of housing for working class too expensive, and they were expelled to hills in the proximity of the city centre. After that, favelas were constructed around central part of the city and the Southern Zone (Zona Sul), where more affluent residents had moved, creating a demand for workers to construct housing in newly established neighbourhoods like Ipanema, Leblon, and Gávea (Silva, 2010).

In the 1930s Rio de Janeiro witnessed what Valladares (2019) termed the “favelization” of the city. It was only at the end of the 1930s (1937) that construction regulations, known as “Building Code”, were established for favelas. During the 1940s, according to the literature, residents of favelas had no space and power to express their opinion regarding housing policies because in those times, many people in favelas were illiterate and this made it impossible for them to vote and to be more involved in the measures settled (Comelli, 2021).

### **1.1.3 1950s-present time**

The years between 1950 to 1960 were marked by the uncontrolled expansion of favelas (Valladares, 2019). However, with the beginning of the military dictatorship in 1964 in Brazil, the policies of elimination and removal of favelas emerged and lasted until the 1970s. Despite evicting over 100 000 favela residents and demolishing 62 favelas in 1970s, the city still struggled to provide adequate housing for those displaced or migrating to the city (Perlman, 2010). This made the government realize that policy of eradication was not proven as successful, as Perlman suggests (2010).

With rising prices of housing in Rio, many lower-middle-income families chose favelas as an alternative cheaper option of housing, while migrants continued to move into the city constructing more favelas, although at a lower rate than before (O’Hare & Barke, 2002). After the return of democracy in 1985, the urbanization process of favelas started (Valladares, 2019): interventions that facilitated access to basic services such as water, electricity, sewage, lighting, and garbage collection

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<sup>1</sup> The War of Canudos was a violent conflict in late 19th-century, where the government forces suppressed a religiously inspired peasant settlement in Canudos, resulting in the destruction of the community and the deaths of thousands of its inhabitants (Johnson, 2021).

commenced (Rocha, 2010). However, by this time, favelas had been taken over by gangs who took advantage of these territories due to the absence of state or police presence, as state governor Leonel Brizola forbade police to enter favelas in 1985 (Perlman, 2010). When the police returned to favelas, they started to implement police operations with the aim to capture drug traffickers hiding in favelas, which continues to this day.

Over the past decades, various public policies such as Favela Bairro, Morar Carioca, Rio Mais Social Program, Police Pacification Units (UPPs) and Program of Urban Acceleration (PAC) have been implemented with the aim of improving living conditions and social inclusion in favelas. With international events that Rio hosted such as Pan American Games (2007), FIFA World Cup (2014), Olympic Games (2016) and Paralympic Games (2016), the security of visitors was considered a priority (McGillivray, Duignan, & Mielke, 2019). As part of that, the city returned to the practice of eviction in the case of some favelas and upgrade in some other cases. During the Olympics, many community-led initiatives tried to use to spotlight of this event to raise awareness about the social problems in favelas. In the past two decades, many NGOs and projects inside favelas were created to find solutions for different social issues that favelas are facing nowadays (Tommasi, 2018). The current policies focus mainly on the question of public security and the “war on drugs”, where police military forces operate in favelas with the objective to capture drugs, weapons, and the drug traffickers (Barbosa et al., 2020).

In summary, favelas are part of the rapid growth of the city of Rio de Janeiro and represent one of the challenging outcomes of urbanization in the 21st century (Tacoli et al., 2015). Internal migration and immigration contribute to urbanization worldwide, with particularly high rates in Africa (Turok, 2014), Asia (United Nations, 2013) and Latin America. The estimated one billion people living in favelas and squatter settlements today suggests the pressing nature of this issue (United Nations Development Programme, 2005). Living in informal settlements correlates with poverty (Tacoli et al., 2015), and Amaral (2020) pointed to the fact that urban dwellers lack influence over interventions targeting poverty’s description, assessment, and action.

## **Chapter 2. Stigmatization and its impact: the example of favelas**

### **2.1 Intergroup relations in urban contexts**

Cities are places of constant interactions which form a base for the establishment of different social units, representing various groups of people within the urban setting. Based on the Theory of Social Identity (Tajfel, 1975; Tajfel & Turner, 1985), there exists a process of categorization of one's "in-group" being contrasted with an "out-group". Since these groups are organized around some characteristic that people share, differences become the fundamental part of this process of categorization. Festinger (1954) in his Social Comparison Theory proposed that individuals have a natural tendency to evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities, opinions and behaviors to those of others. People engage in this social comparison to establish their social identity and reduce uncertainty in various social situations. Additionally, Social Identity Theory postulates that there is a tendency to view one's own group with a positive bias vis-à-vis the out-group, alongside a tendency to perceive out-group members as more homogeneous than those within the in-group, consequently leading to generalizations and perceiving all out-group members as uniform (Quattrone & Jones, 1980). In the context of Rio de Janeiro, a distinct division exists between "morro<sup>2</sup>" (representing favelas) and "asfalto<sup>3</sup>" (representing the rest of the city), as these two groups of citizens are often called (Saaristo, 2016).

#### **2.1.1 Majority and minority groups, discrimination and oppression**

Society creates certain standards of normality based on majority groups and everything that overpasses those limits of normality is treated as inadequate and viewed through negative biases and absence, based on the original theory of Foucault (1979). There are unwritten implicit social rules formed by relations of power and this is how societies are organized. Majority groups in the society not only label others as different, but they also position them as socially inferior. The majority in society wants cooperation and agreement, viewing the minority as deviants, setting the norm for what is considered desired and normal and in that way legitimation of inequality is created, according to Nemeth (1985). This refers to justifying, defending and maintaining the current status quo of social inequality and the existing hierarchies in the society (Costa-Lopes et al., 2013).

Overall, powerful groups, as described by Tajfel and Turner (1985), and more recently also outlined by Link and Phelan (2001), identify and categorize individuals based on their differences and actively engage in acts of disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination against those deemed

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<sup>2</sup> Hill (translated from Portuguese)

<sup>3</sup> Asphalt (translated from Portuguese)

socially inferior. Tajfel and Turner (1985) found out in their original study that the mere perception of belonging into two distinct groups is enough to trigger intergroup discrimination. Discrimination in the present context encompasses actions, policies, practices, or societal systems that establish, perpetuate, or strengthen advantages for certain groups and their individuals while disadvantaging other groups and their members (see also Dovidio & Iker, 2019).

The migration of people living in rural poverty to cities creates urban poverty and unequal conditions for the people living in cities (Awumbila, 2015). Since the growth of Rio de Janeiro was influenced by strong migration flow and happened in an unequal way, this was mirrored on the creation of strong hierarchization and stratification of different social classes (Campos, 2005). The powerful groups in the city were composed of the wealthy landowners, industrialists and the governing elite in an opposition to the working class that came to the city to construct spaces for them.

Therefore, despite all citizens having the same formal rights, the access to them and their exercise differed among distinct social classes, a disparity enduring until this century (Vieira, 2007). Hence, as Saaristo (2016) suggests, we can talk about oppression that residents of favelas have been experiencing, struggling to attain their full citizenship.

### **2.1.2 Stereotypes, prejudice and stigmatization**

As people compare themselves to others, they create various representations of them. Social representations are collective cognitions about the social world aiming to establish an order that enables individuals to navigate in the social world and it also enables people to classify others (Moscovici, 1988). One form of such representations are stereotypes, which are simplified and generalized beliefs or impressions about a group of people that are widely held and often oversimplified (Allport, 1954). Based on stereotypes, people form various emotionally charged attitudes towards others, which are defined as prejudice.

Since people tend to prefer their own in-group, this can lead to the negative evaluation of out-group in favor of their in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). The negative stereotypes or in other words negative expectations about the out-group (Stephan & Stephan, 1996), can sometimes reach an extreme form of dehumanization, where people are denied their humanness as they are not seen as individuals with human cognitive capacities and emotions but sometimes merely as nothing more than an animal based on the categorization (Haslam, 2015; Vaes et al., 2020).

It is important to distinguish negative stereotypes from stigmatization: the difference lies in the fact that stigma depends on power and in this way it is different from negative stereotypes (Link & Phelan, 2001), because powerful groups can impact the lives of the ones that are stigmatized in various ways, for example limit their access to the same opportunities as the powerful groups have or limit

their participation in decision making processes (Ugiagbe & Eweka, 2014). In that way, people in favelas are not only viewed in a negative way, but also being stigmatized (Brum, 2011).

## **2.2 Stereotypes about favelas and their historical transformation**

The labels that favelas and their residents have received since the beginning of their existence were predominantly negative, connected to the perception of favelas as a “problem” by the majority social groups in the city (Magalhães,2019). This led to the creation of many negative stereotypes, prejudice and stigmatization of the people who live in favelas, besides seeing them as a homogenous place in the eyes of public, putting all the existent favelas with their peculiarities and diversity under one umbrella term “favela”, disregarding the diverse characteristics and variations that exist among different favelas (Valladares, 2009). This phenomenon highlights the formerly discussed inclination toward homogenization of the out-group.

As previously mentioned, people who began to construct favelas were the same people who were displaced from the previous housing structures, “cortiços”. Those were already seen as threats to societal and moral order; place full of crime, disease, and dirt (Vaz, 1994). As pointed out by Souza e Silva (2002), during Brazil’s journey towards modernity, favelas were seen as something that was the opposite of civilization; favela inhabitants were perceived as “uncivilized savages” living in places of complete chaos, disorder, and lack of proper structure. In some studies, it was found that favela inhabitants were seen as an “aesthetic leprosy” (Valladares, 2019, p. 111): they were compared to highly contagious disease, a social pathology that needs to be combated (Rocha, 2017).

The inhabitants of favelas were considered criminals who chose to live there in those precarious conditions and most of these population was black, which led to spread of racially prejudiced way of thinking such as the black people live in favelas because they poor intellect doesn’t provide them with more options (Rocha, 2017). Criminalization of the poor, which traps people in violence of others which they did not took part in (Barros, Frej & Melo,2017), is present often in the context of favelas of Rio de Janeiro (Coimbra, 2006). The takeover of favelas by gangs made already stigmatized residents in favelas be labeled as “dangerous class” (Coimbra, 2001). This narrative served to be used for justification of many interventions of the government, such as removal of favelas, building walls separating them from the rest of the city or police armed operations. Since government decided to mark their presence with military troops and machine guns in favelas, criminalization of victim became common strategy of construction of supposed violent enemy, which delimits those who would otherwise be innocent victims; a death which is justified just because the victim was closer to traffickers for example (Souza, 2020).

One thing that connects most of the negative stereotypes about favelas is the “notion of absence” (Souza e Silva, 2002, p.4). Seeing favelas as places of absence, be it an absence of proper living conditions, opportunities, education or resources, leads to creation of stereotypes about the people as the ones always lacking things, according to the same author. The danger of this kind of stereotype is that when we see the people just as those lacking something, we assume that about their whole personality, therefore we do not admit the thought of inhabitants of favelas as also people who can have something; be it talents, ambitions, or dreams.

According to Kumar (2016), there is a perception that individuals living in poverty lack certain mental abilities or capacities. This view suggests that the poor are seen as having a limited inner life, devoid of desires, thoughts, intellect, or capabilities. When the society denies these basic human characteristics to people of favelas and sees them as the enemy or the problem of public security, it dehumanizes them.

### **2.3 The impact of stigmatization and exclusion of favelas**

Residential segregation, as argued by Gorbunova et al. (2015), is widely perceived to have detrimental effects in terms of individual and social outcomes. This includes the lack of access to schooling and healthcare, differences in crime rates, educational attainment, school drop-out rates, as well as its impact on access to social networks and occupational opportunities. On top of that, it results in the emergence of cognitive social representations that guide behavior towards individuals living in certain neighborhoods. For example, this can manifest as distrustful behavior or creating distance towards them (Gorbunova et al., 2015). These individuals often become invisible due to this social exclusion. When individuals are not seen, the likelihood of achieving a shift in their situation that would promote productive inclusion becomes low. Poverty is not just an economical condition; it is also a social condition. Exclusion occurs on various levels, including cognitive, institutional, and interpersonal exclusion (Abrams et al., 2007). All these labelling and process of stigmatization affects almost every aspect of lives of favela residents, as shown in the following sections:

#### **2.3.1. Police operations in favelas of Rio de Janeiro and “necropolitics”**

According to Da Silva and Menezes (2019), military troops enter favelas with armed police vehicles known as “caveirões”, which resemble war tanks and are used to assert force and control during police operations. According to the same authors, the police adopt a “politics of extermination”, where the death of drug traffickers is not only tolerated but also desired and rewarded. Additional deaths are justified in terms of the war on drugs and the fight for a “safer” city. The main victims of these shootings are predominantly young black men suspected of involvement in gang activity. This phenomenon is

known as racial shooter bias, as described by Kahn and McMahon (2015). Racial shooter bias is not observed only in Brazil but also in the United States, where black African Americans are at a higher risk of being shot than white Americans, as found out by Mekawi et al. (2019) and even more recently by Stelter et al. (2023). Deaths of these people might be legitimized in the eyes of the public if they are considered criminals, as it was found out that the information released about the victim significantly influences attitudes of the public (Dukes & Gaither, 2017).

During police operations in favelas, deaths also occur by “stray bullets” fired during the shootings. According to a recent report from *Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública*, there were 61 deaths of children and adolescents due to police interventions in Rio de Janeiro in the past year (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2022).

According to Ramos and Paiva (2007), naming this conflict between the state and drug traffickers as a war and allocating connotation of favelas as “war territory” and the “territory of enemy” makes people from the rest of the city perceive this territory as something to be attacked or occupied and the people there are seen as somebody who should be eliminated as an enemy. By assuming that some individuals are inherently violent, complex sociocultural factors are naturalized, diverting attention from the real causes, and leading to the devaluation of their lives. According to Mbembe (2003), Brazil, especially in the case of Rio de Janeiro, is adopting at an increasing rate “necropolitics”, which involves the manipulation and regulation of death and mortality as a form of political power and control over populations. This creates and manages conditions resulting in the premature death and suffering of certain groups of people (Mbembe, 2003), in this case young black men from favelas.

### **2.3.2. Discrimination in terms of limited access to work opportunities**

Due to the perception of people from favelas as being dangerous, a general suspicion and distrust have risen among city residents, making them hesitant to employ individuals from favelas to work in their shops or houses. According to a study conducted by Instituto Data Popular in 2015, 47% of “asphalt” residents stated that they wouldn’t hire someone from a favela to work in their homes, although there has been a notable shift in this attitude in recent years (Rocha, 2017).

Employers are also hesitant to give people from favelas jobs as they might often not make it to work if there are police operations, trying to avoid such complications (Perlman, 2010). The fear of job loss might push individuals to risk being caught in gunfire by attempting to work during ongoing police operations. In the past, many people resorted to providing false addresses when applying for jobs to avoid discrimination.

Moreover, a significant income disparity exists between favela residents and “asphalt” residents. A study conducted by Ribeiro in 2002 showed that men in favelas earn 35% less than their counterparts



in other parts of the city, and this disparity increases to 50% less in the case of black men residing in favelas. These socio-spatial income inequalities can be observed also in other contexts, as highlighted by Carmo and Carvalho (2013) in the case of Lisbon, Portugal. Their research demonstrated the correlation between different parts of the city and varying income levels.

### **2.3.3. Barriers in access to quality education**

According to Leeds (2007), the quality of education in Brazil has declined over the last decades. Consequently, students often opt for private high schools instead of public ones to receive a quality education and prepare for the standardized entrance exam for universities, ENEM. However, favela residents can rarely afford these private schools. An illustrative example lies in the disparities between the neighborhood of Bonsucesso and the complex of favelas Maré, which are separated by just one street. Socio-economic status is the main variable affecting this (Santos, 2018). The basic education often fails to relate to the social context of children from favelas, contributing to high drop-out rates. Child labor reaches 50% in some favelas of Rio de Janeiro, which prevents children from attending school as they must contribute to their families' income (Souza e Silva & Urani, 2002).

Contrary to the notion that aspirations of young people from favelas significantly differ from their counterparts in the city, a study conducted by Santos (2018) suggests otherwise. Interviews with young people from Maré found out that their life aspirations vary as much as from people outside of favelas. There is also a heterogeneity of perspectives of those who share the same socio-economic origin- some of them think that school can help them earn better and find job more easily, while others are unconvinced about this (Silva & Leme, 2019).

Many times, people in favelas lack role models who studied at universities and could provide some assistance for them. Additionally, there is a narrative shared by favela residents that poor person shouldn't try to dream and should try to be realistic about their future, therefore many of them do not consider going to the university as part of their life plans, as they think it's not an option for them. Not only are these students not supported by their teachers, but many times they are even discouraged, hearing things such as: "you are not going to become anything, you won't get anywhere in life" (Silva & Leme, 2019).

Furthermore, stereotype threat might pose an additional barrier to accessing quality education for favela youth. This phenomenon involves anxiety or apprehension among individuals from a particular social group about confirming negative stereotypes associated with their group (Steele, 1997; Pennington et al., 2016). Consequently, students from favelas might perform worse on some standardized exams because they feel to be at risk of confirming to stereotypes about people from favelas as uneducated, which is widely spread negative stereotype about them.

#### **2.3.4 Human rights violation**

The distribution of human rights is claimed to be universal, yet there are many oppressed groups whose members don't have even their basic human rights guaranteed (Pande & Jha, 2016). Residents of favelas lack necessary representation in the field of democratic debate, and their complaints are mostly overlooked and ignored (Amaral, 2020). We can talk here about poverty of voice, which is the inability of people to influence decisions that affect their lives and their right to participate in the decision-making process.

In addition to human rights violations during the police operations mentioned in the previous section, and stressed by Canineu (2019), other rights are also frequently violated. One of them is the right to basic sanitation, drinking water and electricity. Favelas often lack proper infrastructure or possess precarious infrastructure. There are more than 13 million irregular urban households that do not have basic urban infrastructure in Brazil (Pinheiro de Miranda & Cavalcanti e Silva Filho, 2023). They supply of water and sewage are the basic requirements to guarantee dignified living. The lack of those results in many problems connected to public health and environmental issues. It is estimated that around 100 million people in Brazil don't have access to sewage collection, leading to a higher risk of infection and death (Pinheiro de Miranda & Cavalcanti e Silva Filho, 2023).

The right to public health services is also compromised, and favela residents have more difficult access to health care compared to other residents of the city. This results in various problems, such as cases of women dying in childbirth because they didn't receive proper healthcare (Souza, 2020) or a high rate of diseases like dengue or tuberculosis in many favelas of Rio de Janeiro (De Souza Porto et al., 2015).

#### **2.3.5. Detrimental impact on mental and physical health**

The impact of the life conditions in favelas and the social exclusion on the mental and physical health of favela residents is immense. The repercussions of police operations and violence are undoubtedly the highest risk factors for mental health deterioration as people need to live in chronic stress conditions, which have detrimental effect not only on their mental but also physical health.

A study conducted by NGO Redes da Maré between 2018 and 2020 in the favela of Maré (2020) revealed that 44% of respondents suffer mental health problems connected to the shootings in the territory, and 29% of them report physical health problems. Besides constant fear, people also often receive dehumanizing treatment that takes away their feelings of self-worth and leads them many times to lose trust in themselves and in the world in general (Medina, 2013).

When people are excluded from a group, they lose psychological and material benefits associated with membership such as access to resources. This is connected to a reduction in self-efficacy and self-

esteem that follows social exclusion. This can undermine perceptions of control, which can then trigger negative emotions such as anger and feelings of uncertainty and frustration (Abrams, Christian, & Gordon, 2007). People suffer mental pain because of humiliation, disdain and indifference when they are excluded, and this pain is often perceived at least as painful as physical pain.

### **2.3.6. Cultural oppression**

Besides guaranteeing basic human rights, there is also an importance of guaranteeing cultural rights to individuals, which makes it possible for people to perform their will, and through them, they can attain freedom of expression (Pande & Jha, 2016).

An example of the attempt of cultural restriction and oppression in favelas can be related to funk music. Brazilian funk is a very popular musical style with the main presence and creation in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and sharing the sound of funk is strongly a community experience (Medrado & da Silva Souza, 2016; Sneed, 2019). Despite funk being recognized by law as a form of cultural expression, there were various attempts to prohibit funk (Medrado & da Silva Souza, 2016). During the military occupation of complex of favelas of Maré from April 2014 to July 2015, there was a prohibition of “baile funks”<sup>4</sup>, which didn’t last for too long as people started organizing them again after a while, showing cultural resistance, according to the same authors.

This also has an impact on the cultural producers such as MCs (Master of Ceremony) and DJs who work in the music industry and are often accused of association with drug trafficking (Garcia & Gil, 2021). One such case was Baile da Gaiola, the former biggest baile funk in Rio de Janeiro, where the well-known DJ Rennan da Penha was accused of association with drug trafficking and sent to jail. He was then proven innocent and set free, however this illustrates as an example of the association of funk music with gang activity.

Garcia and Gil (2021) state that “the criminalization of funk can affect an entire favela population, since artists are accused and arrested for expressing sociability experienced within the favelas in their music. As funk, among poor children and young people, is considered one of the manifestations of their identities, the criminalization of this musical style also becomes the criminalization of these bodies” (p.115).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Brazilian funk parties organized in favelas (Sneed,2019).

<sup>5</sup> Translated from Portuguese: “A criminalização do funk pode afetar toda uma população favelada, uma vez que artistas são acusados e presos por expressarem sociabilidades vividas dentro das favelas em suas músicas. Sendo o funk, entre crianças e jovens pobres, tido como uma das manifestações de suas identidades, a criminalização deste estilo musical se torna também a criminalização desses corpos” (Garcia & Gil, 2021, p.115).

## **Chapter 3. Collective identity, cultural identity, and community identity**

Human beings are strongly embedded in their social context, which in turn influences them in countless ways. From the moment that we are born, we are surrounded by others, and our experience is created mostly by how we relate to the people around us. We make sense of who we are, our identity, through interaction with others, thus creating our social identities. Social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Social identity plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' sense of belonging and shaping their attitudes and behaviors within a social context. Understanding the dynamics of social identity is essential for comprehending the complex interplay between individuals and their social environments, and it offers valuable insights into the processes of identity formation, intergroup relations, and collective action.

It is important to distinguish between personal identity and social identity. Personal identity is typically connected to the attributes of oneself that are perceived, either individually or in combination, as distinctive to one's own self, while social identity is explicitly tied to a social group beyond the individual. Unlike social identity, which is shared with a specific group of individuals, personal identity distinguishes an individual from everyone else (Ashmore et al., 2004). It is about how person is viewed socially, how they are socially defined, so these distinctions are taken into consideration and not individual characteristics (Verkuyten, 2012). We base our sense of identity of who we are in contrast with who we are not, as dos Santos (2011, p.146) expressed it by saying that “without a difference, there is no identity”. Identity makes sense not only as what people are but also what they are not; therefore, identity and difference are inseparable (Silva, 2000).

A type of social identity relevant to this study is collective identity, which will be used as an overarching concept, and its interaction with cultural and community identity will be examined. Collective identity refers to the shared characteristics and sense of belonging that individuals have with a particular group or community, distinguishing collective identity from other types of identity by its orientation on common shared goals and collective action (Snow, 2001; Snow & Carrigall-Brown, 2015; Davis et al., 2019). Collective identity plays a crucial role in the mobilization of people, forms a key element in social movements (Polletta & Jasper, 2001) and emerges often in conditions of political or socioeconomic exclusion (Snow, 2001).

Cultural identity can be viewed as a subset of collective identity and social identity (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023). According to Yang, Zhao, and Liu (2021), “culture itself has an 'identity' because culture has a common source and shares a historical ancestor, with the same historical traces and

cultural experience” (p.178). Cultural identity is an inclusive form of collective identity that encompasses various aspects of an individual's life, including norms, values, behaviors, beliefs, traditions, and symbols, which undergo continuous construction and transformation.

Social embeddedness, in turn, refers to the degree to which an individual's collective identity is embedded in social networks and interpersonal relationships (Ashmore et al., 2004). When social embeddedness is high, most of the person's everyday social connections involve people of the social category in question. With low social embeddedness, the person has few or no regular social contacts and relationships with others of the group. In the context of favelas, the social embeddedness is usually quite high (del Rio et al., 2019). Therefore, the importance of including community identity comes into play.

A community is formed by a group of citizens bonded through geography, interaction, or shared identity (Lee & Newby, 1983). It can be categorized into territorial and relational communities, with membership, influence, integration, fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection being key elements (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Membership in a community provides a sense of belonging and safety, influence is connected to making difference to a group, a common symbol system helps maintain group boundaries and fosters understanding, integration and fulfillment of needs will happen through the resources provided by the group, and shared emotional connection refers to shared history, places, time, and experiences. Additionally, the sense of community is characterized by a perception of similarity, interdependence, willingness to give and receive support, and a sense of being part of a larger dependable structure (Sarason, 1974).

These identities overlap and interact in the context of favelas. Cultural identity, which shapes individuals' perceptions and understanding of the world and leads to positive identification with the in-group, plays a significant role in the formation and maintenance of collective identity (Yang, Zhao, & Liu, 2021). At the same time, community identity contributes to the collective identity by fostering a sense of belonging, shared experiences, and social support within the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Sarason, 1974). Understanding these subgroups of collective identity sheds light on the construction and maintenance of collective identity and contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex social dynamics of communities.

### **3.1 How collective identity is constructed**

#### **3.1.1 Identity as a dynamic process**

Nowadays, individuals are increasingly encouraged to take an active role in their identity formation, compared to pre-modern societies when identity was ascribed (Côté, 1996; Hall, 2006). Identity took

on a new dimension in modern times in the process of globalization. In the past, identity was something more stable; nowadays, in the era of postmodernity, it is defined by constant change.

Hall (2006) emphasizes the fluidity of identities, challenging the notion of fixed and essential identities. Although fixation is a tendency, it also becomes an impossibility – we try to stabilize and fix identity, but at the same time, other processes try to destabilize it and subvert it (dos Santos, 2011). Identity is not something that a person discovers; it is something that is created during our lives. The creation of identity now is a complex interplay between individual experiences, social structures, and cultural representations. Considering identity as something changeable is the underlying assumption behind this study, as it suggests that identity can change and can be created by people themselves.

### **3.1.2 Identity and influence of social and cultural factors**

Identity is created through social interaction, mediated by cultural tools (symbols, myths, social languages), and it is situated (Gómez-Estern et al., 2010). That means that to understand it, we must understand the social setting in which it takes place. Each interaction with others has the power to shape and transform our identity. As Jackson and Hogg (2010) suggest, personal identity evolves with every new social encounter as individuals reflect on these experiences and make decisions about which values, virtues, and characteristics to embrace or reject. Although many of our values may operate at an unconscious level and have been shaped by various social and cultural factors throughout our lives, we ultimately have agency in accepting or rejecting these values.

The dynamics of identity is accompanied by the evolution of culture, and cultural factors mold and shape identity, which is the explicit and personified expression of culture (Pande & Jha, 2016). Culture is present in our everyday life, in everything we do, behind our way of functioning through day, the use of some specific technology; everybody is affected and shaped by culture (Rogoff, 2003). Pande and Jha (2016, p.354) propose that “what culture propounds in theory, the identity performs in action.” Identity is an action that defines a person’s belonging to a group and in this action, people create new definitions of who they are. Viewing identity as an action suggests perceiving it as a fluid concept that can vary across different activities. The differences depend on how different cultural tools, goals, and situations work together and coordinate with each other (Gómez-Estern et al., 2010). Thus, identity has the potential to undergo transformations depending on the specific activities undertaken and the cultural tools used in those contexts.

Culture is socially transferred, and participants behave in a manner acceptable and comprehensible to one another, which is guaranteed by existent patterns of behavior in culture and by shared collective experiences (Delpechitre, Duleep, & Baker, 2017). The relationship between

culture and people is bidirectional; culture influences people, but people also influence culture (Albert & Trommsdorff, 2014). Culture makes identity durable and transcends it in different contexts.

### **3.1.3 Identity in connection with power dynamics**

Issues of dominance and oppression have already been outlined in the previous chapter, and in this section, its connection and impact on social identity will be presented. Social and group memberships are embedded within the historical, social, economic, and political context, and these contexts are shaped by structures of social, economic, and political power (Sue, 2016). Where there is a difference in society, there is a certain type of power present too, and it is reflected in the process of inclusion and exclusion, defining frontiers, classification, and normalization. What is normal is chosen arbitrarily and it works on the principle of hierarchization (Silva, 2000). Dos Santos (2011) asserts that more important than asking what cultural identity is, is to question how it is created and how it is connected to ideologies, power, and representations.

Hall (2006) explores the role of power, politics, and historical context in shaping cultural identities and highlights the significance of representation and discourse in the construction of meaning. By being in power, certain groups can make rules and therefore influence identity of other groups (Liebkind, 1989). Identity as well as difference are social relations, which means that they are not simply defined but are imposed (Silva, 2000).

In Dos Santos' analysis (2011), various identity construction processes are distinguished. Legitimation-Domination involves cultural identity formation by dominant institutions to legitimize their control over others, often leading to the denial of resources for marginalized groups. In contrast, Resistance-Liberation seeks to transform the conditions of the oppressed, using identity affirmation as a resistance strategy. Change-Transformation highlights identities as historically, socially, and culturally constructed entities, remaining adaptable and dynamic over time, capable of continuous construction and reconstruction.

What could be applied to the context of this study are the mechanisms of resistance-liberation and change-transformation, as collective identity of favela residents is a form of resistance against conditions of domination and it is continuously constructed and reconstructed historically (Savova, 2009; Perlman, 2010; Loria, 2019; Garcia & Gil, 2021).

## **3.2 Components of collective identity and their significance**

Considering all the information discussed in the previous chapters, it can be assumed that there are several risk factors in the identity development of residents of favelas, since they are a minority group that has been historically oppressed and continues to be excluded from society and stigmatized.

One of the most important things that provide a foundation for creating collective identity is identity clarity, which can be defined as “the extent to which beliefs about identity that arise from one’s cultural group membership(s) are clearly and confidently understood” (Usborne & Sablonniere, 2014, p.436). Being clear on our social identity makes it easier to define our values and have certain points of reference. It also makes easier for people to understand their personal identity. This can be particularly important for individuals who are emerging from a history of colonization and discrimination, where they might be more uncertain regarding questions of where they belong (Usborne & Sablonniere, 2014).

Following on what was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, studies done by Tajfel et al. (1987) and their Self-categorization theory states that coordinated group behavior is possible because different people define themselves in terms of the same social category, which creates the basis for coordinated action. Knowing what psychologically binds us to the communities where we belong is key to developing tool for strengthening communities (Nowel & Boyd, 2010). In the following sections, all the major positive outcomes of construction of collective identity, its components and relevance will be presented.

### **3.2.1 Common goals & engagement**

Personal investment in a group is connected to developing an emotional connection, which makes people care about the groups they are part of and identify with the common goals of the group (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). Cooperation to achieve superordinate goals always serves as a strong motivation for people to cooperate (Rogoff, 2003). People who have similar values, needs, priorities, and goals perceive that by joining their forces together they can satisfy them better and easier (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

In the case of communities, when having emotional attachment to their community, people are more likely to dedicate time and effort for community causes (Ashmore et al., 2004). Campos (2011) talks about the importance of the feelings of inhabitants regarding the place where they live and how essential it is in the construction of their own identity. The bonds and cohesion within communities, crucial for preserving a vibrant collective heritage, also serve as catalysts in discussions and play significant roles in democratization and counter-hegemonic discourse (Lin, 2011). People create communities to satisfy their needs, but sometimes individuals act to the benefit of their communities at substantial cost for themselves in pursuit of higher-order ideals and personal values. Nowel and Boyd (2010) also state that being a part of a community can be seen not only as a resource but also as a responsibility. Côté (1996) emphasized the importance of identity capital as a resource, which is all



that people invest into who they are, and this turns out to be even more important resource than human or cultural capital in today's society.

Many times, strong community identity incentivizes participation in voluntary associations and stimulates civic, social, and political engagement. Voluntary organizations make individuals feel that they share the power when they see results of their work, and this in turn leads to greater satisfaction and greater cohesion of the organization (Wandersman, 1981). Davidson and Cotter (1989) found that individuals with a strong sense of community are more politically engaged, including higher levels of voting, contact with political officials, and involvement in public issues. They exhibit a sense of political efficacy, take initiative, and have a civic-minded attitude. A sense of community empowers people politically in multilevel ways and makes them express themselves politically through variety of channels (Stoeffler, 2018). This engagement is crucial for being represented in the democratic debate.

### **3.2.2 Self-esteem, feeling proud and empowerment**

According to Gurin and Townsend (1986), the perception of common treatment among group members in society is a key factor in the development of collective identity. This perception arises when individuals feel that they are being treated primarily as members of a particular group rather than as individuals and when they recognize that their individual mobility is influenced to some extent by their group affiliation. Despite their individual differences, people develop a sense of shared destiny, which can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction when disparities are observed. In response, group members may question the legitimacy of these observed inequalities, such as the wage gap between different parts of the city or their underrepresentation in mainstream media and political debates.

Social and cultural identity can be important sources of pride, helping people understand who they are, what their dignity is based on, and what they can be proud of (Jurasek & Wawrosz, 2023). This can be especially relevant for groups who have been dehumanized, causing them to lose their sense of human dignity. Valuing the culture created in places where they come from and creating a positive cultural identity is an important element in the restoration of their human dignity. Many people who live in favelas state exactly the culture as a resource of community pride (Cardoso, 2015). Positive and strong group identity, especially in the case of minority groups, can be a valuable resource because it gives people self-confidence (Verkuyten, 2012). Confident individuals believe in themselves, which goes hand in hand with self-efficacy and a sense of agency, crucial in the construction of a strong community identity and subsequently collective action (Jovchelovitch & Priego Hernandez, 2015).

Here comes the important role of community empowerment, which occurs through the development of the community (Stoeffler, 2018). Empowerment in general "refers to a process of becoming able or allowed to take active control of specific facets of one's life" (Davidson & Cotter,

1989, p.124). In the community context, empowerment means that people will participate in collective action based on the belief that their collective action will make a difference. Behavioral involvement is a fundamental aspect of collective identity and encompasses the various ways in which individuals actively engage in activities that express their affiliation with a particular group. In the context of cultural identity, these activities may also include attending events related to music, participating in traditional customs, enjoying cultural cuisine, or contributing time and resources to organizations that promote and uphold the collective identity (Ashmore et al., 2004).

Based on the findings of the classical study of Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) on collective self-esteem, members who actively participate in the social world around them are supposed to have higher collective self-esteem, so this direction between collective self-esteem and collective action goes both ways. When people become protagonists of their lives and take on leadership roles in their communities, through this leadership roles people can feel they have influence even when their influence would be indirect (Souza et al., 2021). This reinforces their feeling of emotional attachment to the community, as members are more attracted to a community where they are influential and can make a difference, which goes also in concordance with Tajfel and Turner's Social identity theory. The people who are community leaders and serve as inspirational examples increase the perceived success of the community and make people more prone to identify with the community.

### **3.2.3 Sense of belonging, well-being & buffer against stigmatization**

Cultural and community identity play a significant role in fostering a sense of belonging (Puddifoot, 1995; dos Santos, 2011), as they satisfy the fundamental human need to belong and motivate individuals to join and identify with groups. The level of emotional connection a person experiences with a social group is closely tied to their sense of acceptance, value, respect, and support within that group (Ashmore et al., 2004).

Positive and strong minority identity (Verkuyten, 2012), a sense of community and interaction with members of the community as neighbors (Farrel, Aury & Coulombe, 2003), and psychological sense of community (Nowel & Boyd, 2010) all contribute to the well-being and life satisfaction of members of the group. Identification with the social group can serve as a buffer against discrimination and predict psychological and physical health (Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003). Positive minority identity can also function as a buffer against stigmatization and discrimination (Verkuyten, 2012).

Abovementioned study conducted by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) suggests that individuals who have high levels of private collective self-esteem, meaning they hold a positive view of their own social group, tend to respond to collective threats or negative feedback in a way that reinforces and enhances

their identification with their group. In other words, when faced with criticism or challenges to their group, individuals with high private collective self-esteem are more likely to defend and support their group, strengthening their sense of belonging and loyalty. Collective self-esteem will moderate the extent to which individuals will try to project or enhance their collective identities (Jetten et al., 2017; Bagci et al., 2023). In the face of collective threats, high collective self-esteem individuals will be more likely to change the values they attribute to groups by focusing on positive attributes instead of negative or lacking ones. They make it by changing dimensions on which these two groups are compared to yield more positive outcomes of these comparisons.

### **3.2.4 Resistance & fight for rights**

Affective attachment reflects the extent to which an individual perceives their personal fate as intertwined with the collective fate of the group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). A positive social identity makes disadvantages appear unfair and generates attempts at changing present intergroup relations (Liebkind, 1989). This means people belonging to a group that is being oppressed will make an effort to change their realities or to negotiate their identity so that the outcome is group-enhancing. As an example can be used groups such as Afro-Americans in America or Maoris in New Zealand who rejected the previously negative in-group evaluations and developed a positive ethnic group identity, prompting them to fight more for their political and economic objectives and reclaim their access to power (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Consistency is very important for minority influence, because if the minority keeps insisting on fighting for their rights and defending them, this might make majority question things. Since people need consensus to define social reality, convincing some members of the majority already weakens them (Nemeth, 1985).

As much as identity can be form of dominance, it can be as well form of resistance (dos Santos, 2011). Duncombe (2007) argues that holding on to one's identity even despite oppression is the highest form of resistance. He defines cultural resistance as "the practice of using meanings and symbols, that is, culture, to contest and combat a dominant power, often constructing a different vision of the world in the process" (Duncombe, 2007, p. 1). Preserving collective and cultural heritage emerges as a vital binding factor in social mobilizations against dramatic modernization and radical government strategies (Simon & Braathen, 2018).

### **3.2.5 Significance of collective memory**

The construction and recollection of memories are profoundly influenced by culture because our memories are shaped within a cultural context (Wang, 2011). Crucial cultural knowledge is passed on

during communal activities, frequently without any conscious attention to the process (Simon & Braathen, 2018).

Discovering one's transformative potential enables individuals to explore their roots and envision the possibilities of their future. Thus, the recovery of historical memory provides a foundation for autonomously determining one's own path (Martín-Baró, 1997). The shared emotional connection within a group is rooted in their collective history. It is important to note that individuals do not necessarily need to participate directly in that history, but they must identify with it (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). To establish this identification, individuals must possess a clear understanding of their cultural identity. Without such clarity, individuals may lack an awareness of the persistence of their cultural group over time and thus struggle to comprehend their relationship to the past and future (Usborne & Sablonniere, 2014). Recognizing one's cultural identity as enduring across time is crucial for fostering a stronger sense of belonging.

Collective memory possesses the ability to reconstruct rather than merely preserve the past. While no memory can perfectly retain the past, it can be reconstructed within the contemporary frame of reference (Assman & Czaplicka, 1995). Through collective knowledge, each group develops an awareness of their unity and distinctiveness. Heritage carries a binding and reflexive character that strengthens the bonds within a community.

## **Chapter 4. The role of narratives in the construction of collective identity and context of favelas in Rio de Janeiro**

### **4.1 Role of narratives in the construction of identity**

According to Yang, Zhao and Liu (2021), most cultural scholars agree that identity is constructed through words, and by using those we can dissolve and rebuild identity, making language one of the main tools of identity construction. The role of language and narratives is important because how people label the group that person belongs to and themselves will influence how they construct their identity, as argued by Levinsky (2000). Understanding the role of narratives in the construction of identity holds a priority position and is of great significance in studying this process.

Formerly, Bruner (1990) coined the term “folk psychology” which can be understood as something like “common sense”, representing how people in different cultures understand and explain things and behavior around them. People learn this early- as early as they learn how to speak. The organizing principle of folk psychology is narrative; it is about how narrative organizes experience in a way that affects our memory. Narrative is important for folk psychology because it talks about human action and intentionality and can conserve memory or alter the past. Culture can make us collectively “remember” events we haven’t experienced, using language as a primary tool to make it happen (Rogoff,2003). We frame our experiences in narrative form and this framing provides sense to our experiences in the world. Framing occurs in a social context, not just the individual one.

Kremer (2013) argues that "the ability to narrate is a way to bridge the individual and the social, the subjective experience and collective experience, the personal and the communal" (p.114). Collective identity can be considered a sort of script people use to shape their life plans and tell their life stories (Appiah, 1994). In the context of collective identity, there can be stories considered collective identity stories, which involve a person’s ideas, emotions, and mental pictures about the past, present, and future of the group to which the individual belongs. There can also be group stories, which refer to story of the group itself (Ashmore et al.,2004). Both of these are important sources that reinforce collective identity and serve as tools of collective identification.

Cultural identity, as discussed in the previous section, is constructed from a historical narrative, but that one is subjective (Yang et al., 2021) and connected to power relations (Ashmore et al., 2004). Ashmore et al. (2004) suggest that “the dominant groups in a society are able to craft master narratives (for their own group and for others) that bolster existing status and power differentials by both hiding and highlighting “(p. 97). Using narratives can be misused by the dominant groups, imposing narratives that favor them and maintain the status quo of their dominance in the society. “The class with the right to speak can manipulate reality through discourse” (Yang et al., 2021, p.181). An example of this

considering on a global perspective could be the narrative of the West being advanced and the East backward, presented as an objective, non-questionable truth (Yang, Zhao, & Liu, 2021).

It is important for people to establish and clarify deviations from the norm, and stories explain this comprehensibly. As a result, people often do not seek explanations of what they consider normal (Bruner, 1990). Many collective identities have stereotypes connected with them (Ashmore et al., 2004), and narratives ensure the maintenance and perpetuation of those. In Chapter 2, different forms of existent negative stereotypes about favela residents were mentioned, showing how these negative narratives can impact people's lives. Chapter 4 explained the importance of a positive collective identity. This identity is important because it focuses on the positive power of narratives, leading to way which leads to all the positive outcomes that were mentioned in the previous chapter. In a community context, narratives play a central role in creating emotional attachment to one's community, thereby strengthening community identity (Bagno et al., 2014).

## **4.2 Narratives in the context of favelas**

### **4.2.1 Media narratives and their impact on identity**

Value orientations reflecting public opinion are transmitted through media, peers, school, work contexts, and from there, they permeate families, spreading throughout society (Albert & Trommsdorff, 2014). Media create and disseminate narratives that significantly influence people's lives, and it's nearly impossible to discuss the construction of identities and representations without acknowledging the role of media.

Groups can collectively present themselves through mass media (Liebkind, 1989). The underrepresentation of certain social groups in the media or the propagation of negative stereotypical images about them can contribute to numerous negative outcomes, many of which have already been discussed in Chapter 2. The portrayal of impoverished urban residents often features thoughtless and stereotypical depictions that reinforce segregation, transforming their challenges into easily digestible forms of entertainment (Peixoto, 2007).

This underlying reason led people in some favelas to resist and create their own community media. Many community media were established due to dissatisfaction with the negative image of favelas perpetuated by mainstream media (Silva & Araujo, 2012). Common topics in media created in favelas encompass the identity of favela residents, community pride, artistic manifestations, cultural campaigns, and reports of police violence (Canavarro, 2019). Although the objective at the beginning of these media was often to talk about and cope with police violence, one of the main goals later became strengthening the community connections through local art and culture.

The “Projeto Mídia e Favela<sup>6</sup>” provides important insights into use of media in favelas to promote democracy; it analyzes media produced in favelas and the representation of favelas in mainstream media (Silva & Araujo, 2012). The project highlights the creation of counter-narratives to the prevalent mainstream media portrayal of favelas as lacking and deprived. Favela media aims to subvert this narrative by showcasing what favelas truly are and all the things that normally do not get represented in the large media. The narratives disseminated by media are mainly negative. For instance, in a study by Nóra and Paiva (2008), the amount of negative news about favelas in Rio on Globo, one of the largest and most influential media organizations in Brazil, amounted to 462 (71,6%) negative publications out of 645 publications. This negative portrayal of a specific group by the mainstream media can be also observed in contexts out of Brazil in the case of African-Americans, Latino populations or indigenous people worldwide (Ramasubramanian et al., 2023).

The internet and social media can serve as crucial and valuable resources for empowering urban popular residents (Melgaço & Madureira, 2017). They provide access to knowledge, enhance critical thinking, and offer a safe space for self-expression and connection with others who share similar causes. Utilizing these platforms to share narratives enables individuals who might feel unheard in their daily lives to be heard at least within the “online” world.

Sociocultural aspects of social media and their positive impact on empowerment include the promotion of literacy skills, providing a platform for self-awareness and self-expression, enabling local residents with strong technological skills to be acknowledged and contribute to civic action and fostering sense of community (Nemer, 2015).

#### **4.2.2 Community journals and written narratives: some examples in Rocinha and Maré**

In many favelas in Rio de Janeiro, there exists a strong community of writers, journalists, and poets. They are the ones most frequently engaged in creating and sharing narratives about favelas. They fight for their own voices and the voices of their communities to be heard by creating many projects and initiatives. One notable example can be “Bando Editorial Favelografico”, a literary group that writes so-called marginal literature, whose protagonists are from periphery (Loria, 2019). Their objective is to offer critical perspectives of social reality, turning literary realm into space of fight and resistance. According to the same author, the literature is used as a “weapon of social transformation” to change the representation of favelas in hegemonic discourse (p. 8).

Community journals (both in digital and printed form) are a type of media that gained a lot of influence in the past years. When discussing community journals or any form of community communication, we refer to actions that involve collaborative efforts prioritizing collective

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<sup>6</sup> „Project Media and Favela“ (Translated from Portuguese)

management, autonomy, and discussions relevant to the local community (Paiva, 2008). These journals focus on the topics mentioned in the previous section, managing to reach a larger number of citizens than other form of media. They are often actively present on social media platforms, which are also highly popular within favelas.

Several projects have emerged to facilitate the sharing of stories and train individuals in digital journalism production. One such project was VIVA Rio, which empowers people through self-representation. This initiative created a website where individuals could share stories and images, connecting people from favelas across Brazil. In its second version the project focused on training health workers in favelas to create narratives addressing unaddressed issues (Davis, 2015). In these ways, narratives can function as resources and incentives for the development of new public policies.

Numerous community journals share either collective narrative stories or group stories about favelas, preserving the collective memory. Two community journals that stand out are “Fala Roça” (based in Rocinha) and “Maré de Notícias” (based in Maré). These journals are currently active in creating narratives and are among the most well-known community media in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

“Fala Roça” was established in 2013 by a group of young individuals who participated in activities organized by “Agência de Redes Para Juventude”, an organization aiming to awaken and promote protagonism in the lives of the youth to help them achieve their dreams (Fala Roça, 2023). Initially, it functioned as a printed journal due to limited internet access and smartphone usage in the favela at that time. Later, it expanded to produce digital content as well. The themes covered in “Fala Roça” primarily revolve around culture and history, with a deliberate avoidance of focusing solely on violence as the central aspect of favela life (Muniz & Saback, 2013). The intention was to share positive stories about Rocinha residents who were either misrepresented in media or depicted negatively. To this day, Fala Roça continues to work on strengthening the local identity of residents by creating their own counter-hegemonic narratives.

“Maré de Notícias” was founded in 2009 by “Redes da Maré”, an NGO engaged in the territory through various educational and cultural projects (Maré de Notícias Online, 2023). The mission of Maré de Notícias from the outset was to inform the population and mobilize them. It is one of the largest community media in Brazil, with a print run of 50,000 copies. Its aim is to serve as a leading example of community communication for the residents of the 17 favelas in Maré, as well as public and private institutions, non-governmental organizations, opinion influencers, and communication professionals. The objective is to function as a platform actively contributing to the creation of narratives that expand the perception of favelas and marginalized populations, with a focus on achieving their basic and fundamental rights. Their impact can be seen in various areas, such as construction of new public policies based on their work and research (Dos Santos Monteiro, 2020).



### **4.2.3 Favela museums and preservation of collective memory**

There is a strong tradition of oral narratives in favelas, conveying the community's understanding of its political structure and self-identity in this way (Savova, 2009). It also plays a key function in preserving collective memory, which adds cultural value to specific places, objects, and practices when they are recognized as heritage. Preserving collective memory is crucial, since many favelas were on several occasions the target of removal politics and with a lot of resistance of their inhabitants they managed to not be demolished and their inhabitants evicted (Simon & Braathen, 2018). Sharing stories about that can help build community pride and strong collective identity.

Many oral traditions and history of these territories were transformed into museums, which serve as places of resistance. An illustration of this is the Evictions Museum of Vila Autódromo, an ecomuseum in the open air that showcases human rights violations in Rio's favelas (Simon & Braathen, 2018). The museum presents the memory and culture of the community through diverse mediums such as photographs, videos, sculptures, and fresco murals. Another example is located in the Morro da Providência favela, where the concept of a "living museum" has emerged, curating cultural artifacts, stories, and practices to emphasize the dynamic nature of heritage within the community. Memory in favelas is not confined to physical objects but exists as a construction within the inter-relational space between individuals, according to Simon & Braathen (2018).

## **4.3 Culture in the context of favelas**

### **4.3.1 Resistance in favelas**

Resistance is one of the most marking aspects of culture and characteristics of favelas in Rio de Janeiro in general (Lemos, 2018; Motta, 2019; Magalhães, 2019; Souza, 2020). According to Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez (2013), the efforts to remove favelas from the landscape of city of Rio de Janeiro made individuals join their forces and fight against this politics of removal.

Forms of resistance that were already highlighted in this work were resistance of cultural oppression during prohibition of funk, creating counter-narratives by community media and creation of territory museums keeping the history of territory alive. Producing content that mobilizes the population to take action and that critically opposes perceived injustice is a very important demonstration of resistance (Amaral, 2010).

The music and television industry experienced boom in the past years in favelas. The production of TV series and movies in favelas presents symbolic occupation of spaces where they got no representation in the past- the television (Rocha, 2008). This resulted in the public having an opportunity to see the real, daily life of people portrayed by the residents of favelas and not people from the outside.

### 4.3.2 Cultural production of favelas

People who share sense of community inhabiting the same space often share their identification with the local culture, which shows how community identity and cultural identity go hand in hand in this case. Residents of favelas are creating a rich variety of cultural productions which the local artists use to express and reaffirm their identity. Cultural production here is not just an object or artefact but an action (Barbosa, 2014).

Music is very important part of life in favelas. Musicians are seen as producers and symbols of local identity, using narratives in forms of songs to get their message around and represent their community (Piccolo, 2009). Music can serve as a tool for community artists to communicate and create connections with the outer world or with the proper residents. It also plays an important role in the maintenance of collective memory as a creation that can continue alive even after the death of the people who produced it. The most popular musical styles created in favelas are funk, samba, forró, pagode, rock and hip-hop. Many funk local producers create positive narratives of the territory that they elevate in their songs, for example: “Vidigal, hill of leisure” or “Rocinha, a paradise” (Lopes, 2009, p. 383)<sup>7</sup>. Some of the initially marginalized artistic expressions such as samba then became known all around the world (Carvalho, 2013). Schools of samba are a crucial musical element coming from favelas making people proud of their community.

Another aspect of cultural production that has a strong presence in favelas is audiovisual and visual production, such as visual art (graffiti) and photography. Streets, becos and vielas<sup>8</sup> of favelas are many times painted with colorful visual graffiti or sayings with inspiring messages. A street is a central place in favelas as it is a place of community encounters, commerce presence and artistic manifestations (Perlman, 2003). When it comes to photography production, there are various projects and initiatives created to show daily lives of favela residents and focus on positive things and not on the violence and police operations. As an example can be used project *Favelografia* in favela Borel, which aims to fight stereotypes and use art and photography as a bridge between different social classes and try to incentive the search for new perspectives of favelas (Cidade, 2020).

There are many other cultural manifestations that are characteristic for favelas such as “Rodas de capoeira” which shows resistance of Afro-Brazilian culture, “Rodas culturais” where different rappers and MC’s take part in battles and rap workshops, doing “churrasco” (barbecue) or kids flying kites on “laje”(flat rooftops of houses), (Valladares, 2019). Appreciation of all this culture emergent in favelas by their residents is what creates the base for positive cultural identity.

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<sup>7</sup> “Vidigal, um morro de Lazer”, “Rocinha, um paraíso”

<sup>8</sup> “Beco” and “viela” are Portuguese terms for small alleys in favelas

### 4.3.2 Case of Rocinha and Maré

Rocinha and complex of favelas of Maré (often called just Maré) are one of the biggest favelas in Rio de Janeiro and they share certain similar characteristics. One of them is a cultural richness represented in forms of art, music, oral narratives, books, poems, or community media. What is different however is their location, Rocinha being situated in Zona Sul among the most affluent and lucrative neighborhoods and touristic zones and Maré being located in Zona Norte further away from the touristic sights (Klintowitz, 2008). Maré lies in the zone where a lot more shootings happen compared to Rocinha (Fogo Cruzado, 2023). Their difference is also in their landscape as Rocinha is located on a hill and favelas of Maré are almost all located on flat landscape, except for favela named Morro do Timbau.

Rocinha has been labeled for a long time as the biggest favela in Latin America. It is particularly difficult to estimate how many people live in Rocinha since official census states 70 000, however some claim it might be even 200 000 inhabitants (Cypriano, 2005). Rocinha has a bursting commercial sphere, counting with the amount of 6529 commercial enterprises in 2002 (Censo Demográfico 2010, 2012) suggesting that nowadays the number even much higher supposing the non-ceasing growth of Rocinha. Located in the proximity of the beaches in Zona Sul made Rocinha place where community-based tourism spread, where tours with local guides are available for outsiders who would like to get to know better the daily life and the history of Rocinha. This topic is problematic, as tourism in favelas has been criticized as an act of commercializing and selling poverty (Von Rompu, 2019). Duarte and Peters (2012) argue that community-based tourism can have a positive side, but only if guided by local residents, as it can lead to more realistic perceptions of favela residents and more socio-economic opportunities. If not done with caution, this form of tourism can, on the other hand, turn into “safari” tours observing poverty.

In the case of Maré, it is a complex of 17 favelas, located between three main transportation routes of the city: Av. Brasil, Linha Vermelha, and Linha Amarela. The first favela of Maré was already mentioned Morro do Timbau in 1940. Its current number of habitants is around 140 000, making it one of the most populous complexes of favelas in the city (Redes da Maré, 2023). Since once side of Maré is bordered by Guanabara Bay, the first settlements there were so called *palafitas* (stilt houses). Its history was marked by strong community participation and creation of many organizations and associations fighting for rights of its residents.

In Maré can be found Museum of Maré, which is a symbol of resistance and collective memory of Maré (Baptista & Goncalves, 2022). Despite many connections of Maré with international projects it is far away from being a touristic spot such as Rocinha.

#### **4.4 The goals of this study and research questions**

Based on the findings discussed in the previous chapters, the collective identity within these communities can function as a valuable resource for fostering collective action and enhancing collective self-esteem and pride, and by that reducing the impact of stigmatization and catalyzing demands for rights. This holds particular significance in the context of favelas, where residents frequently face rights violations and contemporary issues that necessitate community mobilization (Fleury, 2023). Although some research discusses the role of narratives and community media in empowering favelas (Paiva, 2008; Davis, 2015; Loria, 2019), scant consideration has been given to their role in shaping the collective identity of residents.

Prior research predominantly concentrated on aspects of violence, crime, and challenges within favelas, while the exploration of positive elements only recently gained attention. Positive impact of collective action was mainly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemics, when residents and NGOs joined their forces to promote access to health care for people in favelas who were vulnerable group in the times of pandemics (Fleury & Menezes, 2020). Investigations into the identity of favela residents primarily aimed to identify stereotypes and their effects, although some studies discussed reconstruction of the stigmatized identities of favela residents through cultural movements (Neto & Zanoli, 2019) or collective identity based on music (Pimentel, 2017). Nevertheless, a specific study focused on the formation, composition, and potential of collective identity remains absent. Research on collective identity has focused mainly on gender, ethnicity, religion, nationalism, and social movements (Snow & Corrigan-Brown, 2015) and there is a gap of research on collective identity in context of communities.

The goals of this study are therefore to understand what factors and elements are important in the process of construction of collective identity, how this collective identity can be strengthened, how it is expressed in various forms of collective action and which place have narratives and community journals in this process, from participants' perspective. The following results are interpreted with the objective to respond questions:

- **How is the collective identity of residents of Rocinha and Maré constructed, strengthened and expressed? (main research question)**
- **How narratives and community journals contribute to this process? (subquestion)**

## Chapter 5. Methods

### 5.1 Sample

The requirements for the recruitment of participants were that they had to be older than 18 years old and had to be actively involved or have experience with creation of narratives in favelas of Rocinha or Maré. This specific target group was chosen with the assumption that these people are the ones who can understand the dynamics of the role of narratives in lives of people and could bring better understanding of the research question and subquestion. According to Peruzzo (2000), people who are involved in narrative-making are many times involved also in the local projects and have the role of communication protagonists in favelas. Some of the contacted people were unavailable for time reasons or did not respond at all.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive and demographic information about participants*

Name of the participant	Code assigned	Name of favela	Narrative creation	Community involvement	Gender
Consuelo	P1	Rocinha	Author of anthology	Educational coordinator	Female
Lindacy	P2	Rocinha	Author of a book, poet	Sarau <sup>9</sup> , Literary projects	Female
Joilson	P3	Rocinha	Author of books, poet	Sarau, Literary projects	Male
Hélio	P4	Maré	Journalist	Co-founder of Maré de Notícias	Male
Andreza	P5	Maré	Journalist	Journalist in Maré de Notícias	Female
Leandro	P6	Rocinha	Journalist	Founder of FavelaRocinha.com	Male
Ifaponle	P7	Rocinha	Author of books, poet	Sarau, Literary projects	Male
Renato	P8	Maré	Author of a book, illustrator	Literary projects	Male
Maria (anonymized)	P9	Maré	Journalist	Journalist in Maré de Notícias	Female

<sup>9</sup> Sarau is a literary event with the purpose to promote social and cultural integration of a particular group (Biblioteca Central Irmão José Otão, 2010).

The final sample consisted of nine participants (see Table 1). Four (44.5 %) of them were female participants. The age of participants ranged from 26 years to 64 years. All the participants were born and raised in Brazil, in states of Rio de Janeiro (N=5; 55.5 %), São Paulo (N=1, 11.1%), Bahia (N=2, 22.2%) and Pernambuco (N=1, 11.1%). Three (33.3%) of them were born in Maré, two (22.2%) of them were born in Rocinha. Three (33.3%) of them lived in Rocinha more than 20 years and one (11.1%) of them was working in the context of Maré for 2 years and lives in Vidigal (favela located next to Rocinha in South Zone in Rio). Five (55.5%) of them were involved in creation of narratives in Rocinha and four (44.4%) of them were involved in creation of narratives in Maré.

All the participants were in some way involved in creation of narratives and knew very well or were part of the community in Rocinha and Maré. Four of them (44.4%) are journalists and contribute to the community journal Maré de Notícias and five of them (55.5%) are writers. As the sample was specifically focused on people who are writers or journalists, there was an option given for the participants for their name to be used publicly or for it to be anonymized, as suggested by one of the participants due to respect and recognition of the participants, who might want to be identified. Eight (88.8%) of the participants chose for their real name to be used and one (11.1%) chose to be anonymized. The summarizing information about participants can be found in the Table 1 above.

## 5.2 Instruments

Considering the research goals, a qualitative research methodology was chosen. The goal of qualitative research is always to explain and never predict, which makes one of the major distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research (Willig, 2013). One of the advantages of qualitative research when studying person experience is the richness in description and the ability to capture individual's perspective in the construction of social reality (Howitt, 2016). Qualitative studies are, then, concerned with meaning and in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events (Frost, 2011).

Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted, as they are appropriate to use when we want to explore insider's perspective in detail (Leech, 2002). Based on the research question, a script with 9 interview questions was developed (see Annex A). The order of question varied based on the answers of the participants.

The objective of these questions was twofold: to gain insights into the construction and expression of collective identity and utilization of narratives and community journals in these processes in favelas Rocinha and Maré; and to comprehend the participant's role within this context. Example question was also included (Leech, 2002) to get more specific information about the use of narratives. Questions exploring community pride and sense of belonging were asked to examine community identity in

favelas. Questions about the culture of Rocinha and Maré were posed to understand its uniqueness and to explore participant's cultural identity. Two questions focused specifically on behavioral engagement of people and empowerment and one question aimed to identify possible challenges faced during the work with narratives.

## **5.3 Procedures**

### **5.3.1 Data collection**

In the beginning, a thorough readings on the relevant literature were conducted to become more acquainted with the topic and preliminary research questions were defined.

The participants were recruited using the snowball method. This method is often used in qualitative research, and it is efficient and cost-effective and can be used to access people who might be sometimes difficult to access otherwise (Polit-O'Hara & Beck, 2006). Snowball method is a nonprobability sampling method, which means that the sample includes the members of population who are accessible for the researcher and not everyone from the population has the same chance to be selected (Naderifar et al., 2017).

To get the first participants, acquaintances of the researcher were approached to find participants suitable for the study. Then the participants themselves were asked further and those suggested the next participants. Sampling in this case continues until data saturation (Naderifar et al., 2017). The risk of bias in this method is low in case of homogenous population regarding the shared characteristic of target group (Polit-O'Hara & Beck, 2006), which was the case of this study.

The study was approved by the ethical committee at Iscte, University Institute of Lisbon, and was conducted in accordance with the main ethical principles of psychological research (Elmes et al., 1995). The participants read and signed informed consent before the interviews (see Annex B), where they were informed about their right to withdraw, confidentiality of the study, voluntary participation, risks related to the study, the anonymization of data (if they chose not to be identified) and the method of collection of data (voice recordings or Zoom recordings). Before the interview the participants were informed about the purpose of the research, as knowing the research question helped the participants to understand better the context of the study. Before and after the interview there was a space for participants to have some inquiries to make sure they had space to clarify their doubts and that make sure they understood everything.

The interviews were conducted or in person (N=6; 66.6%), or through platform Zoom (N=3; 33.3%), based on the preference of the participant and the circumstances. The ones conducted in person were recorded by mobile phone and recordings were then transferred to external drive of researcher to guarantee safety of the data. Videocalls from Zoom were recorded by tool for recording

available at the platform and then also moved to external drive. The reason for inclusion of both video and audio recording during video calls was to provide the most similar experience as during the in-person interview and also to create rapport with the participants. The interviews took from 50 minutes to 90 minutes and were conducted in Portuguese language, which was the native language of all the participants. Although Portuguese was not the native language of the interviewer, she is fluent in it, and she encouraged the participants to ask in case they would not understand something and at the same time made sure she understood everything during the interviews by adding additional questions if needed and consulting doubts with the supervisor, who is a native speaker.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer introduced herself and explained briefly the goals of the research and gave space for any questions. Then the interview was conducted following the interview script with space for any additional questions or comments. At the end of the interview, the interviewer thanked the participants for the participation and made it possible to contact her for any future questions and results of the study.

### **5.3.2 Data analysis**

The current study is performed within social constructivist epistemology defined by Gergen (1985) and phenomenological methodology based on original philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger (Davidsen, 2013). Social constructivist epistemology is a theoretical framework that emphasizes social and cultural construction of reality, where knowledge is created during collective processes and the individuals actively participate in this process, according to Gergen (1985). Phenomenological approach allows researchers to study the subjective experience of the participants and the researcher is allowed to have a distinct attitude adopting an insider's view, which is needed instead of commonly used scientific rationality (Zahavi, 2008). It describes social phenomena in the way they are experienced and understood by participants (Zahavi, 2019). Therefore this study aims to understand the subjective point of view of favela residents about construction of collective identities within their social reality and its aim is not to objectively describe some phenomenon.

Thematic analysis was the method of analysis used in this study, considering the focus on many elements of collective identity and the additional role of narratives and community journals in the collective identity creation. The approach that Braun and Clarke (2019) propose is the use of thematic analysis as a specific method on its own, trying to discover patterns within the data. This study focused on perceptions of community writers and journalists and their experience related to collective identity processes in these favelas and did not focus on their specific personal collective identity creation.

After the interviews were conducted, all of them were transcribed firstly using Microsoft Word tool for transcription and then manually corrected and completed by the researcher. After the



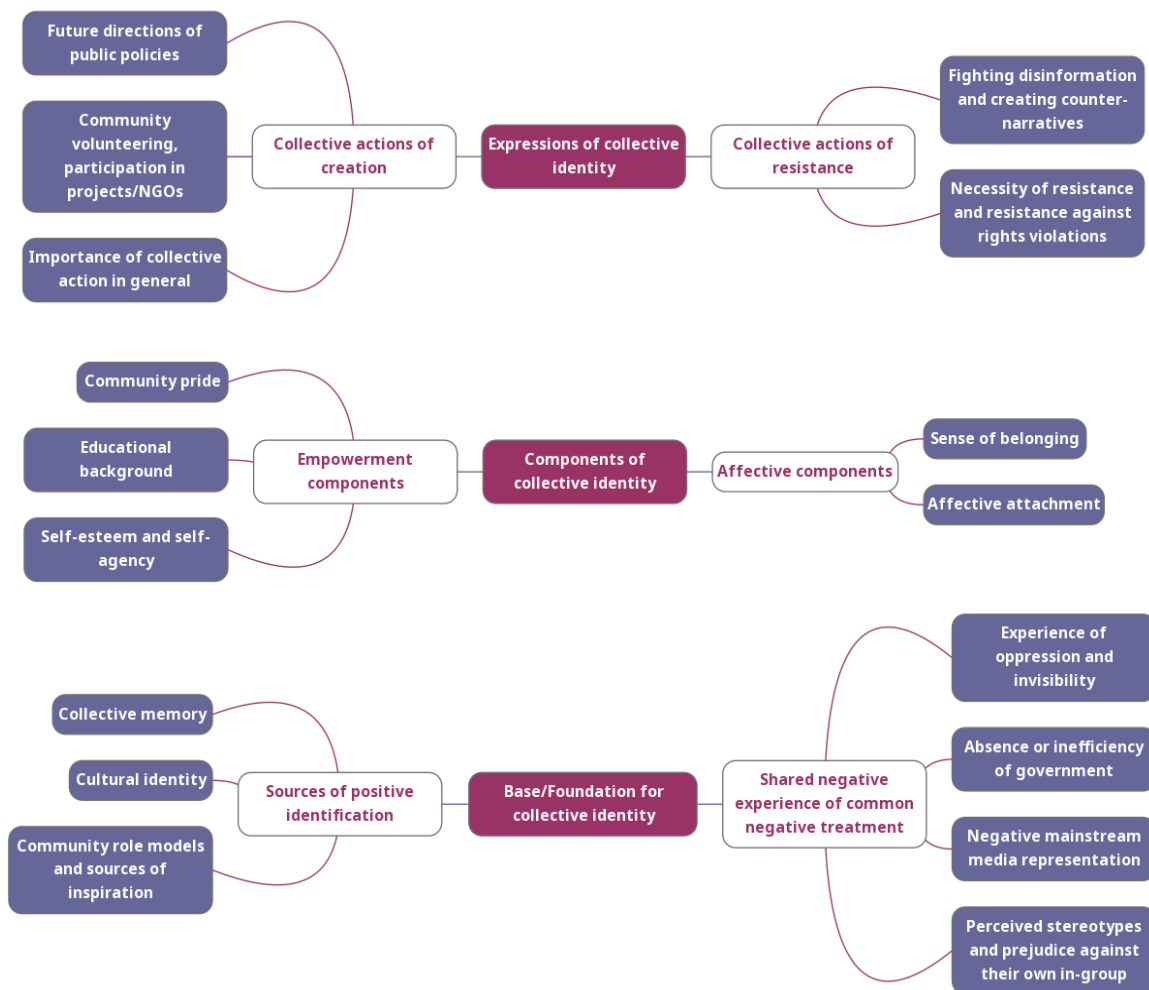
familiarization with data, coding was performed. Coding and data analysis was performed in English language. Coding is a process used to reduce data content in qualitative analysis and codes can be considered as building blocks of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The codes used in analysis were both descriptive and interpretative codes and manifest and latent codes. Descriptive and manifest codes are the ones that are directly mentioned by participants in their speech and interpretative and latent codes are the ones that the researcher discovers between the lines, as mentioned by the same authors.

According to Miles et al. (2018), coding is a process that happens in cycles. For the initial process of coding, a software MAXDQA2022 was used, where the first cycle of coding was done. Then the second cycle of coding was performed manually and subsequently 3 themes, each with 2 subthemes were defined. The prevalence of the theme can be defined in many aspects, but in this study prevalence that was taken into consideration was the number of participants who mentioned the particular theme in order to determine recurring patterns and similarities among participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## Chapter 6. Results

Regarding the main research question, three main big themes were defined: 1) base or foundation for collective identity; 2) components of collective identity; and 3) expressions of collective identity. These main themes were divided into 2 subthemes for each theme. The subthemes were further divided into 14 different codes identified during the coding process. The overview of the results connected to main research question is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Overview of themes, subthemes, and codes



To respond the subquestion two themes regarding the narratives were defined: role of narratives and role of community journals.

## **6.1 Base/foundation for collective identity -Shared experience of negative common treatment**

Perceived stereotypes and prejudice, negative mainstream media representation, absence or inefficiency of government and experience of oppression formed the base of collective identity of the participants. Perceived stereotypes and prejudice and negative mainstream media representation created many negative feelings in participants and led to rejection of this negative image of their in-group, absence or inefficiency of government mobilized them to participate in collective action and experience of oppression made them resist and fight for their rights.

### **6.1.1 Perceived stereotypes and prejudice against their in-group**

Perception of stereotypes existing about favelas and their residents was present in the experience of all the participants, suggesting that it is something they are all aware of and being affected by.

P1 talked about the experience of her students when they used to go to the shopping center and people suspected them of being criminals: "...they complained a lot about the prejudice that existed at the mall when there was a cinema or theater, when they went, they saved money to go, they dressed up, people secured the streets thinking it was a big robbery, right? ... so it was much more place of elite."

P1 also mentioned her own experience: "Sometimes I go to places and people say, 'Wow, it doesn't even seem like you live in Rocinha.' 'Why? There are no educated, well-mannered people in Rocinha? We who are from the community or from the favela, we have to walk around with a sticker written on our forehead, I'm from the favela, what does that have to do with it, does it interfere?'"

Prejudice perceptions were related to different negative emotions, such as sadness, frustration, or shame: "We get very sad when a policeman comes in here and enters a house and says: 'You can't have a refrigerator like that. You must be a drug dealer, the drug dealer's family...'" (P4). The feeling of shame, for example, was mentioned in the context of past experiences, when individuals were reluctant to associate themselves with the area they lived in: "Favela was not considered trendy, so many people were hiding. 'Where do you live?' 'I live in São Conrado.' If they lived in Parque da Cidade, they'd say, 'Oh, I live in Alto da Gávea.' 'It's a lie, you live in the favela...'" (P7).

Participants warn against not perceiving favelas as a homogenous place and being aware between the differences between favelas and within the territory of one favela itself as well. Although there are many cultural aspects that are shared within the territory of a particular favela and between favelas in general, P4 and P7 emphasize that there is a huge cultural diversity within the territory, as Maré is composed of 17 different favelas each with its own culture and Rocinha is one of the biggest favelas in Latin America, therefore within these territories will exist a big cultural diversity.

Stereotypes are nevertheless mentioned to come not only from people outside favela, but also between favelas: "I imagine you must have heard in Rocinha people talking about Maré, there must be people like: 'I'm going to have to wear a vest, a helmet or I'm going to ask for support from the army.' And then, when you get there? Everyone on the street, you know... the culture happening there, the children flying kites, playing." (P7).

### **6.1.2 Negative mainstream media representation**

Many of existing stereotypes were perceived to be perpetuated by the media. Consequently, there exists a sense of apprehension among residents when it comes to engaging with journalists: "When you go and ask to do the interview... it's like... 'So why should I respond? Research, right? ... I don't want to be studied...' So I feel... Maybe a reluctance, right? They have their reality, right? And that many times most people will not understand. It's frustrating, right?" (P9). P5 discussed the challenges the community journalists face when they want to make an interview and people refuse exactly because of the fear of their words being used to further spread stereotypes or harm them.

Majority of participants (5 of 9) voiced their frustration connected to the mainstream media and its negative representation of favelas. The frustration that respondents feel regarding the mainstream media comes from the feeling of indignation about mainstream media spreading untrue information: "When Flávio Dino, right? He was the secretary of security and he went to Maré, right? Everyone loved it... the locals, right? Instead of the big (media) vehicles... doing a story like this: wow, it's really the government now, it's there trying to be present there... no, the news that came out was that he had a plot with a drug dealer, that he was part of Comando Vermelho<sup>10</sup>, you know. There was even a photo... he took with the journalist, with the residents, so they used these photos to make fake news, right? So this is very frustrating..." (P9)."

The participants relate that mainstream media or the consumers of it don't make the effort to check the news they are spreading or consuming: "When there is a death, right? Then they put it like this, the police killed 5 drug dealers. Who said they are drug dealers, you know? They are locals. You know, nobody goes there to check this information. (P9)" ... "Because there are many people that I don't even say people from other countries, but people from here, from the same country, they embrace so much the information that are written from the traditional media that they don't really know the truth, nor do they seek to know" (P6).

P3 brought up a question of criminalization of favela culture: "It is very important, but to tell these stories truthfully, with truth, without distorting. You know, without thinking that the guy who does this, who makes art within a community, is involved with what creates violence, because we live in the

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<sup>10</sup> Red Command (translated from Portuguese), one of the biggest criminal factions in Brazil, present in Rio de Janeiro.

same place, but we don't mix." The participant shows here one more time the importance of spreading information that are true about favelas.

On one hand there is an excess of these negative representations of favelas and on the other hand lack of favela representation in the mainstream media publishing stories which would not contain violence and just daily life of common people. Participants narrate that stories of common people in favelas and positive things they do, do not have place in the mainstream media, which can be problematic as the only source of information about favela residents for the society is negative. This leaves the residents with the feeling of injustice and makes them motivated to show the other side of lives of people in favelas: "Then there's the other station that does live coverage from a helicopter, saying that there are only bandits in Maré, that women are bandit lunchboxes, anyway, so we're there in constant conflict with this narrative that is being imposed on one side, but we are also trying on the other" (P5).

### **6.1.3 Absence or inefficiency of government**

Government is seen by most of participants (7 of 9) as inefficient or absent, which is reflected on issues such as limited access to electricity, basic sanitation, education facilities and financial support for poor families: "We see more and more fees, taxes, everything increasing and we don't see the return. Mainly the favelas. We see a lot of return in residential neighborhoods, in neighborhoods like Leblon, Ipanema. So any problems you have there will be immediately resolved. In the favelas they will not be solved. So, during the election period, the candidate always goes to the favela ...everyone promises 1000 things and people believe them, they vote for the candidate and nothing happens. So it's surreal. In this period, we are talking about corruption...is the cancer of the country." (P6) ... "The government is not good...it is not present for the favelas" (P4).

The presence of government was discussed also in terms of violence during police operations: "It is no longer to denounce that everyone knows that the police kill young people every day, kill workers in the Rio favelas, everyone knows that, it is in the media every day...send here the things we need, right? Sanitation, schools, funding for cultural projects, commerce, and entrepreneurship projects, improve the urban structure here... not just send the police...Why? Because precisely when there are these police operations, it's not just this fear of dying that we learn to deal with, right?... But it is also because all trade and local social relations which need the street are prejudicated, (favela) needs the street to be working..."(P7). The participant mentions the need to deal with the fear of death, which police operations bring with them, and which becomes something present often for people living in favelas. He also highlights the importance of the street for the local economy and social interactions, which must be interrupted during these actions.

P5 asserts that “the governor ...will do whatever he wants with the favelas... (P5)”, which shows how the government becomes not only an agent which they cannot count on, but also a source of fear and desperation. P4 expresses wish for the “war on drugs” to be fought in a more intelligent way, suggesting that the government should focus on the points where the drugs and weapons enter the country and seize them before even getting to favelas. He also points out the oppression in terms of restriction of free movement in favelas during the police operations: “So you schedule things, sometimes we schedule, people say: Let's schedule this, but if there is an operation, I mean... You will always have to work this way. But no, you will always be deprived of your freedom, because you will never have that: tomorrow, I can do this thing. When you have everything if, if, if... When you think about it, those who live in the favela, those who work in the favela feel it, we are always thinking about how things will be”.

#### **6.1.4 Experience of oppression and invisibility**

The presence of inequality and division between people in terms of those who have power and those who do not was perceived by 7 of 9 participants: “It's horrible to know that there are people who feed themselves from bad things, they grow, save money...(in the contrast with those in) power, influence, (they) determine who wins, who loses, who must die, they know and treat them like animals. ... not even an animal, because I've seen dogs wearing jewelry around their necks, you know?”.

The term “elite” was mentioned several times during the interviews, being considered as the out-group which is in power and controls various aspects of lives, such as education, culture or finance: “...communication was very elitist, I didn't identify with what I was learning at the university and with what I was experiencing, so it was a very distant reality...”(P5) ... “The elites in Brazil, the cultural elites, even at the university... not everybody, you can't generalize, but there is a tremendous cultural, political and financial elite” (P7).

P4 talks about the imposition of names in the process of construction of territory: “...and the other daycare center in Vila do João is called Tio Mário. 'Who must this uncle Mário be?' I went to daycare, I did a story once, telling the story of all the names of all the schools in Maré. And then I said: 'Why uncle Mário? Who is Mario? Who was a resident (called) Mário, was it some child honored?'... He said: 'No, it was Mário Andreazza. ' He was a federal government minister and was the one who created the intermediary project. So there was all the imposition... I found out from the newspaper that there was an imposition on the construction of the territory.”

Two participants brought up the subject of invisibility of the poor people in favelas by the system. P3 believes that it is because of the lack of interest of people who are in power: “There are people who live in misery. These people are invisible to the system. These people are invisible to power itself.” P7

talks about invisibility from a different point of view, where he presents it as something that government does on purpose with the poor: "...this city here has always had a very hygienist policy...cleaning the city's poor and taking the poor out of the city, hiding our narratives at the same time...". In this way poor people are seen as the ones who "dirty" the beautiful image of the city and therefore there should be hid from public spaces. This is shown at the example of cultural events or places, where people from favelas do not appear, showing spatial segregation that exists in the city: "...because these people understand that these cultural public apparatuses are not for them" (P7).

P7 also mentioned many examples of oppression in connection with the past of colonization and slavery. He talks about the difficulty of Brazilians to define their identity: "We in Brazil will always be a colonized country, the result of an exploitation process, as a colony. We've always had a lot of difficulty having our own identity. So we always questioned ourselves, who are we?" The difficulty of determination of one's identity comes from many forced elements that were being imposed on people, which makes it difficult for people to really determine what is what they should considered true about themselves and what is a story that was created and forced upon by somebody else.

The same participant mentioned the efforts of removal of Afro-Brazilian history and efforts to "whiten" the population, which was the politics adopted in Brazil after the abolition of slavery. He had an experience with an extreme form of oppression of black people, which were the efforts of their "extermination" by the police during police operations. Participant shares his feelings of being a target of aggressive politics existent in the country during his youth: "They try to eliminate people who were failures in the Matrix...a guy like me like....at that time, Rocinha was much more violent than it is today, it was very sinister. I experienced a time that was very sinister. That it wasn't meant to be alive, no. It was not meant to resist." He went on to explain that until this day people from favelas, especially young black men experience racism and talked about "genocide". This points to the intersectionality of favela residency and race, which elevate the impact of oppression.

P3 articulates that there exist also more latent forms of oppression, such as not providing students access to the information about the oppression of their ancestors. He mentions example of many topics disappearing from the school curricula, which makes the history of oppression continue without the future generations being aware of that: "The historical facts were also all diminished ...labor rights, slavery... nothing is over, that everything is there, everything is alive...when you take this out of history, you take out the historical facts you are making these children not look back and say, 'This happened to my grandfather and I don't want to that happen to me...' It's a subtle way of oppressing, without leaving evidence. Nowadays, you can no longer whip a human being, you can no longer beat him so that he works, that he is forced to work... So we're going to act where he doesn't reach, which is not letting him have the knowledge, not letting him find out how the grandparents, great-grandparents and others from all the ancestry of that youth lived...". In his view this form of oppression is dangerous

because it maintains conditions of poverty, which increases the risk of people finding illegal means of survival which in this case means joining the gang, resulting in the death of many young people.

## **6.2 Base/foundation for collective identity- Sources of positive identification**

This subtheme aggregates quotes that indicate the function of role models, cultural identity and collective history as elements that play a fundamental role in shaping the collective identity of a community as they contribute to the creation of positive identification, shared positive experiences, and a sense of common history and values.

### **6.2.1 Community role models and sources of inspiration**

People from the community were cited most often as a reason for community pride: “There are a lot of incredible people, who are from Maré. And that's sensational”(P8). There were demonstrated many examples of community role models by the participants: “There's always a reason to be proud here, right? Right now, I'm helping to rescue the story of a person who was the first physical education student at UFRJ in 1978...it's José Carlos who was the first to have a gym in here...” (P1). Big sources of pride are in the case of Maré the women who became successful in politics, such as Marielle Franco (a city councilor assassinated in 2017), Anielle Franco (a current minister of racial equality) and Renata Souza (a current state deputy), as related by P5 and P8. This presents significant change from the past when favelas did not have any representation in the government and having a representative from favela in politics shows people the results of resistance against the oppression faced in the past and breaking this invisible barrier. P8 mentioned the artistic immortalization of Marielle Franco, whose paintings are located on pillars in the community, as a symbol of resistance and community pride.

P8 talks about the importance of identification, when you see somebody achieving things in life that you would like to achieve, coming from the same background as you: “When it's someone from the favela, it also ends up being even cooler, because there's this thing of identification, the child being able to understand himself as a possible author, you know? That there is author from favela, right?”.

P5 illustrated an example of how her work as a journalist changed her relationship with mothers from the school of her son, being admired for making interviews with famous people and managing to balance her career and taking care of her family. She enunciated her opinion that we must not inspire just by showing our success but also by showing people possible ways how they can achieve the success they want to and turn it into action instead of just enjoying their admiration. Participant declared that “when we are here in this space, everything we do has an impact on other people's lives”. This is an idea that was shared by all the other participants as well, mentioning how they affected life of others, many times serving as role models or sources of inspiration themselves. Participants argue that people



seeing positive things in the community and seeing or knowing local role models makes them value the territory more and serves as a source of pride.

Besides people serving as a source of inspiration, P4 also mentioned role of NGOs as a source of inspiration, as well, as they renovated and painted the building of NGO “Redes da Maré” to show as an example for people as how they can transform their houses in a beautiful way and P9 highlighted the importance of showing value of local places which can also have an inspirational character for the residents and be sources of pride. P4 and P6 pointed out that the whole community itself and different projects or community media can serve as a source of inspiration for another favelas: “When you start spreading good news, good things, it can even encourage other regions to do the same... there is nothing more rewarding for one favela to be an example of another and to focus on the good side to make the residents enjoy it in the best possible way “(P6).

P3 and P7, on the contrary, expressed the conviction that there is a lack of role models in Rocinha and P7 also expressed disapproval of how certain people from favelas who have a lot of visibility don't use it for things that would help the community: “How can you sell millions of books? Have millions of followers? And you don't use this for something with a local impact... it doesn't even cross their minds”. The participants expressed the belief that the community could prosper much more if it had more role models and see it as something lack in the community.

### **6.2.2 Collective memory**

Collective memory was defined as fundamental for the creation of collective identity by 8 of 9 participants who stated numerous reasons for its importance. Collective memory can give direction for people in their life and provide identity clarity: “I think the basis of everything is memory, because if you don't know where you come from or who you are, you are going to accept people saying that about you” (P5). One of the most important relevance of the knowledge of the history of the territory was defined as a base for appreciation of that place and creation of affective attachment bond with the territory: “This is a story (about the history of Maré) that my mother told me and that already impresses me a lot and makes me love the place a lot” (P8). According to participants, the appreciation of the territory is important because it makes current residents value the work done in the past by their families and people who inhabited the territory before them. There were many things constructed by collective action of the community without government help, as for example construction of stairs in Rocinha by the group of masons and construction workers, mentioned by P7 as he reminisced about the stories his dad used to tell him about the past of Rocinha.

P4 said that “when you lose history, you lose your reason. It becomes banal...so you think it was done by a step of magic. It is important ... to tell the story because their father, their mother,

unfortunately, will pass away. And then there are things that are lost... History is an inheritance. We live in a poor place where no one who is going to die will leave a bag of coins for their son but will leave the story for him". The participant showed a fear of memories getting lost, which would result into young generation not appreciating things they have now, not realizing that most of things in the territory were constructed and created with a lot of effort of their ancestors and the first residents.

This is what P6 observed as well when he talked about new people moving to Rocinha who do not know anything about the history of the territory: "We are going through a complicated period, because we receive a lot of people from outside and these people from outside use Rocinha as a transition in life, right? This loses the characteristics of the region a little, because people do not have a certain appreciation for the region, for them it is just a place where they live. They don't know, they don't have knowledge of the history of the region. And many times they don't even try to find out about the region's history... So, it's a bad period for many residents who were born in the area...the person does not have an identity in that region. Their identity is from another location. So Rocinha, it has a lot to lose with this...she loses the appreciation that people could have, of more care".

The memories of evolution of the territory are a part of collective memory and seeing progress makes people have positive attachment towards the place: "Look, it's important because Rocinha is important, you know? It's important for people to tell the story of Rocinha, because Rocinha is all good things, Rocinha I used to hear that this was a cockroach race , right? And all of a sudden it turned into this whole thing right here" (P2). Having knowledge of how things used to be in the past can also serve as a source of inspiration for people, which was the aspect mentioned by P3 and elaborated in detail by P8: "I think that when the territory...has a lot of history to tell, this story also serves as an inspiration to create other things...And then I think that the more history we have access to...I think that more charm is what will come out of it. I think it changes the view of the territory itself and also opens the door to other changes".

### **6.2.3 Cultural identity**

Almost all the participants (8 out of 9) showed signs of strong cultural identification with the territory and appreciation for the local culture... P5 describes her relationship to the local culture especially fondly: "I think it's sensational, I think one of the greatest beauties of Maré is the thing about (local) culture, this appreciation of culture and culture that is produced here" and P8 said that "so the guys here...(they are) almost spitting out cultural production at all times", showing strong presence of cultural scene that he notices. What was identified as a differentiative cultural factor from other favelas was the strong presence of the population from the Northeast of Brazil present in Rocinha and Maré, mentioned by 6 of 9 participants. This is shown in the strong presence of musical style forró,

products in the shops, cuisine, accent of the people and customs such as Festa Junina, all typical for the Northeast. P6 revealed how strong is the presence of this culture: "So you have this particularity, so if you go to a street market in Rocinha on Sunday. You practically don't even feel like you're in Rocinha anymore, you teleport to the Northeast."

Music and dance were mentioned the most during the interviews, making it a prominent aspect of culture, especially in Maré (P5,P8,P9). The musical genres mentioned were pagode, funk, samba, forró, rap, rock, reggae, and orchestra and among dance styles those mentioned were "passinho" (funk), ballroom, samba and forró. P5 proposes that music can be an important way of identification and expression of young people: "...young people identify a lot, sometimes not in terms of books, not in terms of internet militancy, but music, through the non-criminalization of funk, rap, reggae,...so it's bringing these young people to talk about what happens in the favela through art, to express themselves through art". She also said that this applies specifically about the case of young black men from 18 to 26 who is the population that dies the most in favelas and in Rio de Janeiro and music can serve as a protective factor against them entering the drug trade. P7 mentioned how music served as a medium through which favela entered the national debate in the past when MCs from São Paulo made it big with rap talking about what is like to be a young black man in the periphery. This was according to him a "cultural landmark" in the history of Brazil.

Besides music, literature was mentioned by P2,P3,P7 and P8, who notice a strong presence of writers and literary projects in Rocinha and Maré. Very popular is organization of literary events called in Portuguese "sarau" attended by P2,P3 and P7: "There is a group in Rocinha that Joilson is part of together with me, called Sarau Letras da Favela. In this sarau, we organize literary events where people go beyond poetry, tell stories, sing, right? It encourages people to participate collectively, in a cultural activity, to distribute books..."(P7).

P8 commented on the presence of visual arts too: "Photography scene is also very big in Maré... there is a project called Observatório de Favelas... which within it had a project that was Images of People, which is a school of popular photography, and was formed by João Roberto Ripper, ...his idea was that the favela photographs, the photographs that spoke of the favela, usually came in contexts of public security tragedy, right?... and that maybe, if favela residents had access to photography, it would generate other perspectives besides this one, right? Other looks, including positive ones...". Besides photography, street graffiti was also mentioned as an important expression of visual arts.

P7 highlights the importance of the street for the culture of favela, seeing it as an essential aspect which contains in itself also an aspect of resistance and he contrasts it with the culture of the affluent neighborhoods, the "asfalto": "I think this is very typical ... So this occupation of the street where you are sitting in the street at the bar, you know, the samba circle, capoeira circle...These expressions of the community...that happen on the street, this is the Rio de Janeiro we talk about. The real Rio de

Janeiro. So, if you go to Rocinha on a day like today, there will be people on the street. Then you look here, you look here at the south zone of Rio de Janeiro. These huge buildings, penthouses. There are many people who leave by car, go to work, come back...They are afraid of the street, they are afraid of the people... “. Besides entertainment, residents also use street as a place for local commerce and it has a crucial function in local economy and construction and maintenance of relations between community members.

The culture and art are seen as a tool of transformation of the territory and its people: “These characters who transform the territory with poetry, with books, with music, you see. These little things are big... Because the book, poetry, art, music, they exist, these arts exist to show paths, to show horizons” (P3) ... “So, culture is transformative. Yes, I would say that it is the basis of what we do in Maré de Notícias as well. That we're not here to show just the facts, but we're here to show all this culture that surrounds the favela, right? (P5) ... “because culture, leisure in the favela is a very strong tool “(P4). This shows that the participants see the local culture as an important resource in lives of favela residents.

### **6.3 Components of collective identity- Affective components**

Based on shared experience of negative common treatment and sources of positive identification, affective components of collective identity such as sense of belonging and affective attachment are formed. These components build sense of unity, community cohesiveness, interdependence and provide a support system during challenging times.

#### **6.3.1 Sense of belonging**

All the participants demonstrated that there exists sense of belonging in Rocinha and Maré. Sense of belonging was observed both in the participants sharing their personal feelings and in their description of other examples of people from the community. P1 and P2 relate that they felt welcome and valued in Rocinha: “For me, Rocinha was the beginning of a life change for me... The place where I was welcomed, where I met people who looked at me in a way that I started to realize that I was somebody, that I had some potential, that I could do something productive for, you know”(P1) ...“I really thank God and Rocinha that I was accepted by Rocinha and I started to admire everything that Rocinha has” (P2). These words show a lot of appreciation for the territory and the feeling of being accepted was what made the participants feel that they belong to Rocinha.

P2 admitted that she feels safer in Rocinha than other parts of the city: “I'm a bit scared of being out there because in Rocinha ... we feel... safe in Rocinha, because nobody messes with you here... sometimes I feel a little insecure about going to another place “(P2). P8 admits his work as an author

of children's book that he wrote was inspired by the territory he grew up in, showing a strong sense of belonging: "This book that I released, Moleque Piranha, it has a lot inspiration in my experience inside the favela, right? Where I grew up, where I was born and still live today".

Community cohesiveness and close relations between people contribute to creation of the feeling of belonging. P1 commented on the closeness she created with people in Rocinha: "...And the friends who I knock on the door and let me in and offer me coffee and air conditioning, you know? I built this intimacy here". P3 talks about his childhood and how his neighbors cared about him not getting into problems: "I didn't fall into social risk because my neighbor announced to my mother that I was bordering on social risk. 'Look, your son, he's in such a place, he's in such company, he's going there.'" P8 talks about the event when his book was launched: "...it was really cool, because I managed to involve many kids, with some of them I already have some kind of experience in some way, with others no, right? And I think that, mainly parents of the kids." Community events help to bring people together and strengthen the sense of belonging according to participants.

The participants reported that they observed a difference in the sense of belonging between the past and the present, however this difference was perceived by different participants in a different way. Some participants stated that they observed that people show more that they feel they belong to the community now than in the past (in the context of Maré).

On the other hand, P7 talks about the change of the sense of belonging in the opposite direction in Rocinha and he complains about the destruction of it because of urban changes which affected favelas too and social relations which "were being destroyed first by this neoliberal culture and ideology of individualism and also by the urban structures that ended up remaining but became more tense, more complicated." This was also caused by many new people from different places moving to Rocinha, changing its social structure, as reported by P6.

Cultural and community identity serve as foundations for the creation of sense of belonging and the participants showed that they strongly identify with the local culture and the community by both appreciating the culture and seeing it as something they can be proud of and appreciating the territory itself, its history and the people who they share this territory with. Community support and need fulfillment are another important aspects that play role in the creation of sense of belonging and it is provided not only by interpersonal relationships with neighbors and the rest of the community, but also by the relationships between favela residents and various NGOs and projects which provide support for the residents: "They (favelas) all have NGOs. They all have institutions, and they are always doing something positive for their respective regions" (P6).

### 6.3.2 Affective attachment

Sense of belonging helps to create positive feelings about some place, and this relates to the creation of affective attachment. A strong positive affective attachment of participants to their communities emerged from all the interviews. P2 and P5 both expressed their feelings about their favela as “being in love”: “I’m in love with everything that happens here.” (P5) and “Can I say that I don't like this Rocinha? I can't, I'm in love, I'm crazy about it...” (P2). The same participant also stated as the reason why people love Rocinha the welcome feeling it gives people and the opportunities to find anything you need there. P6 talked about caring and feeling affection towards the region because of the past of his family rooted in Rocinha. P8 stated that stories that his mum used to tell him about the history of Maré created this love he has for the favela.

Affective attachment was also manifested in many actions done for the community by the participants with the objective to increase community cohesiveness, connect residents, contribute to well-being of the community, provide opportunities, and protect and preserve the history of the territory. These actions are usually done on voluntary basis by the participants and other residents to improve the quality of life of people who live in their community: “My family is all in Rocinha, I have a house there... I'm always there trying to do something that causes some impact, right?” (P7).

P3 provides access to knowledge for Rocinha residents by providing free books for them: “I put a box of books on my window and leave them there for the residents to take...And then what happens? Who takes the book? I don't know who takes it. I work at night, I get home at 2-3-4 in the morning. The box is empty, I go there, put the books back, the books I have left and then they go there and get them (P3)”. P4 mentions an example of the case of one boy who tried to have a positive impact on the community, funding his actions with selling used oil he collected: “When you think like this, the guy did a small thing, but he did something that he could, you know? And then he started to think about how he could mobilize even more there, so he took his bicycle, which rode with sound, he earned money by advertising with his bicycle... he was projecting a movie for the kids. And then, who was in the surroundings made popcorn and gave those children a soda, there were children who had never been to the cinema and that guy with the oil that he kept selling, he managed to buy the film DVD, he managed to buy equipment to project every week, project a different film for those children...So you see the power that the favela has.”

P3 and P6 shared the idea that people should have and demonstrate certain feeling of gratitude towards the community and “give back” to the community what they received, placing the community at an important place in the lives of residents and seeing it not only as a resource, but also a responsibility: “Gratitude for having the generosity of: look, as I left the place, I know how many people suffer there. I don't want those new people to go through what I went through. It all comes back again. It's like it's in the family, but in the favela, in the community, I think it has to be that way.”(P3) ... “It's

not just a community, ...a favela... this name has weight, it has a history, so you need to understand how it started for you, in some way contributing what you acquired throughout your life to help the region as well. So, for me, it is important that you add value that you learned during your life, understand the history of the region and make the region evolve with you”(P6).

Many of the projects within the territory function on the base of donations and or financing of the creators of the projects, which shows that people are willing to invest their time and financial resources into the community: "the people who participated in the project took many things out of their own pockets to keep the project going” (P6) ... “there are other people who like this initiative and who help maintain this place, right? The capitation is entirely by donation” (P8).

## **6.4 Components of collective identity- Empowerment components**

The components of collective identity that are crucial for collective action-based behavior could be defined as empowerment components. Community pride, educational background, self-esteem and self-agency contribute to residents taking a more active role within the community and their feelings of self-efficacy when wanting to fight for collective issues.

### **6.4.1. Community pride**

All the participants showed that they feel prideful about Rocinha or Maré. Community pride seems to be influenced by historical roots, collective achievements, the presence of community role models, and a strong sense of cultural identity. Collective memory is important for the sense of community pride and affective attachment and this applies especially for the people who were born in the territory: “...in fact, I think the thing of pride is generally people who have a history rooted in the region”(P6).

P9 highlighted how the perception of community pride has evolved over time. In the past, residents felt forced to hide their place of residence interviews due to negative stereotypes associated with the area. However, there has been a noticeable shift: "Today I already see the feeling 'I am really from here,' you know? 'I'm happy and I'm a favelado<sup>11</sup>.' I feel that pride."

P8 discussed the positive impact of children being interviewed by journalists while attending event of his book launch, contributing this way to their sense of pride: “The children gave an interview on the day to journalists who showed up, so I think in a sense of pride, right? Somehow, I think the children really bought into this idea, like, that they know an author”.

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<sup>11</sup> Term that is used to describe somebody from a favela, usually when used by the inhabitants of the other parts of the city considered a pejorative term, however in the last years it became used by favela residents in a positive way when they identify with being from a favela.

This feeling of pride is an important part of collective identity which doesn't end in itself as a positive feeling, but at the same time acts as an empowerment factor. The importance of community role models as positive examples who were born and raised in favelas and had success in their lives lies in showing the community residents that it is possible to achieve things in life, despite many obstacles created when one is born in a favela. This creates a positive self-image of the participants and improves their self-esteem, while at the same time motivating people by sharing stories of resilience of others. As an example of that can serve the story of the current state deputy Renata Souza: "So you think, wow, somebody raised in Maré. She didn't make it right away, but she didn't give up, she went there, tried again. Then she graduated, she was the first black doctor of Maré...so speaking of communication, doctorate in communication... So she is a reference and now a great politician. The most voted woman in the state of Rio de Janeiro" (P5).

P4 expressed that he sees the importance of knowledge about the past in creating feelings of pride which in turn mobilize residents to fight for their rights and makes them more resilient towards common negative treatment.

#### **6.4.2 Educational background**

Education and its importance were a recurrent subject in the interviews, and it was illustrated how having education and being an educated person empower inhabitants and provides them with tools to improve the life conditions in their territory.

Some of the participants mentioned that their parents were illiterate (P1,P7) and P1 narrated how the wish of her mum to complete her studies served always as a source of motivation for her to finish school and to value education, her being the first family member who graduated.

P3, P5 and P7 mentioned barriers that exist nowadays that prevent people from poorer conditions to get access to education and knowledge. "Sometimes it's not a lack of interest. Sometimes you think that reality is far from you, because how does a person stop during the day to read a book, if he is hungry, hum? There is no way to. If he is tired after taking care of the children, after taking care of everything, the house, after having worked, he is exhausted, he will not stop to read a book..." (P5).

P5 and P7, who have a university degree, criticized how knowledge at this level is biased: "Our education here in philosophy in Brazil was always very Eurocentric, right? We are a country in the global south, a colonized country. Our cultural background, the background of Brazilian intellectuals is always very colonized, very focused on the pragmatic teaching of the Northern Empire of the United States, or it is focused on the intelligence with a more European bias, very theoretical, little local reflection" (P7).



What showed to be very important was the existence of community role models who motivated people to continue studying, as mentioned by 6 out of 9 participants: "... a woman over 60 years old was approved at a public university. And that was really cool, it had a really good impact because people encourage other people, you know, to go back to studying" (P6). P5 connects the importance of community role models with the importance of mobilization within the territory that gives the necessary push to residents to pursue their goals or dreams. She herself is one of the people who studied at the university and she wants to use her knowledge to help the territory and people living there: "I equipped myself to help this territory in whatever way I could, so that there are more people at the university, yes, but that these people are also aware that this is not just their merit alone, that it is a territorial issue...you need to help all the other people, the collectives, the institutions, give more visibility, because if it just stays with you, the story ends in itself."

The same idea emerged in the interview with P3, who however expressed his "depressive outlook" on the situation as he said that people who go and study at the university don't return back to favela with the purpose of being a role model as well: "It's because the vast majority who manage to go to college, they don't come back and don't say, look, I came here to strengthen the place where I live, where I was born, where I grew up... my way of looking at it is that, who got to college has to go back to pick up the neighbor's son, who is younger than him, or younger than her...because it's a pain when I meet a 17 or 18, 20 year old girl or a boy working where I started to work- waiter, cook ... and they have a very large potential to grow, to go to college, but they don't have anyone to guide them. And who can serve as an example? Who, 20-15 years ago, went to college and managed to leave the community...(P3)".

The relevancy of education lies mostly in its transformative power, mentioned by 6 out of 9 participants. P1 mentioned many examples during her experience as an educational coordinator in Rocinha: "I believe that I chose an area that is privileged for this (positive impact), which is education. That, whether you like it or not...you end up opening a range of no, not even inspiration, but really communication. And even if the person doesn't have such an open mind, he starts to have access to knowledge that he didn't have before. Opportunity to see that other people have lived the same or similar stories as her, and they begin to feel a significant part of some cause" (P1). P3 talks about the transformative power of poetry and books: "Try to put something in those little heads over there, and you'll see how many windows you open. This is the positive side... So it's a boy he learned from a book, how to walk (in life)" (P3).

P1 talks about her low self-esteem growing up, said she was "Consuelo who thought she was nothing to anyone, you know? Who took advantage of studying as a weapon because it was the only thing she had that she could still use, (when she was) without hope, out of fear". She now presents herself as a confident woman helping others to learn in education projects. P5 highlighted how

education empowered her to be able to create positive changes and impact in the theory and also to multiply this by encouraging others to study or pursue their dreams. P7 said that: “When I finished high school, I went through good schools and good colleges that gave me the basis to be able to understand the world, and understand how this issue of writing works...”. It is essential for people to feel that they have the tools necessary to create an impact and education provides these tools for the people.

P6 mentioned positive impact of educational project in Rocinha he was part of: “We did a very interesting job in schools in Rocinha, in high schools, where young people over 14 years old study, I was very happy because we received from them very good feedback. These are people who are well on their way to engaging in social causes... And I think it's a great way to start, with young people explaining to them that it is possible, yes, to do something, not just wait for the government to resolve, but somehow fight in favor of where you live”.

#### **6.4.3 Self-esteem and self-agency (collective and individual)**

Negative image existent about favela residents and stereotypes and prejudice connected to that affect the self-esteem of people and their perception of themselves. Individual self-esteem stems from the positive self-image residents create about themselves, collective self-esteem originates from positive image favela residents have about their community and self-agency is a belief of residents that they can become protagonists of their lives and that they have the power to create positive changes in their lives and in their community. Both are crucial base for collective participation, but also for achieving success in one's life in any area.

P3 reveals that the biggest challenge for him is to convince people of their own value: “So we hear so many things that don't value us as a human being, that the biggest challenge is to deconstruct this bad construction that was done there at the base... to convince someone that they have a value when the people said that they don't have any...”.

Community role models played an important part in the construction and reinforcement of collective and individual self-esteem and self-agency, as they affected lives of others either by serving as an example with their life story or by encouraging others and empowering them in other ways. “Showing the possible ways” was an expression that was used many times by the participants, which suggests that a lot of their effort is dedicated to trying to change the idea of people living in favelas who don't think they can achieve things or already accepted their life to be a certain way and offer them new ways of thinking showing possibilities. Many times, people might think that certain opportunities might not be for them and successful people from their community show them that they can become many different things, as stated by P1,P3,P4 and P5.

Valorization of every life story, not just the famous people, contributes to the construction of self-esteem of common residents of the community by giving them recognition, as P5 described in detail: “(the person) will see somewhere in the newspaper or somewhere on social networks or in a short video, she will see someone like herself. And then this frustration, this tiredness, this exhaustion... the person will be like this: I am a strong woman, I am a woman of fiber. I am like that too; I am also worthy of pride. Or it may not make them look for a university, but it will turn a key the way they look at themselves. Sometimes, it's not always how a person is going to look at the world, but sometimes it's like they're going to look at themselves and we always try to work on that”(P5).

Collective self-esteem and self-agency are also connected to community pride, as participants brought up many times potential of favela and its residents: “Because the favela doesn't have means to do things, but it does (them anyway). Imagine if they gave us the conditions to do it, we would have conquered the world already... people here in Rio, here in Brazil, cannot see the value that the favela has.” (P5) ... “Just for being a community that is lacking, it may be in lack of (presence) the government, the government does not come here, but it carries a potential for culture, leisure, sport, several things” (P3). Seeing this potential shows that people see their community and people there in a very positive way and see it as a powerful entity, which in turn increases their collective self-esteem and self-agency.

## **6.5 Expressions of collective identity- Collective actions of creation**

Collective action is the behavioral expression of collective identity, and it is most often connected to the existence of common goals of the community and efforts to solve common issues. From the data emerged particularly the importance of proposing directions for public policies and creation of various projects that address a wide range of issues present in the community.

### **6.5.1 Importance of collective action in general**

Collective action is what forms the base for all the initiatives, projects, volunteering, and NGOs in favelas. All the involvement of participants in their community is driven by their conviction that working together is the only way how they can achieve some results and come up with solutions for the common problems: “If there is something that I think I could take away, I could learn from this project, right? It's just that you can't do anything alone.... I didn't do it all myself...a thing that I liked so much, if it weren't for having so many people like that, a lot of people participated, right?” (P8)... “Local problems are not individual problems, they are problems that need to be discussed collectively and the solutions that the favela will only win when we have collective solutions...”(P7).

Collective memory and community pride together with self-agency of residents all help to mobilize the territory and its residents to fight for collective issues. According to 6 out of 9 participants,

residents of favelas learned that they could count with little help of the government when dealing with their problems, so they adopted the attitude of “what we don’t do ourselves, won’t get done”. This created a base for solidarity between the residents as many of the problems of the territory became common issues that people tried to solve together: “Residents with NGOs who will try to resolve... because the government, even the presence of public bodies... So, if you wait for them, right? They won't count with anything. I feel a lot of this that people participate, because if they don't, nobody will” (P9).

P4 announced that by creating a sense of belonging in people, they will in turn take part in the collective action for the improvement of the territory: “...because if they feel (sense of belonging), they will fight together with their father who sometimes can no longer fight for a sewage system, improve the sewer situation, so (it’s important) they can feel like they are from Maré too”. This fight for improvement of living conditions was discussed by P7 too, but he talked about an example in the past: “There are a lot of stairs in Rocinha that people go through today, you don't even know who made them. If these stairs in Rocinha could tell stories, they would tell us stories about people we can't even imagine, right? Of struggles, of organization, of collectivity, right?” However he mentioned that this is very difficult to happen nowadays, which he attributes to the lack of interest in collective memory and also the change in society to more capitalistic one: “in these times, let’s do (organize) a cleanup event. Well, nobody has time, nobody wants to. 'How much will I earn?' ...It's hard to gather people to make collective thing that doesn't generate profit...”. There is visible contrast in the narration of participants between some seeing a lot of collective action and some believing this is more a thing of the past.

### **6.5.2 Future directions for public policies**

Public policies affect lives of residents in favelas and their importance was mentioned by P4, P5, P7. The necessity to take into consideration proposals of the residents of favelas themselves while creating public policies was highlighted by P7: “Historically here in Rio de Janeiro, public policies... how does the government do it? He does it from the top down because we have a colonialist past of slavery... today in the favela you already have a generation of people who graduated, studied, have intellectual training, have experience with public management, understand what are public policies and the local population wants to participate in this construction.” This reflects that the public policies aimed at solving problems in favelas are usually imposed by the government without proper understanding of the internal problems.

P5 highlighted the importance of sense of belonging and people claiming officially they are residents of Maré in the construction of public policies, because a simple act of identifying with the community as a resident and saying that one lives there helps to construct new public policies for the

territory: “After the Maré census, we also showed people that if you don't say you live in Maré, the state will never produce public policies for that place. Because if you say you live in Bonsucesso, because you're ashamed to say you live in Maré, there won't be a school for your child in Maré. Because according to the data, statistically there are more people living in Bonsucesso than in Maré. We can build more schools, the family clinic has more access to health, send more ambulances...” The participant said that since more people declare that they live in Maré, 9 more schools and healthcare centers were constructed and this made people see the positive results of the census. She said it also empowered them to demand more, because now they always put Maré in comparison with other neighborhoods in the city and keep asking for things that other neighborhoods with much less residents do have.

P4 mentions the effort of Redes da Maré and Maré de Notícias to make research that could be a base for new effective public policies, demonstrating the interests of favela residents to actively participate in the construction of public policies in the future: “...to be an instrument so that his (resident's) voice has power inside and outside the territory, so that he can bring public policies, so that Maré can develop.”

### **6.5.3 Community volunteering, participation in projects/NGOs**

All the participants are actively involved in one or more projects in Rocinha and Maré and presence of NGOs and various types of projects is something that was repeatedly brought up during the interviews. All these initiatives have in common their focus on some positive contribution to the community, improving life of residents and being present and dealing with some issues that the government doesn't, based on the words of participants. There was demonstrated big impact on lives of residents by NGOs present in the territory. P9 said she notices a lot of participation of people when some discussion rounds or events are organized by NGOs, because they fight for community causes and this is what makes people participate, as they are working on the same goals and discussing the same issues.

Participants stated that one of the reasons which ignited their interest in creation of various projects and community media was the necessity to create knowledge they could relate to and make it accessible for other favela residents, as many times they could not relate to the information they had access to. Most of the projects mentioned by participants were educational or cultural projects. P1 said that in educational projects all kind of different issues are dealt with, and people are helped in various ways: “So each person came and had a life story of abuse, illness, of this, of that...And it was all worked at in the education project. So we had those who had depression, those who didn't have self-esteem and we helped them to refer them to places... because of this social mobilization of mine,

I met a lot of people who worked on several fronts, so I used to pick up the phone whenever I needed to (help somebody).” Similar experience was mentioned by P5 when she defined the objective of Redes da Maré and Maré de Notícias to get closer to people and find out what issues they are facing, which can be for example many times problems with domestic violence, and they help the residents to get access to psychological support.

Projects such as community museums serve as keepers of collective memory, as could be seen in the example from Rocinha: “There are several institutions, NGOs that seek to bring the history of Rocinha to people... we have the Sankofa Museum, which does spectacular work, there is a Rocinha without Borders that they also do lots of talking about the history of Rocinha with people who have been in the region for decades. And that's not lacking in Rocinha. If the person wants to seek more information, it will be very easy. And with highly qualified people...”(P6). These places make it possible for people who might not have been born or raised in the territory to get access to the history of the places, strengthening the collective memory of the territory.

Often these projects serve as a way to connect people and to let them know about different opportunities that exist in the favela, but they might not know about them. P4 discusses NGOs spreading information about free educational opportunities for young people, informing them about available courses. They can also act as a protective factor against entering the drug trade, as P3 mentioned a project of Tio Lino, local artist from Rocinha: "And he took the boys from social risk and said: 'No, go away from there, there are firearms, come here, there's a brush here, change your gun for a brush.'"

Participation in these projects gave the participants feeling that they are helping to transform the territory and lives of people in a positive way, which P1 explains as a very gratifying experience: “I'm happy ...I don't earn money, but I earn things that money can't buy. Money comes as a result, you know, of work and such. I feel it has always been like this. Since I started walking with these issues of social projects here too...So, I've always had a lot of opportunity to collaborate with what I know how to do. And also receive a counterpart, right? Back in my land, there's a song that goes like this, there's always a little bit of perfume left in the hands that offer roses, in the hands that know how to be generous, so you really give the flower, but something of it stays in you...”

## **6.6 Expressions of collective identity- Actions in form of resistance**

Shared negative experiences of residents of Rocinha and Maré and their positive identification with the territory is transformed into actions in form of resistance, when residents fight against disinformation, oppression, and stereotypical image of them. The term resistance is used as participants often used the word “fight” when describing their actions: “that we, as residents, have

always fought for it, so everyone understood our struggle, many also joined us to continue in this fight (P6).

### **6.6.1 Necessity of resistance and resistance against rights violation**

Participants mentioned resistance in their lives or in the history of favelas in various contexts. P2 talked about her dream to construct her own house and how she decided to construct it in Rocinha after arriving to Rio, even though she was without money and living as a domestic worker in a house of one family. P5 and P7 talked about the necessity to keep resisting and fighting, even just by making baby steps: "...even if it's not on a large scale. (It causes) change and we'll make it happen. Working doing little baby steps... But it needs to be done". P4 voiced that the residents must continue resisting and cannot normalize violence: "We can't stop, we can't give up. I think that when we accept the situation, it becomes normal, then it's normal to have an operation from top to bottom, it's normal for a *caveirão*<sup>12</sup> to enter, the children having to hide... when we think it's normal, the essence of life is over".

P7 talked a lot about resistance in general: "If somebody comes to push you, you resist, your body resists, right? ... resistance, you know, that's what resistance is. It's the collective meetings, the organizations, right? You keep a diary, sit down, write, and think about your stories, make it reach people... Little resistance, step by step. Against a whole system that says we shouldn't be there at all." The participant described that before the people in favelas did not have visibility or place in the national debate but nowadays, they are being seen more, which is a form of resistance against the efforts of the society to keep them hidden and invisible. He also mentions occupation of the street as an important act of resistance that is central to favela culture: "I think this is very typical ...especially in a favela like Rocinha, this occupation of the street, which is something anti-elitist...".

P5 stressed the importance of knowing the history in terms of knowing what your rights are, which is, according to the participant, crucial in not accepting oppressive treatment of rights violation. P9 talked about the change that happened in terms of residents being more active when it comes to their rights: "When the police invade the house...they (residents) manage to have more autonomy, right? To stand up (to the police) and everything ...They're less intimidated ... I think it's more voice now...because in the past there was almost no (such a thing as) a complaint, there used to be an operation and that's it. You ended up seeing it there, it was on TV and that was it. You know, so today we can see more of these 2 sides also thanks to the awareness of the residents, right?" She stated the work of community media and NGOs as the reason for that, as they work hard on spreading awareness about the rights of residents, which is very important since many times they don't even know about all their rights and to demand their rights they first need to be aware of them.

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<sup>12</sup> Tank used by the military police during police operations.

### 6.6.2 Fighting disinformation and creating counter-narratives

Participants showed a great effort done to break and fight against the stereotypical vision of favelas and against fake news that are often spread about them. They do this by the creation of counter-narratives and true narratives about the territory.

P5 talked about the importance to show that although there is a strong presence of violence, favela should not be defined by that: "...is to show that we are building other things. We are far beyond violence. Here we had an operation this week. Yeah, it was one day. One day of police operation, but all the other 6 days of the week we are working. We are producing culture, we are raising our children. We are struggling, fighting, doing many things beyond what happened one day here. So it is to show who we are, that violence, which is stamped, that (is) what happened once does not reflect what the favela is and its power". P4 talked about the effort of NGO Redes da Maré to show that people can have nice house without having to be necessarily involved in the drug trafficking: "Redes goes against this, showing that that guy can have that television, can have that refrigerator, can have a good house, because he feels good where he is, (he can) transform his surroundings".

Stereotypes are not always just created and spread by the out-group, as pointed out by P5: "...there are several influencers, several digital leaders out there talking about a series of things that, for the most part, do not represent the favela." Therefore, it is important for people to present favela in a realistic way, as emphasized by participants, without contributing to the stereotypical vision of them.

P6 presented his way of dealing with stereotypes and people who see favelas in a negative way: "In fact, we have to keep doing what we do, that's what's most important, to seek improvements. And also expose what is we do well. So, for me, that is enough. No, no need to fight the haters and show them off and all...So that's why I don't focus a lot, I don't spend a lot of energy with haters, because it's not ignorance, no, it's really not wanting to understand, so, no matter how much we say something, they will give their counterpart in a negative way". He understood that some people will keep having negative opinion no matter what and that is why he tries to just focus on creation of positive things without paying attention to this negativity of people.

Culture and art have a transformative power to fight certain stereotypes: "I think that everyone in the favela mobilizes and tries to change this situation that we are still suffering from...it needs to be reversed... And we can reverse it with the culture and art" (P4) ... "we had Estesi and Mat presenting Maré slam to President Lula in Brasilia...You know, it's a poetic and musical movement, talking about what happens here. For the president, look how much weight this has, you know? ... culture has this power to move, to instigate young people, to bring reflection through art" (P5). This is the result of positive cultural identification of residents with the place and determination to change the negative vision that exists in a creative way.



## 6.7 Role of narratives

Narratives mentioned by participants took various forms- oral stories shared by parents, books and poetry written by authors in favelas, stories and articles published in community journals, videos shared on social media, debates and rounds of discussion and artistic narratives such as photographic collection, paintings, music, and performance.

Oral storytelling was used mostly in the past when people didn't know how to read or write and they serve now as a source of collective memory. P7 and P8 talked about stories their parents used to tell them about how the territory used to be in the past: "We here in Brazil, for our cultural formation, we have a very strong oral tradition, so, for example, my mother was a storyteller. Excellent storyteller. She was illiterate, did not know how to read, write, but she told stories excellently. Yes, I remember to this day. We see this oral tradition a lot and it is very common in the favela where I was raised..." (P7) ... "So many legends were created, urban legends like that, about different things, right? It's what people call legends of Maré" (P8).

Narratives also serve as a source of resistance and in the fight against perceived injustice, as proposed by P3 and P7: "So, my narratives today are making these reflections in a very down-to-earth way, telling ...stories of simple people, but that can show, you know, that there is still a frontier of resistance, as if there was a small guerrilla. A little daily guerrilla warfare, each story we write each time we go to write is a new focus of guerrilla warfare." (P7) ... "That's why there has to be this narrative of protest, of denunciation, of saying what's really going on, right? ...That's why we wrote all these narratives" (P3). Writing about what is wrong in the society and denouncing it is one important function of narratives and sharing those can be also form of political action, as P7 asserted. Participants talked about the efforts of society to silence and erase their stories and by continuation in the writing and spreading their stories they practice resistance against this oppression.

Spreading oral or written narratives about the territory can create a sense of belonging and make people value the territory, as proposed by P4,P5,P6, P8 and P9. By organization of discussion rounds and speeches in the community about various issues residents can hear ideas and opinions of others and they can also contribute to the discussion, sharing their experience and ideas.

Participants talked about their effort to create a different narrative about favelas and their residents, fighting the stereotypical vision of favela as a place of violence, bad quality, lack of education and skills. This effort was mentioned by P1,P4, P5, P6 and P9 fighting against disinformation and fake news: "It reached not only the inside audience, which was our goal here, (but also) an outside audience, to demystify all the information that other people get" (P6) ... "...it is difficult for people to get true information circulating widely. There is a lot of fake news anyway, so the work it is even more important that it reaches these people, the people of Maré and outsiders too, for those who see the

favelas in a different way” (P5). There was a lot of visible effort done by participants to show positive and good things about life in a favela as counter-narrative to the vision of favela of mainly negative things: “So if a community media today, grows talking about the positive side of its region, that's great...it's good to talk about the good things, because, as I said, it can make people understand (things) and in some way, even help that these good things to become more and more common” (P6).

Narratives can also inspire, motivate, and empower people, which is done especially by spreading stories of people who overcame difficulties in life, which was observed by P5 and P8: “These are stories that have this journey, right? That escalation. That there is pain, that there is suffering if that is the case, but that there is an evolution, something epic in some sense...I think all of these have this in common, this journey of overcoming obstacles” (P8). Stories of community role models also made people inspired and empower them through the process of identification, making them reflect about their possibilities and creating feeling of self-agency, which makes people become the protagonists of their lives: “Opportunity to see that other people have lived the same or similar stories as them, and they begin to feel a significant part of some cause. Yeah, from then on, they're creating an idea or building an idea, for example, I got some people who didn't believe in themselves and stuff, and we started talking about entrepreneurship, meeting people who lived in that context, and then became successful people because of commerce or industry, or studied to become a technician in something and set up their own businesses, you know?”(P1).

They can also make people feel proud of their community: “These stories, those that make us amazed.” (P8) and they can also improve self-esteem of the residents, as the participants showed that by seeing stories of other people with whom residents can identify can help them feel better about their life: “It may not be a political inspiration, it may not be an LGBT inspiration. It may be as I said some simple person. The stallholder, who was there selling her pastel every Saturday and then you start to think, what a strong woman. Not that this will push you to have a career, go to college, to equip yourself in some way, but it will make you see yourself, for example, not as a failure” (P5).

Narratives can make people reflect about different issues in their lives and in the community: “Today they have precisely the function of making people reflect, right? ...Aware of the power he (the author) has to mess with people's heads, he will write stories that make people wake up” (P7). Besides making people reflect, narratives can also help to make people think in a critical way: “All these narratives that you start to create and take into a favela and you start to make the people of the favela take these texts into their homes. You also create the critical sense” (P3).

## 6.8 Role of community journals

Role of narratives that community journals spread and the work they do has a tangible positive affect on the community and construction of collective identity, as illustrated by the participants. P4, P5, P6, P7 and P9 have a personal experience with contribution to the community journal(s), working for them or even founding them and they provided many insights into their role in the construction of collective identity.

Community journals work on conscientization of residents about their rights as citizens and at the same time try to empower them to demand their rights. They do this by educating people about what their rights are and encourage them to demand them, as P5 stated: "There are several issues. What we always need (to do) is to keep insisting, to bring it up, to relive, to show these memories so that people demand, because if you don't know, you won't demand." In this way we can talk about the role community journals play in mobilization of the community: "Narrative that we do is to accompany this transformation of space, territory together with this resident. To mobilize this resident so there is collective construction" (P4).

Collective action and the work of Maré de Notícias was defined as crucial at times of police operations, when people share the latest news about the continuation of the operation and about the latest shootings and the journal publishes always new updates and serves as a guide for the residents, as described in detail by P5: "...we are very categorical on police operation days. We focus a lot on this, we have a team that is on duty, it's always talking to the residents and with "Maré de Direitos"<sup>13</sup> to understand the complaints... so, we don't only say that the police operation is going on, we cover everything based on the complaints, on what the resident is saying, on what is happening, it ends up being a very big guide for the residents on days of operation...".

The participant also talked about Maré de Notícias being one of the first journal to focus on other things than just violence regarding police operations, focusing on how it impacts education, health, stops the daily life of residents. She mentioned examples of students who had to take their entrance exam for the university and were impeded to do so or lady who was supposed to have a cataract surgery scheduled for 3 months and she might go blind because the health center was closed due to police operation. Nowadays many other journals use this way of reporting police operations, so the community journal in Maré served as an example for others.

The presence of community journals and the information they spread is crucial in terms of representation of the territory and its residents: "...cultural productions, media productions are representations of the favela" (P7). Without these representations there would exist only the representations that the mainstream media does, which is mostly the negative one and comes from

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<sup>13</sup> Project by NGO Redes da Maré to amplify the access to rights of residents of Maré (Redes da Maré, 2023).

the outside and not from the inside: “When we take the mainstream media, social networks, TV, radio, the mainstream media in general. You will see that stereotypes are reinforced, so there is a certain type of stereotype that they like to sell about the favela and they want to make this stereotype reproduce as much as possible” (P7). P4 stated that “we need (to show) that favela has a power, this prejudice has to be changed.”

Community journals are one of the main actors in the fight against stereotypes and creation of counter-narratives about favelas: “I think each one of them (community journals) ...develops practically the same work. Which is trying to focus more on the positive part, right? So I think that all of them are in the same cause, in the same way... With the same purpose...to combat these stereotypes, these wrong ideas that some people have about the community, to humanize it, right? Show here that they are people, they are human beings, they are workers.” Community journals make residents value the community more and spread this also outside of the favela: “...to show that what exists there inside, there exists art in there, right? There’s culture, there’s entrepreneurship. To make this connection, both internal and external, right?” (P9) ... “(our objective is to) try not to attack so much and go back to the territory, to your research basically, to show the culture, to show the good things here” (P5). This is important as it provides residents with positive sources of identification within the territory and can create stronger community and cultural identity.

One of the differences between community journals and mainstream media is the focus on the residents as protagonists of the stories, as pointed out by P5: “...bringing the resident as the protagonist...instead of us being here talking, this happened...we bring a resident: “Talk. What happened at your house? What happened at your door? What kind of violation did you suffer?” There are a number of institutions already looking into it statistically, but it's us bringing the faces and stories behind these data... It's something we say in Maré de Notícias...we are not here to give people a voice. We are here to amplify the voice they already have. It's amplifying what they say, we're just going to give more visibility to what they say, but in their own words.”

The community media in Rocinha and Maré feature stories of residents of the community transforming them into community role models by showing their courage or resistance against harsh life conditions and the people overcoming obstacles in life: “I like the smaller stories too. I have an article I wrote now about Maré marketers, they work at the fair...so talking about these little stories and how they live, you know? There is a lady who is 80 years old. And she is working and built the house and raised her son and paid INSS (social security) and works at the fair, with the money from the fair. I think these stories are also worthy of pride (P5)”. P9 mentions the fact of people seeing people at the cover of the community journal and then seeing them somewhere on the street is a way of connecting people and creating a sense of belonging.

Strengthening of relationships and bonds within the community is one of the objectives of community journals based on opinion of P4, P5, P6 and P8: “I think (the journal) had a mission there, which he honed over time to create a better relationship with the residents” (P8). P5 highlighted the importance of delivering the newspaper personally to the residents in Maré in order to create a feeling of belonging: “We deliver hand by hand in the house of each of the residents of the 17 favelas of Maré, so that we have this contact.” P4 talked about the making young generation also appear in the journal: “And also the young people so that they appear in the photo, have speeches in the young newspaper, so that they feel they belong to the newspaper and then also make them feel they belong to the territory in Maré.”

Connecting the residents and the community is another important function of community journals: “...(the community journal) tends to want to dialogue much more with the resident about everyday issues as a resident, yes, (about) the cultural agenda of what will roll in Maré...some captivating story ...Overcoming stories, very beautiful stories about residents of Maré”(P8)...” So, many times we don't just do the work of telling what happened, but also say where it is happening... this link between them (favelas) also getting to know each other culturally...” Besides that, community journals talk about different cultural and educational projects and some of them serve also as a source of advertisement of local commerce, as mentioned by P6.

P5 and P9 mention the example of how the reaction of people changed during the moment when they received the community journal Maré de Notícias. P5 mentions times when they arrived at some houses and people would refuse to admit that they were from Maré because they felt ashamed and the hard work Maré de Notícias did to change this, showing people that geographically and historically the territory where they live is Maré and during decades they worked by distributing the journal personally door by door to all households in Maré to create this sense of belonging.

P4 talked about the role of the journal in rescuing the history of the territory and construction of collective memory: “Maré de Notícias tells the story, the journalist tells the story, right? It often rescues the history of the territory, right? They're old ladies and gentlemen and they tell you how Maré was founded... and now we are telling the story of each community. It's a discovery, every week, every month, it's a discovery of new things here, in the territory.” In this way the residents can read about places they know and when they were born but might not be aware of the history of the territory, which makes them appreciate the territory more.

## Chapter 7. Discussion

Stigmatized groups often face discrimination, oppression, and social exclusion (Link & Phelan, 2001; Ugiagbe & Eweka, 2014). This can lead to risk in identity development, as belonging to a social group that is a source of shame can lead to conflicts in identification and might make individuals take responsibility for their disadvantaged positions (Liebkind, 1989) and affect their self-esteem in a negative way (Bourguignon et al., 2006). Perceived discrimination is also associated with decreased life satisfaction, depression, and anxiety (Schmitt et al., 2014). On the other hand, in case of positive identification with one's in-group, there are numerous benefits: increased well-being and life satisfaction, buffer against stigmatization and discrimination (Verkuyten, 2012), higher sense of self-esteem and self-agency (Jovchelovitch & Priego Hernandez, 2015), and source of empowerment to fight for common goals and rights (Leach & Livingstone, 2015).

In the context of favelas in Rio de Janeiro and people who inhabit them; they have faced numerous negative stereotypes and instances of prejudice from the moment of their origin, a topic extensively explored previously in the literature about favelas (Perlman, 2010; Rocha, 2017; Valladares, 2019). The stigmatization of favelas has an impact on various areas of lives of favela residents, such as discrimination in terms of limited access to work opportunities (Rocha, 2017), barriers in access to quality education (Santos, 2018), risk of stereotype threat (de Souza, 2018), human rights violations (Amaral, 2020) and detrimental impact on mental and physical health (Construindo Pontes, 2020).

Perceived discrimination can however increase identification with the stigmatized group, as it makes individuals more aware of their group affiliation (Leach et al, 2010). Collective identity, which in the case of favelas is closely related to community and cultural identity, can be used as powerful resource in mobilization of residents to promote collective action focused on solving common problems and achieving common goals (Simon & Braathen, 2018; Neto & Zanolli, 2019; Fleury & Menezes, 2020).

**The main goal of this study was to understand in a deeper way how collective identity of favela residents is constructed, strengthened, and expressed.** Our findings show that collective identity of favela residents is based on both their shared experience of common negative treatment as a group and on positive identification with their in-group. The sense of negative common treatment (Ashmore et al., 2004), collective memory (Usborne & Sablonniere, 2014; Simon & Braathen, 2018), cultural identification (Tommasi, 2016; Cidade, 2020) and community role models were found to be central components in the creation of collective identity. The negative common treatment consisted of perceived stereotypes and prejudice about their in-group, negative mainstream media representation, absence or inefficiency of government and experience of oppression and invisibility.

Results showed that mainstream media are one of the main sources of spreading of negative stereotypes about favela residents, which was proposed also in many previous studies (Da Silva, 2008; Cantarino, 2012; Silva & Araujo, 2012; Nunes, 2017; Palermo, 2018). However, the interaction with media might contribute to a higher sense of recognition and positive identity for the community members provided that journalists present the exact story told by the participants without changing it, as suggested in this study.

The expressions of prejudice might not be as overt nowadays as in the past and can be expressed in form of microaggressions, which are subtle insults aimed at minorities that implicitly communicate hostility and have various detrimental effects on their physical and mental health (Lilienfield, 2017). One of the participants shared her experience with a form of microaggression, when people said she didn't look like somebody from favela, because she was well-mannered and educated. This finding suggests that even though prejudice against favela residents might be less overt in the present, it still exists in the society in blatant form.

Besides experience with negative stereotypes and prejudice, participants also related perceived discrimination and political and societal oppression and their perception of being abandoned by the government (Fernandes, 2021), which resulted in the feeling of distrust or disappointment towards the government (Maiolino et al., 2007). Participants highlighted mainly police violence during police operations and its accompanying violations of human rights (Leite, 2014; Mbembe, 2016). These experiences prompted favela residents to act collectively and rely on each other instead of the government, according to the interviews.

As each favela is a unique place and favelas differ one from another, there exist also stereotypical visions between favelas about another favelas. This indicates that people in favelas, although sharing many common aspects, also differentiate between different territories and might even adopt certain stereotypical visions about other favelas as well. This suggests that minorities also compare themselves with other minority groups, not just the majority group, and they can use it for creation of positive distinctiveness, as also found by Dias Alexandre and colleagues (2007).

Negative stereotypes and prejudice created negative feelings, which led in the past on many occasions to identity concealment, when individuals chose to not disclose some parts of their identity to present themselves in a more socially acceptable way (Quinn, 2006), as when lying about the place of residence when applying for jobs. Over the past years, this shame was transformed into community pride by changing the dimension on which their in-group is compared to the out-group from negative to a positive one, which is an example of positive identity management strategy employed by minorities called social creativity, originally described by Tajfel and Turner (1985).

The positive aspect they focus on the most is their culture, which serves as the most significant marker of positive distinctiveness of favelas from the rest of the city (Lopes, 2009; Tommasi, 2016;

Cidade, 2020). Their identities, which are counter-cultural to the rest of the city, serve as a source of agency and power in collective action (Loria, 2017). This empowering aspect of cultural identity within communities was observed in wide variety of other contexts, such as in the case of community of Tongan and Samoan women in New Zealand (Williams et al., 2003) or Basque ethnic community in Spain (Zabala et al., 2020). Music, which is a strong part of cultural identity of favelas, and identification with it can be protective factors against young people entering the drug trade, proposed by the participants of the study and also in general by Daykin and colleagues (2012).

Street has been mentioned as the principal space where the culture takes place in favelas, as already described by Perlman (2003) and Souza (2020). Interesting comparison of perception of street among favela residents and people from “asfalto” was presented. According to one participant, street in favelas is a symbol of community life, local commerce and culture, whereas in other parts of the city it is a symbol of fear and threat. This is another example of creating positive distinctiveness by switching the aspect on which in-group and out-group are compared.

The interviews revealed prominent importance of collective memory as a building block of collective identity, as it creates sense of belonging in the residents, gives people direction in their lives providing them with identity clarity (Usborne & Sablonniere, 2014) and fosters community pride by serving as a base for the appreciation of the territory and a base for creation of affective attachment to the community (Simon & Braathen, 2018). Culture, territory, and collective memory create the base of collective identity because they give meaning to it, proposed by David and Bar-Tal (2009). Knowing collective history and seeing it as something to be proud of is crucial for resilience when it comes to dealing with perceived unfair treatment and it also makes people more assertive when demanding their rights (Karolewski, 2010).

Drawing from the study's conclusions, community role models provide positive sources of identification with the community, which confirms the previous classical studies on community identity conducted by McMillan & Chavis (1986) and can be observed in other contexts, such as in low-income Latin neighborhoods in the United States, as found by Shetgiri and colleagues (2009). On top of that, they empower people in many ways, for example motivate them to improve their education level. Participants held the view that action of each individual has an impact on the community as whole, showing the community interconnectedness and interdependence. Lack of role models on the other hand presents risk factors (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003), such as entering the drug trade and taking part in illicit activities (Abrams, Christian, & Gordon, 2007). From the interviews emerged the conviction of some participants that in Rocinha there is a lack of community role models, while in Maré there is strong presence of many community role models. This was discussed in the context of community residents who managed to obtain a university degree and moved outside of the favela.



**The collective identity is strengthened by various components**, mainly the empowerment and affective components, based on the research outcomes. Components of collective identity are in reciprocal and correlational relationships, as found by David and Bar-Tal (2009) and some of them can be bi-directional (Roccas et al., 2008). Therefore, some of the abovementioned components that form the base of collective identity could also serve as strengthening factors (for example community role models or cultural identity), depending on the degree of identification. Alternatively, it can signify that collective self-esteem leads to increased pride in one's community, or conversely, community pride can boost collective self-esteem.

The affective components emerging from the interviews were sense of belonging and affective attachment to the community. Community cohesiveness, close relations between people and collective memory contribute to the creation of feeling of belonging and create affective bond to the territory. However, the difference between the past and the present was pointed out by several participants in the case of Rocinha, showing increasing individualism trend in the communities, which follows the global trend of individualism, described by Hall (2006). This difference between Maré and Rocinha in sense of belonging could be explained by looking at the composition of residents- while in Maré there are very few tourists and foreigners moving in, Rocinha is known as the former biggest favela in Latin America, attracting many outsiders. This points to possible threats of weakening of collective identity by the change in composition of favela residents, which could be prevented by focusing on creating a sense of belonging also in the new members of the community.

Sometimes people might feel discouraged or might believe that it's beyond their power to cause some real impact, as mentioned by the participants. Here comes the importance of empowerment components of collective identity. Empowerment occurs both on personal and group level, as indicated by this study. When it comes to community empowerment, it occurs mostly through the development of the community (Stoeffler, 2018).

Education plays a key role in the empowerment of favela residents, as it can serve as a tool that promotes positive change in the community, considering the findings of this study. Firstly, education serves as a transformative tool for individuals, as it opens their minds and exposes them to new ideas (Melo, 2019) and secondly, it serves as an empowerment tool, important for self-esteem and self-efficacy (Orth et al., 2010). Being seen as an educated person leads to seeing oneself in a positive way and thus enhancing self-esteem of the person (Gómez-Estern et al., 2010). In the context of favelas, this might have even greater impact because of the existing stereotype of people from favelas as uneducated people and possibly lowering stereotype threat.

Self-esteem and self-agency are essential for collective action, as the individual has to believe in their own power to make some change and believe in themselves as well. Both of these constructs were mainly affected by the presence and impact of role models in the community by showing possible

ways that participants can take to improve their life conditions and increasing community pride as well. Participants believed in the potential of favelas and they are convinced that it is not used to its fullest, showing very high self of collective self-esteem. Individuals with high collective self-esteem will react in a way that enhances their collective identity when faced with threat or negative feedback (Jetten et al., 2017; Bagci et al.,2023).

**The expressions of collective identity can be divided into two groups: collective actions of creation and collective actions of resistance.** Actions of creation are efforts to develop the territory and solve common problems present in the territory, while actions of resistance are perceived as fight of residents against stereotypical vision of them and mobilization in fight for their rights.

The importance of collective action was highlighted by majority of the participants, who believe that together they can achieve much more as each one individually. Local problems should be solved collectively, based on their opinions. Outen and Schmitt (2015) found out that those who identify with their ingroup might endorse more collective action in order to cope with discrimination and that is in turn associated with greater self-esteem and reduced psychological distress.

Creation of public policies is a critical topic for favela residents, who stressed out the necessity of these being constructed using bottom-up approach. The importance of communities deciding themselves what they need and having a space in decision making process has been repeatedly shown by various authors (Freire,1970; Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez,2018;Ribeiro,2018). Engagement in the creation of public policies is strongly influenced by sense of belonging to the community and territory, as the people need to feel part of the place to be interested in public policies that affect them, as shown in this study.

Involvement in community projects and NGOs can be considered another creative form of collective action of favela residents. NGOs and community projects make a significant impact in favelas, as they strengthen the collective identity by connecting people, fighting for common issues, and taking care of needs of the residents (Custódio,2017). They provide opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, local activism, and leisure, among other ones. Community museums preserve collective memory of the territory and provide access to information about the past. Participation in community projects empowers favela residents, as it increases their self-agency and collective self-esteem (Jovchelovitch and Priego-Hernandez, 2018), and they see direct results of their actions which motivates them to continue improving conditions in their community.

This study found out that many residents in favelas who participate in local projects and dedicate their free time and resources for them do so because they see being part of community as not only a resource, but also a responsibly, which was mentioned by Nowel & Boyd (2010) previously. NGOs also significantly contribute to the creation of community pride by showing the residents all the culture and diversity within the territory, according to the data.

Collective identity serves as a source that can be used for mobilization of people and prompt them to take action to achieve common goals (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). The element of resistance came to the fore many times in the interviews and forms an essential part of the expression of collective identity of favela residents, following up on findings of the previous research about resistance in favelas (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2013; Sneed, 2013; Barbosa, 2014; Lemos, 2018; Motta, 2019; Magalhães;2019). Drury et al. (2005) found out that mere thinking about members of one's social group cooperating to reduce inequality already leads to positive feelings and empowerment. Dos Santos (2011) describes the process of resistance-liberation, during which the new constructed identity of the excluded and oppressed and its affirmation becomes a form of resistance against conditions of domination. Resistance in favelas it was observed in various types of different actions.

One of them is fighting disinformation and creating counter-narratives. The feelings of frustration and indignation with negative images of favelas and the creation of fake news about them motivated favela residents to create a counter-narrative and show positive and good things about their reality (Silva & Araujo, 2012; Muniz & Saback, 2013). Sharing narratives from favelas to the world outside is the most important tool in the fight against disinformation and against negative stereotypes and prejudice (Comelli,2021). By getting their real story reach people, they offer a counter-narrative to what is widely believed, told from their perspective. Creating counter-narratives is an action that can be observed in various other favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro and other parts of Brazil (Fernandes, 2019), but also for example in the context of urban periphery in Lisbon in Portugal (Luria, 2017).

Another form of resistance is the act of fighting perceived injustice and mobilization, which is possible because of collective memory, community pride and self-agency of residents, based on our findings. In the past years people started demanding more rights and react differently when their rights are violated in a sense that they are less intimidated. This was possible because of the work of NGOs in the territory spreading awareness about citizens' rights (Redes da Maré,2023).

**The second goal of this study was to understand how narratives created in favelas and community journals contributed to the process of creation and strengthening of collective identity.** Narratives were confirmed to have a crucial role in identity building (Bruner, 1990; Gómez-Estern et al.,2010; Kremper, 2013; Yang, et al., 2021), affecting various of the previously mentioned components of collective identity. Oral narratives were mentioned by the participants as a tradition and a way of building collective identity in the past, creating sense of belonging and affective attachment in favela residents. Nowadays this role has been taken by community journals and digital media (Davis, 2015).

Narratives were seen as a source of resistance and as a tool in the fight against perceived injustice, as they incite critical thinking and make people reflect on various issues. This can be described as creation of critical consciousness, which was described by Diemer et al. (2016) and is essential for oppressed people's analysis of societal inequities and their motivation to address them. Critical

consciousness helps people also to change narratives that were imposed on them by dominant groups in the society and create counter-narratives, as discussed above.

Narratives make people feel they belong to the territory, and this could be reinforced by discussion rounds and spaces where people can share their stories and opinions and identify themselves with the community and with each other, a practice mentioned in the interview by the participants. Feelings of inspiration, motivation and empowerment are created when people hear or read stories of people belonging to their in-group overcoming life difficulties (Rappaport, 1995). According to our findings, hearing stories of common people from community overcoming difficulties in their lives also makes people proud of the territory and its people. Stories of community role models are important because they activate the mechanism of identification when it is somebody from the community and this in turn increases people's self-esteem and sense of self-agency; it makes them feel that they also can achieve things, just like their neighbors or people with similar experience to theirs.

Community journals are one of the main vehicles which spread narratives in favelas, therefore they fulfill all the functions that narratives do in collective identity creation and on top of that some more. Even though mainstream media is perceived in a very negative way by favela residents, community journals are on the other hand viewed very positively. One of the main important roles they play is spreading awareness about rights and encouragement of people to demand them (Amaral, 2020). This resulted in collective action of mobilization of residents during police operations and helping each other by spreading information on the days of police operations using community chats on social media and provision of assistance in case of rights violations helping residents denouncing them.

They are an important source of information that comes within the community, and they are careful not to twist the story and use exactly the words of residents when doing interviews about some issues. They make the residents the protagonists of the stories, which makes them feel recognized and strengthens their local identity, as also described by Davis (2015). This gives the residents a space where they are represented by people from their community, which holds great significance in case of stigmatized communities facing oppression (Rennie, 2005).

Another important role community journals play is to connect people in the community, strengthening their relationships and bonds between them. They share information about cultural events and try to elevate the culture and positive things in the territory, showing people the good things that surround them, creating positive identification with the territory (Amaral, 2019).

Rescuing collective memory of the territory is considered very important for community journals, as they are aware of its crucial role in creation of collective identity. They do it by sharing stories about the history of different parts of the favela and presenting it in an interesting way (Fala Roça, 2023; Redes da Maré, 2023).

## **7.1 Limitations of the study**

This study should be interpreted regarding its limitations. The participants of this study were people who were highly involved in the process of collective identity building, which does not show how these processes develop in “common” residents who might not be involved in any projects or collective actions. It is possible that other residents might identify less with the community, as they are not involved directly in the community collective action and people can differ in their degree of identification with the collective (Jackson & Smith, 1999).

Additionally, an external position of researcher could be regarded as a limitation. There is a necessity for the research about favelas to be made also from the members of the in-group, which might avoid some misinterpretations made by the external observers studying certain communities. As emphasized by the participants, those who reside in favelas possess the most comprehensive understanding of their own challenges and circumstances.

## **7.2 Conclusions and directions for future research**

This study explored primarily the construction, strengthening and expressions of collective identity in favelas of Rocinha and Maré, and secondarily the role of narratives and community journals in this process. There are several final remarks that should be mentioned, as well as theoretical and practical implications of this study.

Firstly, It is important to highlight the heterogeneity among favelas and that findings of this study should be interpreted considering this fact. Each favela is unique and the construction of collective identity might differ based on the specific context of each favela. By understanding these communities, we can build bridges between different favelas and also between favelas and the rest of the city.

Secondly, it might be interesting to compare directly work of two community journals, which wasn't possible in the case of this study as approached participants from the community journal of Rocinha “Fala Roça” did not participate in the study. This could show different practices and how context of each favela influences the community media production and process of creation of narratives.

Theoretical implications of this research showed importance to further analyze several aspects. One of them is the impact of intersectionality of favela residency and race in the process of stigmatization and oppression, which emerged in the interviews mainly mentioning the situations of racial police bias during police operations. Being a black person and a resident of favela might elevate the impact of oppression and discrimination that favela residents experience due to racism present in the society (Håndlykken-Luz, 2020).

This study pointed at the possibility of the gradual shift from overt form of prejudice to blatant one, in the case of people who live outside of favelas. It also showed how minority groups can compare themselves not only to majority group but also to other minorities. These two findings show an importance of further detailed research of prejudice mechanisms in both favela residents and people living in other parts of the city. Understanding these forms of prejudice is essential in order to combat them.

This study also suggests the potential use of art and culture as effective tools for breaking down negative stereotypes about stigmatized groups, which should be further analyzed in detail in future research. What might be also interesting to discover is if culture is used as the key element of positive distinctiveness in other favelas in the city, or if this is specific for context of Rocinha and Maré.

This research provides a rich base for further research which could focus on some specific aspect or component of collective identity, bringing more understanding into the relations between different elements and their interaction. There is an importance to replicate this study in other favelas to see what peculiarities can be applied in other contexts. We could hypothesize that in favelas where there exists little preservation of collective memory, collective identity would be weaker, because collective memory forms a strong base for collective identity, as found in this study. It might be interesting to also study smaller favelas and see if population size has an impact on collective identity. Smaller size favelas might have stronger collective identity supposing that people had closer ties and there would exist higher cohesiveness among residents.

Further research should also examine what motivates young people after obtaining their university degree to come back to the community and serve as a role model helping other younger generations to motivate them in their studies, as there was a difference in the perception of residents in terms of lack of role models in their communities.

Practical implications of this research are that the findings of this study can provide feedback for community writers and journalists who were interviewed and give them valuable insights into their contribution to collective identity building and using these findings in their practical work, for example in community journals and initiatives to promote collective identity.

On top of that, results of this study point to the importance of investment into education in favelas, as it was demonstrated to be an important empowerment component on individual and community level. It could also make people from these territories less excluded from the rest of the city. Public policies aimed at favelas should not only focus on visible urban upgrades but also on social factors and investment in the education and improving of life quality from other aspects too, as also found out by extensive research on favelas done by Perlman (2010).

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## **Annex**

### **A. Interview questions**

#### **Portuguese version**

1. Você pode descrever sua experiência com a criação de narrativas na Rocinha/Maré?
2. Você pode citar alguns exemplos de narrativas que tiveram um impacto positivo na comunidade?
3. Você acha que existe um sentimento de pertencimento na Rocinha/Maré?
4. Você acha que as pessoas que moram na Rocinha/Maré têm orgulho disso?
5. Que tipo de histórias você acha que inspiram as pessoas e as fazem agir?
6. Como você envolve pessoas que normalmente não leem ou não estão interessadas em ler livros/jornais?
7. Como você acha que a mídia comunitária difere entre a Rocinha/Maré e outras favelas?
8. Que você considera específico da cultura da Rocinha/Maré?
9. Que desafios você enfrentou na criação de narrativas?

#### **English translation**

1. Can you describe your experience with creation of narratives in Rocinha/Maré?
2. Can you mention some example of a narrative that had a positive impact on the community?
3. Do you think that there exists sense of belonging in Rocinha/Maré?
4. Do you think people who live in Rocinha/Maré are proud of it?
5. What kind of stories do you think inspire people and make them take action?
6. How do you engage people who normally don't read or are not interested in reading books/journals?
7. How do you think community media differ between Rocinha/Maré and other favelas?
8. What do you consider specific for culture of Rocinha/Maré?
9. What challenges have you faced creating narratives?

## B. Informed consent

### CONSENTIMENTO INFORMADO

O presente estudo surge no âmbito de um projeto de investigação a decorrer no **Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa**.

O estudo tem por objetivo *examinar como as práticas de narrativas (storytelling) criam, moldam e reforçam a identidade cultural positiva dos moradores das favelas da Rocinha e da Maré e também comparar as práticas de narrativas usadas nessas comunidades*. A sua participação no estudo, que será muito valorizada, irá contribuir para o avanço do conhecimento neste domínio da ciência, consiste *em participação em uma sessão de 45 a 60 minutos durante a qual será realizada entrevista semiestruturada com os participantes*. As entrevistas serão gravadas (em caso de entrevista pessoal será gravada somente a voz, em caso de entrevista pelo Zoom serão gravados a voz e imagem).

O Iscte é o responsável pelo tratamento dos seus dados pessoais, recolhidos e tratados exclusivamente para as finalidades do estudo, tendo como base legal o seu consentimento baseado em art. 6º, nº1, alínea a) e/ou art. 9º, nº2, alínea a) do Regulamento Geral de Proteção de Dados.

O estudo é realizado por Lucia Janoková (contacto: [janokova.lucia@gmail.com](mailto:janokova.lucia@gmail.com)) que poderá contactar caso pretenda esclarecer uma dúvida, partilhar algum comentário ou exercer os seus direitos relativos ao tratamento dos seus dados pessoais. Poderá utilizar o contacto indicado para solicitar o acesso, a retificação, o apagamento ou a limitação do tratamento dos seus dados pessoais.

A participação neste estudo é **confidencial**. Os seus dados pessoais serão sempre tratados por pessoal autorizado vinculado ao dever de sigilo e confidencialidade. O Iscte garante a utilização das técnicas, medidas organizativas e de segurança adequadas para proteger as informações pessoais. É exigido a todos os investigadores que mantenham os dados pessoais confidenciais.

Além de confidencial, a participação no estudo é estritamente **voluntária**: pode escolher livremente participar ou não participar. Se tiver escolhido participar, pode interromper a participação e retirar o consentimento para o tratamento dos seus dados pessoais em qualquer momento, sem ter de prestar qualquer justificação. A retirada de consentimento não afeta a legalidade dos tratamentos anteriormente efetuados com base no consentimento prestado.

O seus dados pessoais serão conservados *pelo período de máximo 6 meses após as provas públicas do mestrado (julho/agosto 2023)*, após o qual serão destruídos ou anonimizados, garantindo-se o seu anonimato nos resultados do estudo, apenas divulgados para efeitos estatísticos, de ensino, comunicação em encontros ou publicações científicas.

Não existem riscos significativos expectáveis associados à participação no estudo.

O Iscte não divulga ou partilha com terceiros a informação relativa aos seus dados pessoais.

O Iscte tem um Encarregado de Proteção de Dados, contactável através do email [dpo@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:dpo@iscte-iul.pt). Caso considere necessário tem ainda o direito de apresentar reclamação à autoridade de controlo competente – Comissão Nacional de Proteção de Dados.

**Declaro** ter compreendido os objetivos de quanto me foi proposto e explicado pelo/a investigador/a, ter-me sido dada oportunidade de fazer todas as perguntas sobre o presente estudo e para todas elas ter obtido resposta esclarecedora. **Aceito** participar no estudo e consinto que os meus dados pessoais sejam utilizados de acordo com a informações que me foram disponibilizadas.

Sim  Não

**Autorizo** a gravação da voz (entrevista pessoal) ou gravação da voz e a imagem (entrevista pelo Zoom).

Sim  Não

Algumas pessoas podem querer ser identificadas por vários motivos, considerando a natureza deste estudo. Caso pretenda que o seu nome verdadeiro seja mencionado na dissertação, por favor assine aqui.

**Declaro** que dou minha autorização para que meu nome completo seja citado no trabalho de dissertação de Lucia Janoková.

Sim  Não

\_\_\_\_\_ (local), \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (data)

**Nome:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assinatura:** \_\_\_\_\_