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The Social Conscience of Rap:
What Young People Learn from Hip-Hop about Everyday Ethics

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Abstract

This dissertation explores hip-hop as a moral philosophy in action; a set of aesthetic and ethical values that manifest in young people's perspective about *the good life*. Hip-hop is an arts movement of rap, movement, and style originating among Black and Latinx youth in the South Bronx during the late 1970s. In contemporary times hip-hop exists in a collection of scenes and activities, in *hoods* across the globe, where many young people participate as fans, artists, producers, interpreters, critics and consumers, because it resonates with their subjective tastes and their social identities. It is the most consumed genre in the American popular music industry; a multi-billion dollar industry including fashion and technology, and a consistent generator of new lingo, styles and memes. All of these material manifestations of hip-hop (rap verses, music videos, and linguistic forms) also have ideational manifestations in the thoughts, attitudes, and values of the people that inhabit hip-hop scenes. This dissertation is an empirical study of how those values (especially the values of authenticity, fairness, and loyalty) manifest in millennial *hip-hop heads*. The study assesses the impact of hip-hop on young people's moral lives; which values they prioritize as sacred, the types of moral questions/critiques they pose, their approach to moral dilemmas, how they relate to various members of their social worlds and maintain obligations to them. Hip-hop, like many artforms (including surrealism and anime) has a certain ethos or philosophy that accompanies it. In places where there is a hip-hop scene there are also individuals compelling others to *keep it real*, *stay woke*, and *stay down* along with a host of other moral imperatives. This dissertation is an inquiry into the features of that philosophy and how it manifests in the values and behaviors of the young people that appropriate it. To explore hip-hop philosophy in action I use a variety of mixed methods (validated psychological assessments, discourse analysis, ethnographic observation and semi-structured interviews).

Keywords: hip hop culture, morality, discourse, value socialization, cultural psychology, interpretive communities, moral vernacular, multimodal literacy, rap lyrics, moral pluralism, culture and cognition, sociogenesis, arts education, culturally sustaining pedagogies

Chapter Summaries:

I begin (Chapter 1) with a review of the psychology literature (1994-2016) that investigated the effect of rap music on youth and adolescent psychology. Early studies focus exclusively on proving or disproving correlations between hip-hop listening and problem behavior (i.e. aggression, risky sexual behavior, property crime, school failure, etc.). In response to the deficit approach taken by various early researchers, the chapter ends with an articulation of an alternative approach to investigating the ethics of rap music; one based in sociocultural theories of development. This approach privileges the voices of hip-hop practitioners themselves and asks them for their subjective accounts of their fundamental values instead of assuming deviance based on mainstream standards.

In the first empirical study (Chapter 2) I use validated psychological measures to assess the moral attitudes of college-aged hip-hop listeners in Chicago, as they compare to a group of non-listeners who were enrolled in the same university course. This study finds that hip-hop heads prioritize the values of fairness and authenticity to a higher degree than their non-listening counterparts. Conversely, when it comes to the value of submitting to authority, they value this moral principle less than their non-listening peers. This chapter suggests that one useful way to describe how hip-hop philosophy manifests itself in young people, is to say that it socializes youth into a

cultural matrix of moral priorities which includes an emphasis on the values of *realness* (authenticity) and *wokeness* (awareness of social inequality).

The next study (Chapter 3) takes the approach of discourse analysis to explore how moral vernacular from hip-hop music (catchphrases and proverbs) become part of the everyday conversation of young people. I trace the historical origin of the popular catchphrase *no new friends* back to its original delivery by Drake in his 2013 song, to its rise as a common mantra amongst the wider hip-hop community. Using data from clinical interviews I conducted with 21 young people, I explore how they used this phrase in their everyday lives and how this cultural concept manifests in their own personal understandings of their commitments to their friends. The conclusions of this study were that hip-hop is a language rooted in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) with cultural concepts that shape the way its practitioners describe and prescribe their social worlds, equipping them with a language of downness, a social language that articulates sacred pledges of loyalty and solidarity.

The dissertation ends with an analysis (Chapter 4) of hip-hop gurus (or guides), individuals who are intentionally using hip-hop practices as a means of teaching ethics. This includes teachers, rappers, and therapists who argue that the hip-hop based lessons they teach in their classrooms/lyrics/sessions provide students/listeners/clients with resources that they can employ on their moral quests for *the good life*. In case studies of 3 hip-hop gurus from across the United States, I describe approaches that they use to manifest the hip-hop philosophy in their students in order to encourage expansive patterns of social relationship based on intimacy, hustling and restorative justice.

Acknowledgements

The phrase "research is me-search" has loomed large in the social sciences lately as scholars acknowledge that their topics of study are nowhere near dispassionate inquiries into arbitrary aspects of the social world. Thank goodness there are LGBTQIA scholars building "queer theory" and Muslim scholars studying the sociology of Islam. The research topics we choose in graduate school are often fronts to investigate our own identity, to engage in some sort of personal psychoanalysis or therapy or to bring some much needed answers to personal challenges we are struggling with, or even to find policy answers to social issues that have affected our own communities. My dissertation certainly fits the category of *me-search*, being that it is a study of the cultural impact of an artform which is my personal all-time favorite genre and has been a personal conduit to the divine.

On the other hand, when it comes to describing how this investigation was carried out, another phrase has emerged as even more fitting: ***research is we-search***. This dissertation is the result of various people's overlapping quests for meaning, some people quite near to me and some quite distant (in other departments, in other hoods, in previous generations). I give shout outs to the humans (living and ancestral) that co-create my reality.

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remember, at my lowest moment when I felt like I couldn't go on, you looked me dead in my eye and said "don't feel sorry for yourself" and from that point forward I refuse to do so. There's too much work to get done. Also I send a salute of "REST IN POWER" to my brother Brent D. Carr who was tragically shot and taken from us weeks before the completion of this project. I hear your laughter daily and channel your fearlessness as much as possible. Shout outs to all of my siblings including our matriarch-in-training Nalo Wise who continues to pull our family together through her leadership and charisma; and aunties, and uncles, and fake cousins, and real cousins and on and on and on.

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Introduction:

Gaining One's Definition

Positioning the Author and Study In Their Current Social Context

ABSTRACT: The social sciences is replete with various instances of observer's bias; occasions where a researcher's interpretation of a community or culture was disseminated as truth with a capital T, and was later revealed to reflect the perspective of a narrow cultural vantage point, or a very particular ideological viewpoint. Therefore a foundational principle of rigorous research is that of reflexivity, a process in which the researcher is introspective about his/her own social position and how this position shapes the lens through which they observe and analyze their subjects. The first chapter is an attempt to make this process of self-reflection explicit by writing about my own background with hip-hop music, the role it plays in my life, and how topics of ethics became central to my investigation. In this section I also look to frame our current obsession with hip-hop's morality as a case of something much more pervasive throughout the history of humanity, the attempt to label certain genres (and the people that relate to those genres) as sacred or profane.

Across cultural communities and throughout human history the development of morality has always been a process that unfolded with the aid of language and media. From proverbs to sacred religious texts to social commentary documentaries, these media serve various purposes from preserving cultural traditions of moral thought, to contesting prevailing local norms, to framing new moral and societal dilemmas. These texts play primary roles in the developmental contexts where individuals learn the general codes of conduct of their communit(ies) and engage with these norms to develop their own values. Human populations from all over the world incorporate media of multiple modalities (verbal stories, children's story books, sermons, religious texts, etc.) into their efforts to engender positive moral dispositions in their young people.

Communities have also worried about the negative effects of certain media genres on youth moral development. There are several historical examples such as during 17th Century England when legislation was passed to ban erotica novels. A significant concern throughout human history has been that young people that are exposed to illicit genres, will attempt to imitate indecent behavior, learning to value acts that are viewed as immoral. Because of this, social scientists interested in moral development have often studied the influence of particular cultural products (violent video games, sexually explicit music lyrics, etc.) on young people's moral reasoning.

The program of research detailed in this dissertation explores one modern controversial genre of media and the participants that engage with them- rap music and rap listeners. Rap music finds itself as the object of both zealous praise and vehement disdain. One side claims that rap texts represent the critical voice of urban youth and the cultural lifeways these communities use to survive and resist oppression. The other side suggests that rap music encourages moral deviance and antisocial attitudes. Understanding the effects of rap music on values has implications for whether parents encourage or discourage their children to listen to the musical style, the depiction of the genre in public discourse, and the acceptance of rap music as a legitimate form in the canon of American music.

The community of study in this research includes young people in Chicago that dedicate a great deal of their daily lives listening to hip-hop lyrics, scouring digital spaces for songs that appeal to their refined tastes, attending events where other rap listeners convene and rap music is played, and sharing/discussing rap music with peers. Some of them write and perform rap lyrics themselves, using the artform as a primary mode of artistic expression. This study explores the ways in which these frequent participants in rap culture engage with the moral discourses that are embedded in rap lyrics - the claims that rappers make about what is right and wrong. Rap music acts as a significant component

of the sociocultural context in which these adolescents are developing an understanding of their moral obligations. In particular, these studies explore how rap listeners appropriate from lyrics ways of conceptualizing and articulating notions of social justice, authenticity, loyalty and resistance.

Autobiographical Narrative

One of my earliest memories of rap music was that my parents didn't want me to listen to a lot of it. As an adolescent I had a deep respect for my parents and their values. I didn't rebel much against their rules or expectations. But we disagreed deeply when it came to rap music. My perspective on my mom and dad's opinion of rap is summed up by the title of Will Smith's 1988 Grammy Award winning song - "Parents just don't understand." They simply did not understand rap. When I use the word "understand" I mean two things. First I mean that they didn't get what was so appealing about it. It didn't appeal to their aesthetic sensibilities that were sculpted by the more melodic stylings of 1960s and 70s Black American music; Teddy Pendergrass, Diana Ross and James Brown. But secondly, they also couldn't understand it in the sense that they could not comprehend the words. When it came to making out the words in rap music my parents were functionally illiterate.

I knew from a very early age that parsing the lyrics of rap music required a particular type of literacy. It required perceptual acuity to hear the words as they were rattled off in rapid fire amidst drum-heavy backing beats and often discordant chords. You also had to be able to understand the messages that were being conveyed, which were often filled with obscure references to various subcultures and coded language. One of the people in my life that was the most hip-hop literate was my friend Hamadi. He was a voracious reader of all types and genres of art and literature from X-Men comic books to African-American literature, but he was also a "hip-hop head." When we were listening

to C.R.E.A.M (Cash Rules Everything Around Me) by the Wu-Tang Clan he could tell you that the Rza had sampled "As Long as I've Got You" by The Charmels to make the instrumental for the song and that in the fourth bar of the first verse, when Raekwon says "So then we moved to Shaolin Land," he is making a reference to a nickname for the Staten Island borough that the rap group resides in, but he is also referring to the Shaolin monks, a group of Chinese Buddhists that created a school of Kung Fu during the 5th Century. When I would sit around in Hamadi's basement watching Rap City and listening to him drop knowledge, I would think to myself "how can I be down with this?"

I didn't have any money to buy music so I would walk the Eastside streets back and forth between the various library branches to check out CDs. The Columbus Metropolitan Library system was consistently ranked in the Top 5 systems in the country and they had made a conscious effort to keep hundreds of thousands of audio tapes, CDs and other recordings of popular music. This is where I borrowed some of the classics of the rap music canon: *Resurrection* (Common 1994), *Foundation* (Brand Nubian), *I Wish My Brother George Was Here* (Del tha Funky Homosapien), *3 Feet High and Rising* (De La Soul), *Black Star* (Mos Def & Talib Kweli), *Illmatic* (Nas), *ATLiens* (Outkast). I would take them home and play them over and over again (and if they made the cut they would be illegally burned onto CD-Rs and added to my collection).

There was something motivating my desire to be literate in rap beyond just wanting to be expert or cool. There was something about these rap lyrics and the way these poets were attempting to make sense of their place in this world, to find purpose, to find their voice. There was something particularly attractive about the way they confidently asserted their location in the underground. They emanated a sense of righteousness and bravado in being an outsider.

As a thirteen-year-old kid I was an outsider. I was learning what it was like to be a black youth in a society that gives many signals that black boys were different. I was also an outsider to many of the institutions of my own community. When they were in their twenties my parents had left the Black church and many of the other traditions of their family to join the All African People's Revolutionary Party. Therefore I was raised an atheist, socialist, and black nationalist cultural dissident and these marginal identities pervaded all parts of our household. I was constantly being reminded of my place on the margin. When my Fairwood Elementary classroom did the Thanksgiving Day play I was pulled out of the classroom because participating in holidays glorifying the capturing of Native lands was against our belief system. While the students in my class were doing plays about Pilgrims and Indians, I would make my way to the detention room to join the rest of the outcasts, mainly Jehovah's Witnesses.

For some reason this outsider status was validated in rap music. There was a sense of pride in being outside the mainstream. There were people with Africentric beliefs just like my family's. There were rappers that claimed to be part of fringe spiritual movements like the 5 Percent Nation of Gods and Earths. And they seemed to not only be proud of these beliefs, but think they were cool. Rap reflected young men of color like me and Hamadi who were sorting through a number of influences that tried to lay claim on our lives (the church, the schools, the sports teams, and the gangs) in order to develop our own voice. As an adolescent in the process of defining my own identity these searchers were role models for G.O.D. (gaining one's definition):

G.O.D. Gaining One's Definition
Common (1997)

Some say that God is Black and the devil's White
Well, the devil is wrong and God is what's right
I fight, with myself in the ring of doubt and fear
The rain ain't gone, but I can still see clear
As a child, given religion with no answer to why
Just told believe in Jesus cause for me he did die
Curiosity killed the catechism
Understanding and wisdom became the rhythm that I played to
And, became a slave to master self
A rich man is one with knowledge, happiness and his health
My mind had dealt with the books of Zen, Tao the lessons
Qur'an and the Bible, to me they all vital
And got truth within 'em, gotta read them boys

You just can't skim 'em, different branches of belief
But one root that stem 'em, but people of the venom try to trim 'em
And use religion as an emblem
When it should be a natural way of life
Who am I or they to say to whom you pray ain't right
That's who got you doing right and got you this far
Whether you say "in Jesus name" or "Al-hamdu lillāh"
Long as you know it's a bein' that's supreme to you
You let that show towards others in the things you do
Cuz when the trumpets blowin, 24 elders surround the throne
Only 144,000 gon' get home
Only 144,000 gon' get home
Only 144,000 gon' get it baby

Figure 1. An excerpt from Common's 1997 song G.O.D. (Gaining One's Definition), featuring Cee-Lo Green. The song is Track 7 on the album *One Day It'll All Make Sense* (0:49 – 2:06).

But I also couldn't ignore the problematic images in rap music. While Common investigated spirituality and the metaphysical in the verse above, I also heard what he sometimes said about women. He ends another verse declaring unapologetically "I wanna bone Jada Pinkett and that ho Patra." Sometimes the hypersexuality of rap validated my own emerging desires as a pubescent teen, but other times I could feel that there was something destructive about the misogyny and objectification that found a safe place in rappers' words.

This nuance is what makes hip-hop such a rich place to study morality. The process by which we learn to "do good" is unstable and situated: sometimes we are intensely focused on the ethical implications of our actions, sometimes we are not thinking about morality at all. Sometimes the pressures of our environment make it so that ethical action is hard or even impossible to carry out.

Sometimes we even use morality as a shield to justify actions we know are deeply problematic. Sometimes if we simply knew better, we would do better. Didier Fassin suggest that morality is "the subjective work produced by agents to conduct themselves in accordance with their inquiry about what a good life is." This dissertation is an attempt to use what social scientists have learned about the human mind, human learning, and human culture; as well as a number of methodological tools like ethnography, clinical interviews and experimental psychology in order to systematically study this deeply subjective facet of human experience: morality. Hip-hop is the case study. The hip-hop community is the group of humans that is spotlighted. But my hope is that the richness and diversity of the hip-hop community can be seen as a microcosm of a more universal challenge that has confronted all human communities.

As I write this dissertation we are in the midst of another momentous turning point when it comes to whether rap will be defined as virtuous or vicious in the public imagination. The rap community has been devastated by allegations of child molestation levied against one of rap's original artistic innovators, Afrika Bambaata. Bambaata has been affectionately nicknamed the godfather of hip-hop, famous for producing one of hip-hop's original mega hits, Planet Rock. He was also the founder of the Universal Zulu Nation, an organization responsible for reforming neighborhood gangs of the South Bronx, transforming these organizations that had once been criminal enterprises into a sprawling service organization offering cultural programming for youth across the New York area. This legacy of community service and cultural innovation was tainted when Ronald Savage, one of the young men mentored in the UZN 40 years ago, told his story of being sexually abused by Bambaata when he was 14 years old. Since his allegations surfaced in March of 2016 several other men, now in their 50s, have stood up to tell similar stories of being abused by the godfather. These allegations conjure a number of

questions about the very nature of hip-hop: How can we see hip-hop as a cultural tradition of navigating righteousness when one of its primary founders victimized some of the most vulnerable members of the community?

In many ways, hip-hop as a culture has been as contradictory as the godfather himself. In his Bigger and Blacker standup comedy routine Chris Rock spoke to the contradiction of having a presence in your life that has both empowered and abused you:

> "If you're black, you got to look at America a little bit different. You got to look at America like the uncle who paid for you to go to college - but who molested you" (Rock 1999)

Inserting Rock's jarring humor into the discussion is not to make light of the tragic pain that hundreds of thousands of victims of sexual abuse have endured. It is to show the brutal contradiction that exists within all moral codes from the Declaration of Independence to The 10 Crack Commandments (Smalls 1997). Ironically, hip-hop has at times been similar to the American culture that it was bent on subverting. It has both freed us and abused us. This music has been the soundtrack for spiritual elevation and the soundtrack for drive-by shootings. It has taught us how to cope, feel hope, and sell dope.

Since its very beginning hip-hop has had an ethos of intervening in culture. It is counter-culture, not in that it opposes everything that American society is about, but in that it gives agency to the self to change the society in the way we see fit. It has offered this agency to speak up and intervene to the most marginalized segments of society. This dissertation has been written to be informative to the cultural interventionist. This dissertation is written to be informative for parents, teachers, artists and listeners that wish to change the culture (both American and hip-hop culture) in the way they see fit. Parents are considering this when deciding what music to expose to their children, which songs from their past are

worth sharing with their kids, which songs to shelter their children from, and which conversations to have with them to help them navigate the themes that are in this music. Educators are infusing hip-hop literature into their curriculum in order to model the philosophical questioning of Jay-Z and the verbal facility of Lil Wayne. My hope is that this research can be informative to those that wish to intervene, especially those that wish to intervene from the inside. What has the past 40 years of hip-hop history taught us about how this artform has produced artifacts and practices that influence our moral development? Armed with this information how can we foster a culture that heals persistent problems, and gives young people the tools to continue the struggle of human beings to live ethical lives and build a healthy and just social order? This is the motivation of this research.

Chapter 1:

Psychologists Just Don't Understand

Rethinking the Influence of Rap Music on Youth Psychology

ABSTRACT: This chapter reviews the psychology literature (1994-2016), focusing on empirical studies that investigated the effect of hip-hop music on the psychology of youth and adolescents. The review finds that early studies focus exclusively on substantiating or disproving correlations between hip-hop listening and problem behavior (i.e. aggression, risky sexual behavior, property crime, school failure, etc.). Researchers primarily took a deficit approach to hip-hop culture, and it wasn't until 2002 that a small group of researchers began exploring the possible positive benefits of rap, exploring the efficacy of *hip-hop therapy* in clinical settings (. The chapter ends with an explanation of an alternative approach to investigating the ethics of rap music; one based in sociocultural theories of development. This approach privileges the voices of hip-hop practitioners themselves and asks them for their subjective accounts of their fundamental values. The concluding section articulates foundational principles of a sociocultural approach to studying morality.

Introduction:

The role that hip-hop plays in the moral lives of children has been historically contested since the start of the genre. After the rise of rap music during the 1980s there were lively debates in the popular media about the harmful effects of the genre. Organizations like the PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center) claimed that rap music and other offensive genres (i.e. heavy metal) had a detrimental impact on the moods, attitudes and behaviors of young people, influencing them to engage in high-risk or deviant activities such as illegal drug use, gang violence, and premarital sex (Ballard & Coates 1995). This organization lobbied the US Congress to require record companies to place warning labels on albums with offensive content, so that parents could protect their children from the harmful effects. The current policy of the RIAA to place parental advisory stickers on the packaging of music recordings (and on the album art of digital sales) was instituted under the auspices of protecting youth from harm.

Figure 2. *Parental Advisory sticker designed by the Recording Industry Association of America in order to inform parent consumers about explicit language and content in recorded music. Since the 1980s record companies have worked with artists to label which albums and songs will receive this special designation. The industry has also developed a widespread practice of re-recording "clean" versions of songs deemed explicit..*

There were also claims about the negative effects of rap music levied by members of the Black community. C Dolores Tucker the African-American Secretary of State in Pennsylvania who proclaimed that she was on a "crusade against rap" was responsible for getting the US Congress to hold hearings against rap music (Smitherman 1997). Her criticism focused on misogynistic, sexually explicit and violent lyrics. Underlying these calls for censorship was an assumption that exposing children to rap music induced moral deviance. The claims made by C Dolores Tucker and the PMRC were highly debatable. At this point there was little evidence to suggest that mere exposure to rap lyrics had any effect on the attitudes or behavior of the young people that listened to them. This lack of evidence garnered the attention of psychological researchers interested in adolescent development.

1.) Psychological Studies of the Influence of Rap Lyrics on Adolescent Behavior

During the early 1990s many concerned psychologists began exploring the tie between rap music and moral deviance. Took & Weiss (1994) conducted the first of these studies, attempting to establish if there was a link between listening to rap music and "adolescent psychosocial turmoil." Psychosocial

turmoil was characterized by a number of behaviors including substance abuse, sexual activity, illegal behavior and "less traditional religious affiliation." The subjects in this study included 88 adolescents that were outpatients at a military medical center and psychiatric clinic. It is important to note that because of the location of this sample at a clinic that treated behavioral disorders, it should be expected that the incidence of psychosocial turmoil would be higher in the subject pool than in the general population. The study compared the adolescents at this clinic that had a preference for rap (and/or heavy metal music) with those that did not. Researchers found significant positive correlation ($p<.05$) between these genre preferences and markers of adolescent turmoil. For example, 44% of rap/heavy metal listeners (R/HM) had been suspended or expelled from school, as compared to only 23% of non-listeners. This trend continued for other behaviors like below average grades (46% R/HM, 24% Other), illicit drug use (23%R/HM, 8% Other), sexual activity (40% R/HM, 18% Other), and history of arrest (45% R/HM, 20% Other).

These results seemed quite convincing, however, when researchers controlled for gender most of these correlations became statistically insignificant. What appeared at first to be a correlation between rap listening and deviance was actually due to the fact that the rap/heavy metal listening group included significantly more males (64% male) than the non-listening group (35% male). The increased levels of sexual activity, drug use, and arrest history in the R/HM group were likely due to these activities being more common in males than females.

The only significant differences that remained when they controlled for gender were related to problems in school. Were these problems in school a result of exposure to rap music? When the data was interrogated, it didn't seem to support the narrative of rap influencing their school engagement. The rap listeners with poor grades also had poor school records at the elementary level, prior to their

developing an interest in rap or heavy metal. Based on these results Took & Weiss offered a conclusion about the public outcry to protect American children from rap and heavy metal music:

> These findings suggest that the appropriate place for intervention may not necessarily be with adolescents and their music, but rather with elementary school children who are having problems. If these children can be helped to have more of a sense of accomplishment in their school work the need to seek alternatives can be abated. (Took & Weiss 1994)

Although the Took & Weiss study seemed to invalidate any causative link between rap listening and problem behavior, it was followed by numerous studies by other researchers that did, in fact, find correlations between rap listening and deviant behavior, including violent or aggressive attitudes/behaviors (Miranda & Claes 2004, Chen et al. 2006, Johnson et al. 1995a, Tanner et al. 2009, Selfhout et al. 2008), decreased academic aspirations/engagement (Johnson et al. 1995b), drug use (Miranda & Claes 2004, Chen et al. 2006), theft (Miranda & Claes 2004, Tanner et al. 2009), gang membership (Miranda & Claes 2004), risky sexual activity (Took & Weiss 1994) and violence against women (Barongan & Hall 1995, Johnson et al. 1995b). The conclusions of these studies seemed to fall in line with the claims made by the public figures and institutions that crusaded against rap; that exposure to the messages in hip-hop lyrics causes moral deviance.

A review of this literature provides us with a portrayal of the current state of the psychological theory of rap's influence on youth and their character. A critical examination of these studies reveals numerous limitations in their research design. Many of the studies that followed Took & Weiss followed a similar study design. A particular community of adolescents was selected as the study population. Study populations usually consisted of the students at a single high school, a single community college or

a collection of high schools in the same municipality. In most of these studies the population was segmented into hip-hop listeners and non-listeners. Hip-hop listeners were identified through self-report surveys that asked them whether they liked hip-hop music, whether they listened to it often, or whether they identified with the rap music scene. Once the hip-hop listeners had been segmented from the non-listeners, researchers analyzed group differences in the incidence of various morally deviant attitudes and behaviors.

Although I am using the term morally deviant to characterize the types of attitudes and behaviors they tested for, researchers may or may not have used the word "moral" or "immoral" to characterize the behaviors. Sometimes they referred to the behavior as deviant behaviors (Miranda & Claes 2004), socially disapproved (Took & Weiss 1994), antisocial behavior (Selfhout et al. 2008), maladjusted behavior, externalizing problem behavior (Selfhout et al. 2008), psychosocial turmoil (Took & Weiss 1994), and even health risk behaviors (Wingood et al. 2003). While they used various terms to describe problematic behavior, I argue that the unifying theme is that they focused on behaviors that deviated from societally agreed upon norms for behavior. I use the word moral because the psychologists all describe this behavior in terms of its juxtaposition to normative social obligations to the community. These researchers were interested in whether or not hip-hop influenced kids to break rules, to act out, to behave in undisciplined ways.

Even when these studies were framed as being grounded in concerns of adolescent health, they seemed to focus much more on behaviors that broke established rules or norms of decency. For example in a study published in the American Journal of Public Health, Wingood et al. (2003) hypothesized a link between exposure to rap music videos and the health outcomes of African-American female adolescents. The particular outcomes they focused on included whether the girls in their study had hit a teacher, had

been arrested, had multiple sexual partners or used drugs and alcohol. They also tested these young women for sexually transmitted diseases (chlamydia, trichomoniasis, and gonorrhea), which were construed as the health outcome of risky sexual behavior. This assemblage of behaviors, while some have an impact on the adolescent's health and well-being, all of them are highly moralized within American society. It is hard to see how hitting a teacher can be construed as a health concern for the young woman doing the hitting. The language of health and wellness was infused with a logic of morality whereas "rap will make you sick" is used as a proxy for "rap will make you do bad things."

The results of the Wingood et al. study supported the conclusion that exposure to rap causes problematic behavior. At a 12-month follow-up, researchers found that the group of girls that had spent more hours watching rap music videos during the week (the high exposure group) was 3 times more likely to have hit a teacher than girls with less exposure to these videos. They found statistically significant correlations between rap music video exposure and most of the negative health outcomes they tested for. The high exposure group was 1.5 times more likely to have acquired an STD, 1.5 times more likely to have used drugs or alcohol, and 2 times more likely to have had sexual partners. One problematic part of this study design is that they did not control for total hours of television viewing. There have been studies linking television viewing in general to the development of aggressive behavior. The students that were part of the high exposure group could have simply come to watch more music videos because they had increased exposure to television in general. This calls into question the assumption that it was their viewing of music videos in particular that caused the effect.

Nonetheless, Wingood et al.'s interpretation of these results was that the images shown in rap videos, which they deemed to be violent and sexually explicit, modeled unhealthy behavior for African-American girls. They cited Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory to explain the mechanism through

which media portrayals are encoded as mental models that then influence the ways that the media consumers perceive the world. The idea was that these young people, through seeing images of violence, drugs and hypersexuality in rap music, were reshaping their moral schema in a number of critical ways:

1. Adolescents learned the **knowledge and skills** necessary to participate in illicit behavior.
2. Adolescents learned to be **motivated** towards engaging in illicit behaviors when they observed rappers gaining desirable rewards (i.e. fame and wealth). This created the expectation that they too could gain rewards from engaging in this behavior.
3. Adolescents learned that there would be relatively few social sanctions that would arise from this behavior, because the rappers hardly met harsh consequences for illicit activity.
4. Adolescents learned strategies for justifying illicit behaviors so as to reduce the salience of motivations that lead to self-restraint

Wingood et al. results seemed to substantiate the social cognitive account of rap's influence. The study found that, over the course of 12 months, the adolescents in the high exposure group modeled their behavior after the videos that they watched. Their conclusion was that exposure to rap music videos drove adolescents towards risky behavior (drug use, sex with multiple partners, aggressions). They deemed rap music videos to be a public health risk.

There were several other studies exploring the correlation between rap music and deviant behavior, many of which cited the social cognitive model as the causal mechanism. For example, Selfhout & Delsing (2008) used a longitudinal design to measure how rap/heavy metal preferences and problem behavior (aggression and criminal activity) evolved over time in a cohort of Dutch adolescents (age 11-18). In particular, they wanted to see if preferences for R/HM at T1 would predict the development of externalizing problems at T2 (2 years later). The study found that a preference for rap

music was predictive of externalizing behavior, which included tendencies to display direct or indirect aggression as well as tendencies to engage in minor offenses like shoplifting, vandalism and unarmed fights. While early cultural preferences for rap were predictive of later problematic behavior, the reverse was not true. Tendency to engage in problematic behavior at T1 was not predictive of the development of genre preferences for rap 2 years later. This allowed the researchers to rule out a rival theory to the social cognitive model, often referred to as the psychosocial model (). The psychosocial model proposed the reverse direction of causality of the social cognitive model. It hypothesized that students that were high on externalizing behavior were attracted to rap music because it justified or complimented antisocial feelings that they already had.

While there were a few studies that argued for the psychosocial model, the majority of longitudinal studies found that genre preferences preceded the development of deviant behavior. Although the behavioral consequences varied, this body of knowledge built up a significant amount of evidence to suggest that ideas within rap music can influence young people's behavior.

2. Problems with a Straightforward Connection Between Rap & Moral Deviance

2.1 The Heterogeneity of Rap Music

While many studies found direct relationships between rap listening and problem behavior, there were a number of later studies that suggested that the relationship was a lot more complex and varied. For example, there seemed to be dramatic differences in the influence of rap depending on the specific subgenre that the young people were listening to. In their study of adolescents in Quebec, Miranda & Claes (2004) hypothesized that the various subgenres of rap would have different effects on adolescent behavior. Their sample of French-Canadian adolescents had diverse music tastes and the

subsection that preferred rap could be split into even smaller sub-genre groups. These participants indicated their preferences for four subgenres of rap; American rap, hardcore/gangsta rap, hip-hop soul, and French rap.

Miranda & Claes found that French rap and gangsta/hardcore rap preferences were correlated with deviant behaviors (violence, street gang involvement, mild drug use and thefts). However, they found that a preference for the hip-hop soul subgenre was actually negatively associated with a number of deviant behaviors. Their explanation of these results was that hip-hop soul music often incorporates prosocial themes into its lyrics. While they continued to argue that there was a "pervasive relationship between rap music and deviant behavior," they conceded that rap also has the potential to socialize young people in prosocial ways.

While Miranda & Claes found several distinct differences between the 4 genres, their 4 categories barely scratched the surface of the subgenre heterogeneity of rap. Just within the local rap scene of Chicago, there is a great deal of diversity in the types of rap subgenres and their content. For example one of the most prominent sub-genres of rap in contemporary Chicago is drill, which was born in historically Black neighborhoods on the South Side of Chicago like Englewood. Drill shares many features with Southern trap, such as its frequent portrayal and glorification of gang-affiliation and masculine toughness. The American media has directed considerable attention to whether or not drill music has encouraged the surge in youth violence between rival neighborhood-based crews in Chicago like the Gangster Disciples and the Stones (Delerme 2014). Since the emergence of the drill sound in 2010, several rap artists affiliated with these organizations have been slain, including Lil Jojo (18 years at time of death), Jayloud (18), Johnny Boy da Prince (23), and J-Money (21).

Within their lyrics drill artists express their allegiance to street codes, defending their territory, and a commitment to fearlessly combating enemy crews. The lyrics of rappers from the Chicago drill scene are distributed digitally via youtube to thousands of local youth. Drill becomes a primary vehicle for these youth to access narrative accounts of gang life - including their values and justifications for actions. This has led many to believe that rap may influence teen listeners to find identity in the gang lifestyle, acting as a recruiting tool for specific gangs, but more broadly a media that socializes young people into the gang lifestyle.

At the same time, there are strands of rap in Chicago that are in direct opposition to the value commitments in drill music. Innercity Chicago also has a vibrant tradition of rap inspired poetry slams that are intertwined with politically progressive activist movements. Organizations like Young Chicago Authors support young people that write lyrics themed around uplifting community. This organization hosts Louder than a Bomb, the largest youth poetry slam in the United States. Internationally renowned Chicago-based rap artists like Chance the Rapper and Vic Mensa have been involved with these efforts, and others to empower Chicago youth and tackle community social issues. Although Chance and Vic come from some of the same neighborhoods as youth involved in the drill scene, they consciously advocate values of non-violence and community resilience. Therefore listeners of this strand of rap are exposed to arguments for civic engagement and commitment to community well being.

The heterogeneity of the content of rap music suggests that many of the previous studies may have been painting rap music with too broad of a brush stroke. Any understanding of the influence of rap on young people must be accompanied by an understanding of which rap artists and rap texts that young person is engaged with and the content of those artists.

2.2 The Heterogeneity of rap listeners

The linear relationship between rap exposure and problem behavior was also complicated by studies finding that this relationship depended a lot upon the ethnicity of the students, and other facets of their sociocultural experience. Tanner et al. 2009 conducted a study with 3,393 Toronto adolescents, investigating whether being an urban music enthusiast (strong preferences for rap and disinterest in other music genres) was predictive of criminal behavior. They found that urban music enthusiasts had higher rates of both property crime and violent crime. However, when these results were broken down by race, there were very different patterns within the White, Black, and Asian/South Asian subpopulations. The relationship between appreciation of rap music and crime only existed in the White and Asian/South Asian students. For Black youth, there was no connection between rap preference and criminal activity.

One important conclusion that this research highlighted was that adolescents exposed to the same images could develop different interpretations based on their sociocultural location. It was their interpretations of the rap music that determined what effect it had on them, and adolescents of different ethnicities apparently had different interpretations. Tanner et al. (2009) provided speculative interpretations of their results. They argue that white fans of a music that is overwhelmingly and originally a black/street form of music, perhaps have a distorted outsider's view of what it takes to be authentically hip-hop. They see themes of violence within the music and believe that these norms are shared by most urban youth. Black youth see these same themes in the music but (because they are often exposed to alternative narratives in their community) do not perceive the behavior as a requirement of being a part of the rap subculture. Tanner's results showed that for Black youth, rap appreciation was instead correlated with an increased perception of social injustice (an understanding that the justice

system and educational system were unfair). For the black adolescents in their study, an authentic hip-hop identity was more related to a critique of society.

Again Tanner's study only scratches the surface in exploring how adolescents' sociocultural location and identity plays a large role in their perception, interpretation and appropriation the themes in rap music. What this study illuminates is that any systematic study of rap's influence on moral development must pay attention to the sociocultural location of the young person. It must factor in the interpretive resources that the listener brings to their comprehension of rap lyrics and how those interpretive resources are shaped by the previous experiences that they have had with particular people, communities, contexts and media.

2.3 Assumptions of Deficit

The heterogeneity of the content in rap music as well as the heterogeneity of the rap listeners problematizes research studies that posit a direct relationship between rap listening and moral deviance. But there is an even more profound flaw in the theoretical assumptions of these studies. The program of research was skewed towards asking questions about rap's deficits. There were dozens of studies testing the relationship between exposure to rap music and negative vices. There were very few psychological studies of rap music investigating correlations between rap listening and prosocial behaviors. What motivated the attention on the detrimental effects of rap?

At this point it would be valuable to point out that while the PMRC and C Dolores Tucker were engaged in a crusade against rap in the popular media, there were individuals that were defending the honor of the rap genre and claiming that hip-hop was a platform for developing prosocial behaviors. Individuals like Africa Bambaata often nicknamed the Godfather of Hip-Hop argued that the artform

was in fact an artistic subculture that targeted young people in high-risk populations (Black and Latin youth in urban areas) and provided them with a positive alternative to the gang lifestyle. Africa Bambaata's musical and social movement entitled the Zulu Nation was founded out of reformed gang members that created service organizations aimed at providing cultural programming for youth.

Not only did supporters of hip-hop claim that hip-hop musicianship offer alternatives to problematic lifestyles, but they pointed to certain rap artists that had explicitly prosocial messages. KRS-ONE in his Gospel of Hip-Hop (2009) suggested that the principles embedded within hip-hop lyrics could act as an inspirational in the pursuit of health, love, awareness and wealth. These artists pointed to messages about knowledge of self, entrepreneurism, loyalty to kin, community solidarity, authenticity and religiosity.

But if this heterogeneity exists, then the following question becomes even more puzzling: Why have there been so few studies by psychologists attempting to test the role of rap music in engendering prosocial values or behaviors in its listeners? One could imagine the development of hypotheses constructed to test the influence of rap listening on strength of peer relationships, entrepreneurism, or racial identity. Miller (2012) used the term "moral panic" to describe the tendency of institutions to be suspicious and hypercritical of rap. The concentration of research questions on moral deficits suggests that experimental psychology as a discipline has been susceptible to the same type of moral panic.

To some extent the focus on rap's connection to antisocial behaviors reflects a confirmation bias. The studies in the psychology literature overwhelmingly focus on negative behaviors, and in particular, negative behaviors that are more prevalent within the sociocultural ecosystem of the urban community where the rap subculture lives (i.e. nobody searched for relationships between rap listening and white collar crime). This begs the question, if we expanded the scope of virtues and vices that were

investigated in these studies would the psychological literature portray a more complimentary image of the role that rap plays in young people's lives?

Our conception of wellness, sociality (anti or pro), and even health is based on moral and normative worldviews about what types of behaviors are normal/good for a person to engage in, what goods are most valued, what roles should individuals in his community. These questions are highly culturally influenced and not simply matters of objective measurement of maladjustment. Communities have different criteria for wellness or social responsibility, that are based on cultural traditions, political construals of the social world, access to resources/power. Communities have different degrees to which they stress obligations to collectivism vs. individualism, the mainstream vs. the underground, and national law vs. divine law. Therefore when judging the behavioral effects of rap it is important to study behavioral effects as embedded in various value systems of which young people are encountering, value systems in which many psychology researchers from Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic (WEIRD) institutions (Henrich et al. 2010) may be alien to. A psychology that is sensitive to sociocultural context takes seriously the need to understand the value systems of the communities it studies, as well as the value systems that undergird their field's notions of wellness or adjustment.

3. Studying Value Systems The Guiding Principles of a Sociocultural Approach to Researching Moral Behavior

3.1 Emic (and Etic) Perspectives

"Rather than defining what is "morality" and verifying whether people's deeds and judgments correspond to the definition, [social scientists] tend to apprehend morality in acts and discourses, to understand what men and women do which they consider to be moral or good or right or generous" (Fassin 2012)

In this quote Fassin argues for studies of morality that foreground a community's local understanding of right and wrong. He calls for an emic study of morality, one that describes the moral acts and discourses of a cultural community from the perspective of community members themselves. How do locals describe their own values? How do locals explain the moral judgments they make and the behaviors they enact out of moral duty? While Fassin's perspective is born from anthropology and rests in a tradition of ethnographic methods and thick description (Geertz), cultural psychologists (Vygotsky 1978, Bang, Medin & Atran 2007) have attempted to take up these same commitments to constructing emic accounts by using methods like the cultural consensus model, cognitive task analysis and clinical interviews.

The theoretical assumption of an emic approach to studying morality is that human communities vary when it comes to how they characterize good and bad. In order to explain or describe the moral behavior of a particular community of humans, it is useful to know the local rules, norms and customs they are operating with and the material ways they describe and enact them. This approach to morality is rooted in cultural pluralism and the idea that there are multiple moralities depending on which local community you find yourself in.

Much of psychological research on this topic operates from an etic approach. The idea is that rap listeners are being influenced by the music that they listen to and that most of the changes in their attitude are happening beneath their conscious awareness. This is not an erroneous perspective. An overwhelming amount of research shows that moral judgments are inspired by unconscious intuitions, emotional responses (Haidt 2001). If this is the case, why should we trust their accounts at all? This

illuminates an underlying tension between an ethnographic approach to this question and an approach grounded in experimental psychology. In this approach it seems most effective to simultaneously trust and distrust local accounts. Individuals are most equipped to explain and describe their subjective experience of their lifeworlds. On the other hand, individuals are not necessarily experts on the psychological mechanisms that underlie their thought processes.

An emic perspective is a critical first step in understanding the moral system of a community. But it must be balanced by an etic perspective, and informed by explanatory frameworks that we know to be at work on the human mind even if subjects are not aware of them (i.e. human biology, cognitive processes).

In the case of hip-hop, an emic approach to understanding moral socialization means understanding the common ways that rap listeners, and rap lyricists signal that they think something is moral or immoral. It means understanding their criteria for evaluating or judging the "rightness" or "wrongness" of an action. It does not include defining a priori what we as investigators think is moral (i.e. drug use, sexual behaviors) and looking for the presence or absence of those behaviors in the subjects we study. In many ways, a sociocultural study of the morality of rap listeners is interested in a very different research question (Question 2) than the question that motivated previous psychological studies of rap and moral deviance (Question 1).

1. ~~How do rap listeners deviate from the moral norms of mainstream American society?~~
2. What are the moral norms that rap lyricists/listeners are (re)producing?

The first question holds the values of dominant institutions as normal, and unquestioned. On the other hand, the second question lends a certain legitimacy to the actions of the young people that are part of the hip-hop community (or at the very least, it does not delegitimize their perspective a priori). It is not invested in upholding a mainstream conception of normativity. It is instead interested in understanding what subjects believe to be normal or normative.

While psychologists studying rap listeners have not traditionally used an emic approach, there have been a number of researchers in linguistics, anthropology, sociology, education and performance studies that have used a combination of methods to understand the rap community in/on their own terms. Spady et al. (1995) coined the term *hiphopography* to describe an emic approach to the study of hip-hop that was based on the testimony of individuals that lived the rap culture. Alim suggests that hiphopography uses ethnography and oral history to understand the development of this artform from the perspective of its originators and its practitioners.

> Hiphopography assumes that the culture creators of Hip Hop are quite capable of telling their own story. Oftentimes, as researchers, we are quick to interpret artifacts of the culture, like records, CDs, album covers, lyrics, videos, magazines, and other products, without ever attempting to obtain the artists' own interpretation. In hiphopography, the values, aesthetics, thoughts, narratives, and interpretations of the culture creators are our starting point. (Alim 2006)

In many ways this dissertation is a hiphopography of adolescent and young adult rap fans and the role that rap plays in their moral lives. Although these subjects are young (and belonging to a number of other social identities that place them at the margins), a theoretical assumption of this study is that there is value in listening to them tell their own story. Using discourse analysis we explore the stories they tell

about how they make moral decisions. We focus on the words they use to describe their own values and the values embedded in the rap music they listen to.

Several ethnographic researchers have attempted to understand the moral aspects of rap by exploring the testimonies of youth themselves. For example, Newman (2005) engaged in an ethnographic study of a group of Caribbean American and Latin American adolescents at an urban arts high school in the Bronx. These teenagers were all artists in the underground hip-hop scene in New York and also took part in classes at their school focused around hip-hop production and poetry. Newman observed these young men while they delivered freestyle rap verses, he observed their social interactions in the class and he also interviewed them about their values and aesthetic preferences. His conclusions were as follows:

> the analysis of rap ciphers reveals generic elements that depend crucially on an ideology that is also manifested in participants' social norms and explicit statements. In the case of the young MCs, all these elements prefer individuality to collectivity, view moral responsibility as operating at the level of the individual, and display positive evaluations of strength, dominance, and pursuit of self-interest. They are unapologetic in their hegemonic masculinity. They also manifest belief in realism and denigrate idealism. (Newman 2005).

In his analysis he points out various generic elements; characteristics of the genre practice of engaging in a rap cipher such as braggadocio about one's own dominance, and the use of violent imagery to describe one's potential to defeat rap competitors. He noted these elements as integral parts of participating in a rap cipher, finding that each time these young men wrote verses they included references to inflicting verbal violence and to being the most potent authentic emcee. He also saw connections between the dispositions of an effective rapper and the rough and tough dispositions these young men carried out in their social lives. The young men wrestled with one another and often engaged in rough interplay.

While he could have stopped here and prematurely concluded that there was a causative relationship between rap engagement and aggressive behavior, Newman also gave the young people an opportunity to explain the meaning behind the practices they engaged in. Engaging in a discursive analysis of their lyrics as well as semi-structured interviews uncovered that these violent threats were largely virtual and metaphorical. Boasts of their physical prowess were actually metaphors for their lyrical prowess.

They also had explanations for their rough play. In their interviews these adolescents explicitly endorsed using tough love as opposed to kind love. Their inclination to be rough with one another seemed to come from a conscious goal of engendering toughness in their peers. None of the young men in the study were engaged in criminal behavior, but they did see the image of the thug as a motivating symbol for the toughness needed to survive and rise out of the socioeconomic conditions of their neighborhood. These young men were quite aware of the ideologies that underlied their actions in their social lives and the ones they espoused in their poetry. This seems to give credence to an emic approach to these questions. The young men's testimony illustrate that they had put a lot of reflection into their embrace of the ethical worldview that was embodied in rap lyrics.

One of the important aspects of an emic approach to moral thought is the realization that young people have often done a lot of thinking, reflecting and strategizing about moral issues and that in order to explain their behavior you need to allow them to explain their thought processes. Much of the work on adolescence (especially in the context of urban youth and rap listening) tends to approach young people as if they are pushed this way and that by a number of pressures (i.e. media pressures, parental pressures, and peer pressures) and does not privilege the deliberation they have done as moral agents.

An emic hiphopographic approach assumes that young people are operating from a knowledge base and often have conscious ideological commitments that motivate their actions.[4]

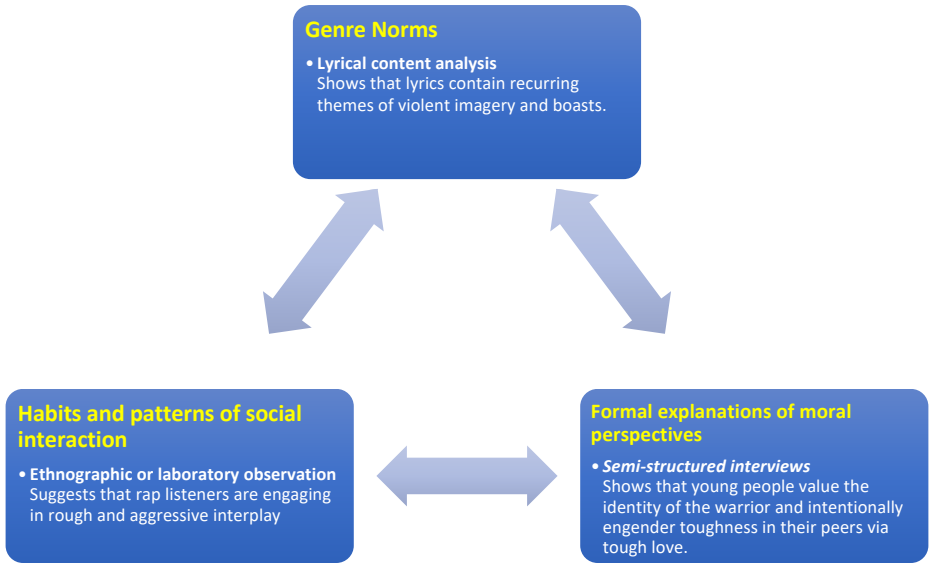


Figure 3. Psychological studies of rap listeners often involve psychologists describing patterns in the behavior of rap listeners but rarely incorporate adolescents' own perspectives allowing them to give formal explanations of their beliefs and values. They also do not deeply engage with the lyrical content. An emic approach uses a deep analysis of the cultural artifacts and the explanations of the listeners themselves in order to contextualize patterns of behavior or cross -cultural differences. Newman's study of rap cyphers in the Bronx highlights how these 3 elements are connected to one another.

3.2 Discourse

> Our basic (and perhaps commonsensical) notion is that children develop the moral ideas they have because local guardians of the moral order (parents, teachers, peers) re-present and convey to children powerful morally relevant interpretations of events. Those interpretations are conveyed, we believe, in the context of routine, yet personally involving, family, school and social life practices …They are conveyed, we believe, through the verbal exchanges – commands, threats, sanction statements, accusations, explanations, justifications, and excuses – necessary to maintain routine practices. (Shweder 1987)

Another important facet of a sociocultural approach to researching moral socialization is a focus on discourse. The development of moral schemas is mediated by young people's participation in a

number of discursive practices where they learn the vocabulary, the narratives, and the arguments concerning which actions are right and wrong (Tappan 2006, Shweder 1987, Fung 2001, Fasulo et al. 2007, Fader 2011, Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik 2007, Lambek 2010). They appropriate this "moral vernacular" (Oakeshott 1991) from members of their community that are knowledgeable about the social order (parents, teachers, and peers), but also from multimodal texts (religious texts, fables, folk tales, novels, etc.). Therefore in order to make sense of how young people are socialized into the moral order, researchers must analyze how a discursive environment, rich in moral vernacular, is a learning context for young people to learn and orient to community norms.

Several researchers have claimed that hip-hop can best be understood as a social language (Smitherman, 1997; Alim, 2009; Petchauer, 2009). The production of rap lyrical content by lyricists and the engagement of these texts by rap listeners is in itself a rich linguistic practice. However, hip-hop language is not just housed in musical texts. It is also spoken and understood by a wider network of individuals that are connected in varying levels of communication because they share physical spaces (inner-city communities and rap concerts), practices (lyrical comprehension and freestyling), and artifacts (rap blogs and rap videos). Alim (2009) has referred to the Hip-Hop nation as those fluent in this system of semantic meaning; its grammar, its narratives and its ideologies.

The language that the Hip-Hop Nation speaks descends from language practices initiated in its "linguistic forbears"; African American Vernacular English (AAVE), urban street vernacular and various soul music genres (R&B, funk, blues, and rock & roll). The study of hip-hop as a social language has thus followed in the scholarly tradition of those who have documented and analyzed the features of these sociolinguistic dialects (Lee, 2004). These researchers have also characterized how dialects rooted in youth, Black, and economically disadvantaged communities are dialogically conversing with more

dominant language practices (Rickford & Labov 1999, Rickford 2002, Lee 2004); the language of adults, white privilege and the rhetoric of global capitalism.

If hip-hop is indeed a social language, then we should expect that it also has aspects of a moral vernacular. Embedded in the hip-hop social language are linguistic forms that are voiced in order to make propositions about which behaviors are right, wrong, just, dutiful, virtuous etc. For example, one utterance with moral implications that is frequently articulated in hip-hop lyrics is the phrase "keep it real." McLeod (1999) analyzed the variety of ways that rappers use the linguistic form "keep it real" in their song lyrics. This study was a discursive analysis of 800 different authenticity claims from hip-hop magazines, song lyrics, internet discussion groups and press releases. McLeod found that hip-hop community members used the phrase "keep it real" to articulate 6 different moral obligations; staying true to yourself, maintaining racial solidarity with the Black community, resisting the allure of capitalist consumerism, being a brave and honorable warrior, staying consistent with tradition, and expressing allegiance to the streets.

A discursive approach to understanding rap's influence on moral development pays attention to the language in rap music that articulates how one should behave, which responsibilities they should have to which humans, and which virtues should be revered. A discursive approach investigates how young people interpret this moral vernacular when they hear it, and how they appropriate that language into their own discourse. For moral discourse analysts, a large part of moral socialization is learning to speak the language correctly (Oakeshott 1991). So an understanding of the effect of rap culture on moral development must take into account the processes through which linguistic forms like keep it real are heard, comprehended, appropriated, revoiced and transformed.

3.3) Developmental Processes

Finally, a sociocultural approach to studying moral behavior is based on focusing on the historical and social processes that have developed phrases like *keep it real*. Understanding how those cultural practices (or an individual's participation in those practices) changes over multiple scales (cultural historical, sociogenetic, ontogenetic, and microgenetic). Moral development research (like much of developmental psychology research) primarily focuses on ontogenesis, mapping out various pathways for individual development. In fact, at this point the way I have framed the research question focuses on ontogenesis: How does engagement in rap music influence an adolescent's moral development? The psychologists that attempted to answer this question employed longitundinal study designs in order to figure out how a person's involvement with rap music at T1 would effect behaviors/attitudes at T2. Ontogenesis remains a key lens in this research but it is hard to understand the process of human development without paying crucial attention to other overlapping processes (Bronfenbrenner 1977, Cole 2007, Saxe 2003):

1. Cultural historical development
2. Sociogenesis
3. Microgenesis

3.3.1) Cultural Historical Development

It is impossible to understand the influence of rap on children's development without understanding the historical context in which the rap artform developed. The rap genre was founded in the mid-1970s among Black and Latinx youth artists in the low-income neighborhood of the South Bronx (Rose, 1994). During this time the South Bronx was among the poorest neighborhoods in America, large swaths of land with buildings burned down to the ground, demolished and abandoned.

This is the historical context in which resilient and creative neighborhood youth created an artistic movement. The hip-hop movement was a movement of artistic expression that included DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti. But among the most prominent aspects of that movement was the invention of rap. It is a form of spoken word poetry that is delivered in synch with drum-heavy backing beats, in rhythmic flow patterns. The early originators of the genre formed a school of poetry that innovated cadences, vernaculars, recurring metaphors and other stylistic innovations that structured the way that discourse was transmitted within the genre. As the genre came to life, one of the emerging conventions was to capture very vividly and viscerally the realities of neighborhood life. Adjectives like raw, hard and dope became descriptive of a common aesthetic objective, where emcees sought to create edgy (and sometimes hyperreal) depictions of life in the concrete jungle. In order to understand the linguistic patterns and the moral ideologies that arose in these young poets it is necessary to understand their historical influences.

The poets were inspired by a number of cultural traditions that preceded them, for example, the tradition of African-American musical expression that trace back to Negro Spirituals, Gospel, the Blues, Jazz, Rock & Roll and R&B (Kopano 2002). One of the direct influences was the style of rhythm and blues was the black "personality disk jockeys" of the 1940s and 50s like Dr. Hepcat that engaged in rhythmic "jive talk" on radio stations bringing bebop inspired verbal performances and commentary to the air waves (Toop 1991). Scholars suggest that these DJs inspired the Jamaican art of toasting during the early 1970s, where DJs would remove the vocals from a popular song and improvise poetry over top of the songs. The original rap poets like Fab Freddy and DJ Kool Herc were of Caribbean-American descent and were certainly inspired by the tradition of toasting (Kopano 2002). The first rappers were also inspired by the Black Poets of the 1960s and 70s. With this said, finding one direct antecedent of rap

is probably impossible. Scholars have made historical connections between rap and a number of Black language innovations some of which were made by notable public figures (i.e. the verbal jousting of Muhammad Ali), while others can only be attributed to the communal practices that are popular in Black American communities:

> Rap's forbears stretch back through disco, street funk, radio DJs, Bo Diddley, the bebop singers, Cab Calloway, Pigmeat Markham, the tap dancers and comics, The Last Poets, Gil Scott Heron, Muhammad Ali, acapella and doo-wop groups, ring games, skip-rope rhymes, prison and army songs, toasts, signifying and the dozens, all the way to the griots of Nigeria and the Gambia. No matter how far it [rap music] penetrates…its roots are still the deepest in all contemporary Afro-American music. (Toop 1991)

These forms of spoken word were also always platforms for the transmission of values. The grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and narratives, were crafted in a context in which African-American people had consistent struggles like securing basic safety in the oppressive social systems of slavery and Jim Crow, finding innovative ways to resist this oppression, coming up with ways to dialogue with one another in coded language without detection. This historical context was the crucible for the development of African-American oral traditions and moral vernaculars. The language practices were embedded with values and lifeways that provided pathways through these struggles. Rap artists drew on this legacy both consciously and unconsciously as they were exposed to the rich discursive and cultural environments of black communities. When trying to understand the moral vernacular of rap and how young people learn to speak it, you cannot divorce this socialization process from the fact that they are being socialized into a local community with cultural traditions. Historians, linguists and theologians have done much more exhaustive treatments of the historical evolution of Black language, Black musical forms, and traditions of African-American moral thought than I will be able to carry out here but it is important to understand the moral vernacular of rap music in the context of this legacy.

Rap music spread so rapidly throughout the hood in part because it articulated the shared experiences and challenges of hood life during the Reagan era, including dilapidated public housing, defunded schools, neighborhood violence, police brutality and the consequences of drug trade and addiction. One of the songs that legitimized rap as a national force and a pop music success was *The Message* a song by Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five (1982). In this song, author Melli Mel articulated the despair of "broken glass everywhere" illustrating the ways in which the hood was filled with fractured infrastructure and shattered dreams.

> God is smiling on you, but he's frowning too,
> Because only God knows what you'll go through.
> You'll grow in the ghetto living second-rate,
> and your eyes will sing a song called deep hate.
> The places you play and where you stay
> Looks like one great big alleyway.
> You'll admire all the number-book takers,
> Thugs, pimps, and pushers, and the big money makers.
> (Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five 1982)

When Melli Mel describes the hood, he speaks about the moral dilemma of being born in a place where some of the few jobs available are within "black markets," economic industries that are both illegal and often have serious moral implications. Hip-hop has often commented on this dilemma, with some artists condemning the thug lifestyle, many telling nuanced stories of the human beings caught within the cycle, and others even glorifying its obscenities. Again, we argue that hip-hop culture is a product of its environment and therefore its ethical concepts must be understood as adaptations to the major moral challenges that define social life in that community. What are the major hurdles that the community faces when it comes to maintaining their social obligations to one another? For folks living

in the hood in the 1970s those challenges included the decision of whether or not to engage in the narcotics trade that infiltrated the community. There were challenges of maintaining community solidarity in the face of discrimination. Ethical concepts formed to create solutions to these various challenges, and the lyrics of the most prominent form of poetry was a platform for cultural creators to record and design these concepts.

The culture and ethics of hip-hop are also reflections of the joys and aspirations of hood life. In describing the hood during the origin of hip-hop, it is important not to focus solely on the hardship and ignore the rich joy that existed alongside it. In her song *Every Ghetto, Every City*, hip-hop artist Lauryn Hill (1998) reminisces on the beauty of her hometown of East Orange, New Jersey, which she refers to as the New Jerusalem:

> But way before the record deal,
> The streets that nurtured Lauryn Hill,
> Made sure that I'd never go too far.
> Every ghetto,
> every city,
> and suburban place I've been,
> Make me recall my days in the New Jerusalem.
> (Lauryn Hill 1998)

New Jerusalem is a slang term for New Jersey popularized in rap music during the 1980s. Lauryn uses this eponym to emphasize the ways in which her community was a space of spiritual nurturing. In this sense, she compares *the hood* to the holy city of the 3 Abrahamic religions. Throughout the rest of this song Lauryn describes with nostalgia the everyday cultural activities that surrounded her during her childhood. She talks of fashion trends like removing the patches from her Lee jeans and sewing them to the tongue of her shoes, which grew out of an ethic of recycling and conserving resources. She speaks of

drinking an herbal drink called roots tonic with Jamaican Rastafarians in her neighborhood, a sect of Afrocentric ascetics that grow dreadlocks and believe that the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. As Lauryn grows up, Rastafarianism continues to have a meaningful impact on her worldview, consistently inspiring her lyrics. She also references the influence of Islam on her Jersey neighborhood and the fact that so many Black children during the 1980s were given Muslim names. The complex cultural and religious landscape of the hood meant that Hill was influenced by various moral traditions that intersect and interact with each other to form the sociocultural context of her moral development. When Lauryn Hill goes on to write some of the foundational rap texts in the canon of hip-hop she is drawing on this childhood socialization.

This era was also a time of vibrant ethnic pride within Black and Brown communities across the nation, due to various community achievements such as a number of Black candidates across the nation being elected to mayoral offices for the first time. When Lauryn was born, East Orange was run by its first Black mayor William Hart. Although there were despairing conditions in some of the housing projects (Lauryn mentions Prince Street Projects) there was also a great deal of aspiration and hope that motivated the ethics of Black and Brown folk at the time. Consequently, we argue that the values that are expressed within hip-hop at this historical moment, such as an ethos of "making something out of nothing" and strong ethnic solidarity, were just as much reflections of the joy and triumphs of 1970s hood life as they were adaptations to the pain.

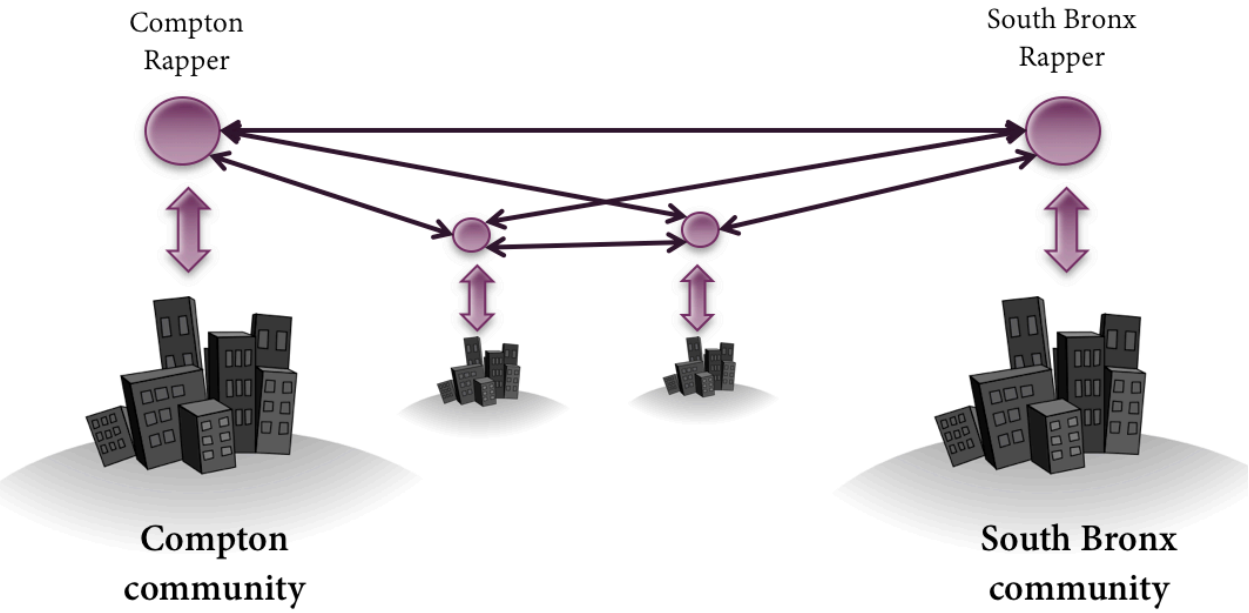
By 1979 rap had its first commercial hit in *Rapper's Delight* propelling it from existing solely in the local New York scene to being mainstream. By the early 1980s this folk art movement had spread across the country setting the stage for a hip-hop scene emerging in every major urban community in America. This is a good time to introduce the concept of sociogenesis, which is an important concept in

trying to understand how rap listeners and lyricists formed a discourse community in which they were in conversation with one another.

3.3.2) Sociogenesis

Chuck D of Public Enemy, one of the most politically vocal groups during the formative years of the genre, referred to hip-hop as "the Black CNN." His insights speak to the ways in which the hip-hop media opened up a national inter-neighborhood network of communication between young (majority African-American) folk. Rap created a popular platform for inner-city youth to hear narratives of hood life directly from the mouths of other youth. With the creation of this platform, young rappers in Compton were in conversation with rappers and listeners in Memphis, and exposed to their stories and perspectives. In a way, rappers became journalists of their community, summarizing and reporting on the experiences of youth in that neighborhood and recording them on wax. These testimonies were then disseminated throughout the communication network of the Global Hip-Hop Nation (Alim 2009). Now it was possible for a young person in Compton and the Bronx to carry out a conversation with one another, with rappers and the hip-hop language as intermediaries.

Figure 4. A representation of the inter-neighborhood network that hip-hop produced, in which rappers became key intermediaries.



Chuck D's analogy of "the Black CNN" has gained quite a bit of traction in the historical understanding of hip-hop (). His analogy is representative of what sociolinguists have called discourse communities (Nystrand 1982), groups of individuals in communication with one another that share conventions for communicating with each other. Many hip-hop scholars have argued that a great way to think about hip-hop culture is as an interconnected network of people in communication with each other; a group of people with shared texts, and shared conventions for writing and interpreting those texts (Alim 2009, Smitherman 1997). Discourse communities are made up of people producing language or texts based on shared conventions.

Gee (2002) gives the example of academic journals as a prototypical discourse community. In order to publish in an academic journal, a person preparing a manuscript has to be competent in the concepts of the field, what types of accounts are valued. Over time, individuals join the community and

learn the conventions of the community. Graduate students move from being naïve peripheral members of the community to fully competent in the language practices. One would expect that longtime participation in an academic discursive community that values objectivity, reliability, and validity are also transferring these values to other portions of their lives. In other words their norms, values and attitudes are changing as they begin to participate in these language practices where objectivity. As they learn to speak and write in the language they are also assimilating interpretive frameworks of looking at the world.

Like academic journals, the rap genre has also developed norms for participation over its 40-year history. In order to be intelligible as a member of the rap community, artists must appeal to the norms of the genre. Some of those norms are aesthetic, grammatical or structural but others are ideological. This research highlights processes of sociogenesis in the rap discursive community. It is about understanding the discursive norms of the genre, how these norms developed, how they are interpreted by the individuals that are part of that community, how members move from being naïve of these conventions to experts, and finally what impact being a member of this interpretive community has on the values and identities of these rap listeners.

The development of the rap discursive community has been responsible for the creation of new discourses, new vocabulary, and new interpretive conventions that have had impacts on the identities of those that join the discursive community. Understanding processes of sociogenesis means understanding the ways that a new language form (let's say "keep it real") is disseminated throughout the network, is heard by people plugged into that network, is taken up by these individuals, and used by these individuals to communicate their own intentions. In order to understand youth development you need to understand the networks that they are linked to and who they are talking to. Linguists have

examined the ways that rap discourses are taken up by communities (the African-American community, the broader American community, the Global Hip-Hop Nation). The dissemination of rap music around the world through radio broadcast, record sales, and digital distribution has influenced countless individuals to engage as lyricists, and many more to engage as consumers of texts, or appropriators of the language of rap.

4. Conclusion

The history of studies within the field of psychology suggests that many researchers were influenced by the "moral panic" (Miller 2013) that permeated popular discourse about hip-hop during the 1990s. The assumptions they made about hip-hop caused them to focus on proving or disproving the antisocial effects of rap music on young people. They simultaneously neglected to study possible ways in which hip-hop could produce prosocial behaviors in young people. They situated hip-hop's influence mainly in a deficit narrative, in which rap caused young people to deviate from societal norms towards activities that were deemed inappropriate.

Above I have highlighted another theoretical approach to studying moral values that is based on sociocultural theories of human development. This is the theoretical approach that informs the three empirical studies featured in this dissertation. Each of these three studies is attempting to answer the following question: What are the moral norms that rap lyricists/listeners are (re)producing? The first of these studies (Chapter 2) investigates this question through a cross-cultural study. This study is superficially similar to the deficit studies of 1990s, in that it attempts to compare rap listeners to non-listeners in terms of their attitudes. However, where it departs from these studies is that it is not interested in answering a question about whether rap is good or bad, instead it is interested in

understanding which values are most important to rap listeners, and which ones are less important. It asks a diverse sample of young people about their attitudes of a broad list of virtues, some of which hip-hop listeners might find to be of high priority and some which they might find to be of low priority.

In the second empirical study (Chapter 3) I focus on discourse, another important aspect of the sociocultural approach to studying value systems. I analyze a particular moralized phrase (no new friends), which promotes a ride or die loyalty to day-one friends. The phrase was created by the rapper Drake in a 2013 song and then consequently became a popular catch phrase in youth culture. I analyze the initial song that the phrase originated from to get at its intended meaning(s), and then interview young people from Chicago about the phrase to see how that meaning was appropriated by various youth becoming a popular way through which they communicated solidarity with their friends.

The third empirical study (Chapter 4) is a study of modern hip-hop *gurus*. In response to the dearth of psychology studies with prosocial narratives in the 90's, the early to late oughts produced a cohort of American scholars in psychology who began to look at ways in which hip-hop produced effects that were therapeutic, or positive for identity development (Tyson 2006). These scholars were often investigating hip-hop's use in clinical settings or in schools, suggesting that engagement with various rap related activities (songwriting, beat production) decreased the incidence of antisocial behaviors. In fact, they often suggested that hip-hop could remedy some of the same social ills that earlier psychologists suggested rap produced. In Chapter 4 we will return to these hip-hop gurus (or guides) to foreground some of the modern narratives of clinicians, educators, performers and preachers; focusing on how they make claims about the ethical effects of hip-hop practice. As practitioners focused on youth development, they suggest that there is something unique about hip-hop in its ability to foster ethical worldviews in young people. Studying teachers is a very particular way of getting at the question of how

hip-hop moralities are reproduced. Hip-hop evangelists represent people who are actively theorizing about the principles of hip-hop ethics and how to disseminate them to various audiences. They are approaching students, clients, and audiences as people that they are attempting to heal, elevate, and guide.

Chapter 2:

What's Good in the Hood?

The Moral Priorities of Rap Listeners

ABSTRACT: A cross-cultural approach to moral psychology starts from researchers withholding judgments about universal right and wrong and instead exploring what the members of a community subjectively perceive to be moral or immoral in their local context. This study seeks to identify the moral concerns that are most relevant to listeners of hip-hop music. We use validated psychological surveys including the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek 2009) to assess which moral concerns are most central to hip-hop listeners. Results show that hip-hop listeners prioritize concerns of justice and authenticity more than non-listeners and deprioritize concerns of respecting authority. These results suggest that the concept of the "good person" within hip-hop culture is fundamentally a person that is oriented towards social justice, rebellion against the status quo, and a deep devotion to keeping it real. Results are discussed in light of a theory of moral development in which culture is seen primarily as a force which determines a community's moral priorities.

"Genuine tragedies in the world are not conflicts between right and wrong. They are conflicts between two rights."
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Phenomenology of the Spirit

"Priorities, my nigga everybody got 'em,
There's some on the top and some on the bottom."
- Jidenna

Positioning This Study in the Larger Dissertation:

The social intuitionist perspective (Haidt 2001), an approach to understanding human morality based in social psychology, evolutionary theory, and moral anthropology has posited a fundamental premise that is central to this investigation – one important way of understanding cultural differences in morality is by thinking about it in terms of priorities. Some groups prioritize some virtues more than others. There are very rarely individuals in any society that will argue that loyalty is bad. Similarly, you will rarely find a religion or other sacred values built around the virtue of being inauthentic, "Thou shall lie as much as possible." But even though we all think that being a loyal friend and telling the truth are generally good, various groups might place it higher on their list of priorities while other groups might place it lower. If you look at the cultural products of that group there may be a sense that a certain virtue is prioritized as a fundamental organizing principle of community life, whereas that same value is just seen as a banal truth in another group.

It should not be overlooked, the significance of the fact that no matter which culture of humans you travel to, all of them contain a notion of fairness as something good. All of them have a word for it, and have practices dedicated to punishing cheaters. Because of this, researchers have been eager to try to summarize the fundamental ethical beliefs that all humans share (Haidt 2001). Some say there are 5, others say there are 6, but one thing most agree on is the fact that there is some shared moral predispositions of the human mind. Due to hundreds of thousands of years of natural selection acting on our species, the brain is wired in advance of experience making human beings predisposed to preferring kindness to cruelty, fairness to cheating, and loyalty to backstabbing (deWaal 2008). So when we observe variation between individuals or between groups of human, it is often a matter of one group prioritizing a virtue in one context and another group deprioritizing it.

The notion of priority is quantitative in nature, so certain quantitative analyses are quite effective at analyzing a community's priorities, and whether those priorities are relatively higher than they are in another community. For example, in order to compare the relative priority of a value between two communities you might ask the following questions based on quantitative research methods:

1. Which of the two communities has a larger number of synonym words for this virtue?
2. Is this virtue mentioned more frequently in the sacred texts of one culture versus another?
3. Does one culture have a larger number of proverbs dedicated to this principle?
4. Are children scolded or shamed more frequently in one culture when they don't express this characteristic?
5. Do the religious sermons of a group contain more mentions of the virtue than the sermons of the other group?
6. When individuals from both communities are surveyed and asked to rate the importance of Virtue A (on a scale from 1-7), does one community rate it significantly higher?
7. Does one community provide more opportunities for children to practice a virtue than others?

What is quite important to reiterate is that high and low priority are relative terms. Many Americans may look to the Orthodox Hasidic Jews as placing a high priority on modesty, with men often wearing conservative long black cloth jackets called rekels and women often wearing long skirts and shirts with sleeves past the elbow. However Amish people living in rural communities according to the principle of *ordnung* where electricity is not allowed in the home may look at the Orthodox Jews as extremely exorbitant with their use of cell phones and video games. There is not necessarily a ceiling to how much an individual or group can dedicate themselves to a particular virtue. And one person's piety may be viewed as extremely lax to Observer A, and extremely rigorous to Observer B. A cultural psychologist who is interested in explaining the cultural variation of moral attitudes would therefore be trying to characterize meaningful differences in the extent to which a virtue is heralded by a group. Describing priorities as low, medium and high may not be the best way to accomplish this. Instead, one

needs to look at the observable variation that exist between human beings on a particular moral dimension and then create a scale that covers the entire spectrum of this variation. There will be variation on this scale both within groups and between groups.

One of the reasons to call it a priority is because human beings have significant limitations (of time, energy and resources) in terms of how much they can pursue any one virtue and they are often balancing the time and energy they spend pursuing one virtue with their pursuit of other virtues or their pursuit of other needs and wants like safety, food, shelter, clothing, belonging, pleasure, or relaxation. Sometimes two virtues may come into conflict. For example, many times the authenticity of individual self-expression may come into conflict with a duty to group cohesion. Many individuals from collectivist families of East Asia who immigrate to the West express feeling a tension between the strict values of familial duty that are encouraged in their homes, and the ethos to follow one's personal dreams, which is often encouraged in American life (Hong et al. 2000). It would be pretty dishonest to say that people from individualist cultures do not value strong groups. But you can say that within their list of values they prioritize individual expression a bit more. Or more accurately you could say, in comparative terms, they prioritize individual expression more than people from collectivist cultures.

The term "moral priorities" illuminates important facets of human moral functioning, but it also obfuscates other facets. When we normally use the word "priorities" we tend to be talking about a list of concerns that arises from some degree of conscious deliberation. When a person says "In the New Year I'm going to prioritize eating right" we can assume that they have made a conscious choice about this, realizing that it will require intentionally sacrificing other possible behaviors like eating a bunch of dessert.

On the other hand, when it comes to moral values, peoples' priority list is often the result of unconscious processes. It is often the result of having been born in one type of family versus another, born with one slightly different neurobiological structure versus another, or born in one region of the globe as opposed to another. When a person is learning which values to organize their life around they are not necessarily conscious of the fact that there are alternatives. In fact, one of the defining characteristics of a moral argument is that they are presented as if they are the only reasonable righteous way to live your life. When an Evangelical Christian preacher suggests that protecting the sanctity of life of fetuses is good (in the moral sense), they propose it as a moral imperative. They don't usually say, "Which set of morals do you prioritize: the ethic of life or the ethic of women's choice? It's your choice to choose your moral orientation!" In this sense, it is hard to say that evangelical's values of preserving fetuses are some type of priority, but rather they seem more like a belief.

At the same time, in the current era young people (at a very early point in their lives) are being exposed to many conflicting arguments about the good life. A person from a collectivist family might very well be consciously deliberating about how much they prioritize their duty to their collectivist family and their moral duty to their own individual expression. There will be certain moments when young people feel like they are shopping in a marketplace of ideals; choosing between conservative and liberal values, between individualist and collectivist mentalities, and between comformist or rebellious attitudes. In many cases young people (especially those in cosmopolitan cities, in diverse schools, or in intercultural/interfaith families) are exposed to various moral ideologies that they are considering . All in all, it is also true that much of the learning that happens during the process of moral socialization happens below the level of conscious awareness.

My choice to use the term "priorities" mostly reflects a birds-eye view observation of the grand diversity of human cultures; the observation that all communities are "moral" about something, and of the list of values that communities could be moral about, all human communities deprioritize a subset of that list as well. There are various psychological and cultural processes related to this deprioritization. Social psychologists have shown a number of these deprioritization mechanisms. For example, psychologist Milgram (1978) in a controversial study showed that human beings were willing to deprioritize empathy for others and administer electric shocks to people if they were instructed to do so by a credible authority. Milgram was interested in the various situational aspects of a social interaction that enable individuals to deprioritize their moral intuitions. Our moral values and how much we prioritize them is influenceable by a number of environmental factors, features of the current political moment, situational limits on our cognitive capacity, arousal levels, etc.

Deprioritization also happens on the cultural and societal level as well. Research in neuroscience has shown that people learn to deprioritize feelings of morality and sociality if the object of those feelings is a societal outcast. There is a part of the human brain called the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) that is activated whenever a person perceives another human being. This brain region has been found to play an integral role in tasks related to social cognition and interpersonal affect. In a 2006 study at Princeton University (Harris & Fiske 2006), using functional magnetic resonance imaging, researchers found that the mPFC was activated in response to all social groups except extreme out-groups, specifically homeless people and drug addicts. These researchers found that the human brain perceives these outcasts to be essentially non-human. This tendency to deprioritize social and moral emotions is learned through experience. Over time of living in our society we internalize that society's norms, learning that homeless people represent an untouchable caste for which it is appropriate to withhold our intuitive tendency

towards empathy and social cognition. Therefore the processes that cause us to deprioritize our moral intuitions consist of social factors of the moment as well as learned behaviors that we appropriate as members of a particular sociocultural context.

In this dissertation I am inquiring into the virtues that are highly emphasized within hip-hop culture and those that are emphasized less. Since I am a cultural psychologist I am particularly focused on hip-hop as a cultural influence and how engaging in hip-hop related practices leaves lasting impressions on young people leading them towards tendencies of prioritizing some values and deprioritizing others. When constructing their understanding of the good life (the principles that a good person lives by), which virtues rise to the top as the most important? On what criteria are hip-hoppers more likely to judge the behavior of others?

I will also comment on some of the cultural and psychological processes that are responsible for producing patterns of moral priorities that exist within the hip-hop community. The cultural factors that we will focus on in particular are those related to racial stratification, class stratification, and language socialization. There are many other processes that play a role in the distribution of values that find themselves at front and center in hip-hop culture. With respect to race and class, we are interested in understanding to what extent hip-hop's value priority list is the way that it is because it came to prominence within a community that was racialized, minoritized, and economically subjugated. My research design was constructed to test a well-theorized hypothesis; that being a part of a racialized minority, and a part of the working class might allow you to perceive the notions of justice, subversion, and authenticity in a particular way, and this particular societal position may be more fertile for certain interpretations of justice, subversion and authenticity as opposed to others.

The following chapter is a cross-cultural research study, designed to test this hypothesis. Again, this study employs quantitative measures of participants' moral attitudes because these measures are better at capturing how important or unimportant certain values are to participants. They are also better at measuring aggregate differences between groups. This is one important way (but certainly not the only way) of describing cultural differences between groups, as quantitative differences in the average response of one group and another. By no means would we expect all hip-hop listeners to prioritize one value and non-hip-hop listeners to prioritize completely different ones. Instead we will be looking for statistically significant differences in the average hip-hop listener's priorities and the average non-hip-hop listener's priorities, expecting a great deal of within group variation. These perceptible differences in response values can tell us something about the way that hip-hop culture acts as a prioritizing force for some values and as a deprioritizing force for others.

1. Introduction

Many American rappers including Kendrick Lamar (2010), Snoop Dogg (2015), and Busta Rhymes (2006) have delivered the following catch phrase in their lyrics: "You can take me out the hood, but you can't take the hood out of me." They proclaim that there are certain aspects of the "hood" lifestyle and value system that, once they are part of you, direct how you perceive the world and behave in it.

In some ways, this proverb is also a characterization of rap itself, which has migrated outside of the American inner city, been disseminated worldwide, but it still often acts like it's from the hood. In the late 1970s a group of Black and Latinx youth from the South Bronx started an arts movement to express their perspective and positionality as ghetto poets (Rose 1994, Chang 2005). Today rap has expanded well beyond its South Bronx origins, diffusing into American suburbs and rural areas, as well as overseas. It is a dominant music genre and cultural reference point for young people of various races, ethnicities, religions, and creeds. A Kaiser study (2005) suggested that 65% of American children listen to hip-hop music on any given day. Hip-hop is a product of its environment but it has also become an environment in itself. There is a hip-hop scene in every major city and most minor cities in countries as diverse as Finland (Westinen 2014) and Brazil (Pardue 2004).

Being a part of the hip-hop scene (i.e., going to rap shows, frequenting hip-hop themed websites, discussing music with friends) means engaging with a community of people that have certain styles of being in the world and styles of self-presentation. Young people who are part of these cultural scenes are influenced by the hip-hop cultural innovators that preceded them and learn to present themselves in similar ways, wearing edgy clothing styles, embodying the body language and swagger of rappers, and adopting their lingo. Additionally, this scene contains common values about what is cool or "lit," what

is authentic or "real," what is socially conscious or "woke," and what is wrong or "shady." These ways of being in the world are displayed and encouraged in the lyrics of the music and in the various spaces where rap culture lives as the authentic way to be.

Now that rap music and rap scenes have propagated across the globe, a student of popular culture might ask: Which parts of hip-hop culture have had lasting effects on how its practitioners think and act? Some have referred to the cultural dispersal of hip-hop as "The Tanning of America," (Stoute 2011) citing the ways that rap has spread black culture across ethnic boundaries. The present study explores a particular subset of values that have been disseminated through hip-hop media and become a part of the everyday ethics of young people across the globe.

The community of study in this research includes young college students in Chicago that spend a great deal of time listening to rap lyrics, scouring digital spaces for songs that appeal to their refined tastes, attending events where other rap listeners convene and rap music is played, and sharing/discussing rap music with peers. The themes and vernacular from rap music have become a part of their everyday speech. Some write and perform rap lyrics themselves, using the art form as a mode of artistic expression. Rap music acts as a significant component of the sociocultural context in which these adolescents are developing an understanding of their moral obligations. In particular, this study explores how rap listeners appropriate from lyrics ways of conceptualizing notions of social justice, authenticity, and rebellion.

In the following sections, we review the psychology literature in which researchers have investigated rap's influence on moral attitudes and behavior. We then respond to that literature and explain the ways that studies of rap and morality could benefit from a sociocultural perspective, one that is attentive to the ways in which hip-hop has the characteristics of a culture, and socializes its listeners to

prioritize certain values. Next, we illuminate three key values that researchers of rap culture have identified as central to the genre (social justice, rebellion, and authenticity). Finally, we present data from an experiment. In this experiment, we test the hypothesis that the key values that are prominent in hip-hop media become lasting and meaningful values that orient the ethical perspectives of rap listeners.

2. Psychologists Search for A Link Between Hip-Hop and Moral Deficiency

Since its beginnings, the role that hip-hop plays in the moral lives of children has been contested. After the rise of rap music during the early 1980s there were lively debates in the popular media about the harmful effects of the genre. Organizations like the Parents Music Resource Center claimed that rap music and other offensive genres (i.e., heavy metal) had a detrimental impact on the moods, attitudes, and behaviors of young people, influencing them to engage in high-risk or deviant activities such as illegal drug use, gang violence, and premarital sex (Ballard & Coates 1995).

Miller (2013) uses the term "moral panic" to describe the response of several mainstream institutions and public figures to the threat of rap music. She suggests that several factors (including racism and classism) led to a paranoid perception that the messages in rap music were degrading the moral fiber of young people. A review of psychological studies of hip-hop and morality during the 1990s suggests that researchers may have been influenced by this moral panic as well. Out of the dozens of psychological studies of hip-hop music, the majority explored connections between rap music and "moral deviance"; also referred to as socially disapproved behavior (Took & Weiss 1994), antisocial behavior (Selfhout et al. 2008), maladjusted behavior, externalizing problem behavior (Selfhout et al. 2008), psychosocial turmoil (Took & Weiss 1994), and even health risk behaviors (Wingood et al. 2003).

Although an initial study by Took & Weiss (1994) seemed to invalidate any causal link between

rap listening and problem behavior, it was followed by numerous studies by other researchers finding correlations between rap listening and deviant behavior, including violent or aggressive attitudes/behaviors (Miranda & Claes 2004, Chen et al., 2006, Johnson et al., 1995a, Tanner et al., 2009, Selfhout et al., 2008), decreased academic aspirations/engagement (Johnson et al., 1995b), drug use (Miranda & Claes 2004, Chen et al., 2006), theft (Miranda & Claes 2004, Tanner et al., 2009), gang membership (Miranda & Claes 2004), risky sexual activity (Took & Weiss 1994) and violence against women (Barongan & Hall 1995, Johnson et al., 1995b). These conclusions seemed to fall in line with claims made by the public figures and institutions that crusaded against rap: that exposure to hip-hop lyrics leads to moral deviance.

Many of these studies employed a similar design. A particular community of adolescents was selected as the study population. Samples usually consisted of the students at a single high school, a single community college, or a collection of high schools in the same municipality. Then the population was segmented into hip-hop listeners and non-listeners. Hip-hop listeners were identified through self-report surveys that asked them whether they liked hip-hop music, whether they listened to it often, or whether they identified with the rap music scene. Once the hip-hop listeners had been segmented from the non-listeners, researchers analyzed group differences in the incidence of various morally deviant attitudes and behaviors. Although these studies produced correlational evidence for negative effects of rap, they did not factor in confounding variables that may increase the tendency to listen to rap music and to engage in problem behavior (i.e., coming from economically disadvantaged, disaffected communities).

There were significant nuances to these studies that undermine a simple causal relationship between rap listening and deviant behavior. First, the correlations between rap listening and moral

deviance depended a great deal on the backgrounds (racial, socioeconomic, and otherwise) of the students listening. The effects were different and sometimes opposite on black kids than they were on white kids, with one study for example showing that correlations between rap listening and criminal behavior only held for white adolescents (Tanner et al., 2009). Second, there were notable differences in the influence of rap depending on specific subgenres. For example, the relationship between rap and moral deviance seemed to disappear if students were listening to more politically conscious genres as opposed to gangsta rap (Miranda & Claes 2004). Studies investigating rap's influence tended to overlook the wide variety of content, tone, and ideology within rap music. Finally, it is worth remembering that any causal relationship may involve values and behaviors affecting listening and not necessarily the reverse.

Overall, much of the prior work on hip-hop and morality has embodied a deficit approach that prejudged hip-hop lyrics and the associated hip-hop culture. A cross-cultural approach to moral psychology should withhold such assumptions and consider the possibility that the differences in values and behavior between rap listeners and non-listeners could in fact represent cultural differences in the priorities of values. In this study, we take a sociocultural perspective, treating hip-hop as a set of lifeways and cultural adaptations developed by youth of color to adapt to urban environments. Participating in these lifeways includes the development of sophisticated moral sense-making strategies where certain ethics are encouraged and certain values are prioritized over others. Our goal is to identify the moral concerns that are most relevant to listeners of hip-hop music. Based on analyses of hip-hop culture by artists, art critics, and scholars (Rose 1994, Dyson 1996, Chang 2007) we hypothesize that heavy listeners of rap music will prioritize three different moral concerns as central to their moral identity: 1.) the moral imperative of social justice, 2.) rebellion against authority 3.) and authenticity. We predict that rap

listeners, through their involvement in hip-hop culture, will tend to prioritize these values more than their non-listening peers.

To measure these values in a sample of hip-hop listeners, we use the Moral Foundations Questionnaire, a validated self-report measure that assesses to what extent various moral concerns are important to the respondent (care/harm, fairness/unfairness, loyalty/disloyalty, submission/subversion, or purity/impurity). Moral foundations theory (MFT) is a good starting point for thinking about the cultural models of morality present in rap culture, but we are alert to identify additional dimensions that might be relevant. For example, authenticity is not represented in moral foundations theory (Haidt 2009), but has been proposed as a key value of hip-hop culture (McLeod 1999), and therefore we include measures of it.

3. Hip-Hop as Culture: A Product of Its Environment

"Rap is a vernacular art, which is to say that it is born out of the creative combination of the inherited and the invented, the borrowed and the made." (Bradley 2009)

This study follows notable members of the rap community, as well as academic scholars of rap in defining hip-hop as a culture (Toop 1984, Tate 1992, Rose 1994, Neal 1999, Alim 2006, KRS-ONE 2009) in the sense of culture as collective adaptations to environmental conditions (Boyd & Richerson 2005, Saxe 2005, Lee, Spencer & Harpalani 2003). On this view, in order to understand hip-hop's aesthetic sensibilities, its common practices, and its cultural values it is necessary to understand the environment that hip-hop evolved in.

The hip-hop genre was founded in the late 1970s among Black and Latinx youth artists residing in the low-income neighborhood of the South Bronx (Rose 1994, Chang 2005). At this time, the South

Bronx was one of the most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the United States. From this community that was simultaneously both economically under-resourced and culturally affluent, a cohort of youth assembled to create an artistic movement that included graffiti, breakdancing, DJing and lastly, the most foregrounded element of hip-hop – rap music. Surrounded by poverty, youth created complex music from limited materials. Early rap consisted of a poet delivering a vocal performance in conjunction with instrumental breakbeats played by a DJ or with beats made using the mouth (beat-boxing). As the genre came to life, one of the emerging conventions was for rappers (or emcees) to capture vividly and viscerally the realities of neighborhood life. Adjectives like *raw*, *hard,* and *dope* became descriptive of a common aesthetic objective, where emcees sought to create edgy (and sometimes hyperreal) depictions of life in the concrete jungle.

In the 1980s, rap spread to communities similar to the Bronx, including other large American metropolises and predominantly African American communities. In other words, hip-hop spread throughout *the hood*. Forman (2002) described the hood as a "geocultural construct" or a cultural understanding of space. The term *hood* is used ubiquitously in rap lyrics (and Black vernacular more widely) to describe low-income neighborhoods where many black and brown folks live across the country (and globe). When a person claims to be "from" the hood, not only are they referring to their specific neighborhood, they are claiming to be a product of an environment that extends beyond their own local manifestation of it. Although *the hood* does not share contiguous borders, it is imagined as a collective terrain, spanning from Watts to Bankhead to Detroit. Rappers Big K.R.I.T. and Mick Jenkins both refer to themselves as from "the hood" even though one is from Meridian Mississippi and the other from the South Side of Chicago.

Rap music spread so rapidly throughout the hood in part because it articulated the shared

experiences and challenges of hood life during the Reagan era, including dilapidated public housing, defunded schools, neighborhood violence, police brutality and the consequences of drug trade and addiction.

Again, we argue that the ethical concepts of hip-hop culture must be understood as adaptations to the major moral challenges that define social life in that community. What are the major hurdles that the community faces when it comes to maintaining their social obligations to one another? For folks living in the hood in the 1970s those challenges included maintaining community solidarity in the face of discrimination. Young people faced decisions of whether or not to engage in the narcotics trade that infiltrated the community. Ethical concepts formed to create solutions to these various challenges, and the lyrics of the most prominent form of poetry was a platform for cultural creators to record and design these concepts, such as an ethos of "making something out of nothing" and strong ethnic solidarity.

These adaptations to hood life were not built from scratch. Cultural practices and concepts evolve from previous cultural forms through processes of sociogenesis (Saxe 2005) and they do so within previously established social networks of human interaction. Hip-hop is cultural because it appropriated cultural forms of rhetoric and ritual that were already present in Black communities and extended them (Kopano 2002). The original hip-hop poets were inspired by a number of cultural traditions that preceded them, for example, the tradition of African American musical expression that traces back to Negro Spirituals, Gospel, the Blues, Jazz, Rock & Roll, and R&B.

One consistent cultural element in Black music and rhetoric has been pursuing freedom from oppression. The grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and narratives of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) were crafted in a context in which African American people had consistent struggles like securing basic safety in the oppressive social systems of slavery and Jim Crow, finding innovative ways to

resist this oppression, coming up with ways to dialogue with one another in coded language without detection (Smitherman 2006). This historical context was the crucible for the development of African American oral traditions and moral vernaculars.

Rappers grew up in hood spaces where this wisdom was encoded in the everyday speech of their family and community members, as they told stories and shared common proverbs. Rappers drew on this wisdom when they constructed their poetry. For example, in Common's (1994) song "Book of Life" you can see him appropriating linguistic and literary contributions of African American wordsmiths from previous generations:

I funnel through the tunnel, disgruntled
Tryin' to find me some light.
In the rim of darkness, I too sing.
I may not be the darkest, brother,
But I was always told to act my age, not my color.
Not knowin' that my color, was out of the original,
So now I sing the new Negro spiritual.
(Common 1994)

Within this verse, Common makes reference to the famous Langston Hughes poem (1926) that begins "I, too, sing America. I am the darker brother." He quotes a common folk proverb in Black communities, "act your age, not your color" a saying that commands a person to act in a way that is mature, as opposed to behaving in ways consistent with stereotypes of Black people. He also declares that his poetry is in the tradition of the Negro spiritual, a set of religious songs sung by enslaved Africans, articulating their spiritual justifications for freedom. In this one stanza, Common recalls three ideas that were generated by previous generations of Black people, and uses those ideas as conceptual

resources informing how he should act in the world.

In this study, we suggest that heavy rap listeners share certain concepts (narratives, discourses, styles, and attitudes) that were born from hood circumstances. This shared knowledge becomes a sociocultural lens for seeing the world. The idea that this hip-hop culture is *learned* is critical to this investigation. Before rap listeners can "be" cool or woke, they have to *learn* what cool and woke mean, and how to enact them. Therefore, we locate hip-hop culture as the shared knowledge and discourses that members of the community have appropriated from their cultural surroundings.

By highlighting the shared knowledge between rap listeners, we do not wish to erase the heterogeneity within the culture. There are hip-hop scenes in certain geographic regions that differ in their understandings and practice from those in another region. Rap culture can be further segmented into subgenres with different norms, and hip-hop practitioners (rappers, DJs, producers, and promoters) often have internal debates over the values that define the culture. All the while, because these diverse individuals are connected through a network of interconnected practices, environments, and media, there are patterns of thought that distinguish hip-hop culture.

Members of rap culture obtain their shared knowledge from many places (i.e., conversations with their peers or observing how rap artists are covered in the media), but one of the foremost sources is the rap lyrics themselves. Being a participant in hip-hop culture means that you listen to rap lyrics, comprehend them, memorize them, and consequently learn to be fluent in rap vernacular. Rap, the most prominent and widespread manifestation of the hip-hop aesthetic form, is a form of spoken word poetry that is delivered in synch with drum-heavy backing beats. The early originators of the genre formed a school of poetry that innovated cadences, vernaculars, vocabulary, recurring metaphors, and other stylistic innovations that structured the way that discourse was transmitted within the genre. In a

sense, these poets have created a "social language" (Bakhtin 1981), a discourse that was unique to their social strata. The values and ways of being are encoded in these lyrics and rap listeners can learn the codes by listening to them when they are articulated, interpreting those lyrics, and appropriating the structure and vocabulary of the social language. This study is thus interested in exploring how individuals that engage with the social language of hip-hop heavily, over long periods of time, gain conceptual ways of differentiating right from wrong.

3.1 Key Values of Hip-Hop Culture

Many researchers of rap adopting a cultural perspective have tried to delineate the key values and ethics of hip-hop culture through discourse analysis of lyrics (McLeod 1999), ethnographic observations of rap listeners (Newman 2005), and historical analyses of black musical/discursive forms (Toop 1984, Rose 1994). These studies differ from the psychology studies mentioned earlier both in the methods employed and findings. Hip-hop scholars from anthropology, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies have brought a particular sociocultural lens to their work, either by being experts in African American history, by employing an emic approach to get the insider's perspective, or by being hip-hop listeners themselves. Using these theoretical approaches, sociocultural researchers of rap have pointed out various virtues embedded within hip-hop culture, three of which we explore in this paper: 1.) social justice 2.) rebellion and 3.) authenticity.

Sociocultural researchers of rap have pointed to discourses of **social justice** where emcees question injustices in their society (Dyson 1996). In many instances, hip-hop appropriates the narratives of the Civil Rights/Black Power movements and Black Americans' centuries-long struggle for racial justice.

Many rap songs are particularly perceptive of the unjust ways in which society is organized, seeing the poverty of the hood environment as a prime example of economic inequality. As rap has migrated outside of the American context it has often been appropriated by marginalized communities commenting on the unequal distribution of resources and power.

Critiques of injustice are accompanied by a pervasive ethic of **rebellion**. Rap has traditionally attempted to challenge the legitimacy of powerful institutions that have consistently oppressed communities of color and are responsible for the suffering of people at the bottom (Rose 1994). Songs make fun of traditional symbols of power like police officers, elected officials, and traditional media outlets. In songs like *If I Ruled the World* (Nas & Lauryn Hill 1996) and *Thugz Mansion* (2Pac 2002) these poets imagine worlds where the power structure is inverted; futures where people in the hood are wealthy and their values and practices are seen as beautiful. These futures are often pursued by any means necessary, and breaking the rules of powerful institutions are seen as necessary evils or even righteous acts of civil disobedience. This rebelliousness is not just presented as the cool way to be, but is often advanced as a moral imperative in order to gain freedom, economic independence, or to protect one's family and community.

Researchers of rap have also showed that moral themes of **authenticity** pervade the genre, as rappers judge a person's realness by how genuine they are and how true they are to black culture or street identity (McLeod 1999). Rap artists often talk about the importance of "keeping it real". The construct of "realness" often means staying true to yourself, being genuine, and/or maintaining your integrity by not selling out or watering down your persona to fit in to mainstream society. Being real for the largely Black and urban youth with whom rap originated also means staying true to where you came from (the streets and/or the black community), expressing your culture proudly, and representing

community interests. Being real is also highly tied to themes of aggression and fortitude, which are perceived to be the natural inner state of human beings. If a person expresses these emotions honestly then they are real. But if they water down raw emotions or harsh opinions to appease social conventions or to prevent someone from being offended, then they are being fake.

The present research further investigates whether or not these cultural values of rap (social justice orientation, rebelliousness, and authenticity) are present in the attitudes and behaviors of rap listeners. While it is one thing for researchers to find these key virtues expressed in rap songs, rap videos, and rap scenes, it is another thing to ask whether these values are central tenets that orient the daily ethics of rap listeners.

4. Analytical Framework: Moral Priorities and Moral Foundations Theory

In order to account for the role of hip-hop in influencing moral development, we draw on theories that cultural psychologists have used to understand how human beings are morally socialized by the cultural contexts that they inhabit (Shweder & Much 1987, Haidt 2012, Tappan 1997, Sachdeva et al., 2011). These theories seek to understand how human beings, that have very similar mental machinery at birth, come to develop very different senses about what is right or wrong depending on the culture they develop in. These researchers have built these theories in order to understand why a child born to a family in the Odisha state of India is much more likely to think that it is morally wrong for widows to remarry or eat fish than a child born in Chicago, Illinois (Shweder & Much, 1987). This research suggests that human beings have the potential to become moral about a wide variety of issues and tend to moralize the behavior that is moralized in their social context.

At the same time, researchers argue that these culturally attuned intuitions all have similar

foundations in universal drives shaped by the evolutionary history of human nature (Haidt, 2012). Haidt uses evidence from neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and the anthropological record to identify 5 moral intuitions that form the basis for moral sense making. These intuitions evolved in early humans because prosocial groups, made up of individuals with these moral inclinations, outcompeted groups without them. The five Moral Foundations are as follows:

1. **Care/Harm** - Human beings perceive physical and emotional harm and empathize for others' well-being. This may stem from the evolutionary imperative to protect and care for offspring and other close kin.
2. **Justice/Injustice** - Human beings perceive, form, and maintain relationships based on reciprocity and fairness. This may reflect the evolutionary advantage conferred upon human groups cooperating in mutually beneficial partnerships.
3. **Loyalty/Betrayal** - Human beings have the ability to form in-groups to which they have the responsibility to prioritize their well-being over out-groups. This may stem from the advantage conferred upon cohesive groups that are able to outcompete less cohesive groups.
4. **Submission/Subversion (to authorities)** - Human beings have the ability to form hierarchical communities where members at the bottom of the hierarchy have the responsibility to submit to the will of members at the top. This may stem from the evolutionary advantage conferred upon groups with centralized leadership structures and obedient followers.
5. **Purity/Pollution** (Sacred/Profane) – Purity concerns may support perceiving contaminants and avoiding them. Purity has been extended to include triggers in the social world like sacred objects and can be seen in the propensity to keep the body (or soul) free of pollution from impure materials (like forbidden foods) or behaviors (like unapproved sexual behaviors).

Haidt (2012) proposes two mechanisms for how sociocultural context adjusts our moral foundations. The first is that culture can shrink or expand each of these cognitive modules making them more or less important to a particular cultural context. Haidt uses the following example: "In the past fifty years people in many Western societies have come to feel compassion [care/harm foundation] in response to many more kinds of animal suffering, and they've come to feel disgust [purity/pollution

foundation] in response to many fewer kinds of sexual activity" (2012). Through the lens of moral socialization theory, cultural differences in moral perspective are a matter of cultures developing different moral priorities over a period of time with some of these moral foundations being emphasized more in a culture and others deemphasized.

The second way socialization comes into play is that cultural practices can help define which social scenarios trigger moral intuitions. For example, recent incidents of police killings of unarmed Black people have uncovered very different patterns of moral intuitions between Black and White Americans. A Washington Post poll (2014) distributed to American voters suggests that 74% of Blacks perceived these killings to be indicative of broader injustices in the treatment of African Americans by police. Only 35% of White voters thought of these as evidence of injustice, instead viewing them as isolated incidents of excessive use of force. These large differences suggest that incidents of police brutality of unarmed Black men trigger intuitions about justice and harm within the minds of most African Americans, while in many White Americans they merely trigger the harm module.

These two mechanisms provide us with a theoretical framework for understanding the way that hip-hop culture exerts an influence on moral attitudes. In this study, we focus primarily on the first mechanism, exploring how that engagement with a set of community values tends to increase the priority of those values for community members, as opposed to non-community members. Based on the key values that are widely expressed within rap media, we expect rap listeners to have the following priorities:

> **Hypothesis 1:** *Social Justice Orientation*. Rap listeners should prioritize matters of justice and injustice more than their non-listening counterparts.
>
> **Hypothesis 2:** *Rebelliousness orientation*. Rap listeners should place less priority on respecting authority than their non-listening counterparts and instead should prioritize challenging authority.

Hypothesis 3: *Authenticity Orientation.* Rap listeners will prioritize genuineness or authenticity as a moral imperative more than non-listeners. This is based on research showing that notions of authenticity are strongly linked to morality (Gino et al. 2015)

In summary, we predict that hip-hop listeners will rate justice and authenticity concerns to be more important, and rate authority concerns to be less important than their non-listening peers. We did not anticipate differences between listeners and non-listeners on the remaining three dimensions (care/harm, loyalty/disloyalty and purity/impurity).

Researchers have noted a pervasive warrior spirit within the rap genre, pointing to the ways in which emcees value strength and often use metaphors and imagery rooted in warfare or battle. Because of this, one might assume that hip-hop listeners would see harming others as less of a moral violation than non-listeners. *However,* research into the psychology of various groups engaged in armed conflict (i.e., Palestinian supporters of Hamas), suggests that these groups see war as a moral imperative and that willingness to use violence against outgroup members reflects a commitment to protecting the ingroup and its values (Ginges et al., 2011). For that reason, violent actions in righteous wars are often psychologically construed as reducing overall harm by eliminating harmful others. Therefore, we predict that rap listeners will not show a marked difference in concern about harm.

We also did not anticipate large differences between rap listeners and non-listeners in their prioritization of loyalty as a moral value. If there were differences in loyalty they might show up in who one is expected to be loyal to, with hip-hop listeners less likely than others to conceive of their loyalty obligation based on constructs like the nation-state and more likely to conceive of their loyalty as linked to ethnicity or community.

It also isn't clear whether the purity/impurity construct as conceptualized by Graham, et al. (2009) corresponds to a unitary concept within hip-hop culture. Purity collapses across notions not necessarily correlated with one another in hip-hop culture: 1.) Is there a natural order from which deviation is seen as immoral? 2.) Is there a substantial class of behaviors that you find disgusting or morally repulsive? and 3.) When it comes to sexual activity do you moralize chastity, self-restraint, or traditional social mores? Based on an analysis of hip-hop culture we might expect that rap listeners might be very attracted to the first notion, moderately supportive of the second, but averse to the third. Therefore, the composite purity measures may conceal differences between rap listeners and non-listeners at a finer level of analysis.

5. Methods:

5.1 Participants

The participants in this study (N=112, 58.2% males) were selected from introductory Psychology courses at Northwestern University. Demographic data for the participants in the study is shown in Table 1. Students were preselected as Hip-Hop Listeners if they were high scorers on a Hip-Hop Practice Index (HHPI). The survey (available in Appendix 1) asked respondents to make a self - assessment of their participation in the hip-hop community using a 1-7 Likert scale. The scale was constructed to gauge to what extent students 1.) engaged in hip-hop related practices, 2.) held hip-hop culture to be a significant part of their identity, and 3.) were immersed in social circles where hip-hop listening was commonplace. Students that scored 4 or higher on the HHPI (7% of the total subject pool) were part of the Hip-Hop Listener sample group. Therefore, the Hip-Hop Listener sample was a group of students (N=47) for whom hip-hop listening had played a significant role in their lives in the past few

years.

Students coded as being in the rap listener group rated themselves as rather knowledgeable about hip-hop ($M = 5.45$ on a scale from 1 to 7). The overwhelming majority of them (80.5%) listened to rap music at least 1-2 hours per day and a majority of them (53.7%) visited websites where hip-hop music was featured or discussed at least several times a week. They also recognized hip-hop as a central part of their identity. An overwhelming majority (90.2%) of rap listeners agreed that rap had been an important part of their life over the past 3 years. Most (82.9%) thought it was important to know and understand the words to rap music and 56.1% indicated that hip-hop contained words of wisdom they lived by.

At the same time, only 27% of rap listeners felt that the subjects of rap music were things that that they experienced in their everyday lives. This may reflect the fact that most of the students came from upper-middle class backgrounds. Therefore, this group of students represented a large subset of American hip-hop listeners, many of which are not from the hood, but nonetheless find the music to be a key part of their identity containing powerful content that is meaningful for their lives.

The comparison group (N=65) consisted of undergraduates from the same Psychology classes randomly selected from the 929 students who filled out the hip-hop interest scale, once the most avid hip-hop listeners were removed. Their scores on the HHPI indicated that they had relatively low interest in, exposure to, and knowledge about hip-hop. A majority (76%) indicated that they were not knowledgeable about hip-hop, 81% indicated that it was not important to know the words to rap music and 89% did not think that rap music contained words of wisdom that they lived by.

Table 1. Research Participants by Ethnic Background, Social Class, and Political Affiliation

	Non-Listener		Hip-Hop Listener	
	N	*frequency*	*N*	*frequency*
Ethnic Background:				
Black/Latinx	12	0.24	20	0.43
non-Black/Latinx (White and Asian)	38	0.76	26	0.57
Social Class (Parents' Yearly Income)				
Low SES (<$40K)	6	0.13	4	0.09
Lower Middle SES ($40-90K)	15	0.33	11	0.26
Upper Middle SES ($90-150K)	5	0.11	9	0.21
Upper SES (>150K)	20	0.43	19	0.44
Political Affiliation:				
Very Liberal	8	0.15	7	0.15
Liberal	10	0.19	21	0.46
Moderate	25	0.48	14	0.30
Conservative	9	0.17	4	0.09

*The Black/Latinx category contained 7 mixed race participants with at least a portion of their ethnic background rooted in Black or Latinx communities.

**Several students neglected to submit their demographic information, especially on questions pertaining to parents' income and ethnicity. 23 out of the 112 participants were missing responses for at least one of the demographic factors. Thus, the analyses of demographic factors have smaller sample sizes than the analysis of main effects, equivalent to the number of participants that had sufficient data to run the test.

5.2 The Instrument: Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ)

We used the MFQ (Graham et al., 2009) to assess differences in the prioritization of the moral foundations between hip-hop listeners and non-listeners. Students were asked to rate how relevant various concerns were when making moral judgments. The first set of questions asked students *"When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant*

to your thinking?" They then rated a number of concerns related to each of the 5 moral foundations. For example, a question that indexed the loyalty intuition asked them to rate *"whether or not someone did something to betray his or her group"* on a scale from 0 (not at all relevant) to 5 (extremely relevant).

The second set of questions asked students to rate their endorsement of a number of attitudes that are representative of each of the 5 moral intuitions. For example, a question measuring the importance of the submission to authority intuition asks subjects to rate on a 0-5 scale how much they agree with the following statement: "Respect for authority is something all children need to learn."

In addition to the 5 moral intuitions assessed in the MFQ we also evaluated their prioritization of authenticity as a moral value. The MFQ was amended to include 9 new questions concerning authenticity. For example, in one question subjects were asked to rate on a scale of 0-5 how much they agreed with the following statement: *One of the worst things someone can do is portray themselves as something that they are not (*full scale available in Appendix 2.0*)*.

5.3 Analytic Procedure

Composite scores for each moral dimension (care/harm, justice/injustice, loyalty/disloyalty, submission/subversion, purity/impurity, authenticity/inauthenticity), were calculated for each participant. The composite score between 0 and 5 corresponds to their average response when rating the questions associated with that particular moral concern. Therefore, each participant ended up with 6 composite scores measuring how much they prioritized each of the 6 virtues when making moral judgement (0 = not at all relevant, 5 = extremely relevant).

Univariate regression was conducted using Stata data analysis software (StataCorp 2001). Regressions were run for each of the 6 moral dimensions, regressing the composite scores for the moral

dimension on hip-hop listening status. These regressions allowed us to test our hypotheses of whether or not there were statistically significant differences between rap listeners and non-listeners on their composite scores for each dimension.

5.4 Influences of Ethnicity, Social Class and Political Affiliation

The previous analytic procedures investigate differences between rap listeners and non-listeners in their prioritization of certain moral values. But this may give the impression that hip-hop listeners are part of a homogenous culture where they all participate in the same cultural practices, make the same interpretations, and follow the same moral codes. Since rap's prevalence, practice, and interpretation vary based on sociocultural context, an important question is: how does one's cultural membership (ethnic, SES, or political) mediate the relationship between hip-hop and moral socialization? Are there different effects for Black/Latinx listeners and non-Black/Latinx listeners? Are there different effects for wealthy listeners vs. those with less socioeconomic resources or liberal listeners vs. conservatives? We investigate these patterns using multivariate regression, a method that looks at the relationship between predictor variables and outcome variables expecting that they are interrelated. We use these regression tools to analyze the dataset (47 rap listeners and 65 non-listeners) exploring how demographic factors mediate the relationship between rap listening and moral attitudes.

5.4.1 Ethnic Background

The participants in the study were of diverse ethnic backgrounds: Asian/Pacific Islander 19.8%, Black 12.5%, Latino 12.5%, White 46.8%, and Mixed Race 8.33%. For the purpose of regression analysis these students were categorized as Black/Latinx (Black, Latinx, and Mixed Race participants) or non-

Black/Latinx (Asian and White participants) a distinction drawn for three reasons: 1.) the historical origins of the music in B/L communities 2.) the prevalence of B/L ethnic traditions, themes, and artists in the genre, and 3.) the historical marginalization of B/L communities within American inner cities due to racism. We expected that ethnic background would mediate the influence that rap listening has on moral priorities. Model 2 therefore factors in ethnic background status as a predictor variable.

5.4.2 Socioeconomic Status

The participants in the study also came from various social class backgrounds. SES was determined by parents' income (<$40K = lower SES, 40-90K = lower middle SES, 90-150K = upper middle SES, and >150K = upper SES). Hip-hop culture arose in low-income communities and therefore students from lower SES backgrounds are more likely to be hip-hop listeners. The regression model factored in the subjects' social class, acknowledging that moral priorities and hip-hop practice may be also influenced by SES. In Model 3 we factored in both underrepresented ethnicity status and socio-economic status as predictor variables.

5.4.3 Political Affiliation

Participants' self-reported political affiliations fell within the categories of conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal. Previous research has shown that prioritization of the 5 moral intuitions are intimately tied with political orientation (Graham et al. 2009). In Model 4 we factored in underrepresented ethnicity status, SES, and political affiliation.

5.4.4 Analytic Procedure

For this analysis, we focus on the three moral concerns for which there were significant differences

between rap listeners and non-listeners (justice, authority, and authenticity). For each of these moral concerns where we observed a main effect, we assessed the relative contribution of the four predictor variables in predicting value prioritization. How much do each of these four predictor variables explain the variation in students' prioritization of the moral concern? See Table 2 for a visualization of the relationship between predictor variables and outcome variables.

6. Results:

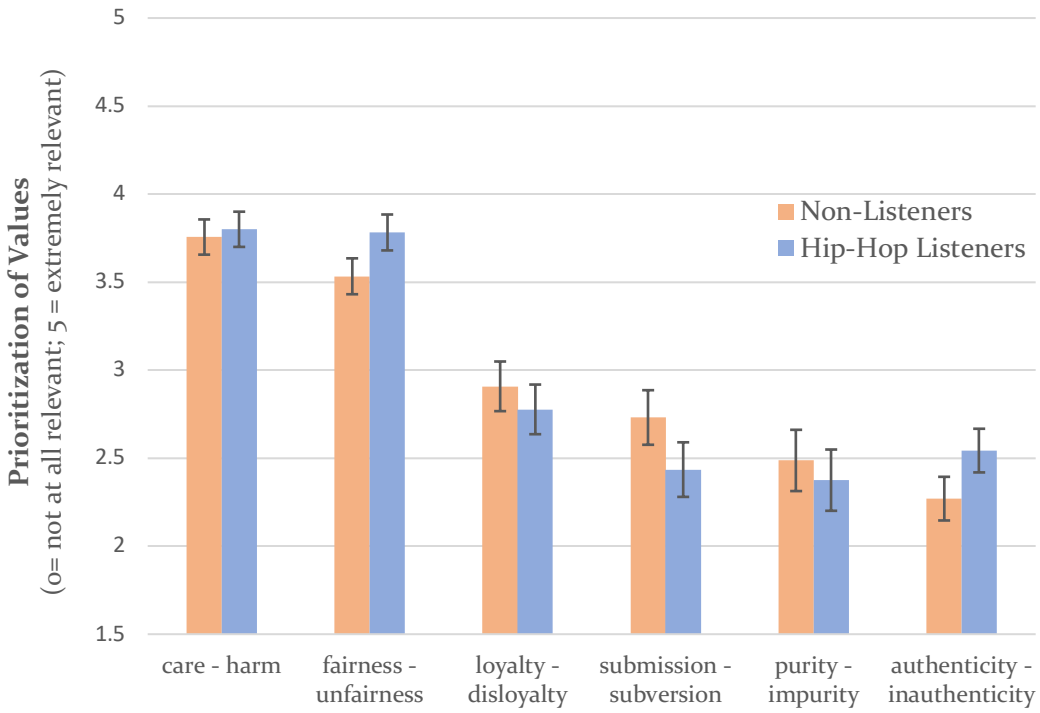
6.1 Main Effect of Rap Listening on Moral Priorities

We predicted differences between rap listeners and non-listeners on justice/injustice, submission/subversion, and authenticity/inauthenticity measures and found that the data confirmed these hypotheses. Justice was a higher priority for hip-hop listeners ($M = 3.78$) than for non-listeners ($M = 3.53$). This difference was modest but statistically reliable $t(111) = 2.45$, $p = 0.016$. Rap-listeners ($M = 2.44$) and non-listeners ($M = 2.73$) differed in prioritizing submitting to authorities. Although these differences were not statistically significant they were reliable with a 1-tailed test, $t(110) = 1.91$, $p = 0.077$. As will be shown later (Section 6.2.3), this difference became significant when the effects of related variables of race, SES, and political affiliation were considered. Lastly, hip-hop listeners prioritized authenticity as a moral value ($M = 2.54$) to a significantly higher degree than non-listeners ($M = 2.27$), $t(110) = 2.20$, $p = 0.030$. They thought staying true to oneself was more of a moral concern than their non-listening counterparts did.

We did not expect differences between rap listeners and non-listeners on the dimensions of care/harm, loyalty/disloyalty, and purity/impurity and found no statistically significant differences. There was no reliable difference in the prioritization of care/harm between listeners ($M = 3.80$) and non-

listeners ($M = 3.76$), $t(110) = 0.45$, $p = 0.657$. Both listeners and non-listeners rated scenarios where someone was physically or emotionally harmed as a strong moral violation, and rated caring for others' physical and emotional well-being as a high priority. There was no reliable difference between hip-hop listeners ($M = 2.78$) and non-listeners ($M = 2.91$), $t(110) = 0.93$, p = 0.355, on the virtue of loyalty/disloyalty. Thus, the importance of in-group solidarity was similar in both groups. With respect to the concern of purity/impurity, there were also no statistically reliable differences between hip-hop listeners and non-listeners ($M = 2.49$ and 2.39 respectively), $t(109) = 0.64$, $p = 0.523$.

Figure 5. Prioritization of 6 Moral Values (Non-Listeners vs. Hip-Hop Listeners)



6.2 Ethnicity, Social Class and Political Affiliation as Mediating Factors

Table 2 presents the Pearson product-moment correlations among the variables in the study (the moral intuitions and the demographic factors). Tables 3, 4, and 5 present the hierarchical regressions for

predicting justice/injustice, authenticity/inauthenticity, and submission/subversion respectively. The demographic factors of ethnicity, social class and political affiliation had varied associations with moral priorities. Before exploring these regressions in detail, it is important to note that there were main effects of these demographic factors on moral intuitions. There were significant ethnic differences on two moral dimensions; purity and authenticity. B/L students were more concerned with purity and authenticity than non-B/L students. Social class was a factor for authority, purity, and authenticity. The lower their socioeconomic status, the more the participants tended to prioritize these dimensions as a moral concern. Conservative political affiliation was positively correlated with the dimensions of loyalty, authority, and purity. These latter results mirror previous studies that have found these dimensions to be more important to conservatives than they are to liberals (Graham et al. 2009).

Table 2. Intercorrelation matrix of variables

	Variable	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10
1	Care/Harm	--																		
2	Fairness/Unfairness	0.54	***	--																
3	Loyalty/Disloyalty	0.23	**	0.20	**	--														
4	Submission/Subversion	0.19	**	-0.03		0.55	***	--												
5	Purity/Impurity	0.31	***	0.32	***	0.50	***	0.50	***	--										
6	Authenticity/Inauthenticity	0.31	***	0.51	***	0.40	***	0.12		0.43	***	--								
7	Listener Status	0.04		0.23	**	-0.18		-0.18	*	0.06		0.21	**	--						
8	Ethnicity	-0.05		0.11		-0.05		0.09		0.19	**	0.25	**	0.21	**	--				
9	Socioeconomic Status	-0.08		-0.10		-0.06		-0.29	***	-0.33	***	-0.23	**	0.07		-0.42	***	--		
10	Political Affiliation	0.02		0.15		-0.33	***	-0.21	**	-0.31	***	-0.09		0.18	*	-0.02		0.09		--

* p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Positive correlations for the ethnicity variable mean that being Black/Latinx was correlated with that variable. Positive correlations for the Political Affiliation variable mean that liberal political affiliation was correlated with that characteristic.

6.2.1 Fairness

In all four models rap listening predicted prioritization of fairness as a moral value (Table 3). When factoring in demographic factors (ethnicity, SES, and political affiliation) rap listening was the only statistically significant predictor of justice concerns across the four models. This suggests that the heightened attention that rap listeners pay to justice is not explained by being B/L or low-income. B/L hip-hop listeners ($M = 3.84$) are more justice oriented than B/L non-listeners ($M = 3.54$) and the same is true for non-B/L hip-hop listeners ($M = 3.71$) when compared to non-listeners ($M = 3.53$).

6.2.2 Authenticity

Rap listening reliably predicted prioritizing authenticity in all four models (Table 4). Ethnicity and SES also were associated with endorsement of authenticity. Even though hip-hop listeners of all races prioritized authenticity more than their non-listening counterparts, B/L hip-hop listeners prioritized authenticity ($M = 2.72$) more than non-B/L hip-hop listeners ($M = 2.42$), and low-SES rap listeners prioritized authenticity more than high-SES listeners (means: lower SES = 2.73, lower middle SES = 2.55, upper middle SES = 2.34, and upper SES = 2.28). B/L ethnic background, low socioeconomic status, and hip-hop listening seemed to have separable effects on the importance of authenticity. Political affiliation on the other hand, was not associated with the value of authenticity.

6.2.3 Authority

In Models 2, 3, and 4, rap listening reliably ($p < .05$) predicted prioritizing respecting authority figures (Table 5). Respect for authority was associated with not listening to hip-hop, low SES, and conservative political affiliation. Low-SES students valued respecting authority more than high-SES

students (means: low SES = 3.05, lower middle SES = 2.74, upper middle SES = 2.64, upper SES = 2.34) and conservative students valued respecting authority more than liberal students (means: conservative = 3.03, moderate = 2.71, liberal = 2.43, very liberal = 2.33).

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Table 3. Summary of regression analysis for variables predicting **concern for fairness/unfairness.**

Variable	B	SE	p-value		Adjusted R^2	R^2
Model 1						
Rap Listening	0.249	0.102	0.016	**	0.043	0.052
Model 2						
Rap Listening	0.218	0.113	0.057	*	0.03	0.05
Ethnicity	0.081	0.12	0.5			
Model 3						
Rap Listening	0.289	0.122	0.019	**	0.037	0.07
Ethnicity	-0.028	0.143	0.845			
Socioeconomic Status	-0.051	0.061	0.402			
Model 4						
Rap Listening	0.258	0.123	0.039	**	0.051	0.095
Ethnicity	-0.028	0.143	0.848			
Socioeconomic Status	-0.059	0.061	0.333			
Political Affiliation	0.035	0.023	0.122			

Table 4. Summary of regression analysis for variables predicting **concern for authenticity/inauthenticity.**

Variable	B	SE	p-value		Adjusted R^2	R^2
Model 1						
Rap Listening	0.273	0.124	0.03	**	0.034	0.042
Model 2						
Rap Listening	0.187	0.135	0.169		0.062	0.082
Ethnicity	0.316	0.144	0.031	**		
Model 3						
Rap Listening	0.314	0.144	0.032	**	0.089	0.121
Ethnicity	0.067	0.169	0.694			
Socioeconomic Status	-0.154	0.072	0.035	**		
Model 4						
Rap Listening	0.303	0.146	0.04	**	0.087	0.13
Ethnicity	0.083	0.169	0.624			
Socioeconomic Status	-0.156	0.072	0.033	**		
Political Affiliation	-0.018	0.027	0.5			

Table 5. Summary of regression analysis for variables predicting **concern for respecting authority**

Variable	B	SE	p-value		Adjusted R^2	R^2
Model 1						
Rap Listening	-0.296	0.155	0.058	*	0.024	0.033
Model 2						
Rap Listening	-0.359	0.169	0.037	**	0.034	0.054
Ethnicity	0.229	0.18	0.208			
Model 3						
Rap Listening	-0.396	0.176	0.027	**	0.104	0.135
Ethnicity	0.195	0.207	0.349			
Socioeconomic Status	-0.163	0.088	0.066	*		
Model 4						
Rap Listening	-0.378	0.175	0.034	**	0.142	0.182
Ethnicity	0.215	0.204	0.294			
Socioeconomic Status	-0.157	0.087	0.073	*		
Political Affiliation	-0.062	0.032	0.06	*		

Discussion:

Contrary to earlier studies of hip-hop's effects on moral behavior, most of which relied on assessing the prevalence of behaviors that mainstream society has deemed to be antisocial or morally deviant (i.e., engagement in risky sexual activity, drug use, or property crime), our approach used self-report measures to assess rap listeners' subjective evaluations of various moral values (caring, fairness, loyalty, submission, purity, and authenticity). We assessed how important each of these values is to their moral decision making.

The present research suggests that rap listeners, when compared to non-listeners, found some of these values to be more important and others to be less important. Rap listening was correlated with an increased prioritization of justice and authenticity concerns, and a deprioritization of authority concerns. Results also suggest that these differences between hip-hop listeners and non-listeners were not merely artifacts of demographic variables that are correlated with hip-hop listening (Black/Latino ethnicity, low SES, or liberal political affiliation). The effects of rap listening on these three moral values persisted even when accounting for the demographic variables.

In fact, rap-listening was more predictive of subjects' moral priorities than these other demographic factors, showing greater effect sizes and greater reliability. These results support the idea that hip-hop culture is a cultural influence that warrants study as a shaper of youth/young adult moral identity, in addition to race and social class. Although hip-hop culture is certainly related to ethnic, socio-economic, and political identities, it has elements that cannot be understood simply by understanding ethnic or social class identity alone. We argue for an understanding of youth moral socialization that takes into consideration the media that they engage with. Social groups and subcultures built around consumption of media genres exert impactful influences on the values of young

people, and those impacts are mediated by their participation in other practices and cultural communities.

The high prioritization of fairness among rap listeners supports our hypothesis about rap being oriented towards social justice. These results also concur with those from a previous study (Tanner et al., 2009) showing that rap listeners in Canada were more likely to perceive the criminal justice system, educational system, and Canadian society in general to be unfair. Our results add to this narrative suggesting that rap listeners not only perceive the society to be less fair, but they are also subjectively aware that fairness is a high priority in their worldview. Hip-hop artists have often rallied around the cause of social justice, and these results suggest that the listeners of the genre seem to be more attuned to the value of fairness, and prioritize it as a central value in their moral decision making.

The results of this study also support our hypothesis about the rebellious orientation in rap music and suggest that one of the values of hip-hop culture that is often taken up by its listeners is the inclination to challenge authority rather than submit to it. One way to interpret hip-hop listeners' low authority scores is that hip-hop listening leads to a value deficit (less respect for authority). However, another way to interpret them is that rap listening leads to a value gain (more self-reliance and autonomy). With the value gain interpretation, hip-hoppers' low authority scores are simply a side effect of their prioritization of competing values like independence. They are simply more vested in other virtues like courage and autonomy that express themselves in behaviors like challenging illegitimate authorities, critiquing systems of oppression, and expressing their viewpoints even when they clash with the norms of authority figures or the traditions of society. Whether rap is morally enriching or depleting depends on the behaviors and dispositions that we desire in our children. These desires vary quite a bit between different parents, communities, and societies.

The tendency to value submitting to authority was actually most correlated with low socioeconomic status. Participants from lower social class strata were more likely to strongly value respecting authority. At first glance, it seems unintuitive that low SES is indicative of submissive attitudes about authority, while rap listening is correlated with subversive attitudes, given that hip-hop was born in low-SES communities. The rebellious hip-hop subculture stands in contrast to the norm for low-income communities. In many ways, hip-hop listeners' views on authority seem to more closely match the views of the wealthiest participants in the study. Both seem to value autonomy and independence from authority.

However, within the psychology literature anti-authoritarian viewpoints are represented in very different ways when they are found in hip-hop listeners than when they are found in upper middle-class children. When attributed to high SES white youth (especially boys), these viewpoints are often depicted as agentic; a character asset (Baumrind 1971). They are seen as the precursors of self-efficacy and the characteristics of future entrepreneurs and creative thinkers. When attributed to hip-hop culture they are depicted as undisciplined and disobedient; the dispositions of lawbreakers. This bias in the literature mirrors stereotypes in the broader society that perceive black agency to be dangerous. These results highlight the importance of employing an emic perspective, one that tries to understand the behavior of a community from their own perspective instead of from that of a cultural lens that has been traditionally hostile to B/L artforms and cultural lifeways. If rap-listeners are referring to their own behavior as independent or autonomous, and researchers are interpreting their behavior as disrespectful, then those researchers may be using their own external moral frameworks to judge rap culture.

This often leads to biases in the types of research questions that psychologists explore. There have been no studies of rap listeners using established measures of autonomy that explore whether rap music

can be used to foster feelings of independence and autonomy in young people. This dearth of research stands in contrast to the many accounts of young people who say that they use the music for motivational purposes, to pump themselves up to fight through the daily challenges that stand in their way, and to feel more self-efficacious. Rap music has also consistently popularized *the hustler*, an entrepreneurial archetype that is able to make something out of nothing, through hard work and "grinding." Ties between rap music and entrepreneurial virtues such as risk taking, are absent in the psychology literature. Meanwhile, there have been multiple studies exploring connections between rap music and law breaking, assuming that rebelliousness in inner city youth is most tied with disciplinary problems.

The results also suggest that hip-hop listeners are socialized into an orientation of authenticity. The concept of realness in hip-hop culture includes the obligation to maintain congruency between who you are essentially (culturally, personality-wise, on the inside) and how you portray yourself to be. Therefore, realness also seems to be related to notions of honesty and integrity. These concerns were significantly more important to the hip-hop listeners than they were to the non-listeners.

The effect of rap-listening on authenticity was also mediated by race and social class. It was the rap enthusiasts from the social groups that founded hip-hop culture (low-income Black and Latino youth) that were the most committed to the value of authenticity. This value was less important to rap listeners the more distant they were from this identity (i.e., upper-class, non-B/L youth). Authenticity and realness in hip-hop is often about staying true to the Black community and Black culture. Rappers also use phrases like "keep it real" and "stay true" in their lyrics to advocate for staying loyal to the streets, to the hood, to the low-income neighborhoods that they represent.

McLeod (1999) argues that these claims of authenticity are a reaction to being a part of cultures

(ethnic and socioeconomic) that are threatened with assimilation, systemic oppression, or discrimination. It is those of us whose ways of life are under attack for whom the value of authenticity becomes the most important. Being firmly and genuinely oneself is associated with the inner strength necessary to resist the pull of the mainstream. It is conceivable that non-B/L youth are not as receptive to claims of authenticity in rap music because they are part of ethnic groups that are less threatened by an imminent danger of assimilation. Perhaps this is because their communities have traditionally encountered less resistance to assimilation, they valued assimilation as a strategic unproblematic goal, and/or they are already part of the majority white culture into which minority cultures are assimilating.

The data also suggest that the moral viewpoints that are prevalent in the rap community reflect sensible choices by youth to embrace ethical systems that are relevant to their sociocultural circumstances. An increased sensitivity to the value of justice is sensible for young people from communities that have been systematically treated unfairly. The same can be said for the value of challenging traditional authority figures. Lastly, a devotion to authenticity is a reasonable response for communities that are threatened by cultural erasure. All in all, rap-listeners' concepts of the "good person" are colored by their perceptions (and their cultural forbearers' perceptions) of what it takes to thrive in their society and contribute to their communities. Even for young people that are not in hood environments, a system of moral ethics that pays increased attention to justice, autonomy, and authenticity could be useful for navigating the moral dilemmas in their lives. These values may also be broadly useful to young people across the board who experience marginalization simply by being youth in a world that feels like it privileges adults.

Many educators are interested in encouraging the moral development of young people that are part of the hip-hop community. When trying to engender more prosocial behaviors in rap listeners it is

important to think about how to do this in a culturally relevant fashion; one that considers the moral dilemmas that are most prevalent in their context as well as the costs of prioritizing certain values in certain communities. If your culture isn't threatened by oppression it is easier to imagine a moral system where authenticity isn't much of a concern. If approaches to moral education do not take context into consideration, young people will experience these curricula as out of touch with the everyday moral dilemmas that they find themselves in, and the constraints placed on their lives by systemic injustice.

The results of this study also call for further exploration of hip-hop and its use as an important resource in moral education. More work needs to be done exploring the ways that young people are currently using rap texts to motivate themselves to be better human beings in the world, playing songs in order to help themselves feel more self-efficacious, to feel more in tuned with their community, or to gain insights into how to navigate an unfair society. By studying how young people are organically and intentionally morally educating themselves with hip-hop media we can use these insights to inform the development of culturally relevant interventions that use hip-hop as the cultural basis for therapy, leadership training, and civics education.

Young people will continue to gravitate to moral exemplars that are part of the cultural lifeworlds that they come from. Figures like Kanye West will remain influential role models for youth who see value in his courage and authenticity. It is imperative that we understand the ethical systems that young people find meaningful, which values those ethical systems prioritize, and also which blindspots they have. This will not be achieved by censorship or by protecting children from rap perspectives. We do not move towards making young people more holistic moral thinkers by removing rap voices from the conversation, but instead by bringing them in dialogue with other ethical theorists – from Socrates to the Dalai Lama. Towards this end, more work in comparative moral psychology is

called for; particularly studies that investigate how modern cultures and subcultures promote the prioritization of particular values, and how young people are navigating these various ethical systems as they develop their own moral voices.

Chapter 3:

Why Errybody Sayin' *No New Friends*?

The Moral Codes of Rap and Why Young People Recite Them

ABSTRACT: This study traces the dissemination of the phrase "no new friends" from its origin in rapper Drake's 2013 song to its current use by various young people who have taken it up as a catch phrase in their everyday lives. This expression of loyalty has become a common way that hip-hop adjacent youth articulate their obligation to their day-one friends. Through a discursive analysis of the original song, an analysis of interviews with 21 college students who use the phrase, and a Twitter scrape of 8,716 global mentions of the phrase during November 2017 we explore the function that these dramatic pledges of solidarity play in youth social life. Although all of the participants frequently listened to hip-hop music, and it had been a big part of their lives during the past 3 years, only some of them were fluent in African American Vernacular English. It was these individuals that had understandings of loyalty that most coincided with the cultural constructs of "downness" within hip-hop culture. This supports our theoretical account of the mechanism through which hip-hop moral codes become a part of young people's ethical decision making. It is not just through exposure to the music via listening, but instead it is through a process of language socialization, learning to speak the language.

"Motherfuckers say that I'm foolish,
I only talk about jewels
Do you fools listen to music
or do you just skim through it?"

- Jay Z, Renegade

Positioning This Study in the Larger Dissertation:

The last chapter of this dissertation was entitled "A Difference in Priorities." The arguments in that chapter framed differences between hip-hop listeners and non-listeners as quantitative aggregate differences in how much these groups emphasize certain virtues in their lives. The conclusion of the analysis showed that the hip-hop community places authenticity and justice high on their list of moral priorities and places respecting authority fairly low on their list of priorities (as compared to non-listeners). In this next unit we will switch to another way of characterizing hip-hop's moral structure. Instead of a quantitative comparison, this unit will be based on a qualitative analysis of some of the moral concepts that are prominent within rap lyrics. This analysis is a characterization of hip-hop's discourse; the words and notions that are frequently uttered in hip-hop spaces, in the lyrics of its prominent rappers, in the blogs that cover the genre, and in the neighborhoods (the hoods) where hip-hop is a way of life.

With this in mind we can think about hip-hop itself as a social language (Bakhtin 1935); a discourse with its own words, vocabulary, narratives, and speakers that are socialized into it. Like all social languages it evolves from previous dialects. Hip-hop discourse received its most substantial cultural inheritance from African-American Vernacular English, a social dialect of English spoken by an ethnic minority of approximately 70 million and the communities adjacent to that community. Embedded in these words you will find traces of the values, beliefs, and cultural lessons that emerged over a 400 year African-American experience in the United States. Therefore when hip-hop was formed, the ideas that they talked about and the language they used to talk about these ideas were those that they inherited from African-American Vernacular English and other discourses that were present in their context.

In the third unit I claim that the values of hip-hop culture are encoded in its vernacular. This is related to a theoretical claim that is substantiated by many sociolinguists and researchers of discourse. The claim is that the language we speak in our specific sociocultural milieu (ex.// how golfers speak on the country club circuit or how yogis speak in yoga studios) has evolved over time so that it contains the perspective and values of the people that inhabited those contexts before us. Therefore a window into the values of a "culture" is closely analyzing the words, narratives, idioms, that have become prevalent in that culture and the connotations that they have developed.

How does this effect our analysis of hip-hop culture? Many people make claims about the moral content of hip-hop. However, a fair characterization of the values of hip-hop culture starts with the people who make claims about those values knowing what hip-hoppers are saying when they voice their values. It almost goes without saying that an expert on the values of Saudi women better know how to comprehend Arabic, they should hear the women's testimonies in their own words, they should know a bit about what moral concerns they express in their private everyday conversations, they should know a bit about the Quranic verses that they use to legitimize their viewpoints, and the particular stories they tell to one another about what is right or wrong. And if, for some reason, these experts on Saudi women's values do not speak Arabic themselves, then they better be relying on an accurate translation.

The same goes for those studying millenials engaged in hip-hop. In order to understand the values of rappers, rap fans, and hip-hop heads it is equally important that researchers understand the language they speak. They better understand what young people say when they say "stay woke" or "keep it real." However, understanding the language of hip-hop culture faces a barrier, namely that it is often considered to be slang or broken English. The word slang is a word with a disputed origin, possibly from 16th Century Scandinavia, although there are other theories that it originated amongst

Gypsies around that same time. Despite its unclear origins, it seems to have entered into the English lexicon at some point during the 18th Century. The earliest trace of the word is in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1756, in which it is defined as "the language of the low and disreputable" (Ayto & Simpson 2010) In its original usage, the word slang has a moral valence already embedded in the word. Slang is for immoral people. If you spoke slang in England in the 1750s you were a scoundrel, a thug. Many argue that the word slang still retains this meaning in that people conceive of it as language that belongs to the vulgar, to the uneducated, to the rude and unrefined.

On the other hand, users of the word slang might counter that they are not making moral judgments when they call hip-hop words slang, that they are merely pointing out that hip-hop vernacular is colloquial or informal. Even so, they are certainly saying something about the legitimacy of the discourse, about which words are normal and which ones are not. Surely they are saying something more judgmental than, "these are words that working-class people use." For goodness sake, many words are spoken by working-class people, words like "dog" or "tree" or "Wi-fi" but these words are not called slang. What makes slang, slang is just as much about who does not speak it as it is about who does. Slang is **not** spoken by people with high repute, in contexts where manners are required, or in written formats like academic journals. Slang is a way of marking what is illegitimate to those who are refined and sophisticated. And the power to define what is official language and what is slang often lies in the hands of the powerful. James Murray in the 19th century declared that the Oxford English Dictionary should contain "no slang, no dialect, no coarseness, no recent coinage…considered jargon" (Skelton-Foord 1989).

In this way, if hip-hop language is marked as slang **from jump**, then before we even have a chance to engage in a deep investigation of its meaning, there is a sense that it is low and not high, ordinary and

not elevated, primitive and not sophisticated, emotional and not conceptual. I argue that imagining hip-hop language as slang confines the interpretations that researchers will make of it, biasing them towards seeing vulgarity where none was intended and constraining them from seeing sacred values where they were clearly invoked.

The marking of discourse as illegitimate is not just a thing that is done to specific words in a language. It is done to certain tones, topics, registers, cadences, gestures and even to the speakers themselves. An entire genre and all of its discursive elements (linguistic and paralinguistic) can be marked by certain segments of society as offensive. In a psychology study of the stereotypes people associate with American music genres (Dunbar et al. 2016), participants were given a set of song lyrics to read. One group was told that these lyrics were created by a rap artist, and the other group was told that these exact same lyrics were from a country song. The group that thought the lyrics were rap lyrics judged them to be more literal, more offensive, and more in need of censorship than the group that thought they were reading country lyrics. Therefore, in the popular imagination, no matter what is said, if it comes from the genre of hip-hop, it is assumed to be more vulgar.

This cognitive and cultural bias against hip-hop that has been proven in the literature again and again, is one major reason why the exploration of rap's virtues is an uphill battle. How can scholars fully describe the sacred aspects of rap to a mainstream culture whose social mores are partly defined by their absence of slang? How do you make hip-hop's ethics make sense to an audience whose definition of "cultured" is understood in contradistinction to the culture of social outcasts, and whose understanding of what it means to be civilized is a linear progression away from "primitive" ways of being, which is often a euphemism for the ways of being of people of color, working class folk, and indigenous communities.

This uphill battle is marked by certain practical barriers as well. For example, the words that most hip-hop heads are using are often considered too "informal" for academic journals, and despite the fact that the word "woke" is used by millions of youth across the planet Earth, when I write it in an academic paper I still feel as if it would better be placed in quotation marks and treated as undiscovered, as abnormal, as having some level of obscurity, even more obscure than the word *existentialism* or *non-cognitive*. In many ways the discourse we speak as members of the academy is embedded with a bias towards linguistic practices that can be traced either to Western ancestors in Greek or Latin, towards linguistic constructions with widespread usage in written literature, towards those that are adjacent to techno-scientific enterprises and away from those that arose in popular culture, away from those in informal spaces and away from those popularized by youth, and the unschooled.

Therefore it is important to place this study in its proper context, as part of a network of theorists and methodologists that are also fighting this uphill battle (Smith 1999, Alim 2007, Bang et al. 2007) and are dedicated to decolonizing research practices, not only because it is an imperative for achieving social justice, but because it is required for us to faithfully describe the cultural practices of human beings on the planet Earth. How can we describe in high fidelity what our subjects feel if we never take time to problematize the language, and conceptual frameworks we are using to make sense of them, frameworks that arose in conjunction with efforts to legitimize Western Judeo-Christian cultural enterprises, at the expense of indigenous, African, Eastern, Islamic and other groups that have been colonized and minoritized.

Part of the answer to this is starting our inquiry from jump with a theoretical position that has been substantiated in various academic fields including anthropology, cultural psychology, and sociolinguistics; that all of the communities we study are engaged in complex social cognition, and are

spontaneously engaging in various lines of philosophical and ethical questioning that are universal to the human experience "How do I live a good life?" "How should I treat other beings?" This type of ethical reasoning is occurring explicitly in all communities around the world and is implicitly embedded in many of the practices and habits that these humans engage in. Therefore our research project as moral psychologists consists of looking for the moments in their everyday discourse where they are engaged in asking these questions, or implying/ declaring answers to them.

This process also includes working with several sources that have remained marginalized from academic inquiry. For example, Urban Dictionary is an online crowdsourced dictionary of English slang that was created in 2000. It contains 1.6 million words and 2.7 million definitional entries for these words (Nguyen et al. 2017) and a 2007 estimate suggested that it received about 50 million site visits per year, about 30 times as many views as Wiktionary (Cotter & Damaso 2007). UD's approach to building a dictionary is quite different from the lexicographic methods used by more traditional dictionaries such as Oxford English or Webster's. First of all, the dictionary contains thousands of words that are excluded by these more traditional sources, accepting words that are widely used by youth, in urban areas, in regional or ethnic dialects, and in special interest groups. Therefore hip-hop vernacular is much more likely to be catalogued in Urban Dictionary than it is in Oxford or Webster's. Although these "informal" words make up a significant portion of the words that we use in our daily lives, they are often excluded from traditional English dictionaries. For example, the word *selfie* was added to Urban Dictionary four years before it was deemed acceptable for Oxford dictionary.

Urban Dictionary entries are also written by the users themselves, with many words having several different definitions written by separate users. Each definition is then upvoted or downvoted democratically by users of the site. This is quite different from the top-down process of more traditional

dictionaries where editors develop criteria and lexicographic rules for defining words and seek to come up with an objective singular account of a word's meaning. Linguists that have studied the emergence of UD have argued that it "represent[s] popular and divergent, as opposed to authorized and uniform views of meaning" (Cotter & Damaso 2007).

Similarly, in my approach I attempt to draw on sources that were built with input from everyday people and platforms where authorities can be openly challenged and the main criteria for whether a word usage is legitimate is whether a community of individuals uses it in that way. This approach reflects my theoretical position that language and culture is not only built from top-down through vertical transmission (formal education from learned authorities and powerful institutions to unlearned novices) but also through grassroots innovations, in local contexts among everyday language users. Therefore in order to best understand hip-hop culture it means that we must rely on more crowdsourced resources, media where there is more equal access to the right to contribute (including web-based platforms like youtube, rapgenius, wikipedia and urban dictionary). A systematic approach to studying moral vernacular includes delving into these sources where the perspectives of everyday speakers are chronicled, as well as going directly to the speakers themselves; observing them and asking them for their two cents.

Using these sources that capture the everyday discourse practices of the hip-hop community I attempt to explore the "moral vernacular" of rap music. By moral vernacular, I mean the words that individuals and communities use in their everyday speech to make reference to their moral principles. Each speech community has a moral vernacular. What is the language that folks are using when they are shaming someone for acting up, when they are gossiping about bad actors, when they are giving advise to someone in a moral dilemma? By eavesdropping on people's daily discourse, and closely examining

these speech acts we can get a sense of what their priorities are, how they describe the moral universe, and what are the common ways of swaying people to bring their behavior in accordance with group norms.

Through this investigation I found that among hip-hop heads, the words for good and bad are slightly different. The words meant to convey virtues like "authenticity" have slightly different connotations than the words in Standard American English. Therefore the characterization of the values and ethics of hip-hop culture will gain a lot from a process of decoding and translating. Hip-hop star Jay-Z () released a book called *Decoded* where he (in conjunction with writer dream hampton) explained the meaning of some of his most popular rap songs to the public. Chapter 3 of the dissertation as carries out a similar function of decoding, however, the focus of this chapter is to decode the common phrase "no new friends

1. Appropriating the Voice of Rap

"Underground ruffnecks, pounds of respect
I've never been afraid to let loose my speech
My brothers know I kick the code of the streets"
- Guru, Code of the Streets, 1994

The above quote was delivered by the late Guru (Keith Elam), one half of the East Coast rap duo Gang Starr in their song *Code of the Streets* (1994). Elam was born and raised in Roxbury to a middle class family in a predominantly African-American neighborhood in Boston, his father a judge and his mother co-director of the Boston Public Schools library system. The fact that Elam chose to go by the rap name Guru (which means "guide" in Sanskrit) shows that he understood his artistic craft to be analogous to spiritual teachers from pan-Indian traditions like Jainism and Hinduism. But instead of teaching the tenets of a tradition that we are used to hearing under the umbrella of religion, Guru preached rap culture. In the above excerpt, he says he kicks (or projects) "the code of the street." He communicates the worldview of the ruffnecks in his neighborhood, who are governed by cultural practices of respect. He best articulates these moral practices when he *lets loose his speech* in the format of a rap verse. While Guru was still here with us on the physical plane, he was gifted in his ability to describe the codes, understandings, and inner strivings of the people that grew up in his neighborhood. However, if he were still here I think he would argue that this lyrical power wasn't solely located in his personal voice, but instead this power was a characteristic of hip-hop language art itself. Somewhere in the broad canon of metaphors, rhymes, punch lines, and stories of rap music was the articulation of an ethical stance on social life.

My objective in studying the ethics of rap is to contribute to existing theory (Shweder et al. 1990

Tappan 1997, Fung 1999, Bhatia 2000, Fader 2011) about the relationship between two types of codes: linguistic codes and moral codes. Linguistic codes are the sum total of semantic and grammatical knowledge (vocabulary, idioms, sentence structures, discursive practices etc.) that we have learned as speakers of a particular social language or discursive community. Moral codes are the rules for behavior people internalize that structure the ways we perceive right and wrong as it applies to certain virtues like reducing harm, fostering justice, following rules, and acting authentically. Like other analysts of moral discourse (Walton & Brewer 2001, Day & Tappan 1996, Fung 1999) this research study is interested in the ways in which the words, narratives, and arguments with which we speak often contain evidence of people positioning themselves in moral stances. When analyzing the transcripts of humans engaged in various types of discourse (gossiping, instructing, rapping etc.) perceptive observers often find them using various forms of evaluative language, where they comment on the propriety of people's actions, declare truisms about the way people *should* act, or make reference to universal goods or bads.

Even more specifically, I argue that through being immersed and participating in contexts rich in moral dialogue is a primary process through which young people develop shared meanings of the sociomoral order with the people in their social contexts (Ochs 1996). This process includes young people dialoguing with proximal and distal others (parents, coaches, teachers, peers, preachers, and media role models) and because of the fact that they are talking and listening to *types of people*, they are socialized into ways of perceiving right and wrong that are coherent with those *types of people*. By types of people we are talking about the fact that those "guardians of the social order" (Shweder & Much 1989) that children talk to are all part of cultural communities (ethnic, geographic, socioeconomic, religious, and political) with various traditions and ideologies. And it is primarily through language (although gesture, physical mimicry and other forms of non-verbal communication play a role as well) that young

people are oriented to the ideological and moral orientations of these communities. For example, Fung (1999) studied the discourse of shame (cánkuì / 慚愧) in Taiwanese families and how parents' disciplinary talk socialized children into feeling shameful about inappropriate behavior.

These sociocultural approaches are largely influenced by the work of Lev Vygotsky, who conceived of the process of learning itself as a process of bringing voices from the external world into the mind. Not only have many prominent sociocultural theorists thought about cultural learning as the internalization of voices in our milieu, but the colloquial understanding of the conscience is often imagined as an inner voice. For example, Socrates wrote that he heard a "daemon" that cautioned him before he made a naughty decision, which many theorists have interpreted as his conscience (Ojakangas 2013). The major assertion of this research, however, is that each person's conscience speaks in a dialect (or dialects), with a particular ethos that is shaped by the semantic and symbolic environments that they developed in. Also, the semantic features of that inner voice (the words it uses, the stories it tells) make a difference in the way people reason about right and wrong. Thus, it is problematic to think that everyone's moral voice will reason like Socrates's Daemon, or scold like Taiwanese parents invoking cánkuì / 慚愧. Some people's conscience may kick it like Guru.

For this analysis, I focus on the language associated with rap music and hip-hop culture more broadly. We explore how engagement with rap lyrics socializes young people into ethical systems of thought, speech and behavior, a vernacular philosophy of the social world that originated at the nexus of various sociocultural identities (African-American culture, street culture, rock and roll music traditions and youth popular culture). By saying that these young people are socialized into an ethical perspective, I am not using the word ethical to suggest that their perspective is right or wrong in my opinion, or that

it is right or wrong according to some universal set of principles. I am suggesting only that they are learning sets of values that shape how they themselves evaluate "righness" and "wrongness."

We will study this process by focusing on *rap proverbs*, words of wisdom that originated in rap lyrics and have now become prevalent in the everyday speech of people in the hip-hop community. Proverbs are one of the most obvious instances of the ways in which moral codes are embedded in everyday discourse. To say a proverb is to recite the values of your culture verbatim.

As a student of hip-hop culture, my focus on proverbs was largely inspired by an interview that I had with Caroline, an 18-year-old college freshman, and rap listener. In this interview, it seemed that Caroline used a popular lyric in the same way as many people use proverbs. In a conversation with her closest girlfriends she uses a phrase "no new friends." "No new friends" is a song by the artist Drake (produced by DJ Khaled and featuring Lil Wayne and Rick Ross) in which he argues for an extreme loyalty to one's original friend group. When Drake utters "no new friends" he proposes it as a principle that he lives by where solidarity to old friends is shown by completely rejecting any possible new friendships that may come along. Drake sees this as more and more necessary as he becomes more and more famous, and acquaintances begin to seek friendship with him for superficial reasons. Below is an excerpt from my interview with Caroline, at a point when she is telling me her interpretation of Drake's song.

<u>Transcript 1.</u>

Kalonji:	how would you describe the main value that the artist advocates [in the song]?
	umm,i guess i would say that the artist is trying to advocate for like the people that have stuck by him like the
Caroline:	longest like the people that he's closest with.
	and umm saying like, like the whole "no new friends"
	just about like that main support group that you're always with.
Kalonji:	Right
Caroline	and so, i don't know

	i guess like i joke around with my friends about this song
Kalonji:	Oh really
Caroline:	uh huh
	like when i'm sitting alone like "no new friends"
	like we always make jokes and stuff about it
Kalonji:	uh huh
Caroline:	umm and like I don't know
	even in college here, like if i'm actually telling the truth
Kalonji:	uh huh
Caroline:	i'd say that like pretty quickly i found like a group of friends and then we'd be like "no new friends"
	like we only sat together like
	and that's kind of how it is at home too
Kalonji:	Sure, sure ok
Caroline:	like/ just like sticking with the people that you know like have your back and everything

…

Caroline suggests that she and her friends verbalize the phrase in order to signal their allegiance to one another. They use this catch-phrase as a shared vocabulary to describe moments in their social life that exemplify these deep feelings of exclusive solidarity. The idea that they desire exclusive relationships because Drake said so is far too simplistic. However, it does seem that this particular phrase helps them articulate an understanding that they share. Caroline's revoicing of Drake's phrase led me to think about the number of moments in which lyrics like this are used in everyday discourse by rap listeners. Phrases like "no new friends" and "real recognize real" are popular catch phrases that populate the everyday speech of rap listeners. Many of these catch phrases are normative declarations of common values; in this case solidarity. By examining how young hip-hop listeners use this phrase "no new friends" we will be investigating how they are being socialized into the codes of hip-hop culture.

This inquiry will examine how "no new friends" is connected to an entire legacy of phrases and linguistic constructs within Hip-Hop Nation Language that have similar sentiments of group solidarity. As rap artists have dialogued with one another about loyalty over the last 40 years of hip-hop history

many distinct words, narratives, and arguments have emerged to express complex concerns of interpersonal solidarity. These concerns of loyalty reflect moral dilemmas that are central to people in the hood. What is my responsibility to low-income family members and friends if I find success? What is my responsibility to Black people in a racist country? What is my responsibility to members of my gang or posse in a world where we have been criminalized, imagined as criminals, and/or have chosen to embrace illegal financial hustles? The moral construct of "staying down" has evolved in a context where these are among the primary moral dilemmas. Loyalty constructs in rap culture often have connotations of street authenticity, proud gang affiliation, and/or passionate ethnic solidarity.

2. Theoretical Background: Proverbs and Other Moral Sayings

For decades, social scientists have studied proverbs and other common moral sayings in order to understand a community's moral life, especially communities with strong oral traditions. Researchers have studied the proverbs of various cultural communities from Igbo villagers (Penfield & Duru 1979) to Spanish speaking residents of Los Angeles (Arora 2015) in order to analyze the central values of that culture. In their ethnographic study of Igbo proverbs Penfield & Duru (1988) found that older members of the society used proverbs to teach younger people what they should do to maintain a peaceful social order or omenàlà. The Igbo children in their study were raised in a discursive environment that was rich in proverbs. Penfield & Duru elicited 150 different proverbs and 380 contexts in which those proverbs were used. There was a prominent sense among adults in the community that being able to understand and "throw" proverbs was an important measure of intelligence and moral maturity. Fluency in moral vernacular was evidence that young people who were once moral novices were gaining some level of expertise with omenàlà.

In this paper we will try to explain "no new friends" and its dissemination around the hip-hop community using theories that were developed to explain the cultural use of proverbs and other moral sayings. There are three characteristics of proverbs that make them excellent focal points for understanding a community's values, namely their role as 1.) a theory of social life, 2.) morally prescriptive discourse, and 3.) well known manifestations of the common perspective.

2.1 Proverbs are theories of social life.

When a person uses a proverb, they are proposing a theory of social life. To give an example, a person may be describing their marital troubles to a friend. The friend could respond with a proverb, "happy wife, happy life." The friend is urging the struggling husband to conceptualize his messy complex situation in a way that conforms to his particular theory about the way that social life works, and should work. Some of the constituent parts of the "happy wife, happy life" schema are the moral agent (the husband), the individuals to whom they owe moral obligations (the wife), social categories that the actors belong to (woman), implicit theories or stereotypes about how certain types of actors usually act (women are hard to please and emotionally fickle but when they are happy, that happiness inspires happiness in the people around them), and the intuitive normative obligation that results from perceiving of the situation in this way (one should try to make their wife happy at all costs). All in all, a proverb is a theory of social situations that construes the interrelations between different aspects of that situation (i.e. social agents, their social roles, and the consequences of their actions). You may notice that there are sexist assumptions that underlie this theory of social life. Now is a time to reiterate that when I refer to these proverbs as moral I am not suggesting that they reflect my perspective on what is moral, nor am I suggesting that they are reflective of some notion of morality in a universal sense.

However, I am suggesting that the phrase is moral in that it presents a theory of social life that contains embedded presumptions about what is good.

Cognitively, a proverb acts as a problem-solving heuristic. It provides a socio-logic for solving a moral dilemma, "a socially developed sense of practical reasoning" (Goodwin and Wenzel 1979). When you apply a proverb to a particular social problem you are able to infer an appropriate course of action (White 1987); appropriate based on the common assumptions of members of the cultural group that share this theory.

By investigating the proverbial phrase "no new friends" - and the young people that use it - we are inquiring about the moral dilemmas that young hip-hop listeners are having in the realm of friendship, and the underlying theories of the social world that they are using to navigate those dilemmas. Why do they think that "no new friends" is a logical script for solving the problem? How does their use of the phrase "no new friends" suggest that they are segregating the social world (i.e. between old friends and new friends)? And what are the social responsibilities that they have to these different people?

2.2 Proverbs are morally prescriptive discourse.

Proverbs are moral in that they include a prescriptive component. They prescribe what one *should do* in a particular scenario. It is important to study how proverbs are used in everyday interaction in order to understand this prescriptive quality. They are often used in a conversation when someone is trying to "comment on, correct or alter another person's behavior" (Penfield & Duru 1988). They are linguistic tools used for the practical purpose of prescribing a course of action, forewarning the danger of taking a certain action, getting someone to perceive a situation differently, or declaring the importance of a common value.

Even in communities where proverbs are not used explicitly in formal moral education like they are for some Igbo children in village life, they still implicitly represent direct instructions, and when they are employed in discourse they make recommendations of how a virtuous person should act. Proverbs are implicitly pedagogical and can represent the most popular and concise moral curriculum of a community. They represent the moral norms of a community in that they are common rhetorical devices for bringing people's behavior in accordance with cultural habits of thought and action.

By examining the proverbial features of "no new friends" we are asking: How are rappers and rap listeners like Caroline prescribing one another to engage in certain types of community-sanctioned behavior? What does using a prescriptive phrase like "no new friends" say about what members of hip-hop culture believe is morally binding or sacred?

2.3 Proverbs are common knowledge.

What makes proverbs "cultural" is that they are widely shared by the members of a discursive community. They are spoken often, most times in a verbatim recitation. This popularity can come from the traditionality of the saying, the fact that it has been said for many generations in that community, or can be attributed to the ancestors (Arora 2015).

On the other hand, many proverbs have the quality of being "common" without necessarily being old. This is partly due to the invention of written and mass media outlets that can distribute language much faster than word of mouth dissemination. Researchers have argued that the central quality of proverbs is that they are imagined as "community-sanctioned." They are often perceived to represent the values of the people. This is a reason they are often introduced with "They say…" or "People say…" In this sense, proverbs are not just common in their frequency but they represent the

common perspective or the cultural consensus. They are commonsense. This quality makes them prime candidates in studying the core values and normative assumptions of a discursive community. In some sense the emergence of a proverb - a widely recognized moral truth - results from the "experience of a community of persons thinking and acting together over time" (Goodwin & Wenzel 1979). Proverbs are often the result of a community having common moral dilemmas over a period of time and discovering a solution to that dilemma that is widely accepted.

3. Methodology and Analytic Approach:

The research that led to this manuscript illuminated several words of wisdom in hip-hop culture that have these three features, for example, *you ain't gotta lie to kick it*, *money over bitches*, and *real recognize real* (See Appendix 3 for the comprehensive List of Rap Proverbs collected). We have defined rap proverbs as commonly uttered prescriptive statements in rap culture that provide a framework for solving a moral dilemma. The "proverbs" recited by the rap community were often authored by rap artists and then quoted again in the lyrics of dozens of other rappers. These "words of wisdom" have subsequently become well known folk sayings among rap listeners, distributed widely among the global hip-hop community. This particular study is a study of one of the morally-laden sayings within rap music and how young people use this phrase in their everyday lives. We chose to focus on one proverb because focusing on one single cultural form allows us to trace its circulation through time and space methodically in the service of developing a theory of how these rap proverbs circulate more broadly. This approach is based heavily on the approach taken by Saxe (2005) in tracing the historical development of mathematical forms amongst the Oksapmin communities of Papua New Guinea.

The analysis of the meaning and usage of "no new friends" included 3 major methodological

approaches: 1.) a historical analysis of the hip-hop community and the context in which this phrase was created, 2.) a line-by-line discursive analysis of the rap song where this phrase originated, and 3.) a discursive analysis of 21 young people's use of the phrase in their everyday lives through clinical interviews. The employment of each of these three methods draws on theories of interpretive communities (Fish 1976) which argue that the meaning of a "text" for the members of an interpretive community can only be ascertained by analyzing the personal interpretive strategies of individuals, the content and structure of the text itself, and how these interpretive strategies are embedded in a historical set of interpretive practices amongst a community of authors and readers; or in this case rappers and listeners.

4. Where Did "No New Friends" Come From? A Historical Analysis

In order to truly understand Caroline's use of the phrase "no new friends" and what it means to her it is crucial to understand the sociocultural context that we were in when this interview was conducted. The interview took place in 2013 on a college campus in a suburb of Chicago, IL. During this time period, especially for the young adult demographic that Caroline was a part of, the rapper Drake was a staple of pop culture. His crossover appeal to R&B, rap, dancehall and world music genres as well as his presence in both film and wider celebrity culture, made him one of the most widely referenced public figures at the time. He sat courtside at NBA playoff games and hugged superstar Lebron James after games. Young people created all types of digital memes that displayed his lyrical dominance, admired his sex appeal, and poked fun at his dance moves.

At this particular historical moment, one of the latest Drake-related musical releases to go viral was the catchy hip-hop collaboration produced by DJ Khaled called *No New Friends*. During the hook

of the song Drake sang the phrase "no new friends" out like a boastful mantra:

"I still ride with my day one niggas, I don't really need
No new friends, no new friends, no new friends, no no new."
(Drake et al. 2013)

This musical collaboration featured some of the biggest names in rap at the time, including Lil Wayne and Rick Ross, who along with Drake, delivered verses on the song related to the topic of loyalty. The song was number 29 on the Billboard's year-end charts, a list of the United States' most popular songs for that year. The Billboard charts are based on cumulative total of yearlong sales and airplay, in both physical and online streaming platforms. A song with this placement on the 2013 charts would have been streamed hundreds of millions of times, reaching the individual digital playlists of tens of millions of Americans. Caroline was one of the youth that had heard the song.

Because of the popularity of the song, the phrase itself had become a part of the societal discourse, infiltrating the vernacular of hip-hop listeners. To get a sense of the scope of its presence in societal discourse, I scraped the social media website Twitter during the fall of 2017 for any mentions of the phrase by users on the platform. Within the 34-day period "no new friends" was mentioned 8716 times. Figure 1 shows a choloropleth intensity map of the geographic location of each twitter mention during that time period.

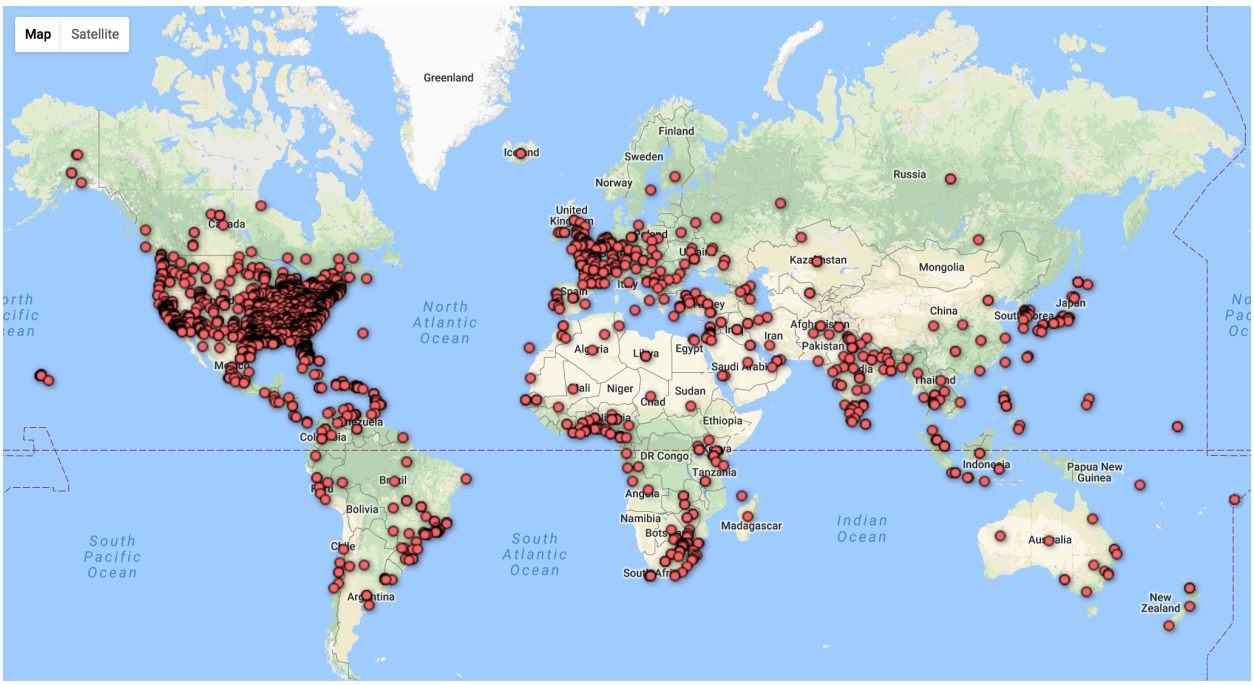


Figure 6 ***Geographic Distribution of Tweets Containing The "No New Friends" Proverb*** *A chloropleth intensity map (Google Fusion Tables) showing the geographic distribution of the 8717 people who tweeted the phrase "no new friends" between November 6th and December 10th 2017.*

While a large percentage of the mentions took place in the United States, there were hundreds of mentions in Latin America, Europe, Africa, Australia, South and East Asia. For example, @philpottsHS from Buenos Aires tweeted *"Ahora estamos bien, comemos bien Nos vemos bien, olemos bien No new friends, no new friends Fuck you man, fuck you man."* He comments in Spanish "We are good, we eat good, we look good, we smell good" and then he switches languages, repeating the mantra "no new friends" twice in English. He uses this popular slogan to communicate that his original friends are all he needs. Another twitter user from Greensboro, NC (USA) with the handle @jstreet94 tweeted *'They say "no new friends" but half the "new friends" I made more loyal than then original ones.'* Notice his use of "they say," a common clause used to introduce proverbs (Goodwin & Wenzel). The use of "they say" prior to a proverbial saying helps the speaker connote the pervasiveness of the linguistic form. When

@jstreet94 comments he is critiquing what he feels to be a ubiquitous norm in his environment. These twitter mentions did not just include people referencing Drake's song. Instead it showed people using the phrase to talk about their own personal lives. The phrase was no longer just Drake's phrase, it belonged to young people that were proximate to a globalized hip-hop culture. It was part of their working vocabulary for describing their everyday lifeworlds.

Another way to illustrate the impact of the phrase is to show the ways that other rappers took it up. After the initial success of the song, rappers began to include the phrase in their own song lyrics. Using Rap Genius, an online database of lyrics, our research team found the phrase used in 167 different songs from its first use by Drake in 2013 to the time of our websearch, which was three years later.

One of the ways to think about the pervasiveness of this phrase in youth culture between 2013 and 2017 is by using sociogenetic theory (Saxe 2004). The phrase is a cultural form that propagated through a human community through social discourse. People heard Drake using the term and interpreted what he intended the phrase to mean. Over time, individuals also heard members of their linguistic community using the term in everyday speech. They saw the phrase mentioned on twitter in varying ways. And through a process of social learning, a person that was part of the hip-hop language community was able to make sense of the phrase, and eventually be able to use it themselves in their own everyday talk. I argue that not only were they engaged in language learning, but they were also engaged in moral learning, because the phrase itself contained moral content referring to expectations about how individuals should and should not relate to social others.

5. What Does This Song Mean? A Discursive Analysis of "No New Friends"

In order to characterize the moral content that is transmitted in the phrase "no new friends" it is

useful to include a discursive analysis of the song lyrics themselves (). A line-by-line discursive analysis allows us to take a systematic and reflective look at the hip-hop verse to analyze the intended meaning of the authors of the text, as well as the possible cultural meaning(s) of the text (how members of the cultural community of devoted hip-hop listeners may have been trained to interpret it). By looking closely at each line of text, and the linguistic features of each utterance, we can, as researchers, suspend our own judgments and first impressions and instead accumulate adequate evidence across the entire text to make sense of its meaning(s).

One problem with the interpretation of hip-hop lyrics is that they have often been interpreted by people who are not doing deep engaged readings of the text, or who may be outsiders projecting a more judgmental view of hip-hop. They are often alarmed by certain features of the language, including profanity, the use of the word "nigga," sexual imagery, and violent imagery. They argue that the presence of those controversial features is reason to avoid the texts completely, some even arguing for their censorship. Some of these critics even go as far as to suggest that their interpretations of the text are in fact *the* meaning of the text (I am offended; therefore, this is offensive), ignoring the interpretations of other dedicated fans who highlight completely different messages in the text, messages that are less sensational or even prosocial. I think this point was best articulated by an owner of a popular hip-hop venue in Chicago named Connor that I interviewed who said: "to someone who doesn't care for hip-hop at all / they just listen to this / they hear beats / they hear a dude talking about cocaine and partying / and they're not really gonna delve anymore into that." Connor was saying that the people who are distracted by these features are often missing the point.

In the discursive analysis that follows I will argue that the thesis of this song is to promote a moral code of loyalty. Drake, DJ Khaled, Rick Ross and Lil Wayne have designed this song with the intention

of drawing a distinction between "day one niggas" (friends you have known since "day one") and "new friends." In drawing that distinction, they are showing the various manners in which a righteous person should treat their "day one niggas" versus how they should treat "new friends." Your ability to notice this as the main point (and to notice the nuanced ways in which this point is delivered) may depend on your proximity to the hip-hop discursive community. If you are part of the community, then you have cultivated a number of sense making strategies that help you understand what this verse is talmbout (talking about). If you have little exposure to rap then you may have more naïve and "generalized" interpretive strategies that have been cultivated by your exposure to other genres of music, literature, or language.

This discursive analysis should be helpful for both types of people. If you are the first type of reader (a hip-hop expert), you will benefit from an exercise that makes the implicit knowledge you have more explicit. As an expert, you probably listen to dozens of hip-hop songs a week and know what they "mean." However, the interpretive strategies you use to make sense of those songs may be mostly unconscious. If you are the second type of reader (a hip-hop novice), then engaging in line-by-line discursive analysis will provide you with the opportunity to learn some of the expert conventions that hip-hop authors use to convey meaning. Along the way you will have to wrestle with the tendency that Cooper pointed out, the tendency for novices to be distracted by inflammatory speech. Love what you did here both in terms of content and form.

One such inflammatory word is the word "nigga" which has a powerful history within the context of Black America, used first as a virulent racial epithet by White Americans in an attempt to dehumanize African human beings in conjunction with various other forms of oppression (slavery, Jim Crow segregation, lynching, etc.). Researchers of AAVE (Smitherman 2006, Alim 2009) have pointed out that

in its current use, primarily by Black Americans, there is extreme variation in the meaning of the word nigga. Within this song, the word nigga was uttered 40 times, more frequently than any other word in the text. It was used as an antecedent for the second person "you" (Line 45), as a synonym for "homie" or friend (Line 21), to refer to humans in general (Line 43), to men in general (Line 41), and as a noun for a non-desirable person. Although it is not used this way in the text it can also be used as a neutral non-derogatory term for black people in general. The word is flexible enough that depending on the tonality that the person uses and the discursive context that they use it in, they could be expressing any one of these meanings, with the intention of their utterance having none of the other connotations. Still some members of the Black community (and other members of society as well) find all uses of the word to be offensive and degrading given its origin, especially when it is used by non-Black members. Again this speaks to the internal heterogeneity of all cultural groups. I include this as a cautionary warning for those who see the academic use of this word as license for them to use it, and also as a trigger warning for those whom are triggered by the word.

In researching the cultural practices of someone different than you there may be things that are unsettling or upsetting . As for some of the readers of this article there may be cultural practices that you may not have access to, and may never have access to (like the Umhlanga sacred rites of passage for Zulu girls). The purpose of a Black researcher (who uses the word in his personal life) wrangling with this word in public venues with non-Black readers, is not to give or revoke access. Rather…but is so that we may all be better aware of its meaning within hip-hop music, among people whose perspectives are often judged as vulgar or unrefined simply because of their use of the word. As discourse analysts, we attempt to focus on the complex meanings that rappers and rap listeners intend to make when they use it, the meanings that are received by members of the interpretive community, doubling down on the notion

that *their* voices and *their* perspectives should be centered if we are studying *them.* (I use the pronoun *them* but some of *us* are included in *them*). The exercise in suspending your outrage with this word is exactly the type of approach that is necessary to engage in the ethnographic observation of "other people's values."

Appendix 1: Transcript

	[Intro: Drake]
1	Yeah, I stay down with my day-one **niggas** and we in the club, screamin'
	[Hook: Drake]
2	No new friends, no new friends, no new friends, no, no new
3	Still here with my day-one niggas so you hear me say
4	No new friends, no new friends, no new friends, no, no new
5	I still ride with my day-one niggas I don't really need
6	No new friend, no new friends, no new friends, no, no new
7	I stay down from day one, so I say
8	Fuck all y'all niggas except my niggas
9	Fuck all y'all niggas except my niggas
10	One more time
11	Fuck all y'all niggas except my niggas
12	Fuck all y'all niggas, stay down from day one, so I say
13	(Fuck a fake friend! Where your real friends at? Started!)
	[Verse 1: Drake]
14	Man, this shit so ill that we had to restart it
15	H-town my second home like I'm James Harden
16	Money counter go *brrrr* when you sellin' out the Garden
17	Four-car garage, pornstar ménage
18	Birdman go *brrrr* 'cause he know this shit retarded
19	Fuck her on the floor 'fore we make it to the bed
20	That's what yo' ass really call started from the bottom
21	Yes, Lord, OVO Sound, man, I'm proud of my niggas
22	Knew that we would make it, never doubted my niggas
23	All my bitches love me; if I had a baby mama
24	She would probably be richer than a lot of you niggas
	[Chorus 2: Drake] lines 25-39

	[Verse 2: Rick Ross]
40	Your bitch all in my photographs
41	Ho niggas got hate for me
42	*Big homies, all certified*
43	Nothin' niggas gon' take from me
44	Follow codes, study game
45	Feed fam, nigga, fuck fame
46	All black, my whip foreign
47	These bad hoes keep tiptoein'
48	Down in Turks and Caicos
49	Dope boy, that's my dress code
50	All I hug is blood, nigga
51	Khaled, that's my flesh, ho
52	All I want is love, nigga
53	Money bring that stress though
54	Smoke good, I love life
55	Strip club like e'ry night
56	E'ry night my same niggas
57	Day one, straight menace (Rozay!)
	[Chorus 3: Drake] lines 58-69
	[Verse 3: Lil Wayne]
70	Ugh, I'm here with my niggas
71	I'm too high to be friendly
72	They throw dirt on my name
73	Well, that's why they still dig me
74	And I'm tired of all this hatin'
75	I thank God for my patience
76	I thank God for my homies, I wish we could trade places
77	Bitch, we good-fellas, boy, all them niggas with you, they just pall bearers
78	And if we ball, catch us
79	Remember sip slow, live fast
80	Young Money, stay young I been Cash Money since day one (Tunechi!)
	[Chorus 4: Drake] lines 81-91
	[Outro: Future]
92	Fuck all y'all niggas except my niggas
93	Fuck them other niggas 'cause I'm down for my niggas

5.1) Us versus *Them* Distinction

I argue that the primary meaning of the song, summarized in the proverbial phrase "no new friends", is the distinction made between *my niggas* and *y'all niggas*, or between ingroup and outgroup. In order to characterize this distinction, I firstsingled out all the lines where the authors referenced "my niggas" or "y'all niggas," 82 instances in total. In searching for lines about "my niggas" I included lines that referenced *day-one niggas*, *us, we,* and *real friends;* words that were often used interchangeably with "my niggas." Lines in the "y'all niggas" category also include references to *you niggas, you, y'all, new friends* and *fake friends*.

These decisions were informed by our knowledge of the implicit convention of "battling" in rap culture, in which rhymes are written to address enemies in rival crews (Bradley 2009). Therefore I found that the first person plural pronoun "we" often implicitly means "our crew" and the second person pronoun *you* and its plural form *y'all* often implicitly refers to the enemy crew. Out of the 8 times *you* was used in the second person, 3 of them were referring to rival squads. Therefore, our categorization reflects a dichotomy that the rappers are making between ingroup and outgroup, with their verses written in a way that they are directly addressing the outgroup in the form of threats and insults. Table 1 includes an excerpt from verse 3, delivered by Lil Wayne, and the codes applied to each line.

Table 1.

74	*"And I'm tired of all this hatin'*	
75	*I thank God for my patience*	
76	*I thank God for my homies,*	My niggas
77	*I wish we could trade places*	My niggas
78	*Bitch we goodfellas*	Y'all niggas / My niggas
79	*Boy, all them niggas with you they just pall bearers"*	Y'all niggas

The first four lines of this excerpt include Lil Wayne commiserating about all of the people around

him that are jealous haters, and then showing gratitude to a higher power for the virtue of patience and for his loyal "homies." Abruptly, the "bitch" in line 5 marks the moment where Wayne moves from humble prayer to a tone of verbal battle and braggadocio. It is at this moment when Wayne makes it clear that he is addressing "y'all niggas" - his potential enemies. The "we" in that same line is referring to the homies that ride with him, whom he describes as goodfellas, making an allusion to the Italian-American gangster film Goodfellas. In the next line he makes a verbal joust at "you," his enemy, claiming that "you" are surrounded by an entourage of pall bearers. This is a threat; a clever way for Wayne to insinuate that he will kill "you" and that after the murder, your friends will be reduced to a pitiful bunch of men carrying the casket at your funeral.

In order to understand the meaning of "No New Friends" you have to understand the conventions of the rap genre, that ritual insults are a key component of rap, which are appreciated for their comedic delivery and the graphic nature of their brutality. Also, an interpreter of these words must understand that the semi-imaginary/hyper-real world that emcees are invoking is a hostile world - a world in which "you," "they" and any other unknown subject can almost always be interpreted as potential enemies or haters. Part of the job that interpreters of rap must do is try to make sense of what about this hostile world can actually be applied to the "real world." The line between reality and fiction is often blurry, and although, rappers take poetic license to engage in hyperbole and metaphor, they are certainly not wholly divorced from reality. I argue that they are entertainers but they are also commentators. They are often making commentary on the world, how it actually is, and how it should be. One of the questions that drives this inquiry is the following : What are young people interpreting when they enter this hyperreal world and what in this world do they think is applicable to their own everyday life worlds? What types of arguments about the real world are rappers trying to make as they write these creative fictions? And

what is the moral of the story that is conveyed to listeners?

Again, I argue that the moral that the rappers wish to convey is to stick with your original friends through thick and thin. This is shown by making a harsh distinction between "my niggas" and everyone else. After reducing the data set to the lines of the song that invoked "my niggas" and those that invoked "y'all niggas," we then coded each phrase for the social acts that were carried out in each line. Each line either included the rapper as carrying out some social act on the subject, the subject carrying out an act on the rapper, or the rapper and subject carrying out a social act together. The coding of social acts can be demonstrated through the following excerpt from Rick Ross's verse:

Table 2.

Transcript	Subject	Social Act
44. "Follow codes, study game 45. feed fam, fuck fame."	Day-one niggas	Provide for them financially

In this couplet, Ross first commands us to follow the moral "codes" of the street in Line 1 (Line 45?). But it is the second line where he makes the reference to his "day-one niggas." Using alliteration he spits four mono-syllabic f-words, "feed fam, fuck fame," as a declarative mandate. Ross declares that the code of the street requires the social act of "feeding" your day-one niggas or, in other words, taking care of them financially. This line is an example of the loyal and intimate way in which your day-one's should be treated according to the ethics of hip-hop culture.

When analyzing this text, once each of the lines invoking a subject was coded according to the social act committed, we found that there was a distinction between the social acts committed *on*, *by*,

and *with* day-one niggas and those committed *on* and *by* y'all niggas. Table 3 shows the social acts for each.

Table 3. Social acts coinciding with in-group and out-group

My niggas	**Y'all niggas**
being down for them *Ex.// "I still ride with my day-one niggas" (Drake)* celebrating them *Ex.// "I'm proud of my niggas" (Drake)* believing in them *Ex.// "Knew that we would make it, never doubted my niggas" (Drake)* providing for them financially *Ex.// "Feed fam, fuck fame" (Rick Ross)* physical affection *Ex.// "All I hug is blood, nigga" (Rick Ross)* regarding them as flesh *Ex.// "Khaled, that's my flesh, ho" (Rick Ross)* thanking God for them *Ex.// "I thank God for my homies" (Lil Wayne)*	exclude them *Ex.// "No new friends" (Drake)* insult or "clown" them *Ex.// "If I had a baby momma, she would probably be richer than a lot of you niggas" (Drake)* curse them *Ex.// "Fuck them other niggas, cause I'm down for my niggas" (Future)* plot on their death *Ex.// "All them niggas with you they just pall bearers" (Drake)*

The social acts carried out by, with, and upon "my niggas" coincided with sacred scripts of loyalty and enduring friendship. The authors incorporate the two concepts of "staying down for" and "riding with" their homies, both of which are common phrases from AAVE/HHNL to express the idea of solidarity. The metaphor of "riding with" somebody conveys a sense of being in the same vehicle, moving in the same direction, and journeying on the same pathway. Rick Ross raps about the importance of physical affection between men through hugs (Line 50). Again, he expresses this theme of solidarity between male bodies when he asserts that his fellow Miami native and long-time homie DJ

Khaled is flesh of "his flesh" (Line 51). He includes all members of his inner circle into the category of "blood relatives," even homies outside his family and in fact, even those outside his ethnic group. Rick Ross is African-American and DJ Khaled is Palestinian American.

Although the n-word may be offensive to some readers, for the authors of this rap, calling somebody "my nigga" is not just reclaiming a pejorative word that was once used against us. In these utterances, when it refers to day-one niggas, it is a term that has been "sanctified" (See Rick Ross Sanctified) in its connotation, becoming a term reserved for "blood brothers" with a sacred bond.

Many comparisons have been made between hip-hop culture, street-gang culture and warrior culture. In all three formations, loyalty to one's comrades is demonstrated directly in how brutally you are willing to treat the opposition. In a hostile world in which your comrades' well-being depends on how vicious you are to outsiders (enemy soldiers), the willingness to fight is considered both courageous and a sign of loyalty and an aid to group cohesion. Within "No New Friends" the three vocalists use various discursive moves to make a definitive distinction between in-group and out-group.

A note should be made that although the foregrounded social distinction made in this text is between "my niggas" and "y'all niggas," a third group of individuals emerge throughout the song; women. Women are not included in the in-group / out-group distinction. Drake, Lil Wayne, and Rick Ross's beloved "day-one niggas" seems to be a gendered construct, made up primarily of men. When women are mentioned in the verse, it is mostly in reference to their sexual appeal. They are discussed primarily as objects to be enjoyed for sexual satisfaction (Line 19) and as status symbols that show how powerful one group is, as opposed to another ("your bitch all in my photographs" Line 40). This observation has been substantiated by many intersectional feminist theorists (Crenshaw 2017) who argue that the masculine moral codes of brotherhood between homies have been built on the backs of

women. Women and "y'all niggas" are often positioned as collateral damage in the sacred code of brotherhood. Well put

Most moral codes (as they are followed in the real world) include excuses and justifications for why some classes of people are treated as outside of the moral circle. Thus they allow a certain amount of collateral damage, or even outright intentional brutality towards particular groups. Often this requires individuals on the periphery or outside of the ethical system to point out these violent contradictions and fight to expand the moral circle to include groups who have traditionally been marginalized.

6. Why Errybody Sayin' It? A Discursive Analysis of Rap Listeners Using the Phrase

In the previous section of the paper, we analyzed the authors' intended meaning. Building from these understandings, the motivating inquiry of this research is to examine how young rap listeners interpret this language and then appropriate it for use in their everyday lives. The way that this phrase was appropriated from this initial song and then became a proverbial saying illustrates the role that hip-hop plays in socializing youth. The idea of "appropriating" social voices draws heavily on Bakhtinian thought (1981). He thought that the act of speech (and even the act of thinking) was fundamentally one of revoicing; that we do not produce the content of our utterances from scratch or out of a dictionary but we revoice words that have been spoken by other mouths. This might be a good place to mention the other layer of "appropriation" a la Bakhtin, that we also accentuate utterances with new shades of meaning (and sometimes new purposes) as we appropriate.

For Caroline, one of the thousands of American youth that are revoicing this phrase, what does it *mean* when they say it? What does their revoicing of "no new friends" say about *their* values and about

their reasoning? If this term was developed in the context of the rap music genre, a genre where rappers tell hyperreal stories of warrior masculinity, verbal battling, and sacred bonds of brotherhood, how has Caroline (and other rap fans) appropriated this linguistic utterance to be used in their own contexts? This is a dialogical way of understanding the cultural effect of hip-hop, the dialogical relationship between the discourses produced by rap artists and those produced by the various other members of the hip-hop discourse community. YES Bakhtin's fundamental argument is that we are shaped by the people that talk to us, from the voices that we internalize, and the communities that we are in conversation with.

6.1) Interview Methodology:

The third part of the analysis includes interview data that I collected with young adult hip-hop listeners at Northwestern University. These students were selected from introductory psychology courses if they were high scorers on a Hip-Hop Practice Index. The survey (available in Appendix 1) asked respondents to make a self -assessment of their participation in the hip-hop community using a 1-7 Likert scale. The scale was constructed to gauge to what extent students 1.) engaged in hip-hop related practices, 2.) held hip-hop culture to be a significant part of their identity, and 3.) were immersed in social circles where hip-hop listening was commonplace.

Once we identified the most avid rap listeners, we conducted semi-structured interviews with them to explore how they interpreted a subset of 25 different catch-phrases from hip-hop culture. The analysis in this paper focuses only on their responses to questions about "no new friends." The interview protocol was constructed to elicit information about their understanding of the phrase, the social contexts in which they used the phrase, and their evaluation of the moral value of the phrase (See Appendix 2.0 Interview Protocol).

1.) **Understanding** - The interviewer assessed their understanding of the phrase, asking them to self-rate their understanding on a scale from 1-7. They were asked to describe in their own words the main value that the author of the phrase was trying to advocate and also to describe a hypothetical scenario where the phrase might be used.
2.) **Social Context** - In order to get a sense of the scope of usage of this phrase in their language community, they were asked to rate how often people in their social circles used the phrase. They were asked to identify the individuals in their social circles that would most likely use the phrase (i.e. *older male members of my family*). They were also asked to evaluate how pervasive they thought the underlying value of the phrase was in their social circles.
3.) **Personal Use and Critical Positioning** - They were asked to rate how often they themselves used the phrase and how much they agreed with it (on a scale from 1-7). They were lastly asked to edit and rewrite the phrase in any way they saw fit that better reflected their own perspective and experience. This was a particularly fruitful way to get them to speak about their own personal perspectives, including the ways that their beliefs and values might differ from the ones expressed in the phrase.

The interview was conducted by a culturally competent confederate with 20 years of experience studying and participating in hip-hop culture. The interviewer intentionally used HHNL, informal conversation, as well as academic discourses of experimental psychology within the interview to create a discursive environment where all of these discourses were seen as legitimate within the context of the interview.

6.2) Moral Dilemmas of Friendship Management: Which social scenarios trigger "no new friends"?

In the interviews, participants offered a lot of information about the moments in their life when the phrase "no new friends" was applicable. The contexts they invoked the most were social scenarios involving their peers. Young people spoke about trying to manage their friend groups and negotiate the

relative relational obligation to different friends. They often referred to friends in various distinct circles "my high school friends" "my college friends" "the people I came into Northwestern with my freshman year." This shows one aspect of the social worlds in which these young people are navigating. They are transitioning in between social spheres (i.e. from high-school to college) and they are trying to make decisions about how they should act towards their various peer circles. Meanwhile they are coming into contact with several messages that recommend ways that you should treat friends, acquaintances and other peers. Some of these messages may be coming from the media and genres like rap music. This study is exploring one particular proverbial phrase "no new friends" and the ways that this moral mandate became a part of young people's moral vernacular. If this phrase is a discursive tool created to express a particular sentiment, in what contexts are youth employing this tool as a way to look at the world? When do they find this particular phraseology to be an apt description of their own feelings, namely the impulse that they feel to show loyalty to some and exclude others?

Bethany was a 20-year-old college student from Chicago. She expressed the sense that this phrase was a big part of her life, and it was used "all the time" by her college friends that she started off with freshman year. They would say it to each other when they were confronted with a situation when a new person would try to enter their friend group, but that person was disliked by one or more of the group members. It was a mantra used as a reminder of a common ethos that they shared to loyalty and exclusive support. Bethany's clique of friends had a group chat where they talked to each other throughout the day, which was entitled "no new friends." The use of this phrase as the name of their group chat shows one way that it was used as a clique slogan, articulating the commitment that was expected as a member of the group.

Bethany's understanding and use of the phrase seemed to gel with our analysis of the message of

the original song, which delineated a sharp boundary between a small core friend group and everyone else. For Bethany the phrase was used to segment off her social world between a tight-knit clique of friends and everyone else on the outside. To what degree is Bethany's use of this proverb reflected in other interviews? Was she an outlier? Representative of a sizeable group?

6.3 When Was The Phrase Seen As Irrelevant?

There was also evidence that some participants thought that the phrase was irrelevant to their lives. Many students interpreted the "no new friends" mandate as only applicable to rich and successful people. These students often articulated that they thought the message of the song was that successful people cannot trust the intentions of new acquaintances. These young people were much less likely to say that they endorsed the value of the song given that they didn't view themselves as successful to the extent of a celebrity and therefore didn't have the problem of friends wanting to be in their lives because of their fame or money. These students did not map the sentiment of the song and the feelings Drake was experiencing onto their own lives. In some sense, students were integrating the narrative of the rappers' lives into their evaluation of whether the principle applied to them or not. In other words, is this a life narrative where the values, and moral decisions of the person are directly relevant to me? Bakhtin suggested that the process of ideological becoming is one of developing a voice that is *internally persuasive*. This is a process of integrating various narratives, and discourses into your worldview that resonate with your emerging identity to the point that when you animate these ideologies they feel like they are your own.

6.4 Ethical Fluency: "No New Friends" As A Descendant of Hip-Hop Nation Language

Bakhtin referred to social languages as "a discourse peculiar to a specific stratum of society (professional, age group, etc.) within a given social system at a given time." The notion of a social language is central to sociolinguistics in that language forms are spoken by communities of speakers and descend from previous forms that also have a social location. The American music genre of hip-hop is a direct derivative of the African-American Vernacular English that was spoken by the majority of hip-hop's founders; from the South Bronx originators to the Compton innovators to the Bankhead elevators. Many of the linguistic features of the African-American English dialect have been popularly stereotyped as slang (using chill to refer to a style of relaxing or being) or as grammatical errors (using the invariant *be* in "I *be* chilling"), primarily because they are connected with Black working-class communities who themselves have been stereotyped as unintelligent and unsophisticated by racist classist logics. However, linguists have disproved these claims of linguistic deficiency (Labov 1969, Rickford 2002, Lee & Majors 2003), instead finding that the variety of English spoken by working class African-Americans is actually its own sociolect with its own consistent internal logic, vocabulary, complex grammatical rules, structures of argumentation and phonetic tonalities that are distinct from other American English dialects. It is not only structurally different from other English varieties, but it is also semantically different in that it houses within it ways of making meaning that are a reflection of the African-American experience in America.

Several of the study participants made utterances that contained AAVE speech codes. One of the most common AAVE codes in the data set was the use of the quotative "be like." Researchers of AAVE have noted that by the 1980s (the zenith of hip-hop culture's rise) "be like" replaced "say" as the most frequently used quotative for AAVE speakers born after 1960 (Cukor-Avila & Bailey 2015). So when

Bethany expresses how absurd she thinks it would be for someone to say "no new friends" in a public context full of new people, this is how she conveys it:

> Nobody's gonna walk into a classroom and *be like* "I'm not gonna talk to any of you."

While AAVE speech codes were more likely to be present in the African-American youth in the study, they were also present in a few non-African-American youth, showing the dispersion of these codes across ethnic boundaries through the mainstreaming of AAVE in popular media such as rap music, and the sharing of low-income hood spaces by African-Americans and other ethnic groups including Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Koreans in New York or Mexicans, El Salvadorans, and Filipinos in the California Bay Area. Research has shown that embracing Black language practices provides some non-Black teens with a sense of belonging within the surrounding urban culture (Lam 2009). A correlative study (Chelsey 2011) showed that knowledge of AAVE vocabulary among non-African-Americans was positively correlated with number of hip-hop artists listened to, exposure to Black popular culture, and number of weak social ties to African-Americans.

The linguistic features that are indicative of the hip-hop community, what Alim (2009) has named Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL), can be understood as descending from AAVE. It is a style of AAVE spoken by people who frequent certain environments (i.e. urban schools, rap shows, hip-hop venues), who have consumed certain types of media information (rap music and rappers' interviews), and who are positioning themselves towards certain values and aesthetics (i.e. the rawness of the street, Blackness and coolness). HHNL is like its mother tongue (AAVE) in that it conforms to grammatical structures, and semantic conventions.

How does the mastery of HHNL linguistic codes correspond with an internalization of the moral

codes associated with hip-hop culture? Is fluency with the vernacular of HHNL reflective of the development of a cultural understanding of morality? The 21 interviews were coded for various linguistic markers of HHNL (including quotative *be like*, negative concord, implicit copula, habitual be, as well as the presence of AAVE/HHNL vocabulary). The subjects in this study can be divided into two groups; one made up of hip-hop listeners that spontaneously used HHNL language markers in their discourse (N=8). The other group consisted of the hip-hop listeners whose speech contained no markers of AAVE (N=13).

Of significance, subjects classified as HHNL speakers were also the subjects who were more likely to say that they understood the phrase "no new friends" (average of 6.3 on a scale of 1-7) as compared to non-speakers (average of 4.6). The HHNL speakers tended to confidently express that they understood the meaning of "no new friends." The non-speakers, however, were much more likely to express that they had an incomplete or insufficient understanding of the phrase. The qualitative analysis of these interviews also showed that HHNL speakers often recounted that people in their social circles used the "no new friends" phrase frequently in their everyday speech. On the other hand, non-speakers expressed that this phrase was rarely revoiced in their social circles. All in all, HHNL speakers tended to be young people who understood the linguistic and moral codes of rap music and also were immersed in social circles where this language was used in everyday speech.

Table 4.

Language Designation	N	Self-Reported Ethnicity (Black / White / *Other)	Understanding of the phrase "no new friends" (1-7 scale)	Endorsement of the value "no new friends" (1-7 scale)
HHNL speakers	8	.38 / .38 / .25	6.3	3.1
non-speakers	13	.08 / .54 / .38	4.6	3.5

*The other category included students from various ethnic backgrounds including Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino/a and mixed race. They were collapsed together because no one of these ethnic groups made up more than 10% of either sample.

As the HHNL speakers offered their interpretations of "no new friends," they tended to spontaneously use various words from HHNL that express notions of loyalty; words such as *down*, *ride*, *day-one* (as an adjective, or as a noun for a person), *gang-gang,* and *i've got your back*. These spontaneous utterances of HHNL loyalty vocabulary suggests that these participants understood loyalty in hip-hop terms. They had acquired these phrases from their peers, the media, or other social actors and along with them they had acquired culturally-specific concepts for making sense of their obligations to friends.

It is important to reiterate that the phrase "no new friends" is connected to an entire legacy of phrases and linguistic constructs within Hip-Hop Nation Language that have similar sentiments of group solidarity. As rap artists have dialogued with one another about loyalty over the last 40 years of hip-hop history many distinct words, narratives, and arguments have emerged to express complex concerns of interpersonal solidarity. Loyalty constructs in rap culture often have connotations of street authenticity, proud gang affiliation, and/or passionate ethnic solidarity. These connotations are not incidental characteristics of the hip-hop code of the street, they are part and parcel of what it means to be a "down" person. The mastery of these various related linguistic constructs within the rap of loyalty is another way to characterize the moral expertise and understanding of the HHNL speakers, as opposed to the non-speakers.

One result of this study is that although all of the participants frequently listened to hip-hop music, and it had been a big part of their lives during the past 3 years, only some of them spontaneously spoke with HHNL. It was these individuals that had understandings of loyalty that most coincided with the cultural constructs of "downness" within hip-hop culture. This supports our theoretical account of the mechanism through which hip-hop moral codes become a part of young people's ethical decision

making. It is not just through exposure to the music via listening, but instead it is through a process of language socialization, learning to speak the language.

6.5) Instability & Codeswitching

For now, let's transition back to Bethany to illustrate the dynamic and shifting nature of her adherence to this code. In my interview with Bethany, she recalled numerous instances when she used the phrase, in conversation with her younger cousins, and in text conversations with her own clique of friends. After she described all of these examples, it seemed to me that she used the phrase quite a bit. However, she herself didn't think so. She had a sense that this proverb was much more prevalent in others' speech than it was in her own. She rated her use of the phrase at around a 4 out of 7, but her younger cousins (12 or 13 years of age) "at about a 6 or 7." When I finally asked her about whether or not she agreed with the sentiment of the phrase she said that she did not. "I like new friends" she said.

Bethany's case illustrates a recurring phenomenon in the dataset. Habitual revoicing of the code did not always mean that the person explicitly endorsed the code when they were asked in an interview context. In fact, even when young people like Bethany habitually followed the code, it didn't always mean that they endorsed the phrase. This contradiction intrigued me. How was it that Bethany, who seemed to have such a visceral emotional attachment to the phrase didn't agree with it when I asked her in the interview? I asked her about this seeming contradiction in a follow up question. Her response was clarifying:

> **Bethany:** I feel like people don't really say it around people that they don't know…cuz they don't want people to think that they're mean or rude but like when you're around your friends and stuff you can just say whatever and so I think that it's accepted a little bit more around friends, but i would never be like just chilling with some new people and then be like "no new friends," and then they're like what?…so the value, i think is more of like, just don't accept everybody into your circle, and everybody doesn't deserve to be like in your Day one circle like the people

> who always been with you, and so i would say that that's about a 6 like the value of it, but the literal meaning of it isn't like, you know it isn't, it doesn't resonate as well, but like, what he's implying is uhh is more of you know, what we, what we think of, **keep your circle small**

In many ways, Bethany's testimony speaks to the contextual application of the phrase, and more broadly to the contextual nature of moral discourse. Whether or not Bethany voiced this phrase, or acted it out depended quite a bit on the social environment she was in at the time. If she was alone with her friends she may use it to emphasize their ride-or-die solidarity. She may use it in scenarios when one of her "day-one's" felt betrayed and Bethany wanted to emphasize that she is loyal to her friend above anyone else. On the other hand, when she was in other public spheres, around "new people" (or perhaps in an interview situation such as the interview with you?) she was also orienting to norms of treating all people with respect. As she navigated different social environments, Bethany was engaging in a moral calculus of tradeoffs between loyalty to few and kindness to all: In which scenarios do I need to make dramatic pledges of loyalty to friends? In which scenarios do I need to tone that down to prioritize the feelings of others, or to prioritize the development of new friendships? Her interpretation and application of the phrase was much more nuanced than the rigidity that the phrase connotes. She was able to separate the literal meaning, which couches loyalty in absolute terms of lifelong exclusivity, from what she felt was a more nuanced and livable moral code. The more trans-contextual meaning of the phrase to her was "keep your circle small."

On the other hand, she was only asked to come up with this trans-contextual meaning within the discursive context of our formal interview when I pushed her to do so. In her everyday life, she did not necessarily need to reconcile this contradiction so directly. There was nothing about the private contexts that she inhabited with her friends that warranted for her to use the more moderate "keep your circle

small." "No new friends," in all of its extremeness, served an almost sacred moral role in some contexts of her life but seemed absurd to apply to other contexts. She seemed to make implicit judgements from the cues around her, to determine whether or not this mantra was appropriate or inappropriate. In many aspects of our moral psychology we exhibit these paradoxes. If we expect morality to conform to universal laws that transcend context these paradoxes can seem like logical contradictions. But if moralities are lived out in actual moments, contingent on the features of the immediate context, then the fact that Bethany and her clique don't deny the opportunity to make new friends in all contexts won't seem like a contradiction at all.

Bethany's testimony is an example of a common trend among the rap listeners we interviewed. Although the HHNL speakers were more likely to have a deeper, culturally grounded understanding of the phrase "no new friends" they were no more likely to say that they agreed with the sentiment of the phrase. Some HHNL speakers were extremely supportive of the notion of keeping your circle small, and others were much more critical of it. This was also the case with the non-speakers of HHNL. In other words, internalization of the codes of rap did not seem to foster a passive adherence to the rule. Instead learning this rap code meant that the young people had been socialized into an ongoing dialogue about these ideas. They exhibited an understanding of the complex contours of the argument for exclusive social circles, why rappers had traditionally argued for this code, but still many maintained a healthy distance from taking them as doctrine.

This is a good point to introduce the concept of codeswitching, borrowed from sociolinguistics, which describes discursive scenarios when a speaker of two or more dialects or social languages switches between them in the course of their speech. The HHNL speakers in the study were certainly switching back and forth between using HHNL varieties and more standard American English. This is the variety

of codeswitching that is well documented in the linguistics literature. However, there was another related type of codeswitching that occurred in the data set, a type of moral codeswitching. This happened when young people reported being beholden to a cultural moral norm in one context, but not in another context. These were young people fluent in more than one set of moral codes.

A specific illustration of this is with Teauna. During the course of her interview Teauna told me a story about a friend of hers that had become a NCAA college basketball player and because of it he achieved a certain amount of fame and social capital. She suggested that her friend is following the "no new friends" moral norm of being skeptical of new acquaintances. "The way he acts he wants to know if people are like *down for him* [uses scare quotes] now, instead of people trying to be his friend now that he's successful." As Teauna said the phrase "down for him" she used air quotes, which based on the context can be interpreted as scare quotes. Sociolinguists have described scare quotes as metalinguistic commentary, where speakers use quotation marks or quotative finger gestures in order to problematize a particular utterance. By using scare quotes Teauna positions "down for him" as a problematic phrase and marks it as distinct from the rest of her statement. Perhaps she felt it was slang terminology that may not be appropriate for our conversation. Perhaps she was trying to distance herself from this notion. Why does she set apart this piece of speech? This is an illustration of how speakers position themselves as close to or far from the moral discourses that they have appropriated. With that said it is important to note that discourses are experienced or judged as inappropriate for certain contexts, and that inappropriateness is related to the ideologies that hold power in that discursive environment. Although she may have used "scare quotes" in the formal research interview, there is no reason to believe she would use those scare quotes if she were talking to her basketball playing friend directly.

Also, what does it mean to downplay a vernacular phrase when it is also moral vernacular, and

holds within it some prescriptions for how we should act? Does it show some type of recognition that this moral code is not valued by some? As young people are moving in between spaces they are making decisions about whether or not certain moral logics are applicable to certain spaces, respected by certain peoples, all of which have implications for whether they will be useful to them in a specific context. Bethany, Teauna and other students were quite aware that the moral norms and street codes of rap were inappropriate to some contexts.

Moral codeswitching draws on linguistic ideas of positioning, that people are always positioning themselves with respect to the ideological and moral logics that they have appropriated, revoicing one moral vernacular in one instance and another in other instances. While many human beings certainly have a drive to be internally consistent, they also have a drive to be locally understood, and to belong, and so they have appropriated various strategies to oscillate between those drives.

7. Conclusion:

Our analysis shows that the phrase "no new friends" has become a stable linguistic utterance in the everyday lexicons of youth and emerging adults in the hip-hop community both in America and other English-speaking global communities (i.e. Canada, England and South Africa). This proverb draws on a common convention in the realm of hip-hop battles, of making a sharp distinction between the members of one's immediate intimate ingroup and any outsiders. Evidence shows that many young people view "no new friends" as a popular norm followed by many people in their community, one that either they have adopted themselves or one that at the very least requires a justification for why they think differently. Consequently, we argue that this linguistic phrase can be used as a marker of a moral norm in the hip-hop community, one in which youth are navigating and orienting to. There is also

evidence that young people find this phrase to be an effective way to articulate their commitment to their friends, and this phrase carries with it a number of discursive practices that orient group members to the expectation of loyalty. This data supports a sociogenetic account of moral development, one in which discourses are adapted and disseminated around cultural communities via processes of social communication.

The moral vernacular that a community speaks represents the result of that community's thinking and dialoguing over time about common moral dilemmas. The discourse around "no new friends" in the HHNL community is no different. Various cultural construals for conceptualizing the virtue of loyalty have arisen in the hip-hop discursive community. These cultural construals are embedded in the various linguistic forms that have been invented and disseminated amongst HHNL speakers, phrases like "no new friends," or "ride or die". These cultural construals of loyalty are rooted in narratives and logics that are central to the experience of the various communities that intersect with hip-hop identity, African-Americans, urban, and those that? "the streets." While the "hood mentality" is the central experience that grounds this concept of downness, it has been appropriated and utilized by people who are only adjacent to "the hood" and also by those who are distant to street lifeworlds.

Another conclusion of the study is the distinction that arose in the research subjects between hip-hop listeners who spontaneously and fluently spoke HHNL from those that did not. By virtue of being fluent speakers of HHNL, not only had they appropriated the phrase itself but they had also appropriated a barrage of related phrases and concepts into their own personal moral vernacular. These HHNL speakers self-reported a deeper understanding of the phrase. This was a particularly significant finding given that it supported the hypothesized theory of development; language socialization. The study subjects who were more fluent in HHNL were the ones who expressed a deeper understanding of the

phrase.

When judging the meaning of moral decrees like "no new friends" it is important to understand the contexts in which its adherents are using those phrases. When looking at the rap songs out of context the phrase may seem crude, judgmental, and even an endorsement of violence against non-group members. However, the ways that youth interpret it, and the ways they go on to use the idea in their everyday thought and action makes all the difference in evaluating the effect of hip-hop on youth thought. Some may argue that the effect of this phrase (its meaning) is an irrational and toxic exclusivity, however, the data suggests that students were using it much more prosocially; contextually employing codeswitching skills (and even parody) in order to know when the ethos was useful and when it could potentially be harmful to non-group members.

This is by no means a suggestion that this is always the case for every young person or for every hip-hop norm. There are surely some young people that are not as dexterous, and will follow the norm much more blindly, using the phrase as justification for violent activity, or bullying non-group members. Further research should look into the personality, and environmental precursors that predict more prosocial uses of hip-hop ethics and those that predict more antisocial behavior. However, in our ethnically diverse sample of college students there was no indication that habitual use of the idea was predictive of attitudes that justified violence or even verbally abusive forms of social exclusion. To some extent they were able to make a distinction between the hyperreal world of rap fantasy and their own lives. In other words, they took the text seriously but not literally.

One limitation of the study was the use of college students at a highly competitive university, one that preferences students with certain types of personalities, interests, and through their admissions criteria eliminates students with other tendencies. Although our sample was ethnically and

socioeconomically diverse there is reason to believe that these students are not necessarily representative of hip-hop listeners writ large. These are students who have adapted their cognitive and social processes to fit in with Western school environments (sit quietly in rows and speak when called on) and likely learned to highlight features of hip-hop identity that conform with it, and suppress features of hip-hop identity that may clash with it. This propensity to codeswitch may be a requirement of their access to the space but may not be as adaptive to people with less interaction with middle-class institutions.

There is likely some difference in how this phrase is appropriated depending on the environmental circumstances that youth find themselves in. Youth living in communities with heavy gang presence may find the phrase to be helpful in accounting for the benefits (in terms of economics, security, and belonging) of remaining loyal to a crew. Those youth living in communities for which gang life is rare or non-existent may not gravitate to this interpretation. Follow-up research is being conducted with socioeconomically and environmentally diverse youth – those living in predominantly African-American communities, and those engaged in street lifestyles – to examine how norms and codes from hip-hop are "localized" (Westinen) based on the context that youth find themselves in.

With that said, hip-hop as an ideology with ethical implications must be seen as a philosophy with multiple potentialities. In the same way that the Koran inspires some interpreters to commit to a life of charity and others to target innocent lives, hip-hop as a system of ethics cannot be understood by studying only the texts themselves but must be understood by analyzing the interpretive strategies that individuals and groups of hip-hop listeners are bringing to the text and how they are adapting those ideas and concepts to their particular communities.

Chapter 4:

Hip-Hop Gurus

Teaching the G-Code As Transcendental Ethical Inquiry

1. Introduction

This chapter explores a number of educators whom I refer to as *hip-hop gurus*. These are folks who use the power of speech as well as other practices rooted in rap culture (beatmaking, freestyle ciphers, songwriting, lyrical exegesis, dance) to guide students in their moral development. The term guru is originally a Sanskrit word and over several centuries it has developed various connotations. But as far as first impressions go, the term guru can seem a bit self-righteous. I'm pretty sure it would feel uncomfortable for someone to call me one, and almost certain I would be hesitant to call myself one. Many of the educators I interviewed agree with this sentiment and said that they often intentionally avoided coming off as know-it-alls. What made them gurus, was not that they were holier-than-thou, in my opinion, but that they often used their own experience with moral dilemmas in order to illustrate for students, a map of the moral terrain, common pitfalls that they had fallen into, and words of wisdom that could apply to various dilemmas.

The term guru seemed to fit particularly well for these men and women considering a common English translation of the word, which roughly corresponds with the word "guide." After talking with

several of these instructors, it seemed to me that the idea of the "moral guide" was a great way to think about how they operated. Another reason I have adopted the word guru is because of a dynamic game-changing hip-hop artist from Boston who used the term as his stage name (see Chapter 3).

The guides that I characterize as part of this category are not just teachers in classrooms but also include people from a number of professions including therapists, educators, artists, emcees, and spiritual advisors. What ties them together is that they are all doing work as guides. They are developing philosophies about the way that social relations should be, how they should solve ethical dilemmas, and are also doing some work in communicating these theories or lessons to students (or audiences more broadly) in ways that are explicitly pedagogical. The gurus are often creating media that articulates or argues for this perspective, or creating spaces where students can rehearse and practice moralities.

Part of my focus comes from the proliferation of hip-hop pedagogy and hip-hop therapy; the introduction of hip-hop music and culture into educational and clinical settings (Tyson 2002). In seeing these various educational spaces and clinical approaches there is a definite sense that these teachers see hip-hop as more than a neutral art that teachers and clinicians are using as a hip trendy intervention to captivate youth attention with a shiny thing that they like. They do not see rap music as the bubble-gum flavor in which to insert medicine. Instead teachers and practitioners of hip-hop pedagogy and therapy seem to think there is something inherently transformative about hip-hop as a culture and as a philosophy. They see hip-hop as not only relevant to youth but as an authoritative set of discourses that can lead to deeper forms of moral awareness. This narrative is what I will explore, how these gurus are perceiving hip-hop as a transformative resource for empowering youth to make good decisions, and further their quest for the good life.

Given the controversial history of hip-hop and the criticism it has received from certain pundits, it is often unintuitive for many to think of hip-hop music as something akin to a Sunday school class or an ethics training. However, there are various people that are part of the hip-hop culture who have taken up a moral mission, suggesting that their art (or teaching) guides audiences (or students) towards moral ends. For example KRS-ONE wrote an 832 page text, stylized in a Biblical-styled verse, called *The Gospel of Hip-Hop*. Throughout the text he argues in a self-proclaimed "sermon" that hip-hop is a divine offering.

> For with this first instrument we remember GOD and how we were rescued by unseen forces more powerful than any government on Earth. For when all seemed hopeless and oppression seemed permanent, a caring, protective, nurturing creative force independent of all the World's political, business, educational and religious institutions, swept through our hearts and homes and we were rescued from sickness, hatred, ignorance and poverty with a behavior that we eventually began to call "Hip Hop." (KRS-ONE 2009)

The opinion that hip-hop acts as an evangelical force that resurrects urban community from their plight, may not be articulated in such "religious terms" by the average rap fan, or even by most of the hip-hop gurus I have interviewed. But sentiments linking hip-hop with processes of spiritual transformation or moral uplift has certainly been echoed by various artists such as Erykah Badu's assertion that "Hip-Hop is bigger than religion" (Badu 2008). KRS-ONE is certainly not the only person involved in rap making these claims. The point of this article is to summarize and concretize the claims of these gurus, investigating how exactly they think hip-hop is exerting an effect on people's moral character. The point is to make these philosophies and pedagogies legible to psychologists and educators who are interested in child development. I hope to situate these claims in our most updated theories regarding the cultural basis of development, the trajectory of moral development, identity

development, and socio-emotional growth to see if the claim of hip-hop's moral nature is worth further exploration.

I am analyzing these gurus primarily as a learning scientist. The learning sciences is a burgeoning field that is using the best of what we know about psychology and human behavior to create a more vivid picture of how people learn. My goal is to use these scientific methods of the learning sciences (although quite frankly it is just as much an art as it is a science) to explore rigorously: How does the cultural context of hip-hop (its discourses and practices) provide young people with one set of scenes, practices, and guides that help them develop their own moral voice, finetuning their moral questions and refining their ethical quest?

2. Moral Development As Finetuning Moral Questions

Most human cultural communities (national, local, religious or cultural) affirm the importance of using education to pass along their values to their young. I say *most* and not *all* because although I've yet to come across a community that hasn't been invested in effecting the values of their young, I have also learned that I should never say never. Nevertheless, this impulse towards intentional moral education can be traced back to many of the most ancient societies. As early as the 27th Century BC in Ancient Egypt there was a notion that education was necessary to socialize children into the moral order. The Egyptian word for "character" actually descended from a root which meant 'to shape, to form, or to build." They thought of moral character as something that had to be shaped by a teacher, similar to how clay is shaped into a vase (Eby, 1940).

This idea is also presented in the works of Confucius, the philosopher credited as the founder of Chinese moral education. Confucius authored the Chinese classical texts where he mapped out the

intricate moral codes that became the official state religion during the Spring and Autumn period 771-446 BC. These codes stressed filial piety, an elaborate set of obligations that you had to your parents, spouse, ancestors, older and younger siblings. The principles of Confucius were passed on through various dynastic periods and still resound in the culture of modern China (and far beyond). The vertical transmission of these values through the generations was possible because Confucius ardently argued for public moral education. He thought that in order to socialize young people into the order it was necessary to "provide education for all people without discrimination" (Chan 2008).

Throughout time and across human communities there has been some notion that societies do not reproduce themselves without educating the next generation in the norms and values that hold that community together. The American community is no different. American public schools were conceived with the idea of passing American values on to young people. Rebell (1989) traces this idea back to the founding periods of the American republic. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush championed the idea of republican schooling, a type of moral education based on "the deliberate fashioning of a new republican character, rooted in the American soil…and committed to the promise of an American culture" (Rush 1786).

At the same time, this process of vertical transmission, one generation guiding the next, often goes astray. Another way to put this is, when we peer across the railroad tracks at groups that are different from us, or when we look back into history at a group of people in another time period, we often know deeply that they were terribly wrong. Sometimes communities are invested in certain ideologies that are causing great harm to other people and pass violent or selfish values down to their children with as much fidelity as prosocial ones. In the case of the United States, various generations of Americans were invested in passing down to their children the notion that African people, Native people, Jewish people

and so many others were subhuman and thus did not deserve the same rights. In these cases it often takes other guides (or gurus), social movements, and ideologies to emerge to awaken the community and help provide these misdirected communities with a new map that will clarify their direction.

On a more micro level, we are all guides or models for behavior. We are also passing on values through horizontal transmission, meaning between members of our same generation, between peers, amongst colleagues and even with strangers. In various spaces we are modeling for other human beings what a certain answer to a moral question might consist of, and those around us are observing what we do and consciously or subconsciously altering their thoughts and behavior based on the new information they receive.

This point is as good as any to present some type of partial definition of morality. I draw from various scholars (Karenga 2004) when I propose that morality consists of *a set of questions* about the nature of social relationships and the various answers our human communities have evolved to those questions. One of the most fundamental questions involved in the moral quest is: What responsibilities do I have to other human beings? How should I treat them? What duties are required of me to take care of other beings? Various people including philosophers, spiritual leaders, artists, and yes rappers have asked these questions throughout history and tried to offer partial answers. They have left us various principles or artifacts (in the form of proverbs, principles, and rituals) that we use as tools in our own personal lives to help guide us in answering this question for ourselves.

The reason why I propose morality as a set of questions is because the answers to those questions are contested and at least partially socially constructed. Different people with different beliefs, worldviews may answer these questions slightly or vastly differently (imagine a gender non-conforming LGBTQIA activist in West Oakland California vs. a technology-averse Amish farmer in Pennsylvania).

This article is not proposing a grand philosophy of moral living or a way of understanding universal moral principles. There are moral universalists who believe that there are universal principles, and that if we apply those principles just right in a logical manner then there is an objective solution to every ethical dilemma that every sane rational person should use. Way on the other end of the spectrum there are moral relativists that believe there are no objective answers to ethical questions, and that the answers that one individual comes up with regarding an ethical dilemma are as good as any other person's answer. There are also moral pluralists who believe something somewhere in the middle, that individuals and communities have different moral inclinations but they are not infinite, but finite and that they can be comprehensible to one another. I am personally closest to the ethical pluralism position but this will not be an article in which I attempt to argue these matters. Instead this essay will focus on the process of questioning itself, considering which questions does the discourse of hip-hop provoke its students to ponder? How are various guides prompting their students to embark on a moral quest to answer for themselves some of the most enduring questions in human ethical imagination, questions which have slightly different connotations in the modern age, and different implications depending on where you are positioned in society?

3. Social Connection As the Foundational Moral Question

This analysis defines sociomoral development as a process of finetuning moral questions. One of the most central moral questions is: How do I characterize the social relationship between myself and other beings in my environment and the obligations and prohibitions that these relationships involve? Moral development can be seen as the learning that occurs (both formally and informally) that provides a person with better more refined ways of asking this question. What do I mean by better or more

refined? What actually changes about these questions over time? What makes an adult more competent moral questioner than a 5 year old? One key difference between the questions of a novice and the questions of that same person once they become more competent is that their questions become more relevant and adaptable to the community in which they finds themselves. For example, below I describe how a person growing up in a Gujarati family might learn to finetune their fundamental moral question as a result of their upbringing:

Context: Gujarati Family

Fundamental Moral Question: How do I characterize the social relationship between you and I, and how would I describe the obligations and prohibitions that our relationship involves?

Questions that they learn to ask?

Q: Is he my older brother (bhai), eldest brother (bhai ji), or older sister (didi)?

A: He is your eldest brother (bhai ji)

Q: How am I supposed to treat an eldest brother?

A: You must respect him.

Moral Question After Being Revised By Experience: How do I characterize the social relationship between me and bhai ji given obligations to respect him?

The majority of human beings with fully functional brains spontaneously ask the first question. This question is biologically determined. The grand majority of 5 year olds have the mental machinery to be able to ask this question, as they acquire skills like theory of mind (Flavell & Miller 1998). On the other hand, in order to get to the point where they are able to ask the refined questions they must acquire a number of culturally constructed concepts, for example bhai, bhai ji, and didi.

Rai & Fiske make the case that fundamentally, moral psychology is relationship regulation (2011). They argue that a large part of the process of moral judgment is learning about the categories of beings in your community and the ways in which those types of beings are treated within the community. They

argue that individuals are managing relationships according to 4 different moral motives: unity, hierarchy, equality and proportionality. Based on the person and the context, there will be varying degrees to which you may use one orientation or another.

As we analyze the hip-hop gurus in this study we will ask the following questions: which social-relational questions that they are invoking? Which culturally constructed concepts (or models) are they offering to students so that they can learn to ask more finetuned questions? As the gurus design learning environments how are they making space for students to rehearse asking those questions and understand how those questions can be meaningful to their lives?

Here I examine ways in which hip-hop gurus may inform young people about the social relationships people seek and the moral obligations and transgressions that these relationships involve. What are cultural practices from hip-hop that have been adapted to model for students the categories of social relationships that exist in their context, and the relevant features one should pay attention to in order to inform their moral quest.

My emphasis on rap is not because I believe that hip-hop spaces are the ultimate or even some optimal environment for moral development. It is one of the many contexts in which youth are finetuning their moral questions, and the theoretical exploration of this dissertation is about the relationship between context and moral development. Hip-hop practices have a certain authority or relevance that gurus draw on it for socio-relational models (stories, cultural practices) to create interventions in the social world, and to guide young people into understanding the landscape of moral questions (sociorelational dilemmas) that exist in their lifeworlds.

4. Methodology:

In order to answer these research questions I focused mostly on the role of the guru or guide, making sense of their pedagogical approach, how they articulated their moral objective. What moral expertise were they bringing to the table? How did they articulate the ethical learning goals of the pedagogical practices they engaged in? Which concepts, practices, or tools from hip-hop culture did they draw on to meet these learning goals? The study consisted of a series of clinical interviews with hip-hop gurus. The hip-hop gurus were chosen so that there was representation in the study from a number of fields; including the performative arts, the teaching profession, and community social workers. This purposive sampling was done in order to show similarities between individuals in all of these sectors who employ a pedagogical approach to their use of hip-hop.

5. Running Drills of Intimate Connection Through *Dap* (Dignity and Pride)

My exploration will begin with a particular hip-hop guru whose classroom activity went viral on various social media platforms garnering millions of views from people all over the world. It was also picked up by various mainstream news outlets occupying segments on shows like *Good Morning America*. The video shows Mr. White, a Black male teacher in North Carolina, facing a single-file line of his students who are waiting to enter his classroom at the start of the period. At the front of the line is *Tremaine* (all students' names changed for anonymity) one of the fifth graders in Mr. White's class, wearing a grey sweatshirt and a pair of khakis. Mr. White and Tremaine, standing facing one another, suddenly begin a secret handshake, their hands criss crossing and meeting each other, left hand up high, right hand up high, left hand down low, right hand down low, twice again on the black hand side, and finishing it off with a dab (the hottest hip-hop dance move at the time, made famous by which basically

took on the connotation of celebratory). After dabbing emphatically in synch with Mr. White, *Tremaine* runs into the classroom and then next in line is Cora. Cora and Mr. White immediately begin their own personalized handshake. This is the ritual that Mr. White and his class does everyday before they enter the classroom.

Mr. White's pedagogical practice of *dapping up* his students will be analyzed as an example of how a hip-hop cultural practice can be used as a tool to reimagine the social relationship between student and teacher. In this section we will investigate a few questions: What is the historical sociogenesis of *dap* and how is it a reflection of hip-hop culture? What learning goals was Mr. White trying to achieve by dapping up his students? How does this cultural practice challenge the predominant socio-relational model of student-teacher relationship and guide students towards conceptualizing new models based on hip-hop adjacent identities?

5.1) The Historical Origins of Dap As a Cultural Practice

It would be ludicrous to argue that the shaking of hands is a hip-hop specific practice. Hand shaking has been traced across the world and back in time to the earliest human civilizations including the ancient Assyrians. It is a ritual that acts as a greeting, a showing of solidarity, or a symbol of trust. On the other hand, varieties of this practice have evolved local peculiarities and significances in particular communities. For example, in the modern context of African-American communities, the handshake often called *pound* or *dap* (an acronym for "dignity and pride") has a very particular social history. In a project called *Five on the Black Hand Side,* Chicago artist and researcher of visual culture Lamont Hamilton traced the genesis of various unique varieties of Black American handshakes back to

their origin in the late 1960s (Hamilton 2014). He was able to trace a number of multi-step hand salutes back to companies of Black G.I.s stationed in the Pacific during the Vietnam War.

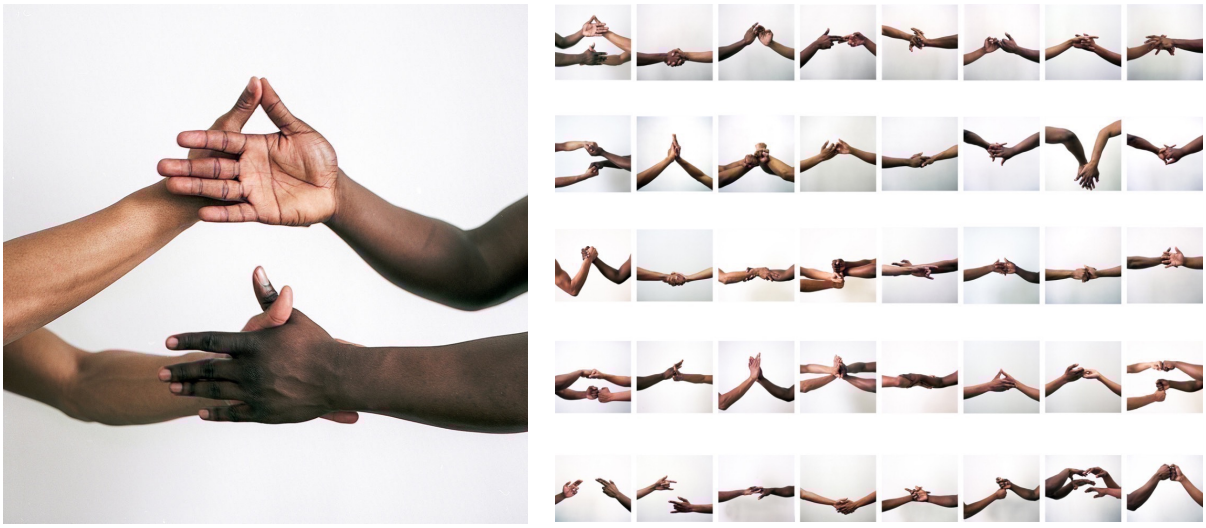


Figure 7. Photographs from Lamont Hamilton's exhibition Five on the Black Hand Side: Origins and Evolutions of the Dap, an ethnographic exploration of the sociogenesis of Black hand shakes done in conjunction with the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

Faced with racial discrimination (both within the ranks of the military and in the larger American context) these officers developed elaborate secret handshakes as a collective pact to take care of one another in the context of a military that still treated Black soldiers as second-class citizens. The dap was actually banned in various parts of the military, with martial law suggesting that the physical solidarity between Black soldiers was a threat to platoon unity. Even though the dap was often banned, various companies secretly developed divergent varieties of handshakes and these different versions were brought back to various American towns and cities when the officers were discharged. Hamilton sought out black men from across the United States who had inherited these traditions of dap and documented the embodied procedure of each handshake with time-lapse photography.

The descendants of these cultural forms can be seen across Black America (and Black-adjacent America) on college campuses, in sports locker rooms, and have retained a meaning of resilience and solidarity. Different versions of dap have also evolved to take on the cultural references of the current day, such as the inclusion of the latest dance moves. The dap takes on more layers of significance in hip-hop music as rappers elevate it as the official way to show love, like when Boosie Bad Ass (2010) sings in the song *My Brother's Keeper*, "Love my clique, wake up, I dap 'em down" or when 2 Chainz (2016) paints the picture of him dapping up the Creator of the universe "I'm so high, me and God dapping". These references to dap show that this particular greeting takes on a ritualistic significance within the hip-hop culture.

5.2) Dap As a Socio-Relational Model

5.2.1 Dap as Model of the Teacher-Student Relationship

So what does it mean that Mr. White decided to bring this cultural practice into the classroom? When I asked him about the inspiration for his pre-class routine he suggested that he conceived of it by watching the pre-game routine of the Cleveland Cavaliers, an American professional basketball team led by internationally renowned super-athlete Lebron James. During their warmups, the members of the Cavaliers were famous for each member of the team carrying out a unique personalized handshake with every other player. Mr. White, a former basketball player himself, saw the pre-game ritual as a way to foster intimacy between members of a group. In the context of his classroom, it was a ritual to embody the unique personal relationship he had with each student. In our conversation he consistently talked about wanting to engender a sense of teamwork and collectivity in his classroom.

> I want to make my classroom feel like a family oriented atmosphere. I try to really push the team concept that we are building with each other and helping each other build at the same time. (Barry White, interview)

The adoption of that cultural practice acts as a critique on the previous socio-relational model. and a reformation of it to make it more in line with a new socio-relational model. The introduction of dap into the classroom is a critique on the norms of the traditional classroom and a pedagogical move to develop a new more intimate socio-relational model for teacher-student interaction. It is important to note that in order to create more closeness, Mr. White introduced a socio-relational model from his own cultural lifeworlds (African-American, hip-hop, and basketball) in service of intervening in a school structure that encouraged a physical and social distance between teacher and student.

The socio-relational model of the detached intangible teacher has been critiqued by other researchers, and a number of empirical studies have investigated the efficacy of introducing touch and intimacy into the classroom. One study (Steward & Lupfer 1987) examined a class of undergraduate students who had individual conferences with their professors. During the course of this conference half of the students were touched by the professor (lightly on the arm for less than 5 seconds). The other half of the students were not. The researchers found that the half that were touched rated the efficacy of their teacher higher than those that were not touched, and they ended up scoring .58 standard deviations higher on the next test as compared to the untouched.

There is some empirical evidence to support Mr. White's claim that touch creates deeper connection between teachers and students. And while the efficacy of Mr. White's pedagogical strategy is beyond the scope of what my study has explored, what can be said is that Mr. White himself views the

introduction of dap into his classroom as re-forming the social-relational connection between teacher and student. In this sense he sees it as a moral intervention, an intervention in the service of building deeper connections.

5.2.2 Dap as Model Of Relationship Between Western Schools & Marginalized Communities

Mr. White is not only challenging predominant patterns of social relationships between student and teacher he is also challenging traditions of relationships between Western schools and ethnic minorities. Instituting dap as classroom practice challenges patterns of historical racial stratification that positions black and brown bodies, (and any rituals, gestures or activities marked as the products of Black bodies) as inherently non-school, and unintelligent. Part of the history of discipline within the schools of non-white kids in America has been a process of "disciplining" them to assimilate into Western traditions of thought and being, as Churchill (2004) described in the examination of the assimilation of Native Americans in Western boarding schools in *Kill The Indian Save The Man*. In fact the entire objective of the movement for social justice in education can be thought of as a moral question about the nature of relationships between black and brown peoples and the institutions that develop youth in America (Espinoza & Vossoughi 2014).

The introduction of dap into the classroom is related to a network of related pedagogical strategies (i.e. cultural modeling, critical pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and Africentric pedagogy) that seek to disrupt the process of school-mandated assimilation (Lee 2006). Dap is part of a cluster of overlapping cultural practices including basketball and hip-hop that contain overlapping racialized histories within America. Starting with basketball, it is important to note that the NBA is largely a Black league, with 74.4% of NBA players being Black (Lapchick & Guiao 2015) and with African-Americans

being somewhere between 2.2 and 3.3 times as likely to follow the NBA than the national average (Silver 2014). This overrepresentation of Blacks among players and fans of the NBA illustrates the centrality of basketball as a cultural practice in many Black communities. Nasir (2000) showed the ways in which young Black athletes, who often underachieved in high school math classes, were engaging in complex mathematical practices while calculating statistical averages of NBA players (free throw percentages, assist-to-turnover ratios).

Due to basketball being pervasive in the same communities and neighborhoods that birthed rap, hooping references are pervasive in hip-hop music. Within rap lyrics hooping or balling remains a recurring metaphor for the swagger and success whether or not it was Big Bank Hank portraying his fandom of the Knicks in the Sugar Hill Gang's (1980) genre-defining classic Rapper's Delight "So after school, I take a dip in the pool, which is really on the wall/I got a color TV so I can see the Knicks play basketball" or the more recent artist Post Malone (2015) whose entry into the hip-hop world included him declaring himself the white Allen Iverson, "White Iverson/When I started ballin' I was young/You gon' think about me when I'm gone/I need that money like the ring I never won, I won."

For these reasons, a person that has learned to give dap, is also likely to have learned to shoot a jump shot, to understand the significance of an assist to turnover ratio. And due to the placement of these cultural practices within the social strata of the American context these are likely to be the cultural repertoires of Black and Brown students. These are also activities which are likely to be stereotyped. Hip-hop gurus were those that introduced cultural forms from hip-hop culture into their classroom but they were also usually adept enough to know that rap songs were not the sole artifacts that would serve this purpose. There were other adjacent cultural forms that would serve a similar role.

Therefore the introduction of this *complex of practices* as official classroom practices acts to de-center cultural practices that are based in Western cultural traditions, predominantly white spaces, formal-education, upper-middle class communities, disembodied philosophies, and shift the center towards cultural practices that originate in communities of color, in colloquial folk knowledge systems, low-income areas, and embodied ways of knowing. I will introduce an example from Medin & Bang (2014) that illustrates the way that schools become institutions that test students based on their proximity to mainstream normative practices and their distance from historically marginalized practices:

> Suppose I know how to do one hundred things, that you know how to do one hundred things, and that our skills overlap 50 percent (we have fifty skills in common). Next assume that I am in a position of power and decide to make up a test of ability by randomly selecting twenty of my one hundred skills. When I give you the test you'll likely score around 50 percent, which is clearly inferior to my 100 percent. Of course if you were in a position of power and made up the test it would be a different story. But I can't test for your unique skills because they are likely irrelevant to my life and I lack them. As long as I'm in a position of power, I define what skills are relevant and I might even use my superior performance to justify my position of power. (Medin & Bang 2014)

Mr. White's educational move is to try to re-define the skills that are relevant, to include cultural practices that have been historically marginalized. Again I look at Mr. White's pedagogical move primarily as an intervention in the moral (social-relational) structure of the classroom, an intentional strategy to reform relationships between individuals, communities, and institutions, including students and their practices that were often portrayed as immature, inappropriate for the serious intellectual rigor of the classroom.

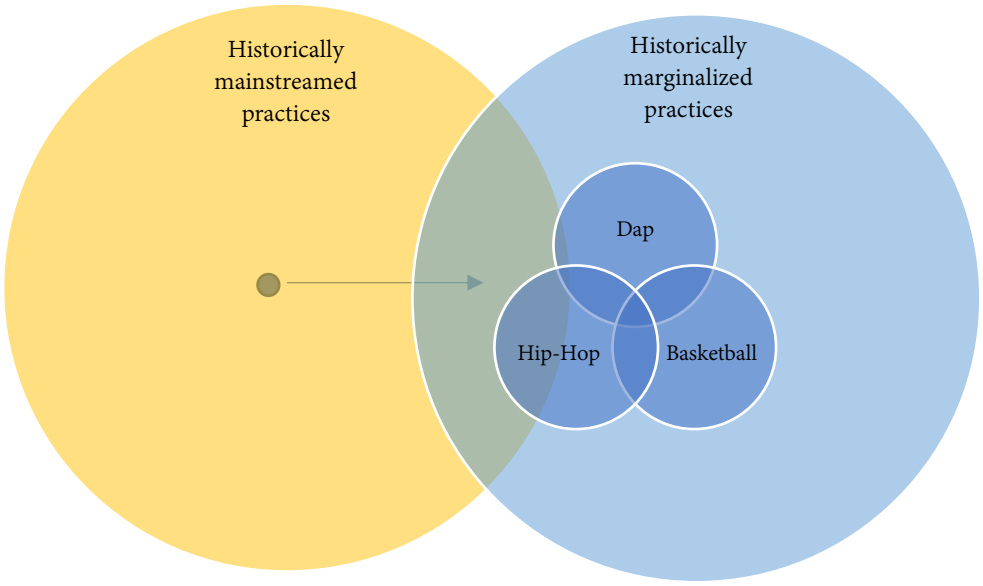


Figure 8. A diagram showing the full range of human cultural practices including those that have been historically mainstreamed and others that have been historically marginalized. The movement towards culturally sustaining pedagogies is one that shifts the "center" towards an orientation that intentionally values marginalized practices. This is often done by introducing a complex of cultural practices (i.e. dap-hiphop-basketball) that share overlapping histories.

Again the foundational moral question is "What is the structure of the social relationship between me and x, and what are the obligations I have to maintain that relationship." There are various accounts that have suggested that schools have an obligation to maintain the insights of the Western canon, but hip-hop gurus are asking whether or not schools (and other institutions) have the moral responsibility to *sustain* – as in culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim 2014) – the cultural practices of communities that hail from the global South. These relationships can be conceived of as a number of overlapping social contracts between a person and the beings in their community, the groups and institutions in your society, the land that you traverse, the cultural traditions that give life meaning, and

the forces of the universe. The hip-hop gurus show an intention to intervene in social structures, to guide youth to seek greater harmony between self and various social entities.

I have suggested that moral education is happening during any pedagogy that causes students to ask moral questions in new ways, particularly in ways that are informed by the social histories of the moral norms in question. In the case of Mr. White's activity, you can see how the activity may generate some of the following questions that may have been taken for granted: Should the relationship between me and my teacher be one that is intimate or detached? Why are some things that I do with my friends or in my neighborhood not a big part of my school experience? When is the "appropriate" context to express my identities (especially those rooted in traditions that are often minoritized or racialized in society)? These are quite important questions for young people to engage with because they are being called to wonder why certain practices are seen as *normal*, *formal*, or *refined*. Their asking these moral questions is considered a learning goal in itself, not so that we can force them to act according to our norms, but so that they can be informed moral actors as they form and re-form the moral conventions of tomorrow in a way that is coherent with their highest moral ideals (i.e. authenticity, fairness, or rebellion).

6. Hussle & Motivate: The Big Homie Nipsey & The Hustler's Ethic

When I tell people I study the moralities youth learn from hip-hop, one of the primary questions that I receive is: "Which type of hip-hop are we talking about? The *conscious* kind or the *gangsta* kind?" Many of the people that I come across know that hip-hop doesn't have one single unified message. There are the Black empowerment anthems of Mos Def & Talib Kweli (Brown Skinned Lady), the strip club manifestoes of Tyga (Rack City), the love ballads of Lauryn Hill (Ex-Factor), the religious

odes of Kanye West (Jesus Walks), and the battle hymns of Lil Jon (Bia Bia). There is quite a bit of diversity of content in the genre of hip-hop, with dozens of sub-genres and rappers with varying values, political opinions, and subject matter emphases.

Out of all of this complexity, one categorization people often place on hip-hop is that between gangsta rap (the older cousin of trap) and conscious rap. The idea is that hip-hop can be neatly segmented into rappers that are socially conscious & politically aware, and those that are nihilistic and involved in the trap lifestyle. The expectation from this would be that the conscious subgenre (for example, emcees who make music with overtly social justice messages) would be the ones who were doing the moral modeling, while the gangstas would be largely ambivalent to morals. Perhaps they are the type to shun or avoid morality as something that has no bearing on their life, instead promoting mostly hedonism and individualism. If anything, it is presumed that they would be modeling immoral behavior.

However, in my research of hip-hop gurus, it was a lot harder to neatly segregate hip-hop between conscious and gangsta strands. Many hip-hop gurus did not distance themselves from the gangsta way of life, the illegal subcultures of drug dealing, or the flashy indulgences of hyper-capitalist consumption. They did not find it contradictory for these activities to overlap with a robust moral philosophy or with a devotion to a higher power. The thugs of rap were also preaching a moral pedagogy. Perhaps we should have heeded the caution of Andre Benjamin when he warned us about the false dichotomy between conscious and gangsta in Outkast's (1998) song Aquemini: "Is every nigga with dreads for the cause, is every nigga with golds for the fall, naw so don't get caught up in appearance."

6.1 Nipsey's Neighborhood

In order to illustrate this paradox I analyze one particular West Coast rap guru, Nipsey Hussle. Nipsey is a recording artist and self-professed gangbanger from the Crenshaw District of Los Angeles California; a predominantly African-American neighborhood on the city's south side. As evidenced by his nickname *Neighborhood Nip*, Nipsey is focused on uplifting his hood to the utmost extent, consistently representing Westside Slauson Ave. He has been developing community businesses in Crenshaw since his teenage years. In 2017 he launched a project called Vector 90 only blocks from his own home, a co-working space for innercity entrepreneurs, right in the center of the Crenshaw District. In the bottom is a Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) learning space for developing young African-American students, educating them for multiple science-adjacent possibilities, including future careers in technology sectors, and as hypothetico-deductive problem solvers of Crenshaw's most immediate social problems.

Meanwhile, in true illustration of the improbable marriage of gangsta and guru, Neighborhood Nip is also a vocal and reputable member of the Rolling 60s gang, a sect of the notorious LA Crips. The Rolling 60s is the largest underground organization in the city of LA by number, boasting over 1300 members in its ranks. The son of an Eritrean immigrant father, Nipsey joined the street gang when he was 14 years old because he was homies with a lot of Crenshaw residents that were already affiliated.

The analysis in this section will analyze the moral discourses that Nipsey employs in his music and his public communication. I will make sense of Nipsey's moral message (particularly around hustling and self-determination), the moral questions he is inciting, and how his articulation of ***work ethic*** is actually reinforced by his social position in the Rolling 60s. While it would seem that being involved in the gang culture of Los Angeles would seriously mar his credibility as some type of moral authority, it is

this very experience which gives him the authority and the perspective to educate young people who are growing up and developing in a gang-pervasive context.

Since Nipsey's primary form of moral guidance occurs in the lyrical content he delivers in his music as well as the message that he promotes in interviews and public appearances, these were the primary form of data that I considered in my analysis. I used interviews in which he was being questioned about his biography, his artistic products, and his underlying message. This analysis focuses particularly on an interview on the Hot 97 radio show hosted by Ibrahim "Ebro" Darden, Peter Rosenberg, and Laura Styles, in which Nipsey was promoting his 2018 major-label debut album *Victory Lap*. The videorecording of this interview and the audiorecording of the *Victory Lap* album were analyzed using multimodal discourse analysis methods () identifying moments when Nipsey used **rhetorics of morality** and when he spoke in a **pedagogical voice**.

6.2 Hustle & Motivate

> See it's a couple niggas every generation,
> That wasn't supposed to make it out but decode the matrix.
> And when they get to speak, it's like a coded language,
> Reminds niggas of they strength and all the stolen greatness.
> We used to shoot at niggas at the Mobil station.
> Full circle, mogul motivation
> (Nipsey Hussle, 2018)

In the lyrics of his Victory Lap album, Nipsey makes clear that he sees himself as a moral guide. For example, in the above excerpt from the thirteenth song *Loaded Bases*, Nipsey alludes to a small talented cohort of individuals of which he is a part of. He sees himself as part of a lineage of individuals

who have transcended the circumstances which constrict low-income people of color in the United States. Somehow he was able to decode the matrix, to decipher the rules of the game. Now that he has a platform to speak to millions of people, he uses the "coded language" of hip-hop as a way to show young people their strength and their ability to transcend any barriers in their path.

Primarily he sees himself as a motivator. In order to think through Nipsey's motivational strategy it is useful to make sense of the current theories on human motivation, and how psychologists currently believe motivation is cultivated in an individual. Psychological theorists of motivation highlighted two key processes that lead to intrinsic motivation (Deci et al. 1991); internalization and integration. Internalization refers to a process whereby one's motivation to engage in an activity becomes internal as opposed to external, and that person begins to self-regulate their participation in that activity. For example, a person who has internalized the motivation to be an entrepreneur. They also become identified with that activity over time as an important part of their self-concept. This is also accompanied by a process of integration in which their drive towards engaging in that activity becomes more integrated with their other values, needs, and identities. While at first a new motivation towards entrepreneurship may conflict with other values or identities. Nipsey sees himself as engaged in facilitating both of these processes of internalization and integration by helping young people internalize the motivation to be a self-determined entrepreneur, and to integrate that motivation with other identities that they may have prior; including identities as African-American, low-income, gang-affiliated. Part of his role of motivator is narrating a story in which these aspects of identity are coherent and harmonious with one another.

His philosophy as a moral guide is based on a particular theoretical perspective on moral development; a perspective that holds that a person's moral sense-making (the ways in which they will

factor in the well-being of other beings into their thought processes and practices) is highly contingent on the environment in which that person develops; namely the economic resources they have access to, and the amount of safety they experience.

Nipsey begins introducing this theoretical perspective in an interview on Hot 97. He starts by probing the hosts of the show to see if they have heard of a certain psychologist: "Y'all heard of this dude named Maslow? He made a thing called the pyramid of human needs. At the base of human needs is our physiological needs. Food, clothing, shelter…There's other needs that come above that; but if you can't address these, all that other shit don't count." Nipsey cites Jewish American psychologist Abraham Maslow and the theory of human motivation he proposed called *the hierarchy of needs*.

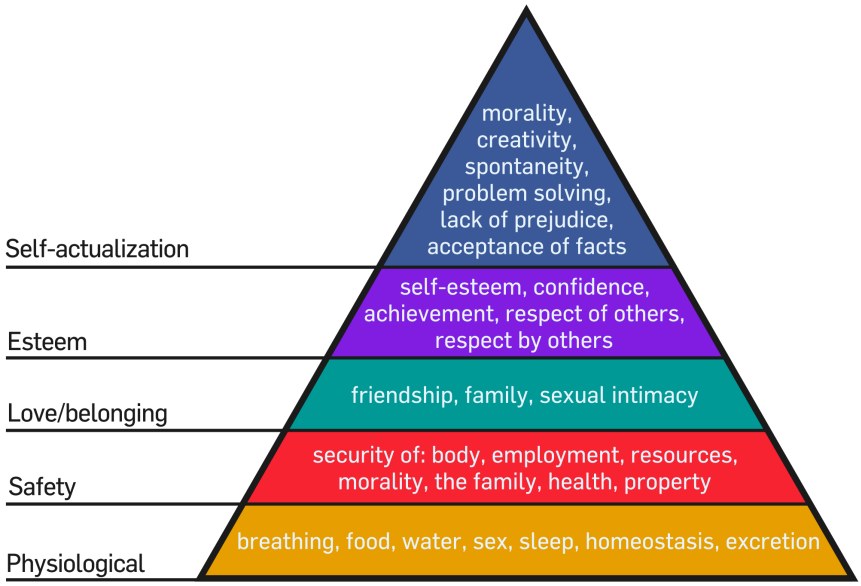


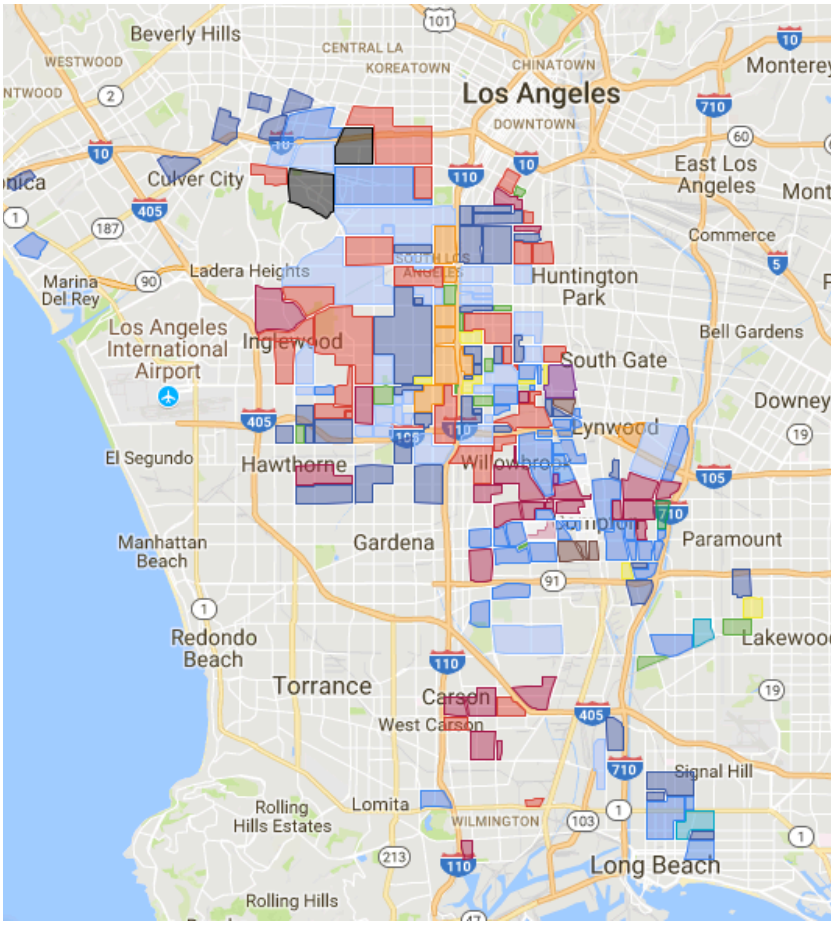
Figure 9. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, an illustration provided by an anonymous user in the Wikimedia Commons.

For Nipsey, Maslow's theory informs how he should approach giving moral advise. He argues that Maslow's theory dictates that people whose basic fundamental needs are unmet should be provided with a different type of moral guidance, one that acknowledges that most of the motivations for their behavior exist in a realm of meeting basic needs. "You can't necessarily come to too many conclusions about a person's moral foundation cuz they in survival mode." He conveys that, when a person is in survival mode, baseline needs like food, shelter and clothing are so important to human beings that they will naturally tend to prioritize these motivations over all others. If moral development is the expertise of posing moral questions and pursuing the results of your inquiry, some people have more opportunities to develop sophisticated moral questions, and more drive to pursue moral ends. For others there are more pressing concerns which monopolize their psychic space leaving little time for philosophical questioning. I will challenge this claim a bit more in a later section, however, first I think it is important to think about how the use of "official" academic theory on psychology serves Nipsey's overall approach to pedagogy. Nipsey's usage of theoretical concepts from psychology in this interview shows that he sees the moral reasoning of his audience as reliant on their psychological states, which are rooted in various physiological drives, and that the prioritization of those drives is partly and mutually exclusive.

6.3 Hood Ethics: The Intersection of Geography, Socioeconomic Status, and Moral Thought

As a moral guide Nipsey is well-aware that the constituency that he is catering to is that of the people who are growing up in *the hood*. By hood I partly mean low-income residential neighborhoods like Crenshaw. But thinking of the hood as a stable geographic location with firm boundaries is not always so straightforward. As you wind through the south side of Los Angeles you will pass through affluent African-American neighborhoods like Baldwin Hills as well as less affluent ones. At one

moment you will be passing multi-million dollar homes and not even a hint of gang presence, and then right across Angeles Vista Blvd you will cross into Rollin' 60s territory. And moreover, due to forces like gentrification, the hood often overlaps with non-hood elements on the same street corners. The hood is not merely geographic. The hood that Nipsey is preaching to represents young people in a particular social environment, an environment that many youth around the corner in Baldwin Hills cannot relate to. The hood life is an economic niche that is defined by having a lack of resources, and by having people in your networks who lack resources. Being hood is also partly a socio-economic caste.



Key

Blue - Unaffiliated Crips
Light Blue - Neighborhood Crips or 2X Crips
Dark Blue - Gangster Crips or 3X Crips
Green - Hustler Crips
Yellow - Mafia Crips
Orange - Hoover Criminals
Red - Bloods or Brims
Burgundy - Pirus
Black - Black P. Stones
*Map does not include Latino gangs

Figure 10. A map of the territories of South Los Angeles Blood, Crip, Hoover and Piru gangs created by an anonymous user of the Google "My Maps" function. The map has garnered over 4 million views, which speaks to the general interest in gang life and geographic space. The methodology that led to the creation of this map is unknown. Although various sources of mine have suggested that many of the boundaries are fairly accurate. This map is mainly to illustrate that many gang-affiliated youth are adapting to such geocultural boundaries (https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ul5yqMj7_JgM5xpfOn5gtlO-bTk&ll=33.92232102499491%2C-118.31310912186814&z=11*).*

The audience for Nipsey's moral lessons also belong to a particular segment of the hood. The young man who is listening to a Nipsey Hussle record on West Slauson Ave is often either gang-affiliated or surrounded by a social context of gang life, one in which his brother, cousin, friend, or father (and sometimes grandfather) has been gang-affiliated. For example, the beef between the Rollin' 60s and the 83 Gangster Crips has lasted three decades, longer than America's longest official war (the Afghan War, 2001 - 2018). The social identities of youth in that context have been shaped by their kinfolk's multigenerational participation in those wars. These youth are also shaped by their community's long-time participation in organized underground (and often illegal) methods of subsistence. These communities were initially subjected to racial violence and residential segregation and then twice assaulted and compounded by the devastation of the crack epidemic of the 1980s and then again by the intergenerational trauma of grief and revenge that has been a constant cycle of gang life.

Hip-hop's moral philosophy was developed in this social context and contexts like it, originating in the slums of late-1970s South Bronx. It is a philosophy that is acutely aware of these hood environments and approaches the question of moral development as if these socioeconomic factors (and their histories) are central. It does not seek to solve these problems primarily through a strategy of punishment, by banishing the individuals caught in this social strata into cycles of incarceration. Instead the best of hip-hop moral philosophy looks to actually empower and *motivate* the young people that are in these circumstances, seeing them as fundamentally morally-inclined beings who have the self-determination to transform systemic level problems, and continuously elevate their own patterns of behavior.

In this vein, the leading single on Nipsey's breakthrough 2018 album was entitled *Hustle & Motivate*. In this project he embodies the figure of the hustler, a character who is already embraced in hood culture, in order to show role models of the industrious big homie. So what is Nipsey's moral message? How does he draw on hip-hop discourses, empircal psychological research, and historical knowledge of the development of gangs to articulate a motivational narrative? Are his references to gangbanging meant to glorify the violence, to humanize its perpetrators, to illustrate its complex causes, or to act as a relatable Big Homie that could model the path from senseless pawn to self-sufficient boss? His theory of how he should preach to gang-affiliated youth is based on an understanding that moral discourse will have different appeals based on the background of the listener, especially their level of security when it comes to basic needs.

6.4 The Gangsta: Morally At-Risk or Moral Exemplar?

Maslow's theory predicts that under-resourced individuals will have the tendency to deprioritize moral concerns. However, recent research in psychology actually shows the opposite trend (Piff et al. 2010). A study of the influence of social class on prosocial behavior actually found that lower class individuals acted more generously, compassionate and trusting in a range of behavioral tasks. The study showed lower SES individuals gave more to strangers. In each of these tasks lower SES individuals performed as if ethical motivations were of a higher priority than they were for upper SES participants. To explain these results the authors suggested that individuals living in under-resourced communities are often more dependent on distant community members for their economic survival. While upper class individuals are able to provide for their nuclear families with a great deal of economic independence, lower class individuals must forge egalitarian social bonds with other community

members who they count on for social and economic support. This means that lower-SES individuals are more likely to be socialized into an ethic of egalitarian interdependence. The results of this study suggest that we should not look at the moral reasoning of under-resourced communities as deficient and that the predictions suggested by Maslow's theory, that low-SES people will have less psychological resources to dedicate to moral thinking, is fundamentally refuted by the empirical research.

Generosity and empathy are not the only values that seem to be more highly prevalent in low-income communities. Our own previous research (Chapter 2) also showed that individuals who are located in the hood (or who have been socialized by hood/hip-hop discourses) actually have higher commitments to certain moral values than participants from outside of the hood. (Chapter 2) found that hip-hop listeners were more likely to prioritize the value of authenticity and the ethic of fairness than non-hip-hop listeners. Also, we found that individuals from lower SES backgrounds were more likely to prioritize being authentic and respecting authority than middle and higher SES participants. These results problematize the notion that survival mode is mutually exclusive with the highest forms of ethical inquiry and action.

Nipsey Hussle draws on Maslow's theory in order to try to humanize the gang-affiliated youth that are his main constituency, to show that the people who are involved in gang life (even those that have committed violent crimes) are not morally bankrupt. On the other hand, the most up-to-date research deeply problematizes Maslow's theory, showing that it paints an incomplete picture of the moral lives of under-resourced human beings, and can lead to the false conclusion that low-income people do not have moral imaginations or rich ethical theories. There is no evidence that lack of resources decreases a person's commitment to moral values or to the time and depth that they wrestle with ethical questions. Does this mean that Nipsey is wrong for citing Maslow?

Any robust theory of the social cognition of the gangsta must incorporate a true understanding of the broad range of values that gang involved youth are considering in their daily lives. Researchers have posited a number of attitudes and values that co-occur with gang-related delinquency (Matza & Sykes 1961, Tarry & Emler 2007) such as thrill seeking, attitudes regarding the illegitimacy of authority, belief that society is unjust, perceptions that they have a lower social status than deserved, and loyalty to other gang members. This cluster of values and attitudes can be categorized as moral, immoral, and amoral based on their "objective" direct effects on other human beings (taking another person's property harms that person) or based on whether they are subjectively perceived by the actor to be serving a greater good. The research actually shows that gang life requires quite a large amount of consideration of social beings, and there is little reason to believe that most gang-affiliated youth have deficits in empathy or other aspects of social cognition.

While Nipsey agrees with certain aspects of the Maslow theory, he undoubtedly believes that the conscience of the people in his neighborhood is rich and active. There is a sense in which he sees poor Black folk in the innercity as fundamentally engaged in a moral striving. He sees the gangsta as on the right side of history, fighting against forces of evil who have the intent to oppress him and therefore the prototype of moral depth.

In fact this narrative of the innercity kid persevering against systems of power and other forces of evil that seek to oppress him is the primary moral narrative Nipsey uses in his Hustle and Motivate strategy. In seeking to motivate these youth he offers "hustle" as a liberatory philosophy. This philosophy is based in principles of tireless hard-work and cleverly outwitting people in positions of power; the idea of the ruthless underdog businessman. Again it must be noted that hip-hop moral guidance gels well with the primary theories of human motivation, because gurus like Nipsey Hussle are

working hard to help youth integrate a drive to hustle with other identities that they may have already accepted (Black identity, low-income identity, gang affiliation). In a sense this is the challenge of all hip-hop gurus (whether gang-affiliated or not); to help youth integrate the intended value goal (i.e. entrepreneurship, leadership, vulnerability) with the other primary identities that youth in these contexts are already gravitating to. These gurus anticipate conflicts between identification with the hood and identification with power, a conflict that is prevalent in societal stereotypes of low-income people as powerless.

7. Freestyle Fellowship: A Hip-Hop Based Sacred Space

Finally I focus on an educational context called Freestyle Fellowship (name changed for anonymity), a sacred space (Eliade 1959, Holloway 2003) that was designed with the idea that hip-hop based activities could provide a type of moral guidance or socioemotional incubator for the young men that participated. Freestyle Fellowship (FF), located in an urban Northern Chicago neighborhood, holds weekly circles for young men where they come together to share personal stories, interrogate ideas, analyze important texts (including hip-hop lyrics), and engage in creative free writing. The organization primarily serves young African-American and Latino men between the ages of 15 and 25. FF provides a unique setting where young men who identify as hip-hop practitioners were intentionally focused on character development and socioemotional growth. The mission of the space is to be a place where individuals come to grow and develop as men, becoming better representatives of their community.

Another part of the FF mission is to explicitly target young men that have had experiences within the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Many of the young people that come to meetings have (at some point in the recent or distant past) been in trouble with the law. This is not a rare occurrence

for young men in the neighborhood where FF takes place, and for young Black men in Chicago in general. In fact, during the course of my time observing FF I myself was accosted by a police officer, with that officer throwing my bike 10 feet across the pavement and then thrusting me against a brick wall and removing my wallet without my consent. All of this because I attempted to record with my cellular phone an abusive interaction between this officer's partner and members of the program. I say this so that the ethnographic record reflects Black researchers also being physically targeted by law enforcement.

With some understanding of the context of the neighborhood it is important to point out that some of the FF members were under increased risk of contact with the criminal justice system since they were involved in drug economies or gang-related conflict. Some of the participants had been incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. The weekly meetings, referred to as *circles* because of the circular formation that they sat in during their conversations, also served as a place where the young men could reflect on and interrogate underground economies, gang organization, and incarceration, which are all prevalent structural features of their local social environment. Therefore, conversations about personal growth are locally situated. In other words, they often discuss values that are important to them as members of this community, with shared experiences and challenges. One of the shared challenges that the organization embraces in its mission is the desire to "transform intergenerational patterns of violence." This is part of the socio-relational analysis that takes place in the space, where young people begin to understand the source of violence in their lives, whether that violence is manifested in their own behavior towards community members, in the actions of their peers, in their families in patterns of domestic violence or at more systemic levels from law enforcement, or systemic oppression like segregation or lack of a social safety net.

The FF program also explicitly uses hip-hop cultural practices as a reference point to ground circle activities. Program leaders known as *circle keepers* draw on components of hip-hop pedagogy. The circle keepers in FF can be thought of as the hip-hop gurus of the space, and they include both staff members as well as young people who were once FF participants and have over time taken on more of a leadership role. One of the hip-hop cultural practices that circle keepers draw on is the frequent use of rap lyrics as the basis for interpretive discussions, what I refer to as *lyrical exegesis*. At some point during the course of a meeting, circle keepers introduced a rap song. They played the audio recording and provided participants with written versions of the lyrics to follow along. After the listening session participants offered their perspective on portions of the text that resonated with them. They discussed the meaning of the text and how its themes are relevant to their own lives. Hip-hop was infused in the circle activities in other meaningful ways. Students are often asked to respond to a writing prompt in hip-hop form, producing short rap verses and then performing them for the collective. Other activities ask them to recall lyrics that have been meaningful in their lives and recite them to the circle as words of wisdom.

The organization recognizes that hip-hop is a primary discourse for many of the young men in the community they serve. Therefore the space is rife with various hip-hop language and literacy practices. First, there are native hip-hop practices that are adapted to the circle. Students engage in comprehension, interpretation, analysis, and debate in ways that seek to replicate the way young people engage with rap lyrics in informal conversations with their peers. Because these rap-related practices are prevalent, and students have a conception of the space as hip-hop friendly, they also tend to use the hip-hop language outside of explicitly hip-hop based activities. They use the lingo from rap songs to describe their feelings. They reference the words of rappers to buttress their arguments. In this sense the

canon of hip-hop lyrics becomes a shared text to support student's claims, validate their feelings, and offer meaningful examples of wisdom. In my interview with a 19-year-old participant in FF he speaks about the use of hip-hop during circle discourse:

> I: In Freestyle Fellowship, like what's different with what you do with hip-hop there?
>
> P: Uh Freestyle Fellowship umm I can say we / we look at [hip-hop] and try to bring more clarity to our own lives through that / through these lenses and try to / Try to um, help ourselves just see more broadly / broaden our horizons and help ourselves just really / really look at things from a student's point of view / like we really humble ourselves in that space so that we can uh really take away as much as we can from these verses (Interview, 2/19/14).

When analyzing Carlton's statement we see that he not only recognizes the use of hip-hop lyrics but he acknowledges their use as a definitive text. He uses the word verse, suggesting that the hip-hop songs they listen to are respected for their lyricism and poetic rhetoric. But his statement also suggests that he may use the word *verse* to express another more sacred connotation, as in Koranic verse. In many cases within circle discussions, literary allusions to hip-hop texts are accepted as "argument-ending terminal goods" (Shweder 2003) in the same way as allusions to religious texts or classic literary works. When a Hindu cites the Vedas or a thespian cites Shakespeare they assume that the authority that these texts hold within their respective communities automatically substantiates the truth of the claim. In this sense, if a claim is endorsed by certain sacred or ultra-legitimate sources, then it is an *argument-ending terminal good*. In some cases within the circle certain rappers' voices hold an authority that does not need to be interrogated. At other times, however, participants actively critique these voices. When analyzing the use of hip-hop voices it is important to understand how these voices are positioned as authorities.

As part of an ethnographic study, I attended FF weekly circles that were held at a community space in a local church. During these meetings I acted as both a participant and observer, which provided a particular lens into their practices. I was certainly an outsider to these meetings at first but I was also actively practicing how to do the things that insiders did. My own knowledge of rap and my respect for hip-hop culture made me a partial insider as well, and certainly contributed to the way in which I was accepted in the circle. I partook in all circle activities including interpretive discussions and free writing sessions. I took copious field notes about the different activities that we engaged in. The cultural practice highlighted in the next section was a short 15-minute activity in which all circle participants recited from memory a rap verse of our choice, a verse that helped articulate how we were feeling over the last few days. This section will also include data I collected from a 60 minute semi-structured interview that I conducted with a 19 year old participant in the circle named Carlton. Carlton spoke to me about what the circle activities meant to him and the role of hip-hop in his life.

7.1 An Ethnographic Account of Lyrical Recitation During a Peace Circle

The lyrical recitation exercise that we practiced occurred only after we engaged in a process that was frequently carried out to initiate the start of the circle. Before the circle opened up young people and facilitators were basically hanging out, greeting each other with daps, catching up and joking around. The circle keepers began to arrange chairs in a circular formation, a design that allowed all participants to see each other's faces at all times. A colorful quilt was arranged at the center of the circle with various objects lying on top. These artifacts include a curved stick, a toy glove in the shape of a massive Incredible Hulk hand, a rock painted red on one end, and a selection of cards with the images of animals

strewn around the perimeter of the mat. Some of these eclectic artifacts are used as talking pieces to indicate when someone holds the floor. Picking up on the cues of circle, all 10 of the participants in the room began to take our seats. The circle was opened with a candle being lit and a short invocation. There was definitely a sense within the circle that participants respected these rituals and objects as sacred. In my interview with Carlton after the fact, he suggested that he perceives of this space as a ritual space where spiritual discourse occurs:

> I: Do you think people are different in Freestyle Fellowship than when they're outside of the circle?
> P: uhh hmmm (pause) / To an extent. Not really different people I wouldn't say, just they're, they're accessing different parts of themselves a lot of the time. Because I know when I go in there it's more, it's very spiritual, it's like, it's almost like church for me

This transition from banal to sacred space was certainly something that I witnessed as the candle was lit and the activity began. To introduce the lyrical recitation exercise, the staff member and co-founder of Freestyle Fellowship began, "Ok, we are going to start off by everyone quoting a song that sort of sums up how you've been feeling lately. And don't tell us the name of the song or the artist right away. Try to see if we can guess it and if we can't then you can tell us. Who wants to start?" He reaches for the mat in the middle and picks up the stick. Then puts it back down and says, "I'll let whoever starts…(trails off)."

The person who picks up the talking stick first is a young man by the name of Lucas. He starts immediately with his recitation:

> But now you buried, rest nigga 'cause I ain't worried.
> Eyes blurried, sayin' goodbye at the cemetery.
> Though memories fade, I got your name tatted on my arm,
> So we both ball till my dyin' days.
> (2Pac, 1996)

Directly after Lucas finishes his recitation another circle member Kevin jumps in and offers a guess regarding the speaker of the quote. "I think it's Tupac because you always rap Tupac." Another youth by the name of Jasper smiles and nods his head acknowledging that he agrees with that answer. There seems to be a general sentiment that it is Tupac, people nodding their heads, but nobody seems to know the song. Lucas doesn't reveal the song but instead goes immediately into speaking about the reason that this verse is meaningful in his life at the moment, "I've been thinking, there was a guy on Refugee that got shot. And I didn't know the guy but." Refugee Road is a street 2 blocks North of the church we are meeting in. Lucas then goes on to name three friends of his that were killed recently and how the news of his neighbor being murdered has caused him to think about the people he lost to gun violence, making them "heavy on [his] heart." Lucas then passes the talking stick to the left hand side.

The next person to recite is a young man in his mid-twenties by the name of Marcus:

I think Bush trying to punish us,
Send a little message out to each and every one of us.
Real G shit, well that's really unheard of,
When you get more time for selling dope than murder,
In this crazy world.
(Young Jeezy, 2008)

His recitation actually foreshadows a conversation that we had later during that circle about whether or not prisons should be reformed or abolished altogether, which was a recurring conversation in the space as they tried to imagine systemic solutions to the problem of a hyperactive criminal justice system had caused on their lives. Marcus himself had conflicting ideas about the nature of prisons. He thought of them as fundamentally unfair and that the justice system was predatory on certain marginalized communities. But he also felt that prison was a place where he personally grew, both

educationally through his receiving a degree while incarcerated, and socio-emotionally. For him the recitation was a time to express the "craziness" and absurdity of the justice system, and how that absurdity had grave impacts on his own life.

Kevin receives the talking stick next. He is a youth educator in the neighborhood who teaches poetry and spoken word at the local community center. Kevin often worked in collaboration with FF staff, sometimes referring youth to circle meetings if he thought that they might benefit from the environment. Kevin begins by saying that his quote is not from a famous artist but in fact from a student that attended one of his poetry workshops.

i can't tell where i'm ***running to***
but everybody i ***run into***
seems like they're ***running too***.
(Unknown youth)

Kevin remembered these lyrics because of their clever use of a homophonic phrase as the recurring rhyme (running to/ run into / running too). He also talked about how he felt his student's lyrics viscerally illustrated how senseless life can be, but that there was some sort of comfort in the fact that we are all in the rat race together.

My analysis of this ethnographic case has been largely informed by the literature on literacy as a cultural practice (Scribner 1984) and multimodal literacies. An important takeaway from this literature is that the cognitive practices associated with what is counted as literacy in a particular community vary with respect to time and place. "At one time, ability to write one's name was a hallmark of literacy; today in some parts of the world, the ability to memorize a sacred text remains the modal literacy act. Literacy has neither a static nor a universal essence" (Scribner 1984). The example Scribner used here, that of

"memorizing a sacred text" is quite a prescient example given the nature of FF. Part of Scribner's work was done in Liberia with the Vai, a community of subsistence farmers who read and recite Arabic as part of their religious practice as Muslims. Scribner's case study of the Vai showed that this community actually consisted of various interpretive communities Many of the Vai learned a traditional Vai script and used it primarily to write informal letters with friends and family. Some knew Arabic for their religious literacy and recitations. And other knew English, which they learned in school and therefore this type of literacy was accompanied by many of the cognitive practices of Western schooling (i.e. logical syllogisms). Therefore literacy couldn't be defined in any universal sense. Literacy included the skills, and cultural scripts that were needed to engage in the forms of adaptive social practice that manifested in a particular group of people. Therefore a social analysis of FF as a learning environment is perceptive of which linguistic abilities are prized by that community and what those abilities allow a person to carry out in their environments.

One important feature to note about the lyrical recitation activity is that these recitations are from memory. Within this activity students were recalling anywhere from one to twelve bars (measures) of lyrics. To carry out this feat the student must have studied significant swaths of the hip-hop canon and be able to recall these phrases in the particular moment that they are needed. They were not tasked to recall *any* hip-hop verse, but one that could act as "words of wisdom" for themselves or for others in the circle, a proverbial set of bars that could act as a lesson for the very particular struggles they are going through at that moment. An analogy can be made between this cultural memorized recitation to the "throwing" of proverbs in various West African oral traditions like that of the Igbo (Penfield & Duru 1988). Penfield & Duru found that Igbo elders regarded the ability to memorize, recite and apply proverbs to the relevant context as a key marker of intelligence and moral maturity, and as evidence that

young people understood the "omenala" or social order. In summary, one feature that characterized the FF learning environment was an emphasis on hip-hop literacy, a particular form of cultural knowledge; having appropriated certain lyrics from the rap canon that were oral and moral. This activity overlaps with a number of other activities including close interpretive listening sessions of rap lyrics and songwriting activities.

The other facet of understanding literacy as a cultural practice is the notion that a community's literacy norms are often adaptive. Therefore when thinking about the role that this recitation activity plays in their everyday lives, there is some sense that it played a *proverbial* role. They were using rap quotes as proverbs, that could provide an interpretive framework for how they should understand certain philosophical questions that impacted their lives. It provided them with the ability to offer advise to other members of their circle in a language that was mutually understood and legitimate.

Another point to make is that circle keepers operate on the assumption that the young people attending the circle will have already applied these rap texts to memory on their own time. Underlying this assumption is a knowledge that circle keepers have about the cultural practices that young people are already engaged in outside of the circle. The circle keepers knew that young people in their target demographic already had a certain literacy with rap. This seems to support a fundamental claim of this dissertation, that the rap gurus are not themselves singlehandedly elevating rap practices to the level of the sacred, or convincing participants through proselytizing methods that rap is moral. Instead they are actually often relying on young people already having a spiritual relationship with these lyrics and engaging with these literacy practices on their own time. Instead they are extending the boundaries of the sacred space that young people are already creating in freestyle sessions, impromptu songwriting activities, and critical conversations of rap literature. As gurus their role is that they are making

classrooms and churches places where young people feel that their type of spirituality is accepted, and that their type of literacy is valued. So here the guru is not primarily someone that *exposes* youth to wisdom, but as someone who makes space for the wisdom traditions that they already participate in.

7.2 Practicing Philosophies Through Prefigurative Performance

There is a sense in which hip-hop rituals can also be thought of as playing a therapeutic role, healing trauma that these young men have accumulated in their lives. The use of hip-hop in therapy is a well-studied domain and has been used by practitioners in clinical and criminal justice contexts (Tyson 2002). On the other hand, the remedial space, a space where individuals are transitioned from mental disorder to order, is not the only way to characterize the ritual circle FF is nurturing. Another framing is that hip-hop-based peace circles is a way to *practice* or rehearse socio-relational models. They are practicing socio-relational ways of being that are predicated on respecting the wholeness of their selves and honoring the humanity of others. Part of this is facilitating a space in which the cultural products that these young men already hold dear, are elevated to the level of sacred texts, are examined . Their memorization and recitation of these texts is prized as an intellectual endeavor. The "healing" framing incorporates the clinical narrative of reforming damaged selves or healing sicknesses and often feeds into deficit narratives about the individuals themselves being broken, about the cultural products they produce being broken, and the texts they hold dear as fractured or deficient (as in broken English).

I argue that an important phenomenon to pay attention to in these spaces is that of learning, particularly that of practicing and rehearsing. The young men in FF are *practicing* vulnerability by sharing their emotions with other young men. They are practicing reconceptualizing their connection

with hip-hop as something that is as legitimate as other "moral vernaculars." Carlton speaks of practicing FFs ways of being and then transferring these practices to other parts of his life.

> FF is very spiritual / it's like, it's almost like church for me / but / it's / I'm personally getting to the point where / that's almost always my feeling / it's like I'm a walking meditation

For Carlton, becoming a "walking meditation" is part of the learning goal that he has for the space. He believes that the feelings he is able to channel within the circle should transfer to his everyday life. At this time it is important to understand that although this gathering happened within the confines of a church, the program itself was unaffiliated with the church and primarily used the building because it offered free space. Therefore the sacred space created was never linked with any Christian tradition. There was no mention of Christian doctrine by circle leaders and I never received any cues that this was imagined to be a space for formal religious worship. Therefore, when Carlton claims that "it's almost like church" I take him to mean FF shares certain characteristics with church, namely the fact that it invokes a sense of spirituality, and the activities are held to be sacred. My interpretation seems plausible since Carlton himself did not identify as Christian and seemed to be interested in various forms of spirituality including Buddhist thought and African metaphysics.

Another way to think about the rehearsal that happens during ritual space is to think of it as prefigurative politics (Boggs 1977). The idea of prefiguration describes social movements who have certain goals for societal transformation, and use their everyday social life in the life of those institutions as a place to rehearse those goals and values. This means that these organizations don't just go out in the world to *advocate* for non-violence or for a more restorative approach to criminal justice, but they *practice* those values in everyday interactions in their institutional practices. They try to find ways in which their current behavior in their small community becomes a model for more system-wide

manifestations of those values. Creating a ritual space-time was one way that FF could mark the actions that occurred within that space-time as prefigurative. Lighting candles and using sacred objects as talking pieces were cues to signal a collective understanding among everyone in the space that the actions we are carrying out now are an embodiment or performance of our most highly held values. Therefore having vulnerable conversations about grief and trauma becomes a rehearsal for a world in which trusting relationships with others is the baseline. Practicing egalitarian non-hierarchical participation structures based on restorative justice was a way to model reform that could eventually be taken up by penal systems that have been largely punitive.

Conclusion

In this chapter we covered hip-hop gurus or guides from three contexts: Mr. White, Nipsey Hussle and the Freestyle Fellowship Circle Keepers. The theme that tied these three contexts together was their appropriation of hip-hop-based cultural practices in an effort to provide socio-relational models that encouraged their students to ask new moral questions and to rehearse new relational configurations between themselves and others. These practices were often practices that students had some familiarity with. Mr. White's students likely gave dap in other less formal contexts, and FF participants probably discussed lyrics in various places. What was unique about these guru-guided environments was the entrance of these hip-hop based practices into new contexts in which it had previously been stigmatized. By bringing dap into the classroom it challenged prior conceptions of the teacher and student as distant. It also challenged traditional patterns that stereotype people of color and their practices as non-school. The circle keepers' introduction of rap in a ritual space challenged

assumptions about the sacred and the profane in a society in which rap is often portrayed as a vulgar vernacular.

There is a reason why this study did not explore the efficacy of these gurus and their learning environments. I gave no pre-tests and post-tests when interacting in the FF peace circles. I did not ask for Barry White to provide me with the end of year reading and math scores for his 5th grade class. I did not test listeners of Nipsey Hussle's albums to see if they were more. This is fertile ground for further research, however, in this dissertation I was focused on *characterizing* the cultural practices and the aesthetic/ethical values that underlie their work. There are rarely studies done to examine whether or not the use of Western cultural frameworks are efficacious as compared to non-Western ones. They are employed regardless of this lack of evidence. So quite frankly I see no reason to assume that This study cannot serve a comparative role in analyzing whether hip-hop culture is as efficacious as Buddhist-based learning environments or indigenous science based interventions or of cultural frameworks based on the Western traditions such as the Socratic method. It is simply to show that teachers are indeed building robust learning environments rooted in alternative cultural traditions because those traditions are sacred to them. And within those contexts they are imagining ways to consistently re-design those spaces so that they are more efficacious and adaptive to the current challenges of their communities. And if hip-hop gurus are any way representative, they have been very open to receive information or studies from anyone who respects the sacred nature of their relationship to the cultural practices they hold dear.

The reason that the argument of this dissertation was rooted in language of morality is because it is fundamentally a moral question whether or not schools or other public institutions *should* take on the role of sustaining the cultural practices and wisdom traditions of marginalized peoples. It is a moral question, whether or not certain people should be able to declare their spaces and cultural products

sacred in the same way as folks from more powerful and legitimized traditions (Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman, and Anglo-American) have been able to. And once that moral responsibility is embraced, my prediction is that a whole range of cultural frameworks will be free to empower various literacies, activities and ways of being.

Chapter 5:

Implications of the Study

Reappraising the Cultural Value of Youth Cultural Artifacts

1. Implications for theories of moral development

Moral development is a phenomena that is studied to understand how people develop behavior, attitudes, and values that are aligned with certain notions in the moral sphere. Researchers in this area are focused on human capacities such as the development of empathy and perspective taking, the construction of beliefs about the roles and obligations you have to different actors within your community, notions about who we should respect or defer to, ideas about which behaviors are impure or degrade a person's integrity and those that that are sacred and fortify a person's virtue. There are aspects of these behaviors that develop in human beings quite naturally, and are present in human beings cross-culturally. These moral faculties are part of human social cognition, but they also manifest quite differently for people in different cultural contexts. The field of moral psychology is also interested in how the expression of these faculties varies based on the cultures in which people develop.

Understanding these concerns are interesting for pure knowledge sake, however developing a theory of moral development that accurately represents how people use these moral faculties also has numerous broader impacts. Various institutions within society operate based on "theories of moral development" whether they claim so explicitly or whether it is more implicit. Many schools claim to help young people build character. The criminal justice system operates based on assumptions about how human beings become "criminal" and how those "criminals" are reformed. Their decisions about how they operate as institutions is based on their theories about why people commit violence, and why

they form social relationships with others. There are various implications of a theory of moral development that effect how we develop policy that encourages the virtues of communality.

Many researchers want to explain catastrophic breakdowns in the moral fabric of human communities. For example, Lawrence Kohlberg was a Jewish-American psychologist, who prior to his academic work served as a Marine in World War II. For part of the time he served in the military he worked to smuggle Jewish refugees from Romania into Palestine. His ambition to create a theory of moral development was influenced by him witnessing the catastrophic moral failure of the perpetrators of Jewish genocide and his hope to prevent such catastrophes from happening again. Therefore a focus on understanding the moral faculties and how they develop is also rooted in an attempt to better understand what causes us to do harm (i.e. to commit sexual assault, to torture, etc.), and to identify the learning environments and social practices that prevent these outcomes and lead instead to individuals who act in service of humanity.

Some researchers are interested in the human development of moral capacities for different reasons. They instead want to explain differences in moral perspectives between different groups of humans that have led to clashes between political factions, ethnic groups, or religious communities. For example, Haidt (2009) attempted to explain differences in moral cognition between American conservatives and liberals that have led to heightened political division. His theory helped to explain this partisanship by showing that the moral values that were important to conservatives were different from the ones that were important to liberals. These "moral priorities" have been cultivated through processes of socialization in which individuals are socialized into the ideological priorities of their social conspecifics. But how does saying that cultural groups have different moral intuitions help us solve ethical dilemmas? Or should we be interested in that at all?

In some sense Jonathan Haidt is acting as somewhat of a cultural moderator, hoping to mediate the conflict by showing that in some deep ways both factions are focused on trying to do "the moral thing." Both sides have righteous justifications for their perspectives, but they have deep disagreements about which values are the most important. This is not a small contribution to the theory of moral development. Given that much of the theory in the Kohlbergian tradition has been based on stage development, a set of analyses that shows that human beings may be just as "moral" but be moral about different things, is an important reality to account for in the theory.

On the other hand, there are some important aspects of this theory to question. Does the culturally pluralist perspective of Jonathan Haidt depart completely from the prescriptive tradition of Kohlberg, in order to pursue a purely descriptive project? Is Moral Foundations Theory interested in simply describing how people engage in moral sense making, or is it value-laden itself, attempting to prescribe some way to be in the world. Just because researchers are playing the role of the moderator does not mean that they are disinterested in some outcome. Jonathan Haidt for example has created Heterodox Academy because he is interested in solving problems of divisiveness in American politics. This academy convenes individuals with different moral intuitions to engage in political dialogue. Sometimes when it is rhetorically convenient, Haidt attempts to position himself as an objective witness of the culture wars between liberals and conservatives. By arguing that there are positions on both sides, he seems to be saying that the objective is to see the merits of both sides so as to reach a compromise. On the other hand, as any judge or jury member knows, the objective is not necessarily to find the midpoint between the plaintiff and the defendant. Even fairness and objectivity means taking the side of the victim against the perpetrator. There is nothing about being a moderator at all times that is intrinsically admirable.

Even in situations where moderators are useful, like in political processes meant to bring all perspectives into the public square for democratic debate, the moderator has a very integral role in determining *where* the center of the debate is. In this regard the moderator (who is usually both the convener and the facilitator of discussion) is not objective. Is the center the mean of all of the political perspectives that exist in the country? How would we determine what that is? Should we assume that the center can be found at the purple medium between two red and blue poles? Is it as easy as creating a linear scale between the most liberal person in America and the most conservative person and setting the middle as whatever the mean is between those two poles? Is political thought really this linear of a dimension? The Heterodox Academy boasts that within its diverse community 16% identify as conservative, 17% as progressive, 25% as centrist, and 26% as libertarian. However, there is no natural sense that these are the ideological buckets to draw from in order to have viewpoint diversity. How many of the people in the Heterodox Academy are Native Americans that believe in the sovereignty of their tribes and that the Americas should be decolonized? How many of the people within Heterodox Academy identify as socialists? How many identify as Amish and believe in withdrawing from "English" society to pursue technology-free simple living? How many are white supremacists? If the goal was just to develop a rainbow coalition of all of the different political opinions that exist within the American community, then Heterodox Academy is not doing a great job at all. As the moderators the leadership of the Heterodox are already making assumptions about which viewpoints are valid and which political opinions are useful for a "balanced" debate.

Haidt has not pulled himself out of the moral matrix when he embraces this philosophy of political moderation. Even the identity of the moderator is based on certain cultural values, values of tolerance, and moderation, and objectivity. Therefore even these noble "rationalists" have not removed

themselves from the bind that Hume suggested, that reason is always the slave of the passions, and our passions are formed by our personalities, by the ideologies we have subscribed to, and by the groups we have been bound to. Embracing an ideology of cultural pluralism is not escaping the moral matrix, instead it is joining a new moral matrix, perhaps a cultural community with values based in cosmopolitanism, or secular humanism, or enlightenment values.

With that said, if I am to avoid the same traps as moral foundation theory, I must be reflexive about the values that underlie my analysis. This analysis does not reach the standard of pure objectivity that is heralded by most cognitive scientists. The point of this dissertation is not to completely remove myself from the "moral matrix," or to convince others to remove themselves. At the same time, there is intense value in illustrating that our judgments are deeply interwoven in moral matrices that determine our values. And it seems from the insights derived from ethnography and the anthropological sciences that it is possible and valuable to suspend judgments for long enough to see that our values are partially socially constructed. But at the same time does that mean that we should (or even can) suspend our judgments indefinitely. The ethical perspective that underlies this theory of moral development is based on very strong ideological and moral commitments; a critique of power, honoring the sanctity of human life, finding commonality across difference, and protection of underdogs. Each of these commitments have emerged as key priorities in my life based on my participation in various contexts. For me to suggest that there was some rational process through which I came to these values as fundamental to my project would be giving my intellect too much credit. Given these experiences, I perceive the work of Kohlberg and Haidt in a particular way, and am responding to it accordingly.

With that being said, theories also tend to take shape in a way that they coalesce with the major data points observed within the analysis. Kohlberg focused on reasoning across the lifecourse and thus

he built a stage-theory. Haidt focused on political division, and so his theory of moral development placed at the forefront the intuitions that differ the most between political conservatives and liberals. This theory of moral development comes to fruition as the product of analyzing hip-hop music, the most popular music genre and youth cultural scene during the second decade of the second millennium. By looking at hip-hop, and how young people interact with it, what can we better understand about human moral psychology?

For one, not only has the cultural basis of morality been confirmed within this analysis, but it has shown that within this period of globalization and digital media, cultural practices flow across geographic boundaries at unprecedented levels, and with this flow of culture, there is also the flow of values, of moral discourses and ideologies. This flow of culture, however has not led to the deletion of boundaries. In place of the tribes and nations that were once built primarily on geographic proximity, people erect cultural communities based on shared discourse, shared symbols, and shared aesthetics; and within these echo chambers, discourses and values become reinforced dialogically.

Also the ethos of a culture is developed in relationship with the cultures that they are in conversation with, which includes the cultures of the communities they are inspired by, at war with, in competition with, or oppressed by. Hip-hop gains its emphasis on rebellion, and social justice, and authenticity due to its relationship with other communities and institutions within society (i.e. the police force, the system of white supremacy). Hip-hop culture has been represented by other more mainstream institutions as a moral plague. Artists are often defending themselves from these accusations within their lyrics. Hip-hop has also often responded by showing ways in which mainstream institutions are morally flawed. These discourse communities are ideologically competing with one another and also merging with one another. Hip-hop culture has flown into communities who appreciate its aesthetic

characteristics, but also it has flown more easily into communities that share the ethos of rebellion, social critique, and youth subversion.

Thirdly, there is a great deal of heterogeneity within the hip-hop discourse community. There are various subgenres that have slightly different ethical and aesthetic priorities; some oriented more towards hard cultures of honor and respect gained through displays of aggression, others oriented towards an ethic of social justice. These inner divisions are often manifested in members of one genre calling out or accusing the ethos of the other community of being less wholesome, or less authentic. These moral accusations can also manifest in artists critiquing themselves, positioning themselves as complex wholes that are influenced by multiple warring ideologies within rap. In the song *Zealots*, Lauryn Hill chants "Even after all my knowledge and my theory, I add a 'mother fucker' so y'all ignant niggas hear me." Here Lauryn suggests that she sometimes uses the vulgar language and the aggressive bravado of gangsta rap to make her message legible to "ignant niggas." By "ignant" she is not just referring to ignorance, or lack of information, but as a state of moral dormancy, the opposite of being aware or *woke*. She has been influenced by both discourses and even though she may believe that conscious rap is the superior, more-elevated form, she doesn't see other discourses as wholly useless. Similarly rap listeners are engaging in interpretation and appropriation of these discourses, adopting hybrid moral propositions that often promote paradoxical visions of the good life.

2. Societal Implications

Based on what we have learned about the social conscience of rap music, how can these lessons inform us as cultural creators, designers of learning environments, and creators of public policy? As hip-hop/R&B music has become the most listened to genre among American listeners (Nielsen 2017), it

has also come into contact with various aspects and institutions of society including the criminal justice systems, the school systems, and our cultural institutions. The history of hip-hop has shown that the artform has often been interpreted by mainstream institutions as having a valence of immorality. I argue that taking a culturally pluralist analysis of hip-hop culture is important in order to mitigate serious injustices that result from misunderstanding hip-hop culture. I will explain three such misunderstandings in three different arenas of American social life; the criminal justice system, schooling and parenting, and the politics of language and culture.

Arena 1: Criminal Justice

The young adult is charged with a crime. Can't we use aggressive rap lyrics as evidence of violent intent?

Olutosin Oduwole is a lyricist, poet who was accused of planning and attempting a Virginia Tech-style mass shooting on his campus while he was a student at Southern Illinois University (NPR 2017). He was charged in 2007 with attempting to make a terrorist threat, convicted and sent to prison for five years. The central evidence in the case was a piece of paper found in his car by police on which he had scribbled rap lyrics and the following words, "a murderous rampage similar to the VT shooting will occur at another highly populated university. THIS IS NOT A JOKE!" Oduwole argues that those words were part of a skit that he imagined to be interwoven with lyrical performance on his album. He claimed that the words written on that page were his artistic expression and were never meant to express a genuine intent to commit a crime.

After serving five years the conviction was overturned by the appellate court. However, Oduwole's case has been one of many legal cases in which rap lyrics have been used as evidence of violent intent, gang affiliation, or to substantiate patterns of violence. How can we assure that rap lyrics

are judged fairly in our legal system, especially since rap is stereotypically associated with various forms of social deviance? This has been a research topic explored in detail by Charis Kubrin a criminologist who has investigated the ways in which stereotypes of rap and hip-hop may affect how it is perceived by the courts. In a psychology study, Dunbar, Kubrin & Schurich (2016) offered two experimental groups the same violent song lyrics. Group 1 was told that they were produced by a rap artist, while Group 2 was told they were authored by a country singer. The participants in Group 1 were significantly more likely to deem these lyrics as offensive, literal, and as in need of regulation. In other words, there is something about knowing that lyrics are from the rap genre that causes many perceivers to believe that aggressive lyrics actually reflect violent intent on behalf of the artist. When violent lyrics are in other genres they are interpreted as less offensive, and are not seen as literal invocations of senseless violence. The conclusions of the authors were that due to pervasive stereotypes of rap, that rap lyrics "could inappropriately impact jurors when admitted as evidence to prove guilt." This is an example of how systematic misunderstanding of a cultural practice (rap music) can lead to patterns of injustice as young people who are involved in rap culture are misread and misinterpreted by the justice system. As rap continues to become pervasive in youth communities (especially overpoliced low income communities) the amount of young people who have written rap lyrics grows as well, a subset of which will contain violent imagery. But what is the roadmap to a criminal justice system that can understand the nuance of hip-hop culture and the complex relationship between art and everyday behavior.

Rigorous research plays a role in addressing this misunderstanding. Investigating rap lyrics and culture with a sociocultural approach to understanding morality produces more nuanced and humanizing portrayals of the genre. Future research in this domain would focus on the following questions: What are the complex reasons that hip-hop artists portray violence in their lyrics? Are

portrayals of the self as aggressive or violent in hip-hop lyrics always correlated with a propensity to commit violence in the world? These are questions that can be asked as researchers of rap culture try to better understand how its practitioners make meaning of their worlds, including both artistic worlds and their social life worlds. The writing of lyrics based on stories of combat and violence are a central part of the genre. Again our results from Study 1 showed that rap listeners did not deprioritize the value of caring for others. Protecting human beings from harm was just as high of a moral priority for rap listeners as it was for non-listeners. Further research should look into the role that violence plays as an aesthetic interest. And these studies should avoid oversimplified stereotypes that conclude prematurely that the hip-hop community portrays violence because they have a high propensity to commit it.

Arena 2: Schooling and Parenting

Should I allow my 9-year-old to listen to Cardi B? Should we teach the lyrics of hip-hop in a class on poetry, English literature, or creative writing?

As a researcher of hip-hop, one of the most common questions I receive is about the appropriateness of hip-hop music for young children. Given that I argue that hip-hop often exposes adolescents and emerging adults to moral themes and discourses that broaden their ethical sense-making, parents wonder about how this will extend to younger children. My research has not delved into the pre-adolescent demographic and therefore I am hesitant to answer that question directly, although many of the students in my study had listened to hip-hop in early childhood. Future research should wade into the types of interpretations that pre-adolescents are making of the hip-hop media they are engaged with. How are themes from hip-hop appropriated for usage in other social contexts in their lives? How are the moralized discourses and practices of hip-hop re-produced in their behaviors?

Given the developmental differences between pre-adolescents, adolescents and emerging adults these questions are worth their own deliberate investigation.

With that said, this study suggests that further studies should proceed without using a deficit framework. Given the richness of the genre our study shows that we have every reason to believe that young children would be as likely to appropriate discourses of social justice, loyalty and authenticity from rap as they are to appropriate violence or misogyny. The research question should proceed from this premise and then assess how young people are interpreting rap lyrics and appropriating discourses and concepts to interpret other areas of their lifeworlds. Attention should also be paid to the peer groups of young children and how those groups become interpretive communities in which young children learn how to interpret youth culture; and form perspectives on which aspects of a genre are valued and worth appropriating into their everyday lives.

Along with parents, various other professionals who focus on child development are focused on the role that hip-hop culture can play in their classrooms, therapy sessions, and other youth development contexts. The fields of hip-hop therapy, hip-hop pedagogy and hip-hop theology are continuing to blossom theoretically and attract practitioners who wish to bring the fruits of hip-hop culture into their own approach to child development. This study adds to the burgeoning literature in this domain by attending to the ways in which hip-hop is also rich in ethical content and can be an incubator of philosophical imagination, a carrier of values, and a set of tools and practices that instructors are using to guide students in their moral development. This focus on the ethics and values of hip-hop culture is the major contribution this work makes to the growing cohort of scholars developing hip-hop inspired interventions for child development.

Arena 3: Culture & Language

Does "merch" or "gang gang" belong in the Oxford English Dictionary? How can the mainstream cultural institutions of society (dictionaries) accurately reflect the extent to which hip-hop values and language have diffused throughout society?

There is one final arena to consider when thinking about how misunderstandings of rap can lead to marginalization of hip-hop practitioners. This arena includes the institutions that act as gatekeepers of language and culture. Within society various established institutions influence which language forms, cultural practices, and aesthetic styles are seen as legitimate. Their legitimacy is based on how sophisticated, intelligent, or virtuous these styles are perceived to be in the eyes of these gatekeeper institutions. Many of the biases against rap as an artform affect the way its cultural productions are positioned by gatekeeper institutions such as dictionaries (Oxford English Dictionary), arts academies (The Grammys), and academic institutions (Berklee School of Music). There is a true need for sophisticated studies of the content of rap and the contribution that these texts make to the interpretive communities that engage with it. Hip-hop culture produces new discourse and new philosophical ideas that become meaningful and even sacred to the communities that engage with the music.

The ways in which rap language has dispersed around the globe across linguistic barriers speaks to its usefulness as a linguistic form. People find that rap vernacular is useful in expressing their authentic ideals, even the ideals they hold to be sacred. The data in this analysis illustrated linguistic forms created by American rap artists becoming common utterances in the vocabulary of youth all across the world, even in communities where English was not a dominant language form. Lexicographers must adjust their methods to the dynamic ways that language is being shaped by youth culture in the contemporary moment. Lexicographic criteria that privilege words with longstanding

histories in the language, that deprioritize slang, or that imagine words as having universal meanings are becoming artifices of a bygone era. More democratic lexicographic methodology as used on sites like UrbanDictionary.com will become imperative as languages develop more and more sociolects transforming meaning based on the social context in which they are adapted. These archaic ways of preserving language increasingly privilege communities that are closer to centers of cultural power like prestigious universities and those that shun the dynamic ways that meaning is made on the ground, in communities of color, in digital spaces, and in the vernaculars that are closest to the authentic imaginings of common folk. Similarly the cultural gatekeepers of museums, arts academies, and academic institutions must become more invested in noticing, sustaining, and preserving the intellectual innovation and philosophical imagining of this global movement of youth culture. While institutions are clear perpetrators, we must all continue to interrogate our own thinking and the logics we employ that venerate the cultural artifacts of the privileged over those of the marginalized. To invoke this sentiment, I end with a verse from J. Cole's High for Hours where he calls us to use inner reflection and personal moral development to revolt against oppressive structures. Peace and gratitude.

Here's a thought for my revolutionary heart
Take a deeper look at history, it's there to pick apart
See, the people at the top they get to do just what they want
'Til after while the people at the bottom finally get smart
Then they start to holla "Revolution!"
Tired of livin' here in destitution
Fuck that lootin' can you tell me what's the best solution?
I used to think it was to overthrow oppressors, see
If we destroy the system, that means we'll have less of, greed
But see, it's not that simple

I got to thinkin' bout the history of human nature why this instrumental, played

Then I realized somethin' that made

me wonder if revolution was really ever the way

Before you trip and throw a fit over these words I say

Think about this shit for a second, you heard the way

The children in abusive households

Grow up knocking girlfriends out cold

That's called a cycle

Abused becomes the abuser and that's just how life go

So understand

You get the power, but you know what power does to man?

Corruption always leads us to the same shit again

So when you talk 'bout revolution dawg, I hear just what you sayin'

What good is takin' over when we know what you gon' do?

The only real revolution happens right inside of you

I said, what good is takin' over when we know what you gon' do?

The only real revolution happens right inside of you

Nigga.

(J. Cole, 2017)

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Appendix 1. Hip-Hop Practice Index (HHPI)

*A survey created to assess the extent to which individuals 1.) participated in hip-hop related practices, 2.) identified with hip-hop culture, and 3.) were immersed in communities where hip-hop was prevalent.

1. Practice

How knowledgeable are you about hip-hop (rap)?

How many hours of hip-hop rap do you listen to per day, either while doing something else or as your main activity?

How often do you attend concerts, performances or parties where hip-hop is featured or discussed?

How often do you visit websites where hip-hop music is featured or discussed?

Have you ever written a rap verse?

Have you ever freestyled?

Have you ever produced a beat?

How many years have you been listening to hip-hop?

How up to date are you regarding new hip-hop music?

How easy is it for you to understand the lyrics in hip-hop music?

What is your usual level of involvement when you listen to hip-hop music?

2. Identity

How important has Hip-Hop music been in your life in the past 3 years?

I often find myself quoting hip-hop songs in my everyday life.

How important is it to know and understand the words to hip hop songs?

People that listen to hip-hop music look at the world in a similar way.

People that listen to hip-hop music look at the world differently than non-listeners.

Hip-hop music contains words of wisdom that I live by.

Hip-hop is a big part of my life.

I don't really relate to hip-hop music. (reverse coded)

I would be fine if I didn't listen to hip-hop for the next 30 days. (reverse coded)

I want the people around me to know that I relate to hip-hop music.

I am a part of the hip-hop generation.

3. Cultural Immersion

The subjects that they talk about in hip-hop are things that I experience in my everyday life.

Do your parents like hip-hop music?

How important is it that your friends understand hip-hop music?

Where I live most people listen to hip-hop.

Where I grew up most people listen to hip-hop.

Where I hangout most people listen to hip-hop.

I don't know many people that don't like hip-hop.

People around me try to live a hip-hop lifestyle.

Appendix 2. Authenticity Sub-Scale

* A survey created as an addendum to the Moral Foundations Questionnaire used to assess the extent to which participants value authenticity as a moral virtue.

When you decide whether something is right or wrong, to what extent are the following considerations relevant to your thinking? Please write a number from 0-5 next to each statement using this scale:

- Whether or not someone stayed true to themselves.
- Whether or not someone kept it real
- Whether or not someone sold out.
- Whether or not someone was authentic.

Please read the following sentences and indicate your agreement:

- I have a problem with people that "jump on the bandwagon" just because something is popular.
- One of the worst things someone can do is portray themselves as something that they are not.
- I think it is wrong for people to change who they are in order to advance in life.
- It is ok to fake an emotion sometimes in order to make others feel comfortable. (reverse coded)

Appendix 3. List of Rap Proverbs Collected to Date and the Number of Times Each Proverb Was Quoted by a Lyricist (Rap Genius, 2015)

	Proverb	Quotations
1.	don't hate the player, hate the game	67
2.	cash rules everything around me	100*
3.	the revolution will not be televised	64
4.	i wonder if heaven got a ghetto	19
5.	real recognize real	40
6.	you ain't gotta lie to kick it	35
7.	you wasn't with me shootin in the gym	14
8.	the darker the berry, the sweeter the juice	13
9.	ain't no such thing as halfway crooks	16
10.	your arms too short to box with God	26
11.	money over bitches	286*
12.	arm, leg, leg, arm, head	91
13.	if you don't know you better ask somebody	21
14	scared money don't make none	55
15	if you scared go to church	52
16.	niggas bleed just like us	35
17.	life's a bitch and then you die	66
18.	get it how you live	111*
19.	word is bond	107*
20.	fight the power	82
21.	I'm not a businessman, I'm a business man	17
22.	check yourself before you wreck yourself	37
23.	mo money mo problems	151
24.	when you come you better come correct	28
25.	we don't love these hoes	98
26.	yolo (you only live once)	122*