

2017

# Local Embeddedness Matters: A Study of Hip-Hop Artists' Interaction With Their Local Community

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LOCAL EMBEDDEDNESS MATTERS: A STUDY OF HIP HOP ARTISTS' INTERACTION  
WITH THEIR COMMUNITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctoral of Philosophy

in

The Department of Sociology

by  
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M.A., Louisiana State University, 2014  
August 2017

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sigh...just when I thought I was done writing. But anything about hip-hop wouldn't be complete without shout-outs, right? So, in true fashion, I would like to thank God because without Him none of this would be possible.

From getting this started for my master's thesis to finishing this dissertation, it was just as much of a commitment for my chair, Dr. Sarah Becker, as it was for me. She had no idea when she agreed to chair my research, that I would decide to move half way across the world to the Middle East my last year. No matter how distracted I become with other interest and activities, she still supported me as I worked at my own pace. Dr. Lori Martin and Dr. Bryan McCann were also along for the ride from masters to doctorate, and devotedly provided constructive feedback and advice whenever I needed it. Once Dr. Susan Weinstein agreed to join the bunch as a dean's rep, the dynamic of the committee helped ease the stress of defenses and oral exams as they gradually morphed into engaging discussions of hip-hop, culture, community, and race (let's hope I can still say the same after this last one).

Of course, there would not be a study without the artists who willingly responded to possibly obscure flyers for research participants, and those who agreed based on recommendations from friends. I probably wouldn't have had the courage to pick up the flyer and call, so the fact they were willing to meet, talk to, and be recorded by a totally random stranger and ask for nothing in return is deeply appreciated. For the few that I knew personally, even though they were kinda obligated to participate, I still appreciate them lending their voices.

To my PhD sister-friends, Melinda, Dari, and Tiffani. You guys encouraged me soooooo much. Just having someone there to do academia with made a world of a difference! Moving to a completely new place that I had no prior connections to and being able to find not one, but THREE amazing women who would push and encouraged me throughout the process was invaluable. I learned something different from each you, and I honestly can't imagine going through this without y'all. And my homie Tim – my G! Bruh, I can't tell you how much you motivate me. Anytime we talk, he pushes and encourages me to keep going. I have had so many conversation with him where at the end I walk away feel like a million bucks. Just watching him grow and follow his dreams over the years seriously encourages me to find my passion and chase after it with all I have.

During this time I also had the honor of finding my own poet laureate. Clem, he is someone who motivated me and encouraged me to be the best me I could be. Watching him find his groove and thrive in it really makes me want to do the same. And when I would have breakdowns, that I didn't know were breakdowns, and times when I was stressed, and didn't know I was stressed, he did everything he could to pick me back up and help me get back on track. Your energy was felt from miles away.

Then I had the brilliant idea that moving 8025.41 miles away from my department, friends, family, and anything that remotely resembled home, would help me focus on getting this dissertation finished. I was in for a rude awakening. Yes, I would be further away from distractions, but for every distraction I left in the States I found two more in the UAE. In addition, I would then lose the ease of access to my professor and committee that I benefited from while on campus. But then one eventful Thursday night I went to a Game Night, and I am so grateful I did. I met Rod who would be there to cheer me on every step of the way until I reached my goal of finishing. When I needed a welcoming distraction, he was there, and when I needed someone to remind me to get it done, he was there, and he never let me forget to "enjoy the process". Rod and my other

globe-trotting scholars Bianca and Tierra helped me to balance work, dissertation, living abroad, and to live my best life while doing it.

Lastly, my family, the ones who have been on this long education journey with me. I'm sure they have given more than I know so I could accomplish the things I have and to pursue my many interests. Support means nothing when trying to describe their role and contribution in my life. And my 908 girls, Imani and Raine, I think you've put up with me long enough to be considered family (we've stood at an alter together so I think that makes it official). Imani, I'm sure I have racked up a nice bill through your editing services and counseling session, and Raine, your positivity and radiance always seem to find me on the most needed days.

There are also a multitude of others who have helped push me along the way. As 3 Stakes said, "No man is an island, peninsula maybe." So, to all of you who collectively reached out a hand and grabbed hold of the Island of Castel to ensure that I didn't drift away at sea, I thank you. I appreciate you, I value you, I admire you, I cherish you, and I celebrate you. This is an ode to you.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation study is an exploration of hip hop and rap artists' embeddedness in local communities, and their interpretation of the connectedness between their work and their communities. I explore the influence of place and space in the identity development of artists, and how artist use those identities to guide their interactions with their local community. I also investigate the significance of artists' interactions and relationship in the cultivation of social and cultural capital. In contrast to previous scholarship emphasizing the negative influence rap and hip-hop artists have on their communities, I utilize in-depth interviews with artists to examine the ways in which they use hip-hop music in pursuit of social change and community engagement. I intend this project to contribute to knowledges of the multidimensionality of resident's experiences with community engagement utilizing the context of hip-hop music as articulated through the voice of hip-hop artists.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since its origin and development in the cultural breeding ground of the early 1970s South Bronx, hip-hop has expanded to be a prevailing cultural aspect of urban, suburban, and rural environments worldwide (Basu and Lemelle 2006, Chang 2005, Jones 1994, Ogbar 2007). Becoming a voice for youth culture and being used as a vehicle for social and political change (Bynoe 2004, Clay 2012, Hayduk 2004, Perry 2004), hip-hop's musical form, rap, also embodies recurring displays of sexism, validations of machismo, and incorporates discussion of violence and/or criminal behavior (Morgan 1995, Quinn 1996, Rose 1994). While scholars have found listeners to be drawn to hip-hop due to its life affirming counter-narratives to mainstream cultural values (Mahiri and Conner 2003, Sullivan 2003), hip-hop can simultaneously exemplify and reproduce intersecting forms of oppression. As a cultural practice that not only acts as a source of entertainment, but also functions as a model of pedagogy and therapy treatment (Diaz, Fergus and Noguera 2011, Heath and Arroyo 2014), hip-hop embraces the expression and values of an assortment of identities (Hall 2011). Therefore, extensive research has been conducted to explore the societal and cultural implications of the complex nature of hip-hop (Blanchard 1999, Forman 2002, Imani 1999, Kitwana 2005, Kitwana 2008, Ogbar 2007, Perry 2004, Rose 1994, Watkins 2005).

From its use in marketing and advertisements (Rehn and Skald 2003) to its use in educational resources (Diaz, Fergus and Noguera 2011), hip-hop is often used to engage with populations who may view their realities to be in opposition with dominant mainstream culture (LaVouille 2013) and therefore functions as a form of cultural capital. With its popularity outgrowing exclusiveness to urban areas and infiltrating suburban, rural, and international environments, cultural scholars have discussed the significance of the integration of hip-hop's style of dress and nuances of distinctive vernacular into broader everyday mainstream culture (Cutler 1999). Such studies have drawn upon surveys with hip-hop listeners, content analysis of newspapers, academic courses and educational curriculum models, or participant observation at youth-targeted events and programming in order to explore the influence of hip-hop culture (Beaulac, Kristjansson and Calhoun 2011, Diaz 2010, Gourdine and Lemmons 2011, Hall 2011, Munoz-Laboy et al. 2008, Weiner 2008).

Research has shown that hip-hop music is an important cultural art form for youth of color in the post-civil rights era (Clay 2006, Clay 2012, Kitwana 2008, Lipsitz 2012, Robinson 2014). Encompassing a set of skills developed through the social and cultural conditioning of persisting racism against Black and Brown residents in South Bronx, hip-hop is a medium through which marginalized populations can voice their lived experiences (Chang 2005, Kitwana 2005, Perkins 1996). Hip-hop provides participants with access to social support and validation that functions to benefit the individual as well as the entire community through its strong networks and social ties, which foster the development of social capital (Sullivan 1997). Thus, disenfranchised communities are able to use hip-hop music to coordinate and facilitate practices of activism and social change that are personally and collectively beneficial (Coleman 1988), by using it as a tool to create meaning, identity, and community as they confront notions of access to resources and rights (Clay 2006, Clay 2012, Hayduk 2004, Kitwana 2008, Kosanovich 2012, Morgan and Warren 2011, Nasir 2015, Wright 2004).

Viewed to have more connections to articulations of identity and place than any other music genre, hip-hop incorporates individual and group social experiences as they related to

specific conditions of geographical places (Forman 2000). It allows participants to engage in negotiation practices for cultural and material spaces (Kosanovich 2012). Even in light of the globalization of music, hip-hop still serves as a mechanism through which individuals are able to process social identities and contest notions of identity work in relation to the context of locality and occupied geographical areas (Bryson 2014, Carter 2003, Clay 2003, Morgan and Warren 2011, Naison 2004, Nasir 2015, Pardue 2011). Identity construction is a significant cultural process in modern-day urban life (Kruse 2010), and hip-hop serves as a platform that encourages such processes to be sustained and maintained within one's social interaction and ties to their local community (Stokes 2004).

Therefore, in this study I explore how artists use hip-hop as a culturally valued form of capital within the context of their communities in the pursuit of social change. I use in-depth interviews with self-identified hip-hop and rap artists to get a better understanding of hip-hop artists' interaction with their community, and to investigate hip-hop artists' self-perceived relation to and impact in their community. I discuss artists' connection to locale and the significance place has in identity formation of artists, the ways in which they then use their identity as artist in approaches to community engagement and social change, and how social and cultural capital is cultivated in Black communities as a result of hip-hop artists' mentoring relationships. My research seeks to contribute to literature that enhance understandings of the multidimensionality of resident's experiences with community engagement utilizing the context of hip-hop music as observed through perspectives of hip-hop artists.

### **Historical and Social Context of Hip-Hop Music**

Hip-hop and rap are terms often used interchangeably to describe a culture that is in part expressed through music. Hip-Hop culture encompasses elements referred to as the four pillars of hip-hop: deejaying, breakdancing, graffiti art, and emceeing, with each individual element having its own history, meaning, and significance within hip-hop culture. Moreover, hip-hop culture in its entirety embraces an assertiveness expressed through fashion, unique vernacular, and gestures that are often linked to urban street culture (Keyes 2002). Emceeing, or rapping, is holistically defined by Keyes (2002) as "a musical form that makes use of rhyme, rhythmic speech, and street vernacular, which is recited or loosely chanted over a musical soundtrack" (pg1). Borrowing from West African call and response traditions and toasting of Jamaican dancehall selectors, hip-hop music blended aspects of jazz, disco, and funk to create a culture rooted in the social and cultural experience of minorities living in Bronx, New York in the early 1970's. Acquiring the music of their parents that expressed the African American experience during the Civil Rights Era, such as Sam Cooke's "A Change is Going to Come" and Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddamn", hip-hop music developed as a result of what cultural scholar Mark Anthony Neal (2002) refers to as the post-soul aesthetic. Neal asserts the post-soul aesthetic personifies "the political, social, and cultural experiences of the African American community since the end of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements" (pg3).

As Black Power and Puerto Rican National Activism movements were coming to an end in the early 1970s, the persisting social and economic conditions of people of color in New York City created a space that was conducive for the cultural development of hip-hop culture (Kosanovich 2012, Naison 2004, Ogbar 2007, Perkins 1996). At the hand of one of the most influential urban planners, Robert Moses, ideas of urban renewal condemned entire neighborhoods and uprooted hundreds of homes that were replaced with engineering feats such as the Cross-Bronx Expressway and innovative urban high-rise housing such as the Bronx River Housing Complex



(Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012, Naison 2004). Experiencing the largest impact from Moses and The New York Regional Plan Association's endeavors to transform Manhattan into an affluent residential oasis, South Bronx was the poorest of the boroughs due to the increasing unemployment rates that resulted from the deindustrialization of New York City (Chang 2005, Ogbar 2007). With minorities making up a majority of its residential population, South Bronx experienced an increase in gangs and violence as Black and Brown residents grew exhausted from frustrations with the economic conditions, lack of civil rights, and racialized treatment – as the Kerner Commission Report (1968) would later reveal (Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012, Ogbar 2007).

Developing a creative outlet through which to channel their frustrations, and to innovatively make use of the resources that were at their disposal, the social and economic conditions helped minority youth in the South Bronx give birth to hip-hop culture. The public housing complexes served as a central meeting space for youth to converge and develop their own form of cultural and artistic expression (Kosanovich 2012, Naison 2004). By taking funk, soul, and disco records and turning a five second instrumental break into a three-minute loop of playing the same break repeatedly (Keyes 2002), seminal deejays DJ Cool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa encouraged marginalized inner-city youth to channel their potentially violent energy into breakdancing and deejaying. By the summer of 1975, almost everyone in the Bronx knew about Afrika Bambaataa and his movement The Universal Zulu Nation - an organization encompassing many reformed gang members who used the various elements of hip-hop culture, such as music and dance, to organize cultural events for youth in effort to redirect youth from violence and drug dealing to community uplift (Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012).

Initially remaining self-contained within a seven-mile radius of Crotona Park, hip-hop provided previously misguided youth with a creative voice, and served as a source of hope and inspiration (Chang 2005, McQuillar 2007, Watkins 2005). As bootleg cassette recordings of the area's prominent deejays began to circulate, the popularity of hip-hop began to expand within surrounding boroughs (Chang 2005). Along with the increase in exposure, and due to the youth who initiated hip-hop culture growing of age and moving away from the local house party and block party scene, deejays and emcee would often perform at several local clubs in one night by leaving behind the cumbersome sound system and traveling only with their crate of records from location to location (Chang 2005, Shanks 2010). Hip-hop music soon began to compete with disco music on the night club scene, peaking the interest of regional record labels to profit from the new found sensation by officially recording and releasing a hip-hop record (Chang 2005). In an effort to be the first on the market, owner of Sugar Hill Records Sylvia Robinson and her son Joey Robinson recruited three rhyimers previously unknown on the local hip-hop scene to record "Rapper's Delight" (Heard 2004). As Sugar Hill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" took the world by storm, deejays and emcees scurried to sign record deals with local recording companies.

Due to copyright and sampling restrictions, deejays were replaced with house bands during the recording process allowing emcees to take center stage (Chang 2005). Emcees' lyrics began to gain more value as hip-hop shifted away from deejays playing the breaks for b-boys, to less dancing as performances focused more on the emcee's lyrics (Chang 2005). No longer was hip-hop music production only about having a good time, emcees began to use their platform and voice to expose the social conditions of their communities. At the hand of record label managers, Grand Master Flash's lyrics in the 1982 hit "The Message" paint a vivid picture of the social conditions of his environment (Chang 2005). In addition, Grand Master Flash's lyrics expressed frustrations with the desire for better living conditions but the lack of resources and concern of other residents to change them. Following suit, emcees such as KRS-One, Chuck D and Public Enemy, Rakim,

and NWA later filled many stereo systems with lyrics that illustrated the dismal social conditions that plagued their communities and others like it. With hip-hop music production now being recorded and accessible outside of the seven-mile Crotona Park area, hip-hop gained popularity in surrounding areas as a voice for those going unnoticed by mainstream institutions (Jones 1994).

Along with the spread of hip-hop came the emergence of various approaches and styles as artists in different areas used hip-hop music production to reflect the social experience of their specific community - including the infamous subgenre of gangsta rap. Featuring music lyrics that highlighted the illegal criminal activities of inner-city neighborhoods, gangsta rap portrayed the lifestyles of gang members that earlier hip-hop pioneers such as Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaata were encouraging listeners to turn away from. Nevertheless, gangsta rap still manages to be the most commercially successful subgenre of hip-hop (Robinson 2008), despite facing a multitude of critiques including public disapproval from White House administrations of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton for its “sick” practices that “approve of killing a law enforcement officer” (Phillips 1992). In addition, Black activists such as C. Delores Tucker launched anti-gangsta rap campaigns and crusades in an attempt to prevent the distribution of gangsta rap to American youth due to its perpetuation of violence and misogyny (Chang 2005, Conway 2015, Darryl Edric Pugh 2013, Neal 1999). Causing a great deal of controversy for its content that seemingly glorifies crime, violence, sexism, and often employing a considerable use of profanity, eminent gangsta rap artists such as Ice Cube and Ice T characterized their music as *reality rap* due to their rationale of exposing the disturbing and violent realities of their communities (Cube 2010). Even with its outspoken lyrics, gangsta rap is understood by some to act as “a vehicle to expose a lot of critical issues that are not usually discussed in American politics” (Phillips 1992). Referring to their music as reality rap instead of gangsta rap, artists such as Ice-T and NWA resist claims that they are promoting gang violence, but contend they are sharing the reality of their experiences living on the West Coast during times of high levels of gang violence, tense race relations, the political influences of President Ronald Reagan, and the crack epidemic that lasted from the 1980s to early 1990’s (Cube 2010).

As it overflowed outside of inner-city lines, hip-hop became a movement of expressing oneself regardless of socioeconomic status. “Everybody had something they wanted to say,” stated Will Smith, a well-known actor and hip-hop artist also known by the stage name Fresh Prince (Jones 1994). As artists like Fresh Prince, Run-D.M.C., and LL Cool J arrived on the scene; the content of hip-hop music was no longer a dichotomous discussion of inner-city social conditions, as artists expressed their experiences of being raised outside of underprivileged neighborhoods. Hip-hop began to be embraced and used by persons of all backgrounds as a way of voicing their individual ideas and everyday experiences. Equivalent to the sociological concept that expressive-symbol elements of culture are influenced by the systems in which they are created (Peterson 1979), hip-hop music presents a variety of realities and stories that are a direct reflection of the diversity among hip-hop artists and their respective communities and neighborhoods (Forman 2002, Jones 1994, Rose 1994). The culture of hip-hop is a kinesthetic experience, through which artists creatively articulate their social experience while also serving as a window through which others can observe and use to gain deeper insight on the lived experiences of its creators.

### **Hip-Hop in The Academy**

Sociologists have a long tradition of exploring the social and cultural implications and significance of music (Frith 1996, Schutz 1951, Silbermann 1977, Weber 1958). However, scholarship on hip-hop music is relatively recent in the history of the discipline. The discussion of

meaning and contributions of hip-hop was nationally circulated by *The Source* magazine, a national publication that focuses exclusively on hip-hop music, politics and culture, which has been published monthly since 1988 (Ogbar 2007). Shortly after *The Source* magazine presented such conversations to the public, academic scholars began to study a host of issues related to hip-hop: its effect on listeners—particularly youth and minorities (Mahiri and Conner 2003, Tanner, Asbridge and Wortley 2009), how it is situated within broader mainstream culture (Binder 1993, Blanchard 1999, Rose 1994), and its content and performance (Kubrin 2005). Specifically, Rose's (1994) groundbreaking scholarly work *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* examines the connections between rap music, Black culture, and American society and the ways in which they coincide culturally and socially. Since then, hip-hop has gained attention across academic disciplines and has been discussed in the fields of anthropology and folklore, English and communication, education, political science, religion, and sociology.

Due to the complex nature of hip-hop culture's social and cultural existence, academic conversations and debates regarding the topic often clash. While it is conceivable to characterize hip-hop music as “problematic” (Cole and Guy-Sheftall 2003, Crouch 2000, McWhorter 2003) due to its display of misogyny (Armstrong 2001, Morgan 1995), reference to violence (Johnson, Jackson and Gatto 1995, Rebollo-Gil and Moras 2012, Ro 1996), use of vulgarity (Krohn and Suazo 1995), fascination with material consumption (Morgado 2007, Rehn and Skald 2003), and glorification of what hooks (1994) terms a *gangsta ideology*, it is also just as credible to value hip-hop music's social significance as the voice of marginalized populations' everyday apprehensions of living in disadvantaged communities (Mahiri and Conner 2003).

With its increased consumption across social boundaries, scholars like Bynoe (2004) view hip-hop music's widespread success as a sacrifice for its historical context of social and political commentary thus now “lacking vision and analysis” (West 1999). The growth of specific subgenres of hip-hop, like gangsta rap, has led many cultural scholars to observe a decline in hip-hop music's cultural and social value (Crouch 2000, McWhorter 2003). With hip-hop's expansion across the globe, it now has a mass appeal that can also be interpreted as less interactive and concerned with localized social and cultural implications (Bynoe 2004, Questlove 2014). However, scholars such as West (2005) believe despite its diluted mass appeal, hip-hop music “still expresses stronger and more clearly than any cultural expression in the past generation a profound indictment of the moral decadence of our dominant society” (pg179). Youth across the world find hip-hop to be a valuable form of social commentary through which to articulate their feelings and experiences of contemporary forms of social marginalization (Bryson 2014, Clark 2012, El-Tayeb 2003, Morgan and Warren 2011, Nasir 2015, Pardue 2011, Schneidermann 2014). In addition, hip-hop is being used as a medium to reconstruct marginalized identities of women and LGBTQ persons within traditionally male heterosexual dominated spaces (Armstead 2007, El-Tayeb 2003, Fischer 2012, Wilson 2007).

Indeed, hip-hop has been viewed by some gender scholars to have an influence on sexual aggression against women (Barongan and Hall 1995). It has also been seen to play a role in the occurrence of dating violence amongst adolescent teens (Johnson et al. 1995). The distinctive language and semantics of hip-hop has led English and communication scholars like Cutler (1999) to interpret exposure to hip-hop music as the source of adolescent listeners' use of African American Vernacular English, which in Cutler's view can have serious consequences for adolescents' negotiation of the relationship between self and others such as their “[failure] to perceive the social and political aspects of the culture or [failure] to be sensitive to the issues of group boundaries” (Hewitt 1986:48 quoted in Cutler 1999:435). However, race scholars, for

example, have documented how listeners find hip-hop to be life-affirming (Sullivan 2003), and how listeners enjoy hip-hop music because they are able to easily relate to its messages that affirm their social experiences, feelings, and attitudes (Mahiri and Conner 2003). Research has shown how hip-hop music manages to connect with listeners unlike any other genre of music, exemplifying a counter frame distinguishing it from others like heavy metal, in that hip-hop music is viewed as an art form of “artistic communication from the streets” possessing important messages (Binder 1993:763). Examining the use of hip-hop within curriculum and instruction, pedagogy scholars have observed benefits from educators who have used hip-hop as a tool to engage students in and outside of the classroom (Diaz, Fergus and Noguera 2011, Hill 2009). Sociologists have studied the social and cultural meanings of hip-hop music (Flores-Gonzalez, Rodriguez and Rodriguez-Muniz 2013, Forman 2013, Persaud 2011) and the continued significance of the space hip-hop creates for marginalized populations to use as a means for achieving social change within disadvantaged communities (Diaz 2010, Mohammed-Akinyela 2012, Trapp 2005).

### **Hip-Hop Artists’ Embeddedness in Community/ies**

Historically speaking, hip-hop is profoundly connected to the concept of community. Thus, one approach to obtaining a richer understanding of hip-hop is to examine hip-hop through the lens of community. The concept of community has traditionally been studied by sociologists as a way of exploring the impact of social spaces on people’s everyday lived experiences (Hollingshead 1948). Defining community and differentiating it from neighborhoods has been a prominent debate not only amongst sociologists, but within conversations about policy and economic matters. Sociologist Ruth Glass delineated neighborhoods from communities by situating neighborhoods within communities. Glass defines neighborhoods as solely an area where people lived and may experience the same things, while communities are spaces where people are aware of the communality resulting from sharing “common spatial experience and [being] willing to act communally” (Byrne 1999:119). Thus, the common spatial experience of communities have been examined in terms of the social interaction(s) of its inhabitants – historically being viewed through Tonnie’s (1887) paradigm of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, or the folk-urban continuum (Bernard 1973). *Gemeinschaft* views social interactions in terms of togetherness or a familial bond shared amongst individuals (Christenson 1984). Persons who take part in such social interactions share common mores and values, exhibit a strong sense of group solidarity, and “the ways of living are conventionalized into that coherent system which we call ‘a culture’” (Redfield 1947:294). On the other hand, *Gesellschaft* interprets social interactions as a means of achieving individual goals and objectives within a capitalistic setting (Christenson 1984). “In *Gesellschaft*, every person strives for that which is to his own advantage and he affirms the actions of others only insofar as and as long as they can further his interest” (Tonnie 1887:77).

*Gemeinschaft* came to be understood through the representation of familial interactions within communities found in rural settings, while *Gesellschaft* was typified through capitalistic characterizations of communities situated in urban settings (Bernard 1973). Yet, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are not two dichotomous paradigms, but the social interactions within communities which are observed as a mixture of both paradigms conceptualized as the folk-urban continuum. Even though residents of urban communities are subjected to the individualistic nature of capitalism, studies show that group solidarity and collective efficacy to act on behalf of the common good can develop as a result of strong social ties and cohesive relationships among community residents (Kaufman 1959, Miner 1952, Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997, Taylor

1996, Wells et al. 2006, Wilkinson 1979). This view of the folk-urban continuum can also be illustrated through the historical embeddedness of hip-hop artists in their community. Channeling the collective efficacy of residents in his neighborhood who also wanted to address the disorder within their urban community, hip-hop artist Afrika Bambaataa established The Bronx River Organization in 1973, later renamed The Zulu Nation. Comprised of neighborhood residents, many of whom were reformed gang members, the organization used various elements of hip-hop culture, such as music and dance, to organize cultural events for youth in efforts to reduce gang activity that was currently taking over their community (Chang 2005, Keyes 2002, Kosanovich 2012, McQuillar 2007). In many ways, The Zulu Nation exemplifies how the strong social ties and networks among minority youth in disadvantaged communities are exercised through hip-hop as a means of addressing communal concerns (Mohammed-Akinyela 2012).

However, with the globalization of music, hip-hop culture is now incorporated into suburban, rural, and inner-city lived experiences contesting the traditional implications of community as incorporated in hip-hop music. Some ethnomusicologists and cultural studies scholars contend that music experiences of listeners and performers in connection to geographical cultures and spaces have declined (Hudson 2006, Rice 2003, Stokes 2004). Instead of embracing and encouraging music's characterization of particular regions and locales, the rise of world music has instigated interest in the appeal of musical art that incorporates multiple cultures and elements that value diversification (Connell and Gibson 2004, Hudson 2006). Reflecting the expansion of global communities and initiating a perceived decline in the importance of place, concepts of imagined communities (Anderson 1991) have allowed for disembodied experiences to occur within virtual spaces (Basu and Lemelle 2006, Broder 2006, Bryant 1995, Lysloff 2003, Rodel 2002).

Additionally, with the increase in the commercialization and marketability of music, hip-hop specifically is often viewed in terms of its use for individual capitalistic means. In 2016, the top five wealthiest hip-hop artists earned between \$750 million and \$60 million (Greenburg 2016). With such statistics, many are drawn to the dreams of hip-hop's lucrative music industry which is filled with rags-to-riches stories that tend to convey a sense of rapid social mobility (Jackson 2013). Artists may strive for their own personal advantage of being a hip-hop artist while still contesting connections with their local community. Thus, as viewed with the context of the folk-urban continuum, the social interactions of hip-hop artists and the rationale of their embeddedness within their community are multidimensional. The interaction and influence of an artist in relation to their community can be viewed through both familial or capitalistic connections. Delineating it as either spaces in which commonality is shared or solely as a place where residents live and co-exist, the ways in which community is defined and delineated by artist shape both their performance as an artist in their community and their interpretation of their role as an artist in the context of their community. This study seeks to further explore those notions.

### **The Significance of Cultural Capital in Black Communities**

I utilize the concept of cultural capital to help guide my investigation of hip-hop artists' embeddedness within their local communities. Cultural capital gained notoriety through the work of Bourdieu (1977) to include non-financial assets that foster social mobility such as education, preferences, attitudes, or behaviors (Lamont and Lareau 1988). Cultural capital can be understood to "act as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status" (Barker 2004:37). The power and status that is awarded as a reflection of demonstrating cultural knowledge has an impact on one's ability to move across

class categories. However, due to the “exclusionary character of cultural capital” (Kingston 2001:89), it has the tendency to only benefit and encourage social mobility amongst individuals who exhibit behaviors, attitudes, and preferences that align with the socially dominant group (Kingston 2001). In doing so, non-dominant and minority groups are left incapable of achieving social mobility according to Bourdieu’s (1977) concept and utility of cultural capital.

While traditional characterizations of cultural capital explain how social class is reproduced among the middle-class through preferences and ideologies of the dominant class, critical race theory scholars attempt to highlight the ways in which racial minorities use their unique experiences to develop skills, abilities, and an array of knowledges to overcome various forms of oppression and foster collective agency (Crenshaw 2010, Jayakumar, Vue and Allen 2013, Yosso 2005). In Black communities, cultural capital is a significant source of support and empowerment, and is useful in educational and institutional programming whose mission and focus endeavor to facilitate successful life outcomes of racial minority populations (Franklin 2002, Green 2014, Morris 2004). Parents attempt to expose Black youth to valued forms of cultural capital through participation in organized sports, after-school programs, and summer enrichment activities as a means of combating cultural and social exposure to racial segregation, high unemployment rates, instances of drug addiction, occurrences of violence, and mass incarceration rates (Alexander 2011, Delgado-Gaitan 2001, Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins 2005, Jayakumar, Vue and Allen 2013, Savage 2002). Such programs provide youth with the access to community adults who share their social and cultural experiences, allowing for the development and cultivation of relationships that will expose Black youth to culturally valued forms of social capital (Green 2014, Hurd et al. 2012, Rhodes, Ebert and Fischer 1992, Richardson 2012). Through the presence of such relationships, youth develop social networks and ties that increase access to resources aimed at enhancing individual’s life chances and furthering the advancement of the overall group (Coleman 1988). Racial minority youth then experience gains in self-identity and purpose as a result of engaging in such relationships with community adults (Rhodes 2005, Sanchez et al. 2014).

Previous research on the topic expose spaces in which the development and cultivation of cultural and social capital occurs and implications of those occurrences in Black communities, however, much of the existing literature on such forms of capital neglect to examine how it is used and reproduced within the context of hip-hop music culture. Therefore, in this dissertation study I conducted in-depth interviews with hip-hop artists. I analyzed their personal narratives in order to get an inclusive understanding of their embeddedness within their communities. In doing so, I endeavor to illustrate artists’ use of capital in their various approaches to community engagement and social change.

### **Synopses and Chapter Outline**

Historians credit the birth of hip-hop as a cultural outcry of frustration from a population of minorities that were being excluded by mainstream institutions as a result of segregation and the lack of representation in media and other cultural outlets. As it increased in popularity, hip-hop music, similar to other genres, began to be viewed as a medium through which artists exposed the social conditions and experiences of their communities. The work created by artists is understood by many to embody – indirectly or directly – social, political, and cultural currents of their time. Building upon the initial paper written from this project, this dissertation study explores artists’ embeddedness in local communities, their interpretation of the correlation of their work to their communities, and the impact they have as individual civic actors outside the narrow limits of their art. The following chapters examine hip-hop artists’ perceived role of community in their

work as artists, as well as civic actors. It continues the exploration from the projects initial paper's characterizations of *how* respondents' chose to engage with their community and further examines *why* respondents engage with their community; with specific interest in how their interpretation of community affects their *why*.

The first article, "Does My Message Define My Role?", discusses how hip-hop artists' emphasis on their music's message influence their interpretation of having a role, or identifiable place, in their local community. Considering the significance of space and place within hip-hop music, I examine how respondents' identity as artist are shaped by their local communities, and how artists' identities influence their production of hip-hop music. I explore if and how hip-hop artists maintain connections to their local communities and construct localized identities within a global market that encourages the deterritorialization of music. Findings illustrate that despite the globalization of hip-hop music, place still remains to have a significant influence on the identity of hip-hop artists. By exploring the differences between respondents who openly expressed their attention to the message in their music compared to those who did not, the ways in which participants' articulation of their music's message influence their responses of having a role in their community is examined. Artists' thoughts of having a role helped illuminate respondents' sense of attachment to their local communities; which was further revealed in their description of the various ways in which they are physically active in their community.

The second article, "Commerce or Community?", looks at career motivations of hip-hop artists' and how those motivations influence artist's interpretation of their music and their impact on their community. I consider the influence dual pulls of hip-hop career aspiration (i.e. social meaning and financial attainment), and the ways in which they influence respondents' performance as artists, their interpretation(s) of their music's impact and connection to community. How respondents articulated their motivations for pursuing career aspirations in hip-hop music, either monetary reasons or for its social meaning, seem to determine how they interpreted their role and impact in their community as artists. Therefore, I discuss the implication of how mutually exclusive characterization of artists' motivations for pursuing music often urge individuals to choose between using their position as artists to achieve personal financial attainment or to align with the historic social meaning of hip-hop/rap music culture; eradicating options to do both.

The final article, "I Just Want to See You Shine Son", considers the strong networking ties amongst hip-hop artists. I explore mentoring relationship between hip-hop artists and the cultivation of social and cultural capital within the context of such relationships. Each of the respondents described experiences with some form of mentoring relationships that typically consisted of more experienced artists taking up-and-coming artists under their wings acting as mentors to younger, aspiring artists. In addition, relationships described were not limited to interactions with other hip-hop artists, with some participants using their identity as artists to establish trust with youth in their community as a means of fostering successful adolescent development. I then discuss the ways in which the formations of social networks and ties among hip-hop artists are used to develop and cultivate supportive relationships, and attempt to assess the social and cultural capital that results from such associations and relationships.

Through these three papers, this study builds on discussions of place and identity development within music and approaches to community engagement and social change while addressing hip-hop music as a culturally valued form of capital. First, by situating music within the context of local communities and the influence of community on identity development, I capture the significance of artists' relationship and connection to their community. Second, by exploring the sources of artists' motivations for pursuing careers in hip-hop music, I expand our

knowledge on the use of music as a form of community engagement and social change. Third, through examining the mentoring relationships of hip-hop artists and the spaces in which they are development and maintained, I illustrate how hip-hop music serves as an avenue in which social and cultural capital is cultivated and reproduced in Black communities. This information is vital in enhancing understandings of social change and community engagement within racial minority communities, and encourages the development of culturally valued skills and abilities that are capable of reducing the marginalization of disenfranchised groups.

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## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Hip-hop music is historically known for giving a voice to those within minority populations (Chang 2005). I therefore designed a qualitative study that would give artists an unrestricted opportunity to describe their personal stories and feelings toward their community as well as their positions in the community as hip-hop artists. Through the use of in-depth interviews with self-identified hip-hop artists, I was able to collect empirical knowledge from individuals who are intimately involved with hip-hop culture on both a personal and professional level. With hip-hop being an art form that attempts to capture everyday lived social experiences (Beer 2014, Black 2014, Jaffe 2014, Perry 2004), allowing artists to share their personal stories serve as a beneficial approach. Through their accounts, I examine the interactions of artists and their local communities. I explore artists' interpretation of the connectedness of their work to their communities, and the impact they have as individual civic actors outside the narrow limits of their art. In addition, I explore the informal and formal mentoring relationships of hip-hop artists with other artists as well as residents in their communities. I analyze the development and implication of such relationships with an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the significance and meaning of artists' interactions within the context of their local community.

For this project, I exclusively focus on the meaning and practices of emceeing and music production, or what I refer to as hip-hop music. This does not disregard the value of the three remaining pillars, but instead allows me to provide a more comprehensive examination of hip-hop musicians' local embeddedness within their communities. There are times throughout the study that I reference hip-hop culture, but I do so specifically to contextualize hip-hop music's significance within hip-hop culture and consequently broader mainstream American culture.

### **Data Collection**

From September 2013 through February 2014, I conducted interviews with 26 hip-hop/rap artists located in the southeast region of the United States. The sample of respondents include participants between the ages of 18 and 53 at the time of the interview, with the average age being 26 years old. Of the total 26 participants, there were 22 men and four women. All identified as Black or African American with the exception of two white interviewees: one male, one female. Recruitment for participants was open to all individuals eighteen years or older who self-identify as hip-hop or rap artists. Participants were recruited through flyers advertising for the study that were posted at venues frequently hold hip-hop and rap related events such as open mics and music concerts. I also personally attended hip-hop functions with the intentions of speaking with attendants about the study. In addition, at the conclusion of each interview, respondents were asked to refer other artists who they felt would qualify for the study.

Interviews with participants were conducted in person at local coffee shops or public meeting spaces. When more convenient for participants, interviews were conducted by telephone or via video call services such as Skype or FaceTime. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour, and were audio recorded with the consent of the participant. An interview instrument was used and covered many topics and served as an outline of how the interview was structured. The interview instrument acted as guide to ensure key topics were discussed, and provided flexibility and fluidity for respondents to share their stories, thoughts, and opinions (Charmaz 2014). Probing was used when necessary to clarify ambiguous responses, or to acquire adequate responses (Neuman 2012). The interview began by asking respondents to provide background information about the place where they grew up and the family dynamics of their childhood. They were then

asked about the area in where they lived at the time of the interview, and their involvement in their neighborhood and community. The conversation then transitioned into topics on music, discussing their first memories with creating music up to their current music related ventures and future goals and aspirations. The last segment of the interview covered respondents' perception of community and how they interpret their music and their performance as artists in relation to it. Demographic questions concluded each conversation. A copy of the interview guide can be found in the Appendix.

### **Data Analysis**

For the original paper from this topic, I transcribed the audio recordings of each interview verbatim and transferred the transcripts into Atlas.ti, a computer based software program that facilitates qualitative data analysis. Open coding (Babbie 2010) was used, where all transcript data were read and loosely labeled with preliminary codes by principle ideas such as artists' interpretations and opinions about various subjects relating to their community and their identity as artists, accounts of various actions within their community, thought processes of their music's effect on their community, and their feelings of responsibility to their community as an artist. During this period of open coding, codes such as "being relatable", "use of platform as an artist", "inspiring/evoking change", "giving back", and "positive impact" were used to organize interview responses. Using Atlas.ti, I reviewed the categories and visually sorted or connected them into sub-categories or themes based upon artists' expressed relation to their communities. Codes such as "being polarizing", "desire for music to emote", and "being a voice" were linked into a theme of the pursuit to stimulate thought within their communities, and codes such as "evoking change" and "giving back" were combined into a theme of on-the-ground activism.

With the use of grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967), an open-ended approach to the data was taken with the hypothesis being modified as the analysis progressed resulting in the development of a theory *grounded* in the data (Charmaz 2014). Starting out with the assumption that hip-hop artists have a strong connection to their community and neighborhood, due to the historical background of hip-hop culture being an outlet for inner-city residents to voice their concern for their community's social condition (Roy 2008), I initially set out to explore the extent that hip-hop artists took to express their connection to the community in terms of their music and their performance as artists. Respondents spoke of a perceived responsibility to positively address the conditions of their community, but as the study evolved, I noticed artists articulating different approaches to fulfilling their expressed roles. Several artists expressed using their music as a channel to discuss the conditions in their community. Other artists spoke of physical engagement, while some expressed a mixture of both approaches.

Thus, I coded the interview data using three findings that emerged: the articulated conditions of their community, the pursuit to stimulate thought within their community, and the performance of activism within their community. The theme "articulated conditions of their community" included sub-codes that encompassed the various ways in which the respondents described their communities; social conditions, physical order, characteristics of community, and community's influence. The theme "pursuit to stimulate thought within their community" included sub-codes that embodied the artists' desire to use the music they create to encourage listeners to reflect on community conditions in a way that may provoke action; being a voice, being provocative/polarizing, to evoke change, and desire for music to emote. The theme "performance of activism within their community" included sub-codes that described the physical acts of

community engagement artists exhibit in aspiration of bettering the current social and physical conditions of their community; being a leader, giving back to the community, and mentoring.

For this study, the same approach to data analysis was followed. I employed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), where the data analysis was conducted in a two-stage process. First, transcripts were reviewed using open coding. During open coding, I coded the interviews line-by-line using emerging themes, categories, and descriptions (Esterberg 2002). As a result of open coding, recurring themes and concepts emerged from the data and were used in the second stage of analysis, focused coding. The data was then reviewed line-by-line, but this time coded using key recurring themes and concepts that emerged during the first stage of analysis (Esterberg 2002). I exercised a consistent interaction with the data and developing analysis by going back and forth between the data, analysis, and methods using inductive data to develop analytical outcomes (Charmaz 2014). I also attempted to identify in vivo codes, language and wording taken directly from the respondents' narrative, in order to accurately illustrate respondents' views as they articulated them (Charmaz 2014).

As a result of focus coding, themes, codes, and sub-codes were restructured to depict a more accurate representation of what respondents were articulating in their interviews. The redeveloped themes were "respondents' connection with community", "relationships between their music and community", and "respondent's self-identified roles". Under the theme of "respondent's connection with community", codes such as mentoring, responsibility to community, organizational involvement, and defining community were categorized. The theme "relationship between their music and community" included codes such as music's impact on community and music's reflection of community. Lastly, the theme "respondent's self-identified roles" included role in neighborhood and role in town. Concept mapping was then conducted as a way of visually organizing sub-codes of all major codes, and the relationships between sub-codes. Concept maps were created for the major codes "why define community as you did", "music's impact on community", "hip-hop role in life", "role in neighborhood/role in town", "community involvement", "organizational involvement", "mentoring", "responsibility to community", and "music's reflection of community".

Specifically, for the first paper, data analysis was conducted by first reviewing the concepts maps that were created for each major code. Studying the relationship between sub-codes in each concept map, "carrying a message" stood out as a sub-code that was connected to many of the other codes on the map. Interview responses were then organized by the code "carrying a message" in order to examine the ways in which respondents were referring to the concept. I examined the ways in which respondents' discussion of the message in their music related to other major codes, identifying a connection between the major codes "role in community" and "community involvement". Thus, how respondents' narratives on the message in their music foreshadowed how they interpreted their self-identified role in their community – which was then further illustrated in their descriptions of their physical involvement in their community.

For the second paper, I set out to intentionally explore artists' interest in pursuing hip-hop music as a career. Referring to the codes and sub-codes that were created during the focus coding, I studied the relationship between the sub-codes for the major code "hip-hop's role in life". The sub-codes "musical career aspirations" and "motivation for creating music" stood out. Interview responses for each sub-code were transferred from Atlas.ti into a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel in order to focus on the specific textual data I was interested in and to reduce sensory overload from the remainder of the data. In Excel, I reviewed the text and developed additional coding groups. For example, coding groups that emerged from "motivation for creating music" included

“money”, “passion”, “spread message”. As the data analysis progressed, coding groups were further refined resulting in “meaning” and “fame/money”. The resulting coding categories were used to explore respondent’s narratives of their motivation for pursuing music in relations to the other major codes that emerged in the focused coding process. Such analysis revealed the ways in which artists’ articulations of their motivations for pursuing music influenced their interpretation of their music’s impact on their community and their role as artist.

The data analysis process for the final paper was similar to the analysis process in the second paper. With the objective to examine mentoring relationship discussed in the interviews, I reviewed the major code “mentoring” and its sub-codes. I placed textual data from Atlas.ti into Excel in order to only focus on data that referenced mentoring. As mentoring related text were analyzed, coding groups such as “being mentored” and “mentoring others” developed. Coding groups were then compared and examined in relation to other major codes from the focused coding process. In search of themes to explain connections between codes, I observed how the respondents’ narratives on mentoring relationships illustrated the existence and development of social and cultural capital. Interview data was grouped by the ways in which respondents characterized and depicted such forms of capital in their narratives.

### **Reflexivity and Positionality**

“The evidence gathered during research is never separable from researchers’ selves and is inextricably linked to the perspectives of the researchers, who are the only instruments of data collection.” – Preissle and Grant (2004)

In order to understand hip-hop and rap artists’ embeddedness within their communities, I first located myself and identified my positionality in relation to this research project to account for ways in which who I am affect my research. For example, being an African-African scholar interviewing a majority of respondents who also identify as Black, I was able to benefit from what Twine (2000) refers to as *color-matching* due to the possibility of respondents feeling more comfortable and willing to openly answer interview questions. When discussing their social experiences and background, participants may have been more prone to disclosing racialized experiences than they would have with a researcher who they did not racially identity with. As Rhodes (1994) describes, “closeness to identity and, in particular, shared racial identity is generally presumed to promote effective communication between researcher and subject and, conversely, disparate identity to inhibit it” (pg550).

During the interview process, I often encountered respondents using phrases such as “you know what I mean,” implying that I understood their feelings or viewpoints based upon an unspoken indication of shared experiences. In such instances, I probed for more detailed explanations as needed to be sure that I fully comprehended their stated perspective. Also, when describing their social experiences during their early years as a child, some respondents would inquire where I was from in order to gauge our sense of shared commonality and to assess my insider/outsider status. Respondents would attempt to use my hometown of Memphis, TN, a predominately Black city, to express common socioeconomic experiences, or further articulate a more detailed account of their experience to me - an outsider. For example, as one respondent interjected as they are describing the level of poverty in their city’s education system, “I see you’re from Memphis, so you feel what I’m saying right.” In an attempt to solidify his point, the respondent used my hometown of Memphis as a means of relating my social experience in a majority Black southern city to his social experience in a majority Black southern city. In another

instance, being from Memphis was used to denote my outsider status, “I know Memphis go ham too but like it’s still different. This is the deeper south, so, you know what I’m saying.” The respondent made sure I was aware that even though it may be insinuated that we shared similar experiences, there are still differences that would cause me to be an outsider.

Yet as beneficial as it may seem, *color-matching* also had its limitations. Being an insider in terms of race, certain premises and lines of inquiry were not as salient to me as they would be to a White researcher. Building upon Simmel’s claim that outsiders “see patterns that may be more difficult than those immersed in the situation to see”, Collins (1991) interprets “outsiders within” as advantageous to research practices. There are potentially shared characteristics and concepts that I may have overlooked due to my close familiarity with participants’ racial experience, which has the ability to obstruct analytical analysis. As I was coding respondents interviews, I noticed instances where I should have probed more but did not. For example, one respondent stated, “I think when you’re a rapper it’s somebody who does it because they look at it as a way out.” Unintentionally recalling personal experiences hearing other individuals who identify as Black making similar statements, I unknowingly consented to the respondent’s views without probing for further explanation. Responding by simply moving on to the next question, I missed my opportunity to inquire further about why the respondent made such a statement, hindering the potential for more fruitful data collection.

Furthermore, sharing racial identity did not automatically establish full shared experience in that each individual has “multiple identifications” (Essen 1994). Even though we share some racial experiences, each person experiences race differently and those differences may not be fully understood by others regardless of *color-matching*. Thus, when interviewing respondents, even those who were from Memphis, there were social experiences they described that I did not relate to. For example, there was one respondent who attend the same high school as I did, was in my graduating class, and lived in a neighborhood about 3 miles away from mine. Despite the closeness, and our shared racial identity, I did not relate to the social experience he described when asked about his early life. He shares, “It was like pretty much split between Vice Lords and uh, you know, Vice Lords and Crips and GD’s [Gangster Disciples], and I ended up growing up on the Vice Lord side. So, naturally I ended up getting into a lot of the things that they were getting into, and that’s pretty much how my community was – a bunch of gang life.” My experience living in a neighborhoods 3 miles away was different. While I was aware of the strong presence of gang activity within the city of Memphis, I did not come into such close proximity of it within my immediate neighborhood. Therefore, I was unable to identify with his social experience regardless of our shared racial identity.

In addition to race being a prominent “social signifier”, “insiderness” is also delineated by other characteristics that may place race as a secondary factor (Winddance-Twine and Warren 2000). With majority of respondents being male, as is representative of the overall population of hip-hop artists, my identity as a woman affected the interview process and subsequent data analysis. Interviewing convicted male violent offenders, Presser (2005), a White female, values cross-gender research reasoning that “gender dynamics are clearer when research interviews are cross-gender” due to the one’s capacity to discern cultures that are not their own (pp. 2071). Despite my interview guide not directly containing gender-sensitive topics, respondents may still have articulated gendered responses and my identity as a woman may have grant me the ability to recognize them as such. During the interview, when asking respondents about being mentored and mentoring other artists, some respondents expressed notions of not needing assistance from others. Through discussions with a female professor about the analysis of the data, the probability of such

responses being influenced by the performance of masculinity surfaced. However, due to the limited amount of such responses and the lack of additional data to further explore such notions, the thought was shelved. More favorably, stereotypical gender roles in conversations may have been advantageous due to respondents viewing me as unthreatening and different (Horn 1997, Pini 2005). Male respondents could have viewed me through the lens of traditional discourses of femininity and took me to be an empathetic listener. Thus, there is a possibility they were more willing to provide narratives of their background and work as artists when questioned during the interview (Pini 2005).

Conversely, as a young woman interviewing males, I was susceptible to sexual advances or flirtation behavior from respondents (Gailey and Prohaska 2006, Gailey and Prohaska 2011). Similar to other women researchers (Arendell 1997, Becker and Aiello 2013, Gailey and Prohaska 2011, Lee 1997, Pini 2005), I was sure to be mindful of the ways in which my response to such flirtation behavior or hints of sexism had the ability to impact the research process while also being sure not to allow myself to be subjugated by undesired and offensive advances. For example, whenever communicating with respondents via text message to set up and confirm interview details, I was sure to use formal language and wording as to prevent any false interpretation from respondents. I would also attempt to keep all pre- and post- interview communication as brief as possible, as not to be interpreted as being suggestive of any personal intentions and maintaining a professional image at all times (Gurney 1985). When setting up the interview location, I proposed public meeting locations at local coffee shops, library meeting rooms, and bookstores. In doing so, I attempted to alleviate subjecting myself to environments where I would be alone with participants. During the interview process, I adopted a competent, knowledgeable professional persona while still maintaining a nonthreatening role (Gurney 1985). Thus, prior to interviews I was sure to briefly familiarize myself with artists by exploring any Facebook, SoundCloud, or other music related accounts artists maintained on the internet. My intentions were for respondents to view me as an experienced researcher genuinely interested in their work as an artist, while preserving enough distance from their personal life to suggest any intimate interest.

As Naples (1996) explains, “‘outsiderness’ and ‘insiderness’ are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members” (pg84). Therefore, my positionality was constantly negotiated and renegotiated due to its fluid nature in relation to those I encountered throughout the research process. While I may never know the exact influence my race and gender had on the data collection and analysis process, I do acknowledge that as a researcher I had an impact on the research conducted. However, I believe my influence was minimal as a result of my efforts to maintain an objective, unbiased and professional persona throughout the study.

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## **CHAPTER 3: DOES MY MESSAGE DEFINE MY ROLE?: HOW HIP-HOP ARTISTS' EMPHASIS ON THEIR MUSIC'S MESSAGE SHAPES THEIR INTERPRETATION OF HAVING A ROLE IN THEIR COMMUNITY**

### **Introduction**

Originating in The Bronx, New York and later expanding to cities across the nation and countries around the globe, many scholars contend that the production and consumption of hip-hop music and culture is no longer tied to specific geographical areas (Basu and Lemelle 2006, Bennett 1999, Everett-Hayes 2013, Forman 2000, Rose 1994). Remarkable growth and transformation in the music industry and how music is created and marketed has resulted in what many could consider a despatialization of hip-hop (Sigler and Balaji 2013). However, the unquestionable connections between music, identity, and place are still relevant today (Hudson 2006). Despite the globalization of both the production and consumption of music, music still has the ability to convey and articulate feelings of attachment to place, and to verbalize one's connection to geographical spaces (Hudson 2006). Hip-hop scholars contend that despite globalization's effect on music, physical space still retains a sense of significance in hip-hop (Forman 2002, Rose 1994). In this paper, I explore hip-hop and rap artists' relationship to their local community. I examine how artists' concern with their music's message shape their interpretation of having a role, or an identifiable place, in their community. By highlighting key literature that illustrates the link between music, identity and place, I use in-depth interviews with hip-hop artists in the southern United States to bring attention to the cultural significance of artists' bond(s) to their local community.

### **Globalization, Music, and Place**

The utilization and importance of place within music in conveying and shaping identity has been the subject of a robust interdisciplinary discussion amongst anthropologists, geographers, ethnomusicologists and cultural studies scholars in recent decades (Stokes 1994, Negus 1996, Roberson 2001, Rice 2003, Connell and Gibson 2004, Stokes 2004, Hudson 2006, Alim and Pennycook 2007, Kruse 2010, Sigler and Balaji 2013). Some scholars have observed the experiences of musicians and listeners to be no longer bound to an isolated geographic culture, due to disconnections between place and identity as a result of the globalization of music (Rice 2003, Stokes 2004, Hudson 2006). With the globalization of music, scholars have proposed that the significance and impact of place on cultural elements such as music have declined. Due to the commercialization of musical genres, the rise of 'world music' instigated interest in widening the appeal of musical art rather than embracing and connecting it to particular markets (Connell and Gibson 2004, Hudson 2006). The globalization of music has thus deterritorialized this form of art by attempting to disconnect it from place to accommodate the contemporary movement of people between geographical locations (Hudson 2006).

The declining importance of place results in the expansion of a global community, or imagined communities (Anderson 1991), that overpower the sense of place delineated by local boundaries, allowing for disembodied experiences that are facilitated by virtual spaces (Bryant 1995, Rodel 2002, Lysloff 2003, Basu and Lemelle 2006, Broder 2006). As Stokes (2004) describes, "the actors of 'globalization', such as multinational corporations, regional and transnational political, labor and goods moving ubiquitously, are perceived as devices operating in distant space, abstract, general and impersonal, acting on local practices" (pg374). Internet usage

in production, marketing, and distribution of music has encouraged the creation of music devoid of local markers and identifiers in exchange for a sonic experience that is more cross-cultural and transcends geographical boundaries. “As the stability and coherence of social identities [have] been called into question, so [has] the idea that there may be any fixed link between a social group and particular musical sounds,” (Negus, 1996:100).

However, even despite the decentralization of music due to the increased utility of the internet to market, produce, and consume music on a global scale, music still maintains the ability to encourage local identities among artists and audiences (Kruse 2010). For example, studying Cartel, a German-Turkish hip-hop group, Stokes (2004) reasons that identity construction is still currently an essential cultural process that is sustained in one’s community, city, and other various spaces of modern-day urban life. The notion of place, or the connection to a specific geographical space, still plays a major role in the ways artists articulate their identity and how they market themselves (Sigler and Balaji 2013).

### **The Role of Place in Hip-Hop**

“‘Place’ can be thought of as complex entities, ensembles of material objects, people, and systems of social relationships embodying distinct cultures and multiple meanings, identities, and practices (Hudson 2006:627).” Hip-hop has “more pronounced and explicit connections to specific locales and the articulation of geography, place and identity that sets the genre apart from many of its musical predecessors” (Forman 2000:70). Hip-hop’s attachment to the notion of place is rooted in its eminent origin in the South Bronx during the early 1970s. With an exceedingly high unemployment rate due to the classed and racialized consequences of deindustrialization, the transition from a nonviolent civil rights movement to the emergence of the Black Panther Party and Puerto Rican National activism efforts, the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway that isolated the South Bronx from the rest of New York, and the emergence of public housing complexes, the social and economic conditions of the South Bronx fostered a distinctive physical space where the culture of hip-hop could emerge as a form of resistance (Collins 2016, Ide 2013, Kosanovich 2012, Naison 2004, Ogbar 2007). Resultantly, there was a transition from territorial gangs who protected particular neighborhoods and geographical boundaries to territorial disk jockeys and their crews (Forman 2000, Chang 2005). As emcees replaced disc jockeys as the focal point at parties and performances, emcees’ reference(s) to geographical locales and their representation of specific neighborhoods progressively grew in importance and meaning (Cramer and Hallet 2012). In addition, the use of community centers, parks, and YMCAs as spaces where youth gathered and performed cultural practices such as graffiti writing, break dancing, DJing, and rapping illustrate an even deeper connection between hip-hop and physical spaces at the point of the art form’s historical origins (Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012, Ogbar 2007). Resultantly, hip-hop is closely connected to space and place due to the economic and social conditions of the South Bronx that lead to the cultural practices that are now referenced to as hip-hop (Kosanovich 2012, Rose 1994). Hip-hop served as a medium through which individuals could engage in dialogue that was a direct product of their existence in that physical space (Forman 2002, Kosanovich 2012).

Even with the spread of hip-hop from South Bronx to cities across the nations, the importance of place remains a prominent feature of hip-hop music culture. Despite hip-hop’s expansion, New York, and the surrounding northern region of the U.S., remained forerunners of hip-hop music production well into the 1980s. However, hip-hop’s presence in various geographical spaces introduced variance in production, with the music taking on identifiable characteristics, later resulting in the emergence of distinctive regional sounds (Forman 2000). On

the West Coast, Crenshaw, California based artist Ice-T is credited with pioneering the subgenre gangsta rap with his 1986 release “6 in the Mornin’” (Diallo 2010). Soon after, characterized as G-Funk due to its incorporation of Parliament/Funkadelic-inspired musical elements, West Coast based rap began to dominate the hip-hop music industry. Frustrated with the prevailing presence of West Coast artists and the subsequent rejection of East Coast artists by radio stations and record companies, Bronx-based artists Tim Dog released his frustrations on the 1991 release “Fuck Compton”, initiating the infamous East Coast versus West Coast rivalry that last most of the decade (Seng 1997). Filled with tension between East Coast front men Bad Boy Records and East Coast forerunners Death Row Records, *The Source* magazine held its second annual hip-hop award show in New York City during the height of the feud in 1995. Winning “Best New Group” and being boo’d due to their lack of affiliation with neither West Coast nor East Coast, Atlanta-based artists OutKast declared to the crowd “the south got something to say” (Sarig 2007). Within the next few years, Southern rap infiltrated the music scene as southern artists demanded their place as the third coast of hip-hop (Grem 2006).

Each offering differing characterizations of regional and racial identity in which artists proudly personify, each region still produced hip-hop music that illustrated urban Black living experiences (Grem, 2006). Thus, in the case of hip-hop, place is symbolized through proximity to urban communities, or *hoods*, people and experiences that exemplify working-class struggles, and the social interactions that are a product of such experiences situated within the context of these local communities and neighborhoods (Smith 1997). Notions of place, and identity in relation to place, are regularly used as a tangible product in order to prove one’s authenticity (Sigler and Balaji 2013), causing artists’ careers and identities to become embedded within the city, community, or neighborhood in which they were from. “Hip-hop’s overall identity as a musical and cultural form rests on its ability to convey the ‘real’”, Dominello (2008) describes (Sigler and Balaji 2013:340); with such tropes of authenticity being neither fixed nor tangible (McLeod 1999, Forman 2002, Sigler and Balaji 2013). Due to authenticity being a fundamental trait of hip-hop culture, place often operates as a commodity and a symbolic indicator of value as it is used by artists to justify their authenticity through their proximity to glorified physical spaces (Forman 2002, Quinn 2004, Powell 2011, Sigler and Balaji 2013).

Nonetheless, the globalization of music has urged hip-hop artists specifically to exhibit both a local and global appeal while forcing artists to accentuate one more than the other in order to prevent conflict caused by the local-global binary (Smith 1997, Sassen 2000, Powell 2011, Cramer and Hallet 2012, Sigler and Balaji 2013). Hip-hop music has managed to become transnational due to its ability to use universal language while simultaneously maintaining and reinforcing the importance of space and identity as a means of constructing authenticity (Forman 2002, Watkins 2005, Broder 2006, Sigler and Balaji 2013). Instead of deterritorializing hip hop, the global spread of the genre has encouraged participants to engage in a form of cultural reterritorialization by reworking their production of hip-hop culture to include new meanings and representations that reflect their specific localized context (Bennett 1999, Roberson 2001, Malone 2002, Basu and Lemelle 2006, Broder 2006, Dominello 2008). Despite hip-hop music’s global consumption, it still remains a genre and cultural commodity with strong connections to space by capitalizing on many localized characteristics and elements (Bennett 1999, Dominello 2008, Marsh 2012, Sigler and Balaji 2013). Thus, in this paper, I examine the significance and influence of an artist’s ties to their local community in their production and performance of hip-hop music. In addition, I investigate the ways artists’ locale shape their identity as artists. Using in-depth interviews with self-identified hip-hop and rap artists, I explore if and how hip-hop artists maintain

connections to their local communities and construct localized identities within a global music market that encourages the deterritorializing of hip-hop.

## **Methods**

This paper uses data from in-depth interviews for an ongoing qualitative research study examining hip hop and rap artists' embeddedness in local communities and their interpretation of the connectedness of their work to those communities. A qualitative approach using interviews with self-identified artists was chosen in order to study artists' subjective attitudes and experiences toward "community" (Perakyla 2005, Charmaz 2014). At the time of the interview, respondents ranged from 18 to 53 years of age with the average age of respondents being 26 years old. The sample included 21 African American men, three African American women, one Caucasian man, and one Caucasian woman. All participants were American citizens and were from the southern United States.

Since there was not a comprehensive list of self-identified hip-hop and rap artists available to locate participants for the study, two nonprobability sampling techniques were used: reliance on available subjects and snowball sampling (Babbie 2010). Initial participants for the study were recruited through flyers advertising for individuals eighteen or older who self-identified as hip-hop or rap artists (n=9) and through utilizing existing contacts in my personal networks (n=4). Flyers for the study were physically posted at venues that held open mics or similarly related events, and an electronic copy of the flyer was posted in online music forms (e.g. music related Facebook group pages, musician sections of craigslist, etc.). In addition, I personally attend local music-related events and spoke with attendees about the research study in hopes of receiving word-of-mouth referrals for participants. Following each interview, respondents were also asked to recommend individuals who may be qualified and willing to participate in the study.

Interviews were conducted between September 2013 and February 2014, concluding with a total of 26 participants. Semi-structured IRB-approved interviews took place in person at local coffee-shops and bookstores, online via video chat, and over the telephone. Each interview was recorded with consent of the participant and lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. An interview guide was used to help facilitate a progressive conversation with respondents about their music and the connection to their community. Interviews began by asking respondents to talk about their early life. Respondents shared details about the place they grew up, their family, and compared it to the current neighborhood they lived in at the time of the interview. After background questions, they were asked about their music. This section of the interview included questions that asked about how they began creating music, the creative process, and their goals regarding music. The next section of questions covered the respondent interpretation of the connection between their music and their community, if any.

Initially, analysis was conducted in three stages: open coding, focused coding, and concept mapping. Using qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti, open coding was performed in order to group responses into categories. Resulting categories included, but were not limited to, "community involvement", "role in town", and "music's impact on community". Next, more focused coding took place where responses within each category were coded with more nuanced sub-codes. Within the topic of "music's impact on community", sub-codes such as "being a role model", "carrying a message", "creating change via conversation", and "having a voice", emerged. Lastly, to help get a better understanding of the relationship between codes, concept maps were created for each of the category that were developed in the first step of open coding.

After examining the concept maps for each category, the relationship with multiple codes to the sub code “carrying a message” stood out. Taking advantage of the qualitative data’s flexibility (Charmaz 2014), I then began to organize interviews by the code “carrying a message”. A connection between the codes “carrying a message”, “role in community”, and “community involvement” then surfaced. By listening to respondent narratives instead of grouping interview responses by individual coding groups (Chase 2005), I began to recognize how artists’ narratives of their musical content correlated with their interpretation of having a role in their communities, as well as their feelings of attachment to their geographical area. Respondents’ articulation of their music’s message also revealed how they express their identity as artists in relation to both their music and their physical community.

## **Findings**

A little over half respondents (n=14) explicitly spoke about the importance of the message in their music. Therefore, for this paper, interviews were separated according to whether or not the respondent unambiguously referred to the message of their music. Respondents’ narratives were then examined to explore the similarities between those who openly expressed their attention to the message in their music, compared to those who did not. While exploring the differences between the two groups, how participants’ articulation of their music’s message influenced their responses of having a role in their community was noted. Respondents who clearly expressed their concern for their music’s message, also clearly expressed feelings of having a self-identified role in their community, while those who did not clearly express concern for their music’s message did not. Artists’ thoughts of having a role helped illuminate respondents’ sense of attachment to their local communities; which was further revealed in their descriptions of the various ways in which they are physically active in their community.

### **Artists’ Concern with The Message in Their Music**

Throughout the interviews, respondents detailed the creative process and significance of their music. Through sharing stories of how they began to create music and their motivation to continue pursuing music, many respondents also highlighted the importance of their music’s message. Utilizing their platform as public entertainers, many hip-hop artists have used their music to create dialogue and to engage in communal conversation (Bynoe 2004, Perry 2004, Questlove 2014). As one interviewee, Simon, a 23-year-old African American male, shared:

I think rappers are public speakers, rather they are negative or they are positive. They can have that platform because the music has a message rather you’re, you know, getting people hype or not – or you’re getting people in a meditative state or not. It’s carrying a message. That’s what music does.

Viewed as a performance art, music has the ability to facilitate social communication and allows musical performances to create a space for social interaction (Waterman 1998). Hip-hop music provides a medium through which artists are able to engage in communal commentary regarding topics and subjects that may be relatable to their audience. Connecting with listeners more than any other genre, hip-hop is considered to be an “artistic communication from the streets” (Binder 1993:763). The connection, or relatability, of hip hop music with community listeners provide a motivation for many artists to continually pursue music.

During the interviews, most of the respondents (n=16), like Simon, openly expressed concerns about the meaning that was embodied in their music. A sizeable minority (n=9) did not directly express the message of their music having a particular significance to them. Those who spoke about the message that their music carries understood the positive themes in their music to have an impact on their community. Ideas of inspiration, being true to oneself, and messages that attempt to initiate a positive change fueled these respondents' passion to create music. As Tiffany, A 21-year-old African American female, expressed, "I would like to think that I am a positive influence on my community and that my music is also...I just let it kind of inspire me to push through and I hope that my music can be an inspiration to others." Tiffany sees her goal of being a positive influence on her community as motivation to continue to create and release music; even despite difficulties or challenges that she faces.

Similarly, other respondents expressed the significance of creating music with a positive meaning. For example, Darren, a 29-year-old African American male, shared:

Yeah, I mean for me I am always trying to; I like to portray or put out there the role of leadership. One where you are leading by example. So, the music is being different from what is heard on the radio or continuously seeing it is something for me where I am trying to put myself out there as somebody who is leading by example with that type of the difference within the music.

In making this comment, Darren argues that currently released music is lacking messages of leadership. Therefore, he seeks to create music that will fill that void in order to provide others with an example of a leader. Respondents like Tiffany, Darren, and Simon seem to have identified deficiencies within the messages that are received in their community. They then use their platform as artists to create music with positive themes in order to inspire others and lead by example. As Christopher insists, "I feel like, man, make the yougin's in the community know the stuff that they see don't have to be the stuff they have to do. You know, take other choices or other routes, you know. You can do better than that, though. It's not all about what you see."

### **Artists' Beliefs of Having a Role in Their Community**

Amongst respondents who openly spoke about the significance or value of the message in their music, majority (n=10) also spoke positively about having a role in their community. Their interpretation of the role in their community was embodied within their identity as artists. As Roberson (2001) states, "music is a symbolic resource and music production and that musical consumption are important in the ongoing, creative use of music to construct identities (pg213)." Likewise, many respondents in the study expressed self-identified roles in their community that were intrinsically connected to their desire to create music with a positive message. Zachary, a 29-year-old white male, articulates:

Yeah, I think I am the light around here for my community. I'm part of just bringing more positive in it. The music scene and everything. Just showing them, like I said, that they can do positive music and do music and still, you know, love it and still affect people.

Zachary sees music as a resource to fulfill his role in his community; bringing more positivity. By making and releasing music that generates more positivity within the community, he sees himself

as a light to others. He also sees himself as an example of how music can be created that will positively affect the community. In doing so, Zachery is attempting to demystify perceptions that creating positive music is not enjoyable and does not have to ability to influence listeners.

As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) states, “identity is the social position of the self and other.” (pg586). Respondents often articulated their self-identified role in their community through their relationship with those in their community. Keith, a 31-year-old African American male, explained:

I think I have a responsibility, not that anybody put that on me necessarily. I feel somewhat of an obligation to really reach out to some of the brokenness that are in some of those places because some of those communities don't have very positive role models...I think that, you know, there are a lot of voices that are missing...I feel like I kind of take the responsibility on of saying ‘Hey, I think there is a different way we can think about doing life’, and that kind of thing. So yeah, I kind of take that responsibility on to show people an alternative to what I think they are brainwashed into thinking.

Keith shoulders his role in his community as a responsibility. Similar to other respondents, Keith has identified a void in his community and he uses his platform as an artist to speak out and provide alternatives to what individuals in his community are currently being exposed to. He internalizes his position as an artist to encompass an obligation of being a positive role model to those who may not receive such exposure. Keith argues that the identity he has taken on was never given to him, but instead is an identity that he has discovered through his relationship to those around him, and is currently being constructed and developed through his production and distribution of music.

Many respondents’ perceived roles and intentions of spreading positive messages extended beyond the scope of their own personal communities. As Anthony describes, “I have a role in the neighborhood that I grew up at and in many other neighborhoods. And I say that because my neighborhood ain’t no different from all the other neighborhoods.” As artists, their music reached beyond the physical geographical boundaries of their residential areas, and extended into neighborhoods and communities with comparable characteristics. Cohen (1995) argues that “music and place [are not] fixed and bounded texts or entities but [are] social practice[s] involving relations between people, sound, images, artifacts and material environment” (pg438). Respondents’ identit(ies) as artists are similarly not limited to the geographical locales in which they are physically present, but are capable of being translated and transmitted to comparable social settings elsewhere. Thus, Keith’s adopted responsibility of “providing an alternative” is not limited to filling such shortcomings solely in his immediate community, but expands to include all communities who are lacking positive role models.

Compared to these respondents, artists who did not openly verbalize concern about their music’s message expressed feelings of not having a role in their community. Such responses typically described feelings of not having connections to those in their community, resulting in views of not having a responsibility as an artist to their community. Justin explains, “No [I don’t have a role] because I don’t interact with anybody in my community except for my two neighbors, you know.” Since Justin did not interact with numerous residents in his community, he did not feel that he has any responsibility to people in his community. As Zachery vented about not having a role in his community, “I mean not really. It’s not really a connection like that with them.” As Lipsitz (1997) affirms, “Intentionally and unintentionally, musicians use lyrics, music forms, and



specific styles of performance that evoke attachment to or alienation from particular places” (pg3-4). By not interacting with members of their community, some of the artists in this study were less likely to feel a connection that would potentially create an interest in delivering a particular message or having a particular responsibility.

Examining music and place, Negus (1996) articulates the difference between place and a sense of place suggesting that “a place as the particular location, concrete site of specific social activities does not always coincide with a ‘sense of place’” (pg184). Even though these artists reside in the community and may have some small degree of interaction with other residents, those attributes did not translate into a “sense of place” that would cause them to feel as if they have an individual responsibility to those in their community. However, respondents’ lack of personal obligation to their community and absence of a verbalized concern about their music’s message did not indicate a disregard for the overall welfare of their community. As Darren, a 29-year-old African American male, articulates:

Not necessarily, I wouldn’t say that I have a role. I think that we all, if something happens where there is an accident or if there is something that needs to be voted on, if there is an opinion of things like that I think that there is a role or a skills or a piece where you feel committed to that area. Whether it's because you have been living there for so long and you have a familiarity with people and just the area in general. I wouldn’t necessarily say I feel like I have a role but I definitely feel like I am a part of it. I would definitely say that, yeah.

Even though Darren does not feel he has a specific role in his community, he still feels a sense of belonging. He feels more of a connection to the geographical area due to it being his residence, and an interest in maintaining the security of his living environment. As a result, there is an awareness of others in his community who also share the same connection to their communal area, but not a feeling of holding a particular responsibility as an individual. As Kruse (1993) states, “an important way in which musicians and others involved in local scenes understand their own involvement [is] as something that both identifies them with and differentiated them from individuals and groups in other communities” (pg38). Darren, and other respondents who didn’t feel they have individual roles in their community, identify with those in his community in a way that would initiate a call to action in the occurrence of communal instances, while still differentiating himself from those in his community in a way that does not result in his construction of having a role in his community.

### **Artists’ Physical Presence in Their Communities**

Respondents who spoke about the message in their music also detailed various ways in which they are physically active in their communities outside of their paid jobs. During the interviews, these respondents spoke about tutoring in their local area, starting community focused organizations, working with at-risk or underprivileged youth, and mentoring aspiring hip-hop and rap artists. When asked about the intentions of his involvement in his community and why he decided to start a non-profit organization, Bryan, a 53-year-old African American male, explains:

We see African Americans males growing up without father figures and we try to be father figures. We try to be that mentorship that they need to become a man. So many young men are growing up to without even being introduced to a man so

that's why they can go out and do the type of things that they do. So, we go out and we try to introduce that manly, masculine image inside of the home.

Seeing a need for more mentorship in his community, Bryan established an organization that fills the perceived void of positive Black role models by starting a community based organization. In 2013, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) released a report measuring U.S. fathers' involvement with their children between the years 2006 and 2010 (Jones and Mosher 2013). The document featured statistics on the regularity of a father's presence during age-specific activities with their children. Results found that non-Hispanic Black fathers were just as active and present in their children's lives, if not more, than white and Latino fathers regardless if they did or did not live with their children during the time of the study (Jones and Mosher 2013). However, due to the large amount of African American men from already disadvantaged communities who are either incarcerated or deceased (Alexander 2011, Wolfers, Leonhardt and Quealy 2015), conversations around Black fatherhood more often than not center around terms such as *crisis* (Culp-Ressler 2014). Therefore, Bryan sought to create a counter-narrative by providing role-models that he felt were missing in the lives of young males in his community.

Likewise, other respondents' physical involvement was initiated based upon a need they observed in their communities and their pursuit of fulfilling it. Respondents not only interpreted the needs of their community from the circumstances of others around them, but they also used their own personal experiences to guide their involvement. Speaking about his engagement with the young Black males in his community, Lawrence, a 40-year-old African American male, shares:

I don't know if I am a role model to them or anything, you know what I'm saying, or looked at as somebody who is positive. Or maybe I am making some sort of impact in that way; I am not certain. I don't really have a proper role I wouldn't say, but just being a Black male and seeing other Black males growing up around here I feel like I just need to peek in some type of way and let them know that I am concerned in some type of way about their well-being.

Using his own experience as a Black male, Lawrence sees the value of investing time into other Black males. Even though he is unsure if his presence in the lives of those young men in his community is as impactful as he would hope for it to be, Lawrence still feels the need to show his concern for young Black males by being physically present in their lives.

Meanwhile, all the respondents who did not express concern with the message in their music were not physically active in their community. However, even though they were not currently active in their community outside of their paid jobs, some respondents articulated a desire to be but were hesitant due to being unsure of their impact. Unlike Lawrence's tendency to check on the young males in his community regardless of the uncertainty of his influence, Malcolm discloses, "I want to be involved, or like I want to do something back home, but I don't know how they are going to accept me." Due to the lack of connection these respondents have with those in their community, they were unsure of what type of response they would receive if they were to have more of a physical presence. When asked about if she was involved in her community, Ashley, a 22-year-old African American female, responds:

Not necessarily and that bothers me because I'm doing something that a lot of the people in my neighborhood never do. I am in college right now and I am pursuing

so many aspirations and things are coming true for me and I feel like I am not necessarily sharing that with them. So yeah, I think that it is something that bothers me that I don't have a real physical role here besides just being there, definitely.

Despite Ashley not having a physical role in her community at the time of the interview, she has the desire to. By creating music and accomplishing other commendable achievements, Ashley has the interest of having a stronger presence in her community and being more in touch with those around her. Considering all she has to offer to her community, and thinking of the positive influence that she could potentially have on those around her, not sharing her aspirations and accomplishments with those in her area troubles her.

But not all respondents who were physically inactive in their community were unsettled by their current lack of involvement. Some respondent shared reasons for why they were not as active in their community as they wished to be, and intentions of changing that in the future. As Michael, an 18-year-old African American male, explains:

Maybe in 10-15 years when I have unmasked the funds and the, uh, resources to help my community in the way that I want to you know. You know be able to do, be able to play that role, but as of now my role is to concentrate on music and, and make sure that the quality is good and that I get to that place that I want to be.

Having the intentions of being more active in his community in the future, Michael interprets his current role in his neighborhood as creating music. In doing so, the music he creates will put him in a better financial position to be more active in his community. In accordance Eric states, "I wish that I could give more of me to the community. I am not selfish or anything, it's just that it's a place that I'm headed for and I'm not yet there. So, I mean, once I am able to get back in touch with my community then I will." By focusing on their music at the moment, these respondents believe that the music they create will place them in a better position to have an impact on their community in the future.

## **Discussion/Conclusion**

This study builds on previous literature by examining the ways in which artists' production and performance of music is influenced by their bond(s) to their local community (Hudson 2006, Kruse 2010, Sigler and Balaji 2013, Stokes 2004). The findings indicate that despite the globalization of music, place still remains to have a significant influence on individual hip-hop artists' identity as artists. More specifically, hip-hop artists still maintain a sense of communal responsibility; upholding hip-hop's close relationship to space and place as illustrated through its communal elements embodied in the origin of hip-hop culture as it was localized in Bronx (Kosanovich 2012, Naison 2004).

Artists in the study articulated how they interpret their identity and place in their community within the context of the music they create. Recognizing deficiencies and shortcomings in their local areas, respondents who openly expressed concern about the message in their music articulated intentions of creating music that would offset and neutralize unfavorable conditions within their community. Through their relationships with others, respondents also illustrated the significance of place and identity through their interpretation of their role in their community in relation to those around them. For artists who were concerned with their music's message, their roles in their community were interpreted to be ones in which they influence those around them;

whether those roles consisted of the intent to fill voids in the lives of others, or simply acting as a voice on behalf of those who go unnoticed. But not all participants expressed taking on such personal responsibility. Respondents who did not openly express a concern for the message in their music did not feel as if they had a particular role in their community, however, such respondents still maintained a sense of concern for the overall wellbeing of their community. Stokes (1994) claims, “even though they are out of the ordinary experiences, music and dance (and talk about music and dance) do encourage people to feel that they are in touch with an essential part of themselves, their emotions and their ‘community.’” Place mattered to artists causing them to feel a part of the community in which they lived, and they retained a collective sense of commitment to the area without the need of taking on additional individualized roles.

These findings draw attention to the enduring cultural significance of artists’ connection to their local community, and its extension to similar locales. Historically, the genre of hip-hop was rooted in its relation to specific spaces and places in South Bronx, but due to the globalization of hip-hop music it has spread into communities around the world. Similar to the way hip-hop culture has been adopted by population and communities that identify with the applicable use of hip-hop as a form of resistance (Bryson 2014, Clark 2012, El-Tayeb 2003, Morgan and Warren 2011, Nasir 2015, Pardue 2011, Schneidermann 2014, Wilson 2007), respondents in this study articulate how their identities are developed within the context of their local communities causing them to be relatable in the context of similar locales with comparable characteristics. Therefore, this study emphasizes the notion that mass consumption of hip-hop music has not deterritorialized music, but has extended the reach and impact of artists whose identity is still shaped and influenced by their local community. Artists are now more aware of how the social issues they are addressing in their music are experienced by others in similar communities. Thus, taking advantage of the global reach of hip-hop music, artists are using their artistic identity that is developed within the context of their specific locale to impact not only their immediate community but other similar communities as well.

Further research would help clarify hip-hop artists’ interpretation of their impact on comparable communities outside of their own. The scope of the existing study was to explore artists’ embeddedness in local communities and their interpretation of the connectedness of their work to those specific spaces. Thus, in order to get a better understanding of the impact of the deterritorialization of music in a genre whose origins are closely connected to localized identities, additional data explicitly exploring such topics must be gathered. In addition, inquiry on other social and economic elements that contribute to artists’ production and performance of hip-hop music could yield more nuanced findings about the level of significance place has on the identity of artists in a globalized music market.

As Roberson (2001) describes, “music does not simply reflect a place, sense of place, or local identity, but also create (and is used to create) these.” This study reveals how artists’ concern for the message in their music and the physical presence in their community illustrates the ways in which local communities play a role in the development of artists’ identities. Furthermore, the findings illuminate how the development of artists’ production and performance of hip-hop music is still influenced by the localization of place while simultaneously being inspired by other locales in a global market.

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## CHAPTER 4: COMMERCE OR COMMUNITY?: HIP-HOP ARTISTS' MOTIVATIONS FOR PURSUING CAREER ASPIRATIONS IN HIP-HOP MUSIC

### Introduction

High numbers of record sales and music video programming substantiate hip-hop as one of the most popular music genres of our time (Chang 2005, Tanner, Asbridge and Wortley 2009). Although often criticized for controversial dialogues around violence, misogyny, and illicit drug use (Blanchard 1999, Dawkins), hip-hop still manages to connect with youth unlike any other medium (Watkins 2005). Riddled with rags-to-riches stories filled with bling and glamour, youth are often drawn to dreams of a lucrative hip-hop career (Foster 2014, Harding 2010, Jackson 2013). According to Forbes magazine, the top five wealthiest hip-hop artists earned between \$750 million and \$60 million in 2016 (Greenburg 2016), but these fortunes were not earned on lyrics and beats alone. Averaging less than \$1 for every album sold, large amounts of profit from music sales are not seen by artists who create the music, but instead go to record labels, managers, lawyers, accountants, and other behind-the-scenes business persons (Truthwritez 2009). Yet through exclusively stylish wardrobes, lavish lifestyles, and exorbitantly priced music videos, consumers may perceive the music industry to be a lucrative professional career option.

A significant increase in the commercialization and monetization of hip-hop music and culture has led many hip-hop critics to declare that hip-hop is dead (Dawkins, Miller-Rosenberg 2014, Mitchell 2001, Tate 1996, Zone 2007). Attending the 1995 Million Man March<sup>1</sup>, Tate (1996) argued it was unthinkable that organizers would gather a large group of African American men without inviting hip-hop artists<sup>2</sup>. He reasoned that it must mean hip-hop has lost its spiritual and political relevance as a result of the music industry being saturated with hip-hop artists lacking lyrical skills. Stirring the hip-hop community with the title of his 2006 release, prominent hip-hop artist Nas similarly proclaimed *Hip-Hop is Dead*. Rather than attempting to proclaim the irreversible demise of hip-hop's tradition and history, however, Nas was instead endeavoring to challenge new artists to maintain their modern appeal while preserving the historical significance

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<sup>1</sup> The Million Man March was organized by Minister Louis Farrakhan, and the Nation of Islam, in which over a million African American men gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. on October 16, 1995 to “declare their right to justice to atone for their failure as men and to accept responsibility as the family head (Nation of Islam).”

<sup>2</sup> Due to unresolved issues with the Nation of Islam (NOI) over the definition of God, Clarence Smith left the NOI and founded the Nations of Gods and Earth (NGE). Clarence, also referred to as Clarence13X and Allah, believed that all Black men were inherently God, and that only five percent of the population knew the truth (Ju 2014). Clarence's teachings in the NGE were prevalent throughout New York City during the time early hip-hop was emerging, therefore, many early hip-hop founders and artists were students of and heavily influenced by the NGE - with the foundational lessons of the Zulu Nation being a direct reproduction of the NGE Supreme Mathematics and Alphabets (Allah 2010). To many NGE was a branch of NOI due to Clarence's former membership in the NOI and his close connections to Malcolm X, therefore, Tate's (1996) stance on the absence of hip-hop figures as an event organized by the NOI seem reasonable. However, Clarence's, and subsequent NGE, former connections to the NOI does not warrant the NOI's inclusion of hip-hop figures in organization endeavors with the community.

of the genre (Simmons 2016). When recounting his reasoning behind the title of the album during an interview discussing its 10-year commemoration, Nas shared, “I felt like it would be dope if I could say something like ‘Hip-Hop is Dead’ that would make some of the young guys realize that not only can you follow what’s happening today, but you can go back into the history” (Simmons 2016). However, reflecting on those intentions 10 year later, Nas feels that he “missed the mark by miles” (Mass Appeal 2016).

As debates over whether or not hip-hop is “dead” because it has been so highly monetized suggest, there is tension in hip-hop music culture between monetary goals and being true to the genre’s roots by engaging in critical cultural analysis and being connected to marginalized community(ies). Some rappers desire fame in the mainstream music industry or commercial success for material reasons. Some are inspired and motivated by socially and politically aware rappers of the past and attempt to use their music careers to continue the pursuit of communal engagement and empowerment in the tradition of founding members of hip-hop culture (Muhammad 2008). Regardless of which has more appeal to individual artists, all artists in the United States are exposed to these dueling motives/forces, which are associated with the genre’s history and location in a capitalist economy and society. Individuals who pursue careers in hip-hop may therefore feel pressure to negotiate this tension with regards to their aspirations and to validate their decision through their work and performance as hip-hop artists. In this study, I explore hip-hop artists’ career motivations and how those motivations influence how they see their music and themselves impacting the world around them. Using 26 in-depth interviews with self-identified hip-hop and rap artists, I attempt to get a better understanding of the influence dual pulls (i.e. social meaning and financial attainment) have on artists’ interpretation(s) of their music’s impact and their connections to community.

### **Hip-Hop’s Roots in Community Engagement**

Hip-Hop is a genre whose history closely connect with community engagement (Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012, Nasir 2015, Nuruddin 2004, Wright 2004). Hip-hop was created as a space in which residents of disadvantaged communities could articulate their feelings and thoughts about the current state of then-declining economic and social conditions in the Bronx River Housing Complex (Kosanovich 2012). Used as a medium by youth to challenge institutions of power that creates such conditions and negatively impacted marginalized communities, hip-hop music is historically known for its powerful influence as a tool for social critique (Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012, Nasir 2015).

Afrika Bambaataa, born as Kevin Donovan, was one of the forerunners of hip-hop during its developmental stage and helped unearth the powerful potential of hip-hop as a tool for social engagement. As a former member of The Black Spades gang, Bambaataa turned to DJing as a way out of strenuous gang life (Chang 2005). After returning from a life-changing trip to Africa and Europe, Bambaataa decided to transform The Black Spades into an organization whose new mission would be to convince as many people as possible to stop the violence that was currently overtaking the Bronx (McQuillar 2007). By the summer of 1975, almost everyone in the Bronx knew about Afrika Bambaataa and his movement, the Universal Zulu Nation. The Universal Zulu Nation was made up of many reformed gang members who used various elements of hip-hop culture, such as music and dance, to organize cultural events for youth in efforts to reduce gang activity (Chang 2005). It grew to become the first hip-hop organization made up with socially and politically aware emcees, b-boys and b-girls, graffiti artist, and deejays (Chang 2005, Diaz 2010, Kosanovich 2012). As the culture of hip-hop started to catch fire outside of the seven-mile Bronx

area and spread throughout the New York metro area, other crews began to join in similar unifying mindsets as those that made up the Universal Zulu Nation. Filled with energy, momentum, and dynamic forces, hip-hop quickly became a source of encouragement and reformation for the community (Hip-Hop History). Considered by many to be the god-father of hip-hop, Bambaataa<sup>3</sup>, soon went on tour with members of the Zulu Nation creating a global hip-hop community built on the premise of halting street violence and advancing the community by empowering individuals to become productive citizens (Diaz, 2010). As the phenomenon expanded into inner cities across the country, hip-hop became the voice of a population of youth who were going unnoticed by mainstream institutions (Jones, 1994).

With a distinctive ability to and history of reflecting social conditions in urban settings, hip-hop artists have an opportunity to play a role comparable to a “village oracle, making life comprehensible, defendable, and reachable” (Cummings & Roy, 2008). Connecting with listeners in a way unlike any other musical genre (Watkins 2005), hip-hop is now being used globally to engage with disadvantaged communities concerning social topics such as race (Nuruddin 2004, Pardue 2011, Wright 2004), religion (Banbury 2016, Nasir 2015), gender and sexuality (Armstead 2007, El-Tayeb 2003, Fischer 2012, Nichols 2014, Wilson 2007), politics (Binfield 2009, Bryson 2014), and health (Beaulac, Kristjansson and Calhoun 2011, Munoz-Laboy et al. 2008). Current well-known hip-hop artists like Mos Def, Nas, Lupe Fiasco, and RZA use hip-hop/rap music as a platform to discuss political issues and spread knowledge to listeners (Muhammad 2008). Hip-hop artists have the opportunity to use their notoriety to increase awareness of social conditions, emulating full-time community organizers, activists, and rising politicians (Bynoe, 2008). An ethnographic study on Muslim youth after the September 11 terrorist attacks illustrates how Muslim youth use aspects of hip-hop culture to articulate and engage in dialogue with the community about their human rights struggles and Muslim identity post-9/11 (Nasir 2015). Similarly, LGBTQ hip-hop artists have used hip-hop culture to reconstruct marginalized identities of gay African American men both within majority white LGBTQ spaces and within heterosexual, homophobic hip-hop spaces (Wilson 2007).

### **Hip-Hop Career Motivations: Commerce or Community**

“This concerns the relationship between incomes and achievements, between commodities and capabilities, between economic wealth and our ability to live as we would like.” – Sen (2001)

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<sup>3</sup> On May 6, 2016, the Zulu Nation issued a press release announcing the removal of Afrika Bambaataa from organizational leadership due to the recent surfacing of sexual molestation allegations against Bambaataa (Golding, 2016). A little over a month prior, Ronald Salvage described accounts of being sexually abused by Bambaataa as a teenager during the 1980s (Rys, 2016). As three additional former Zulu Nation members emerged with similar allegations of being molested by Bambaataa, the reputation and intentions of the organization and the leader viewed as a pioneer and icon of the early hip-hop movement was brought into question (Golding, 2016). Resultantly, International and Regional U.S. Zulu Leaders have assumed control over the organization as they commence to restructure and perform an in-depth assessment of how the organization can better serve the community as outlined in the organization’s states beliefs (Rys, 2016).

The incorporation of hip-hop music culture into spheres of politics (Binfield 2009, Bryson 2014), education (Diaz, Fergus and Noguera 2011, Hill 2009), architecture (Cooke 2014, Sarabia 2017, Wilkins 2000), and other essential occupations have increased the visibility of hip-hop/rap music culture in professional discussions. Thus, hip-hop music's increasing presence outside of entertainment fields, coupled with its status as a multi-billion industry, has caused the pursuit of a career as a hip-hop artist to be viewed as an acceptable path to achieving occupational success (Foster 2014, Harding 2010, MacLeod 2009, Smith 2003, Young 2004). However, little research has explored the aspirations of youth who pursue careers in hip-hop music. Conducting an ethnographic study of hip-hop artists at Project Blowed in South Central Los Angeles, Lee (2010) observed the practices aspiring rappers used to cultivate their music skills in order to become successful rap artists, but the study did not characterize individuals' motivations for pursuing such goals. Building upon Lee's (2010) work, Foster (2014) conducted interviews with young Black men involved in hip-hop/rap music production as a means of examining factors that influence individuals rap-centered aspirations, and the pursuit of such aspirations. Foster (2014) found prospective artists were influenced by indirect and explicit familial influences and peer interactions that encouraged them to pursue hip-hop music through affirming messages or instances of collaboration (Foster 2014). Individuals who desired to *go far* endeavored to do so initially for social recognition, but such desires were later supplanted by a more purposeful target of economic stability for themselves and their family (Foster 2014). Even for those who were creating music *just to be doing it*, they originally entertained notions of pursuing a career in hip-hop music production for notoriety and financial attainment.

Foster's (2014) work underscores how even for artists who pursue music for its own sake, fame and fortune can be an influential motivator. Research suggests this might be especially true for youth in disadvantaged communities, where rags-to-riches stories of hip-hop artists overcoming odds of failure to achieve unprecedented success may depict familiar social and cultural frames through which youth can envision social mobility for themselves (Foster 2014, Harding 2010). Therefore, using music as a means to overcome such odds could appeal to youth who experience similar social and economic conditions as many of the hip-hop/rap moguls they see basking in mainstream economic success of hip-hop/rap music (Harding 2010, MacLeod 2009, Smith 2003). A career in hip-hop music production is viewed as a way for young Black males in underprivileged community to achieve social mobility when considering their life chances (Foster 2014, Lee 2010, Strayhorn 2009, Young 2004). Thus, sometime during the 1990's, aspirations and pursuits of a career as a hip-hop artist became an acceptable way to try and achieve occupational success and reach the American Dream (Foster 2014, Harding 2010, MacLeod 2009, Smith 2003, Young 2004).

While being accepted as a path to socioeconomic mobility, a career in hip-hop/rap music production is also simultaneously tethered to notions of social responsibility due to hip-hop/rap music's roots in community engagement. Thus, dichotomized characterizations of individuals' motivations for engaging in hip-hop/rap music production can be generated inasmuch as this tradition pushes aspiring artists to embody ideas of individual propriety or community accountability in their performances as artists. Such categorization of individuals' motivations for pursuing hip-hop/rap music can be used to interpret and validate artists' work as "authentic" or not. Notions of authenticity centered on comparing current hip-hop to original models of hip-hop before it reached mainstream appeal attempt to reject impressions of consumerism in favor of creative expression and communal involvement (Hess 2012). Yet, despite their progressive political use of hip-hop music to promote civic engagement, conscious hip-hop artists may still

promote hip-hop production as a means of upward mobility because of their capacity to capitalize on hip-hop's marketability (Hess 2012, Smith 2003).

Viewed by many to be the father of hip-hop, DJ Kool Herc even acknowledged having financial motives when charging for his infamous parties in the South Bronx that are credited to have inaugurated hip-hop culture during the 1970s (Fricke and Ahearn 2002, Hess 2012). "First, from the day one people sought to get paid...if the opportunities that exist now existed then...the early 'hip-hoppers' would've taken advantage..." Davey D, a hip-hop historian and journalist, proclaims (Davey D). The financial success of The Sugar Hill Gang's 1979 hit "Rapper's Delight" selling two million records upon its release illuminates hip-hop's connection to commerce that dates back to the first decade of its inception (Hess 2012). However, despite its ability to acquire monetary gains, hip-hop was still used as a consciousness raising tool while simultaneously serving as a means of financial fulfillment. But with the net worth of hip-hop artists being well into the millions, hip-hop culture has seen a shift where artists are often dichotomized as either utilizing the music as a means for financial gain or attempting to preserve traditional notions of hip-hop by embracing an anti-commercialism stance that champions the use of hip-hop music as a form of creative expression and communal uplift (Hess 2012). The intention of this study is to contribute to existing conversations on hip-hop career aspiration by further exploring how artists' motivations and intentions for creating music influence their interpretation of the impact of their music on their community.

## **Methods**

This paper draws on data from an ongoing qualitative research study examining hip-hop artists and their embeddedness within local communities. Using in-depth interviews with self-identified hip-hop artists, it explores the connections between artists' motivations for creating music and their views on the impact their music has on their community. Data in the study comes from interviews with 26 self-identified hip-hop/rap artists located in the southern United States. Participants were recruited using flyers calling for self-identified hip-hop artists 18 years or older to participate in an academic research study. Copies of the flyer were posted at libraries, bars, college campuses, and other public venues in the community where music-related events were frequently held. An electronic version of the flyers was listed on virtual bulletin boards and online forums that were specifically targeted towards musicians. Individuals were also contacted through music pages on Facebook. In addition, I personally attended local hip-hop and music events to recruit participants for the study. At the conclusion of each interview, utilizing a snow-ball sampling technique (Babbie 2010), respondents were asked to recommend other artists from their social network who qualified to participate in the study.

Among the 26 artists recruited for the study, all respondents are from the southern United States. The majority (21) came from Louisiana, two from Tennessee, one from Arkansas, one from Georgia, and one Florida. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 53 at the time of the interview. All respondents identified as African American or Black, with the exception of one white female and one white male. A total of four women are included in the study's sample. I began collecting interviews in September 2013 and the last interview for the study was collected in February 2014. I interviewed participants in public spaces such as library meeting rooms or local coffee shops. Interviews lasted anywhere between 30-90 minutes depending on the respondent. For participants who were located outside of my geographical area, interviews were conducted over the phone or using video chat software such as Skype. All interviews were recorded with consent of the participant and all audio recording were transcribed.

An interview guide helped facilitate a progressive conversation about respondents' music, their community, and the relationship between the two. The interview guide included topics such as respondents' early life; how and when they began making music; what they are currently doing regarding music; and their interpretation of the relationship between their music and their community.

Data analysis took place in three steps, using Atlas.ti and Microsoft Excel. First, all interview transcripts were placed into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software package, and data was loosely coded using open codes. General codes such as "getting started [with hip-hop music]", "musical career aspirations and motivations", "music's impact on community", and "motivation for creating music" emerged. Second, I used Microsoft Excel to compile textual data from each general code into separate columns organized by participants. Once all data was integrated into Excel, I then reviewed text for each general code and developed groups of sub-codes. For example, sub-codes that emerged from the general code "getting started [with hip-hop music]" were "friend or family's influence", "being drawn to the culture/idolizing popular artists", "creative/expressive outlet", and "playing musical instruments". Lastly, using sub-codes from the second step, I categorized respondents based upon their expressed motivations for pursuing career aspirations as artists. Results from the general code categories were then compared to one another, resulting in themes that are discussed below.

## **Findings**

During the interview, respondents articulated reasons and motivations behind their interest in pursuing a hip-hop/rap music career. For this paper, interviewees were grouped according to those career motivations. Some participants talked about being motivated by financial attainment, while others articulate non-monetary reasons more closely aligned with the social meaning and use of hip-hop/rap music as a form of community engagement. They are therefore grouped into two categories: artists motivated by meaning-making and financially motivated artists. Analysis of narratives from respondents in each category illustrates the ways in which their motivations for creating music influence how they interpret their production and performance as a hip-hop artist in relation to their community and their role(s) as community-based actors.

### **Perceived Community Impact Among Artists Motivated by Meaning-Making**

When asked why they wanted to pursue music full time, fourteen of the 26 respondents (54%) talked about pursuing hip-hop music for its social meaning and its use for communal engagement. They spoke of using music as a platform to communicate their ideas and thoughts to a mass audience. As Richard, a 23-year-old African American male, describes:

I just want to be heard...Like a lot people that's out now, like they don't know exactly what music is. They just do a whole bunch of stuff to get paid and to like just get income off of it, like you know. It's like basketball players. Like a lot of basketball players now they don't really care for the sport anymore. They care for the paycheck. So that's what you hear a lot in the industry now. I don't care much about that. Only thing I care about is getting heard and actually putting music out there that is worth listening to.

Richard's interest in wanting to be heard and his perception of the lack of music "worth listening to" creates a void he hopes to fill. Richard, like many other artists and hip-hop critics, view hip-

hop in a dichotomy in which individuals who engage in hip-hop production are either in it for monetary benefits or are creating music for reasons that align with the historical context of hip-hop culture in which it was used as a tool for social engagement (Hess 2012). Therefore, Richard's motivation for creating hip-hop music is to provide more genuine hip-hop music void of materialistic influences.

Respondents were attracted to using music as a form of communal engagement based upon their personal experience with hip-hop culture. "Hip-hop was just, it was just bigger than the way of life as in like the subculture. I just liked the music and I gravitated to it and I was in love with the scene and in love with the people," Lawrence explains. Valuing cultural aspects of hip-hop's music scene, Lawrence decided to pursue career aspirations in hip-hop music because he wanted to be a part of creating that same experience he has grown to love. In addition to being attached to hip-hop music culture and wanting to be a part of its creation, other artists further explained they pursue careers as artists in an effort to keep the culture of hip-hop alive. "I'm trying to stay true to the culture of hip-hop as I see it. And so, I think that's, I mean, I think that's what's missing the most," Joseph details. Similar to Richard who feels as if the industry is saturated with artists who are simply creating music for money, Joseph interprets current hip-hop music to lack culture. Therefore, these artists endeavor to create music that is authentic and align with values and aspects of traditional hip-hop/rap music culture as they have experienced it.

Those who pursue music for reasons outside of its monetary benefits (broadly referred to here as "meaning-making") were more likely to articulate a belief that their music has a positive impact on their community. Of the fourteen respondents who said they pursue hip-hop for meaning-making reasons, twelve (or 86%) expressed feeling their music positively impacts their community. Keith, a 31-year-old African American male, sees the impact and influence of his music through the feedback he receives from listeners. He states:

I can see that it definitely has an effect on people from their feedback and them telling me 'I got your CD and I broke it listening to it so can I have another one' you know. 'I know all the words to this, man you really helped me through this situation' or this day or this whatever. So, I know that it has an affect based on the feedback that I get which encourages me to keep doing this.

Similarly, Darren, a 29-year-old African American male shares:

You know I will randomly be in [the community] and run into somebody that I never met before and be like 'oh yeah, I have heard of you, you play with such and such.' So, it seems like to a degree the music is having an effect and the name is being spread around to a degree where people are familiar. It may not necessarily have seen me perform live but they are aware of what I present musically.

Based upon feedback they receive when interacting with those who have heard their music, Keith and Darren interpreted their music has a positive influence on their community. Respondents also went further to express how they wish their impact was even bigger, therefore, motivating them to continue to pursue career aspirations in hip-hop and to release more music. "I wish it had a bigger affect, which is why I am continuing to release music," Keith states.

Respondents also felt their music has a positive impact on their community due to listeners being able to relate to its messages. "[My music] effects the community because I grew up in the



community and going to my music, I don't write stuff, I write stuff I go through, I been through, I lived," Christopher, a 24-year-old African American male explains. Since the content of his music addresses his lived experience in his community, Christopher believes listeners in his community can relate to his music due to their shared experience living in the same geographical area. Likewise, Joseph, uses his music to discuss topics listeners can relate to, but does so from a different perspective. He shares:

So, the whole concept of [my music is to] talk about how drugs affect us. Let's talk about how to, I got a song where I talk about like a revenge murder but it's from the other side of the situation. Not like I'm a killer, killer, and I go home and go to sleep and everything is all good. We are talking about remorse and what led up to it.

For Joseph, not only does he make music that is relatable, but he uses topics that listeners can identify with in order to expose them to different perspectives on issues his listeners may experience. In doing so, he is able to engage with listeners and expose them to ideas and viewpoints that they may not have been cognizant of.

However, not all respondents who are pursuing music for its social meaning identified their music's impact on their community as positive. Even though none of the respondents who are pursuing a career as a hip-hop artist due to its social meaning interpreting their music as having a negative impact on their community, two respondents said they were not sure if their music has *any* impact on their community. For example, Lawrence, a 40-year-old African American male, stated:

Usually a lot of times who [the music's message] is intended for is not necessarily who consumed it the most. I actually say that in a song, like 'depending on tours the people that are on the floor/aren't necessarily the same people that you intended it for.'

Lawrence is unsure if the audience listening to his music is the audience messages in his music are intended for. Similarly, Ashley, a 22-year-old African American female, feels that for her music to have an impact on her community, she must first figure out how to get those in her community to be receptive to the music she creates. She explains,

I would definitely like to think that [my music] is doing something instead of laying here stagnant... I think getting [people in my community] to listen to it is the hardest part. Like getting them to listen to something that is not a part of this [local] inner city type music. That's the hardest.

Since her music is not like music her community is accustomed to listening to, it may be challenging to know if her targeted audience is receptive of her music and messages it carries. Thus, Ashley is unsure if her music is having a positive impact on her community if the audience she intended her music for may not necessarily be as receptive to listening to its messages. Even though they are creating music that is more positive compared to other hip-hop music, which is often viewed as having a largely negative message or impact, Lawrence and Ashley are unsure if messages in their music are reaching the right target audience that will benefit from its meanings and intentions.

### **Perceived Community Impact Among Financially-Motivated Artists**

Out of the 26 respondents interviewed, 12 (or 46%) spoke of pursuing music full time for monetary reasons. When asked what his goals were regarding his music, Anthony, a 29-year-old African American male, shared, “I’m just really trying to be blessed and paying all my bills and live comfortable off it.... I ain’t trying to be in no history book and all this. It’s the money. Just to bless my family and others.” Anthony desires to use hip-hop music as a means to provide for his loved ones. He simply wants to be able to live a content life free from stress and worry of struggling to provide comfortable living conditions for his family. Therefore, Anthony, like other respondents, deem it rewarding and plausible to use their musical abilities and talents to provide such a living. “It’s a sense of fulfillment that I got every time I got to make something or convey an idea through a feeling that I had and using music as the most immediate medium and still get paid for it or get compensated for it,” Simon, a 23-year-old African American male, articulates.

In addition to the economic benefit of creating music, respondents also articulated pursuing music career aspirations for fame. For example, Kenneth, a 23-year-old African American male, explains:

I want to be the greatest. I just want to be up there having a conversation with Jay Z. That’s one of my idols as far as that guy being really amazing. So, I definitely want to be on his level. At that plateau if not right beneath or way beyond if possible. I want to be way better than him and everybody else that think they are on that level. Not saying that he is the best but just in comparison, he gets that respect and I want that respect.

For Kenneth, achieving fame and being respects as other well-known artists motivates him to pursue career aspirations as a hip-hop/rap artist. Similarly, Joshua foresees him and other artists he associates with to have accomplished a level of notoriety within five years’ time. “In 5 years, I think we will be running the game as a unit, like the whole team will be. That’s how I want it to be like you know,” he declares, “coming from the struggle and making it somewhere from nothing, you know”. For Kenneth and Joshua, they are interested in using a career in hip-hop/rap music to attain upward mobility and to obtain respect and a feeling of success that results from climbing the social ladder. For many minority youth, specifically African American males, they may be inclined to pursue other avenues of upward mobility outside of traditional careers, such as music entertainment and sports, because they may interpret the overrepresentation of African American males within such industries as a more easily obtainable careers that will ultimately lead to economic success (Lee et al. 2011).

Five of the twelve respondents (or 42%) who expressed pursuing music for financial reasons interpreted their music’s impact on their community to be negative. For example, even though he chooses not to release certain songs under his artist name due to the impact it will have on the community, Justin, a 29-year-old African American male, still creates music for other artists he knows will have a negative impact on the community:

That’s gone be out there regardless so if you can make a dollar off it, you know, make your money, you know what I’m saying. It’s America, you know. I’m just selling music, then [you] would have to understand that it’s a job, you know. [You]

done worked them jobs before so, you know, it wasn't something that [you] wanted to do but [you] had to do it, you know, and to pay the bills, you know.

Even though Justin decides to only have particular songs related to his name as an artist, he still chooses to create music that potentially has a negative impact on his community and to sell those songs to other artists to release under their name. In doing so, he is protecting his image as an artist while still capitalizing on the marketability of hip-hop music. Overall, he places more benefit in the financial gains accessible to him through creating hip-hop music, compared to the impact music he creates can have on his community.

Other respondents openly release songs under their name, even though they believe it might have a negative influence on the community. Anthony explains, "Yeah, it be on my mind when I write certain songs and do certain things that it might tell me in my heart that this here gone cause problems; as in violence." During the writing process, Anthony realizes that the music he is creating has the potential to cause violence in his community but chooses to release the music anyway. Instead of selling songs that may cause negativity to other artists as Justin does, Anthony chooses to address the suspicions that he has about his music's negative impact by asking God for forgiveness. "I put it out anyway but I ask the Lord that everything will be all right...Not so much that it don't cause the effect because it's gone cause the effect, but that he forgive me for making it," Anthony shares.

Instead of articulating feelings of being unsure if their music is having an impact on their community, three respondents who are financially motivated to pursue music regarded their music to not have any impact on their community. David, an 18-year-old African American male, shares, "I feel like my music, I wouldn't say it has a success yet...But I feel like if I blow up, I feel like my music will have an effect on my community." For David, he considered his music to currently not have any impact on his community due to his status as an aspiring artist. Nevertheless, he suspects once he reaches a higher level of success his music will then have an influence.

The remaining three participants who pursue music for financial reasons articulated they believe their music had a positive impact on their community. However, unlike respondents who pursue music for social meaning providing account of how they interpret their music to have a positive impact on their community due to personal accounts of listeners, participants who pursue music due to monetary motivations defined their positive impact on their community based upon potential they feel their drive and ambition to pursue career aspirations in hip-hop has on others. While those who pursue music for its social meaning express positively influencing the community by engaging in direct dialogue with listeners through their music's lyrical content, those who were pursuing music for financial reasons articulated having a positive influence on their community in a more indirect way. Kelly, a 19-year-old African American female, shares:

In the past couple of months, we have really like opened up eyes in the community because we have been doing shows and everything. And everybody is kind of starting to see like that we are serious about it you know. It's kind of inspiring other people to go out and do stuff too because it's not that hard to go do it if you go out and get it by yourself. So, I would say overall I have a positive effect on the music community, definitely.

Kelly and other respondents described how they felt their music had a positive impact on the community due to the potential of others interpreting their pursuit of music as an illustration of how feasible it is for one to follow and achieve their goals.

### **Artists Connectedness to Community**

Respondents pursuing careers as hip-hop artists due to its social meaning were most likely to provide accounts of having a physical presence in their community outside of their paid jobs. All but one of the respondents in this category (93%) provided accounts of how they were physically active in their community tutoring, mentoring rising hip-hop artist, spending time with youth, or volunteering with community organizations. “I don’t want to be a studio revolutionary. I want to be about that life I’m rapping about,” Joseph states. For these respondents, their desire to use hip-hop as a tool for social engagement extended beyond music they create and is further fulfilled through having a physical presence in their community.

Only one artist pursuing a career as a hip-hop artist for monetary reasons talked about having a physical presence in his community. However, his physical presence in his community seemed to be driven by personal gain of support for his music career and not as a benefit to those in the community. “I just want them behind me, you know,” Joshua explains, “That’s what it’s about. I don’t see no other rappers throwing no crawfish boils. They say they in the ‘hood and they from the ‘hood but they ain’t doing nothing for them, you know.” Seeing the lack of other rapper’s physical presence in the community, Joshua holds community events to acquire support and endorsement from his community. Unlike respondents in other categories, Joshua interprets his physical presence in his community more so as a marketing approach for his personal brand as a hip-hop artist, compared to being physically active in his community for the benefit it provides those on the receiving end.

Upon initial glance, how respondents articulate motivations for pursuing career aspirations in hip-hop music appear to produce different likelihoods of aspiring to foster a meaningful connection to their community that encourages social change. On the surface, it may seem that artists who pursue career aspirations in hip-hop music for its social meaning are more connected with community engagement while those who are pursuing careers in hip-hop for financial reasons are less concerned with community engagement and choose to create music for its personal benefits. However, if examined closely, respondents who are pursuing music for its social meaning and respondents who are pursuing music for monetary reasons are both equally committed to community change—they just have different visions and approaches. Respondents pursuing music for financial reasons interpret community and social change as tied to *financial* contributions, while respondents pursuing music for its social meaning seem to act on perceptions of community and social change occurring via individualized *interactions*.

Seeing social change as embedded in micro-level interactions between individuals, respondents who are pursuing music for non-financial reasons choose to directly engage with listeners via their music as if they are having conversations with each of them. For example, John explains,

[In my music, I] question how guns got here, question how dope got into our communities. Question these things and if you question it I think that will make you think about it enough to where there is a reason other avenues aren’t pushed on you as much. Um, I just want people to think that’s it. Think and believe

something and if my music makes you do that then I think that my purpose was served.

John frames using the lyrical content in his music to engage with listeners as a way to initiate social change in his community. The lyrics of his music are directly focused on influencing listeners to constructively question social conditions of their community in a way that would lead to some form of social action.

Respondents like John were also more likely to report being physically engaged with their community as a means of directly investing in people's day-to-day lives through small, yet effective actions. For example, Lawrence intentionally chooses to be physically present in lives of youth he encounters. He explains, "Just being a Black male and seeing other Black males growing up around here I feel like I just need to peek in some type of way and let them know that I am concerned in some type of way about their well-being." Lawrence's understanding of social change is manifested in personal interactions of community engagement. Therefore, he chooses to actively engage in the lives of young Black men in his community on a daily basis in an effort to show that he is invested in their well-being. Even though Lawrence is simply "peeking in" on youth, being a Black male, Lawrence values those small interactions to be influential in generating social change.

Eric, a 22-year-old African American male, also uses his identity as an artist to have a physical presence in his community. As a part of a music programming in his area, Eric works with urban youth coaching them through the process of writing hip-hop songs. "I really love talking to kids especially the kids who really have a lot of potential but don't have the structure," Eric explains. Using his talents and identity as an artist to engage with youth, Eric is provided a unique opportunity to interact with urban youth that may otherwise be disengaged. In their study examining the use of hip-hop as a form of therapeutic practice for marginalized youth, Heath and Arroyo (2014) found that creating hip-hop music provided therapy patients with a sense of empowerment in a trusting environment. In addition to being involved with nonprofit organizations in their communities, five respondents who are pursuing music for its social meaning also expressed starting community-based organizations. For example, Bryan shares about an organization he started within his community:

It's an organization where we basically focus on young African American males, but we offer help to anyone at risk. But we see African American males growing up without father figures and we try to be father figures. We try to be that mentorship that they need to become a man. So many young men are growing up without even being introduced to a man, so that's why they go out and do the type of things that they do.

Recognizing a void in his community, Bryan establishes an organization that will help provide individual support and guidance he feels young African American males are not otherwise receiving in his community. Eric and Bryan interpret their personal involvement in the lives of youth to serve as an impactful way of directly engaging in social change in their community. Hence, Bryan created a community-based organization to increase the amount of personal interaction in his community.

On the other hand, to initiate meaningful and impactful work, respondents pursuing music for financial reasons interpret the need for community engagement to be more than one-to-one

interactions and to take place through monetary contributions. As Michael, an 18-year-old African American male explains, his music does not have an impact on his community simply because it is not his intended goal: “That’s not my goal. My goal right now is popularity so I can get the money to help my community in a bigger way than just music can,” he shares. For Michael, even though he is pursuing a career in hip-hop/rap music for monetary reasons, his ultimate goal is to use finances he earns from creating music to provide social change in his community. As expounds further:

It’s just a journey to get to a destination, and my destination is to help my community in a huge way. Like I have had plans for years ever since I started getting into rap and knowing that, rap makes it, hip-hop makes it very very clear that rappers get paid. So, I knew that if I became a rapper or something like that, that I would you know be able to do something more than what was expected of me.

Based upon Michael’s expression of being financially motivated to pursue a career as a hip-hop/rap artist and his music lacking an impact on listeners, it may seem as if Michael’s performance as a hip-hop/rap artist is disconnected to his community. However, further explanation reveals Michael’s connection to community to extend beyond his music and is embodied in his overarching goals of pursuing a lucrative career as a hip-hop/rap artist to create social change in his community.

Similarly, Kenneth felt he is not currently in a position where he can give back to his community. “I am not selfish or anything it’s just that it’s a place that I’m headed for and I’m not yet there. So, I mean once I am able to get back in touch with my community then I will,” he shares. Kenneth feels he must first devote his time and attention to reaching a place where he can provide major resources to his community. Therefore, his current lack of on-the-ground activism in his community does not mean he is unconcerned for people’s well-being. Instead, his absence is simply a sacrifice he is making in order to position himself to be able to contribute to his community in a more impactful way in the future.

Alternatively, instead of having a physical presence in their community, two respondents who are pursuing music for monetary reasons shared accounts of financial contributions to their community. Having an aunt who is a council woman, Anthony indicates he and other hip-hop artists he associates with regularly donate significant amounts of money to community causes such as crime stoppers. “I have an auntie, she is a councilman and we have been donating 2 or 3 hundred dollars every month or every other month to like stop the crime and crime stoppers,” he details. Instead of using his music to engage with listeners about the need to end violence in his community, Anthony considers the impact of communal engagement to lie in financial contributions and support of change that influences the structural concerns in his community. As Walter explains:

The main thing about it is that, as an artist who wants to give back you have to realize that enjoying the music and making music for people to relate to is not enough...So, you have to maintain a point to where you are comfortable and then [once you are] in a good spot, you have to give back to the people and go back to the community that you were in. That the community you were in, or even more communities if you have the power to, and set up things that are conducive to the

growth of that community like school and hospitals in areas that don't have medical care.

Walter feels that simply making music will not be enough to effectively address the needs in his community. In order to contribute something that is impactful, he interprets he must first focus on getting himself in a better position as an artist. Then once he has reached a certain status, he will be able to provide his community with the structural help it needs. For Walter and Anthony, effective community development occurs through financial contributions that impact structural elements.

### **Discussion/Conclusion**

This study builds on previous sociological literature on hip-hop music, specifically in relation to the use of hip-hop music as a tool for community engagement and pursuit of social change. Findings indicate that upon initial review, artists seem to be motivated to pursue careers in hip-hop music production for either monetary reasons or for its social meaning. Those motivations then influence how respondents interpret the impact of their music production and performance as artist in connection to their community. Particularly, respondents who are pursuing music for non-monetary reasons are more likely to interpret their music as having a positive impact on their community. In addition, they are also more likely to currently be involved in their community in some form of direct, hands-on activism like mentoring younger aspiring hip-hop/rap artists or providing tutoring service. Meanwhile, those who are pursuing music for financial reasons are less likely to interpret their music to have a positive impact on their community, and are not as likely to be engaged in direct activism in their communities as those who pursue music for its social meaning. Instead, they feel they are not currently in a place where they can provide their community with the type of resources they consider their community to need.

As contemporary hip-hop artists, individuals confront a binary that challenges them to navigate the tensions between upholding the historic connections of hip-hop music to community engagement while simultaneously considering factors that were not relevant to early hip-hop artists. With the hip-hop music industry now generating millions of dollars each year, current artists encounter decisions and choices that early hip-hop artists could not conceive. Similar to Tonnies (1887) paradigm of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, initial findings corroborate how the commercialization of hip-hop music and how the profitability of hip-hop music production has placed artists motivations on polarizing ends creating a forced dichotomization of individuals' motivations for pursuing career aspirations as a hip-hop artist. While *Gemeinschaft* conceptualizes residents' social interactions that embody a sense of togetherness and group solidarity symbolized by rural settings, *Gesellschaft* references individuals concern for their personal well-being and attainment within a capitalistic society exemplified by urban settings (Christenson 1984, Miner 1952, Tonnies 1887). Mutually exclusive characterization of artists' motivations for pursuing music often push individuals to choose between using their position as artists to achieve personal financial attainment or to align themselves with the historical social meaning of hip-hop/rap music culture; eradicating options to do both.

However, as seen through the folk-urban continuum (Bernard 1973, Miner 1952), the two concepts do not have to function as dichotomous paradigms and should instead be viewed as a collection or range of coexisting values. Thus, findings in this study reveal that artists who are motivated by meaning-making and those who are financially motivated to pursue a career in hip-hop/rap music are exemplifying connections to community. They are merely doing so utilizing

different approaches to community engagement. How they interpret their production of music and performance as artists in relation to their community may vary, but they are equally dedicated to impacting their community in a meaningful way. Respondents in this study report that even though they may be pursuing career aspiration in hip-hop music for financial attainment and are more likely to think their music has no impact on community (or a negative one), they still endeavor to use their position and influence as hip-hop artist to initiate influential work for social change. Instead of being in opposition to those who choose to use their music to engage with listeners and who maintain a physical presence in their community via various forms of hands-on, personal interactions, respondents who pursue music for financial reasons aim for financial contributions to community development.

Results from this study highlight the presence and implications of various approaches to social engagement and community development on an individual level within hip-hop music productions and performance, and the multidimensionality of artist's motivations for pursuing music careers. Due to the genre's historical use as a tool for communal engagement (Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012, Nasir 2015, Nuruddin 2004, Watkins 2005, Wright 2004), results in this study suggest artists are continuing to pursue similar long-term implications of utilizing hip-hop as a means of achieving social change in ways their immediate surface-level motivations might not suggest. Even though all artists may not be engaging with their community through musical content and having a physical presence in their communities, they still utilize resources accessible to them as a by-product of their hip-hop music production to help initiate social change in their communities. They are just guided by different interpretations of the type of contributions that generate social change.

As residents of the post-Civil Rights South, respondents in this study have a unique lived experience due to their locale of being surrounded by constant reminders of the Civil rights era such as the presence of plantations or monuments that cause southern residents to “constantly [have] one foot in the present and one foot out (Bradley 2014).” Thus, southerners still maintain an interaction with the past in distinctive ways that may serve as a source of inspiration for artists to interact and engage with their community through their music. While respondents articulate their use of various approaches to community engagement, they are also illustrating their unique lived experience as artists located in the post-Civil Rights South. As southerners, respondents are navigating intersections of a rural southern experiences as they merge with an urban existence in which unresolved economic, social, and political concerns endure (Robinson 2014). These artists use hip-hop music production as a creative space to interact with their unique lived experiences while simultaneously choosing, or not choosing, to engage in efforts to reduce the presence or influences of environmental factors present in their communities. With social concerns more prevalent in southern cities and spaces - lower performing education systems and greater Black-White educational achievement gaps (Camera 2016, Morris and Monroe 2009), higher rates of poverty (Mekouar 2015), and high rates of chronic disease and poor health outcomes (Artiga and Damico 2016) – southern artists may be confronted with outcomes and occurrences of undesirable community conditions more commonly in their lived experience when compared to non-southern artists. As Robinson (2014) explains, “Black southerners respond to structural and social changes through art, culture, and identity practices that affirm the region while calling out its faults (pg197).” In addition, southern residents are viewed to have a greater sense of belonging and attachment to notions of community when compared to non-southern residents (Robinson 2014, Sarig 2007).



These findings necessitate a more nuanced discussion of various environmental and socioeconomic factors that influence how artists choose to engage with their community; through personal interactions or through financial contributions. This study's sample was limited to mostly Black males in the southern United States. Therefore, with hip-hop's music's popularity and consumption amongst a diverse audience including individuals from various social and economic backgrounds (Bennett 1999, Cutler 2008, Kitwana 2005), future research could also explore motivations of non-Black persons who pursue career aspirations in hip-hop/rap music production and the ways in which non-Black artists use their music to engage with their community. Investigating how notions of collective or individual social responsibility is perceived and performed by artists who are members on non-Black communities could be illuminating. Such research would be able to further clarify the influence of external elements on individuals' connection to their community in relation to their pursuit of a career in hip-hop/rap music.

Placing artists in mutually exclusive categories causes a binary in which one group is viewed as more authentic and loyal to the genre's historical context than the other. However, history shows the presence of both financial benefit and social implications of hip-hop music have coexisted since DJ Kool Herc first utilized the 'merry-go-round' technique at block parties in the South Bronx during the early '70s (Chang 2005, Fricke and Ahearn 2002, Hess 2012). Thus, instead of viewing artists via conflicting attractions to career aspirations in hip-hop music, artists should be viewed in terms of their shared commitment to their community. Individuals should not feel pressure to choose between using their position as artists as a means to either maximize the social implication of hip-hop through its traditional use or to alternatively use hip-hop music productions as a means of financial mobility. Relieving such tensions will provide more artists with encouragement and support needed to continue to initiate social change and to contribute to their communities in ways they interpret to be meaningful and impacting.

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## **CHAPTER 5: “I JUST WANT TO SEE YOU SHINE SON”: FOSTERING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL THROUGH HIP-HOP ARTISTS’ MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Introduction**

Studies show that successful transition from adolescents to adulthood requires the formation of positive relationships with community adults (Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins 2005) and that non-kin community adults play a significant role in the successful development of youth - specifically Black youth (Richardson 2012). Through the development of social ties and connections with community members and social organizations, individuals gain access to knowledge and resources that enhance their life choices and chances (Bourdieu 1986, Coleman 1988, Portes 2000, Putnam 1995, Sampson, Morenoff and Earls 1999). Therefore, a mixture of social relationships and networks within urban families and communities have served as a source of support in the successful development of inner-city youth, as a result of familial and cultural modification strategies of dealing with unemployment, drug addition, violence, infectious diseases, and mass incarceration rates (Beam, Chen and Greenberger 2002, Green 2014, Richardson 2009, Richardson 2012). Parents attempt to engage Black youth in community related programs where they can interact with community adults who promote resiliency and expose them to cultural knowledge as a means of increasing the social status of Black youth – cultivating both social and cultural capital in the process. Such programs include, but are not limited to, organized sports, after-school activities, summer enrichment courses, or mentoring programs led by adults who can relate to their cultural and socioeconomic experiences. Research on youth programs of this nature find sports coaches and other community adult leaders to act as a source of risk reduction and to confer a sense of self-identity among youth participants (Brooks 2009, Green 2014, Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins 2005, Richardson 2012).

Although previous research has assessed the cultural significance of positive youth relationships with community adults within the context of sports programs and educational institutions, little to no research has discussed such mentoring relationships as a site for social and cultural capital utilizing the context of hip hop music. A small body of research on contemporary hip-hop artists suggest that artists frequently interact and engage in community-based organizations that foster a space for mentoring relationships to develop, and that the use of hip-hop music production often provides them with a creative alternative to drugs and violence (Lee 2016). In addition, hip-hop music has been used in education fields as a form of cultural capital to support their academic success (Diaz 2011, Emdin and Lee 2012, Hill 2009, Wimberly 2013). Therefore, this exploratory study seeks to contribute to the growing social science literature that seeks to identify strengths of mentoring relationships in Black communities within the context of hip-hop and rap artists. Using in-depth interviews with self-identified hip-hop artists, I illuminate the presence of mentoring relationships between artists and identify the ways in which hip-hop music is used to nurture social and cultural capital amongst participants.

### **Conceptualizing Social and Cultural Capital**

Building on Tocqueville’s (1835) observations on life in America, there are now various conceptualizations and uses of social capital in social science literature (Portes 1998). For this study, I conceptualize social capital as social ties, and their resulting developments such as networks, norms, trust, and reciprocity, that help provide individuals with benefits through access

to information and other resources that enhance life choices and outcomes (Bourdieu 1986, Coleman 1988, Portes 2000, Putnam 1995, Sampson, Morenoff and Earls 1999). Through social ties and connections to both kin and non-kin, such relationships collectively organize standards and responsibility for upholding institutionally defined appropriate behaviors. (Coleman 1988, Vryonides 2007). The use of social capital is vital in gaining access to knowledge, information, values, skills, and standards that have the ability to increase one's life chances – other forms of capital (Wimberly 2013). Functioning as relationships between individuals that are constructed to create resources, social capital incorporates both formal and informal networks that provide advantages for the individual as well as the community as a whole (Coleman 1988, Freitag 2003, Sullivan 1997). Social capital can be acquired and reproduced as a mean of maintaining social inequality between groups, hindering an individual's social mobility, when combined with other forms of capital – specifically cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986, Bourdieu and Passeron 1997, Vryonides 2007).

Extending Marx (1867) economic concept of capital to symbolisms of culture, Bourdieu (1977) reasons cultural capital to be the foundation of social life and to determine an individual's social status. Elements such as taste, clothing, mannerisms, and skills collectively compile cultural capital that is manifested in three forms – embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. The more cultural capital an individual has the higher their social status. Embodied cultural capital is manifested in dialects and mannerisms, while objectified forms are represented in tangible items such as cars and clothes, and institutionalized forms are obtained through education and certifications (Bourdieu 1986). Serving as a “sense of group consciousness and collective identity”, cultural capital provides resources and strategies that aim to support the advancement of the entire group (Franklin 2002:177). Challenging traditional notions of cultural capital, Yosso (2005) builds on the work of Oliver and Shapiro (1995) to highlight ways in which communities of color exhibit an “array of knowledges, skills, abilities, and contacts” that often go unrecognized and acknowledged by mainstream cultural institutions (Yosso 2005:69). Due to racial discrimination and inadequate chances for social mobility, minority groups assert culturally distinctive approaches to structural opportunities (Carter 2003, Ogbu 1974).

Examining cultural capital in African American communities, Franklin (2002) explains how cultural capital is a significant source of support in African American school and institutional programming. “Black people share their cultural capital with one another and develop their social capital (Black social capital) for survival and success in a segregated world bounded by the omnipresent forces of racism and discrimination – forces that limit their opportunities beyond the Black community,” Morris (2004) clarifies (pg102). Thus, African Americans are eager to support programs and institutions they feel are effective in nurturing such abilities as a means of furthering the advancement of the collective group. Contributing their “time, energies, and financial and material resources” (Franklin 2002:178), African Americans have been traditionally known to collectively work together to generate resources needed to satisfy social, political, or economic shortages in their community – breeding cultural capital (Savage 2002). Individuals are then equipped with the ability to overcome instances of social inequality through the use of capital that is culturally relevant to their social experience and needs (Morris 2004). In addition, cultural capital can signify inclusion or exclusion within groups (Bourdieu 1986, Bourdieu and Passeron 1997, Lamont and Lareau 1988) and may be used by minority groups to authenticate ethnic identities through the formation of racial boundaries (Carter 2003, Clay 2003). Through the use of specific knowledges, behaviors, and credentials, cultural capital is used to establish identity



markers (Clay 2003). Such forms of cultural capital are sustained and validated through social ties and connections with others who display legitimized racial indicators.

Evidence suggests that social networks and ties are a significance factor in how parents foster resilience among urban youth, and to serve as a resource for interpersonal assistance when needed (Richardson 2012, Sommerfeld and Bowen 2013, Wells 2008). Social capital is sought through the use of religions institutions, organized sports, after-school programs, and summer enrichment activities as a site social interaction that provides Black youth with beneficial capital development that is limited in urban communities due to racial segregation, high unemployment rates, urban violence, drug addiction, and poor health (Brown and Brown 2003, Delgado-Gaitan 2001, Green 2014, Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins 2005, Jayakumar, Vue and Allen 2013, Lauer et al. 2006, Richardson 2012, Savage 2002, Sommerfeld and Bowen 2013). With parents and educators being the primary agents of capital, lacking awareness and means of increasing youth's attainment of capital hinders their potential for success (Orr 2003, Sommerfeld and Bowen 2013). Therefore, programs targeted toward Black youth attempt to serve as a space to foster youth development outside of the classroom and provide participants with access to beneficial social assets through positive non-kin relationship ties. Through such programs, older community adults who are more experienced in some area offer guidance to youth who are less experience, developing an emotional connection characterized as a mentoring relationship (DuBois and Karcher 2013, Munson and McMillen 2008, Zimmerman, Bingenheimer and Notaro 2002).

Engaging in mentoring relationships with adults who share their social and cultural experiences, mentees tend to experience an increased sense of self-identity and purpose (Green 2014, Hurd et al. 2012, Rhodes 2005, Sanchez et al. 2014). In addition, mentoring relationships can also assist racial minority mentees with needed resources to overcome incidences of oppression (Sanchez et al. 2014). Thus, programs that foster mentoring relationships with community adults provide mentees with skills that assist them in navigating relevant social and cultural institutions, and result in higher goal and aspirational development (Green 2014). Following Yosso (2005) insistence that communities of color become empowered to use assets readily available to them, a multitude of research has explored spaces in which social and cultural capital is developed and reproduced by racial minorities and urban residents (Al-Fadhli and Kersen 2010, Furstenberg and Kaplan 2004, Green 2014, Harding 2010, Richardson, Lawrence-Brown and Paige 2004, Richardson 2012, Sommerfeld and Bowen 2013). However, such studies have been largely limited to such presence and occurrences in the context of educational institutions and organized sports programs. Thus, this study attempts to contribute to the literature on how hip-hop music culture is used in Black communities as a way of fostering social and cultural capital using mentoring relationship.

### **The Social Significance of Hip-Hop Music**

The history of hip-hop culture's inception is an ideal illustration of how communities of color develop networks and ties capable of producing valuable resources that facilitate the advancement of an entire group. Rundown by the after thought of deindustrialization and urban renewal, the South Bronx in the early 1970's is easily characterized by unemployment, violence, and the oppression of predominantly African American and Latino residents (Chang 2005, Ogbur 2007, Perkins 1996). Channeling their skills and abilities into more positive outlets, youth of color in the South Bronx facilitated, coordinated, and cooperated to develop a culture that added value to their collective socioeconomic experience as marginalized residents (Bourdieu 1986, Kosanovich 2012, Perkins 1996, Sullivan 1997). As the popularity of hip-hop culture grew, it

materialized to embody a set of knowledges, practices, and networks that were going unrecognized by mainstream cultural outlets (Chang 2005, Jones 1994, Yosso 2005).

With youth's increased interest in hip-hop and the resulting decline in gangs and violence, the culture of inner-city youth began to develop social networks to help offset their experiences of oppression and marginalization. Participation in hip-hop culture also served as a form of identity development for minority youth who were in need of acceptance and affirmation as the Black Panther and Puerto Rican Nationalist movements began to lose steam (Clay 2003). Afrika Bambaataa, an ex-warlord of the infamous Black Spades gang, led the charge of encouraging youth to use their energies to uplift the community instead of destroying it (Chang 2005, Kosanovich 2012). Bambaataa and his messages of "Peace, Love, Unity, and Having Fun" soon garnered a cult following, as Bambaataa used influences from New Orleans Black Mardi Gras group Zulu Krewe and the 1964 movie *Zulu* to conceive hip-hop's first organization – The Zulu Nation (Chang 2005, Nation 2014). Intentionally incorporating messages of Black solidarity, The Zulu Nation constructed and maintained boundaries of racial identity. It provided a space for hip-hop artists – b-boys, b-girls, emcees, and graffiti writers, deejays - to connect and bond with other artists who shared similar knowledges, behaviors, and preferences, acting as a site for social and cultural capital to be cultivated and developed (Clay 2003, Kosanovich 2012). Such connections and utilizations of social networks still exist today amongst contemporary hip-hop artists.

In his study of hip-hop artists in South Central Los Angeles, Lee (2016) observed how young rappers gather weekly to participate in hip-hop music production at Project Blowed, and use the site to foster a space of creativity and refine artistic skills and abilities in an environment typically characterized by gangs and violence. Project Blowed provide opportunities for aspiring hip-hop artists to be exposed to mentoring relationships with older hip-hop artists as a way of not only socializing less-experienced rappers to the technical aspects of music, but also to encourage the use of creativity and the arts over disturbance (Lee 2016). The manifestation of social and cultural capital in the context of hip-hop social interactions as illustrated at Project Blowed, expose the significance of mentoring relationships amongst hip-hop artists as a reputable site for positive youth development in Black communities.

Following in the footsteps Africa Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation, prominent hip-hop artists have also begun to develop mentoring programs with the mission of assisting aspiring artists with familiarity and competence of maintaining a hip-hop career. Having over a decade of experience in the music industry as a hip-hop artist, Young Jeezy, an native of Atlanta, GA, provides rising artists with feedback on their music along with personalized guidance on navigating the music industry (Torres 2017). "It was important for me to give back to the community in this way because a lot of this [music] is about information and knowledge of this game we in," Young Jeezy tells XXL magazine (Torres 2017). Similar to the ways in which parents attempt to provide adolescents with exposure to social capital that will increase their development and provide access to social and cultural capital to assist in navigating mainstream institutions (Morris 2004), Young Jeezy, and other artists, endeavor to provide aspiring artists with information and advice on achieving success despite perceived barriers and impeding circumstances. However, hip-hop music as a site to foster social and cultural capital has been understudied.

## **Methods**

As part of a larger project that examines hip-hop artists and their connection to their community, this study uses data from 24 in-depth interviews with self-identified [Black and/or

African-American] rap and hip-hop artists located in the southern United States. Of the 24 participants, 21 were men and 3 women. At the time of the interview, respondents ranged from 18 to 53 years of age – with 26 being the average. Respondents for the study were recruited using flyers that were posted in libraries, community centers, college campuses, bars, music related on-line message boards, and venues where music events were frequently held. Flyers called for self-identified hip-hop and rap artists to participate in a research study on artists and their connection to their community. Participants were also recruited using a snowball sampling technique (Babbie 2010) in which respondents were asked to identify and recommend additional artists they felt would qualify for the study. There was no compensation for interviews, and individuals' participation was completely voluntary.

IRB-approved interviews were conducted in public spaces such as library meetings rooms, bookstores, or coffee shops, and lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and a half. When more convenient for participants, interviews were also conducted using video chat services such as Skype and Google Hangout, or over the phone. During the interview, an interview guide was used to help facilitate a progressive conversation with respondents. The guide covered topics such as how respondents began creating music, what they were doing at the time of the interview in regard to music, their future plans and goals in reference to their music, and their perceived connection between their music and their community. With the consent of participants, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software, interview transcripts were reviewed and labeled using preliminary codes that emerged such as artists' community involvement, their description of both familial and non-familial relationships, the influence of such relationships on their music, and their interactions with their community. During this period of open coding, codes such as "being a mentor", "non-music related mentoring", "receiving musical support", "having a mentor", "supporting other artists", and "developing mentoring relationship" were used to organize participants' responses. With the use of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), an open-ended approach to the data was taken with the hypothesis being modified as the analysis progressed. Starting out with the assumption of hip-hop artists having strong connections to one another and forming close knit relationships with other artists as they pursue their musical career, I initially set out to explore interactions between hip-hop and rap artists and networks that develop among individuals with common goals of furthering their careers as artists. Therefore, contextual data that was labeled with the code "mentoring" were transferred from Atlas.ti to Microsoft Excel in order to visually review all mentoring related data collectively. Responses were then reviewed and organized by descriptions of being mentored and mentoring others. Using the two categories, I examined the ways in which respondents discussed the occurrence of mentoring relationships, how they were initiated, and the benefits of such relationships.

Respondents spoke of individuals they encountered during their musical career who had an influence on the direction they have taken as artists. Relationships participants described aligned with definitions of relationships discussed in mentoring literature – formal mentoring relationships, informal (natural) mentoring relationships, and peer mentoring relationships. Thus, data gathered from interviews were ultimately coded using three emergent themes: being a mentor, having a mentor, and engaging in peer mentoring relationships. The theme "being a mentor" included sub-codes encompassing various ways in which respondents described relationships with others who may be younger with less experience, and who they provide support and advice. The theme "having a mentor" included sub-codes embodying artists' explanation of relationships in which other individuals who may be older with more experience providing respondents with

support and advice. The last theme “engaging in peer mentoring relationships” includes sub-codes describing respondents’ relationships with other artists who may be on the same level musically as they are, but a relationship where support and advice is mutually shared and exchanged. As I reviewed the codes and sub-codes in search of a connecting theme, I observed how artists’ description of mentoring relationships and their interactions with other hip-hop artists illustrated concepts of social and cultural capital. Respondents’ narratives were then organized based on their portrayal of such forms of capital.

## **Findings**

### **Hip-Hop Music as a Form of Cultural Capital**

For most of the artists in the study, hip-hop music was a soundtrack to their early lives growing up. Respondents described accounts of writing poetry, freestyling with friends, or simply being introduced to hip-hop through the increasing presence of hip-hop music videos on television shows such as Yo! MTV Raps and BET Rap City: The Basement. “I was 5 years old and they had me rapping LL Cool J. Just really, I mean really a child of Rap City, Yo MTv raps loving and watching it,” describes Joseph. Numerous respondents told personal accounts of their earliest memories involving hip-hop music. Their anecdotes portrayed the various ways in hip-hop culture was a part of their everyday lived experiences, thus, initiation an attraction to hip-hop music culture. As Lawrence explains, “hip-hop was just, it was just bigger than the way of life as in like the subculture. I just liked the music and I gravitated to it and I was in love with the scene and in love with the people.” Similarly, John also accounts how he was drawn to being a hip-hop artist based upon his admiration of popular hip-hop artists:

In the beginning it’s this, I think it is about you idolizing people, you know. I was a huge Pac fan when I was younger which might have got me into like poetry. Um, in high school I liked Jay-Z. I remember his, when he dropped Blueprint in 2001. That was crazy. Um, Nas. I was always a fan. It was just looking up to people.

Hip-hop artists provided respondents with idols they could culturally identify with, and equipped respondents with identifiable representations within mainstream media outlets. Many mainstream hip-hop artists represent the ability of marginalized individuals to overcome adverse socioeconomic conditions many inner-city youth can relate to (Harding 2010, MacLeod 2009, Smith 2003). In addition, studies have found that listeners are attracted to hip-hop music due to its ability to provide messages they understand by virtue of its life affirming counter-narrative to mainstream cultural values (Mahiri and Conner 2003).

Due to the motivations and encouragement of friends and family, respondents further expressed that it wasn’t until around high school or college that they began to take music more seriously as an artist and began to record music and start to perform at local events such as talent shows and open mic events. Either their friends or family were actively creating music and pushed respondents to join them, or after hearing the respondent’s poetry or freestyles their friends or family would encourage them to pursue it even more. Keith details:

I was good friends with a guy who was performing...I would go to a lot of their concerts whenever they would have them and a lot of their events. I just went a lot and I think out from that just came inspiration to write a poem...but I didn’t really have ambition to really perform or anything like that...But they really encouraged

me to take it further. They thought it was really good, you know I never really thought that much of it...But like I said it was really their encouragement to take it to a different power.

Family and close friends are a great source of support and are vital to the development of both social and cultural capital in the lives of African American youth (Coleman 1988, Furstenberg 2001, Richardson 2009, Taylor et al. 1990). Serving as the first source of agency (Green 2014, Savage 2002), families and close friends affirm respondents culturally valued behaviors and musical taste (Carter 2003). Such encouragement and validation foster cultural capital that serves as a basis for social inclusion and authenticates their Black identity (Clay 2003). Thus, cultural capital manifested in the context of hip-hop music helps recipients gain a sense of self-identity while also reinforcing particular talents, abilities, and credentials (Carter 2003, Clay 2003, Coleman 1988, Wimberly 2013).

In addition to familial ties, relationships and associations with non-kin adults are critical in the identity development of racial minority adolescents (Carter 2003, Clay 2003, Richardson 2009). Out of the twenty-four respondents interviewed, 12 respondents (50%) expressed currently having, or having, had a non-kin mentor at some point in their musical career who was older, more experienced and who provides some form of advice or guidance. Once mentoring relationships develop, artists described receiving valuable advice about further honing their skills. Mentors also provided emerging artists with knowledge and direction about the business aspect of creating hip-hop music. Explaining benefits of guidance he received from more experienced artists earlier in his career, Darren reveals:

Those guys definitely kind of brought me along and allowed me to see different gigs. [They] just kind of took me under their wing. [I] learned a lot about studio etiquette and the business side of the music and being able to put your best foot forward.

Through his relationship with more experienced artists, Darren was exposed to behaviors, norms, and interactional styles that are needed to navigate the business side of the music industry. More experienced artists serve as gatekeepers to hip-hop music related knowledge and symbolic goods, allowing rising artists like Darren to acquire attributes and customs that signify his ability to achieve success. Thus, Darren's relationship and association with those artists provide him with cultural capital that allows him to "put his best foot forward" through the adoption of practices that promote social mobility within the music industry. Darren's description of such relationships exposes how hip-hop music produces cultural capital, through the use of social capital, as certain values and norms, such as those embodied in the music business and studio etiquette, are learned and validated – enabling artists to be more successful (Gaurntlett 2011, Wimberly 2013).

### **Opportunities for Social Capital Formation in Local Hip-Hop Scene(s)**

The majority of mentoring relationships respondents described were initiated naturally with individuals they would meet and/or encounter frequently as regulars on the hip-hop music scene in their local cities. "Usually [I meet people] at a show and that's the first hello or maybe it's like a, you exchange information and they come through the studio or I come through their studio," states Eric. Finding mentors through local hip-hop scenes provide respondents with access to networks and individuals who are familiar and understand the cultural and social factors that

artists' encounter in their pursuit of a hip-hop music career. It is these hip-hop related spaces that foster opportunities for mentorship to naturally emerge, and acts as a source for social capital respondents are not exposed to elsewhere (Gauntlett 2011, Sullivan 1997).

Many of the mentoring relationships artists described provide encouragement and support to continue pursuing and creating music. Ashley describes:

[My mentor] is a motivator when it comes to getting stuff done. You know he is definitely one of perfecting your craft. "You know you got to keep working at it, you got to be a student of the music." That's what he is always saying, "you got to be a student of the music."

Ashley receives motivation to continue refining her craft as an artist. Even though her mentor provides her with general support, the inspiration her mentor provide helps her stay focused and motivated as an artist. Likewise, Christopher, a 24-year-old Black male, expresses how the motivation he receives from mentors encourage him to continue making music. He explains: "I get emails, you know, calls telling me to push... That kind of motivate me to just want to do it more. It kind of get, it kind of touch me, you know what I'm saying, you know just keep doing more music." For Christopher, he articulates the importance of his mentoring relationship in terms of the strength he receives to continue to create music despite any barriers he may encounter along the way. Having someone whom they trust and who in return believes in their ability to achieve success acts as a stimulus, often times increasing mentees goals and aspirations for themselves (Franklin 2002, Green 2014, Richardson 2012, Sanchez et al. 2014, Yosso 2005).

Other respondents who articulated not having an individual they identify as a mentor still expressed occasionally interacting with more experienced artists, but not having consistent communication with those individuals. For example, John shares:

I pick people's brains all the time. I meet artists that are signed, or kind of right at that point, and I pick people's brains. But I don't have like one person that mentors me. I just try to soak up as much as I can from conversations I have when people are giving me tips or whatever advice they can.

For John, even though he does not have one particular person he can identify as a mentor, he takes advantage of social interactions he has with more experienced artists by soliciting tips and advice. "The advantages an individual gains from having greater amounts of social capital are inherently the results of interactions with other people over time," Furstenberg and Kaplan (2004:220) affirm. Thus, being able to engage in positive social interactions within the context of hip-hop music still aids John, and other emerging artists, in the development of trust, norms, and habits that contribute to social capital development (Wimberly 2013). In addition, having access to such social interaction and ties to more experienced artists through local hip-hop scenes provide John, and other aspiring artists, with the ability to receive relevant information on hip-hop music production – increasing their chances of achieving greater success and social mobility.

Even if respondents did not identify specific individuals who they would consider to be a mentor or a mentee, some however speak of peer mentoring relationships with other artists that provided them with beneficial social interactions and network ties. In these peer mentoring relationships, there is an exchange of support and guidance between themselves and other artists who have similar levels of experience. Fifteen respondents (63%) articulated being a part of such

an exchange in which peer mentorship took place. Malcolm explains, “You know I guess you can call it peer to peer mentoring. I have a friend [who lives close by] and he is usually my harshest critic. Which I love, I love the fact that he is always so harsh. But he has sort of been like a peer mentor.” For Malcolm, he may not have a mentoring relationship with a more experienced artist who is providing him with guidance and advice, but he does have a relationship with a peer who provides support and feedback to help hone his skills. Access to such social interactions and associations serves as a resource for artist to draw on, offering emotional encouragement and guidance in their time of need (Deo and Griffin 2012, Moschetti et al. 2017).

Out of the twenty-four respondents, eleven (46%) described cases in which they were associated with a group of artists or a record label. When describing their relationship with group members, artists articulated instances where communal contributions of uplift and inspiration occurs. For example, Anthony detailed how artists on the record label he is affiliated with meet regularly to discuss their music. He shares, “We have roundtable talks. I will say that that helps because we have roundtable talks about what the goal is and what achievements we work straight to that. So that help me stay focused.” Having a space where he can share his goals with a group of people who can help provide him with accountability is beneficial to Anthony. Engaging in peer mentoring relationship is seen to be an advantage over traditional mentoring relationships, in that there is enhanced learning and support due to the absence of a sense of authority (Smith 2011). Without the presence of an older figure who is deemed to be wiser, peer mentors may be more willing and comfortable to engage in influential dialogue with peers, mimicking the social and cognitive development input among siblings (Baker and Smith 2009, Brody et al. 2003, Smith 2011). Therefore, the round table discussions act as a safe space for Anthony and the other artists to provide authentic exchange of both support and criticism that may not take place between an older mentor and younger mentee. It is believed that such interactions with peers are as equally, or more, effective as engaging in social interactions with more experienced adults (Smith 2011).

### **Using Hip-Hop Music Mentoring Relationships to Cultivate Social and Cultural Capital**

Social capital often “instill social responsibility, civic engaging, mutual obligation, interpersonal trust, and reciprocity” (Richardson 2012:185). Thus, experiencing the benefits of networks and social ties, other artists were invested in providing the same advantages to youth in their community by being a mentor. As a result of the social capital he acquired performing in other locations, Lawrence observed progressive environments for artists, which he felt was lacking in his local area. “I started touring and what not and I would go into places and see how they had things set up and the opportunities for hip-hop artists and I would come back and kind of compare it and notice that we don’t have that same infrastructure as these places,” he explains. Therefore, Lawrence created a space where artists could come to be strengthened and encouraged, and simultaneously also expanded their social worlds and networks. Developing a weekly showcase for aspiring artists, Lawrence endeavors to help individuals in his community to become familiar with presentation and the performance aspect of being an artist. He explains:

Being that I didn’t really have anyone sitting down and talking with me about what direction I needed, to say the things that I need to do, to establish myself and conduct myself properly. I do a lot of that and I try to be that for folks that are taking it seriously but may not know the right way to do it. So, I end up kind of having to be a mentor to a lot of folks around here.

Due to Lawrence never having an individual he considered a mentor, he purposefully created a space where artist could interact with one another and to provide them with the type of cultural capital he felt was missing earlier in his music career. By establishing a positive space where social interaction between hip-hop artists could take place, Lawrence created opportunities for artists to come together in a way that builds them up and networks can be formed between artists and local community members (Coleman 1988, Lee 2016).

Attending Lawrence's weekly showcases, another respondent, Joseph, was able to establish a connection with Lawrence that he feels was beneficial to his growth as an artist and as an individual. Joseph states:

I been blessed to be mentored by this guy name [Lawrence], he has had like the longest running hip-hop show in [the area] for 10 years. But he has been from South Africa to Budapest, like he has been all over the world, and he is very wise. He has been mentoring me, gave me a whole lot of game.

Due to Lawrence's sense of obligation and reciprocity of being exposed to the developmental benefits of social capital, Lawrence actively organized opportunities to mentor aspiring artists like Joseph. Through that mentoring relationship, Joseph's ties and connection with Lawrence provided him access to valuable sources of knowledge and experience that contributed to Joseph's growth as an artist and as an individual.

Two other respondents in the study also illustrated the benefits of being exposed to such forms of social and cultural capital at Lawrence's showcase, with one explicitly referring to him as an elder statesman in the community. Darren shares:

He is someone who has been directly involved within the [local] hip-hop community for many years. He gave a lot of us, he gave myself, our first start. He was a person that has continued opening doors for hip-hop emcees across the city as far as being able to do events like [my own], and allow us to be able to have that entrepreneurial spirit where we can just say "ok, I am going to book this show and then I'm going to promote it and get people to come out," instead of taking the artists' role. He kind of laid that foundation and that ground work for a lot of us.

Not only were artists able to increase their social interaction with other artist, but through their mentoring relationship with Lawrence, they obtained skills and abilities that afforded them access to cultural capital that aided in their success of furthering their music careers. As Kenneth affirms, "[Lawrence] is the cat the put me on and helped me get my name out."

Mentoring relationships artists described were not limited to music production. Respondents also illustrated how they used hip-hop music as gateway through which general forms of mentoring relationships were initiated with youth in their local community. Joseph explains:

Regardless, when you were like a teenager or elementary school age kid, regardless of what type of music you make if you tell a kid, like kids don't even want to be basketball players no more. Everybody want to rap. So, with the kids that give you a whole 'nother level of credibility or what have you. So, I want to use that, whether I am getting paid to do it or it's voluntary bases.



A fundamental characteristic of mentoring relationships is the existence of mutual trust between the mentee and the mentor (Larson 2006, Richardson 2012). Joseph realizes the cultural influence of music and the impact his identity as an artist has on youth within his community. He thus emphasizes using his identity as an artist and hip-hop music as cultural capital and a form of authenticity to garner trust with youth that may otherwise require a more detailed and lengthy vetting process (Carter 2003, Clay 2003). According to the similar-attraction paradigm (Byrne 1971), individuals are more likely to choose mentors and mentees who they believe are comparable to themselves (Sanchez et al. 2014). In addition, research has shown that mentoring relationships are more effective when mentors and mentees have mutual interests (DuBois et al. 2011, Rhodes 2005, Sanchez et al. 2014). By using hip-hop music as a form of cultural capital to engage with youth, social capital is then provided to youth as a by-product of the mentors “awareness of the values of community and mutual support, and [their interest] to make that part of their lives” (Gaurtlett 2011:5). The existence and formation of social capital in this context, occurs as artists use their ability and interest in engaging in supportive actions for the benefit of others, and a general culture of community (Coleman 1988, Gaurtlett 2011).

Similarly, Eric described his involvement with a formal mentoring program which specifically utilizes hip-hop music as cultural capital to engaged with adolescents in the community. He details:

[I work with] a program where they pretty much teach urban youth the ins and outs of rap. So, I teach the kids how to rhyme and this other guy who I went to college with, he is a producer...two kids he teach, two kids I teach...I really love talking to kids, especially the kids who really have potential but don't have structure. So, my job is to teach them how to write literally a song. Teach them what a bar is, how to measure a bar, how to write a 16-bar verse. Beat, bar, hook, you know the essentials to writing a song.

Even though Eric is formally paired with kids he mentors as a means of fostering skills to create music beats and write lyrics, an emotional connection is also cultivated where Eric is able to provide support and encouragement to youth in a trusting environment through the use of hip-hop music as a form of cultural capital. Once the relationship has formed within this structured environment, Eric is able to talk with them and provide the social capital need to aid in their adolescent development. Investigation the impact of incorporating hip-hop music in therapeutic practices of marginalized youth, Heath and Arroyo (2014) observed that hip-hop music helped establish a trusting space in which patients were provided a sense of empowerment. Therefore, hip-hop music serves as an advantageous space in which social networks and ties are cultivated as a means of nurturing social and cultural capital.

Awareness of hip-hop as an influential method to reach youth also inspired artists to start programs in their neighborhood and community where organizations, such as the one Eric contributes to, are missing. One respondent described how he also used his identity as a hip-hop artist to create a non-profit organization to help provide support and guidance for youth within his neighborhood. Bryan describes:

[I started] an organization where we basically focus on young African American males, but we offer help to anyone at risk. But we see African American males growing up without father figures and we try to be father figures. We try to be that

mentorship that they need to become a man. So many young men are growing up without even being introduced to a man, so that's why they go out and do the type of things that they do. So, we go out and we try to introduce that manly, masculine [image that is missing] inside the home.

In 2015, single parents accounted for 66% of households in Black communities - disproportionately being led by single mothers (KidsCount 2017, Richardson 2009). The role of non-kin Black male figures in the lives of young Black men serve as a source of emotional support (Beam, Chen and Greenberger 2002, Green 2014, Richardson 2009, Richardson 2012), as do relationships with non-custodial fathers (Jones and Mosher 2013). Attempting to fill what he frames as the void of affirmative male role models within his community, Bryan created an organization with the mission of being a positive influence on those who may not have adequate guidance and support within their home and social settings. As Baker and Maguire (2005) suggest in reference to effective mentoring practices in light of changing communities, Bryan's organization seeks to make-up for the lack of available capital in his community by providing youth with access to positive networks and resources that will increase their life chances (Coleman 1988, Richardson 2012).

## **Discussion/Conclusion**

Being able to form social ties and connections that increases self-esteem, promotes a sense of identity, and foster a locus of control is vital for minority youth who often face social institutions and a dominant culture that has a history of degrading cultural, linguistic, and phenotypic characteristics of minority groups (Stanton-Salazar and Spina 2003). Thus, the development and presence of a mentoring relationship with someone who shares the same cultural background is an invaluable experience for many urban residents (Green 2014, Jarrett 1995, Sanchez et al. 2014, Stanton-Salazar and Spina 2003). Having an adult in their community, outside of family and kin, who is willing to support and foster maturity of minority youth is critical in their overall development and success (Beam, Chen and Greenberger 2002, Jarrett 1997, Richardson 2012, Stanton-Salazar and Spina 2003). In addition, mentoring relationships that occur naturally are considered to be a normative element of adolescent development and have known correlation between the presence of a non-parental adult and better psychosocial outcomes (Beam, Chen and Greenberger 2002, Zimmerman, Bingenheimer and Notaro 2002).

Similar to the ways in which sports coaches and uncles develop mentoring relationships with young men that are critical in their development and psychosocial well-being (Beam, Chen and Greenberger 2002, Richardson 2009, Richardson 2012), hip-hop artists have the opportunity to provide aspiring artists with social and cultural capital through the formation of mentoring relationships. Embedded in the relationships and associations between individuals and institutions, social capital occurs as a by-product of interactions that are often a result of other forms of capital such as cultural capital (Wimberly 2013). Individuals bring cultural capital to hip-hop music related event and activities which encourage the formation of relationships and association between participants, providing social capital as a by-product (Wimberly 2013). While the findings in this study do not offer insight on the ability of mentoring relationships amongst hip-hop artists to determine the projected success of mentees music careers, it does highlight the significance of such relationship between artists and their usefulness as a site for the access to and development of social and cultural capital.

Due to this study's analysis of mentoring relationships between artists occurring after the completion of the data collection process, questions during the interviews did not elicit detailed responses on the nature of the social and cultural capital obtained and its influence on respondents' development both as an artist and as an individual. Therefore, more in-depth research on such social interaction and network ties within the context of hip-hop music is needed. A more diverse sample that examines the significance and existence of social and cultural capital among hip-hop artists with different demographic attributes may be useful in producing more nuanced subgroup analysis. While the findings of this study do not imply that the presence of social and cultural capital provided through mentoring relationships amongst artists to offer all the needed resources and support to achieve social mobility, it does however note the significance and importance of such relationships in the lives of artists and the youth in which they serve. This research suggests mentoring relationships within the context of hip-hop music deserves greater attention regarding the social and cultural benefits of artists' embeddedness in Black communities, as opposed to alternative views that may devalue their presence and significance.

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## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Following Rose's (1994) pioneering work on the ways in which hip-hop music, Black culture and American culture coexist, hip-hop has become an established context through which to conduct research on urban and regional realities (Beer 2014, Black 2014, Jaffe 2014, Jeffries 2014). It has been used to explore concepts of identity and self-construction, educational attainment, religion practices, entrepreneurship, political processes, and social commentary within communal settings (Banbury 2016, Clark 2012, Diaz 2012, Hayduk 2004, Hill 2009, McCorkel and Rodriguez 2009, Morgan and Warren 2011). Hip-hop music, and other popular culture mediums, provide insight and detailed accounts on place and region which allows researchers to access worlds that may be unseen through traditional analytic pursuits (Becker 2007, Beer 2014). Such insights offer complementary understandings of existing knowledges and approaches to scholarship on social relations that help establish broader academic analysis (Beer 2014, Black 2014, Jeffries 2014). Hip-hop also offers a glimpse into how marginalized populations practice acts of urban citizenship through "appropriating space in the city" (Lamotte 2014:686). As Rose (1994) affirms, "hip-hop replicates and reimagines the experiences of urban life and symbolically appropriates urban space through sampling, attitude, dance, style, and sound effects" (pg22). But as hip-hop began to infiltrate rural, suburban, and global spaces, the content and meaning of hip-hop music as a real and authentic projection of Black American urban experiences changed (Jeffries 2014).

With hip-hop music now being incorporated into everyday lived experience of various national context (Beer 2014, Mitchell 2001), it is contended that hip-hop is no longer reflecting of the inner-city street life that it once was (Black 2014, Connell and Gibson 2004, Hudson 2006). Being filtered through personal and commercialized interest and agendas, to some hip-hop now presents a distorted and manufactured urban experiences catering towards consumers pleurability (Beer 2014, Black 2014, Potter 1995, Rose 1994). The influence of record companies, capitalistic ambitions, and other intrinsic and extrinsic factors often restrict hip-hop artists' ability to present unaltered representations of urban life (Jeffries 2014). However, despite existing industry pressures, music manages to uphold its close ties to local experiences and identities, and still serves as a reality-telling that accurately illustrate accounts of social interactions within communal settings (Beer 2014, Dawsey 1994, Jeffries 2014, Kruse 2010, Smitherman 1997). Even though all hip-hop artists do not present exact reports of urban life, using hip-hop music as a context for sociological studies still enables outsiders to be immersed in the lives, experiences, and emotions of particular locales and regions (Beer 2014, Jaffe 2014, Jeffries 2014). Hip-hop music serves as an entry point through which to observe more comprehensive understandings of individuals' embeddedness in social spaces (Beer 2014).

Therefore, hip-hop has been used in academic studies to explore intersecting notions of identity, community, and belonging that occur within both physical spaces and group associations (Beer 2014, Krims 2000, Rose 2006, Watkins 2005). Studies have utilized content analysis of music lyrics, evaluations of program and curriculum, surveys with listeners, focus group and in-depth interviews with individuals who participate in hip-hop music culture production (Beaulac, Kristjansson and Calhoun 2011, Binder 1993, Diaz 2010, Heath and Arroyo 2014, LaVouille 2013, Lee 2016, Mahiri and Conner 2003, Mohammed-Akinyela 2012, Morgan and Warren 2011, Tanner, Asbridge and Wortley 2009). While such studies adequately address the significance and multifaceted capability of hip-hop to connect with a continuously expanding population of youth who identify with its culture, hip-hop is simultaneously maligned (Alim 2006, Anwar 2007, Asante

2008, LaVouille 2013, Ogbar 2007). Criticized for its incorporation of violence, sexism, misogyny, and encouragement of an gangsta ideology, hip-hop culture's contribution to the advancement and positive development of youth and communities of color is often questioned (Armstrong 2001, Barongan and Hall 1995, Cole and Guy-Sheftall 2003, Crouch 2000, Cutler 1999, hooks 1994, Johnson et al. 1995, Krohn and Suazo 1995, McWhorter 2003, Rebollo-Gil and Moras 2012, Ro 1996).

This study seeks to highlight the ways in which artists use hip-hop music as a mechanism to work toward social change. I utilize hip-hop music as a context through which to explore residents' interactions with their local community, and how hip-hop music can be used to enhance individual's social experiences. Each of the papers within the study expose the ways in which hip-hop music is used by artists to develop and articulate expressions of identity and self-construction, pursue social change and community development, and utilize social and cultural capital to strengthen and build up one another all in connection to their geographical locale. Together these papers testify to the various ways residents choose to interact with their local community, and their rationale for doing so.

In "Does My Message Define My Role?" I highlighted how the development of hip-hop artists' identity is still influenced by notions of place and geographical locale despite the globalization of music. Artists in the study continue to project traditional communal elements as embodied within the origins of hip-hop music. Through their relationships with their community and its inhabitant, respondents develop a sense of identity that shapes who they were as artists. Even though artists' identities are connected to the social experiences of their local communities, they interpret the message and applicability of their music to also be relevant to those in similar communities. Thus, instead of deterritorializing their music, artists capitalize on music's global reach to speak to the lived experiences of not only those in the geographical boundaries of their local area, but provide musical experiences that individuals outside of their immediate community can culturally and socially relate to. Instead of the globalization of music overpowering the sense of place in identity development of artists, place still serves as a significant influence in individuals' performance as an artist while also being inspired by other locales.

In "Commerce of Community", I discussed how artists' motivation for pursuing a career in hip-hop music illustrates their interpretations of community engagement and effective ways on achieving social change. While contemporary artists from variant social backgrounds face different levels of pressure to pursue hip-hop music for personal financial gain or for its social meaning, hip-hop artist's motivation for pursuing hip-hop music can be conceptualized through the folk-urban continuum which depicts resident's social interaction in their community. On one hand, residential interactions reflect a sense of group solidarity and communal value, and on the other hand residential interactions focus on individual economic mobility and personal attainment. Each form of engagement with the local community does not function separately, but rather occur as a collective of coexisting values. Thus, respondents' use of hip-hop music in relation to their interactions in their local community illustrate the various approaches to community engagement and social change. Instead of viewing artists in terms of dichotomous motivations of pursuing careers in hip-hop music in ways that may limit their influence, artists should be supported and encouraged to utilize hip-hop as a culturally valued form of capital in pursuit of social change as they see fit.

Lastly in "I Just Want to See You Shine Son", I examined the social and cultural capital that is cultivated through hip-hop artists' mentoring relationships and how hip-hop music can be used in Black communities to facilitate successful development outcomes. Hip-hop music is

used as a context through which social interactions can take place for individuals to gain access to social networks and ties that will expose them to beneficial forms of cultural capital. Therefore, in addition to utilizing other social institutions and community programs to further the psycho-social development and attainment of youth in Black communities, the finding in this chapter illustrate how mentoring relationships within the context of hip-hop music also serve as a valuable space in which social and cultural capital is nurtured and maintained.

By focusing on the embeddedness of hip-hop artists in their communities, this study advances the understanding of the multidimensionality of resident's experiences with community engagement. By using non-financial assets such as behaviors, preferences, and attitudes that are expressed and articulated through hip-hop music, artists are capable of addressing relevant social issues and localized community experiences using culturally valued forms of capital. Through their music and their performance as artists in their local communities, they are able to provide a space in which others are encouraged and have access to resources that can facilitate their successful navigation of social and cultural institutions. This study also illustrates the ways in which residents use the resources at their disposal to pursuit social change and community development. Depending on individual's backgrounds and understandings of social issues in their area, the ways in which they choose to engage with their community differs – but they all express concern and attempt to contribute to the well-being of the overall community in some way.

The information from this study is useful in enhancing understandings of social change and community engagement in disadvantaged and marginalized communities. In order for pursuits of social change to be successes, we must cease to view them through confined classifications and techniques. We must allow residents to use their cultural and social experiences to pursue the methods they deem most appropriate to address the social issues they feel are relevant to their local communities. In addition, considering how each individual has multiple identifications and experiences to similar identities that can be internalized and understood differently (Sellers et al. 1998), we must embrace unique perspectives with the intentions of pursuing community development and social change holistically. Incorporating such knowledge into community development practices and programming will strengthen efforts and increase the capability of reducing the marginalization of disenfranchised groups.

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## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Geographical Location</b>
Justin	29	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Richard	23	Male	Black/African American	Little Rock, AR
John	25	Male	Black/African American	Atlanta, GA
Joshua	23	Male	Black/African American	West Baton Rouge, LA
Carl	22	Male	Black/African American	West Baton Rouge, LA
Christopher	24	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Joseph	30	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Simon	23	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Bryan	53	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
David	18	Male	Black/African American	Memphis, TN
Michael	18	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Anthony	29	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Kenneth	23	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Malcolm	26	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Ashley	22	Female	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Tiffany	21	Female	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Eric	22	Male	Black/African American	New Orleans, LA
Larry	19	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Darren	29	Male	Black/African American	New Orleans, LA
Kelly	19	Female	Black/African American	Lafayette, LA
Travis	24	Male	Black/African American	Tampa, FL
Walter	20	Male	Black/African American	Memphis, TN
Zachary	29	Male	White	Lafayette, LA
Lawrence	40	Male	Black/African American	New Orleans, LA
Keith	31	Male	Black/African American	Baton Rouge, LA
Lauren	35	Female	White	New Orleans, LA

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

### PART 1: Background Questions

1. I want to start by talking about your early life. Can you tell me a little bit about the place you grew up? [*If they only talk about the city, use this follow-up*]: Can you describe the neighborhood that you grew up in?
2. What about your school? What was it like?
3. Tell me about your family.
  - a. What are your relationships like with them?
  - b. Who raised you?
  - c. [*If they didn't already talk about extended family*]: What about your extended family... like aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, grandparents? What are your relationships like with them?
  - d. Do you have kids?
    - i. [*if yes*] Can you tell me about them?
    - ii. How old are they?
    - iii. Who do they live with?
    - iv. What is your relationship with them like?
    - v. [*if do not live with interviewee*] How often do you see them?
    - vi. What grade(s) are they in?
    - vii. How do they do in school?
    - viii. Do you help them with school at all? [their school work, transportation to/from, talking to teachers] Why/why not?
    - ix. Do they participate in any after-school programs or any activities?
      1. [*If yes*]: What kinds of programs/activities?
      2. [*If no*]: Is there a reason they don't?
  - e. Have you ever been married or had a long-term partner?
  - f. [*if yes*] Are you currently (married/partnered)?

### PART 2: Neighborhood Life

1. Okay. We are going to move into talking about your life now. If someone asked you where "home" is, what would you say? Why?
2. Can you tell me about the neighborhood you currently live in?
3. Who do you live with?
4. What kind of relationships do you have with your neighbors?
  - a. [*possible follow ups*] Do you get along with them?
  - b. Do you know them well?
  - c. Do you socialize with them?
5. Do you feel like you have a certain role in your neighborhood?
  - a. [*If yes*] What is that role? How would you describe it?
  - b. [*If no*] Why not?
6. Are you involved in any community or neighborhood organizations?
  - a. [*If yes*] What kind of organizations/groups? What role do you play in them? (i.e. what kind of work do you do?)
  - b. [*If no*] Why not?
7. Are you involved with any groups or organizations outside your own neighborhood?

- a. *[If yes]* What kind of organizations/groups? What role do you play in them? (i.e. what kind of work do you do?)
  - b. *[If no]* Why not?
8. Do you have a group of friends that you usually hang out with?
- a. *[If yes]* What are they like?
  - b. How did you meet them?
  - c. Do most of them have full time jobs? *[if yes]* What kind of jobs?
  - d. Do most of them stay out of trouble?
  - e. Are any of them also musicians? If yes, do they help you with your music at all? How so?
  - f. Are any of them involved in the community? If yes, how so? What kind of work do they do?

### PART 3: Your Rap/Hip-Hop Work/Artistry

1. How long have you been creating/making music?
2. Do you remember what got you started? How and why did you get into making music?
3. Do you have an artist name? If so, how did you get it?
4. What are you doing right now in regards to your music?
5. Who would you compare your music style to?
6. What influences your music?
7. What are your goals regarding music? Is it a means of income or more of a hobby? Why?
8. Do you have a job outside your music?
  - a. *[if no, skip to next question]*
  - b. *[If yes]* What kind of job?
  - c. How long have you worked there?
  - d. Is it full time?
  - e. Do you like it?
  - f. Does it interfere with your ability to make music?
9. (If does not have a job) How does your family (ask about family generally and about kids, specifically, if they have kids) feel about your decision to solely focus on your music? How do YOU feel about that decision?
10. On average, how many hours a week would you say you devote to your music?
11. Do you record your music at a studio or at home?
  - a. What is a typical day like in the studio (or recording, if they do it at home)?
  - b. Who is normally there with you?
  - c. How do they add to the recording experience?
12. How do you market and distribute your music?
13. What is your target audience?
14. Where do you see yourself in 5 years in regards to your music and career goals?
15. Are you currently signed to a label? If not, do you have the aspiration of being signed? Why/why not?
16. How do you know your music is good?
17. Is there anyone who helps you or mentors you with your music?
  - a. *[If yes]* Who? What kind of help/mentoring do they do?
  - b. *[If no]* Why do you think that is?
18. Do you help others with their music?

- a. [*If yes*] Who do you help? How do you help them? Why?
  - b. [*If no*] Why do you think that is?
19. Has your family heard your music before?
- a. [*If no*] Why not?
  - b. [*If yes*] Do they listen to it frequently?
  - c. How do they feel about it?
  - d. Do they give you feedback on it?
  - e. [*If they have kids*] Have your kids listened to your music? How do they feel about it? Do they give you feedback on it?

PART 4: Your Music and the Community

1. If someone asked you what “your community” is, what would you say? Why?
2. Do you feel like your music has an effect on that community?
  - a. [*if yes*] What kind of effect? Why do you think this is?
  - b. [*if no*] Why not?
3. Does your music reflect your community in any way?
  - a. [*if yes*] How?
  - b. [*if no*] Why not?
4. Do you feel like you, as a musician and artist, have a responsibility to your community?
  - a. [*if yes*] What kind of responsibility? Why do you think this is?
  - b. [*if no*] Why not?
5. [possible follow-up]: Do you feel like you, as a musician and artist, have a specific role to play in to your community?
  - a. [*if yes*] What kind of role? Why do you think this is?
  - b. [*if no*] Why not?
6. When I asked you to tell me what you thought of as “your community,” you talked about it in terms of [summarize their answer according to one of the two options]:
  - [a specific geographical space like a neighborhood, city, or hometown
  - [a symbolic community like “the Black community,” etc]
 Other people talk about it in terms of [select other option here]:
  - [a specific geographical space like a neighborhood, city, or hometown
  - [a symbolic community like “the Black community,” etc]
 I’d like to walk through some of these previous questions with that definition of “community” in mind...
  - [repeat questions, but with relevance to either their neighborhood/city or a symbolic community]
  - [IF they talked about geographic community first and you are doing the symbolic one second, you will have to first ask them if there is any sort of symbolic community like “the Black community” or “the Jewish community” that they feel like they belong to]
7. Okay, so, going back to the beginning of this section one more time, when I asked you what “your community” is, you defined it as [fill in blank: neighborhood/city/symbolic]. What do you think lead you to define it in such a way?

PART 5: Imprisonment Experiences (if any)

1. Have you ever been in jail or in prison?
  - a. [*if no*] SKIP TO PART 7
  - b. [*if yes*] If so, for how long and where did you serve your time?

2. Why were you in prison?
3. Where did you live right before you were incarcerated?
4. Who did you live with prior to your incarceration?
5. What was your relationship like with them?
6. [*if has kids*] Did you live with your children prior to going to prison? What was your relationship like with them?
7. Were you working before you went to prison?
  - a. [*if yes*] What kind of job? What happened to that job when you were arrested?
  - b. [*if no*] Why not?
8. What did your normal day consist of while incarcerated?
9. Did anyone come visit you while you were incarcerated?
  - a. [*if yes*] Who? How often? What were those visits like?
  - b. [*if no*] Why not?
10. Did you keep in contact with any family member via phone or mail?
  - a. [*if yes*] Who? How often? What were those phone calls/emails like?
  - b. [*if no*] Why not?
11. Did you participate in any programs during the time you were incarcerated?
  - a. [*if no*] Why not?
  - b. [*if yes*] What type of programs?
  - c. How did you find out about them?
  - d. Were you required to participate in them or did you choose to on your own? Why?
12. Did you work on your music while you were incarcerated?
  - a. If not, why not? [skip to question 7]
  - b. If so [ask questions 4-6]
13. Do you feel like the music that you created while you were incarcerated is any different from the music you created when you weren't incarcerated? If yes, how so?
14. Did you share any of your music with others while you were incarcerated? How? What were their reactions?
15. Did you work on your music with others while you were incarcerated?
16. Do you think your incarceration had any effect on your music?
17. How about the reverse? Do you feel like your music had any effect on your experiences in prison?

#### PART 6: Re-entry Experiences

1. Where was the first place you went when you were released?
2. Describe what your life was like the first few months after you were released.
3. Were you on probation or parole? If yes, for how long? What kind of restrictions were placed on you? When did it (or will it) end?
4. Is life different after your incarceration compared to your life before you were incarcerated?
  - a. [*if no*] Why do you think that is?
  - b. [*if yes*] How?
5. What type of obstacles or difficulties have you experienced since you have been released?
6. Have you overcome those obstacles or difficulties?
  - a. [*if yes*] How?

- b. *[if no]* Do you feel like you will overcome them at some point? Why/why not?
7. What has been the hardest thing you have to deal with after being released? How did you deal with it?
8. What has helped you the most since you have been released?
9. Have you participated in any programs since you were released?
  - a. *[if no]* Why not?
  - b. *[if yes]* What type of programs?
  - c. How did you find out about these programs?
  - d. Why did you choose to participate in these programs?
  - e. What did you have to do in order to participate in these programs?
  - f. How long did the programs last?
  - g. Were these programs helpful? Are there specific aspects of the program/s that were helpful? That could use improvement (or could be done differently)?
10. Do you still keep in contact with anyone that you met while you were incarcerated? If yes, how? Who?
11. Have your relationships with family and friends changed since you have been released?
  - a. *[if no]* Why do you think that is?
  - b. *[if yes]* How?
12. *[if has kids]* Has the relationship with your children changed since you have been released?
  - a. *[if no]* Why do you think that is?
  - b. *[if yes]* How? Why do you think that is?
13. *[if has kids]* Do you think your children were impacted in any way by your incarceration? Is so, to what extent? How? If no, why not?
14. What is your ideal job or career?
15. Have you shared these ideas with family and friends?
16. If so, what was their response? If not, why not?
17. Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? 10 years?
18. Did your music change in any way once you were released?
  - a. *[if no]* Why not?
  - b. *[if yes]* How? Why?

#### PART 7: Rap and Prison (Others)

1. Do you personally know anyone else who is currently making music who has also been incarcerated for any period of time? [IF NO, SKIP TO PART 8]
2. If so, how did you meet them?
3. Are you close to these individuals, or are they just acquaintances?
4. Do they solely focus on music or do they also have a job?
5. Do they work with other people on their music?
6. Do they mentor or help others with their music?
7. Do they do any community work that you know of?
8. Do you feel like prison affected the music that they make?

#### PART 8: Demographic / Concluding Questions

1. How old are you?
2. How far did you go with your schooling? (i.e. what's the highest grade level you completed or the highest degree you have earned)
3. Which of the following categories does your current income fall into?

- a. Under \$14,999 a year
  - b. \$15,000 a year - \$29,999
  - c. \$30,000 a year - \$49,999
  - d. \$50,000 a year - \$74,999
  - e. more than \$75,000 a year
4. How do you identify in terms of racial background? [possible explanation: Tell them that rather than giving categories like “white/Black/etc” we like for people to be able to self-identify]
  5. If I have additional questions, can we meet again or could I contact you via phone or email?
  6. Do you know any other people who might be interested in participating in this study? [make sure they know that the people can be men/women, from any city/neighborhood, and that they do not have to be famous or successful, just making music and/or individuals who see themselves as rap/hip-hop artists]

## APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL FORM

### ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair  
131 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
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**TO:** Sarah Becker  
Sociology/WGS

**FROM:** Robert C. Mathews  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** August 19, 2013  
**RE:** IRB# 3405

**TITLE:** The Embeddedness of Rap/Hip-Hop Artists in Local Communities

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:** New Protocol

**Review type:** Full  Expedited  **Review date:** 8/21/2013

**Risk Factor:** Minimal  Uncertain  Greater Than Minimal

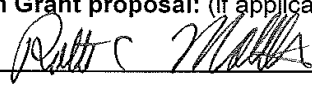
**Approved**  **Disapproved**

**Approval Date:** 8/21/2013 **Approval Expiration Date:** 8/20/2014

**Re-review frequency:** (annual unless otherwise stated)

**Number of subjects approved:** 20-50

**Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal:** (if applicable)

**By:** Robert C. Mathews, Chairman 

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –**  
**Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:**

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*



# Application for Approval of Projects Which Use Human Subjects

This application is used for projects/studies that cannot be reviewed through the exemption process.



Institutional Review Board  
 Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair  
 131 David Boyd Hall  
 Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
 P: 225.578.8692  
 F: 225.578.5983  
 irb@lsu.edu  
 lsu.edu/irb

– Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include two copies of the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below. Once the application is completed, please submit to the IRB Office for review and please allow ample time for the application to be reviewed. Expedited reviews usually takes 2 weeks. Carefully completed applications should be submitted 3 weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

– A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

- (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru F.
- (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
- (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.  
\*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
- (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)
- (F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://research.lsu.edu/files/item26774.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator\*:  Rank

\*PI **must be** an LSU Faculty Member

Dept:  Ph:  E-mail:

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each

IRB#	<u>3405</u>	LSU Proposal #	_____
<input type="radio"/>	Full	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Expedited
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Complete Application		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human Subjects Training		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	IRB Security of Data Agreement		

3) Project Title:

4) Proposal Start Date:  5) Proposed Duration Months:

6) Number of Subjects Requested:  7) LSU Proposal #:

8) Funding Sought From:

Study Approved By:  
 Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
 Institutional Review Board  
 Louisiana State University  
 203 B-1 David Boyd Hall  
 225-578-8692 | [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)  
 Approval Expires: 8/20/2014

**ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR** named above

I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers) in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance (FWA00003892) with OHRP and 45 CFR 46 (available from <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>). I also understand that copies of all consent forms **must be maintained at LSU for three years after the completion of the project**. If I leave LSU before that time, the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Signature of PI *Sarah Becker* Date 8/15/13

**ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR** named above. If multiple Co-Investigators, please create a "signature page" for all Co-Investigators to sign. Attach the "signature page" to the application.

I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

Signature of Co-PI (s) *Castel Sweet* Date 8/15/13

## VITA

Castel Sweet, a native of Memphis, Tennessee, received her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice/Criminology at Hampton University in 2012. Thereafter, she enrolled as a graduate student at Louisiana State University in the Department of Sociology. Using the field work she conducted from the master's degree she earned in December 2014, she expanded the scope of the project for her doctorate. As a graduate student at LSU, Castel was involved in various capacities with community service and civic engagement related projects both on and off campus. During her last year of doctoral studies, she moved to Abu Dhabi, UAE as a distinguished graduate assistant helping the Petroleum Institute's Student Life Department restructure and re-organize student groups and enhance student development practices.