The Art of the Hustle: A Study of the Rap Music Industry in Bogota, Colombia

by

Laura L. Bunting-Hudson

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ABSTRACT

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How do rap artists in Bogota, Colombia come together to make music? What is the process they take to commodify their culture? Why are some rappers able to become socially mobile in this process, while others are less so? What is technology's role in all of this? This ethnography explores those questions, as it carefully documents the strategies utilized by various rap groups in Bogota, Colombia to create social mobility, commoditize products and to create a different vision of modernity within the hip-hop community, as an alternative to the ideals set forth by mainstream Colombian society. Resistance Art Poetry (RAP), is said to have originated in the United States but has become a form of international music. In conducting ethnographic research from December of 2012 to October 2014, I was able to discover how rappers organize themselves politically, how they commoditize their products and distribute them to create various types of social mobilities.

In this dissertation, I constructed models to typologize rap groups in Bogota, Colombia, which I call *polities* of rappers to discuss how these groups come together, take shape, make plans and execute them to reach their business goals. I was also able to document the inconsistencies, problems and negotiations that the members of these entities encountered as they attempted to become successful musicians in the current global economic environment. This dissertation offers explicit details of how the rap musicians in the polities under study, were able to utilize their social networks in the process of commodifying their products for distribution in the hip-hop market place. I also tackle current academic discussions about how the rappers use

digital technologies to assist them with this process. Engaging with concepts from economic anthropology, social mobility literature, political economy and globalization studies, the findings here demonstrate various entrepreneurial strategies utilized by rap musicians in this location.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHARTS, IMAGES AND TABLES

KEY ACRONYMS AND COMMON COLOMBIAN JARGON

Bazuka – A form of Crack Cocaine.

BTA – nickname for Bogota City.

Callejero – a person from the streets.

Creída – a spoiled brat, in Colombian slang.

DAS – Departmento Administrativo de Seguridad (or Department of Administering Security) in Colombia.

DIY – Do It Yourself; referring to businesses, in this context.

Gomelo – a preppy, middle class person in Colombia.

Hip-hop Al Parque – a music festival held once every year in the Fall which showcases international and local rap talents in Bogota, Colombia.

HHNL – Hip-Hop National Language

IDARTES – the Ministry of Arts and Culture in Bogota. They are responsible for putting together Hip-hop Al Parque.

Limpieza social – a social cleansing program run by DAS (*Departmento Administrativa de Seguridad)* and private militia groups in Colombia to eliminate socially undesirable people like drug addicts, dealers, prostitutes, juvenile delinquents, and homeless people.

Lukas – A Colombian slang term referring to money.

Minga – A term that has historically meant an indigenous person and is meant as a derogatory term. However, many of the rappers that I worked with used this term endearingly and were proud to be a signifier of the term.

Nea- A shortened slang term for '*gonorrea*' or gonorrhea that friends call each other as a joking insult.

Ñero(a) – A term that means someone from a lower strata barrio, who is your friend. It is short for the Spanish word *compañero(a)*.

Olla – a neighborhood or block of abandoned factories or apartment buildings where drugs are sold and consumed.

Pareza/Paresoso(a) – to be lazy or a lazy person.

Pueblo – A term in Latin America used to talk about the majority, the lower classes, or the poplar class. This term is used with endearment to discuss the average person. It is sometimes used in a paternalistic fashion to discuss the government's responsibility to the noble people who live in small towns with humble means.

Raperos – A Spanish term for people involved in the rap music scene.

Rolo/a – a slang term, meaning a person from Bogota, Colombia, in Spanish.

Stratas – economic segregation in the city of Bogota based on people's income level. Appendix A offers a map of the official economic strata divisions determined by the *Departmento de Ingresos y Acuarios Nacional* (DIAN) of Colombia.

Vagos – a classist term indicating someone who is materially needy because they are lazy and make poor lifestyle choices.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to everyone with a dream. Know that your vision is unique and with the faithful pursuit of it, through hard work, collaboration and a bit of luck – you can realize what you are committed to manifesting. #369

CHAPTER 1: The Importance of Exploring the Development of a Rap Music Industry in Bogota, Colombia

"One of the great gaps in anthropology is that we have been too much interested in the 'system' and although we know that people spend half of their lives finding ways to 'beat the system' we tend to only take notice of them when they are caught out, brought out to trial and punished. The fact is that sometimes people do beat the system and are not punished; that is how systems change." - F.G. Bailey

"I call people rich when they're able to meet the requirements of their imagination." –Henry James

Introduction

We were at my apartment in Harlem and I was making everyone breakfast. We were talking about my project. I had a playlist from Spotify going in the background and suddenly "*Senda Meñatica*" a reggaeton song by Tony Dize came on. My informants started complaining.

[Rapper]: ¨Ooooo….noooooo, what the fuck is this Lau? I thought you was cool. Now you're making me re-think this whole thing. One of my informants told me with a smile on his face.

Laura: "What?" I responded confused.

[Rapper]: "Turn that shit off, girl." my informant commanded.

I hurried to my computer and turned the song off.

Laura: "Wait, but what happened?" I asked, still not understanding.

[Rapper]: "Do you understand what they are saying?"

Laura: "Most of the time. Why?"

[Rapper]: "What do they talk about in those Reggaetón songs?"

I sat back and thought about it for a minute.

Laura: "I guess, they talk a lot about sex."

[Rapper]: "Yah, that's all they talk about. It's the dumbest form of music ever, my nigga. Corporate media loves it because it's the reggae beats, fused with other Latin sounds from *merengue*, *bachata* and *cumbia*, then they add rap. All they talk about is sex, material shit and this type of music just dumbs down the population. They use all this ignorant language, they swear, they say stupid shit and make it sound like poor people don't know how to talk correctly. It has no substance. It's like commercial rap in the US now-a-days. It stereotypes Latinos as being hyper-sexual, uneducated, chasing after money and having sex with random people. It encourages our people to be stupid. It's like the illuminati plot comes to Latin America."

Laura: "Illuminati?" I asked, wrinkling my nose, not sure what we were talking about anymore.

[Rapper]: "Yah, I mean, you know how everyone thinks Jay-Z sold his soul to the devil to make rap music for corporate America?"

Laura: "Yah, I have heard about it."

[Rapper]: "Well, that's what reggaetón music is, to me. It's the same thing. Here, in the US, you have people like Jay-Z, Lil´ Wayne and Drake talking about spending all their money on poppin' bottles at the club, having sex with all these random hoes, disrespecting education, doing drugs, being greedy and doing illegal things. All that stuff is going to make you poor and land you in jail or might even kill you. That's how the elite try to program poor people to keep them poor and stupid. Really, in order to be rich and powerful, you have to be educated, live a pretty frugal life and keep yourself away from having random baby Mama's and stuff. The Illuminati tries to hold us down through corporate ownership of the media and pumping out these 'false' images of how to be successful to confuse us. Reggaetón is one of the tools that the elite use in Latin America to do that. That's why we (real gangsta rappers) hate it. That's why if you're going to roll with us, no more Reggaetón Lau."

Laura: "No problem. No more reggaetón, y'all." I responded.

This was one of my first conversations with a main informant from Bogota, Colombia in the rap scene. He and his rap group had been invited to the United States by a Spanish Language Radio station in New York and some other affiliates in Miami to perform a couple of concerts. I had listened to their music a few times and knew that their songs were usually full of substance. They would rap about young kids learning what not to do by discussing the mistakes they had made or by rapping about other bad examples they had witnessed around them. They would rap about going to school, looking for the good things in life, saving one's money for grander investments, being good parents, getting professional jobs and by being politically engaged citizens that should work to heal a war-torn Colombia. Their music grabbed my attention. I wanted to discover more about how rappers from a highly-stratified society, embroiled in a civil war and well-known for its drug trafficking, were using capitalistic mechanisms to try to revolutionize their culture. What kind of organizational strategies did they employ to become

socially mobile members from the lower class, how did they learn to commoditize their products and what kinds of contradictions arose through these processes?

I wanted to know more about how rap artists make music and create an alternative sub-culture in their aims to reinvent society in their imaginings of a social system free of racial and class discrimination, where people have access to the resources that they need. Was this aspirational goal of the rap musicians even possible? In order to find out more about the economic structures and processes of creating rap music, I traveled to Bogota, Colombia where some of the most 'successful' independent artists in hip-hop reside and I conducted ethnographic research with them for 21 months. I worked with many groups. I met members of the original rap groups there, some of the first DJs, beat boxers, break dancers and graffiti artists. I interviewed many rappers, producers, DJs, cinematographers, homeboys, club owners, groupies, fans, clothing manufacturers, factory workers, retail shop managers, and close friends of the rap groups. Throughout my research, I found to answer my research questions, I had to understand what it meant to live as a person in Bogota, and to interrogate the various types of discrimination, oppression and economic challenges that the average person faced in their everyday lives. Then, I had to research the musicians' approaches for overcoming these obstacles as they produced music and culture that instructs societal change.

By conducting participant observations, interviews and collecting content data from the artists, I was able to discover how rap artists are revolutionizing their culture to create more openings for social mobility to improve access to opportunity, and to improve life chances for people in the lowest *stratas[1]* of society. Most importantly, I discovered how rap artists are aiding the population to reimagine what is possible today in Colombia through their ability to

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[1] See Appendix A for a map of how stratas are divided in Bogota, Colombia.

commoditize musical products and live alternative lifestyles. Conducting interviews, listening to life histories and learning about the process of making music that generates an alternative sub-culture in Bogota, this research lead me to draw three important conclusions from my research:

Firstly, I found out how individual rap artists were able to come together to produce songs, create merchandise and an ideology of inclusion to promote the well-being of the people within their communities. People involved in making rap music, do so as an attempt to resist mainstream dominant culture and structural discrimination (Keyes 2000, Smith 2003, Westbrook 2011). People within the hip-hop community often believe that because of the harsh policing tactics used in their communities, their race and class – do not allow them to prosper, using conventional mechanisms of social mobility (Krims 2000, Flores 2001, Cutler 2009, Gosa 2011). Therefore, rappers come from an oppositional culture, seeking to put an end to their oppressive circumstances through discussing the issues and creating a will for political change. This research was able to model the social organizational tactics that rappers take, analyze their message of social change and understand how these young people overcome oppressive forces in order to become socially mobile. I discovered that there were two main types of social organizations in the rap scene, in Bogota. In this study, I call the two groups the corporate model and the adhoc model. The corporate group of participants in the rap music industry in Bogota, fostered the development of a pseudo-familial business niche among the core members of the group which enabled the polity to expand their businesses with the assistance of their transnational social networks. In the adhoc group, I found, counter examples to this which help to illustrate the importance of the types of social organizations that exist among these musicians, as they both have unique ways of resisting dominant cultural forms. I found that the rap groups were making music to raise a strong sense of awareness about social and political issues within

their communities. While part of the rap music genre is dedicated to having fun and providing a means of escape from the drudgery of everyday life, much of the music is also dedicated to motivating young people to have a sense of themselves, respect their families, work hard, and to gain knowledge in order to pursue the image of this world, for which they want to live within.

Secondly, I observed the process of how the musicians within this scene wrote rap lyrics, produce sounds, disseminate music, commoditize other hip-hop lifestyle products and socially network across vast transnational spaces to capitalize from their image. The participants in my research used the globalized economic system and its burgeoning technological innovations to create tracks, make music videos, edit those projects, and publicize them on digital platforms that have a global reach. This process enabled these groups to promote their visions of social change. Producing music, the participants in this study engaged in a type of technological production that is wholly new to our field of study as the result of digital formating. It is therefore important to relay how the study's participants commodified their products, used digital technologies and what forms of technology they used to master the music in their locations to add to current academic debates about the decentralization of the music industry, the 'democratization' of technological dissemination and processes of capitalism which impact the effectiveness of this movement for societal change through cultural production.

Lastly, I wanted to share how the rappers in Bogota learned to use business strategies and technology to design a hip-hop industry inside of their country. With the advent of social media networks and various internet platforms, the artists that I worked with plotted out how to best utilize technology to navigate the decentralization of the music industry, to build business structures that employ members of their very own hip-hop communities. In talking with members of the rap scene, I found that while access to technology has been an important factor

in allowing greater diversity of access to individuals to create music, traditional barriers to education, professional equipment, recording studios, media outlets and social networks still play an important role in the availability of opportunities for the rap artists who are trying to achieve social mobility and to create change through the commercialization of their lifestyle.

Problem Statement

The interest for this project blossomed out of a curiosity that I had about how rap music was being produced and distributed. As I began to read the limited amount of scholarly research about hip-hop production in Colombia, it seemed to be a collection of vague and elusive works that obfuscated the daily inner-workings of knowledge about the actors within the rap scene. I wanted to better understand 'how' the rappers were coming together to formulate a scene that sought to influence its audience's lifestyle choices and to make money off of that same attempt at cultural change. The social scientists who had worked in the field to discover the many facets of the rap scene in Bogota, claimed that the rappers were *not* interested in capitalizing off of their music (Pillai 1999, Feiling 2002, Lemus 2005, Montoya 2009, 2011). This could not be farther from the truth and misrepresents decades of rap music production in the city. This issue is important to explore because often, the anthropological record about commodities of capital exchange produced by cultural groups in the so called 'developing' world are misunderstood (Polanyi et. al 1957). The reason this happens can be for a variety of reasons. One of those being that cultural art forms from the developing world are stereotyped to represent a 'pure' political or cultural ideology free of monetary influence. Cultural critics from the Marxist tradition, *a la Gramci*, often take a dim view of art that is generated for capitalistic comsumption. They argue that once art becomes enmeshed with efforts to generate capital, the revolutionary value of the cultural product is suspect to being interrogated as part of the dominant culture which contributes

to a hegemonic influence which creates false consciousness among its audience members (Gramsci 1992, Adorno and Horkheimer 1986, hooks[2] 1994, West 2005, Classen 2005, Sarikakis 2005). To simplify the problematic element of art as it is combined with capital, why not just deny the capitalistic element exists and do a one-sided analysis of the revolutionary elements of the culture? The resulting scholarship will be radical and no one will know the difference, anyway. Or perhaps the scholars in this field genuinely missed the entire *Centro Comercial* (or mall, in English) that exists in downtown Bogota that is full of stores owned by rap artists? Maybe they did not realize the amount of clubs in Quadra Picha or Soacha owned by people within the rap community? Or they also missed the barbershops, tattoo parlors and clothing factories in the city that are owned and operated by the members of the rap scene? Whatever the case may have been, I did notice the entrepreneurial activities within the rap scene in Bogota because the artists were proud to show off their business endeavors and to discuss their economic success. And for me, wading into the murky waters of contradiction between capitalism and how that enables or inhibits the revolutionary artistic poets from genuinely being able to create cultural change is incredibly interesting. As Lee Drummond (1996) or John Fiske (2010) have pointed out, the intersectional meeting place of popular culture and capital accumulation can articulate points of societal tension, contradiction and methods for overcoming challenges that otherwise may be hidden from plain view in cultural studies.

In my initial contact with the rappers in Bogota, I quickly learned that they were all trying to make money from hip-hop through various means. They tried to sell their music, go on concert tours and they even went so far as to promote the sale of so called 'lifestyle' products that related to their genre of music production. While the academic literature about the rap scene

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[2] bell hooks does not capitalize her name to put emphasis on her work and not on her person.

in Bogota, cast the artists and their following as brave groups of young revolutionaries, the rappers attempts to become socially mobile entrepreneurs and to commoditize their music was wholly lacking. This was unfortunate because the unique ability of the young people in this industry to commoditize rap music and the alternative lifestyle that accompanies it, leaves out a large part of the philosophy of rap music and misses the innovative genius of the artists. It also left aside how the art form was revolutionizing the culture of people in Bogota through economic and political empowerment. This philosophy of rap music argues that anyone can be creative, work hard and find a way to survive difficult circumstances through art, entrepreneurship and occasionally breaking the rules. Rap music, in some respects is capitalism's anthem, while at the same time elements of the art form challenges to the economic system, too. The music represents the philosophy of using your enemies' own systems to undermine them (Keyes 1994, Thomas 2007). Rap music is a counter-cultural vision of the American Dream, set to dope beats. In this case, we can think of Americans, as all of the people in the Western Hemisphere. Many of the people living on this continent share this vision of wanting opportunity and the possibility for improving our life chances. The rap musicians in Bogota, Colombia were no different. They wanted to share their message of how to gain access to a better lifestyle through their musical and cultural production.

This research then, sought to make the narrative of rap music production from this place more wholistic by including the missing components of the story of how rap artists in Bogota, Colombia were establishing businesses related to the production of hip-hop, to create a platform for social mobility for their community of followers by commoditizing their music in the era of globalization. In much of the current literature regarding globalization and the (neo) liberal political economy, there is a debate about how people access resources to achieve social

mobility. Palaversich (2006) and Rincon (2009) argue that in the era of neoliberalism and globalization cultural producers increasingly reference globalized images of prosperity by which to measure one's own material success. Palaversich, in fact calls this the Neoliberal Dream, which is related to the exportation of the American Dream, using the process of globalization, throughout the Americas, if not throughout the world. This Neoliberal Dream encourages upward social mobility. Sarikakis (2005), Gupta and Bughra (2009) as well as other critics of globalization argue that this cross-cultural coveting of material wealth is not something that the average person in other contexts can achieve due to the growing inequalities located within this system. Or as Palaversich (2006) herself, argues that now, people are willing to do *whatever* it takes to reach the levels of success for which they see as being the global 'norm' for the middle class. In this study too, I uncovered that many of the rap musicians I worked with were involved in narco-trafficking and made their work into narco-entertainment (Palaversich, Rincon 2009). The moral arguments surrounding the promotion of this type of lifestyle remain open and highly contested within media studies.

Real-Life questions about how people gain access to the global middle classes still remain highly contested, in our current political economy. Renowned sociologist, Barbara Ehreinrich (2006, 2010) has been an outspoken critic of the illusion of the American Dream. In her book, *Bait and Switch* (2006), she argues that the American Dream is no longer attainable for the average person in the U.S. Other prominent social scientists such as David Harvey, Richard Florida, Dan Charnas and David Stoute however argue that in fact, for cultural producers, globalization is inherently good for them and their chances of gaining upward social mobility are quite high, if they use the right business strategies. Florida (2012) argues that the current economic system rewards traditional values such as education, hard-work, and calculated risk-

taking while also thriving on liberal humanist values such as racial equality, encouraging social mobility through education, and gender equity thereby creating diverse environments where creativity can flow freely. This research seeks to further understand the nature of social mobility in relationship to these scholarly debates to be able to add to them in the unique context of investigating a so-called – developing economy. As James Ferguson (2014) points out, the modal anthropology student of today heads out into the field looking for interesting NGOs to work with and misses the true development workers from the working class. Taking his criticism to heart, here, I engage with real development workers from Colombia, who created culture, jobs, and an entire industry with the counter-cultural realm of hip-hop. My aims are to explore the indigenous development strategies from the ground up.

This study not only seeks to add to the debate about social mobility, globalization and organic economic development but also hopes to inform readers about the processes involved in commoditizing products in this context. Scholarship on the commodification of products often argues that a commodity that is 'for sale' often loses pieces of its authenticity as the goals for producing a cultural revolution (hooks 1994, West 1999, Pardue 2008). In this way, then, the early academic literature on Colombian hip-hop may have been trying to preserve an argument about the sanctimonious nature of the music that they were analyzing. However, in this recorded account, I will tackle the arguments about the commodification of rap music in this location to hopefully illuminate the reasons that the commodification of hip-hop does not take away, but actually adds, to its ability to influence ideas of cultural change on a grander scale, than would be possible without the market.

Finally, in researching this topic, I discovered that scholars such as Harvey (2004), Lysloff (2008), Castells (2010) and Florida (2012) often attribute much of the upward social

mobility of cultural producers to the democratization of technology. Even popular cultural voices like Thomas Friedman, for example, have imagined that technology would create this panacea of opportunity for everyone in the world. However, notably, there are still many structural obstacles to gaining access to and knowing how to use technology. This research explores those issues in great detail to contribute to previous academic discussions about the structural limitations of technological ingenuity.

Engaging in a Study of Rap Music

Eighteen years ago, as an adolescent, I became fascinated with rap music. I lived in a town called Jacksonville, Texas. I moved there from Tucson, Arizona which was a largely liberal, white, middle-class, enclave within the state. When I moved to Jacksonville, I was struck by the crude racism and class division in this small Texas town. Immediately, not knowing any different, I sat with some black girls at lunch on my first day of school and was called a "nigger lover" for the rest of the two and a half years that I attended high school. I was ostracized from the mainstream white kids at school. It was during this period of my life that I was introduced to rap music and met rap musicians in this small Southern town. From this time period, moving forward, rap has been my favorite genre of music. I have listened to it every day for the past 20 years of my life. Even from my youth, I understood that rap music was a safe outlet for people within racially contentious, class divided contexts to express their political, economic and social frustrations. Additionally, rap was a platform to allow fantasy and dreaming of a different lifestyle where oppressed people were free to be knowledgeable, powerful and even wealthy without fear that the racist white majority would punish them for their success.

As I began looking for a project in media studies to research for this dissertation, I was drawn to the rap music I heard by some Colombian artists that were at a Hip-Hop for Peace

Festival at Rutgers University[3]. I asked the organizers of the event to put me in touch with the artists from Bogota, and that is where my research investigation began. in the beginning of my research, I was particularly interested in discovering more about the political and social messages that I heard in their songs. However, once I realized that many of the groups were also entrepreneurs, manufacturing clothing, CDs, owned stores and had their hands in other businesses, as well, I realized the enormous potential for this research. I wanted to not only investigate the political and social messages of the music but to also understand how people could create an entire lifestyle for themselves which encouraged a different way of thinking. I began to further uncover the rappers access to technology and thought that the rap groups had an interesting contribution to make to the world of anthropological study.

Conceptual Framework

I am interested in how rappers organize themselves in collectives to use technology and create enterprise within the greater political economy. Here, I review how other scholars have investigated issues related to the hangover effects of colonization such as Colombia's civil war, discrimination, poverty, social conditioning practices, drugs and the neoliberal security state that is meant to combat all of the previously listed social ailments. Then, I outline the discourses of the political economy in regards to the phenomenon of globalization, where I delve into a conversation about social mobility, the commoditization of products in relationship to these larger theoretical phenomena to situate this study within a conversation of broader literature in anthropological economics and ideas of modernity for economic development. In regards to supporting the findings of this research, I also outline important literature about social and

political group formation, social mobility and business development strategies in this age. While my analysis here is primarily anthropological in nature, I also draw upon related literatures due to my own interdisciplinary background. As a result, this research borrows concepts from other fields including sociology, education, human geography, development studies and political economics.

Hangover Effects of Colonization

Karl Marx argued that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." (2008 [1852] pg. 12). Therefore, it is incumbent upon people living in the present to reflect on the historical record to understand how the conditions created there, influence the current state of political affairs, people's attitudes, sense of social norms and the other systematic social trappings that were created historically. In this selection, I present previous research into discrimination, colonization, the Colombian civil war, drugs, and the neoliberal security apparatus meant to control these subjects in the imaginings of the state. These are the ghosts that currently haunt *Gran Colombia* in its quest to become a modern, developed, nation state.

When the Spanish conquered Latin America, the Spanish Inquisition was beginning in Europe. This religious and political movement brought oppressive prosthelyzation practices to the Western Hemisphere which included converting people to Catholicism, and making extreme examples of non-believers through torturing them (Silverblatt 2004). With somewhere between 85-90% of Colombians claiming that they are Catholic, still to this day, according to the Colombian Evangelical Association, the Catholic Archdiocese and the US State Department's estimates, the results of these colonial modification tactics speak for themselves. To borrow

concepts from Achilles Mbembe, the colonial abilities to "massage" and "groom" the future citizens of this nation were astounding. Alexander Edmonds (2010) does a thorough analysis of the processes of miscegenation that the Portuguese crown undertook to deracinate the people of that nation. Spanish tactics to impose their religious and race making sensibilities onto the Colombian population were not so different. Much like the Portuguese, the Spanish colonization practices included miscegenation among the Native, European and African people's in the New World. As the Spanish conquered the Native peoples, they tried to inter-marry with them, this practice was done somewhat strategically (de la Cadena 2006). Conquered peoples attempted to retain their social status positions of power through marrying their daughters off to powerful Spanish officials (ibid). Spanish authorities recruited as many Europeans to immigrate to the New World to settle it and to create ´blanquimiento´ (social whitening) in the population, as the Spanish Crown, as well as religious authorities, encouraged racial harmony through this process (Silverblatt 2004). The elite colonialists believed that if the population could not clearly identify themselves as a differentiated racial category of one kind or another, then it would be difficult for the people to divide themselves along racial lines, and therefore could not rebel against the authorities (de la Cadena, 2006). Ann Stoler and Irene Silverblatt remark on the colonial authorities' ability to therefore make race not so much about skin color *per se* but rather to make it more about how people conduct themselves socially. Joel Streiker (1995) has also found through his ethnographic research in Cartagena, that the population racially polices itself along these old colonial categories. He argues that people attribute racial identity to where people gather, how they dress, who they associate with, how they speak to one another, if they are religious and what kind of occupations they hold. In Colombia and many neighboring Latin American countries then, phenotype alone does not denote racial categorization. Rather, skin

color is only a factor when combined with all of the aforementioned elements such as overall appearance and social behavior which serve to determine whether one is '*negro*' (black), '*indio*' (Indigenous), '*meztizo*' (mixed, Spanish and Indigenous), '*mulatto*' (a mix of black, Indigenous, or European) or '*castillano*' (white, of European decent) (Wade 1997, Edmonds 2010). Additionally, there is a tendency to put people in limited racialized categories, often discounting other immigratory histories from Asia, for example. This complicated matrix of racial composition differs from that of the United States. Someone can have dark skin in Colombia, coupled with a privileged background in that country and they will be considered a part of the *castillano* (or white) elite (de la Cadena 2006, Edmonds 2010). In the past, this has even lead some to assume that racism does not exist in Latin American countries because it can be harder to recognize (Edmonds 2010). However, to be called *negrito* (black), *minga* (indigenous), *ñero* (a low class rural to urban migrant from the barrio), have all been terms used to negatively identify people. In fact, these terms are often used as racial slurs against people believed to be on the lower end of the racial hierarchy. The color caste system within the paradigm of Latin America has not been strictly phenotypically based but never the less, is discussed in those terms. The white *castellanos* (Spanish descendants) are the privileged economic and political group, the *meztizo´s* (mixed European and Native) are next, with the *mulatto´s* (mixed African, European or Native blood), *indio's* (Indigenous people) and *negro* (people of African descent) are often ranked last in historical colonial construct of a racial caste system. These mixed racial categories of people again, are not singled out for being as such, except in everyday speech. To reedify the point here once again, in Latin America, race does not always reflect skin tone, but rather the definition of race. A combination of factors such as phenotype, social activity, religion, occupation and social connections are factors that all contribute to the creation of a racialized

caste system in Latin America. The way that people are categorized then, can serve as a basis for discriminatory practices in Colombia and elsewhere within the region.

Another serious hardship faced by many Colombians, is the fact that the people are living in a war-torn nation. The war in Colombia, one that has raged on since the late 1940s, is the longest civil war in the history of the western hemisphere (Villar and Cottle 2011). While the efforts to create peace should not be minimized, the war in Colombia does seem to be a relic of the Cold War (Bouvier 2009). The government in Colombia lacks control over three-fifths of its own territory which is run by communist guerillas (Villar and Cottle 2011). The United States grants Colombia the most aid money apart from Israel or Egypt to fight this civil war (Stokes 2001). Scholars such as, Victoria Sanford and Leslie Gill have conducted brave ethnographic field work charting governmental attacks against the poor, labor leaders and left wing educators in Colombia under the guise of fighting the 'communist insurgency'. Sanford (2003) estimates that a program known locally as ´limpieza social´ which has pledged to clean-up the left-wing guerillas and kidnappers has been responsible for the extra-judicial killing of over 30,000 people since its inception in the late 1970s. Gill (2008) also estimates that about 3 million people have emigrated from Colombia, as a means of escaping the targeted violence against educators and labor leaders. As Jimeno (2014) also points out, the war has been going on for so long, that the persistent violence has been normalized into the everyday lives of the people. As the state has become too weak to govern the territory, Jimeno's basic premise is that 'social fragmentation' has risen to the point where gangs, and traditional warlords, *de facto* control most of the territory of Colombia. The findings of my research concur with Jimeno, as evidence found here, will also later demonstrate.

The Civil War in Colombia also cannot easily be parsed from the War on Drugs. As the United States officially gives money to Colombia to fight the communists who it also equates with the drug runners through *Plan Colombia[4]* and the War on Terrorism, military missions become difficult to untangle (Villar and Cottle 2011, Jimeno 2014). While there is ample evidence that the paramilitaries (mercenaries hired by the Colombian government) and the Colombian military are highly involved in trafficking drugs in this country, the funding of Plan Colombia seems a pretext for aiding the government to fight the communists, as both sides of the civil war also use drug money to finance their operations (Villar and Cottle 2011). However, as Colombia is one of the top drug producing nations in the world, there are always unintended consequences or spillover effects of a country's comparative economic advantages[5]. In the case of Colombia, many people like to ignore this fact and pretend that the consumer nations, such as the United States, France and the United Kingdom, to name a few, are the drug addicted nations that buy from producing countries. This unfortunately is not the case. When 35% of a country's GDP is made from the illegal drug trafficking market (ibid), the reality is that populations of poor, desperate groups fleeing dangerous situations have cheap, largely unfettered access to powerfully pure drugs. Philippe Bourgeois (2003) is possibly the most famous anthropologist to work with populations of people who use drugs. Through his study, working with crack addicts in East Harlem and in East Los Angeles, he studied the informal economic activity of the crack market and the survival strategies used by these populations. In this investigation, I found

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[4] Plan Colombia is a project closely linked to the counter-insugency programs targeting the elimination of communism in Latin America under the Kennedy Administration in the 1960s. It is a project where the United States government gives billions of dollars in aid money to fight 'communism', the 'war on drugs' and now 'terrorism' to the central government in Colombia. None of the aforementioned terms are well defined under the program and the government uses the monies to suppress all three 'threats' to the nation-state with very little oversight or accountability (Petras 2000, Veillette, 2005).

[5] Comparative Advantage is an economic term developed by David Ricardo (1817), in liberal economic theory. It describes the ways in which a nation should hone in on a unique industry that it can have dominance over in the world marketplace.

Bourgeois' work about how to interact with my informants who consumed large amounts of a crack–like substance called bazuka, instructive. Bourgeois' (2003) work has brought attention to the large impact that street drugs like crack, have on society. As drugs are illegal and many scholars are afraid or do not know how to begin to engage the topic on an intellectual level, Bourgeois' ethnography tackled this issue head-on. His work has helped me to be able to approach drug users on the streets of Colombia, to represent them as I legitimately saw it, without intellectual fear. Although urban life in a war-torn country can be challenging, many of my informants were not discouraged by the difficult life circumstances that they encountered. Discrimination, poverty, war and drug addiction are ever present obstacles in Colombia, but people are resilient against the most oppressive forces, in certain cases. In fact, sometimes the way in which people struggle against these vices are to engage in them and profit off of them.

Many of my informants did just that. They formed street gangs and quasi-criminal organizations, in order to make their lifestyles possible. As many were discriminated against because of their race, class status or lack of the right kind of educational background, many of them turned to the illicit sales of drugs, contraband or engaged in the sex trade. The sociological and anthropological investigations that attempt to explain delinquency in urban settings, and the rise of gang activity mainly come from the fields of sociology and criminology. One of the first well-known studies about gangs and their activity was conducted by Frederick Thrasher in 1927 where he surveyed over one thousand gangs to uncover the various ways in which they are organized and to try to understand their reasons for existing. Thrasher (1927) discovered that there were many different types of gangs and that they were organized according to various ideologies, had different goals and behaved in a wide range of manners in order to achieve those goals. George Herbert Mead was able to study delinquency by using an ethnographic approach.

He concluded that rehabilitating delinquents and reintegrating them into society worked much more effectively than harsh and punitive measures against criminal elements. Robert Merton also famously wrote many articles on social structure and anomie, or one's ability to disregard societal values or norms from the 1930s to the 1950s. He similarly found that delinquency was not necessarily related to people's disregard for societal norms but was in fact, related to the opportunities that the individuals perceived they had access. These actions were simultaneously dependent on the informant's values. Albert Cohen studied subcultures in inner-cities which lead to the development of delinquency in adolescence because of their differential treatment by society as members of the lower class. Phil Cohen, Albert's son, similarly picked up on this type of investigation in the 1970s and concluded that youth from subcultures often reproduce delinquency as a response to the older generation's dominant ideology that they are the victims of discrimination and economic oppression. The youth then, try to react to this ideology by rebelling against the legal system. Francis Ianni (1971) conducted an anthropological study of the Mafia in the United States to discover its organizing principles. He determined that gangs were the ways in which communities organized themselves socially and resolved conflict when the state was absent or unable to provide these structures. Building from this previous scholarship, I am analyzing the gangster rappers that I worked with as individuals from various class groups, coming together to form networks that often behave in delinquent ways to attempt to change their fate through re-appropriating societal resources and garnering social mobility as they attempt this feat.

The Anthropology of Rap Music in Colombia and Beyond

Rap artists have been largely understudied in anthropology. Although, hip-hop music is the second most popularly consumed music genre in the world next to rock music, it has been

paid relatively little attention. Similarly, rap artists from Latin America, and particularly from Colombia have also been neglected in terms of field research. In 2002, there was a documentary called *Resistencia: Hip-hop Music in Colombia* produced by Tom Feiling. He interviewed famous rap groups like *Asilo 38*, the Ghetto Clan, *Poetas de la Obscuridad* and the Atomic Rockers Crew. The documentary argues that hip-hop is a genre of music created to push back against violence, capitalism and the imposition of traditional family values as a 'norm'.

One of the only anthropologists to study rap music specifically in Colombia is Angelica Montoya who studied the identity formation of youth that consider themselves rappers (*raperos*). Montoya (2006, 2007, 2009, 2011) determined that Colombian youth that become involved in the hip-hop scene usually do so to combat negative stereotypes about people from their social class position, race and gender. She observed that through the musical art form, young people were trying to change the stereotype of their age group and their social position. The young people want to demonstrate their intelligence, their street smarts, their ability to be strong, and self-confident even though they come from low socio-economic positions or *stratas* as they are known in Colombia. While Montoya (2009, 2011) conducted her research about youth identity formation within hip-hop in the city of Medellin, similarly Gladys Lemus (2005) based her research on the same topic in Bogota. Lemus (2005) had similar findings. Youth in Bogota tend to identify themselves as *raperos* when they feel a desire to demonstrate to mainstream society that even though they are young and poor, they dream of changing the world through communicating their struggle and empowering themselves through art to discover a better way of life.

As all three authors cover important themes, their work seems to discount the importance of hip-hop in the way that I saw it transforming lives in Colombia. Not only was hip-hop music a

way for the youth to identify themselves and to develop creative outlets for self-expression, the artists that I worked with were also transforming their lives materially through technology. Innovation and the capitalization of production. Feiling, Montoya and Lemus all highlight that the rappers in Colombia do not want hip-hop or rap music to become commercialized the way that it has in the United States. Montoya even asserts that Colombians do not have the same drivers in their society to try and brand themselves and commercialize rap as an art form. This research demonstrates that while I heard the same thing many times over in my own field work, the activity and behavior of the rappers that I worked with indicated something different. While rappers do not want Colombian rap music to become like rap music from the United States, they do commercialize themselves and fashion their own brands to generate capital. Differently, then the scholars listed above, I was able to infiltrate the male-dominated Colombian rap scene to discover that the some of the artists themselves are very interested in being able to make a living selling their art and the rappers go to great lengths to develop the hip-hop industry in Bogota.

Sujatha Fernandez (2003) has documented how the Cuban government has been involved in trying to control and co-opt the development of rap music there. Similarly, Derek Pardue (2008) has charted how the Brazilian government has utilized rap education workshops in prisons to give the inmates an outlet for their social frustrations. While this artistic excercise is meant to give free expression to the prisoners, Pardue asserts that in fact, the institutional nature of the process, inevitably tames the 'revolutionary' nature of the lyrics that are allowed to be created within the particular space of the prison. Perry (2008) also conducted a study on hip-hop in Cuba to discover that youth, in that context, use the music to identify themselves as part of the African Diaspora and to define what it means to be Afro-Cuban despite the government's resistance against the youth to identify themselves as racially unique or different.

Rap music in general is something that is often dismissed in the larger international context of being able to generate mass media sales, although hip-hop music makes up 27% of all music sales, world-wide (Nielsen 2012). Considering this fact, I thought there would be vast amounts of literature demonstrating how hip-hop entrepreneurs were able to come together, make music and access resources to create businesses. However, there is not a great deal of scholarly work on this topic.

According to anthropologists, musicologists and journalists who have written about hip-hop it is a musical format that originated in the South Bronx (Keyes 2004, Alim 2006, Chang 2007). The origin of the music itself is generally considered multi-national, while having a strong basis for the music rooted in populations from the African Diaspora (Keyes 2004, Chang 2007). There are even some scholars that claim the music is solely from the black or African American, community in the United States (Keyes 2004). Although other scholars such as Juan Flores (2001) point out that the origin of the music is more dynamic than to just have come from one place or one ethnic group. Still, the majority of scholars would argue that rap music is Resistance Art Poetry (RAP) and that its main goal is to use recycled or remixed beats underneath provocative and thought provoking lyrics (Alim 2004).

Anthropologists such as H. Samy Alim, Alistair Pennyhook, and Awad Ibrahim have focused on the lyrics of rap music to better understand the linguistic diversity and play on the language used by the artists. They have argued that the literary pluralisms that exist within US and even internationally need to be better understood by classroom teachers to facilitate the development of our global educational goals. Other scholars have focused on the social and political aspects of rap music. Mark Anthony Neal and Murray Forman edited an encyclopedia of Hip-Hop in the United States that contains articles that address a range of issues within the

22

hip-hop community from the language used within the genre to the cultural and political messages it sends, as well as how the music has been commercialized. Dan Charnas (2011) is a journalist who published a book called the *Big Paycheck: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop* which chronicles the historical development of hip-hop and its most successful businessmen. Finally, Steve Stoute (2012) also authored a book called *The Tanning of America: How Hip-hop Created a Culture that Re-wrote the Rules for a New Economy*. These works are insightful to the development of the hip-hop industry in the United States and I will refer back to them for comparative insight into the hip-hop industry in Colombia, particularly in later chapters of this work. This research contributes to the historical documentation of the development of hip-hop in Colombia, the contributions rappers want to make to their society and how they are revolutionizing the economy there through utilizing social relationships and new technology.

Globalization and Economic Anthropology

This research is also links conversations about globalization, economic anthropology and ideas about indigenous economic development. In this section, I will define globalization and discuss some works with which I am engaging, to highlight particular concepts in this research. Then, I will also discuss economic anthropology in terms of its links to themes such as, social mobility, the commodification of the genre and how technology influences these processes. Ted Lewellan (2002, p. 9) defines globalization as:

> "the increasing flow of trade, finance, culture, ideas and people brought about by the sophisticated technology of communications and travel by the worldwide spread of neoliberal capitalism and it is the local regional adaptations to and resistance against these flows."

As some researchers argue that globalization is a new phenomenon that has been increasing with the re-introduction of liberal global economic policies (Fiss & Hirsh 2005), other scholars point

out that globalization is not a new phenomenon and has been taking place since at least the 15ᵗʰ Century, which started with colonization (Trouillout 2003). The concept of globalization as defined by Lewellan however, lends a broad theoretical landscape for which to describe the transnational nature of this particular research project. While it is also acknowledged that globally neoliberal economic platforms have been encouraged by the international financial institutions (IFIs) (Harvey 2004, Chang 2002) this work also takes a nod from Stephen Gudeman (2016) who argues that using political economy or a modes of production framework for analyzing economic anthropology can limit the analysis. Gudeman advocates for conceptualizing economic situations, as an alternative. Considering this argument, I have chosen to focus on two economic aspects of the development of rap music in Bogota, Colombia. I want to explain how rap groups are organized to achieve social mobility, and how they commodify their products. These activities lend themselves to redefining societal values to produce cultural change. In referencing literature from the earlier problem statement, of course some scholars have argued that social mobility is harder to achieve in the era of globalization (Ehrenreich 2006, 2010) while others have stated that the culturally creative industries should be set apart from this argument because these producers have largely been successful in the new economy (Harvey 2004, Florida 2012). Other scholars who study social mobility practices have found that in fact, there are a great many ways in which individuals have been able to utilize what they term as 'middling strategies' to create and accumulate wealth to join the ranks of the socially mobile middle classes (Robson and Butler 2001, Cohen 2004, Nutini 2005, Heiman et.al. 2012, Florida 2012, Jayaram 2014). In fact, advocates for the liberalization of development economics had long suggested that by breaking down the welfare state, challenging the rentseeking and clientelistic behavior of strong state apparati, would lead to the opening-up of new spaces for social mobility and

entrepreneurship among previously disenfranchised social class groups (Krueger 1979, Lal 1983, Williamson 1990). In order to evaluate the rap groups that I worked with in regards to their middling or social mobility strategies, I am relying on traditional political anthropology from FG Bailey to discuss the machinations that groups can invent to gain political and economic power. Here, I also enlist the help of Michel Callon and Bruno Latour in framing this study within actor-network theory (ANT). These two strands of theoretical scholarship guide me in explaining the inner-workings of the different types of rap groups that I worked with, to foster a better understanding of how organizations were successful at creating socio-economic mobility. I also take the liberty to conceptualize the practices found within this case to argue that some of the rap groups engage in a form of indigenous economic development that is worth recognizing as a form of modernization and economic growth.

In discussing the processes of commodification that rap music and cultural products underwent, I discuss how the liberal economy and technology have encouraged this process (Harvey 2009, Palomera 2013). Arjun Appadurai (1994) defines commoditization of cultural products as an object located within an economic situation, in which its social relevance comes from its past, current or future prospects for exchangeability. This work then, analyzes the cultural production of hip-hop and the market value that is generated from its existence within the Colombian context. This work also explores the facets of personhood created from the desire to market representations for commercialization. From Alexis Bunten's (2008) work on the commodification of personas, this manuscript seeks to highlight how commercial processes of capitalistic accumulation impact the actions of rappers as they create personas to help them with this endeavor. According to Zimmer (2010) studying the social network of the rap musicians and how they commoditize their products will enable this research to explicate strategies of

entrepreneurship and business development in Bogota, Colombia that may be helpful to understanding this phenomenon in a variety of contexts.

Here, I also delve into investigating technologies role in enabling the rappers to develop their musical talents and how they reach across transnational spaces through this process. As relatively little is known about how technology enables DIY development, anthropological economists like Stephen Fox (2014) and Eitan Wilf (2015) urge more scholarship in this field. This research investigation, took that call seriously. Better understanding how people make connections, maintain bonds, learn to use technological resources and what kind of limitations are inherent with this type of entrprenuership enable the discipline to understand the bounds of this new type of music production format and innovation. While some popular globalization advocates have made sweeping claims about the miracle of technological 'democratization', these assertaion are need to be thoroughly interrogated to better understand the limits of technological revolution.

At the heart of this research too, are questions involving the globalization movement and its impacts on various people's lives. Briedenback and Zukrigl (2001) make the case that studying globalized forms of music production and their content are important endeavors because often, the creators of the artform are telling us the complicated narratives that come out of the processes. Scholars like Rohit Chopra (2003) and Jan Bloomeart (2010) for example argue that globalization is a form of (neo) colonization that reinscribes the ideals of progress, modernity, orderliness, racism, classism and sexist paradigms of thinking by creating a global hegemony. While it may be true that often modernization projects by various levels of governments, do exist, human agency is endlessly creative and restless in contesting those disciplining forces. This work focuses on a particular valve of cultural resistance to

'normalizing' and mainstreaming processes of our global communities to investigate that boundless, innovative, genius that causes human beings to thrive.

Chapter Summary

In the following Chapter, I describe the setting within Bogota, Colombia for the reader to better understand the political, economic and social scene in which rap music has come to flourish within this setting.

In Chapter 3, I describe the methods used in this investigation. I unwind the process of how I entered the field, collected various forms of data, with whom I worked, and I give account of the variety of methods used in collecting my data. I also discuss the way my data was analyzed and abstracted. I conducted 21 months of field work with my informants, investigating the processes of creating, producing and distributing rap music and its culture in Bogota. I conducted participant observations with many rap groups and rappers. Some of them are the most famous rap stars in the country. I was able to conduct 61 formal interviews. I have over 1200 pages of transcripts and 700 hours of video tape from rap concerts, civic events, recording sessions and interviews. In this chapter, I discuss how I have compiled all of that data into a comprehensible study of the social models of rap groups in Bogota, and how they operate internally to make their music.

In Chapter 4, I outline the rap networks in Bogota, by creating a social model detailing general rules and guidelines that the so called 'corporate' rap polity adopts. From conducting my fieldwork, there were patterns of behavior and strategies that organized rap groups used to maintain group cohesion in their social network. The corporate models utilized organizational political strategies in order to construct a coherent group of expansive networks that enabled

them to become industrial rappers in the Bogota, music scene. In other words, these rappers have been able to become successful capitalist entrepreneurs who have created social mobility for themselves through utilizing real and fictive kinship bonds, as well as coherent business strategies. In this chapter, I illustrate the social structural model that the rappers from this type of network used to create their businesses centered around hip-hop. One of the most important aspects of this type of model is that the participants have a unifying philosophy, system of values, creation narrative, share the same goals and vision for the kind of hip-hop community that they want to materialize within their country and they successfully market it to the fans of rap music in Bogota. As the participants in this type of network view themselves as being related to one another, they see themselves as elite voices of the hip-hop community and because they defend this claim together, they are successful at making a living, in order to be the best rappers in the city.

In Chapter 5, I will present another kind of model of rap groups that existed within Bogota that is also very popular but these groups were less well organized. The rappers from this model are what I refer to as the adhoc model of rap networks. The rappers and solo artists from this group do not have the structural economic organization that enable them to unify and build businesses. As rap music is an art form, these musicians and participants refused to solely engage in the capitalistic practices of making music. The rappers and producers in this category only had one thing in common, they want to make music. Other than loose transactional bonds for making music, they did not share core moral values, as in the alternative case of the previously mentioned corporate networks. Showing the similarities and differences that exist within these two rap polities enable us to observe that not all groups and individuals have the same reactions to structural forces within the global system. Observing these formulaic differences of how

people make rap music is vital to adding to the arguments for and against these new economic politics and technologies so that our academic community can more specifically gage the benefits or pitfalls of the current order.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to discussing the unique place of women in rap in Bogota. While rap music has traditionally been a male dominated music genre, as are most genres of international music, women have always been a part of the rap scene. Uncovering the roles that women play in the rap scene to further develop the culture, how they help with group maintenance practice, utilize their expert knowledge to set standards of professionalism and contribute to the scene as rappers, as well, this chapter will explicate how women participate in rap music in Bogota.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to examining the social messages that the rappers in Bogota are sending to their audiences and what they say are their intentions. While I model the extreme cases of various rap groups to illustrate how they operate in Bogota, in a general sense, examining the lyrics of rap groups and what the artists themselves have to say about the messages that their music is sending to people, this data allows the reader to understand the social and political controversies that people living in Bogota experience. The data presented here, also provides a better understanding of how people cope with and are resilient to an ever changing socio-cultural and political economic landscape of uncertainties.

Chapter 8 traces the transactional use of resources that has to be obtained in order to assemble a rap song in the various polities of the hip-hop community in Bogota. This chapter goes into extensive detail of how producers and rappers compile a song. Producers need quite a lot of technological resources in order to make the beats for a song, record it and master it. This process also requires training for the art to take proper form. In this analysis, I examine data from

different types of groups that I observed and report the processes that they utilize to acquire these resources, how they learned to use them and to illustrate the differences between the corporate network's artists and the adhoc models artist's in this process.

In Chapter 9, I uncover the process behind disseminating products as independent rap artists in Bogota from the data that I collected from my participants. As the producers, managers, promoters and product distributors for different rap groups, explain the processes of getting music and hip-hop merchandise to the fans, I found patterns of similarity and difference that the two models of hip-hop artists utilized in this location. Here, I share those findings to further enhance what is known about varieties of ways that people in Bogota try to publicize themselves and their music.

The final chapter is dedicated to discussing the ultimate reach of the hip-hop groups. The corporate models were able to develop businesses based on their music in a diversified fashion. When a business group is able to develop businesses in several different sectors of the economy, this is called a horizontal business strategy. In Chapter 10, I describe the key business practices that were able to push the corporate model from being hustlers on the street to being the entrepreneurs of formal businesses within the city. The strategies that the corproate business models used to establish themselves in different business sectors may be helpful to other people within the industry interested in replicating their success.

The findings of this research indicate that there are very distinct ways in which groups of people approach the challenges of interacting with the global economy. Their choices are interesting to document, to facilitate greater understandings of how people gain access to power in our modern political economy. James Ferguson (2014) has noted that while it has been traditional to think about how people derive power, as something that trickles down from the

state in a vertical manner, he argues that this notion needs to necessarily be disrupted. In our globalized world with technological advances which make it possible for international actors to reach across national boundaries and to socially network with others in order to create forms of social mobility by combining strength from these various "levels" of international actors working in tandem against the desires or policy formulations of the state. This research gives a detailed account of how that is possible through coordinating actions of groups on a transnational level. This research also indicates that even groups that are not successful at gaining economic power with cultural production are still innovative and liberalizing forces within political economic systems. Their contributions can be valuable to social resistance and cultural transformation, as well.

Additionally, this research traces the commodification processes of how rap music in Bogota comes into existence. By understanding how rappers commodify their personas as 'authentic' gangster rappers, how they organize themselves socially, analyzing their rap lyrics, production processes, dissemination techniques and business strategies, this information can provide more insight about the innerworkings of cultural production. This information can be helpful for other burgeoning musicians, entrepreneurs or educators who facilitate cultural production development.

Finally, this research was also able to discover how the development of digital technology was facilitating the production process undertaken by the rappers in Bogota. While some academics and popular critics have commented on the supposed flattening effects that technology has on populations who employ these resources, this research found that this has not, in fact, happened. The availability of digital technology is still highly divisive and depends on

user ability. This research contributes to discussions with the fields of economic anthropology, development, education and technology use.

CHAPTER 2: The Rise of Rap Music Here and There

"Reality is wrong. Dreams are for real." – *Tupac Shakur*

Introduction

Rap music is a popular counter-cultural format that explores important political, social and economic issues that Colombians' face in everyday life. Using Hannah Arendt's (1957) concept of a 'counter public space', I argue that rap music is used, as progressive societal force in popular culture, that is a catalyst to speak back to power. In this chapter, I want to recount the various political and economic drivers that influenced the development of hip-hop and her cultural production in general. Then, I describe the cultural movements that rose-up in response to these legal and economic changes within the larger political framework of the state which ushered in the advent of a global hip-hop movement. Finally, I delve into the exclusive history of the origination of rap music in Bogota, Colombia to contextualize the importance of this musical genre for the people there today in providing a counter public space to discuss popular political, economic and social concerns with the system. I also explore how hip-hop provides a platform to engage in the political and social lifestyle changes for people who live in Colombia.

Rap music has a long and varied history in the context of its origin and its development in Bogota, Colombia. In this Chapter, I discuss the various deviations rap music took, first on the streets of New York City and as it traveled to Latin America. I relay the complicated nature of some of the current debates and controversies surrounding the genre to a wider audience. Then, finally I contextualize the music by discussing the conditions under which the rappers, with whom I worked, are creating rap music in Bogota.

First, I synthesize various narratives of the formation of rap music. Beginning in the late 1970s, rap music began to take form in the basements of self-made DJs from London, and New York experimenting with digital music technologies. These processes became combined with the tracks of Rastafarians and radical gang leaders from the *barrios* of these locations. Rap music was born from the economically disadvantaged communities in Jamaica, London, and New York (Chang 2007, Keyes 2002). These occurrences happened separately and together. This ethnography intends to make it clear that hip-hop and rap music developed somewhat indigenously within the many locations in which it currently exists through global urban flows by way of travel and migration (Alim et. al. 2008). Some hip-hop scholars argue that the music was solely created within the Bronx of New York City during a particular time frame (Keyes 2002). However, understanding how cultural flows within the paradigm of globalization and free markets make it impossible for a cultural product to be contained or exclusive but rather make it diffuse and prolific, I argue that rap music developed in the Bronx as forms of this type of music were also sprouting up and spreading, in tandem with other urban enclaves around the globe (Flores 2001). As rap became more and more commercialized in the US, it then gave rise to a label for this type of mixed, urban music, made from turntables and other home-made, hand-me-down instruments. Where hip-hop developed, is a main point of contention in my informants' interpretation of the innovation of this genre and much of the existing literature about rap music. Here, I argue that while hip-hop did gain more commercial popularity in the Bronx, it was also simultaneously emerging in other places. However, ultimately, the reader will have enough perspective given throughout this summary, that they may decide for themselves how they believe that hip-hop came to be in Colombia and where its authentic roots originate. Whether one believes that rap music is a cultural product from the US or that it is a musical genre that has its

own localized articulations in numerous locations throughout the globe, the outcome is that rap music has become a platform for the public to discuss current events, pressures, political, economic and social life in modern society.

After outlining the general historical development of rap music, presenting information about how it was first grew out of people's homes, then flowed into the streets, this narrative will then explore how the genre became popularized and eventually commercialized in the United States and throughout the globe. Finally, some of the ideologies of hip-hop and their controversies will be discussed. I will ultimately argue that rap music in Bogota, Colombia developed out of a specific set of circumstances that are unique to its location. Bogota is the main locus of refuge for many of the internally displaced people that exist within the country as a result of the civil war. It, therefore, has a uniquely large homeless or extremely poor population that lives in the outskirts of the city and in South Central Bogota, which has also been nicknamed 'El Bronx'. The internally displaced refugees are often blamed for the crime and moral degredation in the city (C.F. Sanford 2003). As a result, there are local discourses of discrimination against them, the Afro-Colombians and the Indigenous populations. This results in difficult circumstances for the people living in the Colombian capital of Bogota.

The *Resistencia Artistica Poesia*[6] explored in this ethnography was created as a social coping mechanism to interrogate the colonial legacy in Bogota, Colombia such as the civil war, the War on Drugs, the militarization of society, and discriminatory practices within the Colombian state system raged on (Lemus 2005, Montoya 2006). Rap artists are attempting in some capacity to change the way their society views people who live in poverty or have hardships. Rap artists are resisting the cycle of poverty narrative set forth by societal elites and

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[6] RAP music in its' Spanish translation.

strive to change the way people in Colombia view the structural oppression that exists for the lowers class groups through rallying around the culture of this musical genre. I am arguing that rap music developed as a way for marginalized people to speak back to power and to resist the right wing political forces that accompanied the resurgence of liberal economics in the Americas.

The Need for Rap Music and the Development of Hip-Hop

The political upheaval at the end of the late 1960s, accompanied by the economic stagnation of the 1970s left many people in the United States ready for change. While the Civil Rights movement made many gains in the 1960s, it was badly shaken as Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated and as the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) broke up organizations like the Black Panthers by jailing its members (Smith 2003, Gosa 2011, Stoute 2012). The Civil Rights Movement was in crisis and was lacking popular voices from young activists, who were afraid to organize and speak out (Smith 2003). The development of hip-hop music in the inner-cities gave the youth an opportunity to create poetic rhymes, with indirect messages, over beats and to discuss their everyday troubles through this artistic platform. As Ronald Reagan and the Conservative Majority took control of congress in the 1980s, many left-wing political groups felt marginalized (Gosa 2011). The rise of ring-wing ideologies transformed the political system in the United States under the paradigm of a new liberal economic order (Smith 2003, Gosa 2011). Hip-hop and rap music became a means for urban minority youth to speak back to power, even if it was only from the street corners or at block parties (Stoute 2012).

Rap stands for Resistance Art Poetry, R.A.P. (Keyes 2002, Lemus 2005). Rap music and rap culture is a form of cultural production that has developed in lower class neighborhoods from different places around the globe to resist dominant cultural images and ideas (Alim 2004, Chang 2007). With the colonization of much of the world by European countries initially and then re-

36

colonized through the economic and military global dominance of the United States subsequently as part of globalization, much of the world has been inculcated into believing in the narrative of the superiority of white people, white politics, white economics and rap music offers an alternative space for people to push back against the imperialistic ideas of that dominant cultural hegemony (Thomas 2003, Gosa 2011).

Adorno and Horkheimer were some of the first cultural critics to remark on the hegemony of production in mass communications by the United States and Europe. They argued that through mass communication idioms and globalization processes, racism, classicism and gender stereotypes were reified through cultural production. They argued that most mass media represents racist ideals of white males as the good guys, minorities as bad, makes the rich look glamorous and righteous while the poor are caught in a cycle of poverty because of the bad choices that they make in life (c.f. Oscar Lewis in *Five Families: A Case Study in Mexico).* The mass media outlets also reconstitute women in the gender binary that is so common in colonial rhetoric (Lessig 2004, Thomas 2007). It puts women in two categories, the virtuous versus the whores (hooks 1994, Collins 2002, Thomas 2007). Rap music is part of a subculture which pushes to offer alternative forms of cultural production and image making for people to further understand the intellectual complexities of race, class and gender beyond their colonial imaginings (Gosa 2011). Rap music is counter-cultural.

Originally, the art of hip-hop included five elements. It combined the art of making beats, or djing, rapping or creating poetry, graffiti art or street art, break dancing and the knowledge of self (Chang, 2007, Keyes 2002, Lemus 2005). Rap music also symbolically fights against unnecessary consumerism as it relies on using 'recycled' material, or garbage – if you will, in order to make music (Chang 2007). Collecting old record players, records, mixers, keyboards,

drums, guitars, synthesizers, recording sounds and figuring out how to mix them together to record new songs out of old ones using sampling techniques, is at the core of this art form (Chang 2007, Alim 2004, George 2005). Taking the old and making it new. Innovation, recycling, resisting consumer throw away culture by reversing it and making something new with the old discarded products one already has, was part of the origins of rap music or hip-hop (George 2005). Once beats were being created with recycled records, synthesizers, and drum kits, people began laying down slam poetry or sometimes reggae style sermons over the tops of these tracks and this is how hip-hop was invented in the South Bronx of New York City (Chang 2003, Keyes 2001). Krims (2000) and Chang (2007) have presented narratives of how hip hop began in the disco scene of the late 1970s in London. Disc Jockeys (DJs) began playing techno music or music made by digital technology. In the late 1970s, as many Jamaicans were fleeing the island due to the economic downturn there, they headed to London and the South Bronx in New York, where they began singing reggae style tunes over the tracks that DJs were creating in the electronic music scene (Keyes 2001, Chang 2007). As the flows of music went back and forth from London to Kingston, a young man named DJ Kool Herc, or rather Keith Campbell and his Father, Clive Campbell invented hip-hop music in their living room in 1973 (Chang 2007, Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012). They had immigrated to the United States from Jamaica just a few years earlier. The Campbell family had been interested in the disco music of the era and were playing around with records, turn tables and live instruments in the living room, while laying down poetic rhymes over the top of these tracks. They began using a technique called 'breaking', which is where a DJ moves the record around as it is spinning to create different sounds and laying their politically driven discourse over the top of the sounds they were creating by mixing records together with outside noises infused from synthesizers and drum kits (Charnas

38

2011). At a party that they held in their apartment in the Bronx in 1973, they broke out this new music for the first time. They played records from the disco era, reggae, soul, funk, jazz, and salsa (Chang 2007). The party was lit and this is how hip-hop was born. Other people in the neighborhood began mimicking this new musical style that Keith and Clive had shown them. In the Bronx, people started having block parties where they would play this new hip-hop music and try to unite the neighbors (ibid). The medium created by the cultural production of hip-hop allowed the youth of this generation to have a reason to come together in a collaborative effort. The unity and the composition of needing so many people to create hip-hop gave inner-city communities reasons to bond with one another. As groups of people began to come together to create cultural products, their innovation spilled over and created a whole lifestyle (Charnas 2011, Gosa 2011, Stoute 2012).

As I discussed this creation narrative with some of my informants they were quick to point out that a lot of the first DJs in New York were also Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Blacks, Latinos, Jamaicans, Europeans, and so it was hard for any 'race', 'nationality' or 'culture' to argue that 'they' created hip-hop exclusively. Although, the African American community has been deeply enmeshed with the culture of hip-hop historically (Keyes 2002, Alim 2006) other ethnic groups cannot be excluded from this process (Flores 2001). Jeffrey Chang's work on the hip-hop movement in the Bronx, tells a story of how hip-hop created unity and peace among racial groups in the South Bronx for the first time in its more recent migration history. In the late 1960s, the Bronx had been divided up into ethnic enclaves where rival gangs representing different nationalities, controlled the streets and violence was rampant. Chang's work, claims that Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and blacks would put aside differences to come together and make hip-hop music and throw block parties. Chang's narrative illustrates this idea that hip-hop

brought people together to make music. One cannot do hip-hop alone, after all. Other scholars tell alternative tales of the origins of hip-hop that depart from this unified celebration of multi-culturalism, however. While Chang's work takes a romantic view of the multi-ethnic, inner-city celebration of hip-hop which ushered in the beginning of an era of post-racial politics, other scholars contest this narrative.

The history of hip-hop being a 'transnational' or even a 'multi-cultural' musical invention is debated among scholars like Cheryl Keyes (2000) or William George (2005), who claim that hip-hop is directly a product of the African Diaspora and therefore is the cultural product of 'black' people. In fact, most of the first rappers and DJs were from the African American Community. Many of these scholars argue that in fact, there was often violence between ethnic groups within New York over who could rap and be considered an authentic part of the hip-hop community. Some of the earliest artists in the genre included, Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five, Fab Five Freddy, Marley Marl, Afrika Bambaataa, Cool Moe Dee, Kurtis Blow, Doug E. Fresh and The Sugar Hill Gang (Alim 2006). In 1979, the release of "Rapper's Delight" became the first commercially popular hip-hop song in the United States (Alim 2006, Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012).

Gilroy (2005) and Kelly (2005) write about the initial difficulties for Puerto Ricans or non-blacks to be involved in the production of hip-hop music on the East Coast in the US, unless they could pass as black. Kelly (2005, pg. 99) quotes Kid Frosty, the first Latino DJ in the US, as saying that as long as no one noticed he was Puerto Rican or if he could 'pass' as a black guy, they would let him DJ. If the crowd however, heard the slightest hint of his Spanish accent or if he dropped a beat that gave him away as 'too Latino', the crowds would boo him off stage (ibid). This kind of racial tension that existed in certain parts of rap music, made it difficult for Latinos

to enter the genre for many years, if they identified as such in the context of the United States. Considering the variation in narratives, it seems that different spaces and times were governed by various social rules within spaces of hip-hop music. While music cannot be allied with one racial or ethnic group exclusively, Ibrahim (1999) notes that people who listen to rap music and adopt its poetics enjoy being identified with the 'black' community, regardless of their actual ethnicity. In the context of the United States, blackness is often posited in opposition to whiteness. Therefore, if white mainstream culture is said to represent the nuclear, middle class family, blackness is often said to equate difference, the resistance to this (Alim 2006, Thomas 2007, Gosa 2011). Rap music often is themed around this idea of difference from the 'traditional' paradigm of what it means to be from the United States. Rap music represents the poor, the disadvantaged, those from so-called dysfunctional familial spaces and it is a music for those lacking access to formal resources (Keyes 2002). In this way, then, rap music is a resistance art meant to empower the people in society who feel downtrodden or 'othered'. The music is supossed to be a source of inspiration that people can use to transform their lives from oppressed victims to empowered 'bosses' of their own destiny (Smith 2003).

Towards the end of the 1980s, rap music exploded commercially and took a particularly hardcore turn (Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012). Hip-hop was formed through the creation of beats driven by deep bass and messages of strengthening the youth, uplifting people, and talking about political issues. Additionally, there had always been a side of the music that was mostly for the purposes of entertaining people and dancing. However, by the late 1980s, groups such as Public Enemy, 2 Live Crew, and NWA were some of the biggest selling names in commercial rap and their messages were militantly violent, and misogynistic. bell hooks, believed that this generation was suffering from what Franz Fanon (1963) called the 'Colonization of the Mind'. bell hooks

argues that rap music started out as a genre that was meant to represent radical left-wing political messages but was bamboozled[7] by corporate media. Instead of criticizing the artists who make rap music, however, hooks is more interested in discussing how rap displays power and the 'true' ideology of what she calls the 'capitalist, white supremacist patriarchy' that produces this genre of music, commercially. hooks argues that the top music production companies like Sony, Columbia and Atlantic records show what they truly think of black people in the way they choose to produce the most hardcore and provocative images in rap music. She continues on to point out that the music industry has fallen in love with groups like 2 Live Crew, NWA and Public Enemy, precisely because of the stereotypical images that these artists present in their music. These gangster rappers help to symbolically represent the 'other' in society by depicting black males as aggressive, over sexualized, criminals. hooks points out how often the color caste paradigm is used in the Hollywood depictions of black social interaction. The European beauty ideal is re-emphasized through the imagery of music videos where light-skinned thin women are shown to be the objects of intense desire, while the dark-skinned, heavier set women are shown to be less valuable and more expendable through violence (hooks 1994).

Travis Gosa (2011) alternatively argues that hip-hop presents a complex set of social messages within it and that it should be read as entertainment with a mix of identity politics. Gosa states that rappers take on a character that goes back to African literary traditions where the rapper becomes the 'badman' or the cultural 'trickster'. His job is to showcase what can happen in various scenarios when the rules of society are played with. Gosa goes on to thread together how there are entertainment rappers and socially conscious rappers but both act as story tellers.

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[7] bell hooks uses this term to describe what happened to commercial rap, but it is also a reference to a famous Spike Lee (2000) film about how Hollywood and 'show business' has historically interacted with blackness in the United States.

Their purpose is to relay diverse narratives and teach moral lessons in all of their songs. Gosa explores the conspiracy theories within the hip-hop community too about how the media is controlled by the illuminati (white elites), who use the images in rap to reify stereotypes about black people. Gosa explains that the racial stereotypes and misogynistic images of black people that are represented through certain aspects of rap music are not lost on the listeners, however. He continues, to point out that, many young people utilize this music to better understand how they are being portrayed in the media and possibly by society at large to gain knowledge of self. They can utilize these images to try to understand how corporate cultural production influences their lives. He also points out the complicated nature of rap music and argues that the artists are not promoting violence and misogyny but in fact, are usually arguing against them, which many critics of rap music fail to understand. The development of gangster rap, not coincidentally, came about at the same time that people were beginning to feel the negative impacts of the new liberal political and economic realignment, created under Reaganomics, to tell tales of what this paradigmatic shift was doing to the inner-cities of the United States.

As the state changed its focus in development and reoriented itself towards private enterprise, expanding the prison industry and re-instituting right-wing political ideals (Dávila 2004, Hilgers, 2010, Waquant 2012), one of the most popular genres of music in the world took root in the United States as a new way for young people to come together and speak back to power. Early groups like Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation and Freddie and the Fabulous Five helped to start a movement that expanded into a diverse set of production types within hip-hop and rap music. Suddenly, there were certain groups that were recognized as socially conscious rap groups like De La Soul and then contrarily there were other rap groups like 2 Live Crew that show case a more hardcore representation of life in the inner-city. However, both subgenres of

43

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resistance art poetry demonstrated a rich diversity of voices within the African Diaspora of inner-city life in the United States. The messages that these rappers delivered would help pave the way for later artists within rap music to develop clothing lines, fragrances, and other commercially viable products. Rap music not only gave people from the inner-cities a platform to speak back to power about the economic and political conditions that were being structurally forced upon them, but it eventually provided an opening for the artists to develop entrepreneurial opportunities, and gain social mobility, as well.

The Emergence of A Movement in Bogota

It makes sense that hip-hop like many social and political movements had a lot of internal struggle, conflict and potential to create social change at its inception. Hip-hop was first heard on the streets in the US, in the 1970s but locally in Colombia, many older hip-hop heads (people who work in or helped to pioneer the hip-hop scene in Bogota) that I spoke with, thought the urban hip-hop scene, which included break dancing, graffiti, dj-ing, and mc-ing; these practices were something that had developed organically in Bogota. Some of the oldest B-boys and DJs remember when hip-hop started in Colombia. One of the grandfathers of hip-hop in Bogota, was a break-dancer and DJ named Fresh. He had started out as a b-boy in the 1980s. He recounted to me one evening during our first interview in November:

> Fresh: "How did it start? Let's see, it was just an urban movement everywhere, you know? Funk and soul music was being taken to the streets with portable record players, walkman, instruments, people were just getting together in the parks and metro stations to jam, dance, and paint. We started this event called the *Septimazo* on Seventh Street, before it was closed to car traffic, like it is now and we would party on the street corners. We were a little organized, but not that much. Then, in the mid-1980s, maybe like 1986 or so, Afrika Bambaataa came to Bogota to spread the message of hip hop, as they saw it. The Zulu Nation taught us about their 5 principles of hip-hop. The breaking, djing, mcing, knowledge of self and graffiti. The Zulus brought DJ Jazzy Jeff through and that's who gave me my name. I learned a lot of my DJ-ing skills from him too."

Fresh told me about how young people were trained as '*callejeros intellectuales*' (intellectuals of the street) to go out into the '*bajo barrios*' (low strata barrios) and set up workshops on how to DJ, rap, break dance and to do graffiti. The Zulu Nation preached that through being involved with these types of activities and organizing in communities, many of these groups could promote the values of hip-hop music which are unity, peace, and fun (Geroge 2005, Dyson 2005). The Zulu Nation set up chapters in cities throughout Colombia too and in this way expanded their influence here. Some of the initial DJs and rappers like DJ Jazzy Fresh and Al Roc Delito joined the Zulu Nation to become official ambassadors and representatives for the groups in Bogota. They believed that hip-hop would change Colombia for the better through its ability to unite people. Fresh remarked to me in one interview,

> "We thought if this music can unite the gangs in the Bronx, and in New York, well maybe it can uplift the people in the Bronx (an area of the center which contains the city's worst *olla*, at this moment called *La Elle*), here in Bogota. We were hopeful."

People in Colombia were becoming fans of hip-hop music and clothing styles from the US starting in the early 1990s, but it took a few more years for a national hip-hop movement with its own artists to really gain widespread traction inside the country. DJ Fresh and his friend would tell me about how, "There would be small groups of kids rapping, DJing and breaking out in the parks but until the late 1990s there was not really that big or popular of a scene like there is today. Everything was still small, still really underground." Fresh would tell me, when he would reminisce about the good old days. There were a few groups whose albums began to emerge as part of the formal hip-hop scene in the 1990s. One of the first albums to drop was *El Muro* by *Gotas de Rap* in 1995. Then, there was *La Etnia* (The Race) with *El Ataque de Metano* and *Estilo Bajo* came out the following year with *Jungla* (Feiling 2002). These three groups dominated the underground rap scene throughout the mid-1990s (ibid). Finally, in 1998, IDCT

(Instituto Distrito de Cultura y Turismo) held the first *Rap-Al-Parque* in *La Media Torta* (IDARTES 2015). *Rap-al-Parque* was an event set up, in conjunction with other concert series organized through IDCT in order to celebrate local and international hip-hop talent. The first *Rap-al-Parque*, surprised everyone. The *Media Torta* which seats 25,000 people was over flowing with concert attendees and it became clear to the organizers of the event that they were going to need a bigger venue (ibid).

The following year more successful rap groups formed and came onto the scene, such as *Cescru Enlace*, *Asilo 38* and *Fondo Blanco* (Feiling 2002). These groups offered a style of rap music that represented the issues driven, hardcore gangster rap that was popular in the United States in the early 1990s. Their lyrics focused on the civil war, political corruption, trying to stop violence, arguing against discrimination, talking about what living in poverty was like, but yet arguing for resilience among the people of the *pueblo*. For example, *Cescru Enlace* has a song entitled, '*manos criminales*' (or Criminal Hands) which discusses Washington's War Against Drugs and the deadly effects that it has on the people of Colombia. The song begins, and the rappers say that they need people to take a moment to analyze the politics of the drug war. They argue that in order to understand it, people need to realize it is part of an elaborate plot by Washington to fuel the North American economy by turning Colombia into a colonial entity of the US. They argue that drug money supports the guerilla fighters in the jungle, and gives the US an excuse to intervene in Colombia's political economy. The rappers sing about how the drug war leaves many victims in its wake. Cescru sings of how poor, young adolescents in urban areas who are looking for easy money get involved in manufacturing and selling drugs, which makes them a target for the Colombian paramilitaries and police. The rappers continue on to inform the audience of how the US sprays herbicides on the illegal narcotics plants, poisoning the people

and the land from being able to produce quality crops. Cescru sings about how everyone is impacted by the war against drugs from the urban areas to the rural. The armed military conflict displaces people from their land who then move into the city and become easy targets for drug pushers who get them addicted to bazuka and heroine. All the while, the rappers point out, the government is signing free trade deals with the US that allow them to steal Colombian oil and natural resources. They conclude by arguing that the War Against Drugs should end and that the 'criminal hands' (the US) should leave Colombia. These political messages resonate with the people in Colombia and also caught the attention of the New York Times in May of 2004, where they reproduced some of the lyrics from this song in an article that talked about the group at length. The opportunity for one of Colombia's most popular rap groups to have readers all over North America read about their anger towards the drug war is what many young revolutionaries would want. Perhaps having a voice in a globalized Colombia can make a difference for those seeking to change their political system by enabling the young rap artists to communicate their views and help share them with like-minded audiences.

Another example of a successful rap group in Colombia from the late 1990s that is still popular today is *Asilo 38*. They had a hit record called "*Homenaje*" dedicated to all of the people who died in the political violence on the streets. Homenaje, literally means homecoming or sending out your respects to someone who has passed away. In this case, the song gives the survivors of the war and political violence an opportunity to say good bye to their loved ones who have died in the struggle. The chorus screams out "*no volverás mas, descansa en paz*" (you will not return anymore, rest in peace). This song was picked up by MTv Latino, and was a hit throughout Latin America in 2000. The song discusses the impact that violence from all the fighting has had in Colombia, on the lives of so many ordinary people. As somewhere around

250,000 casualties and around 3 million refugees worldwide have suffered as the result of the Colombian Civil War, the subsequent US interventions to aid the War Against Drugs and the War Against Terrorism, in a country with 33 million people, the effects of the civil war have been felt by many (Villar and Cottle 2011). The song also encourages people to be more peaceful with one another in the streets and to lead life as a role model so that people can set a positive example. The song emphasizes that one ever knows when it might be your turn to die, so try to do what you can to make a difference now. "*Homenaje"* has an important message for the public moreover because it tells the world about the severe problems with violence that the people in the slums of Colombia face and it offers a popular discourse that can facilitate an opportunity for the public to put words around their emotions in order to grieve about the loss of their loved ones. This song is a source of acknowledging the pain caused by the death of so many hundreds of thousands of lives lost and of the suffering that so many people face by opening-up space for people to speak about these issues in a way that is different from mainstream narratives about these issues. While the government often advocates begetting violence with more violence, this song stresses the importance of peace. Music can be a great source of therapy for people. The popularity of "*Homenaje*" in Colombia and across the Spanish speaking world was powerful too because it spoke to so many people all over the Latin American region that have lost loved ones at the hands of violence. From the Shining Path in Peru, to the disappeared in Argentina or Chile by dictatorial right wing government repression, or the countless people murdered in Central America as a result of the proxy wars between the US and Russia during the Cold War, this song spoke to common, painful experiences that people have had with violence.

"*Homenaje*" came at an important moment too in the human rights and public policy debates at the turn of the millennium in Colombia itself. Alim (2008) argues that rap music is the

'dusty foot soldiers' philosophy. It is a type of way to draw attention to issues that are plaguing communities in a way that does not seek to directly challenge the powers that be but rather, may lead people to question activities in society. "Homenaje" is a call to bring recognition to the deaths of tens of thousands of people at the hands of the state. According to scholars like Victoria Sanford and Leslie Gill who have done extensive anthropological work on this topic, Colombia's government had been going after left-wing activists within the country since the late 1970s (Sanford 2003). In the 1990s, the CIA and the DEA were responsible for giving training and money to the Autodefensa Unidos Colombia (AUC) a paramilitary organization that is said to have killed upwards of 30,000 Colombian civilians from 1997-2008 (ibid). Gill (2005) also uncovered how paramilitary groups were colluding with multi-national companies like Coca-Cola to execute local labor union organizers. While the song ¨*Homanaje*¨ does not directly call attention to these issues in a political manner, the song asks why so many people have been needlessly killed which subversively calls attention to the issue of extra-judicial killings.

In the cities of Bogota, they too had experienced the covert use of extrajudicial killings by vigilante groups that collude with paramilitary forces and the government. As I was walking

around the city, I saw signs like this one posted in the center of Santa Fe and Barrio San Diego:

LLEGO LA HORA DE LA LIMPIEZA SOCIAL

AHORA LE TOCA EL TURNO A LAS MALPARIDAS PUTAS BASUQUERAS Y SIDOSAS, VENDEDORES DE DROGAS, LADRONES CALLEJEROS Y APARTAMENTEROS, JALADORES DE CARROS, SECUESTRADORES Y JOVENES CONSUMIDORES

YA LOS TENEMOS IDENTIFICADOS

Para el pueblo en general, Ustedes han notado una creciente de la violencia, robos o atracos, prostitucion y consumo de droga… etc. en los últimos tiempos, debido a todo esto nuestra organización ha tomado la irrevocable decisión de atacar la violencia con VIOLENCIA.

Ya no van a contagiar de SIDA a nadie más, solamente a los gusanos.
Tienen las horas contadas, todas las putas de los bares y cantinas y las malparidas prepagos.
Han contagiado a mucha gente de SIDA. Prepárense HIJUEPUTAS…!

Todo malparido que se encuentre en estos bares después de las 10:00 PM no responderemos si caen inocentes. Este más con su familia.

Jóvenes, no los queremos ver en las esquinas parchados drogándose, estamos en limpieza esto es serio. No consuma droga, estudie mas y esté con sus padres reciban sus consejos y los buenos ejemplos. Esto esta PODRIDO.

Vendedores de Drogas, últimamente se esta creciendo el negocio de hasta vender droga en las esquinas, ya no mas, métanse esa droga por el CULO ARRIBA, no mas

Ladronzuelos, dejen trabajar a la sociedad. Pilas que están PILLADOS…. JUICIO O MUERTE; USTED LO DECIDE… YA TENEMOS UNA LISTA DE BARRIDO INICIAL.

La organización lo ha decidido así, esta limpieza se necesita.

Empezaremos muy pronto, le pedimos perdón a la sociedad si caen inocentes.
ESTO ES SOLO POR UNOS MESES

SEÑOR PADRE DE FAMILIA ESTE MAS CON SUS HIJOS, NO SEA UNO DE ELLOS LOS QUE CAIGA EN ESTA LIMPIEZA… DIALOGEN.

Ogdis.

Si Usted encuentra esta hoja, sáquele varias copias y repártalas a los amigos, vecinos, o a un familiar suyo que no caigan por no enterarse.

La organización no puede entregar esta hoja en cada casa, por eso pedimos su colaboración.

Image 2.1 Limpieza Social

The above reads: "Now the time has come to clean our society of the crack heads, the drug addicts, drug pushers, robbers, homeless people, cart pushers, kidnappers and drug consumers." The add continues that "prostitutes and carriers of HIV also need to watch out

because this group has identified them as 'pariahs' of the neighborhood and will be looking to fight violence with violence." They threaten the elimination of all of the socially undesirable people in the community, as they have been labled by this vigilante organization. According to *La Semana* (2013), who ran an article about these programs in their popular Colombian magazine, it suggested that the vigilante groups were targeting young people dressed like "hip-hoppers". This kind of indiscriminant cold blooded killing of the marginalized youth in Bogota, was a theme of great concern to the hip-hop community when I was there.

Therefore, these songs are more than just music, they are an oral history of the state sponsored violence that youth in Colombia experience today in their social and political climate. These songs symbolize the core roots of rap music in Colombia. The origin of the genre stems from the violence and oppression that people have experienced here. As one of my contacts would often remind me,

> "You know its funny how in the US, they think they inv
> ented rap. They think they are so gangster, so hood, but we're the real gangsters. All that
> shit they talk about up there was inspired by us. We're the home of Pablo Escobar, this is
> where the real hood is and people sell dope to get out of poverty. They don't even know
> what real poverty is up there. People say that we copy the rap scene in the US but really
> all the stuff they talk about comes from us. Colombians are the real gangsters."

And sure enough, sampling from some of the original songs by gangster rappers in Colombia, I came across one by Fondo Blanco called "*Bajo la tierra*" (Underground) where their lead rapper starts the song by saying he is going to tell a story from the streets of what gangsters have to do in order to make it out of the hood where he is from. This song describes a wild tale of how he was raised in a really bad situation but had to learn quickly from his circumstances and study how to turn things around. He explains in the song that he had to start selling drugs at an early age but that he does not feel bad about it because he knows he will be

able to make a better life for himself and his family one day. These songs, much like the songs in rap music from the US, tell tales of individuals challenging oppressive imperialistic violence, war, and destruction to turn their lives around through entrepreneurial activities that enable them to become successful and to try to lead a good life.

As these songs drew international media attention and gained popularity with the public, the government of Colombia began to recognize the value of hip-hop music in allowing young people to have an outlet for coping with societal problems. In 1999, IDARTES was created and it moved Rap-al-parque to later in the year, and to a bigger venue. They renamed the event *Hip-Hop-Al-Parque*. In 1999, Hip-Hop-Al-Parque was held in *Parque Simon Bolivar* with over 85,000 people attending. It quite easily became the biggest hip-hop festival in Latin America.

The Rise of Hip-Hop Entrepreneurship

During the 1990s, hip-hop music took on a whole new dimension of entertainment in the United States. As rappers began to convert hip-hop music into various forms, one of the most notable and popularly selling sub-genres was that of gangster rap music. From rap groups in the late 1980s like NWA, and Public Enemy, fans of the music readily responded to the radical social and political messages of songs like "F**k the Police" or "Fight the Power" however, the process of commercializing hip-hop has been controversial specifically because of this connection that the genre has with resistance politics. Christopher Smith (2003) discusses this contradiction at length in an article titled, "I don't just dream about getting paid", which is the title of a song by Tha Dogg Pound. He explains how the early entrepreneurs of hip-hop like, Russell Simmons, Sean Puffy Combs, and Dr. Dre made hip-hop music palatable for mainstream elites in the United States. When hip-hop was originally conceived of, as this radical type of music that talked about disrespecting the American political system and attacked its authority,

52

politicians like Dan Quail, Tipper Gore and Lynm Cheney tried to legislate bans against the genre. However, once rap became a viable business model, which not only sold music but also, also produced clothing, fragrances, cars and encouraged conspicuous consumption, many of the critical voices disappeared (Smith 2003). In this way, rap music challenges and is at the same time, co-opted by capitalism. It challenges the system's cultural hegemony, while simultaneously feeding its demands for economic growth. Many of the mainstream images do more to open-up the political culture of liberalism to more readily include communities that have often felt marginalized within the system, rather than to challenge its economic foundations.

It's important to chronicle the historical contributions made by hip-hop artists in the industry because they have inspired similar types of global activity to flow from their creativity. As avenues of African American political and social activism had been shut down through racial politics and institutionalized forms of racism, the economic sphere of entrepreneurship became a new way for people to challenge the system under the new liberal economy (Smith 2003, Stoute 2012). Feld (2003) and Venkatesh (2006) chronicle the ways in which the new economy of intensified capitalism, and right wing politics surged in the 1980s and 1990s. The long history of segregation, unequal education and opportunity to resources that had been advanced during the Civil Rights Era, were once again under challenge as race making politics came back into style. The capitalistic system in the United States had been designed during segregation to socially separate people in real estate practices, policing and through an unequal access to institutional resources such as health care systems or education (Kennedy 1989). As the 1980s approached and the Conservative Revolution took place, many social welfare systems were cut, the criminal justice system was expanded and the targets of these programs seemed to be poor, urban youth and people of color (Feld 2002, Venkatesh 2006, Alexander 2012). It was within this oppressive

time period, that black entrepreneurs organized around a new cultural industry through music production (Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012). Historically, African Americans in the United States had suffered systematic racism in formal institutions, employment and receiving loans for entrepreneurship purposes (Venkatesh 2006). Therfore, they have often relied on alternative mechanisms of breaking into industries and investing in one another's businesses (Venkatesh 2006, Butler 2012). With the proliferation of free market economics, political pushes for entrepreneurship and the expansion of technology in the economy, have in some cases opened-up new opportunities. African Americans involved in the production of this new innovative musical genre called hip-hop became the first movers in the development of this culture as a business. As African Americans had been traditionally shut out of the production process of mainstream music in the past, the development of the new economic order, created new avenues for Do It Yourself business innovation and production. Some of the biggest successes in this new industry were in the world of producing and commercializing hip-hop (Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012). Digital technologies and global capitalism were now enabling alternative media products to be produced in a marketplace that had once been tightly controlled by media elites (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1988, Ginsburg 1991, Appadurai 1994). In the rap scene, record companies like Def Jam, Bad Boy Entertainment, and Rock-a-fella Records became independently established, black owned businesses establishing hip-hop as a commercial enterprise in the United States. This enabled people in the black community to develop enormously successful music production companies that specialized in promoting black talent and the hip-hop lifestyle. Some of the original entrepreneurs in the hip-hop business in the United States have been successful at overcoming traditional stereotypes about African Americans. Due to the systematic oppression where this group was marginalized from participating in mainstream media production, business

entrepreneurship and technology these new economic openings enable more democratic participation for people who have previously been shut out of the system (Stoute 2012). These hip-hop entrepreneurs represented a strong, very visible opposition to traditionally racist stereotypes against black men in society, in particular. Where previously people had stereotyped African Americans as lazy, unintelligent or bad businessmen – now the public had a good deal of vivid examples of alternative types of representations coming from this community, thanks to the hip-hop industry and its early pioneers.

A few representations of successful hip-hop entrepreneurs, that outline some of the first movers in the production and development of hip-hop music that inspired the industrialization of the genre in the US are people like Russell Simmons, Dr. Dre, Sean 'Puffy' Combs and Fifty Cent. Russell Simmons was one of the first major hip-hop entrepreneurs in the United States. He along with Rick Rubin founded Def Jam Records as a subsidiary of CBS Music Studios in 1985 (Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012, Blatt 2014). Simmons went on to be one of the first major producers of rap music. Thereafter, he diversified his economic activity by getting involved in producing films, television shows, a clothing lines, and health products (Stoute 2012, Blatt 2014). Russell Simmons is the third richest person in hip-hop behind Dr. Dre and Sean Puffy Combs (Blatt 2014).

Dr. Dre was also one of the first successful entrepreneurs in the hip-hop industry. Andre Romelle Young (Dr. Dre) began his career as part of the World Class Wrecking Cru in the late 1970s which made early hip-hop music. This group eventually evolved into NWA (Nigga's with Attitude) which went on to be one of the first gangster rap groups, popularizing explicit lyrics that glorified life in poor neighborhoods. After he worked with NWA, Dre went solo, and in 1992 he produced his first album called "The Chronic". He then went on to produce other

popular gangster rappers of the 1990s like Snoop Dogg, The D.O.C., and Warren G. Dr. Dre co-created Death Row Records in the late 1990s with Suge Knight (Charnas 2011). In 1996, he split with Death Row Records and created his own label called, the *Aftermath*. While Dr. Dre amassed most of his wealth primarily from producing other artists, in the last few years he also became involved in the innovation of products and producing motion pictures. He created a set of headphones called, Beats, which he recently sold to Apple for $1 billion dollars (Blatt 2014). Additionally, in 2015, he released his own film called, *Straight Outta Compton*, chronicling the story of NWA's rise to fame.

Sean 'Puffy' Combs (AKA: Puff Daddy) is another famous hip-hop entrepreneur who was born in Harlem, NY. In the early 1990s, he became a talent scout before founding his own record label called Bad Boy Entertainment (Stoute 2012). He began producing Christopher Wallace (AKA Notorious BIG), Lil Kim, Mase and NAS. Sean Combs also put out a few solo albums before getting involved in horizontal business development, as well. He put together his own clothing line and got involved in heavily investing in various parts of the entertainment industry. Today, Sean 'Puffy' Combs is the wealthiest man in hip-hop with a net worth valued at $735 million USD (Blatt 2014). Similarly, inspirational is Sean Carter (aka Jay Z). Jay Z was born in Bed-Stuy Brooklyn and began rapping at a young age. Although Jay Z rapped alongside famous musicians such as LL Cool J, Big Daddy Kane and Big L, he could not get the attention of any major record labels, early on in his career, so he sold his mix tapes and CDs out of the trunk of his car in New York. Eventually, his reputation on the streets gained notoriety. In 1995, he, along with Karen Briggs and Damon Dash, founded Roc-a-fella Records (Stoute 2012). After putting together a distribution deal with Priority Records, Jay Z released his first major album called Reasonable Doubt. Jay Z has become an entrepreneur and investor. He has the most

albums produced by any solo artist in history, according to Billboard Music (2015) and was recently inducted in the Songwriters Hall of Fame (Coscarelli 2017). He owns Roca Wear Clothing line, was CEO of Def Jam Records at one point, founded Roc Nation, and is a certified sports agent. He also owns the 40/40 Club in New York and has an extensive investment portfolio. According to Forbes magazine, Jay Z is worth an estimated, $500 million dollars (Blatt 2014).

These are some of the inspirational tales of the American Dream for hip-hop artists from the US. These are the role models of rap music. All of these men, started out as people of modest means, living in neighborhoods that many would describe as poor, urban areas with gang violence and going to school in difficult situations. However, they were able to hone in on their their musical talents, work hard and develop businesses. These are the visions of social mobility that people have when they think of the American Dream. And as Diana Palaversich (2006) argues through the process of globalization and the spread of neoliberal economic policies, these dreams are not just the American Dream, as in reference to the United States, but these dreams of social mobility, and entrepreneurship have been exported throughout the continent, as these men have become examples to the world of what can happen when one invests themselves into developing the industry of hip-hop. These entrepreneurs represent the Neoliberal Dream.

As Ruth Blatt (2014) of Forbes magazine points out, the formula of hip-hop is conducive to neoliberal economics. The lyrics of rap music encourage young people to overcome hardships, dream of the future that they want and to work hard to achieve their goals. Plus, as Blatt points out, most of the people rapping about these things have come from some of the worst circumstances imaginable. Dan Charnas (2011) describes how most hip-hop artists had to learn to become business people by hustling on the streets in order to survive. They had to learn how

to earn money to finance their first mix tapes, convince people to let them use their studios and then sell those mix tapes out of the back of their cars, if necessary, to break into the business. This is what rappers refer to as learning how to 'hustle'.

That is what many rappers in Bogota, Colombia are doing, as well. While Pillai (1999), Feiling (2002), Lemus (2005) and Montoya (2011) argue that many hip-hop artists in Colombia are not focused on earning money for their craft, I did not find this to be the case. As I worked with hip-hop artists in Bogota, such as La Etnia, Cescru Enlace, Masai Ban Go, Todos Copas, Aerophone Crew, Crack Family, LG Prada, Loko Cuerdo, DCP Mafia, Rap Vampi, Askoman, Asilo 38, K-11, AW Fam, Naesky Crew, Melanina and Flako Flow, which are the biggest names in Colombian Rap music, I found that many of the members of these groups were trying to develop music, talent, records, and industries to support these endeavors. In the following chapters, I will outline some of the strategies for creating the hip-hop industry that were taken by the members of these groups. However, the model of the capitalistic hip-hop entrepreneur exists in Bogota and has been the basis for many of these groups to develop successful businesses that have allowed them to become socially mobile. Collectively, these various artists have established record companies, clothing lines, credit agencies, barbershops, and have produced films. Some of these artists own large shares in transnational horizontally integrated businesses. Therefore, I disagree with the aforementioned scholars on this subject. In this work, I will prove that some of the rappers in Colombia do strive to earn money, make a living from hip-hop and do quite well with developing an industry inside of Colombia for their products.

The Sub-genres of Hip-Hop and Their Controversies

While, Pillai (1999), Feiling (2002) Lemus (2005) and Montoya (20011) argue that the rap artists are not interested in capitalistic entrepreneurship, I believe the confusion surrounding

this issue comes from how rappers in Colombia perceive and discuss hip-hop entrepreneurs in the United States. Scholars such as Cheryl Keyes (1994), Cornel West (1999), bell hooks (1999) and others argue that hip-hop in the United States was a form of art developed to challenge social and political constructions of inner-city life in America during a period of economic hardship and 'white flight' particularly from the Bronx, parts of Los Angeles and Detroit where hip-hop music was born and developed. They conitnue that as the genre gained commercial appeal, it was transformed into 'gangster rap', which displays the rappers as criminals, hyper-masculine figures who objectify women and are hardened, calculating capitalists who will stop at nothing to make money. Keyes (1994) and West (1999) in particular argue that rap artists sold out on their revolutionary ideas of recreating the 'hood' or poor neighborhoods in favor of having mass market appeal to white audiences in the suburbs who were comfortable listening to gangster rap which reified the racist, sexist and classist stereotypes with which they were comfortable.

The rappers in Bogota, however see the culture of rap music somewhat differently. For many of them, their first introduction to rap music, were from the commercially distributed gangster rap albums that came from Latin America and from the US. While DJ Fresh actually met Afrika Bambaataa and members of the Zulu Nation, most of the younger rappers that I worked with in Bogota, did not have a lot of connection with the Zulu Nation or this possibly 'purer' form of revolutionary or conscious hip-hop. When I would talk to them about their influences from the genre, they would often cite the Wu-Tang Klan, KRS One, Nas, Big L, Notorious BIG, Tupac Shakur, La Etnia, Tres Coronas, Mexicana 666 or other popular artists involved in producing gangster rap.

> "Yah, you know, to us, rap music from the early 90s is where the real rap music comes
> from. The rap music that they make nowadays has all of these corny melodic beats that
> you can tell were produced in fancy studios, and you wonder where the rapper came

from. Is he even really ridin the beat or is the producer just fixing the arrangement with the software that they have, you know? What we like is the old school rap. The real art of what we are doing is important to us. Down here, rappers have to be real, they have to be gangsters that come from the street and they have to be talented at the art of making music. When people say they don't want Colombian rap to become commercialized like it is in the US, this is what they mean. It's not that we have anything against making money, but we don't want just anyone to be able to get into the rap game down here. You know?"

While Cheryl Keyes, Cornel West and others see a separation between the original rappers of the 70s and 80s who were supposedly more conscious or revolutionary, the majority of rappers in Bogota, do not make this distinction. They view the gangster rappers as the 'real' and original form of rap. Gangster rap, therefore, is the genre of 'authenticity', within the scene. Additionally, they argue that rap music is a cultural product that belongs to a certain class of people. They do not just want anyone to be able to get into the rap game.

For people in Colombia, there are several different types of hip-hop music and often people make a distinction between these sub-genres of the music when they discuss it. There are three sub-genres all connected to the art of hip-hop. The first type, they call hip-hop, then there is rap music and finally there is reggaeton. In Colombia, hip-hop music is the most conservative of all of these musical forms in that the music is meant to be entertaining, non-controversial and generally has wide commercial appeal. Groups that are considered to be a part of this sub-genre in Colombia are *Choc Quib Town*, *Systema Solar*, and *Bomba Estereo*. These groups could also be said to belong to other genres of music too like electro-cumbia, which is why many would argue these groups are really on the periphery of more hard core hip-hop music. These groups are often associated with making Afro-Colombian hip-hop that contains positive representations of racial diversity and 'good' messages. One of my informants would comment,

"You know, they [hip-hop artists] depict Colombia in the image that politicians want the world to see. They show Colombia as this societally progressive, yet moral place, where

people like to sit in the sun, work hard and play on the weekends. They are very appealing for the global middle class, if that makes sense."

Then, there is rap music in Colombia. Rap music is more hard core and includes even more sub-genres. Some rappers claim to be 'gangsta rappers', others claim to be '*rap consciencia*' (socially conscious rappers) and still others preferred to use the title '*rap callejero*' (or street rappers, who differentiate themselves as non-gang affiliated). These rappers, however, claim that while hip-hop artists sold out to the music industry for commercial viability, they on the other hand, have remained principled and committed to their audiences in the streets of Colombia and in the world. The rappers that I worked with argued that they had a strong commitment to rapping about real life, as they experienced it in Colombia. Instead of singing over poppy beats, they tended to speak over more traditional, hard core gangster rap beats, like those that one

61

would hear in early rap from the 1990s in the US or the early 2000s in Colombia. While all of the groups I worked with had a range of topics that they would rap about from politics, to family, to problems in the street or even having fun, their lyrics were always connected to real life stories or situations.

The one exception to this was a song by Melanina and Flako Flow called *El Tiki*, for which they received a significant amount of popular criticism. Melanina and Flako Flow are gangster rappers from the Southern part of Bogota and had received credit in their community for being hard core '*raperos callejeros*' because of the nature of the serious social and political issues that they tackled in their songs. However, in 2010, the rap duo released a song called *El Tiki*. *El Tiki* is a song about partying, womanizing and getting heavily intoxicated. Plus, the song had a certain beat to it that is traditionally associated with reggaeton. In the introduction, I quoted

one of my main informants who told me that reggaeton was unacceptable in the rap communities in Bogota and that I should not listen to it, if I wanted to hang out with the rap crews in Bogota. Most rappers there, think of reggaton music as having no substance, being flagrantly immoral and lude. As a lot of my contacts explained to me,

> "Reggaeton is just stupid. It's what '*gomelos*' listen to on the weekends when they get drunk and go out and party. It's a type of music that encourages people to spend all their money at the club and mistreat women, it's just terrible. But commercially, it sells."

Statements like this were made to me throughout my fieldwork in Bogota. When I would ask about the possibility of having a bigger hip-hop industry in Colombia, a lot of rappers said that was what was needed. They wanted more capital and more institutional support, but not at the cost of the integrity of substantive music.

> "I think that kind of economic support will be there, in another decade or so. People really like rap music. But we can't sell out. We cannot just make the same kind of rap that comes from North America or Europe though. Our audience listen to us because they know we have been through the same things that they have and that we are all working together, slowly but steadily for a better future. If we give up on that, people will see us no differently from any other genre of music. We are creating a different way of thinking that's based on working hard, being smart, strategizing our way through life, comporting ourselves with dignity and respect. This is the vision we are trying to create and we have to stay true to that vision. Sure, we could take short cuts and turn into reggatoñeros tomorrow and we would all have a chunk of change in our pocket that would leave us with the next changing trend. But we are trying to create lasting societal changes of peace, more societal openness and building up our communities. That takes time and integrity and we are willing to put that in to see the rewards farther off in the future."

While rap from Europe or North America is seen to have sold out in terms of its modern ability to create societal change, the rappers in Bogota are not so willing to relinquish their values.

Image 2.4 Daddy Yankee

This is a meme that I downloaded from Facebook from one of the websites of my informants that says that "Reggaeton was banned in Cuba. The music of Daddy Yankee, Wisin y Yandel and other artists from that genre of music are prohibited on the island because the music downgrades the morals of the citizenry, damages the sensibilities of ordinary people and is counterproductive to artistic creativity."
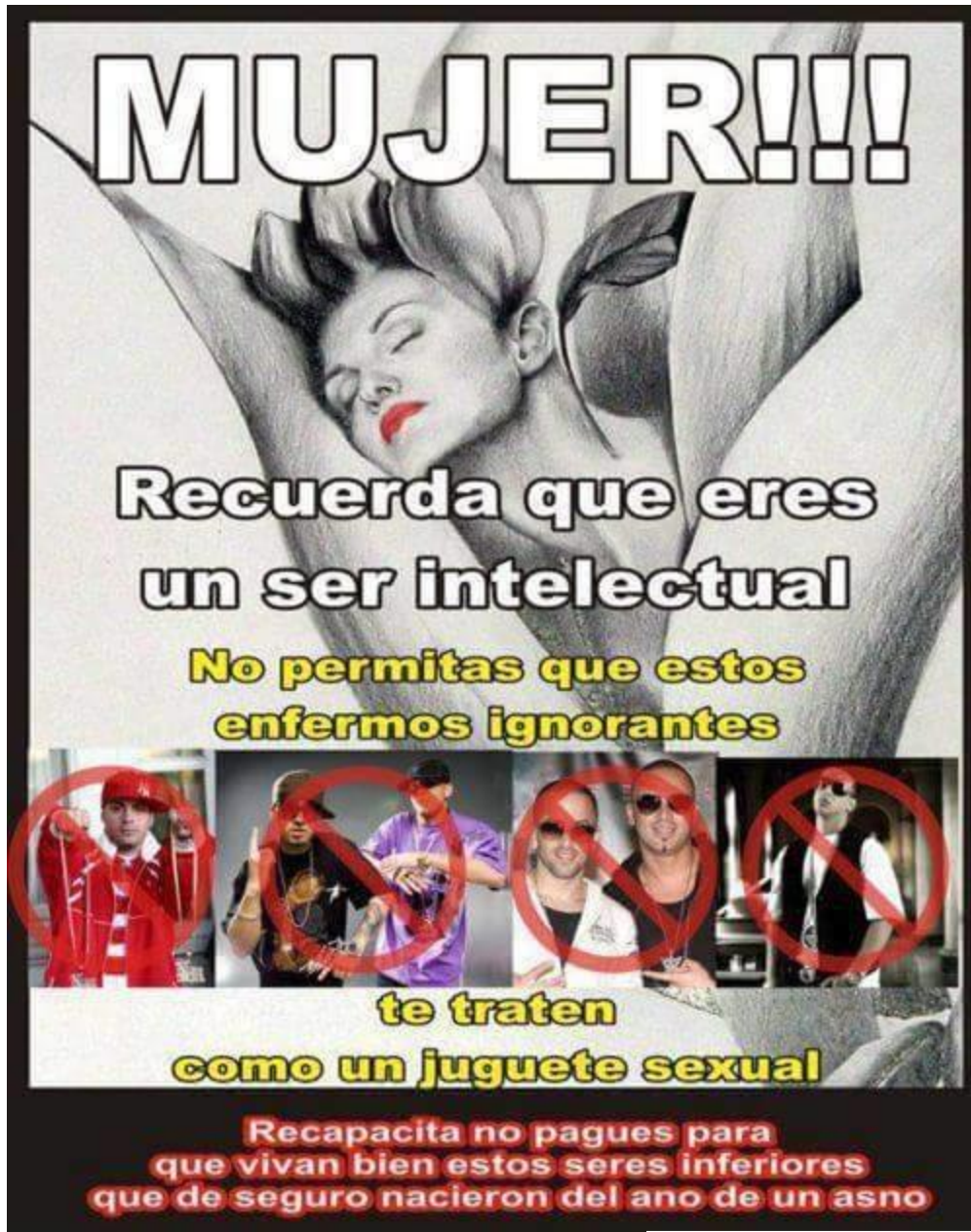
Image 2.5 Mujeres Recuerdas que…

Here is another example and this one reads: "Ladies, remember how intelligent you are. Do not permit these sick and twisted dumb fucks to treat you like a sexual toy. Make good decisions so that you do not pay for the rest of your life living as if you were born to be their donkey (ass) of the year." While, Lemus (2005) and Montoya (2011) may have read these messages as being

anti-capitalistic, I saw them as being more about staying true to the message of social change that the rappers in Bogota, wanted to see through the creation of their culture and music. Unlike hip-hop from the United States where disrespecting women and becoming a stereotype for commercial profit is acceptable, the rap community in Bogota did not accept this type of attitude.

Conclusion

Rap music's development in Bogota, Colombia is an example of how globalized cultural formats spread from one place to another. While rap music may have originated from the African and Hispanic Diaspora of culture that found itself blending and converging on the streets in the Bronx of New York City, the way in which it fused with urban movements already taking place in other parts of the world. It came to form its own unique artistic material life in Bogota, Colombia which resulted from a heterogeneic sets of political, economic, and temporal circumstances, that cannot be singularly viewed as a homogenizing force of cultural imperialism from the core countries of capital production to the periphery but must be viewed separately from the cultural creators point of view to properly understand a definition for what rap music is in Bogota, Colombia. Rap music is a source of inspiration for people living in the popular classes of Colombia. The music is meant to help people put into words how they feel about the war, the violence, life on the streets and even to learn how to enjoy substantive components of reality such as one's family, education and the resources that you do have access. Rap music is a source of public culture in Colombia that has enabled people to change their mentality in the age of globalization. As the state has become more democratic, deregulated the economy and opened itself to more foreign trade, rap music encourages people to express how they feel about these changes.

CHAPTER 3: The Art of Studying Gangster Rap: Gaining Entrée, Methods and Limitations

"In order for ethnology to live, its object must die; by dying, the object takes its revenge for being 'discovered' and with its death defies the science that wants to grasp it." ― *Jean Baudrillard*

Introduction

My fieldwork was complicated. As some of the rap groups with whom I was working did not get along, it was difficult to know if I was in danger. I never knew when I would possibly witness an event that I was not supposed to see or if gossip would circulate back to someone and I would be to blame. Working with gangsters, rappers, deportees, producers and recognizing that these identities could shift dramatically in a matter of minutes if the right (or wrong) situation presented itself, was problematic. However, I was cognizant of how difficult my fieldwork would be before I departed for Bogota. I had read about others in the field who encountered similar dilemmas and handled my research with the upmost professionalism.

Gangster rappers of rap '*callejero*' (street rap) by its very definition implies that the themes located in the music run counter to dominate ideologies in art (Alim 2004). However, as an art form, one is never sure of the legitimacy of content of the product from its translations into real life. While the gangster rappers I worked with had written songs about robbing people, stealing, drug dealing, prostitution, arms dealing and even murder I was not sure going into the field how much of this was just music or actual tales from reality. In trying to work with a delicate population of individuals, I wanted to ensure their safety and mine. However, just to be cautious I began to read other anthropological studies about working with gang members and other people involved in criminal activity, in case I ran across this type of 'realism' in the field. While some advisors recommended that I try to be candid with my work, I found this impossible.

As a way to gain entreé into the field, I had to guarantee my informants that I would do my best to disguise their identities, as they were giving me incredible access to their daily lives and the way they produce music.

In the aftermath of September 11th, 2001, the United States began working with Interpol and other law enforcement organizations around the globe to identify known terrorist groups and to explore the possibility that gang members could be working with these organizations in various localities to plot attacks against Western governments (Travis 2008). While one of my main informants, had been permitted to re-enter the United States after being deported, that same summer, just before I arrived in Colombia, he had been on a concert tour in Europe, one of the organizers of his concert tour, was brought up on drug trafficking charges in Spain. As a result, after he left Spain, and the concert organizer was put on trial, the judges in this court determined that because the rapper was an identified member of the same gang that his compatriot was, the juridical body would censure my informant, preventing him from re-entering the European Union. The panel of judges determined that this rapper facilitated gang activity and possibly could launch terrorist attacks against the nation-state. My informant received the letter from the Spanish government at his home in Bogota, in the middle of July and I arrived there two weeks later.

With the recent news of one of my main informant's expulsion from Spain fresh on the minds of many of the people I was working with, the delicacy with which I proceeded in guaranteeing confidentiality of their identities was important for me to conduct quality research. I very well understood that the way in which I recorded my data, what I wrote down and how I interacted with my contacts would always have to be highly sensitive to the political environment in which we were contained.

Gaining Entrée

Discovering a unique group of musicians that had been successful making music and were using new media technology to promote themselves was a 'serendipitous event', as one of my mentors at Columbia, Lambros Comitas, might say. At a Hip-Hop for Peace Festival at Rutgers University hosted by Anthropologist, Professor Aldo Civico, I met a group of young rappers, film producers, radio hosts, journalists, and graffiti artists from various countries in Latin America. Networking with this group, I heard some rap from Bogota, Colombia. I was impressed by the lyrics. The lyrics contained radical political and social messages. I asked the festival organizers how I could get in touch with rappers from Bogota. My contacts set up a meeting with myself and one of the rappers whose lyrics I had mentioned enjoying quite a lot. Initially, we were introduced over Facebook and then later in New York City, when he came to perform at a concert, where we met face to face. I was able to meet this informant, in Queens in the Spring of 2013. As I got to meet this rapper at a friend's home in Harlem, he agreed to help me if I came to Bogota to put together a project where I was able to observe the rap scene and to see how people in Bogota, Colombia compose rap music. When I met him, my contacts told me that I was sitting in front of the biggest name in rap music from Bogota, Colombia where this man owned several stores, a clothing line, and seemed to make well produced music. He had international connections too. He was in New York City talking to me through the help of his friends in New York and Miami who had flown him in for a concert tour in New York, Boston and Miami. Additionally, he was staying with his friends in the Bronx that he had grown up with. He had other associates in Europe, whom he told me, helped him produce beats, videos and master the group's sounds. His rap group was flying to Europe in June with his business partners to do a tour in Sweeden, Germany, France, and Spain. He started telling me "you know it's all

about the underground, it's all about one love, *la familia* and keeping it street…keeping it *al piso* (grounded)".

I knew then that I had the project in media that I had been searching for. If I wanted to see how a small group of media producers operated, then studying rap groups in Bogota, Colombia would be a good way for me to investigate these themes. Additionally, I always knew there was a political and cultural aspect of the music, so I was hopeful that I would discover the ideology of the cultural movement or the presence of unifying values and purpose that the groups use to influence society. If a group like this was able to have connections in Europe and in the United States which allowed them to travel there, then there might be quite a bit of network creation skills, unifying bonds and transnational relationship building that happens. I wanted to find out more about those processes. Just how does that work? How does one build a transnational actor-network in the rap music industry without help from the music industry, *per se* and what does that do?

Questions

The groups that I worked most closely with in Bogota, allowed me to gather enough data from them in order to compile anthropological models in which I could base the answers to my research questions. Out of the many groups in Colombia with whom I worked, I chose, in this case, to demonstrate the outcomes of two models based on this research with the many actors within them. Both polities[8] of artists represented here demonstrated varying degrees of local and international support for what they do. Under this criterion based sampling technique that I used to select the rap groups with whom I worked, I identified two rap polities that had international

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[8] Professor Hervé Varenne (2007 .p. 1578) has suggested that ¨polities¨ should be used as a word to replace ¨communities¨ when discussing dynamic group relations. Polities are collectives that have embedded social, political and economic interests which bring them together to form a group (Fligstein and Sweet 2002).

connections and were making music in Bogota. Glaser (1978) calls this a purposeful sampling method which is useful for understanding comparative analysis and for understanding processes for example, of how rap music is made in a given location. Then, I follow up this technique using social structural modeling techniques to demonstrate the relationships between group members in an anonymous fashion.

My research questions were:

1.   How do rap groups network with international financers, rappers, managers, and producers to compose, record and disseminate products?

    a. What technology do they need to do this and what is the process?

2.   Secondarily, I wanted to know what inspires the music that these rappers produce? How do these groups maintain their identity and formation across transnational rap communities?

I answered those questions by doing participant observation with several groups of rappers that were rivals. Patton (1999) argues that identifying groups that compete with one another is essential to understanding what is similar and different between them. In this case, I took two groups that were essentially the opposite of one another and then have created models out of these groups to discuss the ways in which they organize themselves to produce music. Selecting these two models and demonstrating the differences between them is also a sampling technique that Bruno Latour (2004) asks anthropologists to consider when trying to explain the processes of group activities. Therefore, I selected two models that could demonstrate the processes in similar and different ways to reveal as much as can be understood about the inner-workings of producing rap music in Bogota, Colombia through analyzing transnational networks and the technologies that support their production.

The representations of these rap polities would be best able to answer my questions about entrepreneurship, social organization, social mobility, technological use and innovation techniques. This information could ultimately answer larger theoretical questions that scholars seek to better understand about how these ideas connect to issues of technological lock in, the digital divide, and liberal economic trading policies for people developing cultural industries in Colombia. I was seeking to discover social mobility strategies that they were pursuing that could in turn, be helpful for them[9]. As one can imagine, in a gangster rap scene there are business people, group members, security guards, managers, women, wives, girlfriends, groupies, photographers, videographers, cinematographers, DJs, beat boxers, producers, promoters, club owners, homies, graphic designers, fashion designers, tattoo artists, models, dancers, rappers, gangsters, and gangster rappers. It is a full scene of varying individuals that have multiple identities and heterogeneous interests. It was hard sometimes to know who to talk to or who to hang out with. This was further complicated by the fact that I wanted to hang out with rival rap groups. Sometimes, my informants expressed their difficulty trusting me. I got asked a lot of questions from all of the groups and factions that I worked with. I interviewed a wide variety of rap polities in Bogota, Colombia and many different rappers. From this experience, I develop a method of analysis in the following chapters that outlines two models of interaction that I observed fairly closely. These models, represent the social structure and processes of production that take place between networks of actors and technologies in Bogota, Colombia. Claude Levi-Strauss argued that creating models of characteristics in a social structure and discussing the process that these moving parts underwent as they negotiated, transformed and acted in society - made it possible for anthropology to observe phenomena as it occurred. Here, this project sought

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[9] See Tuihwai-Smith's argument on decolonizing methodologies that argues for a strategy of including participants in determining 'what' to research, as to be helpful for that community.

to discover how entrepreneurship, technological innovation and business organization strategies develop in a creative industry such as hip-hop, which creates a lifestyle, and music genre. I developed two differing models of representation of groups within the rap scene, while giving the individual actors in which I am specifically discussing anonymity. I had to do this, in order to preserve some distance between the actors in my ethnography from any harm that could come to them or to myself from releasing the real identifying information of people within the groups.

> [Informant 1]: "Like are you trying to find out what kind of illegal stuff we're into?"
>
> Laura: "No." I replied. "I am going to keep all this confidential. I am not going to let anyone get in trouble with 'how' I write about this later on."
>
> [Informant 1]: "Oh. Well… like how can you do that?" he asked, looking at me puzzled.
>
> L: "MMMM….honestly, I am not totally sure, but I have been working on a method to be able to talk about you guys and what you say to me but in an anonymous way."
>
> I: "You better…or you better never come back here. (He laughed intensely.)….right, [Informant 2]?"
>
> [Informant 2]: "Nah, Laura smart. She not gonna get it twisted."

Despite the fact that I was working with deportees, gang members and rap stars – I did my best to ensure that I was always with people that could protect me and was never alone with anyone that I thought would harm me. Gaining this level of trust with my informants started over Facebook. I was put in touch with some rap artist there in December of 2012. Once we got in touch, I began speaking with them about the project. From there, we built a rapport. Once, the rappers realized that I was interested in observing their business patterns, and associations some of them became nervous. They said that we should wait until we met in person to talk more. This was my first clue that this research might involve some controversial subject matters. While my professors at University had urged me to make my project open and to use the real names of my contacts, as they were already famous, I tried this. However, just in case, I also began doing

some research on informant confidentiality and thought that if it became necessary, I could in fact find a way to cover the identities of my informants and began to think of strategies to write about them without overexposing their personhood. I needed to protect their right to remain anonymous and confidential in the process of my study. This is when I began to remember Max Weber and Levi-Strauss methodological development of social models that would allow one to discuss at length the social characters, attitudes and behaviors of subjects in a group, and to trace it as a social model of one network versus another. Max Weber famously did this in sociology by studying religious sects of people, or social organizations by constructing representations of those entities. Here, my dissertation also uses the strategy of modeling in the next few chapters to demonstrate how these rap networks were organized (Callon 1986, Zimmer and Aldrich 2010). Then, I will discuss the *processes* of interaction that the models of rap groups utilize for their musical production process (Zimmer 2010) and then finally, the project takes a look at the business strategies that the polities utilize. Using theoretical models of social structures through discussing group formation, behavior, norms and irregularities, I can share the strategies of entrepreneurship and social organizational behavior that my informants engaged in without betraying the identities of those with whom I gained an enormous amount of trust in order to carry forth this project and I owe them a great amount of respect, to not disturb their hustle, as it were.

Developing Models to Protect Confidentiality

Confidentiality was a key component of my success in conducting this research in Colombia. As I believe the government of Colombia and possibly international policing organizations may try to limit the activities of the polities that I work with or may try to hinder their future entrepreneurship practices, I have to respect my informants' desire for

confidentiality. I have rendered their identifications impossible to detect through creating social models of the polities of rap groups with whom I worked and have removed information that might identify the participants. Being able to guarantee confidentiality also helped me to gain trust in the field. I eventually found it necessary to tell my informants that I would give them complete anonymity in my research. I found this to be necessary, once again because of the way that the illicit economy in Colombia interacts with the everyday life of so many people. I feared that some of the information that my rappers allowed me to witness and told me about might have legal, custodial and cultural consequences for my participants if I recorded their actions openly and exposed their identities using their real names. As causing harm to my contacts would be unethical, I had to take the upmost care in concealing the identity of my participants. I also did this because as I was working with people that did not always get along, I did not want any gossip to pass from my mouth to the other group which might incite trouble between the polities.

In the beginning of my research, I tried to get the rappers to hide their illegal activities from me. I told them that this was better for their protection and for mine. In fact, once I mentioned this to one of the rap clicks, I did not see anything illegal from that moment forward, besides a little marijuana smoking and a bit of violence. Other rappers that I worked with, however thought that it was essential that they act 'authentic' around me and to show me everything that they were involved in. They seemingly wanted to show me things that would shock me. They would openly bring firearms and drugs into the studios to show them off. Sometimes they would do drug deals in the studio. Occasionally though, they were just 'letting me know' what kind of things they could have access to and they would bring their stock piles of drugs and weapons out of the closet they hid them in, just to show me how much illegal

contraband they were dealing with. There was definitely an air of 'showing off' though and even some 'play', I suspect with the displays of contraband. In some ways, they may have just wanted to show it to me because I was a foreigner. My field notes included information about what substances I saw in the studios and sometimes include conversations about processes of trafficking illegal goods in Colombia. However, I tried to keep my notes about this limited and somewhat abstract to protect my informants from being harmed in the event that my field notes were ever subpoenaed. Plus, it really did not have that much to do with my research questions and I did not think it was an essential component of the investigation.

In order to discover the networks of people that the artists use, I had to hang out with them for some period of time and document their interactions using participant observation. I was able to know who they talked to, how they operated; I could observe their interactions and was able to interview the members of their crew in order to better understand the group dynamics and networks that evolved around the polities. I had to get the members of these groups to allow me to hang out with them and to watch what they did. I had to do what they did and go where they went. The gangster rappers ritualistically hang out in a click full of men that interacts, have BBQs, Birthday parties, celebrate holidays and if you want to be a part of the group, then you have to socialize on the occasions that have significant meaning to the participants (Ward 2012). This was how I was able to become seen not just as some nosey researcher, but as a member of the group, someone who cares about the people involved. This ability that I had to discover what was important to these group members allowed me to have a lot of inside access to activity with the rap collectives and their international contacts. Because they trusted me, they allowed me into their network and felt comfortable supporting my research through protecting my observations. Once I got to know my artist's a bit, I usually gave them a formal interview where

I asked about some basic life history questions about their interest in music, their vision of rap, how they knew about the scene in the city and these kind of questions. Naturally too, I would ask for their transnational associations (See Appendix B for a full list of the interview questions).

Once, I discovered the members of the group's networks that lived in other places around the globe, I would see if they had a part in the assemblage process of the music, videos or other merchandise. If they did, I would ask the artists to be put in touch with them as well. After a formal interview, I would ask if it was possible to observe the informants at work. In some cases it was, in others it was not. For example, in January, one of my rap groups was filming a music video at a local prison with one of their friends who is locked up. I asked them if I could go to the prison with them, but the group was concerned that I would not be safe inside the prison. They asked the guards just to be certain but everyone involved believed that my safety would be a great risk because unlike prisons in the US, the yard is open all day, everyday with the general population consorting together. The group thought I would probably get kidnapped.

Additionally, of course, not everyone was comfortable having their actions video or audio-taped all the time. I would always ask first if it was ok. In total, I collected 61 interviews from rap artists, producers, photographers, managers, graphic designers, dancers, wives and girlfriends in the various groups. Additionally, I interviewed 5 administrators with IDARTES who help organize and gather funding various hip-hop events in the city and two academics who had worked with rappers in the city. I conducted group observations with four groups and collected close to 250 hours of video to transcribe and have over 1100 pages of field notes. In the end, I chose to write about the groups as representative models, in order to render their identities anonymous.

I began my observations with some of the rap artists as they visited the United States starting in the spring of 2013. Through the spring and summer, I came into greater contact with the rappers in Colombia over Facebook and by the time I arrived in Bogota in August of 2013, I had an enormous group of rap artists offering to help me with my research. I worked with many of the well-known rappers mentioned in the previous chapter. As I worked with these groups conducting observations, interviews and participating in events with the rappers, going to concerts, assisting them in the recording process, offering feedback to them about how things sounded, I was able to understand the process of making music that they engaged in, what technologies they were using and if they were making or loosing money in the process.

I also collected secondary data sources such as CDs, old flyers of concerts, YouTube footage, on-line merchandise, interviews and Facebook archives to add to interview data and to support my observations. I have also analyzed these artifacts to triangulate data and to understand the cultural developments and trajectories of the movement from different points of view.

Methodology

Social Models of Subcultural Rap Polities

As I discussed in the previous chapter, there is a program called '*limpieza social*' that has targeted rapper and young 'delinquents' in the city. This is a program executed by the government and is a form of extra-judicial killing (UNHCR 2014). My contacts are viewed by many people within Colombia as hardcore gangsters that carry firearms and told me they were ready to protect themselves if they need to but they also expressed concerns that they could be targeted by this social cleansing program. It is therefore essential for my informants' personal

safety and well-being that I have created social models that represent the polities in which they worked to illustrate their social interactions.

In this process, I have created sociological models of two groups with whom I worked rather closely. As I mentioned in the introduction, what I am interested in discovering is how gangster rappers are organized, how they create their culture and make music. In order to communicate my results without endangering the well-being of my informants, I am going to discuss the representations of two polities with whom I worked. There is a tradition in doing this with political entities. Thrasher (1927) represented sociological models for the behavior of delinquents in Chicago by describing their behavior as youths and followed their activities into adulthood discussing their activities, basis of organization and types of groups that existed. Ruth Benedict, Robert Merton, and Claude Levi-Strauss continued on in this tradition of developing techniques for modeling social behavior through representational models. In my study, I employ the use of helpful theoretical tools from actor-network theory as developed by Bruno Latour and his colleagues. Actor-network theorists rationalize that when trying to describe the interactions of objects and things, one must locate the entrepreneurs, mediators, and actions that carry *out* the goals of the group. Firstly, in building this social model, I identify the *entrepreneurs* within each polity. These are individuals that garner and then appropriate *resources* (Rip 1989, Latour 2006). *Mediators*, are actors or objects that the entrepreneurs inscribe to aid in the production process (ibid). Part of understanding the production process then is to understand how these mediators become *enrolled in the group* (ibid). The entrepreneurs and the mediators then develop a *program of action* involved in producing the groups' *goals* (ibid). Sampson and Grove (1989) additionally argue that what scholars have to observe are the interventions, and who is in charge of controlling behavior within these social models to understand their structures and how they

create processes or flows of activity. In a social organization, one should observe the internal controls that are in place and what conditions they create for those involved in the network. In both of the organizations that I will represent in this study, I have identified the entrepreneurial elements, the mediators, internal controls, roles and goals of the groups to discuss the structure and processes of maneuvering within those structures. These entities could be actors or objects and their activities are traced through understanding where the elements *flow* and how they *interact* with other parts of the network. Similarly, in political anthropology Bailey argues that leaders, co-opt teams and develop types of bonds with those groups to appropriate resources and through tracing the processes that these actors use, one can learn how political power is garnered and maintained. I employ these theories to create social models of the rap polities that I describe in the following chapters. Then, the study continues to use those social models to describe the processes that the groups use to make music, garner social mobility and to create businesses in Bogota, Colombia with the hopes of answering academic questions about these topics. In using this methodology, communities of cultural creators can better understand their current political economic environment, its advantages and drawbacks, so that moving forward, people can navigate the ever-changing reality of our world with increasingly innovative tactics for avoiding the downsides of this system, aiding the process of progress.

Observations

I conducted my observations in 2013, to the Spring of 2014. I conducted participant observations for over 14 months in person, plus an additional 3 months of observations on-line and in Europe. Clifford Geertz (1994) argues that 'deep hanging out' becomes essential to understanding the symbolic and linguistic imaginings of groups. I tried to reach this depth of relational intention with each music group. Daily, I recorded field notes of activities,

technological usage, and informal conversations between people. I observed the rap groups in their music studios, homes, concerts, and in social situations. Regardless of where the rap group members were, they were always discussing business and making music. Some of the most information rich discussions were facilitated in informal social gatherings because these folks were always working on and talking about music.

Formal Interviews

While in the field, I worked with four different sets of rap groups, several independent artists, interviewed government officials and academics about their interactions with the rap artists in Bogota. While all of the data that I present is real, I have tried to erase identifying information and have removed details that would reveal the participants in this study. It should also be noted that I translated my notes from Spanish to English in some cases and in other cases my contacts would communicate with me in English. The quotes I use from my contacts who spoke to me in Spanish are not always verbatim, as they are interpretations. For example, '*gonorrea*' is a swear word to '*Rolos*' (people from Bogota), but in English it does not really translate directly into anything except a venereal disease. People would use this word there all the time, in different ways. Sometimes it is an insult, sometimes it is a compliment; it really just depended on the situation. When my participants would use that word or others like it in interviews or video recordings, I would replace that word in my transcriptions into English with an appropriate word or slang term. The term that I would use would be an interpretation as opposed to a translation of the sentence or phrase. Again, I did the same thing with the lyrical contents of the music. As I translated the lyrics into English, I tried to use equivalent slang. In the selection on lyrics, I will present the Spanish and Enlgish versions of the songs, as to invite other interpretations, noting that I am fluent in Spanish, but also admitting it is not my native

language and others knowledgeable about literary uses of text could be vital in adding to my analysis, as people read this work.

The units of analysis that presented themselves varied. As I discussed earlier the main informants there were from numerous network affiliates of each of these rap collectives and group members. Ways people connected mattered to me. Taking a Latourian approach of wanting to link actors, networks and technologies across large geographic spaces, I was not only interested in people but I was also interested in their technology. From the rappers to their Akai keyboards, Fruity Loops software programs, microphones, recording booths, internet platforms, I also wanted to meet their technological components and to see how the artists used them. I wanted to be able to account for how these technological elements facilitated the production of sound across transnational spaces. Therefore, I combined the discussion of technologies and individual actors within later chapters of the work to better explain how technology is used in conjunction with personal activities. I did not make distinctions between technology and actors to avoid the dualistic Cartesian splits of people and objects but rather trace the actions of the people with the objects to see where they lead (Latour 1987). Actor-network theory (ANT) is an appropriate mid-level theory in the social sciences, which provides for the modeling of interaction between objects and people in a social network, simultaneously by treating the objects, the same as individuals.

Specific software applications also guide the social interactions of my informants through new media technology and web facilitated agents. There will be specific mention of What's App, Viber, Facebook, SoundCloud, Soundclip, Instagram, Twitter, Spotify, and I-tunes too as these modalities represent the networking portals that help the actors function across these spaces.

As, I mentioned before the variety of actors involved also in creating this music, photographers, graphic designers, tattoo artists, clothing designers, tailors, managers, producers, children, wives, groupies, girlfriends, aunts, uncles, mothers, grandmothers, videographers, and an assortment of other professionals, lay people, amateurs, b-boys, b-girls, aspiring artists and fans. I most closely worked with people directly involved in laying down tracks, recording music, making and mastering songs. I also was shown the production processes of making clothes for each group, so this will be discussed at some length in one of the final chapters.

Informal Interviews

During observations, if something happened or if a topic I did not understand would come up, I would often take out my camera or phone and begin recording my informant's answers to random questions about making music and what kind of technological processes were involved. Then, I would continue to take notes of my field observations. Later, when I typed my notes, I included the transcription of the informal interview with the field observations where I had indicated the conversation took place. I kept one file of these marked as informal interviews, and then copy of their transcription would also be contained within the field observations for the day.

Content Data

Gathering content data was a daily habit throughout my research. Every morning when I would wake up, I would check Facebook and read my news feed. As I saw evidence that seemed pertinent to the study, I would cut and paste memes or status updates that my informants made. I would copy them into Word documents and save all of the clippings for the day. From approximately October 2013 until March 2014, I did not have access to a smart phone. As I was

in a lot of dangerous neighborhoods where the police might even target somebody for a smartphone[10], my informants thought it was best for me to carry cheap technology. As a result, I downgraded my I-phone to a basic Nokia block phone or also referred to as a *clasico* (or 'burner') upon arrival. I bought a video camera and a still camera with the money from selling my I-phone. However, not having smart technology at hand, prohibited me from checking social media sites and inhibited the gathering some forms of this data. Luckily, my rap group members did not begin to use other social media outlets, that are exclusively accessible from Smartphone devices, such as Instagram, until about midway through my study. That is when I decided to get a smart phone device solely for the purposes of checking the Instagram accounts to collect content data from this platform, in particular. Other forms of social media were slower to take off in Colombia, as you will read in later parts of this study.

Collecting content data became my past time on slow days during the investigation. If none of the rappers were getting together, making videos or having concerts, I would sit down with my laptop and look on You Tube for songs or recent postings from my informants. I would often download their music to begin transcribing and translating them. As this process is quite time consuming, it was an important activity for me to work on in the field. It also aided me in better understanding the groups I was working with and what was important to each network.

Translation

As I would collect field notes and interviews, I would record them in Spanish first and then use collaborative and iterative translation methods to deduce the English equivalency of

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[10] On a couple of occasions, I had police harass me, particularly when I was by myself. They would ask me why I was in such a poor neighborhood, accuse me of having drugs and would search me. They would say things like, 'well if you have a Smartphone or some cash, we will leave you alone.' Once they realized I did not have money, drugs or a Smartphone, they would go away.

what my informants were saying to me (Douglas & Craig 2007). Hip-hop research in the United States has been mostly pioneered by H. Samy Alim who argues emphatically that there is a Hip-Hop Nation (HHN) that shares the same language (hip-hop national language) around the world and the way words and phrases are used in English, often have a differing meaning from their translation in standard English. For example, saying someone is 'bad' does not mean they are literally bad. Oppositionally, it means they are 'good'. Hip-hop is a culture of resistance, therefore, language is codified in a way that 'outsiders' to the group are not meant to understand in a literal sense (Alim 2008, Keyes 2001). Word meanings are often inverted or are changed to signify opposition to the dominant culture or something unexpected from the way it is used in hip-hop. Hip-hop in Spanish from Colombia is similar to hip-hop word usage in English from the US in this regard. The rappers often use jargon close to the street to describe things. For some examples, they call each other *minga*, *ñea* and other offensive terms to signify 'insider' information. Henceforth, in the process of interpreting the conversations that I had with my informants, I had a great advantage in my field site setting because I had so many people who had lived in the United States around me that I could easily ask for a breakdown of the meanings of phrases, that were often given to me in HHNL from English. For example, let us take the word *minga* from above. *Minga* is a person of indigenous origin. In the past, it was a word meant to racially identify and segregate an indigenous person or a person of Afro-Colombian decent in the city and to insinuate that they are of lowly status and uneducated. A *minga* is stereotyped as someone who speaks unsophisticated Spanish (or *gamin*[11], as they might say in hip-hop) and is from the lower *stratas* of society. It is a word that the rappers in my study would say is

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[11] *Gamin* is a Spanish slang term meaning a form of speech from the streets. *Gamin* is equivalent to the term 'gangster' or 'street smart' in English.

equivalent to that of the word *nigga* [12] in HHNL [13]. Rap groups in Bogota would often interchange these two words, in fact. HHNL takes words like *minga* and nigga and inverts their meaning to take power away from elite people who come to (mis) use the words (Alim 2004, 2006). This is a linguistic technique of reversing the traditional use of the word for its context in hip-hop. Instead of *nigga* or *minga* being used negatively, the genre employs the word to put its meaning on its head and to make the word ineffective as an insult. The idea is that by doing this, pretty soon, you have all members of society running around calling each other '*mingas*' and the word loses its negative associations. In my study, when I was collaboratively translating my field notes this was the way that I would think about what my contacts were trying to communicate to me. In a study like this, using other translation methods would not capture the appropriate meaning of phrases. Back translation is an excellent method for accurately capturing the exact construction of a literal translation (West 2007). In this study, however, my rappers do not speak standard modern Spanish and I am not translating their words into standard modern English. My study is in the streets, where they speak *gamin* Spanish. I am translating what my *gamino* rappers think their words mean in the context of HHNL and conveying those meanings to academics. After I interpretatively transcribed my data, first into *gamin* Spanish and then into Hip-hop English, I would make sure that there were no identifying traces of my informant's original identities left on cassette or video tapes. I did this again as a precaution to making my informants vulnerable to the legal system or to one another.

Data Analysis

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[12] This term is used in hip-hop to mean a person who is Never Ignorant Getting Goals Attained, as re-defined by Tupac Shakur (Alim 2004).
[13] Hip-Hop National Language.

Combing through data is a process that should be ongoing throughout the research and dissertation write-up process (Goetz & Le Compte 1984). It includes various stages. Reading and re-reading data, I began to notice themes, repeated phrases, words, stories that were told over and over again with disparities and similarities. I re-read through accounts of events and used ANT to think about how people were coming together to interact and for what purposes. As I collected data, I began to think about what I had, I continued to read anthropological theories about creating social models, how to analyze social media, organizational structures, the anthropology of Colombia, making music and entrepreneurship niches. As I did this, I began making comparisons, contrasts, drawing maps of networks with my informants, having them explain linguistic phrases of lyrics with me and began to synthesize social theories with my own observations and data.

More on Methodological Issues

As I mentioned, convincing the rappers that I would protect their identities was an important issue that I had to constantly reassure them but I also had to contend with a number of other factors in the field. For example, who I am as a person was both an advantage and a disadvantage in the field in various ways. While my gender and nationality were difficult for me to know how to navigate, those attributes also helped me at times. Additionally, I had to learn all of the jargon and slang of each rap group and I had to establish myself as a serious person who was not in the field to 'party' with my contacts but that I was genuinely interested in the serious nature of research. I am a woman who was studying a male dominated subculture. The rap scene occasionally has women involved as rappers, b-girls (break dancers), technicians, some producers and managers but they are the minority of people involved directly in making music. Most of the girls in the rap scene are groupies, or girlfriends and sometimes wives of the rappers.

While there are a few female rappers or women working in this industry, it was not the norm. Women do not participate in the rap scene in productive ways, as a rule. They are much more often the consumers and fanatics of the culture, then the ones actively engaged in making the music. In Chapter 5, these issues are explored in much greater detail as I will introduce the readers to the ways in which women are present within the rap polities that I worked with. But for now, it is sufficient to say that field work was often awkward because of gender roles and perceptions of who I was and what I was doing there. At the same time, I could not have done this research without being who I am.

Let me explain. At times, people felt that I was an ambiguous figure in the field. I did not talk very much and was always observing or standing off to the side or recording conversations or events. This however, did not stop rumors from circulating that I was dating various rappers. As some of the significant others of the rappers were dangerous women, this was a delicate issue. Although these rumors were completely untrue, they helped to build up my reputation as a serious hip-hopper in the movement. In some ways, it gave me an advantage. People perceived me to be one of the homeboys, most of the time. I dressed in baggy clothes and stayed quiet like one of the other rappers. Additionally, I was always filming activities or writing something down which led people to recognize that I was clearly in the scene to do work. My behavior, also enabled audiences to think of me as someone connected to hip-hop in Bogota, as a local. In fact, most people often referred to me as a journalist or someone making a documentary. This helped me to garner respect from the fanatics of the rap groups and even from the significant others of the musicians. Margaret Mead discusses at great length in her sexuality studies in Samoa, that it was a great advantage in some ways to her field work that she was a woman outside the culture so she could just 'blend' in with the men. She explains that as a somewhat androgynous figure in

the field, she was able to sit back and observe in a way that she could not have, if she was anyone else. I found this to be the case, for me, as well. One evening when I was having coffee with a Master's Degree student from *La Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, he was asking me who I was working with. I told him the names of some of the more well-known rap groups that I was working with. He seemed shocked.

> [Academic]: "I can't believe that they are letting you work with them."
>
> Laura: "Really? Why?"
>
> [Academic]: "Well, they are so famous and they are so….macho. Well, I mean, I guess you are a tall, pretty, blond haired, blue eyed foreigner….all I know is they would never give a local the kind of access you have."
>
> Laura: "Really? I mean, they are so into supporting local people and Colombianas."
>
> [Academic]: "Yah, but they would be scared that we would find out too much. I don't know. All I know is that several of my colleagues, male and female have tried to get in with those groups and they always turn us down. You must have had some kind of special connection and must have proved yourself to them in a way that we could not."

And this was true, I had to hang out with my initial contacts in New York for almost a month proving that I was 'cool' and I was not going to embarrass my main contacts. At one point towards the end of their trip to New York, one of them said to me:

> [Rapper]: "I am going to have to convince my homeboys that you are black because you look so white."
>
> Laura: "What? What are you talking about?"
>
> [Rapper]: "You're so blonde, you're such a white girl. I am going to have to convince my homies that you are cool though. Don't worry, I mean you'll be fine but I am going to have to convince them that you're a black girl, even though you don't look like it."

These interview statements and field notes illustrate the somewhat confusing nature of my gender and status within these groups during my field work. I had to act a certain way. To be honest, this harkens back to my days in the small town in Texas that I discussed in the first

chapter. Without my previous experience hanging out with hardcore gangsters, rappers and drug dealers as a young person in Texas, I would never have known how to act around these folks as an adult, especially an academic. The combination of my gender, appearance, and previous experience all gave me a unique ability to enter into this hardcore gangster rap scene.

Another element that enabled me to access the field was that the hip-hop community in Bogota, has many deportees from the United States. In fact, about 50% of all of the rappers that I was working with were deportees from the United States, or Canada. The fact that I sounded like a '*gringa*' and talked slow caused my contacts to comment on this. They would compare me to the deportees. This allowed me to fit in, as I speak Spanish slowly and with a non-native accent. In other social circles, in the linguistically sophisticated parts of Bogota, my communication skills would have been more of a significant problem in gaining entree as a North American. Particularly, because Colombia is well-known for '*bien español*' (for having precise, fast and elegant speech). In this particular case, my slowness and uneasiness with the language actually helped ally me with the more hardcore members of the gangster rap scene.

I also encountered ethical issues with drugs and drug use during my field work. While there were an enormous amount of drugs, almost all of my informants smoked marijuana, they did so to various degrees and in different ways. As rap music comes from Jamaica and is associated with the radical politics of the Rastafarian movement (Keyes 2002, Krims 2003, Chang 2007) and club scenes in the middle of inner-cities, hip-hop has always been associated with the cultural movement for the legalization of marijuana (Chang 2007, Alim 2004). It was everywhere. While I support the legalization of marijuana as a political issue, ethically I thought it was a bad idea to participate in this or in any drug use with my informants. If I was going to have these rappers take me seriously, it was best not to consume illegal substances with them and

to be sober during fieldwork. In fact, I do not like to drink alcohol either. When people would ask if they could get me something to drink, I always requested water. Sometimes when people would really pressure me to drink, I would act like I was imbibing a shot or a sip of beer, by pressing the bottle to my lips and pretending to take a swig. People would also pressure me to smoke marijuana and to do other drugs but I just said 'thank you, no' and that was generally a sufficient response. If they really insisted I would just tell them that I was there to work and that meant there was more for them. As a result of this though, sometimes the groups or group members would make fun of me for being a nerd and not knowing how to have fun. However, that was exactly the impression I was seeking to give them, so my anthropological *persona* was well served by my reactions.

Positionality

I have already discussed a lot of issues regarding my positionality in the field. I am a tall, white, blonde female who grew up in Tucson, Arizona. I began learning Spanish at a very young age with some of my best friends teaching me Spanish in pre-school. Then, it took quite a while but by the time I was in college, I could speak Spanish and understand it fluently. With that said, any good linguist will tell you that Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in the world, and it is regionally diverse in its variation. When I arrived in Colombia, people told me that I would have to quit talking like a Mexican if I wanted people to respect me. So, I asked my contacts to help me learn how to sound more Colombian. They taught me a few things right away.

The rappers first informed me about a lot of their slang. In my field notes, I have pages of '*jerga*', that people use in the hip-hop scene in Colombia. Some of the first things I learned were the context of *minga* and *nea*. I asked if these phrases were ok to use with everyone or if people

got offended if you called them that. My contacts told me that upper class people thought that those terms were inappropriate but that young people would like it if you spoke to them that way. Even until the moment I was leaving Bogota, though I was asking questions about meaning and trying to better understand the linguistic implications of the way people spoke to each other. Before, I went to Bogota, people had commented to me that the people in the rap scene spoke *gamin* Spanish or gangster Spanish. *Gamin* is a form of street Spanish. People tend to use the word ending *cita* on every word at the end of a sentence. Their Spanish is particularly rhythmic and almost song-like. *Gaminos* (gangsters) enjoy hearing Spanish spoken well too and tend to admire people who have a nice strong rhythm to their accent. The *gaminos* will chip off endings of words a bit in some phrases and exaggerate them in other places, so paying close attention to their speech is definitely important for a *gringa* from the US who grew up on Spanglish. But I encouraged people to teach me prison lingo, insults, 'dirty words' and of course, that always helps one adapt, learn inside jokes, secrets and helps to understand how to carefully navigate gangster rappers in a research investigation. Being linguistically competent in a hip-hop scene is vitally important to clearly understanding the intentions of the songs you hear, the words you record, and the messages that the rappers are displaying to their audiences. I was able to analyze the poetic meaning of lyrics, taking transcripts of audio and listening to the many varieties of Colombian accents.

I had to be very professional with my informants. They were my co-workers in the field. I did not want to mix business and my private affairs. Working in the entertainment industry though, it is common to become familiar with and comfortable with the people around you. As I mentioned earlier, I attended a lot of birthday parties, barbecues, family get-togethers and holidays with my informants. About one month into my fieldwork, I began hearing rumors about

myself from different sources. These rumors continued until I left the field. They were mostly speculative rumors about who I was or what I was doing there. Some people thought I worked for Vice Magazine, the Discovery Channel or was some sort of journalist making a documentary. I was always taking interviews, recording people and doing work around the rap crews, so people knew that I was there to do work. I tried to be as upfront with people as possible but inevitably too, as details about my purpose were murky to outsiders, people also thought I was dating the rappers or producers. Inevitably, I heard multiple rumors about relationships people thought that I had with the rappers or producers with whom I was working. I can report that those rumors were not true, but I also believe that these rumors indicated that people knew I was a part of the scene, locally and thought I was a trusted member of the rap network in the city. I believe that is why it was so easy for me to gain access to this population and am able to relay such detailed information about the production process of this industry, now.

Limitations

Some of the rap groups with whom I worked had bitter rivalries with one another. As you will continue to discover through reading this work, some of the rap groups are affiliated with street gangs and have honor codes which meant that they take the issue of 'loyalty' very seriously. As I started out working with one particular polity of rappers within the scene, as I was moving across it to gain a wider perspective from other entities, I got a stark warning from one of the factions that I needed to be careful who I was working with and that before I moved onto to other groups, I needed to be certain that I was finished with them. Once I moved on to working with the other rappers in the scene, they advised me that I could not be seen in public with them anymore.

Another limitation to this work, will inevitably be the technique of modeling. There are scores of criticisms in the anthropological community about using modeling. As it was a technique developed by Max Weber, Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict and C. Leví-Strauss it admittedly is only a representation or an image that I have created based on the data that I have gathered. As Claude Levi-Strauss (2008) points out, the whole purpose of social modeling is to be able to theoretically construct parallel realities of social observations to make them comparable. In these two social models, that is what I have done. While some people believe that these representational models lead to the essentializing of important differences between people, Abu-Lughod (1996) points out that it is impossible to directly relay anthropological observations, particularly without harming informant confidentiality, guaranteeing some form of erasure. The task that one is left with then, is to balance the telling of events, actions and narratives that inform but do not reveal identifying information. One must describe in detail without claiming that it is reality. However, the information that anthropologists are delivering is too important in adding to the academic record in our attempts to advance society. We cannot just throw out important contributions to this field because they are imperfect. One must realize their benefits and limitations in an objective sense while reading through the work.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I reviewed my techniques, methods and challenges during fieldwork. While the project was difficult, I believe that the exciting contributions that I am able to make about the business practices, the production techniques, technology uses and networking capabilities of the rappers in Bogota, Colombia will speak for themselves. Reviewing the methods of gaining access to the rap scene in Bogota, Colombia, how I presented myself as a researcher in the scene and some of the challenges that this presented may help the reader filter

the data and to consider alternative readings. I welcome feedback and participation from those that view at this work. Using anthropological models, and keeping the confidentiality of my informants is also an important aspect of the reporting of my findings and I invite other experts in the field to continue to collaborate on these issues as the searchability and identification of quotes from social media outlets continues to become an ever-present danger to our field. In the following chapter, I continue to describe the social setting and conditions facing the people in Bogota before the dissertation enters into the chapters which answers the research questions.

CHAPTER 4:
Corporate Models: Creating Social Mobility through Strategic Social Network Formation or Gang, Gang

"Work hard in your calling." – Max Weber

Introduction

In the last Chapter, I presented the methodology of how and why I chose to set up these polities as anthropological models. In this Chapter, I demonstrate how entrepreneurs in my study became successful and formed social organizations that were productive to making music, through using technology and their social connections in order to be able to develop the hip-hop industry in Bogota, Colombia. Harrington and Boardman (1997) conducted an anthropological study in the 1990s to determine how social mobility is created for people who grow up in poverty. They concluded that young people who became socially mobile had made some sort of unique social connection with a person or persons who mentored them on 'how' to become upwardly mobile. In the current liberal economic environment, many have argued that the chances for social mobility among the less materially resourced are harder to achieve (Escobar 1996, Roitman 1997, Harvey 1999, Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, Ehrenreich 2006, 2010). According to sociological theories, people that are born into poverty will typically have a more limited amount of life chances than people born into higher income category levels to achieve upward social mobility and 'success' (Glad, 1967, Sorokin 1998, Beller 2009). The reasons for this include a complex matrix of their predicted exposure to educational opportunities, connections to social networks and life opportunities (Glad 1967, Beller 2009).

In this study, however, I discovered that many of the rap artists, with whom I worked, were able to beat the odds against them and were able to achieve upward social mobility. I wanted to find out more about how they accomplished this feat. In this chapter, I explore a rap

polity's techniques in making this socio-economic transformation in their lives. Sorokin (1998) defines social mobility as an individual's ability to change social class position, in an upward or downward direction, within their lifetime. In terms of success then, I am arguing that rap polities whose members have obtained social mobility are part of a *corporate polity of upward social mobility*. Here, I describe how this rap polity used their network of friends and family to create an upward trajectory of economic earnings. The rappers that I worked with used a variety of strategies to create political and economic opportunities which included building a multiplex international network of music producers, business executives, innovators and rappers that worked together to build up their network's financial wealth and to change their life chances within the liberal economic and technological system of globalization. Therefore, I will employ political economic theory to discuss the environment in which our rap polities operate and I will combine F.G. Bailey's theories from *Strategems and Spoils* with terms also used by Bruno Latour in actor-network theory to describe a social model and processes used by my informants to achieve upward social mobility. I will also reference literature in anthropology about kinship networks and business strategies. Kinship networks can be found within businesses all over the world. Jonathan Butler (2012) discovered kinship networks in what he called 'ethnic enclaves' in the United States among African Americans. He noted that due to racial discrimination, denial of financial resources and limited access to schooling opportunities, many African American ethnic enclaves used familial or friendship ties to start businesses in their community. The polities of African American entrepreneurs would create their own lenders, borrowers and systems of repayment devoid of help from formalized institutions. Similarly, Hugo Nutini (2005) also noted recently in Veracruz, Mexico, many of the *nouveau riche* used *compadrazgo* networks to gain social mobility under neoliberalism. Steve Gudeman (2016) points out that social networks

which function well, learn how to balance self-interest and mutuality. This polity demonstrated this balance. They are a social network that has learned how to inculcate its members into a group where they emulsify competing interests and resolve conflicts through the rule of laws they themselves live by.

In this chapter, I will discuss how my participants described their ideology about what they were doing, their roles, and experiences, how they became part of these rap networks or polities of rappers by discussing the social controls within their groups to demonstrate how they work together to create a socially mobile, tightly organized networks. I will use actor-network theory and political anthropology to outline how my participants were able to overcome their difficult circumstances and to strategize their way out of poverty using a type of fictitious kinship network, to organize themselves as a corporate body.

The Rules of the Game

Image 4.1 Fuck the Illuminati

"We are gangsters, we are revolutionaries. You see, this is how the world works. The rich and the powerful, they all have gangs that help them maintain their wealth. Whether it's Skull and Bones, their college fraternities or whether they use the army or the police, the wealthy always use gangs to help them get ahead and maintain their power. We call these the imperial gangs. These are the gangs of the colonial powers. We are a part of the anti-colonial movement. We are a part of the gangs of 'the people'. As [deleted gang name] it's our job to destroy the colonial gangs and to create a new empire that is just for the people. We are about providing social justice and more equity for everyone, not just creating a nice world for the very richest."

Image 4.2 Just Say No to Gangs

The above meme was one that I discovered on the website of one of the gang member's[14] Facebook pages as I trolled through his timeline photos and I thought it illustrated the above point, well. The Facebook meme reiterates the basic point made by the foundational narrative of some of the gangs involved in making rap music in Bogota, which is that fraternal corporate structures or 'gangs' exist everywhere in society. In working with the successful polities of rappers in Bogota, Colombia, I found that the most successful groups of rappers were allied with formal international gang networks. These gang ties usually led back to the Latin Kings or the Bloods, who are international allies in fighting what they call the colonial rule of the 'old empires'. As this polity of rappers needed a creation narrative to justify their existence and to

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[14] I discovered this meme on the Facebook page of a gang member who acted as security for one of the corporate rap groups with whom I worked.

create a sense of loyalty and belonging[15], this narrative worked. Over and over again, I heard the members of this group talk about how they were fighting against the (neo) colonial rulers of Colombia.

"Look at who is in charge of Colombia, Lau. It's all the same family. You have Santos running in an election this year against his cousin. This [Colombia] isn't a democracy, it's a family business. The elites who run this country are a mafia, and we are their competition."

From this perspective, this polity of rappers saw it as their mission to create a popular cultural movement that would take political and economic power away from the current oligarchical regime. Their job was to challenge them. Their goal and prize was to seek economic and political power to compete, as they saw it, the crooked, criminal class of political elites in the country. Bailey (2001) argues that in a political game there always have to be prizes. Similarly, Latour and actor-network theorists argue that there have to be similar goals and outcomes that a polity strives for in order for a group to be able to come together. This narrative of the people fighting for power against the gangs of the imperial powers of the world, provides such a prize.

The next component that any political team needs are the values of the group. Bailey argues that values provide a means for achieving the end goal (Bailey 2001). Similarly, Latour (2005) argues that a network needs what he calls interessment. This is when a group decides 'how' the members of a group gain access to the inside circle. While interessment holds a special meaning that can be applied to objects or people, the word 'values' holds a moral connotation. Values both create and regulate political competition. The values set forth by these rap collectives, allowed people to relate to the group and allowed the politicians to compete with the rappers for political power recognizing their legitimacy as worthy, moral opponents (Bailey

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[15] Basso (1996) argues that creation narratives allow for groups to identify insiders and outsiders of a group and to help bound the groups. That is what I concurrently discovered with this polity of rappers. The groups needed a way of binding themselves together through creating an ideology.

2001). The rappers who were allied with this group espoused the values of *hard work*, *respect*, and *struggling*[16] against the system. They also believed in being *loyal*, *honest*, *knowledgeable*, building *unity* and *fraternity*. F.G. Bailey (2001) argues that any political organization has to create an ideology that is held together by its values. This model had an ideological narrative replete with organizational values that fit well with the narrative of hip-hop and resonated well with the revolutionary values of much of the Colombian population. In order to maintain these values, groups have to ceremonially maintain them.

The members of the rap polity were under constant pressure to demonstrate hard work within the group. They had to earn money. In latter parts of the chapter, I will explore how this took place but it was understood that to be a part of this rap polity working from early in the morning until late at night five or six days out of the week was required. Respecting one another was also a big part of the philosophy of this polity. When I was in the field, one of the members of the group was temporarily suspended from the group for repeatedly disrespecting his 'brothers' in the group. I was there for one of the discussions about this.

> [Homeboy]: "I mean, well, he has just been falling off. It's probably all the drugs. He tries to hide it from us but we know."
>
> [Rapper]: "What's he doing?"
>
> [Homeboy]: "I guess he just takes a lot of acid and does a lot of coke. You know, he's my brother and he's put in a lot of work for us. But then, lately he's been getting sloppy and like he sent some credit cards to my house, in like this scam or whatever and that's when I flipped out on him. Plus, he's been just like embarrassing us a lot when we make appearances at different places. I think he just gets too messed up. He gets drunk, drugged out, you know and he just offends our squad. You know, we are out with our main chicks, our wives and stuff and he'll start talking about our *mozas* and our side chicks. Like he's just been pissing people off."

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[16] The words in italics here, denote a specific saying by the group. I have provided an interpretation of the phrase here as to relay the message but not to give away the exact saying which may be too revealing for my contacts.

It was explained to me, that being respectful and acting like a *caballero* or a gentleman was always the way to behave. If the group had to defend itself against an external threat, that was different. However, being disrespectful to your brothers out in public and causing embarrassment was a big *faux pas*. Eventually, the group member being discussed in the above excerpt from my field notes was suspended from the group. He disappeared from the scene eventually, as he became fearful of the other members of the polity. This scenario illustrates the seriousness of being respectful and maintaining *bien comportamiento* (good behavior) within this rap polity.

Another tenant of this rap polity was to struggle against economic and racial discrimination, as well as to stand up for people who were different from yourself. Diversity was important to the group. Struggling, meant that if a group member came from a wealthy background and wanted to be part of these groups, they would have to work just as hard as the rest of the team to prove oneself as a valuable group members by exemplifying the values that this type of model represented. This meant standing up for the various members of the allied groups, working within bands of brothers and displaying the values of its members consistently, by helping the overall cause. For example, there was a cinematographer that was introduced to the polity through a mutual friend. This cinematographer lived a really nice neighborhood. He had been raised by a single mother who was involved in selling commercial real estate around different departments (states/provinces) of Colombia, and as a result, she had become financially well-off. Her son, a cinematographer, for this rap polity, attended the best schools, and universities in Colombia. Additionally, he even lived abroad for a few years to gain experience working in one of the cinema arts meccas of Latin America. He attended the Harvard of Bogota. As a core member of the corporate rap polity, he displayed a lot of talent, and was a valuable networker. He was also very brave.

In addition to working with the corporate rap polity, he also reached out to historically disenfranchised groups of people to use new media to champion their causes. For example, when I was in the field he was making a documentary with one of his colleagues about a city called Palenque. Palenque was the first free slave settlement in the Colombia and was rich with Afro-Colombian traditions. His film was a project designed to capture the unique historical significance of people who live in this town, now. The people that live in Palenque are some of the first people who brought many facets of Costeño culture from Africa, such as the musical tradition of Champeta, traditional African food, natural-pathic healing medicines and techniques. This film was designed to highlight those cultural achievements to showcase Afro-Colombian contributions to the national culture and to educate other people about this fascinating town in Colombia. The film maker was a socio-cultural activist and that is why the rap polity interessed him into the group. He was willing to put in a lot of work to open-up the Colombian culture and help educate the population about the vibrant history of a predominantly Afro-Colombian enclave like Palenque to break down prejudicial stereotypes and barriers that exist against this group of people within the country. That is why these progressive rap groups wanted to work with him, even though he was different from the rest of the crew, as he came from a higher socio-economic strata. The cinematographer used his knowledge to enlighten people about the Afro-Colombian culture to end ignorant discriminatory practices against them.

Not only did the cinematographer work to end racial discrimination but he also worked with transvestite prostitutes in the barrio of [Name of the Neighborhood]. One afternoon, I accompanied him as he turned in funding grant proposals to a branch of IDARTES in the center of the city that offers a refuge for the women. On this particular afternoon, IDARTES was

having a support group for them and I had a chance to find out for myself what the cinematographer's documentary was about.

> [Transvestite]: "He's filming us talking about sex. We are talking about how we work in the streets as prostitutes, *callejeras*, street walkers. We wanted to make this documentary to educate people about safe sex practices, how to not get AIDS/HIV, STDs, you know, that type of shit… and he's the best! You know how he works, and gets all your good angles. He wants to make this a good film, that's interesting, beautiful and will ultimately help people in high risk health groups to be careful with the way we choose to live their lives. We can live however we want to but people need to know what they are getting into if they want to be freaks."

Again, this cinematographer was on the cutting edge of cultural progressivism. Many people stereotype rap music as being homophobic or anti-gay and it is for some groups of Colombian rappers. However, in the corporate rap polity, they respect the importance of withholding judgement about individual lifestyle choices and focus on the theme of helping high risk sexual groups better understand how to take care of themselves. Colombia has red zones in the city where prostitution and drugs are '*casi legal*' (legally tolerated). From a class perspective, some of the most marginalized members of society live in these zones. Colombia is a country that has been through decades of violence. Profamilia (2014) estimates that there are 16,000 sex workers in Bogota, alone. The film maker that was one of the main members of this widely popular rap group that I worked with, was making this film to ensure that this population of people and their clients could access important information about how to stay safe when participating in promiscuous sex. The film maker was saving people's lives by giving them information about how to be careful. He was showcasing the intelligence of the sex workers also and empowering them to become educators in a popular media format that would be available to the public. IDARTES was going to show this documentary on an open access cable network, late in the evenings, once it was complete. The government of Colombia, was in fact, footing the bill for this project.

This film maker was recording, and showcasing the real lives of people in Colombian society in a positive light. He was helping to reinvigorate awareness, pride and lift-up those that were down[17]. In fact, that was the name of his cultural production brand. This cinematographer was well connected within the educational and political funding systems, too. He was consistently working with government officials to get monies to pay for his efforts. He struggled to help uplift the people. Additionally, he was professional in his ability to garner funding for this type of project. This is how he earned a place in one of the most hardcore rap polities in Bogota. He had to struggle for the cause to change the system from the angle he was best equipped to assist the movement. This is how he showed the ability to 'struggle' against the normative system and use the government to aid in sending out messages of support for the people of Palenque, and the rest of the African Diaspora in Colombia. He was also advocating for the health of people involved in the sex trade.

Another tenant of the group, was that they demanded loyalty from the other group members. This meant that if someone was part of the inner circle, then they had to affiliate exclusively with other members of the rap polity. Going back and forth or associating with other members of rival rap organizations could get a member kicked out of their group or in serious jeopardy with the other group members.

Honesty among the male members of the polity was also another value that this rap group strictly adhered to. If someone was a member of the inner circle of this group, they had to be honest with the group members about everything. In several of my interviews, issues of honesty were brought up. For example, another one of the industries up and coming cinematographic talents was recommended to the rap polity but the rap group that ended up working with him did

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[17] Again, the exact name of the cinematographer's project has to be left aside. However the themes discussed above are the interpretation of the project's name.

not appreciate the values of the cinematographer related to his work ethic because they felt he had been lazy, dishonest or both. One of the field notes regarding the first and final project that they embarked on together went like this:

> "…We tried to use him for [Name of Rap Song], and he couldn't do what we wanted, remember? Like it's a matter of talent and the kid is talented, but he is also dishonest. Remember when we spent all that money to rent out that hotel room to shoot those scenes with [Model] and we asked him to bring the back-up batteries, the lights, and the light refractors cause we need that shit up in the heat. And then we got all the way to fucking [Name of City] and was in the hotel room before he told us he didn't have the right equipment. That's a three hour drive back to Bogota to get the shit and then remember all the footage came out all fucked up in terms of lighting and that kid made us lose money and time. That's just the type of business shit I don't play with and I won't work with him again. You don't tell people you have things and that you are ready to roll out, get to a destination to film and then tell us you're not ready after we asked you and you said yes. That's unprofessional, it's dishonest, it just didn't work, you feel me?"

Being an honest person was a part of the values system of the crew. Not only did they specifically mention it over and over again, like in the excerpt above but the crew would have on-going conversations about honesty and use this case as an example to other group members. At a later point we will discuss times in which the rap polity's beliefs can be suspended circumvented or negotiated within the group but for now, let us assume that the members put their new recruits through tests. Sometimes, the recruits made it and sometimes, they did not. In the above example, this was a videographer that got an audition with the group but did not pass the test of being accepted into the group as a member. Loyalty, honesty, knowledge, unity, and fraternity were prized values set forth by the group. They talked about and tried to practice these values in a strict sense with people in their inner circle by continuously checking their member's character by assessing their ability to carry out the goals of the group through following these moral codes. As FG Bailey points out using a set of agreed upon values is what allows political and economic groups to endure in a competitive system. These core beliefs and practices of being hardworking, respectful, struggling for certain political, economic and social issues such as

106

promoting sex education, ending discrimination, and disarming classist assumptions through their socially mobile class climbing behavior, set examples for changing attitudes in the popular culture, at large within Colombia. The group members were loyal to each other, honest, knowledgeable, unified and fraternal which allowed them to play the game, to compete with socio-cultural influences in the popular realm. These groups advocated a leftist political ideology and developed a method for this to exist within the capitalist political economic framework of Colombia. Their message, methods and cultural modernization approach is welcomed by large parts of the population and by an emerging moderate middle class that is sympathetic to the leftwing political movement for cultural innovation and change.

Building knowledge was another important value of this rap polity. The corporate polity of rappers had a book club. When I was in the field, they were reading a series of books by Robert Greene. They had just finished *The 48 Laws of Power* and were beginning another book of his called *Masters*. These books are about how to create the reality that you want through designing your own destiny.

> Laura: "What kinds of books do you guys read?"
>
> [Rapper]: "We read all kinds of books. We started our reading Machiavelli, Sun Tzu, Gandhi, we've been really into Robert Greene lately. When we were in prison together, the older [NAME OF GANG] said we needed to be '*callejeros intellectuales*' (street intellectuals), so that's what we try to resemble. We'll read anything. I've been reading some Pauhlo Cuello, Michio Kaku, I mean if you have anything you would suggest, I am up for it."

This represents just one of the members of the rap groups who was incredibly eager to read and know more. Similarly, many of the members of this corporate polity were on the same track. The group members were encouraged to be smart, and to try to craft a better existence for themselves within their groups through gaining more knowledge.

Unity and Fraternal Brotherhood

Another aspect of the corporate rap polity's core values were brotherhood and unity. Revisiting the opening creation narrative for the group, one can note the discourse of these embedded values. Part of being any core group of professionals that work together and try to make a political empire, is that of unity, oneness, belonging, brotherhood, fraternity. How do you socialize oneness? What does that mean?

Creating broad understandings and deep meanings between people seemed to help the corporate polity's members decide where they stood with each other. These values were something that only existed in a concentric way with about 8-12 members of each group. Many people from this polity had been involved in gangs in the United States and were deportees from Chicago, New York and Miami. But they all understood each other and worked with non-gang affiliated artists from Bogota too. They claimed to be a close-knit group publicly and privately. In all of these groups from the corporate models, they had core rappers, producers, production assistants, business managers, and other 'socios' (or business associates) that would help execute tasks within the groups. These guys had known each other for many years in most cases and they all knew their place within the groups. They also knew how to make music, money and expand their presence, internationally. They were musically talented and they were business men.

At the core of these group interactions however was a basic understanding of the multiple roles and ways in which this organizational structure was beneficial to them was at the root of their unity. They respected the hierarchies in place. Their organization, was in fact set up as a close-knit group of like-minded corporate partners who operated as a familial gang unit, a rap group and a group of businessmen. Ethnographies that have been conducted out of this kind of group organization, argue that the more a group is involved in complex, multi-layered interests, the more the group will become tightly woven together through continuous interaction (Thrasher

1968, Hart 1973, Blok 1974, Bailey 1969, Ward 2011). The groups have to develop an internal system of norms about the interpersonal relationships they have, the business interests and how to cooperate with one another on all of these levels. Some political anthropological theorists argue about the typology of these norms. Bailey (2001) for example, writes that there are behavioral norms that are moral and contractual. Moral norms being that of a personal nature, contractual norms being those related to a business deal. However, most strong groups are interested by a 'multiplex' of these interests. In the case of this model, the participants were interested in the group on moral and transactional levels. Additionally, they were part of bureaucratic corporations together. This meant that the unity and fraternal bonds that the groups formed had to be well understood. On a normative level, the fraternity treated each other like brothers. They were sensitive to the feelings and needs of one another as they put their brotherhood first as part of their family. The core members of the corporate polity were responsible for bringing in money to the group together to contribute to different parts of the rap business endeavors that the group had carved out. Plus, there were members of each polity that were responsible to everyone else for the maintenance of the businesses that the group ran together as well. In the next section, we will move into discussing the structures, roles and social interactions that the participants had in demonstrating their ability to perform morally and to enable the functioning of this group to endure specific political contests, but this will also allow us to continue a working analyses of group behavior by which to compare a second model in the following chapter. In order for this group of disadvantaged youth to become socially mobile in the rap scene in Bogota, they had to have certain values and standards about the way they interacted with one another. Additionally, they had to work as a corporate body and could not just look out for themselves. Rather, they had to develop a familial polity, where they lived by a

strict moral code of values that resembled that of the Boy Scouts[18]. For people to become successful in the world of entrepreneurial cultural production, people have to treat each other with loyalty, respect, they have to work hard, fight against injustice and they have to be intelligent (Florida 2012). The group also cared about social justice, empowering their friends, family and neighbors, as we will continue to discover throughout this ethnography. Sarah Dodd (2011) similarly argues that despite the rhetoric of popular ideology about how capitalistic aims corrupt groups and terminate in a tragedy of the commons, the entrepreneurs that are making the largest gains with their business practices are those that remain independent from the mainstream ways of thinking, participating in collectivities, rejecting purely profit motives for their business aims, engage in social protest, identify strongly with the working class and using extreme art to communicate their visions for change. While Dodd was analyzing the development of business entrepreneurship of punk music, my findings in this area are similar.

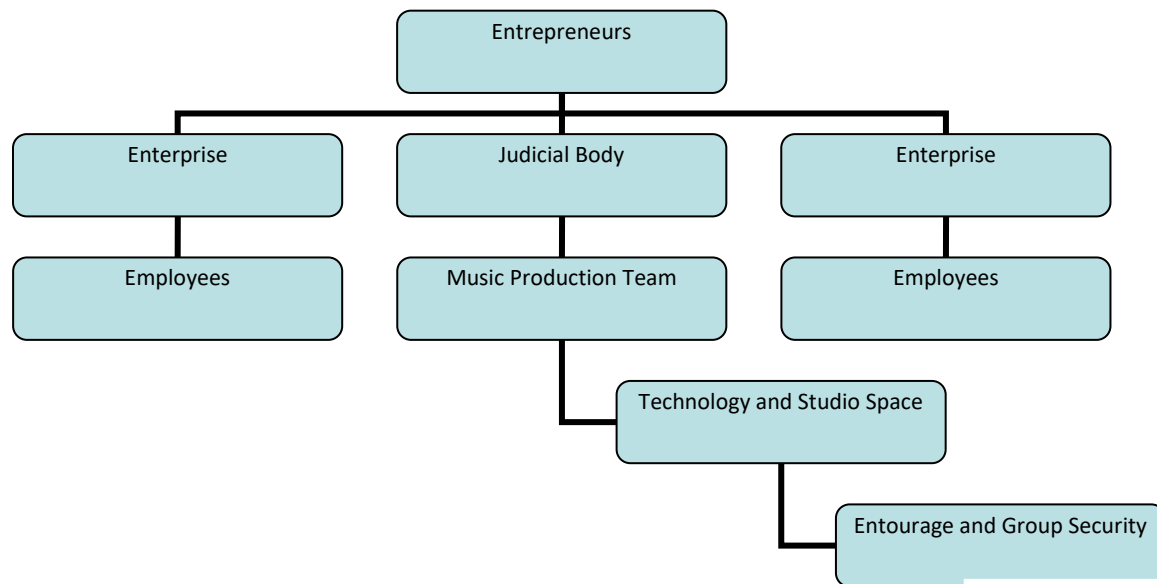**Basic Political Structure and Roles of the Group Members**

Image 4.3 Corporate Hierarchy

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[18] In the early drafts of this chapter, Dr. Dan Souleles commented to me that the corporate rap polities seemed to resemble this type of kich fraternal organization.

The groups that could be classified in this model, also had particular roles that dictated the actions and behavior that was expected of the group members. The groups had what Bailey (2001) would describe as leaders and what Latour (1986) would describe as entrepreneurs. These are the members of the polity that act to gather, direct and distribute the group's resources (Rip 1986, Bailey 1986, Latour 2004). In the successful rap groups that I worked with, there was always a complicated organizational bricolage that was constantly at play and I will do my best to describe what was happening with these overlapping entities. The corporate rap model that existed in the rap scene in Bogota, were tied to larger gang networks but not everyone in the rap polity was a member of a gang. In these cases, there were almost always then, two organizational structures being interlaced by its members. First, there was the rap polity that had entrepreneurs that were rappers from disadvantaged communities in the Americas somewhere. Sometimes, they were from the *strata O* communities of Bogota. In other cases they were deportees from large cities in the United States. They were always people who listened to a lot of hip-hop, became involved in selling drugs and were party to other gang activities as young people, as well. The entrepreneurs of these rap polities were used to making money, dealing with people, products and merchandise. The corporate rap networks wanted to develop a hip-hop industry from the ground up, to make a hip-hop scene that represented the values of racial and economic equality as well as entrepreneurial endeavors that they could pass down to their children.

They inscribed people into their rap click to help them make this dream a reality. Their political teams consisted of several roles. They always had a faction that created merchandise for the group, another group that made music, they had a group that ran the above board business ventures of the click and yet another that ran the illicit operations for the group. The

entrepreneurs were in charge but they also, at times, would utilize the judicial body of the gang
to resolve certain types of disputes between group members.

Values and Vision

Peripheral Members

Core Members

Gang Structure

Entrepreneurs

Judicial Body
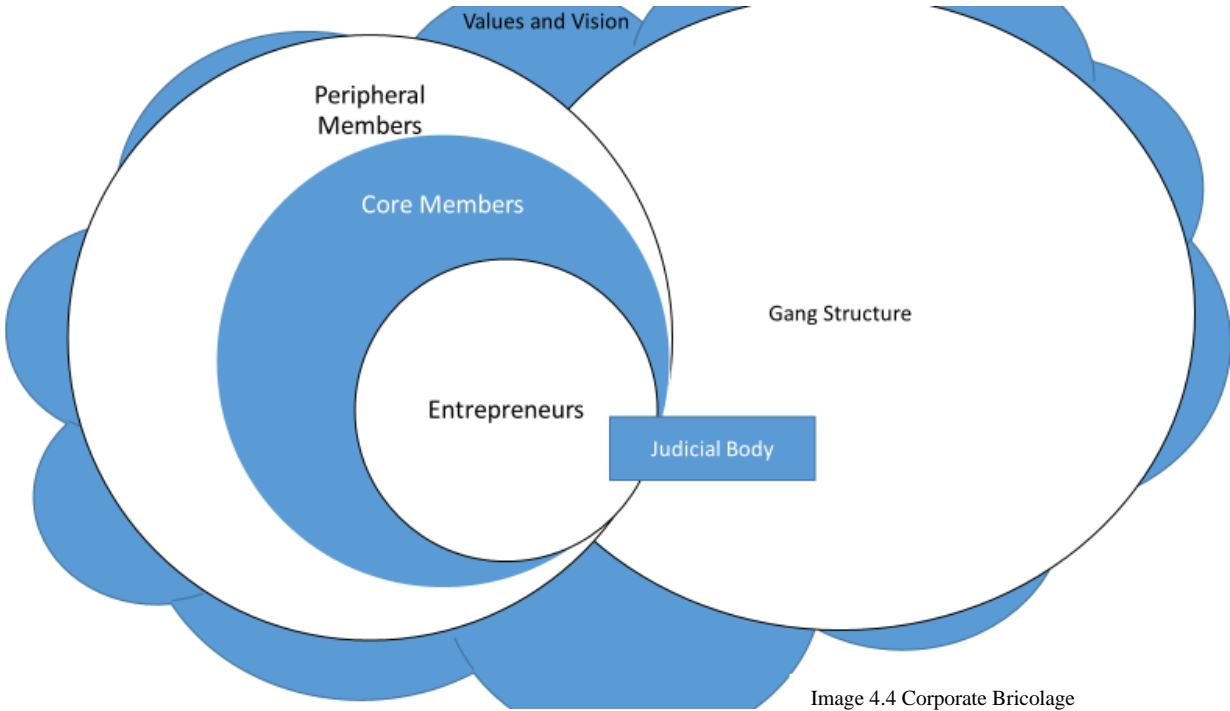
Image 4.4 Corporate Bricolage

Local Gang
Leader

Judicial Body

Gang
Members

Affiliates

New Recruits
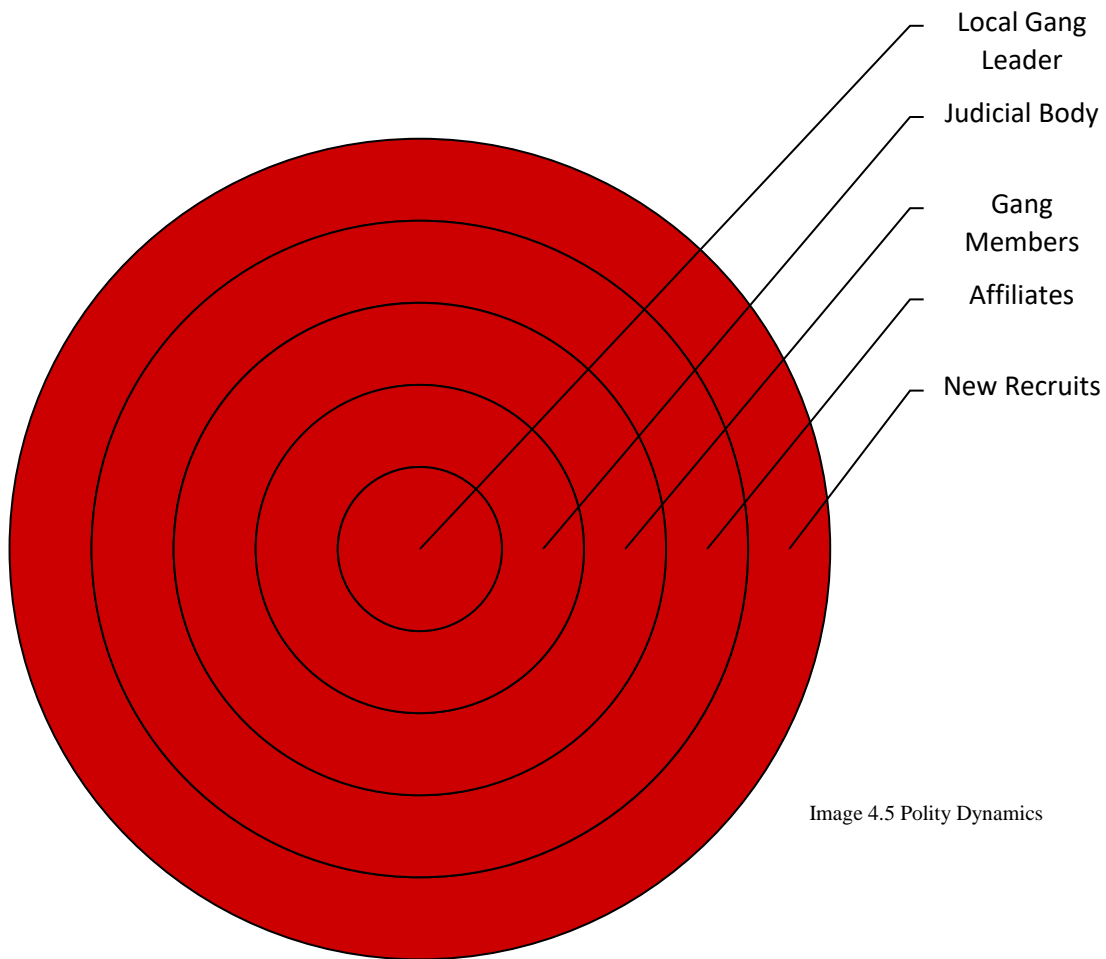
Image 4.5 Polity Dynamics

The roles of the group members overlapped into different spheres to create group bricolage. In terms of making music, then these groups had producers that could get them access to equipment that they could not get in Bogota, helped the groups master their sounds and worked to distribute their music through having access to formal networks in the music industry. Then, there was always a cinematographer and a graphic designer that work together to put together music videos and new logos for the groups.

Typically, one of the rap entrepreneurs acquired the merchandise for their retail outlets. He would inscribe[19] a clothing factory to produce all of the clothing for the retail outlets and then he would personally manage the retail operations at the stores. The entrepreneurs would also have their closest and most trusted friends, finance their other business operations and employ other members of their rap polity to allow everyone to maintain a stable level of economic support within the franchises. The other entrepreneurs would help run the illicit operations for the rap teams. The illicit sector of the groups also provided economic security for the organization. At concerts or when the group was on tour, the corporate networks could tap into their national and international gang networks to supply logistical support and bodyguards. This part of the organization also helped to provide security anytime that any of the other factions were transporting large sums of money or merchandise. In the following section, I will discuss the internal dynamics of how the group works together in each of its different sectors in order to build their rap empire.

Group Maintenance and Internal Controls

Groups come together for particular reasons. Latour (1986) argues that groups come together for a common goal. In this case, the rappers and gangsters came together because they had a shared vision of progressive social change that they wanted to implement this through making music, and consumable lifestyle products. Callon (1986) argues that there are core group members and periphery group members. Bailey (2001) states that the core group members are tied to the group through multiplex relationships which usually include moral and transactional goals that the individuals within the core membership have. The rap polities being modeled here advocate for the moral values to be the manner in which they pursue the larger goals of the

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[19] I will explain how the rap groups were able to do this in Chapter 9.

polity. Building a rap empire while challenging the legitimate authority of the state to better serve the people, making money and enhancing the status of the group members was important to the leadership and the core members in this model. The rap group was maintained through the leadership of the entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs had a variety of ways of creating cohesion in the group through the language of values that was discussed earlier in the chapter. Law (1986), Krieger and Belliger (2011) argue that internal group stability thrives on the consistency of maintaining group values. In speaking with the members of this rap polity, there was a high degree of what Mikhail Bakhtin (2010) would call centripetal forces. The group used their values and mantras in common speech at group gatherings and when hanging out. The rap polity would often use specific handshakes, and would throw gang signs to each other in public spaces to denote unity of affiliation. They would also use the colors of the gangs they were involved in when producing the clothing lines for the rap groups. The groups would have a day of the week when the rewards and punishments for the activity of the polity were divided up and distributed. For the most part, the polity tried to use positive reinforcement to create a familial sense of belonging between its members to ensure the behavior that the group wanted to see internally.

Image 4.6 Kings

Anytime someone violated the rules of the rap group and betrayed their trust, the rappers would collectively make decisions on how to handle the situation, and the entrepreneurs would have the final say. For example, if a promoter invited the rap group to do a concert and then did not pay the rap polity what they were promised, the rap group would talk about the best way to react. Then, the entrepreneurs would gather alone to decide amongst themselves what the final solution to the offense should be. The goal was to ensure that the group got paid and that their reputation was not damaged in the process of having been robbed or lied to.

Somewhat differently, if someone in one of the rap group's retail store was caught stealing from the stores or giving unreported discounts to people, usually the entrepreneur who ran the retail stores would dock the employees pay and fire them. However, there was an incident when I was in the field where one of the rap polities discovered that one of their employees had plotted an elaborate scheme to rob the rap group of millions of pesos. The entrepreneur in charge of this sector, got their gang unit involved. In order to do this, he had to coordinate with the other entrepreneurs and address the leadership structure of the gang.

The gang structures were run like republican institutions. Internationally, there was a complex system of leadership. I am going to liberally explain the titles for the reader to be able to understand. However, it should be noted that I am abstractly discussing a similar structure that exists across most international gangs. There was someone that they called the Emperor and he was the figure head of the gang worldwide but he was elected by the Princes from all of the nations involved. At the national level, there were Princes that were in charge of the various countries that participated in the international gang. The Princes were elected by the Dukes. At regional levels they had Dukes that were in charge of those places. Dukes were elected by their local Judicial Council. Each Duke also had a Judicial Council that worked to resolve local disputes and was elected by the core membership of the gang in each region. In this way then, local gang members could have a say in the operations of their chapter in a constrained manner.

International Gang Structure

King

Princes

Dukes

Judicial Council

Core Members
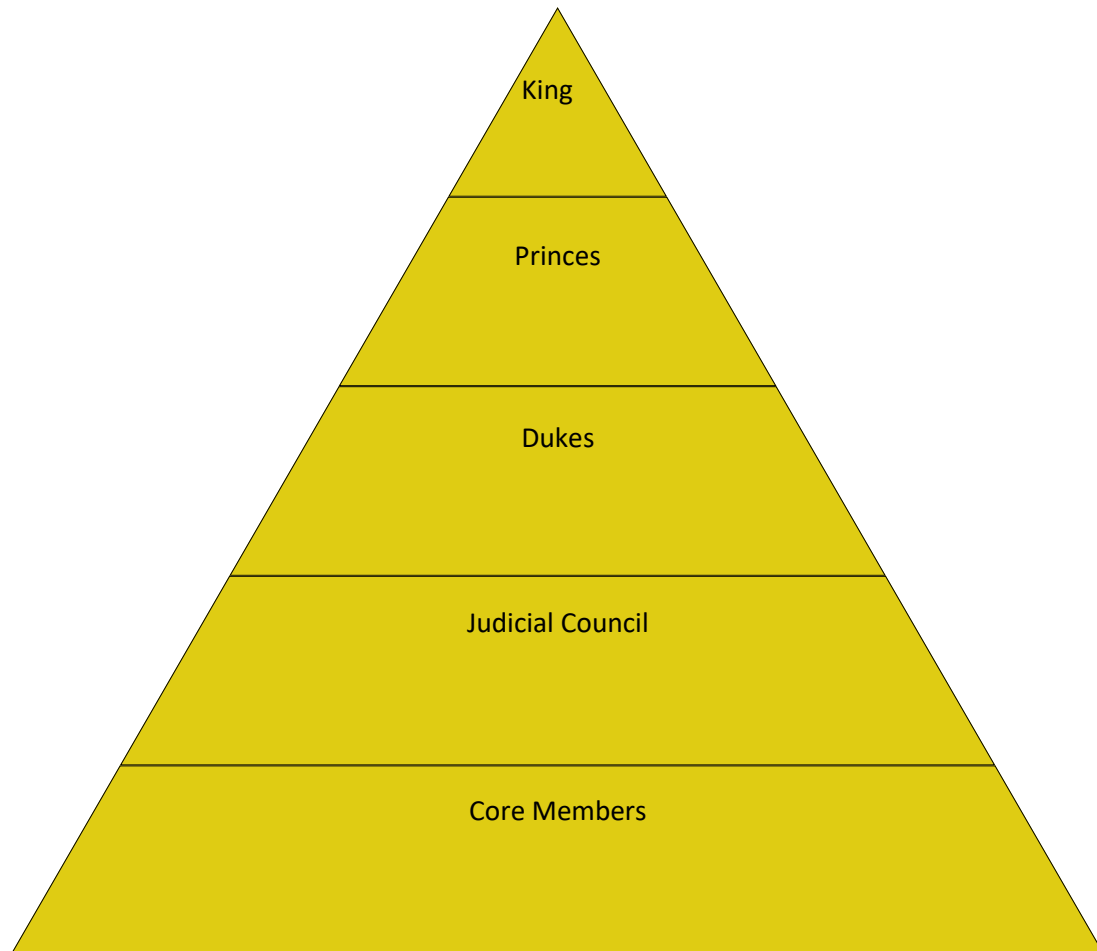
Image 4.8 International Gang Structure

When the entrepreneur of a local rap group discovered that one of his employees was planning on stealing millions of pesos from his retail operations, he went to the Duke of his local Royal Council meeting, to appeal for help. The Duke and the Council listened to the complaint and unanimously voted to get involved to remove the threat from the entrepreneur's business. The Council always had to make unanimous decisions. Punishments for violating the rules of the

gang or its affiliates varied. Punishments could range from verbal warnings by the Council, to paying fines, being suspended from group activities, being beaten up and sometimes punishment could result in death. The seriousness of breaking the rules within these particular types of gangster rap groups could end in severe consequences depending upon the degree to which members violated particular guidelines. "Violence, deceptions of truth, display of wealth, manipulation of theory and appeals of duty" – these are some other forces deployed in the attempt to ensure interessment within any given polity (Callon 1986 pg. 34). This rap model was well versed on when and how to use those tools within their organization to ensure the desired results. Due to the seriousness of the consequences in dealing with these groups, there was not a lot of internal disagreement or open competition among the core members of the group. For the most part, the core membership tried to meritocratically earn their leadership positions through displaying the values of the group and through meeting their individual goals set forth for them through the weekly meetings. Power was earned and achieved. Maintenance of the right to exercise power was constantly proven through the actions that the members took on a regular basis. While some have argued that social mobility is much harder to gain access to in the globalized liberal economy, other groups like this one, have been able to work together to become socially mobile members of society. In some respects, they have done all the wrong things. They come from adverse backgrounds, deal drugs, are members of street gangs and yet, somehow, these points of disadvantage have also been what has made them so successful. Following the popular narratives of the music they produce, these rappers banded together with like-minded individuals, kept it real and used their gang affiliations to work together to stack paper (or make money).

External Political Contests and Controls in Limiting the Power of Gangster Rap Polities

As one can imagine, the successful aspirations of rap groups like this do not go unchallenged by their peers or by law enforcement entities. In the city of Bogota, there are fierce rap rivalries among the various polities that exist there. At one time, many of the polities worked together to try to forge a hip-hop culture built on making music, challenging the *status quo* and having fun, which are some of the basic tenants of hip-hop (Chang 2007). However, not unlike the rap scene in the United States, after some years, different groups began to disagree about the way forward in developing rap music within Colombia. Some rap polities wanted to formalize the industry, upgrade the quality of music and to try to economically develop the industry. Other rap groups did care to make this a priority. Out of this difference of opinion, fierce rivalries developed and festered. I heard many stories about why and how bad blood came in between various rappers. The main differences between the rap polities tended to revolve around several issues. The model of the rap group that I am describing in this chapter had many components to it, which enabled its economic success. It had, 1.) a highly-developed sense of internal organization, 2.) a clear vision of the type of hip-hip scene they wanted to produce, 3.) tight internal regulations on how to act or comport oneself and 4.) had a strong work ethic. The rivalries that this faction developed with other rap groups often surrounded four main issues which included fighting over intellectual property, reputations, drugs and women.

One of the main sources of political competition in between the rap groups was over intellectual property. As the scene was first developing in Bogota, many of the rappers that would later come to rival each other, used to work together. On occasion, one of the ostracized members of the group would try to re-record or perform one of the songs that they had made with a member of the corporate model in the past. This type of competition for the right to perform a song that they had collaborated on with a rival member from the past was not

acceptable to the corporate model of upward social mobility. To them, if someone had been excommunicated from the group, then it was for good reason and they relinquished the rights to their intellectual property. When, on occasion, someone violated the intellectual property rights of the group by performing one of their songs, they were likely to get beaten up by members of the corporate rap polity while they were out on the town, so everyone would hear about it. Not only did this serve as a punishment for the rappers that violated the successful corporate model's intellectual property, according to them but it also served as a message to other people. The message was simple, if you steal their songs, you will pay.

Another issue that was a source of problems between this successful model of rap stars and other groups was the image and reputation that the corporate model wanted to present to the world versus that of other rap groups. In the following chapter, a very different type of polity of rappers will be unveiled. However, for now it is sufficient to say that this particular model of corporate rappers worked diligently. The members of these various organizations put in tireless hours perfecting their craft, making quality music, clothing and trying to improve the rap scene by spreading their message to its fans, so if a rival group tried to tarnish their image in anyway, the rival rappers would suffer, usually through a violent attack against them from the upwardly mobile squad.

Drugs were another issue that the rappers would fight over. The corporate rap groups sold drugs but lived by the motto: "Don't get high off of your own supply". Let me be clear, almost all of the rappers that I worked with smoked marijuana. But the rappers from the corporate model had to do it in a way that did not impact their work. If the other members of their team thought that someone's drug use was getting out of control, the polity would first reprimand them by bringing them to the entrepreneurs and having a talk with them. However, if the

problem continued, the team member would get kicked out of the group and might even get beaten up. If other rappers stepped on their drug dealing turf or just seemed like an easy target because they were too high and hanging out in their *olla*, then the corporate rappers would beat them up. The successful rappers reasoned that they did not put all this effort and work into creating a scene for other less disciplined rappers to get high and ruin everyone else's reputation.

Then finally, one of the last issues that caused outside competition were the women in the rap groups or the *faldas* (or skirts). Early in the 2000s when the rap rivalries in Bogota began, it was in part because of issues of disrespect arose over women. A rapper in one of the corporate rap polities was embarrassed by an outsider who stole his girlfriend. As repercussion for this, the outsider was eventually killed, most likely by members of the corporate rap polity, according to most of my sources. This set the tone for caution when it came to matters of the heart. It meant that other members of the successful rap polities were very careful when dealing with women in the group. In another chapter, I will explore the rules, norms and exceptions of these principles in more detail however, it is important to understand that this successful rap polity did not take disrespect on any level, lightly.

In terms of competition with other rap groups, this polity took their intellectual property, reputation, business ventures and their personal relationships with others, very seriously. Any infringement of what they saw as other rappers disrespecting them or violating their principles paid the price usually through physical violence. Another way in which this polity of rappers was involved in political contests for power, was with local, state and international policing bodies. Locally, the police would try to reign in the political violence that this model used against other competitors in the rap scene. But as the group members explained to me, local law enforcement could always be paid off and these groups had the money to do it.

At the state level, about half of the rappers from this polity that I worked with had been sanctioned by the United States or Cannadian government's. Many of the rappers involved in these corporate rap polities were deportees from the United States whose parents had immigrated to New York, Chicago, Toronto or Miami. Some of these deportees were even born in the US. However, under the Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act of 1996, signed into law by President Bill Clinton any first-generation immigrant found guilty of a crime under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, could be deported back to their parent's country of origin (Morowitz 1996, Araña 2005). Additionally, the European Union's Police Agency (EUROPOL) had alerted several countries national government's while some of the rappers from these groups were traveling through their border areas. In one country, a promoter that was hanging out with one of the corporate rap groups was detained and one of the rappers was banned from entering any EU country for 10 years, as a result of his alleged affiliation with international criminal organizations. As the globe becomes a smaller place, and as international criminal law becomes increasingly harmonized to combat illegal organized crime, political institutions may try to limit the freedoms that it has given to the global population of travelers that it suspects are affiliated with illegal activity. However, this still may not be able to stop these criminal organizations from making Euros. In fact, the system may propel the criminal entities that it offends to push back even harder against these groups. At this very moment, the criminal organization that this rapper is a part of is moving to be recognized as a political party in Europe (Brotherton and Barrios 2014). If this happens, the rapper from this corporate network, may not be banned from travel in the EU for very much longer.

Conclusion

Understanding how successful rappers in Colombia come together and organize themselves to create an industry that has never existed in Colombia before now, a few key issues should be noted. The rappers in this particular model are well connected to transnational gang networks, their organizational structure mirrors that of the political units in which they claim to fight against, they use some of capitalisms philosophies to further their own political and economic agenda, while completely inverting other tenants of liberal political economy. The members of these corporate models also decisively maneuver around local, national and international entities which seek to control their behavior. Despite arguments that local, state and international policing bodies are increasingly restricting movement and targeting perceived security threats (Shami 2005, Waquant 2012, Zigon 2016), these rap polities are often able to navigate around the legal systems set up by these entities to still do as they please. The rap polity in this selection could not operate as effectively as it does without access to the other like-minded individuals that they are connected to through the transnational nature of the gang structure in which they have access too and through the technology that has been made available to them in the age of digital technology. Members of this rap polity have traveled extensively throughout the United States, Europe and Latin America because of their connections. They are able to use mediums like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others in order create, facilitate and maintain bonds over large distances, over the course of many years. This harkens back to the arguments of Ferguson (2014) on how the state becomes less powerful than it once was as digital technologies change the topography of political power. As actors can now reach across national boundaries to network with other actors in other places, these individuals can circumvent the state's attempts to limit their power.

The group also distinctly mirrors those colonial entities in which it fights against. Robert Merton (1968) famously noted that most informal structures mimic formal structures in communities where those institutions are dysfunctional or absent. In this case, the successful rap polity that I describe here mimics business polities, political and policing organizations that in Bogota, Colombia may serve as a replacement for those institutions that the average person there lacks access. This rap polity steps in and fills those voids. The rap polity creates jobs for local people, has an ideology and a belief system, which they adhere to strictly. Analyzing the values systems that the rap entity purports, they advocate for loyalty, knowledge, honesty, unity and fraternity. Politically, this makes their ideology very attractive to the societal groups in which they interact with on the popular level. For people searching for meaning in life, for role models, social justice advocates and economically successful business men to look up to, these rap groups seem to be the messaianic answer some are looking towards.

The groups also advocate for the ideals of hard work, self-discipline and respect, which have similarities to Adam Smith's overture in *Wealth of Nation's* that competition and hard work breed success. Another of their sayings, also reifies liberal economic values by arguing that their fans need to follow these values so that "progress can continue". With these mantras at the helm of these rap models foundations, then, it makes them a hard target for their enemies to counter. They represent a moral political organization that the state and local law enforcement have to play fairly with in their game for power as to not upset the population. In this sense too, the rap model is able to interess their members on a moral and a transactional level. They provide a clear moral political philosophy that many Colombian's find attractive and transactionally they encourage the upward socio-economic mobility of disadvantaged communities. The values that they discuss publicly then become difficult to criticize. Indeed, these values not only serve the

corporate rappers ability to become more upwardly mobile in terms of their own socio-economic status but these values serve as a basis for commodifying the personas of the rappers in the group to make their values, commercially appealing to their audiences (Luvaas 2006, Bunten 2008).

While scholars studying the rap communities in Bogota have missed the capitalistic development of a hip-hop industry, uncovering this facet of the way rappers socially organize themselves actually reveal how sophisticated the rap entrepreneur's commercial tactics are, indeed. The rappers use what Samy Alim (2006, pg. 26) calls the "right mix of cooperation and competition that is taught in hip-hop communities" to build money generating industries that allow the members of this community to reside comfortably in the middle class. While internally, group members compete for recognition, they are disciplined through the values of the group to do so in a way that forces social cooperation. With outsiders, the group is encouraged to compete with them by any means necessary when the norms the corporate entities value are breeched. This model, demonstrates that for successful, upward social mobility, the right mix of knowing when and how to compete versus knowing when to cooperate is important to fostering one's trajectory in life. Morality and social cooperation still have to exist for socially mobile actors to be able to play to win in a game for prizes. This selection also reveals that self-interest, or blunt force alone cannot be the only strategy that a group uses in order to maneuver around the neoliberal controls that local, state or international bodies try to use to discipline the population. With more freedom of movement, increased communications and technological development, people can discover new, innovative ways to subvert the powers that be. Using economic measures against local police, hiring lawyers to fight criminal charges and even using democratic processes to change laws that restrict the movement of one's political entity can be effective measures in evening the playing field for many of the actors involved in trying to revolutionize

127

the political economic game with which we are all engaged. This polity used proven methods of

building up and achieving power. Analyzing the middling strategies that were used here to build

up the social organization and generate capital have been interesting to uncover.

Chapter 5: Erratic by Nature:
Adhoc Rap Groups in Bogota

"Traditional hedonism...was based on the direct experience of pleasure: wine, women and song; sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll; or whatever the local variant. The problem, from a capitalist perspective, is that there are inherent limits to all this. People become sated, bored...Modern self-illusory hedonism solves this dilemma because here, what one is really consuming are fantasies and day-dreams about what having a certain product would be like." — David Graeber

Introduction

In the last chapter, I explored rule driven models that developed complex systems of what I referred to as a corporate rap model. In this chapter, I present the opposite type of rap groups that I was introduced to during my field work. I call them the adhoc polity of rappers. Both of these models are the two extreme opposites of the types of rap polities that one could find in Bogota, Colombia. However, not many groups fell in the middle of these extremes within this particular rap scene. Most of the rap groups were either aligned with the corporate model or they were not. That was the result of the highly competitive nature of rap within the city that was based on rap beefs that the groups have with one another. In this chapter, I present political anthropology and actor network theory based model of how the *adhoc rap model* operated. I lay out the prizes and values that the group espouses, their structure, the groups' internal working dynamics and the external political contests that the groups encountered from outsiders.

Prizes and Values

While the model that I described in the previous chapter, was a model that organized itself around clear cut goals and principles, for other groups that I worked with, their ideals, their vision and their means of achieving those ends were much more spurious. The rappers that I worked with in Bogota, could almost be evenly divided between these two types of groups. Either, they had a strong bond or they did not. There was not a lot of in between. The prize then,

for the rappers that did not think of themselves as being united by strong kinship or corporate ties, and was divergent. For this model, the prizes they sought in the rap scene varied. When I asked the rappers in the corporate network, what they wanted to achieve through being involved in the rap scene, they would inform me about their creation narrative and they would tell me it was their job to revolutionize the culture and make money. When I asked this group of rappers why they were a part of these groups, their answers looked something like this:

> [Rapper 1]: "I make hip-hop music for the devil. He came to me and told me that he would give me great rewards if I would make music for regular people. I believe that he gave me this talent for making beats and that's why I do it. I want to see what's going to happen."

> [Rapper 2]: "I do it for the weed, money and hoes nigga….shit…what you think?"

> [Producer 1]: "We rappin bout how we live, you know? Everything that we rap about is real, it's how we livin. We 'bout that life, you heard?"

> [Producer 2]: "Well in Colombia, everyone is onto this old school 90s style hip-hop, but me and mine are trying to update their musical repertoire. We are trying to make new, innovative, Colombian trap style beats."

The rappers involved with less centralized groups, were after many different end goals such as, fame, money, women, using rap music as a way to talk about their lifestyle, and making new, innovative sounds for people to listen to in Bogota, Colombia. In this way, the goals and prizes that the group were vying for, were constantly moving shifting, changing in importance and altering the focus for the group, depending upon the situation. This meant that group membership was also constantly changing. Whereas, in the previous model, each group could identify a core group membership, this model, the adhoc polity, did not revolve around that principle of

organization. Anyone interested in making the type of music that this polity produced, was invited to join in. The composition of the groups changed frequently, sometimes within the hour.

The different types of rappers involved in the adhoc model varied too. While the corporate model was based on rappers that had come from hardships, the adhoc model was much less concerned about the rapper's past. The rappers that joined these groups came from a variety of social stratas in Bogota. Whereas, the corporate model was much more discriminating against people they viewed as '*gomelos*' or what we might refer to as 'yuppies' in the United States, the adhoc model was much less concerned about the 'authenticity' of where its rappers came from, as long as they were into making rap music right now. 'Authenticity' in rap music has been viewed as a large part of trying to keep hip-hop connected to its original roots (Rickford and Rickford 2000, Cutler 2009). 'Authentic rap' then, is defined as rap music that is made by people from marginal communities who are expressing a desire for societal change (Keyes 1994, Perry 2008, Alim 2009, Cutler 2009). Cutler (2009) chronicles how authenticity plays a role in rap battles that take place in Detroit to determine who is a 'real' rapper versus who is 'fake'. Similarly, in the rap scene in Bogota, many people believe that some of the big-name rappers from the adhoc model are fake rappers.

[Rapper 1]: "Yah, I mean, [Name of a Rapper], his parents [are musicians] and he was sent to private school all of his life. Then, he heard rap music, and decided he wanted to be a gangster, so he makes rap music. But he's not in our scene. He's not a real rapper. He's just a crackhead wanna be."

[Rapper 2]: "Yah, I mean a lot of them are just lame. They live at home with their parents, sell small amounts of drugs, don't have real jobs and just make shitty rap music. It's pretty stupid. Then, obviously, we have real gansgta rappers down here. I mean, you know, you've worked with them and you can probably see a big difference, right?"

131

People cannot help the circumstances that they are born into. While many of the rappers in the corporate model, were born into poverty, this was actually seen as a blessing for them in terms of establishing themselves as authentic rappers. In the reverse, many of the members of the adhoc model who were born into wealthy '*gomelo*' families, were embarrassed of their well-to-do upbringings and consequently, they would try to get into trouble to prove their authenticity in the scene. This role reversal, of having wealthy kids act 'low class' to try to fit into the world of rap music is exactly the type of cultural-reversal some people would say rap music tries to create. Rap wants to turn the world upside down, creating cultural confusion so that it becomes more difficult to point out, who is poor, who is rich and how these groups of people are supposed to act. Ironically then, the glamorization of 'street life', hanging out on the sidewalks, being seen in the '*ollas*' and hanging out with people that could be identified as being from the popular classes was an important part of life for the rap musicians in Bogota. Regardless of original hereditary class status then, establishing oneself in the streets became a goal for the members of the adhoc polity. For some of the rappers born into the middle class, becoming downwardly mobile was something they had to do, to be thought of as authentic members of the rap scene. This type of attitude in action seems contradictory, to many of the values of rap music, and may have been one of the reasons previous scholarship into this scene was confused by many of the actors within it. Instead of people trying to hustle their way out of poverty, as much of rap music advocates for, many of the members of the adhoc rap models tried to downgrade their class status, to fit in.

Structure and Roles

The rappers that found themselves in the adhoc model, came into the scene by way of their desire to make rap music. The most common way that this group would hang out, was at

record studios. The studio became the locus or the focal meeting point for the group. Differently from the corporate model, where the rappers were the entrepreneurs that united the group, the adhoc model was bound together around the meeting place of musical production. While the rappers from the other model would hang out together throughout the week, the rappers in the adhoc model were brought together much more infrequently and spontaneously. As the studio was the spot where the members of this team converged, whenever they would get together, they always needed producers to make and record the beats. The rappers would then lay down the tracks. The producers were responsible for securing the location of the record studio and gathering the technological resources that it would take to put together beats. Similarly, the producers were responsible for allocating the time and resources to the rappers to let them know when, where and for how long they could utilize those resources to make a song. That is why they acted as the entrepreneurs.

The technological resources available in the studio as well as the rappers, acted as mediating bodies. The technological components were used for assembling a musical track and the rappers introduced the linguistic content. Then, the technological components captured the recording of the beats and rhymes together to produce the rap song. Other actors that were usually present at the record studio were promoters, managers, graphic arts designers, tattoo artists, photographers, cinematographers and of course, the groupies, the fans, or the friends brought along to help lend support to the artists. This adhoc model made itself available to the possibility of 'experimentation', as well. Unlike in the corporate model, the roles in this model were much more flexible and fluid. A groupie who showed up to the studio, just to hang out, was perfectly able to volunteer themselves to hop up on the mic and help record a verse or a chorus

of one of the songs. Play, and flexibility of roles or rules was much more encouraged in this type of rap ensemble, than in the other model.

Sometimes, there were also transnational components of these groups. However, due to the erratic nature of the relationships that this group had with its members, these parts of the group did not have a permanent place within the assemblage. The transnational actors that were involved with the adhoc models, tended to be on the periphery of the group, in a far more distant sense then in the corporate model. They would come in occasionally and help out with different types of inversions into the rap groups. The transnational actors would buy the adhoc groups equipment cheaper on second hand markets in the United States or in Europe, then send it to the rap groups. These rap groups like the corporate network also had access to equipment from overseas but in a different way. The manner that I saw these precarious networks operate is that their connections overseas were not able or willing to permanently offer stable technical assistance. Their involvement was much more precarious. Anna Tsing (2015) might consider these to be like polyphonic assemblages, where actors, material resources, and technologies are subject to shifting moments, spaces or transient mishaps. They would give the adhoc models equipment like computers, keyboards, mixers, microphones and other equipment, at their leisure. Additionally, they also provided talent to the groups by way of traveling to Colombia and recording with the artists or they would fly the artists to other countries to do concert tours with them and to give them media exposure. There was a lot of transnational interexchange that took place for these groups. The adhoc rap groups would often meet their international affiliates over the internet. However, because they did not have a strong bond with them, these relationships were for short term goals, like a song, a concert or a couple of interviews. The rap groups would communicate via Facebook and Skype. The adhoc rap groups worked with their compatriots

within the continent heavily too. Many people involved in the adhoc rap model had friends in Ecuador, Venezuela and Peru. They also had friends in the US and in Europe as well. But again, these relationships were unstable. For example, rappers might do a track with a group with the hopes of going on tour with them, but then, could not follow though. The rap groups would likely keep in touch and one day in the future, they might perform that song together or not. But the relationships that the adhoc groups had, particularly with peripheral members of the production of their rap music, were much more spurious and heterogeneous then in the corporate model.

Internal Disorder and Group Dynamics

Interesting works in anthropology reveal that social networks of groups that are connected purely for the production of a very specific purpose tend to have a group formation type that we might call a 'heterogeneous collective' (Graeber 2009). Thomas Ward (2011) may have also labeled this group as an 'anarchic democracy'. This is an organization that is highly decentralized and does not have very many unifying principles in comparison with the contrasting corporate model that I presented in the previous chapter. They also had a more liberal economic organization, characterized by much variety in structure. In this section, we can analyze the internal organization of the adhoc model. What kind of organizational strategies were employed for them to locate resources and record music? What type of rules existed, if any in comparison to the corporate model?

Unlike the corporate model, the adhoc model did not support the whole livelihood characteristic of the collective. Therefore, the economic or transactional relationships of the group are looser in these groups. The rap artists usually bought or sold contraband with one another, but this was less systematic. Some of the members of these types of models lived at

135

home and sold enough drugs or contraband to pay for their day to day living expenses. They would combine that with making a living from selling their beats, their raps, tattoos or random other types of entrepreneurial activities that were sometimes associated with hip-hop but often were not. Some worked in retail, others worked for their family's small businesses and still others worked in telemarketing, or other types of formal and informal employment.

The groups in the adhoc model only really came together to make music. The producers would figure out who they were going to privilege with studio time and how much. For their favorite clients, the producers would make their studios available to them as much as the artists desired. As producers and their favorite rappers are generally friends, they would often chill together in their off time and then when the rappers had to go to work or home to visit their families, the producers would work with their other clients. Most producers, in this model as well as in the corporate model treated making beats like an addiction. They took very little time off and when there were not any rap artists present, they practiced their craft and perfected techniques or learned new ones through experimenting with music or listening to other artists that they liked. Their craft was also an obsession. They could not help but make music all the time. Similarly, with rappers, while they were driving to their job or running errands, they were also trying to invent new rhymes, to come up with new lyrics, new songs, listening to new artists that they heard about to get innovative ideas. The producers in the adhoc model however, also took on the role of the entrepreneurs. They decided when and how the rappers would lay down their tracks because most rappers did not have their own studios. The producers, also decided how they were going to work with the rappers. In the adhoc model, I saw a couple of different types of interactions with this relationship.

There were many different economic arrangements that rappers and various producers would have together. Producers were constantly vying for the popularity of the best rappers. If they knew a rapper who had a lot of talent, they would allow the rapper to use the studio whenever they wanted. The producer and the rapper would create beats for songs and album ideas together. In these cases too, the producers would front rappers the cost of producing the album and would recuperate the money off the album sales. What made this possible was the scarcity of capable rap artists in comparison with the amount of skilled producers that existed, in the music market in Bogota.

Other rap artists had to pay the producers to work with them for the hours that they put in creating their beats and the time it took to record the songs as well. This was what most rap artists who were trying to enter the rap game had to do. They had to get enough money together to make a song and then pay to get it mastered and mounted on an internet platform so they could gain popularity. The hope was, that at some point in the future, they could get recognized enough to have producers start making albums for them for free. And yet, still, other groups would have arrangements where the producers would make them free beats, or let them use their studio for free or both. One might consider the rappers and the production assistants to be the mediators of the group. The relationships were highly interchangeable and could result in varying forms from day to day. Along with the producers and rappers, there were production assistants. The producers in this model lacked formal training in their craft. To compensate for this fact, they needed to have assistants who could lend them a hand in the process of making songs. While Chapter 8 deals much more specifically with this topic, it will suffice to mention this role here. Additionally, on occasion, the public relations coordinators who booked concerts, scouted for talent and updated the social media accounts would help with music production, as

would cinematographers and musicians. Below is a prototypical model of an adhoc group's organizational structure. The arrows running both ways indicate the temporary nature of the relationship and the individualized groupings of the boxes, indicate that these individuals were constantly coming and going without any predictability.
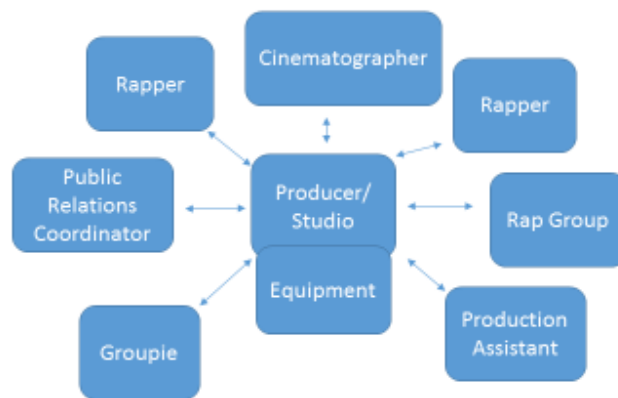
Image 5.1 Organizational Structure of the Adhoc Rap Group

In comparing them to the corporate models then, the adhoc groups did not have values systems, so frequent problems would arise in regards to issues that rappers in the other model did not run up against. For example, with the corporate models, there was a values system that advocated for hard work, self-discipline and respect. Having a values system in place helped prevent problems before they started but because these adhoc models did not operate off of these principles, they had problems occur within groups, constantly which interrupted the flow of work between individuals and groups. This heteroscadacity did not occur as frequently in the corporate model. For example, in the adhoc model, the artists would complain and even fight with the producers about the rate at which projects would get completed. The artists and producers would

complain at each other for the ways in which the other was lazy. *Pareza, parezoso/a[20],* were words that the artists used in these models to describe one another and their work habits, often.

Self-discipline was another issue within the groups. Where as in the previous chapter, the discourse of how the artists or affiliates of the core group of corporate actors would closely monitor the behavior of one another to hold each other accountable in completing goals and working hard, this group did not have the same type of internal social discipline. Many of the actors within these groups would take a lot of drugs and hang out in the *ollas* for days at time, missing concerts, recording sessions, and meetings with important promoters. Additionally, people did not utilize the principle of respect within this click. People would give each other low quality performances, resources and finished products. People would also treat each other poorly on a personal level and members would frequently get in fights with one another, as a result. There was constant 'beefing' within these clicks. One minute, everything was fine between two people, the next minute someone was angry with someone else because they did a poor job of mixing their recording, and the next minute another guy had a beef with his friend because he stole his girlfriend. Problems between group members were constantly igniting.

However, even though this group did not have a clear-cut system of values, they were still continuously trying to figure out how to get along. The adhoc models, organized themselves through gossip, and reputation building. To many of these group members, being recognized as the most 'gangster' or the toughest in their group, without going too far and loosing favor with everyone all together, was an important way of building up their image in the rap scene. Bourgeois (2005) found this to be true of many people who hang out in the streets. Being seen as tough and masculine was one way of earning respect in this chaotic forum. The individual

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[20] Meaning to be lazy or to do your daily tasks slowly without a rush.

boasting did not always lead to group cohesion. In fact, the reason that I call this the adhoc model, is because all of the groups that I worked with, that would fall into this type, are no longer rap groups that work together. The corporate units would endure, but the groups in the adhoc polity, that formed heterogeneous collectives or anarchical democracies were groups typified most strongly in their limited temporal span. Unlike the corporate models, these adhoc models would not endure very long. They did not develop into deeply complex business models that united continents and built industries together like the corporate networks.

In fact, the lack of quality production, gossiping, and the backstabbing behavior of group members often lead to divisive outcomes. However, the social milieu in which many of the rap members found themselves in, tended to be a mix of values that did not quite go together. Thus, people were interested in gossiping about the people in the polity, which lead to rapidly changing alliances. Gossip in many cases served as a means of communicating these shifting loyalties in the rap world. As I stated previously, the cohesion of group members within the corporate rap organizations were solid. There were not any shifts in alliances from that side during my fieldwork. However, within the adhoc models, the loyalties of the rappers changed from moment to moment. This happened often because people would gossip a lot about each other and were not loyal. They would also disrespect each other frequently by taking other crew members girlfriends. The guys would try to act like they did not care about this kind of behavior but in reality, if someone stole someone else's girl, money or shoes, well, the truth was, this often revealed who one could really trust and that left few alliances within these clicks for any long period of time.

In a less structured organization, it is not that values do not exist but rather it is that values are revealed through gossip, and behavior (Merry 1997). Understanding how people

140

interpret actions and hearing their explanations about how relationships endure or break a part, is key to analyzing how this type of adhoc model is (un) structured. As this group formation does not explicitly tell its members, hey this is the prescription for getting along with one another, the values and implicit interactions cannot be as easy to understand as within the corporate model. However, one can certainly not take the social signaling here, for granted. Additionally, these differences, as Levi-Strauss or Latour have commented, allow the anthropologist to more clearly note the differences in how each model is arranged.

In opposition to the corporate model where gossip was recognized as a sign of disloyalty, its members did not talk badly about one another. If someone in the corporate model had something to say to someone, they knew that they had better just say it to their face. Otherwise, if it got back to the entrepreneurs, that kind of behavior was taken as a weakness in the character of the gossip. To discourage this practice the leadership in the corporate models would accuse gossipers of being 'backstabbing bitches'. This kept people from feeling confident to just say whatever was on their mind. In fact, chit-chatting was much less discouraged in the corporate rap groups. In the adhoc models, however gossip was encouraged. It was as Hannerz (2002) points out, possibly a tool used for communication and moral sanctioning. According to different theories in anthropology, gossip is used as a communicative mechanism for people and also deployed as a source of harm. It really depends on two things, how the receiver of the information views the event or phenomenon that serves as the feature of gossip and also it is dependent upon the speaker, the storyteller. In the adhoc model, I argue that a lot of gossip seemed to be in play all of the time. The members of this group used gossip and information sharing as something that was open to the group. There were no boundaries necessarily except where members decided to take offense to try to impose a rule of conduct.

For example, something that I saw happen quite frequently in this group, was that there was fighting over women. If a woman was with one rapper one minute and another the next, sometimes the crew members would beef, but not always. It depended. This is where the gossip became the flow or mechanism to communicate when there was a problem or alternatively when it was alright. In the corporate model, these issues were dealt with through direct communication. If someone wanted to be with one of the other crew member's x-girlfriends after the couple split, that was usually cool but the issues were squarely dealt with, head on. In the adhoc model, the men did not discuss these issues with each other as directly. Usually, the rapper would sleep with his homies girl and then the couple would make a spectacle about it within the crew somehow. The spectacles surrounding these events would cause people to gossip, would generate notoriety and fame surrounding the couple on social media. However, this type of activity would also cause the significant other of the couple to get upset. They would feel that their homeboy had been disloyal to them and would generally express this through striking out at them publicly or in social gatherings. The corporate models avoided this because they did not want to generate scandal for the sake of fame but wanted to focus on the production of genuinely good music with a political message, without disrupting their lucrative business ventures. The adhoc polity was much less concerned with these moral or transactional ends. They were more concerned with trying to be young, rich and hopefully famous. In attempts to position their personas as commodities on social media, they often created a spectacle of themselves to draw in attention to their behavior. This disrupted the unifying bonds of the group though. As a result, the other members would ensue in gossiping about other people and this gossip, served to break apart friendships and working relationships in the adhoc polity.

This contributed to another feature of the adhoc models. While the corporate rap group was interested in seeking knowledge and improving themselves by having mottos about progress and being intelligent, the adhoc model was more about living for today. In the United States there is similar struggle going on in the world of hip-hop. On the coasts, there are rap groups that make really progressive, heavy beats and have equally intellectualy adept rhyming skills but in the South, people make rap music about nonsense, the beats are simplified and slower (Westbrook 2011). Westbrook argues that the South has been accused of having a lot of weak artists who are good business people in terms of generating popularity within the genre but only because they are lyrically shallow, use "commercial whoredom and infantilized sound." (2011, p. 145). The critics of the adhoc model would argue that the adhoc polity does the same thing in the scene for Bogota. As members of the corporate model discovered that I was also working with some of their rap scene enemies, they would make the following comments:

> [Rapper]: "Oh yah, you're working with them. All they rap about is ignorant stuff. They promote doing drugs and fucking with women but they live at home with their Mamas."

> [Cinematographer]: "Yah, you know Lau, it's like they are trying to fall in the trap, while we are trying to get out. The shit just doesn't make no sense, Lau."

As in opposition to the way in which the corporate model facilitated upward mobility and a knowledge for how people could do this, the purpose of the adhoc model seemed to be to promote nonsense and having fun. The members of this group would talk about this theme too. They would talk back to the more street smart rappers and make various arguments about how the corporate models were too serious. In some of their songs, they would give direct shout outs to the other 'street smart' rappers and tell them they were full of hypocrisy and argue that hip-hop was a music designed for enjoyment. Again, this has been a long-standing debate in hip-hop. The corporate model advocated for gaining knowledge of self and participating in trying to

advance the culture, while the adhoc model, focused on developing entertainment and experimenting with the art form.

A similar debate in hip-hop developed in the United States in the late 1980s when gangster rap music was becoming popular. The discussion continued between the Southern rappers and the coastal rappers in the early 2000s, as well (Westbrook 2011). To recount the historical background of this controversy once again, when gangster rap became the most commercially viable sub-genre of rap in the United States, many critics argued that the only reason that it was popular was because the lyrics depicted black people as a stereotype that the white majority had interests in proliferating. Gangster rap portrayed young people of color as violent, misogynistic thugs that were only worthy of being locked up in prison (hooks 1994, Chang 2007). Spike Lee famously made a satire called *Bamboozled* which likened gangster rappers to that of early minstrel show entertainers that acted uneducated and ignorant because these images were commercially viable to white audiences who enjoyed seeing black people in these particular roles. Gangster rappers defended their music arguing that they were bringing awareness about the plight of inner-city people who had to contend with police brutality, racial profiling and extreme inner-city violence in order to survive. These competing visions of what gangster rap was doing for the public as a part of popular discourse became quite heated. Scholars like Cornel West for example, argued that gangster rap was contributing to creating an "air of nihilism over the culture of production" by blacks in the United States (1990, pg. 99). Other social advocates like bell hooks or Toni Morrison however, poignantly argued that the nihilistic responses to society that are present in gangster rap come from a complex set of circumstances, where unlike West, the 'street intellectuals' that make gangster rap music were

144

informing the public of a type of revolutionary mindset that had developed from social deprivation (cited in De Genova 1995).

Later in the 2000s, rap music that came from the Southern part of the United States was accused of being too commercialized and had become shallow because it did not discuss serious issues. I would like to further connect these arguments to the political economic environment in which this music became popular, as well. As the inner-city communities in the United States became increasingly squeezed through cuts in welfare spending, the privatization of the prison industry and were plagued by the crack epidemic, gangster rap became a representational symbol for strength and resilience in many communities of color. Simultaneously however, the representations utilized by mainstream rap music also became a justification for the increased surveillance of the communities that the genre hoped to serve. This has similarly been the case in Bogota, Colombia. As the lower strata communities and even middle class gomelos have caught the wave of resisting hegemonic cultural norms within society through discussing these issues with the popular production of rap music, this same artistic expression has been a rallying cry for other like-minded youth across social class lines. This is something that has rarely been seen in Colombia, in previous generations. Unfortunately, the breaking down of social class distinctions has also simultaneously caused less well-off populations from the hip-hop community to be targeted by law enforcement and the vigilante groups that participate in 'limpieza social'. While rappers in Bogota, discuss drugs, promiscuity, the life of crime, political issues and social injustices, this rallying cry against the system also causes conservative forces within society to target these outspoken rap artists (Semana 2013).

As Ben Westoff (2011) points out, rap music from the Southern US arguably promotes negative black stereotypes, much like the reggaetoñeros in Latin America or the rappers from the

adhoc model. While this research delves deeper into this issue a little later in the dissertation by comparing words of rappers from each of these groups, it is sufficient to argue here that the corporate models make rap music in its older, more traditional format where they believed they were spreading the knowledge of how to survive in harsh conditions while the adhoc models made forms of rap music that were made for entertainment purposes. These varying types of rap music compilations then cause the art form to become blurred in its efforts to create a revolutionary culture of social change. It becomes quite difficult, to generalize wholly about rap music in the United States or in Colombia. The rappers who make lyrics in the adhoc rap models in Colombia are glamourizing drug dealing, womanizing, making money, although arguably, this is mostly a form of performance and not reality.

While the corporate models valued an internal working dynamic of honesty with their click, the adhoc rap models did not necessarily engage in such a practice. In this model, there was a strong sense of distrust among the group members. They would compete against each other constantly for social prestige and resources, so if a member of the group could pull something over on the rest of the group, they would. This type of internal group dynamic did not lead to upward social mobility and many of the rappers in these crews were questioned on the grounds of their 'authenticity' and their ability to 'keep it real'.

Conflicts

Due to the erratic nature with which the rappers in these sets of the adhoc model operated, they tended to have a lot of enemies within the world of rap music in Bogota. The internal conflicts that the groups experienced were replicated with other groups outside of the click too. In combing through my data, I discovered a few scenarios that illustrated some typical political conflicts for power within the world of rap in Bogota for the adhoc rap groups. These

146

conflicts took place between the differently organized groups within the rap world. Here, I discuss three incidents where the adhoc rap groups had political contests with each other or the corporate groups. In one of the incidents that I am discussing, it is part of public knowledge in the rap scene in the city, however, the incident's details will be recounted without names and specific details that could get anyone in legal trouble.

In the first conflict that I am going to discuss, the adhoc groups challenged the hegemony of the corporate rap groups in the Hip-Hop Al Parque line-up of artists that are showcased at the annual festival. In the decade proceeding this year's events, the corporate model had dominated the programming of the annual concert, which was also the largest hip-hop festival in Latin America. At an annual planning meeting, one of the girlfriends of a rapper in the adhoc model's rap groups, stood up in front of the IDARTES planning committee and openly complained that the corporate groups had excluded established members of the cities rap groups that were not a part of their click and that this was unacceptable. The coporate model was accused of creating a monopoly over the event and this was unfair to the other artists, who did not have a chance to perform. The corporate model responded verbally to the criticisms in the meeting. After the meeting concluded, the participants were leaving the event and the members of each click ended in a physical altercation. The political contest resulted in a draw. It ended abruptly, as a sort of tie. After the event, the individual artists social media accounts were flooding news feeds, defending themselves or denying that anything significant had even taken place. In the actual event that year, however the corporate rap groups were denied access to the event programing process. The rap groups were presenting in Hip-Hop Al Parque[21] that year were from the adhoc

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[21] It is also interesting to note that while violence had never broken out at any other Hip-Hop Al Parque event in the past, in 2014, someone was stabbed to death at the event. The perpetrator said he had been inspired by the artists to take revenge on his enemies.

model of rappers. A sea change had been implemented politically because the rappers from the adhoc models exercised their collective political voice on some level against the more organized corporate groups involved in making rap in Bogota.

Another incident where the adhoc models were involved with a conflict was with one another. One rap group, was friendly with another. The two groups had worked together in different capacities over many years. A particular rapper dated this girl who wanted to learn about the hip-hop industry. She and the rapper dated for quite sometime. The next thing everyone knew, the rapper's girlfriend was dating his good friend in the other rap group. The rappers got into some verbal confrontations over WhatsApp, Viber and Facebook. They also yelled at each other over the phone. This conflict however, did not escalate very far but it did ruin the working relationships that these groups had with one another.

Then finally, there is the incident where one of the female[22] rappers that I worked with disrespected the rappers of a corporate rap group. The corporate rap group responded by harassing the young girl, until she apologized to the corporate click. She apologized in a message on Facebook where she said she genuinely did not mean to insult them and she felt really bad that the whole incident had developed into such a big controversy. In this case, technology was used as a mediation device to solve political conflict for the groups involved.

All of the above scenarios can be interpreted a number of ways. In the first scenario, the corporate model that had previously dominated the event, lost power to the adhoc model through an unplanned verbal outburst at the right time. Thinking fast on her feet, the girlfriend of one of the rappers in the adhoc model recognized an opportunity to tell the IDARTES planning

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[22] I use female here as a purely linguistic term. Saying women rapper or women in rap, just does not roll off the tounge as nicely as 'female rapper', when accompanied by certain other phrasing. I do not however have any proof of gender but am merely recounting how each male or female represented themselves to me in this investigation.

committee about monopolizing practices that the corporate rap group used to exclude many of the cities participants. In the second scenario, the political contest between the two rappers over the rap manager girlfriend gave all parties involved quite a political spectacle that drew attention, support, disapproval and fan entertainment to the rap scene. As the rappers and the girlfriend would post pictures of the escapades of the couples on Facebook and because these folks would generally cause scenes at concerts and events, this generated a swirl of gossip and excitement about the couples. The gossip industry in Hollywood provides examples of how people can enhance their local celebrity appeal and scandal was one way of drawing attention to artwork by creating fame for Do It Yourself (DIY) Celebrities who are trying to attract attention to themselves through using new social media websites (McNamara 2011). In some ways, creating this type of celebrity interest helps to entertain the fans of the rappers in the adhoc model. Lastly, the political contest that the adhoc rapper waged against the corporate rap group was not well thought out by the adhoc rapper. This young female rapper was new to the game and did not have enough political capital within the social networks of the rap world to go up against such a well-organized rap group with all of its resources and members. If this rapper had not apologized to the group, she would have been beaten up severely until she surrendered to the crew. These were just the rules of the game, when people disrespected the organized corporate rap polity. As in the previous chapter, these incidents represent the processes of groups competing for political power, challenging, negotiating their status, testing relational bonds and figuring out how to play within the structure of the rap game in Bogota. When the government planning committee became aware of the alleged unfair 'business' practices of the corporate model in regards to the planning of a local event with transnational appeal, the government planning organization, IDARTES, used this alleged infraction by the corporate rap polity, as an excuse to exclude them

from accessing the public platforms at Hip-Hop Al Parque for the year. The government checked the social, and political power that the corporate rap groups could exercise. *De facto*, it gave the adhoc models a chance to showcase their message, talent and production skill. While liberal economic environments give opportunity for social factions to rise, it also still provides enough government structure on some level to check those rising monopolistic powers. Competition and a chance to play still exists for the little guys, the up and coming. The argument often put forth by social scientists that the 'big' players, in a liberal economic environment, always have an advantage over the smaller, less well-organized groups, does not play out in the anecdotal data, collected in this study.

In the second conflict described here, the groups in the adhoc models were in conflict over women and bonds of friendship. Morally, this group could not coalesce their values or did not want to. Therefore, their groups became easily divided. This was not necessarily a 'bad' thing for the groups in this polity though because they used the opportunity to exploit their issues on social media, enhancing the exposure and attention that scandal brought to the groups. Then, in the final anecdote, the young female rapper that challenged the organized rap groups to try to gain political prestige within the group, failed miserably. The corporate polity, took this opportunity to school the young rapper and to let her know her place within the rap scene. She did not have enough prestige, or political capital to maintain her advance towards power and the corporate rap polity exercised their police force to oblige her to publicly back down, apologize and retreat. These are all examples of the adhoc rap polities in conflict. These anecdotes illustrate the rules of the games being played with the rap scene in Bogota, Colombia. As previously argued, the liberal economic climate is situational with how it treats the behavior of various polities of cultural producers. As Bailey (2001) has rightly argued, social systems always come

up with rules of the game that the actors engage. In this particular model, the rappers and producers were not able to organize themselves properly to achieve social mobility, however. While this may not have been everyone's goal, in a real sense, it is still something that they would rap about in their lyrics. This type of incongruence between rap and reality has notably caused some confusion within the scene in Bogota and leads people to wonder about the true aims of the genre.

Comparing the Polities

There are many similarities and differences between the rap groups that I worked with. I have highlighted extreme models that I am calling corporate rap polities and adhoc rap polities. The corporate rap polities are rap groups that had organizing principles, values, prizes, roles for participants, rules of the game that were to be followed, internal operating structures and political contests that they strategically engaged. The adhoc model on the other hand was known for a broader sense of variance in the rules and structures that they played within. While the corporate models were stronger, and had more stability, the adhoc models assisted the rap scene in Bogota with innovation, creativity and progressive variation in the types of music or experimentation with making the scene that they represented. Both types of models serve their purpose in challenging each other in competition to make the rap scene in the city stronger and more vibrant. And while the adhoc model was constantly challenging established norms, breaking rules and inviting chaos – this behavior also served the hip-hop scene in Bogota to keep it innovative and edgy.

People adapt to the circumstances in which they find themselves. The corporate model, found themselves in marginal communities where they did not have a voice. They colluded together to create a powerful corporate organization from which they have gained economic,

151

political and social power. The rappers in the adhoc model were born into situations where they did not find it as incumbent upon their personal survival to organize as tightly around the hip-hop community to become socially mobile entrepreneurs within that industry, so they took another route within the community. The political and economic environment has rewarded certain types of social networking strategies, while seemingly punishing others. In this case, most of the corporate rappers were able to go from living in strata 0 communities to residing in strata 3 or 4 within a few years, as a marker of their economic gains. As for the adhoc model, many of these rappers were not able to achieve financial success. However, many of the innovative sounds within the scene came from them. The adhoc models created new cultural products that did not exist in previous generations of people within their familial or social circles. They come from a place of societal privilege where they are able to live incredibly liberal lifestyles. They sell illegal goods, try to become famous and create cultural products that no one else within their society has been able to achieve. These two groups illustrate the power of choice and societal maneuverability that people have in our current global economic system. The adhoc model in particular, showcases the ultimate rebelliousness against upward social mobility in the capitalistic system.

Alternatively, I could argue that this ethnography highlights the very problems with globalization and the way it encourages social mobility. This system empowers or perhaps even requires that in order for people to become socially mobile, they have to engage in illegal economic activites and be a part of an international gang unit. The system allows drugs and contraband to flow fairly freely across international borders. Globalization and the liberal economic environment demand those that produce cultural products under its influence, engage in 'immoral' or alternative lifestyles. However, I see it differently. I think that the corporate gang

members are regular people that are fighting for justice in their communities and showing other like-minded individuals 'how' to do the same thing. Where traditional forms of education[23] in Colombia have failed young people in preparing them to adapt to this competitive free market environment, rap musicians, fill the void. They are creating social media, music, clothing, businesses and a lifestyle for young people to emulate what have been in some form or fashion, helpful for these artists. Rap music advocates for a more open-minded, economically diverse Colombia. While many scholars discuss the scathing injustices of colonization: namely racism, classicism, and sexism, there is never a discussion of how to get away from these poltergeists. The rappers have tried to develop a way of doing just that. They live differently. They do not believe in the system but they engage it to change it. Some of them try to vie for the money and the power, some of them live outside the laws to try to change it and others brag about fantastical realities to stimulate other people to experiment with the way that they live. This is what I hope Laura Nader meant by studying up. We need to study the upstarts, the uprooting of what is and the uplifting people who try to change society to make it different. That is where I think people will find their 'slow' revolutions. This is where interesting anthropology takes place.

Conclusion

In an adhoc rap polity such as this, the prizes and values for each individual actor are individualistic and unique. These heterogeneous collectives that form for temporary purposes may serve to make an album, a few songs or they may serve to create gossip, scandal, outrage and they may draw the public's attention to certain social issues. Some might argue that this group glorifies the exact type of values that the rappers in my opening field notes of the introduction railed against. However, one also has to acknowledge that a dynamic of fun and

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[23] I am using this term liberally to describe family, schools, and other formally recognized institutions of acculturation.

playfulness with these types of rap polities encourages the formations of interesting collectives that create a divergent art forms that advocates alternative values, lifestyles and understandings of right and wrong.

These groups also have powerful actors within them who can make decisions about who and what kinds of music they showcase and popularize within the Colombian rap scene. The producers of these polities clearly hold the power of deciding who, when and how much recording time each of the artists can get for their tracks. The producers in this way, have control over the market and which artists get developed the most. The rappers act as contractual labor that can be given free services for guarantee of future payment, when the artists album becomes a local 'hit' and returns economic gains for the producers.

As this is the case, many rappers in the Bogota scene, compete against each other for working with the best producers. Their competition is limited to non-fraternally aligned producers within the rap scene because of the competitive nature of the industry in which they operate. This competition over producers leads the rappers to try and appeal to the skillful beat makers in the field of music production. They may seek to impress producers with their talent or they may attempt to draw attention to themselves through scandal and gossip as I have demonstrated here. In this chapter, I illustrated some of the internal conflicts that are present within the adhoc model of rap organizations that do not appear in the corporate models. Due to the unregulated nature of relationships in these models, the artists that operate within the rap groups, may compete for access to a great production team, just to lose it all because of drugs and personality conflicts. Or a production team may fall apart due to the in-fighting over women. These types of contests did not happen as frequently in the corporate organizations because the potential threats to the stability of the group were pre-empted by rules of conduct that carried

punishments with them, if the members would not learn to work hard, be self-disciplined and to have respect for one another. This difference of production strategy may have been due to material factors that influenced each groups' life chances beginning at early ages, different individual or collective desires or a matrix of all of the above.

In terms of the external conflicts that the group members had with others for political power and the ability to produce music, these conflicts mimicked the internal cohesion problems that the groups had with one another. The actors interessed with the adhoc rap polities were unpredictable. Individual members might start mouthing off in public meetings, fight amongst one another for fame and women, additionally they saw nothing wrong with challenging another group simply to see if they could get away with it. These rap polities in Bogota that were loosely organized made the scene fun, playful and experimental, sometimes to the disappointment of the corporate models who saw the adhoc models mostly as a nuisance. Although these two groups had a hard time getting along because they were competing against one another for popularity and access to financial resources from the public and the private sector, they both ignited a good deal of public appeal with their differing strategies.

The actors in the adhoc polity did not have as much financial success as the corporate models, from their music. Most of the producers that I met within this model had a hard time supporting themselves and their families with the money that they earned in the rap game. They usually had to subsidize their incomes by selling contraband or working in another field. Many of the rappers in this polity would try to make ends meet by rapping on buses or the *Tranmilenio* which is the public transportation system in Bogota, but this did not usually yield enough earnings for them to survive. Therefore, many of the musicians and artists in this type of

organization either lived at home or had other employment outside of the music industry or hip-hop altogether.

This chapter was primarily analyzing the organizational nature of rap groups that would not be considered corporate models in Bogota. Corporate models are more tightly organized and structured organizations that have a republican form of governance that contributes to their overall longevity, cohesion and stability. They also utilized a corporate economic structure to take advantage of their transnational social gang networks, which propels them towards monopolistic tendencies to try to shut down outside competition. In contrast to that model, I have also provided data about the adhoc rap polity which is more decentralized in nature and has a more fluid set of interactions between it and the other nodes in this network type. They were organized by anarchic democractic structures or heterogeneous collectivities. In the following chapters, I will analyze the rap polities in terms of their lyrics, modes of production and business strategies revealing the similarities and differences between these groups on in-depth issues regarding technology and music production in the era of globalized music assemblage.

CHAPTER 6: Boss Bitches in the Rap Scene

"I long to speak out the intense inspiration that comes to me from the lives of strong women."-
Ruth Benedict

Introduction

The role of women in the rap scene in Bogota was very particular. Rap groups have often been male dominated entities in the locations in which they form. In part, this is due to the nature of the music and once again the social environment in which the music has been made. Manufacturing jobs have been a large source of employment for working class men in in the Post-Cold War Era for many countries in the Western Hemisphere. However, as global competition has increased and many of these jobs have been exported to Asia, men in the Western Hemisphere have been left unemployed. Therefore, men in lower-economic stratas have been economically disempowered, in these globalization processes (Keyes 1994, Smith 2003, Gutman 2006, Chang 2007). Rap music itself is about men taking back their (power) voice and expressing themselves through art. One interesting perspective on the male domination of rap music, is that sometimes men are stereotyped as being emotionless, quiet, strong and serious (Vigoya 2001). Rap music on the other hand, is a space where working class or marginalized men can open-up about the hardships in life that they face and that the music becomes a form of therapy for them. They can express themselves through a variety of modalities too. DJing, break dancing, writing rhymes, graffiti art and the knowledge of self, which are the five founding principles of hip-hop that allow men to (re) discover their inner voice (Keyes 1994, De Genova 1995, Chang 2007).

The fact of the matter is though, that when there are men congregating and doing something significant in society, women will be present, as well. Even though, rap has been

viewed by many as a space traditionally reserved for working class men to display their dominance of the streets then, rounding this fact out, with a discussion about the women who participate in making rap culture in Bogota, Colombia can aid in better understanding the different dynamics that go on between men and women in the rap scene. Recording the ideology of the women involved in rap music as they articulated it to me, hearing about their roles, the part they play in assisting their rap clicks with managing their economic, social or political affairs and understanding how women's rap groups are organized within the male dominated sub-culture is fascinating to understand because it helps to inform much of the ideology of each of the rap polities, with whom I worked.

Significant Others

In this section, I am going to discuss some of the roles that the women in the different rap models occupied, when I was in the field. Women were companions of the rappers as well as rappers themselves in certain instances. In this selection, I will discuss women in the role of the significant other for the rappers. There were different ways in which rappers would discuss their significant others. They would refer to them as their wife, girlfriend, *moza* or groupie. The different types of rap groups used these terms differently as well. For the more corporate rap groups, the titles that were given to their significant other, the words really meant something. For the adhoc models, titles were thrown around and the relationships were more precarious, in the instances that I observed.

To the corporate rap groups, someone who was a wife, girlfriend, moza or groupie, had very specific roles and duties to the group. If someone was a wife of one of the rappers in the group, they could be trusted with all angles of group business and with corporate group activities. The title of 'wife' was reserved for the privileged position of one or two women per

158

rapper[24], generally. Many of the rappers that I worked with did not believe in nuclear family formations. Most of the rappers with whom I worked had multiple lovers. They had multiple wives, girlfriends, mozas and groupies with whom they were involved. The wives were the closest to the men. Girlfriends on the other hand were trusted with certain aspects of the business but were not privy to as much information as the wives. Then, there were the *mozas*. *Mozas* were temporary lovers of the rappers. Wives and girlfriends were considered to be in the core group of rappers. *Mozas* and groupies were outside of this realm. Groupies then, were women who were intimate lovers that had a one-time love affair with the rappers. The corporate rap groups treated these classifications of women seriously and different rules applied to interacting with each group in a special way. In the following section, I will give some examples of each of the classifications of women's titles to highlight some of the differences between the categories, to make the distinction between the roles clear. Then, I will move on to describing how the adhoc

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[24] Unless denoted otherwise, the rappers I am referring to represented themselves as men.

rap models thought of the women in their click in still yet, a different sense.
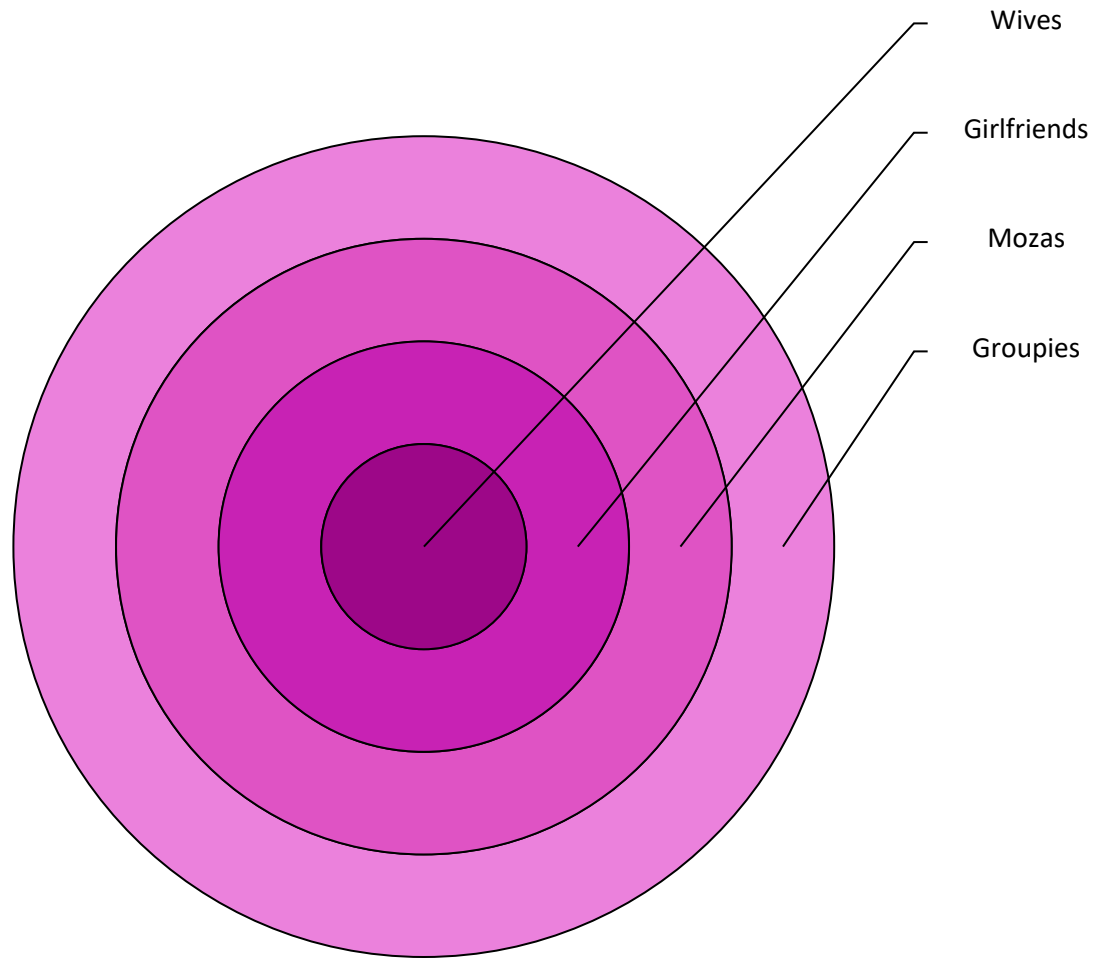
Image 6.1 Corporate Women's Organizational Structure

Wives in the corporate models, were women that had been romantically involved with the rappers for long periods of time. Usually, these relationships were years long by the time the women were proclaimed the rap stars' wife, in the corporate model. The 'marriage' was usually not official, although in some cases it was, but rather it was a verbal recognition of the relationship. In public spaces the couple would call each other '*marrido*', '*esposo*' or other names to signify a marital bond existed between the man and the women in the group. Wives

were tough women who were involved in helping the rap group secure financing and to organize the affairs of the businesses. In most cases, the women had a type of street smart intelligence that they developed long before getting involved with their husbands. The women that were given the title of a wife were usually what a famous North American rapper Trina[25] would call the 'baddest bitches'. They were women who were Latin Queens, Bloods, burglars, prostitutes and stick-up kids who had made their living, hustling. Therefore, they knew how to continue that type of work ethic as they hustled for their husbands in the rap game. The women given this title generally had to be smooth. They had to know when to get tough, know when to negotiate and to know when it was time to take over as the nurturer of their household. The wives in the corporate rap model were expected to be multi-faceted and to have an entrepreneurial intuition. They were expected to earn money, be respectful to their husband, to take care of his children, to do a lot of the cooking and most of the cleaning. Additionally, the wives were supposed to be permissive with their husband's promiscuity. Most of the women in this role had to be 'ride or die' type of life partners who were willing to do anything for their spouses. This kind of relationship took time to develop and by the time the women were a few years in to the relationship, they were involved in organizing business moves, helping the rap group earn money, disseminating responsibilities to other group members, they were helping to maintain discipline and order within the group, plus tackling all of the responsibilities of the rapper's household. Being a wife to a rapper in the corporate rap group was a secure place to be but it was a highly competitive position to move into. The women who occupied the roles had earned their places by being competent at a variety of tasks on a continuous basis over many years. This role was not for the weak or impudent.

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[25] Trina is the one of the wealthiest woman in rap from the United States. She has a networth of $6 million USD and is largely influencial in the world of hip-hop, particularly for women (Forbes 2015).

The girlfriends of the rappers were also denoted by how the rappers spoke of them. They would call them *mi novia*, *promitida*, or other pet names to help distinguish their status as a significant other in public spaces. Girlfriends were usually younger than wives, and they had less responsibilities to the group than the wives. The girlfriends were often kept more to the periphery, in terms of knowing what was happening in the rap groups. The wives had an intimate knowledge of most of the personal and professional issues that the core corporate model of rappers were doing because they had to be on the inside, just like the men of the group. The girlfriends however, did not have that level of knowledge about the group's activities. Sometimes the girlfriends would be called in to help with enforcing rules or disciplining a member of the group but they were not privy to understanding how or why they were being asked to carry out those duties. In order for the girls to be considered candidates for being girlfriends of the rappers, they had to be good at earning money with their own independent means. The women who were long-term girlfriends also had to be good at following the directives of their boyfriends, not ask too many questions and to be able to move with the group singularly without quite knowing all the details.

Here one of the girlfriends explains her relationship in her own words:

[Girlfriend]: "Well, the first thing that half of these bitches don't understand, is that yah, we are good looking but the most important thing about us is how we act. We are tough, we earn money, and we make 'em look good, not just in terms of our style but it's about who we are. A lot of these young cute girls think that's all it takes to be with one of these guys, and yah, they can be groupies but if you want to be a girlfriend or a wife, you're going to have to be a whole lot more than just cute."

Laura: "So what's the difference? How do you become a girlfriend or a wife?"

[Girlfriend]: "You have to be a gangsta. Like, all of us have had to make a living in some type of illegal way before, so we know how to be grimey when we have to be. Plus, we represent the style of the [Rap Group]. We dress cute but always with the street in mind. We are not *reggatoñeras*! We wear hood stuff and street style but we keep it real. We don't like all that *siliconada* stuff, all that plastic surgery for the body. That's not

162

gangster, that's stupid bitch stuff. We keep it natural and kind of classy. We're not going to show off every angle of our body. Plus, we are the coolest. A lot of the little girls are loud. They bounce around and talk about this and that….we quiet….we sit back and watch people to figure out what's happening."

From the excerpt above, there is a distinction that is made in roles between wives, girlfriends and other women. My informant remarks about the values that the wives and girlfriends have to display. They have to resemble the values of their boyfriends or husbands in that the women have to work hard, by earning their own money. They have to be respectful of their bodies and maintain a look that is not too promiscuous or '*reggaetoñera*' and they have to be self-disciplined in the way that they keep quiet and know how or when to fall in line. This idea of reacting correctly to difficult situations was something that I heard a lot from the women who were involved with the rappers in the corporate model discuss. The wives and the girlfriends had to be socially smart to hang out with the click and they had to earn their position through having the right kind of background, education and comportment.

The other roles that women could occupy as romantic lovers of the men in the corporate models were to be a *moza* or a groupie. *Moza* is a slang term derived from the Spanish word '*hermosa*' (or gorgeous). Mozas were women that the rappers were having relationships with in addition to their wives or girlfriends but the mozas were 'side chicks'. They were the mistresses of the group. Mozas were temporary lovers of the rappers that knew they were the subordinate girlfriend to someone else the rapper was seeing. Being a moza in this type of scenario could be incredibly dangerous too. Take this incident for example:

> We were at a club and a girl who [a girlfriend] recognized from the Facebook messages she had been sending to [a rapper]. [The rapper] would occasionally leave his Facebook open and [his girlfriend] would read his messages without telling him. So when we showed up at the club, [his girlfriend] leaned over to me and [another friend of hers] and

told us we better "stay on point because shit was going to get real." She slowly whispered to us what was going on and that if this bitch talked to [her boyfriend, the rapper], she was gonna 'get her'. Sure enough, [his girlfriend] waited. At about midnight, [his girlfriend] went to the bathroom. When she came out of the bathroom, [her boyfriend] was across the bar behind a crowd of people talking to this girl. [The girlfriend] grabbed an empty beer bottle, and began walking toward [her boyfriend] and the *moza*. [Homeboy of the crew] started saying '*mira* [Rapper´s Name]….*mira* (look)' and [his girlfriend] broke the bottle on the table and ran towards the girl hitting her over the head with the sharp edges of the broken bottle. The [Rap group] grabbed [his girlfriend] and tried to hold her back. Others grabbed the *moza* who by this point had a scalp full of blood and they rushed her out of the bar. After everyone dusted themselves off and calmed down, the managers of the bar cleaned up the blood and the glass on the floor, quickly. Then, the party resumed like normal with [the girlfriend] and [the rapper] snapping a bunch of photos that they later mounted on Facebook claiming they were "so in love".

For this reason, most mozas did not survive very long around the corporate rap group, unless they were tough enough and the rappers liked them enough to move them into the role as one of their girlfriends. I never saw this happen during my fieldwork. Most of the girlfriends and wives of the rappers were hard core. They were not going to allow someone to gain the same position they held, easily. It was going to be a battle and unless the mozas were some of the baddest bitches in the game, they were not going to be able to move into such a prestigious place in the click.

Then, there were groupies. Most of the rappers in the corporate models were incredibly popular in the local scene in Bogota. They had tens of thousands of followers on their social media accounts, they were constantly meeting new people and being solicited by women on-line. One of the wives of these rappers explained the groupies and mozas to me, in this way:

"Well, you're a liberal white feminist from and Ivy League school, soooo….. Yah, I mean, the way I think about it is real niggerish, so I don't know if you can understand but it's like this, [Rapper] is famous and he has 5,000 friends on Facebook and another 3,000 followers, so I know when he's online all day with work, these bitches gonna be throwin' the pussy at him. He's a guy, so biologically it's natural for him to go for it and it would be stupid for me to be mad. All these rap niggas gonna have mad bitches, they just want to feel important. You know, I am a female, I am a Queen. I can control myself and my

emotions. Everybody know woman [sic] are a lot stronger than men in terms of sexual discipline and our emotions. Despite conventional morality, I think this way of being with a man is just much more realistic. Again, that's shit a gangsta bitch gonna understand whereas these simple-minded groupies can't handle that complexity. That's why they think they be fuckin' with your man and don't understand why he ain't gonna leave me….you can fuck my man, but he's not yours. He's mine. Men don't love with their dick, they love with their hearts."

While this particular wife felt comfortable sharing her views with me about these issues, this topic was normally taboo. The wives or girlfriends were largely supposed to ignore the mozas and groupies, unless the rappers got sloppy and started letting the wives or girlfriends see too much of their activity. Then, they were expected to react to the challenge. The wives and girlfriends had the right to react, as was the case with the girlfriend stabbing the moza in the head with the beer bottle. When I spoke with other people in the group about this incident, they generally thought her reaction was acceptable and in fact expected it because they thought that the moza was being disrespectful by showing up to an event where the girlfriend was present. Not only did the moza get too close, but then she flaunted her power taking decision and proceeded to talk to the rapper in front of the girlfriend. Many believed that the moza was challenging the girlfriend. In the minds of the corporate rap network's members that witnessed this incident, the moza had not been careful enough and so she was taught a valuable lesson about messing around with a rapper in this context. As for the one-off groupies, the same conditions applied. They had to be extremely careful in messing around with the rappers. Everyone knew who was single and who was taken in the game, so playing with the members could be risky. The reality of it was if the mozas or groupies were caught, it could mean the end of their night or their life.

As for the rappers in the adhoc model, they did not take relationships as seriously. In opposition to the corporate models where the roles and values governing the actions of the

165

participants were much clearer, the adhoc model's participants did not necessarily follow protocols. The rappers in these clicks very rarely had longtime girlfriends and if they did, they generally kept them far away from the other rappers. I only met one rapper in the adhoc model who was married with children, when I was in the field. This case was the exception and not the rule. Rappers in the adhoc model were more likely to have promiscuous relationships with random groupies. Sometimes these infatuations would form into relationships for a few months where the rappers would say that the woman was their girlfriend. However, most of these relationships that I witnessed did not evolve into long lasting bonds. Unlike the corporate model, then, they did not form longstanding bonds with the groupies in this click. I met a few of their girlfriends but the adhoc model was much more likely to be dominated by the transactional relationships that it had with women through the business of making music.

Women in Rap

In Bogota, the rap scene was dominated by men. Particularly in the corporate rap models, women were involved in moral, social life, but were not part of making the art. The women were the muses for the art, they helped support the making of rap songs through making money for the networks but they were more of an accessory, a consumer, a peripheral participant but they were not rapping on albums, or producing the beats. In the adhoc model however, they had space for rap groups that were comprised of women. The adhoc models tended to work with people from all different backgrounds and walks of life, so they accepted who ever wanted to try their hand at rap. This meant that they worked with female rappers. They encouraged women to get into making beats, learning about making music videos, taking photography classes and helping them manage artists. This was not the case in the corporate rap organizations where they would

prevent women from participating in making music with them. I witnessed the corporate models actively blocking the women in their groups from getting involved in rap.

> Today, [Producer] allowed me to listen to a recording of [Corporate Rappers Girlfriend]. It was a fire track but [Producer] told me that he was not allowed to use the track on any of his albums because she would be mad.
>
> Laura: "That track is so good though." I insisted.
>
> Producer: "Yah, but [Corporate Rapper Boyfriend] thinks that [His Girlfriend] sounds too Puerto Rican on the track too ñera and he doesn't want it out there. He thinks it will hurt his reputation."

This type of censorship over the women's voices in the corporate rap scene was not surprising. The rappers wanted the voice of the group to come from the men. The patriarchal structure that came from the underpinnings of the street gangs involved at the core of the organizational structure, limited the encouragement of the men to support their significant others in having rap careers. Besides being 'Puerto Rican sounding', the track that the corporate models rapper's girlfriend made, it was also about a particularly controversial groupie in the rap scene. This girl had gained quite a lot of fame for dating a rapper, getting him beat-up and publicly cheating on him, whereby she finally broke his heart. The girlfriend of the corporate rap group made a song poking fun at how this girl came to be known in the rap scene and her rap star boyfriend wanted to put a stop to the antagonism between the rival rap groups. The rapper's motive for discouraging his girlfriend from rapping had a lot to do with her political message. His girlfriend was disrespecting a groupie who had helped this polity gain a political edge over their enemies and he did not want his girlfriend disrespecting her. It was a matter of loyalty. The exercise of control was all about the politics of representation.

Roles and Values

Other women who rapped in the scene, did not have to concern themselves with the politics of representing their crew because they were independent and they had their own crew of female rappers separate from any corporate groups. The women that became rappers, that I met, were trying to get more professional and organized when I was in the field. While a handful of them had become successful in the arena of creating rhymes, women had not delved into the field of trying to become beat makers or producers. This meant that the female rappers had to rely on technical assistance from men. They tended to work with a variety of producers to get the sounds and the quality of masterization that they wanted on their albums. The female rappers that I met were usually young, going to school, working and they created their lyrics as a hobby. They would get together in the evenings, the weekends, or one click even designated a 'day off' that they all had in common to work on their tracks together, to bond, to plan for upcoming events, and to record sessions.

The rap groups of women, had a similarly difficult time defining their values and adhering to a code, unlike the corporate rap model. Because goals beyond making rap music were not clearly established, the groups did not know how to govern their social and political lives together. FG Bailey (2001) might argue that the women in rap had a transactional bond but not necessarily a moral one. If the rappers wanted to be in the business of making rap music together, they only needed to have an interest in making music together. Bailey argues that the groups that will become stable need to have both moral and transactional bonds. Due to the fact that the women in rap did not have this moral dimension, many of their rap groups, like the adhoc models within the men's groups were riddled with destructive gossip, high degrees of internal competition and there was not a unifying narrative or base for the rappers to refer back to when they had moral questions.

The reason that the corporate rap groups had so much success is because the political structure provided a 'big picture' accompanied by an ideology that gave the rappers something to believe in. When people are given a direct moral focus through a narrative or founding ideology, then they can centripetally integrate themselves into a larger framework or system (Basso 1996). However, when people do not have this framing narrative to refer back to who is in charge, who has authority and there are no specific rules of play, then all of those issues are constantly under contestation (Bailey 2001).

For example, many of the rap groups of women, with whom I worked with would gossip, much like the men of the adhoc model. Whenever I would meet up with them, it would surprise me how much each of them would talk not about other rival rap clicks or the moves that they were making but they were often gossiping to me in a defamative fashion about their fellow rappers in their own clicks. Most of the information that I learned about the external criticisms towards these groups of women came from people inside their clicks gossiping about one another. It was usually brutal gossip that if it got back to the person being talked about, it was likely to destroy friendships. I observed many disagreements between rap groups of women and they almost always started with gossip. Gossiping about someone in a malicious fashion, or telling embarrassing personal details about someone's past were all indications that one rapper did not respect the other (Merry 1997). In-fighting about these issues were common and rampant.

The women within these rap groups were also always competing with each other for attention. Each one of the women thought that they had more talent, a better ear for beats, a better flow or were somehow stylistically more sophisticated than the other women in their group. This high degree of internal competitiveness did not foster cohesion among the rap groups of women. As no one can do rap music alone, and one needs a whole host of people to help

169

create, produce and master a song, there has to be a balance between competition and cooperation (Alim 2009). All participants within the group have to develop a sense of how to interact with one another or the progress of completing a project will inevitably stall. The women in the rap scene in Bogota were having a hard time achieving this delicate balance between cooperation and competition. When I was there, I never saw a single rap group of women complete a project together. They all broke up before the end of the completion of an album and sometimes the rappers could not even get a single song recorded. As one would expect, getting the composition just right in terms of talent, lyrics, beats and production was not as simple as just wanting to do it.

 Political Structure

The structure of the rap groups of women that I observed varied a bit and was made up of small numbers of people. The women in the rap scene that I observed were either solo artists or were made up of small groups of two, three or four women. Each of these women would then contract a beat maker and/or producer to make songs with them and lay down the tracks. Some of the women in these groups were also fashion designers or would do graphic arts design and would make hip-hop clothing, in addition to recording their songs. These processes will be discussed further in Chapters 8, 9, & 10.

The following female rap artists and male rap artists differed in their compositions too. Many of the male rap artists had a mixture of fans. In particular, the corporate models had followers made up of their fellow gangsters, other men who could relate to their music. Additionally, they had a female following that would mostly classify themselves as '*callejera intellectuales*' (the intellectuals of the street). Their fans were mostly people who identified as gangsters or as '*callejeros*' (or people of the street). The adhoc rappers also attracted their own

intersection of music followers which formed their musical fan base. They attracted a wider range of fans who identified as *rapero*s, *callejeros* but they also attracted people from the heavy metal musical genre and from groups that like punk, alternative and other forms of radical or experimental musical genres like trance or drum and base. They included a wide range of followers.

In fact, one of the most popular female rappers in Bogota, was from the heavy metal music scene. She was a crossover artist. However, most of the women in rap, had female fans that were considered '*gomela*'. The women of rap are most admired by the middle to middle upper income women. The '*callejeras*' see the women in rap generally as too soft. There is still quite a conceptual divide for women and men in the rap scene, particularly on the part of the fans. Men will support fellow female rappers but not with the same enthusiasm as the male rappers and there has failed to be a group of women in rap music that appeals to the whole fan base like that of the men involved in the scene. This is an issue that many women in the rap world in Bogota are trying to change however, instituting cultural change takes collective practice, time, practice, skill, and resources.

Internal Dynamics

I have already discussed the internal political values that the rap groups and artists believed in, moreover, it is important to grasp the complications of specific incidents that women had in working with their male producers and getting the products or services in which they purchased or were having made. Here, I will discuss three events that took place in the field with women in rap, so that the reader can evaluate the socio-political interplay between the women and the processes that they went through to get a song produced. In the following selection, I will present three separate sets of ethnographic data that I collected during my field work to

demonstrate the internal working dynamics that women in rap endured in order to produce cultural products. These instances highlight the strengths and weaknesses in the rap scene in Bogota for women and might be helpful for women in the scene to better understand or reflect on as the progress in creating and disseminating cultural products that represent themselves and their community.

A Women in the Rap Song Collaborates with a Male Rap Star

> Today I was invited to the studio to observe as [Male Rap Star] and [Female Rap Star] recorded a song together at [Rap Studio]. The rappers met with each other early in the morning to collaborate on making a song about doing drugs and partying. Obviously, that meant that they needed to get in the right state of mind to do this. They started out the morning by smoking weed, snorting cocaine and drinking lean. This drug cocktail got the rappers started for the day as they collaborated on lyrics, and were working with the producer to develop the beats for the song. As the day passed, the rappers invited other people to come join us at the studio and to bring more alcohol, drugs and fun people. As the studio turned into a madhouse full of people in full party mode, [Male Rapper] and [Female Rapper] began practicing their lyrics together. At one point, [Male Rapper] said he was just going to go smoke some 'crack' but [Female Rapper] intervened and told him he should just do another line of cocaine with her and practice his lyrics. He stayed and the rappers practiced their song for a good hour. Then, they were ready to lay down their tracks. By this time however, [Female Rapper] was getting a little overwhelmed by the partying because she said it was going to impact the quality of the track. [Male Rapper] hopped up in the recording booth first. While he did this and [Producer] started recording the track, [Female Rapper] was trying to organize the chaos in the studio because it was creating too much background noise on the track. While [Producer] tried to argue with her that they could just cut the noise out as they mastered the track, [Woman of Rap] got angry and said that the more modification that the producers had to do to the track, the worse off the quality sounded in the finished product. She told him that that might be good enough for them but that she was really concerned with the quality of the final outcome. [Female Rapper] ended up throwing a few people out of the studio to help create a more 'professional environment'. When [Male Rapper] was done recording, it was her turn. She hopped up in the booth and smoothly hammered out three recordings of her verses straight away without any do-overs. Then, the other rapper that was going to record the third and final verse showed up at the studio. He had been working all day and came over to the studio around six o' clock when he got off of work. With [Female Rappers] insistence, [Second Male Rapper] rehearsed his verse for about a half hour. When he stepped up in the booth, [Producer] got three clean recordings. After they were done, the drugs came right back out. It was time to celebrate. The previously banished crew members were contacted by [Female Rapper] and told it was safe to return. The crew partied for a few more hours and I took my leave.

In the above scenario, the woman who was working with the two male rappers was highly regarded as a great musician by all of the participants. Therefore, they did not question her exercise of authority over anyone in the group. The other rappers recognized her expertise and her tacit knowledge regarding the music production. They had produced records in that studio many times before with the reassurance that what the female rapper was talking about was true. Clean recordings, where people practiced their lyrics and were rehearsed sounded a lot better riding the beat with prior knowledge through practice. The rappers could lay down their tracks more efficiently and could really concentrate on the music. If there were other people around, partying, making noise, doing drugs, and getting drunk the rappers would not be able to make as clean of a recording. This woman's recordings with the producer were some of the cleanest recordings that came out of this production house, in fact. I will address the specifics of making these songs from the producer's perspective later on, however for the moment it is sufficient to pay attention to the influence of the role of the woman in this studio. The female rapper in this scenario demanded professional conduct. She believed there was a standard for recording music and she wanted that bar to be met. In other recording situations, this was not the case. Men would *not* kick people out of the studio or make demands about other people's behavior. This female rapper was unique in that regard. It demonstrates that she felt competent to add her knowledge to the group and try to help them be as good as possible. This young lady and rapper was committed to professionalism. She wanted to make a name for herself in the rap world.
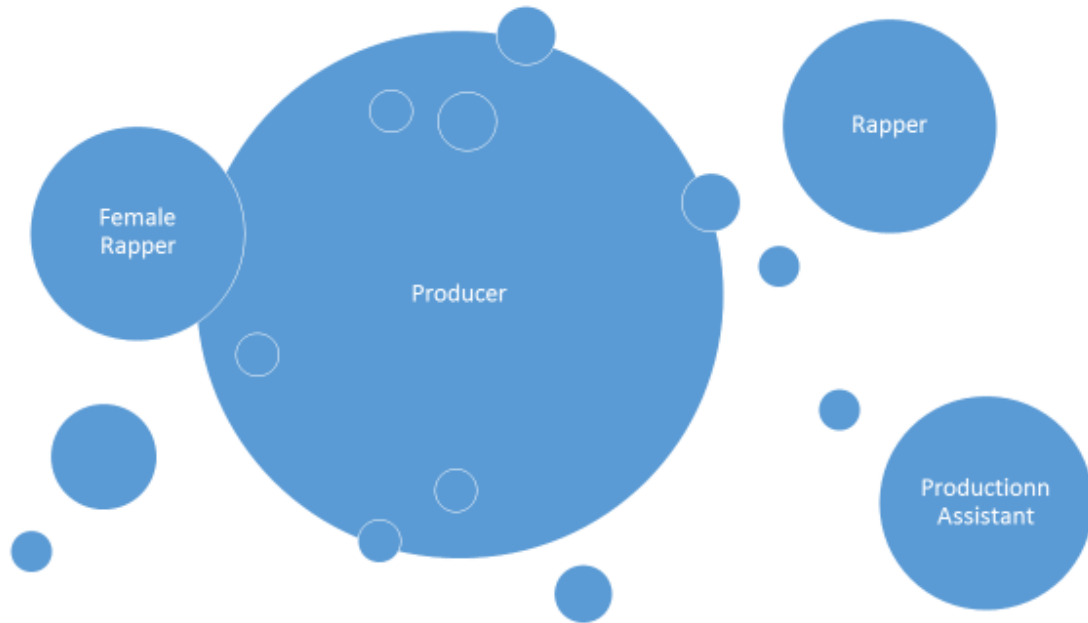
Image 6.2 Adhoc Women in Rap

A Girl Click

Similarly, another rap group that I hung out with, that was all women often worked at another studio in Bogota. They met with their producer who had already completed their beats. There were three women in the group and they all met at the studio on afternoon.

I met with [Name of the Rap Group] at [Name of the Studio]. They were supposed to listen to their track and write lyrics for the recording. When the girls got there, [Rapper 1] and [Rapper 2] already had their lyrics written out but [Rapper 3] was stuck on hers. They began to read their lyrics out to each other criticize words and phrases, and then they sat around editing and perfecting the lyrics. They also advised [Rapper 3] about the lyrics that she should use to complete her verse. In this song, the girls were telling their rap rivals that the trash that was spoken about them was dead and if it wasn't, they would massacre it. It was a pretty fierce song. The girls practiced their lyrics a few times together and then got on the mic……

[Rapper 3] recorded first. [Producer] liked her because she could record her lyrics super clean the first couple of times around. [Producer] told me that [Rapper 2] always thought she sounded bad and wanted to re-record and Rapper 1 always messed up her lyrics when she started laying her rhymes down over the beats. He said that he wanted [Rapper 3] to go first to set a good example for the other girls, so they wouldn't be there all night.

[Rapper 3] was able to lay down three successive recordings back to back. This impressive display of skill did hype up the other girls and [Rapper 1] wanted to try to continue on with the success. She was able to keep the momentum going by recording two tracks back to back without slipping on her lyrical flow but then on her third voice over where she was doing call outs, she messed up her verbage and [Producer] had to hit the pause button. But she was angry. She yelled a lot and cursed. She got out of the recording booth and was stomping around.

"God damnit, I always do this."

"Yo, it's ok." [Rapper 2] told her… "just wait until I have to go." The girls started laughing. [Rapper 1] got back into the booth and kept recording. She got the third recording of the track with the call outs all finished up and the girls decided to call it quits for the day.

I eventually followed up as [Rapper 2] recorded her verse and the three girls recorded the chorus. It took almost all day for [Rapper 2] to record her portion of the song. The producer warned me when I got there how the day would be. It was interesting that he knew that pattern of behavior to expect from the girls. [Rapper 2] had performance anxiety, it seemed. She would perform well while rehearsing and then would fall apart in the recording booth, itself. What was interesting too was after the recording was finished, [Rapper 2] gave the producer a really hard time about how long it would take him to master the song. In the end, the project took over a month to finalize and before it was all over, [Rapper 2] had it out with the producer. She started putting posts on Facebook criticizing his professionalism. This pressured him to finish the masterization process. This group of girls complained to me about the process though. Later on, we were all hanging out and one of them told me:

"Yah, you know, they treat us like that and it's totally fucked up. We pay them stupid niggas money, unlike a lot of their other clients and then they are slow to deliver the products. I get tired of waiting on [Producer]. Sometimes, I think it's because we are girls. They think that we won't do anything to them or that it's funny to charge us or make us wait longer for our finalized mixes but it's fucked up. They should treat us better than everyone else…sshhhhiiittt."

The woman from the previous selection had the same problem though with the producer that recorded her song. She felt like he was delaying in mastering the song and not doing a very

professional job of it. She told me he would send her a 'final cut' and she would listen to it and hear all of these errors in the way she thought the song should sound. She told me that one afternoon she even went to the studio to help the production crew with the masterization process because she thought it kept sounding worse and worse. In this way, the producers would complain that the women were harder on them than other clients. While this is not necessarily true, all of the producer's clients always wanted their songs mastered before everyone else's and no one wanted to wait for their project to be mastered, it was the perception of the producers that the females they worked with demanded a higher quality product. The producer's also believed that the women were more vocal about getting their results. It is interesting though that the rapper in the passage above notes feeling a sense of sexism or discrimination because she is a woman in rap. She argues that because they are girls, they did not recieve as high quality of a product, as the men would get. By contrast, the producers agued that they felt more pressure to get something right for their female clients because they did not want to have the women talk about them on social media or to people in their social circle and denigrate their reputation, so they tried to give high quality products out to their female clients quickly. The producers also used these tactics as a mechanism to signify to the clients when they no longer were interested in working with them. This happened to one of the female rappers that I worked with, as well. A producer had grown tired of her work ethic and had decided to send her a message by taking three months to deliver the final cut of a song to her and then forthwith, he refused to give her studio time. This type of social signaling in the inner-workings from males and females was a common practice between these groups when I was in Bogota. While many of the rap groups and producer's relationships were not formalized with explicit discussions about rules of conduct, different mechanisms of social signaling and performative acts would stand in the place of

formal communication. Many of the women in rap understood these social pressure valves and signals very well and could get what they wanted out of their situation. The men could counter pressure the women by refusing to continue working with them.

Internally then, I observed very common practices among female group members and their male counterparts in producing music. The women who wanted to exercise their personal power in advocating for themselves and the professionalism for their products, generally had high quality results. The men in the adhoc groups perhaps somewhat reluctantly respected the women in rap that they produced music for. They saw them as their employer. This status for women in social situations is something different in Colombia. The women were able to exercise their transactional power over the producers by threatening them with defamation and reputational injury. This power move by the women in rap that I worked with demonstrated their agency in a chaotic business environment.

Women in Business

One of the girls was a fashion designer, one of them a graphic arts designer, another was studying business and photography and the forth one was a student of film and production. The four girls decided to put together a hip-hop fashion show. They planned it eight months in advance and were able to book a place for the event. They employed beautiful women in the hip-hop scene and they were able to invite some special guests to perform at the fashion show. The girls designed a Fall Fashion line, had the outfits made for each of the models and began publicizing the event. The event generated revenue through ticket pre-sales and people pre-ordering clothing from the line. In the end, the fashion show went off without a hitch. The show itself was successful. Afterwards however, some of the girls had a falling out. Apparently, there was a rumor that the lead fashion designers' boyfriend slept with one of the models and the

177

group descended into massive in-fighting. Some of the 'friends' of the fashion designer knew the affair was taking place and the fashion designer got mad because her friends knew about the situation and did not tell her. Then, her group of friends got in a fight because some of them wanted to hang out with the model who had an affair with the designer's boyfriend, while still maintaining their friendship with the fashion designer. The fashion designer was not having any of that and the group imploded.

This illustrates how fragile strictly transactional relationships can be in the rap world. Although, this female constructed adhoc polity was successful in terms of the talent and organization of the event, the socio-political moves that were made among the participants did not allow for the group to endure or to reproduce itself again. This also, illustrates the destructive nature that gossip takes on within the adhoc rap groups. It almost did not matter at some point whether the female rapper actually did have intercourse with the fashion designer's boyfriend or not but it was the fact that everyone believed that he had and as that became the prevailing narrative within the group. Therefore, the fashion designer felt obligated to react to that perception.

Once again though, this incident was fodder for each of the participant's social media sites, which generated much commentary and many photos were taken of the participants at the event, fighting. Moreover, afterwards, in order to demonstrate that the click DGAF (did not give a fuck), which was a common saying among the adhoc models participants, the graphic designer and rapper, made a shirt with that saying on it and sold it on-line through her Facebook account, shortly after everyone in the group got angry with her and stopped talking to her for a while after the fashion show. I interviewed her after I saw these shirts for sale, and asked her about it.

Laura: "What's with the shirts?"

Rapper: "Well, as you know, everyone is all upset about how [Male Rapper] cheated on [Fashion Designer Rapper] and somehow people think I knew about it before hand and didn't tell [Fashion Designer Rapper]. Then I guess [Woman in Rap] wants to still be friends with [The Woman Who Had the Affair with Fashion Designers Boyfriend], and I don't really want to get all mixed up with everyone, so I am just keeping to myself and screaming I 'Don't Give a Fuck', like the shirt says. I will just let people come to me in the right way if they want to chill, but I'm not about that drama, you know?"

Competition with the Women in Rap and the Outside World

I honestly did not witness a lot of contests outside of the rap groups made up of women. The scenarios that I am presenting here are from second hand accounts and the data is not necessarily conclusive but rather illustrates some of the themes that the female rappers would fight with other rap groups about.

A Battle Over Social Class and Rap Authenticity

When I first met one of my rap groups they were in a beef with this other rap set across town. The rappers were standing around one of their smartphones commenting amongst themselves about what an ugly girl she was. I asked them who they were talking about.

[Rapper 1]: "This bitch, she thinks she's so hot."

[Rapper 2]: "Yah, what a fat, ugly bitch, oh and you don't look so gangster with your high heel high-tops on Ms. [Strata 0, Southern Barrio].

Laura: "What are ya'll talking about?"

[Rapper 3]: "Oh there is this rap click from Engativa that we don't really get a long with."

Laura: "Oh really, why? What's the beef?"

[Rapper1]: "Those bitches think we are 'too gomela'. They think we are just all rich and that we can't rap about the street life because we don't know nothing about it. But they just don't know us."

I learned over the course of hanging out with these girls that there was a strong rivalry between the girls of this popular rap group from [Southern Neighborhood] and another group

179

from [Northern Neighborhood]. The girls from [Southern Neighborhood] had been at a concert in [Northern Neighborhood] at an event where they heard this other female group perform. During the performance, the girls from [Northern Neoghborhood] started making fun of *vagos* in their performance. *Vagos* is a term used to refer to lazy people who do not like to work. They started saying, what rappers say in the US, that you need to be a go-getter, you need to work hard and have a lot of money to hang out with them. Apparently, the girls from [Southern Neighborhood] took offense to this. They thought that the girls were acting '*creida*' (Spoiled) and were taking for granted their class position in a war-torn country with millions of internally displaced people in an economic downturn. The girls from the [Southern Neighborhood] were offended. They did not like the classism that the girls of [Northern Neighborhood] were representing in their show and neither did a host full of other participants at the concert. From what witnesses said, the girls of [Northern Neighborhood] were booed off stage. The girls of [Southern Neighborhood] went up to them after this and this is when the girls had a verbal exchange with one another that resulted in a longstanding feud.

When Lemus (2005) or Montoya (2011) argue that the idea of making money and taking about conspicuous consumption in rap music does not happen in Colombian hip-hop, this is the reason they have that impression. Many people in Colombia understand poverty and economic deprivation[26]. The poor do not blame themselves for these conditions. They blame the civil war, the violence, the imperialism by the United States and the system of capitalism in which they live. While the counter-cultural ideology among the popular classes of Colombia does not

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[26] In Chapter Two, I mention that the ideology presented in rap music adovaocates for fighting against the cycle of poverty argument. While many poor people work very hard, they remain poor because of structural conditions which prevent them from gaining social mobility. In the case of the corporate rappers, many of them work hard, but they also find clever ways to evade rules, norms and laws in order to gain social mobility. Admittedly, then, others are not always willing to take these risks, to beat the system. The rappers woud not argue that they necessarily should break the law, just to gain material wealth.

ascribe to an ideology of the cycle of poverty, as readily, many of the upper-class citizens do, many people believe the reason that people are poor is because the rich people are involved in fighting the poor purposefully to make their lives very hard. Therefore, the idea of working and getting money to show off, does not sit well with many Colombians. They are likely to challenge this type of 'calling out' at a rap concert as imperialistic, shallow, materialistic and selfish. And that is exactly what the girls of [Southern Neighborhood] thought of the girls of [Northern Neighborhood]. These girls were not violent towards each other but rather they exchanged words and harassed each other on social media platforms. This conflict among groups in the female rap scene typified some of the larger issues of ideological debate that I have been describing elsewhere in this research. While rap music is an open cypher for ideological discussion, the education and reinscription of imperial ideologies tries to seep into the Colombian rap scene too. However, many of the fans and the competing rap groups also fight to keep the message on the counter-cultural tip. They do not want the rhetoric of 'blaming the victim' to creep into their music scene. The gomela rap group did not publicly ridicule poor people after this incident. They would still do so in private, but they learned a valuable lesson through this rap beef.

A Woman in Rap Challenges the Corporate Rappers

The only other political contest that I heard about was when one of the women in rap that I worked with, got into a verbal altercation with a corporate rap group, that I had also worked with. This beef actually happened while I was in Europe interviewing some of my other informants. However, I was able to access contacts in both groups who wanted to recount their side of the conflict to me. Apparently, the woman rapper was at a meeting for Hip-Hop al Parque where the rappers were presenting proposals to the IDARTES Planning Committee to host concert segments during the two-day event. Somehow the female rapper ended up telling this

181

corporate rap group that she did not know who they thought they were but that she did not respect them. This angered the women in the corporate rap click. They withheld from fighting with this solo artist at the event but afterwards, the women in the corporate rap group were riding around the city looking for her. The solo artist heard that the girls were looking for her and tried to make amends for insulting them. The solo female rap artist profusely apologized to the corporate rap group over social media publicly and privately. The girls associated with the corporate rap group had a good laugh about it and agreed to let the beef die. They later recounted to me that they thought this girl was just young and she had no idea who she was talking to nor the trouble that her and her mouth were going to get her in. They said they had mercy on her because the fight would have been totally unfair. However, they did warn her that she should tread lightly in these matters in the future. Once again, this incident represents how the rap scene policed the boundaries of respect within the rap groups. Classism, and publicly disrespecting other members of the community should be done carefully with strategy and forethought.

I recounted these stories about the external conflicts that girl groups had with other rap groups to illustrate why women come into conflict with other entities in the rap scene in Bogota, Colombia. In the first instance, women were fighting over the messages about social class and the ideology of rap music in Colombia. The girls from [Southern Neighborhood] wanted to make sure that when they heard people selling out their hip-hop music to capitalism, that they said something about it. As race and social class always intersect because the systems put in place through colonization and the process of creating hierarchies under that system (Silverblatt 2004, Collins 2011), the girls from [Southern Neighborhood] were pushing back against the stereotype that all poor people are poor because they are lazy. They wanted to make sure that message was left out of hip-hop because they believed it to be untrue. The female rap artists from the Southern

Neighborhood were fighting back against the imperialistic messages from North American rap. People are pushed into poverty in Colombia by war, violence, political corruption, imperialism and that was the message that the Southern Rola[27] women wanted to maintain within the culture of rap in Colombia. These women wanted to be sure that the message was clear. The popular class did not cause these problems. The poor are not to blame for their condition.

The second incident also demonstrates that the women in rap music in Bogota, Colombia are merciful to their younger sisters in the rap game. FG Bailey (2001) argues that in political contests, there has to be a training period for the younger recruits. The second scenario of conflicts that arose between women that I presented here, served as an example of such a training exercise between the well-organized gangster girls and a new solo rap artist. The solo artist had disrespected a top gangster rap group in public. The women of this group felt it politically incumbent upon their reputation to hunt this girl down and teach her a lesson. They were calling studios all over town and other famous rappers that this solo artist associated with to try to find her. They were in essence, stalking her and the scare tactic worked. The solo artist contacted the gangster girls through social media and asked them to please forgive her. She also contacted the men in the group and apologized for disrespecting them. They asked her to appeal to them publicly for their forgiveness on Facebook and then it would be done. The solo artist complied. The beef was laid to rest. This kind of 'entrentimiento´ or training exercise was meant to teach this young, new artist that there were rules to the game and that you cannot just show up to events, disrespecting the more established artists within the larger rap scene without facing severe consequences. This is something that every political order has to teach. They have to establish the rules and bring the newer younger members back into line when they break the

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[27] Women from Bogota.

rules (Bailey 2001). This was an example to the new artist of how to behave appropriately in the rap scene in the city. They were teaching her a valuable lesson.

Conclusion

This chapter has been dedicated to the women of rap in Bogota. I thought that this topic deserved its own chapter, solely devoted to the political maneuvering of this group of people that is involved in the rap scene. Many women in the rap scene are there as rappers, wives, girlfriends, mothers, mozas, groupies, fans and combinations of these categories. Noting that the rap scene is male-dominated but not wanting to collapse that idea into a stereotype, I thought it was imperative that an analysis of the political anthropology of this group was appropriate to understand the richness of the dynamics between men and women within rap in Bogota. As I have gone through the process of discussing the women in rap in Bogota I hope that the reader has been able to better understand the political discussions, points of contention and ways in which people work together, conflicts are resolved and how people retain relationships with one another or do not within varying contexts.

The wives, and girlfriends of the corporate rappers generally have a quiet and supportive role within the groups. They are not encouraged to work directly in the rap scene because it could prove politically tricky for the men if the women were to be outspoken about their viewpoints. While the women in this model do help generate money, take care of different investments and enforce the rules of the group, they are not as poignantly vocal within the rap scene. Their voice is recognized as having the potential to threaten people in other clicks and to potentially cause unwanted conflicts. The women in the corporate model of rap do have the authority to beat up other women disrespecting the click but they have to follow the hierarchical chain of command that the men have set up. They cannot just go rouge. Greg Thomas (2007)

184

argues that "the racist sexist classist Cartesian split between body and mind is inherently against traditional African traditions such as Matriarchal African societies and polygamous marriage arrangements which were cornerstones of African society." (Thomas 2007, p.23). Many of the Matriarchal power structures, or polygamous marriage structures that Western Colonizers found in other parts of the world were demonized by their conquerors. This taboo against these lifestyles still holds true to this day. Think of the way that Utah was forced to sign laws against polygamy before it became a state or how people from Muslim countries, are still not allowed to bring more than one wife into Western countries when they are emigrating. The decolonization process then, that the rappers in the hip-hop community use to undermine the dominant ideology of nuclear, power-sharing families, is to practice polygyny. When discussing the radical politics of rap music, this is exactly what the founders meant by resistance art poetry.

In this investigation, I was concerned with helping to define ideas of what progress, modernization and development are, by analyzing what my participants think of these issues, particularly in concern to race, gender and class formation because they are contesting hegemonic norms of these concepts through their music, as well as in their lifestyle. Deborah A. Thomas (2004) points out in her book, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization and the Politics of Culture*, that many matriarchal family formations that existed in Africa were imported to the new world during the period of slavery. Often, in the nation state's drive to appear 'modern' and 'progressive' they have tried to create a hegemonic imaginary of the modern family as it has been conceptualized in industrialized societies. Where as in other global locations, it is the norm for many families to be multi-generational and female headed households, this was discouraged because it is discussed as a 'backward' or 'primitive' way of living. The discourse of modernization serves to provide the vision that the nuclear family is the

universal 'norm', without acknowledging that this conceptualization of the family is a modern invention derived by capitalistic desires to create consumer societies and promote economic growth (Goody 1983, Thomas 2007). The resistance against this type of limited thinking in terms of creating family norms, is the subtle push-back against this limited defitition of 'family'. These rap groups are trying to open-up and re-define what family life is in the Western Hemisphere. Why should definitions of monogamy, still be embedded in our legal systems code about marriage? Why should family be limited to thinking about bloodline solely, as opposed to acknowledging the many social actors who comport themselves as such, in familial units? On a deeper level, the behavior of our actors calls us to question these religious and moral hangovers embedded in our political systems that come from a colonial past, which may have been meant to oppress 'other-ness' in our societies.

Reducing these arguments to simple ideas about feminism then, will not work in this case. Scholarship has to be mindful of ascribing victimization to women or any other type of so called "other" (Mohanty 1988, Collins 2002). With sociological and anthropological studies at times, pathologizing the victimization of women in non-nuclear family formations, as subordinates, this abundant trope within our disciplines denies the women themselves of agency in being able to make decisions for themselves and negates their personal power in these situations. To call the women in this investigation, victims or to characterize them as subordinates of the men, does little to aid our understanding of the unique role the women play in their business ventrues or in their familial relationships. An example of the type of scholarship I seek to challenge here, is the recently published book called, *Stick up Kids* by Raul Contreras where he investigates drug robbers in the Bronx of New York City. In the gang unit he studies, Contreras represents a female informant involved in the gang as a victim, who is constantly

subordinated to the desires of the males in the group, without having one-on-one contact with her to undertand the power dynamics from her perspective. Contreras (2013) simply reifies long-standing scholarhship that argues poor women become victims of the poor men that they have to answer to in their communities, without digging deeper and actually talking to this woman. This is a disappointing narrative readers are exposed to time and again within our disciplines where very little attention is paid to the nuiances of the womens' stories and feels that it is unimportant to take the view point of the women themselves, seriously. However, in this chapter, women were able to describe for themselves what their relationships were like and what their lifestyle means to them. These are the voices that help to change societies perceptions on what it means to be in a multi-partnered relationship on different levels of interaction. It is my hope that readers can come to gain more empathy and a more well-rounded understanding of why people participate in polygamous relationships with their lovers. It may not be out of oppressive circumstances but rather a desire to be unique, to live life on their terms and to negotiate with the world they have come to know. It also may be the women's intention to disrupt modern narratives of monogamous love and popular understandings of the concept. The wives, girlfriends, mozas and groupies that I spoke with defended the lifestyle as women within the corporate rap model as demonstrated in the previous pages of the chapter.

The girlfriends of the rappers in the adhoc model were most often promiscuous short-lived relationships. Sometimes, children developed from these relationships and sometimes long-term romantic relationships developed. However, that was much more the exception, rather than the rule. The men in this group were much more likely to share sexual partners and beef about these issues. Gossip, fame and popularity were contested for in the rap scene through rappers using scandal and betrayal as points of attraction to their behavior in hopes of using these

mechanisms to propel them towards fame. Their intimate relationships generated on-line gossip, attention and caused their rivals to become envious of the attention they were garnering through their 'scandalous behavior'. In this way, the females in the rap scene could generate attention and help the develop rap music careers. Again, the adhoc rap groups in the scene were heavily criticized by their corporately structured rivals for their frivolous behavior. The corporate rappers thought that these 'scenes' caused by the adhoc groups gave the genre a bad name. On the other hand, the adhoc rappers were mimicking the commodified images that they had seen on social media platforms from rappers in other contexts in hopes that this scandal driven behavior would garner them the same kind of attention and fame that other artists had received for similar behavior. Additionally, the criticism about scandalous sexual behavior, in any context should be highly questioned. As opposed to the religious morals that many of the world's organized belief systems place on love and marriage practices, or even the sociological esposal of societal 'norms' in regards to relationships driven by the scholarship of people like Talcott Parsons, these adhoc groups opposed that mainstream narrative, as well. The polities practices run counter-cultural to norms imposed under colonial rule. Representing a new norm of open families, as opposed to the rigid nuclear family norms imposed by modern empires, then these sexually promiscuous behaviors advocate for a radically new approach to thinking about relationships and families. Research into this topic by Sylvia Chant and Alice Evans find for example that,

> "For poor young Gambian women and men, resource scarcity seems to be associated with a prioritization of the instrumental and material over the affective or recreational value of sexual partnerships, often resulting in multiple, concurrent relations." (2010, p.353).

I would like to add additionally that this trend of having multiple concurrent intimate relationships is not just a trend for the materially needy or for the poor but is often a social fact of technology, globalization and changing ideas of what creating a family means for the average

person. Academically, it is necessary to take seriously these 'alternative' ideas of what a family is and how long these relationships last. It is also incumbent upon our profession to get with the times and to stop stigmatizing alternative approaches. Some have tried to argue that this 'affective' shift is the cause of neoliberalism. It could also be argued however, that perceptions of what it means to love someone have become more open and flexible. Or perhaps the historicity of these conceptions has just been flatly ignored by the researchers themselves. As people are becoming more educated, less religious and more aware that it is possible to be attracted to more than one person in your lifetime, behavior is changing, accordingly. Globalization and neoliberalism are indeed factors in aiding this change. However, pitting it in to a corner as a bad change, denies the problems that existed with the imposition of colonial structures and discourses surrounding these themes from the beginning. Unlike, the closed, controlled relationships of the corporate model, these ever-changing relationships within the adhoc model represents something radically different. Again, in anthropology we encourage difference, variety and change. It is our responsibility to record these happenings, discuss them and offer rounded, analytical arguments that can be had about them. Doing this, will aid our understanding of one another and will bolster our professional reputation for doing this, objectively.

The women in rap in Bogota were incredibly dynamic in helping to develop various aspects of the rap scene in Bogota. While they did not have unifying principles that defined all of them, many of the women in the scene were known for their hard work, self-discipline and perfectionist tendencies. They were also known as demanding clients. The girls/women in rap provided sources of funding, publicity for the producers and a different voice from the public. As the detailed fieldnotes about the internal dynamics of working with the female rappers discussed

the women involved in the rap scene were sometimes given a hard time but ultimately they were respected for their professionalism, dedication to their craft and demand in product excellence. These excerpts from the field also uncovered how sensitive transactional working relationships can be. Destructive forms of gossip, reputation building or destroying, and the perceptions of non-verbal communication or signaling to the public can be issues that contribute to building up or demolishing relationships. As the women in many of the illustrated situations have a great deal of control over their relational and working environments, in other cases, the group dynamics and complications make it difficult for one actor to decide all outcomes. Further research into women in rap needs to be conducted in all of their varied contexts. What can be argued here however is that rap music is creating new influences in participants' relationships and professional lives. It is allowing for alternative family formations to take place, new ideas of what intimacy should consist of and it is opening paths for young women who would not otherwise have an opportunity to voice their opinions, to rap about the conditions most important to them. In the following chapters, this study will continue to uncover the various ideologies presented in rap music that make it so important to the world of cultural production in our ever changing, multifaceted world. Then, I will follow the processes of production that different kinds of rap groups use to demonstrate how music is made, to discuss the structural barriers that exist for artists and how the commodification of this industry has led to the successful business models lead by people who were born into humble circumstances. Finally, this research concludes by analyzing the business strategies that our polities used. Both models tried to market their rap music products in different ways. The means they used, garnered very different results. Understanding those can aid in other future attempts to reproduce similar results in other places, hopefully with the desired outcome.

Chapter 7: Commodified Content: Rap Lytica and the Saleability of the Struggle

"All I need is a sheet of paper and something to write with, and then I can turn the world upside down." -Friedrich Nietzsche

Introduction

Exploring the origins of rap music and understanding where it comes from, I wanted to come to know, what the rap artists were trying to communicate to their audiences. Why do people create rap music and what messages do rap artists want to send to their audiences? In this chapter, a lyrical analysis of these themes will take place to analyze the uniqueness of the ontological orientation of rappers in Colombia and what they believe music can do to change the current status of their country. In this Chapter, I analyze the songs that several rap groups authored in no particular order, as public documents. I have selected a few well-known rap music hits from various groups that I worked with and in other cases, I have been able to glean anecdotal information from public interviews. In this selection, I am going to present the lyrics from three popular rap songs that were released to the public while I was in the field. I do this here to illustrate the radical political messages of the rappers in Bogota, Colombia and to discuss how and why these messages are possible only because of the open political and economic environment in which they are operating.

I am purposefully not labelling the groups in this chapter as being part of any particular rap polity to preserve confidentiality for my participants. I am going to present the rap lyrics in Spanish and in their English translation, noting that there are poetic elements in all of the songs, that a reader of either language may be able to analyze the translations for themselves. After I present the lyrics in both languages, I will then turn to decoding what the authors themselves have said about the meaning and the process of creation that they went through to produce these songs to uncover the commodification of music in Bogota, Colombia. Finally, some comparative

analysis will come towards the end of the selection to see what can be understood from the authorship process in Bogota's rap scene. In the concluding section, I will argue that these songs represent narratives of variety, tell tales of attempting to adapt to an increasingly chaotic environment and help young people cope with the ever-changing world in which they live.

Just Say No to Drugs

While I was in the field, different rap songs became popular in the city. One of the songs that a lot of my informants started playing was called "*Di Me No a Las Drogas*" or just Say No to Drugs. It is an interesting song with a trap beat. The song was written exclusively by a rapper named LG Prada. He was a rapper originally from Miami and had ancestral roots in Venezuela. In fact, he had been deported back to Caracas after a few run-ins with the law in Miami. He had moved to Bogota as political violence heated up in Caracas and had lived there for about three years. As a result of some of his transnational movements he was connected to some of the biggest names in the rap industry in Bogota. On this track, "*Di le no a las drogas*", Prada worked with the DCP Mafia which is a production house in the city. DCP Mafia constructed the beats for Prada and both artists worked on mastering the song. The lyrics read as follows:

Di Le No a Las Drogas
LG Prada

DCP, DCP
Crack pipes, crack pipes

Este es dedicado pa´ todo queman el blunt
Cuando esta tema se terminó me va a fumar igual que yo
Este es dedicado pa todo qumen al blunt
Cuando este canción se termina es cuando vas a fumar igual que yo

Di le no a las drogas, da las más a mi
Di le no a las drogas, da las más a mi
Di le, di le di le no da me las a mi
No te fumas eso, mejor que lo fuma yo

No te ouelas eso, mejor que lo ouela yo
No te tomas eso, mejor que lo toma yo

Papel ahí mezcla con este syrup
Deje tu mentira no me engaña mi
Yo se que te gusta ere consciencia, conciencia wannabe
Por esto es que te dicen, deje este y da me las a mi
Da me las a mi
Di le no a las drogas, da las más a mi
Si no te haces nada, entonces da me las a mi
Da me las a mi
Da me las a mi
Si no te haces nada, entonces da me las a mi
Da me más a mi
Da las más a Bob o DCP
Cuando tú lo ve las, da las mas a mi
Si no te haces nada, entonces da me las a mi
Da me las a mi
Da me las a mi
Di les, di les, di le fumas da las a mi
Da me las a mi
Da me las a mi mi
Di les, di le, di le no a las drugas más a mi

No te fumas eso, mejor que lo fuma yo
No te ouelas eso, mejor que lo ouela yo
No te tomas eso, eso que yo lo tomo

Papeles haciste syrup así que yo me toman
Dos gramas de perico el y dosepine, ocho en el más calete el bóxer si por ahí ouele dos
Dos frascos de coedina, dos tragos que se van
Niño te vuelo tan alto, llama la Superman
Clonozapan, o perritgotri, sicotropical con espedimine
Medio papel, ocho blunts al mou
Solo empecar la fiesta, tu sabes como empecou

Di le no a las drogas, da las más a mi
Di le no a las drogas, da las más a mi
Di le, di le di le no da me las a mi
Di les, di le, di le no a las drugas más a mi
Este es dedicado pa´ todo queman el blun
Cuando esta tema se terminó me va a fumar igual que yo
Este es dedicado pa todo qumen al blun
Cuando este canción se termina es cuando vas a fumar igual que yo

Dedicaciones especial es de esa mamá gueva rapera conciencia que escucha mi música solo pa criticar me concepto y que no pueda a ver la fiesta, porque esta es todo borracho porque le toma de esta agualera,

Por todo de esta aranda de guebones productores o escritorios de radio o administradores del web si no quieres apoyar mi concepto, pero también cuando pueden verte en un discoteco oueliendo perico

Disque eso pa arancar ese mande de un león a ti un dedicación especial
A todo de esa grupito a todo que esa productora que me ponen nombre que es un sicologi por droga no te puedes poner tu nombre de una cosa que tu no haces.

Chandopa, Chandoda

Si crees que esa es para ti, eso es para ti.
Si crees que esa es para ti, eso es para ti.
DCP, three six mafia en la pista
Somos lo que hacemos
Rudeboys
Ya tu sabes
Rudeboys
Rudeboys
DCP Mafia

This song is set to beats commonly referred to as trap music. Trap music is a form of rap music the developed from the Southeastern part of the United States and deals with the themes of drug-dealing and partying. The song called, "Just Say No to Drugs" has a light party feel and you can detect a playful tone in LG Prada's voice as he flows with sarcasm over this track. Here, I will translate and simultaneously analyze the track in English. I will do this to uncover what the rappers are saying and to socially contextualize the lyrics of LG Prada. Prada opens the song by giving a shout out to the production house of DCP that created his track. Then, when he gives the shout out to 'Crackpipes', he is giving a shout out to people who do hard core drugs. Prada wants to make sure he makes all of the people that listen to his music feel like he is talking to them and that he accepts their lifestyle. It might also be that he is giving a shout out to the Crack Family who uses a hand gesture of a crack pipe as their symbol for their fans, as well.

'*Este es dedicado pa todos queman al blunt*' is saying that this song is dedicated to everyone smoking a blunt. '*Cuando este canción termino te vas igual como yo*' Prada is singing about how the people listening to his song are going to smoke like him when they are done listening to the song. '*Di le no a las drogas, da me más a mi, di le no a las drogas, da me las a mi*' he sings, to just say no to drugs and give them all to him. '*No te fumas ese, mejor que lo fuma yo*' he is saying, it's better not to smoke that, it is better that you give it to him. '*No te ouelas ese, mejor que lo ouela yo*' he is saying that it is better not to sniff that, he's got it. '*No tomas eso*', is to not drink that. '*Papeles y haciste syrup*' here Prada is telling us that he has tried LSD, and coedine cough syrup. Then he says, '*Deje tu mentira no me egaña mi*' which means, do not lie to me, you cannot fool me. '*Yo sé que te gusta la coca*' or, I know you like cocaine. You are socially conscious or '*Tu eres conciencia.*' '*Nah, conciencia wanna be* whereby he then accuses the

socially conscious rappers denying in their music that they are hard core drug users but they rap about being such good, hard working and moral people. One the other hand, LG Prada argues that is not the truth, but rather that the conscious rappers are just socially conscious rapper wannabes. '*Por eso es que te dicen, deje este y da me las a mi.*' '*Da me las a mi.*' If you do not do anything, then give the drugs to me, he sings. He has an associate that he raps with a lot named Bob – *Suave es todo* (or Smoothness is everything) that he gives a shout out to in his songs, and then he gives a shout out to DCP Mafia. The first verse, tells the audience what inspired the song. Apparently, Prada was criticized for his rap radio show that he hosts once a week and for the lyrics in his music which promote drug use. Prada argues that almost all the musicians that he knows use drugs and if they do not, then that is fine, they should just let him have them all.

The second verse is all about the types of drugs available through his rap networks. He starts out talking about a particular drug cocktail he is famous for taking. He sings, '*Dos gramas de perico*' he is rapping about how he did two grams of cocaine. '*Dos frascos de coedina, dos tragos que van*' Prada is telling us about his habit of drinking two bottles of coedine in two shots or perhaps 'gulps' would be a good way to describe it. '*Niño te vuelo tan alto llama la Superman.*' he is saying, like kid or son, this will take you really high, they call it the Superman because only big tough guys (like him) can take this drug combination and it will make you soar higher than an eagle. '*Clonozopan, o periguergotri sicotrpoical con espedimin.*' is a verse where Prada is talking about mixing prescription anti-anxiety drugs with methamphetamines. A half of a hit of acid and eight blunts is what he enjoys, or '*Media papel, ocho blunts halmou.*' '*Solo empecan la fiesta tu sabes como empecau.*' Prada rhymes that this is just how we get the party started, you know how we do it. His use of his native *Venezolono* accent in his lyrics for the

words *halmou* and *empecau* is a way in which he incorporates his national identity into his music. The use of his accent is also similar to the accents that trap music rappers from the United States use to demarcate certain regional accents. Rappers in the South, generally try to incorporate a large amount of regional slang and accents into their music to denote their origins and identity (Alim 2006, Westoff 2011). This seems to be a something that LG Prada, having lived in the Southeastern United States, and being from somewhere other than Colombia, that he wanted noted and to put into his song, for stylistic difference and recognition. At this point in the song, the chorus repeats, and then the third and final verse is kind of more of a mantra then actual rhyming rap lyrics and he says, '*Dedicaciones especial es de esa mamá gueva rapera conciencia que escucha mi música solo pa criticar me concepto y que no pueda a ver la fiesta, porque esta es todo borracho porque le toma de esta agua destilada,*' which translates to Prada rhyming that this song is especially dedicated to those Mama's boys, gay[28] rappers who call themselves socially conscious rappers and listen to his music only to criticize him. He says they are no fun and come to the party but cannot enjoy it because they are sitting on the sidelines drunk off of their distilled water. He then shouts out that this song is dedicated to all of the producers, radio DJs and website administrators who do not support Prada because of his drug concept but then when he sees them in the club, they are sniffing cocaine in the bathroom. '*Disque eso pa arancar ese mande de un león a ti un dedicación especial',* he sings, I especially dedicate this song, to those who have bothered this lion (referring to himself). '*A todo de esa* grupito *a todo que productora que se ponen me nombre que es un sicologí por droga, no te puedes poner un nombre de una casa que tu no haces*' he is saying for those groups who name themselves after nicknames for drugs, that they should not use the names of things that they do

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[28] *Gueva* could be translated as ´gay´ as in a homosexual or as 'someone who sits on their balls and does nothing all day'.

not do. '*Chandopa, chandoda*' is honestly something, I do not understand completely. I think Prada is singing here about the practice of calling yourself something you do not do is stupid and immature but I am open to hearing more thoughts on this interpretation of this phrase because it is being used informally and could have more meanings, than I am grasping, here. Then he says if you think this is for you, this is a song for you and repeats himself. Then he gives a final shout out to the production company and the beat maker, where he closes by saying, '*Somos lo que hacemos.*' or this is who we are. 'Rudeboys' is the name of his production company that he gives a shout out too and the end of the song and says '*Ya tu sabes*' or you already know. He gives a few more shout outs and then the song fades out. This is a classic beef track where LG Prada is talking back to his colleagues in the rap scene of Bogota and throughout Latin America that have criticized his music. It's the best kind of beef song though because it is full of 'play' and 'sarcasm'. The song is not meant to be thought provoking or profound but it is just a fun song, as Prada argues for himself, in English on his Youtube Channel, Rudeboyz TV.

> LG Prada: "Why do people always complain about these types of songs? Their not supposed to be lyrically good or have some type of deep meaning. Its just a track to dance to. Like listening to a dance or house track in the club. Theirs no meaning behind those tracks but it makes you dance! I am getting tired of people coming on these videos complaining "whats happening to hiphop" and etc. If I want to listen to real hiphop I will play some nas, kendrick or Jadakiss etc. But if I am feeling pumped for gym or driving to the club I will listen to songs like this. I don't give an F if their talking nonsense! It sounds good! You lot complaining sound like moody granddads! Get out of here with that shit!

Prada, was clearly expressing frustruration with the way some of the audience members from YouTube received the art. While this song is classic example of trap music and a newer style of music that particular factions of the rap community are trying to introduce into the rap scene. Some audience members are more than a little skeptical about rap music going in this direction. However, the following selection are lyrics from a classic form of rap.

198

The Tears of the Town

Las Lagrimas del Peublo
By Jay M. Vee/Roc Dilla

Las lagrimas del pueblo serán la sangre del gobierno
¿Sientes calor en el invierno?
Es porque están convertiendo el parasíso en un infierno
Las lagrimas del pueblo serán la sangre del gobierno
¿Sientes calor en el invierno?
Es porque están convertiendo el parasíso en un infierno
Es porque están convertiendo el parasíso en un infierno

Gobernar es un negocio familiar, donde no existe los demás
No queremos gobernantes, queremos lideras
Que no tocan nuestros viveres
Que cumplan con sus deberes y no utilicen sus poderes en contra quienes realmente importan
Con cada abuso la paciencia se agota
No hay quien repare los conversaciones rotas
Defender la dignidad es el plan

Ante el que quiere quitarnos el pan
Los de la campaña ¿Dónde están?
Cunado los cosas están mal
Usan como escudo, al que no pudo
¿Quién desunido? ¿Quién?
Lo que era una familia por robarse sus semillas

Las lagrimas del pueblo, serán la sangre del gobierno
Las lagrimas del pueblo, serán la sangre del gobierno
¿Sientes calor en el invierno? Es porque están convertiendo el paraíso en un infierno
¿Sientes calor en el invierno? Es porque están convertiendo el paraíso en un infierno

¡No! No creo en los políticos ni en medios controlados
No dicen la verdaderes, son aliados
Un estado en mal estado
Nunca será un estado para necesitado
Somos revolución con cada acto
No queda intacto lo que vien, ¡Exacto!
La reacion es el impact, no su se mete, no lo saco
Fuerzas armadas marioneta de la mafia
Fuerzas armandas y mudes ante la rabia
Sería la decisión mas sabia, unise a sus familias y defender la causa
¡No! La solución no es violencia es solo reacción a su negligencia

No subestimen nuestra inteligencia
Sabemos que el país es nuestro pertenencia

Las lagrimas del pueblo, serán la sangre del gobierno
Las lagrimas del pueblo, serán la sangre del gobierno
¿Sientes calor en el invierno? Es porque están convertiendo el paraíso en un infierno
¿Sientes calor en el invierno? Es porque están convertiendo el paraíso en un infierno

Colombia
Dos mil trece
Smart Revolution Records
Es revolución inteligente
Alright
Roc Dilla on the beat

Jay M. Vee is a rapper who started his career as part of *Clan Hueso Duro* which began in the mid-1990s and was one of the original hip-hop groups in Bogota. In the early 2000s, Jay M. Vee joined their group, only to depart from it a few years later to pursue a solo career. He is a well-known artist in the field. This song was written by Jay M. Vee after a '*paro*'[29] in August of 2013. This particular protest was led by the farmers in Colombia who were upset about the institution of free trade agreements that the farmers argued were flooding the market with cheap agricultural products and were making it impossible for them to sell their goods (Wills 2013). The protests ended when Miguel Santos, the President of Colombia, agreed to grant debt relief, more access to loans and guaranteed minimums on the sale of agricultural products that were grown domestically (ibid).

In the middle of the protest, Jay M. Vee began writing a song about the political issues that the farmers were facing. In the following selection, I will analyze the lyrics and translate them at the same time, so that a discussion about the lyrics can come to pass. '*Las lagrimas del pueblo, serán la sangre del gobierno*'. This means that the deaths that will occur because of

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[29] A *´paro´* is a strike or a protest.

these free trade agreements will be on the hands of the government and will be the tears of the common man.'*¿Se sientes calor en el invierno? Es porque están convertiendo el paraíso en un infierno.´* which means are you feeling hot in the winter, that's because the elites are turning our paradise into a hell. *´Gobernar es un negocio familiar.´* or the government is an oligarchy, where everyone else does not exist in their world. We do not want governors, we want leaders, Jay yells out in Spanish *´No queremos gobernantes, queremos lideres´ ´que no tocan nuestros viveres´* or we want leaders that will not steal our livelihood and change it for their debts and they do not use their power for the people, who are actually important *´que cumplan con sus deberes y no utilicen sus poderes contra quienes realmente importan´. ´Con cada abuso la paciencia se agota.'* with each abuse, the patience wears thin. *´No hay quien reparé los conversaciones rotas.´* means there is no one that can repair the broken conversations. *´Defender la dignidad es el plan´* or to defend our dignity, is the plan. *´Ante el que quiere quitarnos el pan´*, before they want to take away our bread. *´Los de la campaña, ¿Dónde están? Cuando los cosas estan mal usan como escudo, al que no pudo´* is where JMV asks, "Where are the promises from the campaign? Where are you when things are bad? You are using them like a shield, because they are too morally weak to help anyone". *´Entender que debío dar la mano al que recibio con el puño.´* or to understand that he should lend a hand in fighting for those that gave them power by stabbing the enemy with a sword. *´¿Quien es desunio? Quien? Lo que era una familia por robarse sus semillas.´* The rapper asks, who is disunified? Who? Then he argues that the government's family's are part of the multi-national business cartels that have plotted to rob the people of their seeds. Here, Jay M.Vee is referring to Law 9.70 passed in the fall of 2010. It was a law that forbade small scale agriculturists to trade seed strands with each other and gave the licensing monopoly for selling these seeds to farmers in the country, to a US based agricultural firm

named Monsanto. This *litic*a directly addresses the political issues at the heart of the *paro* by the farmers. Then the chorus repeats. *¡No! No creo, en los politicos ni los medios controlados, son aliados. Un estado en mal estado.´* Here, Jay is rapping about how he does not believe in politicians of the corporate media structure because these folks are always allied with one another and they lie to present the version of the story that they want to tell, the one that make their interests seem appealing. A state (Colombia) that is in bad shape. *´Nunca será un estado para el necesitado.´* It will never be a state for those who need it. '*Somos revolución en cada acto.´* But we are a revolution with every act that we take. *´No queda intacto lo que veín en contra de lo mío, exacto.´* You can not keep the old ways together because it goes against me! Exactly! *´La reaccion es el impacto no se su mete no lo saco´*. The reaction to our protests are what we are seeking. If you do not interfere with it (the system), you cannot get rid of it. *´Fuerzas armadas marioneta de la mafia. Feurzas armadas y mudes ante la rabia´.* Here Jay insults the soldiers, by calling them marinette puppets of the elites who he says work for the government, which is in fact, an illegitimate mafia. Armed forces and you move before they attack. *´Seria la decisión más sabia, unise a sus familias y defender su causa.´* means that the wisest decision, would be for the people to unify against the government with their families. *´¡No! La solucion no es violencia.´* So he is saying that violence is not the answer.*´Es solo la reaccion a su negligencia´* but that violence might be the reaction that people have if their voices are ignored. *´No subestimen nuestra inteligencia sabemos que el país es nuestra pertenencia.´* Do not downplay our intelligence because we know that the welfare of the country is our business. Another chorus is sung and then Jay M. Vee gives a shout out to Colombia, his record company, his producer and revolution.

This song was written, recorded and produced to show support for the farmers who were protesting the changes made to Colombian National Law through 9.70. At the end of August 2013, a documentary was released showing how a division of the *Instituto de Colombiano Agroprecurario* (ICA) throwing out 62 tons of indigenous rice varieties that it claimed were not licensed grains from the state. The farmers in Campoalegre, Huila organized a protest against this government action and to stand up for their rights to possess the intellectual property of their seeds (Semana 2013). In Law 9.70, the government signed into law a part of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). Part of the FTAA policy recommendations asks member countries to make sure that all of their crops are patented and liscenced by the state in order to ensure safe healthy crops as well as to stymie crop contamination. Monsanto was given the sole proprietorship for supplying seeds to all of the farmers in Colombia. The bill 9.70 was passed into law in October of 2010. When the law was initially enacted, there were small scale conflicts between the ICA and the farmers. When the ICA discovered unlicensed seeds it was responsible for confiscating crops, burning them and fining people for their "illegal activity". In some cases, the fines would be such a large economic burden on the farmers that it forced people off of their land. However, these incidents had been too few in number and so sporadically implemented that it was difficult for mass amounts of people to rally around them and protest. The situation eventually hit a climax though, when the ICA cracked down on the indigenous communities for their 'traditional' and unpatented crop cultivation. The whole Colombian farming community went on high alert. The indigenous community at Campoalegre, Huila sued ICA in court for damages and pointed out that the law was in conflict with another multilateral trade agreement with the *Comunidad Andino* under Convention 345 that stated that the indigenous communities that have seeds are allowed to retain the rights to their indigenous farming methods and

techniques (Wills 2013). The courts ruled that Law 9.70 was illegally passed without a proper review and because it contradicted an existing law, it had to be suspended until there was a further investigation by Congress. The law was removed and later modified to allow farmers to have 'hybrid' or 'indigenous' strands of seeds that they did not have to register with the state. The *´paro´* throughout the major cities in the country shut down the majority of business and government operations all over the country for about 10 days. In Bogota itself, the *´paro´* lasted from the 21st of August until the 2nd of September. I was told that 250,000 *campesinos* had marched to the capital in order to protest the actions of the state against the indigenous farmers.

Jay M. Vee's rap song about seeds captures the sentiment that many people were feeling during this political conflict with the government. Many people in Colombia believe, like Jay raps about in this context, that the government of Colombia operates like a familial cartel and that they look out for their business and political interests over the interests of the people. Vee argues explicitly in the song that it should not be like this but that it is. In response, he urges people to organize, and protest against these practices and if asking nicely does not work, violence might become necessary. He urges people to band together with like-minded people (or family) to find ways to intelligently fight back against the system. The song also explicitly says that the blood shed from this protest, is on the hands of the government, as inevitably people were killed, injured and had their human rights violated in this massive strike that took over the country for nearly two weeks. This rap song was an example of what some people would consider a classic protest song from the rap music genre. In the following selection, I have chosen another type of rap classic in Bogota, from the 'gangster rap' sub-genre. This is a song from the Crack Family which was widely popular among rap music fans when I was in the field.

Moles

Topoz
Crack Family

[Educar al niño para no tener que castigar un hombre.]

[Fumas]
Con un fiero vaya mandar un inocente a queda callado
No me quité, no es lo mío
No es lo tuyo, no lo creo
No lo serví pa nada

[Manny]
Quien le vaya, fuero como un video su cuerpo
Le da su muerto, se pánico destraviado
Y sin miran en su pasado sin gañando no se continua así
Sus socios quedan haciendo lo suyo en el lado equivicado
A ganar por los brincos encanados
Cuando lo revoltado buscando libertad pero no hay plata pa la abagada

[Cejaz]
Crack Fam Gangster, Colombian Masters,
La historia de la vida triviado
Sangre por sangre, de la vida y en la calle hermano
Compartiendo pan por momentos buenos y malos

[Fumas]
A caller los que caen ayer es como me he alimentado
Discupío tecado con su limpia cara pero es demasiado arregla
La vida es una rueda un carosel amargo carousel escoje otro camino
Igual si capaz a tocar la guitarra, y me dan la pata se te la recordar la maña
A quien no se la cuidan se la paña

[Chorro]
Carousel me las mostrado que hay valor de papel,
La fuente de dinero que ayer me econtré, la vaporé
¿Por qué? La gasté, ¿Por qué? Me fumé, ya se fue

Carousel me las mostrado que hay valor de papel,
La fuente de dinero que ayer me econtré, la vaporé
¿Por qué? La gasté, ¿Por qué? Me fumé, me gozé

[Fumas]
Nunca se acordo lo de planeado
Se cayó de un borraco lo que más de a pesado
Lo demás de la vida de pena por los centavos
De rea en rodillos con no retorzado

En la recorrido a dónde me camino
Deje mi alma es mi ganga y Fondo Blanco es mi familia
Crack Gangsta Music pa ustedes
Las calles más corrida que nos queda respira un tren de visajes
Un tren de melodías
[Cejaz]
A galla de lo comité automico
Un poco loco al vida al mal le juegado como al boomerang
Se la te vuelto todos
Suerte a tenerte vivo amigo
Crack Familia somos, brillanos más que los tres oros
Con el sol me arma a cobijo
Con las reglas de la calle que yo vivo y voy escribo

[Manny]
Recesito a todo con el corazón de piedro
Que usted espera su vida ha ido solo guerra
Afflejido por las cosas que su seda en su espera
Offendida de cada persona en la tierra
Matan lo que nadie es eterno

[Fumas]
Con este tarjeta a juego de tambar
No me importa con una balla me pie llego, nada solo a pasar el tiempo
El talento, así se calle una flor sí se no quité, lo mata trata a cultivar para vender por solo fumar
el hydro, rojo, morado, azul
Y en la mañana, abrir la ventana y fumo un blun
Topoz, rompeando la vida siempre buscando un roto
Tan tanto, si no sales a las calles re buscara sean mocos o fajos gordos
Topoz, rompeando la vida siempre buscando un roto
Tan tanto, si no sales a las calles re buscara sean si fajos gordos
Tan tanto
Original gangster reppin´our click
Es Crack Familia, listen to this
RE-AL hip-hop for you niggaz
Una escuela por ustedes eso es Crack Family
Original hip-hop for these mingas, una fuerza pa ustedes Crack Family
Crack Family con esto Lampeste

[Chorro]
Carousel me las mostrado que hay valor de papel,
La fuente de dinero que ayer me econtré, la vaporé
¿Por qué? La gasté, ¿Por qué? Me fumé, ya se fue

Carousel me las mostrado que hay valor de papel,
La fuente de dinero que ayer me econtré, la vaporé

206

¿Por qué? La gasté, ¿Por qué? Ya se fue, ya lo gozé

Aquí lo llevo en Bogota.
Rompiendolo
Cuantas hierbas
Hay porque de mi tierra
Lo mata
Lo mata
Rap sicario

This song was written a few years ago and was put out on a previous Crack Family Album called *Maximus*, which featured songs by Manny, one of the lead rappers of the group. The song was written by Manny, his associate Cejaz and a guy they had known for many years named Fumas who had been sent to prison for murder. The song is about ´*topoz*´ or moles. The rappers rhyme about how they are nothing more than little blind moles who are searching for an escape from their conditions by looking for new openings in the ground. This is a poetic metaphor for how people from the lower social stratas in Bogota, come into the world, buried in the ground and they have to constantly look for ways to escape the conditions into which they were born. The 'moles' are born without 'sight' so they have to dig around in the dirt around them to look for opportunities to reach the sun, above ground.

I copied the lyrics from watching their music video for this song. The music video opens with a famous quote that reads, ´*Educar al niño para no tener que castigar al hombre*´ which translates into 'educate the child so that you do not have to lock up a man'. The video for this song was shot in prison with Fumas, where he is serving life in prison for his alleged crimes. The translation and explanation of the above lyrics to this song are as follows: ´*Con su fiero vaya mandate un inocente a queda callado.*´ or you kill the innocent victim with your gun to keep them quiet of your crimes that they witnessed. ´*No me quité, no es lo mío*´ I cannot let it go, that is just not my way. ´*No es tuyo, no lo creo.*´ That is not how you would handle business, I do not

believe it *'le vaya fuera como video su cuerpo.'* Whoever comes at me, I light up their body. *'La da su muerto se pánico destraviado.'* This type of life will lead you to death, panic and destruction. *'Y sin miran en su pasado, sin ganando no se si continua asi'* and if you are looking at your past, without earning a lot, and you do not know if you can continue like this. *'Sus socios quedan hacienda lo suyo en el lado equivicado.'* where your associates keep earning theirs on the wrong side of the law. *'A ganar por los brincos encanados'* to make money just to spend on partying with some fake snitches who will lock you up in prison the moment they get caught doing something illegal. *'Cuando lo revoltando buscando libertad pero no hay plata pa la abogada'* When you look back, you will wish you were still free but there will not be any money for an attorney. *'Crack Fam Gangsters, Colombian Masters'*, means to tell the audience, that these guys have beaten the system and become masters of it, so pay attention and listen to what they have been through, so their listeners can avoid the same fate. *'La historia de triviado, sangre por sangre en la vida en la calle hermano'* or the trivial history where it is blood for blood is how life is in the streets my brother. *'Compartiendo pan por los momentos buenos y malos*, or sharing bread through good times and bad is how this group of brothers makes it through their everyday lives, to quiet those that did them wrong '*A caller los que caen ayer es como me he alimentado'* yesterday is how I have survived and made myself stronger. *'Discúpio tecado con su limpia cara pero es demasiado arreglado'* is that I shot him with my gun because he was too dressed up and looked like a good target to rob and kill. *'La vida es una rueda un carousel amargo, escoje un otro camino'* or the life is a wheel, a carousel, so choose another path. What goes around comes around so be careful of what one chooses to do. *'Igual si capaz a tocar la guitarra y me dan la pata se te la recorder la maña'*, equally, if you have the chance to play the guitar and they give me their best, you should record your skills. *'A quien no se la*

cuidan se la paña´ For your friends who do not act with care or caution. Then the chorus repeats. *´Nunca se acordo lo de planeado´* Never just go along with the plan *´se cayó de un barraco lo que más de a pesado´* or you will fall from the cliff faster then a heavy weight. *´Lo demás de la vida de pena por los centavos de rea en rodillos ´.* All of the poor people live their lives down on their knees praying for every cent they can get without an answer. *´En la recorrido a dónde me camino deje mi alma´* on this journey in the past, I lost my soul. *´Es mi ganga y Fondo Blanco es mi familia´* or *Fondo Blanco* (the name of a former rap group that Fumas was a part of with Cejaz Negra before they were Crack Family) is my gang, they are my family. *´Crack, gangsta musica por ustedes.´* or Crack Gangster Music for you all. *´Las calles más corrida que nos queda respira´* We run these streets and keep them alive. *´Un tren de visajes, un tren de melodías´* or a train of tragedies is a train of melodies. *´A gallo de lo comite automico´* a rooster committed to the explosive life. *´Un poco loco, al vida al mal juegado como el boomerang se la te vuelto todos´* A little crazy, to the life that is poorly played, it is like a boomerang that sends back everything that you give it. *´Suerte a tenerte vivo amigo´* I am lucky to have you alive, my friend. *´Crack Familia somos brillando más que los tres oros, con el sol me arma a cobijo.´* Crack Family, we are shining more than three gold medals, with the sun that I arm myself with for protection. *´Recesito a todo con el corazón de piedro.´* with this stone cold heart he resuscitates everything. *´Que usted espera su vida ha ido solo guerra´* what would you expect with his life being full of nothing but war. *´Ofendida con cada persona en la tierra´* offended with every person from the land. *´Matan lo que nadie es eterno.´* They killed him because no one is eternal. *´Con este tarjeta a juego de tambor no me importa con una balla aposto me pie llego´* taking a chance with this game of Russian Roulette, a bullet came close to hitting me in the foot, but oh well. *´Nada solo a pasar el tiempo´.* I did it for nothing, only to pass the time. *´El talento*

así se calle un flor, si se no quité, lo mata.´ The talent in the streets will quiet the flower, if you do not quit the life, it will kill you. *´Trata a cultivar para vender por solo fumar el hydro, rojo, morado, y azul.´* Try to cultivate the flowers only to sell them or to smoke them, hydroponic weed in red, purple and blue. *´Y en la mañana, abrir la ventana y fumo un blun´* and in the morning, he opens the window and smokes a blunt. *´Topoz, rompeando pa la vida siempre buscando un roto, tan tanto. Si, no sales a las calles re buscara sean mocos o fajos gordos.´* Moles, breaking through the life always looking for a hole, how stupid. If you do not go out into the streets really trying to see if their will be boogars or fat stacks of cash. *´Original gangstas reppin our click, es Crack Familia, listen to this. Real hip-hop for you niggaz, una escuela por ustedes eso es Crack Familia.´* They sing that they are the original gangstas representing their click, it is Crack Family listen to this. Real hip-hop for you niggaz, a school for you guys, this is Crack Family. *´Original hip-hop for these mingas, una fuerza pa ustedes es Crack Family.´* Original hip-hop for these indigenous and black people, a force for you guys, Crack Family. *´Crack Family with esto lampeste.´* Crack Family, rapping with this grand plague (gang). Then, the chorus is sung again. They sing, this is how we do it in Bogota, count on us for herb because it is from our land. We killed it (this track), we killed it. Rap group of assassins.

The beats in this song are slow and are similar to rap music that one would have heard from earlier 1990s gangster rap in the US. The video for this song is shot in a prison and the song itself is about how to struggle and to keep looking for new ways to survive. In the song the rappers discuss their lives, what they have had to do in order to survive but advocate for others not to follow in their foot steps directly because it may lead to prison or death. Crack Family advocates for strategizing through life in the streets in smart, conscious ways to beat their circumstances. They talk about how they understand that people have to do whatever it takes to

feed their family but argue it is better to stay on the right side of the law, to try not to be violent or do illegal things just for there sake of showing off. Their basic premise is that people should only live like them as long as they have to and that they should try to keep climbing out of the hole they were born into, if they can.

Lyrics and Rhymes

H. Samy Alim (2006) argues that hip-hop and its contents are a cypher of society at large. A cypher as Alim explains it, is a place where different points of view are brought together to discuss issues impacting society. He argues that while many rappers, and fans try to define hip-hop in one way or another, the reality of rap music is that it is an art form that is constantly evolving, changing and being created. In other words, there is no true 'authenticity' or 'style' but these are elements constantly being contested and defined within the art form. The cypher of hip-hop, then represents all of the styles that are associated with the music. From classic hip-hop, to gangster rap, to socially conscious rap, to commercial rap, to trap music, all of these subgenres are a part of the larger musical typology of rap and hip-hop. I would also like to borrow from Travis Goza (2011, pg. 5) in his explanation of rap music as a site for the development of "counter-knowledge: an alternative knowledge system intended to entertain while challenging white dominated knowledge industries such as academia or the mainstream press.". Above, I presented the lyrics, translations and a basic understanding for what the lyrics of these rap songs are communicating. In this section, I will delve deeper into my analysis of each of the songs, while comparing and contrasting the messages of the songs presented to get a clearer idea of what the cypher of hip-hop production looks like in the rap scene of Bogota, Colombia.

The three song lyrics that I presented here, are all from slightly different genres of rap. LG Prada´s *´Di le no a las drogas´* would likely be considered a trap music hit. While Jay M.

Vee's song, *´Las Lagrimas del Pueblo´* is a socially conscious rap song. Then finally, *´Topoz´* is a traditional gangster rap ballad. The artists of these songs often make their music for different moods, occasions and to reflect different social issues or events. Prada, for example has other songs that are more serious in nature and advocate for political change. Similarly, Jay M. Vee and Crack Family also have songs that are part of the romance rap sub-genre and other songs that reflect more commercial styles. No single artist is unidimensional but these individual songs do give some insight about the forms, varieties and topics that are discussed in local rap music.

LG Prada´s *´Di le no a las drogas´* is a trap music song. Within the contents, he addresses some of the ideological divisions about rap music in Colombia. In the opening verse, Prada argues that many 'socially conscious' rappers claim superiority in their lyrical content to other forms of rap music. He argues however that these rappers are hypocrites because they often do a lot of the things in real life, that they rap against in their songs. In this way, LG Prada, is challenging the authenticity of socially conscious rappers in the scene, arguing that they are not 'real' and that they do not understand the purpose of the music in which they engage in producing. For this reason his song is considered a 'beef' rap. A 'beef' song is when a rapper feels that another has slighted them publicly, so they use a rapsong to respond to the criticism. Alim (2006) argues this is a form of communicative 'competition'. It is in essence a street fight with words as opposed to violence. Many people who have written about the hip-hop community credit hip-hop with providing a forum for rappers to rhyme about conflicts between groups instead of literally having these rivalries escalate into physical altercations (Chang 2007, Alim 2006, Westoff 2011).

While Prada claims that his song is not meant to be taken seriously but is rather a form of entertainment for his fans to work out to or to party to, I think he is too humble about his own

message. In the second verse of his song, Prada, explicitly discusses the vast amounts of drugs that he and his homeboys consume while they party. The social insight that LG Prada offers in this song is important to consider because Colombia is often exploited in the media as an international location that produces around 50% of the drugs consumed world-wide (Villar and Cottle 2011). While politicians and others inside Colombia have argued that the real problem is not drug production but rather the demand from the consumers that are alleged to be from North America and Europe, this song alludes to a different set of social facts. As Yolanda Gomez Torrez (2009) exposed through her investigative journalism, Colombia has its own drug consumption challenges. In Bogota alone, there are over 450 *ollas* that bring in around $300 billion Colombian pesos or $150 million USD per year that is circulated within the Colombian economy by its own population (Gomez 2009). In Prada's song, he raps about how people abuse prescription drugs, street drugs and he explicitly tells the audience that he and his click do this on a regular basis. In this case, Prada's song serves as a vehicle for understanding the holistic relationship that drugs have with society. The heavy amount of drug consumption enjoyed by many people in Colombia is one of the spillover effects that being the world's largest drug producing country has on its population. In these ways, Prada confronts the perception of socially conscious rappers as not being what they appear to be and he also opens a larger public debate with Colombian politicians to contest their narrative that the 'war on drugs' is just a North American and European consumption problem. He points out that in fact, drugs are consumed heavily in producer nations, like Colombia. However, instead of problematizing drug consumption as traditional narratives about drug use often do, LG Prada, ultimately, is arguing that drugs are not a 'problem' at all. Despite the mainstream media narratives that all drugs and drug use is bad, LG Prada is arguing that they are a normal part of everyday society. Locking

213

drugs out of normal discussions, has aggravated drug use problems. LG Prada's message is politically popular among his fan base, as well. They have grown tired of being criminalized in the streets by their government for targeting them with 'social cleansing' programs. This track, then becomes commercially popular for its alternative political messages, as well as its overt message of frustration with others in the rap community. As the track engages in degrees of scandal, as Prada attacks unnamed rap artists that are supposedly 'socially conscious', Prada exploits the use of the beef track genre to try to gain popularity on-line.

Jay M. Vee's song, in this selection presents him as a politically conscious rapper who in this instance, delivers a song about the *Paro* of 2013. In *Las Lagrimas del Pueblo*, Jay M. Vee raps about how the government of Colombia has sold out its people and tried to make their livelihoods more difficult by taking away their seeds and food sources. His song also goes into detail about how the government operates behind the scenes. He argues that they are a cartel, like the mafia and they operate the government as a family business. He advocates for revolutionary actions and community solidarity as the best way to challenge the power of the elites in society. He also argues that when communication and non-violent measures do not work, that is when the people erupt in violence against the state. Jay M. Vee's words give legitimacy to those armed conflict groups like the FARC, the ELN, or other social factions who have resorted to violence in the struggle for political power in Colombia. Vee argues that the government itself is responsible for the bloodshed because of the way they horde and exploit the resources of the country. As many of the country's leading newspapers and media outlets in Colombia started focusing on the protestors in the strike as criminals who were stopping commercial enterprise and were committing violence in the city, this song brought the focus back to the issues that protesters thought were an essential part of the struggle. This rap melody serves as a counter-balancing

mechanism to the mainstream media's reading of the situation between the campesinos and the government. This song demonstrates the power that people have around organizing, negotiating and ultimately using extreme protest tactics or even violence to combat the ill effects of large corporations on small communities in countries that are increasingly becoming a party to multi-lateral trade agreements. Many people who study neoliberalism often argue that the multi-national structures of wealth are becoming so big and monopolistic that they can get away with coercing governments around the world to passing and enforcing laws that protect their wealth and power. This may be somewhat true. However, this incident highlights that even the big and powerful corporations, such as, Monsanto cannot run over the farmers of Colombia without a serious challenge. This incident and the rap music that was a part of it, demonstrate how there is room to commoditize protest culture. While some academics and cynics have often thought that political messages become watered down when they are commercialized, this incident demonstrates how ideas of protest and revolution are popular. Therefore, they are capturable by artists who can articulate the popular opinion and turn it into a money generating music video on YouTube. A more in depth analysis of the technological and economic mechanisms utilized by the rappers will be carried out in the following chapter. For now, it is sufficient to lightly acknowledge that part of the process of commercializing rap music is the authorship of the music itself and that this music is a product, too. It highlights that in a liberal economic system there is room for all kinds of commodities. Consumers help to make this type of protest product popular through their consumption of the message.

Topoz, is a classic gangster rap song. This song discusses the survival strategies and tactics that people in the community use in order to make a better life for themselves. The song incorporates poetic metaphors of poor urban dwellers as moles who are born underground, blind

and have to search for a way out by digging around and trying different strategies to escape their life circumstances. The song is representative of the mobility genre of gangster rap that encourages its listeners to struggle against the odds to try to win. It is a type of song that presents metaphorical and literal examples of advice for the up and coming generations of fans to understand 'life lessons' that other people have already experienced so that the youth can learn from them. The song opens with Fumas presenting his story of how he ended up in prison. He urges other young people not to end up in the same place that he has, while Manny's verse backs up Fumas' point of view. Then, Cejaz breaks in to the song and delivers a verse urging listeners to be careful with each decision that you make because the things that you do will always to come back to you in some way or another. The song, discusses how finding the right kind of friends to help deal with your circumstance is one way that people in disadvantaged communities can come together and overcome their difficult life chances. This song is based on 'street knowledge'. H. Samy Alim (2006) argues that this type of rap is 'Dusty Philosophy' for the foot soldiers fighting to survive difficult circumstances that is delivered by rap artists to help ordinary people think outside of the normative paradigms that are presented to them by other parts of society. While 'dusty philosophy' from rappers is never complete, it offers alternative options for people who are finding it difficult to locate a good job to be able to support their family using conventional wisdom.

All of these songs present different styles, content and perspectives of life in Bogota. While Prada's song is more playful and less serious in tone then the other songs, his message still offers interesting insights about the culture of residents in Bogota and sheds light on serious social issues that people in the country face. Jay M. Vee's song, on the other hand is serious in style and tone. He has a message that conveys the larger politically entrenched problems that

people living in poor communities in Colombia have with the government and argues that the government is responsible for the violence in the country because of the way they exploit the nation to gain wealth and power. Crack Family uses this same line of argument to justify the harsh realities of surviving in poor ghetto communities within Colombia by having to do whatever it takes. While these songs all come from different genres of rap music, they also share some similarities. Rap songs, such as these produce a space for counter-knowledge to emerge. Counter-public spaces are essential for people to form new narratives about how society shall proceed forward in the times of rapid social transformation and to resist totalitarian elements of the dominant culture (Arendt, 1963). All of these songs tackle various social issues from drug use, to political disputes between farmers and the government to how poor people can use different strategies to escape the life they were born into. The songs come from different factions of the genre of rap music. While Prada admits that he just makes his music for fun, Jay M. Vee and Crack Family argue that they are revolutionary forces within society. Despite the rhetoric in the two songs about revolutionary politics, their format for distribution takes on the traditional capitalistic manifestations. The message of the rap music is also quite controversial, and with the way that artists can independently make their own content without constraints from larger record labels or anyone else. In the following chapter, more about this process will follow.

Conclusion

I originally sought to understand what artists are writing about in their rap songs, what they intend to communicate to their audiences and to explore the diversity of the voices of hip-hop in the city. As these songs do not necessarily represent all of the sub-genres of rap music, nor all of the topics covered by the artists in this city, it does give some insight into the nature of

the art work from this location. Rap music in Bogota is its own creation and has its own unique style. While the rappers do not attempt to replicate the styles of rap music found elsewhere they do borrow from some of the beats, and styles associated with mainstream commercial rap formats in the US and from around the globe. Additionally, the rappers in Bogota, struggle to formulate their own counter-public discourse that is separate from mainstream media, academia and political discussions available in normative social platforms. The voice of the rap community introduces different perspectives on current events and social problems at the margins of society. It gives people a space to discuss alternative ways of living and thinking about their realities. Once again, this demonstration of data from my research reveals that globalized, neoliberal cultural production practices are not constrained by the commoditization processes into becoming monolithic, or adversely impacted by social or political controls but rather that they are diverse narratives that challenge the mainstream academic, journalistic interpretations and political arguments about the current economic climate in which they operate. These narratives serve as a way to help further liberalize the Colombian society.

CHAPTER 8

The Art of Production: Beats, Equipment, Recording and Masterization

"I've gone seventy-nine hours without sleep, creating. When that flow is going, it's almost like a high. You don't want it to stop. You don't want to go to sleep for fear of missing something." - Dr. Dre

Introduction

As in other genre of music, the authorship of the music and the lyrics separately have a moment when they come together in the recording studio to transform into a song that is recorded onto some sort of format that one can playback. Once this happens, a whole series of other mechanical processes follow which allow the song to have a certain type of sound. This post-recording process is called masterization. Once a song is mastered it becomes a track that is ready for distribution. In this chapter, we will explore the process of making beats, recording music and mastering a song as it happens in a step by step process according to the types of rap groups with whom I worked. This section is meant to answer my research questions about the process of making rap music in Bogota, Colombia but also speaks to larger political and economic issues that have been addressed throughout this dissertation. In this selection, the reader will discover how social networks and technology facilitate the process of educating young people in the absence of formal institutions. While many critics of the liberal economy decry the rolling back of state sponsored institutions like schools, social welfare systems and argue that policing mechanisms have been beefed up to technocratically respond to perceived 'threats' (Davila 2006, Hilgers 2010, Waquant 2012) this literature leaves out how ordinary people are responding to these changes. This chapter intends to shed light on these topics to

illustrate how rap artists use new technologies to make music and pioneer businesses in this economic order.

Question

In this chapter, I am seeking to interrogate how rap music makes the transition from a song with some beats and then becomes a combination of lyrics and beats in a finished mastered cultural product. The reason this becomes interesting to analyze is because small differences in the way the recording booth is constructed, the equipment that the artists use, and the conditions for the recording session can make big differences in the sound quality that is captured and ultimately the marketability of the product. Plus, the masterization process is important to explore. As technology is entering an era of digitalization, there are artists and producers who criticize others for their extreme reliance on the masterization process, arguing that with the right equipment, producers can make anyone sound on-tempo, on-key, and can auto-tune someone's performance, so that 'anyone' can sound like a rock star or in this case a rapstar. This chapter will take some of those points to task, to discover how far one can actually argue that talent does not matter, if the right technology is in place. Here, I sought to discover what process each of the rap groups that I worked with use to make beats, record their music and master their songs. Once this question is explored, then the chapter delves into deeper issues about the extent to which the democratization of digital technology in the music industry enables or is limited in producing different kinds of sounds. In the end, the data reveals that technology still relies upon the human user to effectively orchestrate and operate technology to create the ultimate market advantage and highest caliber sound quality. Technology in of itself cannot overcome human user error, lack of talent or misappropriation of skill. For those interested in debates about the loss of social institutions, this chapter reveals through its highly-detailed analysis, that social

institutions and access to those formal places of power are what sorts the value of products that are delivered by cultural workers. As quality matters in the game of cultural production, accessing formal institutions to be able to polish ones' craft becomes a vital necessity for those trying to earn a living in this sector. Despite the optimistic view that technology will level the playing field for amateur artists who compete against those professionally trained with access to formal resources, the research reveals that this hypothesis is overly optimistic about what people can accomplish without professional training and resources. The neoliberal discourse of giving evermore access to the common artist in the open marketplace, is not what I discovered in this case. The findings of this chapter suggest that artists with more formal training, access to tight knit corporate groups, higher quality digital equipment and formal institutions within the cultural production industries make a better grade of products. Those products are the ones that are more likely to succeed in the marketplace of hip-hop cultural production. While neoliberalism may create openings for innovation, and entrepreneurship, it does have its limitations. This could be an area that policy makers work to improve.

Beats

Taking a deeper look at the way that beats were created in these instances can aid in understanding the authorship process of making music in rap communities in Bogota, how long this takes, and what kind of electronics or instruments are involved. One can also further understand how education, technology and equipment ultimately matter in the production process of these commodities. In the corporate rap models the beats were created in professional recording studios. The beats were authored over the period of a couple of days, usually when young men were showing off their sound engineering skills together in a competitive DJ battle mode. The beats that I saw being developed for a single track, took a few days to construct with

people who have professional sound engineering capabilities. Conversely, the adhoc rap model made their beats in home studios over the course of a few hours. While sometimes they used one principal author, the adhoc model's beats were also made with multiple producers. The corporate model's beats were most often constructed randomly without purpose. In the corporate model the music producers were full-time professional music producers who had educational credentials in the art of making music and they were beat-making junkies, who spent all of their waking hours making new beats.

> "I just make beats all the time, that reflect my mood. So if someone calls me and says, 'hey I need a beat for a party song.' I ask them a few questions about how long they want the beat to be, what the theme is and if they have any sample versus yet. Then, I send over two or three tracks for them to pick from. Usually, I hit the mark."

The adhoc model's producers were more hands on with their clientele and usually made beats on demand.

> "Sometimes, people will ask me for beats and I will have some extra ones that I send. But usually, the artists want to get involved and tell me how the track should sound."

Most of the beat-making sessions that I observed with the adhoc models, included the producers making the beats in the studio with the rappers the very day they were recording the song. Making beats on demand, as opposed to having days, weeks or months to create a sound for a particular song, meant that the producer did not have as much time with the sounds. Whereas, in the corporate models the producers had long periods of time to play with the sounds and change the beats or to add in different cuts and beat drops, the adhoc model's beat making style did not allow for this type of complexity or variation to develop within the music. The corporate models worked with producers who had been making beats for many years. This enabled the producers to be able to talk to their rap artists at a distance about themes of songs, moods and different

types of sounds they wanted included in the beats. Whereas with the adhoc rap models, the producers usually had less experience making beats and needed more in-person direction from the rap artists that they worked with in order to make the beats that their clients wanted.

The most important difference between the beat-makers from the two different models of rap groups, in producing the beats for each of their songs, is the equipment that each one of them used. The most successful producer that I worked with, had access to a professional recording studio in Paris and worked with one of the corporate groups from Bogota on an on-going basis. The corporate producer has access to a professional recording studio where he has: a Digital Audio Work (DAW) Station that is powered by Macintosh computers, a Mixing Console with recorders, synthesizers, and samplers on it. He has a Multi-track recorder, reference monitors, keyboards and acoustic drum kits. In comparison, the most successful producer that I worked with from the adhoc rap group, was working with a smaller number of electronic inputs. He had a computer, a synthesizer, audio interface and virtual studio technology (VST) plug-ins that he downloaded by pirating the software from internet websites. The producer from the adhoc model would often experience technical difficulties with his computer system because of all of the illegally obtained VSTs that his recording team used. The websites that they downloaded the VSTs from were often riddled with viruses and Trojan horses. The producer from this rap group would also frequently joke around about the time that it would take to open, save or record programs that they were running on the computer, by saying "Look be patient, this isn't a Mac."

Conversely, the producer from the corporate model never had to waste time worrying about these issues. Perhaps one of the most powerful ways to understand the difference between the environment and conditions that each group worked in is to look at the difference between their work stations. The producer in Paris made his beats here:
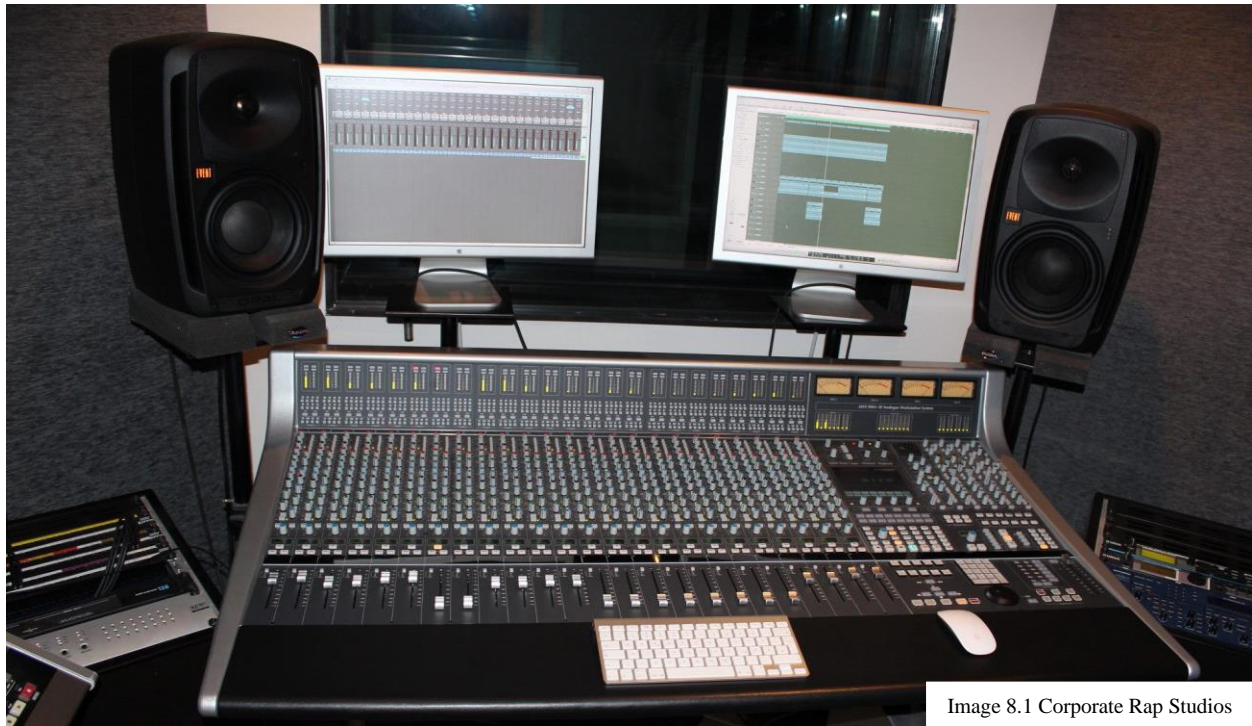
Image 8.1 Corporate Rap Studios

Table 8.2 Corporate Rap Model's
Input Costs for the Creation of Beats

Equipment	Brand	Cost in Euros	Cost in USD
Mixing Console	Solid State Logic AWS 900+	€42, 145	$59,000
Computer with 2 Monitors	Mac	€4,525	$6,335
Multi-Track Recorder	XLogic	€2,356	$3,299
Acoustic Drum Kit	Akai MPC 2500	€999	$1,400
Production Software	ProTools	€215	$299
Digital Audio Workstation	Apple Logic Pro	€140	$199
Reference Monitors	Opal Event	€1,070	$1,500
		€51,450	$72,032

To contrast this picture, one of the Producers from the Adhoc Model made his beats here:

Image 8.3 Adhoc Model's Home Studio

Table 8.4 Adhoc Rap Model's
Electronic Equipment to Create Songs

Equipment	Brand	Cost in Colombian Pesos (COP)	Cost in USD
Computer	Dell Hard Drive/Sony Monitor	$1.5 million	$765.00
Software Production Package	Image Line – FL Studio 10	Pirated (Free)	Free
Synthesizer	Akai Professional Synth Station 49 with MIDI Controller	$200,000	$79.00
Reference Monitors	Fame	$300,000	$150.00

Virtual Studio Technology	Lex Luger Bass Kit	Pirated	Free
VST	808 Mafia Drum Kit	Pirated	Free
VST	Trilian	Pirated	Free
VST	Purity	Pirated	Free
VST	Kick Ass Brass	Pirated	Free
VST	Nexus	Pirated	Free
		$2 million	$994.00

In an interview with the producer in Paris, I asked him to tell me in a much more detailed sense, how he and the interns made the beats for one of the songs they produced and he was much more obliged to talk about the process at length.

[Producer]: "Well, me and some of these new summer interns were messing around in the lab and we were talking about the weak poppy beats that all these artists like Drake and Nicki put out. We were talking about how we miss the hard beats with depth and soul that Mobb Deep or the more hood *mingas* write. So, we start messing around with the Mixing Console, opened-up Logic and started composing. We were all sort of competing to make the beats as hard and serious as the old-school beats. We opened a bit easy with a few bars and then we go in harder and harder. By the end of the song, it's bangin like 'Shook Ones' or something. It's great."

Laura: "Can you show me how you build a song in Logic?"

[Producer]: "Yah, [Another Producer] has the same program."

He turned on his computer, opened-up Logic and I could see the format. It's a program with multiple layers of tracks.

[Producer]: "So first thing you want to do is pick out a bass line and a tempo for the song. Over here, we have all of these plug-ins that you can use which make different sounds. We don't have it here but at the studio, you have a mixing console with all of these instruments to choose from too. So, I generally pick out my bass instruments, build some sounds, then I pick out my brass and all the percussion. Once you do this, the next thing you want to do is compose a melody. You can pick out whatever type of strings or guitars or whatever you want to put in. What happens when you start getting competitive in the lab, is generally the beats get really complicated and you'll have a lot of layers of sounds and add ins. This is kind of what happened with us on [Name of Track]. We kept listening to the beats over and over again, switching it up and going back to it to add more sounds, claps, breaks, and instruments to come out with the hardest beat possible."

This manner of showing off for the sake of displaying skill and a unique understanding of sound was what people did in order to outdo each other in the spirit of creating a really beautiful product. If someone could add to another person's style by compounding a beat, a sound, a new bassline, that was what they wanted to do in the spirit of the competition. The idea was not to 'beat' each other *per se*, but to cooperate and show skill. Essentially, the goal was to demonstrate your knowledge and the ability to create sound. The data collected here demonstrates what Tannenbaum et. al. (2013) describes when they argue that the culture of DIY production requires a quasi-obsession on the parts of creative producers and it demands a type of 'hedonistic' play. Conversely too, with what many economic theorists argue, this is not a business that can survive if the participants only care about the monetary aspect of what they are doing. In discussing the process of making beats with the corporate rap producers, they never mentioned making money. In fact, they talked about passion, friendly competition, brotherly bonding over their craft and a type of sensual relationship with the products that they made. The monetary value that their craft eventually produced was simply a bi-product of a job well done.

The producers in the adhoc models were also interested in creating sound and showing off their skills but in a different way. Because they did not have formal training about what they were doing, their collaboration was more explicitly to fill in technical gaps. Where one of the artists did not have as much expertise, the other one would try to fill the void with their knowledge or experience. For example, in one of the groups that I worked with, there was a beat maker who would set up the basic outline of the song in Fruity Loops but he lacked the ear for creating melodies and he needed assistance generally from other people in the studio to help him. The producer would begin by laying down the tempo, the percussion instruments, and the clap.

The few times that I observed him though, he also needed other producers or rappers to listen to the song over and over again while they filled in the melodies, the beat drops and the synthesizers. The group would often change the arrangement of the beats, even as they were recording which is something that the corporate models did not do.

The producers and musicians creating the beats also had varied backgrounds and types of education both formal and informal that are worth discussing. For example, one of the producers from the corporate rap models in which I worked, did not have any formal education in beat production. He had learned to construct beats on his own as a young kid. His parents had encouraged him and supported his craft. In anthropological theory about 'how' people obtain knowledge, it is assumed that one needs a mentor. And perhaps that is true in the abstract sense. This particular producer heard beats being produced through rap artists starting at the age of nine. The producer expressed interest in learning how to make beats and his parents helped him acquire equipment, whereby he began a trial and error method of trying to reproduce those sounds. As a teenager, he began producing beats with friends and with a social circle. But in talking with this producer, he largely mastered his craft by himself. The difference is that he started this craft production when he was very young and he spent a lot of time alone in his room practicing, recording his beats and listening to them as he played them back.

> "You know, I grew up in a rough neighborhood and running home after school, hanging out by myself making beats kept me out of trouble. It was a way for me to have fun and learn stuff and stay off the street. And I mean, I am where I come from but I was never like a gangbanger or anything. I have always just been making music and people respect me for that."

A producer that I worked with from the adhoc rap model had a similar story except that his beat making history, came much later in his life. As the producer from the corporate network started making beats when he was a young boy, the producer from the adhoc model did not start

making his beats until later in life, when he was about 30 years old. This is what accounts for the skill level difference in the models. The ability to hone in on one's interests, having access to resources, schooling and independent practice time is what separates one artist from another.

Apparently, production knowledge can be acquired through a great deal of trial and error or experimentation. Sociologists like Tannenbaum et. al. (2013) have speculated that people thrive in technological environments when they are able to have time to be 'hedonistically' idle and they have time to play with electronic equipment. However, other anthropologists like Eitan Wilf (2015) argue that the 'play' or experimentation stages of innovation need to have some structure around it in order to be productive. The producer that I worked with in the corporate model, told me that when he began expressing to his parents his desire to make rap music, they did not know how to help. They began looking around and the first thing they thought might be a good idea, was to buy one of the mini-keyboards or synthesizers that they saw at a toy store, then they bought a little cassette recorder. As they did more research, they discovered that they needed turntables and so they looked in resale shops for cheap record players and records, which they slowly acquired for their child. This burgeoning producer. Then, it was up to him to try to recreate the sounds he liked from hip-hop songs he heard on the radio or from MTV using the equipment that his parents were able to obtain for him. Overtime, he figured out how to recreate songs and beats he heard from his favorite rappers. As he gained experience, he was then able to create his own unique sounds. However, he never had any real formal musical training until he reached secondary school and was enrolled in a liberal arts high school in Paris. By the time he got there though, he was showing many of his teachers how to do what he had learned because hip-hop was new to them, as well.

Educational experts often think that codified knowledge is more important than tacit knowledge and yet still, little is known about the role of innovation in these types of settings. Can one say that producers were learning in a setting of peripheral group participation? How peripheral can one be from the centric fountain of knowledge and still learn from the masters? In the age of the internet and our technological revolution, it is important to further investigate these ideas. I do not pretend to have all of the answers. It seems that many of the producers that I worked with learned how to make beats in extremely peripheral settings. As they spent so much time alone trying to figure out how to play with sounds, what equipment they needed and how to recreate sounds and how to hook up stereos, it is difficult once again to use traditional paradigms of learning. Once, each of the producers reached a certain point of expertise, then they began collaborating with other people and sharing their knowledge. Age, time spent and quality of equipment played roles in the degrees of mastery that each producer was able to obtain.

Many of the producers in the corporate models began collaborating and sharpening their skills with their peers as adolescence. In one of the adhoc groups with whom I worked, there was a rapper who could read music (codified knowledge) and had some formal music education. He would assist the beat makers with whom he worked in making the music for his tracks, but beyond this, there generally were not people within this model that had a lot of formal musical training and could be considered masters of their craft.

In the corporate networks, however, producers either taught themselves or had formal education or both and collaborated with other people until they became true masters of their music production. The corporate producers seemed to be older than the producers in the adhoc models, had more time to develop their craft and had betters access to formalized equipment. For example, with the producer from Paris he received formal education certifications through his

secondary schooling and then directly after his tertiary level graduation where he was exposed to music education, he gained an internship with a major recording studio. He proved himself in the industry and was granted master status by being given a formal professional job title as a producer. Many of the interns that worked for him had codified knowledge from their training in school as musicians and sound engineers. They were apprenticing under him, at a record studio to gain more tacit knowledge about their craft. This type of situated learning, that we locate in the later stages of the development of this particular producer's career fit nicely into the paradigm of situated leaning, but more should be uncovered about this process. This particular producer might be considered a type of innovator or pioneer. He eventually achieved master status as he formally learned about music theory and sound engineering in formal schooling. Finally, he became a master of the craft. He was pioneering a movement that was underway in other places. However, because he was a first mover in this craft in his location, because he came into it as it was being invented, he gained access to high quality equipment, had the idle time to invest into developing his craft and was eventually able to receive specialized schooling about music theory, therefore he was specially advantaged in becoming a master of this craft. The adhoc producer that I worked with came into production late in his adulthood, did not have as much time to invest, did not have formal schooling in music education and had access to inferior equipment. This resulted in one music producer having formal institutional access to a recording studio and the other who did not. This process of learning is incredibly helpful for those looking to get into a particular field of cultural production. The bottom line is, to become a professional in this field, one still needs institutional access. The most common way to receive that is through specialization in schools.

Image 8.5 The Lab

Expert Knowledge: Prepping the Recording Booth and Getting the Right Equipment

Continuing the argument about those that have professional access to knowledge and equipment, I now analyze the construction of the recording process to demonstrate how this expert knowledge gained through schooling and institutionalized training makes a difference in the process of making music. Turning back to discussing the production equipment and resources that rap groups have access, let us now examine the construction of the technical process of making a song. Not only do groups need the right kinds of electronic equipment but they also need the ability to create the right environment in the recording booth, specifically with getting the acoustics right. This was one of the biggest challenges that the producer from Paris had when beginning to work with his rappers in Bogota.

[Producer]: "Yah, you know, one of the biggest challenges that I had when I started working with [Rap Group] was getting the recordings that they were sending me to sound right. There are certain aspects of recording sounds that you can fix post-recording, but there are certain things that you can't fix. When I first began receiving tracks that [Rap Group] was

recording in [Local Producer] studio, there would just be so much sound feedback in the recordings. I could try to play with the sounds by fixing the pitch and the tuning but there would always be this strange hollow sound, as if [Rap Group] were recording their tracks far away from the mic or something. I finally had to fly down to Bogota with one of my sound engineering buddies …. to fix it."
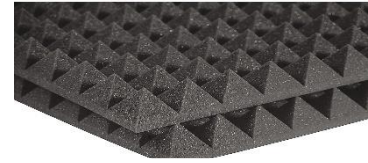

Image 8.6 Foam Insulation

Laura: "I know it might be a kind of detailed process, but can you walk me through what you guys had to do to fix the problem and be as specific as possible?"

[Producer]: "Oh yah, I can show you."

[Producer from Paris] and I were in [Local Producer's] home studio. He had a recording studio in his house. He used a spare bedroom that was connected to another room. The second room was the recording booth. We walked into the booth. It was a small space. There was wood paneling all over the wall. There was a part of the wood paneling however that was not sealed down all the way and I could see that underneath that was a black foam substance that they called Acoustic Treatment. [Producer from Paris] told me that [Rap Group] had to reconstruct the whole room to line the walls with this and then put the wood paneling back over it to insulate the room properly.

Creating the right kind of insulation in the recording booth is important and can be an

expensive process. Luckily, the rap group was able to fly in experts from Paris who had

experience working in a recording studio there and they had a professional sound engineer who

could assist them with the construction tecniques. The sound engineer knew how to calculate the

acoustics for the room and what type of insulation would be required to make the tracks sound

professional. The rappers knew that they could not simply fly overseas every time someone in

the group wanted to record a song, so they recreated the professional recording booth that they

needed in their local producer´s home studio in Bogota. Another problem that I witnessed a

corporate rap group overcome was that they were having problems gaining access to high-grade

microphones.

[Rapper]: "When we started working with [Producer], we sent him some tracks. The first thing that he asked us, is 'what type of mic are you guys using?' We had gone to the electronics district in the center of the city and purchased the best quality mic that they had but when [Producer] found out what we were using, he said he could hear the difference. We needed a mic that could pick up the full range of our voices. When him and [Sound Engineer] came, they

brought us a Neumann, which is a professional grade mic that can pick up the full range of voice that we throw out when we're spitting our rhymes."

Laura: "What kind of mic did you guys have before?"

[Rapper]: "A Schure. And they make really high grade mics but you can't get their high-grade ones in Bogota."

Laura: "Why not?"

[Rapper]: "I'm not really sure. We even went to the electronics stores and asked if they could order one of the higher quality mics and they said they couldn't. I'm not really sure why."

Laura: "And did you notice a difference in the Neumann versus the old Schure?"

[Rapper]: "Oh yah, instantly you could hear a difference in the pitch and we actually sounded professional. [Producer] and [Sound Engineer] also brought us a pop filter for the mic. After they re-constructed the booth with the acoustic treatment, soundproof glass window, mic, and pop filter, we were ready to roll. We finally had the set-up we needed to make tracks that could be played on the radio and they would sound like the quality music that you would hear coming out of the US or Europe. That had always been one of our problems in the past."

Some of the reasons that rapstars might not be able to get the high-grade mics are due to cost and

tariffs. Although there have been multiple free trade agreements and many people believe that it

is easy to import goods of any kind, I was not able to follow up on this. I went to the center of

Bogota and visited electronics stores to try to triangulate my data. I wanted to see if in fact, it

was difficult to obtain high quality microphones from vendors there. Indeed, it was not possible.

None of the vendors there had expensive microphones. The vendors claimed they could not get

the models of Neumann, Blue or Schure that I was requesting. They cited importation bans on

the products as reasons that they could not get the high-grade microphones. I am not well enough

versed in International Trade Law to know if they legitimately could not import the products. In

considering the situation more carefully, I realized that the issue might not be trade laws at all,

however. Carrying such highly valuable goods into the center of town, may have just been too

risky. The microphones that these groups were dealing with were worth anywhere from $1.5

million to $2 million pesos in Colombia. This would be equivalent to three to four times the

average monthly salary in Bogota (DIAN 2013). In other words, the risk of importing these

microphones and selling them would be very high for the vendors. This actually might be more of a logical explanation for the vendors' refusal to import the items, rather than actually trade barriers preventing their importation. However, whether the items were legally banned or practically impossible to obtain, the outcome would have been the same without the help of a foreign friend. In the case of the corporate groups however, they were able to circumvent this technical barrier by upgrading the quality of their record production because they were able to import the microphones that they needed through having friends come from abroad and physically bringing the groups the items they needed to improve production. This again, illustrates the importance of having social network connections in an insecure political and economic environment. These social networks can bypass technical barriers to entry that musicians in Bogota had previously experienced. With the advent of the internet as a rapid communication device, the affordability of travel and the migration of Colombians to other corners of the globe, it is now possible for certain, well connected groups to be able to have access to high grade technologies that they could not obtain under other circumstances, if they are aware of what they need and have the social networks to access this equipment.

The adhoc rap models however, did not have this luxury. In observing with a particular adhoc rap group, I asked for a tour of the studio. It was then, that I started asking them questions about the 'construction' of the studio. This was coincidentally just a few days after I had talked to the producer from Paris and his sound engineer about reconstructing the studio in Bogota for the corporate rap group. Many of the home studios used by rap groups in the adhoc models, tried to insulate the recording booths with foam and milk crates but the recordings that came out of this process had inconsistent sound quality, while the inferior quality of the mics could also not catch the range of depth in the voices from the rappers. Moreover, with the booth not being

insulated, there was often background noise from the studio, the apartments next door and even traffic noise distortion from the streets. A lot of the problems encountered by the artists in their original recordings, could be fixed through the masterization process. However, sound quality problems involving pitch, clarity and noise distortion required a great deal of time and effort, which many of the adhoc groups were not capable of or willing to fix.

The producer's in the adhoc rap models used insulation and understood the basic principles of sound engineering. However, many of them were using egg cartons, because they were cheaper, as opposed to the higher cost of foam treatment. Additionally, the corporate rap models had professional sound engineers working with them to make a recording booth using construction workers who professionally measured and installed the acoustic treatment. Many of the adhoc rap groups that I observed were just tacking egg cartons all over the walls with staple guns. They were also using lower

Image 8.7 Egg Crates

quality microphones that cost around $400,000 COP or $200 USD. These mics were not even the highest grade of microphone that one could obtain from a local store in Bogota. They also had pop filters for the microphones but really, they needed more than this to filter the type of background noise these groups encountered and to ensure that the sounds being recorded were fully captured in all of their voice range and depth. However, these amateur producers were doing what they could with the budget they had and with the knowledge that they had gleaned from internet websites, photos and popular media. In several of my formal interviews with

producers I asked them how they learned to construct their studios. Here is how one of the producers responded:

> [Producer]: "Well, first we studied the movie *Hustle and Flow*. We sort of knew that we needed some sound proofing equipment, some software and mics. Then, we got [Rapper in Madrid] involved. He told us to use the empty egg crates to give us our acoustic installation, I already had the computer, he sent us this mic, the synthesizer, the mixer and then to put it all together, we just watched You Tube videos."

> Laura: "And you guys pretty much have the sound that you want?"

> [Producer]: "Well, you know we have the sound that we want, for what we can afford. The sound quality that we can produce is pretty high level. Without having millions of pesos to invest, we have done a pretty good job. Plus, [Producer] is a wiz with Pro Tools and can usually get us the clarity we are looking for on any track we record."

Each group then has put as much as they each can into creating the sound that they want based on who they know. It is interesting to note that both of the groups in this selection had electronics imported from Europe. While the members of the corporate network got their equipment from Europe because they could not find what they needed in Bogota, the adhoc rap network took what they could get from their contact in Spain because he offered it and it was free.

Ready or Not? Layin' Down Bars

In the last chapter, I discussed some of the differences in the authorship process of making music. I presented data about song lyrics and their various social and political messages. Now, I would like to discuss similar themes in regards to composing and recording tracks. Namely, how is it done and why. When I observed the corporate rap networks, they generally had a systematic routine that they would use to record tracks. Often, when I went with them to the studios, they showed up on time, warmed up their voices and got down to business. They would warm up in the same way that one would at choir practice or for singing lessons. They would sing common songs, and they were usually early 1990s rap ballads. Then, the group

237

would practice their verses they were planning on recording later in the day/evening. The adhoc rap groups, obviously did not have the same structured approach. Sometimes the rappers would warm up and sometimes they would just hop in the booth and try to record. This sort of structure became important when it came time to actually record the tracks because the quality of the work came out differently.

How Many Times?

The difference in the amount of times that the producers had to record and re-record lyrics was striking. Most of the time, the corporate rapper would meet at the recording studio in the evenings after school or work. A lot of the rappers and producers from these rap networks were always busy running during the day. As they had businesses, families, children and some of them were attending university themselves, now that they had enough money from their enterprises, weekends and evenings were ideal. When the rappers would arrive at the studio they would get to work right away. They would put on the track, begin warming up and practice their lyrics all within about 20 or 30 minutes. While the rappers were warming up, the producer would check all the equipment, make sure it was ready to go. Then, they would take a smoke break, grab some water, and the rappers would jump into the recording booth. The producer would hop on the decks and then they would record the hook of the song together. They would record the hook two or three times, depending on how much force they wanted the chorus to have, then they would record any ad-libs or call outs that they wanted in the hook. Next, one or the other of the rappers would step out of the booth. They would record the verses, once again usually doing two or three dubs of the same verse to give the track a bold robust sound. The next rapper would jump in the booth and the other would come out. They would record their verse two or three times. Lastly, they would both jump in the booth to do *refuerzas* or the call outs throughout the

song. This process was usually very smooth because the rappers and their producers were warmed up and had worked together so often, they did not have to discuss the process or anything, they just made it happen. The rappers were experienced and had done this many times. Every great once in a while, one of the rappers would miss their bars when they started recording a verse or they would trip over their words but this rarely ever happened. Usually, by the time one of the rappers from this type of network stepped into the booth, they had practiced their lyrics so many times, that they could lay down the track with precision and ease. They would try to finish recording at nine or ten o' clock in the evening usually so that everyone in the studio could go home tell their kids goodnight or rest-up for the next day. They would also try to limit studio time to once or twice during the week and then on Friday nights. On Friday nights, the recording sessions might go a little later and would usually end with a little partying, perhaps drinking some beer or smoking some pot. These groups tended to keep their fun low key.

The adhoc rap groups' processes were very different. Not surprisingly, since I am labeling them adhoc rap groups, their processes were much less focused on recording the music. The 'warm-up' process generally consisted of playing World Star rap videos drinking codeine, smoking weed and bazuka. Once they were properly keyed up on drugs, then the rappers would hop over to the recording booth and try to start rapping. They never warmed up their voices or practiced their lyrics. They almost never could never lay down verses straight away. The producer would open Pro Tools or whatever kind of software they were using to log the tracks and they would start recording, immediately. The rappers and the producers already knew that they would have to stop the track and back up as soon as the rappers messed up their lines. Usually, they would have to go through a verse seven or eight times for the first recording before they got one layer right. Then, they would have to record the reinforcements. Again, this was

never a clean process and they generally had to run down the second layer of tracks five or six times and if they wanted a third layer, which was rare just because it required so much work, the artists would have to take a break, take some more drugs or alcohol and then re-record. The adhoc rap groups could rarely lay down a track in a single day, let alone three or four hours like the corporate models. Once they got the verses recorded, then they would go into doing the ad-libs or the '*refuerzas*'. The hook was almost always recorded last, if it was recorded at all. Sometimes, the producers would just be so exhausted and so tired of recording and re-recording the song that he would convince the artists that the song did not need a hook, that it sounded better without it or that rap music did not always have a hook.

These processes concluded by producing very different products, too. Whereas, the producers in the corporate groups always had a finished product with clear voice recordings where all of the lines were clearly captured and were well timed, the producers for the adhoc model were usually left with a product that was not clear. The artists were slurring their words, there were timing issues and sometimes when the producers would go in and try to master the song, they would have to call the artists back to re-record parts of the song. While the studio models were in the studio for many more hours each week than the corporate models, it was because it was necessary.

Masterization

All of the groups that I worked with used Pro-Tools to master their songs. The corporate rap groups that I worked with generally used Sound Clip to send the sound files back and forth over the internet. Once the rappers were done recording a song, they would send the sound file to each other to make several copies of the original, just to have back up files, in case something happened to the original. Then they would use Facebook messenger, or What's App to

communicate about the masterization process. One of the producers described the masterization process as follows:

[Producer]: "Generally when I get a song, I open the file, download it in ProTools and then listen to it all the way through two or three times. Then, I put it on repeat and start making notes about what I need to change at the different bars to know what to do when I go in to master the song. I start listening to it and thinking about pitch, volume, if I want to use any audio tune sounds or slow down certain words and 'screw[30]' them. Then, finally I will start opening up the plug-ins to get to work.

Laura: "What did you do to master the song [Name of Song]? Can you walk me through the process?"

[Producer]: "Sure. So, once I listened to the song and thought about what I wanted to do, and I am a fan of writing stuff down, so I literally took notes, as I was listening which most of my friends think that I am weird for this….but that that's what I do. Then, I went in and adjusted the EQ settings to add clarity and deepen the bass. Then I went into the compressor and adjusted the threshold and the make-up a bit to make the sound quality tighter. Then, the next thing is I used a limiter to make sure none of the sounds were too high pitched. The beginning of the song sounded super clear, and the ending was already edited perfectly in the mixing process and the recording, so I didn't have to adjust anything. Then, I interloped the song to 16 bits, which is a CD quality standard of masterization and it was done."

Laura: "How long did this take you?"

[Producer:] "I could have done it with in a day or so, but I master stuff super slowly. I like to hear it once, then wait a few days, so I try to drag the process out over 10 days or so, just so I can make sure that when I send it out to the artists, it is perfect. I drag out the process because if I listen to the same song over and over again the subtlety of sounds lose their significance and I start thinking things sound good, when really they still need work."

The adhoc rap groups had a slightly different process. They were still learning a lot of the techniques that they wanted to use to master their songs. Many of the producers in these groups were still getting comfortable with the masterization software and did not always know how to use it very effectively. The adhoc producers were also working with a much more difficult product. As the producers in this model were less experienced overall, sometimes the beats themselves were not clean. The person mastering the track may have to go in and edit the timing of the beats or change the various aspects of the rhythm itself. Additionally, all of the recording

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[30] To chop and screw lyrics in the masterization process refers to creating rifts in beats ´chopping´ them or ´screwing´ someone´s vocals means to slow them down (Westhoff 2011).

and re-recording of the track made it so that the frequencies of the sounds were not consistent and the amount of stop and go meant that the sound quality throughout the song varied quite a lot. When the producers from these groups sat down to work with the masterization process and to even out the sounds, they had to go through the song bar by bar and make specialized adjustments. Whereas, one of the corporate producers would be able to go in to a track to adjust the tune, the pitch, the volume or adjust the bass levels, the producers in the adhoc model had to go into every single layer of the track to carefully edit it. The adhoc producers would use a fade in for the beginning, and then go through each section, painstakingly, layer by layer. The adhoc rap producers also could not just use a simple linear equalizer to master the songs, they had to use a ProFab Filter Equalizer which would allow them to adjust the sound of the beats and the vocals. This plug-in would allow them to adjust frequency, bass, treble, clarity and depth at each bar. It would show one line for the beats and one for the vocals so that the producer could adjust each one of them as needed. The producer would have to open-up the compressor for each bar to make adjustments and the limiter at each bar trying to adjust the sound. Many of the adhoc rappers also liked to use the ProFab Filters auto-tune section to 'screw' some of the vocals. This style of vocal 'slowdown' is also popular in the United States, especially among trap rappers like the ASAP Mobb. In fact, when I was watching one of the producers master a song, he told me,

> "Hey Lau, you know how ASAP Rocky always screws his intros?" It was commonly known among the rap artists that I was really liking the new sounds coming from the ASAP Mobb in Harlem.
>
> Laura: "Yah, I love that."
>
> [Producer]: "We're gonna do that here on our intro, too."

I watched as he got into the plug-in and slowed down the beats with the digital knob and sure enough, all of a sudden, the producer made the introduction sound like DJ Screw or ASAP

Rocky. Usually, if a project would take the corporate rap networks two weeks to work on a song, it would take the adhoc rap producers four times as long. The producers from the adhoc rap models were putting a good four or five hours a day, four or five days a week into trying to get the sounds right. The final product from these two different polities sounded very different. The corporate networks end product was ready for professional grade distribution platforms like Spotify or I-tunes, whereas the finished products in the adhoc rap model, were not up to this level of quality and could not be distributed in the same fashion.

In the earlier days of digital technology, there seemed to be an emphasis on how digital technology would create a 'flattening effect' or make it possible for anyone to record an album and that the technology that was available to a common person would allow them to overcome the talent deficit or would allow 'lay people', amatuers, to be able to produce high quality music in their homes (Florida & Gates 2003). In this case study, however I found that this is situational and multi-dimensional. While technically speaking, most of the corporate rap networks operate independently and do not have contracts with major record labels, these groups are often connected to the global media industry in some way. Many of the rappers work with professional producers who may work for the groups for free or for some sort of compensation. As many of these producers within these networks are professional music producers, they use the resources and materials from major record labels to make songs for their rap artists in Bogota. Meanwhile, the home studios of the adhoc rap networks cannot produce the same sound quality that the professional studios can. This does not seem to indicate that a complete 'flattening' of the industry has taken place just because technology has been introduced. It turns out that professional production equipment, formal music education, employment, connections to the corporate global media structure, and geographic advantages still matter in music production.

While musicians in traditionally 'peripheral' realms can access the media types needed to compose tracks, the tracks are not of the same caliber as those that are produced by industry insiders.

Conclusion

While the access to music producing, technology has been proliferated throughout various parts of the world and is widely available to download from pirated software sites, not just any user can be successful with this technology. The consumers of technology and the music producers are still heavily impacted by the amount of time, skill, professionalism and resources for which they have access. This evidence stands against theorists who insist that technology development, information flow, and increased trade alone will unhinge the traditional reliance on global media companies and put the power in the hands of independent producers (Miller 2000, Harvey 2004, Castells 2008). The democratization of technology alone does not ensure that people will automatically be able to use it to their advantage. The human application of the technology still matters the most. Therefore, more traditional music producers are still creating the higher quality products that make distribution possible. The corporate rap polities are self-disciplined, have access to education in music production, professional production tools, and professional recording studios where they can make high quality sounds. The adhoc rap model uses home studios with inferior products and less knowledge about how to compensate for those deficits. While the corporate networks were able to overcome their geographic positioning and limited access to technology through their global media connections in the US and Europe, the adhoc rap polities, while at times having similar transnational connections were still limited by their access to equal resources because of their own financial limitations, skill and lack of professional connections to networks outside of Colombia. This again speaks to the broader

theoretical questions about how technology is impacting technology and education in the cultural industries within the age of the digital technology revolution and increased product commodification. Access to formal institutional schooling, equipment and providing mechanisms for people to take the time to train to make music is the only way to assist music producers who lack these structural requirements to make commercial rap music, as the corporate model has the capacity to produce. Other groups cannot as of yet, overcome these barriers to music production.

The corporate networks use formal record production companies to make their beats and master their recordings. This undoubtedly, in combination with the educational backgrounds of their producers, enable them to make CD quality or internet platform quality music. While the adhoc rap groups are more limited in their access to formal resources, they have transnational connections to rappers and producers abroad. However, because these groups lack the technical know-how or the codified knowledge that formal music production training and experience provide, they are deficient in the ability to obtain access to the proper equipment to make professional grade beats, from garnering a high quality recording environment and are unable to master the music in a way that allows for their music to be mounted on I-tunes, Spotify or to even come out on a CD with professional quality. The optimists who theorize about how technology and globalization would be able to change the landscape for DIY music producers have grossly underestimated the value that formal education and institutions have in this process. It is not simply about equipment, it is about how human users can imitate and innovate within traditional frames of the music industry. Outsiders remain so. They are not able to produce a high enough quality product to gain access to the system. Even as much as industry insiders or business analysts argue that the music industry has become decentralized in the age of digital

technology, the above case study demonstrates how this is just not true. While the adhoc rap groups may be innovative in their own right, like Wilf (2015) suggests, this spontaneity is not formulated in a specific way and therefore does not benefit its creators. In the following chapter, this investigation delves further into how each group distributes its music and gains popularity in the music scene in Bogota and continues to explore the narratives of how people can become successful in the current political economic environment.

CHAPTER 9
Distribution: The Processes of Making Rap Music Accessible to the Audience

"Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning." – Bill Gates

Introduction

As the internet and new digital technology has become more widely accessible, many speculated that this technological democratization would lead to the decentralization of the music industry (Hracs 2012). This chapter continues to explore to what extent that is true with our rap artists as they attempt to commodify rap music products. As the music industry in Colombia was never the same as it was in the United States or Europe, this chapter will explore the kinds of knowledge rappers need to possess in order to distribute their music. Namely, it points out that the artists need to have enough business sense in the arena of marketing, publicity and sales distribution practices to be able to do it themselves. This chapter seeks to engage scholars interested in finding out more information about how the digital divide impacts music producers in different locations, how do it yourself media groups assist in this process and analyzes the opportunities for social mobility within the current economic paradigm.

As many theorists argue that the traditional music industry has become decentralized, many argue that musicians in the current political economy need to possess technological skills and business know-how (Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012, Sterne 2014). In the past, particularly in North America and Europe, artists would make music, play clubs and try to get 'discovered' by a major recording company (Hracs 2012). However, the industry that supported this 'traditional' trajectory for musicians has taken a hit with the 'digital revolution' (Sterne 2014). Sterne (2014, P. 1) argues that what has been traditionally meant by the 'music industry' is:

> "The term generally refers to the sale and purchase of recordings, the bundles of rights that go with them, and the livelihoods of people involved in that economy, ranging from

musicians and fans to accountants, artists and repertoire (A&R) people, street teams, engineers, producers, lawyers, and record company executives, among others. In this conceptualization, "the music industry" is broadly concerned with the monetization of music recordings."

Sterne (2012) continues on to argue however, that the definition of the 'music industry' should be anyone involved in producing music. That is the stance that this research also takes. The artists that have 'succeeded' since the downturn of the traditional music industry and realize that it is now incumbent upon them to create their own team to help them create, produce and distribute their product are the musicians in this study that have had the most success in becoming well-known in the Spanish language hip-hop community.

Hracs (2014) argues that with the advent of low cost production tools and software, the traditional brick and mortar music industry has been in decline for the past 15 years. Now talented artists have had to develop their own entrepreneurial skills, understand marketing, legal maneuvers and distribution strategies that would have normally been left up to the big music labels, in the past. In recognizing that this might not be the most natural way to view the music industry, particularly in Colombia, I hope that contrasting this traditional understanding of how a music industry is supposed to operate or possibly had for a small proportion of contracted artists in the past, with how they operate now, it can facilitate the understanding of the range of knowledge that present day, independent rap musicians in Bogota, Colombia need to possess in order to make music and become popular in the Spanish language hip-hop scene. This chapter then, will review how artists market themselves using a variety of formats and platforms, how they manufacture CDs and music videos and finally how they publically engage with their audiences through disseminating cultural products, interviews and concerts.

The Digital Divide

With the proliferation of social media and internet technology, it is perhaps difficult to imagine that some people still do not have consistent access to digital technologies. In Bogota, the government has launched an enormous program to upgrade the cities Information and Communications Technology (ICT) network under a series of laws and decrees. The government wanted to "Give more free internet access to the cities residents, recognizing the enormous potential that technology could have for the many residents." (MINTIC 2011). However, in some of the cities lowest economic *stratas*, many people still do not have regular internet access. Internet access is a crucial resource that anyone hoping to engage in the digital production of culture needs to have access. According to statistics from Pedraza et. al. (2012), in 2011 after the city upgraded fiber optic cables in Ciudad Bolivar which is a *strata* 1 neighborhood, 86% of people still did not have internet access for, in their homes and only 14% had internet access over Wi-fi connections using smart phones or other wireless devices. Despite the government itself, installing Wi-Fi technologies and high grade internet connection technology, these upgrades did not materialize in expanding access to lower *strata* residents. The reason for this low rate of dispersion to internet access, despite the governments large scale efforts are because of the vast amount of people that live in municipalities such as Bosa, Soacha or Usme that are not technically counted by the cities municipalities, as they live in informal or illegal housing. Parts of these municipalities are what the rappers refer to as *strata 0* because the city of Bogota often does not extend regular maintenance of services to these 'settlements' of the city. In the investigation of this topic, I could not find any information on the extension of ICT technologies to these communities. As these areas of the city are considered outside the official jurisdiction of the city[31], the municipal governments and their taxes become responsible for upgrading services

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[31] Reference the map in Appendix A. The areas of Bosa, Usme and Soacha are white because they are not counted in the official statistics for the city.

in these areas. These municipalities were left out of the nation's ICT upgrades. Most of the rap music fans come from these *strata* 0 *barrios*. Therefore, when discussing the role of social media and technology in a place like Bogota, Colombia the analysis that is done must be specific and precise. Although, statistically it seems that the use of internet technology for many of the city's most economically disadvantaged groups is low, their likelihood of being unemployed and having access to internet cafes and the time to dedicate to attending such places is very high. Therefore, once again, when examining the data about these issues, I will do my best to explain 'how' people use social media and what the rappers' perceptions of these issues are as they market, publicize and sell their products to scores of young people through various mechanisms. I will also illustrate the rappers' perception of how their fans utilize the internet in attempt to access the rappers' music and cultural products. This is important to explore in more precise detail because scholarship over the slow nature of how the economic system interacts with technological change have been superficially surmised in other veins of the literature on these topics. Therefore, the following selection describes the varied processes that the polities of rappers being described here, disseminate music, how they utilized various media sites and publicized themselves. The data sets provided, allow for a detailed exploration and analysis of the ways in which the economic and digital changes impact the rap scene of Bogota, Colombia.

The World Is Not Flat, it is Still Curvy as Ever

In scholarship on the technological revolution, grand pronouncements have been made about the 'flattening' of the world with the advents of free trade, globalization and the democratization of technological products (Hracs 2014). While it may be true that the digital economy has led to greater independence among many musicians in the industry, it is hard to make grand pronouncements about these processes the world over without taking note of specific

conditions in particular locations. While music piracy, digital distribution and the physical material life of music is shrinking, knowledge about this process must still be gathered. In this research, I still observed an overwhelming amount of consumers who participate in capitalizing the music industry through traditional means. For example, many people in Colombia still purchase compact discs (CDs) and almost all of the artists there put out hard disks which they sell at different stores locally. According to McKinsey and Company's Global Media Report for 2014, the physical sales of music on CDs or Vinyl formatting still accounted for 55% of global sales. In Latin American markets Billboard Music Records (2014) estimated that CD sales still accounted for $437 million dollars in 2014. This number is thought to be falling steadily and being replaced as more and more music fans stream their music and begin to pay for subscription services (IFPI 2014). However, at the time that I conducted my fieldwork in Bogota, Colombia CD sales were still enormously popular among music fans within the city, and every rap music group's priority was make as many CDs as they could afford in order to distribute their music. CD distribution was still the most popular and profitable mechanism for album releases. Again, as the genre of rap music prides itself on being a music of the streets, *rap callejero*, then the musicians and producers still believe it is important to make music as accessible to their fans as possible, without compromising the integrity of the artist's intellectual property through pirated forms of downloading.

The first thing that surprised me about the music scene in Bogota, when I arrived was the prevalence and importance of CD sales. I went into the field thinking that most people were probably pirating songs off the internet in Bogota, just as they do in the US. I almost expected to see many of the computer shops and internet cafes filled with teenagers downloading music illegally on their phones. However, this was not the case. Compact Disc sales were still

enormously popular and important in Bogota. While much of the literature being produced about music dissemination tends to focus on how drastically the internet is encouraging the pirating of artists work illegally (IFPI 2014, McKinsey and Company 2014, Sterne 2014), on the ground, the reality in many countries, is still that people use CDs to listen to music. Even when populations switch over to using digital technology, there is a certain amount of technological lock-in[32] that many people studying this field overlook. For example, at most clubs or in cars, the technology available to people outside of Europe and the US is still an older form of digital technology. Therefore, CDs are still widely used and very popular among most consumers of music. Even if people are downloading music from the internet, they still burn it onto CDs so they can ask the DJ at their favorite club to play it or so they can listen to music in the car. Therefore, while the artists that I worked with did make their music available on popular internet platforms, their primary concern in producing an album was how to get it onto a CD, so that the masses would have access to it.

The process of making a bundle of CDs in Bogota was that first you had to find a computer shop that specialized in making CDs and printing. These were shops that were randomly located at spots around the city. In the front of the store, they would have many computers that people rented by the hour. The shops would often sell school supplies and do printing, as well. The rappers could bring the computer shops an album on a USB drive or a memory card. On the USB, the rapper would have a template of what kind of label they wanted on the CD, and the graphic art for what the album cover should look like. There were various types of album jackets that one could get for the CDs, too. There were album sleeves which were

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[32] Unruh (2000) defines technological lock-in as the usage of a particular technology because it has become dominant in that system. The technology itself may be inferior to other mechanisms, outdated or inefficient. However, it enjoys the prestige of its continued reproduction because it is the common material good used within its industry.

just the standard album cover. They would put the CD in a plastic cover and then stick the CD in a simple square cardboard sleeve and this type of CD and basic album cover would run people around $3,000-$5,000 pesos per CD, depending on the size of the total order. The more CDs were in the initial order, the bigger the discount one would receive. The more sophisticated CD covers that the artist wanted, would run a slightly higher price. The plastic CD covers with a jacket that opened and closed, like the ones we are more familiar with in the US, would run artists anywhere from $7,000-$9,000 pesos a piece.

Many of the artists who designed album covers for their clients would charge them $200,000 pesos to $500,000 pesos, again depending on the complexity of the design and the time that it took for the artist to design the product. For example, when one of the rap groups that I worked with put out their album, they paid a graphic designer friend of theirs, $500,000 pesos to design the jacket cover for their album which required 3 different designs. One design was for the album cover and CD, an inside design with the acknowledgements and the back of the album cover with a song list. On the other hand, another group that I worked with made an album for Hip-Hop al Parque, they paid a graphic designer $200,000 pesos to make a design for the front of the album, and a track list for the back of the simple pouch CD cover they were using. In the end, the artists sell the CDs for $10,000 to $15,000 pesos with the double disc albums being sold at $25,000 pesos. The artists would order these CDs in bulk from the printing shops in quantities as small as 200 CDs or in bulk sometimes at 5,000 CDs at a time.

If a rap group had several points of sale (POS) outlets to vend their products, they generally would order large quantities of CDs, confident in the fact that they could sell these CDs without having a large overstock. The groups would announce the release dates of their albums, on social media platforms and prepare their POS. While the more adhoc groups who did

not have access to multiple POS sites would simply order 200 CDs and would plan on selling

their products at Hip-Hop al Parque once a year in Bogota. Three differentiating factors in where

the artists were able to sell their merchandise also made a big difference in how many CDs they

were able to sell. When I asked one of the corporate groups to describe the process of getting

ready to launch their album, they responded by describing the process in this way:

> "We have a printing company in Unicentro that we have worked with for a long time. They give us a really good deal. For releasing [Album Name] we are going to purchase 5,000 CDs at a time. We will ship 1,500 to Medellin for our homeboys there to sell and keep 3,500 here in Bogota. We will probably be able to sell around 15,000 CDs within the first couple of months of the release, but as you know, with CD sales declining, we don't want to get too overstocked on these. We'll see how they do. Another challenge when we release the album will be to keep it off of YouTube by internet pirates. There will be people who will come buy our album and then try to give it away on YouTube where people can download the whole thing for free. So to counteract this, we are going to have to stay on-line and make sure that we report any copyright violations, right away."

Buying the full CD at one of the POS locations of your favorite group was often the only

way to get the full album. While a lot of groups would make some of their songs and music

videos available on You Tube, they only way to get the whole thing was from going to

physically purchase the disk. The same principle was applied by almost all the rap groups with

whom I worked. The adhoc rap groups ordered 200 CDs to be printed from a local printing shop.

While these groups ordered smaller quantities of CDs that they planned to sell at the annual Hip-

Hop Festival in Bogota, that is the largest Hip-Hop Festival in South America, they were also

concerned with their album ending up on a pirated YouTube website.

> "No, we are only selling the full album at the Festival. We'll put a few songs from the album on YouTube and SoundCloud but if people want the rest of the album then they will have to contact us and buy a hard copy."

In the next section, we will investigate further the advent of websites like YouTube were users generate content and are able to mount that content on the internet platform for other viewers to access. However, I do not want to underrepresent the value and importance of the physical CD in a place like Bogota, Colombia. It is still the most widely utilized type of technology that people there have to access the music that they like to listen to. As one rapper from an adhoc rap set told me:

> "Look, don't tell anyone else from my squad, but I love the [Rival Rap Group]. I have all of their albums. Even though technically I work with the [Recording Studio] and all their artists, I was inspired to become a rapper because of the [Rival Rap Group]. I want to learn from them and I respect them. In fact, there is no hip-hop industry here besides them. They are the industry. Because of that respect I have for them and the desire that I have to learn from the themes that they talk about in their music, I support them. I believe in buying their music."

Again, as Billboard (2014) confirmed that somewhere around 65% of all music sales were still being consumed through the purchase of Compact Discs, my observational data seemed to corroborate these numbers. CDs were still the major format of distributing rap music in Bogota, Colombia and may have been even higher for the consumers of rap because of the aforementioned economic status of many of the customers. For rap music, in particular, the percentage of consumers enjoying purchased CDs may be even higher than the numbers Billboard was able to compile. That is why it is important to get exacting data from the field when discussing issues about the current economic and technological developments that support the environment in which rap is made. While there are a variety of changes being made in how people use resources and material goods, those changes must actually be accounted for if people want to understand how the music industry is functioning in this epoch of globalized music production.

Internet Platforms

In Colombia, the growth and development of using internet sites to distribute music has been slower than in other locations. In North America and Europe, for example, the goal of making money from music has always been a prime function of production. In other locales, like Bogota, this is not necessarily always true (Montoya 2011). In fact, in the rap scene itself there is much discussion about how 'commercialized' the rap in North America has become and this is generally meant in a negative sense. For example, the fans of many of the rap groups in Bogota compare many North American rappers with reggaetón artists and see them as 'weak'. While, many of the trap artists that make rap music in Bogota are much less critical of the North American rappers, they also do not see it as becoming to their image to look like they are reaching for success. These discussions came out when I asked the group's what internet websites they had tried to use launch their albums.

> "Oh no, Lau, we don't really concern ourselves with all that too much. Like we put our songs on YouTube and they have this program where they pay us like four thousand pesos every 30 times our song is played because we have a registered site but we're not going to go out of our way to mount stuff on Spotify, and I-tunes and all that. It's just too complicated and takes so much time. Plus, our goal is not to be mainstream pop rappers. Our goal is to educate the street about how to become real gangsta ass mothafuckers. If we want to be legit with our audiences, we can't be candy ass I-tunes rappers."

For many of the rappers, it wasn't worth it for them to become more 'famous' or to become 'candy ass rappers' by worrying about internet distribution sales. Making too much money or becoming too commercialized would imply selling out their image as 'street' or 'hood' or '*callejero*'. There was a belief among the artists that their audience did not buy music from I-tunes anyways. If they wasted time trying to mount their music on I-tunes or Spotify it would change their focus and then they would not be concentrating on entertaining their audience but would be more commercially driven. Therefore, they wanted to narrowly focus their efforts on

distributing their music on internet platforms that were accessible to their audiences. As I spoke with the groups further, many of them said they had also used SoundCloud a little bit but that they did not want to have to pay the subscription fee to put more than 40 songs on it. Producers that worked with the corporate models had access to corporate SoundCloud accounts that they were able to put beats on through their companies. However, most of the rappers associated with these producers still opted for concentrating their efforts on CD sales, using YouTube a bit and promoting themselves through Facebook. As I was leaving Bogota, they also started using Instagram too as a means to promote concerts and tours but they really wanted to keep their media sites targeted to what they saw their fans utilizing. Even among the corporate rappers, the drive to radically transform the technological methods for disseminating their music then were slower and more limited than in other parts of the world where these changes are happening quite rapidly. Although many developments are occuring within the economy and with technological advances, people still make careful considerations about whether or not to take advantage of these openings. While the corporate rappers that I worked with could have taken advantage of more high profile media platforms, they were concerned with their long-term popularity and strategically opted out of making more money in the short-term. This demonstrates a level of sophistication among these groups in terms of marketing and brand management that makes short term sacrifices for long term gains.

The adhoc rap groups were different from the corporate models in this regard too. They used SoundCloud´s free feature to mount songs and when they reached their maximum allotment of 40 songs, they would take an old song off of the platform and mount newer songs that they wanted to get out to their audiences. They would promote these hits exclusively through Facebook. They also mounted some of their songs on YouTube. While more organized rap

groups had access to a bank account and could use the 'Pay For' system that YouTube had set up

for their artists, other rap crews were not able to do this. I asked some of the groups why.

> [Producer]: "Well, the thing is, none of us have bank accounts."
>
> Laura: "Wait, what?" I replied, obviously surprised.
>
> [Producer]: "Yah, I know that sounds strange probably. But a lot of people in Colombia don't have bank accounts. Like, I can't get one because I owe a million pesos to this bank because I had a bank account. I overdrafted on it and never paid them back. And no one else in the crew has a normal bank account either except [Producer] and he won't let us use it…."

I followed up with this idea and considered statistics about what percentage of people in

Colombia do not use a bank account and according to the DIAN (2014) about 50% of people

over the age of 18 do not have bank accounts. Of course, in the above situation this made sense

and I could understand if circumstances were similar elsewhere in the world. Once someone has

offended a banking system with overdrafting on an account or accruing bad credit with the

international banking system, it is impossible to obtain a credit card or utilize a bank account

from any other financial institution. This is another way that the economic mechanisms of social

control attempt to regulate the population into being responsible consumers. If an individual

breeches the trust of one financial institution, all of them will be notified. There are several

international companies that provide this service to banking systems. They include

Chekxsystems, Early Warning Services and Telecheck. Once a bank reports that a consumer has

low deposit amounts and is a habitual over drafter, these companies put those people on a list and

they can be denied access to having a bank account anywhere in the world (Bonson and Flores

2011). This system is meant to limit the financial mobility of individuals that offends their

standards of financial profitability. This in turn, further hinders the individual's ability to reap

profits from their labor, unless they are able to socially maneuver around this regulation and get

their friends or family to help them repay their debts or to open accounts in a different name.

Turning back to the issues of piracy, many of the artists that I worked with also became

quite upset when they discovered that their albums or mixtapes had been loaded onto YouTube

by random consumers. In working with the rappers, when they would complain to me that this

happened, I would ask them if they complained to YouTube. A lot of them had not. They would

ask me what good this would do for them. I would explain to them that as the authors of the

music, they had intellectual property rights and if they complained about a user on YouTube

publishing their content without their consent, they had a right to protest. Once the artists

complained to YouTube about other users publishing their content without consent, the company

would generally respond within 24 hours. After one such incident, the producer who was upset

about his content being illegally mounted on YouTube by another user informed me:

> "Yah, you know there have been times when I have thought that maybe I need to hire a
> lawyer to copyright our music, our logos and music videos but then I just think about
> how much money we make off of our music and I think it's not worth it. Plus, you have
> to have so much knowledge about your rights in this business and it just makes it hard
> because all I really want to do is make music. I don't really care that much about all the
> business aspect of it."

This is what Sterne (2014) addresses in his article about the current state of the music

industry. He argues that artists not only have to be good at making music in the current

political/economic environment but that they now also have to have the added talent of being

'business minded' entrepreneurs or they will not 'succeed' in the industry. The music industry

now operates off of a principle where those artists that are able to make music and market it

appropriately will be successful, while those that simply want to make music may not be able to

deliver it to their audiences in a profitable manner. This is what I found in my study. While the

more organized rap groups had an ongoing horizontal business strategy that will be more fully

259

explored in the following chapter, the business aims for the adhoc rap groups were almost non-existent.

When I was in the field, I kept asking artists if they were planning on launching their music on any other internet platforms and they repeatedly seemed hesitant for one reason or another. As I began researching how a rapper could get their products launched on I-tunes or Spotify, as Spotify went global in June of 2014, I discovered some of the barriers to entry for this market. If an artist wants to launch their album on I-tunes or Spotify, they first have to contact what is known as a 'music aggregator'. These are companies like Tunecore, CD Baby, EMU Bands, or Record Bands. These music businesses help artists get their music licensed and distribute their albums on the 'pay for' music websites like YouTube, Spotify or I-tunes. The problem, once again, for the artists is that the music aggregators charge a fee to get started and then continually take a percentage of the artist royalties as people play their songs. If customers never purchase or play their music, from these websites, then the artists lose the capital that they invested in the hiring the music aggregator. Moreover, particularly Spotify and I-tunes have certain criteria and recording requirements for the artists to be able to launch music on their sites. For example, if the music aggregator does not think a recording has good enough sound quality to be mounted on a pay for or subscription website, they will ask the artist to raise the quality through re-recording or re-mastering the product. In the case of many of the corporate networks, the music quality would not be a barrier to enter these distribution sites. However, most of the adhoc rap groups, could not get their songs mounted on one of these platforms unless they professionalized their recording process. For the adhoc models to hire a music aggregator just to learn that, would be a waste of time and money. The adhoc models were already aware of their technical limitations.

In one incident that I was familiar with, a corporate rap group, launched their album. It was a dual CD album with 18 songs on each disk. Two days after the CD went on sale in their retail outlets, the full album was made available on YouTube. I woke up on the morning of January 18th, with this message on my Facebook news feed:

> "Loyal [Rap Group] Ninjas,
>
> On YouTube, [YouTube User] is pirating our newest album. He mounted the discs to our latest album last night and it is available for free. We are trying to get it taken down but in the meantime, please continue to support the [Rap Group] by visiting our official webpage on YouTube and through buying our album at our retail outlets…... When people like this *pirobo*[33], Santiago, pirate our songs, it hurts our ability as artist to recover revenue from what we put into making the music, and cheats the fans who spent their hard-earned money to actually buy the album. If we want to continue to have quality, independent rap music made in Colombia, we have to stop people like this from pirating our music. Thank you for supporting us. Let progress continue! [Rap Group] – Real gangsters for life."

After this message went up on Facebook, about 24 hours later, the YouTube user's page was shut down. I kept checking in on the piraters YouTube page and two days later, it came back on-line without any of the rap groups songs on it. The artists from the rap group were busy but I finally caught up with them to talk about what happened when they were on the beach shooting a music video for one of their songs.

> "Oh yah, that situation was fucked up Lau. We put out the album and you know, this mother fucker had been pirating our videos for a while. We knew about it and were concerned because we make money from our videos and songs through YouTube online. So, when someone pirates our shit, it's not good because they are cutting into our revenues. Obviously, we have a lot going on so, I had been meaning to look into doing something about this before. But two days after our dual disc album came out, he put that shit on-line? Noooooo. Fuck that. I was so fucking mad, *parcera* (homegirl/Colombiana)!! I just thought, you know, this can't be right so I just wrote to YouTube and told them what the problem was and gave them full detail about what I knew about the situation. They investigated it really quickly and shut down the site. They wrote me this letter detailing what would happen. They said this guy had to take all

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[33] *Pirobo* is a Spanish slang term for a ´dick´ or a penis.

of our material off of his site before he could re-launch. When he came back online, he didn't have any of our stuff on there. You know, I was really impressed with how fast YouTube responded. I wish I had reported him sooner."

Especially as other adhoc groups did not have bank accounts, the issue of pirated CDs was equally concerning to them because they relied on hard CD sales for all of their revenues. For the corporate groups that did have bank accounts and were anticipating official sales through these websites, the pirating of their materials was also a huge concern for them. Most of the rappers in Bogota did nto appreciate someone else trying to profit off of their capital investments into making music entertainment.

These data sets have provided further information on how groups of people are able to access technology in the current global system. It gave detailed information on how people use technologies, are limited or enabled by digital music formats and described the processes of monetizing the music distribution system in the age of digital music production. In the following section, I will continue to analyze ways in which media production is changing and how rap artists are accessing the sphere of cultural production.

Music Videos

The production of music videos was another way the rap groups that I worked with tried to promote and disseminate their products. While this process had been an extremely expensive endeavor in the past, the technological revolution has helped to alleviate the costs of assemblage. Now, cinematographers are able to shoot videos and edit them with software like I-movie or Final Cut Pro. Using these tools, videographers could make music videos relatively inexpensively and with little professional training. When I was in Bogota, one of the corporate rap groups that I was working with was using a particularly famous local cinematographer as their principal videographer. He shot the music video over the period of a couple of days with a

lot of precise planning. Then, he took around three weeks to edit the video, sent it to the group

and with their stamp of approval he mounted it on YouTube. In the first week, they got over one

million hits. The song became wildly popular as they were hoping. Their results from YouTube

analytics showed that their video from YouTube was being played in North America (Canada

and the US), Spain, Italy, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Brazil, Australia and Argentina but 99% of the

hits were from Colombia. Through using You Tube Analytics and their Interactive Map

Features, the rappers were able to get an idea of how their music and videos were being received

by their audiences and where their audience was located. Perhaps even more importantly, they

could also look on the YouTube video page itself and get instant feedback on how many likes

they had, and in the comments section, they could get qualitative feedback about their audience

reception. At the end of the first week, the group had 5,723 Likes and 157 Dislikes for the video.

When I asked them how much of this YouTube Analytics and comments from the

website they used on a daily basis, they told me:

> "Honestly, it's cool to look at graphs and charts and to get some basic ideas about how
> we're being received on the internet but we don't pay that much attention to it. We're
> more concerned with the streets."

Later, when another group of rappers were filming a music video, I got more insight into this

idea.

> "It's kind of weird you know? I guess, now that we're talking about it, these questions
> you're asking about CD sales versus internet revenue are really good things to think
> about and are really future oriented. It will really depend on how seriously the internet
> and technology is able to reach the masses. As you know, with [Name of Song], we were
> able to make about $4,400,000 pesos off of the song on YouTube in the first week, but
> then after that, you know we had that huge problem with that guy pirating our songs for a
> little while and we didn't know what to do about it until recently. So after that first week,
> we only made another $4,000,000 pesos ($2,000 USD) off of that video for like the next
> 6 months. Whereas, with the album that we made and released in January, we made
> $12,000,000 pesos (6,000 USD) in the first three weeks of launching it and then we were
> able to put in another order for 2,000 more CDs and we are now making another order.

So, our CD business still overwhelmingly makes us more money but something we have to think about is the long term. Our allegiance is always to serve the streets and our fans, so that's what we pay attention to. Where are our real street niggas at? What are they doing? That's why we go out and talk to them. We're not some social media niggas, we street rappers and we keep our ears to the street. That's how we build and strategize."

This type of explanation also seemed to correlate with statistical data retrieved from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) statistics that I was able to later gather about this issue. While some of the rappers had been interested in using YouTube Analytics a bit to get used to understanding the type of data it could provide, they still recognized that their bread and butter came from the streets. They acknowledged that statistics could be useful in understanding trends but the rappers were still much more interested in listening to their fan base and talking to people in person. Somewhat differently though, the adhoc rap groups did not pay attention to You Tube analytics or feedback from their fans at all. They were much more intrested in pursuing their personal desires and goals. In the following selection, I will present some field notes that I collected about making music videos with these types of groups so that the readers can understand the different priorities that each of the groups had.

> This evening, I arrived at the [Studio] where the whole crew was there….. As I was arriving the [Women Rap Group] showed up. We all walked in and greeted each other. [Rapper 1] went into a closet in the studio and pulled out two thirty-three-gallon trash bags full of *baretos* or joints. The group was talking about how they were going to use these joints in their music video about smoking weed all day. They also pulled out a bunch of cocaine and started doing these huge lines in front of me. I was a little freaked out. This was the first time that I had really hung out with them and I told them I was a little uncomfortable with all of the drugs that were in the studio. I tried to explain to them that maybe they should keep this stuff hidden from me. But [the Producer] interrupted:

> "Nah, Lau, look this is all for the music video. The song that we're filming for is called [Name of Song] and what we're talking about how we smoke weed and get high all day. So this is all for the artistic inspiration of the music video. That's why we need it to look like we've got a whole lot of marijuana on deck."

> I calmed down, told them that it would be ok and that I understood what they were doing. They were laughing a bit and saying what a nerd I was. "You gonna be ok?" [A Rapper] asked, rubbing my shoulder a bit. "Yah, I'll be fine." I replied without hesitation. The guys called their friend to come bring more cocaine and some bazuka for some of the

rappers. Once it arrived, everyone got pretty blasted and then more girls showed up. [Rapper 2's] girlfriend brought two of her friends [Groupie 1] and [Groupie 2]. We all got in different taxis and drove to a warehouse nearby. The guys filmed some shots, of themselves smoking weed and singing in the warehouse. Then, they shot some scenes of all the guys hanging out with the girls smoking weed.

Then, the Krew headed over to the [Name of Barrio] which is a neighborhood known for its eclectic art and is close to an *olla* in the preppy *gomelo* neighborhood. This area is well known for drug sales and well off, rich children or '*gomelos*' sitting around smoking marijuana, doing cocaine and tripping on acid. As the [Rap Group] hung out here in the evenings and sold drugs, they thought it would be an ideal place to shoot their video. They filmed the [Rap Group] smoking marijuana, walking around singing, and 'chillin' together in a famous square in this neighborhood. Then, they went back to the studio and filmed scenes of the rappers singing in the recording booth and filmed the entire crew, with groupies and all sitting around smoking marijuana. This seemed to be a pretty standard and perhaps even a bit of a simple rap video.

For months, afterwards, I tried to follow-up with the cinematographer about editing the video. I told him that I really wanted to observe him editing the video. He told me he had not started to edit the video yet but would call me when he did. Finally, after the video had been laying on the editing floor for about 3 months, I met up with the cinematographer to watch him edit. He was working in a very nice studio in the center of the city which was owned by the government. It was his job to coordinate art programs for adolescents who wanted to learn about film production. We went to his office and got to work.

> "I just started working on this last night. I have this idea. I am going to take some excerpts from the opening of a concert from Willie Colón[34] where he is talking about how he wants his fans to just sit back, get fucked up and enjoy the music…And then, I'll look at the footage and see what else I need to do."

I was sitting there with the cinematographer, watching Willie Colón concerts all day trying to find this alleged video footage. Finally, I told him, I had to go. Later on, I was hanging out in the recording studio with the rap group who was waiting on their music video and they started talking about it, spontaneously. They were complaining about problems that they were having

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[34] Willie Colón is a famous Salsa musician from the 1970s in Colombia.

with the cinematographer finishing the video. Sure enough, the video for the song was released

five months after it was recorded. When it came out, the rappers I worked with were really upset.

> Laura: "Why are you disappointed in the video?"
>
> [Rapper]: "Fuck, did you see that? Willie motha fuckin' Colon? What are we, in the 1970s? Jesus Christ!! …..We're not trying to incorporate that shit as part of our image and shit. Fuck…this video makes us look fuckin´stupid Lau. The sound quality….like everything is just fucked up. And that dick, motha fuckin' [Name of Cinematographer] took like 6 months to do this…what the fuck? I mean, it's just so bad on every level."

Later, that same month, I met the cinematographer for lunch to ask him, his side of the story

because the rap group kept beefing with the cinematographer over the video and asking him to

make changes. He explained to me:

> "Look, I did the video for them as a favor. They told me to make it as dope as I could for no money. This was just my creative expression. Now, I feel like if they are unhappy, then they can get someone else to fix it. I have taken the intro with Willie Colon out. But, the problem with sound quality and all that, well that's they problem. The sound file that they sent me, was the one that I added to the video and uploaded. If you ask [Rapper] about that sound quality for the song in general, he is super dissatisfied with it. That has nothing to do with me. I recommended that they have my other homeboys at [Record Studio] remaster it because honestly, I agree, the sound quality is shit."

In comparing the process of making the music videos for these two groups, the difference

was that the corporate network had carefully planned out and cultivated the image of the music

video that they wanted through elaborately constructing every detail of the video, collaborating

with the cinematographer on the images they wanted to achieve and even discussed the theory of

why they wanted to pump out those images. The cinematographer from the corporate rap group

never revealed to me how much he was paid for his work but he assured me it was over twice the

minimum monthly salary for a Colombian for three days of filming and a few weeks of editing

which means it was somewhere over a million pesos. In contrast, the video making process for

the adhoc rap group was much less organized. In my observations, it was clear to me that the

adhoc rap group was more interested in doing drugs and getting high for the shoot, then they

were in actually making the music video to begin with. While the cinematographer they used had a newer more expensive camera than the guy from the corporate rap network, the coordination of shots and professionalism was not present. Plus, the cinematographer that recorded the video for the adhoc rap set took about three hours, while the cinematographer for the corporate rap group worked with his clients for three days from anywhere between 8 and 12 hours a day to get ready, practice the scenes they would film and then to actually shoot them. The adhoc rap group did not plan anything, or practice scenes, they just shot footage and randomly chose locations. Obviously, the issue of pay was a problem, too. At our lunch in mid-April, the cinematographer for the adhoc rap group thought the reason why the rappers did not seem to give him a lot of guidance in what they wanted was so that they would not have to pay him for the work, ever. As for myself, I kept hearing different stories about that topic. At first, the adhoc rappers said they would pay the cinematographer based on what he was able to produce, then they told me they never planned on paying him and then they told me once again that they told him he would get paid based on the YouTube popularity. As was frequently the case with this group, the facts of this situation kept moving. Moreover, regardless of the negotiations that went on internally with the group's negotiation process, the results that came out of it, were that 5,126 people viewed their video on YouTube after one month of publication. Only 27 people liked the video and 94 people disliked the video. The majority of the comments left were remarking on the poor quality of the sound, cinematography and the negative messages of the song.

In the era of technological cultural production then, planning organization and having access to trained professionals who can carry out a project still makes a huge difference between a 'successful' music video that the public consumes versus a product 'fail'. The argument that some put forth, that everyone has an equal chance to enter the industry in this epoch of cultural

production, underestimate the amount of talent, hard-work and institutionally garnered training that putting together high quality cultural products, actually requires.

Interviews

Besides organizing the release of albums or singles on various internet mediums and creating music videos, promoting new songs and albums through radio and TV interviews is still an important way for the artists to communicate with the public. When I was in Bogota, New York and in Europe, I learned about several of the media outlets that were used by the Spanish Speaking hip-hop artists from Bogota. In New York there was *Vida Urbana*, which is the only Spanish language radio show in North America. Then, in Bogota itself, there is *Canal Capital*, which covers all urban arts events in Bogota on a Television show once a week. There is also *Zona 57*, which has a radio show that lasts for three hours twice a week and they podcast the show from their website. *Soñido BTA* is another group that hosts a public access television show once a week featuring the latest musicians in Bogota. In Paris, the radio show that some of the participants with whom I worked with in my study, were featured on a radio show called *Radio Activa*. This is a radio show that broadcasts three times a week for three hours at a time on Paris Radio and is owned by Universal Studios. And the final group that I learned about was the *Wu-Tang Clan Peru* who interviewed some of my participants over Skype. Hip-hop is exploding in Latin America right now though too, so since my field work ended there have been even more radio shows, podcasts and other media outlets popping up. However, these were the interviews that I saw and was made aware of during the course of my field work.

Vida Urbana brought in artists from Bogota to do concerts for them in New York, Boston and Miami. They arranged for promoters to pick them up at the airport, take them around the city and to film their arrivals in New York. The rap groups themselves would use their connections to

arrange recording sessions with old homeboys and people they knew. The artists would utilize this opportunity to promote themselves on Vida Urbana's radio station to promote their concert tours and merchandise. Several of the groups would also bring their merchandise to sell to fans at the concerts. They would bring in huge duffel bags full of t-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, and CDs. They would sell the merchandise at concerts and take orders to ship the products out to customers once they returned to BTA. The corporate rap groups knew how to take full advantage of the economic and technological system in terms of utilizing the internet to keep in contact with important radio producers, promoters, and customers interested in selling their items.

When the rap groups went on concert tours throughout Europe, they sent me videos of their interviews with *Radio Activa* and their concert footage. At the recording studios where the producers worked, they also owned radio stations and they had hip-hop segments, dedicated to hip-hop in Spanish. It worked out perfectly to have the visiting Colombian rap groups on the radio, to promote their upcoming concerts. The groups usually toured in France, Spain, Italy, Norway, Finland, Germany and Switzerland. Colombian hip-hoppers having access to European Spanish speaking audiences was quite a large gift provided to these Rolo rappers by their European allies.

The next interviews that I saw the rap groups giving were after their sets at Hip-Hop Al Parque 2013. They performed there in 45 minute sets. Afterwards all of the groups went to do interviews for *Canal Capital*. Canal Capital is a government sponsored television program that is dedicated to alternative media and exploring the underground art scenes in the city. It helps give exposure to new trends in Bogota and is meant to compliment other alternative media outlets (Canalcapital.gov.co, 2013). After their interviews with Canal Capital, the rap groups went over and spoke with Soñido BTA as well, promoting their albums and merchandise sales. The groups

would use these venues once again to promote upcoming album release dates and to discuss new music videos they were putting together. They would also promote their POS locations for people who wanted to support them through purchasing their merchandise. The interview platforms were a way for the artists to connect with and inspire their audience members.

Vice[35] Colombia has also started interviewing famous rappers in the scene. Like most of the other interviewers, Vice wanted to understand 'how' the groups were able to pull off their popularity and success. In one article where they interviewed Cejaz Negraz of Crack Family, the magazine dubbed him the "Prophet of the Streets" and said he was saving people's lives every day, particularly the lower *strata* youth. The journalist asked Cejaz what he thought about the editors of his magazine giving him this title and tagline:

> "First of all, I am honored. Secondly, I just want to say that this is my mission. Parents, teachers and police sometimes pick and choose winners and losers. They focus on the children that they think have a chance. I focus on whoever wants to listen to me. My fans. I want my fans to succeed and to win. I don't choose them, they choose me. Plus, I have been where they are, so I truly understand them. These fans usually don't want to listen to the adults in their lives, so even though I am not always perfect, they do listen to me. They do look up to me, so I feel a responsibility to show them how I made a wonderful life for myself out of complete misery. I triumphed over all the negativity, all the people who said I wasn't going to make it and they can do the same thing. That's why I'm out here. This is what I was born to do." (Cejaz Negraz, Vice Magazine, August 2013).

These are some of the most powerful words that one hears from the types of rappers that I worked with. Cejaz almost takes on a messianic vision of what he is trying to do. He is trying to save street kids from replicating their situation in the coming generations. They do not have to be perfect, they just have to be ambitious and to try. This message of hope, counters the messages of 'doom' out by the mainstream media and academic literature. As Thomas (2003, pg. 86) points

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[35] Vice is an independent magazine started in the 1990s to showcase provocative journalism and political incorrectness (Vice Media, 2016).

out what makes rap so seductive are the messengers who bring it, "promise upward social mobility…… and an anti-apocalyptic message of hope." This use of a counter-cultural media format to spread an alternative message to youth living in less than desirable conditions, is part of the skillful strategizing on the part of rappers in Bogota, Colombia who are using the technological system of decentralized media groups to spread their message of social change.

I also observed some interviews with rappers for the Wu Tang Clan of Peru over their live podcast that they did every Monday. The interviews took place at a record studio in Bogota using a small Go Pro camera, computer, and microphone over Skype. In this particular case, I found it interesting that the Wu Tang Clan Peru did not necessarily care if the artists were in the studio with them, they would just put them on Skype and broadcast the interview in this manner. The visual aspect was also available on the webcast of the show because the audience could see the artist through using Skype.

The innovative use of alternative media networks such as specialized magazines, radio shows, television and webcasts are a new way for these groups to publicize themselves. The decentralized nature of media outlets being run by people who promote alternative lifestyle choices is something that has been becoming more available and prolific with the advent of digital technology, along with a more unfettered access of goods, people and ideas. No longer are artists beholden to utilizing media outlets that have been developed by major media networks alone but now they can gain access to media platforms that are dedicated to specializing in producing information specifically for young fans of hip-hop. Again, these alternative media networks are a new development in the technological system that gives unprecedented access to exposure by a more diverse range of voices, than has existed in previous generations. Concerts were another way that rap artists could disseminate and promote music to their fans. This process

was also made possible by the social networks that the rappers maintained over platforms of social media, like Facebook. The liberal economic and technological system is what made this mode of production possible for our rap artists in Bogota, Colombia.

Concerts

In terms of having contact with their fans, concerts were one of the most effective ways for rap artists to reach out to their base to recruit new audiences as well. In the time that I spent with the rap groups, the corporate rap networks had more concerts, that were at larger venues and paid more money than the adhoc groups. The corporate networks were extremely strategic about concert planning and making sure that they were paid for their performances. The adhoc rap groups on the other hand were a bit more anxious for exposure and were not always paid for their work. In fact, in both cases, getting paid for the concerts was a constant battle that the artists had to deal with. However, the corporate networks had a standard way of ensuring that they would get their dues. The adhoc rap groups did not always get paid by the concert promoters either but unlike the corporate networks they did not have much of a way of retaliating, except by bothering the concert promoters verbally, over social media and by phone. The concert venues for the corporate network were also much more elaborate. They toured in the US, Europe and throughout Colombia.

The adhoc group however, did not get as many concert tours and gigs. But the majority of communication involved in both models for reaching out to club owners, promoters and concert organizers was through Facebook. Usually, the rappers would receive invitations from various club promoters and organizers, if they had enough notoriety. However, rappers could also contact people in the business to find out about possible openings for venues and could apply for gigs by using the Facebook Messenger feature. This way the parties could easily review the

music of the artist from their Facebook Timeline, and could privately communicate with individuals about upcoming events that might suit either party.

The mechanisms for communicating and easily getting information from social media websites facilitated the organization of hip-hop events, so that they could happen with ease and facility. Once again, the corporate model was able to take more advantage over this feature of the commercial and technological systems than were the members of the adhoc models because of their structural bonds that the corporate model had embedded into their social network.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the liberal economic and technological revolution has facilitated the proliferation of rap music in Bogota, Colombia. By showcasing how the groups disseminate music, utilize media outlets and describing concert events, I have been able to demonstrate the strategies of music dissemination made possible through economic and technological changes in the social environment for Colombians. The world is not flat in terms of technology. Despite optimistic claims that the democratization of digital technology would allow anyone to be able to get into the cultural production industries, it turns out that this is not the case. There are some people who have access to smart phones, roaming data plans that allow them to use Wi-Fi wherever they are and internet connections in their homes. However, the majority of Colombians still do not have this luxury. Therefore, CDs are still a large source of the music distribution strategies in Colombian music markets. That is why it is important for the artists to pay close attention to what is happening in the realm that services their fan base, particularly if they are interested in developing a professional business strategy for their most dedicated followers.

Internet distribution sites are taking off but are relatively limited to the most popular cheapest forms of access for both artist and consumer which id much slower in Bogota, Colombia then in other places in the world. While there are a variety of internet distribution platforms, the most popular are the larger entities like YouTube which is owned by Google, SoundCloud, Facebook and Instagram which are all owned by Facebook. Therefore, the panaceas of democratic or decentralized economics in regards to music distribution and sales, seems to also be a misnomer from some of the recent scholarship about the system of liberal economic policies and new digital technologies. The industry leaders are still very much in control of many of the products created in this system, even in user created content markets which speaks back to the earlier findings of this research which noted that access to these institutions of hierarchical power are still vital for 'would be' artists to be able to access. While concerts and interview sessions are largely organized by the artists and their entourage, traditional business strategies and careful execution of these business moves are the outcomes that are financially rewarded in this era. While it may be true that anyone can access venues and broadcast sites, the more well-known radio and television shows still respect professionalism, and hard work which are traditional core values of capitalism. The corporate rap artists, in particular may have an agenda that seeks to revolutionize the cultural landscape in regards to breaking down prejudices that people have towards race, class or gender but their economic activity reinforces many of the core principles of neoliberalism, in of itself. The adhoc rap groups, on the other hand more resiliently resist the mainstream economic drive for making money but tend to be less skilled at conveying their message to larger audiences. Moreover, both groups heavily engage in the 'play' of revolutionizing and utilizing the technological realm of this system in new productive ways.

CHAPTER 10
Hip-Hop Entrepreneurs and Horizontal Business Strategies for Social Mobility:
The Processes of Building a Rap Music Empire

"I'm not afraid of dying, I'm afraid of not trying." – Jay Z

The original reasons that I went to Bogota, Colombia was to understand the production processes of rap music there in the current social, economic and political contexts in which it was operating. While earlier scholarship on rap music had posited that the artists were not interested in generating capital from their products or in commodifying them for mass distribution (Pillai 1997, Feiling 2002, Lemus 2005, Montoya 2009, 2011), I found these analyses to be incorrect. Therefore, I wanted to understand how music was composed, produced and distributed to the public in the current political, economic, and technological system to get a better understanding of the industry. In fact, to me, as someone who studies anthropology, economic development and education the most interesting aspect of gangster rap music that I discovered, were the horizontal business strategies employed by each of the rap groups that I worked with and how they were using new forms of technological connectivity to deploy their plans. Despite what earlier scholars like Angela Montoya and Gabriel Lemus found, I discovered that the corporate polity of rappers that I worked with was interested in not only creating cultural change through their art but they were also interested in industrializing and professionalizing their cultural craft. While each group I worked with had different strategies of hustling and making their ends meet, the corporate polity was successful at generating capital within the hip-hop community in Bogota. The corporate model, as has been discussed in previous chapters, had a clear vision of how to establish and run businesses. This chapter is dedicated to understanding how the corporate polity used the political, economic and technological system to create social

mobility for themselves in the world of hip-hop, while using counter examples from the adhoc model to highlight differnces in modes of operation and planning.

The members of the corporate polity had been in the rap game longer and had more life experience than the people in the adhoc groups. Additionally, the members of the corporate model had experienced more economically instability in their life trajectory than the people within the adhoc model. Those that were affiliated with the corporate body did not have actual bloodline kinship networks (family) that they could rely on if they needed help. Many of the members did not have parents that were going to be able to allow them to live at home or to be able to support them if their dreams of creating this hip-hop industry did not work out. Therefore, it was incumbent upon them to build-up businesses, make them successful and to create a legacy through entrepreneurship.

In this Chapter, I explore the horizontal business strategies pioneered by the hip-hop entrepreneurs in Bogota. First, I explore more information about the base operations of some of the corporate rap networks and contrast it with the base of business operations that rappers from adhoc groups tried to launch business ventures. Then, I explore other sectors of production pursued by the two polities. Namely, both rap groups are creating various strategies for monetizing their craft, and I explore the processes of cultural production at play within each. I then, address the marketing strategies pursued by the models and some of the deeper issues of political economy involved with the grand vision involved in creating hip-hop culture here. A final discussion about the major discoveries of this work concludes this investigation.

The Hustle

All of the entrepreneurs in my study had some involvement with narco-trafficking. As drug sales make up somewhere around 35% of the Colombian economy (Villar and Cottle 2011) and approximately 5% of the US economy (Zill and Bergman 2014), it is normal to find people in many stratas of society involved in this activity. About half of my informants told me tales of growing up in the streets of the US in cities like Chicago, Miami, New York or Los Angeles and the others came from right around Bogota. Growing up in the streets, many of my informants, particularly from the corporate rap networks had started selling drugs at very young ages. The art of hip-hop also teaches people how to be hustlers (Blatt 2006, Charnas 2011, Stoute 2012). Learning how to engage in street sales at such early ages, many of the rappers grew up relying on cash and making fast money. As Forbes magazine points out in its article on why hip-hop fosters entrepreneurship, Ruth Blatt argues that as rappers learn to market themselves and sell mixtapes out of their cars, like Jay-Z. As part of the performance too, the artists learn to boast about how wonderful their products or music are, they become successful at selling things as part of the process of cultivating rap music. The development of these skills lend themselves well to the business world, as I found to be the case with the business entrepreneurs in the rap game that I worked with in Bogota. While many of them started out hustling in the illicit economy, the young boys knew they wanted to turn this experience into something that they could use in the formal economy. They credited hip-hop music for helping them to conceptualize how to make this transition.

> "Yah, I mean, you know, even though I could not always understand all of the words in rap music in English, I knew those guys were rapping about the hustle and that they were telling you to make money and get out of the game. If you live fast, you will die young."

> "I always admired the East Coast rappers, Big L, Mobb Deep and those hard gangster tracks. But I also admire the business sense of someone like JayZ. We are all from those rough streets and so while that will always be in my veins, I will also be looking ahead to

what I can do next. And you know I am about that life too and we have our own ideas as a gang of how to lift yourself up and transform your reality."

The sentiment inspired by hip-hop of being a hustler, a drug dealer and then taking your profits and flipping them, is what H. Samy Alim calls the 'Dusty Philosophy of a Foot Soldier' (Alim 2006). In a chapter in one of his books, Alim talks about how hip-hop provides instructions for people who see themselves as oppositional personalities in society, can lift themselves up through the power of hip-hop and transform themselves from the oppressed characters of the global system, into these strong, aggressive instruments of societal change. Alim (2009) argues that while hip-hop alone does not provide all the answers to societies challenges, it gives the youth an optimistic starting point for their struggle. In some of the corporate rap groups, with whom I worked, what eventually rounded out this dusty foot soldier's philosophy in their ontological perspectives, was no specifically provided through music, were the ideological underpinnings espoused by the gangs that they were affiliated. The gangs inspired the reading of actual philosophy by the rappers too. In tandem, these instruments, provided organizational narratives, goals, objectives and strategies on how to create an alternative system of knowledge. This mixture of key ingredients inspired the corporate networks of rap musicians in Bogota to create a hip-hop scene that could support artists, their families and hundreds of other people involved in the scene as well.

The adhoc models on the other hand, as previously discussed had a harder time conceptualizing a bigger picture about why they were making rap music. They were in it for the fun of it; they were in it for the fame. Many of the more *gomelo* rappers sought excitement in the streets and from hanging out in the *ollas* and tended to do that frequently when they were

younger, most of their excitement from the gangster life these days came from movies and music videos. For example, one rapper confessed to me,

> "You know since I got off the *pepas* (pills), I try not to go into the *ollas* anymore at all. Yah, when I was young, I thought it was fun to sell drugs in the *ollas*, but now I am older and I realize how dangerous that is. I only go into the *ollas* to drag [Rapper] out of there for shows or when his Mom is looking for him."

And while other crew members went into the *ollas* initially to explore them, they would get trapped in them for long periods of their youth. A lot of the family members of the rappers in the adhoc model had the means to take care of their children when they were messed up on crack and would even enable their behavior by giving them money, which they would in turn often use to buy lean or bazuka. Other rappers in this model were not as lucky and I heard my fair share of stories about rappers living on the streets, smoking bazooka, and begging for money because they had nowhere else to go.

The corporate rap groups however, had their game plans together. In recounting how one group started their clothing line, the entrepreneurs confessed to me that it was a process that was years in the making. They had built various deeply entrenched relationships with other people in their gangs, their extended family and with other artists who had similar values and work ethic. When it came time to start the businesses and to put in the capital investments to make a clothing line, or an information technology start-up or to open-up a barbershop, they would call upon their associates that they had met over time and thought could handle the work. One rap entrepreneur spoke to me and said:

> "You know, there was really no competition." [Rapper & Entrepreneur] told me recounting the process of starting the clothing line. "These guys were my lifelong friends, and they had it all figured out. I just needed to put in the capital and they were gonna have my back. I knew there wouldn't be no bullshit cause they know how we ride. So

279

they got the job. I mean, we looked at other designs and eventually bought some of them from the other artists, but in terms of setting up a long-term work contract, the [Name of the Graffiti Crew] got it and they´ve never let me down in three years of working with them."

The rappers in the adhoc models did not have a systematized way of making clothing. While they had products that had their logos on them, they ordered them one at a time from random people. Differently, many of the corporate rap networks had formal processes for making their clothes.

I went to check out the place where the clothing for the [Rap Group] was made today. I took the Transmilenio to [Neighborhood] where [Graphic Artists Name] met me and took me back to the manufacturing plant. We walked towards a huge area that looked like a row of houses by the square in the center of [Neighborhood]. We went inside to one of the houses on the far end and I discovered as I walked inside, that these had probably once been houses, but they were gutted and now this block of about five or six houses were all connected. When we walked inside the first floor, there were about 12 sewing machines set up with a room to cut the fabric and do screen printing on the other side. I was also shown the second floor which was another room full of sewing machines. [Graphic Artist´s Name] told me there were another 48 machines on the second floor. Before you could go any further up the stairs, there was a huge steel gate with a passcode that unlocked the door to the rest of the stair case. Then the third floor of the *fabricante* (factory) was where designs were made by the sketch artists and fashion designers. There was also a huge steel door protecting this area with another passcode and alarm system. In this room there was the design space but there was also a big meeting room that doubled as a work space for [Graphic Artists Name] and the other managers. There were Mac computers all over the walls. I counted a dozen outside the office and then there were another four inside the conference room/workroom for the executives. I was amazed. This was a very dangerous neighborhood in Bogota, Colombia but it was outfitted with equipment like one would find in any first-class manufacturing plant. There were four floors to this building in all and after [Graphic Artist] gave me a quick tour of the business, he took me upstairs. Upstairs on the fourth floor which once again was protected by large door with a security code, there was a hallway with a bunch of doors to apartments on either side. [Graphic Artist] informed me that all of these apartments were rented out by various people, most of whom worked in the factory downstairs but one of them was the owner of the building, [Rapper´s] uncle. We knocked on his door and a small woman answered. She let us in. [Graphic Artist] greeted here and introduced me. … [Nurse] told us to go on in and said [Rapper's Uncle] had not gotten out of bed yet. When we went in, [Rapper's Uncle] kind of tried to jump up and get in his wheelchair. He yelled at [Graphic Artist] and said he couldn't just bring beautiful girls over while he was in bed watching TV. He looked terribly embarrassed. [Graphic Artist] tried to calm him down and tell him that I was just a friend of the family. But [Rapper's Uncle] kept swearing at him and calling him an '*hijo de perros*' (son of a bitch),

'maleducado' (rude) 'hueputa' (dumb whore) and a few other choice words. By this time, I was cracking up, and [Rapper's Uncle] looked over and said "Awww, she must be one of us if she thinks I am funny." and he relaxed a little bit.

[Rapper's Uncle] invited us to sit down. There was a sofa up against the wall and we sat down while he slid into his wheelchair. [Graphic Designer] started slowly explaining why I was there. [Rapper's Uncle] looked very interested.

[Rapper's Uncle]: "Oh that's great. So what do you want to know?"

Laura: "I am really interested in the process of making clothes. How do you guys do it? Where do you get your materials? How do you guys recruit workers and that kind of stuff? [Rapper] has told me that all of this stuff comes from Colombia and is made by Colombians, so I just want to know more about that."

Rapper's Uncle: "Well, that's almost true. What happened was, I have always worked at a clothing factory. I'm not really [Rapper]'s uncle, you see? I am his neighbor from when he was a kid. Me and my wife used to look after him now and then. His Mom would leave and wouldn't come home for days. We would get concerned and go look in on him. I always worked hard. But about 10 years ago, some hoodlums robbed me on my way home from worked and shot me in the back. That's why I am paralyzed. After I recovered, I could still work in my old job but it was hard to get there and I had so many medical bills to pay. I was drowning in debt and me and my wife could barely make it. [Rapper] came to our rescue. He started helping us out financially, sort of as pay back, I guess from when he was a little boy. Around that time too, we met these punk asses (he says, obviously joking) from the [Graffiti Crew]. [Rapper] told us they were good kids with a lot of talent and why didn't we try to get a business of our own going to make clothes right here in the neighborhood and employ people. At first, I thought these guys were crazy. But the kids from the [Graffiti Crew] were dedicated to making really nice designs for t-shirts. They would go around hustling shop owners for orders, bring the orders to my shop, we would get the merchandise made, they would drop it back off and fill the orders. They started gaining a reputation around the city for their cool custom designs and pretty soon, people were calling them left and right. They were so disciplined too. I mean these little faggots smoke weed and drink sometimes, but they would save their money. And they were ordering so many t-shirts from my factory that the managers there started giving me a commission. We scrimped and saved and worked and pretty soon, I had enough money to buy this little block of fucked up houses. When we bought this place, it was like the *olla* of [neighborhood]. Half the walls were falling down anyways. We just wrecked the rest of them and kind of fixed up the outside so it looks all residential. Then, the [Graffiti Crew] paid for the rennovations. Half of them live here for free now, those little sons of bitches. But you know, we did all of this together. We employ people from our neighborhood that we have known forever and that way we know we can trust them."

Laura: "And what about your products? Where do they come from?"

[Rapper's Uncle]: "At the old factory, we used to have a supplier drop off our fabric and then we would cut it. So 8 years ago, when we were getting ready to open our doors here, I just called them. I looked up a few other suppliers on the internet, and got some quotes

just to look at competitive pricing but because these other guys knew me a little bit, they gave me a good deal. I think most of the cotton roles come in from Mexico and Argentina. We try not to get that Chinese crap cause it's so thin and doesn't last."

"So you guys get the fabric in big roles and then what?"

"The next step, is that we have a bunch of our workers cut up the pieces, they take them upstairs and sew the pieces together and then once we have our shirts, then we take them back into the cutting room and silk screen print them or sew patches on them or whatever. We also recently got this machine up on the third floor that will do silk screen printing all over the t-shirt too for that street style look they're doing in the US."

Laura: "And what about the jackets? That's a big part of your line, right?"

[Rapper's Uncle]: "Yah, that's actually done by this guy and his apprentice….it's [Tanner] and the kids name is [Tanner´s Apprentice]. They have a place outback that [Graphic Designer] can show you later. But yah, all that leather comes from here. Made in Colombia. We get it from the campesinos."[36].

Laura: "So that's what you guys mean when you say everything is made in Colombia? It's all Colombian assembled and the clothes come from products in Colombia?"

[Rapper's Uncle]: "Yes, for example, we don't grow or manufacture cotton, but we still do our best to get it from Latin America. So we try to make sure it's sourced from Argentina and Mexico. We are trying to support our brothers here in Latin America."

The above excerpt illustrates the 'process' that took years for one of the corporate models to develop. Their path towards building a legitimate business, to develop the hip-hop industry enabled them to establish factories, stores, trade networks and to use the advantages that digital technology like the internet has provided. This is an example of how the current political economy, coupled with the rapper's own ideological underpinnings are facilitating social mobility and DIY job creation within the group. Opposingly, other groups have handled the production of their merchandise on smaller scales.

For instance, the adhoc rap models had not gone through all of this relationship building in order to produce clothes that the corporate model did. In one example, during my last few weeks of fieldwork, a couple of groups for the adhoc polity were gearing up to make T-shirts for

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[36] *Campesinos* means farmers in Spanish.

Hip-Hop al Parque. One group in particular, approached me and told me of their intentions but they also told me that they did not know of any graphic designers that they thought would do a good job designing a logo for them. I told them that I knew of some other graphic designers that I met in the hip-hop scene who were really good. I gave them a couple of names of some of my contacts who I thought might be interested in the work. The group contacted a guy I knew and he designed a logo for them. Then, the producer contacted one of his friends who lived in Madrid and asked him if he could front the group the money for making the shirts. The overseas contact lent him around €500 Euros or about $1.2 million COL (Columbian pesos). The lead producer of the group, then went out and bought some black t-shirts and hoodies to get the logo printed on. The group then used a clothing manufacturer that one of the publicists in the group knew about. The t-shirts and jackets were printed. What kind of struck me as odd about the whole affair though was that they got the merchandise made many months before Hip-Hop Al Parque. The t-shirts were done in August but Hip-hop Al Parque was not until the first of October. When the group Facebook messaged me about having the shirts ready, I asked them about this and they told me they just did not want to forget to do it. I asked the group members, if they thought of selling the shirts now and just getting some more made? They said no, it was not worth the trouble. I just kind of said ok and did not worry about it further. This type of small scale t-shirt production for a once a year event was something that maybe would happen again next year at Hip-hop Al Parque, or perhaps not.

Whereas the factory that the corporate model was involved with was an operation with large amounts of sunk-capital and involved relationships that took years to cultivate in order to reap the benefits of such endeavors, the adhoc model took a lot less effort in planning. The corporate network was trying to build up its income generating apparatus and form an empire

which employed their people. The adhoc model was on the other hand, making a dozen and a half t-shirts for an event. The two objectives were different, therefore so where their trajectories in producing the commodities that each group made. However, the intricate process that the corporate model employed, had a great deal of success. Many of the inside members of the corporate rap polity had gone from living in the most vulnerable social stratas in Bogota to becoming well placed in the middle class. This middling strategy that I describe here for vulnerable populations is important to discuss at length because its potential to aid people living within this type of political and economic environment is important to the survival of other vulnerable people in the world, looking for ways to change their current resource status.

The processes of dissemination were different too. The corporate models had stores in Bogota and sometimes in other cities as well. They had to supply all of their distribution sites with merchandise from the factory and arrange transportation to all of the locations. Meanwhile, the adhoc models sole plan was to distribute merchandise at Hip-hop Al Parque. While many corporate models also set up booths at *Hip-hop Al Parque* to sell products, conversely, the adhoc models most often would sell the T-shirts in the courtyard, informally, in front of the booths that the other rap groups had paid money to set up. This went along with the adhoc models general philosophy about pirating things and taking shortcuts. This type of hustling philosophy differed from that of the corporate networks in rap music in Bogota. The corporate models saw their grand vision for re-establishing an empire based on building up people and investing in regular folks, so that they could expand their network and influence. While the corporate models knew which relationships they wanted to build-up because they believed in trying to plan long-term, large-scale visionary goals. They tended to not just live for today but tried to think about yesterday, today and most importantly, they tried to plan for tomorrow. Many of the adhoc

model participants did not share this same type of active behavior. While many of the members of the groups from the adhoc model would sing the praises of the vision that the corporate models had, they themselves could not figure out how to emulate their example. They understood the art of hustling at a basic level but the rappers in the adhoc model did not understand how to take that to the next level and to really build a business from their meager beginnings.

From Hustlers to Entrepreneurs

The rap groups coming from the type of adhoc model that I am describing in this research, lacked the social relationships and deeper networks of human resources that the corporate models used to build-up their hustle. The corporate rappers were able to take the business of making rap music to marketing a clothing line for the groups to investing the capital off of those ventures into other mainstream businesses, creating hierarchical structures that provided income stability for the rappers and their networks. Many of the corporate models built their businesses up over time and with the help of people who had particularized talents.

For example, one group had deportees from the United States in their group with formal educational training in software engineering. The group was able to innovate a software program that allowed them to revolutionize telemarketing practices. They patented the software (with money from rap music and clothing sales) and established a business where its members could work from home, logging telemarketing hours, making calls from companies that subcontracted labor through this group. Another group, used their Masters of Business Affairs (MBA) degrees to set up a chain of Barbershops across Colombia's hip-hop communities in several of the largest cities. And still others founded Film Companies to make their own movies.

The corporate rap groups tried to look at the internal dynamics of the group and to utilize its members other talents and strengths in order to develop a diversified business model where the rap groups had several different revenue streams. If one sector of the business was having trouble generating income, the other part of the business structure would be solid enough to balance the deficit, elsewhere. When I approached this research project, I did not expect to find such a large infrastructure of Do It Yourself entrepreneurship taking hold of the rappers in this genre of music production. But looking back on that now, I realize that it all makes sense. Unnderstanding the way that hip-hop became commercialized in the United States, why would it not have the same ability elsewhere?

The curiosity lies in how this transition takes place, then. How do young people go from being street corner hustlers to hip-hop entrepreneurs? In this selection, I will present data about a couple of scenarios in which rappers were able to develop horizontal business strategies where they were involved in making rap music and had their hands in other business ventures. In this selection all of the examples that I will use come from the corporate model. Most of the corporate models that I worked with started out making music, as we have explored throughout the previous chapters. Subsequently, however the rappers in this model were able to open up other businesses, mostly in the clothing sector but some were even able to branch out further to create babershops, film companies, night clubs and IT companies. The amazing evolution that has taken place for certain groups of formerly strata zero entrepreneurs, has been inspiring for the young people in Bogota, Colombia. It shows them that if young people are smart, work hard and live their culture through consumerism, they can participate in cultural change while simoutaneously achieving social mobility. While some scholars criticize the idea of creating political change through consumerism, it is also important for young people to understand the

power of their economic prowess and how becoming a burgeoning business class of cultural producers can shift societal norms in Colombia. The rappers are facilitators of social and political change there.

The most incredible business venture that I saw take-off when I was in the field, was with a rap group that was able to begin producing clothing, then they opened up a few stores and then the group was able to get into establishing an internet technology[37] business from the members within its ranks. Multiple members of the group were formally educated in Computer Informations Systems[38] and business. As the entrepreneurs of the group saw an opportunity to form a legitimate business with the capital that they had acquired from making rap music and selling hip-hop clothing, the group was able to come up with a business plan with all of the necessary steps to get the business licensed and the innovations that the group was creating patented. This business venture entailed quite a lot of risk and one of the group members shared their concerns with me:

> "It was just one of those once in a lifetime situations where you think, ok, everything about this is risky. I am putting millions of pesos into a business with two ex-cons who just moved here from the United States and they are loked up Gs. They are real gangsters. What if I give them all this money and they just ran with it or worse started the business and then didn't give me my cut? The thing is though, I knew we could make a lot of money together, and I am a loked up G too, so I said what the hell. Plus, I had been talking with [Entrepreneur] over the last couple of years about how he played the game. He was a straight shooter and real serious with business moves. He had shown me a lot of integrity. Plus, in the initial stages of planning the business, me, [Entrepreneur 1] and [Mediator] would sit down and brain storm on the steps we needed to take. [Mediator] would go back and do the research on how much things would cost and to come up with a business plan. Then, when we would meet again, we would break down costs and think of what else we needed to do to become profitable. Before, I laid down a penny, we had a business plan in place and I felt secure in talking with these guys that they were being honest and really wanted this business to succeed. Plus, it was genius. We were making money…..from the United States. How ironic right? We reversing the imperialism of centuries. Instead of the US sucking us dry, now we were the vultures."

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[37] Internet technology, from here, IT.
[38] Computer Information Systems, from here, CIS.

Indeed, it was a profitable business model and the group had a lot of success. They set up a website to advertise their services and software product lines and they started getting clients. They were able to attract big clients too, like Harvard University, AT&T, Time Warner Cable and others then they could build up the company. The business started out of the home of one of the main mediators in the group, at first. The group was able to hire the core members of their crew to help them manage the IT business. Pretty soon, they were able to acquire an office building and set up formal operations for the IT business. They expanded and as they did, they hired more people from their crew. This diversification of investments and sinking fixed costs into the economy, through purchasing real estate and setting up a formal business helped to bring more legitimacy to the way people viewed rappers in Bogota.

Just in time too, it seems. Before this moment, the reputation of rap music in the city, was beginning to suffer. An art form that had at one time been hailed as a 'revolutionary way for young people to learn to engage with civic discourse', (IDARTES, Director 2000) to El Tiempo reporting that "Hip-Hop Al Parque provided a venue for 80,000 teenagers from all over South America to come together to smoke crack." At this time too, La Etnia was the most popular rap group in the city and with 3 out of the 5 members being well known 'bazuka heads' or crack heads, their reputation threatened the legitimacy of the music genre.

The hip-hop groups however proved through their quick economic response to the criticisms of social change that the rap scene in Bogota was more than just a party, people were able to thrive socio-economically from their endeavors that had started in the streets. Another way in which rappers and their groups have tried to develop hip-hop culture in Bogota is by getting into 'counter cultural' merchandise sales. For example, some rap groups have opened-up barbershops, others have established tattoo parlors, or drug paraphernalia shops. Additionally,

the groups have also begun to delve into cinematography. The strategy that the corporate rap networks in Bogota are establishing are enabling the fans of the music to also engage in all aspects of the 'alternative' lifestyle as a commercialized member of the *rapero* community. *Centro Commercial de Plaza España* there is an entire mall dedicated to hip-hop groups. The mall contains, hip-hop gear from the US like FUBU, Roca Wear, Truk Fit Brands and G Unit merchandise from famous brands owned by rappers in North America. Plus, the rappers at Plaza España, sell Nikes, Adidas and Reebok, along with other sports gear that is associated with an urban street style. After a *hip-hopero* shops at Plaza España for the right gear, they need some vaporizers and some blunt papers, so they might go over to a local paraphernalia shop owned by a rap group, and then they could go get their hair braided at a rap group's barber shop, get at tattoo from their favorite rapper and then head to Quadra Picha and hang out at another of the rappers' clubs that night. The corporate networks had worked diligently to construct avenues for young people to pursue alternative lifestyles and they have been doing this by founding businesses that support the culture that for which they want to participate. Many of these businesses employ the fans of rap music too. This was one of the most important aspects of the burgeoning of the hip-hop industry in Colombia, is that it gives employment opportunities to young people. As a response, the public has learned to regard the role of the rappers that associate themselves with this positive capitalistic growth as groups worthy of respect. Smith (2003) argues that because hip-hop moguls represent political correctness of equal opportunity, social mobility and serve the interests of the elite to generate capital, he argues that therefore, society accepts hip-hop culture. Hip-hop entrepreneurs represent a progressive element of cultural change that does not seek to revolutionize society by radical means but rather produces slow cultural change. This is appealing to many elite forces because they can envision

themselves adapting to slow, progressive modernity. In fact, perhaps they can even profit off of it at some point. Plus, the hip-hop entrepreneurs represent the idealized type of business person in the traditional capitalist narrative presented by Adam Smith. These corporate hip-hop groups demonstrate that everyone can achieve the new American Dream. Hip-hop entrepreneurs represent the marginalized person who overcomes the odds and through their idealization of hard work, focus, and self-discipline. Rappers in the coporate models believe that they can become socially mobile through the exploiting certain traditional economic values and can help implement the progressive socio-cultural changes that are needed to help their pseudo-family as they climb the economic ranks of society. This narrative fits in perfectly with the idea of neoliberal dreaming that was touched upon in the Introduction. The neoliberal dream is the globalized version of the American Dream. It states that regardless of your station in life at birth, one can rise to the middle upper-class even in a place, such as a war-torn Colombia. The hip-hop entrepreneurs serve to generate a narrative of hope for millions of street kids born into ´strata 0´ as rappers so often rhyme about in their lyrics. Many of the hip-hop entrepreneurs are successful middle-class participants, even though they were born into difficult situations. These rappers have defied the odds. They have broken the rules, done what they like, sold drugs, defied '*limpieza social*' programs designed to destroy them and instead, they have become socially mobile, middle class, entrepreneurs. These hip-hop businessmen give hope to the hopeless, they reach out to the underserved to give them a message of social empowerment, progress and trying to make a difference in a chaotic world. This is the message that many optimists of globalization want to espouse. They argue that through doing 'the right' things in society, people can achieve social mobility in this economically liberalized system. Superficially, this seems like great news. However, considering the costs that have also come from this model, it is important to discuss all

of the angles of this 'new system' in some detail. The only rappers that have been able to become successful in my study have been those connected to international gang structures. Many of them have been sanctioned by the state and have criminal records. The rappers I met, often engaged in illegal commercial activity to learn how to become business men. Furthermore, even though these rappers now have legitimate businesses, they still feel the state is too weak to help it enforce contracts and it must take matters into their own hands, risking further penalization from the legal system as they engage in vigilante violence to enforce the rules of the game, by which they play.

While discourses of liberal economics generally advocate for people to act on their own, individual desires, and preaches the philosophies of rugged individualism (Read 2009, Bloomeart 2010) this case study found that in fact, the opposite ideals were needed for an entity to thrive under these conditions. The rappers of the corporate polity had to engage in a highly cooperative relationship with one another in order to build their business. Then, simultaneously, this same type of group had to fiercely compete with the outside world, in what might resemble a societal schizophrenia, that Gregory Bateson remarked often characterizes highly competitive societies. Similarly, to Robert Merton's theory or Malcolm Klein's findings about organized delinquency, it is common for informal structures of organized criminal units and formal institutional structures to resemble one another. The rugged individual is not going to make it on their own in a liberal economy but rather it will be those that can learn to 'play' within that environment appropriately with the right mix of competition and cooperation with the other nodes in the system, who will prosper.

Another interesting anomaly that this case study revealed is that while many advocates of liberal capitalism down play traditional institutions of power as mechanisms for creating wealth,

this case study revealed that those institutions are actually more important than ever, now. Rappers that had access to corporate recording equipment, formal media outlets, banks, educational resources, and could create institutions for themselves, became much more successful than those that did not. In fact, ironically, the state's penal institutions gave the entrepreneurs in this case study, a strange type of informal educational advantage. In my view, the strategies that the gangster rappers use to become socially mobile are not necessarily good or bad but they need to be talked about in a scientific way because as Lord Maynard Keynes (1926. pg. 287) famously argued, "Our problem is to work out a social organization which shall be efficient as possible without offending our notions of a satisfactory way of life.". This is still the issue we are trying to resolve. Yes, this group of gangster rappers is economically successful and efficient with their resources, but do we want to live in a society where people have to form this type of social network to become successful?

On the other end of the spectrum in this study, were the not so successful hip-hop entrepreneurs, I called the adhoc rappers. These groups did not have the same infrastructure and unifying bonds that enabled them to get involved in creating the business side of hip-hop. The adhoc rappers were trapped in what sociologists call a 'downwardly mobile' social class movement, instead of being upwardly mobile agents in their society like the corporate networks had by developing into hip-hop entrepreneurs. At one point when I was talking to a member of the adhoc rap models, he was having a moment of self-reflection when he told me:

> [Informant:] "You know the logo ….. on the World Star Hip-hop website, that says 'run the trap' but they ain't running nothing. They don't run the trap, they are falling in it."
>
> [Laughter]
>
> [Informant]: "You know, they are just like a bunch of retarded adolescents that never had to grow up. They are all the typical Mama's boys, who don't have to be men. They live at home with their parents, they don't pay rent, their Mom's take care of their illegitimate

kids and still wash their underwear for them. That's not gangster. That's some bitch made shit. There are so many people in our Colombia who would kill to have access to the opportunities that they have had. Like [Rapper 1]'s Father is a Professor at la Universidad Nacional, [Rapper 2]'s parents are in the symphony. At any point, if they had wanted to become someone, they had all the opportunity in the world to do it. But they didn't. And that's why they are so fucked up. They are just a bunch of yuppy drug addicts pretending to be gangsta. That's why I just have to stay away from them. I kind of have a similar past. My parents are immigrants to the US. They worked their way up and then I fucked up and got deported. Before, I left though, I was able to take some drug money I had made and buy a house. Now, my parents help me rent out that house, and I make money from that, plus, I am going to kind of go my own way now and try to make my own opportunities in business, real estate and the hip-hop market down here. But I have to stay away from the drugs and the bullshit that those guys are into. In the end, I'm glad [Rapper 2] stole [Girlfriend] away from me or whatever. He can have that hoe. But what that did was teach me a lesson. I saw who those punk ass bitches really were for the first time. I really had to open my eyes and look at that hard. Everyone knew that mother fucker was out with my girl and didn't nobody say something to me. They was just using me the whole time. They ain't care about me. They liked me hooking them up with my weed connects, my coke connects, mastering their sound but at the end of the day, they didn't respect me. They weren't really trying to do nothing but be involved in gossip and other bitch ass shit. So I learned my lesson and now I'm going to go try to do my own thing."

This interpretation of his crews' activities is biased but was a point of view that other

people expressed to me about their rap groups or production house affiliations in the adhoc

models. Another rapper commented to me on a social occasion,

[Informant]: "Yah, I mean, that's why [Rap Group] doesn't really work with [Production House] a lot. My family owns a bunch of restaurants down here and some property in the States too. We have money and while I live at home and my Mom helps take care of my son, my family makes me work. I have to help manage the restaurants and the properties because my Father is getting older, so he can't do it all anymore. He expects me and my two brothers to be able to manage all this when he passes a way so we try to learn his business strategies. Plus, me and the [Rap Group] have a *puesto* (store) we are going to open up in Gallerias in a couple of months too. I just don't have time to be involved with baby Mama Drama and arguing about small shit. And when those guys do so many drugs and act so dirty all the time to each other, it just makes me want to stay away from that bad energy. You know?"

Thinking about the impacts of globalization and how images of the commodified self have had

on the adhoc rap groups, I could not help but notice that many members of this group seem to

have followed all of the more fantastical thinking, streaming from popular philosophy of neoliberal economic thinking. They conducted themselves as rugged individuals who only worried about themselves and their immediate desires. They lived in the moment and believed that they could recklessly use drugs, party all the time and womanize without consequences. While certain types of rap songs argue this is possible, their reality speaks volumes about what this type of thinking becomes. As these rappers did not have access or distanced themselves from the access they were born with, to formal institutions, it put this group at a huge disadvantage in making saleable hip-hop products. While they were able to make songs and influence people, this group's tactics for doing this were not necessarily for upward social mobility. In fact, they were on a trajectory for downward mobility. It's not my intent to argue that their lifestyle is wrong or bad, once again. My purpose in this dissertation is to demonstrate what different people choose to do on an on-going basis to create the types of lifestyles that they experience within the structural confines in which they operate. Advocates of liberal economic systems have often argued that with increased freedoms of choice, people will make 'good decisions'. It is my job to show what these decisions are. With many popular voices in political and economic discourse such as Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Julian Assange or Evan Williams (the co-founder of Twitter) dropping out of college and arguing this enabled their success, they may be uniquely exceptional in this regard. Even within the hip-hop community, someone like Kanye West, has also questioned the advantage of educational attainment, in his album 'College Drop-Out', which gives young people the impression that formal education is not important. The rise in popularity of Gangster films or in Latin America of the Narco-genres often leads people into dillusional thinking about how the real world works. While some of these famous entrepreneurs did drop out of college, did sell drugs or did take various risks in heading in the direction that they chose to

become successful, they still did begin that process. In these tales of dropping out of school, skirting the system and making your own way, the details of the narrative have often been lost and act as (mis) guidance to a lifestyle that is not likely to yield the results that the followers of this said path want to experience. That is why academics who recount the tales of American Dreaming have to tell the whole wild story, explain the knowledge acquisition and detailed decision making of how our actors made the strategic choices that they did and it is important to accurately recount the results.

Ha Joon Chang, an economic historian from Cambridge has argued in his famous book, *Kicking Away the Ladder* that it is common for people who become successful to lie about 'how' they did it in order to obscure the path for others to follow. If people misunderstand the path to becoming successful, then they will not create competition for those currently occupying seats of wealth and power. That is one of the reasons that I feel this work is compelling. I want people to understand how our current economic system truly works for cultural producers and those hustling in the DIY industries.

Changing the Game?

While liberalism was initially heavily criticized for pushing millions of people into poverty (Chant 2006) for perpetuating the cruelty of human nature (Read 2009) and creating 'social factions' (Jimeno 2011) among the population, more recent scholarship indicates that populations of people living in the current political economy are adapting 'middling strategies' within this ever changing political economy (Cohen 2004, Hieman and Leichty 2012, Jayaram 2014). Especially in the Do It Yourself fields of cultural production, as I have studied here, many of the participants transitioned from being poor urban youth to middle class participants through developing their own businesses with their friends and consociates. While the adhoc model was

295

not able to become industrially successful and served as our counter example, they still developed knowledge about their crafts and produced quite a lot of content for public consumption. These cultural products are important because their social messages seek to help the youth of today adjust to an increasingly competitive, complex and specialized world. As counter-cultural entrepreneurs use the internet and digital forms of technology to spread messages of upward mobility, business leadership and social justice, perhaps in our lifetime we will witness changes in the way that capital is distributed. In recent years' levels of economic inequality have been falling from some of their ultimate highs during the 1990s.

It is also important to sociologically and economically gather more household data about smaller, informal cultural producers. The decentralized nature of the music industry, TV or even movie production these days often leaves artists out of the equation when looking at how people are succeeding in small upstart business. David Harvey (2004) famously argued that neoliberalism would be good for cultural creators. I recently read an article entitled, "The Shrinking American Middle Class", which featured statistics about how the middle-income earners in the United States were now in the minority for the first time since the 1950s. However, what I realized later in the article was that the Upper-Income Earning bracket had gone from 14% to 21% of the population over the last decade. The lower income bracket only grew by 1%. What this statistic illustrates is that the middle-income earning category was shrinking do to an increase of social mobility and not a decrease in this arena of current labor market activity. In Colombia, the same thing has been happening on a slightly less dramatic scale. However, over the last decade and a half, the Colombian middle class has been thriving.

Economic Stratification	1997	2003	2008	2013

Lower Strata 1,2	44.2	33.7	30.3	28.5
Middle Strata 3,4	33.2	47.1	50.8	50.7
High Strata 5,6	22.6	19.2	18.9	20.8

Image 10.1: Economic Class Stratification in Colombia (MESEP, 2014)

The middle class in Colombia makes up over half of the population for the first time in history. As compared with the 1980s and early 1990s where Colombia's population had over 70% of its population living in poverty, this change is certainly welcome. I am not claiming that hip-hop is responsible for this social class movement, but the political economy and the opportunities it affords are.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I sought to fill in the missing information about the production of rap music in Bogota and to explain how rappers are can become socially mobile individuals who commodify their music as well as their lifestyle products in order to realize their dreams. I wanted to share the 'middling strategies' that real life creative artists use in order to thrive in the era of globalized capitalism. While scholars like Pillai (1998), Feiling (2002), Lemus (2005), and Montoya (2009, 2011) did not explicate these processes in their accounts of rap music, in Colombia, I thought that this information was necessary for cultural producers to gain more insight, in case they are seeking to apply similar strategies to their businesses, as well. The globalization of liberal economics and technological advances have led to many questions within the academic community about people's life goals, aspirations and their possibilities of realizing their dreams. As Palaversich (2006) and Rincon (2009) have postulated, many people involved in the cultural production of narco-genre entertainment have used their background in this lifestyle to further their ambitions of reaching the middle or middle-upperclasses in society. This has also been a similar finding to the studies of Heiman and Leichty (2012), Florida (2012), and

Jayaram (2014). In some cases, rap groups in my research were able to utilize commercial strategies of commodifying their personas (Bunten 2008) in order to further their lifestyle goals, and the processes by which this happened were interesting to explicate. This research demonstrated that one method for obtaining social mobility involved utilizing and exploiting one's affiliations with international gang structures to organize, establish and to maintain business ventures that were highly profitable. This particular corporate rap polity did not require a lot of state assistance in order to realize their dreams and that in some cases the state actually worked directly in opposition to this group. As James Ferguson (2014) has argued, many actors in today's global economy can achieve power by reaching across transnational lines and they do not need the state to 'grant' them power. Providing more data on how this happens helps to disrupt the civil society/state actor binary that is so prevalent in much scholarship about how people achieve access to power and social mobility. By providing rich data about the multiple "levels" of actors within the global economic system, the simple didactic analysis of the past become more robust, full and better represent our human reality. To showcase people's resistance strategies to oppressive forces, such as, limpieza social, the repression against the rappers by the Colombian state, the repression by the US immigration system, and the criminal courts of the European Union highlight the ways in which the liberal political economy and technology aid our rappers in this fight against the systems of state power. The detail of this report also showcases how sometimes the rappers are able to negotiate with local governmental powers to win small concessions from state actors in terms of sponsoring concert events, funding social liberalization projects or making investments into popular access to technology.

The rappers learned how to commodify their music in this same way also. They looked across transnational boundaries to other rap groups in the United States and Europe who were

economically successful in marketing their music and lifestyle products to mimic the same business strategies there, while uniquely adapting those strategies to their specific location. The corporate rap group, was uniquely qualified to take on these challenges because of the strict rules by which governed their organization through their international gang affiliations.

Another finding of this research indicates that the ideological underpinnings for which economic development of an industry takes place are sanctimoniously important to the outcomes that the socially mobile entity. Without the "buy-in" of the actors in this group to the radical politics of the corporate model, they would not have been able to reach their dreams of upward social mobility. Again, James Ferguson (2013) argues that academics must do better to recognize and support these modes of resistance by exploring how they run horizontally, are created, organized and maintain themselves. This work reveals that the political ideology of opposing state control by creating an ideology of social resistance and having the group members constantly working against the authority of local, state and international governing agencies, is a starting place for exploring modes of resistencce political and economic strategies of everyday people.

While the adhoc polity was not as economically successful in their music-making endeavors, their organization allowed for creative innovation within the genre of rap music in Bogota and allowed for a diversity of gender representation. This in of itself, is noteworthy in its contribution to the rap scene. Their lack of ideological cohesion about what they were doing as a unit was also the beauty in its madness. It's what allowed it to be so dynamic. While some could argue this was the rugged individualism of capitalism at work (Bloomeart 2011), others could also understand how the 'hedonistic play' of the group composition allowed it to influence popular society in many different modalities (Tannenbaum et. al. 2014, Wilt 2015). It was also

299

interesting to note the group's perception of media scandal and their attempts to recreate this within their representation of themselves on-line to try to acheive fame and notoriety from their fan base (McNamara 2014). While the adhoc rap group did not have the where-with-all to harness their social media popularity for capital accumulation, their innovative intuition about how to do this was something quite new in Bogota. What remains unresolved is to what degree the members of this group undertook certain actions, consciously or subconsciously, for the purposes of trying to create fame through scandal. We may never understand fully how much of themselves they were trying to commodify or without social media, would they have done these things anyway.

Another major finding of this research is that while many people have speculated that globalized technology would lead to a flattening effect where every user who had access to it could become successful (Lysloff 2008, Castells 2010, Florida 2012). This is simply an over ambitious assessment of the miracles of technology. In the end, time, access to social networks, institutions and user ability had an enormous impact on the outcomes of technological ingenuity. Success within the creative industries is still a craft where user knowledge, self-discipline, access to formalized institutions and quality physical inputs greatly impacts the value of the commodity. As this research discovered that the state was both enabling and disabling the burgeoning of the rap industry in Bogota, the state could further the development of entrepreneurial business developers by affording more people with internet access, supporting the capital investment of corporations willing to put sunk costs into their economy, such as formal record studios or through the support of institutions of higher learning such as vocational schools or university training programs for arts production. These inputs could have large scale payoffs for economic growth and development.

In conclusion, this research on rap music, its participants and the development of their business entities has shed light on many issues in regards to the political economy and how people are interacting with it. Some are utilizing it to become socially mobile, others are using it as a means of creativity and most importantly, it gives people many opportunities to play within it, to figure out their own courses of action in their everyday deliberations about what to do next[39]. As Ferguson (2013, pg. 162) recounts, "perhaps we progressive scholars, would do well to do what many of our informants do, to deal pragmatically with (rather than to deplore) the social world we have got." These have been the representations of real people, their livelihoods and how they faced their social situations to try and transform their society into the image of it they would like to see. I think they created masterful representations of their realities and manifested their desired outcomes. For that, I am forever grateful to have beared witness.

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[39] My supervisor Hervé Varenne often uses this phrase in his lectures on why studying Anthropology is so endlessly fascinating.

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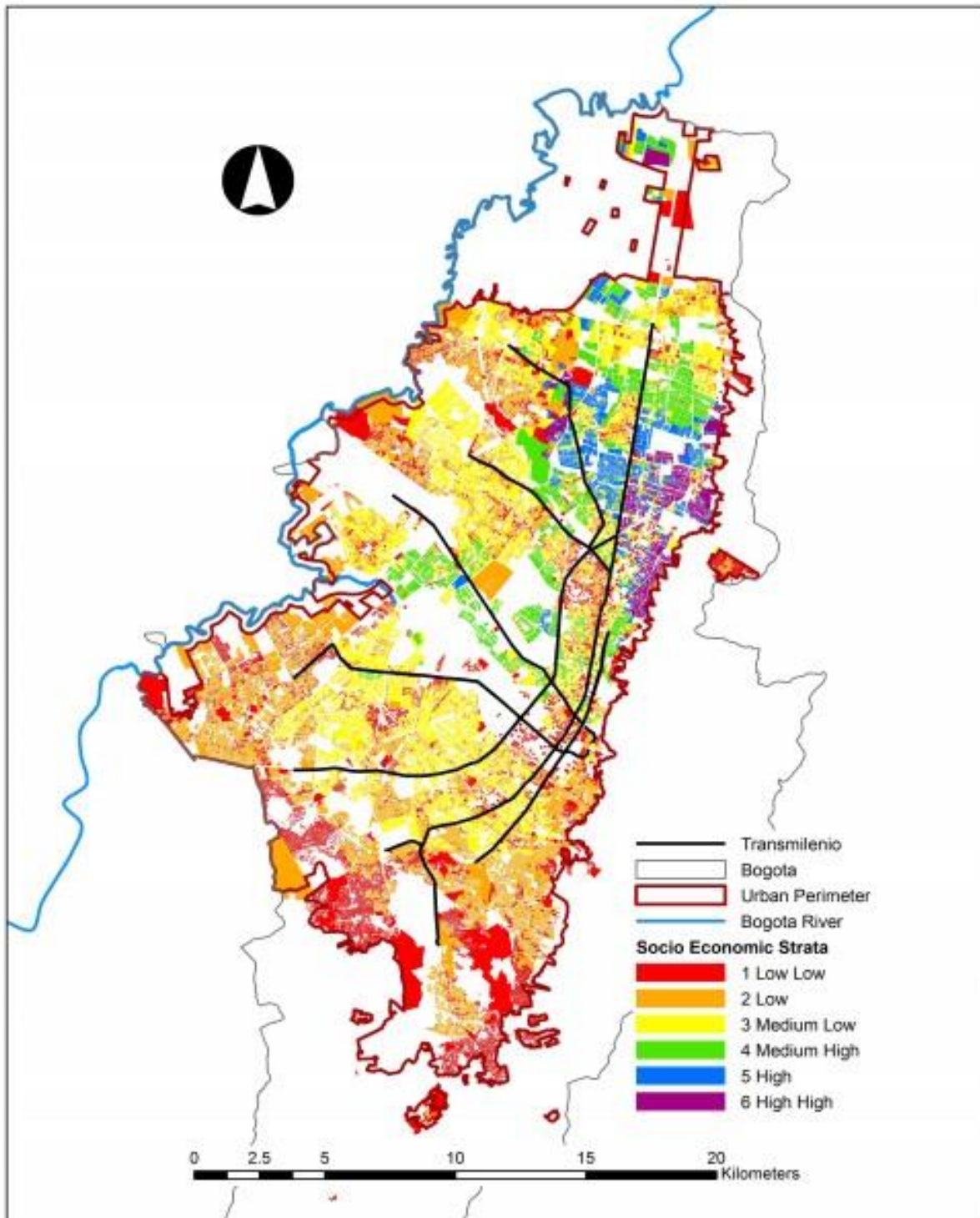
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Appendix A

Figure legend:
- Transmilenio
- Bogota
- Urban Perimeter
- Bogota River

Socio Economic Strata
- 1 Low Low
- 2 Low
- 3 Medium Low
- 4 Medium High
- 5 High
- 6 High High

Scale: 0 2.5 5 10 15 20 Kilometers

Appendix B

Formal Interview Questions

1. When you were a child, who did you like to listen to?
2. When did you start to listen to rap music?
3. When did you first start to make your own music or make your own songs?
4. Why did you decide to make rap?
5. What types of themes, stories or messages are you trying to bring up in your music? What are you trying to communicate to the public in your music?
6. Who produces your music?
7. Do you use your social media networks to help you make music?
    a. If so, how?
8. How do you record and master the music that you record?
9. How does your group distribute the music and the merchandise that you make?
10. What do you call the type of rap that you make?
11. Do you think that your art is a reflection of society or that your art influences society?