

ON THE BEAT: UNDERSTANDING PORTRAYALS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICERS IN HIP-HOP LYRICS SINCE 2009

by

Francesca A. Keesee
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Committee:

	Chair of Committee
	Graduate Program Director
	Dean, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
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Since 2009

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of Master of
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by

Francesca A. Keesee
Bachelor of Arts
University of Virginia, 2015

Director: Juliette Shedd, Professor
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia
University of Malta
Valletta, Malta

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all victims of police brutality.

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I am forever grateful to my best friend, partner in crime, and husband, Patrick. Thank you for inspiring this research project, for keeping me motivated, and for moving to Malta with me. I could not have done this without you.

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ABSTRACT

ON THE BEAT: UNDERSTANDING PORTRAYALS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN HIP-HOP LYRICS SINCE 2009

Francesca A. Keesee, M.S. M.A.

George Mason University, 2017

Thesis Director: Dr. Juliette Shedd

This thesis is concerned with the ongoing violent conflict between law enforcement officers and Black citizens in the United States. The research explores lyrical messages about law enforcement officers found in mainstream hip-hop music from the years 2009-2016 in order to understand how the conflict is discussed in the contemporary Black American community. The author consulted Billboard music charts to select five songs from each year (forty songs total), and she analyzed each song to assess how the artists position police officers and themselves in the narratives of the songs. The songs were subsequently grouped in various ways to interpret trends in the lyrical messages. This thesis uses hip-hop music as a tool to understand one perspective of the conflict between police and Black Americans, and it has produced many viable options for future research on the topic.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Music is sometimes a medication from reality, and the only time you get a dialogue is when tragedy happens. When Tupac or Biggie or Jam Master Jay died, that’s when people wanted to have a dialogue. It was too late. Not enough people are taking advantage of using hip-hop as a way to deal with serious issues, as a way to try to change things before tragedy strikes.”

-DJ Kool Herc¹

The Current Conflict

Perhaps the recent verdicts in the cases of Philando Castile, Samuel DuBose, and Sylville Smith best explain one type of ongoing conflict between police and the Black community. Philando Castile was stopped by police on July 6, 2016 because he had a broken taillight in a suburb near St. Paul, Minnesota (Smith). Samuel DuBose was stopped by a University of Cincinnati police officer for a routine traffic stop in July 2015 (K. Lee). Sylville Smith was pulled over by a police officer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for a traffic stop on August 13, 2016 (Bendix). Each of these Black men was stopped for a traffic violation, and following confrontations with police, they were all fatally shot by the officers. It is important to note that the officers charged with murdering the men are

¹ From the Introduction to *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* by Jeff Chang (xii).

of different races: Latino, White, and Black. In each case, the officers were found not guilty of murder, and the shootings were justified as matters of self-defense (Park). The shootings immediately triggered outrage in the Black community because Black Americans felt unjustly targeted by police, yet again. For instance, after the death of Sylville Smith, there were protests in Milwaukee where “protestors torched a half dozen businesses, smashed cars and hurled rocks at police,” (Park). The subsequent court decisions for these three cases likely triggered further disappointment and disillusionment with the United States criminal justice system.

Distrust, disappointment, and disillusionment are feelings often associated with the criminal justice system in the Black community, especially in recent years. Even though Trayvon Martin was not killed by a police officer, his death serves as example of another type of conflict between Black Americans and law enforcement officers. To some, finding George Zimmerman not guilty meant that Blacks could be victimized by others and there would be no obligation to provide justice to Black victims. Such sentiments were conflated to become part of the greater dialogue about police violence in the Black community. Na’ilah Suad Nasir, a scholar of African American Studies and African Diaspora Studies at University of California Berkley, opined that “The [George Zimmerman] verdict in this case is symbolic; symbolic of the ways that black male life is not valued, the ways that black male childhood is left unprotected,” (Loggins et al.). She connected the way society devalues Black male life with the tendency for authoritative figures, like police officers, to further victimize young Black males. Aya deLeon, a professor in the Department of African American Studies at UC Berkley, stated that the

verdict of the case was “another painful reminder that the justice system fails consistently in addressing deadly violence against young Black men by white authorities, even when they are not so white, and their authority is self-appointed,” (Loggins et al.). deLeon identifies the justice system as “White”, and even though George Zimmerman was Latino and not a police officer, he benefitted from a pro-White, anti-Black justice system. As such, the systemic violence apparent in the American justice system perpetuates violence similar to the physical violence that police officers impose on the Black community.

The Black Lives Matter movement began as a social media response to George Zimmerman going free after the trial for the death of Trayvon Martin. The three female founders felt that the lives of all Black citizens were threatened by societal anti-Black sentiment (Garza). While the social media campaign initially sought to promote the value of all Black citizens (straight, queer, female, male, and otherwise), it soon developed into a large in-person movement as police brutality continued to plague Black Americans [JRS1]. For instance, after Michael Brown, a Black teen, was killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, the town erupted in protests, and Black Lives Matter was among the groups present in Ferguson (Buchanan et al.).

Historical Context

Conflicts between Blacks and law enforcement in the United States date back to the first slaves coming to the New World. For much of American history, local and national law enforcement authorities unjustly targeted racial minorities, especially Blacks, which over time “led to the incarceration, imprisonment, chain gangs, prison farms and other correctional facilities for tens of thousands of African American men,

women, and children,” (Taylor, 201). There have been certain chapters of American history that featured more severe conflicts between police and Blacks than others, and one such period occurred just after the end of World War II (L. Moore, 2). After their participation in the war, Black Americans returned to the U.S. expecting liberation from the oppression they faced before the war. White law enforcement, however, “viewed themselves as agents that existed for the protection of whites only,” so Blacks “needed the protection of police while at the same time needing protection from the police,” (L. Moore, 2). Blacks needed police to protect them from violent attacks by parties like the Ku Klux Klan, who re-mobilized after World War II to resist desegregation of public spaces; paradoxically, Blacks also needed protection from police who brutalized them (Lay). Post-war America featured significant White migration towards cities, so police officers and other state institutions “carried out extralegal violence against African Americans” in place of anti-Black groups, like the Ku Klux Klan, enacting their own justice (L. Moore, 2). Later, when migration trends saw the Black urban population increase and Whites move to the suburbs, local police officers were “expected to control black activity and limit their use of public space,” (L. Moore, 3). Even Black officers that joined the police force in the 1970s could often “brutalize other African Americans because they would be exempt from charges..., their superiors would often reward them, and they would be seen as good cops...,” (L. Moore, 3).

Much of the conflict between the Black community and police officers stems from police trying to control the activity or spread of Blacks in order maintain the status quo (Taylor, 201). Blacks pushed back on this authority, triggering harsher police

responses, and the cycle of conflict continued. This cycle is evident through criminalization of “the black poor and working class,” which continues into present day (L. Moore, 3). This tendency of law enforcement to restrict and control Blacks, and the subsequent response from the Black community, was particularly explosive during the Civil Rights Movement. One noteworthy example was the Birmingham Campaign in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. The campaign was a peaceful demonstration for racial integration, and it triggered a violent response from police that included “using high-pressure fire hoses and police dogs on men, women and children alike...,” (“The Birmingham Campaign”).

Some scholars tie historical and current police violence to perpetual anti-Black racism in the United States. A possible explanation for generations of violent conflict between police and Blacks is “the perceived criminality of the black population,” (Taylor, 201). Clarence Taylor thinks this perceived criminality of being Black has existed since Africans were first brought to the Americas as slaves, and it is the core of the prolonged conflict with law enforcement officers in the U.S. Similarly, Steve Martinot identifies the U.S. justice system as anti-Black by describing the racialization in the case of Trayvon Martin. “Racializing” is an act of reducing a subject to qualities that “includes contempt, hostility, exclusion, deprivation, disenfranchisement, derogation, and violence,” and White Americans engage in this process as a method of “self-defense violence” against the threat of Black Americans (Martinot, 65). Martinot explains that George Zimmerman “racialized” Trayvon Martin as Black, thereby making himself part of “the white racializing process,” that criminalizes Black identity and behavior (65).

Police and Black American Perspectives of Each Other

It is no surprise that there are many negative opinions of the police in the Black community, but the reasons for the negativity may be more complex than expected. A study published in 1981 was conducted across the United States to prove that there is more to the story than Blacks disliking police more than Whites. The study found that race could predict favorability towards police, but age is a more accurate indicator; the older the person, the more likely s/he is to like police officers (Peek et al., 366). The study also found that “racial differences in feeling toward them [police] may be linked to respondents’ views that local police take sides on racial issues...which suggests that...the police are perceived as pro-white,” (Peek et al., 366-367). This study shows that Black opinions about law enforcement might be based on the communal understandings of police bias, instead of general unfavorability.

In 1995 a survey conducted in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. found that Black opinion about local police varied depending on “marital status, income, and neighborhood crime rate,” (Parker et al., 405). The study found that “residents of high-crime neighborhoods, people who were single or separated-divorced, and individuals in the lowest income bracket reported attitudes critical of the police,” (Parker et al., 406). This study helps to show that Black opinion about local law enforcement may be based on various socioeconomic characteristics. Socioeconomic factors affect the nature of daily interactions between local police and Blacks, so if one is accustomed to interacting with the police while they raid abandoned lots in one’s low-income neighborhood, one’s opinion of the police will be negative (Parker et al., 406).

Recent protests against police brutality in urban areas suggest that many Americans, not just Black citizens, have a lot of negative opinions about police. Body cameras have become mandatory in some precincts to improve police-community relations by keeping officers accountable for their actions (Thompson). Some national initiatives have also started in order to improve decaying relations between many police and American citizens. One such program is The National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, which began in 2014 to address law enforcement “bias and procedural fairness” in addition to providing resources for “law enforcement, criminal justice practitioners and community leaders,” (“Justice Department Announces”).

Police officers in Champaign, Illinois provide an example of a local initiative trying to improve police-community relations. Officers have recognized the national patterns between racial minority communities, crime, and negative relations with law enforcement officers, so they have adopted strategies to improve the relationship between police officers and citizens (Dempsey and Lowenstein). Police officers no longer rotate through a different community each day, but rather they have permanent assignments to different areas of Champaign in order to establish good relations with the residents. Police have also taken steps to make sure officers are not just sitting in their cars in the neighborhoods, and they are working with community members to restart neighborhood watch programs. While initiatives, like those implemented in Champaign, are positive steps to ending the ongoing conflict between Blacks and police officers, they must be tested to evaluate their effectiveness in the long term; meanwhile, there still exists widespread violence between the police and Blacks in most of the United States. One study

conducted by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement determined that there averaged “one death every 28 hours” of “young people of color” killed by police in 2012 (Martinot, 53).

Law enforcement officers are not a group in the same way that Black Americans are a group. Black Americans share an African heritage, and many of them have a shared history of slavery in the United States. Furthermore, Black Americans share many social, economic, and political experiences, often rooted in discrimination. Police officers, however, make up a racially homogenous group. They are united by their governmental employment, their shared dedication to the United States legal system, a code of ethics, and a fraternal spirit. Although the Black community and law enforcement officers are not directly comparable groups, some officers created a support group for police, influenced by the Black Lives Matter movement, called Blue Lives Matter. As previously discussed, Black Lives Matter wants to liberate Blacks in America. Blue Lives Matter aims to “honor and recognize the actions of law enforcement, strengthen public support, and provide much-needed resources to law enforcement officers and their families,” (“Blue Lives Matter”). The support group began as a means of defending Darren Wilson, the Ferguson PD officer who killed Michael Brown. Many officers felt that the media supported the lies spread by the Black Lives Matter movement, and that no one cared about what really happened and why Officer Wilson needed to defend himself (“Blue Lives Matter”). Blue Lives Matter does not intend to oppose the Black community; rather they maintain a strong pro-police stance, which inherently clashes with the opinions of those Americans who are more critical of police actions.

Black police officers are an interesting intersection between law enforcement and the Black community, especially because they are still a significant racial minority amongst police officers across the country (Wilson et al., 486). A survey investigated Black officers' opinions about racial profiling and their roles in the smaller communities they serve in the northeast region of the United States. Almost all officers, male and female, agreed that racial profiling occurs in their agency, and most believed the profiling was excused by supervisors (Wilson et al., 491). Furthermore, the majority of respondents "felt their worth as law enforcement professionals was well recognized in the minority community," while only about half of respondents felt the same way in "majority cultured communities," (Wilson et al., 495). This survey illustrates the unique position of many Black officers that are caught between frequently conflicting parties—they are part of an agency that racially profiles members of their same racial group.

This Research Project

The significance of the conflict between police and Black Americans is evident by the variety of news sources that have covered police brutality and violent clashes between police and citizens. These conflicts are not isolated and they impact all Americans. In 2016, the LA Times published an article titled "From Ferguson to Baton Rouge: Deaths of black men and women at the hands of police," (Funke and Susman). BuzzFeed News, a source that is popular among millennial populations worldwide for its mix of trivial and hard-hitting stories, published a list in 2015 titled "Here's a Timeline of Unarmed Black People Killed by Police Over Past Year," (Quah and Davis). This list includes names of sixteen citizens who died between April 2014 and April 2015, photos of the victims, a

brief description of the incidents, and the date of the incidents. In 2016 CNN published an article titled “Hundreds arrested in protests over shootings by police,” (Fantz and Visser). These news sources demonstrate how the clashes between police and Black citizens have become a mainstream, national issue. These articles also represent the breadth of angles from which the conflicts can be analyzed.

This research project is looking at the frequent, intense clashes between the Black community and police officers because both parties have a long history of violence and misunderstanding. This intractable conflict is unique because it involves an ethnic group and an institution. The conflict has an important racial dimension, but it extends beyond race because the parties have an asymmetrical power dynamic and the underlying issues are systemic (L. Moore, 163).

While institutional violence may take generations to eradicate, finding peaceful resolutions to avoid violent clashes between Black citizens and law enforcement should not be on hold. This study draws attention to the lyrical messages shared in the Black community because there may be insights that could lead to peaceful relations between Black Americans and police officers. However, it is important to note that artists’ portrayals of law enforcement in music is only one type of message shared about police in the Black community.

Using hip-hop to research conflict

Traditionally hip-hop was a term that referred to four types of expression: DJing, B-Boying, MCing (rapping), and Graffiti. Now hip-hop refers to a multi-million-dollar industry that includes videos, other forms of dance, clothing styles, language, and more.

What is now called hip-hop or rap music is a combination of DJing (the beats) and MCing (the words) (Rose, 2). This project treats hip-hop music as narrative data because it “is a contemporary stage for the theater of the powerless,” where “rappers act out inversions of status hierarchies, [and] tell alternative stories of contact with police and the education process...” (Rose, 101). The music is also pervasive, proven by its accessibility through radio and its use as background music in public spaces, on phones, and more. Because of its pervasive nature, there are millions of music listeners worldwide, which increases its importance and impact. Mainstream music is often superficial, but sometimes it is deeply personal, reflective, political, and even instructive. For example, Pussy Riot is an all-female, punk rock group that became very popular in the 2010s. Although the music became mainstream, it was highly-politicized protest rock (“Pussy Riot”). Pussy Riot also highlights how protest music, although localized by its political stances, can span the globe.

Hip-hop music has an obvious history of anti-police, anti-establishment rhetoric. In 1988 N.W.A. released one of their most iconic songs, “Fuck Tha Police:”

Fuck tha police, comin' straight from the underground,

A young nigga got it bad 'cause I'm brown,

And not the other color, so police think,

They have the authority to kill a minority...

Presently, popular hip-hop music has not shied away from its tendency to share social or political critiques. In response to the election of President Trump, Joey Badass, a rapper, explained that “Everyone [every musical artist] is starting to feel somewhat responsible

because we're realizing the power that we have as individuals, as musicians, as people with high influence," (Zaru).

Hip-hop music stands apart from other genres for its reliance on thoughtful metaphors. Rap music, which today is synonymous with hip-hop music, expresses an "exceptional linguistic variety" that turns rappers into important storytellers (Crossley, 503). These stories are often a "modern response to the social and economic ailments of the collective African American community..." (Crossley, 504). This study uses lyrics as data in order to look at how the stories are portrayed and how police officers and Black artists are positioned in the stories.

Goals of the Research

This research project is exploratory because its goal is to find out how police are positioned in mainstream hip-hop songs. The purpose of the study is to analyze the most recent, most popular lyrical messages about police in the hip-hop community, and then extrapolate these messages as a part of the dialogue within the Black community. Perhaps the modern hip-hop songs will draw on older hip-hop references about police brutality, or perhaps the songs will reference recent, high-profile victims of police brutality. There may even be a trend of increasing politicization of the songs through the years[JRS2].

This research focuses on the intractable conflict between law enforcement officers and Black Americans in the United States of America. [The research aims to answer the question: *How has mainstream hip-hop music responded to law enforcement officers for the past eight years, since the murder of Oscar Grant in 2009?*][JRS3] The study will collect mainstream hip-hop songs from 2009 through 2016, and then analyze the lyrics of five

songs from each year. Only the messages pertaining to law enforcement officers and the Black protagonists will be closely observed in each song in order to answer the research question. The messages will be analyzed to conveniently summarize major trends about the positioning of police officers and Black protagonists.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research topic by discussing the ongoing conflict between police and Black Americans, the historical context of the conflict, and the intentions behind using hip-hop lyrics to analyze the conflict. The next chapter will provide the necessary literature to support this research. The chapter will establish an understanding of hip-hop, and it will explain the music's relationship to the Black community and police violence.

CHAPTER 2: A FOUNDATION FOR STUDYING HIP-HOP

Introduction

This research lies at the intersection of violent conflict and music. It is concerned with violent altercations between police and Black Americans, but it only focuses on the perspective of the Black community. It approaches Black opinion by looking at the conflict through lyrics performed by Black hip-hop artists. More specifically, the research analyzes how police are positioned in songs, and it analyzes the position of the artists relative to that of the police. To understand the data that will be discussed in later chapters, it is necessary to review who is part of the “Black community” in the United States and how messages can be extracted from hip-hop lyrics. This chapter begins by defining the Black community, and then it defines hip-hop music and briefly reviews its involvement with politics and law enforcement. Finally, the chapter will introduce positioning theory as a mechanism to interpret the messages of the songs and the positions of police and artists.

Defining the Black Community

The terms “African-American” and “Black” are often used interchangeably in the United States. There are various opinions about which term is the most accurate, or useful, in different moments. This study will continue to use the term “Black” to refer to any person of African descent. This includes the Americans whose African ancestors came to the United States via slave ships as much as it includes Americans who are first-

generation Afro-Caribbean. There is no technical definition, specific ratios, or generational restrictions used to define “Black” in this research. The research is concerned with relations between police and Black Americans, and it is focused on hip-hop music performed by Black artists.

A universal notion of Black identity in the United States is not a new or innovative concept. Currently there are initiatives to increase the unity between all people of African-descent living in the United States. The Black Alliance for Just Immigration is led by one of the co-founders of Black Lives Matter, Opal Tometi (Tom et al.). The organization’s goal is “to empower Black immigrants and African Americans to unite towards Black liberation,” (Tom et al., 31). The important factors uniting Black immigrants and African Americans are a shared African heritage and the treatment of African Americans as “second-class citizens” in the United States (Tom et al., 31). The plights of both groups are intertwined.

The term “Black community” is used often in the United States, and Black Americans are frequently treated as one homogenous group, like the Black voting bloc (Henderson). However, while many Black citizens are united through shared challenges of racism and prejudice across the United States², this shared discrimination[JRS4] does not necessarily create a homogenous Black community. In fact, Black American political and social opinions can vary significantly. In 1980 a white police officer was murdered in Algiers, a community in New Orleans (L. Moore, 164). The murder triggered a strong

² As of 2016, 88% Black Americans say more changes are needed to give Blacks equal rights with Whites, compared to 8% Blacks that say enough changes have been made to make the races equal (Pew Research Center).

response from local police, who proceeded to harass [JRS5]the local Black community with illegal searches, beatings, and murder (L. Moore, 166-167). Most Black citizens were horrified and enraged by the police brutality unleashed by the New Orleans Police Department, but some Blacks in New Orleans were not as angered. Class differences affected the opinions of different Black Americans, as “the black middle class did not wish to engage in a protest over the deaths of people with criminal and drug-addicted backgrounds,” (L. Moore, 169). This was not the first, and certainly not the last, instance of class division that highlighted the heterogeneity of Black citizens. Therefore, this study will use the term “Black community” as a convenient way to refer to the large group of Black Americans, recognizing that the Black community is made of a multiplicity of opinions, beliefs, and experiences.

Hip-hop Music

What is hip-hop music?

Hip-hop music is defined by two of the four original elements of hip-hop culture³: DJing (mixing and sampling music, and beat making) and MCing (rapping). It is a genre recognized for its intricate rhythmic syncopations, and it is often accompanied by rapped verses. It was created in the mid-1970s in the Bronx, and like many great myths, its exact origins are unclear (Perkins). Undoubtedly, however, hip-hop was an initiative spearheaded by racial minority youths, and it was heavily influenced by Latino, Caribbean and African cultures (Juliana Chang, 545). This research project has isolated hip-hop music and rap lyrics, but it is important to note that the creation of hip-hop, and

³ The four elements are DJing, MCing, Graffiti, and B-Boying.

its spread around the globe, happened in conjunction with hip-hop's other elements of expression. Rapping rose in popularity above the other elements "because it proved to be the easiest element to commodify," (Juliana Chang, 546).

It is important to note that rap existed as a form of expression before hip-hop developed in the 1970s. Tricia Rose, a prominent hip-hop scholar, defines rap as "a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music," (2). William Eric Perkins uses Afrika Bambaataa's, one of the fathers of hip-hop, explanation to describe how rappers from the 1980s to present-day have drawn on older African and Black American traditions to develop their own styles. African ancestors engaged in rituals using "call-and-response form" and they had long traditions of storytelling, both of which contemporary rap artists incorporate in their music (Perkins, 2). Cab Calloway, who Bambaataa regards as the grandfather of rap, combined scat singing⁴ [JRS6] and "street vernacular" and became very popular in the 1930s and 1940s (Perkins, 3). Calloway provided a lot of inspiration for later rappers through his involvement of the audience, high-energy performances, and improvisations that became "one of the foundations of rap music's distinctive styles—'freestyle'—where rappers spontaneously engage in open verbal competitions and where the audience may be called on to respond," (Perkins, 3). Afrika Bambaataa also pays tribute to raps produced in the 1960s, especially by "soulful balladeers Isaac Hayes and Barry White," (Perkins, 3). Millie Jackson, Isaac Hayes's musical partner, even became well-known "for her X-rated raps on men, cheating, love,

⁴ Scat singing is defined by Dictionary.com as "singing in which the singer substitutes improvised nonsense syllables for the words of a song, and tries to sound and phrase like a musical instrument," (Scat Singing).

and sex,” initiating female involvement in “lovers’ rap,” (Perkins, 4). Political and socially conscious rappers were further influenced by style and content of “message-oriented poetry” of the 1970s and 1980s (like the Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, Sonia Sanchez, and Nikki Giovanni), (Perkins, 4). Furthermore, rappers of the late 1980s were influenced by DJs “who engaged in intense verbal competition,” (Perkins, 4). Therefore, it can be understood that rap music, much like the other elements of hip-hop, reflects its indigenous African roots while also drawing influence from other styles of expression.

Jeff Chang, a hip-hop scholar who wrote a chronological and mythological history of the hip-hop generation, credits Clive Campbell for inventing hip-hop music. Clive Campbell, otherwise known as DJ Kool Herc, is widely credited for creating hip-hop even though the exact origin of the music is difficult to determine. DJ Kool Herc’s name is often mentioned in the same breath as Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa when speaking of the origins of hip-hop music. As part of the myth describes, DJ Kool Herc grew up in a Jamaican-American household, and as a teen he used a sound system, a technological innovation that had become very popular in Jamaica’s music scene (Jeff Chang, 29, 69). He played records on his sound system at house parties and soon uncovered “the break” of a song, which became a fundamental characteristic of his style of record-spinning, and later a fundamental aspect of hip-hop music (Jeff Chang, 79). He and other DJs found creative ways to alter “music temporality” that resulted in catchy, danceable hits for their audiences (Juliana Chang, 549). Each DJ presented a unique style, and together with the MCs, the artist’s performances became the main attractions (Rose, 54). By the end of the 1970s DJ Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, other DJs and their

respective crews replaced gangs as the powers that defined “a new hierarchy of cool,” in the Bronx (Jeff Chang, 83).

It did not take long for commercial powers to realize the economic potential of hip-hop music. The Sugarhill Gang recorded the first mainstream hip-hop record in 1979. The group was unusual because it was manufactured by record producers, and it recorded the first mainstream production of individuals rapping over beats (Jeff Chang, 130). Previously, hip-hop was all about the beats, not necessarily the words, but The Sugarhill Gang’s “word play and verbal dexterity” redirected consumer attention to the lyrical performances (Perkins). The success of their single, “Rapper’s Delight” transferred hip-hop from Bronx neighborhoods to radio stations across the United States, and established rap music as a viable commodity in American markets (Jeff Chang, 131; Rose, 56). By the early 1980s, many more artists were trying their hand at DJing. Afrika Bambaataa founded the Universal Zulu Nation, “the first hip-hop institution,” and realized that he could use his hip-hop albums to spread messages around the world in an effort to create conscious citizens (Jeff Chang, 90, 172). His messages promoted world-wide unity “under a groove, beyond race, poverty, sociology and geography;” he wanted hip-hop music to become transcendental (Jeff Chang, 172). Bambaataa’s nuanced approach to hip-hop music opened the doors for the inclusion of “funk, techno, and drum synthesizers” with the music (Perkins, 13). Tricia Rose finds this tendency for technological innovation to be one of the most important features of hip-hop music, from sampling strategies, to breaks, to the bass (71, 80).

By the mid-1980s, old school hip-hop was already considered dead (Chang, 209). American culture was shifting, music technology was changing, and popular hip-hop song topics began to shift from groovy dance to “songs about beating down style-biters and screwing cheap whores,” (Jeff Chang, 209). Rapping over hip-hop tracks continued to grow in popularity throughout the 1980s, too. In fact, rap became “the ideal form to commodify hip-hop culture” because “[i]t was endlessly novel, reproducible, malleable, perfectible,” (Jeff Chang, 228). Incorporating technological innovations “allowed DJs to exploit an infinite number of samples,” whether from other records, television, or movies, which allowed the music to stay adaptable and fresh (Perkins, 8). Rap music and DJ music could adapt to changing American culture over the years, and they were easily marketed and shared in ways that were not feasible for the other core elements of hip-hop, like Graffiti or B-Boying. “Rapper’s Delight” was released as a fifteen-minute song, which, at that time, was considered short because DJs normally performed for hours. In the mid-1980s, however, “[r]ecords got shorter, raps more concise and tailored to pop-song structures,” and performing groups became duos as opposed to crews of five or more people (Jeff Chang, 228). Run DMC is a rap group that became especially-known for continuing hip-hop’s ascension into mainstream culture by combining street sound with pop music (Perkins, 14). The group’s ability to mix rock with hip-hop catapulted them into the lives of White teens, which drastically increased rap’s commercial presence (Rose, 52).

Hip-hop was no longer exclusive to the Bronx boroughs from which it originated thanks to the popularity of rap. Already in 1986, “[rap] had expanded to incorporate

many more pop perspectives—satirical rap, teenybopper rap, X-rated rap, Roxanne rap, Reagan rap, John Wayne rap,” (Jeff Chang, 229). Popular rappers transformed into spokespeople as they were expected to speak on behalf of their communities; this coincided with “the rap world” turning in “a Black nationalist direction,” (Jeff Chang, 229). So, hip-hop music moved away from its party-friendly, old-school, mixed-race (mostly Latino and Black) origins, and it became “a serious thing, a Black thing,” (Jeff Chang, 229). This was a shift that would affect all hip-hop culture for the next two decades.

The rap group Public Enemy proves the difficulty in balancing an artistic desire for heavy political messages with consumers’ demands for party music. Public Enemy “became rap’s first superstar group, and media attention to its black nationalist political articulation intensified,” (Rose, 4). When the group began producing music, some of the members wanted to exclusively push political messages. They soon realized, however, that they could not become a purely political group if they wanted to maintain fans because their listeners did not want to hear the same complaints about institutions and politicians that they heard elsewhere (Jeff Chang, 247). A balance had to be found between rapper’s roles as spokespeople and party facilitators. One member of Public Enemy, Chuck D, noted how rap music was taking an increasingly serious role in the rearing of youth in the United States (Jeff Chang, 252). Public Enemy is a notable example of a rap group succeeding as mainstream music while also being able to criticize society (Rose, 101).

Gangsta rap grew in popularity in the late 1980s, originating from gang culture in Southern California (Jeff Chang, 307; Perkins, 18). Gangsta rap differs from other types of rap for its rage-filled lyrics and aggressive performance style. This style of rap is distinguished from the “message-oriented, political, or neonationalist genres” of earlier rap because it “celebrates hustling, street crime, women abuse, and the gun as social equalizer,” (Perkins, 18). A few rappers are credited with popularizing gangsta rap, such as Ice-T and the group N.W.A. N.W.A. popularized gangsta rap because they pushed back on pressure to make music loaded with pro-civil rights social commentary. Instead, the group focused on giving their audiences a different narrative to consume—one dedicated to “the strength of street knowledge,” (Jeff Chang, 318). N.W.A. represented West Coast rap, which differed from East Coast content and stylistic flows. The group chose to depict the chaos of life by rapping lines that “celebrated pushers, played bitches, killed enemies, and assassinated police,” (Jeff Chang, 319). N.W.A.’s first album transitioned hip-hop culture, again, by introducing geographical pride for an area and it “marked the beginning of hip-hop’s obsession with ‘The Real,’” or expressing authenticity and truth in all actions (Jeff Chang, 328).

In the 1990s, hip-hop music settled into its role as a story-telling medium that could communicate “the real” to audiences through literal truths or through elaborate metaphors (Jeff Chang, 409). The more popular rap music became, the more topics that could be explored across the United States (Rose, 58). For example, rapper Ice Cube (a member of N.W.A.) had a good relationship with his father, but he often spoke of absentee fathers as a way of nodding to Black civil rights activists that took on father-like

roles (Jeff Chang, 333). Ice Cube spoke about fatherlessness that some could interpret literally (many Black youths grew up without father), and others could interpret metaphorically. Hip-hop music remained a “black cultural expression that prioritized black voices from the margins,” but the music also expanded into multiple commodities in the 1990s (Rose, 2; Jeff Chang, 420). For instance, hip-hop journalism was an unexpected industry that no one predicted. According to Jeff Chang, hip-hop journalism began as a small project of two White, Jewish students at Harvard who loved hip-hop music and culture. In 1988, the students created a hip-hop newsletter called *The Source* which they used to distribute information about top-charting hip-hop songs and artists (Jeff Chang, 410). *The Source* began as a convenient way to consolidate the most popular elements of hip-hop music and keep readers up-to-date, and it quickly became an important element of solidifying the “hip-hop nation” because it told consumers what they needed to know about hip-hop (Jeff Chang, 410). Hip-hop journalism [JRS7] is one of many industries that profited from hip-hop music while also shaping how the music would be produced and shared.

So, hip-hop music began as a DJing innovation in one New York borough, and its purpose was to provide music for dancing and youth parties. It soon incorporated rappers, and it transformed into a global industry where artists became spokespeople. Hip-hop music rooted itself in African traditions, and it used modernized techniques to spread messages.

Hip-hop as a subculture

Dick Hebdige defines subcultures as stylistic challenges to the dominant culture of a society (17). He places a lot of importance on signs and symbols because they create “style,” and he argues that the symbols of the dominant culture and the subculture significantly influence each other. Styles are “meaningful mutations” of status quo characteristics, and they are often represented by hair, clothes, music, leisure activities, and more (Hebdige, 131). Subcultures, therefore, are “symbolic changes to a symbolic order,” (Hebdige, 92). Subcultures resist status quo symbols, and participants actively re-position themselves with alternative identities. For instance, in Britain, subculture Rastafarians, easily recognized by their dreadlocks and reggae music, re-positioned themselves closer to African and West Indian customs than to British culture; in fact, participants in the subculture actively resisted hegemonic British culture (Hebdige, 36-37). As the cultural movement grew, it became more synonymous with Black identity, and the Rastafarian symbols became pro-Black, pro-African symbols (Hebdige, 38-39). Hebdige explains that when subcultures form, they threaten dominant society, which causes the public to fear the subculture. Media plays a significant role in portraying “deviant” acts of subcultures, and frequently the police get involved in a sort of cultural war (Hebdige, 93). Ultimately the subculture is contained after mainstream society accepts the commodified style of the subculture and the fear that once existed is gone (Hebdige, 96).

What the world calls “hip-hop” today is based on the “sensibilities of a large population of youth born between 1965 and 1984” in the United States (Alridge and Stewart, 190). Hip-hop developed out of necessity “as a source for youth of alternative

identity formation and social status” because many public institutions had been defunded or terminated in the poorer communities of New York City (Rose, 34). It soon became a subculture in the United States, and following the trajectory that Hebdige lays out, it was rejected by the public for being too extreme, and then it was commercialized and accepted into mainstream culture. From the beginning, hip-hop culture took style very seriously. Authenticity is the hallmark of hip-hop, so speech pattern, language, location, dress, the crew, etc. all became part of one’s style; even “the ghetto” became a significant symbol (Rose, 12). Rose draws the parallels between the hip-hop generation and Hebdige’s theory of subculture by recognizing artists’ styles as a method of identity expression based on the products available in the dominant culture (36). When hip-hop music was just beginning to spread around the U.S., David Herskovitz, a music journalist, commented that hip-hop ensembles were ““these guys from the ghettos coming out and showing everyone how to dress, how to be fresh...whether it was the way you did your dance or your graffiti or your rapping or your DJing, it was all style,”” (Jeff Chang, 175).

In the 1980s, “cultural radicals” reacted to developing issues of segregation in real life and in media representation, so ““hip-hop activism”” became the resistance against “popular culture,” (Jeff Chang, 249). Resistance appeared in film, newspapers, and especially rap music. “Cultural conservatives,” like the Parents Music Resource Center, fought against the attempted media takeover by the hip-hop subculture (Jeff Chang, 393). Clashes between the subculture and the conservative dominant culture have always been part of hip-hop’s history—hip-hop music was rejected by all mainstream avenues, like

the White and Black middle-class, major record labels, and more (Rose, 6). Some police officers even resisted the subculture through boycotts against anti-cop rhetoric in music, like the song “Cop Killer,” (Jeff Chang, 397).

As hip-hop music spread around the world and its economic prospects looked promising, major music labels bought the smaller ones that signed hip-hop artists, and the commercialization of rap music was boundless (Rose, 7, 17). The commercialization of the music paralleled the growth of its young White fan base, who appreciated hip-hop as a “forbidden narrative, as a symbol of rebellion;” in this sense hip-hop culture was becoming mainstream, yet still regarded as a subculture (Rose, 5). In turn, White rappers emerged and sold very well with White consumers (Rose, 4).

However, if one wonders if the commercialization of rap and the emergence of White rappers terminated hip-hop’s position as a subculture, or watered down its representation of the Black community, the answer is: no. Despite hip-hop’s commercial success, rap music has maintained its focus on “ghetto life,” which means the music still caters to Black hip-hop youth (Rose, 12). Rap is still a Black art form that discusses Black issues, despite its partial propulsion into the dominant culture; in fact, rap’s “margin(al)ity is represented in the contradictory reaction rap receives in mainstream American media and popular culture” because it is accepted into the hegemonic culture, but constantly criticized and marginalized (Rose, 4, 19).

So, hip-hop music is still a useful tool to understand the views and opinions of marginalized Black youth, and the music’s power should not be discounted because of its success as a commodity of the market and White appropriation.

Hip-hop's intersection with gangs, politics, and police

Hip-hop music began in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, in the 1970s, and it has been influenced by decades of various socioeconomic, political, and police-related events. Throughout the 1960s in Harlem, New York City, “days of street protests over education and poverty gave way to nights of clashes between white police and Black youths,” (Jeff Chang, 9). Jeff Chang argues that the 1960s civil rights movement in New York was not comparable to the movement that occurred in the southeastern region of the United States because militarization of police forces in New York continued [JRS8] to ignite violent conflicts between police and Black citizens, even immediately after the Civil Rights Act was signed into law (222). Chang suggests that the momentum of civil rights protests and desegregation in the South (such as the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) did not significantly change racial relations in New York. This is likely because the contexts surrounding (de)segregation in the northern and southern regions of the United States were different. During the time of the civil rights movement in New York, Black and Brown (especially Puerto Rican) gangs were established to provide youths with street protection from authorities and other violence; gangs soon became tools for power and grew in popularity as an alternative to youth boredom (Jeff Chang, 12). As the size and quantity of gangs increased, they were treated as local authorities by residents instead of local law enforcement officers; gangs operated based on agreed codes of conduct and led peace initiatives, among other activities (Jeff Chang, 49, 52).

Both Jeff Chang and Tricia Rose argue that hip-hop culture was born out of the deindustrialization of New York City. As jobs left New York City, so did public and school programs that allowed youth to develop, such as music programs (Rose, 22, 34).

Of course, most of the youth affected by New York City's declining opportunities were ethnic minorities, especially in Black and Brown communities. Options were limited to youth without job prospects or extracurricular activities, and for many this time was filled with the gang activity. When DJ Kool Herc and other DJs popped up in the Bronx in the 1970s, youths were given an alternative to gangs by attending house parties and joining DJ crews. Gang activity in New York slowed as the hip-hop scene grew (Jeff Chang, 80). Hip-hop culture blossomed in an environment of economic decline, social decline, and increased conflict with police because it became a source of "black urban renewal," (Rose, 61).

Although gang activity slowed in New York in the late 1970s and early 1980s, police brutality remained a significant issue for the Black community with no clear path to resolution. Citizen complaints of police brutality peaked again in 1982, and "the police department found that an overwhelming number of cases... involved white officers and citizens of color," often ending in the death of the civilians (Jeff Chang, 196). From time to time, there were still cases of police brutality considered so heinous that the Black community rose in protest and outrage, such as the murder of graffiti artist Michael Steward (Jeff Chang, 195). Almost always, the police officers indicted for brutality or murder were acquitted of their charges, which made U.S. legal systems continually inaccessible to the needs of the Black community.

Rap and hip-hop grew out of low- and working-class neighborhoods at a time when race and economic status were very closely linked. In the early 1980s, "the median white family owned eleven times the amount of wealth as a median family of color," and

“[b]y 1989, the gap had nearly doubled,” (Jeff Chang, 221). National economic policy implemented by then-president Ronald Reagan caused Black Americans to move to suburbs for opportunities, which triggered “white flight” and resulted in racially segregated suburbs (Jeff Chang, 223). This unintentional segregation created many problems between racial minorities and law enforcement officers across the United States. In many ways, police officers protected white citizens from a perceived invasion from other citizens of color. For instance, “over 30 percent of the arrests in Nassau and Suffolk counties [of Long Island, New York]” and “43 percent of suspects shot by police” were Black citizens, even though Blacks “made up only 9 percent of Long Island’s population,” (Jeff Chang, 234). Reagan’s foreign policy in Latin American countries also had disastrous effects for impoverished communities in the United States; drugs flooded the streets, and citizen violence increased (Jeff Chang, 302). Once again, non-White Americans were affected disproportionately by these policies. Selling drugs became expected employment due to a severe lack of employment opportunities for lower class Americans, and some youth pursued a career in rap to lift them out of poverty and away from the drug market (Jeff Chang, 300[JRS9]).

Economic opportunities had a direct effect on gang activities in urban areas. In Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s, gangs formed as protection for youth against physical aggression from law enforcement officers, similar to why gangs formed in New York City (Jeff Chang, 308). In the 1970s, gang activity slowed in Los Angeles, which one gang member credits to the fact that many Blacks were able to work in factories; it should have been no surprise, then, that when the factory jobs left in the 1980s, gang

activity rose again, this time supplemented by drug trafficking (Jeff Chang, 313). These were the conditions under which hip-hop music flourished in New York and California, “under alienated play, as solid jobs evaporated into the airy buzz and flow of a network society,” (Jeff Chang, 316).

All the while, hip-hop music honed in on its “Afrodiasporic” traditions of rhythm and oral narration to “[affirm] the experiences and identities of the participants,” while also criticizing society and institutions (Rose, 60, 65). In the mid-1980s, old-school hip-hop music ended and new music, marked by rage and explicit lyrics, prevailed around the same time that Black collegiate youth took more direct leadership roles in civil rights protests (Jeff Chang, 218). During this time, too, the Nation of Islam strongly influenced the political and social messaging of hip-hop. Louis Farrakhan, who led the Nation of Islam, preached that rampant Black-on-Black murder was planned by the U.S. government, called for segregation of Blacks and Whites, and helped oust some of the drug houses plaguing Black communities (Jeff Chang, 224-225). Anger about institutional oppression, police violence, and social positioning became the emotion of the decade for many Black Americans, apparent in popular hip-hop music and daily social interactions (Jeff Chang, 227). Rap music spoke about the “black urban lived experience” and how that differed from the dominant American lived experience (Rose, 102). The music became even more rooted in discussion about racial inequality, police brutality, economics, etc.

Hip-hop today

Today, rap music and lyrics represent “a polyvocal black cultural discourse engaged in discursive ‘wars of position’ within and against dominant discourses,” (Rose, 102). Institutional racism and police brutality are still major themes in the music that rappers narrate to their audiences. Rose mentions that in the Black American community “police” and “brutality” are often one and the same, especially after Rodney King was beaten by police in 1992 (which was the high-profile police brutality case at the time Rose’s book was published in 1994) (106). Since her book was released 24 years ago, there have been many more cases that continue to prove that police brutality plagues the Black community.

Hip-hop also remains a top-selling music genre and an industry for a multitude of products. Hip-hop music is considered “urban” or “cool,” and the flexibility of the genre has allowed the music to be adapted to attract various age, race, and gender demographics. There are substantial debates amongst hip-hop enthusiasts about what real hip-hop should be, what has become exploitation, who is allowed to access the music, and what access should look like. To some hip-hop fans, rappers like Iggy Azalea (a White, Australian, female rapper) personify problematic appropriation and exploitation of hip-hop culture (Westhoff). To others, conscious rappers, or those who produce music that critiques society or politics, embody true hip-hop, like rappers Common, Kendrick Lamar, and The Game. Regardless, hip-hop remains a flexible medium for music production because it draws upon any pre-existing style of artistry for inspiration.

Hip-hop’s flexibility has led to a coverage of a variety of topics and themes. After the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in Staten Island,

New York (both deaths involving police brutality[JRS10], according to many Black Americans), many hip-hop, rap, and R&B artists released tribute songs in 2015 (DeGroot). The Game, a popular rapper, released a single in protest of the events that occurred in Ferguson, titled “Don’t Shoot”:

*Seen the pictures, feel the pain, scandalous how they murder son
Tired of them killing us, I’m on my way to Ferguson
Talked to TIP, I talked to Diddy, them my brother walking with me
Mothers crying stop the riots, we ain’t got to chalk the city
I seen Cole out there, thought I should go out there
They left that boy for hours in the cold out there
They killin’ teens, they killin’ dreams (It’s murder)*

Lauryn Hill, a well-known R&B singer and rapper released a song called “Black Rage” in 2012, but re-shared the song as a response to the events in Ferguson:

*Black rage is founded on blatant denial
Sweet economics, subsistent survival
Deafening silence and social control
Black rage is found in all forms of the soul*

Contemporary hip-hop songs of protest, support, and tribute still serve as examples of the music’s ability to provide an outlet for voicing concerns in the Black community and initiating dialogue.

Hip-hop also has an increasingly relevant role in higher education. It provides valuable lessons on Black language by connecting contemporary lyrics to slave

vernacular, and it is presented in a way that demands critical thought (Weathersby Jr.). Many hip-hop scholars argue that it should be studied as seriously as other Black music and cultural movements, like “Blues, Jazz, the New Negro Renaissance, and the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Arts Movements,” (Alridge and Stewart, 190).

Hip-hop music originated from underprivileged Latino and Black youths, rooted in poverty, crime, and systemic oppression. It quickly became a global industry and now, academics argue for hip-hop’s inclusion as a field in higher education. Given the high-profile police shootings of Black men and women in the past years, and hip-hop’s growing educational role, it is appropriate to turn to hip-hop lyrics that specifically discuss issues related to conflicts with police. Analysis of the lyrics empowers Black voices that have been affected by a long-lasting conflict, and it might offer insight into effective conflict resolution approaches.

Positioning Theory

Positioning theory states that parties (whether individuals, groups, or organizations) occupy certain, relational “positions” in social exchanges that correlate with specific acts. To some scholars, positioning is an automatic and fundamental characteristic of all social dynamics (Parrot, 29). “Positions” are “rights and duties” that allow a party to navigate social interactions. Recognizing a party has a certain right “requires the acceptance by a person or institution of a correlative duty,” (Harré and Slocum, 125). Positions can restrict the actions of a party based upon what is “socially possible,” and they influence parties to “think, act, and speak in certain ways” that correlate with their position in a social interaction (Harré and Moghaddam, 5, 8).

Basically, positioning refers to choosing acts that are feasible and logical for respective parties during social engagement. The acts are the social meanings behind deliberate “performances,” or actions (Harré and Moghaddam, 5).

Positions may, or may not, be consciously chosen; they can be assigned by other parties based on power dynamics, or one can position her/himself (Harré and Moghaddam 7). Positions are flexible, time-sensitive, situation-specific, and they can be accepted or resisted (Harré and Moghaddam, 7; Harré and Slocum, 127). Because positions are relational, positioning oneself automatically positions others (Harré and Slocum, 125). For example, positioning oneself as subservient simultaneously places another as a master. The non-subservient party may choose to either accept or reject her/his position as master, and her/his choice may affect the positioning of others, in turn.

Positioning theory and music lyrics

Songs have the ability to communicate, entertain, distract, and teach, but not all songs serve these functions equally. Even songs of the same genre, produced within the same time period, serve different functions. For example, LMFAO’s “Party Rock Anthem” and Kendrick Lamar’s “Good Kid” topped hip-hop music charts in 2012. Although the songs experienced paralleling popularity, the effects of the songs differ because they tap into different emotions and share different lessons. The former is a dance-friendly “anthem” for partying, and the latter shares a tale about the corruption of youth in Compton as gang pressures influence daily activities (LMFAO; Kendrick Lamar and Williams). Although the intentions behind the songs are substantially different, they both operate as meaning-makers that pass on messages to consumers. Positioning theory

is concerned with the meanings that individuals “attribute to the situations in which they find themselves (or which they themselves bring about),” (Apter, 23). Songs, whether focused on partying in clubs, engaging in intimate relationships, or protesting systems, allow artists to share the meanings they attribute to topics. These meanings can be as profound as “They was wondering if I bang/Step on my neck and get blood on your Nike checks,” or as superficial as “Party rock is in the house tonight/Everybody just have a good time,” (Kendrick Lamar and Williams; LMFAO). In positioning theory, meaning “is essentially linguistic, culturally relative, socially constructed, and local,” (Apter, 24). Contemporary hip-hop music uses high-context and colloquial language to convey the artists’ experiences and connect with audiences.

Positioning theory is concerned with “the attributes we assign to each other and ourselves in the course of our interactions and conversations,” (Apter, 23). Social interactions determine what positions the participants assume, and their character traits are implied based on the position of a given interaction. Although songs are not social interactions in the same way that face-to-face conversations are, they do reflect social engagements from the artists’ perspectives. For example, on [genius.com](https://www.genius.com) Jadakiss explained that his song “Youthful Offenders” is speaking directly to the male youth in his hometown; the song is a representation of what he teaches to the younger generation (Jadakiss and Akon).

Positions determine “the speech acts available to the person so positioned,” and actions performed by an individual must be congruent “within story lines” (Harré and Slocum, 129). All songs chosen for this research are first-person narratives and are

written by the performing artists; thus, the remainder of the study will often use the term “protagonist” to describe artists in the positions they have given themselves in the narratives. The songs are short (typically three to four minutes long), so the artists position themselves at the beginning, and their actions throughout the rest of the song are consistent with the position they have chosen. For instance, in “Youthful Offenders,” Jadakiss begins his first verse as the wise observer of the youth in his hometown, and throughout the song he observes the youth and offers them advice to survive on the streets.

When positioning theory talks of “availability,” “permission,” or “access” to “clusters” or “repertoires” of acts, it acknowledges that not all people have equal opportunity to express themselves through certain mediums or with a certain language. A young Black male might not be able to voice his concerns during a city council meeting in the same way that a local representative does, but he could use rap music to express his frustrations. On the same token, the local politician might not have access to rap music to spread messages to young people like the young Black male. Of course, the types of messages shared in city council meetings compared to those spread through rap lyrics would vary significantly and speak to different audiences. The crux of positioning theory rests “on the relation between what one has or believes one has or lacks as a right to perform and what one does, in the light of that belief,” (Harré and Slocum, 125). Music is especially relevant in its ability to give the voiceless a unique opportunity to speak. This was evident in 1960s Jamaica, where reggae was born from a generation that could not

access political institutions, so “they channeled their energies into culture...They pulled global popular culture into the Third World,” (Jeff Chang, 23).

Songs can be analyzed any number of ways, whether it is by sound elements, music theory, emotions, or lyrics. Lyrics, themselves, can be analyzed many ways, too. This research will evaluate how artists have used lyrics to position police officers and consequently themselves. Positioning theory is a useful analytical tool for this conflict because it accounts for the type of self-positioning and oppositional positioning that happens in hip-hop music.[JRS11] Positioning theory “typically depict[s] actors as trying to establish for themselves a favorable position;” this could appear as “positive attributes” given to oneself or “superiority to an opponent,” (Parrott, 31). The theory also explains how one can position opponents in such a way that limits their actions and continues to present oneself more favorably (Harré and Slocum, 129). Evaluating the subjective positioning of the self and the opponent is the purpose of this research project.

Positioning theory is also useful for this research because it acknowledges that people change “as their circumstances and contexts change,” (Apter, 23). It recognizes that people “might simultaneously be occupying more than one position,” too (Harré and Slocum, 128). These factors help to explain why artists might have profound messages about law enforcement mixed with high sexualized content, or it could explain artists’ responses to highly publicized cases of police brutality.

Conclusion

The foundation of this research project is formed by hip-hop’s historical and contemporary engagement with police and its ability to communicate with, and represent,

the Black community. This research is concerned with only one of many perspectives of the conflict between Black Americans and law enforcement officers, so it focuses on the perspective of contemporary Black hip-hop artists as presented through their music lyrics. This chapter aims to provide the necessary background information to justify hip-hop's utility in interpreting messages about police officers in the United States.

This chapter began by explaining what "Black community" meant in the context of this study. Then it defined hip-hop and rap music, and it provided historical, political, and economic context to the development of hip-hop to establish an understanding of the relationship between hip-hop music and police officers. After explaining how hip-hop music is viewed and used today, the chapter applied positioning theory to explain how hip-hop music lyrics can be used to analyze the positioning of police officers and Black Americans in contemporary songs. The next chapter will explain the research methods used for this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This study will address the protracted conflict between Black Americans and law enforcement officers by analyzing messages in contemporary hip-hop songs performed by Black artists. The objective of this research is to understand how the conflict is treated in hip-hop music, which is a mainstream medium that still expresses Black commentary and concern. Lyrics are analyzed to highlight the portrayals of police officers in the music in hopes of identifying themes or trends. This study further aims to discuss how the lyrics of the music might reinforce concepts of what it means to be Black, and especially what it means to be Black in relation to police officers.

The research question asks: *How has mainstream hip-hop music positioned law enforcement officers for the past eight years, since the murder of Oscar Grant in 2009?* The question intends to identify how the artists position the police officers (and - themselves) in songs in order to recognize how the conflict is understood in one fragment of the Black American community. The following chapter will justify why the project uses a 2009-2016 timeframe, why it uses hip-hop lyrics as data, why it chooses only Black performing artists of mainstream songs, and why it relies on a qualitative approach.

2009-2016

[2009-2016 is the window of time for the lyrics analysis for this research. Oscar Grant was a young Black male who was killed by a Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer](#)

on the morning of January 1, 2009 in San Francisco, California.– This event was a shock to the Black community, especially because it occurred so soon after the election of the first Black president of the United States.– The event stood in stark contrast to the progress that the 2008 election results allegedly represented.– There was a national belief that the United States had become “some magical post-race realm,” but soon, many reflected that the nation was as violently racist as it has always been (Norris, 104).– For some, like Steve Martinot, the death of Oscar Grant marked a severe turning point for contemporary race relations; he referenced Grant’s death as “the beginning of a wave of killing that reached all the way to the exoneration of George Zimmerman,” (54). The aftermath of Oscar Grant’s death became part of mainstream media, and in 2013 a highly popularized dramatic film was produced about the events leading up to his death, “Fruitvale Station,” (Coogler).– A hallmark of Oscar Grant’s death was a bystander video that captured the altercation between Oscar and the police officers.– This phone-recorded footage was the first scene of the movie, which added to the cultural relevance and emotional significance of the film.

–2009 was a year of optimistic progress and tragic reality for the Black community. Since 2009, there have been many high-profile police brutality cases, especially in 2014 (Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, among others, were killed by police in 2014). This study would like to investigate how mainstream hip-hop songs mention these cases of violence, if at all. Because the shooting of Oscar Grant became nationwide news, and because many more deaths and protests against law enforcement

[officers occurred during the following years, 2009 will be the starting point for this research.](#)

Lyrics

Is it wickedness?

Is it weakness?

You decide

Are we gonna live or die?

So I was takin' a walk the other day, and I seen a woman—

A blind woman—pacin' up and down the sidewalk.

She seemed to be a bit frustrated, as if she dropped somethin'

And havin' a hard time findin' it.

So after watchin' her struggle for a while,

I decide to go over and lend a helping hand, you know?

“Hello, ma'am, can I be of any assistance?”

It seems to me that you have lost something.

I would like to help you find it.”

She replied: “Oh yes, you have lost something.

You've lost...your life.”

[Gunshot]

Is it wickedness?

[News recording]:

[Male]: Lamar stated his views on police brutality with that line in the song, quote: “And we hate the popo, wanna kill us in the street fo’ sho’...”

[Female]: Oh please, ugh, I don’t like it.

These lyrics are from Kendrick Lamar’s “BLOOD.,” the first song on his newest album released in April 2017. While there are many messages to dissect in these few, but powerful, verses, the final news recording (“Lamar stated...I don’t like it.”) merits the focus of this current discussion.

This recording comes from a Fox News television segment of critics who responded to Lamar’s performance of “Alright” at the BET (Black Entertainment Television) Awards in 2015 (Magalhães). The critics vocalize their disappointment of the song’s message and style, labeling it as uninteresting and unhelpful in a world of increasing turmoil between citizens and police officers. One critic, Geraldo Rivera, even goes so far as to say that “hip-hop has done more damage to young African-Americans than racism in recent years,” (Magalhães). Lamar responded to the critics during an interview soon after the television segment aired in 2015, explaining that they severely misinterpreted the message of his song because it is a song about hope and optimism (TMZ). When the interviewer asks Lamar about his standing on top of a police car and the possible negative message that gives, Lamar responds that his performance’s goal was to expose the reality of police brutality, and that Rivera’s critique is a dangerous error that glosses over the real problems. Lamar states: “Hip-hop is not the problem; our reality is the problem of the situation...This is our music, this is us expressing

ourselves...Rather than going out here and doing the murders myself, I want to express myself in a positive light..." (TMZ).

Clearly the Fox News critics did not understand the message that Lamar wanted to share in his music, even though they agreed amongst themselves. The reasons could be generational, class-based, race-based, etc., but the fact remains that what Kendrick Lamar raps does not evoke empathy from these news hosts. This is not to assume that the news hosts could not empathize with his experience, but they do not even begin to discuss what Lamar says about police because they have misinterpreted the point of his song. This gap in communication is why this research has approached hip-hop lyrics as the topic of focus. Hip-hop music is popular and pervasive, but the deeper messages in songs are often overlooked or misunderstood by the public.

Hip-hop music has faced similar obstacles of (mis)interpretation since its beginning. In 1992, rapper Ice-T released the song "Cop Killer" with his band, Body Count. The song begins with Ice-T saying:

This next record is dedicated to some personal friends of mine, the LAPD. For every cop that has ever taken advantage of somebody, beat 'em down or hurt 'em, because they got long hair, listen to the wrong kinda music, wrong color, whatever they thought was the reason to do it. For every one of those fuckin' police, I'd like to take a pig out here in this parkin' lot and shoot 'em in their motherfuckin' face.

Almost immediately police officers and the NRA initiated a boycott of Time Warner because the corporation's record label released Body Count's song (Jeff Chang, 396).

There was a conservative consensus that music like “Cop Killer” was dangerous, it poisoned the minds of youths, and it would lead to literal cop deaths; even then-president George H.W. Bush condemned the song (Jeff Chang, 396). The National Black Police Association, however, denounced the boycott on Time Warner and defended Body Count’s song because it was not about murdering cops, but rather about violent realities many racial minority youths face (Jeff Chang, 397). Ice-T explained that his song was not asking for citizens to kill law enforcement officers, but rather the point was to express the rage harboring in minority communities (Jeff Chang, 398). Opinions about the song became a national controversy, and all the while the intended message about the song went largely overlooked.

Contemporary hip-hop lyrics about relations with police officers deserve study because there might be a pattern of messaging that has gone overlooked, once again. Words and dialogue about the “self” and the “other” matter in conflict resolution because they could facilitate the perpetuation or de-escalation of violence. In the United States, if one is Black, one grows up hearing stories from friends and family about police profiling and brutality. Regardless if one experiences such acts her/himself, one becomes aware of the situation by learning from other Black Americans. The type of language used in this communal story appears in former-president Barack Obama’s remarks on Trayvon Martin in July 2013. In the fifth paragraph of his remarks, Obama states: “You know, when Trayvon Martin was shot I said this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago,” (Obama). It is not uncommon for people to make similar statements about a Black brother, cousin, etc. in

the wake of these tragedies. This knowledge further justifies the interest in lyrical content for this study.

Tricia Rose defends the importance of rap lyrics, calling them “a dynamic hybrid of oral traditions, post-literate orality, and advanced technology;” they are important because they represent an artist’s identity (95). What type of language are artists using to describe police and conflict, today? Are there antiquated references, current references, or a mix of both? Determining this information might give useful insights on how to approach the conflict for future resolution.

Narrative analysis

Tricia Rose recognizes that rappers “speak with the voice of personal experience, taking on the identity of the observer or narrator” when they write and perform their music (2). Lyrics are powerful and important because they carry narratives “told in elaborate and ever-changing black slang and refer to black cultural figures and rituals,” (Rose, 3). Rose argues that the technological elements of rap are just as important as the oral and cultural elements, but the oral characteristics are deeply rooted in “Afrodiasporic” traditions (86). One such tradition is a “toast,” which is “a lengthy, recited narrative or poem describing a series of exploits by a central character,” (Saloy). Rose argues that this “African-American toast tradition” inspired the “narrative originality” of modern rappers (55, 86). She also argues that even though rap is rooted in older traditions, contemporary rappers “continue to craft stories that represent the creative fantasies, perspective, and experiences of racial marginality in America,” (3).

Each song will undergo narrative analysis to assess the positioning of Blacks and police officers in the lyrics. Catherine Kohler Riessman explains that there is no one method to conduct narrative analysis, but it does require the story to be “the object of investigation,” (1). Narratives are tools used by people that help make sense of events that happen (Riessman, 4; Nicholls, 297). The terms “narrative” and “story” are often interchanged, but this study will use the term “narrative” to describe the rhetoric shared through music lyrics. Technically a narrative is “an encompassing term of rhetoric,” while a story is a specific “genre” of narrative with structural requirements (Riessman, 41). The purpose of narrative analysis is to interpret what the authors of a narrative are saying while recognizing that meaning is never static; rather, narratives are constructed from reality and therefore always contextual (Riessman, 5, 15).

There is an ongoing debate whether songs should be considered narratives. This study will treat hip-hop songs as mediums with narrative qualities and the ability to speak about a specific conflict. David Nicholls was of a similar opinion about pop music, arguing that music is not inherently a narrative, proven by plenty of pop songs that do not have any narrative qualities; however, music can be “part of a narrative discourse,” (300). In his opinion, narrative does appear in pop music lyrics, and among all the features of songs that one can interpret, the narrative is one of the most important (300). Others recognize the narrative traits in music, as well. A thesis completed by Jessica Lynn Gehrke at Washington State University analyzes discussion of 9/11, patriotism, and war in country music lyrics. She recognized that country music tends to narrate events, so she looked for songs that shared stories about three specific topics (Gehrke). Some studies,

like that of Richard Walsh, seek to prove important linkages between narratives and music. Walsh discusses music's role in the cognitive development of humans, the primitive connection between music and language, and the fact that music and narrative have a mutual dependence on rhythm. Rhythm as the common basis of both music and narrative is a crucial link and merits further study, according to Walsh.

This research, therefore, will conduct a narrative analysis on the lyrics of forty hip-hop songs about police officers. Research investigating the representation of motherhood in hip-hop and R&B music provided helpful tips for this study. The researchers of the motherhood study consulted Billboard music listings, attempted to select songs by title, and grouped songs based upon contextual themes identified in the music (Chaney and Brown). This present study referred to Billboard music listings for rap music and decided that songs about police could not be accurately identified by the titles; instead, the lyrics had to be browsed to find mentions of law enforcement officers. The songs were identified based on Billboard's listings, and then AZ Lyrics, Genius Lyrics, and Spotify were consulted to listen to each song and verify the words performed by each artist. Similar to Chaney and Brown's study, this study grouped songs based on patterns related to the positioning of police and Black Americans.

Positioning theory offers helpful considerations for lyric analysis that rely on narrative analysis. The steps for analysis that this study uses are based on another study's "analysis of disputes and disagreements" between Georgetown University students and people living in the Georgetown community (Harré and Slocum, 131). A series of questions will be answered in sequential order:

1. What is the main point of the song?
2. How does the artist define her/himself and others?
3. How are police mentioned? Do they serve a main role or secondary role?
4. What is the artist's perception of the interaction/conflict with police?

Black Artists & Mainstream Songs

This study has only included songs that are written and performed by Black artists because the research is concerned with Black community relations with law enforcement officers. A White rapper, like Eminem, might have a song that discusses police violence (in the data collected for this study, he did not have any), but this study would prefer to use a Black artist's description of her/his experiences as a Black (wo)man. Songs written and performed by Black artists also offer representation on behalf of a Black community, most-often the community where the artist is from. This type of representation makes what the artists say about police brutality even more relevant because they are rooted in a community where others likely identify with similar experiences.

Tanji Gilliam discusses the complexity and importance of representation in hip-hop music. Gilliam speaks about the significance of geographic representation, which became prominent in hip-hop music during the 1990s (222). "Representing" stems of traditions of keeping hip-hop truthful and authentic. Gilliam notes that "investments in representation and authenticity involve the presentation of the individual self and the representation of cultural groups...with which the self is identified (222). "Representing" was a direct result of hip-hop's localized origins in New York City, and as hip-hop has spread around the world, rappers have acknowledged the geographic importance of New

York City while promoting their own city (221). Rappers paying homage to their neighborhoods also recognize “that local and national politicians have often abandoned these neighborhoods, and [they] feel a sense of commitment to put their ‘forgotten’ communities back on the map,” (Gilliam, 221). Gilliam acknowledges that overt geographic references and cultural references are common in hip-hop music, but race and ethnic references are not common; instead, there are usually an abundance of “implicit black cultural referents...and they often take the form of lyrical and musical samples. These more indirect referents work to establish ‘insiderism’...” (224). In this sense, hip-hop’s connection to the Black community is usually high-context and happens through the description of unique Black cultural experiences. This is not to say that only Black consumers can appreciate Black artist’s music, but rather that there is a unique connection between Black artists and their Black community. Therefore, this study will include songs performed by Black artists, whether they are 100% of African descent or mixed-race. Songs that are performed by rap groups that feature at least one Black artist will also be considered.

This study pulls songs from the most popular rap albums of each year because the popularity of the music increases its relevance; one can presume that popular songs have reached a wider audience with their messaging, so the implications could be larger than the implications from underground hip-hop songs. Additionally, this study will observe if mainstream artists utilize their popularity to share strong messages about police officers, or if they produce a less provocative message (possibly because they would not want to jeopardize their economic success). There might be a presumption that most of the top-

selling hip-hop songs today are superficial because the artists have “sold out;” however, it is argued that hip-hop is still a space to share Black opinions, and the popularity of the music has merely facilitated the spread of the messages to more people (Rose, 17). Furthermore, if mainstream hip-hop sold out, debates, like the debate about Kendrick Lamar’s “Alright,” would not have happened. Gilliam acknowledges that some hip-hop critics also have doubts about hip-hop’s authenticity; they think most of the music is produced to sell and does not pertain to political or cultural messages (220). Again, the recent debate surrounding “Alright” debunks this assumption, and so will some of the songs chosen for this study.

Qualitative Approach

This research approaches the conflict and data from a social constructivist viewpoint. Social constructivism assumes that “[i]ndividuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences directed toward certain objects or things;” therefore, there can be a multitude of meanings for any given situation (Creswell, 8). This study benefits from such an approach because it seeks to collect all the various subjective messages presented in the songs. This study treats the artists as participants in the conflict, and its goal is to value each participant’s perspective.

Data Collection

This study will analyze five songs from each year, 2009-2016, resulting in a data set of forty songs. Unfortunately, there were no credible sources that offered lists of songs or albums that included mentions of police, so a process was developed specific to this project. The songs were collected through a multistep selection process and recorded

in a spreadsheet in order to reduce researcher bias, where possible. First, Billboard's end-of-year genre charts were consulted to find the top 25 Rap Albums for each year, which was a standardized option that reduced researcher bias. The albums are listed on Billboard's website in descending order of popularity based on the number of sales at the end of each calendar year. Second, the artist's race was noted; if the artist is Black, or at least one member of a group of artists is Black, the album was kept for the next stage of the selection process, and if s/he is not Black, the album was taken out of the list of contenders. As previously mentioned, racially mixed Black artists were included, like Drake and J. Cole. Drake was also the only instance of an artist not being American. Although he is Canadian, his father is American and he has spent substantial time in the United States ("Drake Biography"). Furthermore, Drake's subject material is similar to that of American artists, and he boasts significant influence in American culture. As such, Drake's songs were included for consideration. After this second step of the process, all repeated albums were removed from the years in which they were duplicated. For instance, J. Cole's album *2014 Forest Hills Drive* appears in the 2015 and 2016 lists, but it was only kept on the 2015 list because that was the first year it appeared.

The next stage in the selection process involved scanning the lyrical content of almost 3,000 songs. Songs were scanned for explicit mentions of police officers ("police," "cop," "popo," etc.) and implicit mentions ("those protectin' the block"⁵). Each song that had at least one mention of law enforcement officers was recorded on the spreadsheet to indicate a need for further investigation. After this step, over 250 songs

⁵ From Drake's song "6PM in New York"

were left. The next stage was a detailed review of the songs available for selection in each year. The five songs with the most salient messages about law enforcement officers were chosen, leaving forty songs for analysis. Salience was determined by the frequency of police mentions and the intensity or urgency of the language used. For example, in The Game's song "The Good, The Bad, The Ugly," he has an entire dialogue with police officers because the song mimics an interrogation. This is a very salient song and was included in the data set. In contrast, Kid Ink's song "Hello World" is a celebratory song about his return to rap and impending success, and it has one mention of police: "T-Take off, f-first class/Still ducking the po-po." This song was not included because its mention of law enforcement was not very significant.

Advantages & limitations of data collection

One advantage of this song selection process is that it removed some of the research bias during the beginning steps. Using a list developed by an objective party (Billboard) prevented all forty songs from being handpicked until it was absolutely necessary. A second advantage of this data collection process was having more than enough songs to choose from. While beginning with close to 3,000 songs was excessive, it ensured that five songs could be found within each year.

One limitation of the data collection method is its lack of a regulated mechanism to account for repeating artists with each year. Only five songs were chosen each year, and if one artists had multiple songs that were among the most-salient, they were all considered. A balance of perspective was considered, however, so typically no more than two songs were chosen from the same artist in the same year for the data. Another

limitation is that this collection method could not include albums that did not sell well. Chance the Rapper is a very popular rapper with relevant lyrics about police brutality, but his albums are always free to the public, so he would never end up in the data set. A third limitation of this data collection method was the short time constraint that did not allow for more songs to be included in the final data set. If more than five songs could be chosen from each year, patterns could be more thoroughly observed within each year and from year to year [JRS12].

Recording & Comparison of Songs

Once the forty songs were chosen for the data set, the four questions posed earlier in the chapter were answered for each song:

1. What is the main point of the song?
2. How does the artist define her/himself and others?
3. How are police mentioned? Do they serve a main role or secondary role?
4. What is the artist's perception of the interaction/conflict with police?

The answers were recorded manually on index cards, which permitted easy movement of songs into groups based on observed patterns of the answers. Once the answers for all songs were recorded, the songs were organized into eight groups based on years so patterns could be observed. Next, the songs were inductively grouped into categories based on each of the four analytical questions. For example, when answers to the first question were isolated, songs were grouped into eight categories based on the main points of the songs; when the second question was isolated, songs were regrouped based only on how the artists positioned themselves, resulting in three categories; when the third

question was isolated, songs were separated into two groups (police as primary characters or police as secondary characters) and patterns were observed within these categories; when the fourth question was isolated, eight categories resulted.

After the categories were labelled, each of the songs in these groupings was cross-analyzed based on the other three analytical questions. For instance, “Police are anti-Black” is one category that resulted from isolating the fourth question. Each song that featured anti-Black police was reviewed to find any commonalities between their answers for the first, second, and third questions. This cross-analysis provided depth to the analysis by extracting interesting patterns and themes.

Conclusion

This study hopes to fill in the gap that has formed about current hip-hop trends of police discussion. Since there is a heightened awareness of police brutality in the media, especially brutality on Black citizens, what are the messages shared in the hip-hop community? In the 1980s, N.W.A. said “Fuck Tha Police,” in the 1990s, Ice-T imagined a “Cop Killer,” in the 2000s, Jay-Z talked about his “99 Problems” and police profiling—so, what is being said today?

This chapter has itemized the various decisions made to conduct this research that could address the gap in knowledge about lyrical depictions of the conflict between police and Black Americans. Black hip-hop artists are still important communicators in the Black community, and mainstream hip-hop is a useful arena for conducting research. The next chapter will present the data found from applying narrative analysis and positioning theory to the lyrics of forty police-related songs.

CHAPTER 4: INITIAL FINDINGS

Introduction

This project analyzed each song by answering the four analytical questions mentioned in the previous chapter. The answers to these questions were categorized based on patterns found within a variety of group combinations. NVivo software was also used to analyze the songs without relying on the four analytical questions. The findings of both strategies will be discussed in this chapter.[JRS13]

This chapter will present the findings from the analysis of all forty hip-hop songs. It will begin by listing out the songs, artists, and years⁶, and then it will break down the findings based on specific groupings: year, the four analytical questions, and additional findings. Within each grouping, the songs have been cross-analyzed based on the four analytical questions, which allowed general observations and patterns to be found. The bold subheadings in this chapter represent the inductive groupings, and the respective text will discuss the findings from the cross-analysis. The chapter will end by discussing the extra findings from the NVivo software.

⁶ Year refers to the year the song made it on the Billboard Year End Chart of top 25 rap albums, not the year the song was produced.

The Forty Songs

Table 1 Songs

Song Title	Artist	Year
“We Will Rob You”	Raekwon, ft. GZA Masta Killa, Slick Rick	2009
“Cold Outside”	Raekwon, ft. Ghostface Killah	2009
“Get It Get It”	Cam’ron, ft. Skitzo	2009
“Swishas & Erb”	UGK, ft. Sleepy Brown	2009
“Mind of a Maniac”	Lil Boosie ⁷	2009
“Wild’n Cuz I’m Young”	Kid Cudi	2010
“In His Own Words”	Nas & Damian Marley, ft. Stephen Marley	2010
“Dear God 2.0”	The Roots, ft. Monsters of Folk	2010
“Death to My Enemies”	50 Cent	2010
“How I Got Over”	The Roots	2010
“How Life Changed”	T.I., ft. Scarface & Michelle’L	2011
“Interlude”	J. Cole	2011
“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly”	The Game	2011
“Murder to Excellence”	Kanye West & Jay Z	2011
“Gorgeous”	Kanye West, ft. Kid Cudi & Raekwon	2011
“Good Kid”	Kendrick Lamar	2012
“Homicide”	Future, ft. Snoop Dogg	2012
“World’s an Addiction”	Nas, ft. Anthony Hamilton	2012
“Hold You Down”	Childish Gambino	2012
“Polo & Shell Tops”	Meek Mill	2012
“New Slaves”	Kanye West	2013
“God Bless Amerika”	Lil’ Wayne	2013
“Crooked Smile”	J. Cole, ft. TLC	2013
“Ali Bomaye”	The Game, ft. 2 Chainz & Rick Ross	2013
“So We Can Live”	2 Chainz, ft. T-Pain	2013
“New National Anthem”	T.I., ft. Skylar Grey	2014
“Rich is Gangsta”	Rick Ross	2014

⁷ Name later changed to Boosie Badazz.

“Paperwork”	T.I., ft. Pharrell Williams	2014
“Don’t Worry ‘Bout It”	50 Cent, ft. Yo Gotti	2014
“Bicken Back Being Bool”	YG	2014
“The Blacker the Berry”	Kendrick Lamar	2015
“The Pessimist”	Wale, ft. J. Cole	2015
“New York, New York”	The Game	2015
“Genocide”	Dr. Dre, ft. Kendrick Lamar, Marsha Ambrosius, & Candice Pillay	2015
“Hands Up”	Boosie Badazz	2015
“Y.O. (Youthful Offenders)”	Jadakiss, ft. Akon	2016
“Eternal Reflection Interlude”	Jessica Care Moore (on Jeezy’s album)	2016
“Crocodile Python”	Rick Ross	2016
“Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”	ScHoolboy Q, ft. Jadakiss	2016
“Jason”	Jadakiss, ft. Swizz Beatz	2016

Most of the songs (twenty-one out of forty) feature additional artists performing with the main artist of the song. The analysis of the research will treat the featured artists and their contributions to the songs just as seriously as the verses of the main artists. All songs are written from a first-person perspective, and the lyrics of the featured artists are no exceptions, making their perspective and contributions just as important as the rest of the song. In many cases, featured artists are just singing the chorus, but in some cases, they do add a valuable perspective to the songs. It is worth clarifying, again, that each of these songs was written by the main performing artists, often in conjunction with other writers.

Two songs are not traditional songs, but rather other forms of rhetorical artistry that the artists have intentionally included in their albums. “Interlude” by J. Cole is prose

that details a narrative about his interaction with a police officer. Even though this is not a traditional song, and it is very short (about one minute, thirty seconds long), it is included in the data set because it is a discussion about an undercover police officer pulling him over, which makes it relevant to the overall study. The second untraditional “song” is “Eternal Reflection Interlude,” written and performed by poet Jessica Care Moore, which appears on an album by the rapper Jeezy. This rhythmic poem features typically urban beats and sounds in the background of Moore’s two-minute performance, and it discusses state-perpetuated violence on Black victims. The subject matter makes this poem very relevant to the topic of this research, so it has been included.

Grouped by Year

2009

The five songs included are: “We Will Rob You,” “Cold Outside,” “Get It Get It,” “Swishas & Erb,” and “Mind of a Maniac.” In four of the five songs, the performing artists strongly ground themselves in their street or local neighborhood experiences—the typically Black, impoverished, crime-ridden, and violent “hood” (“Cold Outside,” “Get It Get It,” “Swishas & Erb,” and “Mind of a Maniac”) and one song’s artists place themselves in the Black community by using rhetoric from the Nation of Gods and Earth.⁸ Four of the songs address police officers as secondary characters (“Cold Outside,” “Get It Get It,” “Swishas & Erb,” and “Mind of a Maniac”), while “We Will Rob You” addresses police officers as the focus of the narrative. Two songs place police and Black characters as occupants of opposing lifestyles (“Cold Outside” and “Mind of a Maniac”),

⁸ The Nation of Gods and Earth is a pro-Black ideology that preaches a certain code of conduct and has its own unique vernacular; it is often tied to the Nation of Islam (Chandler).

and two songs explain that police officers are ineffective (“Swishas & Erb” and “Mind of a Maniac”).

2010

The five songs for this year are: “Wild’n Cuz I’m Young,” “In His Own Words,” “Dear God 2.0,” “Death to My Enemies,” and “How I Got Over.” The protagonists of two songs clearly position themselves from the hood (“Death to My Enemies” and “How I Got Over”), while the protagonists of one song place themselves with characteristically Black experiences (“In His Own Words”), one protagonist does not make any racially unifying remarks (“Wild’ Cuz I’m Young”), and one set of protagonists regard themselves as part of a collectively suffering humankind (“Dear God 2.0”). All five songs discuss police officers as secondary characters, and two songs mention police as part of the mass of problems plaguing the whole world (“In His Own Words” and “Dear God 2.0”). Two songs mention the police as actors that are always watching (“Death to My Enemies” and “How I Got Over”).

2011

The five songs included for this year are: “How Life Changed,” “Interlude,” “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Murder to Excellence,” and “Gorgeous.” In three of the five songs, the protagonists place themselves in recognizable experiences for Black Americans, such as getting pulled over, speaking about the Black community and fatherlessness, and discussing social oppression of Black people (“Interlude,” “Murder to Excellence,” and “Gorgeous”). Two songs feature protagonists placing themselves in the streets, knowledgeable about hood culture (“How Life Changed” and “The Good, the

Bad, the Ugly”). Three songs regard police officers as primary characters of the narratives (“Interlude,” “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” and “Murder to Excellence”). While all five songs place the police in adversarial roles, two of the songs explicitly feature the police as enemies (“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly” and “Murder to Excellence”).

2012

This year’s songs include: “Good Kid,” “Homicide,” “World’s an Addiction,” “Hold You Down,” and “Polo & Shell Tops.” The protagonists of four songs identify themselves by their knowledge and experience of street culture (“Good Kid,” “Homicide,” “World’s an Addiction,” and “Polo & Shell Tops”), and one protagonist has identified himself by his middle-class, suburban, Black experiences (“Hold You Down”). Four songs mention the police as secondary characters (“Homicide,” “World’s an Addiction,” “Hold You Down,” and “Polo & Shell Tops”) and one song focuses on the brutality of police as one of the main topics (“Good Kid”). Three of the five songs portray police officers as unhelpful or ineffective (“Good Kid,” “World’s an Addiction,” and “Polo & Shell Tops”), and two songs call out police officers for racially profiling Blacks, especially Black males (“Good Kid” and “Hold You Down”).

2013

The songs from this year include: “New Slaves,” “God Bless Amerika,” “Crooked Smile,” “Ali Bomaye,” and “So We Can Live.” In two songs, the protagonists connect the Black American experience with a likelihood for jailtime (“God Bless Amerika” and “Crooked Smile”), two songs connect current Black issues to slavery in the United States

("New Slaves" and "Ali Bomaye") and one protagonist identifies himself by his experience in the hood ("So We Can Live"). In four songs, the police occupy secondary roles in the narratives ("New Slaves," "God Bless Amerika," "Crooked Smile," and "Ali Bomaye"), but in one, the protagonist engages in a direct dialogue with an officer ("Crooked Smile"). The police occupy a primary role in one song, and the protagonist also engages in a direct dialogue with an officer ("So We Can Live"). Two songs connect the police to greater national problems in the United States ("New Slaves" and "God Bless Amerika").

2014

These songs include: "New National Anthem," "Rich is Gangsta," "Paperwork," "Don't Worry 'Bout It," and "Bicken Back Being Bool." In three of the five songs, the protagonists identify themselves coming from the hood ("New National Anthem," "Paperwork," and "Bicken Back Being Bool") and in two songs the protagonists identify themselves as wealthy and successful ("Rich is Gangsta" and "Don't Worry 'Bout It"). Four songs mention police officers as secondary characters ("Rich is Gangsta," "Paperwork," "Don't Worry 'Bout It," and "Bicken Back Being Bool"), one of which sheds a little positive light on working with law enforcement officers ("Rich is Gangsta"), and three of which reference law enforcement by using the word "Feds" ("Rich is Gangsta," "Paperwork," and "Don't Worry 'Bout It"). One song mentions police as a primary character in an exclusively negative context ("New National Anthem"). Three songs refer to the police and a definitive enemy ("New National Anthem," "Paperwork," and "Bicken Back Being Bool").

2015

The five songs from this year are: “The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” “New York, New York,” “Genocide,” and “Hands Up.” Two songs feature protagonists that are very knowledgeable about the violence that plagues major cities in the United States (“New York, New York” and “Genocide”), and three songs present observant perspectives as the protagonists critique the overwhelming violence in Black communities (“The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” and “Hands Up”). Three songs refer to police officers in secondary roles (“The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” and “New York, New York”). Four songs describe the police and/or the entire justice system as anti-Black (“The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” “New York, New York,” and “Hands Up”), and one song discusses the need for police help (“Genocide”). Three songs mention Trayvon Martin for different reasons. One mentions Martin’s name in conjunction with Michael Brown in a song about killer police (“Hands Up”), another uses Martin’s name in a critique about Black-on-Black violence (“The Blacker the Berry”), and the third uses the name Zimmerman (the last name of the man who killed Trayvon Martin) to also reference Black-on-Black violence (“The Pessimist”).

2016

The last five songs are: “Y.O. (Youthful Offenders),” “Eternal Reflection Interlude,” “Crocodile Python,” “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane,” and “Jason.” The protagonists of four songs place themselves on the streets, affected by collective Black experiences (“Y.O. (Youthful Offenders),” “Eternal Reflection Interlude,” “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane,” and “Jason”). Four songs feature police officers characterized as secondary characters (“Y.O. (Youthful Offenders),” “Crocodile Python,” “Groovy

Tony/Eddie Kane,” and “Jason”). The artists of two songs present their lives of crime and police officers as directly incompatible (“Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane” and “Jason”), two songs present police as anti-Black (“Eternal Reflection Interlude” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”), and three songs present police officers as inconvenient interruptions to daily activities (“Crocodile Python,” Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane,” and “Jason”). “Jason” also references Eric Garner, a victim of police brutality, but instead of using the victim’s name, he repeats “I can’t breathe.” The meaning behind this quote will be discussed in a later section.

Grouped by Main Topic

Street life emphasized

Street, hood, or ghetto experiences refer to urban neighborhoods often inhabited by racial minorities, characterized by crime and violence, that lack positive social and economic investment. Since the 1980s, these areas have been often considered the most “real,” or authentic locations in hip-hop music (Juliana Chang, 551; Rose, 10). Street culture is the main topic for five songs, and all the artists placed themselves as growing up on the street and/or very knowledgeable of current street activity. The five songs are: “Mind of Maniac,” “How I Got Over,” “Homicide,” “So We Can Live,” and “Jason.” Four songs feature clearly defined enemies that either snitch (give the police information) or are jealous, and the artists are completely oppositional to them (“Mind of a Maniac,” “Homicide,” “So We Can Live,” and “Jason”). Two songs mention the police in a somewhat positive way (“Homicide” and “So We Can Live”), and two songs describe the

artists and police as total adversaries (“Mind of a Maniac” and “Jason”). There was not a significant pattern found between the years that each song appeared on the Billboard list.

Protagonist involved in criminal activity

These next six songs portray the protagonists’ involvement in overt criminal activity, ranging from driving without a license, to selling drugs, to robbery and shootings. The six songs are: “Interlude,” “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Polo & Shell Tops,” “Paperwork,” “Bicken Back Being Bool,” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane.” In five of the songs, the artists are unsurprisingly connected to life in the streets (“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Polo & Shell Tops,” “Paperwork,” “Bicken Back Being Bool,” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”). Three songs present the police as an ineffective organization (“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Polo & Shell Tops,” and “Bicken Back Being Bool”), and the other three describe police officers as inconvenient interruptions to every-day activities (“Interlude,” “Paperwork,” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”). In four songs, the police are placed as definitive antagonists (“Interlude,” “Polo & Shell Tops,” “Paperwork,” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”). Again, there was not a pattern found between the years of the songs.

Black experience

The ten songs that focus on the Black experience discuss uniquely Black discrimination, oppression, history, and violence that happens in the United States. The songs include: “We Will Rob You,” “Murder to Excellence,” “Gorgeous,” “Hold You Down,” “New Slaves,” “Crooked Smile,” “The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude.” While the songs address police, class,

and slavery, among other topics, many of them include a social critique of every-day racism, such as “Gorgeous,” “Hold You Down,” “Crooked Smile,” and “The Blacker the Berry.” Four songs discuss Black-on-Black violence (“Murder to Excellence,” “Hold You Down,” “The Pessimist,” and “The Blacker the Berry”), and three songs focus on police and systemic violence on Black Americans (“We Will Rob You,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). In nine of the ten songs, the protagonists are especially reflective and observant of Black issues (“Murder to Excellence,” “Gorgeous,” “Hold You Down,” “New Slaves,” “Crooked Smile,” “The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). Three songs use the name of victims of police/systemic violence, two of which are from 2015 (“Murder to Excellence,” “The Blacker the Berry,” and “Hands Up”). Four songs discuss killer cops (“Murder to Excellence,” “Hands Up,” “The Pessimist,” and “Crooked Smile”), and four other songs place police as members of the greater anti-Black justice system (“Gorgeous,” “New Slaves,” “The Blacker the Berry,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). Two songs mention that the police racially profile Blacks (“We Will Rob You” and “Hold You Down”), and two songs talk about crooked cops (“We Will Rob You” and “Hands Up”). There was not a significant pattern found between the years of all ten songs.

Black youth

Two songs specifically discuss Black youth, which could also fall under the category of Black experiences. The songs are “Good Kid” and “Y.O. (Youthful Offenders).” The songs are from different years (2012 and 2016 respectively) but they

both talk about Black-on-Black violence. “Good Kid” uses the protagonist’s perspective as a participant to explain the violence he has encountered in the hood, while the protagonist of “Y.O. (Youthful Offenders)” takes an observational and advisory role. “Good Kid” focuses on comparing police violence to gang violence on youth, and “Y.O. (Youthful Offenders)” discusses police as one problem among many others on the streets. Both songs describe the police targeting Black youth, but “Good Kid” does so with stronger language.

Having a good time

Two songs focus on the protagonists having a good time and enjoying their lives, despite obstacles that may appear: “Swishas & Erb” and “Wild’n Cuz I’m Young.” Both songs place the artists in lifestyles that oppose police presence, but “Swishas & Erb” presents police as ineffective and targeting Blacks, while “Wild’n Cuz I’m Young” presents a protagonist that is defiant to police officers. The protagonists in “Swishas & Erb” dominate street culture and possess a style rooted in being real, being gangsta, and being Black. The protagonist in “Wild’n Cuz I’m Young,” in contrast, speaks to any rebellious youth of any background.

The world is cruel

Four songs discuss how tough and cruel the world is, and how bleak the future looks. The four songs are: “Cold Outside,” “In His Own Words,” “Dear God 2.0,” and “World’s an Addiction.” All the protagonists place themselves among the suffering, along with the rest of the world’s population. Throughout the four songs, the police are mentioned as one of many problems. In “Cold Outside,” the police and Blacks are in

complete opposition; in “In His Own Words,” police racially profile Blacks and violate privacy of citizens; in “Dear God 2.0,” police are quick to shoot and abuse their authority; and in “World’s an Addiction,” police do not care about helping people.

The United States is unsafe

This category could be part of the previous category, but instead of speaking about the whole world, these four songs critique the United States. The songs are: “God Bless Amerika,” “New National Anthem,” “New York, New York,” and “Genocide.” All songs portray the United States as an unstable area; “God Bless Amerika” and “New National Anthem” speak to the greater nation, while “New York, New York” and “Genocide” focus on large U.S. cities. Three songs position Blacks and police officers in perpetual conflict (“God Bless Amerika,” “New National Anthem,” and “New York, New York”), while “Genocide” calls for police assistance. Two songs describe the police as anti-Black and killers (“New National Anthem” and “New York, New York,” and two songs mention police in conjunction with a critique of the prison system (“God Bless Amerika” and “New York, New York”). All songs come from 2013-2015.

Success

These seven songs focus on the success and wealth of the artists. The songs include: “Get It Get It,” “Death to My Enemies,” “How Life Changed,” “Ali Bomaye,” “Rich is Gangsta,” “Don’t Worry ‘Bout It,” and “Crocodile Python.” The protagonists of four songs compare their current success to the poverty from their childhood (“Get It Get It,” “Death to My Enemies,” “How Life Changed,” and “Ali Bomaye”), and three songs emphasize the protagonists’ loyalty to friends and neighborhoods (“Ali Bomaye,” “Rich

is Gangsta,” and “Don’t Worry ‘Bout It”). The protagonists of four songs clearly position their enemies by listing negative characteristics (“Death to My Enemies,” “Ali Bomaye,” “Don’t Worry ‘Bout It,” and “Crocodile Python”). Two songs mention Black-on-Black harm (“How Life Changed” and “Rich is Gangsta”), and three songs talk about the police always watching them or their neighborhoods (“Death to My Enemies,” “How Life Changed,” and “Don’t Worry ‘Bout It”). Three songs talk about police officers interrupting the protagonists’ daily activities and possibilities for success (“Get It Get It,” “Rich is Gangsta,” and “Crocodile Python), one song mentions police racial profiling and slavery (“Ali Bomaye”), and one song suggests that sometimes it is necessary to work cooperatively with law enforcement officers (“Rich is Gangsta”).

Grouped by Positioning of Protagonist

Protagonist as Black

In twenty-six of the forty songs, the protagonists are clearly members of the Black community. They either reference themselves and other Black Americans as “us,” or they identify features of themselves that are consistent with Black features, like hair texture. While all the songs are performed by Black artists, these protagonists were explicit in their positioning amongst other Black Americans. The protagonists of the other fourteen songs did not denounce their Black identity, but they did not have explicit claims, indicating their narratives were meant to connect with a more-ambiguous audience.

Protagonist from the hood

In twenty-four of the forty songs, the protagonists are from the hood and familiar with street life, and they have experience hustling for money, selling drugs, living around violence, living with a lack of security, etc. These songs do not necessarily focus on

depicting street life, but the artists placed themselves in the hood in order to verify the narrative.

Protagonist as reflective and observant

Twenty-nine of the forty songs feature very politically and socially conscious protagonists. These artists do not explicitly say they are reflective and observant, but the content of their narratives indicate they keep a watchful eye on the struggles faced in their communities.

Grouped by Role of Police in Narrative

This research tracked the intentionality or severity of police mentions in the songs by paying attention to primary or secondary role placements of law enforcement officers. If police are placed as primary characters, that means most of the narrative is about them; if they take on a secondary role, that means they are one of many topics discussed in the narrative. Ten songs feature police as primary characters, and the other thirty referred to them as secondary characters.

Primary Role

Ten songs mention police officers as primary characters: “We Will Rob You,” “Interlude,” “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Murder to Excellence,” “Good Kid,” “So We Can Live,” “New National Anthem,” “Genocide,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude.” Four of the songs focus on state or police violence on Blacks (“Interlude,” “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”), three songs provide narratives of daily activities (“We Will Rob You,” “So We Can Live,” and “Good Kid”), and three songs talk about the hard times experienced in the United States (“Murder to Excellence,” “New National Anthem,” and “Genocide”).

Six songs overtly express the Black identity of the artists and tie the artists to the streets (“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Murder to Excellence,” “Good Kid,” “So We Can Live,” “New National Anthem,” and “Genocide”). Two songs talk about victims of police brutality, one by naming victims, and one without using specific names (“Hands Up” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). Three songs discuss Black-on-Black harm (“Murder to Excellence,” “Good Kid,” and “Genocide”), three songs talk about the racial profiling done by police (“We Will Rob You,” “Good Kid,” and “So We Can Live”), and three songs have direct dialogues with police officers (“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “So We Can Live,” and “Hands Up”). Two songs address positive characteristics of police (“So We Can Live” and “Genocide”), while four songs call them killers (“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Murder to Excellence,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”).

Secondary Role

It was somewhat useful to search for patterns within the ten primary songs, but it was not useful to do the same work for the thirty secondary songs because the group held 75% of the data set. The results from the analysis would not have added to the research.

Grouped by Protagonist’s Interaction with Police

In this category, different from the categories for main topics and roles, some songs are grouped in more than one subgroup because they feature multiple messages about police interactions.

Police are anti-Black

While many songs might imply messages about anti-Black cops, there are ten songs that state this opinion overtly: “Gorgeous,” “New Slaves,” “New National

Anthem,” “The Blacker the Berry,” “New York, New York,” “The Pessimist,” “Hands Up,” “Eternal Reflection Interlude,” “Crocodile Python,” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane.” Seven songs are from 2014-2016, and four of these are from 2015. Five songs talk about Black pride and strength (“Gorgeous,” “The Blacker the Berry,” “New York, New York,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”), three songs talk about victims of direct violence from police and/or systemic violence (“New National Anthem,” “The Blacker the Berry,” and “Hands Up”), and three other songs talk about the police as killers (“The Pessimist,” “New York, New York,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). Four songs indicate that police officers are complicit in an anti-Black system (“Gorgeous,” “New Slaves,” “The Blacker the Berry,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). Three songs further imply that law enforcement officers are pro-White (“New National Anthem,” “New York, New York,” and “Crocodile Python”).

Police are part of a systemic problem

While many songs might feature implied messages about anti-Black cops, there are ten songs that state this opinion overtly: “Gorgeous,” “New Slaves,” “New National Anthem,” “The Blacker the Berry,” “New York, New York,” “The Pessimist,” “Hands Up,” “Eternal Reflection Interlude,” “Crocodile Python,” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane.” Seven songs are from 2014-2016, and four of these are from 2015. Five songs talk about Black pride and strength (“Gorgeous,” “The Blacker the Berry,” “New York, New York,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”), three songs talk about victims of direct violence from police and/or systemic violence (“New National Anthem,” “The Blacker the Berry,” and “Hands Up”), and three other songs talk about the police as

killers (“The Pessimist,” “New York, New York,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). Four songs indicate that police officers are complicit in an anti-Black system (“Gorgeous,” “New Slaves,” “The Blacker the Berry,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). Three songs further imply that law enforcement officers are pro-White (“New National Anthem,” “New York, New York,” and “Crocodile Python”).

Police are racially profiling

There are nine songs that mention the police profiling Black Americans: “We Will Rob You,” “In His Own Words,” “Gorgeous,” “Good Kid,” “Hold You Down,” “Crooked Smile,” “Ali Bomaye,” “So We Can Live,” and “New National Anthem.” All nine songs are rooted in Black culture through specific references and they talk about racial profiling in a variety of contexts. One song suggests profiling should unify the Black community (“Hold You Down”), one song suggests police officers are killers (“Crooked Smile”), and one song attributes a positive quality to police officers (“So We Can Live”). Two songs bring the issue of racial profiling and police back to a larger systemic problem (“Gorgeous” and “New National Anthem”).

Police are watching

Eight songs explicitly mention the police watching, lurking, and stalking the protagonists constantly: “Swishas & Erb,” “Death to My Enemies,” “How I Got Over,” “How Life Changed,” “Polo & Shell Tops,” “God Bless Amerika,” “Don’t Worry ‘Bout It,” and “Y.O. (Youthful Offenders)”. Four songs discuss how the protagonists grew up on the streets (“How I Got Over,” “How Life Changed,” “Polo & Shell Tops,” and “Y.O. (Youthful Offenders)”). Four songs talk about the police monitoring neighborhood streets

(“How I Got Over,” “How Life Changed,” “Polo & Shell Tops,” and “Y.O. (Youthful Offenders)”), and the other four songs talk about the police only watching the protagonists (“Swishas & Erb,” “Death to My Enemies,” “God Bless Amerika,” and “Don’t Worry ‘Bout It”).

Police use direct violence

Six songs specifically mention that police officers kill, try to kill, and/or use excessive force. The songs include: “Dear God 2.0,” “Murder to Excellence,” “Good Kid,” “Crooked Smile,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude.” Four of the six songs associate police officers with killing (“Murder to Excellence,” “Crooked Smile,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”), and two of these songs use the names of victims (“Murder to Excellence” and “Hands Up”). Two other songs describe the police using excessive force (“Dear God 2.0” and “Good Kid”). All six songs indicate that police officers are not helpful, that they are adversarial to Black Americans, and that they add to other problems in the world. In five songs, the protagonists clearly connect with the Black community (“Murder to Excellence,” “Good Kid,” “Crooked Smile,” “Hands Up,” and “Eternal Reflection Interlude”). The protagonists of one song are not overtly connected with the Black community because they discuss the suffering of all humans (“Dear God 2.0”).

Identifying police by race

Four songs talk about the race of police officers, only in terms of being Black or White. The songs are: “Gorgeous,” “World’s an Addiction,” “The Pessimist,” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane.” Two songs state that the police are White, and they are

definitive adversaries to Black Americans (“Gorgeous” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”). In “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane,” the Black protagonist is engaged in criminal activity, and in “Gorgeous” the Black protagonist is not a criminal. In “World’s an Addiction,” the protagonists imply that police officers are not Black by stating that the cops cannot relate to Black youth. “The Pessimist” is the only song that explicitly address Black police officers; the protagonists imply that there is no difference between Black and White cops because the Black male is still likely to get killed by both. “The Pessimist” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane present the police as anti-Black.

Positive perceptions of police

There are four songs that offer somewhat positive views of police officers: “Get It Get It,” “Homicide,” “So We Can Live,” and “Genocide.” All the protagonists position themselves in the streets of an urban neighborhood. The protagonists of three songs explain that they need police because the violence in their neighborhood is so extreme (“Get It Get It,” “Homicide,” and “Genocide”). “So We Can Live” describes an interaction between the protagonist and a police officer, and the officer is lenient.

Direct dialogue with police

Five songs feature the protagonists engaged in direct dialogue with police officers. The songs are: “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly,” “Crooked Smile,” “Ali Bomaye,” “So We Can Live,” and “Hands Up.” Three of the five songs are from 2013. There are various topics around which the protagonists engage with the police, but typically the songs do not depict the cops speaking. All songs place the protagonists clearly as a part of the Black community and at odds with the police. Two of the songs

mention racial profiling (“Ali Bomaye” and “So We Can Live”), two songs talk about killer cops (“Crooked Smile” and “Hands Up”), and one song portrays police as ineffective (“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly”).

Additional Observations of Victims

These patterns became obvious after analyzing the songs, even though they do not directly connect to one of the four analytical questions.

Naming victims

Five songs mention victims (of different types of crimes) by their name. The songs include: “Murder to Excellence,” “New National Anthem,” “The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” and “Hands Up.” Four of the five songs are from 2014-2015, and all the songs declare police officers to be anti-Black. Three songs discuss Black-on-Black crime (“Murder to Excellence,” “The Blacker the Berry,” and “The Pessimist”), three songs discuss killer cops (“Murder to Excellence,” “The Pessimist,” and “Hands Up”), and two songs identify police as part of a tainted justice system (“New National Anthem,” and “The Blacker the Berry”). “Murder to Excellence” names Danroy Henry, a young victim of a police shooting in 2010, and Fred Hampton, a young Black Panther leader who was killed by police in 1969 (Rivera; Gregory). “New National Anthem” laments the unnecessary death of Trayvon Martin, and the protagonist charges the federal government for the death of Malcolm X. “The Blacker the Berry” refers to Trayvon Martin in the context of Black-on-Black murder,” and “The Pessimist” mentions George Zimmerman, the man who shot Trayvon Martin, in the context of Black-on-Black

murder. Finally, “Hands Up” honors the memories of Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin.

Indirect references to victims

Three songs refer to victims without mentioning their names; instead they use highly-publicized phrases that have been associated with certain victims. Unarmed teen Michael Brown was rumored to have said “Don’t shoot” before being shot by police officer Darren Wilson, prompting the phrase “Hands up, don’t shoot” to become “a rallying cry for Ferguson residents,” and “a symbol of outrage over mistreatment of unarmed black youth by police,” (M. Lee). Since the protests in response to Brown’s death began in 2014, there has been significant debate whether Brown did put his hands up or say those words; however, the fact remains that “Hands up, don’t shoot” was one of a handful of high-profile chants used to protest police violence on Black Americans. “I can’t breathe” became a high-profile phrase associated with the death of Eric Garner, an unarmed man killed by police in 2014. A video recording shows Garner gasping for air, saying “I can’t breathe,” after an altercation with police. “I can’t breathe” became another rallying cry for protesters against police brutality (Susman and Haller).

Three songs mention these two phrases. “Genocide” and “Hands Up,” both from 2015, refer to putting “hands up” to prove innocence and avoid being shot by police officers. “Jason” is from 2016, and the protagonist pleads with officers not to shoot because he “can’t breathe.” All the songs depict the protagonists with a high level of understanding and empathy for hood culture, and one song even draws attention to the stigma associated with Black male youths wearing hoodies (“Jason”).

NVivo Findings

The NVivo queries into word frequency were not as helpful as originally expected. The word frequencies prove the already-known language of rap and hip-hop music. Words like “nigga(s)” (253 times) “got” (150 times) and “get” (149 times) are the top three words when all forty songs were analyzed together. When a word frequency was run within each isolated year, the results were very vulnerable to the influence of one or two songs that repeated certain words. For example, in 2010 the three most frequent words were “’cause” (46 times) “young” (46 times) and “wildin’” (37 times). The verse “wildin’ ‘cause I’m young” was repeated forty-two times in the 2010 song “Wildn’ Cuz I’m Young,” which flooded the statistics for the word frequency inquiry. However, there was one year that featured more organic results. In 2015, the second- and third-most used words were “murder(ed)” (40 times) and “black(s)” (27 times). The 2015 songs include: “The Blacker the Berry,” “The Pessimist,” “New York, New York,” “Genocide,” and “Hands Up.”

This study coded for other themes that appeared in the songs through NVivo software. Even though these themes don’t necessarily pertain to the topic of police violence in the Black community, they could be points for future research. The codes that appear in the most songs are “youth” (18 sources), “measures of success” (16 sources), and “smoking weed” (14 sources). The codes that are referenced the most are “measure of success” (34 references), “youth” (22 references), and “lack of security” (21 references).

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the song analysis. Four questions established the framework for the analysis and cross-analysis of the songs, which allowed for the observation of various patterns. This study also expanded slightly beyond the four analytical questions to draw attention to other pertinent patterns noticed in the lyrical content. This chapter ended by explaining a second means of analyzing the songs through NVivo software, which highlighted the frequency of certain words and codes within the songs.

The next chapter will discuss what the presented data means in the context of the conflict. The chapter will answer the research question, in addition to smaller inquiries raised, and it will connect the data to positioning theory.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter will explain the data presented in the previous chapter. The last chapter categorized songs into groups and subgroups, and this chapter will offer interpretations of the groupings. This chapter will begin by interpreting what the songs say about the protagonists, and then it will discuss what the songs say about police officers. The chapter will also address other questions raised throughout the presentation of the study, such as the inclusion of victims. In the last section, the chapter will connect the findings and analysis to the positioning of Black Americans and police officers in the songs.

What the Music Says About the Protagonists

Protagonist as Black

All the artists included in this study are Black, but some of the protagonists strongly identified with black community, while others did not draw attention to their race. The only observable correlation with racial identification was the main topic of the song. If the song has a heavy social critique, like “The Blacker the Berry,” then the protagonist is placed within the Black community. Kendrick Lamar’s song is full of firm placement in the Black community:

I’m African-American, I’m African

I’m black as the moon, heritage of a small village

Pardon my residence

Came from the bottom of mankind

My hair is nappy, my dick is big, my nose is round and wide

Some songs did not have strong social critiques, but protagonists were placed within the Black community because the nature of the main topic called for it, like with “Get It Get It.” “Get It Get It” describes the protagonist coming from poverty, but he worked hard to achieve his current success. The protagonist, Cam’ron, places himself in the Black community by referencing “activator juice,” a serum associated with a popular Black 1980s hairstyle known as the Jheri curl:

40th, down the block danger zone

Up the Ave. forty wall, hope y’all niggas bring you chrome

What you saying homes, cops they raiding homes

Activator juice, yes to spray your dome

The line about the “activator juice” is a metaphor in the song, but the reference confirms his Black identity and knowledge of the Black community, thereby authenticating his narrative.

Consistent with this pattern, the protagonists of songs that wanted to sell a generalized message, like “Wild’n ‘Cuz I’m Young,” do not vocalize their placement in the Black community because it is not necessary. “Wild’n ‘Cuz I’m Young” is about the protagonist enjoying his youth by partying with other youths:

4 in the morning getting cozy

So much goose, I let the fry soak it up some

Tuesday weekly, the legend of the rager

Most have witnessed the Cud' in the club

How the protagonists are characterized in the Black community does not have any notable relationship with how the police are characterized in a narrative. However, if protagonists are firmly positioned in the Black community, any mention they make of police could be attributed to the conflict between police and Black Americans; if artists do not explicitly position themselves within the Black community, then what they say about the police requires a more ambiguous interpretation in regards to the conflict.

Protagonist from the hood

One of the most consistent trends between 2009 and 2016 is that most of the protagonists identify themselves in terms of their street, or hood, experiences, regardless of the main topic. For instance, “Jason” is a narrative about the dangers and unpredictability of the streets, so the protagonist speaks of his own experiences with street violence:

I'm just one of the five, I'm just one with the vibes

Even niggas is jealous so they just want you to die

They don't want you to rise, they just want you demise

So I be crossing my T's and I be dotting my I's

You on the opposite side, shots gonna fly

Best part about it, I can stay right up in Yonkers and hide

In comparison, the main topic of “Paperwork” is success, but the artist still places himself in the streets as a frame of reference to show the extent of his current levels of success:

ATL, Westside, that's the only home I know

In '85, me and Uncle Quint used to ride around in the big Bronco

The placement of protagonists in the hood establishes authenticity in the music. In the 1990s Tricia Rose recognized the importance of “‘ghetto blackness’ as a model of ‘authenticity’ and hipness in rap music,” and the same trend continues today (Rose, 11). This placement of protagonists does not seem to have a significant impact on the positioning of police; however, it does explain part of the conflict between many Blacks and police officers: it is logical that Blacks who grow up in the crime-ridden hood will be at odds with law enforcement officers.

Protagonist as observant and reflective

Most of the songs feature very reflective and observant protagonists, regardless of the main topic of the song. This means that the protagonists are speaking to issues that affect a large community of people. For example, “Ali Bomaye” is a song about the protagonists’ success and wealth, but the protagonists mention the suffering of Black people at the beginning of the song:

Get my people out them chains nigga

I mean handcuffs, time to man up

The Game begins the song with these lines to affirm that he is plugged into the Black community and cares about the pain and suffering of his fellow Black Americans.

Through a slightly different method, J. Cole presents himself as a reflective observer in “Crooked Smile”. The song is about denouncing the pressure to be perfect from outside forces, and J. Cole has positioned himself as an experienced observer for the full duration

of the song. Towards the end of the song he speaks directly about what he has observed concerning the Black community:

'Cause we in hell already—I ask if my skin pale

Would I then sell like Eminem or Adele?

But one more time for the 'Ville

And fuck all of that beef shit, nigga let's make a mil'

Hey officer man, we don't want nobody getting killed

Just open up that cell, let my brother out of jail

Other songs, like “Gorgeous” feature the protagonists placed in the suffering that they are also observing:

Inter-century anthems based off inner city tantrums

Based off the way we was branded

Face it, Jerome get more time than Brandon

And at the airport they check all through my bag

And tell me that it's random

But we stay winning, this week has been a bad message

Kanye West acknowledges one type of suffering faced by Black Americans, and he places himself in the suffering by remembering a time that he was racially profiled at an airport. He shares feelings of hope (“But we stay winning...”), which reinforces his placement in the Black community.

What the Music Says About Police

Based on the categories presented in the last chapter, this section will interpret what the artists say about police officers. First, the messages will be interpreted based on the differences between years, then by main topics, primary versus secondary roles, types of interactions with police, and finally, when there is direct dialogue or mentions of victims.

When grouped by year

There are not great differences between how the police are discussed from 2009 through 2016. The most significant differences between the years occur when specific victims are named because that places the song in a certain time frame. For instance, “Murder to Excellence” from the year 2011 references Danroy Henry, who was killed in 2010, while “Hands Up” from 2015 reference Michael Brown, who was killed in 2014. Perhaps there would be more of a difference if this study analyzed songs of different decades instead of looking at songs within an eight-year frame. Most songs described police and Blacks as adversaries, which is to be expected; therefore, this was a consistent theme throughout the years. One interesting note is that many of the songs that featured protagonists engaged in dialogue with police officers were from 2013 (three of five songs). For example:

1. “Crooked Smile” says:

Hey officer man, we don't want nobody getting killed

Just open up that cell, let my brother out of jail

I got money for the bail now, well now

If you asking will I tell now?

Hey, hell naw, I ain't snitching 'cause

2. "Ali Bomaye" states:

Get my people out them chains nigga

I mean handcuffs, time to man up

Put my hands up? Fuck you sayin' bruh?

3. "So We Can Live" raps:

He asked me when the last time I smoke, I said a while ago

Forgive me officer, I'm stressin' and my pockets sore

Hurtin', chillin' with my dog like a fuckin' Labrador

He said he ain't with the bull: matador

Direct dialogue with police officers will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter, but the above examples show how the dialogue appears in the songs.

Further research could be done to determine why 2013 featured songs in this style of communication. Perhaps there was growing national attention or a growing push in the Black community to increase communication between Black Americans and police officers. In just the following year (2014), the United States Department of Justice announced a large grant to fund the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice in order to improve trust and communication between civilian communities and the justice system (including law enforcement officers), so perhaps this is indicative of a such a trend ("Justice Department Announces").

2015 stood out as particularly potent year for songs about conflict with law enforcement officers. This was first noticed when the word frequency count showed “murder(ed)” and “black(s)” among the top three most-used words for the year. 2015 featured the most songs that used the names of victims of police brutality or injustice system (three of five songs). All three songs also mentioned Trayvon Martin’s case for different purposes, by using either Trayvon’s name or George Zimmerman’s name:

1. “The Blacker the Berry” states:

*So why did I weep when **Trayvon Martin** was in the street?
When gang banging make me kill a nigga blacker than me?
Hypocrite!*

2. “The Pessimist” raps:

*If a killer was a nigga would niggas still really care?
'Cause niggas worser than **Zimmerman** livin' life everywhere
Niggas hopeless.*

3. “Hands Up” rhymes:

*Rest in peace Michael Brown
Cold part about it
He had his hands up...
Rest in peace **Trayvon Martin**
Cold part about it, nigga shot him 'cause
He had on black bruh (at nighttime).*

The use of victims' names will be further investigated in a later section of the chapter, but the three above examples show the prevalence of Trayvon Martin's case. Curiously, Trayvon Martin was killed in 2012, and George Zimmerman was found not-guilty in 2013, but almost all references to this case came from songs in 2015 (Botelho and Yan). There is no obvious reason why there was such a concentration in 2015.

As discussed in the first chapter, Trayvon Martin was not killed by a police officer, but his death and trial still represent the frustration and conflict experienced by Black Americans with law enforcement officers. However, the ways the songs mention Trayvon Martin do not explicitly link the death of the teen to the conflict with police officers. Instead, "The Blacker the Berry" and "The Pessimist" reference the shooting in order to bring attention to high levels of Black Americans murdering fellow Black Americans[JRS14]. Perhaps the commonality between these songs is that Zimmerman's "legal" murder of Martin is one of the most overt and harmful crimes to the Black community, and it is comparable with how detrimental Black-on-Black crime is. Differently from the aforementioned songs, "Hands Up" honors the life of Trayvon Martin and recognizes his innocence in the events leading up to his death. All three songs address other problems with police, independent from the Martin-Zimmerman case, ranging from systemic violence to killer cops.

Four of the five songs from 2015 describe the police and/or the justice system as anti-Black, meaning that they actively work to harm Black Americans. For instance:

1. "The Blacker the Berry" states:

That's what you're telling me, penitentiary would only hire me

Curse me 'til I'm dead

Church me with your fake prophesizing

That I'mma be just another slave in my head.

2. “The Pessimist” says:

A lot of black cops always clap back

And some foul white cops always on deck

Playin' race card, guarantee you'll make a blackjack.

3. “New York, New York” says:

'Cause the police killing too many blacks today.

4. “Hands Up” raps:

Police killing kids, kids killing men

Broke and a fifth of gin'll make a nigga sin

You know you planted that shit on my homeboy...

The DA fired you hot, the friends you called so that appeal get denied

I know it's hate 'cause when I won they had tears in they eyes.

In “The Blacker the Berry,” Kendrick Lamar focuses on critiquing society for being anti-Black, and he extends his charge to include law enforcement officers by mentioning the high incarceration rate of young Black males. In “The Pessimist,” Wale and J. Cole address the higher probability of being killed by a police officer if you are young and Black (“Blackjack”).⁹ In “New York, New York,” The Game explicitly accuses police

⁹ An annotation of the song on genius.com pointed out that Pusha T rapped “CNN said I’d be dead by 21/Blackjack...” in Kanye West’s song “So Appalled.” This was based on statistics that say young Black males are more likely to be killed by police than any other demographic in the United States (Howard).

officers of killing Black Americans, as if to say that police have always killed Blacks, but now it seems excessive. Finally, in “Hands Up,” Boosie Badazz discusses the excessive violence of police, and he connects law enforcement officers to the entire U.S. judicial system as he critiques their motives and intentions against Black Americans.

This 2015 trend could be a result of the high number of high-profile cases involving police officers and Black victims. In 2014, the killings of Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, John Crawford III, Dontre Hamilton, Ezell Ford, among others, by law enforcement officers were frequently in mainstream media (Heisig; Schram; Buchanan et al.; Sanchez; Izadi; Madhani; Mather et al.) These incidents occurred all around the United States, and in all cases mentioned here, except for that of Laquan McDonald, officers were not charged for the murders. The high rate of murders and injustice experienced in the Black community likely influenced the portrayals of police in the music that was produced in 2015.

When grouped by main topic

The forty songs were easily divisible into a total of eight main topics. These topics represent the main message of the songs, so each song ended up in only one group. The topics are: street life (five songs), criminal activity (six songs), Black experiences (ten songs), Black youth (two songs), having a good time (two songs), the world is cruel (four songs), the U.S. is unsafe (four songs), and success (seven songs). First and foremost, the sheer variety of topics proves that artists are incorporating mentions of law enforcement officers in any context. Artists “...detest detectives arresting us over/Weapons possessions, they was checking the Rover/Inspecting the tattoos on my

neck and shoulder,” as Nas, Damian Marley, and Stephen Marley explain in “In His Own Words”; they complain that “...they [the police] bring us no peace,” like Boosie Badazz does in “Mind of a Maniac”; and they are “Running from the law, scuffing up my Prada’s/Crack all in my draws, tryna’ make a profit” in order to get rich, like Meek Mill describes in “Polo & Shell Tops.” Artists use their music to discuss varying types of police involvement, depending on the topics of their songs. For example, Kid Cudi dislikes police in “Wild’n Cuz I’m Young” because they infringe on his ability to party:

I will never sweat for a piggy

You catch me high it’s all good no biggie.

However, Kendrick Lamar lambasts police in “Good Kid” because they harass youths:

But what am I supposed to do

When the blinking of red and blue

Flash from the top of your roof

And your dog has to say woof

And you ask “lift up your shirt”

’Cause you wonder if a tattoo

Of affiliation can make it a pleasure to put me through

Gang files, but that don’t matter

Because the matter is racial profile

I heard them chatter:

“He’s probably young but I know that he’s down”

Step on his neck as hard as your bullet proof vest

There might be a few reasons why artists place police in such a breadth of narratives. On one hand the artists could be depicting real life scenarios from their lives, and the reality is that police have shown up in all of these contexts when the artists were involved. It is also possible that the artists talk about a variety of topics based on what will sell to their audiences, and police are incorporated into the narratives for added effect. Furthermore, it is possible that the songs simply capture hip-hop's anti-establishment rhetoric and style; it is anti-establishment whether one is hanging out with friends, selling drugs, avoiding gangs, or walking down the street.

In most of the songs, no matter the main topic of the narrative being told, the police are placed as adversaries. Again, this is not surprising, given hip-hop's subcultural origins and its long history of conflict with law enforcement officers. This research was curious whether the rhetoric around police had changed since the 1980s, and it appears that what artists say about police today still harkens back to hip-hop's earlier days. N.W.A. rapped "Fuck tha police" at least eighteen times in "Fuck tha Police." This study discovered a few of the forty songs used the same phrase, whether the artists want to pay homage to N.W.A., or the phrase was the only way to express a hostile sentiment:

1. "Mind of a Maniac" rhymes:

I laugh and maintain don't switch the game [JRS15] plan

*And **fuck the police** they bring us no peace.*

2. "God Bless Amerika" states:

*Used to say **fuck the police**, now I say fuck jail*

Same shit, different air freshener.

3. “Bicken Back Being Bool” says:

Pull up on the block like what

Fuck the police, niggas better call the SWAT.

The songs do not make any explicit references to the rap group N.W.A., but the phrase “fuck the police” evokes the memory of the 1988 protest song. Regardless, hip-hop songs from 2009, 2013, and 2014 are still using the same rhetoric as a song from 1988, albeit with different messages for consumers. N.W.A. rapped about protesting the authority and violence of law enforcement officers, while Lil Boosie rapped about growing up in the streets in “Mind of a Maniac” (2009), Lil’ Wayne rapped a critique of the United States in “God Bless Amerika” (2013), and YG rapped about committing a robbery in “Bicken Back Being Bool” (2014). Although the topics clearly vary, they all make a point to clarify their disdain for police officers.

When grouped by primary or secondary roles

Attention was given to primary or secondary placement of police characters in the song narratives in order to loosely assess the intentionality behind the inclusion of law enforcement officers. The songs that featured police officers in primary roles spent significant time engaged with police throughout the duration of the song, even though they do not correlate by year, by main topics, or by direct dialogue with police. This is better seen with a few examples:

1. “Interlude” is a short form of prose explaining how and why the protagonist is pulled over by police and sent to jail. It begins:

I'm drivin', nigga as soon as I get the text we all in the car like 'ahh, yeah nigga, we out here nigga, yeah nigga! So we goin' crazy. We goin' crazy as fuck, we like super excited. Dog, ten seconds later, all I see in the back and hear is 'woop woop,' blue lights right behind me, the fuckin' undercover car, of all things...

2. "So We Can Live" is a narrative of the protagonist's daily life experiences, one of which is being pulled over by a police officer. The entire first verse of the song is dedicated to narrating how the protagonist is pulled over, what happens during the stop, and then what happens afterwards. It begins:

Momma don't work, heater don't work

Police pulled me over and said he seen weed on my shirt

I pray to the Lord and ask for forgiveness

If he popped my trunk I can get a life sentence

He came a little closer and told me that he smellin' it

3. "Genocide" is focused on highlighting the dangers of life in Compton, a city near Los Angeles that is notoriously associated with high rates of violence, crime, and gang activity. Every verse of the song discusses the violence and insecurity of living in Compton, and the chorus, which repeats three times throughout the song, calls to law enforcement officers for help:

There's the stone-cold killers in these Compton streets

One hand on the 9, all eyes on me

Murder, murder, it's murder, it's murder

Call 9-1-1, emergency

Hands up in the air for the world to see

It's murder, it's murder, murder, murder (murder)

4. “Eternal Reflection Interlude” is a poem about the violence enacted on the Black community, especially Black males, by the state and police force. The poem begins:

Soldiers march inside my mouth

Slide down my throat, crawl inside my womb

And leave a hand grenade in my son's arms

Pre-birth occupation.

You wait for them to grow up and shoot us unarmed

Dear black Madonna

How many hail Mary's?

Project holy water.

Bless these loads we carry.

Pregnant with potential but birthing silence.

Tears taste like violence

Born with middle passage anxiety

Why can't you feel God in me?

A million angels follow me

Your system don't acknowledge me.

In each of these narratives, police are part of the central focus. “Interlude” focuses on the police officer in a nonchalant manner, and the interaction between the protagonist

and the officer is not tense. “So We Can Live” has a similarly calm interaction with an officer; in fact, the artist attributes a positive characteristic to the officer because he allows the protagonist to drive away without a drug charge. “Genocide” also attributes a positive quality to law enforcement officers, acknowledging their value by calling on them for help in a war-like city. “Eternal Reflection Interlude” is more targeted toward police officers, charging them with the deaths of so many Black Americans. The variety in the topics of songs, even though they place police in the main narratives, proves that there is a notable degree of creativity and flexibility associated with the portrayal of law enforcement officers. Although police and Black Americans are often framed as adversaries in the narratives, the characterization of police does vary, even in songs that talk the most about them.

Most of the songs included in this study mention police as secondary characters, which means the police are not the major focus of the narrative. Interpreting the use of police as secondary characters, as compared to how they were used as primary characters, is not useful because 75% of the songs chosen for the study featured officers in secondary roles. If nothing else, it can be said that it is more common for mainstream hip-hop songs to place officers as secondary characters. This is likely because it is easier to place officers in the plot of a more-sellable narrative if the mention is brief. Songs utilizing police as secondary characters use some of the same narratives that primary ones do. In the previous paragraph, it was mentioned that “Eternal Reflection Interlude” included police as a part of the system that enacts violence on Blacks. Similarly, “Gorgeous”

connects police officers to a greater systemic problem, but the police become one of many secondary features:

Penitentiary chances, the Devil dances

And eventually answers to the call of Autumn

All of them fallin' for the love of ballin'

Got caught with 30 rocks, the cop look like Alec Baldwin

Inter-century anthems based off inner city tantrums

Based off the way we was branded

Face it, Jerome get more time than Brandon

And at the airport they check all through my bag

And tell me that it's random

“Gorgeous” differs from “Eternal Reflection Interlude” because this mention of police was brief in the first verse (the line about Alec Baldwin), and then the rest of the verse and the rest of the song become a critique of how the justice system and greater society perpetuate anti-Black racism:

Malcolm West had the whole nation standing at attention

As long as I'm in Polo's smilin' they think they got me

But they would try to crack me if they ever see a black me.

The songs with police in secondary roles also connect officers to the prison systems, as is the case in “New York, New York” and “New Slaves”:

1. “New York, New York” states:

And it get cold in the hood, put your ice away

*They locked Rick Ross up and they ain't give him no bail
But a cracker shoot a whole church up and it's "Oh well"*

2. "New Slaves" says:

*Meanwhile the DEA
Teamed up with the CCA
They tryna lock niggas up
They tryna make new slaves
See that's that private owned prison*

Both songs charge the police with colluding with other apparatuses of the justice system for anti-Black and/or pro-White intentions. Songs that place police in secondary positions also mention police in the context of every-day activities, like getting in the way of money-making ventures or success, as Rick Ross describes in "Crocodile Python":

*Beat twenty cases like John Gotti
White man fear a nigga with a free mind
And if you disagree, tell him that he can free mine
Took my Rolex and gave me an ankle monitor
So many angles, these haters'll start popping up*

There are songs that place police among other social problems faced by Black Americans, like in "Hold you Down":

*But niggas got me feelin' I ain't black enough to go to church
Culture shock at barber shops 'cause I ain't hood enough
We all look the same to the cops, ain't that good enough?*

The black experience is blackened serious

'Cause being black, my experience, is no one hearin' us

White kids get to wear whatever hat they want

When it comes to black kids, one size fits all.

Furthermore, there are a few songs that list police officers as secondary characters because they are one of many other dire conflicts faced by Blacks. For instance, in “Cold Outside,” rappers Raekwon and Ghostface Killah discuss the dangers of growing up in urban streets, and they briefly mention police among the list of dangers:

Blood stinking fiends, machine guns, cannons and teams

Baking sodas, gold Revolvers and gophers

Land in every project, sex, lies, murderous reps

Back to cassettes, vets dying on steps

What's really taking place in them hoods?

...They found a two-year-old, strangled to death

With a “Love Daddy” shirt on in a bag on the top of the steps

Police blowing niggas, NARCs and judges

Me and son had beef, I had to murk him, we supposed to be brothers

Another lesson learned from looking at the common placement of police as secondary characters in mainstream hip-hop is the flexibility available in the music genre to place police in narratives.

When grouped by types of interactions

The complexity of police characters grows when looking at the songs primarily based on the interactions between the protagonists and police. Three different groups appear regarding race: anti-Black police officers, police racial profiling, and addressing police based on their race.

One quarter of the songs from the data set carried intentional messages about anti-Black police officers. Sometimes the artists implied this by describing police as a part of an anti-Black system. Other songs explicitly portray the police as anti-Black, as is the case with “New National Anthem” and “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”:

1. “New National Anthem” raps:

I was raised in a decade of hate young nigga

Always dodging polices because they hate young niggas

And we hate them, too, 38 in him shoe...

2. “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane” says:

Punk-ass cops, them crackers want us with our black off

Thug life nigga, since '96 I wanted to gang bang...

And still, other songs portray police as part of a system that is both anti-Black and pro-White, which is not necessarily implied just by being anti-Black; this is consistent with a trend of racial minorities seeing all police as pro-White, noted by Peek et al.¹⁰ Sometimes artists imply police officers are pro-White by describing the officers as only White and explaining that being Black is criminalized, like in the song “Groovy

¹⁰ See page 6

Tony/Eddie Kane.” However, there are songs that make more overt pro-White charges, like “New York, New York” and “New National Anthem.” Both songs connect police to White-favoring initiatives practiced by the criminal justice system:

1. “New York, New York” addresses the sympathy that White violent offenders receive in a pro-White system with notable disdain. The artist references the case of Dylann Roof who was found guilty for murdering nine Black members of a church in South Carolina in 2015 (Robles and Stewart):

They locked Rick Ross up and they ain't give him no bail

But a cracker shoot a whole church up and it's "Oh well"

Oh well, oh well

Hang him with a confederate flag in his cell

Let him sit there and rot 'til his body turns to bones

2. “New National Anthem” extrapolates the argument to explain how George Zimmerman (identified by the line “I guess it’s because his dad was a judge in the city”) was found innocent even though he murdered Trayvon Martin because the racist justice system, consistent with what Aya deLeon described¹¹:

Trayvon in a hoodie, walking through the neighborhood, he

Didn't do shit to buddy, he didn't have to die, did he?

I guess it's because his dad was a judge in the city

They didn't want him in the pen with the thugs that could get him

A jury of his peers said all was forgiven

¹¹ See pages 2-3

There were also many songs, that address how the police racially profile Black Americans. The racial profiling occurred in a variety of narratives, perhaps as a way to share with the listeners that it is an every-day issue for all Blacks, especially young Black males. For instance:

1. “We Will Rob You” says:

*Well it was late one night, walking through the park
With my leathered-down coat and Wallabee Clarks
Getting my step on, big shit, big six, big wrist
So much excitement in the air, I was crisp...
Saw the D's fly by, in a New Yorker, yup, tints and shit
Know I seen 'em, Max loaded, jog right back to the car
They spun around again and blast they shits...
Nice and slow, two hoodies on and a golden pit
Nigga has a white eye, they both blacked down
What's the clown shit for? The dog jumped in the whip
It was a trained one, wops pointed at me (yo, nigga, freeze).*

2. “In His Own Words” states:

*I detest detectives arresting us over
Weapons possession, they was checking the Rover
Inspecting the tattoos on my neck and shoulder...*

3. “Ali Bomaye” raps:

Get my people out them chains, nigga

I mean handcuffs, time to man up
Put my hands up? Fuck you sayin', bruh
'Cause I'm a black man, in a Phantom
Or is it 'cause my windows tinted?

Each song mentioned above suggests racial profiling is at play in different contexts. In the first, the protagonist is walking down the street, dressed up, and the police approach. Although the artist does not specifically use the word “profile,” how he tells the tale indicates he was doing nothing wrong when the police came up to him. The second song alludes to the regular practice of police officers checking young Black males for gang tattoos, a practice also referenced in the song “Good Kid”:

'Cause you wonder if a tattoo
Of affiliation can make it a pleasure to put me through
Gang files, but that don't matter
Because the matter is racial profile

The third song, “Ali Bomaye,” describes a common profiling experience of being pulled over by police officers for unclear motives; the protagonist challenges the intentions of the police, believing that they are suspicious of a Black man with a nice car.

The last category that explicitly involves race includes songs that identify police officers by their race. All but one song indicated that when the artists talk of police, they mean White police. For example:

1. “Gorgeous” says:

Got caught with 30 rocks, the cop look like Alec Baldwin

2. “Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane” states:

Punk-ass cops, them crackers want us with our black off

Both songs present police officers in a way that suggests that they are always White.

“The Pessimist” was the only song out of the data set that intentionally mentioned Black police officers:

A lot of black cops always clap back

And some foul white cops always on deck

Playin’ race card, guarantee you’ll make blackjack

As discussed earlier in the chapter, these three lines of “The Pessimist” say young Black males are more likely to die from police officers than any other demographic. The first two lines charge Black and White police officers, alike, for killing young Black males; Wale and J. Cole explain the Black community is no safer with Black cops, even though one should assume things would be better. This sentiment is echoed in Leonard Moore’s case study of New Orleans when Black cops were included in the police force, but police brutality in the Black community worsened (14). The same sentiment is found in older hip-hop songs, too, like KRS-One’s song “Black Cop” from 1993. “Black cop” includes feelings of betrayal, beginning:

Black cop! Black cop, black cop, black cop

Stop shootin’ black people, we all gonna drop

You don’t even get, paid a whole lot

So take your M-60 and put it ‘pon lock!

Take your four-five and you put it ‘pon lock!

Lookin' for your people when you walk down a block

In this study, race is an important discussion in the music lyrics. Almost all artists overtly presented themselves as members of the Black community, and almost half of the songs from the data set (eighteen) mentioned race and police together. This pattern indicates that much of the Black-versus-police conflict in mainstream hip-hop takes the form of Black-versus-White conflict.

Only six songs overtly mentioned police officers using direct violence. Most of these songs (four total) positioned police officers as killers. For example, the first verse of “Murder to Excellence” begins:

This is to the memory of Danroy Henry

Too much enemy fire to catch a friendly

Kanye West and Jay Z mention Danroy Henry, a young Black victim shot by a police officer in 2010, and then they proceed to label the police as enemies (“enemy fire”), while acknowledging the Black community as the friendlies who often murder their own community members (“catch a friendly”).

There are two songs that mention the direct violence of police in the form of excessive force, like in “Dear God 2.0”:

Terrorist, crime sprees, assaults, and robberies

Cops yellin' “stop, freeze”

Shoot him before he try to leave

This was the only song of the six that did not clearly state that the police were using violence on a Black person. Who the police address with “stop, freeze” in “Dear God

2.0” is left intentionally ambiguous, while in “Good Kid,” the police step on the young Black male protagonist’s neck.

It is surprising not to see a correlation between the years of the songs that mention direct violence from police. Regardless, whether the direct violence is literal like the death of Danroy Henry, or figurative like the young boy assaulted in “Good Kid,” mainstream hip-hop protagonists assume observational positions to share the frustrations, fear, and disappointment in police actions. The songs’ abilities to narrate first-person perspectives add validity to their descriptions of the violence.

It is also surprising to find frequent messages about the police watching neighborhood streets or specific individuals. Eight songs described the police watching, lurking, or always present when they were not wanted around. For instance:

1. “Swishas and Erb” says:

Feds takin’ pictures so the cameras go click

And video rollin’ while I’m holdin’ my dick

They follow me around like they doin’ they job

But while you watchin’ me how many people getting’ robbed?

2. “How Life Changed” states:

I remember bruh

Standing out, ten of us

Flip a bird, split it up

Antenna stickin’ up

For crooked cop patrollin’

There was no correlation between the years of the eight songs, which indicates that this is a common, long-experienced phenomenon for many Black Americans. These songs stand in stark contrast to songs that imply police are never around in the protagonists' neighborhoods, such as "Crooked Smile":

If you asking will I tell now?

Hey, hell naw, I ain't snitching 'cause

Man, they get them niggas stitches now

If you was around, then you wouldn't need a witness now

It is not surprising that six of the forty songs connected police to greater systemic issues in the United States because police are an extension of political and judicial decisions. One example appears in "New National Anthem":

Always dodging polices because they hate young niggas

And we hate them too, 38 in him shoe

All the changes the system will take him through

He ain't a killer but he will if you make him do it

Homicide he'll ride, they'll put him on trial

Let him have a life sentence then do it with a smile

The song insinuates that the United States legal system turns youth into killers, and that the decision-makers do not care about the fate of young Black men. Police are implicated alongside the rest of the legal system in this context.

It was an unexpected and curious discovery that there were four songs that projected positive views of police officers:

1. “Get It Get It” says:

Turn right, head left, street games scrams

Call the cops oc, like we need a ref

2. “Homicide” states:

I grew up ‘round a bunch of monsters

Call that pressure on ya

Be so scared for ya life

You call the police on ya

3. “So We Can Live” raps:

The officer got a call so he was needed

And he told me to slow it down

And I told him please believe it

4. “Genocide” says:

Murder, murder, it’s murder, it’s murder

Call 9-1-1, emergency

Hands up in the air for the world to see

It’s murder, it’s murder, murder, murder (murder)

Three of these songs are calling out to police for their help because the violence within their own communities is out of hand. “So We Can Live,” however, associates unspoken characteristics like “understanding” and “lenient” with police officers after the protagonist narrates that the officer lets him go even though he possesses marijuana. These positions of police contrast with the typically negative characteristics of police in

hip-hop music. The songs disprove expectations that all hip-hop music is antagonistic toward law enforcement officers.

Finally, the few instances (five total) of direct dialogue with police officers were interesting because they proved an important point made by positioning theory: not everyone has “equal access to the local repertoire of meaningful actions,” resulting in some people being “more advantageously positioned than others (Harré and Slocum, 124). In the context of hip-hop music, the artists are more advantageously positioned because they control the narrative presented to consumers. The direct dialogues with police are one such consequence of the artists’ positioning. Four out of the five songs feature the protagonists speaking and responding to police officers without showing the words of the officers. “The Good, the Bad, the Ugly” is a song that is a long one-sided dialogue of the protagonist speaking to officers interrogating him:

Yo, you can keep asking them fuckin questions all fuckin’ day man

I told you what- I told you what the fuck happened, man

Told your partner the same thing, man,

How long a nigga gotta stay here? (Raggedy-ass precinct)

...I gotta stay in this muthafucka until I confess?

Shit, y’all bitches better get some rest

’Cause it’ll be a cold day in Miami

Before I snitch on myself or the hood, you understand me?

It is easy-enough to imagine what the police officers are saying based on the comments of the protagonists, but police do not have a voice in this narrative. This can be indicative

of the hip-hop narrative not being the appropriate space for police to have agency. “So We Can Live” was the only song that features direct dialogue with some words of the police officer:

I said “I rolled one up, I won’t insult your intelligence

But I threw it out the window half a mile ago”

He asked me when the last time I smoke, I said a while ago

Even in this case, the artist supplies the officer’s dialogue indirectly. He prefaces the police officer’s responses with “he said” and “he asked,” and the police officer does not have the agency to speak for himself.

When there are victims

This study expected many victim names to appear in mainstream hip-hop songs, but names are only referenced in five songs. Trayvon Martin’s name was used most frequently (four of five songs). Only three names of victims of police shootings were given: Danroy Henry, Michael Brown, and Fred Hampton. Two additional songs reference victims by using phrases associated with the victims’ deaths: “hands up” and “I can’t breathe.” Both phrases apply to victims of police shootings, totaling four songs that featured the mention of victims killed by police.

It is unclear why mainstream hip-hop songs have not referenced more victims. It could be a result of the data collection method used by this research because not all songs released as singles end up in albums. There are many tribute songs for victims of police shootings, like those released after the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, that are

not part of full albums. A useful follow-up study could exclusively research tribute songs and the narratives they tell about police violence.

Positioning Theory

This section will restate positioning theory, and then it will demonstrate how positioning theory explains what has been observed in the music lyrics. The original research question asks: *How has mainstream hip-hop music positioned law enforcement officers for the past eight years, since the murder of Oscar Grant in 2009?*

Positioning theory claims that positions are sets of rights and duties that determine socially possible behaviors for each actor (Harré and Moghaddam, 5). Positions are social placements, and they can apply to individuals, groups, institutions, nations, and more (Harré and Moghaddam, 5). Positions are relative, so anytime an actor is positioned by another, one is simultaneously positioned; as a result, certain scenarios “may look far more ‘designed’ by those who benefit from the positioning,” (Harré and Moghaddam, 7). Actors can also reposition themselves or reject positions imposed by other parties (Harré and Moghaddam, 7).

Positioning theory deals with assigning meaning to actions, so under this premise, this study interpreted actions and roles of Black protagonists and police officers in the lyrical narratives (Harré and Slocum, 124). The research began by looking at the story line of the narratives (pinpointing the main topic of each song) in order to evaluate the overall expectations of Black characters and police characters (Harré and Moghaddam, 9). In most cases, an obvious adversarial relationship is present because the lifestyles of the protagonists are contrary to the role of police officers. For example, in “Don’t Worry

'Bout It" the protagonist's criminal lifestyle is oppositional to police, who are tasked with ending criminal behavior. Other examples of the adversarial relationship appeared in songs like "Gorgeous" because the protagonist defines Black culture as disliked and unwanted in mainstream America; police, as the protectors of the status quo, are positioned as adversaries because they are presumed to be against Black culture, too.

Because the artists control the narratives of the songs, they are in a more "advantageous" position to control their positioning and that of the police officers (Harré and Slocum, 124). Resisting a position "is a form of metapositioning," and this is what some artists did for themselves and/or the Black community (Harré and Moghaddam, 7). Some songs, like "The Blacker the Berry" reject the negative connotation associated with "Blackness," and introduced a positive one instead. In other songs, like "Rich is Gangsta," the artist chooses to reposition his criminal activity as just another economic opportunity, rather than an immoral act against society. By repositioning themselves, the protagonists of the narratives are always in the right. This is appropriately explained by positioning theory because actors usually try to give themselves favorable positions (Parrott, 31). Positively positioned protagonists are contrasted with often negatively positioned police, because positions are always relative.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the positioning of law enforcement officers and Black protagonists in the lyrics of the songs presented in the previous chapter. The chapter began by interpreting what the lyrics said about the Black protagonists, and then it interpreted messages about police officers in a variety of scenarios. The chapter finished

by returning to positioning theory to make sense of the overall positions of Blacks and law enforcement officers.

The next chapter will conclude the study by summarizing important lessons from the research, addressing limitations of the study, and offering recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this research project was to connect hip-hop music to the conflict between police and Black Americans. It intended to explore messages in contemporary hip-hop in order to assess what is said about law enforcement officers. Studying hip-hop is growing in popularity, but there are very few studies currently using the medium as a source from which messages are extracted. This study could serve as a starting point for future research because each of the preliminary findings could branch into many in-depth studies of their own.

This report set the foundation for the research by providing the contemporary and historical context of the conflict between Black Americans and police officers, and then it introduced hip-hop as an art form and viable unit of study. This research treated mainstream hip-hop songs as narratives because it was interested in the types of messages the artists share about law enforcement officers. Mainstream songs were chosen for their popularity and large consumer audience, which increases the relevance of the study.

Positioning theory supported the project as a tool used to analyze and interpret the messages in each song. Positioning theory accounted for how police and Black protagonists were positioned in the music lyrics, thereby answering the original research question. Analyzing the songs based on this theory allowed for quick categorizations of themes found in the research, which made the lessons of the study clear and valuable.

This chapter will conclude the research project by clarifying the lessons learned from the research, addressing the limitations of the study, and proposing ideas for future research.

Lessons Learned

The results of this study show that the relationship between police officers and Black Americans is plagued by deep distrust by the Black community. Distrust takes many forms in the music: the officers constantly watch and follow people, they do more harm than good in communities, and they neither police effectively nor do they serve citizens. Steve Martinot describes racial profiling as paradoxical to policing because “[i]n legitimate law enforcement, when a crime is committed the police investigate to find and arrest a suspect,” but racial profiling means the “police commit an act of suspicion toward a person and then investigate whether a crime can be attached to that suspect,” (65-66). Many song lyrics in the data set describe officers racially profiling Black citizens, thereby negating their responsibility to protect and serve all citizens indiscriminately.

Many of the songs describe a complicated power dynamic between Black Americans and law enforcement officers because the officers carry legal power but Blacks are depicted as street-smart, capable, ambitious, and proud characters. The value of Black culture (and life) is expressed by the artists of the songs, and it is presented in a way that suggests that law enforcement officers do not recognize or understand this value. The distrust, power-dynamics, and cultural worth experienced by the Black community indicate severe gaps in communication and a lack of empathy between officers and citizens. Based on the lyrics, Black artists assess police officers’ daily

actions to determine their overall intentions, rather than evaluating the officers based on political stances, long-term goals, etc. Consequently, it seems that for a positive relationship to form between police and the Black community, day-to-day interactions between the parties must change. What the Black community experiences as police stalking, harassment, racial profiling, etc. on any given day at any given moment likely needs to change before the parties effectively reconcile.

The research question asked: *How has mainstream hip-hop music positioned law enforcement officers for the past eight years, since the murder of Oscar Grant in 2009?*

To answer this question directly, between the years 2009 and 2016, it seems that mainstream hip-hop artists often depicted police officers as anti-Black and occasionally pro-White, meaning that police actively work to harm Black Americans while working to benefit White Americans. It also seems that police are most often mentioned in the context of race (whether it be racial profiling, institutional racism, or societal racism) in mainstream hip-hop songs, making the conflict between law enforcement officers and Black Americans unsurprisingly racially charged. This indicates that the relationship between police officers and Blacks is largely understood within the context of race relations in the Black community. Artists typically did not address Black cops, but rather mostly implied police are White. This indicates that either Black cops are rarely seen by the protagonists, their presence is ignored, or they are deemed insignificant to the political agenda of the songs. In general, however, police officers are placed in a wide variety of narratives, which indicates that the artists, like many other Black Americans,

engage with police (and racially-motivated conflict) in many contexts: walking down the street, being watched, being pulled over, at a social gathering, etc.

This research has also found that between 2009 and 2016, the lyrical descriptions of the conflict with police was stagnant. How interactions and conflict were described in 2009 seemed very similar to how they were narrated in 2016. It is likely that the rhetoric about the conflict has not changed much since the 1980s, but that is a question for another research project. In general, there were not many mainstream songs dedicated to talking only about police because most of the songs narrate about other events and add police as characters in those events. However, there seemed to be a few artists that had direct dialogue with law enforcement officers through their songs. Mainstream hip-hop music is not necessarily the space for meaningful dialogue between parties in conflict, but it does serve as a venue to air the grievances of one party. Furthermore, it merits recognition that out of only forty songs used for this research, some songs saw positive values in police officers. This indicates that law enforcement officers provide important services needed by Black Americans.

Because positioning is relative, and by the artists positioning police they inherently position themselves, it was useful to assess the placement of the Black protagonist. The artists positioned themselves as Black, hood, and socially conscious people, and they exemplified how even mainstream hip-hop music is responsive to community protests against police violence. The names of victims of police brutality were not used often, which was surprising. Of all the victims mentioned, Trayvon Martin's case was mentioned most frequently as a way of reflecting on the social and

systemic injustice of his death. It is not clear why his case appeared more frequently than other high-profile cases that received prolonged media attention (like Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri).

Limitations of the Study

Although the songs were useful narratives to analyze, this study was limited by its inability to address gender dynamics, non-mainstream hip-hop music, and differentiated terms for law enforcement officers.

The hip-hop music genre has a notorious reputation for oversexualizing women, for using sexually abusive language, and generally for being a market with very few female artists (Rose, 15-16). There have been well-known female rappers and hip-hop artists, from the genre's inception through present day. Tricia Rose argues that although there were fewer women than men involved, female artists were a crucial element to the development of hip-hop even before The Sugarhill Gang turned hip-hop into pop music; artists like the Funky Four Plus One More, Sequence, and Salt 'N' Pepa also had success as male-female or all-female groups (Rose, 26, 57). The involvement of female artists has continued for the proceeding decades—among many well-known female rappers, Queen Latifah, Lauryn Hill, Lil' Kim, Eve, Missy Elliot, and Nicki Minaj have gained global fame. However, despite the presence of women in hip-hop music, the genre has remained male-dominated, which has greatly influenced the content of much hip-hop and rap music. This trend affected this study because there were no female artists in the final data set of forty songs, except for one female poet. Only two female rappers were listed in the eight years of Billboard's top-selling albums: Nicki Minaj and Iggy Azalea. Iggy Azalea

was automatically discounted from the study because she is not Black. Nicki Minaj had a few top-selling albums through the years, but none of the songs were useful for the study.

Consequently, this research only assessed the male perspective of police-related conflict in hip-hop music, severely limiting the scope of the study. Tricia Rose supports the claim that female rappers “rarely address police brutality or media coverage of rap music,” because they focus more on female identity, social and political obstacles, and “the sexist character of black heterosexual relations,” (105). This claim is verified by the data collected and analyzed for this study. However, Rose continues to explain that “race is a commonly shared category of oppression,” so even if it is communicated from a male perspective, the opinion can “speak both to black female and black male experiences of discrimination and oppression,” (105). While young Black males are cited as the demographic most likely to die from police killings, the effects of police brutality on Black mothers or Black female victims should not be discounted (Swaine and McCarthy). The frequent connection between police brutality and racial conflict further validates Rose’s claim that a male perspective on the matter is still an accurate and valuable opinion.

The decision to use mainstream music was another limitation of this study. Mainstream music is often assumed to be very superficial because artists are more concerned with selling to a market than with the meaningful messages of their songs. This study decided to proceed with mainstream hip-hop from an exploratory perspective—does the mainstream content still relay meaningful messages about police-related conflict? There are many relevant songs that could have been useful additions to

the study, but they were not included on Billboard's top-selling charts. For example, Run the Jewels is a well-known, but less-mainstream, hip-hop group that has a lot of music about law enforcement officers. One song, "Close Your Eyes (And Count to Fuck)" begins:

Fashion slave, you protestin' to get in a fuckin' look book

Everything I scribble's like an anarchist's cookbook

(Look good, posin' in the centerfold of Crook Book)

Black on black on black with the ski mask, that is my crook look

How you like my stylin', bruh? Ain't nobody smilin', bruh

'Bout to turn this mothafucka up like Riker's Island, bruh

Where my thuggers and my cripers and my blooders and my brothers?

When you niggas gon' unite and kill the police, mothafuckas?

Or take over a jail, give them COs hell

The burnin' of the sulfur, goddamn I love the smell

Another useful song to analyze is "PohLease" by rapper KAMAU. The song was released in 2016, and it is full of direct messages about police and Black Americans:

As a Black person in America

When you see the police

Say a little prayer to the Shepherd,

Who let wolves guard the sheep?

[Chorus x2]

Who police the police(Who police the police)?

Who police the police(Who police the police)?

Who police the police(Who police the police),

When they get out of line?

[Post Chorus]

Are they gon' have to kill somebody

To get this revolution started

[Verse 1]

It's been a while since the KuKlux

Looked like the KuKlux

You ain't gotta glue clues

As common as glucose

To glimpse them a blue cloak

Welcome to America

The new coke

A cola coated with a bit of codeine

Cope with or decode it

Children of the corner

Get no dosage from the club

Club full of killers

Killing cubs just because

Color is a credible cause...

Choosing songs based on top-selling albums also inhibited the inclusion of useful singles or re-mixes could not be included in the study. For example, the original version of the song “THat Part” by ScHoolboy Q featuring Kanye West was up for consideration for the study, but it was not selected as one of the forty songs because the police content was not useful. The “THat Part” remix by Black Hippy did not end up in the top-selling album, but it would have been a welcomed addition to the study because ScHoolboy Q ends the song by referencing Alton Sterling, another victim controversially murdered by police in 2016 (Almasy et al.):

Enemies gotta bob and weave

Gangbangin' like we stand for somethin'

When Alton Sterling getting' killed for nothin'

Two cowards in the car, they're just there to film

Sayin' Black Lives Matter should've died with him

Wrong nigga in your hood, you gon' ride on him

White nigga with a badge, you gon' let that slide?

Tell me how they sent that footage off and slept that night

I feel bad that my daughter gotta live this life

I'll die for my daughter, gotta fight this fight

Put a Blank Face on, nigga let that drop

That, that part.

A third limitation of this research project was not accounting for different mentions of law enforcement officers, whether it be “police,” or “feds,” or other types of

law enforcement. This study used the terms “police officer” and “law enforcement officer” interchangeably and did not assess for how the songs used the words “police” or “feds.” In general, it seemed like some artists used the word “feds” and others used “cop,” “popo,” etc., but all references carried similar messages about law enforcement officers. This did not inhibit the research in any way, but it did perpetuate a one-dimensional portrayal of law enforcement officers.

There were a few limitations, as well as benefits, to being the researcher for this project. On one hand, being a Black American and growing up with hip-hop music were valuable assets to conducting this research. On the other hand, there was only one person’s interpretation used for the songs for the study. Interpreting music, especially heavily metaphorical hip-hop music, is a subjective practice, and the research could have benefitted from having at least one more perspective.

Future Research

All the limitations mentioned in the previous section could be starting points for further research. In general, this project (without considering its limitations) is the starting point for many potential research projects. One path to continue researching the same question used for this study would be to assess more songs from each year. Using more than five songs from each year could expand the sources used to retrieve mainstream songs. It could allow for the inclusion of more female rappers, and it could also be a useful way to assess trends in police portrayals throughout the years. Another way to answer a similar research question would be to only look at tribute songs dedicated to victims of police brutality. This method could lead to an inclusion of other

traditionally Black genres of music, like R&B, which would also include more female artists.

A different medium to research could be hip-hop music videos. There are many hip-hop songs that might not have strong lyrical messages about police officers, but the music videos do. For example, the music video for rapper Waka Flocka Flame's song "Bustin' at 'Em" begins with a voiceover of a Black police officer (*Bustin' At 'Em*). The officer laments the criminal gangbanging of many young Black men, and says he is giving up on them; the video then shows the officer arresting a young Black man. Unfortunately, this introduction is not part of the original song recording, so the only way to analyze its message would be through a study of music videos. Some songs have strong lyrical messages about police officers accompanied music videos that match the intensity. One such example is the previously-mentioned song "Close Your Eyes (And Count to Fuck)" by Run the Jewels featuring Zack de la Rocha. The music video is almost five minutes long, and it begins by showing a young Black man breathing heavily on his bed, then the camera cuts to an exhausted police officer on a neighborhood street (Rojas). The entire video depicts the battered young man running from the police officer, and frequently the two engage in a physical struggle. Tricia Rose recognized the importance of hip-hop music videos in the 1990s, especially for the narratives they share (Rose, 9). A music video study could produce unique results that might not be discovered through a lyrical study.

Finally, another related concept for future study could be to research representations and positions of Black police officers in hip-hop narratives. The Black

officer has been the subject of hip-hop discussion for many decades. KRS-One released a song called “Black Cop” in 1993, and Waka Flocka Flame’s music video for “Bustin’ at ‘Em,” released in 2010, begins by focusing on a Black police officer. Rapper Killer Mike grew up with a father employed as a police officer, released a song in 2012 titled “Don’t Die.” (Tardio). It begins with a voiceover of civil rights activist Dick Gregory:

How come...with the thousands of black cops in America...you ain't never picked up the paper, turned on the TV, or the news... and seen white folk crying...because this black cop...shot my loved one in the back of the head... 'cause he thought the cellphone was a gun. How come you don't see that?...You think black cops is...more spiritual? You think better qualified? Nah...They got enough sense to know that white folks ain't going to tolerate it...And the only reason they do to us what they do 'cause you tolerate it. Ok, I'm not telling you don't chastise these young men! But I ain't see you chastise the police!

A discussion of Black officers would be especially useful and timely now because on 15 July 2017 a young, White, and unarmed Australian woman was killed by a Black Somali police officer in Minnesota, and the incident has become the latest high-profile police brutality case (Yan et al.)

Hip-hop music has been a useful source of information about perceptions of police officers. It is a constantly-adapting genre, and it is responsive to social and political events, so it will likely continue to be a viable source for future study.

APPENDIX

“Ali Bomaye”

The Game, ft. 2 Chainz & Rick Ross

[Intro - Game:]

Get my people out them chains, nigga

I mean handcuffs, time to man up

Put my hands up? Fuck you sayin' bruh?

'Cause I'm a black man, in a Phantom

Or is it 'cause my windows tinted?

Car cost 300 thou' and I blow Indo in it

You mad 'cause your daughter fuck with me on spring break

Well, I'mma fuck her 'til the springs break

[Verse 1 - 2 Chainz:]

Yeah, roll another one 'cause I'm winning

In my four door looking real photogenic

Gentleman attire, in threads that won't expire

I'm in a class of my own, my teacher got fired

Money getting long, pussy rate keep rising

Versace outfit cost me 3,000
From the P houses, did it from the wee hours
Selling that chicken, no lemon pepper, no sweet and sour
First you get the power, then you get respect
I'm getting so much money I can buy ya bitch
Take it how you wanna, if you wanna take it
I like clubs where all the women working naked
Fell in love with a waitress what the fuck I'm thinking
Bought that ho a ring, it was for her pinky
Uhn, that's pimpin' that's slick
Got a bottle of cologne that cost more than your rent

[Verse 2 - Game:]

Fuck y'all mad at me for?
Got a black card, and a black phantom
With a white bitch in Idaho, I do the same thing in (Montana)
Got a thick bitch in Atlanta, got a redbone in the Chi
Got two chains, they two-tone, two hundred racks, no lie (true)

[Hook - Game]

Ali Bomaye! Ali Bomaye!
I'm 'bout to rumble in the jungle in these new Kanye's
Ali Bomaye! Ali Bomaye!

My lawyer threw them gloves on and beat another case

[Verse 3 - Game:]

Fuck y'all mad at me for, 'cause my belt got two G's on it?

Her bag got two C's on it?

My daughter's stroller got D's on it?

Free Big Meech, Free Boosie and C-Murder

Like New Orleans, like Baltimore

Come to Compton you'll see murders

And my AR see murders, that's beef, nigga, no burgers

I'm insane and you Usain, nigga better turn on them burners

Got coke swimming in that glass jar

Bitch, go turn on them burners

Got dope to sell in this hotel, no half price, no retail

You a bitch nigga, no female, I smack niggas, Sprewell

I'm on the block like D 12, I got the white, no D-12

Like a little nigga in Africa, I was born toting that K

And that's real shit, no Will Smith, and no Nona Gaye

But they yellin'...

[Hook - Game:]

Ali Bomaye! Ali Bomaye!

Thank God that a nigga seen another day

Ali Bomaye! Ali Bomaye!

Got a chopper and a bottle fuck it let 'em spray

[Verse 4 - Rick Ross:]

I take my case to trial, hire the Dream Team

Robbie Kardashian, Johnnie Cochran, I seen things

I dream big, I think sharp

Inhale smoke, Hawaiian tree bark

Humble yourself, you not a G, keep it one with yourself

Run to niggas for help, favors I keep one on the shelf

I got rifles with lasers, swing it just like the majors

Hit you right above navel, now you swimming in pavement

Gold medals on my neck, I call it Michael Phelps

Hoes settling for less, I call 'em bottom shelf

Niggas tough on them blogs and never did nothing at all

On the road to the riches, bitches not tagging along

[Verse 5 - Game:]

Unless it's ass in a thong, hit that ass and I'm gone

Disrespect my nigga Boss and I'm flashing the chrome

I'm waving the TEC, Tity spraying the MAC

Extendos in the back, gonna lap
Got a bitch that look like Laila Ali sitting in my lap
Got a call from Skateboard, pick 'em up at Lax
Speaking skateboards, where Tune at?
Fuck with him, I'll break a skateboard on a nigga back
2 Chainz!

[Verse 6 - 2 Chainz:]

Skateboard on a nigga track
No lie, "No Lie" already got a plaque
Mama got a house, daughter got accounts
Just to think a nigga like me started with a ounce
Bad bitches and D-boys, we bring 'em out
If them niggas pussy, we douche 'em, we clean 'em out
This the voice of ghetto intelligence
If you got work, go to work, don't work at your residence

[Verse 7 - Game:]

...For presidents
Word to Muhammad, that triple beam is heaven-sent
Riding through the jungles in that mothafuckin' elephant
That's a gray ghost, with the ears on it

Swimming through the hood like it got fins on it (Tell 'em!)

You know I got that work on the foreman grill

Weigh the mothafuckas in, made another mill'

Got a nigga feeling like Cassius Clay

Thrilla in Manilla, nigga want it whip his ass today

[Hook - Game:]

Ali Bomaye! Ali Bomaye!

Thank God that a nigga seen another day

Ali Bomaye! Ali Bomaye!

Got a chopper and a bottle fuck it let 'em spray

“Bicken Back Being Bool”

YG

[Intro]

It's that mothafuckin' gangsta shit, nigga

[Hook]

I'm just bicken back being bool

I'm just bicken back being bool

I'm just bicken back being bool

I'm just bicken back being bool

I'm just bicken back, bicken back, bicken back, bicken back being bool

I'm just bicken back, bicken back, bicken back, bicken back being bool

[Verse 1]

Pull up on the block like “What!”

Fuck the police, niggas better call the SWAT

I ain't never played with the pot

I was in your house trying to find a spot to extend my knots

I went to jail for a flock, came home with a strike

You went to jail as a bitch, came home as a dyke

Nigga, yikes! I don't play that shit

Wifey like SEGA, I don't play that bitch

I'm a real Brompton nigga with a motherfucking attitude

Walk up in the spot, you would think that a nigga mad at you
I was on the block chilling, homies, what's the mission?
Came back in a quickness, hoping there wasn't no witness
And they came back shooting, my homies went back shooting
Ain't nobody hittin' nothing, man this shit getting stupid
And my homies with the news, so they grabbed that tool
This all started from a day of niggas bicken back being bool

[Hook]

I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back, bicken back, bicken back, bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back, bicken back, bicken back, bicken back being bool

[Verse 2]

Verse 2, the sun come down
You know when the sun come down the guns come out
Click clack, bow bow, bow bow bow bow bow
I used to rob niggas, that's probably why they try to rob my style
And karma is a motherfucking biatch

You got your homie in jail, you sniatch
All in the court telling the judge who it is
Like a bitch when you get to the pen, niggas on your wig
Niggas be lurking, bitches be slurping
Niggas got caught up on them Nextel's chirpin
It's a must in the county, I ain't have no pagers
My bitch wouldn't come see me, I was in there masturbating
Smoking on a bigarette, eating a bowl of bereal
Niggas on the block selling O's like Cheerios

[Interlude]

Ey nigga, nigga, nigga, I got a whole zone right now
Like right now right now
Like what you trying to do right now?

[Hook]

I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back, bicken back, bicken back, bicken back being bool
I'm just bicken back, bicken back, bicken back, bicken back being bool

[Interlude]

Meanwhile at a home invasion near you

These niggas was robbing your shit

[Skit]

“Man, all the lights off around this mother fucker too. Lights finna be green right now on everything. I ain't got no gloves; I left them mother fuckers in the car.”

“Man, you better tear off your sock and use your sock, nigga.”

“Man, I’m trying to be in and out of this mother fucker like real fast this look funny out here.”

“Man, fuck it, we in that bitch. (Door opening sound) Come on, Cuz, you too loud. You get us niggas to crack. Man, we in this bitch.”

“Cold Outside”

Raekwon, ft. Ghostface Killah

[Kung fu sample (Raekwon):]

We do have to fear him, the Shaolin faces a crisis

And one of the factors will be the Wu-Tang Clan

I just wish he was there... (damn)

So we must all be prepared

[Intro - Raekwon (Suga Bang Bang):]

Them niggas over there, man (whoa...)

Feds been on them niggas all fucking year, son (What I'm gonna do)

(When it's cold outside) Look the nigga's in a bag right now (Ha ha...)

They zipping a nigga off, son (How how... oh oh oh...)

Right... (It's cold... oh oh oh oh oh oh)

[Chorus x2 - Suga Bang Bang:]

When it's cold outside, and the rain turn to ice

When it's cold outside, and the rain turn to ice

[Hook - Suga Bang Bang:]

Said mama's out here flipping out, shots just going off

Somebody laid out, little kids smoking weed

Drive by's every day wondered what's going on
Me outside with my motherfucking AK
Oh oh... what I'm gonna do when it's cold outside...
How how... oh oh... it's cold... hey...

[Verse 1 - Raekwon:]

Religious with hammers, fakes get jammed up
Cakes get battered, coming through to get it, them transactions
Blood stinking fiends, machine guns, cannons and teams
Baking sodas, gold Rovers and gophers
Land in every project, sex, lies, murderous reps
Back to cassettes, vets dying on steps
What's really taking place in them hoods?
Heads get clapped for trap, don't fuck with my mind, I'm strapped
Off with ya dome for fronting on me
Last two L's, I seen visions of dead male and more sales
Real life stories is made, and candles got blazed
For little young soldiers shot by them strays
Pigeons and goons surviving in prisons
Cause divisions, they separating, laying cocoons
And they can't wait to come home soon
While bodies get found in lobbies, chopped up, decaying in rooms

[Verse 2 - Ghostface Killah:]

They found a two year old, strangled to death
With a "Love Daddy" shirt on in a bag on the top of the steps
Police blowing niggas, NARCs and judges
Me and son had beef, I had to murk him, we supposed to be brothers
'Cause he came home fronting, feeling like that I owe him something
'Cause I'm getting money, drive a little something something
Renee got AIDS, with five kids smoked out
House is brick, bills haven't been paid in days
A Brooklyn man's a molester, court case and the crime's raising
Swastikas on the church, they Satan
Holiday season is here and I'm vexed
Who the fuck made Christmas up? I'm fucking broke, it ain't making no sense
Newports are \$7.50, a box of Huggies is off the meat rack
She's back, thirty days, she relapsed
Our troops need to leave Iraq
And rap niggas need to go on strike so we can get more cash
'Cause...

[Chorus x2 - Suga Bang Bang:]

When it's cold outside, and the rain turn to ice

When it's cold outside, and the rain turn to ice

[Hook - Suga Bang Bang:]

Said mama's out here flipping out, shots just going off

Somebody laid out, little kids smoking weed

Drive by's every day wondered what's going on

Me outside with my motherfucking AK

Oh oh... what I'm gonna do when it's cold outside...

How how... oh oh... it's cold... hey...

“Crocodile Python”

Rick Ross

[Verse 1]

Closest ones to me want to see me in a box
Is it jealousy or am I cursed by the gods
My son's mother don't know when or where to start
All the years that I known her, trick never had a job
Unemployed that'll get a bitch depressed
But unlike them other, boys she watched me kill 'em with finesse
I took a turn pussy boy, pick up a book and learn
Have your ass in a church before I end the verse
Rims on the whip got it looking hypnotic
Stuffing money in my pockets as you niggas watching
Crocodile python, all my ice on
And ain't nobody fucking with me while the mics on
She so ecstatic when I fuck her with the lights on
I feel the same when my niggas send the kites home

[Hook]

Damn, why they want to stick me for my paper?
They want the deeds to my fruit of labor
Every time I turn around

Lawsuits put a lean on a king crown
Ten million was the last check
Devil on the deal, the nigga death in debt
They want to own everything I own
They sends drones to survey my home
Suits designed to protect my wealth
Bloody Glock 40 to protect myself

[Verse 2]

Cubans on my neck looking like a python
On the couches I'm the one they got their eyes on
Skip your name, now they want to know your tax bracket
Tell 'em that you with me and the pussy's automatic
I paid dues in these streets
I gave so much I got nothing to lose in these streets
Family asked me am I in Illuminati
Beat twenty cases like John Gotti
White man fear a nigga with a free mind
And if you disagree tell him that he can free mine
Took my Rolex and gave me an ankle monitor
So many angles these haters'll start popping up
Renounced my citizenship and move to Singapore

Couple tax breaks all accounts offshore

[Hook]

Damn, why they want to stick me for my paper?

They want the deeds to my fruit of labor

Every time I turn around

Lawsuits put a lean on a king crown

Ten million was the last check

Devil on the deal, the nigga death in debt

They want to own everything I own

They sends drones to survey my home

Suits designed to protect my wealth

Bloody Glock 40 to protect myself

[Verse 3]

She fell in love with the flow, such a beautiful stroke

Fascinated allegation kilo grams of that coke

Roll with 25 and never knew his social number

Mac-11 for that Gucci belt to go up under

Black man's pride, see it in my eyes

Fayette county prosecutor want to take a nigga house

So much disdain for the police

Clan rally niggas swing from them old trees
Wood wheel in the Wraith and the skinny ties
Crocodile python seats and the carbon fiber
Hot boy, stash box. and the gas tank
Man of leisure to the top I took the staircase

[Hook]

Damn, why they want to stick me for my paper?
They want the deeds to my fruit of labor
Every time I turn around
Lawsuits put a lean on a king crown
Ten million was the last check
Devil on the deal, the nigga death in debt
They want to own everything I own
They sends drones to survey my home
Suits designed to protect my wealth
Bloody Glock 40 to protect myself

“Crooked Smile”

J. Cole, ft. TLC

[TLC:]

Even though I...

[Chorus - TLC:]

On my way, on my way, on my way down

On my way, on my way, on my way down

You're the one that was tryna keep me way down

But like the sun, I know you know I found my way back 'round

[Verse 1 - J. Cole:]

They tell me I should fix my grill 'cause I got money now

I ain't gon' sit around and front like I ain't thought about it

A perfect smile is more appealing, but it's funny how

My shit is crooked, look at how far I done got without it

I keep my twisted grill, just to show the kids it's real

We ain't picture perfect but we worth the picture still

I got smart, I got rich, and I got bitches still

And they all look like my eyebrows: thick as hell

Love yourself, girl, or nobody will

Though you're a woman, I don't know how you deal

With all the pressure to look impressive and go out in heels; I feel for you
Killing yourself to find a man that'll kill for you
You wake up, put makeup on, stare in the mirror
But it's clear that you can't face what's wrong; no need to fix
What God already put his paint brush on; your roommate yelling
"Why you gotta take so long?" What it's like to have a crooked smile

[Chorus - TLC:]

On my way, on my way, on my way down
On my way, on my way, on my way down
You're the one that was tryna keep me way down
But like the sun, I know you know I found my way back 'round

[Verse 2 - J. Cole:]

To all the women with the flaws, know it's hard my darling
You wonder why you're lonely and your man's not calling
You keep falling victim cause you're insecure
And when I tell you that you're beautiful you can't be sure
'Cause he don't seem to want you back and it's got you asking
So all you see is what you lacking, not what you packing
Take it from a man that loves what you got
And baby girl you're a star, don't let 'em tell you you're not

Now is it real? Eyebrows, fingernails, hair
Is it real? If it's not, girl you don't care
'Cause what's real is something that the eyes can't see
That the hands can't touch, that them broads can't be, and that's you
Never let 'em see you frown
And if you need a friend to pick you up, I'll be around
And we can ride with the windows down, the music loud
I can tell you ain't laughed in a while, but I wanna see that crooked smile

[Chorus - TLC:]

On my way, on my way, on my way down
On my way, on my way, on my way down
You're the one that was tryna keep me way down
But like the sun, I know you know I found my way back 'round

[Bridge — J. Cole (TLC):]

Crooked smile, we could style on 'em (back 'round)
Crooked smile, we could style on 'em
(You're the one that was tryna keep me way down)
(But like the sun, I know you know I found my way back 'round...)

[Verse 3 - J. Cole:]

We don't look nothin' like the people on the screen
You know the movie stars, picture perfect beauty queens
But we got dreams and we got the right to chase 'em
Look at the nation, that's a crooked smile braces couldn't even straighten
Seem like half the race is either on probation
Or in jail; wonder why we inhale
'Cause we in hell already - I ask if my skin pale
Would I then sell like Eminem or Adele?
But one more time for the 'Ville
And fuck all of that beef shit, nigga let's make a mil'
Hey officer man, we don't want nobody getting killed
Just open up that cell, let my brother out of jail
I got money for the bail now, well now
If you asking will I tell now? Hey, hell naw - I ain't snitching 'cause
Man, they get them niggas stitches now
If you was around, then you wouldn't need a witness now
How you like this crooked smile?

[Chorus - TLC:]

On my way, on my way, on my way down
On my way, on my way, on my way down
You're the one that was tryna keep me way down

But like the sun, I know you know I found my way back 'round

[Bridge — J. Cole (TLC):]

Crooked smile, we could style on 'em (back 'round)

Crooked smile, we could style on 'em

(You're the one that was tryna keep me way down)

(But like the sun, I know you know I found my way back 'round...)

[Outro - Choir:]

Oh... *[4x]*

La-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la-la *[4x]*

On my way, on my way, on my way down

On my way, on my way, on my way down

You're the one that was tryna keep me way down

But like the sun, all you know I found my way back 'round, baby, back 'round...

You are the one that was tryna keep me way down

But like the sun, I know you I found my way back 'round, back 'round...

You are the one that was tryna keep me way down

But like the sun, I know you know I found my way back 'round

“Dear God 2.0”

The Roots, ft. Monsters of Folk

[Hook – Jim James:]

Dear God, I’m trying hard to reach you

Dear God, I see your face in all I do

Sometimes, it’s so hard to believe it...

But God, I know you have your reasons

[Verse 1 – Black Thought:]

They said he’s busy hold the line please

Call me crazy, I thought maybe he could mind read

Who does the blind lead?

Show me a sign please

If everything is made in China, are we Chinese?

And why do haters separate us like we Siamese?

Technology turning the planet into zombies

Everybody all in everybody’s dirty laundry

Acid rain, earthquakes, hurricane, tsunamis

Terrorists, crime sprees, assaults, and robberies

Cops yellin’ “stop, freeze”

Shoot him before he try to leave

Air quality so foul, I gotta try to breathe

Endangered species

And we runnin' out of trees

If I could hold the world in the palm of these

Hands, I would probably do away with these anomalies

Everybody checkin' for the new award nominees

Wars and atrocities

Look at all the poverty

Ignoring the prophecies

More beef than broccoli

Corporate monopoly

Weak world economy

Stock market topplin'

Mad marijuana, OxyContin and Klonopin

Everybody out of it?

[Bridge]

Well I've been thinkin' about

And I've been breakin' it down

Without an answer

I know I'm thinking out loud

But if you're lost and around

Why do we suffer?

Why do we suffer?

[Verse 2]

Yeah... It's still me, one of your biggest fans

I get off work

Right back to work again

I probably need to go ahead and have my head exam

Look at how they got me on the Def Jam payment plan

Well, I'm in the world of entertainment and

Trying to keep a singing man sane for the paying fans

If I don't make it through the night, slight change of plans

Harp strings, angel wings, and praying hands

Lord, forgive me for my shortcomings

For going on tour and ignoring the court summons

All I'm trying to do is live life to the fullest

They sent my daddy to you in a barrage of bullets

Why is the world ugly when you made it in your image?

And why is livin' life such a fight to the finish?

For this high percentage

When the sky's the limit

A second is a minute, every hour's infinite

[Hook/Outro]

Dear God, I'm trying hard to reach you

Dear God, I see your face in all I do

Sometimes, it's so hard to believe it...

“Death to My Enemies”

50 Cent

[Intro]

Dre, niggas think we're bullshittin' *[gun cocks]*

Yeah

Yeah

[Chorus]

Nigga try me son, he best have the heat on him

Whip him outta his clothes, get to moppin' the street with him

Well I put your body in a bag

Front on me, I'm on ya ass

I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies

I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies

[Verse 1]

Nigga front on me, the goons and goblins come out

Bushmaster hundred shot, drums'll run out

They dumb out, you heard of me

They call me big homie

Me, I make the register ring, I'm the cash cow

They make the hammers ring, they on ya ass now

Hair trigger, stare nigga, yeah niggas'll flip
Six shot semi-assault, let it off at your will
Here I is, where the money is, I still get biz
D's know about the beef, uou gon' still get did
It be your tombstone and your fuckin' grave they dig
Have that ass in the precinct tryna talk to the pigs
I'm like Damien, nigga, when I start gettin' loose on ya
Closest thing to Lucifer, you think you got a noose on ya
I make it hard to breathe
I come with your hustle, air it out, make it hard to eat
Have you lookin' both ways
Like you crossin' the street

[Chorus]

Nigga try me son, he best have the heat on him
Whip him outta his clothes, get to moppin' the street with him
Well I put your body in a bag
Front on me, I'm on ya ass
I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies
I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies

[Verse 2]

Yeah, niggas send me the wrong message, we gon' fucking kill the messenger

Your whole clique, hollow tips'll tear up the best of ya

This ain't the "Carter" nigga, this is Sparta

It's harder, I die and be a martyr, respect me like your father

Let off a clip or let a case off

I have your pussy ass runnin' like a race horse

Follow orders now, Yay' shoot his face off

You can have one, blast one, it's mad fun

See how when you listen to me all of the cash gone

I was born with the TEC, it's a birth defect

I was conceived in the bins, ended up in a Benz

This is what happens when have-nots turn into Sasquatch

Let the gat pop, boogie down on the back blocks

It's horrific, nah, it's terrific

I got it if you sniff it, go head nigga twist it

Get lifted

Goddamn I'm gifted

[Chorus]

Nigga try me son, he best have the heat on him

Whip him outta his clothes, get to moppin' the street with him

Well I put your body in a bag

Front on me, I'm on ya ass

I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies

I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies

[Verse 3]

Yeah, I tell 'em ride on 'em, then they ride on 'em

Get the line on 'em and squeeze the .9 on 'em

Head shot, .40-Glock blow his mind on him

They say ain't not a jux, leave the shines on 'em;

Now you can watch me, nigga, like the police watch me

I move proper, go ahead catch a shell tryna stop me

That 4-30 Spider, carbon fiber

And my dog is like Al Qaeda, natural fighter

Rapid fire, you're sweet like apple cider

The Mack'll fire, mask like Michael Myers

It's off the wire when I get on my bullshit

No smiles, no laughs, you gets no pass

You can explain to my niggas while they whoop yo' ass

My hands itch when the money comes, it's hard to explain it

Last time I itched like this, a truckload came in

Get money, get bread, that's what I do kid

[Chorus]

Nigga try me son, he best have the heat on him

Whip him outta his clothes, get to moppin' the street with him

Well I put your body in a bag

Front on me, I'm on ya ass

I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies

I bring money to my niggas, that bring death to my enemies

“Don’t Worry ‘Bout It”

50 Cent, ft. Yo Gotti

[Hook - 50 Cent:]

Don't worry 'bout how I get my money, bitch, just know I get my money

Don't worry 'bout how I spend my money, boy, I got a lot

Don't worry 'bout that car I drive, don't worry 'bout that bike I ride

Don't worry 'bout them diamonds in that bezel on my watch

Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it

Don't worry 'bout a mothafuckin' thing

Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it

We got a strap up in here if niggas playing

[Verse 1 - 50 Cent:]

When time pass and I'm not around, niggas saying I'm out of town

Probably moving them bricks around, they swear they know how I get down

Don't worry 'bout what I'm doing, don't worry 'bout what I'm doing

My closet full of that fly shit, black card when I buy shit

Sell the shit you get high with, these niggas on my dick

Don't worry 'bout what I'm doing, don't worry 'bout what I'm doing

That's your bitch, I understand, I've seen it all on Instagram

I'm just from the past, I done been all in that ass

Don't worry 'bout what I'm doing, don't worry 'bout what I'm doing

[Hook - 50 Cent:]

Don't worry 'bout how I get my money, bitch, just know I get my money

Don't worry 'bout how I spend my money, boy, I got a lot

Don't worry 'bout that car I drive, don't worry 'bout that bike I ride

Don't worry 'bout them diamonds in that bezel on my watch

Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it

Don't worry 'bout a mothafuckin' thing

Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it

We got a strap up in here if niggas playing

[Verse 2 - Yo Gotti:]

Don't be worry 'bout my record deals cause I still got my plug

Don't be worry 'bout my bitch pimping, she get money out that club

Don't be worry 'bout my partners and 'em, we get money, we eating

You talk shit 'bout a real nigga, bitch, you must be tweaking

Don't be worried 'bout my whereabouts, money all I care about

Keeping it real in my neighborhood, play with me and I'mma air it out

Why you worry 'bout my money, nigga? Bitch, you think I'm broke?

The Fed worry 'bout what I'm doing, think I'm selling dope

I may be and I may not, go to jail I may rot

I ain't never gon' snitch, nigga, never been no bitch nigga

I got big guns, need a extra large, y'all niggas got question marks
Talking down on a real nigga, that's how you get a hater charged

[Hook - 50 Cent:]

Don't worry 'bout how I get my money, bitch, just know I get my money
Don't worry 'bout how I spend my money, boy, I got a lot
Don't worry 'bout that car I drive, don't worry 'bout that bike I ride
Don't worry 'bout them diamonds in that bezel on my watch
Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it
Don't worry 'bout a mothafuckin' thing
Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it
We got a strap up in here if niggas playing

[Verse 3 - 50 Cent:]

Don't worry 'bout what they talking 'bout
Don't tell me what that bitch done said
I'm done with her, you can go with her
I'm leaving here with another bitch
Don't worry 'bout how they look at me
My diamonds on, damn, look at me
These pussy nigga be shooked at me
Wanna judge and throw the book at me

Don't worry 'bout it, I ain't worried 'bout it
Had time to talk to my legal team
Don't worry 'bout it, I ain't worried 'bout it
Ain't shit they could do to me
Still rocking, still rolling
We holding, bill folding, you know it
When I start to ball out money start to fall out
Throw it up, it fall out the sky
Baddest bitches go all out, whole bar get bought out
That's what I call my lifestyle

[Hook - 50 Cent:]

Don't worry 'bout how I get my money, bitch, just know I get my money
Don't worry 'bout how I spend my money, boy, I got a lot
Don't worry 'bout that car I drive, don't worry 'bout that bike I ride
Don't worry 'bout them diamonds in that bezel on my watch
Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it
Don't worry 'bout a mothafuckin' thing
Don't worry 'bout it, don't worry 'bout it
We got a strap up in here if niggas playing

“Eternal Reflection Interlude”

Jessica Care Moore (Jeezy)

[Poem - Jessica Care Moore:]

Soldiers march inside my mouth

Slide down my throat, crawl inside my womb

And leave a hand grenade in my son's arms

Pre-birth occupation.

You wait for them to grow up and shoot us unarmed

Dear black Madonna

How many hail Mary's?

Project holy water. bless these loads we carry.

Pregnant with potential but birthing silence.

Tears taste like violence

Born with middle passage anxiety

Why can't you feel the God in me?

A million angels follow me

Your system don't acknowledge me.

Born free

My prayer mat close to me

I'm my ancestor's priority

Which sound is closer to God's voice then children laughing?

We the beautiful balance goddess on my block

A special kind of hell.
Razors wrapped in feathers.
Our bodies, wishing wells.
We raise our daughters and pray our sons just make it home from school
We need new rules
Queens created out of red clay dust
Pushed into classroom terrorism. Girlhood rushed.
Our black boys born kings
You try to crucify em
They built with steel and dreams
Who's the criminal when the global blood is on your hands
We indigenous these streets been our land
You not supposed to see death this early in the morning
If God is an American, then God must be lonely
More killed by police in our cities
Than Afghanistan
The underestimated. Outliving our circumstance
Some of us don't dance. Some of us got plans
We don't smile for you. But our laugh is hard
Our new religion includes tearing down privatized prison bars
Black birds fly far. I know who you are
Your bravado. you a super star.

The science of Imhotep
With the heart of 'Pac
We the ones they couldn't kill.
The chosen. We won't stop
This is the time for hustlers and scholars
Sunflowers and gun powder
The lies just get louder.
Shout out to the doubters
She can write surahs and psalms
In the same breath cook poems
And write dinner with her left
Rock a mic with her right
And pray her own seeds will be able to
Exchange the heavens for a mirror
And see themselves as the greatest reflection of God.

“Genocide”

Dr. Dre, ft. Kendrick Lamar, Marsha Ambrosius, & Candice Pillay

[Hook - Marsha Ambrosius:]

There's the stone cold killers in these Compton streets

One hand on the 9, all eyes on me

Murder, murder, it's murder, it's murder

Call 9-1-1, emergency

Hands up in the air for the world to see

It's murder, it's murder, murder, murder (Murder)

[Verse 1 - Candice Pillay:]

Murda dem down kill 'em dead (Yo!)

Bullet to the dome to the head

Murda dem down kill a yout'

Don fe pull up on de man and

(Hit 'em up!) What it look like?

See murda dem down kill 'em dead (Yo!)

Bullets come down from the air

Murda down killa you

Don fe pull up on de man and

(Hit 'em up!) What it look?

[Hook - Marsha Ambrosius:]

There's the stone cold killers in these Compton streets

One hand on the 9, all eyes on me

Murder, murder, it's murder, it's murder

Call 9-1-1, emergency

Hands up in the air for the world to see

It's murder, it's murder, murder, murder (Murder)

[Verse 2 - Dr. Dre:]

(It's been a 187 in this bitch!)

Murder this, murder listen, hit a suburban whippin'

Tinted windows ride at your wifey (Blah!) and I bet you miss her

Reload the protocols and we throw the clip in both trays

That's one on the left and one in the right hand, Scottie Pippen both ways

Been doin' drive-bys, got this music industry timelined

Lookin' like Rosecrans when these niggas throw up them signs high

I'm talkin' about that bottom where it's high crimes

Shit, I'm just tryna get paid and keep 'em thighs high

Sometimes I feel like I could just bury 'em, bury 'em

Cause delirium, mass hysteria, scarier area

I'm very aware that hip hop needed somethin' to carry it

So I married that bitch and swung down in that chariot

Hangin' way too fuckin' close, beware the barrier
This is hub city nigga, don't make us embarrass you
Man, you should be realistic, these niggas 'round here ballistic
We did the numbers and you lookin' like another statistic

[Hook - Marsha Ambrosius:]

There's the stone cold killers in these Compton streets
One hand on the 9, all eyes on me
Murder, murder, it's murder, it's murder
Call 9-1-1, emergency
Hands up in the air for the world to see
It's murder, it's murder, murder, murder (Murder)

[Verse 3 - Kendrick Lamar:]

Ahh, shit!
Recognize whatever side the sides reside until the dead has risen
Live in a project building, dodgin' the module ceilings
I ride, I'mma ride in a stolen jeep
Ride with the eyes of five blind men, my vision (Corrupted)
Mama tried counselin', five plans for Kendrick (But fuck it)
My family's ties, had sabotaged Rosecrans existence (abducted)
My aliens on surveillance, they paid me a visit (Disgusting)

Our stadium's packed, raiders in black
Curls drippin', silver bullet, palladium in my strap
I lie on the side of a one way street
Nowhere to go, death all I can see
I say "Fuck is up?", I fuck 'em up, your supper's up or something's up
I hoping all get orthotist, rope it before the double dutch broke
Plenty ruckus with the weapon I protect it under oath
My discretion, fuck your blessing, fuck your life
Fuck your hope, fuck your mama
Fuck your daddy, fuck your dead homie
Fuck the world up when we came up, that's Compton homie!

[Bridge]

Murder, murder

Murder

Murder

It's all murder

Murder

Murder, murder

Murder, murder

It's been a murder

(It's been a 187 in this bitch!)

“Get It Get It”

Cam’ron, ft. Skitzo

[Verse 1]

Been had to gift of gab, lived in the sickest pad
Slept with mice and roaches, woke up pissed up slab
School of the hard knocks, I on the vicious Ave
Jim chase Mark Chan, we beat a bitches ass
Ask me who you loving, Cam you been bugging
Must have lost your mind; you fought Lucien's cousin
And St. Mark's, yeah big LE watch
My nigga red squashed it, forget that topic
40th, down the block danger zone
Up the ave forty wall, hope y’all niggas bring you chrome
What you saying homes, cops they raiding homes
Activator juice, yes to spray your dome
From a tiny dude, developed grimey dude
Stuck delivery, took all his Chinese food
I’m so good but bad, I’m so kind but rude
Americas most wanted, should have signed to Cube
Plus its savage, cop car crash your door
Furthermore heard the boy ’em at the sackamore
Boy yes, overseas more sex

4 jets, corvettes, and I ain't done a tour yet
Cuz I'm moving bricks, yes they serve in fours
Signing off dipset boss, truly yours

[Chorus]

We gon' make it make it, we gon' make it y'all
We gon' make it make it, we gon' take it y'all
We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it
We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it
We gon' make it make it, we gon' make it y'all
We gon' make it make it, we gon' take it y'all
We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it
We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it

[Verse 2]

My cerebral stress, eagle let it rest
Feel it in the air yeah, Siegel said it best
It's a legal mess, needles need to death
Blame the government, until then I need to chef

Turn right, lead left, street games scrams
Call the cops oc, like we need a ref

You can't cheat a chef, I can see your chest
No heart, cherish your oxygen, breathe your breaths
He need a rest, how he gon' be the best
Like I guess a couple slugs he need to catch
See the sketch, you lassie
The gun is Frisbee proceed to fetch
Side up the hoopty, spray up the Sentra
It be sixty years before I'm laid up in benter
Sprayed up her denture, your girl
Then I laid her placenta, blew hazed in her rental
Some days in December, some days I remember
A boy Sugar Ray want to play the contender
Just say I got a temper
And my temperature is off the thermometer
Korean New Year to Hanukah I'm bombing ya
Put you to sleep for good, pajama ya
Wrangle you in ya he man pajama's
Wrap you up in your Pac-Man sheets

[Chorus]

We gon' make it make it, we gon' make it y'all
We gon' make it make it, we gon' take it y'all

We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it

We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it

We gon' make it make it, we gon' make it y'all

We gon' make it make it, we gon' take it y'all

We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it

We gon' get it get it, money we gon' get it get it

“God Bless Amerika”

Lil' Wayne

[Verse 1]

Uh, my mind's filled with mine fields

The ashes fall, the wine spills

The world stops, drops and rolls

It's Judgment Day or a fire drill

Yea, I pour out my heart, have a drink

They say the drunk never lie, they ain't never lyin' yea

My country 'tis of thee,

Sweet land of kill 'em all and let 'em die

[Hook]

God bless Amerika

This so godless Amerika

I heard tomorrow ain't promised today

The end of time is like a hour away

[Verse 2]

Damn, military minded, lost and can't find it

The stars on the flag are never shining

Uh, I saw a butterfly in hell today

Will I die or go to jail today?
Cause I live by the sword and die by the sword
Heard police was looking for me, I'ma hide by abroad
Shootin' stars in my pocket, bitch sit on my rocket
I'm wired off a socket, but still shockin'
Everybody wanna tell me what I need
You can play a role in my life but not the lead
If there's food for thought then I'm guilty of greed
Mama said take what you want – I took heed yea
My little breed, yea

[Verse 3]

Back to life, back to reality
Been eating my girl and she's so sweet, got cavities
Granted we do it for vanity not humanity
But what's appealing to me is under banana trees, love
I go so hard, I tried to pay homage but I was overcharged
Ain't that a bitch? I'm just a nut tryna bust a nut in the nut shell
Used to say fuck the police, now I say fuck jail
Same shit, different air freshner
I don't play boy, I ain't Hugh Hefner
Tryna be a step ahead, but a few feet behind

Two fingers to my head, pop! Peace of mind
I be in the cloud, cloud number 9
And I just fucked the clock and let it come to time
It's a cold world, I put on a mink
There's a chain of commands, I'm the missing link
Yeah

[Hook]

God bless Amerika
This so godless Amerika
I heard tomorrow ain't promised today
And I'm smoking on them flowers, catch the bouquet

[Outro]

Here we live by the sword and die by the sword
The police are looking for me, I'ma hide by abroad
Shootin' stars in my pocket, bitch sit on my rocket
I'm wired off a socket, but still shockin'
Everybody wanna tell me what I need
You can play a role in my life but not the lead
I saw a butterfly in hell today
Will I die or go to jail today?

“Good Kid”

Kendrick Lamar

[Hook – Pharrell:]

Mass hallucination baby

Ill education baby

Want to reconnect with your elations

This is your station baby

[Verse 1]

Look inside these walls and you see them having withdrawals

Of a prisoner on his way

Trapped inside your desire

To fire bullets that stray

Track a tire just tell you I'm tired and ran away

I should ask a choir what do you require

To sing a song that acquire me to have faith

As the record spin I should pray

For the record I recognize that I'm easily prey

I got ate alive yesterday

I got animosity building

It's probably big as a building

Me jumping off of the roof

Is just me playing it safe
But what am I supposed to do
When the topic is red or blue
And you understand that I ain't
But know I'm accustomed to
Just a couple that look for trouble
And live in the street with rank
No better picture to paint than me walking from bible study
And called his homies because he had said he noticed my face
From a function that token place
They was wondering if I bang
Step on my neck and get blood on your Nike checks
I don't mind because one day you respect
The good kid, m.A.A.d. city

[Hook – Pharrell:]

Mass hallucination baby
Ill education baby
Want to reconnect with your elations
This is your station baby

[Verse 2]

All I see is strobe lights
Blinding me in my hindsight
Finding me by myself
Promise me you can help
In all honesty I got time to be copacetic
And finally made decision to hold me against my will
It was like a head on collision that folded me standing still
I can never pick out the difference
And grade a cop on the bill
Every time you clock in the morning
I feel you just want to kill
All my innocence while ignoring my purpose
To persevere as a better person
I know you heard this and probably in fear
But what am I supposed to do
With the blinking of red and blue
Flash from the top of your woof
And your dog has to say proof
And you ask "lift up your shirt"
Cause you wonder if a tattoo
Of affiliation can make it a pleasure to put me through
Gang files, but that don't matter because the matter is racial profile

I heard them chatter: "He's probably young but I know that he's down"

Step on his neck as hard as your bullet proof vest

He don't mind, he know we never respect

The good kid, m.A.A.d. city

[Hook – Pharrell:]

Mass hallucination baby

Ill education baby

Want to reconnect with your elations

This is your station baby

[Verse 3]

All I see in this room

20 Xanies and these 'shrooms

Grown-up candy for pain

Can we live in the same society

It's entirely stressful upon my brain

You hired me as a victim

I quietly hope for change

When violence is the rhythm

Inspired me to obtain

The silence in this room

With 20 Xanies and 'shrooms

Some grown-up candy I lost it

I feel it's nothing to lose

The streets sure to release the worst side of my best

Don't mind, cause now you ever in debt

To good kid, m.A.A.d. city

[Hook – Pharrell:]

Mass hallucination baby

Ill education baby

Want to reconnect with your elations

This is your station baby

“Gorgeous”

Kanye West, ft. Kid Cudi & Raekwon

[Hook - Kid Cudi:]

Ain't no question if I want it, I need it
I can feel it slowly drifting away from me
I'm on the edge, so why you playing? I'm saying
I will never ever let you live this down, down, down
Not for nothing I've foreseen it, I dream it
I can feel it slowly drifting away from me
No more chances if you blow this, you bogus
I will never ever let you live this down, down, down

[Verse 1 – Kanye West:]

Penitentiary chances, the devil dances
And eventually answers to the call of Autumn
All of them fallin' for the love of ballin'
Got caught with 30 rocks, the cop look like Alec Baldwin
Inter-century anthems based off inner city tantrums
Based off the way we was branded
Face it, Jerome get more time than Brandon
And at the airport they check all through my bag and tell me that it's random
But we stay winning, this week has been a bad massage

I need a happy ending and a new beginning
And a new fitted and some job opportunities that's lucrative
This the real world, homie, school finished
They done stole your dreams, you dunno who did it
I treat the cash the way the government treats AIDS
I won't be satisfied 'til all my niggas get it, get it?

[Hook - Kid Cudi:]

Ain't no question if I want it, I need it
I can feel it slowly drifting away from me
I'm on the edge, so why you playing? I'm saying
I will never ever let you live this down, down, down

[Verse 2 - Kanye West:]

Is hip hop just a euphemism for a new religion?
The soul music for the slaves that the youth is missing
This is more than just my road to redemption
Malcolm West had the whole nation standing at attention
As long as I'm in Polo's smilin' they think they got me
But they would try to crack me if they ever see a black me
I thought I chose a field where they couldn't sack me
If a nigga ain't shootin' a jump shot, running a track meet

But this pimp is, at the top of Mount Olympus
Ready for the World's game, this is my Olympics
We make 'em say ho cause the game is so pimpish
Choke a *South Park* writer with a fish stick
I insisted to get up offa this dick
And these drugs, niggas can't resist it
Remind me of when they tried to have Ali enlisted
If I ever one of the greatest nigga, I must have missed it!

[Hook - Kid Cudi:]

Ain't no question if I want it, I need it
I can feel it slowly drifting away from me
I'm on the edge, so why you playing? I'm saying
I will never ever let you live this down, down, down

[Verse 3 - Kanye West:]

I need more drinks and less lights
And that American Apparel girl in just tights
She told the director she tryna get in a school
He said "take them glasses off and get in the pool"
It's been a while since I watched the tube
'Cause like a Crip said: "I got way too many blues for any more bad news"

I was looking at my resume feeling real fresh today
They rewrite history I don't believe in yesterday
And what's a black beetle anyway, a fucking roach
I guess that's why they got me sitting in fucking coach
But God said I need a different approach
'Cause people is looking at me like I'm sniffing coke
It's not funny anymore try different jokes
Tell 'em hug and kiss my ass, x and o
Kiss the ring while they at it, do my thing while I'm got it
Play strings for the dramatic
And end all of that wack shit
Act like I ain't had a belt in two classes
I ain't got it I'm comin' after whoever who has it
I'm coming after whoever who has it
You blowing up, that's good, fantastic
That y'all, it's like that ya'll
I don't really give a fuck about it at all
'Cause the same people that tried to black ball me
Forgot about 2 things, my black balls

[Hook - Kid Cudi:]

Ain't no question if I want it, I need it

I can feel it slowly drifting away from me
I'm on the edge, so why you playing? I'm saying
I will never ever let you live this down, down, down

[Verse 4 – Raekwon:]

I done copped Timb's, lived in lenses, kid
Armani suits, fresh fruits, Bally boots and Benzes
Counting up, smoking, one cuff
Live as a red Jag, a Louis bag, grabbing a blunt, fuck it
Steam about a hundred and one L's
Kites off the jails, buying sweats, running up in Stetson
Nigga hat game was special
It matched every black pair of Nikes
Throwing dice for decimals
The older head, bolder head, would train a soldier head
Make sure he right in the field, not a soldier dead
Got made code red
Break up the black skunk
The black dutch, back of the old shed
If you can't live, you dying
You give or buy in
Keep it real or keep it moving, keep grinding

Keep shining, to every young man, this is a plan

Learn from others like your brothers Rae and Kanye

[Outro - Kid Cudi:]

Not for nothing I've foreseen it, I dream it

I can feel it slowly drifting away from me

No more chances if you blow this, you bogus

I will never ever let you live this down, down, down

“Groovy Tony/Eddie Kane”

ScHoolboy Q, ft. Jadakiss

[Part One - Groovy Tony:]

[Hook – Schoolboy Q:]

Blank Face, tre 8, kill everybody, fuck an AK
Sell narcotics and step my dollars up to Bill Gates
Push all limits, you lookin' timid, need to back off
Punk-ass cops, them crackers want us with our black off
Thug life nigga since '96 I wanted to gang bang
Few years later I'm really from it, we were still kids
Crack off nigga, I'm squeezing empty 'til the shell break
Fuck my image I need to drop, I need to, Blank Face

[Verse 1 – ScHoolboy Q:]

Cause brain damage from my mechanics, keeping two ways
Sell narcotics, I'm slanging diamonds with your pack then
Stack large commas, you with your riders with your backbone
Can't fold figures, I make deposits with the gold grin
Jeans look dirty, I lift the Chevy with the rims on
All bad bitches, they wanna fuck me with the cap gone
Real life nigga, I'm in the stu' 'til all the weed blown
Wait long, long, I hid the dope behind the cellphone

Y'all don't hear me, I want the money right
Ugh, Groovy Tony, no face killer
I see the money right, ugh
Yeah, I'm (Blank Face)
Clear everything out the safe
Crack the pig bank, robbin' your kids too
My heart an igloo, the devil in all blue, huh
Die now go to Heaven or bring 'em through
Lot of brown 'round here, got that white girl for you
And she swimming in fire water, could be double digits
Pistol through your Civic
Most die before they hear it, turn a nigga to a spirit
Drive slow, oh, hey
Hit the curb with shattered mirrors
Look around now you're Hellbound, boogie down
Bullshit I won't allow, slang a bird every hou'
Smack a nigga with the heat
Contradicting, now you peace
Leave you triple six laying in defeat
Can you dig it?
Struck a match, they won't finish
Drop a nigga off, get a nigga wHipped

Squeezing fingertips, aye

[Hook – Schoolboy Q:]

Blank Face, tre 8, kill everybody, fuck an AK

Sell narcotics and step my dollars up to Bill Gates

Push all limits, you lookin' timid, need to back off

Punk-ass cops, them crackers want us with our black off

Thug life nigga since '96 I wanted to gang bang

Few years later I'm really from it, we were still kids

Crack off nigga, I'm squeezing empty 'til the shell break

Fuck my image I need to drop, I need to, Blank Face

[Verse 2 - Jadakiss:]

Exactly what I'mma have when the cops come

Body languages, the same as when the shots rung

Holding a thirty-eight and a shotgun

Real nigga, we all know you are not one, nah

Running with the rebels, it's a three-man weave

With the Lord and the devil

Really all I need is a pitchfork and a shovel

If I can't proceed then I resort to the metal (Blank face)

Getting high watching NBA League Pass (Who with?)

With your family at the re-pass (My condolences)
My heart's getting colder
When I hug your mom and look over her shoulder
You notice I got the (blank face)
I heard nothing, I ain't seen nothing
I ain't in the middle with nothin', no in between nothin'
F y'all for ever hating me
As I sit there while they interrogate me
I'm staring at 'em with the (blank face)

[Part Two - Eddie Kane:]

[Verse 1 – ScHoolboy Q:]

Top rack nigga and the money came with it, huh
New bitch with me, hope the booty came with it, came with it
Uh, rims flying down the road, huh
Five in the morning, feds knockin' on my door, huh
Toilet full of dope, while my burner knee high
Tell me put the gun down, I'm probably gonna die
I know, I know, big guns sell dope
Eddie Kane's little bro, hundred k, one whip, hah

[Bridge – Dem Jointz:]

Open Eddie Kane for hire
Been tryna get rich for hours
Nights like this I wish
Cocaine drops would fall, woo, woo, woo, woo...

[Verse 2 – ScHoolboy Q:]

Yo, uh, yo, uh
Need the car with no mileage
Kristoff on my pallet
My cigar full of cabbage
Came from the dirt to the carrots
Getting dirty dollars
Fuck different baby mommas
Dope between the speakers
So fuck you mister teacher
Cause the paper, I ace it
Lead, they tried to erase it
But I'm still standing
They mad at everything
Nothing given, I'mma take it first
On the trees like a hammock
Flip the work behind the campus

Young Ruby, turn your hood into a movie (into a movie...)

Gang bang it, don't slang it

GTA-ing, shoot the whole club up

Fuck tryna sneak the K in

On the road to riches

Thank you Mister Reagan

You helped them dollars rake in

And to my uncle that hooked up the family

That shit that you was smokin'

I was pushin' residue like on the cushion

I'mma blame it on your ass cause I ain't gettin' whoopings

And your proof is in the pudding

I'm his grandma's baby, Eddie Kane

(Eddie Kane, Eddie Kane)

[Bridge – Dem Jointz:]

Standing in the white light and we on

And is there any other smokers in here?

And we on

And is there any other smokers in here?

And we on

Is there any other smokers in here?

Keys open doors on the road to my heart

Dreams on the floor, bet a nigga stay high

And I know....

What makes the world go 'round, go 'round?

What makes the world go 'round, go 'round?

[Outro – Candice Pillay:]

Walk right into the light

Getting a feeling in the night

[?] spice

You're my only Christ

I have only eyes for you

I have only eyes for you

Your soul is mine

Your soul is mine

Mine, mine, mine, mine

“Hands Up”

Boosie Badazz

[Intro]

Mr. Officer, Mr. Officer, Mr. Officer, why you shooting?

I got my hands up (my hands up), hands up (my hands up), hands up

[Verse 1]

Don't know what they gone do man today (oh Lord)

A crooked cop might try to shoot me today

Plus they dudes in the system, acting like they ready for shit that they ain't ready for

Black power, they scared of us

"Just go kill a black", shot him through the windshield

Taraj want his brother back, fuck that, this shit real

Police killing kids, kids killing men

Broke and a fifth of gin'll make a nigga sin

You know you planted that shit on my homeboy

Motherfuckers gave the bench to my old boy

When shit real, your wrong ain't really wrong boy

So we clutching long toys dummy, bitch you see me coming

[Chorus]

And something telling me to stand up (I'm tired of this shit)

Why you shooting? Officer I got my hands up (police)

My hands up, but something telling me to stand up (fuck that shit)

[Verse 2]

Lord knows the evil (the evil you do)

The DA fired you hot, the friends you called so that appeal get denied

I know it's hate cause when I won they had tears in they eyes

Said it's my lawyer, no that's karma for all the niggas you fried

Seen it firsthand, and man, they ain't got feelings inside

They say we want ya boy to testify, we know he gone die

They smiled at me, it was Lucifer in front of my face

Now my nephew fighting a body, how much more can I take? (fuck that shit)

[Chorus]

And something telling me to stand up (I'm tired of this shit)

Why you shooting officer? (why you shooting?) Officer I got my hands up (police)

My hands up, but something telling me to stand up (fuck that shit, fuck that shit)

[Outro]

Rest in peace Michael Brown

Cold part about it (cold part about it)

He had his hands up (his hands up), his hands up (his hands up), his hands up (his hands up), his hands up (his hands up)

He had his hands up

Rest in peace Trayvon Martin (Trayvon, Trayvon, Trayvon)

Cold part about it, nigga shot him cause

He had on black, bruh (at nighttime), ,black bruh

He had a hood that was black, bruh

Why they do it? 'Cause we black, bruh

“Hold You Down”

Childish Gambino

[Hook]

Ooh, I want it, yeah

Whenever you need my hand

I'll hold you down, oh

Ooh, you want it, yeah

Why in the fuck these niggas

Tryin' to hold me down, oh

[Verse 1]

You such a fuckin' lame

It's what they used to yell back in seventh grade

My momma said she'd get me that new jacket when the cost go down

Hit the office, stole some Tommy Hill from lost and found

Not bad for a family of foster child

Lookin' fly man, I'm flossin' now

But them niggas saw through me

Are you serious? What is this?

Took the jacket off third period, ellipses

Listening to "Sky is the Limit" on my Walkman

Thinking if Biggie can make it through it, man then I can

Dope-boy swag
I always wanted that
But my persona was always more of that Arthur Ash
But no love for the son of a commuter
Who was a radio head and okay at them computers
At the post office
It's funny how you smoke niggas then you start coffins
All my people need throat lozenge
My fear is dead
Ambition drove the hearse
But niggas got my feelin' I ain't black enough to go to church
Culture shock at barber shops 'cause I ain't hood enough
We all look the same to the cops, ain't that good enough?
The black experience is blackened serious
'Cause being black, my experience, is no one hearin' us
White kids get to wear whatever hat they want
When it comes to black kids one size fits all

[Hook]

Ooh, I want it, yeah
Whenever you need my hand
I'll hold you down, oh

Ooh, you want it, yeah

Why in the fuck these niggas

Tryin' to hold me down, oh

[Break]

We the baddest nigga, we the baddest nigga

You hear me?

We the baddest nigga, we the baddest nigga

We the baddest nigga, we the baddest

[Verse 2]

The reason that they say I'm nothin' what they seen or heard's

The same reason Will Smith always opposite Latino girls

They only see you how they wanna see you

'Til you make them see you in some other way

I'm trippin' off the other day

'Cause God knows what these white kids sayin'

Dude you're not not racist 'cause The Wire's in your Netflix cue

Subtle racism

It's hard to pin it 'cause you'd only understand

If you were me for just a minute

This one kid said somethin' that was really bad

He said I wasn't really black because I had a dad

I think that's kinda sad

Mostly 'cause a lot of black kids think they should agree with that

If you're a father, you should stick around if you could

'Cause even if you're bad at it, you get Tiger Woods

MJ

We warriors, we all need senseis

Change everything that we've done so far

I don't mean makin' B.E.T. T.E.R

I mean just the way that we see each other

I won't stop until they say, "James Franco is the white Donald Glover"

Yeah, these niggas wanted Cookie but instead I gave 'em Loch Ness

Sick Boi for life, my swag is in a hospice

Aimin' for the throne, Jay and Ye said to watch that

They ask me what I'm doin', I say I'm stealin' rock back

Nigga

[Hook x2]

Ooh, I want it, yeah

Whenever you need my hand

I'll hold you down, oh

Ooh, you want it, yeah

Why in the fuck these niggas

Tryin' to hold me down, oh

“Homicide”

Future, ft. Snoop Dogg

[Hook - Future and Snoop Dogg:]

You say you wanna take a ride? Get in
I grew up on that other side, getting it in
You niggas selling a bunch of pies, snatch a Benz
I heard you say it's going down, I'm going in
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide, ya ya

[Verse 1 - Snoop Dogg:]

Fighting, shooting, killing, riding
Crippling, tripping, spitting fire
In the kitchen, baking pies
Taking mines, making mines
Yellow tape, black gun
Fill it with them hollow shells
And leave the scene bloody
Buddy can't nobody tell
Catch a plane to the ATL

Lay low in a cheap motel
Whatever suits ya
And get a few thangs from my cousin Future
Now I'm back on and popping like
Trapping, rapping in the cut
Talk shit, I fuck you up
They don't recognize who I am or where I'm from
So I hit the strip club banging 20 Crip cause
Treble with the bass, put that thang up in yo shavening
And leave yo body bleeding on the pavement

[Hook - Future and Snoop Dogg:]

You say you wanna take a ride? Get in
I grew up on that other side, getting it in
You niggas selling a bunch of pies, snatch a Benz
I heard you say it's going down, I'm going in
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide, ya ya

[Verse 2 – Future:]

How many a ride for you, open up that fire for you
You gotta question a nigga standing next to you, cut him off
I grew up on the side you gotta make yourself a boss
Niggas'll shit on you any chance they get
Cross you out on a lick
If you ain't ready for the ending then quit
It's a dirty world, you gotta get your hands dirty
I'm going for the title with my hands on the rifle
I put in the same work you put in, survival
Looking at my rival, they looking suicidal
Keep them bodies off wax, I can spot a rat
Let the guitar play, brrrat!

[Hook - Future and Snoop Dogg:]

You say you wanna take a ride? Get in
I grew up on that other side, getting it in
You niggas selling a bunch of pies, snatch a Benz
I heard you say it's going down, I'm going in
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide, ya ya

[Verse 3 – Future:]

Slang a bunch of packs, and go and snatch a Benzo
I played them streets as a young nigga, ain't never liked Nintendo
Them gangstas in the yard, them my motherfucking kinfolk
They'll kidnap you and yo broad (in broad) daylight, no pretendo
I grew up 'round a bunch of monsters, call that pressure on ya
Be so scared for ya life, you call the police on ya
You ready say you ready
You gon' starve or you want fetti? Yo life'll change a second
Good or bad, don't open yo mouth, make sure you shut it
Ain't no telling who listening, make a wise decision
I'm from 'cross the tracks, like Boosie
If you ride, you better know who shooting

[Hook - Future and Snoop Dogg:]

You say you wanna take a ride? Get in
I grew up on that other side, getting it in
You niggas selling a bunch of pies, snatch a Benz
I heard you say it's going down, I'm going in
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder)
Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)

Go tell 'em it's a homicide (murder, murder)

Go tell 'em it's a homicide, ya ya

“How I Got Over”

The Roots, ft. Dice Raw

Uh, uh...uh, uh-huh

[Hook - Dice Raw:]

Out on the streets, where I grew up
First thing they teach us, not to give a fuck
That type of thinking can't get you nowhere
Someone has to care

[Verse 1 – Black Thought:]

How I got over, where the people come apart
Don't nobody care about ya, only thing you got is God
Out here in these streets.. if you get down on your luck
You can stand out, with a hand out
But nobody give a fuck
Out here in these streets, every man is for himself
They ain't helpin' no one else, it's a hazard to your health
Livin' life in these cold streets
Hey, who's worryin' 'bout ya, babe?
When you whylin' out, runnin' 'round in these streets

[Hook - Dice Raw (Black Thought):]

Out on the streets, where I grew up (How I got over...)

First thing they teach us, not to give a fuck (How I got o-)

That type of thinking can't get you nowhere (How I got over...)

Someone has to care

[Verse 2 – Black Thought:]

When you on the corners, there's too much drama

Livin' with the police right behind ya

It's always more than a slight reminder

We livin' in a war zone like Rwanda

Before I go back to the Heavenly Father

Pray for me if it ain't too much bother

Whatever don't break me a-make me stronger

I feel like I can't take too much longer

It's too much lyin', and too much fightin'

I'm all cried out 'cause I grew up cryin'

They all got a sales pitch I ain't buyin'

They tryin to convince me that I ain't tryin'

We uninspired, we unadmired

And tired and sick of being sick and tired

Of livin' in the hood where the shots are fired

We dyin' to live, so to live, we dyin'

You just like I am

[Hook - Dice Raw (Black Thought):]

Out on the streets, where I grew up (How I got over...)

First thing they teach us, not to give a fuck (How I got o-)

That type of thinking can't get you nowhere (Somebody, somewhere..)

Someone has to care

[Verse 3 – Black Thought:]

Somebody's gotta care

And I swear it isn't fair

In suspended animation, we ain't tryin' to go nowhere

Out here in these streets, we're so young and all alone

We ain't even old enough, to realize we're on our own

Livin' life in these hard streets

Where it's like they lost they mind

Is there any way to find?

Are we runnin' out of time out here?

Listen

Hey, who's worryin 'bout ya, babe?

When you whylin' out, runnin' 'round in these streets

[Hook x3 - Dice Raw:]

Out on the streets, where I grew up

First thing they teach us, not to give a fuck

That type of thinking can't get you nowhere

Someone has to care

“How Life Changed”

T.I., ft. Scarface & Michelle'L

[Verse 1 – T.I.:]

Ay say KT

I remember, bro, standing out ten of us

Flip a bird split it up

Antenna stickin' up

For crooked cop patrollin'

If the red dog rollin'

All the dough I'm throwin'

Fuck a jail I ain't going tonight

Quick to pull a 4-4 in the fight

Under the street lights

Rollin' the dice

We was so enticed

By niggas like slick money and ice

We figure prison, it just come with the life

Along with losin' your life

And there was no way we thought

We'd go to jail for any case we caught

For all the yay we bought

Not a dime did we say we borrowed

Bought damn near every pair of jeans at the mall

Had our way with the broads

Hit the rink but we ain't skatin' at all

Seem like every other day we brawl

That AK on call

When I think about all we done

It's amazing to see how far we come

Remember

[Chorus - Michelle'L:]

I remember walkin'

Didn't have a dollar in my pocket

Now I'm watching stocks like what's the options

Oooh Oooh

Oooh Oooh

How life's changed

I remember hustlin'

Tryin' to get these crooked cops off us

Now I read about it in my office

Oooh Oooh

Oooh Oooh

How life's changed

[Verse 2 - T.I.:]

Ay say C-Rod

Remember days we was slangin' the hard?

In a crib with no lights

We used to stay in the dark

Remember Cap and Mac Boney man

They were retarded

I don't know who kept us laughing the hardest

Since our stacks was the largest

Didn't take us long to corner the market

I remember everyday was a party

15, 16, with dreams of being cocaine bosses

In pursuit of that

We made so many terrible choices

Like the time we made away with that Millennium

From the dealership

Before our day wasn't we killin' 'em?

Late nights

Gun fights

High speed chases

So close to the good life we taste it

Damn the consequences pimp

If it's a chance we take it

First case a month in juvenile and get probation

When I think about all we done

It's amazing to see how far we come

Remember

[Chorus - Michelle'L:]

I remember walkin'

Didn't have a dollar in my pocket

Now I'm watching stocks like what's the options

Ooh Ooh

Ooh Ooh

How life's changed

I remember hustlin'

Tryin' to get these crooked cops off us

Now I read about it in my office

Ooh Ooh

Ooh Ooh

How life's changed

[Verse 3 – Scarface:]

We started small time dope game
Hustlin' that cocaine
In the state traffickin'
High feeling no pain
Numb to the fact
That we was poisoning our own kind
I ain't give a fuck
He gettin' his so I want mine
Youngin' with that attitude
Somebody finna gimme that
I ain't give a fuck how I got it
It was real as that
So if I had to peel a cat
Somebody was dead then
Since I'm a killer
That's the condition my head's in
Can't work too hard to get my money
I refuse to
Slave for the next man a raise nigga fuck you
These streets are 9 to 5
You want it we can get it for ya
And even though they steady changin'

This is still a hustle
Still got them same rules
Man I be the same game
We'd even found some brand new money
Still we maintain
This ain't integrity
We upheld in the street life
Livin' the mother fuckin' dream
Niggas singin' like...

[Chorus - Michelle'L]

I remember walkin'
Didn't have a dollar in my pocket
Now I'm watching stocks like what's the options
Ooh Ooh
Ooh Ooh
How life's changed
I remember hustlin'
Tryin' to get these crooked cops off us
Now I read about it in my office
Ooh Ooh
Ooh Ooh

How life's changed

“In His Own Words”

Nas & Damian Marley, ft. Stephen Marley

[Chorus x2 – Stephen Marley:]

Jah told you in his own words

And I’ll see you through

To guide you through this cold world

And I’ll see you through

[Verse 1 – Nas:]

Two steps away from death, a vest and a holster

I detest detectives arresting us over

Weapons possession, they was checking the Rover

Inspecting the tattoos on my neck and my shoulder

How many times I’m one of six coffin-holders

Or sitting with goons in a visiting room

Flip it, I could’ve been you

Behind state walls bidding

These are the things that a G pray for, acquit us

A little stash in the safe or a little shorty to wait for

Or a shorty to take the weight for him

What really did I escape from?

Thought I saw God’s face on the design on my vintage Claiborne

Swear I see 'em every day in the bus or the train
Or the billboards out there that hang tall
I still give thanks for Him, have faith for Him
No matter what His name's called

[Chorus – Stephen Marley:]

Jah told you in his own words
And I'll see you through
To guide you through this cold world
And I'll see you through

[Verse 2 - Jr. Gong:]

Can you think of a color that you've never seen?
Can you reminisce on places you've never been?
Well is many are called
But them never deemed
Worthy for the cause
'Cause them never clean
Help who help themselves
Jah nuh raffle dream
That's why me chummy with Jah Jah
Like a Cherubim

Keep us strong through the winter like an Evergreen
And all of us are more connected than it ever seems
All things are related and creation is a package
Generate together and we increase the wattage
A how them a go manage?
Tell Babylon them can't do Rasta damage
Nor stop we through the passage
Jah did make a promise, God is always honest
Always keep his word, don't care what the plan is
Don't be astonished
Stumbling blocks vanish
One day the meek gonna live inna di palace, Woah!

[Chorus x2 – Stephen Marley:]

Jah told you in his own words
And I'll see you through
To guide you through this cold world
And I'll see you through

[Verse 3 – Nas:]

Some ask me if I feel that Zion is surreal
And in my songs do I plan to expose and reveal

Word to the curb that's under these chrome wheels
My homies is only ones I'm taking care of
But severe reality starts to become more clear
And these know-it-all rappers have become more weird
As if they were superior and fans are inferior
How I balance between the streets and the theories of
Collegiate literature, I hold mirrors up
Give combinations of pain, joy, fear, and love
Through my perspective I can see Jah reflection
In the highest definition getting high with my brethren
Could've asked us why Africans dying from circumcision
They lack proper surgeons, suffer malnutrition
Underestimate the wealth of their own wisdom
It's like it's been exchanged for this penicillin

[Chorus x2 – Stephen Marley:]

Jah told you in his own words
And I'll see you through
To guide you through this cold world
And I'll see you through

“Interlude”

J. Cole

I'm drivin', nigga, as soon as I get the text we all in the car like “ahh, yeah nigga, we outta here nigga, yeah nigga!” So, we goin' crazy. We goin' crazy as fuck; we like super excited. Dog, ten seconds later, all I see in the back and hear is 'woop woop' blue lights right behind me—the fuckin' undercover car, of all things. So, I'm like fuck. I knew right away what it was. Dog, for the, for two and a half maybe three years before that, in New York, I was drivin' dirty, my license was no good. Dog, how 'bout the moment I found out I was gonna get the deal a fuckin' cop got behind me and I already knew what it was. I handled it so like, I handled it the best way the best way you could ever go to jail, like I went to jail knowin' bitch like, ah know what I'm sayin? I'm in there dog, spendin' the night in jail, realizin' like these niggas have no clue bitch I'm about to sign this. *[laughs]* That was the easiest night in jail a nigga could ever do, son.

“Jason”

Jadakiss, ft. Swizz Beatz

[Verse 1 - Swizz Beats:]

You got me feeling like I ain't winning

I'm starting from the beginning

I go Forrest, go Forrest

I make so much fucking money, yeah I go Forrest

These rims ain't for sale, bitch

This whip ain't for sale, bitch

And this Cuban ain't for sale, bitch

I been on the fucking boat like a sail bitch

500 feet on the fucking water

Ten fucking karats for my baby daughter

You come through boy, place your order

I got some niggas that'll meet you at the fucking border

[Hook - Swizz Beats & (Jadakiss):]

I got my hoodie and my mask on

I got my gun and my blast on

(Don't shoot please, can't breathe

Officer don't shoot, can't breathe)

[Verse 2 - Jadakiss:]

I'm just one of the five, I'm just one with the vibes
Even niggas is jealous so they just want you to die
They don't want you to rise, they just want you demise
So I be crossing my T's and I be dotting my I's
You on the opposite side, shots gonna fly
Best part about it, I can stay right up in Yonkers and hide
Keep a gun in the door, that's all in the rides
'Til my niggas come home, free all of the guys
This shit is all a facade, thought it was all a surprise
I heard of the stories, seen all of the lies
Long as the work is official, and the corner supplied
At the end of the day niggas, we gonna survive
What

[Hook:]

(Don't shoot please, can't breathe
Officer don't shoot, please, can't breathe)
I got my hoodie and my mask on
I got my gun and my blast on
(Don't shoot please, can't breathe
Officer don't shoot, don't shoot, please can't breathe)

[Verse 3 - Jadakiss:]

I'm just one of the five, I'm just one with the vibes
Can't figure it out or they don't wanna decide
In the gutter replying, mic flooded with dimes
Send you ass, I'ma hit you with the butt of the nine
Bullets soaking in pine, let 'em open your spine
Use your brain a little, my nigga open your mind
If you ain't in the circle, for a square I get you line
I know niggas is telling, I don't care about the time
Yeah I got weed on me, I don't care about the fine
From a hood where niggas don't give a fuck by design
Yeah, it's real life, it's not a rhyme
And remember, if you don't get caught it's not a crime
Like

[Hook:]

I got my hoodie and my mask on
I got my gun and my blast on
(Remember, can't breathe
Don't shoot, please, can't breathe)
I got my hoodie and my mask on

I got my hoodie and my mask on

(Officer don't shoot)

I got my gun and my blast on

“Mind of a Maniac”

Lil Boosie

[Talking - Lil Boosie:]

I done showed the world,
Now we finna wrap it up, ya know what I'm sayin'
Welcome to the mind of a maniac
What part of real you niggas don't understand?
Lemme talk to ya'll before we leave

[Verse 1]

I keep a gat cause niggas murder gotta bad habit
Of purple in the studio while I murk ya, I'm comin mane.
I swear to God I'm thuggin' hard trill niggas deal
Witcha big glocks off top, we ain't stuntin' mane
We street niggas, we eat niggas off tracks from Mouse and B
You betta be bout ya bread ya talk to me
Mom, ya wonder why ya child's so bad
Because the fuckin body bags done hypnotized my ass, it's deep
Holdin' on to this money mane I gotta get it
Choppers and a glock 40 play with me you get ya issue
Wrap ya dick up cause ya dick will have the hiccups
You're rich if ya marry a bitch, get a prenup

(I ain't go no mind)

[Hook x2:]

Welcome to the mind of a maniac (street nigga, street nigga)

[Verse 2]

Thug life, that's all we know

So we grow until some beasts when we can let off them leeches

We go and get it, get ya weight up

And when them camera flash you ain't never gotta ask

It's that's Boosie bad azz, straight up!

Angels runnin' us off, I ain't runnin my mouth

Spade for spade, I'm the realest nigga out,

Know what I'm talkin' 'bout

My niggas let Joc out

Jealous 'cause we fresher than rest of them fellas done stick together

Gotta have alarms, locks, I, can't trust nobody

I, gotta keep a desert eagle, nigga, know I got it

Heart full of fuckin' pain 'cause I'm tired of getting' stabbed

And grabbed by all these the mothafuckin' crabs

I laugh and maintain don't switch the game plan

And fuck the police they bring us no peace

This the mind of me, (Boosie boo)
So much shit goin' on where I roam
How I'm gonna find some peace?
They say I'm a role model, but I'm not a role model
Gotta smile when I ain't gotta, tired & still holla
I'm a boss so I go off, know I like to show off
On the road of riches, gotta murda these niggas
(Ain't got no mind)

[Hook x2:]

Welcome to the mind of a maniac (street nigga, street nigga)

We holla fuck cops, if we fall off with this rap
Mane it's back to the trap to bust blocks
Man who can I trust not, nigga fuckin up the game
It's down to momma pain, & CEO's and main mane
Gon' be in the chain game these niggas don't stop playin' from niggas
And bitches, yes sir I got game.
God cursed me with diabetes I feel like I'm insane
You ain't from the hood & you don't deserve
It mane, in the streets they murder mane
And Boosie he a target, so me?

I got my 40 when I'm shittin' on the toilet, I'm paranoid, starin' hard to get ya ass hit

Four or five chains ain't never had shit

Fuck a bitch she wanna mingle, ha, she want my jingles

One hit wonders getting' rich off a single

What's that Michael Vick? Don't snitch

Tell that judge he kill deers and it's real

(Ain't got no mind)

[Hook x2:]

Welcome to the mind of a maniac (street nigga, street nigga)

“Murder to Excellence”

Kanye West & Jay Z

[I. “Murder”]

[Intro – Jay Z:]

Bloody murder, murder murder [x4]

[Hook - Kanye West:]

The paper read murder, black on black murder

The paper read murder, black on black murder

[Verse 1 – Jay Z:]

This is to the memory of Danroy Henry

Too much enemy fire to catch a friendly

Strays from the same shade, nigga we on the same team

Giving you respect, I expect the same thing

All black everything, nigga you know my fresh code

I’m out here fightin’ for you, don’t increase my stress load

Niggas watchin’ the throne, very happy to be

Power to the people, when you see me, see you

[Verse 2 - Kanye West:]

And I’m from the murder capital, where they murder for capital

Heard about at least 3 killings this afternoon
Lookin' at the news like, damn I was just with him after school
No shop class but half the school got a tool
And I could die any day type attitude
Plus his little brother got shot reppin' his avenue
It's time for us to stop and re-define black power
41 souls murdered in 50 hours

[Hook - Kanye West:]

The paper read murder, black on black murder
The paper read murder, black on black murder
Again

[Verse 3 – Kanye West:]

Is it genocide?
'Cause I can still hear his momma cry, know the family traumatized
Shots left holes in his face, 'bout piranha-size
The old pastor closed the cold casket
And said the church ain't got enough room for all the tombs
It's a war going on outside, we ain't safe from
I feel the pain in my city wherever I go
314 soldiers died in Iraq

509 died in Chicago

[Verse 4 - Jay-Z:]

I arrived on the day Fred Hampton died

Real niggas just multiply

And they say by 21 I was supposed to die

So I'm out here celebratin' my post demise

If you put crabs in a barrel to insure your survival

You gon' end up pulling down niggas that look just like you

What up blood? What up cuz?

It's all black, I love us

[Hook - Kanye West:]

The paper read murder, black on black murder,

The paper read murder, black on black murder again

Black on black murder again

Black on black murder again

[II. "Excellence"]

[Verse 5 - Jay-Z:]

It's a celebration of black excellence

Black tie, black Maybachs

Black excellence, opulence, decadence
Tuxes next to the president, I'm present
I dress in Dries and other boutique stores in Paris
In sheepskin coats, I silence the lamb
Do you know who I am Clarice?
No cheap cologne whenever I "shh-shh"
Success never smelled so sweet, I stink of success
The new black elite, they say my black card bear the mark of the beast
I repeat, my religion is the beat
My verse is like church, my Jesus piece, now please, domino, domino
Only spot a few blacks the higher I go
What's up to Will, shoutout to O
That ain't enough, we gon' need a million more
Kick in the door, Biggie flow
I'm all dressed up with nowhere to go

[Verse 6 - Kanye West:]

Yeah it's all messed up when it's nowhere to go
So we won't take the time out til we reach the T-O-P
From paroles to hold G's, sold keys, low keys
We like the promised land of the OG's
In the past if you picture events like a black tie

What's the last thing you expect to see, black guys
What's the life expectancy for black guys?
The system's working effectively, that's why
I'll be a real man, take care of your son
Every problem you had before this day is now done
New crib, watch a movie
'Cause ain't nothin' on the news but the blues
Hit the mall, pick up some Gucci
Now ain't nothin' new but your shoes
Sunday morning, praise the Lord
You the girl that Jesus had been saving me for
So let's savor this moment, and take it to the floor
Black excellence, truly yours

“New National Anthem”

T.I., ft. Skylar Grey

[Intro - T.I.:]

I know radio prolly ain't gonna play this... but chopper going off in the hood man, like
Afghanistan or the Gaza strip somewhere man.

Yeah, we hear it so much we probably numb to it by now. After all, it's the American
way, right?

[Hook - Skylar Grey (T.I.):]

Home of the brave and free (It's America)

Free just to murder me (Land of the handgun)

Land of the beautiful (Home of the shotgun)

Cursed by the hate we throw (You're dead if you ain't got one)

Is this the new national anthem? (It was like this before I got here baby, I ain't do it)

Is this the new national anthem? (I ain't start it, I'm just a part of it)

[Verse 1 - T.I.:]

You say this the home of the brave I guess

I say this the home of the K's and the vets

All alone with the J's smoking yay cause he stressed

On chrome with a TEC taught to spray for respect

I learned from the best used to stay in the "jects"

Bought work from the vets burning rubber in the vets
This as good as it gets used to play with the rats
Then I got older and learned stay away from the rats
God blessed this nigga, to hustle up and make eight figures
Turned from a goon to a great young nigga
No complaining just doing what it take young nigga
I was raised in a decade of hate young nigga
Always dodging polices because they hate young niggas
And we hate them too, 38 in him shoe
All the changes the system will take him through
He ain't a killer but he will if you make him do it
Homicide he'll ride, they'll put him on trial
Let him have a life sentence then do it with a smile
And he only 19, he ain't even had a child
As a child, told his mama he'll be gone for a while
And she cried, still they just put him inside
Now she all on her own because her other son died
Listen to the politician as he lied and he lied
He a snake in a suit, trying to hide in disguise

[Hook - Skylar Grey (T.I.):]

Home of the brave and free (Well damn officer, what did I do?)

Free just to murder me (Naw hold up man, don't shoot, I live over there)

Land of the beautiful (Ay man, what you doin'?)

Cursed by the hate we throw (You trippin', dawg)

Is this the new national anthem (hHw many times has that ever happened to you; what the fuck do you know about being a black man in America?)

Is this the new national anthem (And you wonder why we walk around with straps)

[Verse 2 - T.I.:]

For the stars and the stripes prison bars and the pipe

Young nigga rolling weed in a cigar he can light

Bang red either blue selling hard and the white

Live by the gun, never run from a fight

Trayvon in a hoodie, walking through the neighborhood he

Didn't do shit to buddy, he didn't have to die did he?

I guess it's because his dad was a judge in the city

They didn't want him in the pen with the thugs that could get him

A jury of his peers said all was forgiven

But touch one of mine, right or wrong, I'm a kill them

Fill them with the lead like they put in Martin Luther King's head

Like they killed Malcolm X, Edgar Hoover did that

You can catch me in the hood where they shooting niggas at

They don't know if Neighborhood or the Hoovers did that

Whether Piru or VL's or GDs with me we
Down to up-rise from the OG's to peewees

[Hook - Skylar Grey (T.I.):]

Home of the brave and free (Don't get it fucked up)
Free just to murder me (If you ain't found something you're willing to die for, you ain't fit
to live)
Land of the beautiful (To get something you've never had, you must be willing to do
something you've never done)
Cursed by the hate we throw (I'ma die by mine)
Is this the new national anthem (America, you don' created a monster that refuse to be
ignored, the jig is up)
Is this the new national anthem (Yeah, I'm with the revolution [...] What is you doin'?)

[Outro - T.I.:]

Let me ask you something. If the kids are the future, tell me why you can get more for
being C.E.O., than you can for being a teacher. Tell me why it means more to the
government to pay the people who got to watch over the prisoners, more than the people
who got to keep the children from becoming prisoners. That make sense? Tell me why 9
ounces of crack will get you more time than a rape right now. Tell me why them crazy
white boys can tote a gun but I can't right now. Yea I had felonies, I done did dirt in the
streets, but I ain't ever gave it to anybody that didn't deserve it. You know what I mean? I

ain't ever ran in no public place with no pistol shooting no innocent people. I ain't never ran in no school, killing no kids. Man, this is the result of you refusing to deal with the issues at hand. We are a product of the environment you placed us in... we ain't do it... we just lived through it.

[Hook - Skylar Grey (T.I.):]

Home of the brave and free (Message to my people)

Free just to murder me (Stop waiting on folk to help you; help yourself, it starts with you)

Land of the beautiful (Get yourself out, reach back, get somebody else out)

Cursed by the hate we throw (And that's the way we're going to get ahead)

Is this the new national anthem (Sittin' around waiting on government to do something for us ain't never gonna happen partner, they don't give a fuck about us)

Is this the new national anthem (But don't play into their hand partner, you making it easy for 'em, hell is you doin'?)

“New Slaves”

Kanye West

[Verse 1]

My momma was raised in an era when
Clean water was only served to the fairer skin
Doing clothes you would have thought I had help
But they wasn't satisfied unless I picked the cotton myself
You see it's broke nigga racism
That's that "Don't touch anything in the store"
And there's rich nigga racism
That's that "Come here, please buy more"
What you want a Bentley, fur coat and diamond chain?
All you blacks want all the same things
Used to only be niggas now everybody play me
Spending everything on Alexander Wang
New Slaves

[Hook x2]

You see it's leaders and there's followers
But I'd rather be a dick than a swallower

[Verse 2]

I throw these Maybach keys
I wear my heart on the sleeve
I know that we the new slaves
I see the blood on the leaves
I see the blood on the leaves
I see the blood on the leaves
I know that we the new slaves
I see the blood on the leaves
They throwing hate at me
Want me to stay at ease
Fuck you and your corporation
Y'all niggas can't control me
I know that we the new slaves
I know that we the new slaves
I'm about to wild the fuck out
I'm going Bobby Boucher
I know that pussy ain't free
You niggas pussy, ain't me
Y'all throwing contracts at me
You know that niggas can't read
Throw on some Maybach keys
Fuck it, c'est la vie

I know that we the new slaves
Y'all niggas can't fuck with me
Y'all niggas can't fuck with Ye
Y'all niggas can't fuck with Ye
I'll move my family out the country
So you can't see where I stay
So go and grab the reporters
So I can smash their recorders
See they'll confuse us with some bullshit like the New World Order
Meanwhile the DEA
Teamed up with the CCA
They tryna lock niggas up
They tryna make new slaves
See that's that private owned prison
Get your piece today
They Probably all in the Hamptons
Braggin' 'bout they maid
Fuck you and your Hampton house
I'll fuck your Hampton spouse
Came on her Hampton blouse
And in her Hampton mouth
Y'all 'bout to turn shit up

I'm 'bout to tear shit down

I'm 'bout to air shit out

Now what the fuck they gon' say now?

[Outro - Kanye West & Frank Ocean:]

I won't end this high, not this time again

So long, so long, so long, you cannot survive

And I'm not dyin', and I can't lose

I can't lose, no, I can't lose

Cause I can't leave it to you

So let's get too high, get too high again

(Too high again, too high)

[Kóbor János]

Egyszer a Nap úgy elfáradt

Elaludt mély zöld tó öléén

Az embereknek fájt a sötét

Ő megsajnálta, eljött közénk

“New York, New York”

The Game

[Intro]

Turn the beat up, yeah

[Verse]

New York, New York; wake up LA

Wave hi to the Chi, let's get right today

I heard them lil' niggas takin' their life away

I heard a couple lil' niggas got life today

Is it Farrakhan, Buddha, or Christ today?

She on her knees so she know what it's like to pray

She got religious so she doin' it twice a day

I strap up, no I ain't throwin' dice today

When you got money on yo head it's a price to pay

And it get cold in the hood, put your ice away

They locked Rick Ross up and they ain't give him no bail

But a cracker shoot a whole church up and it's "Oh well"

Oh well, oh well

Hang him with a confederate flag in his cell

Let him sit there and rot 'til his body turns to bones

Just remember who casted the first stone

New York, New York; good mornin' LA
Say hi to the Chi, celebrate with the Bay
No hesitation like Steph, shoot it right in your face
Cause I'm a Golden State warrior strapped with a K
How's it land of the free, when we're trapped in a cage?
Some shit just never make sense like Magic and AIDS
Some shit just never make sense like bashin' the gays
Obama must be in the city, it's traffic today
Niggas trappin' today just like back in the day
We like Roc-A-Fella Records, we packagin' yay
And that Dirty Sprite 2 shit slappin' today
We got these niggas boxed in like Cassius Clay
And my Ferragamo belt where that ratchet stay
Cause the police killing too many blacks today
I wake up in the morning like, "Who gon' pass away?
Who gon' blast today? Who gon' have to pray?"
New York, New York; Good morning L.A.
My nigga Hayes blew him and his wife away

[Outro]

This song is dedicated to Stephanie Mosley, who was murdered from a single gunshot wound inflicted by her husband, Earl Hayes, in Los Angeles, California, December 18th,

2014. I knew Hayes since we were both signed to Aftermath back in 2005. And if I can keep it 8 more than 92 with you, he was a good nigga, I never saw that coming. My prayers are with Stephanie's entire family, I am truly and deeply sorry for your loss.

“Paperwork”

T.I., ft. Pharrell Williams

[Hook - Pharrell:]

(Paperwork)

Don't do no business until you check his (paperwork)

And if all else fails, I just hope that this (paperwork)

Wanna swing Bentley doors, blow smoke through the roof

Everything got a cost, they gone need something on you

(Paperwork)

[Verse 1 - T.I.:]

ATL, Westside, that's the only home I know

In '85, me and Uncle Quint used to ride around in the big Bronco

Took me up to Charles' Disco

Daytime, set me down at the bar

Where I drank Shirley Temple

'Til he walked out with a bag and we got back in the car

“What you wanna be,” he asked, “when you grow up big kid?”

I just wanna be like you, ridin' round town gettin' bread

We shot a couple Lac, couple summer pass

Uncle Quint ain't nowhere to be found

Later we learn that someone ratted him out

For that reason 10 years he won't be around

[Hook - Pharrell:]

(Paperwork)

Don't do no business until you check his (paperwork)

And if all else fails, I just hope that this (paperwork)

Wanna swing Bentley doors, blow smoke through the roof

Everything got a cost, they gone need something on you

(Paperwork)

[Verse 2 - T.I.:]

Picture me in '93

I'm the only man I see

Fresh up off the porch

Lookin' for a drop Porsche and a fake ID

Introduce me to the crack game

Rap game was the furthest from my mind

Had a notebook full of rhymes

And a pocket full of crack rock dimes

Time on my side, lil' .45 in my jeans

Open fire if you seem to be blocking my dreams, yessir

Welfare, food stamps

Section eight, me and Ma lived in the trap

I said fuck school, it holdin' me back

I wanna bankroll, chasin' after that

[Hook - Pharrell:]

(Paperwork)

Don't do no business until you check his (paperwork)

And if all else fails, I just hope that this (paperwork)

Wanna swing Bentley doors, blow smoke through the roof

Everything got a cost, they gone need something on you

(Paperwork)

[Verse 3 - T.I.:]

Look at me, at 17

Livin' on my own, peddlin'

Quarter ki, now and then sellin' weed

Totin' tools, cost my first felony

That's one of many, that were to follow

Drinkin' Henney up out the bottle

Tote a choppa, I think I'm bein' followed

Family don't think I'll live to see tomorrow

Plenty have a story like mine

Know many of you had a little nine
Know many of you did a little dirt
Too many of us did a little time
Wake up, 10 years of your life passed
When you get your cake up
Don't it seem lil' odd
When the Feds on your ass passin' out

[Hook - Pharrell:]

(Paperwork)

Don't do no business until you check his (paperwork)
And if all else fails, I just hope that this (paperwork)
Wanna swing Bentley doors, blow smoke through the roof
Everything got a cost, they gone need something on you
(Paperwork)

[Bridge - Pharrell (T.I.):]

If you think that you high, baby look above you
It's drones in the sky, there's nothing you could do
So left, two, three snap
Right two, three snap
Don't get serious now it's too late for that

'Cause they got

Time on my side, lil' .45 in my jean

Open fire if you seem to be blocking my dreams, yessir

[Hook - Pharrell:]

(Paperwork)

Don't do no business until you check his (paperwork)

And if all else fails, I just hope that this (paperwork)

Wanna swing Bentley doors, blow smoke through the roof

Everything got a cost, they gone need something on you

(Paperwork)

“Polo & Shell Tops”

Meek Mill

[Intro]

Yea, yea

I remember ...

[Verse 1]

I remember nights I used to sell rock

Posted on the corner like a mailbox

First class ticket to a cell block

Just to get some Polo & some shell tops

Cold world and they say hell's hot

But it ain't hotter than that choppa when them shells drop

Man, I seen niggas play that block and get they bell rocked

Cops cleared the scene and I was back by twelve o'clock

Tryna' get it, Dickie on and my fitted

Gun in my draws, ducking the law, I'm all with it

Money, cars and clothes, I wanted 'em all, nigga

I never was good at hoopin', I wanted to ball, nigga

'Cause the OG's sold keys and I had no cheese

Copper's lock me, beat me down like I was Cochise

Old fiends coppin' work through they're old dreams

They got shattered, it ain't matter cause we thirst cream
Niggas serving niggas moms just to make a flip
Homies murder other homies just to make a brick
Most my niggas done got busted tryna' take a hit
The feds were lurking, we was serving, they was taking flicks

[Hook]

This how it goes down in the jungle
Where niggas learn to shoot before they could rumble
Cops rushing, they gon' kick in the front door
And if they chase you better hope you don't stumble
I wanted Polo with some shell tops
I just wanted Polo and some shell tops
And I was out there tryna' sell rocks
'Cause I wanted Polo and some shell tops

[Verse 2]

I done seen close neighbors lose hope
Fall victim to the streets and start to use dope
I use to load my gun before I went to school first
It's crazy niggas wanna kill me, we was cool first
And when it comes to friends you can't let 'em too close

That's why they call 'em close friends, you turn your back they move first
And I just bought a new ghost, and a crib out on that new coast
And it all started from a dolla
Running from the law, scuffing up my Prada's
Crack all in my draws, tryna' make a profit
All I wanted was some shells and some Polo for my closet, Awh
Drug money, turn to blood money
I only roll with niggas that'll take a slug for me
No matter what it is, I'mma pay that bail money
To get my niggas right, my niggas for life!

[Hook]

This how it goes down in the jungle
Where niggas learn to shoot before they could rumble
Cops rushing, they gon' kick in the front door
And if they chase you better hope you don't stumble
I wanted Polo with some shell tops
I just wanted Polo and some shell tops
And I was out there tryna' sell rocks
'Cause I wanted Polo and some shell tops

“Rich is Gangsta”

Rick Ross

[Intro]

Ya'll niggas know what this is,
If you don't, I'm finna break it down

[Verse 1]

I just upped my stock, fuck them cops
If you love hip-hop bust them shots
Your man priceless, if your man's loyal
Better give that man a raise or end up paying for it.
If you cut it, call it Jam Master Jay
No Adidas but I rock a brick a day
Talk about the jewels outta nigga reach,
Nigga please, so I came back with a bigger piece
You still smokin' weed on your car chase
I'm pullin' off the car lot screamin' God is great
Before the crib you gotta clear the guard's gate
Elevators like Frank's on Scarface
New Presidential had that pavé
Like a G, I gave the Cartier to Wale
Then I gave Meek Mill a Range Rover

Told Warner Brothers that the game's over

[Interlude]

For me to move it forward from here on I need 50

I ain't talking 50 Cent neither nigga, ha ha

[Verse 2]

I came back a rich nigga

Young mogul, Bo Jackson, I'm a switch hitter

They want me face down on the pavement

Gang members claim I need to make a payment

It's hard for a young black executive

Can't you see we're all fucking relatives

Relatively easy we can go to war

Fuck it, we can go to war

Chasing me a hundred million, that's inshallah

Fresh up out the Fed system, welcome home Jabar

I watch him pray five times a day nigga

Same one that use to move the yay nigga

AKs in his heyday nigga

Benz coupe, wood frames, low fade nigga

Got the Cubans, got the boats, got the Zoes nigga

Cocaine worth much more than gold nigga
So what's your goals nigga? All my shit went gold nigga
I remember smoking mid-grade
'Til I went and got my shit straight
I'm spittin' like this bitch a mix tape
'Til they seen a ghost with a template
Sitting in the trap blowing thick smoke
Trafficking my dope with a thick ho
Feds tore apart the squad nigga
That's why I had to play the part nigga
That wasn't me, it was a job nigga
It gets deeper, that was just a start nigga
Screaming in my sleep, I know Lord hear me
Death to you fuck boys, on my 4th Bentley

[Outro]

Gangsta, nigga, rich is gangsta, nigga
This is gangsta, nigga,
Yeah, rich is gangsta, nigga.
You know where we came from
Look where we at

“So We Can Live”

2 Chainz, ft. T-Pain

[Hook - T-Pain:]

Honey, we got off on the wrong foot, baby

'Cause the relationship has been so good lately

If I don't do what I do, then who's gon' put food on the table?

It is what it is, I'm just handling biz

But I do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

[Verse 1 - 2 Chainz:]

Mama don't work, heater don't work

Police pulled me over and said he seen weed on my shirt

I pray to the lord and ask for forgiveness

If he popped my trunk I can get a life sentence

He came a little closer and told me that he smellin' it

I said “I rolled one up, I won't insult your intelligence

But I threw it out the window half a mile ago”

He asked me when the last time I smoke, I said a while ago

Forgive me officer, I'm stressin' and my pockets sore
Hurtin', chillin' with my dog like a fuckin' Labrador
He said he ain't with the bull: matador
Looked at the top of my car, like what this lighter for?
I told him I was puttin' girls up in the mornin'
And I'm goin' to my uncle's house to see if he can join me
The officer got a call so he was needed
And he told me slow it down, and I told him please believe it
Then I proceeded to go to my uncle's house
Well it really wasn't my uncle, it was a junkie's house
He got a badass niece with a donkey now
Pullin' out the parking lot, headed to the other spot
Out all night, addict with addicts, causin' Havoc, I'm a Prodigy
Niggas know we Mobbin' Deep, gotta stay up when everyone fall asleep
The good die young, and promises are hard to keep
I left my old job, and now them niggas hardly speak
I got a new job, and plus I'm making more a week
The girl that I'm with is like a young Kimora Lee
I got them folks fiendin', pumpin' that Jodeci
Sippin' and my soda pink, you niggas is toilet seat
Check my resume, it used to say I sold quarter ki's
Conduct disorderly, stayin' in the trap house

Trips went to work, I'm so glad that it mapped out

[Hook - T-Pain:]

Honey, we got off on the wrong foot, baby

'Cause the relationship has been so good lately

If I don't do what I do, then who's gon' put food on the table?

It is what it is, I'm just handling biz

But I do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

I only do what I do so we can live

(So-so-so-so-so-so- so we can live) x4

[Verse 2 - 2 Chainz:]

Simon says, monkey see monkey do

I wore the shirt, you wore the same shirt too

See me with my bitch, you buy your bitch the same purse

Shoot you and your nigga, y'all can share the same hearse

This that murder 1, mixed with the bubblegum

Kept working my dun dun duns, come get your mama some

Nigga, this that slum talk, some say we talks slums

I rarely finish the end of my words
Watch the rims hit on the curve
And what a nigga really care about a lisp?
People arguin' over me while I'm layin' in a bitch
Death to a snitch, get it while you can (break) and shit
Its 3:30 in the A.M.
We're just gettin' started like when I had the van
Bought the tour bus and put some niggas in the pass
Your style good enough to put in a glass bag
You know I'm getting' mines, you should use a hashtag
Flow off the hinges tryna fuck all her friendses
Just killed her pussy, you gon' have to use forensics
Organized crime, you can put me in a lineup
Plus I got dreads, I'll pay a hundred for the line up
(So-so-so-so-so-so- so we can live) x4

[Verse 3 - 2 Chainz:]

Appetite for destruction, and I don't a menu
So far ahead of y'all niggas, I can see you in my rearview
See you in my rearview one of your headlights out nigga
I just got my first R&B bitch and got head all night with her
She said she tired of the generic

I say what up, she say what up, what up, you a parrot?

I'm like "Bird ass girl, aren't you sick of the rhetoric?"

And if I ain't arrogant, I'm out of my element

(So-so-so-so-so-so- so we can live) x4

“Swishas & Erb”

UGK, ft. Sleepy Brown

[Hook – Pimp C:]

Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb

Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb

Sippin' lean, smokin' on some pine

Girl I'm pimpin', got money on my mind

Game is crazy, niggas lazy, I got heavy fire

[?] put one on it bitch, it's still five for sure, for sure

Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb

Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb

[Verse 1 – Bun B:]

You know Bun B the business street soldier in the trenches

Frontline comin' down on twenty four inches

Dope boys hangin' on the corners and the benches

Sayin' it's a drought so it's plenty of heat pinches

Boys used to come up from the rags to the riches

Plush lifestyle with the bad ass bitches

But now it's like the game is full of nothin' but some snitches

And wanna be gangsters that's scared to put 'em in ditches

Fed's takin' pictures so the cameras go click
And video rollin' while I'm holdin' my dick
They follow me around like they doin' they job
But while you watchin' me, how many people gettin' robbed?
Let's keep it trill 'cause we already know
What it already is and how it already go
That's why we chop blades comin' down real slow
Pop trunks, swang, riders slam Cadillac door
Pass the swisha let's blow

[Hook – Pimp C:]

Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb
Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb

[Verse 2 – Sleepy Brown:]

Before we get started, everybody roll up one for Pimp C
Before we go any further, take your lighter, light it up for me
Now let's go, now let's go and all the girls get down on the floor
Throw your money in the air and let 'em know
Throw your money in the air and let 'em know
I'm whippin' big wheels, whippin' big wheels
Hope your drink don't spill whippin' big wheels

Tell me how you feel, tell me how you feel

[?] lady on my side, hey

And if you all down for me

Put your hands in the air raise 'em up for Pimp C

And if you all down with me

Put your hands in the air raise 'em up for Pimp C

[Hook – Pimp C:]

Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb

Don't wanna be disturbed, I got my swishas & erb

“The Blacker the Berry”

Kendrick Lamar

[Intro]

Everything black, I don't want black

I want everything black, I ain't need black

Some white some black, I ain't mean black

I want everything black

Everything black, want all things black

I don't need black, want everything black

Don't need black, our eyes ain't black

I own black, own everything black

[Bridge]

Six in the mornin', fire in the street

Burn, baby burn, that's all I wanna see

And sometimes I get off watchin' you die in vain

It's such a shame they may call me crazy

They may say I suffer from schizophrenia or somethin'

But homie you made me

Black don't crack my nigga

[Verse 1]

I'm the biggest hypocrite of 2015
Once I finish this, witnesses will convey just what I mean
Been feeling this way since I was 16, came to my senses
You never liked us anyway, fuck your friendship, I meant it
I'm African-American, I'm African
I'm black as the moon, heritage of a small village
Pardon my residence
Came from the bottom of mankind
My hair is nappy, my dick is big, my nose is round and wide
You hate me don't you?
You hate my people, your plan is to terminate my culture
You're fuckin' evil I want you to recognize that I'm a proud monkey
You vandalize my perception but can't take style from me
And this is more than confession
I mean I might press the button just so you know my discretion
I'm guardin' my feelins, I know that you feel it
You sabotage my community, makin' a killin'
You made me a killer, emancipation of a real nigga

[Pre-Hook]

The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice
The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice

The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice

The blacker the berry, the bigger I shoot

[Hook]

I said they treat me like a slave, cah' me black

Woi, we feel a whole heap of pain, cah' we black

And man a say they put me in a chain, cah' we black

Imagine now, big gold chain full of rocks

How you no see the whip, left scars pon' me back

But now we have a big whip, parked pon' the block

All them say we doomed from the start, cah' we black

Remember this, every race start from the black, just remember that

[Verse 2]

I'm the biggest hypocrite of 2015

Once I finish this, witnesses will convey just what I mean

I mean, it's evident that I'm irrelevant to society

That's what you're telling me, penitentiary would only hire me

Curse me till I'm dead

Church me with your fake prophesying that I'mma be just another slave in my head

Institutionalize manipulation and lies

Reciprocation of freedom only live in your eyes

You hate me don't you?

I know you hate me just as much as you hate yourself

Jealous of my wisdom and cards I dealt

Watchin' me as I pull up, fill up my tank, then peel out

Muscle cars like pull ups, show you what these big wheels 'bout, ah

Black and successful, this black man meant to be special

CAT scans on my radar bitch, how can I help you?

How can I tell you I'm making a killin'?

You made me a killer, emancipation of a real nigga

[Pre-Hook]

The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice

The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice

The blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice

The blacker the berry, the bigger I shoot

[Hook]

I said they treat me like a slave, cah' me black

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And man a say they put me in a chain, cah' we black

Imagine now, big gold chain full of rocks

How you no see the whip, left scars pon' me back

But now we have a big whip, parked pon' the block
All them say we doomed from the start, cah' we black
Remember this, every race start from the black, just remember that

[Verse 3]

I'm the biggest hypocrite of 2015
When I finish this if you listenin' sure you will agree
This plot is bigger than me, it's generational hatred
It's genocism, it's grimy, little justification
I'm African-American, I'm African
I'm black as the heart of a fuckin' Aryan
I'm black as the name of Tyrone and Darius
Excuse my French but fuck you — no, fuck y'all
That's as blunt as it gets, I know you hate me, don't you?
You hate my people, I can tell cause it's threats when I see you
I can tell cause your ways deceitful
Know I can tell because you're in love with the Desert Eagle
Thinkin' maliciously, he get a chain then you gone bleed him
It's funny how Zulu and Xhosa might go to war
Two tribal armies that want to build and destroy
Remind me of these Compton Crip gangs that live next door
Beefin' with Piru's, only death settle the score

So don't matter how much I say I like to preach with the Panthers
Or tell Georgia State "Marcus Garvey got all the answers"
Or try to celebrate February like it's my B-Day
Or eat watermelon, chicken, and Kool-Aid on weekdays
Or jump high enough to get Michael Jordan endorsements
Or watch BET cause urban support is important
So why did I weep when Trayvon Martin was in the street?
When gang banging make me kill a nigga blacker than me?
Hypocrite!

“The Good, the Bad, the Ugly”

The Game

[Intro]

Yo, you can keep asking them fuckin’ questions all fuckin’ day, man

I told you what- I told you what the fuck happened man

Told your partner the same thing, man, how long a nigga gotta stay here? (Raggedy-ass precinct)

[Verse 1]

There was money on the table with the bricks

I was in the living room feeling on this bitch

Heard my car alarm goin’ off on my 6

So my dogs start barkin’ and some niggas hit the fence

So I take my dick out this bitch mouth and walked to the window

Pull the blinds down and took one hit of the Indo

You niggas ain't doin’ shit, but stealin’ my neighbor’s rims so

Walked back to the couch and told the bitch to bend over

That's what I'm rolling with..

Nah, I ain't sayin’ shit and I ain't snitching on nobody

Yea that's my .45, but it ain't got no bodies

And 2 dead niggas? Them is nobody

They should've torched 'em, and you wouldn't had no bodies

I mean look at these pictures, just so sloppy
Couldn't have been me, I do my shit like John Gotti
Feed the nigga to the sharks after dark
Man, fuck this shit I thought I told y'all
There was money on the table by the bricks
I was at the kitchen table choppin' up some shit
Listenin' to Jeezy and I heard a little (bullet sound)
So I turned the radio down and cocked my 4-fif', oh shit
Am I hit? Nah, just a hole in my Jordan fitted
So I turn down all the lights and cock my 4-fif'
Seen some niggas jump in they Escalade and that was it
How much longer I gotta stay in this mothafucka?
Let me get a cigarette, I don't even smoke but shit y'all got a nigga stressed
I gotta stay in this mothafucka until I confess?
Shit, y'all bitches better get some rest
'Cause it'll be a cold day in Miami
Before I snitch on myself or the hood, you understand me?
Yeah, I fuck with the Bulls but I ain't Sammy
Niggas run around the hood singin', they should get a Grammy
And you two mothafuckas should get an Oscar
With this good cop bad cop shit.. Take me to process
'Cause I don't eat breakfast with no pigs

I watched First 48 so fuck your 25 years
No evidence, no big; I don't know who split them niggas' wigs
Already told y'all, there was money on the table with the bricks
I was walkin' to bathroom to take a shit
Then I heard my dogs barkin', there's some noise by the fence
So I ran to my room and reached for the 4-fif'
Then I seen three niggas by my back door
Looked out the bathroom window and seen two more
So I reached for my chopper and some clips out the drawer
Guess I had to welcome niggas to the gun store

“The Pessimist”

Wale, ft. J. Cole

[Intro]

[Jerry:] Oh so there's still hope?

[George:] I don't want hope, hope is killing me. My dream is to become hopeless. When you're hopeless you don't care, and when you don't care, that indifference, it makes you attractive

[Verse 1 - Wale:]

A nigga feelin' hopeless

Who am I to change perception?

If a nigga kill a nigga he's another statistic

If his skin's a little different they gon' say it was self-defense

Nigga feelin' hopeless

Starin' at the idiom box, riddle me this

If a killer was a nigga would niggas still really care

'Cause niggas worser than Zimmerman livin' life everywhere

Niggas hopeless

Small niggas with big tools

Couldn't get to Harvard, hard work, he hard whipped

'Cause them hardy har's and hard nights

Are hard to live through

When you hopeless
What we gotta do to be winnin'?
'Cause all the schools gettin' closed
Dribble a little, coach, shootin' at a foe
'Cause they chargin' them to hoop at community center
My nigga, hopeless
25 bands, he was shootin' not a damn givin'
Cousin threw a couple grand at some dancers
Throwin' back their fat ass, is my glasses confused?
We're the hopeless
America's dream and nightmare in the same being
Even when being polite here
Niggas try to bring me down, the life of a pioneer
Lightyears worth of hopeless
Celebrities celebratin' disgust me
The cerebellum invaded with all these fresh things on
Watchin' "Love and Hip Hop: Atlanta" as we speak
Nigga we hopeless
Okay, the Steebie show is on
And so my broad rollin' weed now she's mad at me
'Cause she seen a scene with Rasheeda baby father
Said, "You niggas all hopeless"

[Hook - J Cole:]

Got a pocket full of lint again, but it make no difference to me

Fallin' out with my friends again, but it make no difference to me

Goddamn I'm hopeless

Oh man I'm hopeless

Got no gas in my tank again, but it make no difference to me

Overdraft at the bank again, but it make no difference to me

Goddamn I'm hopeless

Lord knows I'm hopeless

Still I pray

[Verse 2 - Wale:]

Nigga feelin' hopeless

Like a Penny with a hole in it

We as empty as a corazón of a widow

From a soul that she don't know when he's comin' home

He don't got no limit, hopeless

What's a purple heart to a hurt head?

He done done 12 years, he was told 6

Prolly go back in a minute, ain't shit here

Nigga so hopeless

Thoughts are ravaging in the whole crib
Now he post-traumatic and always on the edge
On the pills, some bills, two kids, one leg
Nigga so hopeless
A lot of black cops always clap back
And some foul white cops always on deck
Playin' race card, guarantee you'll make a blackjack
Nigga so hopeless
'Cause we ain't 'posed to never have shit
And we ain't vocal as rap
Niggas 'cause we don't mope unless we trap hits
Nigga hopeless
Look at what I go through to show you
Niggas respect money, money respect power
And power, we never given unless
A nigga catch, shoot or dribble
We are hopeless
Nah you ain't out here for the culture
You finna riot, without a purpose
You ain't a mothafuckin' rider, you a fuckin' token, posin'
Nigga hopeless
Of course not literal

But why complain about the man
When a nigga with my skin
The same problems with them I had
Is out there killin' niggas too?
Eat your food, nigga

[Hook - J Cole:]

Got a pocket full of lint again, but it make no difference to me
Fallin' out with my friends again, but it make no difference to me
Goddamn I'm hopeless
Oh man I'm hopeless
Got no gas in my tank again, but it make no difference to me
Overdraft at the bank again, but it make no difference to me
Goddamn I'm hopeless
Lord knows I'm hopeless
Still I pray

“We Will Rob You”

Raekwon, ft. GZA, Masta Killa, & Slick Rick

[Intro - Kung fu sample:]

Who the hell teaches you kung fu?

Your master must be an ignorant idiot as well!

[Intro: Slick Rick]

(Uncle Ricky, would you read us a bedtime story?)

Nah kid, but I'ma give you one them old Raekwon crime joints

Feel me? We will, we will

We will, we will - here we go

[Verse 1 - Raekwon:]

Well it was late one night, walking through the park

With my leathered down coat and Wallabee Clarks

Getting my step on, big shit, big six, big wrist

So much excitement in the air, I was crisp

Money suitcase, Louis joint (yo, Rae, I'm a get some shit just like yours!)

Go make it happen, black God and get rich

Saw the D's fly by, in a New Yorker, yup, tints and shit

They made a right on me, them last two dicks

Know I seen 'em, Max loaded, jog right back to the car

They spun around again and blast they shits
I dropped a Backwood, a puff and then a 6-4-5
You're a live nigga, you almost smashed yo shit
I'ma don my way out the bitch, moving through the car
Nice and slow, two hoodies on and a golden pit
Nigga had a white eye, they both blacked down
What's the clown shit for? The dog jumped in the whip
It was a trained one, wops pointed at me (yo, nigga, freeze)

[Verse 2 - GZA:]

I told the Chef Raekwon, pump the breaks
Slow it down, you know these c-cypher punks scanned your plates
Release the seatbelt off the shoulders, a mile ahead
Then the vibe got a lot colder when the marksman said
"Black niggas in the Jeep, get the fuck out the car"
"Put your hands where my eyes can see or suffer a scar"
He was a veteran, who kept, pepper spray in the canister
Donut shop lounge, thirty eight brandisher
On top of that, the blunt smoke just rang a bell
Of his bloodhound who had an acute sense of smell
Beef tripping, saliva dripping from razor sharp teeth
That was pointy as the daggers of the Indian Chiefs

Same cops known for extorting pimps and booking whores
Aimed Glocks at me and Rae, 'cause they was looking for
A few MC's wanted for a string of break-ins
Last seen, wearing long minks and snakeskins

[Chorus - Slick Rick:]

We will, we will, rob you
We will, we will, Glock you
We will, we will, what? who? (not you)
Here we go...

[Verse 3 - Masta Killa:]

You know my Clan done ran from Japan to Atlanta
With stamina, peace to Chef, Mr. Meth
Move it on your left, with the Iron Lung breath
Ghostface Kill', U-G ill
Deck so real, Dr. Ason Unique, the medic
Ahh, Allah just, The Abbott, ya'll niggas can't forget it
You might catch a cap if your shit ain't street
Allah Mathematics make the cypher complete
See knowledge is the foundation of existence
To know starts the spark of the flow

Wisdom activation of the Nation moving
Wise words, show and prove or understand the 13 letters
And the Masta, culture be the way of life
Freedom is reward, who will pay the price for the power
Spending hour after hour, preparing his self
For the hour, now look how refined
When the mind and body is one, every part of me
Supreme equality, manifest the nature of self
G-O-D, now build and add on to the truth
Destroy the bullshit, born incomplete

“Wild’n Cuz I’m Young”

Kid Cudi

[Hook]

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

And I be wilding 'til I'm chill and old

[Verse 1]

Liquor all night love it!

Untamed youth and coupes move like bullets

I guess the fact my father smoked and drink

Made a young nigga destiny to do the exact same

Young wilding me and all my Codys

Watch the phony and hoes they couldn't blew me

Dark skinned China doll with the fake tits

Ice grillin' my Spanish chick, word

We all in together now we all fear cops be bugging

Shotguns on the whip, fuck 'em

I will never sweat for a piggy

You catch me high it's all good no biggie

[Hook]

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

And I be wilding 'til I'm chill and old

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

And I be wilding 'til I'm chill and old

[Verse 2]

4 in the morning getting cozy

So much goose, I let the fry soak it up some

Tuesday weekly, the legend of the rager
Most have witnessed the Cud' in the club
I don't have Plain Pat ready
Ice is thrown and the whole crew gone
Done off the better and very celebratory
Fuck the blogs, Imma tell my story
No matter the phase, my name is engraved
In the minds of the young
To be living 'til their grave
You live and you learn
Doing bumps in the day
Keep blunts to burn

[Hook]

I be wilding 'cause I'm young
Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young
Wildin' 'cause I'm young
Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young
I be wilding 'cause I'm young
I be wilding 'cause I'm young
And I be wilding 'til I'm chill and old
I be wilding 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' 'cause I'm young

Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

I be wilding 'cause I'm young

And I be wilding 'til I'm chill and old

[Verse 3]

Rage, 'cause I'm paid

Take the gray and create another shade

Awesome no more bitches playing possum

Pop and lock 'em and send 'em on home

Tired of hoes all they want is to get chose

Know the code when a women with some toes

Optimo taking trips to Australia

Do some blow and hope you make through the show

Hands high, go with your soul

And try floating through the sky

Hide your pain with some pussy and mimosa's

Costa Rica next on the agenda

[Hook]

I be wilding 'cause I'm young
Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young
Wildin' 'cause I'm young
Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young
I be wilding 'cause I'm young
I be wilding 'cause I'm young
And I be wilding 'til I'm chill and old
I be wilding 'cause I'm young
Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young
Wildin' 'cause I'm young
Wildin' wildin' 'cause I'm young
I be wilding 'cause I'm young
I be wilding 'cause I'm young
And I be wilding 'til I'm chill and old

“World’s an Addiction”

Nas, ft. Anthony Hamilton

[Intro - Anthony Hamilton:]

Lies and the pain

Betrayal, life

[Verse 1 - Anthony Hamilton:]

In danger's face

Look what you're facing, gave your heart away

And all the remedies couldn't ease the pain

All the hurt and betrayal; need to get away

In a world so cold

You gain your life just to lose your soul

Never thinking twice 'bout what the future holds

All the lies and the games not worth fighting for

[Hook - Anthony Hamilton:]

The world is an addiction, serving up a fix

The world is an addiction, way too much for me

[Verse 2 – Nas:]

Snitches and rapists in the street, crime to the fullest

Asking niggas if they got any extra nine bullets

They deny me that, they know the bullets they loan me

Be the same ones that probably had them lying flat stretched out

Letter T

It's better to dead a beef than let it breathe, then we don't succeed

'Cause then you gotta murder dummies

Waste your time, they allergic to money

I'm never squeamish to blood, we can thug, and get out of hand,

What's the options?

Only conclusion is shooting, bullets poppin',

Hoodlums dropping, fear any day that the feds will come knocking

Was young and nervous, asking myself what's my purpose,

In the back of a paddy wagon, bracelets, aching me

Pigs ignoring, I'm asking what precinct they taking me

These cops can't relate to me, death to prison, empty vacancy

[Hook - Anthony Hamilton:]

The world is an addiction, serving up a fix

The world is an addiction, way too much for me

[Verse 3 – Nas:]

Thou shall not be selfish, real nigga commandments,

Know a billionaire he has everything but a fam,
Guess how angry this man gets, had so many bad chicks in his bed,
Strange sex, same sex, has addictions that are sadistic
Chain of events, habits, he puts cocaine on his prick and acts sick
Self-esteem needs boosting alcohol consumption
Nicotine fusion, some athletes juicing
Pastors quote biblical chapters, Psalms
All along he's into bestiality porn,
And it's wrong, so I keep the Cali weed in the bong
And I'm strong, but the female anatomy got me sprung
And these women need shoes and bags, cars and condos
Fine clothes, and these fiends needs to get high, so they find dough
To mainline dope, and ya'll know

[Hook - Anthony Hamilton:]

The world is an addiction, serving up a fix
The world is an addiction, way too much for me

[Verse 4 – Nas:]

So many vices, habits, mine of course, bad chicks
My response to any advice on what is the essentials of life
I'm just rebellious, not selfish,

Guess we all share different definitions of what wealth is
I need the best things in life that's women, that's cars
Cigars in Venice, bottle on ice, that's priceless
The other night, just in the emergency room
A patient said she needs to see a doctor soon
Doctor busy operating on a lady who's sedated
He can barely concentrate, 'cause he's newly separated
His estranged wife likes entertaining her acquaintance
In the house they were married in, mad people waiting
Some young, some old, heads and stomachs aching
Filling out an application, 'cause they all need medication
But the doctor need love or a quick vacation, calling up his travel agent
Same time, premeditating murdering his ex-wife
Life, savage ain't it
Some need Xanax, just to maintain it
We all need faith 'cause the world keep changing
Let go of the illusion, start some restraining

[Outro - Anthony Hamilton:]

Just hold on (just hold on)

Just hold on (just hold on)

Just hold on (just hold on)

Just hold on (just hold on)

Just hold on (just hold on)

Just hold on (just hold on)

Just hold on (just hold on)

Just hold on

“Y.O. (Youthful Offenders)”

Jadakiss, ft. Akon

[Hook - Akon:]

The mayor saying the crime slowed down

That explains why there's so many cops in my town

I done did so many years in the struggle man

Don't know how to live out the gutter man

Them youngins taking over the old land

And gang banging and moving down south to expand

See all them little kids packing muscle man

And they take it real serious when they hustle man

[Verse 1 – Jadakiss:]

No father figure there so he been a bastard

Knee deep in the street even when its drastic

Them things come wrapped still neat in the plastic

All he doing is bringing heat to his demographic

Thank God the OGs is holding him

Short fuse his complex Napoleon

You can try and talk to him but he ain't there

He done did a little bid so he ain't scared

Yeah but when he get to drinking that's when he gets to thinking

'Bout them bitches got him tweekin' Baby mom's is freakin'
Hustle all week to get fresh on the weekend
Now he going off the deep end

[Hook - Akon:]

The mayor saying the crime slowed down
That explains why there's so many cops in my town
I done did so many years in the struggle man
Don't know how to live out the gutter man
Them youngins taking over the old land
And gang banging and moving down south to expand
See all them little kids packing muscle man
And they take it real serious when they hustle man

[Verse 2 – Jadakiss:]

Learned how to clap before he learned how to stack
Now he doing 30 something years in the max
With numbers like that it take years to relax
And its violent so its mandatory years on the back
Ruthless I'm just tryna tell you what the truth is
He ain't even want to hustle he just wanted to shoot shit
Get high, get some pussy, run around stupid

Really a good kid he just always wanted to do shit
Drop on the jux you can give him a quick call
But kicking it with him is like talking to a brick wall
Comes from a good fam so his books stay right
He only 23 he got a chance to see daylight

[Hook - Akon:]

The mayor saying the crime slowed down
That explains why there's so many cops in my town
I done did so many years in the struggle man
Don't know how to live out the gutter man
Them youngins taking over the old land
And gang banging and moving down south to expand
See all them little kids packing muscle man
And they take it real serious when they hustle man

[Verse 3 – Jadakiss:]

Don't be playing 'em close
Keep the work away from the guns
Keep the money away from them both
Keep it trill with your set
Make 'em feel your respect

No matter what you do never reveal your connect
Don't be running your mouth
You know what it is
If you ain't never tell it how would they know what you did
That thing on your waist got that thing out the lot
You still gotta eat dog if you banging or not
Frustration builds up then gotta release
When the crime slows down the dolla increase
Hundred grand in the duffel them youngin will buss you
And they take it real serious when they hustle

[Hook x2 - Akon:]

The mayor saying the crime slowed down
That explains why there's so many cops in my town
I done did so many years in the struggle man
Don't know how to live out the gutter man
Them youngins taking over the old land
And gang banging and moving down south to expand
See all them little kids packing muscle man
And they take it real serious when they hustle man

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BIOGRAPHY

Francesca A. Keesee graduated from Jamestown High School, Williamsburg, Virginia, in 2011. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Virginia in 2015. She served as an AmeriCorps VISTA in Indianapolis from 2015-2016, then moved to Malta to pursue degrees in the Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security program.