

# Addict Rap?: The Shift from Drug Distributor to Drug Consumer in Hip Hop

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In 2000, “purple drank,” a concoction of prescription medicines was introduced to mainstream Hip Hop. The genre has seemingly always had a relationship with drug content, earlier Hip Hop artists glorified upward financial mobility of selling drugs, whereas some contemporary artists exploit achievements via the consumption of drugs. In other words, there has been a cultural shift from being the drug distributor to drug consumer in Hip Hop. Celebration of drug consumption creates a new forum of deviant and criminal performance within the genre, which challenges previous Hip Hop culture. Furthermore, this promotion of drug use and emersion with societal goals of wealth, status, and prestige, offers a space for discourse about the creation of “apathetic resistance” within Hip Hop culture. Finally, this must be measured by the context of understanding how the intersection of race, gender, class and respectability plays into Hip Hop’s reception compared to other musical genres’ relationship with drug consumption.

While Hip Hop scholarship has grown and continues to develop, there has been minimal academic discourse that challenges the issue of hard-drug consumption from the perspective of the narrator (e.g. MC/rapper). Hence, the objective of this article is to initiate a dialogue about the trajectory of Hip Hop in contemporary society and as a cultural movement based-on political and social expression, particularly with the incorporation of drug consumption by the narrator (e.g. M.C.). In no way does this article speak for all of Hip Hop as a musical form or culture aesthetic<sup>1</sup> but highlights the complexities and intricacies that form within this particular sub-set that addresses lyrics and lifestyle choices based on the perspective of the drug consumer as opposed to the traditional drug distributor. Therefore, analysis of lyrical content and lifestyle of artists is important to investigate the relationship drug consumption has with Hip Hop.

In December 2007, Texas-based rapper Chad “Pimp C” Butler died in a West Hollywood hotel room. According to the Los Angeles County Coroner's office, “the combination of codeine and promethazine found in the rapper’s system, coupled with the sleep disorder apnea, caused his death.”<sup>2</sup> Pimp C along with Bernard “Bun B” Freeman formed the Underground Kingz (UGK), an influential voice in the growth of Southern Hip Hop. His untimely death resulted partly from his overconsumption of “purple drank.” “Purple drank” is also known as “sizzurp,” “lean,” or “mud,” and refers to a beverage that is commonly made by mixing codeine and promethazine with

<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges the fact that Hip Hop is a global movement with various political and social meanings (see volume 1, issue 2 of the Journal of Hip Hop Studies for special edition of Afrikan Hip Hop).

<sup>2</sup> Kristie Rieken, “Cough Syrup Found in Pimp C's Hotel Had No Label.” Houston Chronicle. February 5, 2008. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.chron.com/entertainment/music/article/Cough-syrup-found-in-Pimp-C-s-hotel-had-no-label-1656505.php>.

soda and jolly rancher candy.<sup>3</sup> Three 6 Mafia's release of "Sippin' on Some Sizzurp" featuring UGK and Project Pat in February of 2000 popularized the relatively unknown "purple drank" in American society. Since its inauguration into mainstream Hip Hop, the beverage has become a prevalent item discussed by rappers in their lyrics. However, this substance has been known to be addictive and a contributor to the death of rappers such as DJ Screw and Big Moe.<sup>4</sup> Most notably, speculatively, a "bootleg" form of sizzurp caused Lil Wayne to suffer multiple seizures in March 2013.<sup>5</sup>

The overrepresentation and consumption of recreational drugs, particularly marijuana, is nothing new to Hip Hop culture.<sup>6</sup> In fact, an array of musical genres have seen a share of drug consumption, stemming from European genres such as Northern Soul to other popular music forms such as jazz, doo-wop, rock, punk, and dance.<sup>7</sup> The 1960s psychedelic rock age became a significant era for drug content in music because musicians began to see themselves as artists and drug use became part of the experience and artistry.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Hip Hop's relationship with drugs is magnified by the intersections of race, gender, class, and respectability. Hip Hop is part of the legacy of

<sup>3</sup> Laura E. Agnich, John M. Stogner, Bryan Lee Miller, and Catherine D. Marcum, "Purple Drank Prevalence and Characteristics of Misusers of Codeine Cough Syrup Mixtures," *Addictive Behaviors* 38 (2013): 2445-449; William Elwood, "Leaning on Syrup: The Misuse of Opioid Cough Syrup in Houston, Texas," Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (1999); Melanie Hart, Laura E. Agnich, John Stogner, and Bryan Lee Miller, "'Me and My Drank': Exploring the Relationship Between Musical Preferences and Purple Drank Experimentation," *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 39, no. 1 (2013): 172-86.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Demby, "Codeine Overdose Killed DJ Screw, Medical Examiner Says," (2001) Retrieved January 13, 2013; Eyder Peralta, "Houston Rappers Remember Big Moe, Dead at 33," Houston Chronicle. October 15, 2007. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.chron.com/entertainment/music/article/Houston-rappers-remember-Big-Moe-dead-at-33-1797262.php>

<sup>5</sup> Allison Samuels, "Rapper Lil Wayne and His Struggle with Sizzurp 'Drank'," The Daily Beast. March 18, 2013. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/03/18/rapper-lil-wayne-and-his-struggle-with-sizzurp-drunk.html>; Andrew Gruttadaro, "Lil Wayne: Did Dangerous Concoction He Drank Nearly Kill Him?" Hollywood Life. March 16, 2013. Accessed April 6, 2014. <http://hollywoodlife.com/2013/03/16/lil-wayne-seizure-sizzurp-bootleg/>

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Allen, "Making the Strong Survive: The Contours and Contradictions of Message Rap," In *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap music and Culture* (Ed.) W. Perkins (pp. 159-191), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press (1996); Andrew Golub, Bruce D. Johnson, and Eloise Dunlap, "The Growth in Marijuana Use among American Youths during the 1990s and the Extent of Blunt Smoking," *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse* 4 (2006): 1-21; David S. Timberlake, "A Comparison of Drug Use and Dependence between Blunt Smokers and Other Cannabis Users," *Substance Use & Misuse* 44 (2009): 401-15; Mark Pawson and Brian C. Kelly, "Consumption and Community: The Subcultural Contexts of Disparate Marijuana Practices in Jam Band and Hip Hop Scenes," *Deviant Behavior* 35 (2014): 347-63.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Northern Soul: Music, Drugs and Subcultural Identity* (Cullompton: Willan Pub., 2007); Harry Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man: The Story of Drugs and Popular Music*, [Ed. Rev. and Updated]. ed. London: Helter Skelter, 2003; Barry Spunt, *Heroin and Music in New York City* (Gordonsville, Virginia: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Sheila Whiteley, "Progressive Rock and Psychedelic Coding in the Work of Jimi Hendrix," *Popular Music* 9, no. 1 (1990): 37-60; Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic, and Other Satisfactions*, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

the Black Arts Movement<sup>9</sup>, coming out of Black liberation freedom struggle. Therefore because of the politicized nature of Hip Hop, coming from the inner city, mainstream White America has traditionally viewed this art as “bad” or “criminal.” Consequently, the representation of drugs in Hip Hop culture is not seen as a form of experimentation of artistry as other musical genres, but rather reinforces stereotypes and myths of a deviant community.

Research suggests there has been growing use and consumption of pharmaceutical drugs such as codeine, promethazine, dextromethorphan, and diphenhydramine because the drug is legally obtainable, free of cost with medical insurance, and perceived as safe.<sup>10</sup> Despite public perception and feelings of euphoria and enhance awareness by consumers, the drug has potential harmful side effects such as hallucination, drowsiness, dry mouth, blurred vision, deafness, light-headedness, agitation, confusion, dizziness, disturbed coordination, headaches, insomnia, vertigo, serious brain damage, and addiction.<sup>11</sup>

“Licensed To Pill,” an article written by DJ and producer, A-Trak, calls out Hip Hop artists for their overuse and representation of hard drugs. He does not condemn the lyrics but criticizes artists for not having an open discussion about the effects of these substances. A-Trak claims rap has reached the “psychedelic” age and says, “Rap went from glorifying selling hard drugs to glamorizing their effects. And beneath the surface there may be a profound lack of understanding of these substances.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, Hip Hop is seeing a shift in the types of drugs used to authenticate the culture, ranging from marijuana and alcohol consumption to pharmaceutical drugs and “purple drank.” In addition, the point of view is shifting from the third person narrative to a first-hand account of drug use.

### Methods

Project Know, an online website that provides information about substance

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<sup>9</sup> Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," *The Drama Review: TDR* (1968): 29-39.

<sup>10</sup> William N. Elwood, "Leaning On Syrup: The Misuse of Opioid Cough Syrup in Houston," Texas, Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid; Laura E. Agnich et al, "Purple Drank Prevalence and Characteristics of Misusers of Codeine Cough Syrup Mixtures"; Gerald B. Hickson, William A. Altemeier, and Ellen W. Clayton. "Should Promethazine in Liquid form be Available without Prescription?" *Pediatrics* 86, no. 2 (1990): 221-225.; Ronald J. Peters, Steven H. Kelder, Christine M. Markham, George S. Yacoubian, Lecresha A. Peters, and Artist Ellis, "Beliefs and Social norms about Codeine and Promethazine Hydrochloride Cough Syrup (CPHCS) Onset and Perceived Addiction among Urban Houstonian Adolescents: An Addiction Trend in the City of Lean," *Journal of Drug Education* 33, no. 4 (2003): 415-425; Haifeng Hou, Shugui Yin, Shaowei Jia, Shu Hu, Taotao Sun, Qing Chen, and Rong Fan, "Decreased Striatal Dopamine Transporters in Codeine-Containing Cough Syrup Abusers," *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 118, no. 2 (2011): 148-151; Myroslava K. Romach, Beth A. Sproule, Edward M. Sellers, Gail Somer, and Usoa E. Busto. "Long-Term Codeine Use Is Associated with Depressive Symptoms." *Journal of Clinical Psychopharmacology* 19, no. 4 (1999): 373-376.; Brian W. Blakley, and Heather Schilling. "Deafness Associated with Acetaminophen and Codeine Abuse," *Journal of Otolaryngology--Head & Neck Surgery* 37, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>12</sup> A-Trak. "License to Pill." The Huffington Post. May 20, 2013, accessed January 14, 2014. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/atrak/license-to-pill\\_b\\_3306753.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/atrak/license-to-pill_b_3306753.html).

addiction, conducted a study of drug mentions in rap lyrics called “Drug Slang in Hip Hop.”<sup>13</sup> The study looks at various drugs and the frequency they were used over time (1988-2013) by Hip Hop artists. While certain substances such as alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine have remained relatively consistent overtime in the lyrics, other drugs such as codeine, pharmaceutical drugs, and MDMA have become more prevalent in recent years. One major critique of this study is that while consistency and frequency are shown, *context* is missing from this report. In other words, the ways in which these substances are being discussed is not included. Furthermore, this paper seeks to explore the shift in the dialogue of drug use in Hip Hop lyrics. In other words, exploring how the artists discussing drug content in their lyrics.

Over the course of one year, April 2014 - April 2015, a review of twelve self-described Hip Hop websites and blogs were used for this study. These were chosen based on an article entitled, “Hip Hop Wired Presents: The Top 30 Hip Hop Blogs & Websites.”<sup>14</sup> Over the course of this study, songs (n=501) that specifically addressed or mentioned drug consumption were identified. To give a more robust analysis, ten percent (n=50) of the songs were randomly selected by using a random sampling generator.<sup>15</sup> Songs were given a specific number between 1-501. The generator produced a random list of numbers and a systematic random sampling of every 10<sup>th</sup> number was selected, resulting in fifty songs chosen for analysis.

All songs sampled (n=50) discussed drug consumption of various drugs such as: “Purple drank” (n=34), pharmaceutical pills/medicines (n=13), cocaine (n=11), molly (n=13), marijuana (n=15), and miscellaneous substances [e.g. alcohol] (n=9) and all songs included at least two substances discussed. Based on my reading, two themes emerged from this analysis, which embodied forms of hyper-masculinity, particularly issues of “gangsterism” and hyper-sexuality. The former, indulges in the traditional sense of “gangster” rap where the narrator asserts their power through dominance over others and showcases their masculinity in their ability to be violent or engage in criminal activity, if necessary. The latter, engages in ideas of masculinity weaved through forms of hyper-sexuality and ability to attract and seduce women. The drugs discussed in these songs highlight the theme of drug consumption for both the narrator (i.e. rapper) and other potential users throughout the lyrics.

### **Hip Hop Authenticity: From Drug Distributor to Drug Consumer**

Hip Hop culture is recognized as a lifestyle as well as an art form. Growing out of the South Bronx in the 1970s, Hip Hop became an outlet for urban youth to release

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<sup>13</sup> “Drug Slang in Hip-Hop,” *Projectknow.Com*, accessed October 15, 2016  
<https://www.projectknow.com/discover/hip-hop-drug-mentions/>.

<sup>14</sup> Alvin Blanco, “Hip-Hop Wired Presents: The Top 30 Hip-Hop Blogs & Websites,” *Hip-Hop Wired*, accessed October 15, 2016, <http://hiphopwired.com/211142/hip-hop-wired-presents-the-top-30-hip-hop-blogs-websites/>.

<sup>15</sup> “Research Randomizer,” *Social Psychology Network*, accessed October 15, 2016,  
<https://www.randomizer.org/>.

tension, experiment with musical forms, and create their own identity. The culture of Hip Hop was founded in the post-Civil Rights Movement and developed in neighborhoods that were rampant with urban decay, poverty, and violence.<sup>16</sup> Young Blacks and Hispanics produced Hip Hop, a cultural form within the Black community. According to Afrika Bambaataa, an early founder of Hip Hop, the art form was a way to curb gang violence in New York City.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Bambaataa outlined the five elements to Hip Hop culture, which included: MC'ing (rapping), DJ'ing, writing (graffiti), several dance forms (e.g. break dancing), and most importantly, knowledge.<sup>18</sup> As the genre grew, the MC (rapper) took a more prominent role, becoming the griot, or storyteller, narrating the experiences of ghetto life and beyond.

Hip Hop music focuses and places an emphasis on the narrative to authenticate the music. Mickey Hess writes:

Hip Hop music is a black form, given the involvement of African Americans in its creation, and because its concepts of authenticity are so tied to the roots of its culture. Hip Hop authenticity is rooted in African-American rhetoric; its emphasis on the performer's staying true to himself grows out of black rhetorical traditions such as testifying and bearing witness, in which the authority to speak is negotiated through claims to knowledge gained through lived experience.<sup>19</sup>

Lived experience, which creates self-truth, is an important staple in the Hip Hop community because Hip Hop is a performed identity.<sup>20</sup> The artist's ability to authenticate their race, space, and place becomes the bridge into being accepted by the culture of Hip Hop.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, Hip Hop culture places a certain emphasis on being able to authenticate the performer's role and style in the narrative they articulate. It goes beyond just the rhetoric, but as Andreana Clay points out, Hip Hop is about performance through manipulations of fashion, gestures, and music.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Robert Garot's work on gang affiliation, recognizes fashion and how one claim's style authenticates the self through a set of markers such as the way a hat is tilted, specific colors of clothing, or brand of shoe being worn, which all exhibit the performance of

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<sup>16</sup> Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005); Martin Lamotte, "Rebels without a Pause: Hip Hop and Resistance in the City." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 2 (2014): 686-94.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "History of Hip Hop," *Universal Zulu Nation*, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.zulunation.com/Hip-Hop-history/>.

<sup>19</sup> Mickey Hess, "Hip Hop Realness and the White Performer," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 5 (2005): 372-89.

<sup>20</sup> Greg Dimitriadis, *Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip Hop as Text, Pedagogy, and Lived Practice*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Murray Forman, "'Represent': Race, Space and Place in Rap Music." *Popular Music* 19, no. 1 (2000): 65-90; Dustin Engels, "Baadasssss Gangstas: The Parallel Influences, Characteristics and Criticisms of the Blaxploitation Cinema and Gangsta Rap Movements," *Journal of Hip Hop Studies*, 1 no.1 (2014): 62-80.

<sup>22</sup> Andrea Clay, "Keepin' it Real: Black Youth, Hip Hop Culture, and Black Identity," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46 no.10 (2003), 1346-1358.

identity.<sup>23</sup> Hip Hop, closely tied to urban gang culture, is produced similarly. The culture is consistently re-inventing itself through various forms and trends.

Hip Hop culture is arguably the largest contemporary youth movement in the world and became an outlet as a form of resistance to the heroin and crack epidemics of the 1970s and 80s, respectfully.<sup>24</sup> Traditionally, Hip Hop culture has taken a two-prong stance on drugs: abstinence and self-distancing. The former is seen in early rap songs such as "The Message" and "White Lines (Don't Do It)" by Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five, which overtly cautions of the ills of cocaine and crack. In the song "White Lines" Melle Mel raps, "My white lines go a long way/Either up your nose or through your vein/With nothing to gain except killing your brain."<sup>25</sup> Ironically, Melle Mel was using cocaine while recording this song. Nevertheless, these public service announcement-type songs were short-lived and replaced with the latter more self-distancing from drugs, which happened in several ways. During the "D.A.I.S.Y." (da inner sound y'all) Age, otherwise known as the "Golden Age" of Hip Hop, artists brought with them a Black Nationalist identity that was visible through their style and fashion.<sup>26</sup> Scholar Michael Eric Dyson states, "During the 'Golden age of Hip Hop,' from 1987 to 1993, Afrocentric and black nationalist rap were prominent."<sup>27</sup> Groups such as A Tribe Called Quest, The Jungle Brothers, De La Soul, and Public Enemy wore African medallions, natural hairstyles, and used other forms of dress to express their acceptance and embrace of African heritage, while their lyrics paid attention to issues of urban poverty and White supremacy furthering the Black Arts Movement.

The other form of social distancing away from drug consumption came from the sub-genre of "gangster rap," where the MC would narrate about their own experiences as a drug dealer or distributor of narcotics.<sup>28</sup> In other words, pushing the drugs unto others, who were seemingly weaker to fall victim to becoming a user. West coast rappers, N.W.A. (Niggas Wit Attitude), were critical of police brutality, but became

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Garot, *Who You Claim: Performing Gang Identity in School and on the Streets* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Golub, Bruce D. Johnson, and Eloise Dunlap, "The Growth in Marijuana Use among American Youths during the 1990s and the Extent of Blunt Smoking," *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse* 4 (2006): 1-21.

<sup>25</sup> "Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five - White Lines (Don't Do It)." Genius, accessed September 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/Grandmaster-flash-and-the-furious-five-white-lines-dont-do-it-lyrics>.

<sup>26</sup> William Jelani Cobb, *To the Break of Dawn: A Freestyle on the Hip Hop Aesthetic* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Michael Eric Dyson, *Know what I Mean?: Reflections on Hip Hop* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2007); Tony Green, "Remembering the Golden Age of Hip Hop," *Today*, August 2, 2004, accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.today.com/id/5430999#.VeizktNViko>; Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*; Charise Cheney, *Brothers Gonna Work it Out: Sexual Politics in the Golden Age of Rap Nationalism* (New York: NYU Press, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Michael Eric Dyson, *Know what I Mean?: Reflections on Hip Hop*, 64.

<sup>28</sup> Russell Simmons, *Life and Def: Sex, Drugs, Money, and God* (California: Three Rivers Press, 2002); Dimitri A Bogazianos, *5 Grams: Crack Cocaine, Rap Music, and the War on Drugs* (New York: NYU Press, 2012); Ethan Brown, *Queens Reigns Supreme: Fat Cat, 50 Cent, and the Rise of the Hip Hop Hustler* (Anchor, 2010).

more vocal in discussing criminal activity and hyper-masculinity. N.W.A. became the symbol of “gangster” with Eazy-E being known as “The Godfather of Gangster Rap.” There was an embrace and adoption of a different fashion style, which sought out more expensive clothing with expensive brand labels and differing hairstyles such as the “Jheri Curl.” “Gangster rap” became the dominant form of mainstream Hip Hop music as the genre pushed forward into the 1990s.

The culture of “gangster” rap exploited the idea of authenticity throughout the genre. Two of the most iconic Hip Hop artists, The Notorious B.I.G. (commonly known as “Biggie”) and Tupac Shakur, helped spread the gangster image of rap music through lifestyle and lyrics about drug dealing. Biggie used aggressive and complex lyrics that outlined his days as a street hustler, particularly selling crack and other drugs. His song, “Ten Crack Commandments” is an outline and guide on how to become the best drug supplier. He states, “There’s rules to this shit, I wrote a manual/A step-by-step booklet for you to get your game on track.”<sup>29</sup> Biggie then proceeds to go through all ten rules on being a drug dealer. Rule number four being the most important, paying tribute to the cult gangster film, *Scarface*, “never get high on your own supply,” advocating for the dealer to never dabble or use his own narcotics, otherwise, like *Scarface*, would lead to demise. Moreover, Tupac Shakur was a multifaceted rapper with family ties to the Black Power movement, wrote the “Thug-Life” code of conduct with his stepfather, Mutulu Shakur, a former member of the Republic of New Afrika.<sup>30</sup> These codes describe the points of who is off-limits to sell drugs to, such as children and pregnant women. There lyrics and codes are embroiled with content that shows what Black struggle meant for those coming out of low-income communities, particularly having to resort to selling drugs as a means to make financial upward mobility.

Beginning in the early 2000s, a cultural shift occurred in Hip Hop music. In particular, the types of drugs being discussed and the perspective of the user transformed. Songs about substances such as codeine and prescription medicines began to emerge: “Sippin on Some Sizzurp” by Three 6 Mafia (2000), “Purple Pills” by D12 (2001) and “I Feel like Dying” by Lil Wayne (2007). Rappers began to overtly talk about using and abusing pharmaceutical drugs and codeine in their lyrics. While the trope of being a drug dealer remains prominent in Hip Hop music, some rappers have placed themselves at the center, the consumer, of drug substances, whereas in previous decades, drug use in songs was always about the “other.” The consumer is no longer an unfamiliar face that is indistinguishable from the next, nor is it the third person narrative. Rather the dialogue has been reinvented (remixed) so that the drug user is from the first person perspective.

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<sup>29</sup> “The Notorious B.I.G. – Ten Crack Commandments,” *Genius*, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/The-notorious-big-ten-crack-commandments-lyrics>.

<sup>30</sup> “Thread: Code of Thug Life,” Assata Shakur Speaks Hands off Assata Lets Get Free Revolutionary Pan Africanism Black On Purpose Liberation Forum RSS. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.assatashakur.org/forum/open-forum/9011-code-thug-life.html>.

## Apathetic Resistance: The Symbiosis of Innovator and Retreatist Adaptations

The growth in consumption of “hard-drugs” in Hip Hop music by the narrator has modified the genre’s authenticity of performance as well as the goals and means of Hip Hop culture. Robert Merton’s 1938 article, “Social Structure and Anomie”<sup>31</sup> provides an outline for various social adaptations, which signify the schisms between goals and means in society. While critiqued by other social scientists as not broad enough or too limiting, Merton’s analysis provides a framework to discuss the shift in Hip Hop culture, from being a drug distributor to a drug consumer. According to Merton, there are five social adaptations that guide individual’s adoption of cultural values. Adaptation II, *innovation*, shows a rupture between the culture goals and institutionalized means, whereas Merton states, “Be it noted that where frustration derives from the inaccessibility of effective institutional means for attaining economic or any other type of highly valued ‘success’...”<sup>32</sup> In other words, in communities where resources are scarce or opportunities are few, individuals might have to resort to alternative lifestyles to achieve and obtain their means (success). A frequent example of this adaption is of the drug dealer, who is an individual without many conventional options to achieve their means of success. In this case, selling drugs and then becoming a rapper is a way out of communities that do not present legitimate options to success. This archetype of rags to riches became the standard rule to become a successful Hip Hop artist. Artists such as: Notorious B.I.G., Jay Z, T.I., Young Jeezy, 50 Cent, Lloyd Banks, Beanie Sigal, Freeway, Cam’ron, Jim Jones, Fat Joe, Big Pun, Joell Ortiz, Rick Ross, Pusha T, and many others have narrated their journey, moving from a drug dealer to a successful rapper. Conversely, adaptation IV, known as “retreatism” is a rejection of both goals and means in society. A primary example of this type of person would be that of a drug addict. This person has given up on trying to appeal to institutionalized standards or being seen as someone that wants to move up the ladder of achievement. While new artists embrace drug consumption culture are not fully a retreatist because they profit monetarily, they do embody aspects of this fourth adaption by rejecting conventional norms towards drug use and embracing narcotics as part of their identity. Therefore, “drug consumption rap” becomes a mesh of Merton’s innovative and retreatist adaptations, which produces new ways to understand both goals and means in contemporary society. On one hand, there is an embrace of cultural goals (e.g. success/wealth), while on the other hand; there is rejection of institutional means (e.g. drug abstinence/obedience).

Biggie released his debut album, *Ready to Die* in 1994. The hit single “Juicy” begins with him stating, “To all the people that lived above the buildings that I was hustling in front of that called the police on me when I was just trying to make some money to feed my daughter,” refers to his days of being a drug dealer on the streets of

<sup>31</sup> Robert K. Merton, “Social Structure and Anomie,” *American Sociological Review* 3, no. 5 (1938).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 678.



Brooklyn, New York.<sup>33</sup> Resembling many of his counterparts, Hip Hop culture and the art of MC'ing became an outlet to a generation of urban Black youth coming of age during the de-industrialization of American cities.<sup>34</sup> Many scholars have written that Hip Hop culture grew as a form of resistance or as Biggie raps, "And all the niggas in the struggle" to larger socio-economic problems devastating urban communities around the United States.<sup>35</sup> While Hip Hop continues to be a mechanism of resistance and a way out of impoverished communities, this new sub-genre of drug consumption shifts the perspective and modifies the narrative. Therefore, an "apathetic resistance" has emerged in this new subculture of Hip Hop, which, like other forms of the Black Arts Movement rejects White supremacy. However, artists are simultaneously embracing conformity and retreatist adaptations of wanting institutional success as well as rejection of institutional values. Unlike their predecessors, artists who engage in drug consumption Hip Hop do not deflect the negative associations of being a "user" but use it to promote lyrics and lifestyle.

### "Addict" Rap

Drugs, in some form, authenticate and create Hip Hop culture. The overuse and consumption of drugs is viewed as a way of validating drug consumption subculture, but unlike earlier musical genres that are viewed artistically for indulging in drug use, Hip Hop artists are demonized, considered less credible, and dismissed as lacking talent. Nevertheless, the glorification of "addict" rap is done in ways that highlight issues of overconsumption, authenticity, and hyper-masculinity, which then reinforce these notions of Hip Hop culture by dominant society.

Roughly 38% of the songs used in this sample overtly used the name or slang term of a drug in the title. For example, rapper Soulja Boy has two songs in this study named, "Zan with That Lean" and "Molly with That Lean." Both titles suggest his use of various drugs, the prescription pill of Xanax and Molly, otherwise known as MDMA

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<sup>33</sup> "The Notorious B.I.G. – Juicy," *Genius*, Accessed July 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/The-notorious-big-juicy-lyrics>.

<sup>34</sup> Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*; Andrea Clay, *The Hip Hop Generation Fights Back Youth, Activism, and Post-civil Rights Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Rivke Jaffe, "Hip Hop and Urban Studies," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 2 (2014): 695-99.

<sup>35</sup> Simon Black, "'Street Music', Urban Ethnography and Ghettoized Communities," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 2 (2014): 700-05; Patricia Collins, *From Black Power to: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Michael Eric Dyson, *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip Hop*; Marc Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* (New York, New York: Teachers College Press, 2009); Mark Anthony Neal and M. Forman, eds. *That's the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). Geneva Smitherman, "'The Chain Remain the Same' Communicative Practices in the Hip Hop Nation," *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 1 (1997): 3-25; Katina R. Stapleton, "From the Margins to Mainstream: The Political Power of Hip Hop," *Media, Culture & Society* 20 (1998): 219-34; "The Notorious B.I.G. – Juicy," *Genius*, Accessed July 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/The-notorious-big-juicy-lyrics>.

or Ecstasy, respectfully. In both songs, Soulja describes how he uses these drugs and uses "lean" to help facilitate swallowing these pills, which only adds to his high. In each song he invokes his gangster and sexual prowess with his drug use. In the song, "Molly with That Lean," he raps, "Molly with that lean/rolling through the streets/Man I do my thing, boy I stay clean/Boy you know I'm packing."<sup>36</sup> In these lyrics he discusses his use of drugs but his ability to either defend or assault someone because he is "packing." In other words, he has a gun and will use it. In "Zan with That Lean" he discusses, "Zan with that Lean/Nothin but Irene [marijuana]/Hoes going crazy when I'm on the scene."<sup>37</sup> Unlike the previous lyrics where Soulja Boy is ready to show off his masculinity via use of violence, his drug use here makes women ecstatic to be around him, which gives him the ability to have sex with them because of his status. Soulja Boy's lyrics are indicative of how many rappers portray their imagery through drug consumption as both tough and sexually appealing.

While not all rap songs overtly title their music after or about drugs, there are heavy drug-laden lyrics that would indicate overuse drug consumption. Kevin Gates refers to himself as a "drug user" in his song "4:30 am." He embraces his drug use and glorifies the amount of "purple drank" he is able to consume rapping, "Drug user, don't drink sprite/And when I do, it ain't pink sprite, a lot of lean, its purple."<sup>38</sup> This song lyric is meant as a "diss" to other rappers who claim to use "purple drank" but "water it down" by adding too much soda. In this instance, Gates affirms his masculinity by sticking to only the purest form of lean and thus reiterates his authenticity. Interestingly, later in the song, Gates raps, "6:00 am water boiling, think I'm addicted to the strong aroma."<sup>39</sup> It is a safe assumption that Gates is referring to the method in which powder cocaine is turned into rock cocaine (otherwise known as crack) by boiling it and adding baking soda. However, it is his mention of being addicted to the aroma that leaves the listener with ambiguity if he is mixing this up to sell or use, but either way he enjoys the aroma of crack. Similar to Kevin Gates, Lil Wayne does not shy away from celebrating or discussing his use of drugs. He raps in the song, "Rich as Fuck", "And I got Xanax, Percocet, promethazine with codeine."<sup>40</sup> Lil Wayne's drug use is well documented, however, this litany of drugs and the inference of them all being used together can prove to be fatal. Medical professionals would discourage mixing medicines; particularly Xanax and Percocet, since both produce similar effects and can cause respiratory depression or stopped breathing.<sup>41</sup> Adding, "purple drank" to the equation, which Lil Wayne boldly indicates he uses, only intensifies this potential lethal

<sup>36</sup> "Soulja Boy - Molly with That Lean," *Genius*, Accessed May 9, 2014. <http://genius.com/Soulja-boy-molly-with-that-lean-lyrics>.

<sup>37</sup> "Soulja Boy (Ft. J-Money) - Zan with That Lean," *Genius*, Accessed May 2, 2015. <http://genius.com/Soulja-boy-zan-with-that-lean-lyrics>.

<sup>38</sup> "Kevin Gates - 4:30 AM," *Genius*, Accessed May 4, 2014. <http://genius.com/Kevin-gates-4-30-am-lyrics>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> "Lil Wayne (Ft. 2 Chainz) - Rich As Fuck," *Genius*, Accessed May 9, 2014. <http://genius.com/Lil-wayne-rich-as-fuck-lyrics>.

<sup>41</sup> "5 Dangerous Drug and Alcohol Combinations," (2012, September 11). Retrieved April 2, 2014.

combination. Lil Wayne is joined by other rappers who also discuss mixing of various drugs, such as Travis Scott in Drake's song "Company." In Scott's verse he discusses using Percocets and "purple drank," "Pop a couple percs let's get it in right now...Drink so long, for a year I didn't cough."<sup>42</sup> Sticking to the theme of sexual masculinity, Scott decides it's best for him and his sexual partner to use Percocets to lessen inhibitions to engage in sexual activity. Along with the prescription pills he asserts his masculinity by insinuating the quantity of lean he has used, which would prevent a cough for an entire year.

A glaring display of open drug consumption and glorification is Miami-based rapper, Stiches. Resembling more of a sideshow freak of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century than a typical rapper, Stiches is a White rapper who has a skeleton mouth tattooed on his face, which is amidst many other facial and body tattoos, gold teeth, and a Mohawk haircut. Many of the songs Stiches produce deal with the consumption and distribution of cocaine. In his song, "Facts" he raps, "Do I get high off my own supply? Guess what? Hell yea, hell yeah! I do get high on my own supply!"<sup>43</sup> This lyric refers back to Biggie's "Ten Crack Commandments" and the film *Scarface*, which explicitly states no one should ever use the drugs they distribute. Stiches renounce's this premise and relishes in his use of cocaine, which he is seen using in multiple music videos. To authenticate his use of cocaine and to prove to his fans he is not a fraud, Stiches openly used cocaine at a live show inviting four female fans on stage to join in his indulgence.<sup>44</sup> During the stunt, Stiches re-affirmed his gangster image by saying to the crowd, "I got dope money, you think I'ma [sic] buy some fake shit?"<sup>45</sup> While Stiches is not the standard rapper, his extreme performances indicate the shift in cultural acceptance within Hip Hop from being about solely using drugs as financial mobility to social recognition because of consumption.

The female voice in representation of drug consumption is minimal, finding two songs in my sample that discussed ingestion of drugs from the narrator's perspective. Lil Debbie's song entitled, "2 Cups," discusses her use of "lean" and weed. Additionally, the music video showcases Lil Debbie pouring, "Purple drank" and sipping it out of a Styrofoam cup. The other artist that this study found discussing drug consumption was Nicki Minaj's "Pills n Potions." In this song, Minaj raps, "Pills n' potions/We're overdosin."<sup>46</sup> The reference to overdosing could have many meanings, such as love in an unstable relationship or drug consumption of pills (e.g. pharmaceutical drugs) and potions (e.g. "purple drank"). Hip Hop music is still male-dominated and notions of hyper-masculinity are still conveyed even within female Hip Hop voices. For example,

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<sup>42</sup> "Drake (Ft. Travi\$ Scott) - Company," *Genius*, Accessed June 5, 2015. <http://genius.com/Drake-company-lyrics>.

<sup>43</sup> "Stiches - Facts," *Genius*, Accessed January 25, 2015. <http://genius.com/Stiches-facts-lyrics>.

<sup>44</sup> Zach Frydenlund, "Stiches' Wife Shut Down a Recent Show After He Brought Girls on Stage to Do Cocaine," *Complex*, October 27, 2014. Accessed March 15, 2015. <http://www.complex.com/music/2014/10/stiches-wife-shut-down-one-of-his-recent-concerts>.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>46</sup> "Nicki Minaj - Pills N Potions," *Genius*, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/Nicki-minaj-pills-n-potions-lyrics>.

Lil Debbie raps, "All I need is 2 cups of some lean/And a bad bitch just to roll up my weed."<sup>47</sup> Like many of Lil Debbie and Nicki Minaj's male counterparts, these artists discuss drugs in the same aggressive nature by using it to control other's movements (gangster) or for love (sexuality), respectfully.

Chief Keef and The Weeknd are two examples and illustrations of drug consumer culture in Hip Hop music. While both embrace drug consumption, they authenticate themselves differently. The former, Chief Keef's embrace of drug use validates and establishes him as a gangster. The latter, The Weeknd's consumption of drugs authenticates his sex appeal as an R&B artist in Hip Hop culture.

Chief Keef is a rapper from Chicago who has become the poster-child for "America's Nightmare" when it comes to stereotypes of young, Black, male youth. Already having a lengthy felony record by the age of sixteen, which included narcotics and weapons charges, Keef, has had a turbulent and intensive relationship with the criminal justice system during his short career thus far. Over the past several years, he has failed several drug tests and subsequently been detained for other probation violations, including DUI and posing with guns.<sup>48</sup> Keef has not helped his public persona indicating that his December 2013 mixtape, *Bang 3*, would raise the murder rate stating, "Bang 2 And Almighty So On iTunes Right Now But Bang 3 No Lie Y'all Really Don't know How crazy Im goin #ImFinnaRaiseTheMurderRateUp...If I'm Lien I Can Get Killed right Now this Sh\*t Is So f\*ckin hardcore #ThatOldSosa #bang3 N\*ggas Better Be Scared."<sup>49</sup> Coming from the city of Chicago, with some of the highest murder rates in recent years, there has been debate within the Hip Hop community if Chief Keef is a positive or negative role model for the culture. Fellow Chicago rapper, Lupe Fiasco stated, "Chief Keef scares me...Not him specifically, but just the culture that he represents ... The murder rate in Chicago is skyrocketing and you see who's doing it and perpetrating it, they all look like Chief Keef."<sup>50</sup> Whereas other rappers such as Talib Kweli have stated, "He's somebody who comes out of a very horrifically violent neighborhood of Chicago. Whether you think he's skilled or not, what he's doing is extremely positive...Even if he's gang banging on records, I'd rather him gang bang on records than in the streets and if you gang bang on records, you're at some point going to have respect for music and you're going to grow out of that."<sup>51</sup> Despite the controversy about the image of Chief Keef the common denominator throughout his career is his recreational consumption of "hard drugs."

<sup>47</sup> "Lil Debbie (Ft. DollaBillGates) - 2 Cups," *Genius*, Accessed August 3, 2014. <http://genius.com/Lil-debbie-2-cups-lyrics>.

<sup>48</sup> Emmanuel C.M., "Chief Keef Is Arrested For DUI," *XXL*, Retrieved June 3, 2014, from <http://www.xxlmag.com/news/2014/03/chief-keef-arrested-dui/>

<sup>49</sup> Miranda J, "Chief Keef Says New Mixtape Will Raise the Murder Rate," *XXL*, December 11, 2013. Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.xxlmag.com/news/2013/12/chief-keef-says-new-mixtape-will-raise-murder-rate/>.

<sup>50</sup> Tayla Holman, "Chief Keef Promises to 'Raise the Murder Rate Up' With 'Bang 3' Mixtape," *The Inquisitr News*, December 18, 2013, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.inquisitr.com/1066508/chief-keef-raise-the-murder-rate-up-bang-3-mixtape/>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.

Chief Keef's debut album, *Finally Rich*, includes a track entitled, "Hate Bein' Sober," which celebrates his abundant drug use. Chief Keef raps, "Damn I hate being sober, I'm a smoker/Fredo a drinker, Tadoe off molly water/We can't spell sober."<sup>52</sup> Keef exploits the drug use of both himself and friends, particularly distinguishing the types of drugs each prefers. He goes on to state, "Anti-sober, for no reason,"<sup>53</sup> which is a direct reflection of his retreatism from conventional norms and goals in society. He is at some level, consciously choosing to embrace an over-consumption drug behavior for the only purposes of the high. Keef raps about mainly using marijuana in this song, however, discusses his use of "purple drank" in songs such as "Love No Thotties," rapping, "I'm off this Activis, it got me leanin over/I poured up 4 of Purp in some Peach soda."<sup>54</sup> Despite his overt celebration of being high, Keef checked into a rehabilitation facility in February 2014. He stated, "I was on promethazine, all drugged out. I was tweaking. I don't sip the lean no more though."<sup>55</sup> Whilst making this statement, Keef was arrested in March 2014 on marijuana DUI charges. Then on his birthday in August 2014, Keef posted a picture on Instagram of a bottle of Sprite, Styrofoam cup filled with a purple substance, a blunt, and black handgun. In the caption, Chief Keef wrote, "Said I wasn't leaning Nomore [sic] Only for one night!" By his own caption, Keef admits to using "purple drank."

Despite his own acknowledgment and struggles with drugs, Keef's *Bang 3* mixtape single, "Fuck Rehab" is an outright rejection of sobriety and continuing drug use. He exclaims in this song, "Fuck rehab, rehab make me laugh/ I'd rather be up in jail, getting a lot of mail!"<sup>56</sup> His use of illegal substances is so prominent that he would choose to sit in a jail cell as opposed to being sober profiting from his rap career by his own accord. This direct opposition to earlier Hip Hop artists contradicts the very boundaries of what it means to be a good hustler. Biggie states, "Follow these rules you'll have made bread to break up/ If not, 24 years on the wake up."<sup>57</sup> This is the idea that you will be sentenced to a long prison sentence, which every hustler wants to avoid at all costs but something Chief Keef is willing to do for his anti-sobriety.

While Chief Keef is viewed as the antithesis of American values because of his overt drug consumption, propensity to exude violence in his lyrics, and his unapologetic attitude for his lifestyle, it is important to point out the significant similarity Keef has with the late pop singer, Amy Winehouse. Winehouse, an English singer and songwriter, had a profound connection to drug consumption. Her song,

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<sup>52</sup> "Chief Keef (Ft. 50 Cent & Wiz Khalifa) - Hate Bein' Sober," *Genius*, Accessed March 28, 2015. <http://genius.com/Chief-keef-hate-bein-sober-lyrics>.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>54</sup> "Chief Keef - Love No Thotties," *Genius*, Accessed February 12, 2015. <http://genius.com/Chief-keef-love-no-thotties-lyrics>.

<sup>55</sup> Christian Bonoan, (2014, February 14), "Chief Keef Is Done With Drugs," Retrieved June 3, 2014, from <http://www.xxlmag.com/news/2014/02/chief-keef-done-lean/>

<sup>56</sup> "Chief Keef (Ft. Blood Money) - Fuck Rehab," *Genius*, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/Chief-keef-fuck-rehab-lyrics>.

<sup>57</sup> "The Notorious B.I.G. - Ten Crack Commandments," *Genius*, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/The-notorious-big-ten-crack-commandments-lyrics>.

"Rehab" won several Grammy awards and other prestigious accolades in which Winehouse discusses her refusal to enter rehabilitation for her alcohol and drug use. She sings, "They tried to make me go to rehab but I said 'no, no, no' / Yes I've been black but when I come back you'll know know know / I ain't got the time and if my daddy thinks I'm fine / He's tried to make me go to rehab but I won't go, go, go."<sup>58</sup> Her blatant disregard for drug treatment and embrace of drug consumption was applauded by critics, saying, "What she is is mouthy, funny, sultry, and quite possibly crazy...it's impossible not to be seduced by her originality."<sup>59</sup> Winehouse, who ultimately died from drug and alcohol abuse, was applauded for her unabashed references to drug consumption, whereas artist like Chief Keef are regarded as "thugs" and disregarded as lacking musical talents.

R&B singer, The Weeknd, does not have the "gangster" image his rapper counterparts embody, but nevertheless cloaks his music in drug-laden lyrics. The Weeknd gained popularity by releasing several free mixtapes on the Internet in 2011. Since that time, he has become a major musical figure in Hip Hop culture. A-Trak states, "Singer Abel Tesfaye [The Weeknd] spins disturbing, dark tales of cocaine and abandon, but that's a genuine breakthrough in a genre [R&B] that rarely strayed away from the themes of romance."<sup>60</sup> Being applauded by many of his contemporaries for his sultry falsetto voice, major themes in his music deal with the use of hard-drugs, such as prescription pills, cocaine, and codeine, along with other drugs such as alcohol, weed, and molly. The Weeknd's entire moniker is manifested in drug content. In an article entitled, "Who Is the Weeknd? 5 Things You Should Know," the author explains his signature of "XO" probably does not stand for the traditional idea of hugs and kisses but symbols of the drugs ecstasy and oxycodone.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the embodiment of The Weeknd is a symbol of drugs. He becomes the physical representation of drug use within his genre, which has been labeled as "PBR&B."<sup>62</sup>

The Weeknd's overt drug use is seen in his remix of Beyoncé's song "Drunk in Love." He explains how he has been using pills such as Molly since the age of 17 and on "lean" since the age of 20 without any signs of giving up either of these recreational drugs. In addition, he goes on to state, "Droppin' albums like a pill/Percocets, Adderall, ecstasy, pussy, money, weed/Faded for a week."<sup>63</sup> The Weeknd finds comfort in

<sup>58</sup> "Amy Winehouse - Rehab," *Genius*, Accessed June 9, 2015. <http://genius.com/Amy-winehouse-rehab-lyrics/>.

<sup>59</sup> Josh Tyrangiel, "Top 10 Everything of 2007," *Time*, December 9, 2007, Accessed September 3, 2015. [http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1686204\\_1686244\\_1690616,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1686204_1686244_1690616,00.html).

<sup>60</sup> A-Trak, "License to Pill."

<sup>61</sup> Keith Wagstaff, "5 Things You Should Know About The Weeknd: The Daily Details: Blog," *Details*, November 9, 2012, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.details.com/blogs/daily-details/2012/11/5-things-you-should-know-about-the-weeknd.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Barry Walters, "Frank Ocean, Miguel, and Holy Other Usher in PBR&B 2.0 | SPIN," *Spin*, August 22, 2012, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://www.spin.com/articles/frank-ocean-miguel-and-holy-other-usher-in-pbrb-20/>.

<sup>63</sup> "The Weeknd - Drunk In Love (Remix)," *Genius*, Accessed August 19, 2015. <http://genius.com/The-weeknd-drunk-in-love-remix-lyrics>.

diversity of drug use as the consumer and this is what keeps him going. His music is a telling tale of someone who does not feel like they can function without using hard-drugs, as is a main theme throughout his music. He recognizes this in the song, "Love in the Sky," singing, "But I'm always getting high/Cause my confidence low."<sup>64</sup> Here, the audience sees the vulnerable side of The Weeknd, who opens up about why he believes he needs drugs to function. Unlike his rapper counterpart who would be more hesitant to admit to personal flaws, The Weeknd does it here, which speaks to the sexual appeal of vulnerability.

The Weeknd's embrace of drug-use is not only a space to experiment with drugs but also how these substances allow him to experiment sexually with women. In other words, The Weeknd claims his authenticity through explicit sexual lyrics that are intertwined with his drug use. It is the high that allows all parties to be comfortable in exploring sexual desires with no emotional attachments after the fact. The Weeknd sings, "She repping XO to the death, I'm tryna make these bitches sweat/I'm tryna keep that pussy wet, I'm tryna fuck her and her friends."<sup>65</sup> Referring to himself as XO (ecstasy and oxycodone), The Weeknd feels no monogamous emotions towards any of the women he sleeps with and wants to be able to have the freedom to sleep around while these women sweat (reference to them being high on molly). He consistently mixes references of abusing drugs and the ability to have sex because of drugs. In the song, "Glass Table Girls" he sings, "And we can test out the tables/Got some brand new tables/All glass and it's four feet wide/But it's a must to get us ten feet high/She give me sex in a handbag/I got her wetter than a wet-nap."<sup>66</sup> This song references his use of cocaine and ability to have sex. He also gloats about how well he can perform by giving his female partner an orgasm. The ability to glorify his drug use through hypersexual and masculine tendencies as well as having the ability to choose which women he will sleep with validates and authenticates his drug use.

Even beyond his sexual appetite, The Weeknd highlights his addiction by dismissing doctor's orders to keep sober. In the song, "Kiss Land" he sings, "My doctor told me to stop/And he gave me something to pop/I mix it up with some Adderall's and I wait to get to the top/And I mix it up with some alcohol and I pour it up in a shot/I don't care about you, why you worried 'bout me?"<sup>67</sup> Instead of taking the medical advice, he used these drugs in combination with other substances to remain high. Additionally, he explains that he doesn't care about others so they should not care about him. This outright rejection to conformity and embracing drugs falls within the rules of "YOLO" (You Only Live Once) by not caring or looking to the future but rather

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<sup>64</sup> "The Weeknd - Love in the Sky," *Genius*, Accessed February 12, 2015. <http://genius.com/The-weeknd-love-in-the-sky-lyrics>.

<sup>65</sup> "The Weeknd (Ft. Ty Dolla \$ign & Wiz Khalifa) - Or Nah (Remix)," *Genius*, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/The-weeknd-or-nah-remix-lyrics>.

<sup>66</sup> "The Weeknd - Glass Table Girls," *Genius*, Accessed August 1, 2015.

<sup>67</sup> "The Weeknd - Kiss Land," *Genius*, Accessed November 7, 2014. <http://genius.com/The-weeknd-kiss-land-lyrics>.

living in the present moment.<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, pop star, Katy Perry has made songs such as “E.T.” and “Last Friday Night,” which discuss and celebrate sex as well as drug and alcohol consumption, which rival The Weeknd’s discussion of both topics. It is important to recognize distinctions that are made. Perry, a White female pop-star, is able to crossover frequently into the realm of sex and drugs and remains an icon that young girls should aspire to be like. On the other hand, The Weeknd is someone who should not be trusted because of his drug use.

Both Chief Keef and The Weeknd highlight and represent a growing movement of drug consumer artistry within Hip Hop culture along with artists such as Future who also embraces drug use, particularly pills and lean. The embrace and use of hard-drugs has become a new marker of authenticity. Those who use and abuse pharmaceutical drugs, codeine, pills, and cocaine, along with more traditional Hip Hop embraced drugs such as marijuana and alcohol are now seen as authentic keepers of the culture.

### Conclusion

The simultaneous embrace and rejection of specific values of American culture give the sub-genre of “addict” rap a dichotomous relationship within Hip Hop culture. On one hand, these artists are producing music and benefiting both financially and socially from their art form. They have pushed boundaries to create new spaces for subject matter that was previously considered taboo. On the other hand, the culture of apathy through this very embrace of drugs creates both social and physical risks. Social risks of embracing a lifestyle of drugs can create both criminal and societal problems for individuals. Being caught with illegal drugs could create legal problems leading to arrests, fines, and/or incarceration. Socially, labels of being a drug addict or criminal leaves stigmas and other deviant social sanctions on a person. The embrace of being a drug-user, particularly in the quantities many of these artists talk about can lead to very real physical health risks as well. These health factors can debilitate a person’s ability to function as well as could lead to death as seen with such artists such as Pimp C.

Many of these artists are glamorizing the drugs in their music and only showing the social benefits, which in this case is the authenticity of being seen as a gangster (Chief Keef) or having sex appeal (The Weekend). Whereas, reality suggests that over-consumption of any of these substances have potential risks. A few artists have discussed the downside of drug addiction in their music, such as, Eminem and Joe Budden who have both struggled with drug abuse. Eminem released two albums, *Relapse* (2009) and *Recovery* (2010), both of which discuss his continued battles with prescription pills. Joe Budden talked publicly about his “addictive” personality and continued struggle with drugs stating, “I started with drugs very early, maybe 12 or 13

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<sup>68</sup> Calvin John Smiley, “From Silence to Propagation: Understanding the Relationship between ‘Stop Snitchin’ and ‘YOLO’,” *Deviant Behavior* 36 (2014): 1-16.



years old.”<sup>69</sup> On his debut album entitled, *Joe Budden*, he released a song entitled, “Calm Down” which was an open discussion about his addiction to drugs and how this fractured the relationship with his mother rapping, “Listen...ain’t shit like seeing your moms crying on the floor/Knowing you the reason why she ain’t alright no more.”<sup>70</sup> Throughout the very candid and at times uncomfortable song, Budden talks about his addiction and recovery, citing many 12-step program sayings such as “it’s a slow process,” “one day at a time,” and “people, places, and things.” This song might be one of the most honest rap songs looking at the negative side of drug use.

Revisiting A-Trak’s position, Hip Hop artists and Hip Hop culture, more broadly, needs to examine the content and over-celebration of drug-use in the music. Unlike previous decades or other contemporary genres, Hip Hop music’s relationship with drugs is very much associated with crime and deviance and not artistic form or celebration of creativity. The intersection of race, class, gender, and respectability, privilege those in other genres to be seen as individuals who create unique sounds and contributions to music, whereas, young Black males are lumped into a group of social misfits who perpetuate deviance and criminal behavior.

Recently, Black speech in the form of Hip Hop lyrics was at the center of a murder trial. Hip Hop music has been brought into the judicial process, “as rap lyrics are being admitted as evidence in trials.”<sup>71</sup> The Black voice has historically and continues to be policed, monitored and repressed as something counter to mainstream American values. Hence, unlike other musical genres, where lyrics are seen as fun, artistic, or fictitious, Hip Hop language is viewed as real, authentic, and troublesome. As Hip Hop music continues to grow with new sub-genres such as “addict” rap emerging it will only further the stereotypes, myths, and misconceptions of Black life, without proper acknowledgement, representation and discourse about the art, lifestyle, and lyrical content.

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<sup>69</sup> Trevor Smith, "Joe Budden Talks about His Drug Addiction & Feud with Consequence," *HotNewHipHop*, May 11, 2013, Accessed September 4, 2015. <http://www.hotnewhiphop.com/joe-budden-explains-consequence-feud-and-battle-with-addiction-news.5625.html>.

<sup>70</sup> "Joe Budden – Calm Down," *Genius*, Accessed September 3, 2015. <http://genius.com/Joe-budden-calm-down-lyrics>.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew Pulver, “America’s Hip Hop Travesty: How Rap Lyrics Are Being Used in Court – to Police Black Speech,” *Salon.com* RSS. February 8, 2015, Accessed September 3, 2015. [http://www.salon.com/2015/02/08/americas\\_hip\\_hop\\_travesty\\_how\\_rap\\_lyrics\\_are\\_being\\_used\\_in\\_court\\_to\\_police\\_black\\_speech/](http://www.salon.com/2015/02/08/americas_hip_hop_travesty_how_rap_lyrics_are_being_used_in_court_to_police_black_speech/).

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