FLIPPIN' THE SCRIPT, JOUSTIN' FROM THE MOUTH:

A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO HIP HOP DISCOURSE

by

Mariah Lillian Copeland Parker

(Under the Direction of Ruth Harman)

ABSTRACT

This thesis employs the tools of critical discourse analysis to describe the linguistic (and more broadly cultural) repertoires of a male Hip Hopper in the town of Athens, Georgia. Particularly, study uses the Appraisal framework (Martin & White 2005) to explore the interpersonal meanings created within three Hip Hop texts of three different styles—freestyle rap, trap rap, and conscious rap. In analyzing the global patterns of appraisal in these three texts, it becomes clear that positive implicit judgment is the dominant kind of meaning made in these texts, often invoked through description of actions. Informed by the findings of this study, the concluding chapter considers viable directions for future research in critical discourse analysis and critical language awareness pedagogy.

INDEX WORDS: systemic functional linguistics, discourse analysis, Hip Hop

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DEDICATION

To Athens Hip Hop, past, present and future.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For several decades linguists have attempted to address the black-white reading achievement gap through the study of African American English, believing that they could find the source of young Black children's difficulties with literacy in the segmental and grammatical differences between African American English (AAE) and the mainstream English of schooling. Though today African American English is one of the most studied language varieties in the world (Lanehart 2001), the black-white reading achievement gap nonetheless persists. In 2015, only 18% of Black fourth graders met reading proficiency standards, and by eighth grade, only 16% of Black children met the standard (NAEP 2015).

Early quantitative, variationist sociolinguistic studies did much to establish that AAE is a systematic, rule-bound language variety and not merely a shabby counterfeit of mainstream English (Labov 1972). As well, these studies revealed some morphosyntactic and phonological incongruencies (like high rates of *-ed* deletion in AAE) that could potentially complicate reading and writing acquisition for AAE speakers. For example, Labov (1972) found that AAE speakers were able to transfer tense information implied in the phrase *Last month* to derive the correct pronunc118iation of *read* in the sentence *Last month I read the sign*, but did not transfer the tense information from *passed* to a similar effect in the sentence *When I passed by, I read the sign* because the past tense morpheme is not always phonetically salient in AAE (p. 31). Thus, the high frequency of reduction in spoken AAE was believed to generate issues for young learners in decoding the past tense *-ed* marker in writing. Educational linguists have applied this kind of knowledge to the development of Black dialect readers, structured phonics curricula, and

programs like the Reading Road, which present academic content in AAE (Labov 2008, 2010a). However, such methods have not been widely adopted by educators (Green 2002).

Other social scientists have focused on cultural clashes as the source of the achievement gap (Weddington 2010). Public schooling in the United States is largely dominated by White teachers and administrators who expect White cultural norms from their students. As African American culture retains distinct norms, expectations, and community knowledge, the behavior of students who are seen as "acting out" in the classroom may be deemed quite routine and typical within their home communities. For example, calling out answers (as opposed to raising one's hand) is very in line with the interactional patterns one might find during a sermon in a Black church (Smitherman 2000), where spontaneous verbal contributions are invited; additionally, the instructional habit of using display questions[1], while common in White middle-class homes, is not typically found in working class Black homes (Hoff 2004; Meier 2007). In the minds of many people, to choose academic success is to choose White culture, leading to scenarios like those which millennial West Coast rapper Earl Sweatshirt describes in his song *Chum*: caught between being "too black for the white kids and too white for the blacks," he turns away "from honor roll to cracking bikes up off of bicycle racks" (Kgositsile 2013). In sum, the psychological challenge of reconciling one's sense of African American heritage with the demands of European-dominated society and mores leads to an internal conflict which W.E.B. DuBois famously termed *double-consciousness* and which can lead to alienation in school and other institutional contexts.

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined, and if cultural mismatch gives rise to the deficit social positioning of young Hip Hoppers, then linguistic mismatch, too, is to blame.

[1]Display questions are meant to elicit answers which the speaker already knows and are frequently posed in classrooms as means of testing student knowledge.

Indeed, recent education research has highlighted that educators often fail to validate and incorporate the rich linguistic and cultural assets of AAE speakers in school curricula and other institutional environments. In this study, discourse analysis is used as a tool for characterizing such resources, principally those which arise from and are produced within Hip Hop language and culture. In particular, I use discourse analysis to identify the linguistic resources associated with three different genres—freestyle (improvisational) rap, trap music, and conscious Hip Hop respectively—and suggest that educator understanding of these resources, applied within a culturally sustaining pedagogical approach (Paris 2012), may respond to the issue of deficit social positioning of Black academic underachievement.

Like much research on African American language, this study finds inspiration in stories of Black youth struggle in contemporary educational contexts. I undertake this work to contribute to our understanding of an important facet and source of African American language and culture—Hip Hop—so that future educators may leverage this knowledge in creating classroom spaces and pedagogies that validate rather than discredit Hip Hop youth and, in turn, invite marginalized students to truly engage with their mainstream education as critical thinkers. This work also lays the foundation for future studies of Hip Hop discourse that may serve as resources for educators and researchers who work with Hip Hop youth.

Indeed, as Gee (2008) notes, linguistically minoritized students whose semiotic repertoires are incorporated into the curriculum are in fact well positioned to become consciously aware of the task of acquiring majority discourses, and to gain metalinguistic insight which in turn enables them to better manipulate dominant discourses (p. 180). For example, one of the earliest studies of Black discourse styles in the classroom showed that Black children who were taught in a discourse style that embodied many features of their home discourses achieved higher

scores on standardized reading tasks and became more dexterous in their context-related style shifting (Piestrup 1973). As discussed at length in Harman (2017), many educators today are turning toward critical language awareness pedagogies which empower students to appropriate and reflect on genre-specific linguistic patterns (Martin 2008) while also drawing on language and knowledge from their cultural backgrounds and life experiences to establish an authoritative and critical stance when writing on topics close to heart (Khote 2017, for example).

This work, admittedly, is also informed by my own story. The choice that Earl Sweatshirt describes above is a kind of choice I have often faced throughout my own life and schooling. Thus I also undertake this work as a Hip Hop artist and as a heritage speaker of African American English deeply interested in preserving and understanding my own culture. I acknowledge the bias inherent in that interest. While I hope that this work is of educational import, I aspire to lay the grounds for future, more accessible writings which put the tools of critical discourse analysis in the hands of other Hip Hop artists and language users themselves so that they may hone their craft and appreciate their linguistic heritage.

To these ends, this thesis employs the tools of critical discourse analysis to describe the linguistic (and more broadly cultural) repertoires of a male Hip Hopper in the town of Athens, Georgia. I look at the appraisal resources this rapper employs in his improvisational and written raps and how these resources construct interpersonal relationships within his group and with the Hip Hop Nation at large. Critical discourse analysis emphasizes the discursive construction, maintenance, and disruption of power, and thus I consider how use of Hip Hop language constructs power and distributes power to individuals and groups. Informed by the findings of this study, the concluding chapter explores the sociological and pedagogical implications of

these findings. It also considers viable directions for future research in critical discourse analysis and critical language awareness pedagogy.

The interpersonal metafunction of language, described in detail in the next chapter, helps negotiate relationships like those between teacher and student and between writer and audience. As such, understanding how young Hip Hoppers negotiate relationships linguistically is a powerful place to challenge deficit positioning of the art of African American youth. This can slowly support the bridging of the perceived chasm between Hip Hop and academia. For this reason, I use the tools of Appraisal, a framework which examines how text producers construe feelings about entities in the world (Martin & White 2005), to explore the interpersonal meanings created within Hip Hop social practice. Particularly, I consider how status (a sense of power) and solidarity (a sense of common interest) are linguistically moderated. In sum, this study seeks to answer the following questions, which were developed recursively during my preliminary data collection and analysis:

1. What kind of interpersonal relations are construed in freestyle and written rap?
2. What linguistic resources do rappers use to construct these relations?
3. What linguistic resources have these rappers drawn upon to negotiate status and solidarity within their freestyled and written rhymes?
4. Given the findings produced by the above questions, how do constructions which negotiate solidarity and interpersonal relations cluster in terms of genre?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This thesis is theoretically founded in systemic functional linguistics (SFL), an analytical framework often used in critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). Unlike the generativist tradition which centralizes the individual, SFL focuses upon interactions in context and the social functions of language. It differs from sociolinguistics, too, in its orientation toward the social constitution of texts (Fairclough 2004). According to SFL theorists, every thread in the fabric of language has evolved to perform a social function (e.g. interpersonal or ideational meaning-making). Thus language is, at its core, a social object. Language is seen asnot only shaped by social context but also as playing an active role in shaping social relationships. For these reasons, the context of culture and the specific context of situation of a speech event are central elements of meaning-making (Halliday 1996).

With this fundamental orientation at its heart, SFL is capable of not only illuminating the relationship between language and society, but also critiquing the power dynamics within those relationships. Indeed, SFL was developed in the interest of remedying linguistic and social inequity (Halliday 1996). Critical SFL researchers in particular strive to unearth the ways that systems of power are linguistically constructed in texts and thus how linguistic devices support and challenge the establishment, manipulation, and naturalization of social hierarchy (Harman 2017). One powerful example is Rogers' (2002) study of the literacy practices of a low-income African American family. As part of her larger study, Rogers describes how a meeting between an African American mother and daughter and their school's Committee on Special Education was structured to position the daughter as intellectually deficient and to disempower the mother

who, in other contexts, stood ardently against her daughter's placement into special education. Rogers' SFL-informed analysis reveals the way that institutional power is naturalized discursively (e.g., through turn taking, specialized language), thus reproducing and perpetuating harmful racial and socioeconomic hierarchies.

SFL conceptualizes language as always situated in context. To enable this kind of analysis, SFL acknowledges three meaning systems that language enacts in constructing text: the **ideational** metafunction of construing experience, the **textual** metafunction of self-organization, and the **interpersonal** metafunction of constructing social relationships.

2.1 The Metafunctions of Language

2.1.1 The Ideational Metafunction

Linguistic resources associated with **ideation** function to represent transitivity (such as who is doing what to whom) as well as circumstance (such as how, when, why, and where). The context of culture and situation informs how activities and participants are described and how they construe the **field** of a text—its content or subject matter. Thus, for example, when I call home to tell my mother I'm sick, the subject matter will likely be conveyed through noun phrases like *lots of hot tea and soup*, and *staying home from class*; through processes like *to be sick* and *to feel unwell*; and circumstances like *today, in bed*, or *because of the weather*. The framework of ideation put forth by Martin & White (2005) is useful for examining the way that noun phrases interact with verbal processes and how these clusters of activity are situated circumstantially. Within this framework, clauses consist of figures, or configurations of processes, participants, and circumstances. Figures may be classified as figures of doing (which represent material actions, like *rhyming* and *killin' it*), figures of saying/sensing (which may project another figure; for example, *I wish [he wouldn't do that] or I felt [absolutely crushed by his sudden departure]*),

and figures of being (which ascribe qualities to things and people, like *He is tall*). At the center of each figure is a process, or verb, which may also be classified as active (constructing a figure in which one entity is construed as acting upon another, like *Squalle murdered the beat*) as passive (construing an entity as being acted upon, as in *We still gettin' killed by these cops*); and middle (in which an entity is construed as acting intransitively, as in *Squalle raps*).

We can represent figures visually, with the process as the 'nucleus' around which the participants and circumstances orbit.

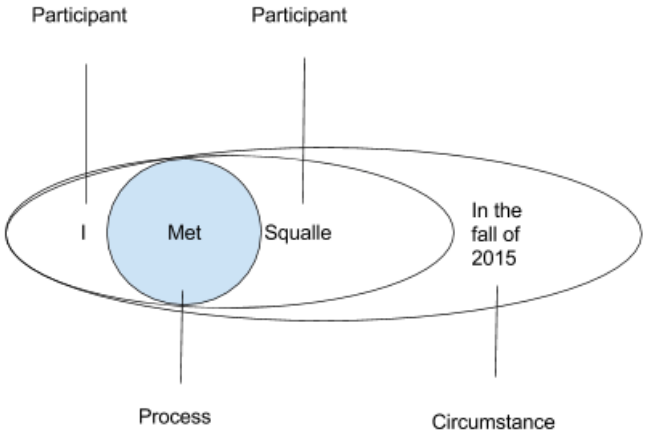

Figure 1: Visual Representation of a Figure of Doing, adapted from Martin & Rose (2005)

The example above is a figure of doing, construing an action with external consequences. In this case, *I* is construed as agentive in an active process. As *I* is introduced first in the discourse, *I* is attributed power and the reader or listener is oriented toward this participant; it is important to note that I could have easily said *Squalle and I met* or *Squalle met me*, but this choice of who is construed as agentive or passive changes the way we understand the experience. Thus it is also important to remember that ideational meanings are not direct representations of reality but instead *construals of experience* which are oriented toward a certain perspective and

in service of a certain goal. These considerations are crucial for performing effective appraisal analysis, which I describe in detail in section 1.3.

1.1.2 The Textual Metafunction

Whereas the ideational metafunction construes experience, the **textual** metafunction of language concerns itself with cohesive relationships among figures *within* a text and their organization. In relation to this metafunction, **mode**, the channel of communication used, often informs the organizational logic of a text, or lack thereof. Modes include speech, song, writing, and signing. The textual metafunction is often realized through use of conjunctions which can be used to compare or to sequence objects or events. As well, conjunctions are useful for constructing cause, purpose, condition, or consequence, thus organizing logical connections between figures (as defined in section 1.1). For example, given that the previously cited telephone exchange with my mother about my illness would be verbal interaction between family members, the spoken discourse will be spontaneous and unplanned, with a few conjunctions (*or, and, but*) , fillers (*um, er, like*) , and discourse markers (*well, so*) used to let my mother know that I'm about to speak or that I'm taking the conversation in a different direction. As well, without a shared environment that we can refer to by pointing and without access to body language, the student and parent will need to be more explicit than they would be face to face.

Within Hip Hop, rhyme-making bears heavily upon textual cohesion and the ideational content of texts is frequently organized in terms of rhyming words, as when one of the participants in this study freestyled the lines *Fake niggas try me at an angle, triangle / I stay strapped like Django.* Content wise, these lines are ideationally unrelated but are organized around the end rhyme which they share. I therefore pause at points in the following analyses to

discuss textual meanings which are unique to Hip Hop, as means of providing the fullest possible characterization of the discourse under consideration.

1.1.3 The Interpersonal Metafunction

While the textual metafunction of language concerns itself with cohesive relationships *within* a text, the **interpersonal** metafunction of language is to construct social relationships, and produce a kind of **tenor.** Tenor refers to the statuses, roles, and role relationships of the participants in an interaction or text. Taking the phone call home as an example, the intimate relationship between the sick student and their parent might also make appropriate a level of informality, constructed through use of terms of endearment like *mama* or *honey* and contracted verbal forms like *wanna* and *gonna.* In other words, the interpersonal system functions to enact relationships and construct an evaluative stance in texts.

While it is necessary to consider all three metafunctions in characterizing freestyle rap, in this thesis I primarily focus on the interpersonal metafunction. To this end, I call upon the Appraisal framework, which concerns itself with the ways that social relationships and evaluative stance towards subject matter are negotiated linguistically within a text (Martin 2003c; Martin & White 2005).

2.2 The Appraisal System

Appraisal resources enable text producers to construe certain feelings about entities in the world—about themselves, other people, and things. These resources can be analyzed as operating within the following subsystems. **Engagement** deals with how and to what degree other voices are acknowledged in a text. **Attitude** concerns itself with evaluative stances toward people and things. **Graduation** attends to the amplification and softening of meanings created via the other two systems.

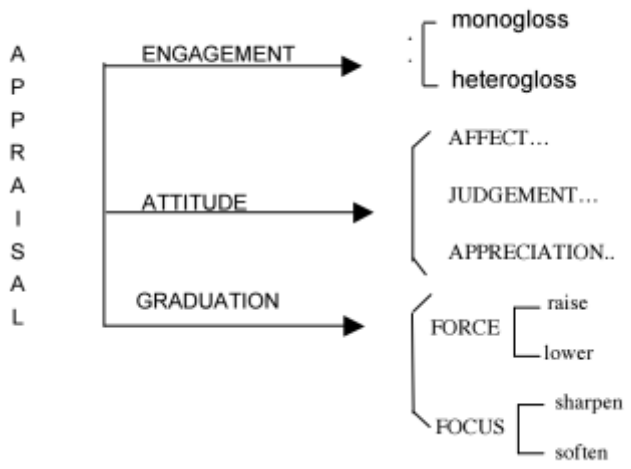

Figure 2: Appraisal, from Martin 2003c (in Humphrey 2008, p. 108)

Central to this study is the subsystem of attitude, which subdivides evaluation into three categories: **affect** deals with the semantic resources used to construe emotion, either explicitly in statements such as *He felt sad* and implicitly in descriptions of behavior, like *He woke up in a cold sweat*. **Judgment** deals with resources used to evaluate the tenacity, capability, and the moral character of others. As with affect, such judgments may also be implicitly invoked in statements like *He doesn't tip well* or explicitly inscribed in a statement such as *He's a terrible driver*. Finally, **appreciation** deals with resources which construe evaluation of objects and may also be invoked through description *(Them shoes look fly)* or explicitly inscribed *(Those are expensive shoes)*. Across the subsystem as a whole, evaluations may range on a continuum from highly positive (*he's the most insanely intelligent person I've ever met*) to highly negative *(I've never met someone so incompetent in my entire life)*.

Table 1: A Summary of Evaluation Types

	Affect - Emotions	Judgment - People	Appreciation - Objects
Positive Inscribed	He felt happy.	He's brilliant.	His flow is incredible.
Negative Inscribed	He felt sad.	He's boring.	His flow is sloppy.
Positive Invoked	He was glowing.	He waves at everyone he sees.	His flow is like the Amazon.
Negative Invoked	He woke up in a cold sweat.	He doesn't tip well.	His flow is like lukewarm spaghetti.

Though the above description and table may seem to carve the system of appraisal into neat categories, linguistic resources for evaluation may often function across categories, realizing multiple kinds of appraisal at once. For example, a statement like *His flow is like lukewarm spaghetti* can be seen as implicitly and negatively appreciating an object, in this case a rapper's cadence, but as well this statement may be reinterpreted more broadly as an implicit positive evaluation of the emcee himself. In this study, such dual-purposed evaluations are coded for both meaning potentials, and their contribution to the prosodic construal of judgment is taken into heavy consideration.

As well, positivity and negativity are not static binaries. Attitudes are gradable and categories aren't always hard and fast. Indeed, the subsystem of **graduation** deals with the moderation of meaning, and through its resources, the intensity of meanings constructed within the subsystems of attitude and engagement may be amplified or softened, often through hedging, the use of modals, and the deployment of value-laden lexical items. For example, adverbs and adjectives may be used to amplify or soften the intensity of an evaluation, as illustrated in the figure below.

High Grading

He's incredibly brilliant
He's really brilliant
He's quite brilliant
He's pretty brilliant.
He's kind of brilliant.

Low Grading

Figure 3: An Example of Graded Evaluation

Within the system of graduation, **force** refers to the degree of intensity of an evaluation. In constructing evaluative force, an author may choose among hyponymous vocabulary items which represent varying degrees of magnitude—words like *glad, happy, delighted,* and *overjoyed,* for example—to play up or play down his or her construal of emotion. As well, an author may choose amongst intensifiers like *very, super, incredibly* for additional amplifying effect. While force manages evaluative gradients like those in Figure 2, **focus** tends to the softening and sharpening of categorical distinctions. For example, *being dead* is a categorical distinction; you either are or you aren't. Even so, the boundary between *alive* and *dead* and may be linguistically sharpened or blurred through use of modifiers like *really dead, sort of dead, kind of dead,* and *so dead,* and *totally dead* (Martin & White 2005).

The resources related to the subsystem of engagement mitigate the extent to which other voices are negotiated in the text. In other words, they provide a metalanguage to analyze how dialogic or monologic a text is. From a Bakhtinian dialogistic perspective (Bakhtin 1981), every utterance exists against a "background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view, and value judgments… pregnant with responses and objections," (p. 281) and the system of engagement is useful for understanding how and to what degree elements in this backdrop are

acknowledged, incorporated, or silenced. On one end of the spectrum, heteroglossic texts are constructed in ways which acknowledge this backdrop, using quotations, concessions, expressions of evidentiality as means of acknowledging and incorporating multiple views. On the other hand, monoglossic texts are constructed in ways which acknowledge and project a single voice or group of voices, often through bare assertions which carry with them a sense of factuality. Thus the system of engagement allows us to make sense of how and to what degree a space for dialogue between voices within and outside a text is expanded to create room for other views or contracted to centralize the voice of the author (Martin & White 2005).

Appraisal meanings do not operate in isolation, but function as elements in integrated complexes of meaning; thus we must consider the co-patterning of meanings made through all three subsystems of graduation, engagement, and evaluation in order to fully understand the way that interpersonal meanings are negotiated in a text (Martin & White 2005, p. 159). While this analysis centralizes appraisal, it is also necessary to perform identification analysis in order to understand how participants are introduced, how reference to these participants shifts over phases of discourse, and how choice of reference (calling a fellow rapper *homie, nigga,* or by their first name, for example) relates to tenor.

2.1.4 Identification Analysis

Identification deals with the way that participants are introduced, tracked, and presumed within discourse. Identification resources, such as definite and indefinite articles, pronouns, and demonstratives, allow the reader or listener to understand which person or thing is being discussed. For example, indefinite articles (<u>a</u> real nigga or <u>a</u> black man) are common means of **presenting reference** or introducing new participants into the discourse. Once introduced, pronouns (like <u>he</u> and <u>them</u>) and names frequently **presume reference,** signaling to the reader

that the referent is someone that's been introduced already. **Possessive reference,** made through use of possessive pronouns, also presumes identities (*my* presumes the referent is the speaker, for example) but as well may be used to introduce an entity (my *mama*, my *team*) that hadn't yet been present in the discourse.

Table 2: A Summary Identification Resources, adapted from Martin & Rose (2005)

Type of Identification	Resource
Presenting	indefinite articles: *a, an, one, someone, anyone*
Presuming	definite articles and names: *the, this, that, I, me, you, she, he, it, we, us, they, them, Squalle, Space Dungeon*
Possesive	*(my) niggas, (my) mama, (his) flow*

These choices help us keep track of who is who and what they are doing, but they also reflect an author or speaker's assumptions about what the listener or reader should or shouldn't be expected to know. As is detailed in Chapter 5, it is common within hip hop texts for a rapper to forgo explicit mention of themselves when constructing positive self-evaluation, as this pattern of evaluation is so common that the referent, in these cases, can be assumed by the listener. As well, frequency of certain references and the kinds of figures in which they occur help signal to the reader who is important and how we should feel about them. As such, identification analysis is crucial in understanding the interpersonal meanings constructed in Hip Hop and other genres.

2.3 Genre

The above appraisal framework is useful for analyzing the discourse patterns which texts exhibit. Scholars have also used these frameworks to identify configurations of ideational,

interpersonal, and textual meaning which recur across texts and to organize texts into genres or genre families according to these patterns (see Humphrey 2015, for example). In this thesis, I use the above framework to analyze three Hip Hop texts produced in three different styles and to organize these texts into genre based on their repeated patterns.

Genres are seen, broadly, as recurrent configurations of meaning. Genres are often overlapping and blendable, too. Thus it is helpful to view genres not in terms of rigid taxonomies but as clusterings of discourse features which reappear in related interactions (Martin 2008). With this in mind, recent research has explored how discourse analysis may be used to organize genres topologically (Humphrey 2015). For example, personal recounts and historical recounts both reconstruct happenings as events unfolding through time. They therefore belong to the recount genre family. However, discourse analysis reveals that personal and historical accounts differ in terms of interpersonal and textual meaning. With regards to interpersonal meaning, historical accounts are less concerned with individual participants and more concerned with groups of participants than are personal recounts. With regards to textual meaning, biographical accounts are often organized episodically around significant milestones, while personal recounts are more often organized as a series of steps. Thus Martin (2008) models the relations between these genres and other genres in the recount family as is shown in the figure below.

Though any number of features could be used to define the axes on a genre map such as this, modeling more than two dimensions can be tricky. Here, genres are mapped as more or less individual-focused, group-focused, serially-organized or episodically-organized, overlapping where they share interpersonal and textual patterns.

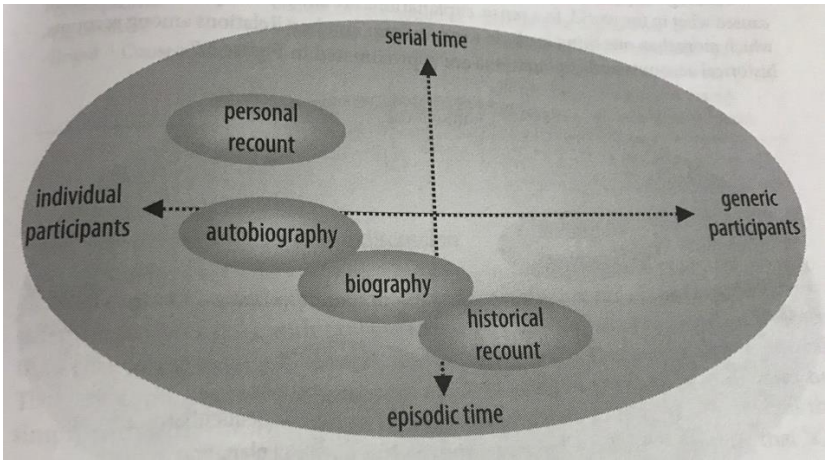

Figure 4: A topological perspective on recount genres (from Martin 2008)

This kind of model allows us to understand genres as fluid regions of commonality rather than inflexible categories, which is useful for two reasons. First, models of this kind can accommodate texts which blend and innovate genres and defy taxonomic distinction. Second, models like this may be used to understand differences between everyday genres (like personal recounts) and specialized genres (like historical accounts) in terms of learner pathways. If a student is able to produce personal recounts, then teaching that student to write historical accounts can be viewed as moving the student from relying on serial time to episodic time and from focus on individuals to focus on groups. The same, I posit, could be true for genres within the Hip Hop genre family and school-valued genre families. In applying discourse analysis to the task of characterizing Hip Hop genres and, later, organizing them topologically, I hope to lay the grounds for situating Hip Hop genres relative to high-stakes academic genres and to take the initial steps toward proposing learner pathways for apprenticing Hip Hop-oriented students toward control of these genres.

In this thesis, Hip Hop is viewed as a genre family, much like the recount family. I use the tools of critical discourse analysis, detailed above, to characterize three texts—a freestyle verse, a trap verse and a conscious verse—produced by one Hip Hop artist. I focus on the

interpersonal meanings created in these texts, using identification analysis, appraisal analysis, and figure analysis to understand who is being talked about, how they are construed, and how processes contribute to these construals. From these patterns, I hope to conduct further study which will situate the focal texts topologically, along axes of interpersonal meaning. Little work has examined genre family relation from an interpersonal perspective (Humphrey 2015) and so the interpersonal focus of this thesis may serve to fill a gap in the current scholarship. More broadly, I hope that this focus may initiate work which locates Hip Hop within the constellation of genres which are currently valued in schools and to begin a discussion of how educators can help their students connect these dots.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT OF CULTURE

As established in the previous chapters, within a functional linguistic framework it is essential to give full consideration to the cultural and situational context in which discourse is produced. In doing so, this chapter begins by establishing the positionality of the researcher and the focal participant in this study. It then provides a brief history of the African American and Hip Hop discourse communities and how this historical situatedness informs the cultural values of these nested groups. It also presents background information on the site of study, Athens, Georgia, in order to situate the samples under analysis in terms of demographics and geography.

3.1 Statements of Positionality

3.1.1 The Researcher

Before discussing the history of Black discourse and Hip Hop, it is important to locate myself in this thesis in terms of positionality and subjectivity, as it is common for outside observers to impose their cultural values onto the communities they study (Saville-Troike 1982). There are many aspects of my identity which contrast with those of my focal participant, and the way these disjunctures may have influenced my research design, analysis, and conclusions must be taken into consideration.

I was raised by my single mother in a middle-class suburb of Louisville, Kentucky, where I attended majority-White public schools. African Americans represented approximately 4% of the total population and the Black community was very tight-knit, often bound by extended family ties. As transplants, my family did not share in the close community connection which the

blood-related members of the Black community enjoyed. Until high school, my primary non-family relationships were with White folks, both middle- and working-class. The primary Black folks with whom I related closely were extended family who lived a few states away, with my two older brothers, and a few of their friends whom they knew through sports. Thus, though I was bullied by my mostly White classmates (and, later, my colleagues at work) on account of my skin color, and though I built a strong sense of African American identity as a result of this othering and through my relationships with my mother and extended family, I was at the same time socialized into White ways of being and speaking within these majority White schooling environments. For example, I cannot say that I learned to speak African American English natively, as I only heard my mother speak it (and felt encouraged to speak it myself) during our visits with extended family.

It was not until high school, when my older brothers and their friends began to freestyle rap together and inspired me to start writing raps of my own, that I became conscious of not only being 'different from White people', but being 'different from Black people' too and thereby I began to explicitly seek closer connections with African American communities. Still, I never attempted to freestyle rap until college since, as a younger female, I felt discouraged from entering into Hip Hop spaces dominated by older males. A continued sense of racial *double-consciousness* followed to college in the mountains of western North Carolina, where only 13% of the student population was non-White. I discovered that my experiences growing up in suburbia were very different than the urban experiences of many of my fellow students of color. This feeling of liminality inspired me to write rhymes and to practice freestyling frequently as a means of expressing and celebrating my racial identity and challenging male-dominated Hip Hop ideologies and spaces. During my latter years at college, I performed at poetry slams and would

rap freestyle at college parties with fellow budding emcees, both White and Black but exclusively male. Through these experiences I began to self-identify as a rapper, though it was not until moving to Athens that I became part of a stable community of rappers.

In Athens, I became part of a community of people who were actively engaged with producing and distributing music and other media (music videos, photography, etc.) and performing on stage for live audiences. Within this community, too, I exist between worlds. I am often situated on the social margins of academia through microaggressive, racialized interactions with fellow students and faculty. I also exist on the social margins of Hip Hop, in which the dark-skinned, streetwise, urban male is seen as dominant, and I, as a female privileged with light skin, college education and a middle class upbringing, am seen as mainstream. In describing the night we met, Squalle, the focal participant in this study, fondly recalls how conspicuous I was in that space and how skeptical he was when I got on stage. "Who is *that?*" He'll say in a quotative falsetto. "She can *rap?*" Thus I admittedly engage in this work as a means of better understanding a community that I have felt excluded from while also celebrating and vindicating it, as my non-academic writing has long done.

3.1.2 The Participant

It is important to understand that I, a light-skinned, middle class, twenty-five-year old female, experience Blackness and Hip Hop very differently than my friend and focal participant Squalle, who is darker-skinned, male, one year my senior and raised in poverty. For the purpose of discourse analysis, which is always situated in context, understanding Squalle's background and how he is positioned societally is also critical to understanding the evolution of his discourse skills and the environments in which it operates. Thus I summarize a few important aspects of Squalle's life story, drawn from our interviews together.

Squalle spent his early life in several different communities situated along the outskirts of Athens proper. “I’ve lived in every ghetto in Athens… all riddled with poverty and crime, drugs, sex and money, you name it,” Squalle describes. “Murder and robbery were common in most, and most kids had to grow up fast or be lost in the shadows.” Living in these places had a strong mental and emotional impact on him, making it difficult to trust others outside of his family. These experiences socialized Squalle into a trap mentality of valuing the accrual of capital and acquiring status by any means necessary. Within African American culture, *the trap* is a location where drugs are bought and sold. It may also refer to the difficulty of escaping life in these areas. Trap life, then, refers to the reality and mentality of surviving and thriving in areas where crime is often a way of life. Individuals trapped in the trap are fixated on the accrual of capital and status by any means necessary. He looked up to his older brother, who he says, “had money and seemed like he had made it.” At the age of twelve, while a student at a predominantly Black middle school in Bogart, Georgia (a town of roughly 1,000 people nestled on the outskirts of Athens) Squalle was introduced to writing raps by a trusted friend, and writing became a way to escape this harsh reality.

The high school he later attended was predominantly white; Squalle describes that there were roughly 10 black students among his graduating class. In his time at high school, he began to see an overlap between his English literature and composition classes (learning about internal rhyme and simile, for example) and his socialization into rapperhood outside of school. He took rap stars Notorious BIG and Tupac as his heroes for the narratives they shared of making it out of their ghettos. Through sports, Squalle says he learned the importance of teamwork, accountability and maintaining a positive outlook. He bonded with others outside his family and

found motivation to keep his grades up, ultimately landing him a scholarship to Alabama State University.

His time at college there was cut short after an altercation with two white men, who had called him slurs, ended in his arrest. After returning to Georgia, Squalle become a staple name in Athens Hip Hop, performing on an almost weekly basis. In the footsteps of his older brother who, Squalle says, "seemed to have found the secret to life" in acquiring money under the table, Squalle too was involved in trap life, though we have never discussed his involvement in detail. He continued to make trap music for several years until a crisis of conscience, stirred up through interaction with artists like Blacknerdninja, whose lyrics stress the importance of making better decisions with age, and, LG, a devout Christian and longtime family friend, inspired him to change directions. Speaking on his relationship with these influential figures, Squalle credits them for helping him find a new voice:

> Squalle: I can credit them for being an influence as well because they took me outside of Athens and they opened my eyes to wow there's people that like other music outside of trap, 'cause LG doesn't make trap music and neither does Nerd of course, Nerd doesn't even use a profanity, you won't even hear a cuss word or a derogatory term in LG's stuff, Nerd is the same way you know so, going on the road with them and touring and… just being in a place where I was like… I don't have any content for/'cause artists don't think about that, like some places you go your content has to match
>
> Researcher: You have to adapt.

Squalle: You have to adapt.

Researcher: Yep.

Squalle: And *Squalle Shottem*, in certain places they just wasn't on that.

Squalle Shottem is a reference to Squalle's first full-length album, produced in the trap style. Thus, in our time as friends, Squalle shifted styles in his music, from this money-obsessed, gangster-glorifying subgenre of Hip Hop to a more politically-conscious style which has garnered him critical acclaim from notable music critics in the Athens music scene (Lamb 2016; Vodicka 2016). Today, he is also active in supporting youth who have experienced similar circumstances within their communities. Squalle coaches a local middle school step team and forms part of a local Hip Hop collective called We're Weird, whose aim, they say, is to give people hope and be positive role models.

This study necessarily exists at the intersection of our positions; Squalle's music, the focus of this study, is informed by his lived experiences and sense of social positioning, as is the contextualization he adds to this data in our conversations together. In addition, my research questions, interview style, analysis and conclusions will be necessarily shaped by my experiences and positioning.

It is important to understand the Hip Hop social practices characterized in the chapters which follow as evolving within the history of African descendants in America. In the sections below, I expand my scope to trace the origins of Hip Hop and blackness in America to its earliest roots. In doing so, I situate modern African Americans and African American language practices within the history of Africans in America as a means of understanding the foundations of Hip Hop.

3.2. Africans in America

The story of Hip Hop language begins with America's beginnings, when captive Africans, brought to American colonies speaking different West African languages, were purposefully intermixed to stunt communication among them. For the completion of their daily tasks, enslaved Africans used routine, single-word English expressions in a form of communication which scholars have termed Black English Pidgin (Smitherman 1977). With successive generations of American-born African slaves using the pidgin as a lingua franca, this system of communication developed a fixed set of grammatical rules, transforming into a creole and later becoming de-creolized as it took on more features of the mainstream English dialect (Smitherman 1977).

In the 1960s and 1970s, quantitative sociolinguistics began to characterize this de-creolized dialect, called many things but referred to in this study as African American English, in terms of its rates of production of morphosyntactic and phonological features (Wolfram 1968; Labov 1972). Prominent morphosyntactic features include double negation, copula absence, zero auxiliaries and possessives; phonological features, in addition to those mentioned above, include word-final devoicing, the monophthongization of diphthongs /ay/ and /oi/ and /ŋ/ fronting (See Green 2002 for a full list of associated variables).

Research has also considered African American cultural-linguistic values and how these values have shaped African American discourse patterns and rhetorical style. Born out of the totalitarian conditions of plantation life during the slavery era, African American culture and linguistic repertoires places a high premium on indirection in communication. In the era of slavery, communication among enslaved Africans was highly regulated and controlled by white supremacists, thus African American English also developed as a counterlanguage used to

express dissent and address those in power without drawing negative attention (Morgan 2002). Cleverness and skill in expressing one's views in covert ways was a matter of life and death. And even today, as rights for the descendants of enslaved Africans advance (albeit haltingly) in this country, the fossils of these initial conditions remain manifest in a profound love of allusion and ambiguity in communication among African American English speakers (Smitherman 1977, Morgan 2002).

Such ambiguity often is fashioned from semantic expansions and reversals, a tradition which is also common in West African languages such as Mandingo. This habitual pattern of meaning can be seen in words like *bad*, which historically and still today can be used as a positive adjective in particular contexts. As well, similar reversals appear in phrases such as *I'm down to study*, meaning the same as *I'm up for studying,* or the term *ill* being used affirmatively.

Innovation is another such value and its roots also extend back to the eras of slavery and Jim Crow. As is readily apparent in the wealth of neologisms and slang generated within African American youth culture and adopted by the mainstream, verbal facility within Black youth culture is measured by one's ability to make a point in an inventive or unusual way rather than straightforwardly or by adherence to mainstream prescriptive norms. By constantly innovating, African American English served and continues to serve as a register of exclusion. Ever evolving coinages camouflage latent meanings from ill-intentioned outsiders, and as soon as one lexical innovation catches on in the mainstream, a new coinage emerges to differentiate youth vernacular speakers from authorities and intruders (Alim 2004; Morgan 2002; Smitherman 1977, 2000).

This historical overview highlights how AAE language is not just a set of grammatical and phonological rules, but is informed, like all languages, by cultural rules and knowledge. An

implicit understanding of the above values is needed in order to effectively communicate within the world of Hip Hop and within African American communities. Having traced the history of the cultural values of the African American community, I now turn to situate modern Hip Hop values within this frame.

3.3 The Story of Hip Hop

3.3.1 Origins and Values

Originating in neighborhoods of color in New York City in the 1970s, Hip Hop has since spread across the United States and the globe. In response to the Reagan-Bush era of right wing political ideology and to the abandonment of civics in urban settings with the decline of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, young New Yorkers of color fought to make sense of and escape their realities in which de facto segregation and gang violence continued to rule (Morgan 1995, 2002; Watkins 2006). Hip Hop as a cultural movement was born in the South Bronx, where block parties afforded young African American, Caribbean American, and Latinx youth a space to practice graffiti art and to breakdance and rap to the beat of drum breaks which DJs extended and spun on home-built sound systems. Masters of ceremonies (abbreviated as MCs or emcees) would invigorate the crowd with call-and-response chants and, as the culture evolved, with elaborated lyrical performances which displayed linguistic dexterity and rhythm as well as the ability to engage and animate audiences. With the advent of the first Hip Hop recording in 1979, Hip Hop aesthetics gained traction with mainstream audiences and spread across the United States and have been adopted and adapted by young people of color in countless urban locales.

Though Hip Hop language and social practices are surprisingly homogenous across regions of the U.S. (Baugh 1983), the cultural and linguistic values of African American

communities serve as the foundation of the Hip Hop subcultural ones. For example, within Hip Hop culture, resistance to the mainstream is fundamental. In battle with the oppressive conditions which seek to constrain Black American life, Hip Hop ideologies are consciously and defiantly constructed against dominant cultural norms and push to create space for the marginalized (Richardson 2006). As California rapper JT the Bigga Figga once explained in an interview with Stanford linguistic anthropologist H. Samy Alim:

> All the slavemasters gave our people straight chitlins and greens… stuff they wasn't eatin'. But we made it into a delicacy. Same thing with the language. It's the exact same formula. How our people can take the worst, or take our bad condition, and be able to turn it into something that we can benefit off of.
>
> (JT the Bigga Figga, in Alim 2006)

Through skillful use of rhythm, rhyme, subtlety, and novel coinages, emcees flip the script and reconstrue their "societal scraps" -- diminished opportunities for education, employment, housing for Black people, and the very criminalization of Blackness enshrined in policies like stop-and-frisk—into linguistic and musical delicacies which are then mass-produced and consumed by music lovers the world over.

As well, these oppressive social conditions foster within Hip Hop a highly critical view of the world. With the pressure of a fundamentally unequal society weighing upon it, Hip Hop refracts this pressure upon its individual members in efforts to maintain and raise its creative standards. As is evident in its emotionally charged language, its use of signifying, playing the dozens, and other forms of derisive humor, and its frequent irreverence for traditional feminism,

cultural nationalism, and religion, Hip Hop is obsessed with criticism and self-criticism, and within its cultural modes, nothing is spared critique and all is open to satire (Morgan 2006). Nowhere is this critical orientation more evident than in the freestyle cypher.

3.3.2 Social Practice and Genre: The Freestyle Cypher

On city sidewalks, living rooms, and in dimly-lit venues, at backyard cookouts and on radio shows, emcees gather to practice and showcase their improvisational rap skills with one another in what we within Hip Hop call *the freestyle cypher*. In this space, generally a semi-enclosed, circular physical formation, individuals take turns delivering unscripted, rhymed and metered verse (known as freestyle rap) and evaluating the verse of others. A gathering of Hip Hop oriented folk can become a cypher spontaneously if one emcee playfully challenges or calls into question the rhyme skills of another, or if an emcee feels particularly inspired by a catchy phrase or by an instrumental played in the vicinity and offhandedly begins to rhyme. These rhymed verses may be delivered acapella, to a musical beat (an instrumental), or to the mouth percussion (beatboxing) of another cypher participant. It is a highly dynamic, animated, and interactive space: as the rappers rhyme, onlookers may signal their approval or disapproval with whoops, snaps, groans, hisses, and other outbursts. Onlookers and fellow emcees, if unimpressed, are also licensed to cut off a rapper whose vocabulary is limited and repetitive or whose flow is marred with false starts, poorly cadenced delivery, unintelligible or imaginary words, extended pauses, fillers, and other exceptional disfluencies. As California rapper Rass Kass describes,

> It's kinda like a training field… you got to react under pressure, because it ain't even really fans in the cypher. I mean, everybody's a Hip Hop fan, but they ain't

> YO fan. They a fan of themselves. It's gladiators! It's jousting! I call it jousting. Joust from the mouth… (in Alim 2000)

Thus rappers performing in this mode and within this cultural space must be prepared to have their linguistic skills challenged (and thus sharpened) to use these skills to rise above critical opposition, both from their audience and, in a symbolic sense, opposition from the harsh world at large.

3.3.3 Hip Hop Cultural Models and Globalization

Together the historical conditions and influences traced in this section give rise to a Hip Hop cultural model which well-versed Hip Hoppers of various backgrounds hold in their heads as they participate in Hip Hop literacy events like the freestyle cypher (Gee 1999). Though they may internalize this cultural model, not all Hip Hoppers live in predominantly African American communities or experience racism, poverty, and other cultural influences. Indeed, in the decades since the inception of Hip Hop, globalization has catapulted Hip Hop across linguistic, socioeconomic and national boundaries. With it, the African American linguistic values, traditions, and practices in which Hip Hop is rooted have been 'glocalized' by music lovers from a wide array of national, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Alim & Pennycook 2008). Direct downloads and online streaming services provide access to the work of artists from all over the world, and it's not uncommon for creatives to form social connections and build community through social media like Instagram and streaming sites like SoundCloud. Still, the unique sociopolitical and cultural realities tied to place play fundamental roles in shaping the stories that emcees share. In this section I discuss the demographics of Athens, Georgia, where

this data was collected, as well as provide some background detail about participants and their social relationships.

3.3.4 Hip Hop and Athens Music

Situated an hour northeast of Atlanta, the Hip Hop hub of the Southeast and the birthplace of trap music, Athens might seem like an unlikely site of Hip Hop cultural production. The majority of its 124,000 citizens are white and roughly a quarter of the population attends the University of Georgia, around which the town is built (United States Census Bureau 2015). Though another third of Athenians are African American, rising housing prices, underfunded public transportation, and other obstacles have kept the city heavily segregated, and gentrification has seen luxury student apartments erected just a stone's throw from government subsidized housing where the occupants are nearly all black and/or living in poverty (Aued 2016).

The music scene in Athens reflects this segregation, too. Though internationally known for rock artists such as REM, the B-52s, Neutral Milk Hotel, Of Montreal, Drive-By Truckers, and others, rap music and Hip Hop have struggled to find their place here. With the Hip Hop mecca of Atlanta so near, many Hip Hop artists emigrate there in search of due recognition and support. In recent years, however, Athens Hip Hop has begun to unify and gain greater representation in the media and mainstream music spaces such as downtown venues and clubs. The establishment of an annual Athens Hip Hop Awards has galvanized the scene and brought the geographically scattered Hip Hop community into a central orbit. The addition of a dedicated Hip Hop showcase to the Athfest Music and Arts Festival's rock-centric programming in 2014 has been a similarly catalyzing move. As Squalle reported in one of our interviews:

> I think we're starting to get more recognition and more attention and uh rather than us/ what it used to be/from what I've seen it used to be us going to them and saying hey we're here! Come out please! And now it's like they come and say hey, we've been lookin' for you, now it's definitely a shift and I definitely think we have a lot to do with that.

By 'we,' Squalle refers to two key events which he and I led during the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016. First, there came Squalle's weekly freestyle cypher nights at Nowhere Bar. Every Wednesday throughout the summer and fall of 2015, Squalle and his close friend, LG, would perform improvised raps over the house band's funk jams and invite fellows emcees onstage to participate in cyphers with them, and in one of our interviews Squalle describes how the event drew together the Athens Hip Hop community and refined his skill as a performer, writer, and freestyler:

> Squalle: ….It was twenty people, some days five people, sometimes like a hundred people and every time we'd just do it like there was a thousand people and it just grew from there, and the band the Norm, you know, even pulled Jay from Nowhere Bar, and we met you at that event, I met DJ Highwalker, we got close at that event, me and Caufield got close at that *event, all of these guys that I'm really close to now we met at that Nowhere Bar.*
>
> Researcher: And how did you feel at first when they approached you about doing a freestyle night? Did you feel pretty confident?

> Squalle: Um... Yeah I mean yeah before then I had not freestyled in like a long time but it was just one of those like cool no pressure, you know, and we started realizing it was a lot of people so I started feeling like okay we gotta get our stuff together 'cause it's actually people in here looking at us now, we had our little house songs that we do that everybody knew and then we'd freestyle the rest of the night, and *Nowhere Bar really polished my skills, being on a mic, projecting my voice, that was fresh, it was my second or third time ever performing with a band, but I feel like it really heightened my musicality, we was doing it every week for three or four months straight, Nowhere Bar trained me,* after Nowhere Bar I started writing in a way to where I could see myself performing it.

As Squalle notes above, the Nowhere Bar event was an important cultural site for two reasons. On a social level, it served as a space for people to gather and network, building bonds across disparate factions of the Hip Hop scene. On an individual level, it sharpened Squalle's skills (and the skills of many participants in my larger study), both through consistent practice, heightened recognition, and through interaction with other skilled emcees.

The second happening was my founding of the Hot Corner Hip Hop freestyle rap competition and music showcase, which began in February 2016 and continues to occur quarterly. The event was my attempt to build on the positive momentum started at Nowhere Bar while offering a space for Squalle and others to perform their written works well as showcase their freestyle. Since its founding, the event has grown considerably and drawn Hip Hop artists from distant corners of Athens and, indeed, many regions of the East Coast to network and

perform together on (and, in a symbolic sense, reclaim) the Hot Corner block of downtown Athens, which was historically Black but has recently ceded to gentrification (see the recent PBS special on Athens Hot Corner). As with Squalle's recent releases, this series of public performances has also caught the attention of the mainstream Athens media, who have noted its success in bringing together the White and Black music scenes (Vodicka 2016; Kerce 2017). When once upon a time it was, in the words of many oldtimers in Athens Hip Hop, impossible for a Hip Hop artist to book many of the more popular music clubs downtown, today Hip Hop shows occur at these venues with almost weekly regularity. Thus the texts under consideration come at a time where Hip Hop, a genre frequently relegated to the margins of an otherwise robust music scene, has risen to prominence, and which Squalle, the focal participant, has just broken through into the mainstream.

The history and cultural-linguistic values of African American and Hip Hop communities, the local context in which these texts are produced and consumed, and the lived experiences of the researcher and the focal participant shape the texts under consideration and, indeed, the outcome of this study. In the next chapter we discuss how these texts were selected and analyzed.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

Having described the theoretical framework, the cultural context in which my data is collected, and the focal participant, Squalle, I now turn to discuss the methodology of this study, detailing my reasoning and procedure for data collection and analysis and providing a narrative overview of the phases through which the study unfolded. SFL is recursively threaded through this work: the theoretical and analytic framework are both SFL-informed, which creates a tight connection between the methodological and epistemological orientation of this study. As stated in the previous chapter, from an SFL perspective, language is seen as not only shaped by social context but also as actively shaping social relationships and environments. For these reasons, the context of culture and the specific context of situation of a speech event are central elements of meaning-making (Halliday 1996). With this in mind, this SFL study takes a discourse analysis approach that examines meaning making at a microlinguistic level (clause-level patterns in individual texts) as well as at the level of context of culture (genres, cultural repertoires) and context of situation (e.g. the immediate context that informed the production of the discourse under analysis).

As established in the previous chapters, within a functional linguistic framework it is essential to give full consideration to the cultural and situational context in which language is produced. To achieve this aim, I began by establishing the context of culture and context of situation in which these texts operate, gathering data through active engagement as a participant-observer. I then started to perform preliminary analyses on texts that were recorded within this

cultural context, considering patterns of meaning making (ideational, textual, and interpersonal) that recurred within and across texts. From there, I refined the focus of the study based on patterns which seemed most salient. Next, I conducted microlinguistic analysis of specific texts according to the frameworks established in Martin & Rose (2005) and Martin (2008). The dominant, recurrent configurations of meaning found in these texts helped to form the basis of my consideration of a preliminary genre categorization that will be substantiated through future research on larger corpora. Each of these phases is detailed in full in the sections which follow, traced chronologically from my earliest interactions at Murder House in August 2016 through the process of analyzing and deriving conclusions from the data collected there in the spring and summer of 2017.

In brief, I gathered data for analysis through participant-observation within the Athens Hip Hop scene over the course of nine months from August 2016 until May 2017 and supplemented these notes with audio recordings and ethnographic interviews. I then transcribed analyzed selections of the recordings and interviews along with lyrics of two of Squalle's songs that fell within trap and conscious subgenres of Hip Hop, respectively, and used my findings as the basis for potential genre mapping. The following is a detailed description of this data as well as my data collection and analysis process.

4.1 The Data

This thesis uses three types of data: data collected as a participant-observer during my time spent with the Murder House crew, individual interviews with the occupants of Murder House and other performers who frequented this space, and song data which was published by the performers and pulled from online streaming sources. In this section, I discuss in detail how this data was collected and used.

4.1.1 Participant-Observation with the Murder House Crew

As discussed in Chapter 3, this work is necessarily oriented by my experiences as a female Hip Hop artist of color who is active in the Athens Hip Hop scene. In developing this SFL study, it seemed natural and consistent with an SFL approach to build on my existing relationships within Athens Hip Hop in compiling and analyzing data. In the summer of 2016, several rappers (with whom I had become friends and who had previously resided in remote parts of Athens) planned to move into a home on the northeast edge of downtown Athens, and as the time to start this thesis approached, I believed strongly that this space would be a rich site of Hip Hop cultural production. I thus decided to focus on this nascent collective, which they dubbed Murder House, as the topic of my thesis. Before I had finalized my research questions, I began gathering data within the cultural and situational context of the Murder House collective through active engagement as a participant-observer.

Table 3: Study Participants and General Demographic Data

Name	Age	Race	Years in Athens	Years Active in Hip Hop	Profession
Squalle	25	African American	25	13	Engineer
Wesdaruler	29	African American	12	6	IT Manager
Warren Peace	30	White	10	12	Grocery store night manager
Trvy	26	Hispanic	1	14	Drug store clerk
Emissary	27	White-Hispanic	10	7	Grocery store night clerk
Lex Callahan	23	African-American	23	3	Hospital custodian

This decision served the data collection and epistemological orientation of this thesis in two ways. In terms of data collection, I was aware of the observer's paradox, the ripple effect an observer has on social interactions (see Rymes 2004) throughout this study. However, working with performers that I knew personally enabled me to move quickly through the adjustment period (in which my participants' self-consciousness at being recorded was evident) into the collection of less self-conscious and (likely) more authentic data. From an epistemological standpoint, my long-term personal engagement with this community, as a fellow performer and cypher participant, allowed me to capitalize on my intimate familiarity with the types of meaning-making validated within this community in designing the research study and collecting and analyzing the data. Indeed, this study served as a rich opportunity to unpack my intuitions as a participant in this social sphere and move from implicit to explicit understanding of the meanings we make and validate within Hip Hop.

After obtaining IRB approval and written consent to document our interactions, I spent time with the occupants of Murder House over a period of six months, from August 2016 to January 2017. The location of their shared home afforded them ease of access to the city center, and so we began to cypher at downtown bars and clubs with greater frequency. Much of my early observations regarding the freestyle cypher were amassed in these nightlife scenarios. In addition, I would meet with the collective at their home just northeast of downtown. In both scenarios, I interacted with these individuals as I usually would: brainstorming and planning musical moves (shows, music videos, studio collaborations, etc); freestyling together, discussing current events, and playfully cracking jokes on one another. My observations during this time were mostly collected while actively engaged in performing and interacting: it was not always possible to write detailed, detached notes while participating in conversations and freestyle

cyphers. However, as the participants relaxed into the reality of being recorded, it became possible for me to record audio and/or video of our freestyle cyphers and conversations.

Though I have spent countless hours in the company of these men, for this thesis I ultimately recorded an estimated ten hours of my participant-observation. As part of these data, I recorded five cyphers of roughly ten to fifteen minutes each, at Murder House and outside downtown bars and clubs. These data were recorded with my iPhone 6s, either handheld (for video) or placed on a central flat surface (for audio). After each session, I compiled notes which formed the basis for future observational, theoretical and methodological memos. After weeding out compromised recordings (e.g. poor lighting and/or audio quality hampered intelligibility or that the participants themselves requested to have removed from the corpus for personal reasons), selections of recorded text, particularly data from our freestyle cyphers, were transcribed for discourse analysis.

4.1.2 Interviews

The data I describe above were used to compile rich descriptions of the context of culture and situation in which the focal texts are situated. However, in establishing context it is common for outside observers to impose cultural values onto the communities they study (Saville-Troike 1982), and as a female, middle-class graduate student working exclusively with blue-collar males, I still risked imposing certain outsider views onto the data. Therefore, I also employed ethnographic interviewing techniques to allow participants to contextualize the data from their own perspectives and in their own language (Roulston 2010). As well, many of my questions were phenomenological in scope as I hoped to elicit the direct description of how participants experienced events like *the freestyle cypher* and phenomena like *flow* without requiring causal explanations or interpretive generalizations (Adams & van Manen 2008, in Roulston 2010).

Though I hoped to use these interviews to make sense of the temporal, spatial, social, and functional organization of the social worlds these rappers inhabit, I also wished to preserve the structure and content of the discourse and to capture patterns that typify our everyday, undocumented conversations. As a result, these interviews were loosely structured and highly conversational, following a topical interview protocol with open-ended questions. Using such protocols, I interviewed four of the participants (Squalle, Wesdaruler, Emissary, and Lex Callahan) for an hour each. These interviews took place at my home or at Murder House and were audio recorded on my iPhone 6s. After the interviews, I replayed the recordings and took notes on their ideational content (as contextual data) as well as salient microlinguistic patterns and transcribed excerpts of interest for microlinguistic discourse analysis, which is described in detail in Section 2.

The demands of daily life on my participants (working multiple jobs, illness, transportation difficulty, and other setbacks) made it so that, ultimately, I was unable to interview all of the participants who formed the core of the Murder House group. Still, the semi-structured, ethnographic, and phenomenological interview approach I took to the interviews with the other participants allowed these participants to contextualize the data for themselves while also producing texts which exemplify the discourse that is commonly produced around and within Athens Hip Hop.

After detailed analysis of the focal texts, I engaged my focal participant in a second semi-structured follow-up interview in which we discussed my analyses and findings (Fairclough 1992). These post hoc interviews were vital for incorporating participant feedback in my analysis and determining the veracity of my findings.

As I consulted my participants, these conversations entered into the pool of data available for transcription and analysis. As well, these recursive conversations helped ensure that this research was ultimately collaborative, taking participant perspectives and input into account at every turn (Fairclough 1992). Indeed, the very focus of this research was transformed through these conversations. For example, as I began to review and analyze the data collected with the Murder House crew, it emerged that some participants were in fact more skilled writers or else preferred writing to freestyling. It became clear that, in focusing on the freestyle cypher, I was guilty of the same linguistic pigeonholing that I claimed to resist. Thus, I expanded my data collection and analysis to written rhymes that had been released publicly by these performers.

Additionally, while initially I aimed to compare texts produced by different participants, one rapper, who has spent his entire upbringing in Athens and who had been active in Athens hip hop for the longest, became intensely interested in this research and volunteered his time most readily. As I also felt that this rapper's experiences as a longtime public figure in Athens Hip Hop made him particularly representative of the discourse patterns within this discourse community, this rapper, Squalle, became a focal interest.

4.1.3 Data from Published Work

Though in this study I focus on the work of Squalle, my initial and future aims were to conduct analysis on work for all the performers, so I consulted the performers when selecting representative written texts and performed preliminary analyses on these texts as a means of identifying broad patterns and refining my research focus. During my participant-observation sessions, we collectively decided upon published works which exemplified the writing style of each of their fellow performers in the group (Fairclough 1992). These works are all publically available for download on Bandcamp.com. As it was ultimately decided that Squalle would be

the focal participant in this thesis, I present analysis of two of his written works, representing the trap and conscious subgenres respectively, in the subsequent chapters. The first is the opening track from *Squalle Shottem,* released in the spring of 2016. According to Squalle, the track, entitled 'Streets Talk, Feds Watch,' was wildly popular with audiences shortly after its release, and this validation within the Hip Hop discourse community seemed to us justifiable grounds for analysis. The opening track from Squalle's more recent album *Black Picassoul,* selected as representative of the 'conscious' style, is also transcribed for these reasons. In analyzing these works, I hoped to better understand how artists consciously position themselves publicly and how these subgenres of Hip Hop compare and contrast with freestyle. A brief description of the full corpus is contained in Table 4.

4.2 Stages of Analysis

In this section I discuss the stages of analysis. First, representative texts for each genre were selected with the help of my participants. I then performed preliminary analysis to refine my research focus. Next, I conducted detailed analysis with attention to the lexicogrammatical and discourse semantic patterns of these texts as means of understanding how interpersonal meanings were constructed in these texts. In this stage, identification analysis, appraisal analysis and figure analysis were recursive, overlapping and ongoing.

4.2.1 Selecting Data for Analysis: Genres and Subgenres

The terms *hip hop, trap, conscious* and *freestyle* suffused my conversations with the Murder House crew during my participant-observation sessions and in my interviews with the participants. It struck me, however, that the grounds for categorizing certain kinds of Hip Hop as *trap* or *conscious* or even differentiating written Hip Hop rhymes from *freestyle* were so assumed that they were almost never discussed. Using discourse analysis to illuminate the discoursal basis

of these distinctions thus became an intense area of interest for my research. I therefore selected texts for analysis which my participants identified as belonging to these categories. The question *what is Hip Hop language?* has been answered by many (see Alim 2004's detailed response, for example) and is too broad in scope for the current analysis. Here, I consider the discourse semantic and lexico grammatical resources found in samples from each style, the kinds of appraisal meanings they construct, and extrapolate a few commonalities which many contribute to future descriptions of Hip Hop as a macrogenre.

Table 4: Summary of the Corpus

Data Type	Amount	Amount Transcribed	Data under Analysis for Thesis	Usefulness
Participant-Observation	600 minutes	0 minutes	N/A	Establishing context of culture
Freestyle rap	75 minutes	30 minutes	15 minutes with Squalle at my home	Discourse analysis to establish 'freestyle rap' as subgenre within Hip Hop genre
Interviews	360 minutes; one and a half hours with each participant	0 minutes	110 minutes with Squalle, split up into two sessions	Establishing context of culture and phenomenological descriptions of culturally relevant events; discourse samples of talk within and about Hip Hop
Published music	7 minutes; 4.5 minutes from *Black Picassoul* and 2.5 minutes from *Squalle Shottem*	7 minutes; 4.5 minutes from *Black Picassoul* and 2.5 minutes from *Squalle Shottem*	7 minutes; 4.5 minutes from *Black Picassoul* and 2.5 minutes from *Squalle Shottem*	Establishing differences between interpersonal meanings created within subgenres for comparison with patterns found in freestyle rap

4.2.2 Preliminary Analysis

My preliminary analyses of the collected data revealed that rappers focused on the appraisal system to build solidarity with their listeners and position some as insiders and others as outsiders. Indeed, analysis showed that most appraisals in these texts were judgments (i.e. appraisal of the tenacity, capacity and normality of oneself and others). Rather than evaluate objects or construe feeling, rappers most often construct evaluations of themselves or others. When objects or feelings are evaluated, these meanings can also be seen as lending themselves to the prosodic construction of judgment, a pattern which will be explained in full later. With this preliminary finding in mind, this study focuses most on the interpersonal metafunction in this study, and in this section I discuss in detail how judgments were analyzed in these texts.

4.2.3 Discourse Semantics and Lexico Grammatical Resources

After my preliminary analysis, I transcribed written rhymes which were released on albums by the four performers. To all these samples—the interviews, freestyles, and written rhymes—I applied three kinds of analysis: appraisal analysis, identification analysis, and figure analysis (see Chapter 2 to see detailed description and definition of these). These analyses were guided by the following subquestions:

With regards to ideation,

- What kinds of processes are construed?
- How are participants construed as participating in these processes?

With regards to appraisal,

- What are the dominant methods of evaluation?
- What evaluations are made?
- How are meanings intensified or downplayed?

- Are other voices acknowledged in the texts? If so, how?

With regards to identification,

- How does the rapper make reference to himself?
- How are other entities referenced?
- With what frequency are these entities referenced?
- How do these references shift over the course of the text?

4.3. Types of Analysis

4.3.1 Appraisal Analysis

To analyze patterns of appraisal for each text and, summarily, the subgenres to which these texts belong, instances of appraisal were entered into a chart which identified the appraiser, the appraised, and the evaluation of the appraised. Evaluations were categorized as positive or negative; as invoked or inscribed; and as affects, judgments, or appreciations. Instances of each category were tabulated in order to identify dominant patterns of appraisal.

4.3.2 Figure Analysis

In performing appraisal analysis, I drew upon figure analysis as a means of differentiating between positive or negative judgment. For example, *to be a dog*, within African American discourse generally, is to philander, and this behavior is validated amongst Black males who traditionally form the core body of Hip Hop. Thus to call someone a dog is positive though it conflicts with a mainstream interpretation of the term. An appraisal of *I* in a statement *I shoot clips* can be viewed as negative since gun violence has taken the lives of many within Hip Hop. However, the core process, *shoot*, is an active process which attributes agency and power to the participant and is viewed positively. For these reasons, I used figure analysis as a means of determining the co-patterning of processes/constructions and positive or negative judgments. I

coded figures as consisting of active, passive, or middle voice processes, thus determining and how and to whom agency, causality, and responsibility are attributed (Fairclough, 1992). The dominant patterns in figure types and participant configurations were then inferred. ‘

4.3.3 Identification Analysis

For identification analysis, I bolded noun groups in the transcriptions and then isolated these references by entering them into a chart which showed line-by-line who had been referenced, and how. These methods enabled me to consider a number of questions: How do references shifted over the course of the text? Who is referenced most frequently and why? Who *isn’t* referenced that might logically belong in the text? Why is such reference left out? This also assisted me in identifying *how* these entities were being appraised in various phases of texts.

4.4 How This Thesis is Organized

The three chapters which follow are organized in this order as well. Each begins with a description of the context of culture and situation in which the sample for analysis was gathered, drawing from the participant-observation described in Section 1 above. A general overview of the findings for each chapter are then are presented, followed by detailed analysis which is informed by the research questions and conducted as described in Section 2. I begin by exploring Squalle’s freestyle rap in Chapter 5, which is shown to be the most positive and self-evaluating subgenre. In Chapter Six, I give consideration to Squalle’s trap style, in which the rapper is shown to position himself favorably through construed relationships with objects and through negative evaluation of others. In Chapter Seven, I consider one of Squalle’s conscious raps, in which the rapper uses identification meanings to construct solidarity even as a latent power

imbalance remains. In this discussion, I comprehensively compare and contrast the findings in Chapters 5 through 7 and discuss the research and educational implications of these findings as well as limitations of the study, and propose a few directions for future research.

CHAPTER 5

FREESTYLE RAP

This chapter explores the patterns of meaning in Squalle's freestyle rap. Because freestyle raps are spontaneously constructed, they may be viewed as a distillation of the most readily accessible meaning-making resources a rapper has available to him or her. In writing, meanings are recursively modified and stretched in a variety of directions; freestyle, on the other hand, is linearly constructed, drawing upon whatever resources the rapper is able to summon instantaneously. In this view, the patterns produced within freestyle rap are the patterns which rappers control most easily. Thus, this study's exploration of the Hip Hop subgenres begins with an analysis of a freestyle rap produced by Squalle shortly after the release of Squalle's second album and first full-length 'conscious' record.

The purpose of the chapter is to illustrate how appraisal analysis, aided by ideational and identification analyses, may be used to construct a characterization of the discourse patterns of freestyle rap. As detailed in the methodology chapter, I follow Martin & White (2003) in coding and analysing the appraisal meanings made in Squalle's text as positive or negative, implicit or explicit, and as appreciation, judgment, or affect. As well, ideational analysis is used to classify processes as active, passive, or middle and determine how processes contribute to appraisal meaning. Using these methods, I show that implicit positive self-appraisal is the most common type of judgment, and that active processes, negative polarity, and metaphor are the primary means of constructing appraisal in this text. I then use these findings to develop a preliminary description of freestyle as genre and as the basis for my descriptions and analysis of the trap and conscious subgenres in the chapters which follow.

5.2 Background

As mentioned in Chapter 3 I first met Squalle at a weekly freestyle night during my first semester as a graduate student. Every Wednesday, Squalle and his close friend, LG, would perform improvised raps over the house band's funk jams and invite fellow emcees onstage to participate in cyphers with them. In our interviews, Squalle described how the weekly event helped him build relationships with other performers and refine his skill. Unfortunately, the Nowhere Bar cyphers were discontinued after several months as attendance began to wane. However, Squalle and others (with whom we became close through the event) continued to freestyle at downtown Hip Hop shows and at Murder House.

Though these weekly public cyphers were not overtly antagonistic spaces, the freestyle cypher is an inherently competitive environment where emcees defend their right to inclusion through showcases of their improvisational skills. Since self-vindicating mentality permeates even the most laidback and cordial freestyle cyphers, rappers performing within this cultural space are prepared to use their language skills to rise above critical opposition.

Informed by critical discourse analysis methodology (Fairclough 1992), I recorded and transcribed several freestyle texts from cyphers with Squalle and others associated with Murder House and conducted preparatory analysis on them early in the study. Of these, I focused on freestyles in which the participants *caught the flow* or *found their zone*, a Hip Hop phenomena which Squalle describes in our interview:

> Squalle: I'll freestyle anywhere, but I have to get in the mood, I would say, my first time/my first time on the mic I would never freestyle, just hope everybody

> know, I'ma give 'em eight bars of somethin' and *then* I'ma go into it, *I'ma get in my zone first, when I get in my zone I can really freestyle...*
>
> Mariah: But what does that mean, to get in your zone?
>
> Squalle: My zone is jus'... to me *it's like my freakin' brain is just firing on all cylinders,* 'cause when you first get into it you tryna feel the beat, you tryna get comfortable, you know people watchin' you so you tryna... impress a lil bit, you ain't tryna be terrible... *you know, but when you get in your zone it's just whatever beat you hear you can just go 'cause you ain't caring about nobody lookin'* at you no more, just feelin it, nobody's there, it's just you, it sounds weird but it's actually a zone.

This mental and emotional state, in which metacognition is suppressed allowing the rapper to conjure more remote connections and uncritically tap into his or her skill-based knowledge (Dietrich 2012), is an oft referenced and much sought-after phenomena within Hip Hop. Oftentimes, rappers will dismiss poor performance or decline to participate in a cypher over difficulties in 'finding their flow.' Thus, it was important to me to analyze texts produced from the *flow state,* which is regarded by rappers as the purest source of freestyle.

The freestyles that are the focus of my analysis in this chapter were collected at my home one afternoon while Squalle and I planned for a song collaboration and chatted about current events in the Athens music scene. While we brainstormed for songwriting, I pulled up a number of Hip Hop beats. Squalle and I vibed to the music for a few moments, trading compliments on

its merits. Then Squalle's words slipped into meter and rhyme and a cypher began. Squalle and I had been freestyling back and forth together for several minutes when Squalle stopped to exclaim, "I can really rap over this nigga's shit!" while laughing with seeming disbelief. As he began freestyling once again, he began to draw on a greater variety of near and slant rhymes and incorporated increasingly unpredictable entities into his similes. Squalle had found his zone, and thus in our post-hoc interview he and I selected excerpt for analysis. With reference to the cyphers I have witnessed in the past year as a participant-observer and data I have collected with other performers, I also see this sample text and analysis below as representative of many prevalent patterns in the freestyle cypher (refer to Fairclough 1992).

5.3 Analysis

In this section, I present my analysis of the interpersonal meanings created in this stretch of freestyle rap. This two-and-a-half minute excerpt is reproduced in full, line by line, in the *Quote from Text* column of the tables which follow, and the full transcription is available in the appendix. For each line of text, I present my appraisal coding as well as a brief analysis of the linguistic resources the rapper drew upon in constructing each line of appraisal. To aid with identification analysis, identification resources are **bolded**. Graduation resources, which modulate the intensity of the appraisals constructed, are highlighted in red.

My analysis reveals that positive evaluations dominate the text and that evaluations are most frequently implicit rather than explicit. Of these evaluations, the rapper himself is evaluated most frequently and is overwhelmingly evaluated in the positive. To these ends, the rapper employs three key linguistic devices. First, negative polarity items are used to invoke opposites (for example, describing what the rapper *isn't*) as means of positioning the rapper highly. Second, the rapper strategically constructs himself as active in processes of doing and others as

acted upon or as experiencers in processes of being. Third, the rapper constructs similes which liken him to valued entities and thus evaluate him highly, though implicitly.

5.3.1 Patterns of Self-Evaluation

It quickly becomes evident, in examining the opening lines of this excerpt, that the pronoun *I* is the most common referent, and evaluations of *I* are overwhelmingly positive, though these meanings are implicitly constructed:

Table 5: Analysis of Lines 1-7 of Squalle's Freestyle

Analysis Types	Line Number	Quote from Text	Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Appraisal Analysis - evaluations coded as either positive or negative, implicit or explicit, and as appreciation, judgment or affect Identification Analysis - Appraised persons and objects are bolded Graduation analysis - graduation resources are in red	Line 1	**I** be where the hitters at	Positive implicit judgment of **self**	Positive **self-judgment** implicitly constructed through association with agentive *hitters*
	Line 2	See **I** ain't just a regular rapper, **I'm** a rapper that can really rap	Positive implicit judgment of **self**; positive implicit judgment	Negative polarity used to distance the rapper from *regular rappers*, constructing positive judgement of **self**
	Line 3	And everywhere I go **I** be really strapped	Positive implicit judgment of **self**	*Being strapped* (having a gun) is a symbol of power, thus this description confers positive judgment of **self**
	Line 4	**Ain't never been a lame** 'cause **I** ain't really into that	Positive explicit judgment of **self**; negative implicit appreciation of **being a lame**	Negative polarity used to distance the rapper from **being a lame,** which both evaluates this behavior negatively while constructing positive judgement **of self**
	Line 5	I'm the only one who can get the job done	Positive implicit judgment of **self**	Adverbial *only* intensifies the meaning that **the rapper** is not only agentive (*can get the job done*) but is singular in

				this ability
	Line 6	I don't know nobody that can fire **me**	Positive implicit judgment of **self**	Negation used to construct positive self-evaluation
	Line 7	**I'm** a boss, **I'm** gon' floss til I retire, b.	Positive implicit judgment of **self**	Construing self as holding a position of power and as engaged in a positive act (to floss)

The text is suffused with positive self-appraisals, and their high frequency may lead them to come across as explicit. However, microlinguistic analysis reveals that the rapper actually avoids direct inscriptions like *I'm amazing, my rapping is amazing* or even *I can really rap.* Instead, the rapper uses a number of grammatical devices to evaluate himself indirectly. For example, the rapper makes liberal use of negative polarity items like *ain't, don't* and *nobody* to construct positive evaluation of himself, as when he says *I ain't just a regular rapper* (line 2), *I ain't never been a lame* (line 4) and *I don't know nobody that can fire me* (line 6). In other instances, the rapper avoids explicit evaluation by embedding his self-evaluation within a dependent clause, as in line 2 when he proclaims *I'm a rapper [that can really rap].*

Figure analysis reveals that active processes, in which the rapper is construed as agent, are also a source of positive appraisal. Indeed, the rapper is often construed as agentive in active processes in which he is acting upon another. In instances of middle voice, the rapper makes frequent use of metaphor to liken himself to positively-valued objects and entities as means a constructing positive self-evaluation, as shown in the next section:

Table 6: Analysis of Lines 8-16 of Squalle's Freestyle

Type of Analysis	Line Number	Quote from Text	Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Appraisal Analysis - evaluations coded as either positive or negative, implicit or explicit, and as appreciation, judgment or affect Identification Analysis - Appraised persons and objects are bolded Graduation analysis - graduation resources are in red	Line 8	**I** slam **'em** on the mat like Kurt Angle	Positive implicit judgment of **self,** negative implicit judgment of **'em**	**The rapper** construes himself as agentive in an active process, while others (**'em**) are construed as passively acted upon
	Line 9	**I'll** bend your back like a Pringle	Positive implicit judgment of **self**	The rapper construes **himself** as agentive in an active process (with sexual connotations)
	Line 10	Oops, **I'm** not single	Negative implicit judgment of **self**	(The rapper here is correcting himself for having made a sexual comment in the previous line)
	Line 11	Oops, I'm a dog, oops, I'm no dingo	Positive implicit judgment of self	*To be a dog*, within Hip Hop is positive
	Line 12	It takes two to dance, it takes two to tango	N/A	This line can be seen as primarily textual, rather than ideational or interpersonal, in function, connecting the preceding and following lines by their end rhymes
	Line 13	**I** stay strapped like Django	Positive implicit judgment of self	*Being strapped* (having a gun) is a symbol of power, thus this description confers positive self-judgment
	Line 14	Fake **niggas** try me at an angle, triangle	Explicit negative judgment of **niggas**	**Niggas** are evaluated as *fake*, which is negative
	Line 15	Isosceles, obsolete, acute, **I'm** the truth	Positive implicit judgment of self	Simile, constructed in middle voice, creates positive association
	Line 16	**I'm** the juice like fresh fruit right	Positive implicit judgement of **self**	Simile constructed in middle voice, creates positive association

Squalle draws heavily upon active processes (like *slam* and *bend*) as well as metaphor and simile in constructing evaluation in the above lines. In this and numerous other instances, the rapper likens himself to positively-valued entities like *the juice, the truth,* and *a boss* as means of implicitly judging himself positively. However, detailed analysis reveals that similes (such as *like fresh fruit* and *like Django*) predominantly function to organize the lines textually, linking one line to the next through introduction of a rhyming word. On the other hand, figures of being, which liken the rapper to valued objects using metaphor (in such instances as *I'm the juice* and *I'm the truth),* are the more salient means of construing evaluation. For example, when the rapper proclaims *I slam 'em on the mat* and *I'll bend your back,* he calls upon active processes *slam* and *bend* to confer power and agency on himself, which in turn confers upon him positive judgment. These figures of doing are followed by similes such as *like a pringle* or *like Kurt Angle*, which introduce a rhyming word. Highly textual in function, these rhyming words thread together ideationally diverse lines; there's no obvious link between *I slam 'em on the mat like Kurt Angle* and *I'll bend your back like a pringle,* save for this end rhyme. The same could be said for *it takes two to dance, it takes two to tango* (line 12) which performs no evaluative function but instead introduces an end rhyme that fosters cohesion between the lines which precede and follow it. As well, earlier in the text, Squalle evaluates himself with the phrase *I stay strapped* without elaborating through simile, in contrast to his later line *I stay strapped like Django*, showing that this evaluation may be effected without use of simile. When Squalle says *I slam 'em on the mat like Kurt Angle,* the active process *slam* constructs positive evaluation while the simile *like Kurt Angle* serves as a textual thread to which the next line may be tied through rhyme. Thus, it can be said that this text foregrounds the evaluative function of metaphor and the textual function of simile. As will be shown in the table which follow, metaphors are used to

construct negative judgments of others as well, often in parallel construction to similes which construe the rapper positively.

5.3.2 Patterns in the Evaluation of Others

To this point, we've discussed how negative polarity, agentivity and metaphor are used to construct positive evaluation of the rapper himself. But what of others? As the text unfolds, the rapper begins to incorporate evaluations of others, though these are most frequently negative:

Table 7: Analysis of Lines 17-21 of Squalle's Freestyle

Analysis Types	Line	Quote from Text	Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Appraisal Analysis - evaluations coded as either positive or negative, implicit or explicit, and as appreciation, judgment or affect Identification Analysis - Appraised persons and objects are **bolded** Graduation Analysis - graduation resources are in red	Line 17	It's **a lot of people** hatin' on **me**	Negative implicit judgment of **a lot of people;** positive implicit judgment of **me**	To hate constructs negative judgment of **a lot of people;** *to be hated on* is often interpreted as positive, implying positive judgment of **me**
	Line 18	I got patience 'cause **the whole world** is waitin' on **me**	Positive implicit judgment of self	**The rapper** is construed as causing the world to wait; thus **the whole world** is construed as passive
	Line 19	**Niggas** playin' catch up, eat this tomato **homie**	Negative implicit judgment of **niggas**	*To play catch up* construes the participant **niggas** as reactive or weak
	Line 20	Ketchup, **you** relyin' on your tongue to get you out of trouble you set up	Negative implicit judgment of **you**	*To rely on* construes the participant **you** as dependent and reactive
	Line 21	But **you** end up fallin' in the puddle, what up	Negative implicit judgment of **you**	*To end up fallin'* construes the participant **you** as dependent and reactive

In terms of identification analysis, others are identified in generic groups, like **a lot of people** and **the whole world,** or **niggas, y'all haters** (in the excerpt below)**,** as well as individually, as **homie** and **you**. In terms of register, referring to others using street terms like

nigga and *homie* serve to draw the listener into solidarity with the rapper. Though emotionally-charged in some contexts, the term *nigga* is also an in-group term and its use here is used to index a shared ideological stance with the listener, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Figure analysis reveals that othered participants are construed negatively through their role in processes which foreground their dependency. Such processes include intransitive material processes like *to play catch up*; middle ergative processes like *to end up fallin'* and *to wait on*, and mental processes like *to rely on* in which these entities are construed as having little power and depending upon other entities—the rapper, their tongues—to take action. In contrast to agentive construals of the rapper which confer positive judgment, ergative, middle and mental processes construe othered entities reactively and implicitly confer negative judgement on these entities.

3.3 Co-Patterning and Inference

As is shown in the table to follow, others are also construed as objects in active constructions which are influenced or acted upon by the rapper, as when Squalle implicitly evaluates **these haters** in the phrase *running through these haters like I'm Herschel.* So common is this co-patterning of identification and evaluation—**the rapper** evaluated positively, **others** evaluated negatively—that it then becomes possible to predict the entities which are being referred to and evaluated even when direct reference does not appear in the text, as shown below. (In this table, elided subjects are indicated in parentheses).

Table 8: Lines 21-26 of Squalle's Freestyle

Types of Analysis	Line	Quote from Text	Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Appraisal Analysis - evaluations coded as either positive or negative, implicit or explicit, and as appreciation, judgment or affect Identification Analysis - Appraised persons and objects are **bolded** Graduation analysis - Graduation resources are in red	Line 22	**We** kill shit, we ain't rehearsin'	Positive implicit judgment of **we**	*To kill* is an active process, conferring positive judgment on **we**
	Line 23	**I'm** rappin' for my turf shit	Positive implicit judgment of **the rapper**	Loyalty to geographic ties are highly valued within Hip Hop, thus conferring positive judgment on **the rapper**
	Line 24	Unh, grown man money, **yours** prolly got a curfew	Positive implicit appreciation of **(the rapper's money)**; positive implicit judgment of the rapper; negative implicit appreciation of **yours** (reference to **money**)	Though absent from the text, it can be inferred that *grown man money* evaluates **(the rapper's money),** which also implicitly confers positive judgment on the rapper himself
	Line 25	I'm Jaleel **y'all haters** y'all Urkel	Positive implicit judgment of **the rapper;** negative implicit judgement of **y'all haters**	Simile constructs associations between **the rapper** and *Jaleel*, whose high status then suggests positive judgment of **the rapper,** and between **y'all** and *Urkel*, whose low status suggests negative judgment
	Line 26	Runnin through **these haters** like **I'm** Herschel	Positive implicit judgment of **(the rapper)**	**(The rapper)** is construed as agentive while **these haters** are construed as passive

Here, too, active processes like *to kill* and *to run through* construe the rapper as agentive as a means of conferring implicit, positive judgment. As well, negative polarity in *we ain't rehearsin'* is used to position the rapper highly. Metaphor constructs both positive appraisal, in

phrases like *I'm Jaleel,* as well as negative appraisal, in phrases like *yours prolly got a curfew* and *y'all Urkel.* The above lines also provide practical examples of how textual organization can intensify and reinforce evaluative meanings. Positive and negative meanings are frequently constructed in parallel in lines like *I'm Jaleel y'all haters y'all Urkel*. With figures of doing like (*I'm) runnin through these haters,* one entity or group of entities is always agentive and another the passive recipients of the action. This co-occurrence reinforces oppositional meanings, and as these meanings accrue and are continually reinforced, it becomes possible to predict referents and interpret evaluations based on these recurrent patterns. When Squalle says, *grown man money, yours prolly got a curfew,* parallelism suggests that **his** money is *grown man money,* and other dominant patterns which recur in the text support this inference, too. The same holds for *runnin' through these haters,* in which the pronoun is elided; given the patterns discussed above, it's possible to infer that Squalle is the one *runnin' through haters*.

3.4 Summary of the Findings

To this point, I have illuminated several key discourse semantic patterns which recur in Squalle's freestyle. As previously discussed, judgment is the most common form of appraisal, though appreciations are occasionally constructed as means of implicitly judging (*yours [money] prolly got a curfew,* for example). Positive judgments are most common, and the rapper is most frequently judged positively. Others (**y'all, these haters, niggas***)* are also judged though less frequently, and largely negatively.

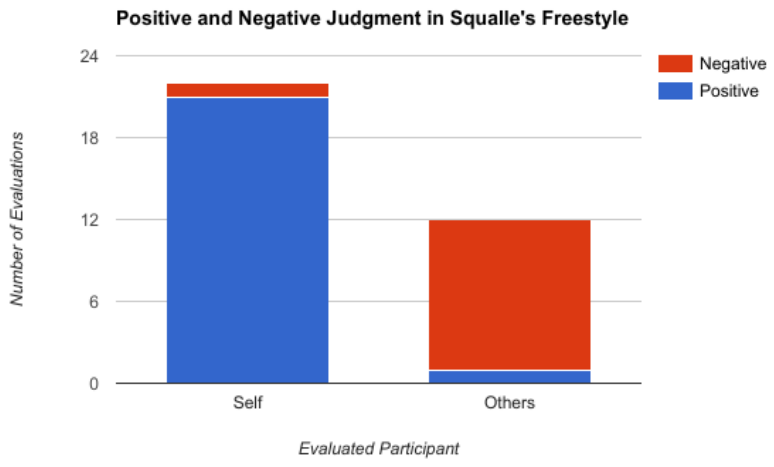

Figure 5: Positive and Negative Judgment in Squalle's Freestyle

In particular, use of metaphor is used to liken the rapper to valued objects (like *the truth*). Through use of active processes, the rapper construes himself as agentive and, thus, powerful (as in ***I*** *slam 'em on the mat)*. Thirdly, the rapper draws on negative polarity *(*as in (***I*** *ain't never been a lame)* to position himself highly. Though discussed only marginally, other participants (***you, y'all, niggas, these haters)*** are also evaluated through metaphor (***y'all*** *Urkel),* participation in middle processes like *to end up fallin'* and *to play catch up,* and recipients of active processes like *runnin through* ***these haters.*** Textual parallelism is drawn upon to reinforce meanings, often making it so that participants can be inferred and need not be explicitly named.

From these findings, a picture emerges of *what* interpersonal meanings are created, *how* they are created, and *how often* certain meanings recur. To answer the question of *why* these patterns exist, we must relate these phenomena to the context of culture and situation in which such texts are produced. In Chapter 8, these patterns are related back to the nature of the freestyle cypher, of Hip Hop culture and African American culture broadly. For now, I turn to consider the patterns of interpersonal meanings which predominate the trap genre, how these patterns are constructed, and how these patterns compare and contrast with those found in Squalle's freestyle.

CHAPTER 6

TRAP MUSIC

Having established a few basic Hip Hop discourse patterns through analysis of Squalle's freestyle, I now turn to consider a song of Squalle's called "Streets Talk, Feds Watch," which is produced within the trap genre. Trap music centralizes the accrual of capital and status by any means necessary and, ideationally, is characterized by stories of organized crime. Unlike freestyle, the text under consideration in this chapter was written for recording and public release. As in the previous chapter, I use appraisal, identification and figure analyses to characterize the patterns of interpersonal meaning within this text. In this instance, however, I also focus on appraisal meanings in the first verse as a means of establishing similarities and differences between this and the freestyle text and focus on identification analysis in the second verse to explore the way that the rapper constructs solidarity with his community.

This analysis reveals that, in contrast to his freestyle, the rapper constructs many types of appraisal meanings when making trap, evaluating objects and expressing feelings in addition to judging persons. These meanings are created by similar means—through strategic use of agentivity and negative polarity, as examples—as in the freestyle rap. Here, these meanings accrue prosodically to position the rapper positively in relation to objects and persons within his community. As well, it is shown that use of the word *nigga* is used to construct solidarity within his community, even if other discourse patterns work to increase interpersonal distance.

As is essential in discourse analysis, this chapter begins and ends through description at the level of context of culture. Subsequent to discussion of the findings, I relate the findings back to the context of culture in an attempt to understand the social origin and purpose of these

phenomena. For now, I start by situating the data contextually, providing background on Squalle's life and its influence on his trap style as well as information about Squalle's place within Athens Hip Hop at the time this text was produced.

6.2 Background

As mentioned previously, within African American culture *the trap* is a location where drugs are bought and sold and may also refer to the difficulty of escaping life in these areas. Squalle spent his early life in several different communities situated along the outskirts of Athens proper and describes these areas as impoverished and troubled, in his music as well as in conversation. "Murder and robbery were common in most, and most kids had to grow up fast or be lost in the shadows." He looked up to his older brother, who he says, "had money and seemed like he had made it" and seemed to "have found the secret to life." In his footsteps, Squalle too became involved in trap life, though we have never discussed his involvement in detail. When Squalle returned from college in Alabama, he quickly became a staple name in Athens Hip Hop, writing, recording, and performing a number of locally-loved trap songs. He recalls performing to packed out crowds and his musical career as having "got to the point that it was poppin' because... I was like *that artist*," Squalle says. "It went bananas… it was just this wave in the city." While riding this wave, Squalle released *Squalle Shottem*, from which the focal text for analysis is drawn.

6.3 Appraisal Analysis of "Streets Talk, Feds Watch"

Given the ideational content of trap texts (drugs, crime, etc) and the harsh realities from which they arise, it is logical to believe that the meanings made within trap texts will be overwhelmingly negative. Indeed, trap music is perceived by many in the mainstream media as nihilistic and hateful. However, the appraisal system, developed by Martin & Rose (2003) and

discussed in Chapter 3, is a cogent way of identifying the orchestration of evaluative terms across texts, and in the samples analyzed here, it emerges that this orchestration of evaluation leads to a highly positive depiction of the rapper. As well, trap music is described as 'abrasive' and 'explicit' but appraisal analysis reveals that the meanings made are in fact more often implicit than explicit. Interestingly, the rapper also constructs a wider array of appraisal types in his trap style than in his freestyle, also expressing appreciation and affect in addition to judgment. Cumulatively, these meanings serve to bolster the positive positioning of the rapper.

My analysis reveals that, to these ends, the rapper employs two key linguistic devices. First, he uses negative evaluations of objects and people as means of positioning himself highly. Second, he strategically constructs himself as active in processes of doing, which confers him with power, and others as acted upon or as experiencers in processes of being, which position them as passive and/or powerless. In the next section, I closely analyze the appraisal meaning constructed in the opening verse "Streets Talk, Feds Watch" and discuss the workings of these patterns in detail.

6.3.1 Findings

As with the freestyled verses in the previous chapter, positive self-appraisals are the most common meaning constructed in this text as well (which is reproduced line-by-line in the table below and may also be found in the Appendix). So common are positive self-appraisals, in fact, that the rapper need not always refer to himself explicitly when constructing such appraisals, instead allowing these appraisals to accrue prosodically over several lines without repeated mention of who is being evaluated. Take, for example, the opening lines of our representative text, quoted in the appraisal chart below:

Table 9: Appraisal Analysis of Lines 1-3, "Streets Talk, Feds Watch"

Type of Analysis	Line	Quote from Text	Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Identification Analysis - Appraised objects or people appear in **bold** Elided pronouns in (parentheses) Appraisal Analysis- Quotes coded as positive or negative; implicit or explicit; and as judgments (of people); appreciations (of objects) or affect (emotions)	Line 1	When **I** hit the city niggas know what's up	Implicitly positive judgment of the **rapper himself**	The **rapper is construed as active** in a process of doing while **niggas are construed as experiencers** in a process of being which is **caused by the rapper**
	Line 2	**(The rapper)** got a couple shooters and a Bentley truck	Implicitly positive judgment of **the rapper** himself	Though the **pronoun is elided**, can be inferred that the **rapper is referent** here, constructs positive evaluation of himself through display of relationship to objects
	Line 3	**(A couple shooters and a Bentley truck/the rapper)** worth a couple milli and **it's** goin' up	Explicit positive appreciation of **a couple shooters and a Bentley truck;** implicitly positive judgment of **the rapper**	Appreciation of objects that **the rapper** has confers implicit positive judgment on the rapper, though it is unclear if *worth a couple milli* refers to **the items or to the rapper himself**

The rapper is construed as agentive and others as passive experiencers from the outset, implicitly judging **the rapper** positively and **niggas** negatively. The song opens with a circumstantial clause, which defines the scenario in which **niggas** participate in the process of being, **to know**. In this way, they are caused to know by the rapper. In contrast with the freestyled text, the rapper also creates associations between himself and objects as means of constructing positive evaluation, as in the second line, *got a couple shooters and a Bentley truck.* So prevalent is the pattern of positive self-evaluation that it can be safely inferred that these objects belong to him and not to *niggas,* even though *niggas* occurs closer to this verb phrase and

could be a likely referent. This pattern of associating the self with valued objects recurs frequently, as when Squalle says in line 9 *couple bands on the bezel boy it's nothin' nigga.* Again, though the rapper himself is not explicitly referred to, it can be inferred that mention of these objects is being used to construct positive evaluation of the rapper without making repeated reference to him.

From the outset, others are construed as affected rather than agentive; in the very opening line, they are construed as *being caused to know* when the rapper *hits the streets*. Negative evaluations of others are common across texts, and several examples of their construction can be found in the lines which follow:

Table 10: Appraisal Analysis of lines 4-10, "Streets Talk, Feds Watch"

Analysis Type	Line Number	Quote from Text	Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Identification Analysis - Appraised people and objects in **bold** Appraisal Analysis- Coded as either positive or negative; as implicit or explicit; and as judgments (of people) appreciations (of objects) or affect (emotions) Identification Analysis -	Line 4	I could be chill at home and couldn't find a fuck	Implicit negative affect	Implicitness constructed through use of modals and indirection (couldn't find a fuck) as a opposed to the more mainstream (don't give a fuck)
	Line 5	'Cause **I** could care less bout **these nigga** [sic]	Implicit negative affect; implicit negative judgment of **these nigga**	**These nigga** are construed as not worth caring
	Line 6	**I** do not need **to impress 'em**, I'm just being honest with you	Implicit positive judgment of **the rapper**; implicit negative affect; implicit negative appreciation of ***impressing;*** implicit negative judgment of **'em**	By distancing himself from **impressing,** the rapper positions **himself** highly and distances himself from **others**
	Line 7	**I** do not flex	Implicit positive	Negative polarity used to

Appraised people and objects in **bold** Appraisal Analysis- Appraisals coded as either positive or negative; as implicit or explicit; and as judgments (of people) appreciations (of objects) or affects (emotions)			judgment of **the rapper**; implicit negative appreciation of *flexing*	distance rapper from *flexing*
	Line 8	**I** been on the hustle since a youngin'	Implicit positive judgment of **the rapper**	**Rapper** construed as agentive in a process of doing
	Line 9	**Couple bands on the bezel** boy **it's** nothin, nigga	Implicit positive appreciation of **the bezel;** explicit negative appreciation/affect toward **couple bands on the bezel**; implicit positive judgment of **the rapper**	**The rapper** is elided here but can be assumed that these objects are his. **The objects** are positively evaluated but then devalued as a means of positioning the rapper highly.
	Line 10	**I** got a few haters and I promise that I love 'em	Positive implicit judgment of **the rapper**	As mentioned previously, *to have haters* is seen as positive. The line affirms that the rapper himself does not hate, which also evaluates **the rapper** positively.
	Line 11	'Cause if **you** ain't got haters you ain't buckin', nigga	Implicit negative judgment of **you**	Negative polarity and conditionals used to distance **you** from *buckin'* which is a valued behavior

A pattern of depreciation of objects and actions, used to elevate the rapper to higher status, is frequent. The artist claims objects, namely *a bentley truck, couple bands on the bezel*, as a means of constructing positive self evaluation. However, he also distances himself from these things as a means of positioning himself as above them, as when he describes his rings as *nothin'*. This patterns extends to the rapper's evaluation of practices, too, as when he insists in lines 7-8 that *I do not need to impress,* and *I ain't gotta flex*; later in line 23 and 26 that *we don't*

fool around and *I don't waste* and in line 24 that he's *never caught slippin'*. In using negation to distance himself from these behaviors and actions, the rapper positions himself highly relative to his addressee.

In summary, positive-self evaluation is the most common form of evaluation in this text, as in freestyle. As in freestyle, second- and third-persons (**[these] niggas, you, them***)* are judged exclusively in the negative. Unlike his freestyled verse, the rapper expresses affect, but these meanings are still limited to negative affect. The appreciations he constructs are mixed, sometimes even within a single sentence. At times, he constructs positive appreciations of objects which he then tears down as means of expressing cool affect and elevating himself. In other instances, negative polarity is used to distance the rapper from unsavory behaviors. These patterns are represented in the graph below.

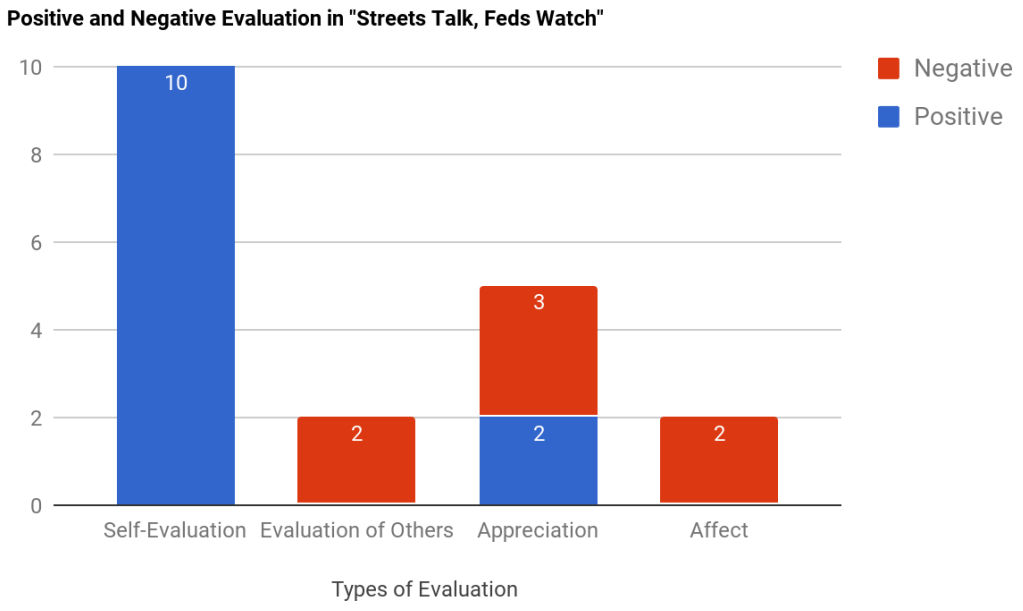

Figure 6: Positive and Negative Evaluation in Streets Talk, Feds Watch

Though recurrent employ of polarity, combined with the verse's emotionally charged language, might strike listeners as overtly evaluative and negative, in a quantitative sense this verse is fairly

balanced in terms of positive and negative appraisal. Eleven of the appraisals identified in this verse were coded as positive and only seven as negative. Further, even in instances where the rapper judges others negatively or devalues objects and actions, this discourse patterns work to construe a positive picture of the rapper as meanings accumulate.

As in freestyle, the rapper is shown to incorporate a wider array of participants into the discourse as this text unfolds. The focus begins on himself and gradually expands as *these niggas* and *you* are drawn into the discourse. In the next section, his focus continues to expand as individuals aligned with himself, identified with possessive pronouns, are introduced into the text. In the next section, I present an identification analysis of the song's second verse, which touches on these developments and ultimately reveals how the rapper constructs solidarity with his audiences through strategic employ of the word *nigga*. In the discussion, findings related to identification and appraisal meanings are brought together and related back to the context of culture.

6.4 Identification Analysis of "Streets Talk, Feds Watch"

It is true that the rapper's evaluations of others are almost universally negative in many of the Hip Hop texts under consideration. However, it is also important to consider how and with whom the rapper constructs solidarity. A number of tactics are used, including use of possessive pronouns to mark individuals and groups which are aligned with the rapper. These groups—my team, my niggas, my mama—are also evaluated positively. In this section, I look briefly at another recurrent method of constructing solidarity: use of the word *nigga.*

6.4.1 Findings

While emotionally charged in certain contexts, the term *nigga* is also an in-group term, and its use here indexes a shared ideological stance. Identification analysis reveals that the rapper uses the term to refer to himself as well as to others. Twice it is used in reference to the rapper himself, as in line 17 (*a real nigga troubles you*) and line 31 (*a nigga's heart so cold*). Twice it is used with a possessive pronoun to refer to the rapper's 'team' in line 24 and 27. At other times *these niggas* is used to refer to other people (*niggas know what's up* in line 1 and *could care less 'bout these nigga* in line 5). In this case of *these nigga*, deictic *these* also suggests a level of proximity. Thus the word can be seen constructing both listener and speaker as existing on the same level in terms of status. Interestingly, this term is never used to refer to a specific referent other than the rapper (as in *that nigga*, or *the nigga in the blue polo shirt*). As this word carries in-group kinship significance and is used to refer to members of the community in general, it draws all referents into a common pool.

Table 11: Identification Analysis of the term nigga in "Streets Talk, Feds Watch"

Line	Quote from Text	Analysis of Referent
Line 1	When I hit the city **niggas** know what's up	Third-persons
Line 5	I could care less 'bout **these nigga(s)**	Third-persons
Line 16	You insecure so **a real nigga** trouble you	The rapper himself
Line 21	I ain't been **a dumb nigga**	The rapper himself
Line 24	**My niggas** warmed up	Third-persons affiliated with the rapper
Line 27	**My niggas** patrol the whole block	Third-persons affiliated with the rapper
Line 33	**A nigga's heart** so cold	The rapper himself

Thus, though the rapper most often evaluates second- and third-persons negatively, he also draws them into solidarity through employ of an in-group term. In applying it to himself, to parties aligned with him as well as othered groups, he indexes the community ties and ideological stance which are shared across these groups.

6.5 Discussion

Combining the results of these identification and appraisal analyses, a picture emerges of how the rapper moderates interpersonal distance between himself and his addressee. The appraisal meanings constructed here are more diverse than in the freestyle sample, but as these meanings accrue they construct an overall positive evaluation of the rapper, and so common are positive self-evaluations that cultural expectation facilitates this meaning-making without need for explicit referents. Figure analysis reveals that strategic use of active processes, which construe the rapper as agentive and associate the rapper with objects of value, is a key means of effecting positive self-evaluation. Negative polarity is used to devalue objects and persons, which also positions the rapper favorably. Othered participants (**you, these nigga)** are construed as passively acted upon, and negative affect (*I could care less*) serves to intensify the negative judgments of others. Together, these appraisal meanings position the rapper favorably and others unfavorably, increasing the interpersonal distance.

However, the rapper also constructs solidarity with others through positive evaluation of entities aligned with him (**my team, my niggas**) and by referring to himself and others as *nigga*, which draws these diverse referents into a common pool and indexes their shared ideological stance.

Situating both the appraisal and identification analyses within the context of culture established in Chapter 4, a picture also emerges of how these discourse patterns reproduce social

values within trap texts and in Black culture. As Squalle himself describes in our interview, a sense of in-group competition weighs upon African American history and culture, and he frequently references "conditioning" as the source of the meaning-making tendencies discusses in this chapter:

> You can credit that to slavery... light skinned slaves was in the house, dark skinned slaves worked in the field, um light skinned slaves got treated better because they were closer to white um even now it's a divide between black and light skinned women, we're all black, but psychologically, darker women look at lighter women like they get treated better, like they're prettier, and it's all in the media, it's everywhere, and that's what I mean by competition, *that stuff was conditioned to us so naturally our mindset is if that person gets something I'm going to be jealous of it, and this person on the other end if I get something I'm going to make you jealous of it.*

Having been socialized into this discourse community and having internalized this cultural model for participation in Hip Hop (Gee 199), Squalle uses the word *nigga* to acknowledge that "we're all black" but uses other meaning-making devices—agentivity and negative polarity in particular—to reinforce a competitive narrative at the same time.

The rapper's appraisal patterns carve out increased interpersonal distance, but given that Hip Hop aims to create space *for* the marginalized, I interpret these patterns not as creating space *between* himself and others, but merely making space *for* himself in a highly competitive social discursive space of Hip Hop. I have spoken at length about the context of culture in which this

text is produced, but consideration of the way texts like “Streets Talk, Feds Watch” are consumed within this context of culture contribute evidence to the above assertion. For example, Hip Hop audiences take no personal offense to lines like *you insecure so a real nigga trouble you.* On the contrary, audiences recite these lyrics at shows, as I have seen countless times and done myself, and listeners are invited to adopt the positioning of the rapper. They call out, *when I hit the city niggas know what’s up!* and use these words as positive self-evaluation of **themselves.** In Hip Hop cultural spaces, these lyrics are as means of discursively creating space for any and all who have internalized a Hip Hop cultural model. Thus these meanings, while negative at face value, are also inherently celebratory.

CHAPTER 7

CONSCIOUS RAP

Though the discourse around trap music, within Hip Hop and without, often frames trap as socially irresponsible. Conscious rap, the focus of this chapter, is framed as a more positive and uplifting subgenre. However, analysis of texts produced in both styles reveals many overlaps in interpersonal meaning. In this section I share analysis of the opening track from Squalle's most recent album, *Black Picassoul,* whose release was covered widely in the local newspaper and whose message was geared toward community empowerment. In contrast to *Squalle Shottem,* which gained popularity among exclusively Hip Hop music circles but went largely ignored by (white) music critics, *Black Picassoul* was widely celebrated in the mainstream local music media, described as "Athens hip hop finding its voice and, more importantly, that voice being heard," (Vodicka 2016) and as "easily one of the most conscious and aware hip-hop albums out of Athens this year" (Lamb 2016). Squalle himself describes it as a serious turning point in his music and for Athens hip hop generally:

> I was performin' and killin' these shows and gettin' off stage and hearin' people say 'aw, great show,' you know, 'I'm rockin wit you,' but going home and feeling like nothing was accomplished like… um and then with the uh recent politics and stuff that's been goin' on it was like I'm feeding… into all of that, *I'm out here one minute I'm saying I shoot you for this and then the next minute you know I'm complainin' about black on black crime so it's just one of those,* I was stuck in

like a hypocritical stage, but now I just view it as *trap is a part of me because it was once a lifestyle I lived but I've grown from there*.

In reference to his composition *Black Picassoul,* Squalle describes himself as determined to show audiences a more thoughtful side of himself and prove wrong those within Hip Hop who had labeled him as 'just a trap artist.' It is also important to note, as he says above, that *trap is a part of Researcher:* that the competitive conditioning Squalle describes has not been not erased by his decision to pursue 'conscious' rap. Indeed, a hierarchical interpersonal distance also manifests itself in his more recent work. Though the ideational content is more sociopolitically oriented and the relationships construed are more complex than in "Streets Talk, Feds Watch", discourse analysis revealed many of the same evaluative and interpersonal patterns. In terms of attitude and graduation, which serves to modulate the intensity of meanings, the rapper constructs connotations which are both intense (drawing on language like *murder* and *killer* to turn the mood up to an aggravated pitch) and implicit (making use of comparisons, interrogatives and other kinds of embedded clauses to construct judgments rather than stating judgments directly). In terms of interpersonal metafunction, the rapper uses various devices which sustain interpersonal distance between the rapper and his addressees and to reinforce a dichotomy between individuals aligned with the artist or not. To illustrate these patterns, I present my analysis of *Crazy Days,* the first track on the album *Black Picassoul*.

In each table, identification resources are bolded and engagement resources highlighted in red. Appraisals are coded as positive or negative, as implicit or explicit, and as affect, judgment, or appreciation. The text is presented line by line in the *Quote from Text* column and with appraisal codings for each quote presented in the *Coding of Quote* column. For each row,

the *Analysis of Coding* column contributes a brief analysis of how linguistic devices function to construct the meaning of each quote. This combination of graduation, attitude, and identification analyses, as shown below, reveals how the rapper aligns the listener with himself while pushing back against those who might judge him in the opening lines of *Crazy Days*:

Table 12: Analysis of Lines 1-8 of "Crazy Days"

Type of Analysis	Line Number	Quote from Text	Appraisal Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Identification analysis - Appraised entities are **bolded** Appraisal Analysis - Appraisals coded as positive or negative, implicit or explicit and as affect, appreciation or judgment Graduation analysis - resources highlighted in red	Line 1	**I** don't get the respect I deserve	Implicit negative affect; implicit positive judgment of **the rapper**	Embeds an implicitly positive evaluation of himself (that he deserves respect) within a statement where a high-polarized auxiliary verb increases the intensity of the meaning.
	Line 2	Fuck **if you feel me**, I give a fuck what you **heard about me**	Implicit negative judgment of **you**	Rapper uses indirection to avoid explicitly judging **you,** instead attacks propositions **if you feel me** and objects **what you heard about me**
	Line 3	How could **you doubt me**? I'm the realest, that's my word	Implicit negative judgment of **you,** positive explicit judgment of **the rapper**	Calls into question the proposition **(that) you doubt me** as means of implicitly judging **you**
	Line 4	Count me out but the game won't be the same without **me**	Implicit positive judgment of **the rapper**	Negation used to construct a positive judgment of **the rapper**

	Line 5	**You** judge a nigga by my looks don't even know my name	Implicit negative judgment of **you**	Negative polarity items *don't even* and value-laden lexis aid in constructing negative appraisal
	Line 6	You judge a book by my cover ain't even read a page	Implicit negative judgment of **you**	As above, negative polarity item *ain't* and value-laden lexis *judge* aid in constructing negative appraisal
	Line 7	**These people** think I'm stuck up because I'm not a slave	Negative implicit judgment of **these people;** positive implicit judgment of **the rapper**	Because the rapper has already aligned the listener with him through previous statements, this construes a negative judgment of **these people**
	Line 8	Because **I** have a conscious mind **they** think I'm misbehaving	Positive implicit judgment of **I,** negative implicit judgment of **they**	Same as above

In terms of identification analysis, the rapper is construed as *I* and *me* with high frequency. As the song unfolds, he gradually broadens his use of identification resources, identifying himself as *a nigga, my looks, my name, my book, my cover* and *a page.* Pronouns used in reference to the rapper are most common, but he also addresses *you*, and, later, *these people* and *they*, which likely refer, based on Squalle's explanation in our post-hoc interview, to racists as well as to Athens Hip Hoppers who see Squalle as 'just a trap artist.'

With regards to appraisal, othered entities (like *you, they, these people*) are evaluated negatively throughout, reinforcing an essentialized interpersonal conflict similar to that in *Streets Talk, Feds Watch.* These negative appraisals are constructed through embedded clauses which

question propositions, as when the rapper says, *Fuck [if **you** feel me], I give a fuck [what **you** heard about me], and how could [**you** doubt me]?* By these means, the rapper draws upon indirection as a means of making his disdain known rather than directly confronting these entities.

In contrast but perhaps unsurprisingly, the rapper constructs favorable evaluations of himself throughout. In some instances, positive self-evaluation is obvious, such as when the rapper claims *I'm the realest, the game won't be the same without me,* and *how could you doubt me?* As in the freestyle and trap texts, here too Squalle uses negative polarity to make implicitly positive judgments about himself. For example, the text begins with *I don't get the respect I deserve,* the negative polarity item *don't* raises the emotional intensity of the statement, which is implicitly positive evaluation of himself (that he deserves respect). In embedding tacit meanings rather than stating them outright, such moves can be said to draw upon the tradition of indirection described in the context of culture.

Turning back to identification analysis, *Crazy Days* differs from trap texts in the way that the rapper complicates the *you-I* dichotomy as the text unfolds. In the latter half of *Crazy Days,* the rapper incorporates a wider range of participants, as illustrated in the following chart, in which the participants are isolated:

Table 13: Identification Analysis of Lines 1-20, Crazy Days.

Line	Aligned with rapper	Othered
1	I, I	
2	Me	You
3	I, me, my word	You
4	Me, me	
5	A nigga, my looks, my name	You

6	My book, my cover, a page	You
7	I'm, I'm	These people
8	I, a conscious mind, I	
9	I'm	
10	Our people	These cops
11	We, we	
12	Another brother	
13		A white man
14	A black man	
15	He	
16	He, he	
17	He	Racists
18	We, the color of our faces	People
19	We	
20	Me, me	

As the song proceeds, the rapper himself is referred to as *me* and *I'm* but as well, he uses synecdoche, referencing *my looks, my name.* Later he draws upon first-person plural possessives, referencings *our people* and *the color of our faces* as he constructs solidarity with his addressee. He also refers to himself and his community as *we, another brother,* and *a black man*. Others are construed as *you* most frequently, but as the lines unfold, others are also referenced as *these people, they, these cops, a white man,* and *racists.* The frame expands until the rapper arrives at the abstract, when the rapper references *a white man* and *a black man* generally. Toward the end of the sample, the rapper employs *we* and *me* interchangeably as a means of formalizing his alignment with those affected by the actions he has described. Incorporating a much wider range

of participants is a hallmark of Squalle's 'conscious' style, even as the alignment of participants does, in many ways, reproduce an interpersonal conflict similar to that of the 'trap' style.

Unlike "Streets Talk, Feds Watch", here Squalle's evaluation of entities like *our people* and *we* is mixed. Rather than adhering strictly to a dichotomized pattern of evaluation, the rapper also negatively judges people who are aligned with him, as is most readily apparent in lines 9-20:

Table 14: Analysis of Lines 9-20 of "Crazy Days"

Type of Analysis	Quote from Text	Coding of Quote	Analysis of Coding
Attitude analysis - Appraisals coded as negative or positive, implicit or explicit, and as judgement, appreciation or affect. Identification Analysis - Appraised people and things are **bolded** Graduation analysis - Graduation resources are in red	I'm tryna make a statement, when will it stop?	Positive implicit judgment of **the rapper**	The rapper constructs **himself as agent**, which confers positive judgment
	Our people gettin' murdered by these cops	Negative implicit judgment of **our people**	**Our people** is the object of a passive construction, which takes away power from the appraised group, conferring negative judgment
	And **we** ain't saying nothing we just sit around and watch	Negative implicit judgment of **we**	Graduation resources *just* and *ain't* make clear that *sitting around and watching* is not sufficient; **we** engaged in middle process (not acting upon another entity) as opposed to active, which is positive
	Every minute on the clock **another brother** gettin' shot	Negative implicit judgment of **another brother**	**Another brother** is the object of a passive construction, which confers negative judgment
	A white man can poison an entire city and get acquitted	Negative implicit judgment of **a white man**	**A white man** is agentive here, but the active process in which he is engaged, poisoning, is negative

	A black man can have an ounce of weed and get a sentence of up to fifty years	Positive implicit judgment of **a black man**	Through previous statements, the rapper has aligned the listener with men of color; as well, an ounce of weed is a valued object in this discourse community, and thus constructing **a black man** as having an ounce of weed is neutral if not positive.
	And **he** ain't never been a killer, he just likes to get high to fight the issues that he deals with	Positive implicit judgment of **he**	Negation and highly-charged language like a killer and fight is used to turn up the intensity of these meanings; negation also used to invoke opposites, constructing a positive judgment of **he**
	On a regular basis he gotta deal with **racists**	Negative implicit judgment of **racists**	Negative meaning implied in gotta deal constructs a negative judgment of **racists**
	We gotta deal with **people** judging us because the color of our faces	Negative implicit judgement of **people**	Negative meaning implied in gotta deal constructs a negative judgment of **people**
	How can **we** be complacent in this nation?	Negative implicit judgment of **we**	Questioning the proposition (that we be complacent) implicitly judges **we** negatively
	Tell me how can **we** be patient?	Negative implicit judgment of **we**	Questioning the proposition (that we be patient) implicitly judges **we** negatively

As in previous texts, the rapper is construed as agentive and thus positively when he says, *I'm tryna make a statement.* However, in this text the rapper uses interrogatives opens a dialogic space and question others' propositions. Earlier in the text this tactic is used to attack *you*, but here it is also used to question those with whom the rapper has built solidarity (as in lines 19-20

when the rapper says *how can **we** be complacent in this nation? / how can **we** be patient?*) In recognizing (and refuting) the viewpoints of others, the rapper invokes moral judgment of persons who hold these views, similar to *Streets Talk, Feds Watch*.

In sum, the rapper is again the most frequently evaluated entity and is most often evaluated positively. As in previous texts, Squalle begins with himself and extends his scope to incorporate a variety of participants, though the number of participants and relationship between participants in this text is wider and more complex than in previous texts. Still, the appraisal meanings constructed in this text are mostly negative. Othered entities (**you, they, these people, racists)** receive negative evaluation exclusively, and these meanings are implicitly constructed through placement in embedded clauses, interrogatives, and roles in active processes of negative value (*to judge, to poison*). Genre expectations facilitate this meaning-making, as we are expected to align ourselves with the rapper and against others, as previous texts have shown. While the rapper constructs solidarity with addressees through interchanging use of **I, we, us,** and identifiers marked by possessive pronoun (**our** people, the color of **our** faces) this group is evaluated negatively through use of interrogatives and placement in passive and middle constructions. This negative judgment serves as means of calling these groups to action, fulfilling the 'community empowerment' aim of the text. Below is a quantitative summary of the kinds of evaluations constructed in this text.

In Hip Hop circles 'conscious' rap is elevated for being more socially responsible than trap music, but as the graph above illustrates, the appraisal meanings constructed in "Crazy Days" are actually more highly negative than those of the trap text. "Crazy Days" draws on a different set of features to construct evaluation, making heavier use of embedding and

interrogatives, but the results are comparable. Here too, Squalle uses appraisal meanings to speak from a position of authority, judging others and positively evaluating himself.

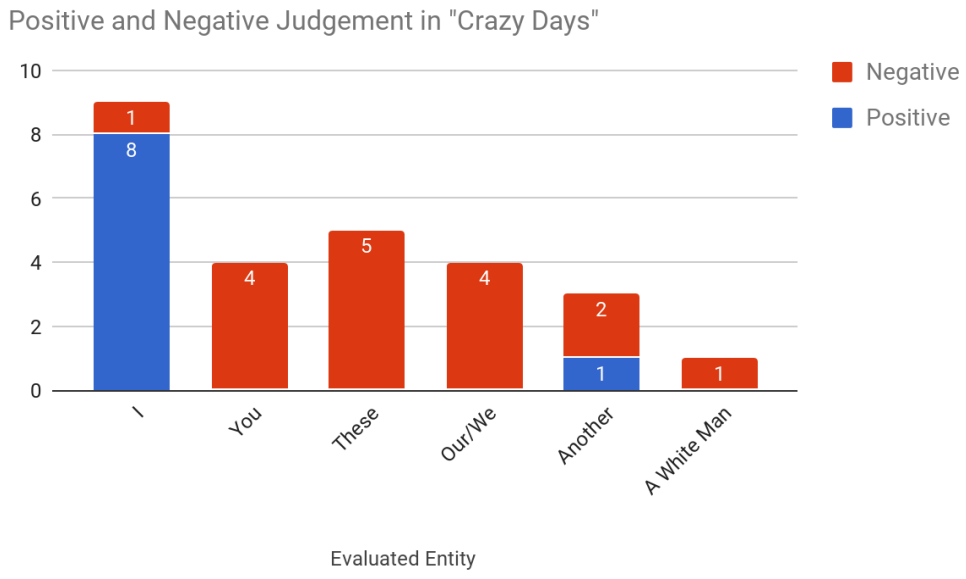

Figure 7: Positive and Negative Judgment in Crazy Days

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

To this point, I have examined three texts produced by a single Hip Hop artist which represent three different styles-- freestyle, style, and conscious. Along the way, I have compared and contrasted these kinds of texts in brief. This chapter offers a comprehensive discussion of the similarities and differences between these three styles, as manifest in the focal texts. I start by recapitulating the key findings of each chapter, with particular emphasis on appraisal resources: who is evaluated and how, and what kind of evaluations are most common. I then discuss the limitations of the study and ways these could be addressed in future research. The conclusion explores several major takeaways from this study, principally the potential role of critical discourse analysis as a toolkit for developing metalinguistic awareness with students.

8.1 **Summary of Key Findings**

8.1.1 Genre Moves and Identification

Genres can be characterized in terms of their genre moves, or the way they progress as they unfold (Martin 2008). In the texts analyzed in this study, these moves are marked by the kind of participants which are introduced at each step. Each text opens with a strong positive statement of self and incorporates and evaluates other entities as the text unfolds, though the treatment and positioning of these other participants varies depending on the social purpose of these texts.

In freestyle, participants were organized into a neat dichotomy. The only entities referenced are the rapper himself, whom he evaluated positively, and entities that he actively

othered (**you, the whole world, a lot of people).** Othered entities were evaluated later on and negatively. In contrast, in the trap text a number of objects are discussed **(a Bentley truck)** before othered entities (**these niggas, you)** are discussed. Entities aligned with the rapper (**my niggas, my team**) are incorporated last. This pattern of introducing othered entities before bringing in aligned entities (**our people, us, we)** holds in the conscious text as well.

Table 15: Genre Moves in Three Hip Hop Genres

Genre	Initial Phase	Subsequent Phases
Freestyle genre	I	Othered Entities (**you, the whole world, a lot of people)**
Trap	I	Objects Associated with I **(a couple shooters and a Bentley truck**) → Othered Entities (**these niggas, you**) → Aligned Entities (**my niggas, my team**)
Conscious	I	Othered Entities (**you, these people)** → Aligned Entities (**our people)**

Though these findings are drawn from a limited sample, future research which examines a larger corpus could identify whether and to what degree these patterns hold across Hip Hop texts generally. Indeed, my larger study included exploration of multiple artists and I was able to see similar patterns across their texts as well, though the scope of this current study did not allow for thorough microlinguistic analysis of these additional texts.

Below, the frequencies of participant types, broadly categorized as *evaluation of self* and *evaluation of others*, is represented visually.

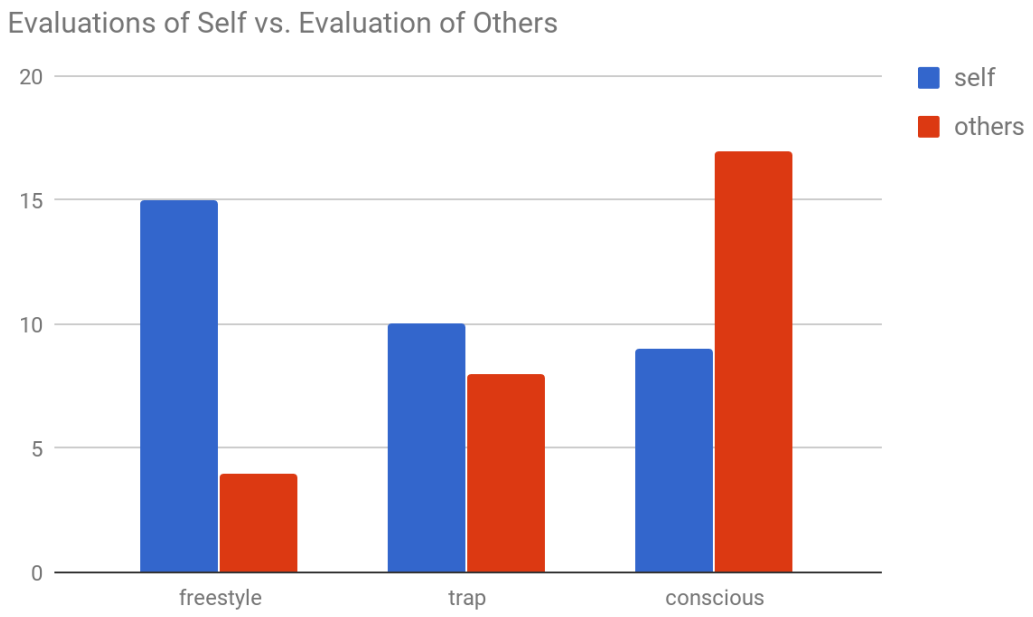

Figure 8: Evaluations of Self vs. Evaluations of Others in Three Hip Hop Subgenres

Relating these findings back to the context of culture and situation in which they were produced, it is possible to gain an understanding of the social motivation behind the attested patterns. For example, the social space in which freestyle rap is produced is highly competitive. It follows, then, that the importance of defending one's right to participate is foregrounded in the mind of the rapper, giving rise to a higher incidence of self-vindicating appraisal meanings. In his conscious text, the rapper is motivated to make an impact on his social world, and so his appraisals are more frequently aimed outward, rather than toward himself. The relationship between context of culture and situation and the patterns found in these texts is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. First, we must consider how these entities are evaluated, both in terms of prominent meaning-making resources and the types of meanings that are rendered.

8.1.2 Appraisal Meanings: Positive and Negative

Having dealt with the prominent kinds of evaluations, I now turn to consider *how* these evaluations are constructed. Across all these texts, implicit judgment is dominant. It is

exceedingly rare that a rapper explicitly evaluate himself or others, and when affect and appreciation are constructed, these meanings most often reinforce implicit judgements made elsewhere in the text. In terms of judgment, positive judgments are most common. No matter the subgenre, the rapper is most frequently appraised positively while othered persons and groups are most frequently appraised negatively. In freestyle, appraisals are overwhelmingly positive and exclusively of the rapper himself. The trap text is more evenly balanced, skewing slightly toward positive. In the conscious text, negative evaluations dominate. These data are represented in the graph below.

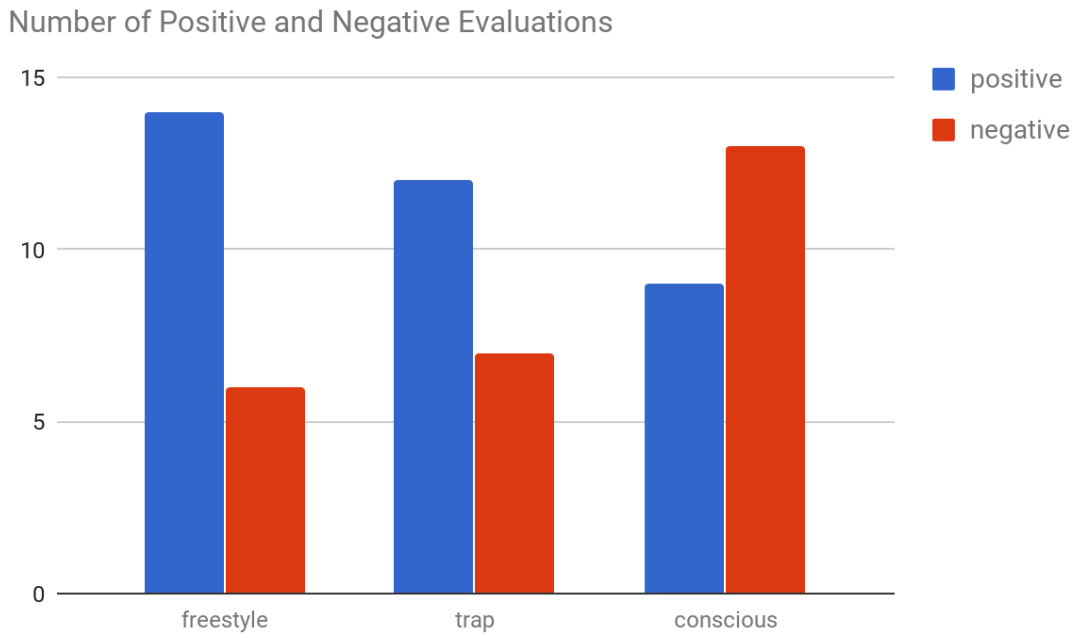

Figure 9: Positive vs. Negative Evaluation in Three Hip Hop Subgenres

As freestyle is constructed spontaneously and linearly, it can be said that the patterns produced within freestyle rap are the patterns which rappers control most easily. Therefore, these data suggest that implicit positive self-evaluation is likely to be a foundational kind of meaning-making which rappers are then able to manipulate and, if they choose, deviate from in their

premeditated, recursively-constructed written texts. For example, positive self-evaluation also dominates the trap text, though the rapper also chooses to construct appreciation and affect. Though negative meaning-making is indeed more common within conscious Hip Hop than in other subgenres, evaluations of the rapper himself are still overwhelmingly positive in this text, too, and this recurrence evidences how strongly rooted this meaning-making pattern is within Hip Hop.

8.1.3 Appraisal Resources

Having discussed the prominent kinds of appraisal, I now compare and contrast the ways these appraisals are constructed across texts. In all three kinds of texts, agentivity is shown to be a fundamental resource for the construction of appraisal. As well, negative polarity figures prominently as a source of evaluation. Trap stands out for its reliance on appreciation of objects to construe implicit judgment, perhaps because of its orientation toward the accrual of material wealth. The conscious text, on the other hand, makes use of the most diverse array of appraisal resources, calling embedded clauses and interrogatives into service of appraisal construction.

Table 16: Primary Evaluative Devices by Genre

Genre	Primary Evaluative Devices
Freestyle	Agentivity, Negative Polarity and Simile
Trap	Agentivity, Negative Polarity, and Associations with Objects and Behaviors
Conscious	Agentivity, Negative Polarity, Embedded Clauses and Interrogatives

Again, these findings are drawn from a very limited corpus, and analysis of a larger corpus is needed to determine the prevalence of such meaning-making patterns within the focal subgenres. As well, quantitative analysis of how often each device is employed would generate

more detailed conclusions about the prominence of each device. Even still, this analysis serves as fertile grounds for developing a hypothesis about what kinds are likely to be common. In the next section, I discuss other limitations and the pedagogical implications of future work which builds on this pilot study.

8.2. Discussion

As established in previous chapters, within a functional linguistic framework, it is essential to give full consideration to the context of culture and situation in which a text is produced. Language shapes and is shaped by social context, and though microlinguistic discourse analysis may reveal the mechanics of *how* and *what* meanings are made, only through consideration of cultural context may we understand *why*. In this section, I consider more deeply the relationship between context of culture and the discourse patterns discussed above as means of illuminating the cultural influences that give rise to these patterns.

To revisit a few major points addressed in Chapter 3, I turn first to address the African American cultural values and Hip Hop subcultural values that are attested in previous literature on these discourse communities (Smitherman 1977, Alim 2004, Meier 2007), which I have summarized as **indirection, innovation,** and **insurrection.** Long before Hip Hop, AAE existed as a counterlanguage, used to express dissent and address those in power without drawing negative attention (Morgan 2002). For these reasons, implied meanings, constant innovation, and subversion of mainstream meaning-making devices are central aspects of the language and its cultural values. Born out of this tradition, Hip Hop discourse is consciously and defiantly constructed against dominant cultural norms (Richardson 2006). As such, Hip Hop cultural values empower for artists like Squalle to invert traditionally negative meanings implied in verb phrases (like *to kill shit* and *to stay strapped*) to construct positive positionings of themselves. In

this cultural context, verbal facility is measured by one's ability to express a point in an inventive or unusual way, rather than straightforwardly, and feeding from this tradition of indirection, the rapper constructs judgment implicitly through strategic use of agentivity, negative polarity, and metaphor, conveying attitudes without directly inscribing qualities to evaluated entities.

Though oppressive conditions have shaped Hip Hop language into a code of exclusion, these conditions have also sown seeds of competition within the Hip Hop community and its language, as Squalle himself illuminated in our interviews. Hip Hoppers like Squalle hold the history and rituals of a viciously competitive cultural model in mind when participating in Hip Hop literacy events. In constructing positive evaluations of themselves through freestyle, trap music, and conscious rap, artists like Squalle defend their right to participate in the highly competitive social space of Hip Hop as well as in the harsh world at large.

8.3 Limitations

This thesis is limited by a number of factors, many of which are related to time. Though I allowed for an adjustment period during my early data collection, still I was forced to omit data in which self-consciousness at being recorded was verbally manifest, data which the participants requested to have removed from the corpus for personal reasons, and recordings of low video/audio quality whose contents were not decipherable. This limited the number of samples I had available for analysis. Given more time, it would have been possible to amass the ata necessary for a more comprehensive study despite such setbacks. As well, many of the participants in this study, who live and breathe Hip Hop, also work multiple jobs, have family commitments and children, and deal with limited access to reliable transportation. For these reasons, the time I allotted for data collection and interviews was not sufficient to meet regularly enough with all of my participants in order to perform multiple interviews and receive

comprehensive feedback and input on my analyses. My hope is that, in maintaining continued contact with this group, I may undertake a larger study which draws upon a broader corpus of samples from different performers in order to develop a more in-depth and expanded description of Hip Hop genre relations.

The analytical framework itself poses several limitations. Hip Hop is a kinesic and musical experience which draws on multiple modes in making meaning. Multimodal discourse analysis, which extends beyond language to semiotic resources like spatial organization and gesture, could reveal a great deal about how bodily movement and orientation and facial expression construct or enhance appraisal meanings. Indeed, my focus on the appraisal framework itself reveals only a sliver of the discourse patterns which characterize these texts and, in turn, limits my understanding of Hip Hop genre relations. A study which gives full consideration to the textual and ideational meanings created within these texts, in addition to interpersonal meanings, and which explores the contribution of other modes, could help develop a fuller characterization of how these subgenres agnate in terms of family resemblances.

8.4 Future Directions

Hierarchically constructed interpersonal meanings are not patterns exclusive to trap and conscious Hip Hop. Nor is it the exclusive genre of the construction and negotiation of solidarity. Modulating hierarchical interpersonal distance and aligning readers into shared stances are valued skills within a number of other academically- and civically-valued genres, though the means for doing so may vary (Humphrey 2015). Similar to Martin and colleagues (e.g. Martin, 1989; Martin & Rose, 2008), who undertook discourse analysis to identify key genres and their agnates in school contexts, my future Hip Hop discourse analyses will situate Hip Hop text types topologically in terms of the kinds of participants they reference and the types of evaluation

which are dominant. This study will make greater use of quantitative methods to establish recurrent discourse patterns in a larger corpus of Hip Hop texts. Building on Martin (1989) and Martin & Rose (2008), these insights will be used to locate Hip Hop within the constellation of genres which are currently valued in schools, such as argumentative writing and historical account. It is hoped that such research will begin a discussion of how educators may help their students see the connections between genres they already value and those which are valued academically and that such research may be used to propose a learner pathway from trap texts to conscious texts to school- and civically-valued genres like argumentation and calls-to-action.

Pedagogically, additional future research may also explore the ways that Hip Hop discourse analysis can be used in the classroom to help students build a metalinguistic toolkit for analyzing other texts. As exemplified in Khote (2017) and Harman & Simmons (2014), using student interests and preexisting understandings as springboards into curriculum knowledge is shown to be an effective method of engaging students and validating their expertise. In Khote (2017), the teacher-researcher selected a topic area which was immediately relevant to the lives of the students (immigration reform) when performing critical discourse analysis in the classroom. By these means, the researcher was successful in positioning students as experts in an subject area, developing their metalinguistic awareness and, in turn, readying them for high-stakes writing tasks. Similarly, Simmons (2014) performed identification analysis on a familiar work of fiction, *Harry Potter*, with her students, as means of igniting their interest while teaching use of a toolkit that strengthened their analytical skills. These studies show that culturally-sustaining pedagogies which develop metalinguistic awareness through analysis of culturally-relevant texts have benefits for both writing and reading skills and critical analysis skills. As

well, through active acknowledgment of the cultural and linguistic value of Hip Hop texts, educators signal to students that their home and community issues matter and are heard.

For these reasons, the importance of performing this kind of culturally-relevant, culturally-sustaining analysis with Hip Hop oriented students cannot be understated. Such collaborative work may serve both as means of validating students' funds of cultural knowledge and teaching a toolkit for analyzing the way meaning is made in other texts. For this reason, I hope to approach future research with educational praxis in mind, developing curricular materials which enable educators to perform this kind of analysis with students, to scaffold students toward analysis of discipline-specific texts and, in turn, appropriate (and challenge) the way meaning is made in school-valued genres.

The more aware students become of their own cultural discourse patterns and the more recognized and validated they feel, the more confident they become with experimenting and applying their expertise in areas outside their comfort zone. Squalle himself exemplifies this; empowered by the validation he received for *Squalle Shottem*, he gained the confidence to apply his Hip Hop expertise to conscious style of rapping and tackle difficult topics like police brutality and racist oppression on *Black Picassoul*. I feel this is true of my experience as well. As I have gained confidence as a Hip Hop artist and solidified a place within the Athens Hip Hop community, I have attempted to apply my cultural knowledge to a field where such knowledge funds are not always embraced or well understood. While I hope that this work is of educational import, I also aspire to lay the grounds for more accessible writings which put the tools of critical discourse analysis in the hands of other Hip Hop artists and language users themselves so that they may hone their craft and appreciate their linguistic heritage.

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APPENDIX:

Transcript from Squalle Interview

Recording starts while talking about the winner for Best Male Hip Hop Artist and other awards at the Athens Hip Hop awards on 9/26/16.

Squalle: His wave is with the urban and the trap style of music, which hey if works… for me but for me t wasn't feeding my soul, I got to the point that it was poppin' because I was on that side of things, I was like that artist, but I wanted to say something and I wanted to not be boxed into a certain kind of music and and then peoples were viewing me different ways that I didn't want to be viewed either so mine just came from some like personal/I had just grown personally, and I still make trap music you know but uh I was more concerned with oh what people listenin' to, rather than what I need to make you know rather than what works for me, what feeds my soul and helps me grow as an artist, and he'll get there every artist gets there.

Researcher: Well it becomes kinda empty if you're not saying anything.

Squalle: It does, I was performin' and killin' these shows and gettin' off stage and hearin' people say aw, great show, you know, I'm rockin wit you, but going home and feeling like nothing was accomplished like… um and then with the uh recent politics and stuff that's been goin' on it was like I'm feeding… into all of that, I'm out here one minute I'm saying I shoot you for this and then the next minute you know I'm complainin' about black on black crime so it's just one of those, I was stuck in like a hypocritical stage, but now I just view it as trap is a part of me because it was once a lifestyle I lived but I've grown from there, I ain't trappin now, so with me now it's just a matter of creating what works for me and what works for other people.

Researcher: And so you feel like it was a personal decision in terms of like, what you needed to do for you and not necessarily what you think other people needed to hear

Squalle: In that moment, because I'm very inspired by moments, and uh, in that moment the trap music just wasn't workin' for me, I was just makin' great music and slippin' into a deep depression of just, bein' stuck and not knowing who I was as an artist, as a person, I was motivated by so many outside influences and um and then just people sayin' oh you the best trap artist… no! I don't wanna be just the best trap artist, I wanna be the best artist, I wanna be the best artist across the board, so it's just a bunch of things that motivated me to make Black Picassoul, and I don't regret it at all, you know, every artist go through it, it's just a matter of whether they do it or not, go through that phase where they're like stuck and confused it's just a matter of like whether they just actually do it. I took a chance with Black Picassoul

Researcher: Did you feel like you were takin' a risk?

Squalle: Yeah, and I knew it and me and Hatstat talked about it, I told him man I'm about to lose a lot of people, and I did, you know, um... back in the/when I was in school that's all I made that's all I was known for, I lost all of that, that whole Alabama followin' I had, slim to none now, because of Black Picassoul, but you know losing that I got all these other huge opportunities that opened up, but it's just a part of growth you know, when you grow you gotta lose stuff.

Researcher: That's true.

Squalle: It's just how/that's just life. Once you evolve past certain phases and certain people it's just not gonna fit no more.

Researcher: Yeah… absolutely. And you just gotta let it go.

Squalle: I think it's better that I lost those people. Those people didn't see the dynamic they didn't see who I was as an artist. And see now the people that support me that like the trap that like the Black Picassoul that like the Entitled Ambitious and that's just/I'll take that any day 'cause the core group of fans I have now don't box me in, they like everything I create because they're open to it, rather than having those closeminded fans.

Researcher: Right

Squalle: So I/it was a risk but it worked out.

Researcher: How did you… You were rockin' with LG and Black Nerd long before Black Picassoul though right?

Squalle: Yeah… which I can credit them for being an influence as well because they took me outside of Athens and they opened my eyes to wow there's people that like other music outside of trap, 'cause LG doesn't make trap music and neither does Nerd of course, Nerd doesn't even use a profanity, you won't even hear a cuss word or a derogatory term in LG's stuff, Nerd is the same way you know so, going on the road with them and touring and… just being in a place where I was like… I don't have any content for/'cause artists don't think about that, like some places you go your content has to match

Researcher: You have to adapt.

Squalle: You have to adapt.

Researcher: Yeeeeep.

Squalle: And 'Squalle Shottem' in certain places they just wasn't on that

Researcher: Could you tell?

Squalle: Yeah I could tell just being on the road, seeing LG perform and Profound perform and I can only do like one song that's kinda like borderline trap but kinda not as you know bad so they would like accept it you know and it was just like I had to create things… now because we're on the road and these people are more open minded. And that gave me the confidence actually to step into Black Piccassoul the way I did.

He and LG's families have been cool for years, met each other at show at the Caledonia Lounge in 2015, shortly before I met Squalle, after meeting Nerd I was like I need to be around y'all all the time, Nerd hit up LG and said, we're going to Carollton, bring Squalle, and also met Profound at a Caledonia show, he and LG and Nerd had been working together for some time. Somebody walks up like, "Man… you going after him? You have no idea what's about to happen right now."

We had known each other maybe a year before the Nowhere Bar freestyle nights.

Researcher: So how did that happen?

Squalle: That happened through Jay Rodgers, current bassist in the Norm, the dummer in the Norm was the drummer in the house band, um Jay played bass and there were some other instrumentals in there. It was dope, it was dope, Jay hit LG up one day, like we got this band at Nowhere Bar and can and Squalle/ 'cause at that time Jay and I hadn't met in person, I had hit him up about recording because he record LG music, so he hit LG up like hey bring Squalle I be hearing he can rap, so bring him, so we met Jay and Nolan and Bryan and that first night was some shit, it was prolly like two people in there, like not counting the bartender and George, and we performed as if it was a thousand people in there, and those two people, whoever they were, it was twenty people, and those twenty people treated us like the just like the greatest rappers alive, it was twenty people, some days five people, sometimes like a hundred people and every time we'd just do it like there was a thousand people and it just grew from there, and the band/the Norm, you know, even pulled Jay from Nowhere Bar, and we met you at that event, I met DJ Highwalker, we got close at that even, me and Caufield got close at that event, Scott Sutton, all of these guys that I'm really close to now we met at that Nowhere Bar.

Researcher: How did you feel at first when they approached you about a freestyle night? Were you confident?

Squalle: Um... Yeah I mean yeah before then I had not freestyled in like a long time but it was just one of those like cool no pressure, you know, and we started realizing it was a lot of people so I started feeling like okay we gotta get our stuff together 'cause it's actually people in here looking at us now, we had our little house songs that we do that everybody knew and then we'd freestyle the rest of the night, and Nowhere Bar reallly polished my skills, being on a mic, projecting my voice, that was fresh it was my second or third time ever performing with a band, but I feel like it really heightened my musicality, we was doing it every week for three or four months straight, Nowhere Bar trained me, after Nowhere Bar I started writing in a way to where I could see myself performing it.

Researcher: Were you excited about freestyling?

Squalle: Yeah, I love freestyling, I'd never took it seriously it was kind of one of those things I'd do on my own time,

Researcher: Do you like freestylin' by yourself?

Squalle: Yeah, 'cause it's no pressure.

Researcher: I feel like I can't freestyle if no one is there, I need that pressure.

Squalle: If I freestyle by myself, there's room for me to screw up and not care about it um but now I just freestyle anywhere, I'll freestyle anywhere, but I have to get in the mood, I would say, my first time/my first time on the mic I would never freestyle, just hope everybody know, I'ma give 'em eight bars of somethin' and *then* I'ma go into it, I'ma get in my zone first, when I get in my zone I can really freestyle.

Researcher: What does that mean?

Squalle: My zone is jus'... to me it's like my freakin' brain is just firing on all cylinders, 'cause when you first get into it you tryna feel the beat, you tryna get comfortable, you know people watchin' you so you tryna... impress a lil bit, you ain't tryna be terrible... you know, but when you get in your zone it's just whatever beat you hear you can just *go* 'cause you ain't caring about nobody lookin' at you no more, just feelin it, nobody's there, it's just you, it sounds weird but it's actually a zone. It's impossible to capture unless you just have it happen to you.

Squalle: It's definitely a vibe, It's uncontrollable and you don't know when it's gon' happen, but as artists/especially now when we perform so much you have to get in your zone, you know, and I got that from watching Pro and Nerd and G and Caufield, like you have to get in your zone, like Caufield got in his zone one day at one show where he was just on stage and his band was playing and he was just… had his eyes closed and it was bumpin' like and he wasn't rap or won't doin' nothin' and peoples was lovin' it because he was vibin' to his… now I get in my zone.

Researcher: Do you think it's easier to get in the zone now that you're more accustomed to different environments?

Squalle: Yes, 'cause to me getting your zone is just being comfortable, to me it's comfortable and confident, being comfortable with where you are and your surroundings and being confident to know that these people gonna um vibe wit you, because it's infectious, it really is infectious, it's really contagious if you're vibing so hard to something, everybody in the room is gonna catch your vibe, and depending on how/who they are, somebody gon' catch they vibe,

Researcher: Right, right and next thing you know

S: It's a wave, if people/it's all energy you know um.. you... gonna/gonna give off a certain energy, that's how you have those certain people who don't have to move they can just stand on the mic and just rap and they go crazy because they're givin' off an energy, and it sounds crazy

but some of it has to be just there naturally, some of it has to be natural, some of it has to be trained too, and Nowhere Bar trained me how to direct my energy, when you perform so much you can say certain stuff and do certain stuff and get a reaction and that's what you would call training the energy um but all of it goes into performing, you have to have that natural energy that you can control…

Squalle: At least fifty people walked out like… this Athens hip hop is really dope, they're gonna come to the next show, they're gonna tell someone about the next show, that's what we need, so it was really dope.

Researcher: Do you think the music scene in town has changed in your time as a performer?

S: Yeah, definitely… I think we're starting to get more recognition and more attention and uh rather than us what it used to be from what I've seen it used to be us going to them and saying hey we're here! Come out please! And now it's like they come and say hey, we've been lookin' you now, it's definitely a shift and I definitely think we have a lot to do with that.

Researcher: Especially with Black Picassoul…

S: I think it was some substance that I think they needed, I don't wanna highlight myself, I feel like that project was way bigger than me, and it's something I could never recreate um.. Not like in a bad way and just like that was what it was meant for and it's not meant for me to like if I were to take all those beats over, empty the vocals on em and rerecord 'em it would never match up to the original and that's what I mean, not like content wise I couldn't recreate it but in terms of vibe… that vibe of Black Picassoul I can't recreate because it was so strong… you know and I feel like that's why I feel like it's bigger than who I am because it means so much to the world… to me just like some "oh, they don't all make trap music" you know that's why I feel like it was bigger than me, 'cause I feel like people was actually was like oh, they're pretty dope, not like "he's dope and everybody else was just…" I feel like people was like, "oh yeah Hip Hop in Athens!" That's why I loved it so much.

Researcher: How were things before? Let's say, before you met LG, what was your social circle like?

S: Just trap music, that was all I was creating, um my start in Athens went quick because I did one show in Athens at Caledonia um and I didn't even do--oh I did do a trap record this one song called 'we ain't parallel' and it went bananas, it's not a trap record but it went bananas with a trap record called "I Got Guap" and from that show that show was packed and… from that show it was just this crazy… who is Squalle type of thing going on from just that one show, I had kinda did that show and didn't even bother anymore until like a month later and um did that and did a second show here at Caledonia again and it was even more packed, I did the same two songs and it went bananas, so it was just this wave in the city, I guess the hip hop part of it, to where the artists were like okay there's this new guy named Squalle who is he, where is from type of thing, the *city* of Athens didn't take off until the Hip Hop awards started, I put on this like crazy performance like with--

Researcher: At the first hip hop awards?

S: No it was at the third hip hop awards I came into--

Researcher: So that was 2015

S: So I came into it and did a what was the name of that song? “Hunnid racks” a trap record and “2 Cool” a trap record, and “Cake Up” a trap record, but with “Cake Up” I brought my two nieces out and they did a huge lil dance or whatever to a trap record--and that’s what kind of catapulted me, to the city, boom boom boom, nobody knew who I was but it was that thing like oh, it’s this new artist Squalle he’s dope but we ain’t gon’ listen to his music. So that’s what it was before LG, and when he came into the mix, it was just kind of one of those like, hey you wanna come on stage? Type of things, where was we I wanna say we was just listening to like new stuff and he knew my music! So I was like, wanna be my hype man? And I expected him to be like, I’m a headliner what you talkin’ bout and he was like yeah let’s do it, and this fool got on stage and it was just insane, that moment was like okay we got something, me and you we got somethin’ goin’ on right here. His mom and my aunt are best friends, and when he told his mom oh this guy named Squalle she had not known who he was talking about and he said his real name Torrance, and she said, he got an auntie named Dee? Florence son? It tooks hip hop to do it… I think outside of the Caledonia I might not have met LG, had I not started music when I did I prolly wouldn’t have met him the way that I met him, things would be prolly a lot different now, but we’re like brothers now, and it seems like we been knowing each other for years, literally goin’ on two or three years, but we’re close, and he argue like brothers, it’s ridiculous, but I love him, but that moment that show was just… and even everybody was like, yall two… but even then it was just him hyping me up at the time when I started hyping him up at Nowhere, I’ll blame Nowhere Bar for that because I was never anybody’s hype man, and that’s what makes We’re Weird work so well because none of us were ever hype men before, be we have to be each other’s hype men, like we don’t mind submitting and uh we have these conversations we sit at Nuci’s Space and we say hey, this show is predominantly Squalle’s set so we’re gonna model this set to fit Squalle and this set we’re gonna model to fit LG and so for four headlining artists to sit and say I’ll go first and open for you, or I’ll sacrifice my song so you can do three and I’ll do one… we don’t have ego, we play like we do,

RESEARCHER Why do you think it is though that’s it’s really easy for people to go there with they lyrics? To make it about ego?

Squalle: It’s just rap. It’s our culture. Our culture is competitive, African American culture is competitive and it’s kinda like how we been conditioned to be, psychologically, and that has spilled over into the hip hop.

RESEARCHER Can you tell me more about that?

Squalle: So it’s like, you take a um… light skinned let’s just use kids, like if you’re a teacher, you have a light skinned child and a dark skinned child, you um give the light skinned child thirty-five minutes at recess and the dark skinner child thirty minutes at recess, even though the light skinned child could have had done their homework two months straight and the dark

skinned child didn't so you chose to reward the light skinned child, to that dark skinned child he's getting five minutes extra because he's light skinned and he's getting five minutes less because he's dark skinned, that's conditioning. Do that consistently and subliminally dark skinned kids start to feel like light skinned children get better without knowing the background um and that's what I mean, as an example, and you can credit that to slavery, the stuff that went into slavery, and that's what it was, light skinned slaves was in the house, dark skinned slaves worked in the field, um light skinned slaves got treated better because they were closer to white um psychologically, even now is a divide between black and light skinned women, we're all black, but psychologically, darker women look at lighter women like they get treated better, like they're prettier, and it's all in the media, it's everywhere, and that's what I mean by competition, that stuff was conditioned to us so naturally our mindset is if that person gets something I'm going to be jealous of it, and this person on the other end if I get something I'm going to make you jealous of it, rather than I get something and I help you get it, you know, rather than that other person saying well they got it, I wanna know how they got it, so let's go ask, and figure out how they got it, you know, it's different, and that conditioning with our people has translated to our hip hop too, you know, oh he get a deal, I'm gonna be upset because I feel like I should get a deal, rather than hey I got this deal, look this is what I did to do it, rather than that it's just oh I got a deal yall ain't nothin, that ego comes from conditioning, the thing about that is we understand us, the four of us understand the conditioning and we see a bigger picture like we see arenas with a hundred thousand people you know and the only way for us to do that can't be ego, the only way it's gonna work period, all the great groups have failed because of ego, it ain't about no money it ain't about this other stuff it's about ego you know and um that's a conversatoin that we had to have literally this is how it's gonna go some of these shows Squalle's gonna headline, some of these shows Nerd's gonna headline, some of these shows LG gon' headline, some of these shows Pro gon' headline, so the rest of us gotta figure out what we gotta do to make the unit look good, even though Profound's doing three songs, the unit gotta look good. So… it's a different type of mentality, and it's hard, it ain't easy, but it's hard to do but we make it work so um, that's the conditioning it's serious.

The conditionin' I was probably a victim of it, that first line of Crazy Days was a result of like me being upset about someone getting some type of somethin' that I didn't get, at that very moment, that thought that I don't get the respect I deserve, you know, then that person callin' me the best trap artist, you know, that was subject to conditioning, so it's not like I'm impervious to it, I still have to fight it every day, it's hard but with us we have to make it work we can have egos, period, for what we want to accomplish, we can't and we have them in a sense but with each other it don't exist, we joke about it, like um Nerd will be like I'm not gonna open for Squalle, but at the end of the day he'll do it, um, we joke about it, it's talks where they have said, you know, Squalle you know out of the four of us you're gonna be the one to do it, no they have said that, they have said look, you prolly got the better chance than all of us, so we're gonna get you to the point to where you gon' be ready for it, um 'cause I won't never do know album release, I won't gon' do that, you need to do an event, and for three headlining artist to say that, they couldn't have egos, egos are um one-sided egos don't see nothing but one perception, these three guys see something bigger, and it all was like lined up, you know, and that's why I say that in No Shame I say, my homie Profound told me to carry the throne, you know, that's what that meant, and I pointed at him, um but it's crazy with us, it really is

RESEARCHER And it's so interesting to hear about the progression and like y'all findin' each other and how that's influenced you and everybody else

Squalle: And I look at them like umm…. I'm still learning, I just need y'all to keep doing what y'all do, and I keep stealin' ideas, and they look at me like, Squalle you ready to take us to the top yet? It's crazy, it's crazy 'cause I look at it like, Nerd or G is gonna take off, and G looks at it like um Nerd or Pro gon' take off, it's really insane, it's really insane, and Nerd just looks at it like he's gon' take off, it's dope though, what I love about Nerd is so dope by himself, he'll drop like knowledge, he'll teach you how to do something, but he's like really comfortable he really is, it works out

RESEARCHER So we talked about where you at now, we talked a little about where you came from, but in my thesis I'm also lookin' at people's experiences like in school,

Squalle: Mm.

RESEARCHER What's that face for?

Squalle: Well what level in school?

RESEARCHER Well when did you start writing?

Squalle: Mm… fourth? Fifth grade? And I'll credit, and this guy hates when I do it, but it's this guy named Rob Bass, he's from Athens, he's a rapper here, um… I'll credit/even thirty years from now I'll credit, if somebody asked me why I started rapping, I'm going to say Rob Bass, Rob Bass [pounds table with fist] is why I started rapping.

RESEARCHER Rob Bass.

Squalle: Rob Bass taught me how to rap, how to write, because I used to go to his house every day, he had notebooks on top of notebooks on top of notebooks on top of notebooks he would rap at least thirty raps to me just…

RESEARCHER This is fourth and fifth grade?

Squalle: Mhm, around that time and goin' into middle school. We lived in Rollin' Ridge together right across from each other, his mom my mom best friends, his sister my sister still best friends til this day, so we were close growin' up he was like a big brother to me and he taught me how to rap.

RESEARCHER So what does that mean? What did he teach you?

Squalle: He just… I don't wanna say he taught me how to rap but he/he got me writing, I didn't even know I could even do it, period, but I just used to go and listen to him, he'd play a beat he would just rap just thirty pages of just everything and I'd just be like, I wanna do it. One day I came in there and he had went and got his mom to buy me a tablet so I came in there and he had

a tablet and a pencil, any other time I'd go in there and just listenin' to him, this time I go in there and he had a tablet and a pencil and I flipped it open and he said write and I said I don't know how to write and he said just write. I started rapping you know and he read over it like okay you wanna make this line rhyme so he taught me, 'cause I was writing at first just writing stories and shit and he was like no, that's cool but try to make this word rhyme with this and that teaching got me like oh… cat with hat...and then I got in certain classes and was like oh I been doin' that…

RESEARCHER What classes were those?

Squalle: I wanna say I got in some type of English class, when was that? I don't think I really cared about any of that stuff until the 9th or 10th grade, yeah and it was just one of those I didn't know what the hell I was doing as far as terms, and then I got into like an English class in high school, we started covering like Edgar Allen Poe and you know the/the people that they teach you or whatever and I/that's when we started breakin' down some of his lines and uh/what's the girl? Emily Dickenson/started breakin' down her stuff, it never really rhymed for real for real they was teachin' you about he was comparing something to something else or um personificaiton and how/how these three words had the same beginning um… end rhyme and middle rhyme and, I got engulfed, I got so engulfed because I thought… it was something new and then something just was like (snaps) you been doin' this, you know this, you know this, I went back to my green notebook and was like, oh, I'm doin' that already! And it was just one of those, okay, I got it now!

RESEARCHER Do you feel like it helped you to have that moment in class?

Squalle: Yeah, it did, it did 'cause after that I started doing it, knowin' what I'm doin', it opened my brain up to like I didn't have to just say, um… pop like popcorn I could say pop like anything else you know and that's because I started realizing this is a metaphor and this is a simile and this is what this is and I/ this is inside rhyme and this is outside rhyme and this is rhyme scheme um I started actually constructing my stuff um but I yeah credit him because he taught me how to um… rap. He taught me how to rap, and not only writing but also how to rap it. Yeah, yeah, he'd play a beat and be like, rap. And I remember like certain poetry didn't have to rhyme, some of it did, some had some legit stanzas, some of it didn't like some of it rhymed the first sentence with the last sentence of the whole poem, and some of it was very constructive, so I started learning how to put inside rhyme into my rhyming. I remember a time in like 10th or 11th grade where I was only trying to create things with inside rhyme and I got engulfed with like the levels to it, or forced rhyme, and you do it a lot,

RESEARCHER Oh I'm obsessed with it.

Squalle: So now I just try to fuse all that knowledge into the way that I write, writing in a way where I can hear myself performing on top making sure I'm in line with the beat or off line with the beat in top of in tune or off tune, so I get deep with, which is why it takes me so long sometimes, I really have to study, sometimes I'll study a beat for like two weeks before I'll write to it, like that "Til We Fall" beat, first of all that beat took a year to make and then it took me like six months to write it because I was so infatuated with the sounds of the instrumental, like oh

man, but “Til We Fall” I was tryna tell a story, “Relapse” I was tryna tell a story, “Proclamation,” I had been learning all of that, but rhyme, rhyme scheme, do I want to be on the beat or off the beat, do I wanna go with this rhythm or that rhythm…not being so cliché/rather than them being so cliché and simple, so I got deep with Black Picassoul, the writing process for it was insane… any lyrics you wanna/I think Crazy Days is the only one you’ve typed out, RESEARCHER Actually I’ve also now done Proclamation and Outer Space Dream today.

Squalle: (laughs)

RESEARCHER …Today

Squalle: (laughs) Oh my god! Well do you have any questions about them?

RESEARCHER Uhhhh let me go back and look at them. (Pulls up laptop)

Squalle: Proclamation’s a deep track.

RESEARCHER It is… I think it’s interesting because it’s mostly/’cause I go through and code every line

Squalle: I see that, yeah

RESEARCHER …for like positive and negative, (turns laptop toward Squalle) so this is the transcription but then, I’ll show you, I like put ‘em in a spreadsheet

Squalle: (excitedly) Really?

RESEARCHER Yeah! So it’s like if it’s positive or negative, if it’s explicit or like implicit, like whether or not you’re saying “This is bullshit!” or if you’re saying like “I don’t like the way you did that…”or

Squalle: Yeah.

RESEARCHER And then for whether or not you’re judgin’ people, anyway it’s all stuff I learned at school about like,

Squalle: Shit!

RESEARCHER So… so um… for example… most of it is negative, in Crazy Days it’s mostly negative, in… I guess I only did Proclamation, Proclamation is actually more positive, still a lot of, where is it… a lot of the imagery like *damage* and *striking a blow* and *being killed* and *gunned down* is still really emotional, and so I was feelin’ like thinkin’ about that today. (Reading from transcript) “Brainwashed and confused…” so it’s like tryna get people to like

Squalle: I was angry…

RESEARCHER …rise up and do all this stuff and I think it's interesting that it's all framed as if it's all gonna happen in the future, it might happen, it's what they gotta do but not what people are doing right now,

Squalle: Yeah, that's exactly what I was doing.

RESEARCHER I just only had a question/so you think that's a good hunch?

Squalle: Yeah, I was angry, um… I'm saying what I'm angry about but I'm saying it like.. sheesh… I'm screaming out like, I'm tryna like, look y'all we're gunned down!

RESEARCHER Right! Right! Yeah! So even though it's like from a position of we, like solidarity, you still have to give all these commands and like advice…as if it's from a position of power.

Squalle: That's exactly where I was at with it. So you dead on with that. I love that verse man.

RESEARCHER It's great, it's great. What's interesting to me though is when you're like, "America don't care about your broken heart, America don't care aobut your stolen dreams, America don't care about our murdered friends…" so like why did you choose to say your sometimes and our other times when arguably we all have all of that?

Squalle: I/what I did with your is that I was still included in that but I was thinking from a performance standpoint, I could say "America don't care about your," to just give it some appeal, um "America don't care about our," so when I say your I'm still included, I did that on purpose, I actually wanted to point at your and our, but I'm included in all that.

APPENDIX:

Full Transcript of Squalle's Freestyle

I love it when you freestyle
It's kinda like you just, talkin to a child
I think it's wild, I mean
I'm really really really feelin your style
I like afro, I'm like Ajax
I'm a cadillac with an 8track in the back
And the rims flat
Got a gat that goes ratatat!
I'm about the cheese like ratatouille
My life is a movie, I'm the director
Perfection, Black Caesar, Lady pleaser, slick like some greaser (laughs)
I'm leanin like the tower of pisa unh
I'm outer space like Mercury,
Shootin one in the dome and takin' you home
Holdin in the chrome, callin my phone
Stop callin my phone 'cause I won't answer
Squalle sicker than cancer
I pounce like black panthers (exclaims)
I like this beat, I like this beat
it's flame it's heat, I like this beat (Researcher: It's flame it's heat!)
I got the sauce like, I got the sauce like honey barbeque
I got the sauce like honey mustard, Sweeter than custard, you a buster
Unh… Let me ruffle your feathers,
I'm flyer than forever
I'm flyer than a feather
I'm flyer than the weather, unh
I am so divine, ((inaudible))
I'm bout the song no Coretta
No Coretta, Coretta Scott King, that's my dream
I'm the number one player on the number one team
I'm skinny and I see you schemin,
I see you dreamin' hater please believe it
I stay prayed up, I fight the demons
We are not the same, we ain't never even
We ain't parallel, I'm flyer than a parasail
I break the cell like a carousel
None of my niggas don't never tell
Unh, I'm a winner so we never fail
Chop the roof in the coop like (skrt)
Oh my gosh, I need this beat, I need this beat, so hit up, L. A. B.
It's lab right? It's lab right? He's fab right?
Nice like, like I shine like nightlight, I'm tight right?

I got kicks like Vanilla Ice
Oooh… I'm like coke with no Sprite
Dope… (exclaims: SHIT! I can really flow on this nigga's shit)
Like a toilet, don't spoil my, surprise I can see it your eyes
I'm in the skies, I'm a real dude,
You ain't in the skies, you's a hater I can feel you
I can see it, please believe it, I see you haters grievin'
I see you hatin' I murdered this beat I beat the track I'm masturbatin'
Premature ejaculatin' ain't got no patient, I ain't never waitin', Squalle run the nation,
Unh… Squalle Shottem yeah I got 'em on the chopper, I'm sick like a doctor
Somethin' poppin' go ahead and pop your collar, I'm a monster, beat you like a lobster,
I'm itching like crabs, I flex up like I've got ten abs, unh… I got the beef and I ain't eatin' to slabs… ((speaking)) I need this guy's contact info yo…

(laughing) I can really rap over this nigga shit!!
((speaking)) Oh my goodness!!
Hold on I gotta catch this, oh my lord… unh

Unh
I be where the hitters at
See I ain't just a regular rapper, I'm a rapper that can really rap
And everywhere I go, I be really strapped
I ain't never been a lame 'cause I ain't really into that
I'm the only one to get the job done
I don't know nobody that can fire me
(laughs) I'm a boss, I'm prolly gon' floss til I retire, b.
Unh… they try me at an angle. Triangle.
I slam 'em on the mat like Kurt Angle,
I bend your back like a prangle-- oops I mean pringle
Oops -- I'm not single -- oops, I'm a dog-- oops, no dingo
Ooh… ooh it takes two to dance, it takes two to tango,
Fake niggas try me at an angle, triangle
Isoceles, obsolete, or acute, I'm the truth,
I'm the juice like... fresh fruit like
It's a lot of people hatin' on me
I got patience 'cause the hold world is waitin' on me,
Testimony is real because I made it,
You don't like how it feel, eat this tomato homie
Ketchup, you relyin' on your tongue to get you out of trouble you set up
But you end up fallin' in the puddle, yo what up
We kill shit we ain't rehearsin'
I'm rappin' for my turf shit
Unh, grown man money, yours man prolly got a curfew
((laughter))
I'm Jalil yall haters yall Erkel
Runnin through these haters like I'm Herschel

After years of livin' in the gutter, set up, that mean I'm shootin' to kill, aimin' from neck up
Been on the grind since 1-9-9-0, since then Mr. Businessman has been my hero,
Take ten multiply it by a 1-0, a hundred you get, after you hit the equal
But it ain't on a calculator, get your pen and piece of paper,
We about to go to class 'cause I'm lyrical with this math,
'Cause I'm ill, ejaculator, how I got the beat on the track, infectious masturbator,
Okay I see you later, but I'm so hot that if I fall I won't land til twenty years later
That's a long time but that's just how it is so, I'm just sit up atop this rainbow,
And eat a lot of skittles,
my life's a lot of riddles,
some people don't understand how I'm so instrumental,
And I'm so influential, how I swag it out
And toast it like a waffle
Just feelin' colossal

Shouts out to my niggas up in Bmore
Shouts out to my niggas up in New York
Shout out to my homies in Florida
Shouts out to nig in California
Shout out shout out shout out,
I am the king, life's a beach while I walk the shore,
Hip hop ain't a job well it's just a chore
Still, so fly I soar
Don't hate the player boy hate the score
Got beef? I'm a carnivore
I'm sure like… I can freeze your core
So nice yeah i got it for the right price
Runnin' this shit so hard I'm sore
I chase the cash til I can't no more
Outer space boy, meteor
How I lean how I lean in the coop no roof no more…

APPENDIX

Song Transcript: "Streets Talk, Feds Watch" from *Squalle Shottem*

Streets talk, feds watch
Streets talk, feds watch
When I hit the city nigga know what's up
Got a couple shooters and a Bentley truck
Worth a couple milli young boy and it's goin' up
I could be chill at home and *couldn't* find a fuck
'Cause I *could care less* [s-elided] bout these nigga
I *do not* need to impress, (nah) I'm just being honest with you
I *ain't* gotta flex, my nigga,
I been on the hustle since a youngin' (since a youngin')
Couple bands on the bezel boy it's *nothin'* nigga (it's nothin' nigga)
I got a few haters I promise that I love 'em
'Cause if you ain't got *no* haters you ain't bunkin, nigga
Shout out to the team for the W (W)
Shout out to the team (Shout out to the team, Shout out to the team)
You insecure so a real nigga trouble you
But that's because it pays to be real, being fake is free
Truth, if I'm lying you're a boomer (boomer)
I'm getting to the money you can go and start the rumor
Ain't been a dumb nigga *ain't* never need a tutor
Everybody's hot niggas but I'm known to keep it cooler
Cool 'em down, cool 'em down, cool 'em down
Cool em... we *don't* fool around
All my niggas warmed up, it's gon' be a shootaround
But we on the come up, *give a fuck* who don't love us
We be on the top and only god is above us (for real)
Streets talk, feds watch
Infrared beam, red dot
Catch me on the block, gettin' to the guap
Streets talk a whole lot (whole lot, whole lot, whole lot)
I *don't* waste shit, whip the whole pot (whip it)
While I'm at it my niggas patrol the whole block
All about the dollar *can't* trust no ho
'Cause all they ever do is tell lies on a nigga (Straight up)
So many fuckin' lies always been told
And they always wonder why a nigga's heart so cold
And that's the real, they *ain't* care how you feel (feel)
I'm just tryna get a meal so my mama get to chill (get to chill)
When I hit the fuckin' block I bet they know the fuckin' drill
They'll *never* catch me slippin' I don't do banana peels nigga (straight up)
We trill, I'd rather be in the business you can go and chase a deal
Sixteen in a clip and we poppin 'em like pills

APPENDIX

Song Transcript: “Crazy Days” from *Black Picassoul*

Fuck if you feel me I give a *fuck* what you heard about me
How could you doubt me? I’m the realest, that’s my word, so what
Count me out but the game *won’t be* the same without me
You judge a nigga by my looks *don’t even* know my name
You judge my book by my cover (subject elided) *ain’t even* read a page
These people think I’m stuck up because *I’m not* a slave
And because I have a conscious mind they think I’m misbehaving
I’m tryna make a statement, when will it stop?
Our people gettin’ murdered by these cops
And we ain’t saying nothing we just sit around and watch
Every minute on the clock another brother gettin’ shot
A white man can poison an entire city and get acquitted
A black man can have an ounce of weed and get a sentence
up to fifty years, and he *ain’t never* been a killer,
he just like to get high to fight the issues that he deal with
On a regular basis, he gotta deal with racists
we gotta deal with people judging us because the color of our faces
How can we be complacent in this nation?
Tell me how can we still be patient?
I’m not waiting on my turn no more
We living in hell I can’t burn no more
gotta take mine, I can’t wait my turn no more
I can’t fight this urge no more, I’m sure
We livin in some crazy days, We livin in some crazy days
will never be afraid, will never be afraid no more
Gotta put this city on my back, gotta put my people on my back, gotta put my city on the map