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Yale Sociology Department 2002

The World Bank and “Sustainable Development”: A Marriage of Convenience or True Love?

Emi Lesure

Reducing poverty through sustainable development is a global strategic priority for the survival of our planet. For the World Bank this means dealing with the comprehensive nature of development.

In the field of international development, there have been few times when academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and international governmental organizations have appeared as unified as they now are under the banner of “sustainable development.” “Sustainable development,” a recent, all-encompassing catchphrase in development discourse used most often to refer to development that has long-term social and environmental benefits, is the goal of these often ideologically opposed groups.

At the center of the of this supposed coalition is the World Bank, by far the largest and most influential development organization with an approximate budget of \$107 billion, annual lending capacity of \$17 billion, and staff of over ten thousand in Washington, D.C. and around the world (World Bank 1997: 5; Bank website; Stern and Ferreira 1997: 524). The Bank claims that “sustainable development” as a means of poverty alleviation is a “global strategic priority,” but is the Bank’s commitment to “sustainable development” truly deep-seated or simply a surface-level, politically-correct, public-relations foil for “development as usual”? By performing content analysis of the Bank’s most widely-read publication, the *World Development Reports*, and its principal policy documents, the Country Assistance Strategy reports, and by supplementing these findings with interviews of Bank employees and critics, I attempt to show that “sustainable development” is a priority for the public face of the Bank at strategic times and during these times for also the Bank’s inner and usually resistant-to-change core, operations.

***World Development Reports* and “Sustainable Development”**

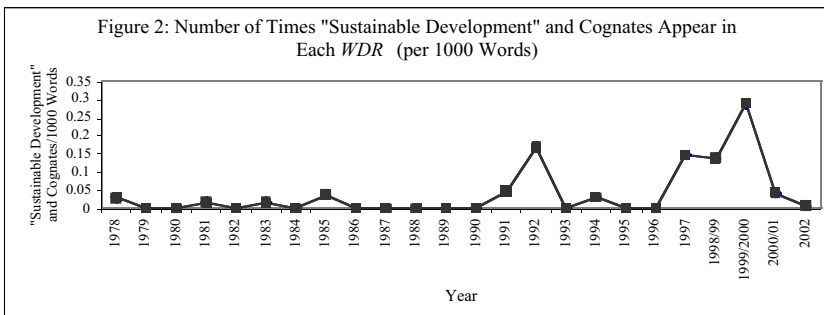
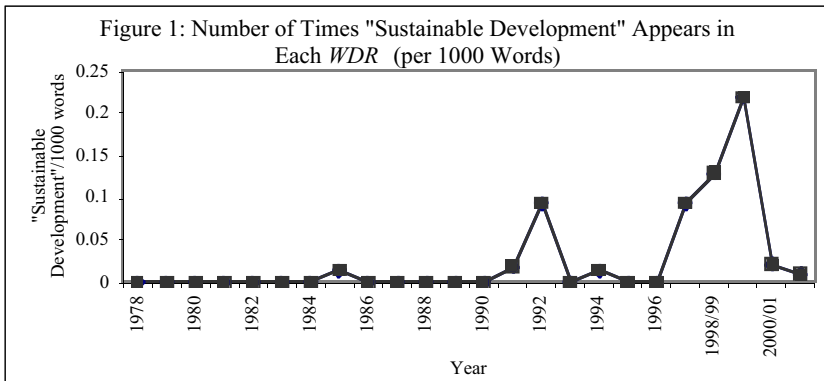
The *World Development Reports* are the Bank's most influential and large-scale publications. Over the years these reports have grown into oversized books of two to three hundred pages with budgets of \$3.5 to \$5 million and distributions of up to 120,000 copies (Wade 2002: footnote 14, Miller-Adams 1999: 20). In comparison, the distribution figure for the Bank's second most popular publication, the *World Bank Economic Review*, is 12,000 and for a typical economic journal, one to two thousand (Stern and Ferreira 1997: 591). The UN's human development report comes close to the *WDR* in distribution with a figure of 100,000, but is dwarfed in budget size with only \$1.5 million (Wade 2002: footnote 14).

The *World Development Reports* were first published in 1978 during the presidency of Robert McNamara to provide “a comprehensive analysis of development problems, and of the policies of developed and developing countries that affect them” (Ayres 1983: 20). The contents of the report are focused each year on a different theme (a list of titles is included in Appendix A) and though are not innovative, do provide a thorough summary of current knowledge about development, the Bank's perspectives, and research done by the Bank (Stern and Ferreira 1997: 571-2; Georgieva, interview, 4/18/02). The team for each report is technically independent of the Bank, but is composed mainly of Bank staff and is ultimately accountable to the Bank (Wade 2002: 8). The responsibility to “bless” the reports before they are published gives the Bank indirect control over the content (Georgieva, interview, 4/18/02); direct control is imposed in extreme cases, such as the 2000/01 report on poverty (Wade 2001a).¹ Thus, the *WDRs* can be treated as indicators of the issues the Bank considers important at the time of their production.

To determine the longitudinal variation in the Bank's willingness to use “sustainable development,” a simple content analysis of each *WDR* was performed. This type of analysis has its limits: it fails to explain how “sustain-

¹ According to Wade (2002, 2001a, 2001b), the Bank, in responding to pressure from the US Treasury, modified the content of the 2000/01 *WDR*. The alterations were not highly extensive because the Bank wanted to preserve the *WDR's* image as a product of independent writers, but were nevertheless significant because they were made and because they involved the key ideology of the Bank, neoliberalism.

able development” is understood and how well integrated it is with the other concepts in the report. Despite this, content analysis does give an elementary picture of a phrase’s popularity. A count of the times “sustainable development” appears for every thousand words is shown in Figure 1; use of the term in reference to the sustainability of projects or economic growth was omitted.² Other formulations of the term exist and are included in Figure 2 (for these variations see Appendix B; hereafter I will focus on these counts). The graphs are slightly incomplete in that they do not record the peak in the 2003 *WDR*, which is about sustainable development and was released in time for the World Summit on Sustainable Development last year.

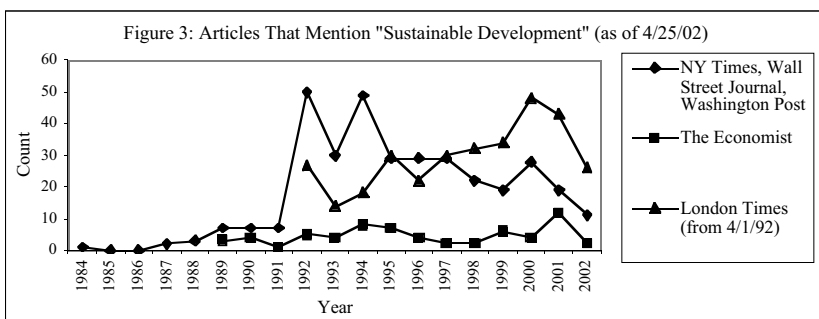


² The total word count for the 1997 *WDR* was based on the average word per page counts of the 1998 *WDR*.

What can account for this markedly inconsistent usage of “sustainable development”? The term’s waxing popularity in the early and late 1990s can be explained by the rise of external and quasi-external pressure on the Bank to discuss environmental issues. Its waning popularity touches on the debate of whether sustainable development is another development fad within the Bank or a concept that has been normalized.

External factors clearly account for the peak in 1992. Einhorn (2001:27), a former Bank manager and Georgieva (interview, 4/18/02), current head of the Environment Department, both explain the choice to write about the environment in the 1992 *WDR* as being influenced by the approach of the 1992 UN Earth Summit. Both describe the Summit as not pressuring, but encouraging the Bank to talk about sustainable development.

The peaks in 1997 and 1999 are more difficult to explain with the externalist perspective. One way to measure public pressure is the extent to which the news media discuss issues of sustainability. The media, as both barometers and molders of public opinion, arguably indicate the level of public interest in a topic and convey this information to the Bank staff who are among their readers. Figure 3 shows the number of articles in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *The Economist*, and the



⁴ For each report a topic is chosen a couple years before publication. Then a director is appointed by the Bank’s chief economist and writing teams assembled; these teams have approximately one year to complete the report. Multiple drafts are circulated months before the release date. The final version is available to the public in the summer or fall of the report year. Print or release dates are in Appendix A.

³ Note that the counts for 2002 are included and do not reflect a decline in usage of “sustainable development.” If usage continues at the same rate for the rest of the year, the total count for 2002 in each of the newspaper sources will exceed the 2001 counts.

London Times that include the phrase “sustainable development” in the heading or text (search performed on Dow Jones Interactive website).³

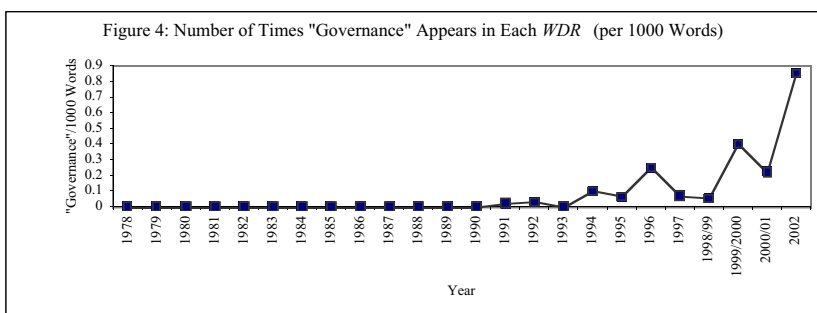
The direction of public pressure as measured by these counts is unclear. The quick rise and fall of interest in “sustainable development” from 1992–3 found in the *WDRs* is also seen with the US news sources, though in these sources the counts of the phrase drop by only half before rebounding the following year. In the *London Times*, counts dip in 1993, but begin a rocky climb after. Curiously, the most recent reduction in the frequency of “sustainable development” usage does not occur simultaneously in the news sources and the *WDRs*. The *WDR* counts plummet in the 2000/01 report, which was being written in 1999,⁴ while modest declines at worst and modest increases at best were seen in the use of the phrase by the media. These patterns indicate that public opinion, as measured by these major news sources, does not explain the *WDR* patterns from 1997 to 2001.⁵

If external factors cannot account for the usage patterns from the mid to late 1990s, a look at one actor who serves as the bridge between the outside world and the Bank—the Bank president—will be helpful. The Bank leader is brought into the Bank from the outside, but expected to balance his externalist perspective with concerns about the internal operations of the Bank. President Wolfensohn entered the Bank in 1995 to repair its relations with the left, which had grown more outspokenly critical of neoliberal development policy. His focus has been on poverty alleviation and the environment (Einhorn 2001: 27; Jordan 1997: 13) and now dotted throughout the Bank’s website are statements like: “The World Bank’s priorities have changed dramatically” (Feb. 2002). He entered at a time when the Bank was most likely just starting the 1997 *WDR* and already well on its way in writing the 1996 one, which could account for why the rise in “sustainable development” skyrocketed after the latter report. Wolfensohn’s presidency may explain the high usage of the term from 1997 to 1999, but what is still unclear is why the term virtually disappears after this period.

Such disappearances may reflect one of two things: the term either was no longer in fashion or was normalized, eliminating the need to market it in

⁵ The counts of “sustainable development” in these mainstream news sources most likely do not reflect the growing number of people on the left calling for new development paradigms. This group of critics has become more vocal, leading to actions such as the Seattle WTO protest in autumn of 1999.

the *WDRs*. David Dollar, a researcher at the Bank; Ranis, a former Bank consultant; and Wade all cite the Bank's affinity for what Ranis calls "ever-changing fads-du-jour" as a possible explanation for the irregular appearance of "sustainable development" in the *WDRs* (Dollar, email, 4/17/02; Ranis, 1994: 221 Ranis, interview, 4/12/02; Wade, email, 4/08/02). "If someone has a fresh idea somewhere, the World Bank has a great tendency...to take it over, hijack it...they capture it and run with it and they have a powerful machinery [for this]—more money...[and] smart people" (Ranis, interview, 4/12/02). The way the *WDRs* are written—each report has a different theme and team of researchers—makes these reports well suited for the Bank's discussion of new fads that arise in the field of international development. The abruptness of the rise and fall of "sustainable development" usage seems to support the fad theory. No longer in fashion, the term would most likely have a replacement—one candidate could be "governance." Figure 4 charts the growing popularity of "governance" in the *WDRs*.



The graph indicates that over its shorter life span "governance" is used on average much more often than "sustainable development" and is especially popular when "sustainable development" is not, with the exception of 1999.

The other interpretation of the drop-offs is that the concept of sustainable development is widely accepted in the Bank and in the larger development field after 1992 and 1999, making it no longer necessary to include the term in the *WDRs*. Current Bank staff I interviewed or emailed (Brown, email, 4/18/02; Georgieva, interview, 4/18/02; Kishor, interview, 3/30/02) supported this explanation by emphasizing that much activity in the Bank has

been triggered by the *WDRs*. Georgiev and Kishor point to the heavy amount of research on sustainable development that followed the 1992 *WDR*. Brown sees the creation of the Environmental and Socially Sustainable Development Vice Presidency as evidence of not only the boosted status of sustainable development in the Bank, but also the Bank's eagerness to develop a better understanding of the concept. Kessler (email, 3/24/02) and Wade (email, 4/8/02) both raised this normalization argument as a possible explanation for the patterns of "sustainable development" usage, though they were not as adamant about its validity as the current Bank staff.

There is no perfect way to test which of these two theories is true. The presence of a new phrase that eclipses "sustainable development" may mean lend credence to the fad theory or may signal that normalization has occurred. Changes in organizational structure serve as more conclusive evidence of normalization, but do not necessarily prove that the Bank's commitment to sustainable development is deep and enduring. Perhaps the most persuasive evidence of normalization is the degree to which "sustainable development" is embraced by the operations side of the Bank.

Ranis (1994: 13) describes the Bank as a body having "two circulatory systems, with relatively little capillary action between them": one consisting of the President's office and research divisions, which are responsible for selling new ideas; the other being the core, the operations departments. Kessler (email 3/24/02) describes the operations departments' resistance to change: "These guys are often told by the president or high level directors, in football coach fashion, to take these great ideas and go to the field and make development happen. Eyes roll, people commiserate in private about out-of-touch management, and things stay pretty much the way they have been." If normalization does occur, a term used in one circulatory system should also be used in the other. Debate exists over whether the *WDR*, as the principle document of the presidential and research shell of the Bank, is in tune with the realities of the operations core. Kessler writes:

...the *WDR*, as opposed to 95 percent of the documents and reports that the Bank generates, is intended for a general public readership. This means that every word gets vetted by vast legions of lawyers, managers and gatekeep-

ers. It also means that its purpose is to promote whatever the Bank's president has cooked up as the moment's current flavor of the month. (email, 3/24/02)

As described earlier, employees of the Bank I contacted disagree, citing the organizational changes spurred by the reports. Kirk Hamilton, a team leader in the Environment Department, writes that the *WDRs* "are not policy documents for the Bank—they represent a way for the Bank to assess knowledge on a subject and to help set an agenda" (email, 4/16/02). Normalization believers would say that the *WDRs* help set an agenda for the Bank. Changes in these reports, therefore, should trigger shifts in the priorities of the operations departments.

One way to help settle this fad vs. normalization debate as it relates to "sustainable development" is to compare the content of the *WDRs* to policy documents, as Kessler (email, 3/24/02), former Bank employee recommends. The following section will examine one type of such document, the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) report.

Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) Reports

CAS reports are written every several years for borrowers and are the most important and highest quality documents to come out of the operations side of the Bank (Stern and Ferreira 1997: 578; Wade 1997: 721). Each report outlines the direction in which the Bank believes a borrower should be headed by focusing on four or five areas of improvement and discussing them in an approximately twenty to thirty page paper heavily supplemented by data tables and charts. The environment, seen by borrowers as a non-immediate and often thorny issue, is typically not one of these (Wade 1997: 721).

To examine the extent to which "sustainable development" has trickled down into Bank operations I reviewed the 78 CAS reports, progress reports, and interim reports available on the Bank website as of April 2002 (lists of countries, report types, and years are in Appendix C).⁶ I performed the same

⁶ In 1998 the Bank created a new disclosure policy that allowed public access to the CAS reports borrowers agree to release. CAS reports from before 1998 exist, but were not covered by the new policy.

Figure 5: Number of Times "Sustainable Development" Appears in CAS Reports

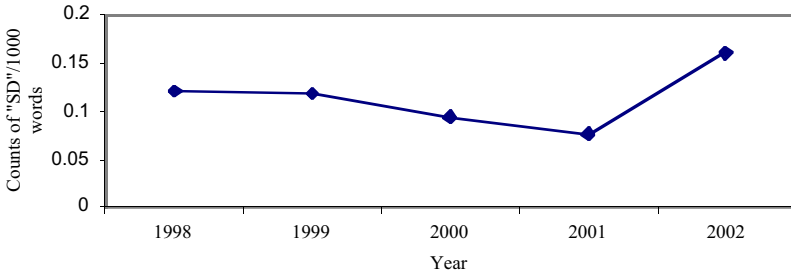


Figure 6: Number of Times "Sustainable Development" and Cognates Appear in CAS Reports

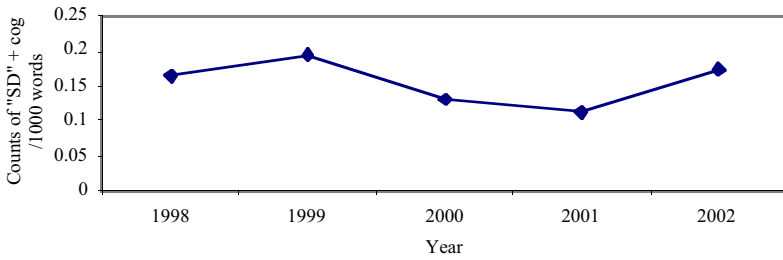
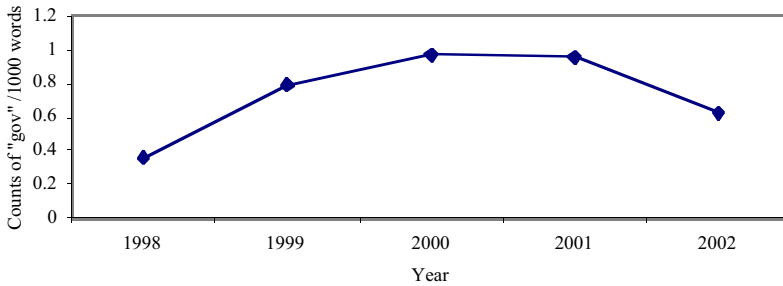


Figure 7: Number of Times "Governance" Appears in CAS Reports



type of content analysis as I did on the *WDRs*.⁷ Because the Bank does not release all CAS reports to the public, the sample is not necessarily representative of all CAS reports and does not include reports written before 1998. But the content analysis of these reports, how ever flawed, does give a raw picture of how much the *WDR* ideas have permeated the inner layers of the Bank. The results are graphed below. In Figures 5, 6, and 7, reports are aggregated by year to show counts of “sustainable development,” “sustainable development” and variations, and “governance” per 1000 words.

The graphs show that the “sustainable development” counts between 1999 and 2001 fall by about half, mirroring the pattern in the *WDRs*. The 1998 and 1999 CAS reports were finished after the 1998 and 1999 *WDRs* respectively, which continued to pay much attention to issues of sustainability. The first year of reduced “sustainable development” usage in the studied CAS reports is 2000, the year of the release of the 2000/01 *WDR*. The downward trend continues in the 2001 reports, some of which were written in the wake of the 2000/01 *WDR*, others after the 2002 issue—in both *WDRs* mention of “sustainable development” was negligible or nonexistent. The eclipse of “sustainable development” by “governance” is also seen in the CAS reports. All of these parallels suggest that the *WDR* trends either influenced the content of the CAS reports or reflected the shifting views in the operations levels of the Bank.⁸

As stated previously, the existence of informational flows between the two circulatory systems of the Bank should support the normalization theory. However, the declining popularity of “sustainable development” in the CAS reports after 1999 and its revival in the reports written in 2002—the same trend seen in the *WDRs*—seems to support not the normalization theory, which would predict constant elevated use of “sustainable development” by operations, but the fad theory. It seems that the same affinity for buzzwords observed in the public relations part of the Bank penetrates even into the operations core.

⁷ Included in the CAS searches were the data tables and appendices attached to each report. Data tables in the *WDRs*, on the other hand, were not examined because of the organization of the *WDR* CD-rom.

⁸ The 2002 CAS reports were also written after the 2002 *WDR* and contrary to the reports of previous years, show increased use of “sustainable development” and related terms. As of April 2002, there had been only three countries that have released their reports, each heavily influencing the 2002 data. However, because these reports were finished within months of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Bank’s final draft of a *WDR* on the same subject, it is possible that the revival of sustainability may not be a fluke. With only three countries to examine, the data is inconclusive.

Irregularities in the use of the term are seen not only over time, but also by country. While some of these are due to the idiosyncrasies of each country, systematic variations do exist, showing that countries with certain characteristics are perceived as better targets than others for discussions about sustainable development. The following section describes these characteristics.

CAS Reports and Country-Level Analysis

I collected various statistics about each of the countries for which the CAS reports had been written. These independent variables include economic and demographic measures: GNP per capita ("GNP/cap"), the amount of debt as a percentage of GNP owed to the Bank ("WBdebt/GNP"), the percentage of GDP from land or natural resource-based activity ("econ struct"), and the urban population as a percentage of a country's total population ("urban"). Other independent variables serve as rough measures of the level of environmental degradation in a country: forest change as a percent of total forested area ("forest") and the number of endangered mammal species as a fraction of total mammal species ("mammal"). The level of pressure from the environmental bloc is indicated by the number of organizations belonging to the World Conservation Union per million people in a country ("IUCN"), the number of environmental organizations also as a fraction of a country's population ("env org"), and the percentage of land under protection ("protect"). Assuming that sustainable development is not the Bank's highest priority, the expected relationships between these variables and the counts of "sustainable development" and its cognates are sketched in Table 1. (A complete list of independent variables and their correlations can be found in Appendix D.)

TABLE 1

| VARIABLE NAME | VARIABLE DESCRIPTION | PREDICTED RELATIONSHIP |
|---------------|---|---|
| GNP/cap | GNP or GNI per capita | Positive: the wealthier the country, the more time and resources can be devoted to less immediate concerns like the environment |
| WBdebt/GNP | size of debt to World Bank as percentage of GNP or GNI | Negative: the greater a country's debt, the more leverage it has over what the Bank says, assuming that countries do not want to talk about sustainable development |
| Econ Struct | the percentage of GDP dependent on natural resources | Negative: the greater the reliance on natural resources for economic vitality, the less the Bank will discuss sustainable development |
| Urban | percentage of population living in urban areas | Positive: the fewer subsistence farmers and people highly dependent on the land there are, the more freedom the Bank has to talk about sustainable development |
| Forest | forest change as a percentage of entire forested area in country | Positive: like econ struct, the less dependent on deforestation for economic growth, the more the Bank will encourage resource protection |
| Mammal | number of threatened mammals divided by total mammal species per 10,000 square km | Negative: assuming that higher numbers of endangered animals are indicative of larger and more immediate problems, such as poor governance capacity, these concerns will receive priority over environmental ones |
| IUCN | number of organizations that are members of World Conservation Union (IUCN) per million people in country | Positive: the greater the external pressure and willingness to discuss environmental issues, the more the Bank will talk about sustainable development |
| Env Org | number of environmental organizations per 100,000 people in country | Positive: same as IUCN |
| Protect | protected land (includes marine protected areas) as a percentage of total country land area | Positive: state willingness to protect land indicates to the Bank how receptive the state will be to discussing environmental issues |

With this data six models, described in Table 2, were created using ordinary least squares with robust standard errors. Each model uses as its unit of analysis single countries and as the dependent variable the square root of each CAS report's counts of "sustainable development" and cognates per 1000 words, which is normally distributed. Dummy variables were created to control for the effect of time. The independent variables listed in Appendix D, but not included in Table 2 yielded very large p-values and appear to not have a significant effect on the results of the content analysis.

TABLE 2 “Sustainable Development” + cognates/1000 words =
f(GNP/cap, WBdebt/GNP, Forest, Mammal, IUCN, EnvOrg,
Protect, Year dummies)

| INDEPENDENT VARIABLES | MODEL 1 | MODEL 2 | MODEL 3 | MODEL 4 | MODEL 5 | MODEL 6 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| GNP/cap | -0.0000303 (.00000862) | -0.0000302 (.00000767) | -0.0000304 (.00000737) | -0.000032 (.00000904) | -0.0000317 (.00000778) | -0.0000315 (.00000811) |
| WBdebt/ GNP | -0.0031082 0.0010878 | -0.0029576 (0.0010919) | -0.0034153 (0.0011058) | -0.0036278 (0.0011582) | -0.0039085 (0.0011713) | -0.0034735 (0.0011609) |
| Forest | _____ | _____ | _____ | -0.0265352 (0.0153229) | -0.0254608 (0.0155481) | -0.0258232 (0.0150462) |
| Mammal | _____ | _____ | _____ | 0.0358316 (0.0235889) | 0.0396079 (0.0234237) | 0.0386573 (0.0227372) |
| IUCN | _____ | 0.0185703 (0.0042543) | _____ | _____ | _____ | 0.017879 (0.0033448) |
| Env org | 0.0015652 (0.0015251) | _____ | _____ | 0.0016804 (0.0017731) | _____ | _____ |
| Protect | _____ | _____ | 0.0031545 (0.0014238) | _____ | 0.0030287 (0.0013578) | _____ |
| Yr 1998 | -0.058513 (0.0922336) | -0.0660037 (0.089547) | -0.0493095 (0.0888547) | -0.0873278 (0.1213927) | -0.0767716 (0.1167222) | -0.09304 (0.1189612) |
| Yr 1999 | -0.0529983 (0.0715279) | -0.0543282 (0.0714965) | -0.0443692 (0.0684894) | -0.0738197 (0.1040384) | -0.0644685 (0.0999306) | -0.0742274 (0.1033863) |
| Yr 2000 | -0.0967652 (0.0646853) | -0.1046072 (0.0620374) | -0.083294 (0.0617477) | -0.1195577 (0.0997063) | -0.1050197 (0.0948157) | -0.1255964 (0.0988521) |
| Yr 2001 | -0.1261517 (0.0615166) | -0.1275349 (0.0620374) | -0.119545 (0.0588852) | -0.1357221 (0.0970243) | -0.1318988 (0.0936222) | -0.1387803 (0.0969357) |
| Constant | 0.4966432 (0.0596733) | 0.498192 0.060272 | 0.4737877 (0.0580754) | 0.5057204 (0.0986721) | 0.4829463 (0.0959877) | 0.5065236 (0.0983371) |
| R-squared | 0.1414 | 0.1732 | 0.1738 | 0.1848 | 0.2137 | 0.2137 |
| n | 78 | 78 | 78 | 78 | 78 | 78 |

See Appendix D for data sources and years. The boxes include unstandardized regression coefficients and in parentheses robust standard errors. Highlighting is used when the absolute value of a coefficient is larger than two times the standard error. The dependent variable is the square root of the number of times “sustainable development” and its cognates appear in each CAS report per 1000 words. The independent variables are measures of: GNP, Bank debt, forest change, threatened mammals, membership in the World Conservation Union, environmental organizations, and protected areas.

GNP per capita and Bank debt are consistently statistically significant and of the selected independent variables, have the strongest relationship to “sustainable development” counts. The negative coefficient of GNP per capita suggests that as countries become richer mention of “sustainable development” declines. Based on the measures used here, this decrease cannot be explained by wealthier countries’ supposed propensities to protect their environments. The correlation between GNP per capita and the ratio of threatened mammals and forest change is low at 0.0108 and 0.0455, respectively. These measures are not comprehensive enough to deny the general belief that the more affluent the country the more resources exist to alleviate environmental problems. The measures do raise the question of whether the

decline in "sustainable development" counts can be explained by a wealthier country's stronger commitment to environmental protection or by its greater power vis-à-vis the Bank. The poorest borrowers are not likely to find lenders other than the Bank while countries with higher GNP per capita are usually offered a choice of Bank loans or private capital. If a more affluent borrower feels unwanted pressure from the Bank to focus on sustainability issues, it may take its business elsewhere. It appears, therefore, that sustainability is imposed on poorer borrowers not so much because they are more guilty of destroying the environment than other countries, but because they have less leverage to oppose the Bank.

Bank debt also has a negative coefficient and a statistically significant relationship to "sustainable development" counts. This can mean a couple of things. The Bank and countries with high debt are mutually dependent: countries that owe the Bank money must at least attempt to comply with its conditions or face penalties, but the Bank cannot be too aggressive in its policies that it angers these countries, jeopardizing the amortization of current debts and the acceptance of future loans. The negative relationship between debt and "sustainable development" counts suggests that countries with higher debt have greater control over the contents of the CAS reports, blocking the admission of sustainability concerns. Another possible explanation is that countries with high levels of outstanding debt are likely to be suffering from problems seen as more pressing than environmental degradation, such as political instability, massive unemployment, and incapacitated economies. With the CAS format allowing for few issues to be discussed, sustainable development, as a fuzzy environmental and human development term, is less likely to be of immediate concern to the Bank and borrowers.

The environmental degradation and organization variables reveal exceptions to this trend. These variables have a weak correlation with GNP per capita and a very weak correlation with Bank debt, but have statistically significant relationships (or nearly statistically significant relationships in the case of the degradation measures) to "sustainable development" counts. The positive coefficient of the mammal variable and the negative coefficient of the forest change variable show that "sustainable development" is more likely to be mentioned for countries with greater environmental destruction.

Even in countries without serious environmental degradation, the existence of environmental activism encourages the Bank to discuss sustainable

development. This activism is quantified through the IUCN and protected area variables, which both have positive coefficients and are statistically significant (when not placed together in the same model). By including "sustainable development" in CAS reports, the Bank is either concerned about appeasing these environmentalists or believes that talk of sustainability will be better received in countries where there is already mobilization around environmental issues.

The influence of these environmental factors on the Bank, however, is outweighed by economic realities, as evidenced by the only slight improvement in the R-squared values of models 2-6 over the R-squared value of model 1. This shows, therefore, that despite the Bank's claims that its "priorities have changed dramatically" (World Bank website, Feb. 2002), its focus is still on economic conditions.

Although this statistical analysis does help construct a better picture of the Bank's inconsistent attention to "sustainable development," it is important to note its limitations. First, even the best model does not fully account for variations in phrase counts from country to country. R-squared values never exceed 0.22, indicating there is much more occurring that the selected variables cannot explain. Secondly, though it is encouraging that "sustainable development" tends to be used in reference to countries with stronger economies, greater environmental need, and persistent environmentalist pressure, the term is not used that frequently. Use of it and its cognates ranged from 0 to 0.663 per one thousand words with a median of 0.109. Using a simple tally, counts of the phrase varied from 0 to 27 with a median of 2 per report. Although the spirit of sustainable development can be reflected in other words, with nearly one in five reports not including the phrase at all and over three quarters containing fewer than five counts of the phrase, it seems there is a way to go before the concept is truly regarded as an issue of great importance within the Bank.

Conclusion

The *WDR* and CAS results construct a picture of the Bank as a body with strong circulatory flows that link the cutaneous layers of the Bank to the internal organs, perhaps more than previously thought. Information from the research and propaganda part of the Bank can be not only transmitted

to, but also internalized by the operations divisions, though as the CAS reports show, this information appears to be used by the latter group only as long as the former remains committed to the new ideas.

Content analysis of the *WDRs* shows that the Bank's commitment to sustainable development has not been strong, consistent, or independent of external forces. The importance of external factors makes political sense. The Bank operates in a very complex political world of donors, borrowers, friends, and critics where to preserve legitimacy it must in the least acknowledge new development trends. In regard to sustainable development, however, it seems from this research that the Bank is doing little more than this.

To be fair it must be said that the Bank could be sincerely and actively promoting the concept through research and projects, which are outside the purview of *WDR* and CAS report content analysis. This point is especially important in regard to operations. Despite providing a window into the operations levels of the Bank, the CAS reports are still policy documents rather than detailed project descriptions. Clearly, more research is needed to see how much this part of the Bank has embraced sustainable development.

While the Bank's commitment has been neither consistent nor deep-seated, it is unclear whether there can be anything other than this type of support for sustainable development because of the inherent vagueness of the term. Dollar writes (email, 4/17/02): "I have never understood the value of the phrase 'sustainable development.' . . . If there is somewhere a process of industrialization and growth that is not sustainable, then I would not call it development."

While explicitly not unique, implicitly the concept is a challenge to existing development models. The problem is that because no one agrees on where development models have gone wrong, no one agrees on the interpretation of what exactly should be sustained—the environment, the economy, social welfare—and how progress should be measured. The benefit of such a vague concept is that it brings many diverse groups together that otherwise have large ideological differences (Lele 1991: 607). The danger is that it becomes easy for groups, such as the Bank, to pay lip service to what could be a new, more long-term, more holistic development paradigm, but not sincerely try to change the status quo, making this alliance across the development spectrum meaningless. This is the irony of the concept—while initially appearing to have so much potential, sustainable development is proving itself unsustainable.

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APPENDIX A: *World Development Report* Titles and Print/Release Dates

| REPORT YEAR | REPORT TITLE | PRINT/RELEASE DATE |
|----------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1978 | | Aug. 1978 |
| 1979 | | Aug. 1979 |
| 1980 | Adjustment and Growth in the 1980s/ Poverty and Human Development | Aug. 1980 |
| 1981 | National and International Adjustment | Aug. 1981 |
| 1982 | International Development Trends/ Agriculture and Development | 1982 |
| 1983 | World Economic Recession and Prospects for Recovery/ Management in Development | July 1983 |
| 1984 | Recovery or Relapse in the World Economy/ Population Change and Development | July 1984 |
| 1985 | International Capital and Economic Development | July 1985 |
| 1986 | The Hesitant Recovery and Prospects for Sustained Growth/ Trade and Pricing Policies in World Agriculture | July 1986 |
| 1987 | Barriers to Adjustment and Growth in the World Economy/ Industrialization and Foreign Trade | July 1987 |
| 1988 | Opportunities and Risks in Managing the World Economy/ Public Finance in Development | June 1988 |
| 1989 | Financial Systems and Development | June 1989 |
| 1990 | Poverty | June 1990 |
| 1991 | The Challenge of Development | June 1991 |
| 1992 | Development and the Environment | Sept. 1992 |
| 1993 | Investing in Health | Sept. 1993 |
| 1994 | Infrastructure for Development | Sept. 1994 |
| 1995 | Workers in an Integrating World | June 1995 |
| 1996 | From Plan to Market | Sept. 1996 |
| 1997 | The State in a Changing World | June 1997 |
| 1998/99 | Knowledge for Development | Sept. 1998 |
| 1999/00 | Entering the 21st Century: The Changing Development Landscape | Sept. 1999 |
| 2000/01 | Attacking Poverty | Sept. 2000 |
| 2002 | Building Institutions for Markets | Sept. 2001 |
| 2003 | Sustainable Development in a Dynamic Economy | Aug. 2002 |

APPENDIX B: Word Variations

Cognates of “sustainable development”: Sustain development, sustaining development, sustained development, development that is sustainable, development that is unsustainable, sustainable rural development, sustainable urban development, sustainable long-term development, etc.

APPENDIX C: Country Assistance Strategy Reports

| YEAR | COUNTRY | DOCUMENT TYPE | YEAR | COUNTRY | DOCUMENT TYPE |
|------|--------------------|-----------------|------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1998 | Bolivia | CAS document | 2000 | Jamaica | CAS document |
| 1998 | Gambia | CAS document | 2000 | Macedonia ² | progress report |
| | | joint CAS | | | |
| 1998 | Macedonia | document | 2000 | Malawi ² | progress report |
| 1998 | Malawi | CAS document | 2000 | Mozambique | CAS document |
| 1998 | Nepal | CAS document | 2000 | Slovenia | progress report |
| 1998 | Panama | CAS document | 2000 | Tanzania | CAS document |
| 1998 | Sri Lanka | progress report | 2000 | Togo | progress report |
| 1998 | Vietnam | CAS document | 2000 | Tunisia | CAS document |
| 1999 | Azerbaijan | CAS document | 2000 | Turkey | CAS document |
| 1999 | Bangladesh | progress report | 2000 | Uganda | CAS document |
| 1999 | Chad | CAS document | 2000 | Ukraine ² | CAS document |
| 1999 | Colombia | progress report | 2000 | Vietnam ² | progress report |
| 1999 | Croatia | CAS document | 2001 | Argentina | progress report |
| 1999 | Dominican Republic | CAS document | 2001 | Armenia | CAS document |
| 1999 | Indonesia | progress report | 2001 | Benin | Interim CAS |
| 1999 | Lao PDR | CAS document | 2001 | Bolivia ² | progress report |
| | | | | Bosnia | |
| 1999 | Lithuania | CAS document | 2001 | Herzegovina ² | progress report |
| 1999 | Moldova | CAS document | 2001 | Brazil | progress report |
| 1999 | Papua New Guinea | CAS document | 2001 | Cape Verde | progress report |
| 1999 | Philippines | CAS document | 2001 | Croatia ² | progress report |
| 1999 | Poland | progress report | 2001 | Egypt | CAS document |
| 1999 | Russian Fed | CAS document | 2001 | El Salvador | CAS document |
| 1999 | Rwanda | progress report | 2001 | Guinea | progress report |
| 1999 | South Africa | CAS document | 2001 | India | CAS document |
| 1999 | Trinidad, Tobago | CAS document | 2001 | Indonesia ² | CAS document |
| 1999 | Ukraine | progress report | 2001 | Iran | Interim AS |
| 1999 | Yemen | CAS document | 2001 | Kyrgyz Republic | progress report |
| 1999 | Zambia | CAS document | 2001 | Mexico | progress report |
| 2000 | Albania | progress report | 2001 | Morocco | CAS document |
| 2000 | Bangladesh | CAS document | 2001 | Niger | progress report |
| 2000 | Belize | CAS document | 2001 | Pakistan | progress report |
| 2000 | Bhutan | CAS document | 2001 | Romania | CAS document |
| 2000 | Bosnia Herzegovina | CAS document | 2001 | Russian Fed ² | progress report |
| 2000 | Burkina Faso | CAS document | 2001 | Slovak Republic | CAS document |
| 2000 | Cambodia | CAS document | 2001 | Turkey ² | progress report |
| 2000 | Cameroon | progress report | 2001 | Vietnam ³ | progress report |
| 2000 | Djibouti | CAS document | 2002 | Belarus | CAS document |
| 2000 | Ghana | CAS document | 2002 | Chile | CAS document |
| | | | | | Interim Strategy |
| 2000 | Honduras | CAS document | 2002 | Nigeria | Update |

APPENDIX D: Variables

| VARIABLE | YEAR | SOURCE |
|---|--|--|
| GNP/cap: GNP or GNI per capita | CAS Report year | CAS reports, Bank website WDI, World Bank (2001) |
| WBdebt/GNP: size of debt to World Bank as percentage of GNP or GNI | CAS Report Year | CAS Reports |
| Econ stru: the percentage of GDP dependent on natural resources* | Year before CAS report date 1999 for 2001-2 reports | WDI, World Bank (2001), UNIDO (2002) |
| Urban: percentage of population living in urban areas | Year before CAS report 1999 for 2001-2 CAS reports | WDI, World Bank (2001) |
| Forest: percent of forest change | 1990-1995 for 1998-9 reports 1990-2000 for 2001-2 reports | 1990-5: WRI 1990-2000: World Bank |
| Mammal: number of threatened mammals divided by mammal species per 10,000 square km | 2000 | IUCN (2000) WRI (2002) |
| IUCN: number of organizations that are members of World Conservation Union (IUCN) per million people in country | 2001 or 2002 | 2001: World Economic Forum (2002) 2002: IUCN (2002) |
| Env org: number of environmental organizations per 100,000 people in country | 2000 | UIA (2000) |
| Protect: protected land (includes marine protected areas) as a percentage of total country land area | 1998 for 1998-2000 reports 2001 for 2001-2002 reports | 1998: World Economic Forum (2002) 2001: UNEP (2001) |

| CORRELATIONS | GNP/CAP | WBDEBT | IUCN | ENVORG | PROTECT | MAMMAL | FOREST | URBAN |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| WBDebt | -0.4765 | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| IUCN | 0.1265 | -0.0632 | 1.000 | | | | | |
| EnvOrg | 0.2474 | -0.0537 | 0.8058 | 1.000 | | | | |
| Protect | 0.0739 | 0.0881 | 0.3775 | 0.2013 | 1.000 | | | |
| Mammal | 0.0108 | -0.0008 | -0.0170 | 0.3385 | -0.0822 | 1.000 | | |
| Forest | 0.0455 | -0.1157 | -0.0399 | 0.2708 | -0.1099 | 0.8771 | 1.000 | |
| Urban | 0.5867 | -0.4921 | -0.0673 | 0.1410 | -0.0867 | 0.0800 | 0.1691 | 1.000 |
| econstru | -0.6169 | 0.4197 | -0.1106 | -0.1158 | 0.0093 | -0.1232 | -0.1833 | -0.6824 |

| OTHER VARIABLES | YEAR | SOURCE |
|--|---|------------------------|
| WB debt total: size of debt to World Bank in US \$ millions | CAS report year | CAS reports |
| Aid: total amount received in aid as percentage of GNI | Year before CAS report 1999 for 2001-2 CAS reports | WDI, World Bank (2001) |
| Freedom: average of political right and civil liberties scores | Year before CAS report | Freedom House (2001) |
| Education: secondary school enrollment as percent of gross | 1997 | WDI, World Bank (2001) |

Not Included: Reports for Maldives and Sao Tome because country size extremely small (< 1000 sq km)

** econ struct = [industry (% of GDP) - manufacturing (% of GDP)] + agriculture (% of GDP)*

Industry includes mining, construction, electricity, water, gas, and manufacturing sectors

Agriculture includes forestry, hunting, fishing, farming, and livestock sectors

APPENDIX E: Missing Data and Data Substitutions

Missing: Bosnia education

Substitutions:

| VARIABLE | COUNTRY | EXPECTED | SUBSTITUTION | SOURCE | VARIABLE | COUNTRY | EXPECTED | SUBSTITUTION | SOURCE |
|----------|------------------------|----------|--------------|--------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|---|---------------|
| Aid | Armenia | 2000 | 1998 | WDI | Edu | Slovenia | 1997 | 1996 | WDI |
| Edu | Azerbaijan | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | South Africa | 1997 | 1995 | WDI |
| | Bolivia | 1997 | 1990 | WDI | | Sri Lanka | 1997 | 1995 | WDI |
| | Chad | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Togo | 1997 | 1996 | WDI |
| | Colombia | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Trinidad, Tobago | 1997 | 1995 | WDI |
| | Croatia | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Turkey | 1997 | 1996 | WDI |
| | Djibouti | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Uganda | 1997 | 1995 | WRI |
| | Gambia | 1997 | 1995 | WDI | | Ukraine | 1997 | 1993 | WDI |
| | Ghana | 1997 | 1991 | WDI | | Yemen | 1997 | 1996 | WDI |
| | Honduras | 1997 | 1993 | WDI | | Zambia | 1997 | 1994 | WDI |
| | India | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | Econ struct | Rwanda | 1998 | 1998 | CAS report |
| | Indonesia | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | Econ struct: industry | Cambodia | | 1998 | WDI |
| | Iran | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Djibouti | | 1998 | WDI |
| | Jamaica | 1997 | 1992 | WDI | | Nigeria | | 1998 | WDI |
| | Kyrgyz Rep | 1997 | 1995 | WRI | | | | | |
| | Lao PDR | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | Econ struct: manufacturing | Bhutan | | 1998 | WDI |
| | Lithuania | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Cambodia | | 1998 | WDI |
| | Macedonia | 1997 | 1995 | WDI | | Djibouti | | 1997 | WDI |
| | Malawi | 1997 | 1995 | WDI | | Nigeria | | 1998 | WDI |
| | Mexico | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Vietnam | | 1993 | WDI |
| | Moldova | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | Econ struct: Agriculture | Cambodia | | 1998 | WDI |
| | Mozambique | 1997 | 1995 | WDI | | Djibouti | | 1997 | WDI |
| | Nepal | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Nigeria | | 1997 | WDI |
| | Niger | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | Forest | Cape Verde | 1990-2000 | 1990-5 | WRI |
| | Nigeria | 1997 | 1994 | WDI | GNP/cap | Cameroon | | 1999 | WDI |
| | Pakistan | 1997 | 1991 | WDI | | Ghana | | 1999 | WDI |
| | Panama | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Uganda | | 1999 | WDI |
| | Papua New Guinea | 1997 | 1995 | WDI | | Vietnam | | 1997 | WDI |
| | Poland | 1997 | 1995 | WDI | Mammal: total species count | Bolivia | | Average of totals in Brazil, Paraguay & Chile | WRI |
| | Romania | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Kyrgyz Republic | | Kazakhstan | WRI |
| | Russian Fed | 1997 | 1993 | WDI | Protect | Belize | 1998 | 2001 | UNEP |
| | Rwanda | 1997 | 1991 | WDI | | Djibouti | 1998 | 2001 | UNEP |
| | Slovak Rep | 1997 | 1996 | WDI | | Yemen | 2001 | 1998 | W E F |

Looking for Hip Hop: Seeing the Body Communicate in Everyday Social Encounters and Visual Commodity Culture

Kristina Toth

Using a multi-sited ethnographic research paradigm, I investigated: (a) how hip hop, a set of grounded lifeways, is expressed through the bodied communicative styles of a group of young people living and working in New York City; and, (b) how HIP HOP, the (audio)visual commodity culture, contributes to and validates these lifeways; while on the flip side, (c) it contributes to the construction of a visual frame through which the youth are viewed and treated accordingly.

HIP HOP SITE 1 — A YOUTH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION IN THE SOUTH BRONX, NYC

[The ORG] was created to school young people to the fact that we are not powerless, we should be seen and heard, and we have the ability and the right to act for change. We are committed to giving ourselves and other youth the skills and opportunities we need to participate in the running of our schools, neighborhoods, and city.

mission statement—printed in an informational pamphlet

In 1994, the same year Nas was telling us the world is ours, a group of young people living in the South Bronx founded The ORG (pseudonym¹) to organize local youth and mobilize the community as a whole to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood. Two years later, the ambitious young people took over an abandoned crackhouse, transforming it into a cozy, colorful, and welcoming space, where kids can come, chill, chat, and complain about the problematic conditions of their lives—at home, in their schools,

¹ All names are fictional.

on the streets, and throughout the city. Until then, in their community there wasn't a safe place where the young people could speak out, be heard, and network with other youth to address their problems through collective action. Now, six years since the first occupation, in the same space a different group of young people are struggling to deal with: the lack of jobs, health services, and extra-curricular programs in their community; poor schools with apathetic teachers, outdated curriculums, disintegrating textbooks, and armed policemen; the absence of parents in young people's lives due to incarceration or death from illness; rampant domestic and gang violence; constant police harassment on the streets; easy access to drugs and weapons; and, a city more eager to spend money on incarcerating youth than educating them.

Everyday the young people, ranging in age from 14 to 21, work together at The ORG to find ways to make the Bronx a semi-suitable place for people to live—while all day trying to overcome their allergies, migraines, and other aches and pains, which result from their residence in a place lacking healthy fresh food and clean air, instead offering dilapidated buildings without heat or functional plumbing, poor health facilities, and roach, rat, and garbage inhabited sidewalks and street corners. Despite having to take on what traditionally might be considered adult responsibilities, such as raising children or helping family members and close friends get out of jail, go back to school, and/or find jobs and places to sleep, the members² of the organization who are still enrolled in school come to The ORG after classes during the week to meet with other staff members to address local as well as city-wide social problems.

In addition to their organization of, and participation in, street actions and lobbying, there are a number of programs the young people themselves founded and regularly maintain—in teams, to which they are noticeably dedicated. And, what I observed every week for seven months was the human energy that goes into maintaining the programs of the Outreach and Youth Court teams. The team members of Outreach occupy the streets of the community every afternoon to inform people about the always open doors of their “youth-led, youth-run” organization, handing out resource

² The ORG has permanent and part-time staff as well as a membership base of volunteers.

cards on which are listed methods for effectively and safely dealing with the police and phone numbers for crisis hotlines, community centers, and other neighborhood institutions (Appendix, Fig.3-6). And the Youth Court team runs the Community Justice Center, an alternative to detention program working with referrals from local probation officers.

Through the Justice Center, the most successful and controversial of their programs, The ORG provides youth advocacy and court support, case management, and legal education to local kids who have gravitated into the spin of the city's juvenile justice system. In addition, they hold "youth court" several times a week in which they hear cases referred to them from the district's family court because the crime supposedly committed is minor and/or a first offense and also because a probation officer found the program suitable for the youth's particular situation. In their court, the "young person gets to tell their story", an opportunity not given in regular court. After each session of youth court, a debriefing process ensues, or better stated, volcanically erupts. It is to these often heated, time-consuming, post-court "pluses and deltas" or debriefs, and monthly membership meeting debriefing sessions, I turned in order to examine and conceptualize how the young people at The ORG communicate. When I began observing, the sessions appeared to be stressful and exhausting endeavors, typically filled with anger and constant agitation. However, after adjusting to the high volume and sometimes harsh tones of voice exhibited at these times, seemingly exaggerated facial expressions, and pronounced gestures of the young people—read "attitude"—I would discover later there was present some frustration in their interactions but not to the extent first assumed. In fact, once I started actively participating, I found their mode of communication refreshingly easy to use and decipher. Finally, because the rules of standard communication at The ORG are often the content of their discussions during post-court and post-membership meeting debriefs, observing at those times, I consistently was directed to specific conversational norms.

First, in meetings the "one mic" rule is the most emphasized, to the extent that a cartoon representation of it can be found on organizational literature as well as painted, employing thick bold black lines, on one of the walls of their usual meeting space (Appendix, Fig.1). It is the most talked about and most violated rule, of which violation often results in a domino effect of people yelling back and forth, "One mic! One mic!" According to

the rule, the speaker alone has the floor, and all listeners thus, should be silent, giving their full attention.

Moreover, the speaker should be sure to maintain a dignified presence, or "hold it down", to secure the attention of others. Ideally, a confident attitude should be projected at all times while speaking, usually conveyed by tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures. The youth recommend speaking in a serious manner, "You gotta talk seriously, or you're not gonna be taken seriously," and with conviction, "Stand for something, or you'll fall for anything." However, becoming overly emotional, demonstrated by screaming, crying, or offering utterances composed fully of curse words, to the extent that one's message becomes completely indecipherable, will result in a loss of respect for the speaker if not a confrontation. And before or after speaking, one should recognize and verbally acknowledge the person who had the floor before them and also those who offered constructive criticism concerning what they stated, "giving props" in other words. Above all, any person who places themselves center stage should present ideas that are original and well developed, or not "corny", and relevant to the discussion. At The ORG, the "corny" accusation is the one most frequently hurled at unfavorable ideas.

"Not for nothing" is another phrase one repeatedly hears at the organization. In short, speakers should strive to make themselves understood on some level, otherwise the effort of speech may be considered completely pointless. At the same time, there is no excuse for demonstrating "ignorance", or being "slow" to grasp an idea communicated by another person. Such "slowness" is frequently the outcome of not paying full attention to the discussion; and, reprimands often are effected through looks and stares. Calling the slow person "stupid" or a "stupid idiot" occurs quite often as well. Clearly, the blunt and what might be deemed aggressive nature of their interactions during meetings can result easily in verbal combat. However, combative verbal exchanges are also an acceptable part of communicating, believed to be of use to a certain extent.

On one level, responding to what has been said and communicating your agreement or disillusionment with a stated opinion is expected. "Talking back" is evidence that one has been listening and has some personal interest in the discussion; and, a speaker may even demand it by saying, "bring it," in a tone suggesting preparedness for critique. Everything is up for

debate essentially. On another level, “bickering” often arises: “stupid”, “you’re stupid”, “that’s stupid”, “anyway”, “shut up, stupid.” A fast-paced exchange of name calling can result, slowing down dramatically the process of holding a meeting. At the same time, though it can annoy bystanders, such a dynamic is deemed necessary by people in the dialogue. Derric and Cedric, like brothers and bitter enemies at the same time, both members of Youth Court, are probably the foremost proponents and best examples of “bickering”. Derric explains, “sometimes I need to hammer in a point”, and “you don’t want to just leave [something you say] out there.” I slowly acclimated to the encounters and realized the young people don’t take note of them, or consider them problematic, unless they want to interject.

Moreover, while a willingness to criticize is valued, overdoing it by making repeatedly negative comments about insignificant aspects of a dialogue typically results in one being “called out”. In such cases, the young people may ask the overly critical person if they ate their “gangster grits” that morning; or, if the person is acting extremely disagreeable, they might say a person ate their “gangster oats”, or “angry food”. I witnessed only two truly intense, explosive battles develop between interlocutors and heard about another that happened while I was away.

Ultimately, it is the familiarity—the close ties—between people that prevent even the most verbally violent communicative events from becoming bitch-slapping sessions. It did not take long to recognize the importance of the “family” aspect of relationships among people at The ORG. After finding myself so disturbed and worried after one particular session of “bickering” between Cedric and Derric, I asked Derric’s cousin Darron if the episode troubled him. He responded nonchalantly, “You know, family.”

I still don’t understand how family membership is determined, but I do know once you’re in it not only does your opinion matter more but also other people are more comfortable revealing things to or in front of you they might otherwise feel embarrassed about. “It’s alright, she’s family.” Once I achieved family status, a few weeks into the research process, the young people began to speak more freely about the things at The ORG that bugged them. And after becoming “family”, I discovered that much of the play-fighting that occurs among people at The ORG acts as a test and a fortifier of close relationships.

In the family that is The ORG then, a sense of real closeness develops among people—an intimacy that allows the subtlest of bodily movements to communicate something a page of text simply could not. Moreover, in general, attending to the body successfully in social encounters with familiars, in other words getting it, contributes tremendously to a deeply felt bond among people.

HIP HOP SITE 2 – THE BODY IN COMMUNICATION

In truth, if one wants to effectively use or read the communication codes employed by the young people at The ORG my above listing of its discursive rules and regulations is inadequate for the task. Without attending to their physical presence, specifically the messages bodied by the youth, one misses a crucial dimension of every spoken word and moment of interaction with them. For example, one evening while we were riding on the subway together, a conversation between Darron and Shawn started about death in their families. Shawn was opening up about the recent passing of his girlfriend's mother. Naturally, Darron and I both appeared saddened. But having heard of death extensively at The ORG, I must admit my sadness didn't seem to run terribly deep; and, after hearing the circumstances of the end of her life, I attempted to change the topic. Darron however, remained quiet for a moment and then said, looking at Shawn, "Son, if my mom died, God help me, I'll kill myself." Shawn muttered something in response, but as my heart sank into the pit of my gut, I didn't even register what was then said. An unfamiliar crinkle in Darron's brow line and a deep yet terribly distant stare I'd never seen on the 14 year-old's face before told me he meant what he said. I ached, and I couldn't say more.

For people in various places, oriented by different cultures and belief systems, the body is a crucial site for the display of feeling or affect. I hesitate to use the concept of emotion since what I am discussing is not a wholly internal process. And, only by positioning ourselves in relation to other people in certain ways, thereby making ourselves open to receive what they bodily convey, can this dimension of communication be attended to.

In his introduction to a seminal collection of essays, *Embodiment and Experience*, Thomas Csordas directs attention to, for the cultural researcher,

the importance of looking at/from the body as “the existential ground of culture and self” (1994). He argues for a definition of the body as a “material entity” and embodiment as “an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement in the world” (12). Using the concept of embodiment, we can ground culture then. We can attend fully to the way cultural spaces are enacted, recreated, and lived by bodies.

In particular, Nick Crossley’s work helps to operationalize the project in terms of corporeal communication (1997). Integrating the body-subject ala Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jürgen Habermas’s theory of communicative action, he proposes a method to embody critical theory. Particularly useful is his explanation about the inscription and readability of subject positions—such as race, gender, class, and other culturally coded modalities of status—on bodies. He argues, “bodily markers frame communicative encounters” (31). The placement of persons in the social structure can thereby “enter into communication through the mediation of our embodiment: e.g. accent, comportment, gesture, dress, bodily attitude”, and at the same time, “evoke a corresponding bodily attitude” from others (31). In this way, and I will return to this later, complications in communication may often result from the unequal positioning of individuals in power relationships.

However, the application of Crossley’s theory to the “double bind” situation magnifies the complex multi-layered nature of communication between persons, no matter their socially ascribed or perceived level of political competence (1997:28-29). Verbal communication is accompanied by gestures and signals telling interlocutors how they should be heard and understood. However, in a double bind situation the speaker presents contradictory messages on different levels of communication, Crossley explains. Oftentimes, he argues, our bodies speak to the sincerity and deeper meaning of our words; and the implications are far ranging. First, because embodied communicative acts transmit information through multiple channels, though necessary for mutual understanding, the dynamic can effect “systematic distortions” when opposing messages are conveyed (30). In addition, because the body is a key, if not the site for the development of self, “our identity, self respect and ‘ontological security’ become bound up” with our communications (30). Therefore, on an emotional level, Crossley illustrates, when per-

sons and the positions they represent are devalued, interactions can become angry, aggressive exchanges of “bodily metacommunications” saying something different from what was originally intended (30).

Thus, when keyed in to bodily expressions, the possibility of understanding another person’s communications and underlying perspective is great. Yet, it is also increasingly dangerous for self and other as people become affectively wrapped around their statements. However, as I alluded to earlier, placed in a supportive and trusting environment or relationship, such as a “family”, people learn to multi-dimensionally read one another effectively. And at the same time, repeated successful readings gradually feed into a sense of intimacy, a realized congruence of visions on the most basic level, militating against the eruption of hurtful conflicts that can result from misinterpretation.

At The ORG then, the young people are particularly vulnerable to irruptive disaccord because of their pronounced forms of bodily communication, and even more so, because of their thorough attendance to them. In particular, I found that faces were constantly being read and used to evaluate other people and their thoughts. I remember one day in particular, when I arrived intending to ask Derric to locate a photograph for me. However, occupied the entire day with meetings, I did not have a spare moment to address him. But apparently, unknowingly, I did. Later that evening, as I was getting ready to leave having forgotten completely what I wanted to speak with him about, Derric approached and asked me, “So why’d you keep looking at me like that all day? You want to talk or something? You need something?” I was shocked. Only a few weeks before the encounter I made the decision to start focusing in my research more intently on nonverbal communication at The ORG.

Specifically, there were a number of facial expressions and a few accompanying bodily gestures I found frequently employed by the kids. And, upon discovering what they meant after taking on some of them unconsciously, I realized why I originally thought their meetings were painful and aggravating experiences. Many of the glances and stares seemed terribly harsh and even motivated by disgust. However, the subtle differences among them and their implied meanings take time to grasp.

I use here Marianne LaFrance and Nancy Henley’s definition of nonverbal communication, presented in an essay concerning the variance of “non-

verbal sensitivity” among people hierarchically arranged in power relationships:

[Nonverbal communication consists of] messages conveyed by the face, such as facial expressions and gaze behaviour; messages communicated through bodily movement (kinesics) such as gesture, posture, and orientation; messages reflected by people’s use of space (proxemics); an array of messages carried by the act of touch; and a large set of messages conveyed by vocal intonation and voice quality (paralinguistics).
(1994:288)

In particular, LaFrance and Henley explain that the functions of nonverbal modes of communicating include: an expression of feeling, a way of positioning oneself in a community, the negotiation of turns in a dialogue, a means for handling transformations in personal relationships, and a method of deciphering the truth-value of utterances.

First, because the “bitch-please-face” was remarked on and reacted to so frequently at The ORG, it deserves primary positioning in a listing of facial expressions put into practice there. A few months into fieldwork, my greatest fear changed from using out-dated slang to unknowingly wearing the bitch-please-face in front of the kids. Naturally, I often received humorous reactions when presenting it, since it was new for me; but, still conscious of my outsider status as a researcher, I was worried about what criticisms of their opinions I might convey by way of my face. The bitch-please-face, a lowered gaze often with a slight clench of the jaw, communicates disagreement, often arising after one has heard an unimpressive idea, inappropriate statement, or something unrelated to the on-going discussion (Fig.7-9).

Also employing a lowered gaze, but effecting a compression of the brow line at the same time, is a facial position suggesting one does not understand what is being said. The facial expression, which I termed the “huh? look” as I never heard the young people refer to it directly, also hints at developing sense of frustration concerning the unclear manner in which the person is presenting their ideas (Fig.10-12). Until my visage became more readable, which happened over time, I received the huh? look constantly at The ORG.

And, when one's impatience is on the verge of disappearing because she cannot comprehend what the speaker is alluding to or has decidedly lost interest in trying to decipher her statements, what is referred to as the "stink-face" can appear (Fig.12+13). With a lifting of the upper lip and nose, an exaggerated compression of the brow line, and a hard direct stare, the speaker is told, "What the hell are you trying to say?" Finally, utter disbelief can be expressed via a countenance that almost suggests sadness on the part of the holder or pity for the speaker's inability to lie skillfully (Fig.18).

Along with facial expressions, other communications are accompanied by bodily gestures and ways of physically orienting oneself in relation to other people. Presenting a stern distant gaze, with arms crossed close to the body, back slightly arched, informs onlookers a person is busy or preoccupied with other thoughts and will be displeased if forced to spend time hearing irrelevant or incomplete ideas (Fig.15,16). Speakers in turn, often use bodily gestures to respond to the reactions of others or to emphasize their own statements. The most common reactive gesture is the "one mic" side-long glance (Fig.14). The speaker lowers her head, turns (if necessary) and looks directly at the individual who interrupted her speech act to make it clear who has the floor.

The most frequently seen emphatic gestures include the grasping of a fist, pulled close to one's chest, intimating one is speaking about someone or something extremely important (Fig.19), as well as a wagging finger that appears to be repeatedly touching upon a bullet point on an invisible to-do list placed in front of the speaker. The latter tells others the speaker is offering detailed directions that need to be followed exactly as stated to complete a task correctly—a personal favorite of Monica, the organization's self-appointed mother figure. Also often presented is what I call the "yeah-um-no" hand gesture, the most fun to use but the most difficult to describe. The gesture enacted looks almost like one is applying with the four fingers of one of their hands a quick burst of pressure to a button or the head of a munchkin floating in the air approximately a foot away from her torso then quickly bringing the fingers down towards the side of the thumb. Perhaps it is a very prim, more subtle version of the "speak to the hand move" (presenting a raised palm to the other person's face) popular a decade ago. It is most often effected when one hears something of little significance or underserving of continued attention; and yet, she feels compelled to respond.

Therefore, as I have described the gestures, gaze behaviors, and facial expressions, one can imagine they are not only entertaining to witness but also pleasurable to use, if not personally gratifying. Little needs to be said, in other words, to communicate opinions and reactions. As I stated above, once one learns how to read and employ these bodily tactics, she begins to feel a level of intimacy developing between her and those with whom she regularly interacts. At The ORG, she probably can consider herself “family”. It is as if one can read minds on bodies. However, there is a larger context to the bodily positions that needs to be addressed.

Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction*, an in-depth discussion about the strategic mobilization of taste—or cultural preference—to maintain class³ distinctions, offers a way of linking the body directly back to the social structure (1984). He offers the concept of “habitus”:

[Certain dispositions] function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by will. Orienting practices practically, they embed what some would mistakenly call values [author’s emphasis] in the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body—ways of walking or blowing one’s nose, ways of eating or talking—and engage the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world. (466)

In other words, people internalize and embody their position in a class structure, Bourdieu argues. Over time, individuals are socialized, primarily through their experiences in family life and the education system, to unknowingly accept their place in the system, aiming practically for what is possible according to their status. Social beings are culturally oriented through the habitus, Bourdieu says, “towards practices or goods which befit the occupants [of a certain] position” (466). In essence, they develop a “taste for the necessary” (178). Moreover, taste as a class culture is embodied. He

³ Bourdieu defines “class” widely, including age, gender, social and other categories. However, the economic basis of all forms of capital—social, cultural or economic—used to define one’s position in the class structure is evident from his argument.

claims “indices of dispositions” are revealed in “bodily hexis, diction, bearing, and manners” (424). Social class is enacted by and readable on bodies.

Further, although he does not emphasize the dynamic throughout his text, Bourdieu suggests individuals placed lower in the social hierarchy experience their bodies as illegitimate for use in certain spheres. A sense of personal bodily devaluation arises as individuals attend to the spontaneous and/or intentional verbal and bodily responses of those placed higher in the structure. He explains, “The probability of experiencing the body with unease, embarrassment, timidity grows with the disparity between the ideal body and the real body, the dream body and the ‘looking-glass self’ reflected in the reactions of others” (1984:207). “Self-assurance” is reserved primarily for those existing at or moving towards the upper echelons of the social system’s hierarchy, he argues (253).

Bourdieu’s theory and application of it are impressive but problematic. Attempting to bring agency into structuralist social theory, Bourdieu ends up doing just the opposite. He offers instead a paradigm of society that includes a deterministic system, while implicating a dimension of our being not readily accessible to consciousness. In part resulting from the specific context in which he writes, Bourdieu over-emphasizes the existence, importance, and inaccessibility of “high” forms of culture. At the same time, his focus on the practical orientations of human beings to their lives draws attention away from the meaningful ways culture develops from, and contributes to, inspiration and innovative action.

Still, bearing in mind both its contributions and problematic assumptions, Bourdieu’s theoretical framework helps to conceptualize the structural and cultural dimensions of the way young people at The ORG communicate. Essentially, considering their home, school, and street lives, it is impractical for the young people to speak out and be overtly communicative with their bodies. At home (if they have one⁴), many of these young people often are ignored or chastised for expressing strong opinions. Cedric has opened up on more than one occasion, telling everyone at The ORG how his grandmother and multiple parents⁵ either have made conscious decisions not to

⁴ A third of the kids currently working at The ORG have lived in or are living in shelters.

⁵ After his mother and father were incarcerated, Cedric was shifted from foster home to foster home, and was subsequently adopted.

hear him or have encouraged him to keep criticisms to himself. Moreover, at school, Monica and other kids often complain, teachers and administrators seem more concerned with keeping the number of students present each day at high to moderate levels than teaching or expressing concern about the academic abilities and personal ambitions of students. On a more basic level, the kids daily move through an educational system that doesn't provide them with the mental resources to feel capable of offering intelligent commentary about anything.

Finally, taking into consideration how they are constantly surveilled—asked repeatedly for a show of ID in their own neighborhood—and harassed by policemen on the streets for the most unbelievable reasons⁶, if offered at all, one could not reasonably conclude that the young people of the South Bronx would feel comfortable in their community expressing their thoughts and opinions in front of others. Considering their unambiguously devalued position in social space, according to Bourdieu's framework, each young person's habitus—as an accumulation of their past experiences at home and in school—should instruct them to say nothing, “consenting to be what they have to be”, as it is highly improbable it would make a difference (1984:471). Therefore, how can they feel legitimately capable of overtly political speech and action? We have to look for the source of their passion to speak and motivation to act elsewhere.

Seeing-a-Body-Like-One's-Body in the Terrain of Hip Hop Visual Culture

The young people at The ORG unabashedly proclaim to live, and serve those living, the “hip hop lifestyle”. What the lifestyle is composed of is a question they don't ask, however. And, they offer few clear answers when challenged. “I don't know—like clothing, the way people wear their clothes, um, the way they talk, the way they think”, Derric offers when pressed. I argue, believing

⁶ Cedric told me about an incident in which his cousin, after “sucking his teeth” in front of a police officer, was pulled out of a convenient store, interrogated about his reasons for being there, and told to return to his home (located about a mile away). In addition, during the first few months The ORG was holding youth courts, partially funded by the mayor's office, all of the staff members were put under surveillance, I was told by the young people. Specifically, pictures were taken of them by the police. Shots were taken of them giving each other “pounds” (hitting fist to fist), hugging, and walking to the train station. And regularly, police officers would come into the building and accuse them of employing gang members, which they claim was evidenced by their hand gestures (interpreted as “throwing up gang signs”).

themselves to be a part of HIP HOP, or the now (audio)visual commodity culture, they are not only inspired to speak and act, but also by naming their ways of living “hip hop” they are given a sense of validation personally and politically. Participating in a “community of sentiment”, collectively enjoying and attending to mass-mediated presentations of their people and culture, the youth are empowered to react to the aspects of their existence in a critical and outspoken way (Appadurai 1996:8). On one level, the audiovisual display of HIP HOP tells them: your ability to speak is your power; your strength and your credibility to criticize come from your experience; your youthfulness is an asset; and, your blackness is admired⁷. Gathered from a series of group discussions, the aesthetics of HIP HOP music—what makes HIP HOP “good”—according to the young people include: “just getting stuff off your chest”, speaking “from your soul” and about “the way you feel”, telling “the truth”. “It’s what we went through”, they say.

And, there are a number of reasons why they find themselves resonant with HIP HOP’s images and messages, to the extent that it mobilizes them. “Mobilize is the key word”, states Cedric. On the most basic level, young people everywhere want to belong, and the mass media act as resource for the project. Youth seek out ways to define identity⁸, as a “sense of inclusion in (or exclusion) from a range of social roles and ways of being, both ‘real’ (those derived from lived experience) and ‘imagined’ (those encountered in realms beyond the everyday: tales, religious epics, mass media, etc.)”, Mark Liechty elaborates, building off Appadurai’s argument about the role of the social imagination in a global context (1995:167). Hip hop can be considered a massive imagined collectivity if not an actual community.

Moreover, because hip hop culture first developed in the South Bronx according to many, those living there can consider themselves easily a part of hip hop as a lived collectivity. The young people at The ORG have encountered “on the block”, or on the streets of their own neighborhood: famous rappers before they became celebrities, and occasionally after; up-and-com-

⁷ On another level, HIP HOP tells them you need “money, power, and respect”, “tits and ass”, “ice and bitches”, and this is a point I will return to later.

⁸ Liechty offers the definition in an excellent and highly-recommended study on how youth in Kathmandu, Nepal access modernity through international media. It should be noted that Liechty stresses the processual nature of identity. Identities are not singular, stable, or necessarily consistent and logical, he argues. Moreover, he explains, having an identity does not require the actualization of it in lived social experience.

ing rappers claiming to have secured record deals; and, the founding fathers of the genre, e.g. Afrika Bambaataa. Older members of the community also often remember out loud going to the infamous block parties often discussed in hip hop history texts. The Bronx is hip hop's original home.

And so, they take pride in a homegrown now pop cultural form that is respected and "real", a culture people live and die for (e.g. Biggie Smalls, Tupac Shakur, et al.). They often quote rappers and admire celebrity figures in the HIP HOP community for working hard "in the business" and having the courage to offer for mass-consumption "the Truth" when they can. "People are gonna find out what's happening [here]." "It's got the politicians scared," they argue. Clearly, *the Glam Factor* has much to do with why the young people at The ORG frequently identify themselves as "hip hop". Seeing a culture that was created in their own community rise to the pinnacle of popular cultural status—become a "worldwide phenomenon" they say—gives hip hop ways of being, in particular those aspects of the culture presented in the imagery (fashion, ways of dress, facial expressions, gestures), authority. It's "cool", and we want to "floss"⁹, or be stylish, they explain.

Moreover, they bodily react to and thus, fully physically participate on some level in HIP HOP. The aesthetic and the sound of hip hop itself encourage bodily interaction through dance, simple head nodding, or the mimicking of the gestures of HIP HOP artists while mouthing lyrics. Terrah recalls HIP HOP videos by the particular moves of the artists in them. In addition, the fact that HIP HOP stars are often young and Black, positioning their bodies in familiar ways, encourages and fosters an intimacy with the form for the young people. Elizabeth Alexander, in her essay about the reactions of Black people to the Rodney King videos, confronts the role of "practical memory" in witnessing acts of televised violence (1995:84). "Bodily experience", she argues, "comes to reside in the flesh as forms of memory reactivated and articulated at moments of collective spectatorship" (84). Embodied memories of discrimination and shared narratives among Black people of their history of slavery and continued oppression make acts of

⁹ "Flossing", or wearing stylish name brand clothes such as Enyce, Diesel, and Ecco, is definitely a more common practice among the young people than "bling-blinging", which includes wearing (faux) diamonds and other fancy jewelry. The latter is difficult for them to achieve and would be dangerous in their community.

witnessing violence inflicted on their people intense, even traumatic, Alexander suggests. Her framework can be stretched to include other subordinated peoples and moving images of various acts.

Seeing people like them, young like them and Black¹⁰ like them—talking and acting in all too familiar ways—in HIP HOP, the kids at The ORG are drawn close to those presented in the images, almost as if blending their selves through their bodies with the ones portrayed. A certain level of trust develops and is maintained between them and the HIP HOP star. Of course, they say, they'd love to see Puffy or Jay-Z become Mayor of New York and might actually want to vote if they could see those names on the ballot. And they understand if some rappers are "afraid to say what they want to say," because "hey, they're not going to talk about the people helping them get rich." Of course not. Our Black sisters? "Shit, I'd put on a bra and panties and dance around for a million dollars," claims Cedric.

One's-Body-Seen-by-the-Other: Consequences of the Eye-Burn

People do not evaluate themselves in terms of mass-mediated imagery alone, of course, or not yet. Our conception of ourselves is also produced in social encounters. The way people react to us—suggesting the way they see us—tells us about ourselves. An experience of the body itself, body-image according to Paul Schilder's theory is the "interrelation of the body sensing the world, and the body sensing itself through sensing the world" (Ferguson 1997:21). Never fully formed, a "complex of feelings", body-image is perception of one's own body, not an act of consciousness or tactile sense, but both—or somewhere in between suggests Schilder's complex, confusing, but still evocative psychoanalytical phenomenological theory (21). In essence, other people constantly contribute to the way one perceives the self, whether she is conscious of the process or not; and, multi-layered messages conveyed during interactions with others feed into the embodied dynamic.

Inter/intrapersonal communication is key.

Once again, Crossley helps us operationalize and investigate a complex theoretical paradigm (1995). Integrating the "body techniques" of Marcel

¹⁰ This is a complicated issue because although most of the young people at The ORG identify themselves as Black, others might not find the categorization appropriate.

Mauss, Merleau-Ponty's concept of "intercorporeality", and a radical reading of Erving Goffman's *Relations in Public*, Crossley discusses the perceptual coordination of embodied social interaction (135). According to Marcel Mauss, in short, people learn over time, or culturally acquire, efficient technical ways of moving their bodies to navigate the social landscape called body techniques. Recall Bourdieu's very practical habitus and the communicative bodies I discussed earlier. Crossley argues that while attentive to history and biography, Mauss's conceptualization is too abstract; and, it fails to address the socio-temporal nature and adaptive potential of the movements. Therefore, Mauss assumes the stability of body techniques through time and space, ignoring how innovative social beings actively deploy and transform them, orienting their usage to existential conditions. Conceptually placing subjects in Goffman's "interaction order", or ordered social spaces with rules and conventions people are expected to acknowledge, respect, and reproduce, Crossley shows how Mauss's body techniques are transformed into "competences and effective action", responsive and reactive to the demands of particular situations (135).

Crossley expands on Goffman's description of "situational accommodation" to illustrate the process (1995:137). To maintain "micro-orders" by effectively coordinating participation in shared spaces, members of society often unconsciously, or almost instinctually, follow certain rituals and rules, according to Goffman (138). The process is dependent on perception of other people's "intentions, dispositions, and involvements" (138). People attend to the verbal and bodily cues others present and offer their own to ensure the smooth flow of social life. Moreover, according to Goffman, the order acted within and recreated is not only a practical but also a moral one. Therefore, identity, or the "selfhood and moral worth" of social beings, is on the line—constantly put forth, called into question, judged, and/or reaffirmed (139). On a number of levels intersubjectivity then, is central to the process of orderly social existence, Crossley argues. People participate in shared spaces consistently looking to the actions and reactions of others to maintain order, gain acceptance, and come to know themselves.

Thus, the public availability of the subjective states of social beings is required to some extent. Crossley believes Merleau-Ponty's concept of intercorporeality is particularly helpful for attending to the role of the body in the maintenance and reproduction of micro-orders. Refusing the ontological

distinction between mind and body, Merleau-Ponty suggests that “mental predicates” exist as “publicly verifiable aspects of embodied conduct or behavior”, Crossley explains (1995:143). Therefore, subjectivity refers not to an internal state (a connotation of emotionality) but is publicly available and perceptible on the body of human beings. As such, “understanding” between people is an “embodied, performative ability”, Crossley says (143). Our bodies speak our minds; and, our bodies connect and intermingle in space through our vision to help us understand one another (cf. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of “the intertwining” or “chiasm”; Crossley 1997:26-27). And so, Crossley’s phenomenological recasting of Goffman’s argument, by foregrounding the primacy of the body and perception in social interaction and the production of social roles and identities in its midst, helps the ethnographic researcher examine how people communicate to others how they see them and the manner in which those others react and at times, consciously perform in reaction.

Outsiders, or people living outside of the neighborhood and those unfamiliar with the work conducted by the young people on a daily basis, frequently visit The ORG. Journalists and more often “the funders”, or representatives of foundations providing monetary resources to organizations, come to see what the young people do. It might be better to say they come and monitor the young people, as in truth, they don’t attentively converse with them or try to understand their perspectives, who they are, and what motivates them, when they are visiting. When they do approach the youth, it is often with the intent to gather specific types of information from and/or about them rather than with an active willingness to know them as people. They seem to arrive with a limiting frame through which they view the kids—everything else is outside of it—invisible or not worthy of continued attention.

However, it was only until I found myself under the downward gaze of the funder that the situation became intelligible fully. After my nauseating experience, I returned to my fieldnotes and read about odd things I had witnessed but originally thought insignificant. Moreover, I became much more attentive to funder-youth interactions. I started watching how funders talk with them, look at them, or sometimes avoid them or their eyes, and the actions the young people take in response.

Three months into observation, I arrived late for an afternoon meeting. I was to be introduced to a representative from an organization interested in funding a hip hop event The ORG is planning. Tamela, the executive director¹¹, applied for a grant from the organization and was anxious to have the funder meet the researcher and volunteer¹² from Yale working on the public relations material for the event. To say the least, I was anything but articulate when I finally met the woman. Before sitting down to talk with her, an older white woman maybe in her late forties, I accidentally stepped into the doorway of the office in which she was interviewing Cedric. As she looked, I thought at that moment, admiringly up at him standing before her, he spoke about his incarcerated mother, about his life in foster homes, the shooting of his sister by local policemen, and the “strength” he gained from these experiences. In response, the woman probed and prodded him on to speak more about his mother.

Then, looking periodically at Cedric, before I forced myself to walk into an adjacent room—it was supposed to be a private meeting—my stomach started to turn and knot as if I was in the hospital. He looked uncomfortable, maybe even in pain. Forcing a chuckle here and there, sweat building on his forehead, his body weaving back and forth, arms dangling along the sides of his torso, Cedric nervously yet smilingly spoke of—glancing over at me with a look of embarrassment or perhaps emasculation—the details of his sister’s murder and his life before age 16 (20 at the time of interview). What I heard at that moment was quite different from what usually issues from his mouth: gloating about the number of his referrals placed back into the system (1 as of March 2002); talking about the sense of empowerment he gained when marching at the Amadu Diallo rally; admitting how excited he was when an “incredible five [people]” showed up to a tenant organizing meeting; offering hilarious stories about his life “down south” where he learned that family life in a “white-washed” suburb “is anything but nor-

¹¹ Tamela, the executive director, is 27 years old. And so, while she substantially influences the maintenance and management of The ORG through her position, she does not have voting rights because she is over the age of 21. She spends most of her time at the organization writing grants.

¹² According to the informal rules of the organization, I was required to work on a project with the young people while observing at The ORG. I volunteered to help them organize, in particular create publicity materials for, a 2-day membership-building event that revolves around hip hop culture. This gave me ample opportunity to informally chat with the young people about hip hop culture.

mal”; and, repeatedly complaining about “how wrong” and frustrating it is when his grandmother calls his home and asks to speak to “my daughter” or “my grandson” (his brother), meaning anyone but him. Instead, Cedric talked about the pain and suffering of losing his mother and then sister and about how hard it is to be black and young in America “fighting for change.” I was speechless, in disbelief. I know he’s a “survivor”, as he’s remarked before, but I would not presume his perseverance and determination to help others come from hurt alone.

Perusing through my fieldnotes from the beginning stages of my project, I found there had been several instances in which funders visited The ORG leaving me feeling as though the kids had been disparaged somehow. During most site visits, the funders arrive and go directly to Tamela’s office upstairs to meet with her and gather all the necessary “organizational” or business information for their reports. Then they normally go on sight-seeing tours of the neighborhood with a few of the kids, what Monica sarcastically calls the viewing of “our hopes and dreams”. After the walk, which unfortunately I didn’t have the opportunity to observe, most funders are either formally introduced to the rest of the young people as a collective in the downstairs space or allowed to mull around and chat freely. The former is more common. Tamela always reminds Cedric and Derric not to “start bickering in front of the funders” and encourages everyone else to “ask questions!” about the fund-granting process during the group meeting. However, the young people usually just shut down.

There was one occasion I remember well, in spite of its typicality, when two young women came to visit from a large well-known foundation in New York City. Kimberlei, the older of the two case managers, prepared a pasta dish for everyone to eat during the group session. The two funders took seats next to one another in a corner of the room, after the neighborhood tour. Across from and next to them, the young people were positioned stiffly on metal folding chairs. The semi-circle seating arrangement, common for group meetings, is normally conducive to discussion. After screening a film, having scarfed down their food, kids spoke with kids, while the funders silently nibbled at their noodles. A Q&A session was supposed to commence. But, after everyone gave brief self-introductions—name, position, and current projects—a hush fell.

I looked around and noticed how expressionless were the faces of the young people. Some looked down at their empty plates, while others seemed to zone out completely, staring at the wall or floor. The funders looked bored one moment, glancing over at the wall clock, intimidated or worried the next, holding their arms close to their bodies, checking the safe positioning of their belongings next to their chairs. Cierra, the poet and most outspoken, finally asked seriously, "So are you guys gonna fund us?" Naturally, placed in an already uncomfortable position, one of the women offered a nervous laugh and explained she couldn't answer because it was not her decision. Back to silence. The other woman looked at her watch then shuffled through papers in her lap. Tamela then told the funders they could ask questions, too, "of course". After a short pause, one of them asked what new programs the kids were working on, exaggeratedly nodding with interest. A few of the young people proceeded to explain their projects; but, they offered descriptions similar to or the same as the summaries they offered in their introductions.

A few weeks after, another funder showed up, representing another well-known New York City foundation. He planned to stay for the Black History Month Poetry Cafe the kids organized for the day. I was painting a banner outside with Monica and her visiting friend when the man slowly lurched over and started to watch us work. I felt uneasy in the stranger's presence, noticing Monica's enthusiasm for throwing paint on the fabric dwindle. He didn't introduce himself; and, he hovered for a few minutes behind us, saying "Oh wow, that's cool", "You're an artist", to Monica every now and then. Honestly, the painting was a disaster. Monica and I were aware of the mess we were left with as we tried to spraypaint and toss fluorescent tempera onto a black cloth that was flapping vigorously in the wind and getting caught on nails in the fence to which it was attached only partially. We realized it would probably become a tablecloth later that day, despite our intention to create a beautiful background for the poetry reading. But still we were having fun. The man's comments were a failed attempt at starting a conversation with Monica, and they obviously were not genuine. Moreover, his face wearing a bit of smirk said nothing to militate against our presumption. It was literally small talk.

Later, while I was helping Derric work on a flyer layout on the computer, the man appeared again, popping up out of nowhere. He seated himself

next to Derric and said nothing for a few minutes. He looked at Derric, looked at me, and looked away. After a moment, staring at the monitor, he asked, "What are you guys doing?" Derric muttered, "A flyer." It was quiet another 5 minutes, until he left the room.

In short, the strange wall-crawling man made many of the young people feel uncomfortable in their skin, noticeably. Mia's comment earlier in the day about "using him for his connections" didn't improve the situation. More than a month a half later, trying to grasp how the funder site visit experience affected the young people, I asked Derric about the last episode in particular. He replied, "Well, that guy's just weird." But, as I inquired about funder, after funder, he offered: "Well, they were just suspicious acting" or "Oh yeah, she was weird" or "He's strange." He didn't offer elaborate descriptions, which is not unusual for Derric; but he said enough. I then proceeded to interrogate Cedric, who became my special informant over time, about the funder experience. When I brought up the strange man, he perked up, "Oh Mr. Dry Eyes?":

Yeah, he's weird. I wish you knew what I was thinking that day, if you could've just read my mind. (laughing) He was asking me all these questions, you know, trying to find out about my referrals and shit, what they've done, or they did, or whatever. And I mean, I was like no! But what the, I mean he kept going on, more questions and questions. That shit is confidential, you know what I mean. What did he want me to do, like break open my files or something... I don't know what he wanted but, I was finally like, you know, what are you looking for? What exactly are you looking for? Tell me, you know.

(from a phone conversation with Cedric,
constructed from my notes)

Cedric did not expand further on the incident, and I didn't want to press the issue too far.

I however, did want to hear his thoughts about the interview with the woman I discussed above; and so, I eagerly inquired. "Yeah, I know she was weird. From a church, you know," Cedric wanted to offer as a full answer to

my question. "Well yeah but, Cedric, you looked a little uncomfortable you know? Sweating all over..." I said laughing. "Yeah I know," he replied. I told him how upset and degraded I felt after my own encounter with the woman. After a long pause, he opened up, "Well, yeah, I mean, sometimes it's like I have to, you know, um, pimp myself, *whore* myself, you know. You just learn that organizing. But I just started doing it now."

Later, he added, "Sometimes, it's like, kind of patronizing, you know what I mean, [the funders] come in here, and they pat us on our heads. They pat us on our heads, thinking, 'Hey, that's one of them good little niggers', it's kind of bad, yeah, insulting." I offered an opinion, however at a loss for words I felt, realizing it was appropriate if not necessary for me to do so in response. "You know, sometimes we just have to get up there and tell our little stories," Cedric explained. "I guess, they like to see youth at the front lines," Cedric offered, echoing a comment I often heard from Derric. We chatted for another 20 minutes, and then remembering something, Cedric told me about a conference during which a funder approached him and commenting on his sister's death said, "Maybe it was for the best." "She was carrying a gun after all," the man explained. "Everyone had to hold me back, you know what I mean," Cedric explained. I knew. A bitch-please-face would not be sufficient.

What explanations I can offer, without having talked individually with all the funders¹³, about why the kids at The ORG allow themselves to suffer, and behaviorally submit to, unprofessional, depersonalizing and at times, inhumane treatment by funders, include the power dynamics of social interaction and the public visual regime. On the one hand, the young people are pressured into obedience and performance under the dominating gaze of site visitors as a result of their subordinate position as staff members of a unique youth-led organization precariously entering its next fiscal year with limited funds. They are seeking the capital necessary to maintain The ORG and save their jobs. Tamela and the kids often discuss the details of the economic and political situation in which the organization finds itself. And so, while the youth are capable of talking about the business concerns of The

¹³ However, I did have the opportunity during a job interview to speak with the executive director of a major New York foundation, who requested to be left unnamed, about the way youth are treated by site visitors, in particular their overt refusal to speak with the young people about anything but personal matters. He said, "It's a problem." He offered nothing more.

ORG as well as other matters relevant to their funding problems and political orientation, they feel ill-qualified to do so because of the way outsiders position themselves in relation to them by words and actions.

Behind the podium at conferences and other large events, the young people willingly and effectively talk about what The ORG does and their goals for the future. However, when personally interacting with funders, they mute themselves and/or reveal aspects of themselves about which the funders seem pleased to hear. Not only are they, on some level, prohibited to verbally expand on their work, but also they are disallowed the opportunity to present themselves as whole people. Moreover, the visitors make little attempt to put them at ease, to let them feel as though they exist in a position to speak.

In her essay, "The existential bases of power relationships: the gender role case," Jean Lipmann-Bleumann helps illustrate how it is not always structures then, or internalized cultural frameworks, that remind people of their place in the social structure, as Bourdieu's theory suggests; oftentimes, it is people acting and actively consciously reacting to one another in shared spaces (1994). All social beings, particularly those in subordinate positions, experience at some time a sense of weakness and feel incapable of controlling the path of their lives, specifically when confronting the forceful presence of those around them with the power to affect their existence. Existentially insecure, people are forced to draw upon whatever they believe gives them the credibility to speak and act while letting others determine these credentials of practice at the same moment. She argues, "the process by which we engage, rebalance and maintain our position in power relationships depends on the resources we are able to develop and legitimate in the eyes of those with whom we must negotiate [my emphasis]" (115). Moreover, it is frequently those in superior positions who set the boundaries of acceptable behavior. "Demands of the dominant party usually create a framework that delineates how we must indicate our compliance," Lipmann-Bleumann elaborates. Simultaneously then, a sense of reassurance and discomfort arise as people try to smoothly move through social space.

As social beings attempt to comfortably process and maintain the micro-order of social interactions then, returning to Crossley's reading of Goffman, people perceive the dispositions of others and verbally and bodily respond. However, because of power differentials, exposed in every commu-

nicative act, people in subordinate positions are predisposed to submit to the behavioral indicators others provide. Moreover, the body/self images of those at the bottom of the power hierarchy are transformed disproportionately in social encounters. Perhaps, Bourdieu was correct in stating that self-assurance is a privilege.

On another level, outsiders also come in with limiting schizoid frames through which they see the young people at The ORG. Living lives infiltrated by mass media imagery, many people today enter social spaces and interactions with substantial perceptual baggage. Entering The ORG, having been introduced repeatedly to inner-city Black youth not only through personal but also (academic and pop) discursive and televisual existence, I knew what preconceptions might be locked away in the back of my brain, ready to implode into my viewing of their lives. I had to confront the frames with which I had been taught to look at these people every time I heard them boisterously conversing about their experiences with gangs, street “business,” drugs, sex, teen pregnancy, and police brutality. After all, that’s what these kids do—gang-bang, shoot each other, sell drugs, smoke weed, drink 40s, fuck, have babies at 13, and get beat up by the police, right? No, in short. That’s in the rap videos, and they talk about these things sometimes; but, it is not how they live. And it was clear I was not the only outsider who entered The ORG with such images floating around in my head; unfortunately, I was one of few people who chose to interrogate the meaning and reality behind them.

In Hal Foster’s *Vision and Visuality*, a collection of short essays in visual theory, both Jacqueline Rose and Rosalind Krauss individually offer useful methods of conceptualizing the problematic nature of visuality, the social aspects of sight (Krauss 1988; Rose 1988). In “The im/pulse to see,” Krauss’s emphasis of the role of the unconscious in seeing is problematic because of its placement in a psychoanalytical framework, which Rose rebukes in her essay¹⁴; but Krauss’s discussion of a pulse, or “the beat of desire,” living in vision is interesting (Krauss 1988:62). Within the eroticized eye is located the beat, she argues, the movement of “a desire that makes and loses its object in one and the same gesture, a gesture that is continually losing what it has

¹⁴ Rose rejects in particular its assumption of an innocent unconscious juxtaposed by a unitary ego and its emphasis on sexuality, to the disregard of gender and race.

found because it has only found what it has already lost" (62). In essence, simplifying her argument a great deal, our desires, our (erotic) fantasies of the things we will to see, enter into our perception, de-forming and restructuring what is before our eyes.

Further, Rose implicates the "psychic economy" intertwined with the desire to see; and, in particular, she argues for the introduction of racial politics into considerations of visibility (1988:120). The employment of racial and sexual tropes in visual space makes the relationship between identity and representation increasingly complex, she explains (cf. Phelan 1993). In other words, visual representations of race and gender are problematic for groups seeking—read desiring—ways to construct identity and encouraging visibility for the purposes of enfranchisement and political mobilization.

And so, keeping in mind the racial/sexual politics of visual space and the force of desire in vision, I argue, although, empowering the social implications of their supposed representation in HIP HOP visual commodity culture are extremely problematic for the young people at The ORG personally and politically. The HIP HOP display affects the way people view them and expect them to act; and, in turn, by performing accordingly, the self-images of the young people and their ability to present themselves wholly are both altered for the worse. The situation is best evident when we consider HIP HOP's long and continued reliance on the limited and sensationalized presentational tropes of gangster-ism and ghetto-ism, now combined frequently with bling-bling-ism.

The belief, on the part of the kids, that they might find themselves presented and accounted for worldwide in HIP HOP is troubling. Moreover, the assumption, on the part of academic and popular commentators, that HIP HOP could be attended to as a way of understanding the local and political existence of young people or a means of politically mobilizing them is wrong-headed. As we are exposed to a continued barrage of images of diamond-studded thugs and those video ho's we just can't seem to get enough of, burning behind our eyeballs is the impulse to see the young people at The ORG as one-dimensional ghetto superstars, criminals and victims of the hood lifestyle—anything but responsible and self-educated leaders of a community organization working to make the Bronx a safe and comfortable place to live.

Even if outsiders enter The ORG without having viewed a HIP HOP video on MTV, hearing a Jay-Z track on HOT 97, or flipping through the pages of Source Magazine, the major news outlets tend to keep the populace informed about what's wrong with, or visually titillating in, HIP HOP. Moreover, The ORG has had substantial representation for a youth organization in the news media over the past 8 years, often described as a hip hop focused organization. In fact, a national newspaper published a rather stimulating piece on The ORG over a year ago, illustrating the reductive tropes used to present the kids to the literate public.

Allowed to observe a hearing of youth court, the reporter wrote a patronizing article about the HIP HOP criminals that come through the organization on a regular basis, he surmises. Offering no context to the lives of the young people other than their wearing of "baseball caps and do-rags" or a "crown of cornrows", he proceeds to explain how the "youngsters" are enacting justice in their community "without grown-ups." He tells of one youth "recently out of jail on a charge of attempted murder," a female with "searing eyes and the memory of juvenile jail still fresh in her mind," another "convicted of stabbing a girl," and a young person charged with "graffiti writing and weapons possession" who "rattles off names of gangs he has a 'beef' with in school." Finally, he quotes a researcher from a national organization to describe the purpose and effectiveness of the community justice program.

The reporter chooses not to cite the opinions of any of the young people concerning their own project. Furthermore, he decontextualizes The ORG by not only forgetting to describe their neighborhood but also not elaborating on the nature of the charges that are often brought against the youth¹⁵ and thus, the problematic juvenile justice system of New York and the U.S. Instead, he relies in his piece on a sensational frame that feeds off what people may already think about HIP HOP, the South Bronx, and black youth.

¹⁵ In particular, I observed a number of cases in which possession of a weapon or graffiti paraphernalia, amounted to carrying a screwdriver, pen, or pencil. The majority of cases I observed dealt with graffiti or assault charges.

Hip Hop vs. Hip Hop Lifeways: Explanations

There exists a harmful disconnect between HIP HOP, an (audio)visual commodity “culture” and a set of proposed lifestyles, and lived hip hop culture, a set of grounded lifeways and a meaningful dimension of social existence. As a creative and innovative culture, hip hop gives definition and significance to the young people’s daily lives: easing their frustrations, soothing their nerves, and comforting their bodies. The work they do and the lives they lead become more fulfilling and enjoyable; and, an immobilizing practicality is overcome by motivation, determination, and vision. But when their culture becomes simplified and commodified, made available for mass consumption, and imagistically deployed via suffocating tropes, the quotidian—the realm in which the young people exist—is left behind. A luscious gloss envelops narrow presentations of their culture as their local existence recedes forever into invisibility. The experience that hip hop emphasizes and was born out of—an oppressive experience suffered terribly yet on some level personally overcome creatively and actively—disappears. A flat screen offers viewers a sexy “ghetto” filled with entertaining villains and other characters—less the people that live, work, and die in the real ghettoes everyday.

The young people, at first excited and proud, slowly begin to feel alienated from a culture they thought was their own but now cannot truly claim, cannot influence, cannot personally access. As it drifts into hyperreality, now accessible primarily through the consumption of objects and moving pictures and faraway sounds, HIP HOP takes the spotlight while the people try to do something on the ground despite feeling abandoned, yet again. HIP HOP is looked to for leadership and political mobilization while the young people are overlooked casually or devalued and treated with low expectations. Their capacity for political action and personal transformation is denied—actively taken from them. And HIP HOP takes the full blame for the misogyny, violence, and materialism developing in their communities while real social problems and governmental neglect are ignored.

Hip Hop vs. Hip Hop Lifeways: Reconnecting

...If you look around, like hip hop—it actually started in the Bronx, and if you look at the Bronx today, I mean, it’s

shitty. I mean, they're ain't nothin' in the Bronx. How they gonna have like a hip hop museum and it's not even in the Bronx, where, you know, hip hop first started? It's like they have a lot of hip hop clubs in Manhattan, and hip hop this, hip hop that; but there's no hip hop in the Bronx.

— Monica (personal interview)

I look at hip hop as a business, and in the business—in a business—you do what the consumer wants. And if the consumer wants you to talk about ice and bitches, that's what you're gonna do.

— from personal interview with Derric, 18 years old,
a self-proclaimed “intellectual”, raised by his
mother in the Bronx, and who listens to R&B,
not hip hop, he says

Academic and popular cultural criticism and commentary contribute to the suppressive dynamic. Certain older members of the black community—the “civil rights generation” young people hear so much about but seldom directly and personally from in an open, attentive way—slight the culture of the youth, also seeing it through a narrowing lens. In the meantime, many academics too, remove themselves from political activity (discursive or physical) and aestheticize the culture, validating the art form while denying the ugly substance lurking beneath it. Humanism is replaced by aestheticism rather than integrated. Attending to its complex but surface codes, lacking faith in the true artistic potential of hip hop, commentators refuse its potential to add to life and offer penetrating questions about, and pointed readings of, a bitter existence.

The commercialized image comes to dictate the frame.

In the beautiful glamour box, the youth find a timeless HIP HOP removed from the boring, unsightly particularities of circumstance, allowing them to escape to the world of fantasy, a place of pleasure and only metaphorical pain. The imagination shrinks as an appetite for illusion grows—no longer are they allowed to dream anything but televised images. Their role models once inspiring individuals become apathetic infallible gods they can only suffer trying to emulate. But not to worry, fulfillment

through collective action is replaced by a satisfaction achieved through private consumption. They can buy their daily rebellion in pretty packages. But do they know who they are? Their lived culture offers an answer, but they can't always hear it. In fact, perhaps the invisibility of their imperfect humanity, their perpetually struggling impoverished human existence, is part of HIP HOP's mass-consumed "flava". Altering their lives in small doses over the long term, juxtaposed against a filmed landscape of jeweled celebrities who left poverty at the blink of an eye, the young people seem rather boring and destined for disappointment.

Outro

The hip hop thing—can help us or hurt us... [it] would help if artists get into politics, if they're mobilizing, getting the community to start thinking and doing something, you know what I mean, because they're people who, you know, are on TV everyday, and not only because they're on TV, but because it's hip hop and everyone loves it... And it might hurt us because not a lot of these artists are talking about true issues, a lot of them move up and out of the community, and, I guess, 'cause they see this as the definition of success... Not to mention the downgrading of our women, of ourselves, and shit like that [in hip hop].

—from personal interview with Cedric, Bronx-born,
20 years-old, future musician/politician

After 5 months of intense observant-participant hanging-out with the young people at The ORG, I found hip hop: a multiplicity of lifeways, a way of speaking and acting that was thoroughly embodied, expressive, participative, performative, and adaptive. They communicated and connected with one another through their bodily gestures and facial expressions, creating and maintaining an intimate space in which to speak and act as people with ideas and opinions that are respected and valued. At the same time, while it wasn't HIP HOP, the visual commodity culture, or the scintillating HIP

HOP lifestyle I peer into on BET every now and then, I discovered this hip hop exists in a complex feed-back relationship with that HIP HOP, at times empowering, other times illusion-ing.

On the one hand, seeing representatives of aspects or metonymic versions of their own lifeways within a popular widely-media-accessible imagistic sphere, the young people at the organization are given a sense of legitimacy, specifically in relation to their bodied presence and right to speak; and thus, their communicative ability, bodily and verbally, in social encounters is validated on some level. Personal conflict and a political identity problematic arise however, when in both physical and discursive spaces the young people are seen according to stereotypical tropes and thereby, disregarded completely as capable contributors to intelligent discussion. In response, during interpersonal interactions with outsiders, the youth are forced to enter a process of bodily withholding, self-muting essentially. On these occasions then, the young people experiences themselves, their bodies, as marked. Valued in one sphere, stigmatized in another. If they choose to instead perform while interacting with outsiders — those keyed into lifestyles rather than lifeways — the youth find themselves unable to express their personhood and the many dimensions of their real lives. A dramatically diminished sense of personal worth and self may arise making it extremely difficult for them to will to communicate further. Silence.

APPENDIX



Fig. 7 Nas



Fig. 8 Jaguar



Fig. 9 Cadillac Tah



Fig. 10 Masta Ace



Fig. 11 Talib Kweli



Fig. 12 Miracle



Fig. 13 Mystikal



Fig. 14 Eastwood

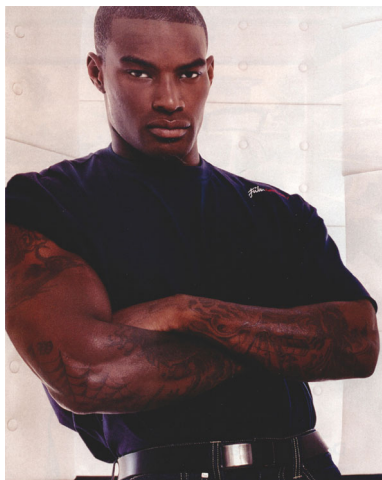


Fig. 15 Tyson



Fig. 16 Ms. Jade



Fig. 17 Petey Pablo



Fig. 18 Prodigy of Mobb Deep



Fig. 19 Cadillac Tah?

IMAGE CREDITS

- Fig. 7 (rapper) Nas, in *Source*, February 2002.
 Fig. 8 (rapper) Jaguar, in *Source*, April 2002.
 Fig. 9 (rapper) Cadillac Tah, in *Source*, January 2002.
 Fig. 10 (rapper) Masta Ace, in *Urb*, October 2001.
 Fig. 11 (rapper) Talib Kweli, in *Source*, January 2002.
 Fig. 12 (rapper) Miracle in *Source*, February 2002.
 Fig. 13 (rapper) Mystikal, in *Source*, January 2002.
 Fig. 14 (rapper) Eastwood, in *XXL*, May 2002.
 Fig. 15 (model) Tyson, in *Source*, April 2002.
 Fig. 16 (rapper) Ms. Jade, in *Source*, April 2002.
 Fig. 17 (rapper) Petey Pablo, in *Source*, January 2002.
 Fig. 18 (rapper) Prodigy in *Source*, January 2002.
 Fig. 19 (rapper) Cadillac Tah, in *Source*, December 2001.

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