



AFFILIATING WITH RAP MUSIC: POLITICAL RAP OR GANGSTA RAP?

David L. CALDWELL*

Abstract

Following the linguistic theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), for this paper, I will describe the interpersonal meanings expressed in the lyrics of political rap and gangsta rap. From SFL, I will apply Appraisal to a small corpus of 10 rap songs, comparing 5 political rap songs with 5 gangsta rap songs. Appraisal is a linguistic analytical framework designed to identify evaluation in language. Ultimately, I aim to apply Appraisal so as to describe the ways in which both political rap and gangsta rap actually 'promote' their respective themes, and in turn, hypothesise why it is that a white, suburban, middle-class youth audience seeks to affiliate with gangsta rap rather than political rap.

Keywords: Political rap, Gangsta rap, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Appraisal, Affiliation

Özet

Bu çalışmada dizgesel işlevsel dilbilimi (SFL) tanımladıktan sonra politik ve çete rap'inde anlatılan kişilerarası anlamları tanımlamaya çalışacağım. Dizgesel işlevsel dilbilim'den Appraisal'ı, 10 kişiden oluşan bir gruba 5 tane politik rap türü ve 5 tane çete rap türü şarkıyı karşılaştırarak uygulayacağım. Appraisal, dilin değerlendirilmesi için tasarlanmış dilbilimsel analitik bir yapıdır. Son olarak Appraisal'ı, hem politik rap türünün hem de çete rap türünün kendine özgü temalarını yüceltme yollarını tanımlamada ve ardından beyaz, şehirli ve orta sınıftan oluşan bir genç seyirci kitlesinin politik rap türünden ziyade çete repiyle ilgilendiğine dair hipotezi açıklamada kullanma amaçındayım.

Anahtar sözcükler: politik rap, gangster rap, dizgesel işlevsel dilbilim, değerlendirme, bağ

1. INTRODUCTION

As noted by Riley (2005), rap music and hip hop culture have been the object of much scholarly attention in recent years (e.g. Rose, 1994; Potter, 1995; Walser, 1995; Krims, 2000; Keyes, 2002; Pennycook, 2007). Scholars have drawn on a variety of disciplines to investigate rap music and the hip hop culture from which it derives. The texts cited above for example are from ethnomusicology, musicology, post-modern cultural studies and linguistics. One general observation about this body of research is that scholars are often divided in their opinion of rap music. Many see rap as a 'voice' for the socially marginalised; a means by which they can "articulate their place in the world" (e.g. Mitchell, 2006, p. 17). Others however, like Rose (1994) and Best and Kellner (1999), are highly critical of certain styles of rap music. Generally, positive reactions to rap music are associated with the style of rap known as *political rap*, whereas negative reactions are more likely to be associated with the style known as *gangsta rap*. According to Best and Kellner (1999):

* The University of Sydney, Australia, dcal4935@mail.usyd.edu.au

At its best rap is a powerful indictment of racism, oppression, and violence that calls our attention to the crises of the inner cities and vividly describes the plight of African-Americans... At its worst, G-Rap is itself racist, sexist and glorifies violence, being little but a money-making vehicle that is part of the problem rather than the solution.

(A Contested Terrain section, para. 8 & 9)

According to the reference text *The All Music Guide to Rap and Hip-Hop* (2003), political rap and gangsta rap are defined as follows:

Looking to move on from the block-party atmosphere of old school rap and eager to vent their frustrations with the '80s version of the inner-city blues, a select few hip-hop groups merged deft rhymes with political philosophy to create a new style of rap... rappers have addressed a wide variety of social and political topics – everything from gang violence, AIDS, drug addiction, racism, domestic violence, and prostitution...

Gangsta Rap developed in the late '80s. Evolving out of hardcore rap, gangsta rap had an edgy, noisy sound. Lyrically, it was just as abrasive, as the rappers spun profane, gritty tales about urban crime... gangsta rappers rhyme in the first person about the lives of thugs, felons, gang members, pimps and crack dealers. Gangsta rappers portray the thugs they're rapping about...

(pp. viii-ix, 563-564)

While these descriptions tell us what the lyrics are about, that is, the topics or themes they 'deal with', they tell us very little about how it is that language is used interpersonally. In other words, how is language used in these particular rap styles to enact relationships? Or in another way, how do the rappers value or 'promote' their respective themes, and what kind of audience or 'consumer' is intended to align with those values?

For this paper, I aim to address such questions by applying the linguistic theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (e.g. Halliday, 1978; Martin, 1992). In short, SFL seeks to explain language by reference to the social context in which it operates. SFL organises language and social context functionally. Halliday suggests that language has evolved functional resources to construe three orders of reality which he terms the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. Martin (1997) defines Halliday's original metafunctions of language as follows: "ideational linguistic resources are concerned with representation, interpersonal resources with interaction, and textual resources with information flow" (p. 4).

As mentioned, this paper will focus on the interpersonal metafunction of language. Appraisal (e.g. Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005), from SFL, offers an ideal analytical framework to systematically identify interpersonal meanings in language. Appraisal is essentially concerned with evaluation: "the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned" (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 22). For this paper, I will focus on the Appraisal system of Attitude. Attitude is concerned with the semantic resources used to express emotions, judgements and valuations, the polarity of those evaluations, as well as the target of those evaluations. Both the political and gangsta rap songs will be characterised according to their expressions of Attitude.

Those findings will then be used to investigate *why* a particular youth audience may be motivated to affiliate with or 'consume' these styles of rap music in terms of the values or 'Attitude' expressed. As noted by Riley (2005: 297):

"It has become increasingly evident, as hip hop culture and rap expand rapidly into new social spaces and as the theoretical sophistication of rap studies grow, that serious attention must be

paid to the question of how specific youth audiences bring different reading formations to the culture and therefore find it meaningful in different ways.”

There is of course no one single social network or ‘hip hop community’ that affiliates with rap music. Following Riley (2005), I have chosen to focus specifically on one highly influential segment of the hip hop community: the white, suburban, middle-class youth consumers (abbreviated as ‘white’ youth audiences/consumers). From cultural studies, Riley offers a neo-Derkeimian interpretation of the ways in which these particular youth audiences ‘make sense’ of gangsta rap. While Riley’s (2005) reading of gangsta rap and ‘white’ consumers is provoking, I am not interested in the specifics of his thesis. I am however interested in his more general observations concerning the extent to which this particular youth audience affiliates with gangsta rap and political rap respectively.

Riley (2005) argues that white, suburban middle-class consumers have a strong affiliation with the gangsta rap style: “It is no secret that this audience of predominately white, suburban consumers exists, and that indeed the explosion in the 1990s of gangsta rap would have been impossible without it...” (p. 299). In contrast, Riley (2005) suggests that there is very little affiliation between a ‘white’ youth audience and political rap: “we are here dealing with an audience that to a significant degree simply is not socially located in such a way as to make such urban, black, political concerns likely or all that relevant to their own cultural worlds” (p. 305).

Again, this kind of observation relies exclusively on ideational meaning: what the political rap songs are about. From this position it is not too difficult to construct a hypothesis as to the reading formations of ‘white’ youth audiences. There are many obvious explanations as to why teenagers, particularly teenage boys, would consume music that comprises themes of sex, violence and drug use when compared with themes of government policy, social reform and Western consumerism. And, as Riley (2005) fairly points out, political rap becomes even less relevant when the political issues discussed have no immediate relevance to the well-being of the ‘white’ youth consumer. It is important to note however that I do not intend to take away from these interpretations. They are valid and clearly a worthwhile pursuit. What I want to propose however is an alternative way of characterising these rap songs linguistically, and perhaps from this, offer an additional hypothesis as to why the white, suburban, middle-class youth audiences are drawn to gangsta rap more than political rap.

2. METHODS

2.1. Data Collection

The data has been sampled from the *All Music Guide to Hip-Hop: The Definitive Guide to Rap and Hip-Hop* (Bogdanov, Woodstra, Erlewine & Bush 2003) which is essentially an encyclopaedia of rap music. It provides reviews of all the noteworthy rap artists and recordings from the late-1970s to the early-2000s, as well as essays, biographies and genealogical maps that trace the history of rap music. The data set sampled for this paper has been extracted from *The All Music Guide*’s list of ‘Essential Songs’ which is further classified according to various styles of rap music, such as: political rap, gangsta rap, hardcore rap, old-school rap and party rap.

In total, a small corpus of 10 rap songs by African-American artists was sampled. The set was further divided into 2 sub-sets according to the following styles: political rap and gangsta rap. Table 1 classifies the 10 rap songs according to style, artist and song title (see Discography for full details):

Table 1: Ten North American Rap Songs: Political and Gangsta

Song #	Artist	Title
1	Arrested Development	Everyday People
2	The Disposable Heroes...	Television, The Drug of the Nation

3	Grandmaster Flash...	The Message
4	Public Enemy (a)	911 is a Joke
5	Public Enemy (b)	Fight the Power
6	Ice Cube	Steady Mobbin'
7	Ice T	New Jack Hustler
8	The Notorious B.I.G.	Ready to Die
9	NWA	Gangsta Gangsta
10	Snoop Dogg	Gin and Juice

The rap lyrics were accessed from the *Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive* <www.ohhla.com>. Those transcriptions were reformatted, checked for errors and then transcribed to the level of the clause. The Appraisal system network of Attitude was applied to the data in line with a basic set of Appraisal conventions (see List of Appraisal Conventions).

2.2. Method of Analysis

Lead by Martin (e.g. Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005), Appraisal is an analytical framework designed to identify evaluation in language and comprises three main sub-systems: Attitude, Graduation and Engagement. The basic overview of the Appraisal system network is illustrated in Figure 1:

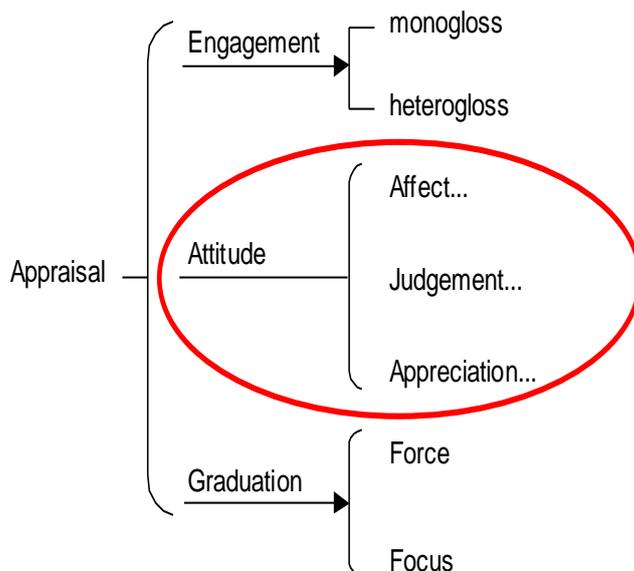


Figure 1: An overview of Appraisal resources (after Martin & White 2005, p. 38)

Appraisal is a superordinate term that deals with “the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations” (Martin, 2000, p. 145). With respect to the Appraisal systems, Attitude concerns the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements, and valuations while Graduation and Engagement concern the resources that amplify and engage with Attitude. This paper will focus exclusively on the system of Attitude (circled in Figure 1).

2.2.1. Attitude

The system of Attitude comprises three distinct systems which are selected simultaneously when a person expresses Attitude: the type of Attitude; the positive or negative value of the Attitude; and the implicit or explicit form of the Attitude. Attitude is reduced to three basic types: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation. Martin and White (2005) summarise the three basic types of Attitude as follows: Affect concerns the semantic resources used to construe emotional responses; Judgement concerns

resources deployed for construing moral evaluations of behaviour; and Appreciation construes the ‘aesthetic’ quality of a product or performance (and natural phenomena).

Affect, Judgement and Appreciation are simultaneously analysed according to positive or negative polarity or the ‘good-bad’ parameter (Thompson & Hunston 2000). In other words, does the Affect express a good feeling or a bad feeling; is the person’s character good or bad in relation to “norms about how people should or shouldn’t behave”; and are the products/performances good or bad in relation to “norms about how products and performances are valued”? (Martin & Rose, 2003, pp. 62-63). Martin and Rose (2003) provide analysts with a detailed corpus for each type of Attitude and their respective system networks. Some of that corpus is replicated below.

2.2.2. Affect

Affect is classified according to a number of variables. For this paper, Affect is analysed according to a type of emotion: dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security, dis/satisfaction. Affect can also be classified according to whether it is an emotional disposition or a behavioural surge and whether it is a mood state or feelings directed from one person to another. Table 2 illustrates the system of Affect with examples comprising positive and negative values. (See the appendix for the list of appraisal conventions)

Table 2: System of Affect (after Martin & Rose, 2003, pp. 60-61)

type of emotion	surge	disposition
disinclination	shudder	fearful
inclination	request	long for
unhappiness (mood)	cry	sad
unhappiness (directed)	abuse	hate
happiness	laugh	happy
	hug	loving
insecurity	twitching	anxious
	cry out	surprised
security	assert	confident
	commit	confident in
dissatisfaction	yawn	fed up
	scold	angry
satisfaction	busy	absorbed
	compliment	impressed

2.2.3. Judgement

Judgement is divided into two broad categories: social esteem and social sanction and then into five sub-types within these categories. Judgements of esteem have to do with normality (how unusual someone is), capacity (how capable they are), and tenacity (how resolute they are); Judgement by sanction has to do with veracity (how truthful someone is) and propriety (how ethical someone is). Table 3 illustrates the system of Judgement with examples comprising positive and negative values.

Table 3 Systems of Judgement (after Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 62)

social esteem	positive (admire)	negative (criticize)
normality	lucky, fortunate, charmed	unfortunate, pitiful, tragic
capacity	balanced, together, sane	flaky, neurotic, insane
tenacity	plucky, brave, heroic	rash, cowardly, despondent
social sanction	positive (praise)	negative (condemn)
veracity	truthful, honest, credible	dishonest, deceitful
propriety	good, moral, ethical	corrupt, unfair, unjust

2.2.4. Appreciation

Appreciation is organised around three variables: reaction, composition and valuation. Reaction has to do with the degree to which the product or performance in question captures our attention (reaction: impact) and the emotional impact it has on us (reaction: quality). Composition has to do with our perception of proportionality (composition: balance) and detail (composition: complexity) in a product or performance. Valuation has to do with our assessment of the social significance of the product or performance. Table 4 illustrates the system of Appreciation with examples comprising positive and negative values.

Table 4: System of Appreciation (after Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 63)

reaction	positive	negative
impact	fascinating, exciting, moving	dull, boring, tedious
quality	lovely, beautiful, splendid	plain, ugly, repulsive
composition	positive	negative
balance	balanced, harmonious	unbalanced, discordant
complexity	simple, elegant, intricate	ornamental, extravagant
valuation	positive	negative
	challenging, profound	shallow, insignificant

2.2.5. Inscribed and Invoked Attitude

Attitude is simultaneously classified as either inscribed or invoked. All of the examples of Attitude listed above are inscribed, that is, the Attitude is explicitly presented by a lexical item carrying a positive or negative value, for example, ‘i was **lucky**’, compared with ‘it was **ugly**’. In contrast, invoked Attitude is ‘evoked’ rather than inscribed by ‘tokens’ of Attitude. As such, invoked Attitude cannot be narrowed down to an individual item. Compare for example, ‘**a kid who reads a lot**’ with ‘**a kid who tears the wings off butterflies**’ (Thompson & Hunston, 2000, p. 142). In these examples, there is no particular word that carries a positive or negative value. However, neutral ideational meanings such as ‘tears the wings off butterflies’ have the potential to invoke Attitude, in this case, a negative judgement of the ‘kid’. In most circumstances, the phrase ‘a kid who reads a lot’ invokes a positive evaluation of the ‘kid’ as clever, intelligent or even tenacious.

Analysing for invoked Attitude can be a difficult task, particularly because coding invoked Attitude as positive or negative is very much context dependent (see Martin, 2003, pp. 172-173). Accordingly, this paper will draw on the analysts knowledge of North American rap music and hip hop culture more generally to interpret the African American Vernacular English. Although there is often potential for multiple coding with invoked Attitude, this paper will limit the invoked analysis to one classification only.

3. FINDINGS

The following set of findings capture the general patterns of Attitude rather than quantifying every expression from the data set. In this way, comparisons can be more easily made between the two rap styles. Each song will be characterised according to its most frequent type or types of Attitude (Table 5 and 6). Each table is separated into 4 columns: the song number (see Table 1), the Appraiser (person or persons expressing the Attitude), the type of Attitude (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation, inscribed or invoked) and the Appraised (the target of the Attitude). In those cases where a songs comprises a high frequency of two types of Attitude, both will be included. The most frequent type(s) of Attitude are further classified according to positive or negative polarity as well as the more specific classifications.

Table 5: Most Frequent Attitude: Summary for Political Rap

Song	Appraiser	Attitude	Appraised
1	Rapper	negative invoked Judgements (propriety)	African-American gang
	Rapper	positive inscribed Judgements (propriety)	Himself
2	Rapper	negative Appreciation (valuation)	Television (Western consumerism)
3	Rapper	negative invoked Judgements (normality)	Himself and African-Americans
4	Rappers	negative invoked Judgements (propriety)	911 emergency service
5	Rappers	negative invoked Judgements (propriety)	‘the power’
	Rappers	positive inscribed Judgements (capacity)	Themselves and African-Americans

Table 5 shows a number of consistent patterns of Attitude in the political rap style. The most common types of Attitude in the political rap songs were expressed by the rapper performing the songs, usually realised by the singular, first-person pronoun ‘I’. In song 5 (Public Enemy, 1990b) the plural pronoun

‘we’ was used, most probably because the group Public Enemy comprises two rappers. It is worth noting that the use of first-person pronouns as the main Appraiser of Attitude may also have an important rhetorical function in these rap songs. These exophoric references seem to refer beyond the rappers themselves to include African-Americans, marginalised African-Americans, and even more specifically, the actual listener.

Table 5 shows that negative invoked Judgements of propriety was the most frequent type of Attitude expressed in the political rap style. In varying ways, those negative Judgements were directed at social groups that have traditionally marginalised and oppressed African-Americans. In short, the political rappers evaluated the social sanction of these groups or ‘dominant forces’ as corrupt, unfair and unjust. In song 1 (Arrested Development, 1991) for example, the negative invoked Judgements were directed at a violent African-American gang that threatened the rapper (performing the song) and his girlfriend. In songs 4 and 5 (Public Enemy, 1990a & 1990b), the Appraised was slightly more general. In song 5, Public Enemy invoked many negative Judgements directed at ‘the power’. While this target is open to interpretation, the co-text indicates that ‘the power’ is anyone considered to be oppressing African-Americans, such as the government, government officials (e.g. the police and teachers), as well as ‘white’ people more generally. In song 4, the target of invoked Judgement was slightly more specific as Public Enemy critiqued the 911 emergency service, for example:

they **don't care** [-Affect: disinclination]
 'cause they stay paid anyway [-Judgement: propriety]
 they teach ya like an ace [-Judgement: propriety]
 they can't be betrayed [-Judgement: propriety]
 i know you stumble with **no use** [-Judgement: capacity] people
 if your life is on the line
 then you're dead today [-Judgement: propriety]
 late comings with the late comin' stretcher [-Judgement: propriety]
 that's a body bag in disguise y'all betcha [-Judgement: propriety]
 i call 'em **body snatchers** [-Judgement: propriety]
 (Extract 1: Public Enemy, 1990a, clauses. 7-16)

Extract 1 also comprised several expressions of inscribed negative Attitude directed at the 911 emergency service. While most of the political rap songs comprised invoked negative Judgements, Song 2 (Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy, 1992) had a high frequency of inscribed negative Appreciations. That inscribed negative Attitude was directed at television and ‘Western consumerism’ more generally. In this way, the target of Attitude or ‘Appraised’ was still reasonably consistent with the political data set, that is, negative evaluations directed at a ‘dominant force’.

Table 5 shows that Song 3 (Grandmaster Flash, 1982) is slightly different to the rest of the political data set. Instead of invoked negative Judgements of propriety, the most frequent Attitude was invoked negative Judgments of normality. Moreover, the Appraised was the rapper himself (or potentially African-Americans more generally) and not a ‘dominant force’, for example:

i can't walk through the park [-Judgement: normality]
 'cause its **crazy** [-Appreciation: reaction] after the dark
 keep my hand on my gun
 'cause they got me on the run [-Judgement: normality]
 i feel like an outlaw [-Judgement: normality]
 broke my last fast jaw [-Judgement: normality]
 hear them say
 you want some more [-Judgement: normality]
 livin' on a seesaw [-Judgement: normality]

(Extract 2: Grandmaster Flash, 1982, c. 102-110)

Extract 2 is a good example of the potential for multiple coding. The clauses coded in extract 2 as negative invoked self-Judgments, that is, the rapper as ‘unfortunate’ given his adverse circumstances, could also be coded in line with the rest of the data set, that is, negative invoked Judgements of the propriety of the ‘dominant forces’ given they contributed to the adverse circumstances. One distinction between this song however and the rest of the data set is the frequent use of the first person pronoun ‘I’, invoking a judgement of the rapper himself rather than those that have marginalised him. In contrast, extract 1 has fewer singular first person pronouns and makes much more reference to the ‘dominant forces’ or ‘oppressors’, typically realised as ‘they’. Whether these clauses should be coded as negative judgements of the ‘oppressors’ as unfair and unkind, or negative self-judgements of normality as a result of the conditions of the ‘oppressors’ seems a minor point in the context of this paper. What is important is that the overall rhetoric of marginalisation and oppression of African-Americans remains consistent throughout the political data set.

While Table 5 shows that the most frequent type of Attitude in political rap was negative, Songs 1 (Arrested Development, 1991) and 5 (Public Enemy, 1990b) both comprised high frequencies of positive Attitude. That positive Attitude was mostly inscribed Judgements of themselves, either as an individual, as illustrated in extract 3, or occasionally as the plural ‘we’. As mentioned, the potential for these pronouns to refer beyond the rappers themselves is evident in extract 3, where the pronoun ‘I’ seems to refer to African-American’s more generally and perhaps also the consumer themselves:

elvis was a **hero** [+Judgement: normality] to most
 but he never meant shit to me [-Judgement: propriety]
 you see straight up **racist** [-Judgement: propriety]
 that **sucker** [-Judgement: normality] was simple and plain
 mother **fuck** [-Affect: dissatisfaction] him and john wayne
 ‘cause i’m **black** [+Judgement: normality]
 and i’m **proud** [+Affect: satisfaction]
 i’m **ready** [+Judgement: capacity] and **hyped** [+Judgement: capacity]
 plus i’m **amped** [+Judgement: capacity]
 most of my heroes don’t appear on no stamps [-Judgement: normality]
 sample a look back
 you look and find
 nothing but **rednecks** [-Judgement: propriety] for four hundred years
 (Extract 3: Public Enemy, 1990b, c. 46-58)

While songs 1 and 5 comprised a high frequency of positive Attitude, as illustrated in extract 3, that positive Attitude was typically expressed alongside or countered by negative Attitude to do with the ‘dominant forces’. The rhetoric of marginalisation and oppression remains a salient feature of the political rap songs despite the positive Attitude.

Table 6: Most Frequent Attitude: Summary for Gangsta Rap

Song	Appraiser	Attitude	Appraised
6	Rapper	positive invoked and inscribed Judgements (normality)	Himself
7	Rapper	positive invoked and inscribed Judgements (normality)	Himself
8	Rapper	positive invoked and inscribed Judgements (tenacity)	Himself
9	Rapper	positive invoked and inscribed	Themselves

		Judgements (normality)	
10	Rapper	positive invoked and inscribed Judgements (normality)	Himself

Table 6 shows that the gangsta rap data set is even more consistent than the political set in terms of its most frequent expressions of Attitude. As with the political rap style, the Appraiser was the rapper or rappers actually performing the song. While this may seem a rather obvious finding, it is not necessarily the case that a narrator is the Appraiser. More ‘objective’ genres such as news reporting and academic writing are good examples in which a narrator is not always the Appraiser of Attitude. In those genres, the narrator refers or ‘attributes’ Attitude to other persons. In this way, both rap styles are particularly ‘subjective’ in the sense that the rappers are the Appraisers. They do not tell ‘other peoples’ stories. The Attitude is theirs.

There was very little difference in the gangsta rap data set in terms of the type of Attitude expressed and the target of that Attitude. Table 6 shows that for all five gangsta rap songs, the rappers most frequently expressed positive invoked Judgements to do with their own normality. In other words, the rappers evaluated themselves as special, or more specifically, ‘cool’ (in the context of African-American, ‘gangsta’ culture). There are differences however in terms of what ideational tokens actually invoked such positive self-evaluations. One of the most common ways in which gangsta rappers invoked positive self-Judgements was by referring to their wealth and physical strength, for example:

what’s up
you say ya wanna be down
ease back
or **muthafucka** [-Judgement: capacity] get beat down
out my face
fool [-Judgement: capacity] i’m the **illegit** [+Judgement: normality]
bulletproof [+Judgement: normality]
i die harder than bruce willis [+Judgement: normality]
got my crew in effect [+Judgement: capacity]
i bought ‘em new jags [+Judgement: normality]
so much cash [+Judgement: normality]
gotta keep it in hefty bags
(Extract 4: Ice T, 1991, c. 55-64)

Songs 6 (Ice Cube, 1991), 7 (Ice T, 1991) and 9 (NWA, 1988) all frequently invoked positive self-Judgements through reference to wealth and physical strength. In a similar way, Song 8 (Notorious B.I.G., 1994) invoked positive self-Judgements, although these had to do with tenacity rather than normality or ‘coolness’. While Extract 5 comprised many invoked self-Judgements from all three sub-systems, the overall rhetoric of the song was one of tenacity, for example:

when i used to be a **crook** [+Judgement: normality]
doin’ whatever it took [+Judgement: tenacity]
from snatchin’ chains to pocketbooks [+Judgement: tenacity]
a big **bad motherfucker** [+Judgement: normality] on the wrong road
i got some drugs [+Judgement: tenacity]
tried to get the avenue sold [+Judgement: tenacity]
i want it all from the rolexes to the lexus [+Judgement: tenacity]
gettin’ paid is all i expected [+Judgement: tenacity]
my mother didn’t give me what i want [+Judgement: normality]
what the fuck [-Affect: dissatisfaction]

now i got a glock [+Judgement: normality]
 makin' motherfuckers duck [+Judgement: capacity]
 (Extract 5: Notorious B.I.G., 1994, c. 30-41)

Tenacity was chosen because the rapper, Notorious B.I.G. (1994), did not explicitly refer to his physical prowess or wealth as in extract 4. Rather, he recounted the events that helped him achieve that wealth, strength and 'coolness'. In this way, Song 8 was more of a personal narrative in which Notorious B.I.G. gave the audience a sense of his personal ethos rather than his attributes.

Song 10 (Snoop Dogg, 1993) was slightly different again. In this gangsta rap song, illustrated in Extract 6, Snoop Dogg invoked positive self-Judgements as he described his sexual prowess, for example:

i breeze through [+Judgement: normality]
 two in the mornin' and the party's still **jumpin'** [+Appreciation: composition]
 'cause my momma ain't home
 i got bitches in the living room gettin' it on [+Judgement: normality]
 and they ain't leavin' 'till six in the mornin' [+Judgement: normality]
 so what you wanna do sheeit
 i got a pocket full of rubbers [+Judgement: normality]
 and my homeboys do too [+Judgement: normality]
 so turn off the lights
 and close the doors
 but but what we don't love them hoes yeah [+Judgement: normality]
 (Extract 6: Snoop Dogg, 1993, c. 12-22)

This short extract reveals a high frequency of sexist, negative language directed at women, for example, 'bitches' and 'hoes'. However, as illustrated, I have not coded that lexis for Attitude. In this context, that is the African-American gangsta culture, these terms are commonplace. Now that is *not* to say that these terms do not carry negative Attitude. They clearly do so, especially in contexts outside the African-American gangsta community. And it should be noted that even in that context, these terms are not interpersonally neutral. They have been deliberately chosen by that community for their negative meanings. However, what was interpersonally salient in this extract was the positive self-Judgements expressed by the rapper, realised through reference to his sexual prowess. Unfortunately, in this community, prowess can be achieved by demeaning and objectifying women. An investigation into why the African-American gangsta culture finds the objectification of women (and violence for that matter) worthy of positive appraisal is of the utmost importance (see e.g. Best and Kellner, 1999). However, that is not a primary concern of this paper. Just as I have coded 'crook' and 'bad motherfucker' in Extract 5 as positive, when in most contexts it would be negative, I have coded references to sexual prowess as something positive, because, in the African-American 'gangsta' context, that is precisely what it means.

3.1. Summary of Attitude Findings

The Attitude findings from the small corpus of gangsta rap and political rap styles can be generally characterized as follows:

1. In both styles, the Appraiser was the actual rapper(s) performing the song
2. Political rap comprised a high frequency of negative, invoked Judgements (of propriety) targeted at 'dominant forces'
3. Political rap also comprised a moderately high frequency of positive, invoked and inscribed Judgements (of capacity and tenacity) targeted at 'self'
4. Gangsta rap comprised a high frequency of positive, invoked Judgements (of normality) targeted at 'self'

4. DISCUSSION

Appraisal positions us to feel – and through shared feelings to belong. In this respect, Appraisal is a resource for negotiating solidarity (Martin, 2004, p. 326).

Following on from the Attitude analysis, the question then arises: how do the Attitude meanings expressed in the political and gangsta rap styles enact relationships? Or in another way, what social networks or communities share the kinds of values or Attitudes realised in political and gangsta rap? If we follow Riley (2005), the question is more specific again: what are the shared Attitudes that motivate white, suburban, middle-class youth to affiliate with or ‘consume’ gangsta rap over political rap?

What I intend to put forward here is merely a hypothesis that would certainly benefit from analysis of a larger corpus as well as some sound ethnographic work to further ‘get at’ the motivations of this particular youth audience. Moreover, I do recognise that this is only one of many explanations and that other explanations (e.g. Riley 2005) are not in opposition with this thesis.

The way in which these respective rap styles affiliate with their consumers is clearly very different. As mentioned earlier, the themes or ideational meanings for each style are distinct and provide a platform for sound explanations as to why ‘white’ youth audiences choose to affiliate with gangsta rap when compared with political rap. It is also clear from the Attitude analysis of this small corpus that the interpersonal meanings expressed in each style are distinct.

In short, political rap affiliates through a rhetorical trope of *condemnation*. In other words, a consumer of political rap aligns themselves with the rap artist and the African-American ‘political’ community more generally through the ‘shared feeling’ that the ‘dominant forces’ (who have traditionally oppressed African-Americans) should in turn be condemned or ‘judged’ for their actions. Some of the political data set does include affiliation through rallying, albeit at a far lower frequency. In those examples, the rappers counter their many negative invoked Judgements of the ‘dominant forces’ with positive self-Judgements. The consumers build solidarity with the rap artist and his African-American ‘political’ community through the shared feeling that they have the capacity to overcome the oppression of the ‘dominant forces’ and ultimately control and improve their adverse circumstances.

The rhetorical trope of gangsta rap is very different than the political rap. Gangsta rap affiliates almost exclusively through *rallying* or *affirmations* (for want of a better term). In the case of gangsta rap, the ‘shared feeling’ between artist and consumer is that the rapper and his African-American gangsta community are tough, resilient, ‘cool’ characters. I would argue however, that this shared feeling extends beyond positive Appraisal of African-Americans. It seems that the combination of first-person singular pronouns with positive Judgements of normality, capacity and tenacity encourages the consumer to ‘take on’ those propositions, regardless of race. Hence, the term *affirmations* rather than *rallying*. The exophoric nature of the pronouns enables the consumer to truly ‘share’ these positive self-Judgements in a way that is not unlike the kind of positive self-affirmations common in ‘new-age’ spirituality.

Perhaps, it is simply more appealing to a white, suburban, middle-class youth to consume a style of music with a rhetoric that reinforces their self-esteem, strength and ‘coolness’, as opposed to a style that reinforces their unfortunate circumstances, shortcomings and more generally, the many problems facing the world. And perhaps, given the relative ‘fortune’ of this audience, feelings of positive self-esteem can be shared much more easily between performer and consumer, than feelings of misfortune and loneliness. Again, I do not wish to ignore the fact that much of this positive rhetoric derives from the marginalisation of others, and ultimately, encourages a very destructive way of being. In this analysts’ opinion however, this kind of reading is so consumed with the outrageous, rebellious nature

of the themes expressed in gangsta rap music, it fails to see the most obvious and appealing feature of this style: it tells the 'white' youth consumers how 'cool' they are, or at the very least, how 'cool' 'gangsta' African-Americans are, and therefore how cool they *can* be...

we don't care
we don't just say no
we too busy sayin' yeah
to drinkin' straight out the eight bottle
do i look like a mutha fuckin' role model
to a kid lookin' up ta me
life ain't nothin' but bitches and money
'cause i'm tha type o' nigga
that's built ta last
if ya fuck wit me
i'll put a foot in ya ass
see i don't give a fuck
'cause i keep bailin'
yo what the fuck are they yellin'
gangsta gangsta

(NWA, 1988, c. 21-35)

REFERENCES

- Best, S., & Kellner, D. (1999). Rap, black rage, and racial difference. *Enculturation*, 2(2). Retrieved December 30, 2007, from http://enculturation.gmu.edu/2_2/best-kellner.html
- Bogdanov, V., Woodstra, C., Erlewine, S.T., & Bush, J. (2003). *All music guide to hip-hop: The definitive guide to rap and hip hop*. San Francisco: Blackbeat Books.
- Keyes, C. (2002). *Rap music and street consciousness*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Krims, A. (2000). *Rap music and the poetics of identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, J.R. (1992). *English text: System and structure*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Martin, J.R. (2000). Beyond exchange: APPRAISAL systems in English. In S. Hunston, & G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text* (pp. 142-176). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, J.R. (2003). Introduction. *Text*, 23(2), 171-181.
- Martin, J.R., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London: Continuum.
- Martin, J.R., & White P. R. R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Mitchell, T. (2006, April 1). The new corroborree. *The Age: A2*, p. 17.
- Pennycook, A. (2007). *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. London: Routledge.
- Potter, R. (1995). *Spectacular vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the politics of postmodernism*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Riley, A. (2005). The rebirth of tragedy out of the spirit of hip hop: A cultural sociology of gangsta rap music. *Journal of Youth Studies* 8(3), 297-311.
- Rose, T. (1994). *Black noise: Rap music and black culture in contemporary America*. London: Wesleyan University Press.
- Walser, R. (1995). Rhythm, rhyme, and rhetoric in the music of public enemy. *Ethnomusicology*, 39(2), 193-218.

Discography

- Arrested Development (1991). *Everyday people. On 3 years, 5 months & 2 days in the life of...* Chrysalis Records.

The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy (1992). Television, the drug of the nation. On *hypocrisy is the greatest luxury*. 4th and Broadway.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (1982). The Message. On *The message*. Sugar Hill Records.

Ice Cube (1991). Steady mobbin'. On *Death certificate*. Priority.

Ice T (1991). *New Jack Hustler*. On *OG: original gangster*. Sire/Warner.

The Notorious B.I.G. (1994). Ready to Die. On *Ready to die*. UM3.

NWA (1988). Gangsta Gangsta. On *Straight outta compton*. Ruthless/Priority.

Public Enemya (1990). 911 is a joke. On *Fear of a black planet*. Def Jam/Columbia Records.

Public Enemyb (1990). Fight the power. On *Fear of a black planet*. Def Jam/Columbia Records.

Snoop Dogg (1993). Jin and Juice. On *Doggystyle*. Death Row.

Appendix

List of Appraisal Conventions

[]	Appraisal
+		Positive Attitude
-		Negative Attitude
+		Invoked Attitude
-		Invoked Attitude