

What's the Deal Forreal: Rap Music's Sociolinguistic Story

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Black American Rap music (BARM) is a cultural art form and a rich linguistic resource for expanding our understanding of African American language (AAL) usage. As a cultural art form, BARM is meant to represent or depict the customs of the Black American society in which it originates. BARM deepens our understanding of AAL usage since the language used in Rap music, broadly classified as Hip-Hop Nation Language, originates in AAL (Finnegan & Rickford, 2004; Alim, 2008). Though AAL is the most studied American English variety across multiple disciplines (King & Rickford, 2016), little is known about AAL's linguistic structure and its variation in music (Lanehart, 2015; Gilbers et al., 2020).

My dissertation develops a heuristic in two studies for the linguistic description and comparison of Rap songs and the individual creativity of artists. In the first study, I use a metrical modeling system to compare rhythmically sampled songs' rhyme and rhythmic structures against other songs in the sampler artists' repertoire (Adams, 2009). I find sampling rhythmic tracks affects how artists rap and how metrical modeling with discourse analysis can account for rhythm-rhyme patterning that contributes to rapper identity and style construction in song lyrics. In the second study, I use a qualitative discourse analytical approach paired with the metrical modeling system used in study 1 to compare four rap artists' creative identity construction using two songs from each artist across their careers.

With this, my dissertation contributes to 1) linguists' knowledge of the patterning of AAL in Rap music, 2) how gender normativity performance in Black American society is reflected in

Rap music, 3) and adds to the recent literature on the decolonization of models that are traditionally tested on white European languages (Hudley et al., 2020; Hudley et al., 2023). Identity and style construction models are typically framed around dominant white language varieties in the United States. In applying them to Rap music lyrics, I shine a critical lens reflecting on the efficacy of these models in analyzing an underresearched data source. In this way, we arrive at a more nuanced understanding of AAL usage in music performance.

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“I am what I am because of what we all are.”

1.0 Introduction

Rap is a style of music that originated in the Black community in New York, where rhythm meets rhyme and speech in the form of lyrics is chanted or “rapped” over an instrumental backing track (Brittanica, 2024). Rap is a rich cultural and linguistic art form. Rap is a “rich cultural art form” because it draws from social information about people’s lived or imagined experiences through broader Black society. As it stands, linguistics tends to reductively view music as solely entertainment (art) or as a form of socio-politically influenced folklore (culture) (Ellison, 1995, p. 256). Cultural art forms like Rap¹ are an amalgamation of entertainment and folklore through the expression of self (stylistic identity) while influenced by artists’ lived experiences (Ellison, 1995, p. 257). Thus, Rap is as much about culture as it is about language.

Despite linguistics’ neglect of Rap, I argue it is also a rich linguistic art form that tells us something about how Black people use language. Rap is a “rich linguistic art form” since it primarily utilizes the African American Language (AAL) in varied and creative ways. Research in AAL goes back over a century with preliminary studies such as Krapp’s (1924) research on “Negro non-standard English,” as it was referred to at the time. Another pivotal study was McDavid & McDavid (1951), which reviewed the relationship between white and Black vernaculars in the South and suggested that all linguistic influence flows from white varieties to Black varieties, thus asserting a kind of white cultural purity (Van Herk, 2015, p. 24). However, more linguistics research into the variety ramped up in the 1960s and 1970s with work by Robbins

¹ “Rap” being capitalized refers to the umbrella term for the genre of music, and “rap” lowercase refers to the action of an artist rapping.

Burling (1973), Joey L. Dillard (1972, 1977), Ralph Fasold (1972), William Labov and colleagues (1968, 1972), Geneva Smitherman (1977), William Stewart (1967), and Walt Wolfram (1969) (Lanehart & Malik, 2015, p. 1). AAL in Rap music is a missed opportunity because even though AAL is the most heavily studied language variety, we still know surprisingly little about its use in music from a linguistic standpoint. There haven't been many interdisciplinary studies on Rap music lyrics. Thus, Rap music still has much to offer in linguistics, as shown by variation studies and sociocultural expression of self.

Becoming more necessary in academia is the need for bridges between disciplines to create fuller explanations of structural linguistic and sociocultural phenomena (Cheshire, 2005). My dissertation intends to link and make more explicit research into Rap music by taking advantage of the frameworks in particular linguistic subfields of sociolinguistics, stylistics, and linguistic anthropology, along with notions of creativity that exist both within and outside the realm of linguistics and in the field of ethnomusicology. An interdisciplinary approach is essential for gleaning all we can from Rap music and its language. By bridging sub-disciplinary and interdisciplinary gaps, I intend to show what a rich resource Rap is in looking at Black culture and creative Black language use in art.

These bridges also advance the linguistic fields' efforts to promote racial equality in research. Charity Hudley et al. (2020) bolster and inform the Linguistic Society of America's (LSA) Statement on Race, arguing that "linguistics urgently needs an interdisciplinarily informed theoretical engagement with race and racism" to decolonize linguistic theories. Thus, my dissertation contributes to the recent literature by (1) bolstering the importance of bringing racialized selves into research, (2) showcasing (socio)linguistic rigor into models of cultural forms, and (3) testing them in traditionally underresearched areas from an interdisciplinary lens. To

answer this call, two qualitative interdisciplinary linguistic studies were performed to inform the creation of a heuristic for comparing the creative processes of style and identity construction of individual rappers in their lyrics that future research could adapt and use in their studies.

In the first study, I adapt a metrical modeling system from ethnomusicology interfaced with the linguistic application of poetics to compare the rhyme and rhythmic structures of rhythmically sampled songs against another song in the samplers' repertoire (Adams, 2009). In the second study, I utilize a qualitative, discourse analytical approach to compare four Rap artists' identity construction with two songs from each artist across their careers. Chronotopes, or configurations of time-space-personhood, are used as identity frames (Bloomaert & De Fina, 2017, p. 4) and are the framework utilized to understand how rappers form identity through song over time. In these studies, I consider how gender normativity performance in Black American society (Morgan, 2015, Kirkland, 2015) is reflected in Rap music interface with how rappers use creative means to construct their respective identity performances in their lyrical content and structure. These sub-disciplinary and interdisciplinary applications from sociolinguistics, ethnomusicology, poetics, and linguistic anthropology show that much can be gleaned from Rap music as a linguistic and cultural art form, not just determined by linguistic frameworks. The following sections will present: 1) the focus and research questions that will guide the dissertation; 2) the literature review to provide motivation, potential solutions, and methodologies for the studies; 3) the proposed data and methodology; and 4) conclusions.

1.1 Focus

Rap is a rich cultural and linguistic art form.

Rap being a “rich cultural art form” means that the lyrical content and traditions presented in Rap music convey information about Black Americans’ lived experiences and culture to the broader public, including global audiences. According to Tricia Rose’s (1994, 2008) seminal works on Rap music and Black culture in America, Rap music is a “black cultural expression that prioritizes [Black] voices from the fringes of urban America” (2). Rap is the last dispensation of Hip-Hop culture, which rose out of the Black Power and Black Arts movements in the 1970s. Within the Black Arts Movement, there was a community-wide push for prioritizing Black voices from the fringes of urban America through nationalism in Black America's visual, musical, theatrical, and written arts (National Archives, [b]). These movements, then, led to the inception of Rap in the late 1970s and its subsequent popularization in the 1980s (National Archives, [a]). Rap music was engendered through mixed traditions, such as African American spoken-word practices (such as toasts and the dozens) and musical traditions (Jamaican dub and southern blues) (Bradley, 2009, p. xxxii). Thus, Rap originated as a musical form of cultural and linguistic expression among African Americans to showcase and exalt creative language usages.

Despite the rich historical and linguistic elements of Rap, as it stands, linguistics tends to reductively view music, including Rap, as solely entertainment (art) or as a form of socio-politically influenced folklore (culture) (Ellison, 1995, p. 256). On the contrary, cultural art forms like Rap are an amalgamation of entertainment and folklore through the expression of self (stylistic identity) while influenced by artists’ lived experiences (Ellison, 1995, p. 257). Sociolinguistics, as a field, is primarily focused on reestablishing priorities associated with early conceptions of style and stylistic performance, such as “context of situations, contexts of culture, and the socio-

semantics of register,” through becoming “more empirically detailed, more culturally diverse, and more culturally attuned” (Coupland, 2011, p. 153). Rickford & Eckert (2001) argue that style is pivotal in studying linguistic variation. However, there has been too much focus on variation and a speaker’s place in the world rather than individual speaker strategies contributing to variation (p. 1). There must be a continuous expansion of thought toward viewing language as reflecting social life and language creating social life and meaning, as well as shifting from “marking categories to constituting a more fluid landscape of meaning” (p. 6). As follows from Rickford & Eckert (2001) and Coupland (2011), this means there is a persistent call for current sociolinguistic studies to look at linguistic data from different cultural and theoretical perspectives and not focus on a set of particular linguistic features in isolation or at a particular repertoire. As a result, identity and style have become less uniform as concepts in sociolinguistics. Thus, it has become necessary to delineate subprocesses that undergird the discursive construction of identity and style to better account for differences and similarities in groups or sub-groups of people. Therefore, there is a need for a broader and more fluid definition of style in sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistic scholars have argued that identity is a configuration of self and others, usually done through individuals' everyday speech or narratives (Coupland, 2007; Tabouret-Keller, 2017). Intrinsically linked with the study of identity is research in stylistics or the linguistic study of style. Stylistic research has a long history in sociolinguistics (Coupland, 2011, p. 138) and is most often first attributed to Jakobson's (1960) poetic approach and Labov's (1972) variationist approach. Jakobson’s (1960) approach laid the groundwork for what is known as “general stylistics,” which focuses on systematic commentary on a literary style that is still relevant to aesthetic appreciation of the construction of a (literary) text and its flow (Coupland, 2011, p. 138).

General stylistics is now known as the overarching application of linguistic analysis to all texts, not just literary sources, and style is seen as a different way to say the same thing.

Labov's (1972) study focuses on particular linguistic features and their correlation with socioeconomic speech variation. The notion of style here is only viewed as cursory to the frequency data of linguistic features with the potential to skew said data. However, what has been found since Labov's foundational study is that style and identity are multi-level phenomena that should be considered "a coordinated configuration of linguistic features designed and interpreted holistically," (Coupland, 2011, p. 140). Studies such as Eckert (2004), Mendoza-Denton (2004), Kiesling (2004, 2022), Johnstone & Kiesling (2008), King & Rickford (2016), and Zimman (2017) all follow the former train of thought in that they all look at clusters of linguistic features to find social meaning and style is more than sociolinguistic variables in emic orientation.

Two studies discuss identity through discursive strategies that are important for my dissertation: De Fina et al. (2011) and Lanehart (2015). Both works assert that identity is socially constructed in interaction. De Fina et al. (2011) discuss the three dimensions of discursive identity construction:

1. The navigation of agency in terms of a person-to-world versus a world-to-person directionality;
 2. The differentiation between self and other as a way to navigate between uniqueness and a communal sense of belonging and being the same as others;
 3. And the navigation of sameness and change across one's biography or parts thereof
- (p. 177)

My dissertation focuses on the liberties in individual "creative" agency that rappers take in their lyrics (i.e. a type of rapper discourse) to mold their identity. This is made possible through a

combination of sources they find in Hip-Hop culture and compares that identity construction at different points of their careers. De Fina et al. (2011) have more of a general sense of discursive identity construction, whereas Lanehart (2015) discusses how African Americans construct identity.

Lanehart (2015) talks specifically about the AAL and identity, where she pulls from Le Page's (1986) concept of "acts of identity" (p. 23) and Markus & Nurius's (1986) notion of "possible selves" to explicate the Black experience of identity construction. Le Page (1986) describes acts of identity as people creating "their linguistic systems so as to resemble those of the groups with which from time to time they wish to identify," (p. 23). Markus & Nurius (1986) argue that an individual is "free to create any variety of possible selves, yet the pool of possible selves" is derived from different categories relevant to that individual's social experiences and context (954). Lanehart (2015) combines these concepts to say that—especially in the Black experience, through acts of identity and the selection of possible selves, Black people have ways of speaking and communicating derived from each of our experiences (p. 874). The particular ways in which Black American rappers make these choices of possible selves through acts of identity are delineated in my dissertation.

What better way to explore concepts like identity construction, stylistic performance, and cultural reflection in linguistic data than through language-based art forms like Rap music? Language-based art forms contain linguistic data with cultural reflections in the underresearched area of artistic performance. Therefore, the frameworks for studying style and identity construction are limited, or it is possible that linguistic analysts have not fully exploited the full breadth of these frameworks. While identity and style can also be performed or created through song, song performance has widely been dismissed in linguistics as *only* an art form. Consequently, there is

currently no attested methodology for comparing style and identity construction in lyrical music, which is Rap music.

Rap is a “rich linguistic art form” since it primarily utilizes the African American Language (AAL) in varied and creative ways. It offers much to the discourse of language variation and sociocultural expression of self. The language used in Rap music, which is broadly classified as the hip-hop nation language, originated in AAL (Finegan & Rickford, 2004; Alim, 2008). Alim (2015) claims that “Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL)” is said to refer to the language used in the Hip Hop Nation (HHN) where its members “practice and or appreciate Hip Hop’s expressive culture” (p. 850). HHNL is just one of the various languages Black Americans have in the linguistic repertoire. As will be seen in my dissertation, this is evidenced by several stylistic and sociolinguistic features: language variation in rappers' lyrics, gender differences, rhyme structural patterns, stylistics, pragmatic implications, and identity construction techniques.

This is not to say that previous work has not been done to highlight the close connection between artists’ use of Black language features and local sociolinguistic patterns. Using Rap artist Nelly’s lyrics as a starting point, Blake & Shousterman (2010) provided a diachronic analysis of “the urr variable” in St. Louis AAL. Nelly speaks the St. Louis variety of AAL, where “vowels in the words *here* and *there* are centralized to sound like [hɜ̃] and [ðɜ̃]” (p. 232). Blake & Shousterman employ an auditory and acoustic examination of interview data sourced from the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection (WHMC) and the Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE) (p. 231). They first present sociophonetic evidence from the interview data that the “urr variable” is present in St. Louis AAL. In the second part of the study, they show that rappers like Nelly and Chingy’s usage of the “urr variable” is more than an idiosyncratic rhyming pattern. The rappers in this area utilize an “indexically linked” variable to a St. Louis identity in

the hip-hop world. Thus, they are playing into a co-construction of identity with the community members in St. Louis and the artists themselves. It further represents a rich sociolinguistic pattern in local language forms that are exploited in their music.

Similarly, Devonish (2006) explored the pronunciation of diphthongs in Jamaican Creole in Dancehall music by artist Mr. Vegas. Mr. Vegas, a Jamaican Creole speaker, manipulated the pronunciation of diphthongs to creatively reverse the vowels of words, to fit the overall rhyme scheme in the song “Heads High.” According to Devonish, this is done partially to shroud the taboo meaning of the song lyrics—women should refuse to give oral sex to a man and keep their pride and their heads high and not do a demeaning act such as that. For example, the lines that Devonish provides as an example are:

Edz ai, kil dem wid yu nou

Jos mek a hwai nuu yu naa blou

“Heads high, kill them with your ‘no’

Just make that boy know that you don’t blow (that is, perform oral sex)” (p. 77).

In this song, /nuo/ and /bluo/, which normally rhyme with /tuo/ “toe” in Jamaican Creole, as /nou/ and /blou/, which would rhyme with /kou/ “cow” (p. 77). This phonological pattern, /uo/ to /ou/, exists in the language in a very limited capacity, with a small number of lexical items ending in /l/. These lexical items are /uol/ “old”, /buol/ “bowl,” and /kuol/ “cold,” with the alternative forms, /oul/, /boul/, and /koul/ (p. 78). Specifically, Devonish shows that Vegas demonstrated intimate native-speaker knowledge of the vowel system in Jamaican Creole to create a catchy song that will appeal to Jamaican listeners for his creative application of a recognized phonological sound pattern.

These projects can show that what rappers are doing are not anomalies but are exploiting and representing local speech patterns through the creative usage of local language forms. With an interdisciplinary perspective, we can bring into view a more complete understanding of AAL linguistic usage in Rap songs beyond traditional variationist sociolinguistic study and instead underscore the value of the art form for a nuanced understanding of the interdependency of culture and linguistic expression in a speaker's creation of self. By employing interdisciplinary methods, my dissertation intends to answer the call in Geneva Smitherman's foreword to *Roc the Mic Right* to continue to show the value of Hip Hop culture in all aspects to get to the "truth about the language of our people" through interdisciplinary methods (Alim, 2008: vii). This call is also not unique to Hip Hop linguistics studies, and there is also a call for more interdisciplinary research in academia.

As previously stated, academia benefits from increased interdisciplinary research to further explain researchable phenomena. There have also been considerable pushes to integrate more interdisciplinary methodologies across linguistics. Cheshire (2005) argues that discourse-oriented analysis complements an analysis of syntactic variation of spoken language to help identify "prefabricated" structures and shows how speakers use syntactic structures in spoken interaction. She argues that generative analysis of syntax would only provide parts of the explanation since, at its conception, generative theory was not concerned with externalized language performance. Bradley (2017) also claims that as a field, linguistics is made interdisciplinary due to its implications and applications across "every field of inquiry which includes human behavior, for technological and economic development in a global society, and the health of cultures and institutions." Considering this, the current project analyzes Rap music by adapting sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and ethnomusicology frameworks to discuss creativity.

As a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by rhythmic, electronically based music, Rap is an all-inclusive creative process from the lyrics to the rhythm structure. Because of this fact, Rap lyrics should be transcribed to honor their total creative usage—one that incorporates information from rhythm, rhyme, rhythm-to-rhyme pairing structure, style, and identity creation in all lyrical contexts (Bradley, 2009: xviii-xx). I will analyze Rap artists' lyrics, focusing on lyrical content/structure and rhythmic structure while considering how gender and identity interface with stylistic performance using a unification of existing frameworks in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and ethnomusicology. While I am pulling from these seemingly disparate approaches, the hybrid product that can be achieved when combining them helps to create a fuller sociolinguistic story of Rap music.

For the first study, an ethnomusicology framework provides a structural view of rhyme-rhythmic patterning, which provides a nuanced understanding of creativity in Rap music. In the second study, the combined sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological frameworks of stylistic bricolage and chronotope and an ethnomusicology framework will be used to compare rappers' identity performance in their lyrical content both synchronically and diachronically. The dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter 2.0 is the literature review and research questions; Chapters 3.0 and 4.0 present the main studies, the associated methodology, and the discussion; and Chapter 5.0 is the conclusion.

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter outlines the theoretical considerations and foreshadows the discussion for Study 1: On Rhythm-Rhyme Structural Creativity in Rap Music (Chapter 3.0) and Study 2: The Multiverse of Creative Chronotopic Identity in Rap (Chapter 4.0). In several sections of my literature review, there will be hyperlinks (in blue underlined text) to timestamped YouTube videos, so the reader should click on these to provide context if you aren't familiar with the examples.

2.1 The Creativity Conundrum: E-creative v. G-creative

The generative structure of Rap music is found in a rapper's creative rhythm-rhyme patterning. At its core, generative creativity gets at a model that describes what goes on behind the scenes within cognition. The generative creativity model asserts the innate and rule-driven universal system of grammar and an elegant system of finite constraints to create or generate infinite novel words and sentences. These infinite possibilities are constrained by rules and native-speaker judgments to dictate and manage the constraints. It is in generative creativity that structure is found.

My first research question asks if rappers express individual creativity in their sampling strategies; if so, how? However, before sampling and the relevance of studying Rap music tradition can be discussed, what is meant by *individual creativity* in both a broad sense and linguistics sense must be developed. The individual is conceptualized here following Johnstone (2000) as a singular

person (speaker, artist, etc.) who draws on a unique set(s) of linguistic resources and makes *creative* uses of these resources (407). A thread that will be followed throughout both studies is the notion of creativity and how that materializes in a rapper's style through song lyrics' content, rhyme structure, and rhythmic structure.

So, what is creativity? Many puzzles complicate linguistic theory, with creativity being one of them. The term creativity is “now both widespread and ill-defined” (Bergs, 2019, p. 173), whose “definitions and applications [...] emerged [depending on] discipline and relevant trends at that time” (Weiss & Wilhelm, 2020, p. 4). *Creativity* is conceptualized as a continuum between poles: 1) *G-creativity*, or generative creativity, is the generation of a linguistic product out of a system of a fixed set of rules (i.e., the scaffolding that makes a work as identifiable as a work); 2) *E-creativity*, or expressive creativity, is the generation of a linguistic product that enlarges or expands said system (i.e. these are the elements touched by unique stylistic choices that one makes). This notion of creativity draws from Sampson's (2016) F-creative and E-creative dichotomy and Zawada's (2009) view of creativity as a continuum between Sampson's dichotomies.

According to Sampson (2016), creativity is a concept that can be parsed in two different ways depending on the baseline in which you are attempting to describe something as *creative*: F-creative and E-creative. He also argues that if something does not fit the criteria of E-creative, then it is not creative in a general sense. First, fixed creative, or *F-creative*, describes the activities that produce examples drawn from a fixed and known range. This notion of creativity, Sampson claims, includes activities, such as mathematics and linguistic “creativity,” that can produce examples that stem from a fixed and known (though infinitely extensive) range, which he terms as *fixed creative* or *F-creative* (p. 18). Regarding linguistics, Sampson argues that Chomsky's (1966) understanding

of creativity is not creative in the general sense. Chomsky's creativity in generative theory asserts an "open-endedness" that allows native speakers of any given language to produce and comprehend a theoretically infinite large set of novel sentences (qt. in (Sampson, 2016, p. 15). To rephrase, Zawada (2009) asserts that generative creativity is considered as only the "ability of the ideal speaker in a homogenous speech community to combine a *finite known* stock of elements based on a *finite* known stock of computational patterns" (p. 236). Therefore, generative creativeness is like that of mathematics with infinite numerical possibilities with a fixed number of parameters set by theorems and ways to form equations. Linguistic creativity does not generate anything new but follows a limited set of rules, thus fixed or *F-creative*. Therefore, generating the most complex sentence out of a finite set of rules can only be *F-creative* and does not break the mold, which Sampson claims to be E-creative.

According to Sampson, *Enlarging/extending creative*, or *E-creative*, describes those activities outside the discipline of linguistics that produce examples that enlarge our understanding of the range of possible products. He claims that this idea of creativity produces examples that stem from a boundless "range" of activities. These are activities such as visual arts (painting and sculpting), aural (plays and poetry reciting), and written arts-based activities (written poetry and novels). Outside of language examples, artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jackson Pollock, and Pablo Picasso all created artifacts, albeit controversial, that were entirely unpredictable by the rules of the system: what makes art, art (Zawada, 2009). Though he has a good point to bring up that there are two very different ideas of creativity, Sampson's argument of generativity "merely" being a fixed entity like that of mathematics is a gross simplification of creativity in this sense.

If you are questioning the dichotomic distinction that Sampson makes, you should. Sampson is misclassifying generativity by describing generative creativity as a fixed entity. Also,

limiting the idea of generative creativity as *F-creative* obscures the idea that language behavior can be *E-creative*, of which linguistic theory has little to say. Sampson (2016) makes note of this. He asserts that “if someone believes syntax in some human language truly is *F-* but not *E-creative*, he should presumably expect linguists to be able to make progress in developing a scientific theory of the syntax of that language” (p. 23). Thus, activities describing generative creativity will be referred to as *G-creative* so as not to limit the idea of generative creativity to a fixed entity like that of Sampson. In seeing no issue with the terminology of expanded creativity, *E-creative* will still refer to “creative” activities outside of linguistics. In supplement, creativity in this project will be viewed as a continuum following Zawada (2009), who claims that based on real-life utterances, it is much more challenging to differentiate between the two complex notions of creativity presented in Sampson (2016) as a dichotomy.

As I propose in both studies, *E-creativity* presents itself in lyrical text-setting (rhyme-rhythm patterning), digital musical sampling, and identity construction. As argued in Study 1, rappers express their individual creativity (*E-creativity*) in their choice of sampling strategies (*G-creativity*). When rappers (samplers) utilize a sampled beat in their work, especially that of other rappers, they tend to emulate elements of the sampled rapper (in lyrics or flow). We must define flow structure in Rap because, according to Adams (2009), “though rappers rarely concern themselves with defining the terms that they use, flow has become one of the most important ways that rappers and audiences distinguish among various styles of rapping and make value judgments about other rappers.” So why should we look at the structure and content of Rap lyrics? These elements go into the judgment of style. These rappers (samplers) also adapt these same elements to their unique style of Rap. Therefore, rappers express their individual creativity in their sampling strategies by adapting the samples into their style with their subject matters (content) or rhythm-

to-rhyme pairings (flow). As shown in Study 2, G-creativity presents itself in the structural elements of the rhyme-to-rhythm pairings, which serve as a point of comparison for flow to be included in the stylistic bricolage at the dispensation of each artist.

2.2 Style, Stylistic Bricolage, and the Language of Rap

Generally, style is defined as “a way of doing something, especially one that is typical of a person, group of people, place, or period” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.b.). For example, this can be seen in how a pimp is characterized. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a pimp is a “man who controls prostitutes, especially by finding customers for them, and takes some of the money that they earn,” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.a.). Katt Williams’s character, Money Mike, in the movie [Friday After Next](#), represents such a pimp character (Movieclips, 2018):



Figure 1: [Money Mike from Friday After Next \(2002\)](#)

A pimp has a particular way of walking. Money Mike has a limp and cane, though he has a switchblade in the abovementioned clip. Pimps also have a specific way of dressing. This usually involves wearing a brightly colored suit or fancy clothes with well-kept hair. Money Mike, for example, is wearing a leopard-print suit, matching hat, and freshly curled hair. Lastly, pimps also have a particular way of speaking or acting, which is usually outwardly aggressive and dramatic, though it may seem polite at first. In the clip, Money Mike politely introduces himself and his “woman,” Donna, to Craig and Day-Day, cousins who work security for the strip mall where Money Mike owns a store. Immediately after introducing Donna, Money Mike says to Donna, “That’s enough,” and puts her behind him, then berates her for not paying attention. Often quoted by fans of Friday After Next, the conversation between Money Mike (MM) and Donna (D) is as follows:

MM: “Speaking of cockroaches, where was your antennas when them niggas was stealing my shit out the store?”

D: “I I didn’t see them take anything.”

MM: “You didn’t see them take anything. Well, look next time! Use your eyes! They ain’t supposed to just be hazel. They supposed to do some goddamn work around here! This ain’t for play. I don’t do this for fun!

D: “I’m sorry.”

MM: “Don’t be sorry, ho, be careful! Lord Jesus” (Movieclips, 2018).

Given this example, style is more than just language use. It also involves holistic self-fashioning.

As delineated in section 1.1, style was traditionally considered limited to language use and sociolinguistic variation (Rickford & Eckert, 2001; Coupland, 2011). Before third/fourth-wave

sociolinguistics, style was defined as linguistic variants with specific social meanings, such as group membership, personal attributes, or beliefs, which can be expressed through language use (Eckert, 2000, p. 41). Motivated by the need to apply differing elements of style outside the language use, the definition of style has shifted to include malleable and multiple linguistic and non-linguistic resources. The process of stylistic bricolage was introduced to address the disconnect between linguistic and non-linguistic understandings of style. In the arts field, bricolage, from the French “bricoler,” which means “to tinker,” is defined as the construction or creation of a diverse range of available things, like D-I-Y projects (Cambridge University Press, n.d.; Oxford University Press, n.d.). Levi-Strauss’s (1966) work brought the concept of bricolage into linguistics. Levi-Strauss defines it as the skill of recombining whatever is at hand to create something new. Therefore, stylistic bricolage is “the process of combining socially meaningful signs into coherent styles” (Eckert, 2004, p. 43), following the work of Levi-Strauss (1966) and Hebdige (1979). In this kind of bricolage, speakers draw on “disparate linguistic resources and use them to construct something that exceeds the meaning of its individual components” (Zimman, 2017, p. 343). Thus, stylistic bricolage has become a sociolinguistic tool for understanding one’s identity performances as a collection of existing resources that create new or remix previous meanings.

This idea of stylistic bricolage will be underscored by Lanehart’s (2015) consideration of members of the Black community, rappers in this dissertation, using continual acts of identity to make choices of possible selves for how they present themselves to their audience. In light of understanding that “doing style” is a process, I want to show that rapper creativity in their music through linguistic resources and drawing on the all-encompassing African American sociocultural context. This underscores the point that Smitherman (1999) made in asserting that rappers are

griots or storytellers of the world and the circumstances surrounding them. This builds on what sociolinguists already embrace as a broader view of style, highlighting that style is more than speech and language use. However, since my dissertation is sociolinguistically situated, language use is foregrounded with interactions with other disciplines to locate comparisons and expansions where necessary.

Rappers utilize a collection of existing Hip-Hop Nation Language (HHNL) linguistic features in their lyrics to co-create and maintain their rap styles, such as particular flows (pacing, vocal modulations, and rhyme schemes) or different subject matters. According to Alim (2015), the Hip-Hop Nation (HHN) is a “diverse, imagined community whose members practice and or appreciate Hip Hop’s expressive culture” (p. 850). HHNL and its usage have been tied to the linguistic systems and cultural discursive modes of African American oral tradition by deriving from and reinventing it. Alim also presents HHNL's tenets, which include but are not limited to asserting that HHNL is rooted in AAL communicative practices, it’s an interdependent combination of speech, music, and literature, and inextricably linked with the sociopolitical context in the Hip-Hop Nation (p. 851-852). Thus, HHNL reflects and expands the African American Language and its usage.

Importantly, Alim highlights how rap artists’ definition of language (i.e., speaking the language of art) often includes aesthetic and stylistic choices (creative use of silence and syllabic stress); language ideologies and processes of identification; sociopolitical (and cultural) contexts of language use in Hip-Hop; and various cultural discursive modes (call and response, signifyin', etc.) (p. 851). Understanding the language of rappers is multifaceted, so an adaptation of stylistic bricolage should be used to realize rapper identities by identifying the collection of existing resources from the HHN used in their identity-making or acts of identity chosen through a selection

of possible selves. Rather than looking at one style or stylistic feature and tracking it across rappers, I am starting with the individual rapper and seeing what elements from HHN and HHNL are used to create each rapper's notable personas. Rappers have the choice of possible selves through the collection of linguistic categories and sub-categories, as delineated by Edwards (2009), which is established in a Rap community of practice (Eckert, 2000).

2.3 Style in Rap and Rap's Community of Practice

Established and argued for by Edwards (2009), style in Rap incorporates two main aspects: content and flow (p. x). The content is the primary subject matter in a song's lyrics. Topics can include real-life (autobiographical experience), fictional, controversial (reflection of harsh reality/possibility of (fantasy), conscious (generally positive/call for change/advancement), and or club/party content (Edwards, 2009, pp. 3-20). There are particular ways of structuring content, i.e., braggadocio (such as claims of being the best rapper ever), conceptual (lyrics centered around a concept), story, abstract (written with cryptic and figurative language), or humorous (30-39). The tools for creating content are not unlike poetic devices observed elsewhere in general language, such as imagery, similes/metaphors/analogies, slang, vocabulary, wordplay, and punch lines. Rap exploits the aesthetic features of language to communicate a message through song lyrics and rhythmic patterning, which directly ties into the notions of poetics in linguistics (Kaur, 2015). Lastly, flow refers to the rhythms and rhymes that a song contains. Both studies described will highlight the patterns of flow, that is, the types of rhyme schemes (multi-/monosyllabic, end-rhymes, multiple rhymes per line, or pacing differences) present in the song lyrics and the content to inform how an artist identifies. So, in answering the call of Rickford & Eckert (2001) and

Coupland (2011) to expand notions of style to different cultural and theoretical perspectives, Edwards (2009) asserts that Rap style includes the bidirectional relation between (a) contextually dependent, social context-influenced speech and (b) socio-prosodic variation.

Importantly, Edwards' (2009) content and flow categories are not mutually exclusive; there are often multiple at play, which supports looking at the categories as fluid through stylistic bricolage. For example, with "[Rebirth of Slick \(Cool Like Dat\)](#)" by Digable Planets (DigablePlanetsVevo, 2009), the topic can be conscious and club/party content, with the structure being braggadocio and conceptual. The infectious and memorable rhythmic track and the smooth delivery of the rhymes make "Rebirth of Slick" able to be danced to. One of the most quotable lyrics and reused excerpts is the first chorus seen in example (1),

- (1) We be to rap what key be to lock,
But I'm cool like that
I'm cool like dat" (Butler et al., 1992).

With the former example (1) and considering the rest of the song, "Rebirth of Slick" has a braggadocious and conceptual structure because they are saying how important they are to hip hop just because they are cool (braggadocio). They continue to emulate that concept throughout the song (conceptual). Considering the following lines as examples (2) and (3):

- (2) We be to rap what key be to lock.
"We are to rap what keys are to locks."
(3) We, like the breeze, flow straight out our lids.
"We are like the breeze that flows straight out of our heads." (Butler et al., 1992).

Both examples (2) and (3) employ wordplay, similies ("we like the breeze"), metaphor ("we be to rap..."), and imagery (Rap being a lock, flow like a breeze out their heads–lids). These uses of the

term ‘flow’ also add to the braggadocious nature of the piece by casting their lyricism as natural and effortless. Thus, it flows.

Study 2 explores how rappers deploy linguistic resources to create stylistic identities within the Rap community of practice. The characterization holds, per Eckert’s (2000) definition, as a collection of people engaged in a particular enterprise (p. 35). This framework helps us understand the nuanced ways Rappers construct and perform identity. As Eckert (2000) explains, people’s participation in a community of practice “depends on where they find themselves in the world as embodied in such things as class, age, ethnicity, and gender” (p. 40). Returning to the discussion of style for a moment, Adams (2009) also describes style as “what an artist puts into a work and what an audience gets out of it.” (p. 104). As stated plainly, this conceptualization of style incorporates an analysis of the amalgamation of an artist’s choices to create the work and how an audience interprets the organization of language in their art, i.e., a kind of interaction. This notion of style can account for the terms of an individual artist’s styles and some of the wider stylistic groups that artists are involved in, such as what Eckert refers to as a community of practice. Therefore, the project will also explore what that framed participation could look like.

The Rap community of practice can be understood in a gendered sense because of the content of their lyrics and how rappers portray themselves in their music, which is commented on by female rappers, such as Megan Thee Stallion. Megan Thee Stallion, a Black female rapper from Houston, Texas, notes this double standard on female rappers aptly in an interview with *The Fader* magazine (seen below in the excerpt for example (4):

- (4) Being a girl too—they criticize you [black female rappers] harder than they criticize men [...] If I was out there making little noises like Uzi and Cardi be making, they would not rock with that. And not saying that they don’t be going hard, because we

definitely finna turn up to both of them, but if it was a chick, like—no (Burney, 2019).

Megan Thee Stallion’s critique of the appropriateness of stylistic (i.e., E-creative) identity-making in Rap music is not devoid of significant cultural norms of gendered speech and conduct. Thus, something outside of the lyrics themselves and embedded in the surrounding culture seems to dictate the “appropriate conduct” of black female rappers. There appears to be a separate sub-community of practice that dictates different social “allowances” for performed male—versus female-identifying rappers. What also comes into play regarding Black male rappers and commercial hip-hop culture is the stereotypical representation of Black men and masculinity where they are seen as, and perform in many cases, being a "thug" (Belle, 2014). Being a "thug" is the portrayal of Black men being seen as aggressive, violent, and angry, which are remnants of an intellectualization of racial stereotypes being taunted by white hegemony for the sake of commercialism and making a profit (Belle, 2014). Therefore, what makes money contributes to how male and female rappers represent themselves in their music.

To better understand how these play out, I will reflect on the gendered ways that rappers craft lyrics. Recall that Rap lyrics are argued here to reflect the surrounding Black culture. The gendered ways that rappers craft lyrics have much to do with patterns that exist within African American Women’s Language (AAWL) and how it differs from Black Masculine Language (BML).

Most of what is known about language is knowledge through studies about male usage, and AAL is no different (Labov, 1972; Lanehart, 2009; Morgan, 2015; Kirkland, 2015). According to Kirkland (2015), following Young (2004) and Smitherman (2006), BML is not a language only used by Black men but a “communicative practice associated more or less with Black male

identities” (p. 835). Here, Kirkland argues that BML has served several capacities in Black culture. One capacity was the function of BML in Black social life as a strategy “for subverting power through linguistic play” (p. 838). This can be seen in the creation of BML cultural scripts and proverbs, such as example (5) seen below:

(5) Yo homie! Don’t hate the playa; hate the game. (p. 838)

Here is a commentary on life as a Black person where life will throw at you what it’s meant to, so one shouldn’t fault the person, but the cards that you were dealt. There is an explanation of macro-consciousness (i.e., *the game*) while acknowledging the endearing relationality of the addressee and addressor (i.e., *homie* and *playa*) in that macro-consciousness. This is commenting on reality for what it is by calling it exactly what it is. Even phonological processes and syntactic elements do this power subversion work in BML, including but not limited to examples 6-8 seen below:

(6) the replacing of -er with -a for *playa*,

(7) pronouncing -ing as -in, as in *chillin'*,

(8) using invariant *be*, *I be the king supreme*

All these promote a cool effect in speech, or “natural smoothness of sound concerned with cadence and flow, which also evokes rhythm and confidence” (Rickford & Rickford 2000; Smitherman 1977, 1999). This subversive cool effect exhibited in BML contrasts with the harsh, emotion-evoking treatment of the Black community during slavery. Therefore, a Black man keeping their cool in the face of adversity, especially in the way they communicate, is a subversive act of identity-making. Importantly, these examples and evocations are all present in HHNL.

Though at their core, they are associated with Black male/masculine identities (Kirkland, 2015), Black female speakers can also tap into this resource to communicate.

Equally important yet underresearched are the contributions of Black women to language use in linguistic studies. The language that males spoke represented the entire ethnicity, not unlike the research on white languages (Henley, 1995; Lakoff, 1975). Morgan (2015) highlights research on how African American women's speech is partly characterized by indirectness. When one reflects on African American oral traditions, the first things that come to people's mind are *signifyin'* and *playin' the dozens*. *Signifyin'* and *Playin' the Dozens* are described as ritualized forms of play, especially among African American males. However, where these are *games* associated with African American males, to African American women, they are only a part of a more expansive and intricate concept of indirection. This concept refers to a purposeful and intentional lack of straightforwardness in which African American women participate. African American women can converse, conveying differing meanings without directly addressing the subject of interest. This is mostly seen in everyday gossip episodes where a woman might say something like the following:

(9) A: *You know who* went to the store.

B: Now they *know* they wrong for going to the store on a day like this.

A: Yeah girl, I don't know what *they* were thinking.

Now, this is an imaginary example, but to understand who is being talked about and what is so important about a day like this, there needs to be an understanding between interlocutors about the subject and situation. Marjorie Goodwin (1990) analyzes this concept of indirectness in he-said/she-said disputes among African American girls. In this study, African American girls go to "elaborate lengths to determine who said what behind someone's back" (Morgan, 2015, p. 825). Importantly, African American women retain this indirectness ritual they may have used as

children, as in Goodwin's (1990), to incorporate into the everyday conversation for navigating social face. I find in study 2 that women are still participating in this.

I argue in my dissertation that the boundaries between language use, social context, and stylistic fashioning are all fluid and permeable. Therefore, a conception of style, especially those describing cultural art forms like Rap music, must account for the fluidity of these dimensions. A conception of individual and communal style for Rap music, in particular, includes rhythm-to-rhyme patterning, linguistic choices shown through language and lyrical dexterity, sampling strategies, identity construction techniques, and how these compare and differ across social contexts such as space-time and gender. Therefore, in both studies, I showcase how individual rappers are creative within and outside these former dimensions by comparing inter- and intra-speaker lyrical examples. In summary, studying differences in performing a study, as shown in Study 2 in my dissertation, shows how male and female-identifying rappers perform gender. Doing such studies as these may tell us more about how BML and AAWL is used in Rap lyrics. This study provides a window into how we can look at gender performance. Though it is not the focus of the analysis, the intention is to provide examples of how differences and comparisons can be made through looking at lyrical content.

2.4 Ethnomusicology Approach to Comparing Rap Creativity

To define rhythm-to-rhyme pairing structure in Rap music, it is necessary to take pieces of knowledge from ethnomusicology to explain some of the techniques outside of the field of linguistics to build those interdisciplinary bridges. "Ethnomusicology is a somewhat young discipline that grows as the years pass (Starks, 2000). There seems to be no singular definition of

ethnomusicology. Still, all studies in this field generally concern the “cultural study of the music of mankind” (Starks, 2000, p. 224). As detailed by Jennifer Post (2011), Ethnomusicology explores the “relationships between music and other forms of cultural expression,” [...] and relates them to other areas such as anthropology, linguistics, gender studies, and cultural studies, “that are typically necessary for [an] in-depth understanding of musical expression in its social and cultural context” (p. 15).

University explanations of the field on introductory websites support these ideas. For example, the Ethnomusicology subdepartment housed in the Department of Music at the University of Pittsburgh says that Ethnomusicology faculty “study and teach courses on some of the most exciting and timely areas of music research today including (1) global popular music; (2) music, labor, and value; (3) gender and sexuality; (4) media and technology; (5) sound studies; (6) cultural rights and advocacy; and (7) sound archives and repatriation (University of Pittsburgh, n.d.). According to the University of Toronto, ethnomusicology, as a field, is

1. a global approach to music, regardless of area of origin, style, or genre;
2. an understanding of music as a social practice: viewing music as a human activity that is differently shaped by social and cultural environments;
3. an engagement in ethnographic and historical research: ethnographic fieldwork and/or historical inquiry that includes participating in and observing the music being studied, frequently gaining facility in another music tradition as a performer or theorist, and pursuing other sorts of deep-cultural understanding through music (n.d)

Thus, ethnomusicology's core is a deep cultural understanding of music as a social practice. The tenets of ethnomusicology align with the enterprise of sociolinguistics, viewing language and

style as a social practice determined by the actions of humans and shaped by different social and cultural environments.

According to Bradley's (2009) book, *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*, the task of an analyst of Rap music is first to figure a way to transcribe lyrics to "represent" the words on the page in a way that is as close as possible to what we hear with our ears. He argues that transcribing lyrics to the beat is an intuitive way of translating the lyricism we hear into what is read without compromise (xviii-xx). Therefore, Bradley's call is for Rap analysts to find a way to transcribe what makes sense for comparing rhythm-to-rhyme. Bradley (2009) defines Rap's stylistic conventions as partly instrumentation structure (rhythm) and partly rhyming structure paired with it. Rap music is almost always 4/4 time (meaning four beats in a rhythmic measure) with a strong kick-drum downbeat on beats one and three and a snare backbeat on beats two and 4. The beat (percussive rhythmic track) is the centerpiece of rhythmic performances such as in Rap music. This includes the MC flow, usually in the beat's pocket (being in the tempo and following the groove of the instrumentation you are performing with). The rhythm (the percussive backbeat) and the rhyme (flow – tempo, pitch, stress, and rhyming patterns) work together and usually predominate over any harmonies or melodies in the song. Flow includes how a rapper uses rhythm and articulation in their lyrical delivery.

Flow is an important part of studying Rap music, but is not dissimilar in concept to prosody. As Gilbers et al. (2020) state, "Flow is to rap, what prosody is to language; both are concerned with the rhythmic and melodic aspects of their respective domains" (p. 713). This means that flow should be included in any study of the rhythm-rhyme patterning of Rap performance, as prosody would need to be consulted in studies of speech. One might even think there wouldn't be much difference in studying Rap or other genres of music like folk, country, pop, or classical music.

However, what is novel in Rap music that is not considered when studying other genres is the relationship between rhythm and pitch (intonation) in Rap music. In other genres, rhythm seems subservient to proper melodies and timing. Thus making it possible to study them separately.

However, when considering the flow of rap, the instrumental rhythm and lyrical delivery are intrinsically linked. Therefore, any method exploring rhythm-rhyme structure in rap must properly account for components of flow. Gilbers et al. (2020) took up such an endeavor to delineate regional differences in rapper flow between East and West Coast rappers using a novel acoustic and phonetic analysis. In this study, they have a quantitative phonetic focus on rhythm and melody. They acknowledge that there can be identifiable rhythmic accents and the metrical characteristics of Rap and that rhyme techniques show an "extra level of rhythmic depth" (p.). This aspect is where my dissertation fits in nicely. Whereas Gilbers et al. (2020) take an acoustic perspective and prosodic methodology, I use a sociolinguistic perspective with poetic and ethnomusicological methodology.

The structural ethnomusicology approach in my dissertation is adapted from Adams's (2009) article, "On the Metrical Techniques of Flow in Rap." This paper is a musicology framework for analyzing flow (structure), explores the concept of flow in Rap, and provides a framework for the comparison of such flow in Rap songs by offering examples of lyrical charts showcasing how "a rapper uses rhythm and articulation in their lyrical delivery." Adams asserts that flow's main components are the placement of accented syllables, the placement of rhymed syllables, the correspondence between rhyming and rhythmic units, and the number of syllables per measure. Thus, Adams's lyrical charts (examples seen below) measure such components of Rap music:

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1	BAS-		ket-	ball		IS		my	FAV-		'rite	sport				l
2	LIKE	the	way	they	drib-	ble	up	and	DOWN		the	court			just	like
3		I'm		the	KING	on		the	MIC-		ro-	phone			so	is
4	DOC-		tor	J		and		MO-		ses		Ma-	lone			l
5	LIKE		slam		DUNKS		('n)	TAKE		it	to	the	hoop			my
6	FAV-		'rite	play		is		the	AL-		ley	oop		l	like	the
7	PICK	and		ROLL		l	like	the	GIVE	and		GO		'cause	it's	
8	BAS-		ket-	ball		(a)	Mis-	ter	KUR-	tis		Blow				

Figure 2: Lyrical Chart from [Kurtis Blow's "Basketball" First Verse \(1984\)](#) (Twilite, 2011)

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1													Sol-	id	gold	
2	CROWN		is	SHIN-		in'	we're	BLIND-		din'	like	some	DIA-	monds		l'm re-
3	CLI-	nin'	in	the	SKY	on	a	cloud		with	sil-	ver	LIN-	ings	dou-	ble
4	BREAST-	ed			Bul-	let-	proof	VEST-	ed		well	pro-	TEC-	ted		
5	The	heart	the	rib-	CAGE		the	chest		and	so-	lar	PLE-	xus	cast-	in'
6	STONES				crack-	in'	two	hun-	dred-	and	six		BONES			and watch
7	yo'	ass		get	blown		to a sea of	FIRE		and		brim-		STONE		
8		How	dare	you	'proach	it	with	DIM		poems			the	ov-	er	fiend
9	like		no-	ah	bean		green		souls		with	a	sol-	dier	mean	
10		the	grand	ex-	qui-	site	im-	pe-		ri-	al	wiz-	ard	oh	is	it the R[i]-
11	za	rec-	tor	come	to	pay	your	ass	a	vi-	sit		Lo-	cal	bi-	o
12	chem-	i-	cal		un-	i-	ver-	sal	gi-	ant	the	black		ge-	ne-	ral Lick-
13	shots	to	Da-	vy		CROCK	ett		on	the	bi-	cen-	tenn-	i-	al Hap-	py
14		mil-	len-	i-	um	two	thou-		sand	mic-	ro-	chips		two	shots	of pen-
15	i-	cil-	lin	burst	out		pure a-	dre-	na-	lin	son	it's	time	for	bou-	tin'
16		It's	a	mile-	age	you're		re-	sem-	blin'	nig-	gaz	who	like	fol-	low- in'
17	Trapped	in-	side	your	pro-	duct	like	a	ge-	nie	in-	side	the	bot-	tle	and...

Figure 3: Lyrical Chart from [The RZA's Third Verse in Wu-Tang Clan's "Wu-Gambinos" \(1995\)](#) (Brooklyn Zoo, 2012)

As seen in Figures 2 and 3 above, these lyrical charts are like metrical stress grids in phonology (Gilbers et al., 2020), as they display stress patterns through syllables in bold-faced type and capital letters. The rhyme structure is depicted using different color groupings. Rhythm structure is shown in the first row of the charts (e.g., 1, x, y, z, 2, x, y, z, etc.). The rhythm structure here shows the beats of the song. A beat is the basic unit of time in music and music theory. For instance, it is what someone can tap their toe to when listening to the drum beat of a particular song.

Rhythm in music is characterized by a recurrent arrangement of stressed and unstressed beats, i.e., strong and weak beats, which are then divided into what is known as bars organized by time signature. The time signature of a song specifies how many beats are in a bar. For example, the time signature used in most Rap music is 4/4 (four-four) time. This would mean that there are four beats in each bar, and usually, there is a strong beat on beats 2 and 4 and weak beats on 1 and 3 to create the base rhythm of a Rap song. Each line in the chart is associated with a bar, and the x, y, and z are the beat subdivisions down to a 16th note. This usually means that a bass drum would play on all four beats, and the accent would be with a snare drum played with the bass on beats 2 and 4 in the lyrical chart. This would create a basic 4/4 time beat. This is separate from the tempo of the beat, which is measured by beats per minute (BPM). For the rhythm patterning of the song, depending on the individual rapper's flow, a rapper would also have word/syllabic stress on or around beats 2 and 4. For example, Ludacris rapped the popular children's book [Llama Llama Red Pajama](#)² (Power 106 Los Angeles, 2017) to a 4/4 time beat. One can hear in this song that there

² The example from Ludacris features the instrumental track to rapper KYLE ft. Kodak Black's iSPY (remix), which Ludacris is rapping over.

are beats and word stresses on or around beats 2 and 4. Lastly, the figure delineates the rhyme structure by putting the different rhyme domains in different colored cells on the table.

For Kurtis Blow's verse shown in Figure 1, there are rhymed couplets (in orange, blue, green, and pink) in predictable locations at the end of a rhythmic/metrical unit (at or around beat four or the z column). The rhymes have the most instances on beat 4 (6/8)³, with only two on beat 1 (2/8). Kurtis has a relatively regular rhythm established with stresses on beat 1 (number columns, (13/18)), and only other instances on beat 4 (z columns, (5/18)). On par with other rappers in the earliest inceptions of Rap in the 1980s, these elements correspond to the rapper's tendency to favor a couplet end-rhyme scheme, where the rhymes fall on the last beat of the musical measure which signals the end of a poetic line (or, bar), and two lines in succession with end-rhymes (Bradley, 2009: 42). Adams (2009) compares the lyrical charts of Kurtis Blow's "Basketball" (2009) first verse and The RZA's verse in Wu-Tang Clan's "Wu-Gambinos" (1995).

As seen in Figure 2, RZA has an irregular rhythm with stresses that seem scattered throughout the bars in the lines. However, there are still generalizable patterns that can be seen. The stresses fall mostly on beat one (numbered columns), but there are instances of stress on beats 2 (2/16) and 4 (5/16). There are no instances on beat 3. As a generalization, RZA has stresses at the beginning of the bar. There are also many lengthy measures in how many syllables are put into each musical measure, with many irregular beat subdivisions to accommodate RZA's conversational tone, especially seen in rows 10 through 17. The rhyming and accented syllables

³ These statistics were not included in Adams (2009) but were gathered from his figures to make the comparisons more tangible to the reader. These simple statistics will be used to apply the methodology alongside the lyrical charts in both of the studies in my dissertation seen in Chapters 3 and 4.

are in increasingly unpredictable locations. Lastly, the rhymes do not correspond to the end of a bar, which is referred to as internal rhyme or enjambment. The rhymes coincide with the beginning of the bar, with most of them falling on beat 1 of the bar (19/35), six instances that fall on beat 3 (6/35), followed by the same amount of instances on beats 2 and 4 (5/35). With even these simple statistics, we can supplement our generalizations that the RZA's rhyme-to-rhythm pattern is rather unpredictable, with many varied instances of stress and rhyme, compared to the simplicity of Kurtis Blow's predictable patterning without much variation.

This musicology framework offers much to an interdisciplinary sociolinguistic analysis of Rap music by providing a standard of comparison for rappers' respective flows by establishing the G-creative structure within Rap music. It is also an informative visual resource for modeling rapper flow, which is why it is used in Study 1 (Chapter 3.0) and Study 2 (Chapter 4.0). However, Adams' (2009) model does not have much to say about how "sampling" could affect rhythm-to-rhyme pairings or flow, its importance to the Rap tradition, or its potential stylistic influence on pairing constraints.

2.5 Sampling and It's Importance to the Black Musical Tradition

As presented in section 2.4, digital music sampling takes a G-creative structure and interfaces E-creative elements. In other words, how rappers use a digital music sample is another fundamental way to express individual creativity. The tradition of sampling is familiar to music not just to Rap music. The idea of "sampling," in a broader sense, can be seen in quotations, paraphrasing, and reported speech from one's previous work or speech or taken from the work of others. These "samples" are another way to refer to intertextuality. Intertextuality was first defined

in the field of literary theory in which it “provides the reader with numberless ways of deciphering the texts including literary works because it considers a work of literature, as it views all texts, not as a closed network but as an open product containing the traces of other texts,” (Zengin, 2016, p. 300). More importantly, intertextuality focuses on how all texts, literary or otherwise, are interdependent. The notion of texts has been applied to written or literary texts and other media or non-literary fields, meaning it can apply to speech or other verbal art forms like songs (Zengin, 2016, p. 301). In the context of linguistic anthropology, Goodwin (2013) asserts that “human action is intensely, perhaps uniquely, cooperative, and individual actions are constructed by assembling diverse materials, including language structure, prosody, and visible embodied displays” (8). In other words, human action, e.g., verbal communication, is theorized as cooperative actions built by an amalgamation of reformulated chunks in a type of bricolage to harken back to Eckert (2000). Thus, “sampling” lends to a bricolage of human action that is interdependent on prior contexts to foster genuine understanding.

In musical composition, sampling can be described as taking a piece of a previously recorded musical track(s) or a sound(s) considered general noise and putting in a new musical track or structure. These *samples* can be a previously recorded drumbeat, melodic riff, adlib, lyrical content, etc., or sounds from everyday life, such as police sirens, gunshots, subway track sounds, etc. The tradition of musical sampling is common to the genre of Rap music. For classical music composers, sampling was ingrained into the creative process where “originality” was seen as a “process of selection, reinterpretation, and improvement, rather than an act of solitary genius” (Collins, 2008). For jazz composers and performers, quotation involves playing the melody of a completely different song over another chord progression.

Though the concept of incorporating *samples* was not new to music production, the introduction of digitization made the process of sampling markedly more efficient by “increasing the speed, accuracy, and degree of manipulation with which they could be achieved” (Behr et al., 2017, p. 230). Digital sampling, commonly associated with the genre of Rap music, is credited to Lee “Scratch” Perry, a Jamaican Dancehall musical producer, who invented “upsetter” rhythms that feature sound effects either layered over or substituting for beats in the musical track (Veal, 2018). Digital sampling takes a previously recorded musical track(s) or sound(s) and puts them in a newly produced musical track. The possibilities are nearly endless.

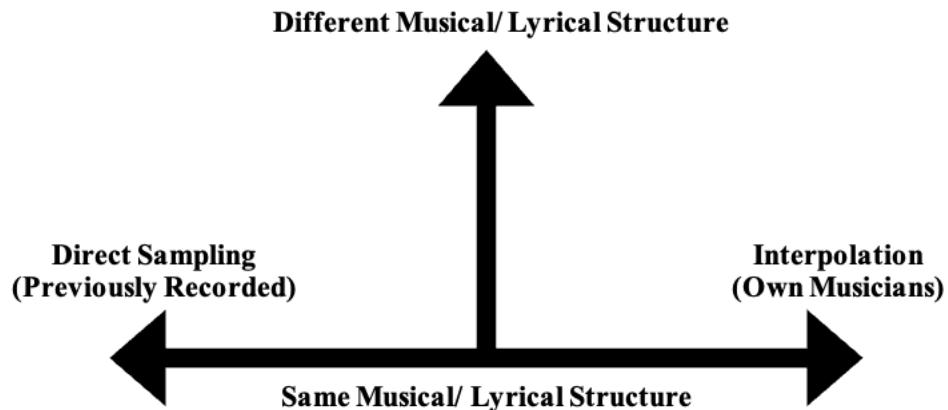


Figure 4: Sampling Continuum

Sampling exists in a continuum, as seen in Figure 3. To the left extreme, there is direct sampling, which is a producer of music taking part in a previously recorded instrumental, vocal track, or sound from a previously recorded source, whether a musical song or everyday life. The baseline of Figure 3 is the same musical structure, meaning there are no pitch changes, filtering, or other modifications to the track. As one adds alterations to the track, it changes the musical structure, thus the vertical aspect of the continuum. An example of a direct sample with the same

musical structure would be “[Mind Rain](#)” (Ama Hussla, 2008) by Joe Chambers⁴, sampled by DJ Premier in Nas’s “N.Y. State of Mind⁵.” An example of a direct sample with a different musical structure would be the vocal and rhythmic track “[I Call Your Name](#)” (Switch – Topic, 2018) by Switch, an R&B band from the 1980s, sampled in “[Throw Some D’s](#)” (RichBoyVevo, 2016) by Rich Boy. In this example, the producer Polow da Don put a sound filter and chopped the rhythmic beat to create a beat loop that sounds like [this](#)⁷ (songsnsamples, 2022). To the right extreme, we have interpolation, which could be many things. In plain speech, interpolation is not taking a piece of a previously recorded track but using one’s musicians to make the sampled sound or singing/rapping the lyrics from the previous work.

An example of an interpolation with the same musical/lyrical structure would be in the singer/producer Masego’s “[I Had A Vision](#)” (Masego, 2018), where he says, “Call her Aaliyah Rock the– Shut up you can’t clear that sample.” With this example, Masego sings the melody and lyrics of Aaliyah’s chorus in “[Rock The Boat](#)” (Legacy, 2013), where she says, “I want you to rock the boat.” An example of an interpolation with a different musical/lyrical structure would be in Coolio’s “[Gangsta’s Paradise](#)”⁸ (Tommy Boy, 2017), featuring L.V., who sings, “Been spending most our lives living in a gangsta’s paradise.” With this example, L.V. interpolates lyrics from

⁴ Jazz artist, song is from 1977, the hyperlink features how the sample is created from “Mind Rain” to make the instrumental track for Nas’ song.

⁵ Rapper, song is from 1994.

⁶ The sample can be heard for the first minute of the song.

⁷ This video features how the sample is made from “I Call Your Name” to make “Throw Some D’s”.

⁸ Coolio’s “Gangsta’s Paradise” also features a direct musical sample with the instrumental track of “Pastime Paradise.”

Stevie Wonder's "[Pastime Paradise](#)" (johnniewalker23, 2008), who says, "Been spending most their lives living in the pastime paradise."

Music is to be grounded as a cultural discourse, like how sociolinguistics grounds speech in the broader society. Therefore, the Rap genre of music, including sampling strategies, can reflect Black culture. Sampling in the context of Rap music also has a broader importance and tie to Black traditions such as oral tradition dominance, evidenced in the act of rapping and emphasis on rhythmic complexity, aligning with other African and African-derived musical traditions. To the effect of oral tradition dominance, Smitherman (1997) states that a rapper is a "postmodern African griot, the verbally gifted storyteller and cultural historian in traditional African society. As African America's 'griot' the rapper must be lyrically or linguistically fluent expected to testify, to speak the truth, to come wit it in no uncertain terms," (p. 4). Rappers are usually the spokesmen and the storytellers. Hip Hop critics like Rose (2008) in *The Hip Hop Wars* assert that Rap does not serve this griot function in the same ways as it was initially intended, seeing that Rap music, like many other things in the Western world, is influenced by the maleficent nature of capitalism. However, in most cases, some messages are transmitted in Rap music, which is why rappers and other musical artists have an audience. When even the rapper is gone, their stories are hidden within their songs, which are either played or recited to others and have synchronic and diachronic significance.

If someone looks at the development of rap over time, they will see that different songs mean different things for different generations of people, or some meanings stand the test of time. For example, when one hears DeBarge's main piano riff to [Stay with Me](#) (flybro213, 2007), a few songs and meanings can come to mind, depending on whom you ask and what era of music they listen to: 80s R&B, 90s Rap music, 2000s R&B, or current Rap music. Some may think of the

original R&B song by DeBarge, which was produced in 1983. If you ask a listener of 90s Rap music, Notorious B.I.G., aka Biggie’s song, “One More Chance / Stay with Me (Remix),” featuring Faith Evans, would come to mind. If you ask a listener of early 2000s R&B, Ashanti’s [Foolish](#) (ashanti, 2018) will come to mind. If you ask a listener of current Rap music, Moneybagg Yo’s song [Wockesha](#) (Moneybagg Yo, 2021) would come to mind. Biggie, Ashanti, and Moneybagg Yo were samplers of the original DeBarge song. Biggie’s, Ashanti’s, and DeBarge’s songs are similar in that they all have the lyrical content topic of failed relationships between a man and a woman for different reasons.

At the same time, Moneybagg Yo’s song detracts from that original meaning but also uses the idea in an E-creative way. The song is about drinking “lean,” or “wock.” This concoction contains a mix of codeine and the antihistamine promethazine combined with soda, cough syrup, candy, and, in some cases, alcohol. Drinking “lean” was popularized by DJ Screw, a Houston producer, who attributed the drug as a source of inspiration for the chopped-and-screwed Rap music style, which is characterized as slowed-down instrumental tracks with accented bass, which he created (Streit, 2018; Corcoran, 2019). Moneybagg Yo does anthropomorphize the drug as a woman who will never leave him like the other women in his life and can always depend on “wockesha.”

In Black culture, naming conventions are everything, especially since, during slavery, Black people were often not able to choose their names. Therefore, when they were able, many Black parents decided to go with unique names that no one else had, like “Milika, Shaday, and Jonelle, or names of significance, like Shahaadah (the first pillar of Islam),” to be as creative as possible (Dinwiddie-Boyd, 1994, p. 87). Creative naming is seen in multiple cultures but is mainly attributed to Black culture (Dinwiddie-Boyd, 1994). What’s important for Moneybagg Yo is that

he is tapping into this creative naming convention by adding -esha to wock. Kesha or Keisha or its other variations are specifically attributed to the Black community for females (Cook et al., 2014, p. 67). Therefore, with his creativity, he is tapping into a prolific female naming convention in the Black community to attribute how he feels about this drug to the fanbase he believes would understand where he is coming from—The Black community, specifically hip-hop culture. With that said, the line of demarcation is not always as straightforward as one may listen to all four songs by DeBarge, Biggie, Ashanti, and Moneybagg Yo. Nevertheless, the point is that different meanings get associated with rhythms over time.

As stated by Rose (1994), sampling is the “repetition and reconfiguration of rhythmic elements to illustrate heightened attention to rhythmic patterns and movement between patterns via breaks and points of musical rupture (p. 70). As one can hear, Rap producers create loops of musical sounds at critical moments where the established rhythm is manipulated—sometimes suspended (periods of silence, i.e., beat dropouts), and rhythmic lines reemerge at key relief points (when the established beat comes back in). Established rhythm manipulation occurs when there is a vocal (with no or limited instrumental accompaniment) or an instrumental solo (without vocals or limited vocals like ad-libs). Stevie Wonder’s “[For Once in My Life](#)” (Stevie Wonder, 2018) includes a harmonica solo and then comes back into a verse. In Rap songs, when producers sample, they will often loop a track that sounds like how the producers—Hector Delgado, Lord Flacko, and Friendzone—on A\$AP Rocky’s “Fashion Killa” sampled The Dream’s “Mr. Yeah” by changing the pitch and chopping the vocal and instrumental track. As seen in the previous [A\\$AP Rocky's "Fashion Killa"](#) (Songs and Samples, 2021), chopping refers to "altering [of] a sampled phrase [or break] by dividing it into smaller segments and reconfiguring them in a different order" (Schloss, 2004, p. 106). Samples are used as a reference point where repetition, recontextualization, or

intertextualization, are highlighted and privileged. Such a sampling process affirms Black musical history and locates “past” sounds in the present. In the process, Rap producers creatively use technology to reconstruct these past sounds and make them new.

Sampling, especially in the context of Rap, has been contextualized as “theft” in many realms (e.g., legal sphere with Copyright Laws). Viewing sampling as “theft” has formed a basis for a negative view of Rap as a genre, which isolates sampling in Rap from other types of musical borrowing in other genres (Arewa, 2006, p. 581). It seems to some degree that sampling is considered by some to be an easy way to mitigate the cost of producing original musical works, much like plagiarism in literature. Authorship is not essential to the performance of folktales in oral cultures, like that of African and African-derived cultures. The concept of authorship in sampling in legality is also problematic because it only accounts for singular ownership of work and does not properly account for community-owned or created works. Sampling is not used in musical production to create problems in authorship or further artistic plagiarism. As Daddy-O, Rap producer for Stetasonic, asserts,

- (10) Sampling isn't the lazy man's way. [...] When we sample a portion of a song and repeat it over and over, we can better understand the matrix of the song. I don't know how they made those old funk and soul records. We don't know how they miked the drums. But we can learn from their records (Rose, 1994, p. 79).

Sampling adds color and additional layers of meaning to music. As Draper (2018) asserts, incorporating samples into musical production shows that it is “part of a larger patchwork, in which something old becomes something new in the hands of a younger generation,” where “respects are being paid in the process” because “many songs might now be more recognizable for a track [in which] they were later sampled.”

Though some rhymes or lyrics become associated with a particular rapper, sampling is a process that helps later musical artists pay homage to previous artists by exposing them to their listeners, which gives way to communal authorship. Thus, sampling is also a kind of identity construction because there is an interaction between the rapper and the previous music sampled and between the rapper and their audience. Therefore, as rappers find and express their individuality in structuring their musical lyrics using G-creative structures, they demonstrate E-Creativity. When rappers (samplers) utilize a sampled beat in their work, especially that of other rappers, they tend to emulate elements of the sampled rapper (in lyrics or flow). Rappers (samplers) also adapt these same elements to their unique style of Rap. I will show that they express their individual creativity in their sampling strategies by adapting the samples into their style with their subject matters (content) or rhythm-to-rhyme pairings (flow).

2.6 Identity and Chronotopes in Rap Music

Many sociolinguistic scholars argue that identity is a configuration of self and the other, usually through individuals' everyday speech or narratives (Coupland, 2007; Tabouret-Keller, 2017). Identity construction for African Americans is also conceived of as a process of choosing from an inventory of “possible selves” through “acts of identity” (Lanehart, 2015). As stated previously, Rappers partially construct their identities through song. This is achieved through a bricolage of stylistic components within their lyrical content and rhythm-to-rhyme pairing. Using these notions of identity construction and stylistic bricolage, an explication in my dissertation is how a rapper’s identity is mapped in their songs and how this looks over time. This stylistic

bricolage of linguistic elements comes together in varied ways, using acts of identity to create a recognizable figure that takes the form of a particular rapper's persona by selecting possible selves.

As will become evident in study 2, the persons Shawn Carter, Dwayne Carter, Onika Maraj-Petty, and Melissa Elliott are not the same as the identities associated with JAY-Z, Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj, and Missy Elliott, respectively. These identities are also separate from other personas within and outside a given song. Though these lists of names identify the same physical bodies, they represent different facets of social identification through and outside their music. Each rapper's persona(s) does not just go away after the song is over but live in the audience's imaginations. Furthermore, rappers need an audience to co-construct their identity in the first place.

Recall in section 2.5 that song lyrics are to be considered an interaction where amalgamation of an artist's choices to create the work and how an audience interprets the organization of language in their art. This occurs in rapper identity-making when the audience is invited to compare one persona's presentation against others, a comparison that has differing semiotic implications that can vary depending on the rapper or song. Persona has largely been used to understand how social constructs or identities become linked with ways of speaking (Agha, 2003, 2005; Johnstone, 2017). Understanding (socio)linguistic variation through the lens of personae has allowed sociolinguist scholars to be able to study identity construction through the lens of individual interactions (micro-social) and being able to map these constructions of macro-social contexts, such as what can be seen in the wider communities in which they take place (D'Onofrio, 2020). This can also take the form of understanding the construction of personhood in specific places, such as what is seen in Johnstone et al. (2006), with exploring the enregisterment of Pittsburghese, and King (2018), with exploring social and linguistic diversity of African

Americans in Rochester, NY. Though a useful conception, "persona" does not neatly account for notions of time included in the exploration of the identity construction. However, such a conception exists in chronotope, the framework that separates physical and performed/embodied personas.

Following Bakhtin's literary analytical tradition, chronotopes have been defined as "depictions of place-time-and-personhood," which frame a reader's understanding of a novel's plot and content to apply to chronotopes of the quotidian (qt. in Agha, 2007, p. 320). For example, "Once upon a Time" would invoke the chronotope of a "fairytale," which can have certain expectations of the plot and characters. Therefore, in study 2, songs and their respective lyrics will be treated as chronotopic artifacts that create or comprise identity and persona creation in a particular time and social context. Blommaert and De Fina (2017) argue that chronotopes can be considered identity frames because the practices performed in identity-making typically demand a framing of "specific time-space conditions" (4). When these specific time-space framing conditions are not met, there are mismatches between presentations and chronotopic conditions. These mismatches cause audience speculation on the typical modes of presentation and interaction (i.e., what is appropriate in a particular setting).

In turn, chronotopes can be used as an identity frame because identity-making practices typically demand a framing of specific time-space conditions to understand the content and the context of identity. Therefore, a rapper's identity performance in a song's lyrics can be parsed more completely by identifying and comparing the specific time and social contexts of the rapper when the song was produced. Thus, using chronotopes as identity frames allows us to understand how rappers form identity through song over time.

2.7 Research Questions

The three main research questions to be addressed in Study 1 (Chapter 3.0) and Study 2 (Chapter 4.0) of this dissertation are:

RQ1: Given the same or similar rhythmic base (sampled song), how are different rap artists (samplers) similar to or different from the sampled work?

- a) How are the samplers using linguistic and rhythmic strategies to express their individual creativity from the sampled song to reflect their artistic identity?
- b) How does the employment of these strategies in the sampled works compare to the rapper's usual creative expression?

Chapter 3.0, "On Rhythme-Rhyme Structural Creativity in Rap Music," discusses RQ1 and explores this by first modeling the G-creative system through Adams' (2009) lyrical charts and comparing rhythm-rhyme structure, or rap flow, of Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, and BIA against each other and the original Missy Elliott. The second part of the analysis compares Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, and BIA's flows in another popular song in their career.

RQ2: How can stylistic bricolage be used to compare rappers' identity performance in their lyrical content?

RQ3: How can chronotopic identity be used to compare a rapper's stylistic performance across their career?

Chapter 4.0, "The Multiverse of Creative Chronotopic Identity in Rap," addresses explicitly research questions 2 and 3. That is through the discourse analysis of the lyrical content of two

songs each from the repertoire of JAY-Z, Lil Wayne, Missy Elliott, and Nicki Minaj, as well as a presenting their songs' rhythm-rhyme structure using Adams'(2009) lyrical chart methodology. This will also be shown by comparing male, female, and overall stylistic bricolage to see what features distinguish each group and sub-group of the artists in the analysis. This chapter will also synthesize relevant time-space conditions for each song and rapper through biographical information to inform chronotopic artifacts showcased in the featured songs.

3.0 Study 1: On Rhythm-Rhyme Structural Creativity in Rap Music

This section presents Study 1, which addresses the structural side of Rap music by analyzing rhythm-to-rhyme patterning using lyrical charts following Adams' (2009) work on Rap flow. As a refresher, the questions addressed in Study 1 are the following:

RQ1: Given the same or similar rhythmic base (sampled song), how are different rap artists (samplers) similar to or different than the sampled work?

- a. How are the samplers using linguistic and rhythmic strategies to express their individual creativity from the sampled song to reflect their artistic identity?
- b. How does the employment of these strategies in the sampled works compare to the rapper's usual creative expression?

3.1 Data & Methodology

The artist demographic information, as well as the analyzed songs that are being compared in Study 1, are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Study 1 Artists

Given Name	Stage Name	Current Age	Gender	Birthplace	Analyzed Songs (Year)
Melissa Elliott	Missy Elliott	52	Female	Portsmouth, VA	“She’s A Bitch” (1999)
Bianca Landrau	BIA	32	Female	Medford, MA	“I’m That Bitch” (2023) “Whole Lotta Money” (2020)
Stokeley Goulbourne	Ski Mask the Slump God	27	Male	Fort Lauderdale, FL	“Catch Me Outside” (2017) “Faucet Failure” (2018)
Melesha O’Garro	Lady Leshurr	36	Female	Kingshurst, Solihuli, England	“Black Panther” (2018) “Likkle Darling” (2023)

I chose the songs listed in Table 1 because Missy Elliott’s “She’s A Bitch” was the original song sampled by all the artists listed, i.e., Ski Mask in “Catch Me Outside,” Lady Leshurr in “Black Panther,” and BIA in “I’m That Bitch.” To compare the sampler artists’ (Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, BIA) respective representations of identity in their song lyrics, I chose one other popular song in their repertoire: BIA’s “Whole Lotta Money,” Ski Mask’s “Faucet Failure,” and Lady Leshurr’s “Likkle Darling.” To select appropriate comparison songs, I did an informal survey of 10 African-American fans of all the artists who are avid listeners of Rap to see where intuitions lie concerning what songs were still popular. This focus group was drawn from my social network. These intuitions partially aligned with the number of views each video had on YouTube: Ski Mask had 68 million views, BIA had 19 million views, and Lady Leshurr had 465,951 views. I interpret the number of YouTube views as analogous to the fans' intuitions about popularity. I chose this course

of action because if the song is deemed popular, the artist will be more motivated to produce a similar product. After all, it would earn them money and favor amongst their fans. As referred to previously, identity formation in music, namely Rap, is a co-creation between the rapper and their audience. Therefore, I believe the popular songs I chose in Ski Mask's, Lady Leshurr's, and BIA's repertoire would represent the "usual" identity representation.

As stated previously, Adams (2009) presented a versatile depiction of showcasing rhythm-to-rhyme patterning through the creation of his lyrical charts as a salient way to show patterning comparability. The point of this study was to provide a heuristic for analyzing Rap song structure that adapts methodology from musicology (i.e., lyrical charts) supplemented with linguistic/poetics methodology (i.e., rhyme patterning informed by phonological knowledge). The lyrical charts show the following elements: lyrical lines (numbered first column), rhyme structure (color grouping), rhythm structure (1, x, y, z, etc. on the first row), and word/syllabic stress in columns (capitalized boldface type). A lyrical chart example is pasted below for reference from Adams (2009):

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z	
1	BAS-		ket-	ball		IS		my	FAV-		'rite	sport					l
2	LIKE	the	way	they	drib-	ble	up	and	DOWN		the	court			just	like	
3				the	KING	on		the	MIC-		ro-	phone			so	is	
4	DOC-		tor	J			and		MO-	ses		Ma-	lone				l
5	LIKE		slam		DUNKS		('n)	TAKE		it	to	the	hoop				my
6	FAV-		'rite	play		is		the	AL-		ley	oop		l	like	the	
7	PICK	and		ROLL		l	like	the	GIVE	and		GO		'cause	it's		
8	BAS-		ket-	ball		(a)	Mis-	ter	KUR-	tis		Blow					

Figure 5: Lyrical Chart from [Kurtis Blow's "Basketball" First Verse \(1984\)](#)

To inform this interdisciplinary process, I use my expertise as an avid consumer of Rap music and speaker of the African American Language, as well as my experience as a classically trained pianist for 13 years, self-taught guitarist, and primarily self-taught drummer. Before

creating the lyrical charts, familiarity with the songs and artists you are trying to compare is vital. This is not to say that you need to become the artist, but it can aid in determining what parts of the song you are trying to depict. For example, it is much easier to understand word or syllable stress in a language for a novel sentence if you are accustomed to it. The same goes for music. The more familiar you are with a song before analyzing it, the easier it will be to pick up more fine-grained details.

The materials required were the lyrics taken from Genius.com (a crowd-sourced lyrical database), a [free online metronome app](#) (with beat stress/accent functionality), [SONGBPM.com](#) (a searchable online database that helps you find the BPM and Key for any song with song data taken from Spotify), and the songs as mentioned above on YouTube (playlist found [here](#)). Though somewhat subjective, the metronome was crucial for putting the lyrics in the chart by locating the beats, or rhythm structure, seen in the first row of the column in Figure 5. A metronome is an instrument that produces a periodically repeating audible sound at a regular interval set by the user. Typically, this would be in BPM, so there is a need for SONGBPM. The metronome was set to 4/4 time signature, the typical time signature for Rap music. It was also set to have an audible beat accent on beat 1 / 4 to identify the beginning of each bar. Importantly, since the metronome is not built into the song, this tool must be calibrated by matching its interval to the song's rhythm. Plainly stated, the metronome's first accented beat needs to match up with the song's first beat, and it takes a few listens to get a handle on it.

The study's objectives are achieved in a qualitative exploration of lyrical content through an adapted ethnomusicology framework (lyrical charts) anchored in poetics framing (identifying rhyme and word/syllable stress) along with an interface of quantitative metrics. The lyrical charts rectify what the listener hears and what they see on the page by showing the rhythmic structure,

line numbers, word/syllable stress, and rhyme domains. Creating the lyrical charts for the present data in Study 1 required a multi-step process outlined below:

- 1) Create a blank lyrical chart in a word processor by making a table with 16 columns and at least 8 rows
- 2) Print or have an electronic copy of the song lyrics for your song of choice from Genius.com and write down the song's BPM
- 3) Listen to the whole song on YouTube twice to gain initial familiarity with the song lyrics and rhythm
- 4) Listen to the song a third time to locate the song section that you want to study, calibrate the metronome with the song's BPM found in step 2, and match the interval of the song's rhythm
- 5) Listen to the song section with the calibrated metronome to put the lyrics in the lyrical chart
 - The song section I chose was the verse or part of the verse (~32 bars) from each song in the data for a controlled environment for comparing the songs. I used the verse to account for the fact that the verses are the primary part of any Rap song where the rapping occurs. This is opposed to using the chorus/hook, which can be sung and repeated throughout. Therefore, it's outside the scope of the present study.
- 6) Repeat step 5 until you feel comfortable about the placement of the lyrics in the beat columns
 - I repeated this step 4 times on average for each song.

- 7) Listen to the song section without the metronome and mark the word/syllable stress of the lyrics with bold-faced, capitalized font
- 8) Repeat step 7 until you feel comfortable about the word/syllable stress markings
 - I repeated this step twice on average
- 9) Listen to the song section to identify the rhymes of the lyrics
- 10) Codify the lyrics in the lyrical chart with color groupings for the different rhyme domains

Steps 7 and 8 are the task of identifying the word/syllable stress. This part of the process is primarily subject to listener intuition. Therefore, as a confidence check, I played a sample of each artist to 2 other avid consumers of Rap music and AAL speakers. The first (a black man in their 30s) confirmed my intuitions about word/syllable stress. The second (a young black woman in her 20s) listened to my recreations to check for accuracy. Their intuitions aligned with my own for stress and rhyme patterning, meaning confirmation of where the word stress and rhymes fell on the beats in the song.

Steps 9 and 10 of the process required that I codify where the rhymes of the lyrics are with arbitrary color groupings. I used the same color scheme for each lyrical chart (green, blue, grey, and additional colors where needed). Though I used the same color scheme in each lyrical chart, each song's rhyme domains (or collection of rhyming words) differ. Each color that you choose is assigned to a particular rhyme. A rhyme “consists of repeating the last stressed vowel sound and all the sounds following that vowel” (Adams, 2009, p. 42). When discussing the rhymes in the analysis, I will classify them as internal, chain, apocopated, mosaic, and identity rhymes. Adams (2009) classifies these types of rhymes as the following:

1. Internal Rhymes: a rhyme involving a word in the middle of a line and another at the end or in the middle of the next.
2. Chain Rhymes: extended runs of the same rhyme sound over a series of lines, often with end and internal rhymes.
3. Apocopated Rhyme: where a monosyllabic word rhymes with the stressed portion of a multisyllabic word (e.g., dance and romancing.)
4. Mosaic (Broken) Rhymes: rhyming a single multisyllabic word with several monosyllabic words.
5. Identity Rhymes: repetition of the same end word in successive lines

Creating the lyrical charts is the most time-consuming part of the process. On average, it took 5 hours to complete the lyrical chart for one song. This transcription and recheck process for all seven songs in the study took several hours over four days to ensure chart accuracy and reduce fatigue.

After the lyrical chart process was completed, quantitative metrics were collected. Namely, a type of speech rate analysis was performed. Following Hammond (1995), Menninghaus (2018), and Lai & Gooden (2022), I computed speech rate by dividing the number of syllables per lyrical line by the number of lyrical lines to judge the tempo of each rapper's flow. The speech rate analysis provided data that allowed for quantitative information to ease comparability between the artists (sampled [Missy Elliott] and samplers) and within the artists' works (popular songs from the samplers [Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, BIA] outside of the sampled songs). I used a form of speech rate analysis for rapper flow to look at syllables in each line and the number of rhymes per rhyme domain to provide figures for comparative quantitative analysis, including gathering the mean speech rates and rhyme rates for each section of each analyzed song in Study 1.

If the rhyme rate (rhymes per rhyme domain) is higher, the rapper has more rhyme complexity, and a lower rate means less rhyme complexity. Speech rate will be calculated by dividing the number of syllables per word into lyrical lines to judge the tempo of each rapper's flow. I expect to see differences in rapper creativity expressed in a difference in speech rate and rhyme rate (flow), analogous to comparing speech rate in speakers at different points in time. The aforementioned quantitative figures were calculated in the following ways:

- **Type of speech rate analysis to find flow tempo (FT)**
 - $FT = \# \text{ syllables per line} / \# \text{ of lyrical lines}$
- **Calculation of rhyme rate (RR) for rhyme complexity**
 - $RR = \# \text{ rhymes} / \# \text{ rhymes domains}$
- **Calculation of how many rhymes are on each beat** (i.e. 1, x, y, z, etc.)
- **Calculation of how many stresses are on each beat** (i.e. 1, x, y, z, etc.)

3.2 Analysis

Before each song analysis, the lyrical chart for each song will be presented, and the analysis will follow the charts. The lyric charts and subsequent analyses will depict how samplers use linguistic and rhythmic strategies to express their individual e-creativity from the sampled song to reflect their artistic identity. There are two parts to the analysis. The first part is the comparison of the rhythm-rhyme structure of Missy Elliott's "She's a Bitch" to each of the samplers' songs: Ski Mask's "Catch Me Outside," Lady Leshurr's "Black Panther," and BIA's "I'm That Bitch". The second comparative analysis will show how the employment of these strategies in the sampled works compares to the rapper's usual e-creative expression (i.e., choices of how a rapper uses a

digital music sample and how they pattern their rhyme). The second part of the analysis compares the sampler artists' rhythm-rhyme structure to another song in their repertoire to establish similarities and differences in their creative practices. The songs in that part of the analysis are Ski Mask's "Catch Me Outside" compared to "Faucet Failure"; Lady Leshurr's "Black Panther" compared to "Likkle Darling"; and BIA's "I'm That Bitch" compared to "Whole Lotta Money."

3.2.1 Sampled v. the Samplers

The first song to be discussed is the original song that each artist (Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, and BIA) sampled, that is —Missy Elliott's "She's A Bitch" which has a lyrical chart as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Lyrical Chart for the First Verse of Missy Elliott's "She's A Bitch"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1							to	the	m.	I.			purr			
2	CAT	like	a	sem-	I			nig-	ga	stole	my	car			why'nt	you
3	get	MY		give	your	ass	a	BLACK	EYE				oh			say
4		bye	BYE					i'm	a	give	your	bo-	dy	to	the	SKY
5				run	through	your		CLIQUE				nig-	ga	you		
6	PISSSED	don't		TRIP				I'M	a	have	to	bust	you	in	your	LIPS
7							and	the	WHIPS			bet-	ter	have	a	WHOLE
8		lot-	ta	CHIPS		cuz	i	ain't	for	no		NIG-	ga	giv-	ing	TIPS

The lyrical chart shows the first verse, which was 8 lines. At first glance, one can immediately see Missy Elliott has several instances of enjambment, which is when the end of a bar does not match up with the end of the line. These instances of enjambment are seen in the following lines in examples (1) – (3):

- (1) lines 2-3 *why'nt you*]LINE-END *get my*]BAR-END
- (2) lines 5-6 *nigga you*]LINE-END *pissed don't trip*
- (3) lines 7-8 *better have a whole*]LINE-END *lotta chips*

The verse also features chain rhymes, which, as noted above, are extended runs of the same rhyme sound over a series of lines, often with end and internal rhymes. Elliott has four rhyme domains (3 rhymes per domain) in her first verse, seen in examples (4) – (7)⁹:

- (4) lines 1-3 in green: [ɛmaɪ] *m.I.*, *semI*, *get MY*
- (5) lines 3-4 in blue: [aɪ] *EYE*, *BYE*, *SKY*
- (6) lines 5-6 in grey: [ɪ] *CLIQUE*, *TRIP*
- (7) lines 6-8 in gold: [ɪps] *LIPS*, *WHIPS*, *CHIPS*, *TIPS*

I separated the bi-syllabic rhymes from the monosyllabic ones in lines 1 to 4 to provide another option for analysis. There is one instance of a couplet: *clique* and *trip*. The rhyme domain here is interesting because Elliott does not voice the coda consonants to make this rhyme work. Deletion of final consonants is a common feature in AAL phonology (Green, 2002, p. 116). It occurs in single words, in the former examples, and in the past-tense morpheme in AAL's well-known T/D deletion pattern, as pronouncing "fast" as [fæs] or "kind" as [kaɪn] (Fasold, 1972).

⁹ IPA is used to discuss rhyme domains to disambiguate the written text's articulated sounds, which does not always coincide in this study.

The rhyming and accented syllables are in unpredictable locations. The BPM of “She’s A Bitch” is 111, which is a moderate speed for the rhythmic track. Most rhymes fall on beat 4 (7/12), followed by beat 1 (4/12), one occurrence on beat 3, and none on beat 2. This means the rhymes typically fall at the end of the bar. Regarding speech rate, there are 9.75 syllables per line. Most stresses fall on beat 4 (10/18), followed by beat 1 (5/18), then beat 2 (2/18), and beat 3 has one instance. Like the rhymes, stresses typically fall at the end of the bar.

Missy Elliott is a complicated wordsmith who utilizes several types of rhymes that are not complex. Still, the rhythm of her syncopated words adds to the complexity of her flow, a stark difference from that of Ski Mask’s “Catch Me Outside,” as shown in the lyrical chart in Table 3.

Table 3: Lyrical Chart of the First Verse Excerpt of Ski Mask's "Catch Me Outside"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1													NAR	u	to	
2	nine		tailed		fox		coat		FUR				I		feel	
3	like	a	guc-	ci	ad		lib		BURR				COLD-	er	than	co-
4	ca	co-	la		mas-	COT	pol-	ar	BEAR (burr)		put	my	SAUCE	on	la-	sa-
5	gna	it	could	make	GAR-		field		PURR				I	ain't	real-	ly
6	fuck-	ing	with	these	nig-	gas	like	a	DYKE				NEW	kel-	loggs	ti-
7	ger	i	tell	them	EARN		your		STRIPES				YOU	try	to	be
8	me	but	bitch	could	NE-	ver	in	your	LIFE		ev-	en	IF	you	had	on
9	my	snea-	kers	like	BOW	wow	in	like	MIKE	like			HOW	these	nig-	gas

I chose an excerpt of his first verse rather than the whole thing (~15 lines) to control the analysis as much as possible regarding the number of lines used for each song. Ski Mask's song has a similar BPM (112) to “She’s A Bitch” (111). Across the 9 lines shown here, there are only two rhyme domains, [ɜ] and [aɪ], with four rhymes in each rhyme domain, all falling on beat 1 and are all monosyllabic. The two rhyme domains are seen below in examples (8) – (9):

(8) lines 2-5 in green: [ɜ] **FURR, BURR, BEAR, PURR**

(9) lines 6-9 in blue: [aɪ] **DYKE, STRIPES, LIFE, MIKE**

The rhyme rate is 4 rhymes per domain, which is higher than Missy's rhyme rate of 3, thus making the rhymes more complex. Ski Mask does some interesting AAL phonology work to accomplish the rhymes in each rhyme domain.

With the first rhyme domain being [ɜ] in the word *bear* in line 4, Ski Mask changes the pronunciation of *bear* to be pronounced like *burr*, as in “burr it is cold in here.” Though it may not be in his regional dialect in Florida, the “urr variable,” as it is referred to in sociolinguistics literature, is “a salient feature for communities of speakers from St. Louis, Illinois, Prince George’s County, among other places” (Blake & Shousterman, 2010, p. 231). This feature is well-known among general speakers of AAL and in the rap community. Its popularity has been attributed to another well-known Rap artist, Nelly, who is from St. Louis and uses it in his popular song, “Hot in Herre.” In this song, Ski Mask borrows the “urr variable” to add to his song's catchiness and authenticity as a well-studied member of the HHN (Alim, 2015).

In the second rhyme domain, [aɪ], Ski Mask does not fully realize the coda or deletes them when pronouncing the words *dyke*, *stripes*, *life*, and *mike*, which renders them as [daɪ], [stɹaɪ], [laɪ], and [maɪ]. This is a similar phenomenon that was featured in Missy's rhyme scheme.

On average, "Catch Me Outside" has 11 syllables per line, which is higher than Elliott's average of 9.75 syllables per line. This suggests that even without listening to the song, Ski Mask is rapping faster than Missy Elliott, considering that the BPM is only one higher in Ski Mask's song. Ski Mask's verse excerpt features a fast-paced, word-filled rhythm and simple rhyme scheme. This fast-paced rhythm of lyrics can be seen in almost every open slot filled with words, especially in lines 8 and 9 in Table 3. Therefore, the song's instrumental speed is similar to "She's A Bitch," but the speech rate is drastically different. The word/syllable stress falls almost exclusively on beat 1 (20/21), and one instance on beat 2 (1/22), with none falling on beats 3 and 4. So, the stress pattern towards or at the end of the bar is the same as where the rhyme falls on beat 1. Ski Mask's "Catch Me Outside" features significant departures from Missy Elliott's "She's A Bitch" namely with a faster flow tempo, more rhyme complexity, and the rhymes patterning at the beginning of the bar. Missy has a slower flow tempo, less rhyme complexity, and the rhymes patterning at the end of the bar. It shows that Ski Mask is attempting to differentiate himself in varied e-creative ways (i.e., how they pattern their rhyme with the rhythmic elements) from Missy Elliott.

Lady Leshurr has a more complicated rhyme and rhythm (Table 4), which departs from Ski Mask's simple rhyme scheme, like Missy Elliott's syncopation.

Table 4: Lyrical Chart for Verse Excerpt of Lady Leshurr's "Black Panther"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1																it's
2	the	l	L		burr				SHOTS		with	a	BAL-	ly		
3	i	wish	a	gyal	WOULD			no	CHA-	let			plus	i	got	the
4	KEYS	like	a	VAL-	et			HEAT		like		mi	A	mi		
5	FREE	throw		on	em		dwayne	WADE		on	the		GAL-	ley		
6	UM		that's	a	THREE		sec-	ond		vi-	o-	LA-	tion			air
7	BALL		and	my	TEAM		stay		a	ni-	hi-	LA-	ting			
8	and	i	real-	ly	don't	know			why	you	HAT-	ing			cuz	you
9	co-	py	so	much			you'd	think	we're	si-	a-	MESE	twins			

The “Black Panther” BPM matches Ski Mask’s “Catch Me Outside” at 111 BPM. Much like Missy Elliott's verse, Lady Leshurr’s verse takes a more syncopated route. However, her flow is reminiscent of Missy Elliott's. Not to be discounted, she even starts the verse in the same way as Elliott “It’s the LL burr shots with a balley,” versus “To the M.I., purr cat like a semi.” However, unlike Elliott, Lady Leshurr has a rather complicated rhyme scheme that includes more multisyllabic rhymes than mono- or bisyllabic rhymes. This excerpt had three rhyme domains (4.6 rhymes per domain): [æ_i], [i], and [aI_eI_I]. There are instances of chain and mosaic (broken) rhymes. The first rhyme domain, [æ_i], is a bisyllabic chain rhyme in lines 2-5 in green with *bally*, *chalet*, *valet*, *miami*, and *galley*. The *miami* in the chain rhyme is apocoped because the stressed part of mi**AMI** completes the bisyllabic chain rhyme. The second rhyme domain in lines 4-7 in blue, [i], is a monosyllabic chain rhyme with *keys*, *free*, *three*, and *team*. The third rhyme domain in lines 6-9 in grey, [aI_eI_I], is by far the most complicated, seeing that it is a mosaic (broken) rhyme, a poetic strategy that remains unused by the other artists. Leshurr rhymes *violation*, *annihilating*, *why you hating*, and *siamese twins*. Recall that a mosaic (broken) rhyme rhymes a single multisyllabic word to multiple words. Out of 15 rhymes in total, the rhymes mostly fall on beat 1 (10/15), followed by beat 2 (3/15), then by beat 4 (2/15), with none on beat 3. So, the rhymes are patterned at the beginning of the bar. This is the same rhyme pattern as “Catch Me Outside,” also patterned on beat 1. The rhyme rate is 4.6, which is the average rhyme per domain, thus making it have higher rhyme complexity than Missy (3) and Ski Mask (4).

On average, “Black Panther” has 10.6 syllables per line (not including the first line, which only has one syllable). This flow tempo is still higher than Missy Elliott’s average of 9.75 syllables per line average but less than Ski Mask’s 11 syllables per line average. Therefore, Lady Leshurr is rapping faster than Missy but slower than Ski Mask. The word/syllable stress falls mainly on

beat 1 (12/20), which is considerably less than on beat 4 (6/20), beat 3 (2/20), and none on beat 2 (0/20). The word/syllable stress is also patterning at the beginning of the bar, like the rhymes, which is also the same pattern as "Catch Me Outside." Again, we see here that Lady Leshurr is differentiating herself from Missy Elliott and Ski Mask in e-creative ways through her usage of lyrical sampling, flow tempo, and increased rhyme complexity.

As you can see in Table 5 below, BIA's "I'm That Bitch" is a departure from both Lady Leshurr's and Elliott's in having more syllables per line, like Ski Mask did but with a simple rhyme pattern.

Table 5: Lyrical Chart of the First Verse of BIA's "I'm That Bitch"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1											soon	as	you	see	me	I
2	up	it		i'm	GONE			i'm	real-	ly	liv-	ing	this	shit	in	my
3	SONGS				glock	in	my	bag	and	it	don't	got	a	SAFE-	ty	
4		i	make	the	mo-	ney	i	don't	let	it	MAKE	me		shout	out	di-
5	an-	a	she	RAISED	me		i'm	with	my	mem-	ber	he's	rock-	ing	a	
6	PAIS-	ley					that's	word	to	mou-	la	can't	PHASE	me		
7	i	rath-	er	cheat	be-	fore	he	drive	me		CRA-	zy				

The BPM of “I’m That Bitch” 141 is the most significant departure from Elliott’s original song (111 BPM). Though it still samples “She’s A Bitch,” BIA’s use of the sample is adapted into a different subgenre of Rap music than Elliott’s original song that can be heard immediately upon playing the song, that is it is much faster. “I’m That Bitch” is classified as Drill music; a speedy trap hi-hat production, brooding synth pads, and crunchy horn samples characterize drill music (Lavoie, 2023). With 11.43 syllables per line, BIA’s rap tempo is faster than all other artists in the analysis. This matches her conversational tone, which can be heard upon listening to the piece. There were three rhyme domains: [an], [ei_i], [eiz_i]. The [an] rhyme domain in lines 2-3 in green is monosyllabic (*gone* and *songs*). The following two rhyme domains, [ei_i] in lines 3-4 in blue and [eiz_i] in lines 5-7 in grey, contained two mosaic rhymes: *safety* and *make me; raised me, paisley, phase me, crazy*. Since the vowels are the same, one could consider the last two domains as one. However, I separated them because [z] makes it a perfect rhyme rather than including both domains, which would make them all slant rhymes. Each way of analysis is valid. The rhyme rate is 2.6 average rhymes per domain, which makes it less complex than Missy (3), Ski Mask (4), and Lady Leshurr (4.6).

Half the rhymes fall on beat 1 (4/8), a quarter on beat 3 (2/8), and one on beats 2 and 4. Something interesting that does not occur in Elliot’s, Ski Mask’s, or Leshurr’s songs is that the word/syllable stresses and the rhymes fall on the same beats. This indicates that BIA would like to draw the most attention to the rhymes rather than the rest of the content of the verse. In English, stressed syllables are relied on to convey meaning, which coincides with Rap as a whole (Bradley, 2009, p. 9). However, with BIA, the rhymes seem to be the only thing that matters.

Overall, BIA differentiates herself e-creatively from the other artists in her decreased rhyme complexity. She has the fastest flow tempo and the furthest departure from the original sample with a vastly different musical structure and BPM.

In this analysis, sampler artists’ rhythm-rhyme structures were compared against each other and the original work from which they sampled. Table 6 below showcases the quantitative metric summary of the songs featured in the first part of the analysis.

Table 6: Quantitative Summary of Sampled v. the Samplers

Stage Name	Analyzed Songs (Year)	BPM	Rhyme Pattern	Stress Pattern	Flow Tempo	Rhyme Rate
Missy Elliott	“She’s A Bitch” (1999)	111	beat 1	beat 4	9.75	3
Ski Mask the Slump God	“Catch Me Outside” (2017)	112	beat 1	beat 1	11	4
Lady Leshurr	“Black Panther” (2018)	112	beat 1	beat 1	9.5	4.6
BIA	“I’m That Bitch” (2023)	141	beat 1	beat 1	11.43	2.6

The second part of the analysis seen in section 3.2.2 compares the sampler artists’ sampled work to another popular song in their career to create more robust conclusions

3.2.2 Sampled songs compared to other popular songs

The second part of the analysis compares the sampler artists’ rhythm-rhyme structure to another song in their repertoire to establish similarities and differences in their creative practices. The songs in that part of the analysis are Ski Mask’s “Catch Me Outside” and “Faucet Failure”;

Lady Leshurr’s “Black Panther” and “Likkle Darling”; and BIA’s “I’m That Bitch” and “Whole Lotta Money.” I will first put the lyrical charts for each popular song and then compare them in the following prose. The first of these is Ski Mask’s “Faucet Failure” (Table 7 below) compared to “Catch Me Outside”:

Table 7: Lyrical Chart of First Verse Excerpt of Ski Mask's "Faucet Failure"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1	let's		make	a	DEAL				rum-	pel-	stilt-		SKIN			
2	she	wan-	na	see	my	pur-	ple	pick-	le	up	in	the	WIND			
3						chan-		cle-	ttas	off			bitch		get	
4	IN				and	if	your		nig-	ga	don't	like	me		your	chin-
5	ny	chin		CHIN							bitch	I'm	hot-	ter	than	a
6	pep-	per	no	MINT									big	step-	per	
7	no	stilts			big		TIT							1		K
8		bought	my		bitch	a	new		KILT		yup				new	
9	skirt			i	skrrt				big		DRIFT		yup			

Ski Mask's "Faucet Failure" has a BPM of 100, which is slower than his "Catch Me Outside" (111 BPM). This song has four rhyme domains compared to only 2 in "Catch Me Outside." There are 3.5 rhymes per domain, less than "Catch Me Outside," which has four rhymes per domain. This could indicate that the rhyme complexity is higher in "Catch Me Outside" than in "Faucet Failure" if the rhyme rate is used alone. However, when analyzing the rhyme domains, "Faucet Failure" has the more technically complex rhymes. The four rhyme domains in "Faucet Failure" are [m], [ɛpə], [ɪ], [ɪlt]. Ski Mask has a more syncopated rhythm with instances of monosyllabic chain rhymes. The chain rhymes lie with [m] in lines 1-6 in green (*skin, wind, in, chin-, chin, chin, mint*) and [ɪ] in lines 6, 7, and 9 in grey (*big, big, tit, drift*). Both chain rhymes incorporate identity rhymes (repetition of the same word to create a rhyme) with *chin* and *big*.

There are 8.2 syllables per line in "Faucet Failure," which is a much slower flow tempo than in "Catch Me Outside," with 11 syllables per line. In "Faucet Failure," most rhymes fall on beat 1 (8/15), followed by beats 2 (3/15) and 4 (3/15), and then by beat 3 (2/15). In "Catch Me Outside," all rhymes fell on beat 3. In "Faucet Failure," the word/syllable stress mainly falls on beat 1 (5/9), followed by beats 3 (2/9) and 4 (2/9), and none on beat 2. In "Catch Me Outside," the word/syllable stress falls mainly on beats 3 (8/22) and 4 (9/22), which is considerably more than beat 2 (5/22), with none falling on beat 1.

Therefore, "Faucet Failure" is a slower song with a slower flow tempo, includes more technically complex rhyme patterning, and has rhymes and stresses that are entirely different and in irregular positions compared to "Catch Me Outside." Arguably, the syncopation and rhyme patterning in "Faucet Failure" could be likened to Elliott's flows. Still, it is possible that Ski Mask somehow attempted to differentiate himself since the instrumental was similar. This leads me to

think that Ski Mask's flow is normally more similar to Missy Elliott's and that he's changing it up specifically when he's sampling her to differentiate himself more.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ideally, I would pull in examples from other Ski Mask songs and other artists in the study to bolster this type of argument. However, a future researcher could pick up this torch by building a corpus of Rap lyrics for comparisons such as these.

Table 8: Lyrical Chart of First Verse Excerpt of Lady Leshurr's "Likkle Darling"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1															they	say
2	mi	ah	boss			and	an	y	where	mi	WALK		IN			
3		mo-	ney		in		mi	pock-	et	i	can't	fit		it	ALL	
4	IN						smooth			uh-	nuh	know	mi	RIDE	di	RID-
5	dem			and	i	know		di	WAN	fi	LIST-	en		my		
6	GIRL		do	not	get		me	STAR-		TED			cha			
7	'fore	mi	haf-	fi	BACK	it	up			mek	mi	BAD	it	up		
8		she	an	AM-	e-	teur			twit-		ter		gyal		too	much
9	CHAR-	ac-	ter			don't	make	mi	HAND-	le	her					

Lady Leshurr's "Likkle Darling" has a BPM of 175, which is much faster than "Black Panther" (112). There are three rhyme domains in "Likkle Darling" and "Black Panther." The difference between the rhymes lies in the rhyme rate. There are 3.3 rhymes per domain in "Likkle Darling" and 4.6 rhymes per domain in "Black Panther." The rhyme domains in "Likkle Darling" are [ɪ_ɑ_ɪ], [i_ɪ_(m/n)], and [æ_ɪ_ɑ]. There are chain, internal, and mosaic rhymes. The first chain rhyme is [ɪ_ɑ_ɪ] (*mi walk in, it all in, me started*) on lines 2-4 and 6 in green. The second chain rhyme is [æ_ɪ_ɑ] (*back it up, bad it up, amateur, character, handle her*) on lines 7-9 in grey. The mosaic rhymes come in on both chain rhymes. This phenomenon is seen more prevalently with the third rhyme domain [æ_ɪ_ɑ] through rhyming the multisyllabic words *amateur* and *character* with multiple monosyllabic/bisyllabic words, *back it up, bad it up, and handle her*. There is one couplet in lines 4-5 in grey: [i_ɪ_(m/n)] (*di riddem, fi listen*) Rhymes fall evenly on beats 1 (3/9) and 2 (3/9), followed by beat 4 (2/9), and lastly, on beat 3 (1/9). In "Black Panther," the rhymes mostly fall on beat 1 (5/10), followed by beat 2 (3/10), then by beat 4 (2/10), with none on beat 3. Thus, the rhyme-rhythm patterning arrangements are different.

On average, "Likkle Darling" has 9.75 syllables per line (not including the first line, which only has two syllables). This is less than "Black Panther," which has 10.6 syllables per line (not including the first line, which only has one syllable). This would suggest a slower flow tempo in "Likkle Darling." Also, in "Likkle Darling," the word/syllable stress mainly falls on beat 1 (6/14), followed by beat 4 (4/14), then beat 3 (3/14), and one on beat 2 (1/14). This word/syllable stress pattern is nearly the same as "Black Panther," though the number of instances differs. In "Black Panther," the word/syllable stress falls mainly on beat 1 (12/20), which is considerably less than beat 4 (6/20), beat 3 (2/20), and none on beat 2 (0/20). Here, the two songs' flow and tempo differences are stark, though incorporating some of the same rhyming techniques.

Table 9: Lyrical Chart of First Verse Excerpt of BIA's "Whole Lotta Money"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1				i	can't	wear	the	shit		you		bitch-	es		wear	be-
2	cause		it's		CHEAP			to	ME				it's	some	mon-	ey
3		at	my		ta-		ble	grab		a	SEAT			with		ME
4		cost	a		tic-	ket		just	to		co-	ver		all	my	LE-
5		gal			FEES				i	don't		hang	with	jeal-	ous	
6	bitch-	es		that's	a		WEAK			dis-		ESE			hoe	don't
7	RUN	UP									if	you	broke	and	in	my
8		busi-	ness	then	just		SHUT		UP							i
9	in-	vest-		ed	in	my		bo-	dy		bitch	i'm	DONE		UP	

BIA's "Whole Lotta Money" has a BPM of 81, which is markedly slower than "I'm That Bitch" (141). There are three rhyme domains in "Whole Lotta Money" and "I'm That Bitch." There is little difference between the rhyme rates, with 2.3 and 2.6 rhymes per domain, respectively.

The rhyme domains in "Whole Lotta Money" are [i_mi], [i_iz], and [Λ Δ p]. There are two trisyllabic rhyme domains seen in examples 4 and 5:

(10) lines 2-3 in green: [i_mi] (*cheap to me, seat with me*)

(11) lines 4-6 in blue: [i_iz] (*legal fees, weak disease*)

The verse excerpt features one bisyllabic chain rhyme:

(12) lines 7-9 in grey (*run-up, shut up, done up*)

It features an identity rhyme with *up* in the third rhyme domain [Λ Δ p]. There is also an apocopated rhyme in the second rhyme domain [i_iz], with the stressed part of bisyllabic dis**EASE** rhyming with the monosyllabic **FEES**. In "Whole Lotta Money," the rhymes fall evenly on beats 1 (3/7) and 3 (3/7), followed by one on beat 4 (1/7) and none on beat 2. In "I'm That Bitch" Half of the stresses fall on beat 1 (4/8), a quarter on beat 3 (2/8), and one on beat 2 and beat 4.

"Whole Lotta Money" has 9.11 syllables per line, which is considerably slower than the flow tempo in "I'm that Bitch" (11.43 syllables per line). In "Whole Lotta Money," the word/syllable stress falls mainly on beat 1 (6/14), followed by beat 3 (4/14), beat 3 (4/14), and beat 2 (1/14). The word/syllable stresses and the rhymes fall on the same beats in "I'm That Bitch." Half of the stresses fall on beat 1 (4/8), a quarter on beat 3 (2/8), and one on beats 2 (1/8) and 4 (1/8). In this comparative analysis, the two songs may have differences in flow and BPM, but they make up for it in similar rhyme complexities and techniques.

The comparison of G-creative rhythm-to-rhyme patterning was accomplished across the songs, as evidenced here with BPMs, flow tempo, and rhyme rate interfaced with the E-creative

rhyme schemes. This comparative method allowed for more holistic knowledge about each artist's patterning tendencies by providing comparable numerical (BPM, flow tempo, rhyme rate) and qualitative data (rhyme schemes). Table 10 below is the quantitative summary of the sampled songs compared to the rapper's other popular songs featured in the second part of the analysis.

Table 10: Quantitative summary of sampled songs compared to other popular songs

Stage Name	Analyzed Songs (Year)	BPM	Rhyme Pattern	Stress Pattern	Flow Tempo	Rhyme Rate
Ski Mask the Slump God	“Catch Me Outside” (2017)	112	beat 1	beat 1	11	4
	“Faucet Failure” (2018)	100	beat 1	beat 1	8.2	3.5
Lady Leshurr	“Black Panther” (2018)	112	beat 1	beat 1	9.5	4.6
	“Likkle Darling” (2023)	175	beat 1 & 2	beat 1	8.9	3.3
BIA	“I’m That Bitch” (2023)	141	beat 1	beat 1	11.43	2.6
	“Whole Lotta Money” (2020)	81	beat 1 & 3	beat 1	9.11	2.3

3.3 Study 1 Discussion

As a reminder, the research questions that are addressed in Study 1:

RQ1: Given the same or similar rhythmic base (sampled song), how are different rap artists (samplers) similar to or different than the sampled work?

- a. How are the samplers using linguistic and rhythmic strategies to express their individual creativity from the sampled song to reflect their artistic identity?

- b.** How does the employment of these strategies in the sampled works compare to the rapper's usual creative expression?

The first set of comparative analyses of the sampler versus the sampled shows how different Rap artists (samplers) are similar to or different than the sampled work using the formulated lyrical charts. Through the subsequent analysis of the prose following each lyrical chart, I discovered how the samplers used linguistic and rhythmic strategies to express their individual creativity from the sampled song to reflect their artistic identity. To do this, I explored what types of rhyme patterning they were using, the BPM, and rhyme and speech rates. In this section, I showed that the samplers (Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, and BIA) differ from Missy's original song while maintaining certain elements.

Missy has a syncopated rhythm that uses chain rhymes that are mono- and bisyllabic while utilizing AAL phonological knowledge to complete rhyme domains, such as final consonant deletion. Ski Mask had a simplistic rhythm that used chain rhymes that were all monosyllabic and utilized AAL phonological knowledge to complete rhyme domains, such as the urr variable and final consonant deletion. Lady Leshurr has a syncopated rhythm, like Missy, utilizes a combination of mono- and multisyllabic and featured mosaic rhymes, and incorporates a lyrical interpolation from "She's A Bitch". BIA has a conversational tone that utilizes chain rhymes that are mono- and bisyllabic like Missy but also utilizes mosaic rhyme schemes as well.

Ski Mask's "Catch Me Outside" and Lady Leshurr's "Black Panther" had the same BPM (112), which was similar to Missy's "She's A Bitch" (111). BIA's "I'm That Bitch" is the only departure from Missy's in BPM (141). Regarding rhyme patterns, Ski Mask's, Lady Leshurr's, and BIA's all pattern at the beginning of the bar on beat 1, which was the same as Missy's. The stresses, however, all pattern at the beginning of the bar as well but depart from Missy's, which pattern at

the end of the bar on beat 4. Though it is slower than Missy's and the slowest overall, Lady Leshurr's flow tempo (9.5) is the closest to Missy's (9.75). Ski Mask (11) and BIA (11.43) have faster flow tempos than Missy's, with BIA's being the fastest. The rhyme rates varied greatly: Missy (3), Ski Mask (4), Black Panther (4.6), and BIA (2.6).

In the second set of comparative analyses of the sampled works with another popular song in the artist's repertoire, I discovered how the employment of these strategies in the sampled works compares to the rapper's usual creative expression. I utilized the same methodology employed in the first set of comparative analyses. Ski Mask in "Faucet Failure" utilizes monosyllabic chain rhymes, like in "Catch Me Outside," and identity rhymes with a syncopated rhythm which were unlike "Catch Me Outside." Lady Leshurr in "Likkle Darling" uses multisyllabic chain rhymes and features mosaic rhymes with a syncopated rhythm, these are both like "Black Panther." BIA in "Whole Lotta Money" uses all trisyllabic chain rhymes that features apocopated rhymes, unlike "I'm That Bitch," which uses mono- and bisyllabic chain rhymes that feature mosaic rhymes.

The BPMs of all the songs in the second analysis varied greatly from the first analysis. Ski Mask's "Faucet Failure" (100) was slower than "Catch Me Outside" (112). Lady Leshurr's "Likkle Darling" (175) is much faster than "Black Panther" (112). BIA's "Whole Lotta Money" was much slower than "I'm That Bitch" (141). The rhyme patterns did not vary much; all tend to fall at the beginning of the bar on beat 1, though "Likkle Darling" also pattern at beats 1 & 2 and "Whole Lotta Money" at beats 1 & 3. All the word/syllable stresses pattern at the beginning of the bar on beat 1. The flow tempos in the artist's other popular songs are all slower than their sampled song. "Faucet Failure" flow tempo is 8.9, and "Catch Me Outside" is 11. "Likkle Darling" flow tempo is 8.2, and "Black Panther" is 11. "Whole Lotta Money" flow tempo is 9.11, and "I'm That Bitch" is 11.43. The rhyme rates of "Faucet Failure" (3.5), "Likkle Darling" (3.3), and "Whole Lotta Money"

(2.3) are all less complex than "Catch Me Outside" (4), "Black Panther" (4.6), and "I'm That Bitch" (2.6).

Overall in this study, the artist's style and identity could be broadly ascertained by comparing G-creative sampling structures with E-creative identity-making techniques. As a reminder, things that are G-creative are the scaffolding that makes a work as identifiable as a work. For this project, these are the core structural elements in rhyme-rhyme patterning and the usage of digital music samples. E-creative things are the elements touched by unique stylistic choices one makes. For this project, these are the choices of how a rapper uses a digital music sample, how they pattern their rhyme with the rhythmic elements, and what they rap about in their lyrics. Analyzing creativity in rap music in such a way shows us that rapper identity construction is fluid, and rappers use creativity to generate a recognizable identity. This means rappers can manipulate tools however they see fit to set themselves apart or pay homage to the work that came before them.

This was accomplished by comparing the e-creative rhyming techniques, e.g., rhyme schemes and rhyme rate, and g-creative rhythm patterning, e.g., flow tempo and BPM. Through these elements, artists use a bricolage of these stylistic techniques as E-creative "acts of identity" are selecting their "possible selves." These are relevant to the need to expand understanding of the notion of style in sociolinguistics as it applies to Rap music—a rich cultural and linguistic art form. What will be seen in Chapter 4.0: Study 2: The Multiverse of Chronotopic Identity in Rap, I extend the E-creative "acts of identity" that rappers use in their lyrics. This extension includes identity-making across time, chronotopic "possible selves," using lyrical content choices through discourse analytical methodology and assessing flow choices.

4.0 Study 2: The Multiverse of Creative Chronotopic Identity in Rap

4.1 Data & Methodology

Study 1 foregrounded the structure of Rap lyrics over the sociolinguistic implications by providing a methodology to compare structural patterning and the influence of sampling lyrics, flows, and digital instrumental sampling on a rapper's style. In Study 2, rapper identity is showcased through analysis of lyrical content and flow for two songs across four rappers' careers to establish a way of exploring rapper identity. As a refresher, the questions addressed in Study 2 are the following:

RQ2: How can stylistic bricolage be used to compare rappers' identity performance in their lyrical content?

RQ3: How can chronotopic identity be used to compare a rapper's stylistic performance across their career?

As stated in Section 3.4, stylistic bricolage is a sociolinguistic tool for understanding one's identity performances as a collection of existing resources that create new or remix previous meanings. The stylistic bricolage in Rap music as lyrical content and flow is based on Edward's (2009) definition of style in Rap. What makes up content is the topic, structure, and content creation tools. Flow is the rhythms and rhymes that a song contains. Rappers utilize a collection of existing Hip-Hop Nation Language (HHNL) linguistic features in their lyrics to co-create and maintain their rap styles, such as particular flows (pacing, vocal modulations, and rhyme schemes)

or different subject matters. Therefore, stylistic bricolage should be able to be used to understand Rapper identities by identifying the collection of existing resources from the HHN used in their identity-making. Importantly, I am not looking at one style or stylistic feature and tracking it across rappers. I am starting with the individual rapper and seeing what elements from HHN and HHNL are used to create each rapper's notable personas.

In the second study, two methodologies are used to study the content and flow of a Rap song's lyrics. For the methodology for analyzing content, I used the bare lyrics from Genius.com, informed by annotations, artist interviews, and biographical information, to perform a discourse analysis of the Rap lyrics. For analyzing flow, I utilized the lyrical chart methodology and speech rate analysis for each selected verse excerpt from each song, as was performed in Study 1. The lyrics in the analyzed songs from Table 2 were retrieved from Genius.com. This crowd-sourced lyric database allows annotations on particular lines or parts of a song and speculations on the meanings of the lyrical content. The Genius.com entry for a song (see Figure 6) includes the title of the song, the artist, the album it is featured on, the date of song release, producers/writers of the song (if known), a summary of the song's meaning (usually crowd-sourced), and the lyrics themselves. If the lyrics have a grey highlight, then there is an annotation on that lyric or set of lyrical lines. In some cases, these lyrics and annotations are verified by the artists.



Figure 6: Screenshot of Genius.com Entry for JAY-Z's "There's Been A Murder"

At the start of this project, I looked through each artist's discography. I consulted others about how introspective¹¹ the lyrics are regarding identity (i.e., one-on-one conversations with friends or asking Twitter for suggestions). I began by talking to the consumers of Rap in my social networks and a small community on Twitter to see which artists have been most relevant in the Rap conversation in the past 20-30 years. Once the artists were chosen, I investigated their discography to see which songs contained significant commentary on their identities. Once the songs were chosen for each artist, I analyzed everything I could find in each song regarding identity: deictic forms, rhyme schemes, autobiographical content, and figurative language. In utilizing Genius.com for lyrics, I could broadly utilize some of the lyrics' annotations if they added to my understanding of the content. In this process, there were differences across artists. To supplement the understanding of the Genius annotator interpretation(s) and my own, I also performed broad Google searches for magazine interviews to aid in a broader social context. This process builds into how stylistic bricolage will be detailed for each artist for comparison.

¹¹ “Introspective” is a term that will be utilized at several points in the analysis. The definition coming from Merriam-Webster is “characterized by examination of one's own thoughts and feelings.”

Like Study 1, I will also be using a form of speech rate analysis for rapper flow to look at syllables in each line and the number of rhymes in each rhyme domain to provide figures for comparative quantitative analysis, which will include gathering the mean speech rates and rhyme rates for each section of each analyzed song in Study 2. Again, I expect to see differences in rapper creativity expressed in a difference in speech rate and rhyme rate (flow), which is analogous to comparing speech rate in speakers at different points in time. I will put these findings into a stylistic summary table to visually compare the songs and the artists.

Even within the creation of individual identity, one can also understand a rapper’s identity performance as a chronotope. A chronotope depicts place-time-and-personhood that frames an interlocutor’s understanding of the context and transmitted message of an interaction. In turn, chronotopes can be used as an identity frame because identity-making practices typically demand a framing of specific time-space conditions to understand the content and the context of identity. Therefore, a rapper's identity performance in a song's lyrics can be parsed more completely by identifying and comparing the specific time and social contexts of the rapper when the song was produced to fully understand the identity and stylistic performance of a rapper across their career.

As shown in Table 11, the participants and songs that are featured in Study 2 are:

Table 11: Study 2 Artists

Given Name	Stage Name	Current Age	Gender	Birthplace	Analyzed Songs (Year)
Shawn Carter	JAY-Z	54	Male	Brooklyn, NYC, NY	There’s Been A Murder (1999) Kill JAY-Z (2016)
Dwayne Carter	Lil Wayne	41	Male	New Orleans, LA	I Feel Like Dying (2007) Let It All Work Out (2018)

Melissa Elliott	Missy Elliott	52	Female	Portsmouth, VA	She's A Bitch (1999) Throw It Back (2019)
Onika Maraj-Petty	Nicki Minaj	41	Female	St. James, Trinidad and Tobago	Roman's Revenge Chun Li (2018)

4.2 Analysis

Before each rapper’s song lyric analysis, there will be a brief introduction to contextualize their life and career as elements are pulled into their chronotopic identities. Each song will then be analyzed for content and flow elements to explore their use of stylistic bricolage (i.e., content [topics, structure, tools] and flow[tempo, rhyme rate]). Each excerpt for content will be presented as numbered lyrical lines written as presented on Genius.com since the focus here is on the words used in the lyrics and not the rhythm. The rhymes will also be bolded to visually compare the two analytical method purviews. After the content analysis, the flow of each song will be explored using the lyrical chart methodology presented in the first study. This will follow suit for each artist: JAY-Z, Lil Wayne, Missy Elliott, and Nicki Minaj. The two songs to be explored for each artist will be used to compare a rapper’s stylistic performance across their career using the stylistic bricolage established in their lyrical content.

4.2.1 JAY-Z, Shawn Carter

Shawn Corey Carter, or JAY-Z, was born December 4, 1969, in Brooklyn, NY, and raised by his mother, Gloria Carter, in Marcy Projects. JAY-Z is a Black rapper and entrepreneur renowned throughout his 30-year career as one of the “most influential figures in hip-hop culture in the 1990s” (Brittanica, 2022). He remains relevant today whilst wearing many hats: rapper, producer, and an extensive portfolio of businesses and investments. Before his Rap career began in the late 1990s, he was a drug dealer kingpin in Brooklyn. In 1996, JAY-Z and two friends founded Roc-A-Fella Records to release his first album, *Reasonable Doubt* 1996.

Since this debut album, JAY-Z has released 13 studio albums with 24 Grammy wins and 83 nominations. In 2008, he founded a new music label, Roc Nation, which has since become a “full-service entertainment conglomerate” (Brittanica, 2022). His most recent album, *4:44*, was released in 2017 on his subscription-based music streaming service TIDAL, which he owns in partnership with other artists. JAY-Z has been married to Beyonce Knowles-Carter since 2008 and has three children with her, Blue, Sir, and Rumi, all of whom he refers to in songs throughout his career. The current project focuses on “There’s Been A Murder,” which is on Vol 3. ... Life and Times of S. Carter (1999), and “Kill JAY-Z,” which is on *4:44* (2017). These songs were chosen due to the time between their release dates and the fact that they were deemed two of the most revealing songs for the chronotopic realization of who JAY-Z¹² presents himself as in music. Using rhyming and intricate wordplay seen in metaphor usage and double entendres, as well as allusions,

¹² JAY-Z is in reference to the rapper himself whereas “JAY-Z” (in quotation marks) is in reference to the persona created in the song lyrics.

“There’s Been a Murder” and “Kill JAY-Z” contain chronotopically contingent understandings of who JAY-Z is and was. JAY-Z utilizes similar rhyme schemes (multi-syllabic and multiple rhymes per line), intricate wordplay (metaphor, double entendres, allusions), and similar content (real-life and controversial; story and concept) throughout “There’s Been a Murder” and “Kill JAY-Z.” Through these diachronic similarities considered in a stylistic bricolage, JAY-Z is creating a collection of recognizable characteristics in the wider Rap community of practice.

4.2.1.1 There’s Been a Murder

The content topic of “There’s Been a Murder” is real-life because it features autobiographical experiences of his prior street life and his current celebrity life. The structure is a combination of story and braggadocio. The tools that JAY-Z uses to communicate the content are imagery, slang, wordplay, and metaphors. This chronotopic realization of himself in “There’s Been A Murder” relates to two identities: the famous, decontextualized, and high-performance version of himself as JAY-Z and the “original” hustler and money maker as Shawn Carter.

1	I hustle from, night to morning, dawn to dusk
2	Kidnap and robberies like, (c'mon nigga) "You goin' with us "
3	I held roundtable meetings so we could go on and discuss
4	Not only money but all the emotions goin' through us
5	Why we don't cry when niggas die , that's how the street raised him
6	Look in the air , say a prayer (hail Mary), hopin' God forgave him
7	Cop liquor, twist it, tap it twice, pour it to the pavement
8	We live dangerous , often findin' ourself in the eyes of strangers
9	(Who the fuck is you?) My dream is big and in it my team is rich
10	As seen through the eyes of a nigga who ain't seen shit
11	Back to live action , I'm packin' , I'm still in the mix
12	Like new hits , I think I'm goin' over your head a lil' bit
13	But I let you know I changed names when I roam through town
14	Stay free and be who I'm professionally known as now
15	Jay-motherfuckin'-Z; and with that said
16	Back to Shawn Carter the hustler, JAY-Z is dead , and I ahh

Figure 7: First Verse of "There's Been a Murder"

In the first verse, JAY-Z explains how he was a born and bred hustler or gangster and portrayed himself as what would be known as a thug (Belle, 2014). The chronotopic identity of “Shawn Carter” is told through a story laden with imagery. He illustrates examples in lines 8 and 9 “Kidnap and robberies like, (c'mon nigga) ‘You goin' with us’ / I held roundtable meetings so we could go on and discuss.” He talks about some of the activities that he and his crew were participating in and shows that he was the leader per se by saying that he “held round table meetings so we could go on and discuss.” Therefore, he wasn’t just an idle participant. Still, he was a leader and would talk to his crew about “getting money” and “emotions going through us” in line 10. In lines 11-13 that follow, he asks an introspective question and answers it as well, “Why we don’t cry when niggas die, that’s how the street raised him.” By saying “we” here, he also hints that he struggles with these emotions.

In line 14, JAY-Z shifts the discussion from introspective thinking to viewing his character from the eyes of others by saying, “We live dangerous, often findin' ourself in the eyes of strangers.” In lines 15 through 22, JAY-Z is openly characterizing himself, starting with asking the question of himself, “Who the fuck is you,” to address who he thinks he is. Identity here in the following lines is taking the form of describing who the “you” is referencing: “JAY-Z.” In the following lines, he asserts that as a gangster, you live a dangerous life by definition, and this life is often scrutinized or glamorized because of the media. However, the reality is nowhere near as glamorous. But in lines 17 and 18, JAY-Z claims that is far from the truth at that time, saying that he’s still “packin’” and “still in the mix / like new hits,” which is a double entendre, which means that he is still in the streets but also mixing and making new music. In the last four lines of the first verse, he asserts that he has two different sides to him. “Shawn Carter” is the man who ran things

in the streets, the thug who made money, whereas “JAY-Z” was his newest persona and whom he is professionally known now. “JAY-Z,” the persona, is new and had not started generating wealth for him when his rap career was just taking off in 1999 when the song was released. In the last line of the first verse, “Back to Shawn Carter, the hustler, JAY-Z is dead,” JAY-Z is saying that he is returning to the old version of himself, “Shawn Carter,” to demystify everyone from this glamorized image.

Simply put, through discussion of JAY-Z’s autobiographical content within a story structure with intricate wordplay and allusion about his past/current lifestyle in “There’s Been a Murder,” he is constructing the "possible selves" (“JAY-Z” v. “Shawn Carter”) that must be understood in a specific time-space condition.

Table 12: Lyrical Chart for First Verse of "There's Been A Murder"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1	i	hustle	FRO M		night	to	MORNIN G		dawn	to DUSK		kid-	NAPPIN G	robber-	ies like	you
2	GOING WITH	US	i	held roun d	table	meetin gs	so we	could GO ON	AND DISCUS S		not on-	-ly MO-	-ney but	all the e-	MOTION S	GOIN'
3	THROUG H US		why we	don't CR Y	when nig-	gas DIE		that's how the	street RAISE D	him	loo k in	the AIR	say	a PRAYE R	hop-	in' GOD
4	for-	GAVE him	cop	liquo r	twist it	tap it	twice	POU R it	to the PAVE-	ment	we live	DANGero us	often	finding	ourself	in the
5	eyes of	STRA N-	gers	my	DREA M is	BIG	and in	it my	TEAM	is RICH		as	SEEN	through the eyes	of a	nigga who
6	ain't seen	SHIT		back to	live AC-	tion	i'm PACK-	-in' i'm	still in the	MIX	like	new	HITS i	think i'm	goin'	over your
7	HEAD a	lil' BIT	but	i let	you know	i	changed NAMES	when i	roam through	TOW N		stay	FREE and	BE	who i'm pro-	fessional L Y
8	known	as NOW		JAY	mother	fuckin'	Z	and	with that	SAID		back to	SHAWN	carter the	hustler	jay
9	Z is	DEAD	and	uh												

The BPM of “There’s Been a Murder” is 166. Therefore, it’s a fast-paced tempo. One can see at first glance that JAY-Z’s rhyme scheme is complicated and contains instances of multisyllabic rhymes, enjambment, chain and internal rhymes, and apocopated rhymes. Enjambment occurs throughout the verse in every line. Three rhyme domains have multisyllabic and internal rhymes, which occur inside the same bar rather than just as the end of the bar like in end rhymes, seen in examples (1) – (3) below:

- (1) lines 1-3 in dark green: [oʊ_ ʌ] (*dawn to dusk, goin’ with us, go on¹³ and discuss, goin’ through us*)
- (2) lines 3-5 in grey: [əɪ _ ɪ(nasal/s)] (*raised him, forgave him, pavement, dangerous, strangers*)
- (3) line 6 in peach: [æ_n] (*action, packin’*)

There are a couple of instances of chain rhymes, as the rhyme domains occur in successive lines, as seen in examples (4) – (6) :

- (4) lines 1-3 in dark green: [oʊ_ ʌ] (*dawn to dusk, goin’ with us, go on and discuss, goin’ through us*)
- (5) lines 3-5 in grey: [əɪ _ ɪ(nasal/s)] (*raised him, forgave him, pavement, dangerous, strangers*)
- (6) lines 5-7 in gold: [ɪ] (*rich, shit, mix, hits, bit*)

One rhyme domain was apocopated in line 7 in pink: [_i] *free, be, professionally*. This is considered apocopated because the stressed portion of professional^{LY} rhymes with **FREE** and **BE**.

¹³ “Go on” here is pronounced like [goʊn] to complete the rhyme domain.

Five rhyme domains were monosyllabic:

- (7) line 3 in light blue: [_ai] (*cry, die*);
- (8) line 3 in brown: [əɪ] (*air, prayer*)
- (9) line 5 in light green: [i(nasal)] (*dream, team, seen*)
- (10) lines 7 and 8 in purple: [_aʊ] (*now, town*)
- (11) lines 8 and 9 in cyan: [_ɛd] (*said, dead*)

There were 32 rhymes in total. Out of ten rhyme domains, there was an average of 3.1 rhymes per domain. Most of the rhymes fell on beat 2 (14/32), followed by beat 1 (11/32), then beat 4 (6/32), and beat 3 with the least (1/32). Thus, most of the rhymes fall towards the beginning of the bar on beats 1 and 2 rather than at the end.

JAY-Z is primarily known to have a conversational tone and flow in his music. This is shown in the sheer number of syllables in each line. There are an average of 25.5 syllables per line if you don't count the last line (9) with only five syllables. However, if you do count it, it is 23.2 syllables per line. JAY-Z is known for these intricate rhyme schemes where he stresses the rhyming words, highlighting them as prominent points in the lyrical phrases. With a speech rate of 25.5, I argue that he has a moderate flow tempo marked by unpredictable variable stress patterns. There are 46 stresses in the verse. Most stresses fell on beat 2 (16/46), followed closely by beat 1 (15/46), then beat 4 (9/46), and beat 3 with the least amount of stresses (6/46). Thus, the placement of the stresses occurs mostly at the beginning of the bar on beats 1 and 2.

4.2.1.2 Kill JAY-Z

The content topic of "Kill JAY-Z" is real-life and controversial because, again, he is portraying the autobiographical experience of a subject matter as controversial as drug dealing. The content structure is a combination of story and concept. The story being told is what JAY-Z

has done in the past based on metaphorically killing oneself to become a better person, fashioned as a conversation between both sides of himself. This chronotopic (specific time-space condition) realization of himself exists in “Kill JAY-Z” two-fold: JAY-Z (of the past) and JAY-Z (of the present). The song “Kill JAY-Z” is interesting in many aspects, from the use of a modified direct sample, the lack of chorus but still having a repetitive element, and how introspective the lyrical content is by way of chronotopic realization of the multifaceted identity of JAY-Z. The tools that JAY-Z uses to communicate the content are imagery, slang, wordplay, and metaphors. These content and flow descriptions build into the identity that JAY-Z attempts to portray in a bricolage.

1	Kill JAY-Z, they'll never love you
2	You'll never be enough, let's just keep it real , JAY-Z
3	Fuck JAY-Z, I mean, you shot your own brother
4	How can we know if we can trust JAY-Z?
5	And you know better, nigga, I know you do
6	But you gotta do better, boy, you owe it to Blue
7	You had no father , you had the armor
8	But you got a daughter , gotta get softer
9	Die JAY-Z, this ain't back in the days
10	You don't need an alibi , JAY-Z
11	Cry JAY-Z, we know the pain is real
12	But you can't heal what you never reveal
13	What's up, JAY-Z? You know you owe the truth
14	To all the youth that fell in love with JAY-Z
15	You got people you love you sold drugs to
16	You got high on the life , that shit drugged you
17	You walkin' around like you invincible
18	You dropped outta school , you lost your principles
19	I know people backstab you, I felt bad too
20	But this 'fuck everybody' attitude ain't natural
~	~

Figure 8: Verse Excerpt of "Kill JAY-Z"

This song explains how JAY-Z thinks that he must metamorphize once again as he did in 1999 with “There’s Been A Murder” and the necessity to kill “JAY-Z metaphorically.” He

addresses himself personally in the third person omniscient point of view as if he is conversing between two chronotopic identities. On the one hand, the previous unfeeling and reckless hustler/thug character, and on the other, the evolved fatherly and willing-to-engage with emotional baggage man he became by 2017. Lines 1 and 2 echo a kind of imposter syndrome that JAY-Z feels, telling himself, “They’ll never love you” and “You’ll never be enough.” In the following lines, he even questions how people could trust him with anything if he shot his drug-addicted brother three times, an event that took place when he was 12 years old. Though his brother never pressed charges and came out with no serious injuries, JAY-Z often recounts this memory in media interviews and in his memoir *Decoded* (2010) as something he regrets. This line showcases differences between the past “JAY-Z” and the present reflective “JAY-Z.” The following four lines, 5-9, talk about his life as a father and how he must be a better man because he is a father now, at the time to only Blue, but now to his twins, Sir and Rumi. He says that he “knows better” but needs to continue improving and can’t keep using the excuse that he grew up with no father. He can shed the “armor” he once wore and become a “softer” version of himself because he is the man his kids deserve. Thus, to understand the “JAY-Z” chronotopic identity in the present chronotope/time-space, one must also understand the “JAY-Z” chronotopic identity in the past time-space, evidenced in the rest of the verse excerpt.

In lines 9 and 10, he commands the former side of himself and tells him to “die” because he is no longer in the times where he needed to be the cold, unfeeling version, in the streets doing illegal activities. Therefore, he doesn’t “need an alibi” anymore. Then he commands himself to “cry” in line 11, saying that he knows that he has been hurt, but he can’t keep holding onto the pain of the past, and to move on, he must be vulnerable and work through those emotions. Lines 13 and 14 shift the conversation to addressing his fans to tell them the truth about the “JAY-Z”

(past and present) his fans glorify. In lines 15 through 18, he explains that his fans should not be like him. It is in these lines that he laments what he had to do because he sold drugs to people he loves, such as his mother Gloria, and became an overly ambitious and reckless high-school dropout hustler, believing he would not see the consequences of those actions, thus “invincible” and “lost his principles.”

Again, by discussing JAY-Z’s autobiographical content, he is constructing chronotopic identity frames, or chronotopic possible selves” (“JAY-Z” of the past v. “JAY-Z” of the present) that must be understood in a specific time-space condition. He accomplishes this within a story and concept structure with intricate wordplay and allusions about his past/current chronotopic identities in “Kill JAY-Z.”

Table 13: Lyrical Chart of Verse Excerpt of "Kill JAY-Z"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1	KILL L jay	z	they'll never	love you you'll never	be e NOUGH	let's just keep it	REAL jay	z	FUCK jay	z	i mean you	shot your own BROTHER	how could we	know if we could	TRUST jay	z
2		and you know be-	tter nigga i	KNOW you do	but you	gotta do better	boy you OWE it	to BLUE	you	had no FATHER	you had the	ARMOR	but you	got a DAUGHTER	gotta get SOFT -	ter
3	DIE jay z		this ain't	back in the DAYS	you don't need	a ALIBI	jay z		CRY jay z		we know the	pain is REAL	but you can't	HEAL what you ne-	ver REVEAL	
4	what 's UP jay z		you know you owe	the TRUTH to	all the YOUTH that	fell in LOVE with	jay z	you	got peop le	you LOVE	you sold DRUGS to		you got HIGH on	LIFE that	shit drugged	YOU
5	you walk in'	AROUND like	you in VINCIBLE		you droppe d outta	SCHOOL you lost your	PRINCIPLES	i kno w	peop le back -	STABBED you i	felt bad TOO	but this	FUCK everyb ody	ATTITUDE ain't	NATURAL	
6	but you ain't a	SAIN'T this AIN'T	KUMBA AYE		but you got	HURT cuz you did	COOL BY YE	you gave him	twen ty mill-	ion without	BLINK he gave you	twenty MINUTES	on STAG E	fuck was he	THINK in'	fuck wro ng

7	with everybody	is what you	SAYI N' but it	everybody's cra-	zy you're the	one that's in-	SANE		crazy how LIFE	works	you got a	KNOT in your	chest	imagine how a	KNIFE hurts	
8	you stabbed	UN over some re-	cords	your ex-	cuse was he was	talkin' too	RECKless	let	go your ego	over your RIGHT	shoulder	your	left is sayin'	finish your BREAK-	fast	you egged
9	solange	ON	knowin'	all aLONG all you	had to say	you was WRONG		you al-	most went e-	ric be NE T	let the	baddest girl	in the WORLD	get aWAY		i don't even

The BPM of “Kill JAY-Z” is 84. This is considerably slower than the BPM of “There’s Been A Murder” (166). There is only one verse in the song, so I took a nine lyrical line excerpt for comparability between “Kill JAY-Z” and “There’s Been A Murder.” There is an equally as complicated rhyme scheme that JAY-Z sports for “Kill JAY-Z.” The rhyme domains combine internal, mono-/bi-/multisyllabic rhymes and mosaic and apocopated rhymes. There are 17 rhyme domains with a rhyme rate of 3.33. This indicates that "Kill JAY-Z" has a marginally higher level of rhyme complexity than “There’s Been A Murder” (3.1).

All of the rhyme domains feature internal rhymes. There are nine monosyllabic rhyme domains while the words used to achieve some of the domains can have more than one syllable, usually bisyllabic, as seen in examples (12) – (19):

- (12) lines 1 and 3 in dark green: [_ɪl] (*kill, real, heal, reveal*)
- (13) lines 1, 4, and 5 in blue: [ʌ] (*fuck, brother, love, fuck*)
- (14) lines 3-4 in dark brown: [i] (*die, alibi, cry, high, life*)
- (15) line 4 in purple: [u] (*truth, youth*);
- (16) line 6-7 in light green: [eɪ] (*saint, ain’t, sayin’, insane*)
- (17) line 6 in red: [ɪŋk] (*blink, think*)
- (18) lines 7-8 in gold: [aɪ] (*life, knife, right*)
- (19) line 9 in peach: [ɑn] (*on, along, wrong*)

There are six bisyllabic rhyme domains, though some include trisyllabic phrases, as seen in examples (20) - (25):

- (20) line 4 in tan: [ʌ_u] (*drugs to, drugged you*)
- (21) line 2 in grey: [oʊ_u] (*know_do, owe_Blue*)
- (22) line 2 in coral: [ɑ_ə] (*father, armor, daughter, softer*)

(23) line 5 in cyan: [æ_u] (*stabbed you, bad too, attitude, natural*);

(24) line 8 in light brown: [ɛk_ɪs] (*records, reckless, breakfast*)

(25) line 9 in orange: [ə_eɪ] (*benet, away*)

The multisyllabic rhyme domains are examples (26) and (27):

(26) line 5 in pink: [ɪn.sɪ.(p/b)] (*invincible, principles*)

(27) line 6 in teal: [u_aɪ_eɪ] (*kumbaye, cool by 'ye*).

There are a few instances of apocopated rhymes shown in examples (28) – (30):

(28) [ɪ] (*alibi* versus *die, cry, high, life*)

(29) [eɪ] (*insane* versus *saint, ain't, sayin'*)

(30) [ən] (*along* versus *on, wrong*)

There is one instance of mosaic rhyme : [u_aɪ_eɪ] (*kumbaye* versus *cool by 'ye*). There were 50 rhymes in total. Out of ten rhyme domains, there was an average of 3.1 rhymes per domain. Most of the rhymes fell on beat 3 (18/50), followed closely by beat 2 (17/50), then beat 1 (8/50), and beat 4 with the least (7/50). Therefore, rhymes most often fall in the middle of the bars on beats 2 and 3.

JAY-Z's conversational flow and tone shines through in "Kill JAY-Z" as well as There's Been A Murder. In "Kill JAY-Z," there are an average of 42.44 syllables per line with nine lines. This is significantly higher than "There's Been A Murder," which has 25.5 syllables per line. With a speech rate of 42.44, I argue that he has a very fast flow tempo marked by unpredictable variable stress patterns. When the song's BPM is slower, artists have more space to fit more words in a line. Thus, "Kill JAY-Z" has a BPM of 84, nearly half that of "There's Been A Murder," which has a BPM of 166. There are 61 stresses in the verse. Most stresses fell on beat 2 (20/61), followed closely by beat 3 (18/61), then beat 1 (12/61), and beat 4 with the least amount

of stresses (11/61). The stresses also pattern most at the middle of the bar, beats 2 and 3, as with the rhyme patterning. Once again, JAY-Z shows his adeptness at rhyme schemes by utilizing his signature complicated rhyme schemes and word stress to indicate rhyming. Thus, throughout the two analyzed songs, he has maintained elements of content (topic, structure, tools) and his flow, making his identity chronotopically contingent across his career in the former ways.

4.2.2 Lil Wayne, Dwayne Carter, Jr.

Dwayne Michael Carter, Jr., known as Lil Wayne, is an American rapper, songwriter, and record executive born September 27, 1982, in New Orleans, LA. He has been cited as one of his generation's most influential Rap artists (High, 2022). He grew up in the impoverished 17th Ward in New Orleans. Wayne attempted suicide by gunshot to the chest at the age of 11 in 1993 (Biography, 2020). Lil Wayne was signed to Cash Money Records by the rapper Birdman at the age of 12 after the incident. They remained the flagship artist before he ended his association with the company in June 2018. Lil Wayne's solo career didn't begin until 1999 with the release of his debut album, *Tha Block Is Hot* (Brittanica, 2017). Since he was a teen, Lil Wayne has struggled with substance abuse, which he seems to glorify in his music, and has become part of his persona as "Lil Wayne: The Addict," which will be highlighted in the song analyses. Since 1999, Lil Wayne has released thirteen studio albums, won 5 Grammy Awards, and won several other awards. He is the chief executive officer of his label, Young Money Entertainment.

The analysis below focuses on "I Feel Like Dying," which is on his mixtape *The Drought is Over: The Carter 3 Sessions* (2007), and "Let It All Work Out," which is the final track on his *Tha Carter V* album (2018). These songs were chosen due to the time between their release dates.

Both songs are argued here to be two of the most revealing songs for the chronotopic realization of who Lil Wayne presents himself as through music with vivid metaphors, allusions, and deictic forms to identify himself and his audience. Lil Wayne utilizes different types of rhyme schemes (end-rhyme, mono-/bisyllabic, and multi-syllabic), vivid imagery and metaphors, and similar content (real-life and controversial; abstract, concept and braggadocio) throughout “I Feel Like Dying” and “Let It All Work Out.” Through these diachronic similarities and differences considered in a stylistic bricolage, Lil Wayne is creating a collection of recognizable characteristics in the wider Rap community of practice.

4.2.2.1 “I Feel Like Dying”

The content topics are real-life and controversial, with Wayne talking about his drug usage. Lil Wayne is usually known for the glorification of drug use in his lyrical content (Kramer & Younger, 2017). However, “I Feel Like Dying” describes his experience as a drug addict, talking about the slippery slope of addiction (citing anecdotal evidence). In this song, Lil Wayne is humanizing himself here rather than showcasing himself as the celebrated drug dealer/user. In this song, the chronotopic artifact he is shedding new light on here is “Lil Wayne: The Addict,” and chronotopic in the sense that it requires a framing of specific time-space conditions to understand. In the content of the lyrics, Lil Wayne explains how everything is good until depression and withdrawal set in from taking copious amounts of drugs. The content structure is abstract and conceptual, containing the use of vivid imagery to explain what drug addiction feels like to him. Lil Wayne’s flow is simple, with end rhymes primarily used.

- 1 *Only once the drugs are done* (Hahaha)
- 2 *Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying* (Heheh, C3, hello)
- 3 *Only once the drugs are done* (Yeah, hello)
- 4 *Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying* (Get lifted)
- 5 *Only once the drugs are done* (Yeah, I get lifted)
- 6 Yeah, yeah, so get lifted, yeah
- 7 *Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying* (Yeah, haha)

Figure 9: Chorus of "I Feel Like Dying"

The chorus, as seen above in Figure 9, sets the tone for the rest of the song by introducing the concept of drug addiction and how Lil Wayne feels about it, i.e., when his high leaves him, he feels like he is dying. In the entirety of the song, Wayne talks about how he feels when he is high (ergo, addicted to the drugs he's referring to in the verses), and then after he becomes sober, he feels like dying (double entendre: the feeling sucks, and life doesn't feel like living). He's using that imagery and wordplay to bring his point across. It is repeated four times, once at the song's beginning and after each verse. Lil Wayne explains how depression and suicidal ideation set in once the drugs have left one's system. The crooning and high-pitched direct modified sample of "Only once the drugs are done / do I feel like dying, I feel like dying" is haunting and melancholy, which fits the song's meaning well. Lil Wayne's interjection of "yeah, yeah, so get lifted, yeah" in line 6 provides his assertion that he continues to stay high so he can never feel the crippling lows. This is important because it provides the frame to understand what it means to be "Lil Wayne: The Addict."

8	I am sittin' on the clouds
9	I got smoke coming from my seat
10	I can play basketball with the moon
11	I got the whole world at my feet
12	Playin' touch football on Marijuana Street
13	Or, in a marijuana field, you are so beneath my cleats
14	Get high, so high
15	That I feel like lying
16	Down in a cigar, roll me up and smoke me
17	'Cause (<i>I feel like dying</i>) hahaha

Figure 10: First Verse of "I Feel Like Dying"

As seen in Figure 10, the song's first verse uses vivid metaphorical imagery of how it feels to be high, ruminating on why Lil Wayne gets high. Lil Wayne represents that when he is high, he can do anything, evidenced by lines 8 through 12, "I am sittin' on the clouds / I got smoke coming from my seat / I can play basketball with the moon." He also feels like everything else is beneath him, "I got the whole world at my feet [...] You are so beneath my cleats." However, when he comes down from whatever high, marijuana in this case, he can get, he feels horrible and finishes the verse with, "Get high, so high / that I feel like lying / Down in a cigar, roll me up and smoke me / 'Cause I feel like dying." The laughter at the end feels less of a humorous laugh but almost of exhaustion and frustration. The first verse explains why "Lil Wayne: The Addict" persists rather than the alternative, which would be him living a sober lifestyle. The specific time-space condition of "Lil Wayne: The Addict" is an abstract description of what he experiences *when* he is high or inebriated from different drugs.

Table 14: Lyrical Chart of First Verse of "I Feel Like Dying"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1			i	am SITTIN	on the CLOUDS	i got	SMOKE coming	from my	SEAT		i can play	basket BALL with	the MOO N	i got the	whole world	at MY
2	FEET			playin TOUCH	foot-	BALL	on mara-	juana	STREET		OR	in a mara-	juana FIEL D	you are	so be NE ATH	MY
3	CLEA TS	get HIGH	so	HIGH	that I	feel like	LY-	ing	DOWN in	the ci GAR	roll me up	and smoke ME	cuz			

The BPM of “I Feel Like Dying” is 83. This is an easily comparable BPM to that of JAY-Z’s “Kill JAY-Z” (84). As previously stated, when the song’s BPM is slower, artists have more space to fit more words in a line. However, they also have the creative agency to not fill the lines with words. This is the case for Lil Wayne in this song, in particular. First and foremost, his verse is much shorter (3 lines) than that of JAY-Z (9 lines). Wayne also has an uncomplicated rhyme scheme with only two monosyllabic rhyme domains with six rhymes each: [it] (*seat, feet, street, beneath, cleats, me*); and [aɪ(ɹ)] (*my, my, high, I, lying*). There were 12 rhymes in total. Most of the rhymes fell on beat 1 (5/12), followed closely by beat 4 (4/12), then beat 3 (2/12), and beat 2 with the least (1/12). Therefore, the rhymes mostly fall at the beginning or end of the bar and rarely in the middle.

I would have to describe Lil Wayne’s flow in a more typical slam poetry style in this song, with a lot of variable rhythm and staccato, interfaced with masterful imagery and wordplay, which are more creatively interesting than the simplified rhyme pattern. There are many word/syllable stress instances, considering only three lines in the verse. Though the average syllable per line is 25.67, there are 23 stresses in the piece. There are almost double the amount of stress instances versus instances of rhyme. Most stresses fell on beat 1 (9/23), followed closely by beat 4 (7/23), then beat 3 (4/23), and beat 2 with the least amount of stresses (3/23). Like the rhymes, the stresses mostly fall at the beginning or end of the bar. In “I Feel Like Dying,” through instances of imagery and wordplay, Lil Wayne showcases his adeptness at portraying abstract concepts while building up an aspect of his identity: addiction. The chronotopic elements come in with his relationship to time sequencing in describing the high placing of the topic and identity in the present and past, simultaneously using both present and past tense. A specific time-space condition (when he is high) is needed to understand his identity. Though both Lil Wayne and JAY-Z utilized

conceptual/controversial content structure, metaphors, and intricate wordplay in their stylistic identity-making, Lil Wayne seems to rely more on vivid imagery and abstract content to identify himself in “I Feel Like Dying” and a less complicated rhyme scheme.

4.2.2.2 “Let It All Work Out”

The content topic of “Let It All Work Out” is real-life, featuring allusion to autobiographical content. The structure is mainly a story with braggadocious elements. The tools used are imagery and metaphors. “Let It All Work Out” is the last song on Lil Wayne’s twelfth studio album, *Tha Carter V* (2018). He stated in an interview that this album was about “growth” and that his music is “supposed to be personal” (Meara, 2014). Therefore, the song was chosen because of personal testimony from Wayne himself that this album was about growth and is considered by many to be one of his most introspective songs to date. The chronotopic identities framed in this song are “Lil Wayne/Tunechi in the Mirror,” with Tunechi as one of Wayne’s nicknames. “Lil Wayne/Tunechi in the Mirror,” as one will see, is a past version of himself and thus characterized by a specific time-space condition, making it a chronotopic identity.

1	C5
2	Yeah, back in this bitch
3	Tune you left this bitch
4	Like you knew this bitch was gon' let your ass back in this bitch
5	<i>Let it all work out, let it all work out</i>
6	But ain't nobody else like you in this bitch
7	<i>Let it all work out, let it all work out</i>
8	<i>Let it all work out</i>
9	Ain't nobody else like you in this bitch

Figure 11: First Interlude of "Let It All Work Out"

In the first interlude, Lil Wayne talks about how he “left this bitch” knowing that “this bitch was gon’ let your ass back in this bitch”. This alludes to it having been seven years since the release of *Tha Carter IV* (2011). However, it seemed that he already knew that he was going to be accepted and celebrated by his fans no matter how long they had to wait because “ain’t nobody else like [him] in this bitch.” The flow analysis is not provided for the interludes due to no rhymes being present.

10	Tunechi, you a monster
11	Looked in the mirror , but you wasn't there, I couldn't find ya
12	I'm lookin' for that big, old smile, full of diamonds
13	Instead , I found this letter you ain't finished writin'
14	It read , "I'm sorry for even apologizing "
15	I tried , compromising and went kamikaze
16	I found my momma's pistol where she always hide it
17	I cry , put it to my head and thought about it
18	Nobody was home to stop me , so I called my auntie
19	Hung up , then put the gun up to my heart and pondered
20	Too much was on my conscience to be smart about it
21	Too torn apart about it , I aim where my heart was pounding
22	I shot it , and I woke up with blood all around me
23	It's mine , I didn't die , but as I was dying
24	God came to my side and we talked about it
25	He sold me another life and he made a prophet

Figure 12: Third Verse of "Let It All Work Out"

In the first line of the third verse, Lil Wayne refers to himself as Tunechi. The following lines are a conversation between himself and the “man in the mirror,” being a metaphor for himself. He has used the mirror metaphor for a while, citing his song “Mirror” featuring Bruno Mars (2011). He claims that Tunechi is a beast when he raps, but when Wayne looks in the mirror, he can no longer find himself as “Lil Wayne,” meaning Tunechi morphed into something he couldn’t recognize as himself. The following lines, beginning with “I found this letter you ain’t finished

writin’” to the end of the verse, are hearkening to Wayne’s suicide attempt. In that attempt, he shot himself in the chest with his mother’s gun in response to his mother not allowing him to join Cash Money Records. However, he got another chance at life because a police officer saved him. This incident is referenced in some of his songs and featured verses, but it is the first time he openly details the situation (Mamo, 2021). Therefore, “Tunechi in the Mirror” was a monster birthed out of young Lil Wayne, who initially wanted a chance to rap as a career and was nearly willing to die for it.

Table 15: Lyrical Chart of Third Verse of "Let It All Work Out"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1			tune-	chi you	a MON-	ster	looke d in	the mir-	RIOR but you	wasn't	there i	could n't	FIND you	i'm	LOOKI n'	
2	for that	big ole	SMIL E	full of	DIAMon ds	in-	STEA D	i found	this le-	tter you	ain't fin-	ish WRI T-	ing	in RED	i'm	sorry
3	for	even	Apolo -	GIZi ng	i	TRIE D		COMpr o-	MISin g	then went	KAM i-	KAze	i	FOUN D	my ma-	ma's pis-
4	tol where	she AL-	ways HIDE	it	i	CRIE D	put it	to my	head and	THOUGH HT a-	BOU T it	no	body	was	HOME to	STOP me
5	so i	called my	AUNt ie	hung	UP	then put	the GUN	up to	my HEA RT	and PON-	dered	too	MUC H	was on	my CON-	science to be
6	SMAR T a-	bout it	too	torn a-	PART a-	bout it	i aim	where my	HEA RT was	POUNdin g	i	SHO T it	and i	woke UP	with BLOO D	all a-
7	ROUN D me	it's	MIN E	i	did-	n't DIE	but as	i was	DYing		GOD	came	to my	SIDE and	then we	TALK ED a-
8	BOU T it	he	sold me	ano-	ther LIFE	and then	he MAD E	a PRO-	phet							

The BPM of “Let It All Work Out” is 138, which is much faster than “I Feel Like Dying” (83). As previously stated, when the song’s BPM is slower, artists have more space to fit more words in a line. However, Lil Wayne goes against this tendency in “Let It All Work Out,” just as in “I Feel Like Dying.” He features a much more complicated rhyme scheme in 5 rhyme domains. There is an overall average of 6.8 rhymes per domain if we include the longest rhyme domain with 16 rhymes. Without the most extended domain, the average is 4.6 rhymes per domain. Considering the overall average, “Let It All Work Out” has a higher rhyme rate, proving to be more complex than “I Feel Like Dying.” Two monosyllabic rhyme domains feature one bisyllabic word each to complete the rhyme domain. The two rhyme domains are seen in examples (31) and (32):

(31) lines 3-4 and 7-8 in gold: [i] (*tried, cried, mine, die, dying, side, life*)

(32) line 2 in blue: [ɛd] (*instead, red*)

There are two bisyllabic rhyme domains as seen in examples (33) and (34):

(33) lines 1 and 2 in green: [(ɑ/ɑɪ) _ ʌ] (*mirror, find you, mile, diamonds, writing*)

(34) lines 5 and 6 in peach: [(ʌ/u/oʊ) _ ʌ] (*hung up, the gun, too much, woke up*)

The most extended rhyme domain with 16 rhymes has four syllables in its domain:

(35) lines 3-8 in grey: [ɑ_(ɪ/i)_(ɑ/ɪ/i)]

- *apologizing, compromising, kamikaze, always hide it, thought about it, hot to stop me, called my auntie, heart and pondered, on my conscience, smart about it, apart about it, heart was pounding, shot it, all around me, talked about it, made a prophet).*

The last rhyme domain, [ɑ_(ɪ/i)_(ɑ/ɪ/i)], features mosaic rhymes: (*apologizing, compromising, kamikaze* versus *always hide it, thought about it, hot to stop me, called my auntie, heart and pondered, on my conscience, smart about it, apart about it, heart was pounding, shot it,*

all around me, talked about it, made a prophet). There are 34 rhymes in total. Most of the rhymes fall on beat 2 (11/34), followed by beat 1 (9/34), and then the same amount on beats 3 and 4 (7/34, respectively). Therefore, the rhymes are scattered throughout the bar with little numerical discrepancy between them.

In this song, Lil Wayne has a similar flow tempo (25.25) in eight lines to “I Feel Like Dying,” which has three lines and a flow tempo of 25.67. “Let It All Work Out” contains 48 stresses, which is a little over double that of “I Feel Like Dying,” which makes sense due to the verse in “I Feel Like Dying” being a little over a third of the length (3 lines) of “Let It All Work Out” (8 lines). There are 48 stresses in the verse. Most of the stresses fall on beat 1 (15/48), closely followed by beat 3 (14/48), then by beat 2 (11/48), and the least instances fall on beat 4 (8/48). The stresses fall at the beginning and middle of the bar on beats 1 and 3. The rhyme scheme shows a maturation in his usage of rhyming to tell a story across the course of his career, coupled with that of vivid imagery and metaphors. Thus, throughout the two analyzed songs, Lil Wayne has maintained elements of content (real-life and controversial; metaphor and imagery), creating chronotopic contingency in how Lil Wayne tells his story within his lyrical content. However, what is not considered chronotopically contingent is his changes in flow from mono/bisyllabic to a multi-syllabic rhyme scheme.

4.2.3 JAY-Z & Lil Wayne Comparison

JAY-Z's stylistic bricolage directly references real-life and/or controversial content to tell stories. To do this, JAY-Z employs a fast, conversational flow that contains imagery, wordplay, slang, and metaphors in a complicated multisyllabic rhyme structure with many instances of word and syllable stress to emphasize rhyming. These have also largely been maintained throughout his

career, as seen in the two songs. However, the stories that he tells have changed in their framing from returning to the hustling and money-making "Shawn Carter" in "There's Been A Murder" to the reimagination of "JAY-Z" in "Kill JAY-Z" as a father who is healing from different traumas and in touch with his emotions. On the other hand, Lil Wayne has less consistency in how he portrays himself in music. Lil Wayne's stylistic bricolage in "I Feel Like Dying" portrays abstract concepts. However, it plays on real-life controversial topics, that employ a simplistic monosyllabic rhyme scheme through a spoken poetry flow that contains imagery. Lil Wayne shows a maturation in identity construction in "Let It All Work Out" by utilizing more complicated multisyllabic rhyme schemes while presenting a story about "Tunechi in the Mirror" vs. "Lil Wayne" with braggadocious elements through imagery and metaphors. "Let It All Work Out" is more like JAY-Z's work with using more direct references to real-life, controversial topics.

JAY-Z and Lil Wayne's songs had nearly the same content (topics, structure, tools). All four songs have real-life and/or controversial content. The structure of the songs is all story except for "I Feel Like Dying," where the structure is abstract. "I Feel Like Dying" and "Kill JAY-Z" are also conceptual. The braggadocious structure is present in "There's Been A Murder" and "Let It All Work Out." Other than "There's Been A Murder," all the tools included some form of wordplay, imagery, and metaphors. The rhyme rates for JAY-Z were similar between "There's Been A Murder" (3.1) and "Kill JAY-Z" (3.33). The rhyme rates (rhymes per domain) for Lil Wayne were similar between "I Feel Like Dying" (6) and "Let It All Work Out" (6.8). The flow tempos of "There's Been A Murder" (25.5), "I Feel Like Dying" (25.67), and "Let It All Work Out" (25.25) are comparable. The outlier is the flow tempo for "Kill JAY-Z" (42.44). The discrepancies in how JAY-Z and Lil Wayne pattern their rhymes and stress varied, which suggests

that rhyming and stress are where the rappers were the most uniquely creative. I expect these same divergences in the female rappers and similarities in content.

4.2.4 Missy “Misdemeanor” Elliott, Melissa Elliott

Melissa Arnette Elliott, or Missy Elliott, was born in Portsmouth, VA, on July 1, 1971. She had a trauma-laden childhood. She and her family had struggled financially her whole life, and what seemed to sustain her was her salvation in music and her faith in God through the Baptist denomination (Biography, 2020). She formed a girl group in the late 1980s named Sista and was signed with them to Jodeci’s DeVante Swing’s label Swing Mob Records in 1991 and moved to New York (Brittanica, 2022). However, the label went under before they released their album. After Sista disbanded, Elliott wrote and produced songs with her childhood friend and producer, Timothy “Timbaland” Mosely.

Missy’s official solo breakout did not occur until 1999 when her debut album, “Supa Dupa Fly,” was released. Since this debut, Missy Elliott has been a four-time Grammy Award-winning rapper, singer, songwriter, dancer, and producer (Biography, 2020). She has made a career heralded for her unique rapping, dressing, and performing style. She took a hiatus from the spotlight from 2008 to 2015 to manage her diagnosis of Graves’ disease but came back with releasing her 2019 album *Iconology* (Kennedy, 2019). The analysis below focuses on “She’s a Bitch” which is a single from her album *Da Real World* (1999) and “Throw It Back” which is a single from her EP, *Iconology* (2019). Missy Elliott utilizes the linguistic and poetic conventions of intricate rhyming schemes (mono-/multi-syllabic, stutter stop, phonological play), metaphor, and autobiographical allusion through wordplay to create a thematic narrative the conceptual content structure in “She’s A Bitch” and “Throw It Back.” Through these diachronic similarities

considered in a stylistic bricolage, Missy Elliott is creating a collection of recognizable characteristics in the wider Rap community of practice.

4.2.4.1 “She’s A Bitch”

The content topic of “She’s A Bitch” is club/party based on a real-life concept. “She’s a Bitch” is the lead single off Missy Elliott’s sophomore album, “Da Real World” (1999). Elliott has told the Daily Telegraph that this song is about a double standard. She explains that “When a guy acts in a certain manner, it’s thought of as healthy aggression, but when a female acts in the same way, she’s called a bitch: all it really means is a female knowing what she wants” (cited Reily, 2019). The structure is braggadocious and conceptual, with the tools used here are slang and wordplay. Therefore, this song is a conceptual attempt at a feminist reclamation of the term “bitch” and how it relates thematically with how Missy Elliott wants to portray herself and combat the negative connotation that comes with this derogatorily used term. At the time, some portrayed Missy Elliott as problematic to work with and challenging (Musto, 1999). She is seen as “the bitch” by outward perception at the time (i.e., specific time-space condition), which is the first chronotopic realization of her identity but also asserts that these comments don’t truly bother her. She claims that she is better than them in many ways by just being herself, “Missy Elliott,” the prototypical chronotope that existed before and concurrent with the outward perception of her being “the bitch”.

11	She's a bitch
12	When you say my name
13	Talk mo' junk but won't look my way
14	She's a bitch
15	See I got more cheese
16	So back on up while I roll up my sleeves
17	She's a bitch
18	You can't see me, Joe
19	Get on down while I shoot my flow
20	She's a bitch
21	When I do my thing
22	Got the place on fire, burn it down to flame

Figure 13: Chorus of "She's A Bitch"

The usage of braggadocious slang¹⁴ and wordplay is apparent in the chorus. The chorus is repeated five times, once after every verse and three times at the end of the song. The repetition of this portion serves a particular purpose of driving home the following meaning. In lines 13 through 15, she asserts that people describe her as a bitch, among other things, when they bring her up in a conversation referencing line 12, “when you say my name.” However, these same people who describe her as a bitch never say it to her face, “Talk mo’ junk but won’t look my way.” Lines 16 through 18 follow the same token that “she’s a bitch,” but she earns more money, “cheese,” so they can just get out of her way while she “roll[s] up [her] sleeves,” and does what she does best. Lines 19 through 24 continue the previous thought of being better than her naysayers. Again, she may be a “bitch” to some, but they can’t compare to her skills, “You can’t see me, Joe,” and she is still going to be the best of the best, “set the place on fire,” when she raps. Four rhyme domains

¹⁴ This is in reference to phrases like “talk mo’ junk,” “see I got more cheese,” “you can’t see me Joe,” and “when I do my thing / got the place on fire”. All of these phrases reference how she is better than the people that consider her as a bitch, i.e. braggadocious.

are in the chorus: [eɪ] [ɪz] [oo] and [əɪ]. In AAL, the final nasal does not exist in many cases; what is printed as name and flame are pronounced as *nay* and *flay*. Thing, [θɪŋ] as printed, is pronounced as *thang* [θeɪŋ], thus making an imperfect or slant rhyme with *flame* [fleɪm]. These constitute an imperfect rhyme because the vowel is the same and the sound category is the same, nasals [ŋ, m], without them being the exact same coda.

23	Roll up in my car, don't stop, won't stop
24	I'ma keep it rockin' til the clock don't tock
25	I'ma keep it hot , light my ass on fire
26	I'ma grab a philly, go and roll it at the bar
27	What ya talk? What ya say? Huh?
28	Gotta flow , gotta move it slow , huh?
29	Better you runnin' out the door , huh?
30	You gon' be a long lost soul , whacha say ?
31	Yippe yi yo , yippe yi yi yay
32	Put me on stage , watchin' niggas feel me
33	Put my shit on wax, watch it blaze like May
34	Go yippe yi yo yippe yi yi yay
35	55, 65, hike
36	75, 85 , test the mic
37	95 , Missy wild for the night
38	105 , I'ma keep the crowd hyped

Figure 14: Second Verse of "She's A Bitch"

In lines 25 to 27, Elliott talks about when she arrives at any performance, she is going to bring the heat with her rap skills consistently and without fail, "I'ma keep it rockin' til the clock don't tock / I'ma keep it hot, light my ass on fire." In line 28, a "philly" is a cigar or blunt (cigar filled with marijuana). In this line, she says that she will smoke at the bar because she doesn't feel the need to prove herself, so she can chill out while other people *try* to prove themselves to be better. Being at the bar, positions Missy as confident and exuding a "cool effect" (Kirkland, 2015) by a person who feels like she doesn't need to prove her skills. This plays into the braggadocio content structure as well. Lines 29 to 32 contain rhetorical questions. This gives the impression

that her adversaries will not last long. They might as well leave, exiting where she remains relevant because they “gon be a long lost soul.” Line 33 is an allusion to a line that she did in a verse for Gina Thompson’s (1996) song “The Things You Do,” “hee hee hee haw,” which became the song’s trademark, though Elliott is not credited. This is important because she did this uncredited verse before her first album, putting her into mainstream media (Golding, 2016). Though many don’t remember the song itself, they remember Missy Elliott’s verse, which is a testament to her recognizable skill because she didn’t need to be credited to become known for this line.

Table 16: Lyrical Chart for Second Verse of "She's A Bitch"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1			roll up in my	CAR don't STOP	won't STOP	i'mma	keep it ROCK-	in' til the CLOCK	don't TOCK	i'mma	keep it HOT	light my ass	on FIRE	i'mma	grab a philly	gon and roll
2	it at the BAR	what ya	TALK	whacha SAY	HUH	gotta	FLOW gotta	move it SLOW	HUH	betta	YOU runnin'	out the DOOR	HUH	you gon	be a long	lost SOUL
3	what ya SAY	yippie	yi YO	yippie yi	yi YAY	put me	on STAGE	watchin' Niggas	feel ME	put my	shit on WAX	watch it BLAZE	like MAY	GO yippie	yi YO	yippie yi
4	yi YAY	fifty	FIVE	sixty FIVE	HIKE	seven	FIVE	eighty FIVE	test the	MIC	ninety FIVE	missy WILD	for the NIGHT	one oh	FIVE	i'mma keep the
5	crowd HYPE															

The BPM of “She’s A Bitch” is 111, which is a moderate pace, thus slower than “Let It All Work Out,” (138) and “There’s Been A Murder” (166), but faster than “Kill JAY-Z” (84) and “I Feel Like Dying” (83). The length of the verse (5 lines) is longer than Lil Wayne’s “I Feel Like Dying” (3) but much shorter than “Let It All Work Out” (8), JAY-Z’s “Kill JAY-Z” (9), and “There’s Been A Murder” (9). “She’s A Bitch,” there are 38 rhymes in total. The rhyme rate of the second verse of “She’s A Bitch” with eight domains, is 4.875, which is skewed with two small domains of two rhymes each at the end of the verse. Without those two small domains with six domains, there are five rhymes per domain on average without the two small domains. The majority of the rhyme domains are chain rhymes and or monosyllabic:

- (36) lines 1-2 in blue: [ɑ] (*car, hot, fire, bar, talk*)
- (37) lines 2-3 in grey: [oʊ] (*flow, slow, door, soul, yo, go, yo*)
- (38) lines 2-4 in gold: [aɪ] (*say, say, yay, stage, me, blaze, may*)
- (39) lines 4-5 in cyan: [aɪ] (*hike, mic, night, hype*)
- (40) lines 4-5 in dark brown: [aʊ] (*wild, crowd*)

The verse features one bisyllabic rhyme domain in line 4 in light green: [ɪ_i] (*fifty, missy*). One trisyllabic rhyme domain in line 1 in dark green is [ɑ_ɔ_ɑ] (*stop won’t stop, rockin’, clock don’t tock*). Most of the rhymes fall on beat 1 (13/38), followed by beat 4 (12/38), then beat 3 (10/38), and the least on beat 2 (3/38). Thus, the rhymes fall on nearly every beat other than beat 2, which only has 3.

The flow tempo is 29.938 average syllables per line without including the fifth line because it only has two syllables and would skew the statistics. This flow tempo is faster than Lil Wayne’s songs in this study (25.67 and 25.25), faster than JAY-Z’s “There’s Been A Murder” (25.5), but slower than “Kill JAY-Z” (42.44). There are 42 stresses in the verse. Most of the stresses fall on

beat 1 (15/42), followed by beat 3 (13/42), then beat 4 (12/42), and the least instances are on beat 2 (2/42). The instances of stress are scattered throughout the verse on nearly every beat but beat 2.

Importantly, through using the conceptual content structure, Missy is not reflecting on events by name or fully detailing them in a story structure like JAY-Z's "There's Been a Murder" and "Kill JAY-Z" and Lil Wayne's "Let It All Work Out." She uses indirection, a hallmark of AAWL (Morgan, 2015), to talk about the situation without revealing anyone by name or directly referencing a conversation. By taking that well-known characteristic of AAWL, Missy reflects African American culture in her lyrics. She does this in "Throw It Back" as well.

4.2.4.2 Throw It Back

"Throw It Back" is the opening track on Elliot's EP (extended play) *Iconology*, released in 2019. Missy Elliott was "motivated to write uplifting music to counter mainstream trends and encourage more dance music to feel good" (Kennedy, 2019). The content topic of "Throw It Back" is club/party, though based on a concept. As a preface, "Throw It Back" is thematically centered like "She's a Bitch" except now this song contains a reference to Elliott's history as an artist. The structure of the lyrics is braggadocious, conceptual, and humorous. Like She's a Bitch, there is a comparison of two identities here but just a definition of the chronotopic identity, "Missy Elliott," understood in the specific time-space condition of her past achievements. Identity-making in "Throw It Back" is achieved through slang, metaphors/similes, wordplay, and punchlines.

1	Walk up in this thing (Thing), I be on my game (Game)
2	If it's competition ('Tition), I put them to shame (Shame)
3	Different kind of chick (Chick), we are not the same (The same)
4	I raised all these babies, call me Katherine Jackson ('Son)
5	Please don't steal my style (Style), I might cuss you out (Wow)
6	What you doin' now (Doin'), I did for a while (While)
7	Missy, Missy, Missy, go 'head, let it slap (Slap)
8	I'ma snatch they wigs 'til I see that scalp (Scalp)
9	Booty, booty clap (Clap), flyin' across the map (Map)
10	Lambo on the block (Block), lookin' like a snack
11	I'll show you how I do it (Do it), show you how it's done (Done)
12	Don't look for another Missy 'cause there'll be no 'nother one

Figure 15: First Verse of "Throw It Back"

The first thing that is noticed in Figure 15 is the call-and-response nature of the lines (Smitherman, 1977; DeBose, 2015). All her rhymes are repeated seemingly for emphasis. This shows that in the content techniques, she is pulling from communal resources and using this style, which is well-known in the black church community — see DeBose (2015). Missy delivers many punchlines, adding to the humorous content involving wordplay. It is almost as if she is giving a sermon at church.

In this verse, Missy Elliott is being her classic braggadocious self. Many young rappers cite Missy Elliott as their influence, “I raised all these babies / call me Katherine Jackson.” In evoking Katherine Jackson, mother of the late Michael Jackson and other Jackson siblings, and through Missy's influence in Rap music history, she argues that she raised and nurtured many musically talented kids/people. She argues in this verse that she is a unique, “different kind of chick.” There will never be another or the next “Missy Elliott.” She has perfected the craft of rapping “What you doin' now / I did for a while” and intends to keep doing it, showing others how rapping is done. The "what you doin' now" connects to her reference to new rappers as babies. Therefore, they are newbies, but she isn't — she has been doing it for a while. She also presents

herself as a seasoned expert connecting with line 1. Missy Elliott defines the prototype in herself and what she does by firming up the chronotopically contingent identity of “Missy Elliott,” past, present, and perpetuity.

Table 17: Lyrical Chart of First Verse of "Throw It Back"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1	walk	up in the	THIN G	THIN G	i	be on	my GAM E	GAM E	if there's	compe-	TITIO N	TITIO N	i	put them	to SHAM E	SHAM E
2	dif-	ferent kind	of CHIC K	CHIC K	we	are not	the SAM E	SAM E	i	RAISE D	all these	babies	call me	katherin e	jack-	SON
3	SON	please don't	steal my	STYL E	STYL E	i	might cuss	you OUT	WO W	what you	doin'	NOW	DOin'	i	did for	a WHIL E
4	WHIL E	missy	missy	MISS Y	go 'head	let it	SLAP	SLAP	i'mm a	snatch they	WIGS	WIGS	'til i	see they	SCAL P	SCAL P
5		booty	booty	CLAP	CLAP	flyin 'a-	cross the	MAP	MAP	lambo	on the	BLOC K	BLOC K	lookin'	like a	SNAC K
6	SNAC K i	show you	how you	do it	do it	show you	how it's	DON E	DON E don't	look for	ano-	ther missy	cuz there'll	be no	'nother	ONE

The BPM of “Throw It Back” is 160, which is much faster than “She’s A Bitch” (111). However, “Throw It Back” has nearly the same amount of lines, with six, and “She’s A Bitch” with 5. As will be seen in the analysis, the elements in “Throw it Back” closely resemble JAY-Z’s “There’s Been A Murder” (166) and rhyme rate (3.1) and flow tempo (23.22), but with fewer lines (6 v. 9). Out of five rhyme domains in “Throw It Back,” the rhyme rate is 3.8, which is markedly less than the rhyme rate of “She’s A Bitch” (4.875). This would suggest that “Throw It Back” has less rhyme complexity than “She’s A Bitch.” Before delving into the rhyme schemes, I count the call-and-response rhymes “thing, thing,” “game, game,” etc., as one rhyme since this is an identity rhyme with more significance rhythmically than two separate entities. It accomplished Elliott’s iconic stutter-stop and syncopated rhythm that she has been known for in her raps.

There are 23 rhymes in the first verse of “Throw It Back.” All the rhymes are monosyllabic as seen in examples (41) – (45):

- (41) lines 1-3 in dark green: [əɪ(nasal)] (*thing, game, shame, same, -son*)
- (42) line 4 in grey: [ɪ] (*chick, wigs*)
- (43) lines 3-4 in blue: [aɪ] (*style, out, wow, now, while*)
- (44) lines 4-6 in coral: [æ(voiceless plosive)] (*slap, scalp, clap, map, snack*)
- (45) line 6 in cyan: [ʌn] (*done, one*)

Only three rhyme domains would be considered chain rhymes: [əɪ(nasal)], [aɪ], and [æ(voiceless plosive)].

Missy does a similar tactic as “She’s A Bitch” for completing rhyme domains. Words/syllables like *-son*, *while*, and *snack* complete their respective rhyme domains because they feature variable pronunciation that takes some phonological knowledge. The pronunciation of *-son*, from the name Jackson, would be [sɒn] in everyday conversation, but Missy pronounced it as

[səm], thus raising and fronting and diphthongizing the vowel to make the rhyme work. This is not unheard of in poetry, but it requires some knowledge about manipulating the sounds in a language so one can still understand them. This is also an attested pattern in AAL for the African American Vowel Shift seen in speakers from North Carolina (Farrington et al., 2021). Per Devonish's (1996) work, Missy shows herself to be an adept speaker of AAL, who can skillfully manipulate vowel pronunciation, and whose keen attention to the rhyme structure and the flow is needed to make her style. Most of the rhymes fall on beat 4 (10/19), followed by beat 3 (8/19), then beat 1 (1/19), and none on beat 2. Thus, the rhymes fall on at or towards the end of a bar.

The flow tempo is an average of 25.33 syllables per line, which is faster than JAY-Z's "There's Been A Murder" (23.22) but slower than "She's A Bitch" (29.83). There are 44 stresses in the verse, which resembles the instances seen in "There's Been A Murder" (46). Most of the stresses call on beat 4 (21/44), followed by 10/44 on beat 1, closely followed by beat 3 (9/44), then beat 2 with the least (4/44). Thus, the stresses are primarily at the end of the bar, accounting for nearly half of the instances.

Thus, throughout the two analyzed songs, Missy Elliott has maintained elements of content (conceptual and braggadocio; slang and wordplay) and flow (mono- and multisyllabic rhyme schemes), creating chronotopic contingency in how Missy Elliott portrays herself in her music. In flow, Missy is on par with Lil Wayne and JAY-Z in rhyme complexity and flow tempo. The true differences lie in the elements of content. These differences are also seen when comparing Nicki Minaj's flow and content to the other artists in the study.

4.2.5 Nicki Minaj, Onika Maraj-Petty

Onika Tanya Maraj-Petty, Nicki Minaj, was born in Trinidad and Tobago on December 8, 1982. She moved with her family to Queens, New York, when she was 5. When Minaj graduated from Fiorella H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, she was set on becoming an actress. Still, she found many hardships on this track and eventually began focusing on a Rap career, citing JAY-Z and Foxy Brown as her major influences (Biography, 2020). She released her first mixtape in 2007 and released two more after that. She was discovered by Lil Wayne and signed a contract with Young Money Entertainment in 2009 through the release of her third mixtape, *Beam Me Up Scotty*. In 2010, she released her debut album, *Pink Friday*, which had the highest sales week for a female Rap album in the 21st century and the second highest overall. *Pink Friday* received a RIAA platinum certification, the first album by a solo female rapper to go platinum in seven years. She released three more albums since then: *Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded* (2012), *The Pinkprint* (2014), and *Queen* (2018). All have won several awards and are critically acclaimed.

Regarding her artistry and unique Rap style, she claimed she didn't want to sound like typical New York rappers and said, "I don't want people to hear me and know exactly where I'm from" (Biography, 2020). She accomplishes this through her rapping speed, using alter egos and accents whilst rapping, using extensive metaphors, punch lines, and intricate wordplay. Being the only rapper out of the four featured in this project to use self-assigned alter egos, Nicki Minaj has interesting implications for her characterization in her music because her characterization depends on the theme she is trying to portray in that song. What Nicki Minaj does is considered "alter-egos" rather than chronotopic identities because of their fundamental dissimilarities in the songs analyzed. JAY-Z, Lil Wayne, and Missy Elliott do not claim that the identities presented within

their songs all refer to the same people from different lenses. In contrast, Nicki Minaj attempts to portray different people, such as a theater actor with a part to play.

Minaj lived through the alter egos she created as a form of escapism, which ended up being her claim to fame (Biography, 2020). The analyses below focus on “Roman’s Revenge,” which is on her debut album, *Pink Friday* (2010), and “Chun Li”, which is on her *Queen* album (2018). These songs were chosen because of their realization of two of her alter egos: Roman Zolanski and Chun Li. Nicki Minaj’s topics include metaphorical/conceptual references to real-life scenarios but include club/party and humorous structure without mention of the story, thus presenting her content in a jocular fashion. This makes her content topic, structure, and tools contingent, but her alter egos are chronotopic (placed in specific time-space conditions) but not contingent.

4.2.5.1 Roman’s Revenge¹⁵

In this song, Nicki Minaj raps as her crazy alter ego, “Roman Zolanski” (Hogan, 2011), and the lyrical content responds to provocations by Lil Kim, who feuded with Nicki Minaj back in the early 2010s. This is the last song on Nicki’s debut album, *Pink Friday* (2010). Much like Missy Elliott’s lyrical content, Roman’s Revenge is club/party yet conceptual (thematically centered) with elements of braggadocio and humor. This song is considered a diss track¹⁶ to Lil Kim, and Nicki addresses the feud with Lil Kim without explicitly naming her. This is the nature of a diss track because most of the song would be targeted lines centered on the people or group of people

¹⁵ “Roman’s Revenge” features Eminem in verses 2 and 4 but are not included in the analysis because, though interesting, the focus is that of Nicki Minaj.

¹⁶ A diss track is a song intended to disparage or attack another person or group of people

you are “dissing.” This song is also a testament to why Nicki Minaj is the Queen of Rap now and that Lil Kim, among others, needs to move aside to usher in a new era of female rappers (Genius). Nicki Minaj uses extensive metaphors, wordplay, and punch lines delivered through intricate rhyme schemes to achieve this content. Through utilizing the conceptual content structure, Nicki, like Missy, does not reflect on events by name. She utilizes indirect talk about her life experiences without revealing anyone by name or directly referencing a conversation.

The stylistic identity making for “Roman” that exists in “Roman’s Revenge” is placed in a specific time-space condition (an allusion to past feuds and how she feels about them at the time of song release), thus rendering “Roman” as a chronotopic identity frame to be invoked.

1	I am not Jasmine , I am Aladdin
2	So far ahead, these bums is laggin'
3	See me in that new thing, bums is gaggin'
4	I'm startin' to feel like a dungeon dragon
5	Rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
6	I'm startin' to feel like a dungeon dragon
7	Look at my show footage, how these girls be spazzin'
8	So fuck I look like gettin' back to a has-been?
9	Yeah, I said it, has-been
10	Hang it up, flatscreen
11	Plasma
12	"Hey Nicki, hey Nicki," asthma
13	I got the pumps, it ain't got medicine
14	I got bars, sentencin'
15	I'm a bad bitch, I'm a cunt
16	And I'll kick that ho, punt
17	Forced trauma, blunt
18	You play the back, bitch, I'm in the front
19	You need a job , this ain't cuttin' it
20	Nicki Minaj is who you ain't fuckin' with
21	You lil' Fraggle Rock , beat you with a pad-a-lock
22	I am a movie, camera block
23	You outta work, I know it's tough
24	But enough is enough

Figure 16: First Verse of "Roman's Revenge"

The rest of the song is braggadocious because Nicki Minaj, as “Roman,” talks about how she is the best and why. Lines 2 and 3, “so far ahead, these bums is laggin’/ see me in that new thing, bums is gaggin,” is an allusion to her issue with the rapper Keys, who refers to Minaj as a bum, and Minaj is calling her a bum in response (SameOldShawn, 2010). Lines 4 through 6, beginning with “rah rah like a dungeon dragon,” is a phrase that is associated with Busta Rhymes from his featured iconic verse in A Tribe Called Quest’s “Scenario” (1991). This line is also repeated for the chorus. This interpolation adds to Roman’s identification as a crazy alter ego meant to be feared like dragons are frightful creatures. One can hear this, especially in the voicing of this line, as if she is trying to scare the listener with a sudden, deeper voice modulation.

Another indication of her adeptness at rap is a style characterized by what’s known as “hashtag rap,” exemplified in lines 10 through 18. Hashtag Rap is characterized by following a line with a one-word or short-phrase hashtag, rhyming by following words or other hashtags or rhyming with a preceding word (RIZOH, 2011). These lines would look like the following stylized with hashtags:

So fuck I look like gettin' back to a has-been?
Yeah, I said it, has-been
Hang it up, **#flatscreen**
#Plasma
"Hey Nicki, hey Nicki," **#asthma**
I got the pumps, it ain't got medicine
I got bars, **#sentencin'**
I'm a bad bitch, I'm a cunt
And I'll kick that ho, **#punt**
Forced trauma, **#blunt**
You play the back, bitch, I'm in the front

Figure 17: Stylized Hashtag Rap Excerpt from "Roman's Revenge"

Table 18: Lyrical Chart of First Verse of "Roman's Revenge"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1		i am	not JAS-	mine i am	aLAddi n	so far	ahead	these BUMS	is LAGgi n'	see me	in that new	thing BUMS	is GAGgi n'	i'm	startin' 'to FEE L	like a dungeo n
2	DRAGo n	RAH	RAH	like a dungeo n	DRAG on	i'm startin' ,	to FEE L	like a dungeo n	DRAG on	look at my	show footag e	how these girls	be SPAZzi n'	so FUC Ki	look LIKE	gettin' back to
3	a HAS been			yeah i said it	HAS	BEE N		hang it up	FLAT	SCREE N			PLAS-	ma	hey NIC Ki	hey NICKi
4	ASTH-	ma	i got the PUMP S	it ain't	got medi-	CINE i	got BAR S		senten-	CIN'	i'm a bad	bitch	i'm a CUNT	and	i'll kick	that HOE
5	PUNT		forced trau-	ma	BLUN T	you	play the BAC K	bitch i'm	in the FRON T	you	need a JOB	this	ain't CUTTi n'	it nick-	i miNA J	is who
6	you ain't FUCK-	in' with you	lil fraggle	ROC K beat you	with a pad-a	LOC Ki	am a MO-	vie	camera	BLOC K you	outta WOR K	i	know it's TOUG H			but enough
7	is ENOUG H															

The BPM for “Roman’s Revenge” is 112, which is nearly the same as Missy Elliott’s “She’s A Bitch” (111). However, Nicki again shows that if the BPM is slower, the artist can tend to craft lyrical lines with more words if it fits their style. In this case, the Roman character does have a faster pace in rapping with vocal modulation. Out of nine rhyme domains, the rhyme rate is 3.2, which is a smaller rate than “She’s A Bitch” (3.8). There are 29 rhymes in total. I included the three instances of dragon and two instances of enough as separate rhymes because they factor in as identity rhymes rather than call-and-response tactics used in Missy Elliott’s “Throw It Back.” Most of the rhyme domains are couplets, with two rhymes per domain accounting for five out of the nine rhyme domains. The couplets are seen in examples (46) – (51):

- (46) line 3 in blue: [ɪn] (*has been, flat screen*)
- (47) lines 3-4 in grey: [æ_ɑ] (*plasma, asthma*)
- (48) line 4 in coral: [ɛ_ɪn] (*medicine, sentencin’*)
- (49) line 5 in dark brown: [i_ɑ] (*need a job, nicki minaj*)
- (50) lines 5-6 in gold: [ʌ_ɪn_ɪt] (*cuttin’ it, fuckin’ wit*)
- (51) lines 6-7 in purple: [əf] (*tough, enough, enough*)

The longest chain rhyme, in lines 1-3 in dark green, is bisyllabic: [æ_ɪ] (*jasmine, aladdin, laggin’, gaggin’, dragon, dragon, dragon, spazzin’, has been*). The second chain rhyme, in lines 4-5 in cyan, is monosyllabic: [ʌnt] (*cunt, punt, blunt, front*). The last rhyme domain, in line 6 in light green, is tri-syllabic: [æ_ə_ɑ] (*fraggle rock, pad-a-lock, camera block*).

You can see that *has been* in two different rhyme domains: [æ_ɪ], in line 3 in dark green, and [ɪn], in line 3 in blue. This shows an intricate usage of phonological knowledge by pronouncing has-been as has-bean, emphasizing BEE-N. This refers to rapper Lil Kim’s moniker “Queen Bee.” Nicki Minaj’s rapper persona, Roman, is based on intricate wordplay and inventive usage of

phonological knowledge to get her points across through indirection. This reflects Devonish's (1996) work, where Nicki has expert rapping skills and is a knowledgeable AAL language user. The indirectness comes in with her not referencing Lil Kim or Keyes by name but instead referring to Kim as a *has-been* and a *Fraggle Rock* and Keyes as a *bum*. The rhyme domains occur almost exclusively on beat 1, accounting for 24 out of 29 rhymes, with beat 3 having three instances and beats 2 and 4 receiving one instance each. Thus, nearly all rhymes take place at the beginning of the bar.

The flow tempo of “Roman’s Revenge” is 32.67 syllables per line, and the last line was not included with two syllables because it skewed the data. Nicki’s verse is faster than all of the other songs featured in the study except JAY-Z’s “Kill JAY-Z” (42.44). There are 43 stresses in the verse. Most of the stresses fall on beat 1 (18/43), followed by beat 3 (12/43), then (beat 2 (7/43), and beat 4 having the least instances of stress (5/43). Word and syllable stress in this verse seems scattered throughout the bar, though most are at the beginning. Thus, it can be argued that using the Roman persona as a chronotopic identity frame is also characterized by fast-paced rapping, intricate wordplay, and inventive use of phonological knowledge.

4.2.5.2 Chun Li

Chun Li (2018) is named after the first-ever female character in a mainstream video game series, featured in “Street Fighter II: The World Warrior” (1991). This song was released alongside “Barbie Tings” (2018), which were the first singles released from her fourth studio album, *Queen* (2018). In this song, Nicki compares herself to Chun-Li and effectively calls herself as such by saying she’s one of the first female rappers to dominate in Rap and still dominates despite rival efforts. The content topic of this song is club/party. The structure has several braggadocio and conceptual elements that contribute to Nicki's skills with indirection (Morgan, 2015). The tools

that are used are metaphor, wordplay, and punchlines. Again, this song is thematically centered by asserting in different ways that she is the best currently and will continue to be the best as time passes (i.e., specific time-space condition of the continuous present) so she can be perceived as the “bad guy” Chun-Li, which will be referenced in the analysis as the present identity realization, or alter ego, of Nicki Minaj.

1	Ayo, look like I'm goin' for a swim
2	Dunked on 'em, now I'm swingin' off the rim
3	Bitch ain't comin' off the bench
4	While I'm comin' off the court fully drenched
5	Here go some haterade, get ya thirst quenched
6	Styled on 'em in this Burberry trench
7	These birds copy every word, every inch
8	But gang gang got the hammer and the wrench (Brrr)
9	I pull up in that quarter milli off the lot
10	Oh, now she tryna be friends like I forgot
11	Show off my diamonds like I'm signed by the ROC (By the ROC)
12	Ain't pushin' out his babies 'til he buy the rock

Figure 18: First Verse of "Chun Li"

The first verse contains much intricate wordplay, not unlike that of Roman’s Revenge, but is not fast-paced like Roman’s. It has more braggadocious elements in the puns that take place. Lines 1 through 4 display what I call a transitive metaphor, which is a metaphor that changes meaning as each line presents itself to connect multiple interpretations of a word or phrase. She says she is going for a swim and “dunked on ‘em,” a phrase which can be taken in two ways: a dunk in a pool or a dunk in basketball. Then, she furthers the metaphor by saying she is “swinging off the rim,” like in basketball. The “bitch” in line 3, which isn’t a direct reference, is a benchwarmer, yet, Nicki is coming off the court “fully drenched [in sweat]” after doing much work

in her career. With this metaphor, Minaj claims that she is the star player in Rap while her competition isn't doing anything but keeping the bench warm.

Though the competition isn't doing anything, they still seem to criticize or "hate on her" and proceed to tell them to quench their thirst with "haterade," which is a play on Gatorade's slogan, "thirst quencher." In line 7, she again refers to her competition in a derogatory fashion by calling them "birds," slang for ignorant or stupid women/girls. Whilst likening them to birds, she says they copy everything she does, from raps to her style of clothing and hair, "every word, every inch." She's showing off the diamonds she is wearing and her wealth like she's "signed by the ROC." This is a reference to JAY-Z's label, Roc-A-Fella Records, which is known for holding up a diamond symbol with their hands, as shown in the figure below:



Figure 19: JAY-Z Holding Up Roc Symbol

All the extensive metaphorical usage, wordplay, and punchlines add to how "Chun Li" is characterized in the content.

21 Oh, I get it, huh, they paintin' me out to be the bad guy
22 Well it's the last time you gonna see a bad guy do the rap game like me

Figure 20: First Interlude of "Chun Li"

To bolster the usage of wordplay and allusion in "Chun Li," I will also discuss the first interlude in the song. The first interlude in Figure 19 (seen below) alludes to her perception of

being a villain by the media since 2017 and her feud with Remy Ma. She even voices these lines in a deeper and raspier voice than the rest of the song. This is also an homage to Tony Montana's famous "Bad Guy" speech from Scarface (Empire State Studios, 2019). By emulating the raspiness to invoke Tony Montana to characterize the alter ego, "Chun Li". There is no flow analysis for the interlude because there are no rhyming elements.

Table 19: Lyrical Chart of First Verse of "Chun Li"

	1	x	y	z	2	x	y	z	3	x	y	z	4	x	y	z
1				aYO		look like i'm	GOin' for a	SWIM	DUNK ED	on 'em now i'm	SWIN Gin' off the	RIM		bitch ain't	COMi n' off the	BENC H
2	while I'M	comin' off the	COURT fully	DRENCHED	here go some	haterade	get your THIRST	QUENCHED	STYLED on	'em in this	BURberry	TRENCH	these BIRDS	copy every	WORD	every INCH
3	but GANG	gang got the	HAMmer and the	WRENCH	I pull up	in that quarter	milli off the	LOT	OH now she	tryin' to be	FRIENDS like i for-	GOT	SHOW off my	diamonds like i'm	SIGNED by	the ROC
4	ain't pushin'	out his babies	'TIL he buy the	ROCK												

The BPM of “Chun Li” is 97, which is slower than all songs in the study except “Kill JAY-Z” (84) and “I Feel Like Dying” (83). The verse length is nearly as short (4 lines) as Lil Wayne’s verse in “I Feel Like Dying” (3 lines). However, this is where the similarities stop between those two songs. “Chun Li” has a rhyme rate of 4 with five rhyme domains in total. There are 20 rhymes in total. All of the rhyme domains are monosyllabic. The rhyme domains consist of three chain rhymes:

(52) line 1-3 in dark green: [ou] (*ayo, goin’, go, oh, show*)

(53) line 1-3 in grey: [(ε)ntʃ̃] (*bench, drenched, quenched, trench, inch, wrench*)

(54) line 2 in coral: [ə] (*thirst, burberry, word*)

(55) line 3-4 in cyan [ɔ(t/c)] (*lot, forgot, roc, rock*)

There were two instances of apocopated rhymes where the stressed portion of the bisyllabic rhyme in the domain rhymes with monosyllabic words:

(56) [ɔ(t/c)] (for**GOT** versus *lot, roc, rock*)

(57) [ə] (**BUR**berry versus *thirst, word*).

There was one couplet in line 1 in blue: [ɪm] (*swim, rim*). Most of the rhymes fall on beat 4 (13/20), followed by beat 3 (4/20), then beat 1 (3/20), and no instances on beat 2. Therefore, Nicki’s verse on “Chun Li” is almost exclusively dominated by end rhymes. This is the opposite pattern of “Roman’s Revenge,” dominated by rhymes at the beginning of the bar on beat 1.

Nicki’s flow tempo in “Chun Li” is 30.5, with line 3 included, which skews the data considerably. Without counting the last line, the flow tempo is 36.67. If we take the latter as the average, Nicki’s flow tempo is faster than all songs except “Kill JAY-Z” (42.44). There are 32 stresses in Nicki’s verse. Most of the stresses fall on beat 4 (13/32), followed closely by beat 3

(11/32), then beat 1 (8/32), and no instances on beat 2. Therefore, the stresses mostly fall at the end, like the rhyme pattern.

Compared to the intricate flow showcased in “Roman’s Revenge,” the analysis of “Chun Li” is much less complicated. Thus, this lends to the assertion that Chun Li and Roman are different chronotopic artifacts. However, Nicki Minaj has maintained elements of content (metaphorical/conceptual reference of real-life scenarios; club/party and humorous structure) and flow (mono- and multisyllabic rhyme schemes), portray contingency in the tools Nicki Minaj uses to portray herself in her music. In getting across to listeners a catchy conceptual and club/party Rap, the alter ego “Chun Li” takes form through allusion, extensive metaphors, and comparably simple rhyme schemes.

4.2.6 Missy Elliott & Nicki Minaj Comparison

Missy Elliott's and Nicki Minaj's stylistic bricolage have many similarities. Missy Elliott has a syncopated flow in both of her songs based around braggadocious concepts, and includes some humorous elements. This is achieved using slang, wordplay, metaphors, and punchlines. In both songs, through the "Missy Elliott" chronotope, Missy Elliott is defining herself as perceived by others and her perception of who Missy Elliott is. Nicki Minaj, though identifying herself as two different chronotopic characters, "Roman Zolanski" and "Chun Li," is delineating concepts with braggadocious and humorous content through fast flows, with wordplay, metaphors, punchlines, and slang. Between "Roman" and "Chun Li," there are differences in how fast the flows are and the types of rhyme schemes used. Roman has a faster flow out of the two chronotopes with a lot of pitch modulation that utilizes complicated multisyllabic rhyme schemes. "Chun Li"

has a slower flow tempo and a more simplistic rhyme scheme that uses exclusively monosyllabic rhymes.

Missy Elliott and Nicki Minaj's songs have nearly identical content (topics, structure, tools). All of the songs have a club/party content topic. The structure of the songs is conceptual and braggadocio. Nicki Minaj's "Roman's Revenge" also included a humorous content structure. All the tools include some form of wordplay, metaphors, and slang. Nicki Minaj also used punchlines and allusion in "Roman's Revenge" and punchlines along with the other tools in "Chun Li." Missy and Nicki utilize the concept of indirection in their content structure. By never directly referring to people or life experiences, they both expertly exhibit the notion of indirectness AAWL (Morgan, 2015). Therefore, their song lyrics reflect patterns in the surrounding Black culture.

The rhyme rates for the two artists vary but are comparable. The rhyme rates for "Throw It Back" (3.8) and "Chun Li" (4) are not far from each other. Therefore, their rhyme complexity is on the same level. "She's A Bitch" is a high outlier at 4.875. "Roman's Revenge" is a low outlier at 3.2. The flow tempos also vary but are not comparable to the rhyme rates. Missy Elliott's flow tempo for "She's A Bitch" (29.938) is faster than "Throw It Back" (25.33). Nicki Minaj's flow tempo for "Roman's Revenge" (32.67) was only marginally faster than "Chun Li" (30.2). Nicki Minaj's flow tempos are faster than Missy Elliott's, so it is fair to say Nicki is the faster rapper. The discrepancies in how Missy Elliott and Nicki Minaj pattern their rhymes and stresses varied, which leads me to think that rhyming and stress are where the rappers were the most uniquely creative.

These are the same issues as seen in the male rappers. However, patterns can be found in what content (topics, structure, and tools) are used most by either gender which is delineated in the next section 4.3 after Table 18: Stylistic Identity Summary.

4.3 Study 2 Discussion

Table 20: Stylistic Identity Summary

Artist	Song	Topic	Structure	Tools	Flow Tempo	Rhyme Rate
JAY-Z	“There’s Been A Murder”	real-life, controversial	story	imagery, slang, wordplay, metaphors	25.5	3.1
	“Kill JAY-Z”	real-life	story, concept	imagery, slang, wordplay, metaphors	42.44	3.33
Lil Wayne	“I Feel Like Dying”	real-life, controversial	abstract, concept	imagery	25.67	6
	“Let It All Work Out”	real-life	story, braggadocio	imagery, metaphors	25.25	6.8
Missy Elliott	“She’s A Bitch”	club/party	concept, braggadocio	slang, wordplay	29.938	4.875
	“Throw It Back”	club/party	concept, braggadocio, humorous	slang, metaphors, wordplay, punchlines	25.33	3.8
Nicki Minaj	“Roman’s Revenge”	club/party	concept, braggadocio, humorous	metaphors, wordplay, punchlines, slang	32.67	3.2
	“Chun Li”	club/party	concept, braggadocio	wordplay, punchlines, metaphors, slang	30.2	4

As a reminder, the research questions that are addressed in Study 2:

RQ2: How can stylistic bricolage be used to compare rappers' identity performance in their lyrical content?

RQ3: How can chronotopic identity be used to compare a rapper's stylistic performance across their career?

As seen in Table 18, JAY-Z, Lil Wayne, Missy Elliott, and Nicki Minaj all belong to the Rap community of practice. Therefore, they all have elements that are emblematic of what style is in Rap (content and flow). Also, their lyrics contain similar linguistic and poetic conventions to shape their identities. These identities all have elements of chronotopic contingency throughout their careers. JAY-Z, Nicki Minaj, and Missy Elliott are all on par with each other, with a rhyme rate of around 3-4. Lil Wayne was the outlier here with 6 and 6.8. There is an overlap in content structure and tools.

However, they maintain some differences in how they utilize allusion in how they tell a story, in the case of JAY-Z and Lil Wayne, or relate to a wider theme, in the case of Missy Elliott and Nicki Minaj. Nicki Minaj's topics include metaphorical/conceptual references to real-life scenarios, club/party, and humorous structures, thus presenting her content jocularly. Missy Elliott and Nicki employ the usage of indirectness, which characterizes AAWL. Jay-Z and Lil Wayne rap about more serious, controversial topics revolving around their lives while telling stories directly referencing real-life scenarios. Importantly, Lil Wayne and JAY-Z transform from just making themselves out as hustlers and thugs or addicts, in Lil Wayne's case, to identifying themselves from multiple perspectives. These shifts reflect wider notions that are seen in wider Black

American culture. As Eckert (2000) explains, people's participation in a community of practice "depends on where they find themselves in the world as embodied in such things as class, age, ethnicity and gender" (40). As noted in the literature review and reiterated here, there seems to be something outside of the lyrics in the surrounding culture that dictates the appropriate conduct of black female rappers, as evidenced by the difference in content portrayal for the rappers.

In Study 2, I extend the E-creative "acts of identity" that rappers use in their lyrics. This extension includes a diachronic analysis of identity-making and chronotopic "possible selves," using lyrical content choices through discourse analytical methodology and assessing flow choices. Like in Study 1, this was accomplished by comparing rapper flows using rhyming techniques, e.g., rhyme schemes and rhyme rate, and rhythm patterning, e.g., flow tempo and BPM. Through these elements, artists use a bricolage of these stylistic techniques as E-creative "acts of identity" are selecting their "possible selves."

5.0 Conclusion

I started by claiming that BARM is a resource that can advance our understanding of sociocultural context and sociolinguistics. The analyses of song lyrics and the stylistic choices of artists demonstrated this value while also underscoring the intricate relationship between language and music. Rather than looking at one style or stylistic feature and tracking it across rappers, I started with a single rapper. I looked at particular elements from HHN and HHNL used to create each rapper's notable personas. As I showed in Chapters 3.0 and 4.0, Rappers have the choice of possible selves through the collection of linguistic categories and sub-categories delineated by Edwards (2009), which is established in a Rap community of practice (Eckert, 2000). My dissertation focuses on the liberties in individual "creative" agency that rappers take in their lyrics (i.e. a type of rapper discourse) to mold their identity. This is made possible through a combination of sources they find in Hip-Hop culture and compares that identity construction at different points of their careers.

Rap is as much about culture as it is about language. Rap originated as a musical form of cultural and linguistic expression among African Americans to showcase and exalt creative language usages. To provide evidence that Rap is a rich linguistic and cultural art form, the sub-disciplinary and interdisciplinary applications from sociolinguistics, ethnomusicology, poetics, and linguistic anthropology show that much can be gleaned from Rap music as a linguistic and cultural art form, not just determined by linguistic frameworks. This answers the call in Geneva Smitherman's foreword to *Roc the Mic Right* to continue showing Hip Hop culture's value in all aspects to get to the "truth about the language of our people" through interdisciplinary methods (Alim, 2008: vii). Rap as a music genre was designed and styled by Black artists who are speakers

of AAL, thus making it a language-based art form and also inputs social information in several ways, as seen in this dissertation. In other words, Rap as a music genre was designed and styled by Black artists who are speakers of AAL through their lived experiences. Therefore, following Charity-Hudley et al. (2020), Rap music is a liberatory linguistic creation (Charity-Hudley et al., 2023), allowing Black artists to create a freedom of varied expression, which deserves a reexamination and closer study. This contributes to the wider discussions in the field related to advancing raciolinguistics (Wolfram, 2023) and advancing racial justice in linguistic research (Charity-Hudley, 2023).

My dissertation provides a novel heuristic for comparing style and identity construction in lyrical music, i.e., Rap music. I argue that the boundaries between language use, social context, and stylistic fashioning are all fluid and permeable. Therefore, a conception of style, especially those describing cultural art forms like Rap music, must account for the fluidity of these dimensions. A conception of individual and communal style for Rap music, in particular, includes rhythm-to-rhyme patterning, linguistic choices shown through language and lyrical dexterity, sampling strategies, identity construction techniques, and how these compare and differ across social contexts such as space-time and gender. Therefore, in both studies, I showcase how individual rappers are creative within and outside these former dimensions by comparing inter- and intra-speaker lyrical examples.

The ethnomusicology framework used in study 1 offers much to an interdisciplinary sociolinguistic analysis of Rap music by providing a comparable numerical standard of comparison for rappers' respective flows by establishing the G-creative structure within Rap music. It is also an informative visual resource for modeling rapper flow, which is why it is used in Study 1 (Chapter 3.0) and Study 2 (Chapter 4.0). However, Adams' (2009) model does not have

much to say about how “sampling” could affect rhythm-to-rhyme pairings or flow, its importance to the Rap tradition, or its potential stylistic influence on pairing constraints. I foregrounded G-creative rhythm-to-rhyme pairing in study 1. This approach led to intuitive comparative numerical and qualitative knowledge about how instrumental sampling techniques, seen in BPM, affect the E-creative stylistic choices of artists' flow. The E-creative choices are seen in values for flow tempo (average syllables per line) and rhyme rate (average rhymes per rhyme domain). By employing interdisciplinary methodology, I showed that interdisciplinary research indeed lends to more holistic explanations of researchable phenomena, especially Black cultural art forms. There haven't been many interdisciplinary studies on Rap music lyrics. These bridges also advance the linguistic fields' efforts to promote racial equality in research (Charity-Hudley et al., 2020; Charity-Hudley et al., 2023).

Such a multidimensional style analysis could offer sociolinguistics studies a rich framework for analyzing speech styles. I applied a discourse analytic framework in study 2 by comparing content categories (topics, structure, and tools) of each artist's lyrics and chronotopic identities (using biographical information). I also discuss how these elements interface with gender-normative performance strategies in wider Black culture. These studies use common analytical frameworks in sociolinguistics, poetics, and linguistic anthropological fields to adapt their usage to an under-researched area—Rap lyrics. Namely, these common analytical frameworks are style (stylistic bricolage, community of practice), rhyme schemes, identity (acts of identity, possible selves), and chronotopes. These analyses in Study 2 were performed alongside the ethnomusicology framework to understand the flow patterning like in Study 1. All of these elements lend to a stylistic bricolage (Eckert, 2004) of acts of identity (Lanehart, 2015) of each

artist that all coalesce to describe the chronotopic "possible selves" (Lanehart, 2015) presented in the song lyrics—JAY-Z, Lil Wayne, Missy Elliott, and Nicki Minaj, respectively.

In response to RQ1, my dissertation also highlights the value of communal authorship as an integral part of style and music-making in BARM. This property stands in stark contrast to ideas of ownership.

RQ1: Given the same or similar rhythmic base (sampled song), how are different rap artists (samplers) similar to or different from the sampled work?

- a) How are the samplers using linguistic and rhythmic strategies to express their individual creativity from the sampled song to reflect their artistic identity?
- b) How does the employment of these strategies in the sampled works compare to the rapper's usual creative expression?

Though some rhymes or lyrics become associated with a particular rapper, sampling is a process that helps later musical artists pay homage to previous artists by exposing them to their listeners, which gives way to communal authorship. Thus, sampling is also a kind of identity construction because there is an interaction between the rapper and the previous music sampled and between the rapper and their audience. Therefore, as rappers find and express their individuality in structuring their musical lyrics using G-creative structures, they demonstrate E-Creativity. When rappers (samplers) utilize a sampled beat in their work, especially that of other rappers, they tend to emulate elements of the sampled rapper (in lyrics or flow). Rappers (samplers) also adapt these same elements to their unique style of Rap. In this way, they express their

individual creativity in their sampling strategies by adapting the chosen samples into their style compiled with their subject matters (content) or rhythm-to-rhyme pairings (flow).

Chronotopes are used as an identity frame because identity-making practices typically demand a framing of specific time-space conditions to understand the content and the context of identity. This allowed us to understand how rappers form identity through song over time. As we saw, a rapper's identity performance in a song's lyrics can be parsed more completely by identifying and comparing the specific time and social contexts of the rapper when the song was produced.

Chapter 3.0, “On Rhythme-Rhyme Structural Creativity in Rap Music,” discusses RQ1 and explores this by first modeling the G-creative system through Adams' (2009) lyrical charts and comparing rhythm-rhyme structure, or rap flow, of Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, and BIA against each other and the original Missy Elliott. The second part of the analysis compares Ski Mask, Lady Leshurr, and BIA’s flows in another popular song in their career.

Study 2 addresses RQ2 and RQ3 seen below:

RQ2: How can stylistic bricolage be used to compare rappers' identity performance in their lyrical content?

RQ3: How can chronotopic identity be used to compare a rapper's stylistic performance across their career?

Chapter 4.0, “The Multiverse of Creative Chronotopic Identity in Rap,” addresses explicitly research questions 2 and 3. That is through the discourse analysis of the lyrical content of two songs each from the repertoire of JAY-Z, Lil Wayne, Missy Elliott, and Nicki Minaj, as

well as a presenting their songs' rhythm-rhyme structure using Adams'(2009) lyrical chart methodology. This will also be shown by comparing male, female, and overall stylistic bricolage to see what features distinguish each group and sub-group of the artists in the analysis. This chapter will also synthesize relevant time-space conditions for each song and rapper through biographical information to inform chronotopic artifacts showcased in the featured songs.

There is never enough data to make wide generalizations, but this dissertation's goal was to provide a starting point for future analyses. To make wider generalizations of creative identity-making within the Rap community of Practice, this heuristic should be applied to more artists and songs to eventually build a corpus of Rap lyrics. The study could also benefit from having a team of researchers from different disciplines look at the data and apply AI through automatic speech recognition/forced aligners. A potential future direction for this comparative and interdisciplinary work would be to apply this heuristic to more artists and songs to eventually build a corpus of Rap lyrics to make wider generalizations of creative identity-making within the Rap community of practice. I desire that in the quest to discover more about Black language use in future studies, researchers strive for more holistic explanations of researchable phenomena. For Blackness has as many facets as diamonds, one must inspect every side and appreciate all it offers to fully understand its brilliance.

Appendix A Full-Text Lyrics of Song Data

Appendix A.1 JAY-Z – There's Been a Murder Lyrics

{*Gunshots*}
{*Woman screamin' in pain*.. cops yellin' "Go! Go! Go! Go!"}
{*Police sirens*}

Chorus

Think there's been a murder-errra-ahhh-hahh-ahhh
I ahh, think there's been a..
I.. I think there's been a..
Think there's been a murder-errra-ahhh-hahh-ahhh
I ahh, think there's been a..
I.. I think there's been a..

Verse 1

I hustle from, night to morning, dawn to dusk
Kidnap and robberies like, (c'mon nigga) "You goin' with us"
I held roundtable meetings so we could go on and discuss
Not only money but all the emotions goin' through us
Why we don't cry when niggas die, that's how the street raised him
Look in the air, say a prayer (hail Mary), hopin' God forgave him
Cop liquor, twist it, tap it twice, pour it to the pavement
We live dangerous, often findin' ourself in the eyes of strangers
(Who the fuck is you?) My dream is big and in it my team is rich
As seen through the eyes of a nigga who ain't seen shit
Back to live action, I'm packin', I'm still in the mix
Like new hits, I think I'm goin' over your head a lil' bit
But I let you know I changed names when I roam through town
Stay free and be who I'm professional known as now
Jay-motherfuckin'-Z; and with that said
Back to Shawn Carter the hustler, JAY-Z is dead, and I ahh

Chorus

Think there's been a murder-errra-ahhh-hahh-ahhh
I ahh, think there's been a..
I.. I think there's been a..
Think there's been a murder-errra-ahhh-hahh-ahhh
I ahh, think there's been a..

I.. I think there's been a..

Verse 2

My infatuation with autos led to autos gettin' sprayed
Houses gettin' broken in, quarters gettin' trayed
Bricks gettin' chopped, mom's pots gettin' used
One thrown in that water, try the soda if there's two (bring it back)
Expensive shoes worn, Louis Vuitton seats, roof gone
Coke cheap, my face is like a coupon
I gotta do Shawn, 'cause even when JAY-Z was lukewarm
I was gettin' my loot on, nigga I'm too strong
Eat 'til the food's gone, they placed me on this earth
The twin brother of Rich Porter, separated at birth
I got the soul of a hustler, quiet noise like a muffler
Fuck with us, walk through the ghetto
See the place that corrupted us
Learn why we buck at the guys that come up with us
Ain't enough bucks for us to split in this shit
Plus ain't nobody lovin' us; and with that said
Back to Shawn Carter the hustler, JAY-Z is dead, and I ahh

Chorus:

Think there's been a murder-errra-ahhh-hahh-ahhh
I ahh, think there's been a..
I.. I think there's been a..
Think there's been a murder-errra-ahhh-hahh-ahhh
I ahh, think there's been a..
I.. I think there's been a..

Verse 3: JAY-Z

See my life is like a see-saw
And until I move this weight it's gon' keep me to the floor
Travel with me through my deep thoughts
Y'all can't learn Jigga by the shit y'all be readin' in The Source
It's deeper of course
Follow the life of this reckless minor
At sixteen in the 600, unlicensed driver
Playin', cops and robbers, like shots can't stop us
Flippin' a bird to the choppers (fuck you coppers!)
Buck-thirty on the turns
Reckless abandon, when I'm standin' on this pedal
Hand on my metal, mind is on this time they tryin' to give me
Lord help me, all I ever wanted to be was wealthy or
Somebody to tell me that they felt me
I tried to play the hand you dealt me
But you gave me five funnies an' shit

I was hungry I needed menage money
Nothin' less than a 520; and with that said
Back to Shawn Carter the hustler, JAY-Z is { *gunshot* }

Outro

{Think there's been a murder-errra-ahhh-hahh-ahhh}

Appendix A.2 JAY-Z – Kill JAY-Z Lyrics

Kill JAY-Z, they'll never love you
You'll never be enough, let's just keep it real, JAY-Z
Fuck JAY-Z, I mean, you shot your own brother
How can we know if we can trust JAY-Z?
And you know better, nigga, I know you do
But you gotta do better, boy, you owe it to Blue
You had no father, you had the armor
But you got a daughter, gotta get softer
Die JAY-Z, this ain't back in the days
You don't need an alibi, JAY-Z
Cry JAY-Z, we know the pain is real
But you can't heal what you never reveal
What's up, JAY-Z? You know you owe the truth
To all the youth that fell in love with JAY-Z
You got people you love you sold drugs to
You got high on the life, that shit drugged you
You walkin' around like you invincible
You dropped outta school, you lost your principles
I know people backstab you, I felt bad too
But this 'fuck everybody' attitude ain't natural
But you ain't a saint, this ain't kumbaye
But you got hurt because you did cool by 'Ye
You gave him twenty million without blinkin'
He gave you twenty minutes on stage, fuck was he thinkin'?
"Fuck wrong with everybody?" is what you sayin'
But if everybody's crazy, you're the one that's insane
Crazy how life works
You got a knot in your chest, imagine how a knife hurts
You stabbed Un over some records
Your excuse was "He was talkin' too reckless!"

Let go your ego over your right shoulder
Your left is sayin', "Finish your breakfast!"
You egged Solange on
Knowin' all along, all you had to say you was wrong
You almost went Eric Benét
Let the baddest girl in the world get away
I don't even know what else to say
Nigga, never go Eric Benét!
I don't even know what you woulda done
In the future other niggas playin' football with your son
You woulda lost it
13 bottles of Ace of Spade, what it did to Boston
Nah, JAY-Z
Bye, JAY-Z

Appendix A.3 Missy Elliott – She's a Bitch Lyrics

Verse 1

To the M-I, cat like a semi
Nigga stole my car, why not you get my
Give yo' ass a black eye
Oh, say bye-bye
I'ma give your body to the sky
Run through your clique
Nigga, you pissed on trip
I'ma have to bust you in your lips
And the whips better have a whole lot of chips
Cause I ain't for no nigga givin' tips

Chorus

She's a bitch
When you say my name
Talk mo' junk but won't look my way
She's a bitch
See I got more cheese
So back on up while I roll up my sleeves
She's a bitch
You can't see me, Joe
Get on down while I shoot my flow
She's a bitch
When I do my thing

Got the place on fire, burn it down to flame

Verse 2

Roll up in my car, don't stop, won't stop
I'ma keep it rockin' til the clock don't tock
I'ma keep it hot, light my ass on fire
I'ma grab a philly, go and roll it at the bar
What ya talk? What ya say? Huh?
Gotta flow, gotta move it slow, huh?
Better you runnin' out the door, huh?
You gon' be a long lost soul, whacha say?
Yippe yi yo, yippe yi yi yay
Put me on stage, watchin' niggas feel me
Put my shit on wax, watch it blaze like May
Go yippe yi yo yippe yi yi yay
55, 65, hike
75, 85, test the mic
95, Missy wild for the night
105, I'ma keep the crowd hyped

Chorus

She's a bitch
When they say my name
Talk mo' junk but won't look my way
She's a bitch
See I got mo' cheese
Back on up while I roll up my sleeve
She's a

Interlude

What? What? What? What?
What? What? What? What?

Verse 3

What you know about Timothy, lemme know
Need an MC like Cease, lemme know
If he get drunk lean on me, lemme know
I'm about to bust like pee, feel me now
Anybody know my skills, what the deal
Anybody feel my skills is the real
Anybody wanna come fuck wit the steel
Anybody gotta get their whole body peeled

Chorus

She's a bitch
When they say my name

Talk mo' junk but won't look my way
She's a bitch
See I got mo' cheese
Back on up while I roll up my sleeve
She's a bitch
You can't see me, Joe
Get on down while I shoot my flow
She's a bitch
When I do my thing
Got the place on fire, burn it down to flame
She's a bitch
When they say my name
Talk mo' junk but won't look my way
She's a bitch
See I got mo' cheese
Back on up while I roll up my sleeve
She's a bitch
You can't see me, Joe
Get on down while I shoot my flow
She's a bitch
When I do my thing
Got the place on fire, burn it down to flame
She's a bitch
When they say my name
Talk mo' junk but won't look my way
She's a bitch
See I got mo' cheese
Back on up while I roll up my sleeve
She's a bitch
You can't see me, Joe
Get on down while I shoot my flow
She's a bitch
When I do my thing
Got the place on fire, burn it down to flame

Appendix A.4 Missy Elliott – Throw it Back Lyrics

Intro

Woah

Woop

(This is a Missy Elliott exclusive)

Woah

Yeah

Verse 1

Walk up in this thing (Thing), I be on my game (Game)
If it's competition ('Tition), I put them to shame (Shame)
Different kind of chick (Chick), we are not the same (The same)
I raised all these babies, call me Katherine Jackson ('Son)
Please don't steal my style (Style), I might cuss you out (Wow)
What you doin' now (Doin'), I did for a while (While)
Missy, Missy, Missy, go 'head, let it slap (Slap)
I'ma snatch they wigs 'til I see that scalp (Scalp)
Booty, booty clap (Clap), flyin' across the map (Map)
Lambo on the block (Block), lookin' like a snack
I'll show you how I do it (Do it), show you how it's done (Done)
Don't look for another Missy 'cause there'll be no 'nother one

Chorus

Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back (Uh)
Throw it back

Verse 2

Middle finger flip (Flip), get up off my tip (Tip)
Money money clip (Clip), Louis on my hip (Hip)
Lambo be the whip (Whip), like banana split (Split)
Look at all my ice, see the way my jewelry drip
Come up off that lick lick
Yeah, he wanna kick it
But he cannot kick it
Unless he be my dip dip
Call me Missy, Mi'-Mi'

I don't play them trick-tricks
Man, I'm so legit-'git
Watch me flip, reverse it
Flip it and reverse it, stupid with the verses
Man, I got the coat and shoes just to match the purses
Woop, woop, woop, woop, I don't need rehearsing
The way I throw it back, I show the whole crowd how I work it

Chorus

Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back (Uh, check)

Verse 3

Missy make up her own rules
Not many can do what I do
So many VMA's that I could live on the moon
Man, I jump and you leap
Better wake up if you sleep
I did records for Tweet before y'all could even tweet
Y'all be thinkin' shit's sweet
Been hot before you could speak
I'm like Heavy D, everyone love me, capisce?
Need a PJ when I'm takin' flight
Get your review and your ratings right
Missy still got 'em losing control
And every night is still ladies night

Chorus

Watch me throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back

Watch me throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Watch me throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back
Throw it back

Outro

Watch me
Watch me
Watch me
Watch me

Appendix A.5 Lil Wayne – I Feel Like Dying

[Hook: Karma & Lil Wayne]

Only once the drugs are done (Hahaha)
Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Heheh, C3, hello)
Only once the drugs are done (Yeah, hello)
Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Get lifted)
Only once the drugs are done (Yeah, I get lifted)
Yeah, yeah, so get lifted, yeah
Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Yeah, haha)

Verse 1: Lil Wayne & Karma

I am sittin' on the clouds
I got smoke coming from my seat
I can play basketball with the moon
I got the whole world at my feet
Playin' touch football on Marijuana Street
Or, in a marijuana field, you are so beneath my cleats
Get high, so high
That I feel like lying
Down in a cigar, roll me up and smoke me

'Cause (*I feel like dying*) hahaha

Hook: Karma & Lil Wayne

Only once the drugs are done (Yeah, yeah)

Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

Only once the drugs are done (Haha, yeah)

Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Hahahaha)

Verse 2: Lil Wayne & Karma

Swimmin' laps around a bottle of Louis the XIII

Jumping off of a mountain into a sea of codeine

I'm at the top of the top, but, still I climb

And if I should ever fall, the ground will then turn to wine

Pop, pop

I feel like flying

Then I feel like frying

Then (*I feel like dying*)

Hook: Karma & Lil Wayne

Only once the drugs are done (Yeah, yeah, yeah)

Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

Only once the drugs are done (Hahaha)

Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Psst!)

Verse 3: Lil Wayne & Karma

I can mingle with the stars, and throw a party on Mars

I am a prisoner locked up behind Xanax bars

I have just boarded a plane without a pilot

And violets are blue, roses are red

Daisies are yellow, the flowers are dead

Wish I could give you this feeling

I feel like buying

And if my dealer don't have no more

Then (*I feel like dying*) yeah

Hook: Karma & Lil Wayne

Only once the drugs are done (Yeah, yeah, yeah)

Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

Only once the drugs are done (Hahaha)

Do I feel like dying, I feel like dying

Appendix A.6 Lil Wayne – Let It All Work Out

Intro: Sampha & Lil Wayne

Let it all work out, let it all work out

Let it all work out, let it all work out

Let it all work out, let it all work out

Let it all work out, let it all work out

Work out, yeah

I'm in this bitch

Yeah, was on the outside, looking in this bitch

But now I'm in this bitch

Yeah, I'm in this bitch

Verse 1

Tunechi, you a genius

Looked in the mirror said

"Don't let the money come between us"

I'm loaded, loaded at my earliest convenience

But fuck 'em, I feel like I got ten middle fingers

I'm sippin', sippin' in this bitch and poppin' uppers

Girl, take this, this that shit that give a flower color

And some bitch named Wonder Woman told me not to wonder

The crumbs, you only see 'em when the cookie crumble

Real shit, nigga, my candle still lit

Had to swallow my pride, though, swear it tastes like spearmint

Big up to my nigga with a strap on 'em

I never turn my back on 'em

'Cause nigga act like they cool with ya

But a lot of these niggas be transformers

A lot of these players be bench-warmers

The game ain't easy, but it's fair, nigga

I'mma sit in this throne so long

'Til it's a fucking rocking chair, nigga

Bad bitch play with my hair, nigga

Said, "Relax, Tune, baby don't stress out"

But I got a lot of shit on my mind, though

She said, "Let that shit work itself out"

"Let that shit work itself out"

Interlude 1: Lil Wayne & Sampha

C5

Yeah, back in this bitch

Tune you left this bitch

Like you knew this bitch was gon' let your ass back in this bitch

Let it all work out, let it all work out
But ain't nobody else like you in this bitch
Let it all work out, let it all work out
Let it all work out
Ain't nobody else like you in this bitch

Verse 2

Cita, you a psychic
'Cause you said there be days like this
They want a piece of me, I ain't the one that's serving slices
Please swallow, I had my share of dirty diapers
Real shit, pussy niggas on that guilt trip
It'll be on in a heartbeat
You can't hear no pussy nigga's shit skip
I fear God, never fear men
Give back, never give in
Beat odds, never beat women
Keep an open mind, let 'em peek in it
Reach highs, never reach limits
Need minds, I don't need plenty
This C5, this for BI and Left Eye, and T-Boz
When I seen Chilli at the Floyd fight
I almost asked her to creep with me
But I was young, and I held my tongue
But with that tongue, I just keep spitting
So it all worked out

Interlude 2: Lil Wayne & Sampha

And now I'm in this bitch
And life said, "Tune, you knew me for way too long"
I never change, you know I been this bitch
And then she said, "Let it all work out"
"Let it all work out, let it all work out" (Yeah)
"Let it all work out, let it all work out"

Verse 3

Tunechi, you a monster
Looked in the mirror, but you wasn't there, I couldn't find ya
I'm lookin' for that big, old smile, full of diamonds
Instead, I found this letter you ain't finished writin'
It read, "I'm sorry for even apologizing"
I tried, compromising and went kamikaze
I found my momma's pistol where she always hide it
I cry, put it to my head and thought about it
Nobody was home to stop me, so I called my auntie
Hung up, then put the gun up to my heart and pondered

Too much was on my conscience to be smart about it
Too torn apart about it, I aim where my heart was pounding
I shot it, and I woke up with blood all around me
It's mine, I didn't die, but as I was dying
God came to my side and we talked about it
He sold me another life and he made a prophet

Outro: Lil Wayne & Sampha & Jacida Carter

Yeah, and he said
"Let it all work out" (Yeah)
"Let it all work out"
(I'm still in this bitch)
"Let it all work out"
(Yeah, thank God 'cause I'm still in this bitch)
"Let it all work out"
Let it all work out (Phew)
"Let it all work out"
(But he said, "Remember this:")
"Let it all work out"
"Let it all work out"
("Ain't nobody else like you in this bitch")
"Let it all work out" (Yeah)
"Let it all work out"
("And don't forget what I did this, bitch")
"Let it all work out"
("Can't even remember when I didn't, bitch")
"Let it all—"
"Let it all work out" (Yeah)
"Let it all work out"
("Now I'm out this bitch")
"Let it all work out"
("I'm out this bitch")
"Let it all—"
("And it all worked out")
Love you, Dwayne

Appendix A.7 Nicki Minaj – Roman's Revenge Lyrics (Eminem's Verses Omitted)

Verse 1

I am not Jasmine, I am Aladdin

So far ahead, these bums is laggin'
See me in that new thing, bums is gaggin'
I'm startin' to feel like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
I'm startin' to feel like a dungeon dragon
Look at my show footage, how these girls be spazzin'
So fuck I look like gettin' back to a has-been?
Yeah, I said it, has-been
Hang it up, flatscreen
Plasma
"Hey Nicki, hey Nicki," asthma
I got the pumps, it ain't got medicine
I got bars, sentencin'
I'm a bad bitch, I'm a cunt
And I'll kick that ho, punt
Forced trauma, blunt
You play the back, bitch, I'm in the front
You need a job, this ain't cuttin' it
Nicki Minaj is who you ain't fuckin' with
You lil' Fraggie Rock, beat you with a pad-a-lock
I am a movie, camera block
You outta work, I know it's tough
But enough is enough

Chorus

Rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Like a dungeon dragon, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Like a dungeon dragon, like a dungeon dragon

Verse 3

Is this the thanks that I get for puttin' you bitches on?
Is it my fault that all of you bitches gone?
Should've sent a thank-you note, you little ho
Now I'ma wrap your coffin with a bow
"Nicki, she's just mad 'cause you took the spot"
Word, that bitch mad 'cause I took the spot?
Well, bitch, if you ain't shittin', then get off the pot
Got some niggas out in Brooklyn that'll off your top
I hear the mumblin', I hear the cacklin'
I got 'em scared, shook, panickin'
Overseas, church, Vatican

You at a standstill, mannequin
You wanna sleep on me? Overnight?
I'm the motherfuckin' boss, overwrite
And when I pull up, vroom, motorbike
Now all my niggas gettin' buck, overbite
I see them dusty-ass Filas, Levis
Raggedy Anns, holes in your knee-highs
I call the play, now do you see why?
These bitches callin' me Manning, Eli
Manning, Eli, these bitches callin' me Manning, Eli

Chorus

Rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Like a dungeon dragon, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Rah, rah, rah, like a dungeon dragon
Like a dungeon dragon, like a dungeon dragon

Outro

Roman, Roman, stop it, stop it
You've gone mad, mad, I tell you, mad
You and this boy Slim Shady
What's going on? They'll lock you away
They'll put you in a jail cell, I promise
Take your mother's warning, Roman, please
Back to bed, run along, let's go, come on
Wash your mouth out with soap, boys

Appendix A.8 Nicki Minaj – Chun Li Lyrics

Verse 1

Ayo, look like I'm goin' for a swim
Dunked on 'em, now I'm swingin' off the rim
Bitch ain't comin' off the bench
While I'm comin' off the court fully drenched
Here go some haterade, get ya thirst quenched
Styled on 'em in this Burberry trench

These birds copy every word, every inch
But gang gang got the hammer and the wrench (Brrr)
I pull up in that quarter milli off the lot
Oh, now she tryna be friends like I forgot
Show off my diamonds like I'm signed by the Roc (By the rock)
Ain't pushin' out his babies 'til he buy the rock

Chorus

Ayo, I been on, bitch, you been corn
Bentley tints on, Fendi prints on
I mean I been Storm, X-Men been formed
He keep on dialin' Nicki like the Prince song
I-I-I been on, bitch, you been corn
Bentley tints on, Fendi prints on
Ayo, I been north, Lara been Croft
Plates say Chun-Li, drop the Benz off

Interlude 1

Oh, I get it, huh, they paintin' me out to be the bad guy
Well it's the last time you gonna see a bad guy do the rap game like me

Verse 2

I went and copped the chopsticks, put it in my bun just to pop shit
I'm always in the top shit, box seats, bitch, fuck the gossip
How many of them coulda did it with finesse?
Now everybody like, "She really is the best"
You play checkers, couldn't beat me playin' chess
Now I'm about to turn around and beat my chest
Bitch, it's King Kong, yes, it's King Kong
Bitch, it's King Kong, this is King Kong
Chinese ink on, Siamese links on
Call me 2 Chainz, name go ding dong
Bitch, it's King Kong, yes, I'm King Kong
This is King Kong? Yes, Miss King Kong
In my kingdom wit' my Timbs on
How many championships? What? Six rings on

Interlude 2

They need rappers like me
They need rappers like me
So they can get on their fucking keyboards
And make me the bad guy, Chun-Li

Chorus

Ayo, I been on, bitch, you been corn
Bentley tints on, Fendi prints on

I mean I been Storm, X-Men been formed
He keep on dialin' Nicki like the Prince song
I-I-I been on, bitch, you been corn
Bentley tints on, Fendi prints on
Ayo, I been north, Lara been Croft
Plates say Chun-Li, drop the Benz off

Outro

I come alive, I, I'm always sky high
Designer thigh highs, it's my lifestyle
I come alive, I, I'm always sky high
Designer thigh highs, it's my lifestyle
I need a Mai Tai, so fuckin' sci-fi
Give me the password to the fuckin' wifi

Appendix A.9 Ski Mask the Slump God – Catch Me Outside Lyrics

Verse 1

Shout-out my mucus, ayy ayy, ayy
'Cause you know that be my slime
Shout-out my mucus
That nigga that be my slime
That nigga that be my slime sli-sli-slime sli-sli-slime slime
Okay
What, watch this pussy, ayy ayy, okay
Naruto nine-tailed fox coat fur
I feel like a Gucci ad lib, burr
Colder than Coca-Cola mascot, polar bear
Put my sauce on lasagna it could make Garfield purr
I ain't really fuckin' with these niggas like a dyke
You Kellogg's tiger I tell 'em earn yo stripes
You tryna be me but bitch could never in your life
Even if you had on my sneakers like Bow Wow in Like Mike
Like how these niggas watch me be disgusting
I'mma do 'em dirty like a ringworm ring
Why they be talking like they might know something?
I'm Madagascar, I'm royalty like lemur king
Told her be careful, my penis drive like limousine
And I don't want any pussy if you just smell like Hennessy
Star Wars confederate rifle shoot like ray-beam
Watch me spin around 360 quick scope or something

Okay like bills on me blue, uh-huh

Chorus

Like a bruise, uh-huh
Better yet, uh-huh, Blue's Clues
Bills on me blue, uh-huh
Like a bruise, uh-huh
Better yet, uh-huh, Blue's Clues
Bills on me blue, huh
Blue's, huh
Better yet, uh, Blue's Clues
Bills on me blue, uh-huh
Like a bruise, uh-huh
Better yet, m-hm, Blue's Clues

Verse 2

Ayy-ayy-ayy-ayy, woah, Nelly
Go and shake that ass like a vibration on my celly
Ayy-ayy-ayy, woah, mama
Diamonds on me fatter than Peter Griffin's big stomach
Stove on me too, uh-huh, old news, uh-huh
Cook a nigga, uh-huh, like stew
They say my flow that gas might burp, excuse you, uh-huh
Where I'm going, oh, I think your bitch plumes
Excuse me don't fumble it
Drive where yo mama live
She gon' stumble on my dick like Jack and Jill on the hill
White on me Jonah Hill
Heard of my gang and them
I'mma beat that pussy till it's black as Ms. Lauryn Hill
That's all folks, uh-huh, Looney Tunes, uh-huh
Mink fur pink like the ass on baboon
Like where YouWillRegret?, uh-huh, coming soon
When that bitch drop, uh-huh, then toodle-oo

Chorus

Okay like bills on me blue, uh-huh
Like a bruise, uh-huh
Better yet, uh-huh, Blue's Clues
Bills on me blue, uh-huh
Like a bruise, uh-huh
Better yet, uh-huh, Blue's Clues
Bills on me blue, huh
Blue's, huh
Better yet, uh, Blue's Clues

Bills on me blue, uh-huh
Like a bruise, uh-huh
Better yet, mhm, Blue's Clues

Appendix A.10 Lady Leshurr – Black Panther Lyrics

Verse

It's the LL brrr shots with a bally
I wish a gyal wood no chalet
Trust I got the keys like a valet
Heat like miami
Free throw on em
Dwayne Wade on the gyally
Erm
That's a 3 second violation
Airball and my team stay annihilating
Trust
So I really don't know why ya hating
Cus you copy so much you'd think were Siamese twins
Look
Feel me nuh
All them other gyal dem are regular
Hear me nuh?
On the radio or a video
Si mi nuh?
All these likkle gyal better simmer down
Inferior she ain't the real ting I'm the original
Hit it up
He want the kitty kat make him break it down
Tippy toe
Ride it like a horse tell her giddy up
Benover
Gyal ah tear it up
Gyal ah rip it up
Go deh gyal!
Look nuh, gyal ah catch Chlamydia
Dutty gyal!
Tell a gutter gyal leave the area
Stutter gyal!
Eye ah flutter gyal mi nuh fraid ah ya
Dig you out the grave I put you in and rebury ya

That's the only time you'll be all over social media

Banter

What you rep for? What you stand for

I be at your door like a delivery from Asda

Hamper, blacking out looking a panther

I will backhand her

Straight to Wakanda!

Rasta

I will blast her mi ah di master

Casper, mi duppy down gyal the body snatcher

Dashed her, in a trashbag come and grab that

Bad gyal vs a dead gyal is a disaster

Actor, cut the chapter mi didn't cast her

Fracture, put the gas up in Madagascar

Scratch that, give em airtime when I'm here they like

Asthma I got asthma I got asthma!!

Killing all ah dem becah mi no seh mi bad

Quick tings and never slowly

Don't have to lie to be cozy

Holy moly

I'll spin a gyal quicker than Rolly polly

All and only

I'm Bigger than him and her and totally

On the ball like Kobe

They taking shots, well I'm the goalie

All your team is phonie

I think you know

I know you know it

And you low on money

You gon need mo you finding Dory

What's the story like an episode of Balamory ay!

Chorus

They don't wanna mess becah mi cold yeah mi real la la

Everybody knows I got the flow and the Skill la la

Man are even hating on the girl better Chill la la

Man are even hating on the girl

Seen x2

Wakanda Forever x8

Appendix A.11 BIA & Timbaland – I'm That Bitch Lyrics

Intro

Yeah, uh
Brr (Yeah), hah, hah (Grr)
Ayy (Yeah), uh
BIA, BIA (BIA, BIA)

Verse 1

Soon as you see me I up it, I'm gone
I'm really livin' the shit in my song
Glock in my bag and it don't got a safety
I make the money, I don't let it make me
Shout out Diana, she raised me
I'm with my member, he rockin' a paisley
That's word to Moula, can't phase me
I rather cheat before he drive me crazy
I'm that bitch
I'm into guns if they come with a switch
I got a type if he makin' me rich
And these bitches be watchin' my page like a twitch
Into one ear and go straight out the mata
I like my niggas the color of Malta
He smokin' gas and he speakin' in Patois
I'm tryna put all my opps on a alter
And we smokin' ya hot like a grabba (Grabba)
I'm a top bitch, I'm a alpha (Alpha)
I'm addicted to money and power, uh (Yeah, yeah, yeah)
And we smokin' ya hot like a grabba
I'm a top bitch, I'm a alpha
I'm addicted to money and power, uh (Brr, yeah, yeah, yeah)

Chorus

She's a bitch (Yeah)
The way I left that shit on read, he don't exist (Yeah)
The way I killed them hoes, they dead, ain't seen them since (Yeah)
The way I put that shit on, I be throwin' fits
I'm that, I'm that bitch (Yeah)
The way I left that shit on read, he don't exist (Yeah)
The way I killed them hoes, they dead, ain't seen them since (Uh, yeah)
The way I put that shit on, I be throwin' fits
I'm that bitch (Uh)

Verse 2

Change my number so you couldn't reach me
I'm the truth without gettin' too preachy
Fuck do I look like lettin' him treash me? (Uh)
I'm the type to go get my respect
Prolly gon' die with my foot on they neck
Iron it out 'cause I know when they pressed
Sendin' him home 'cause he know he a guest, like
I'm a real bitch so I do what I wanna (Do what I wanna)
This nigga toxic, he need him a sauna (Yeah)
I could tell you was a ho from your aura
I limit my drama, I'm havin' good karma
Buy me a house, boy, if you wanna be with me
You used to women that's fuckin' too easily
I used to get to my money illegally
None of my haters is sleepin' this peacefully
Huh

Chorus

She's a bitch (Yeah)
The way I left that shit on read, he don't exist (Yeah)
The way I killed them hoes, they dead, ain't seen them since (Yeah)
The way I put that shit on, I be throwin' fits
I'm that, I'm that bitch (Yeah)
The way I left that shit on read, he don't exist (Yeah)
The way I killed them hoes, they dead, ain't seen them since (Uh, yeah)
The way I put that shit on, I be throwin' fits
I'm that bitch (Uh)

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