BROCKHAMPTON:
Social Advocacy and Diversity in Rap Music

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ABSTRACT

BROCKHAMPTON is a diverse, multiracial rap group that has recently garnered rapidly increasing popularity and influence in the rap industry. Because of this, I wanted to determine if the popularity of the group's *SATURATION* trilogy was affected by the content matter they addressed and how that intersected with the American color line in music marketing. With the research question, "To what extent does the race of a *BROCKHAMPTON* member and the advocacy they utilize, whether it be pro-social or anti-social advocacy examined through the usage of corresponding social themes, influence the popularity of a given song from *BROCKHAMPTON*'s *SATURATION* trilogy?", this study found that it was influenced to a minor extent, with no strong correlation found between race and social themes discussed, or between popularity and the dominant thematic category of a song.

Context

I have always struggled with the stigma on that rap is an aggressive, violent, and rageful genre. When I listen to rap, I hear social themes and messages that are underneath the sound of the music. However, I have realized that people often do not hear the same messages I do. I also realized that people do not choose to interpret rap music the same way I do. I realized that I had forgot that the perception of rap as a multi-layered genre is not one that often comes to the untrained ear. Along with this, I noticed that media and the academic world often discards the positive, advocating side of Hip-Hop. I hope to address this with my research, using rap group *BROCKHAMPTON* to examine the interpretation of rap and its content.

BROCKHAMPTON

BROCKHAMPTON is a 'boy band' rap collaborative based out of Texas. The original members met on online forum *KanyeToThe*, where the front man Kevin Abstract asked: "Anyone wanna make a band?" (Mathus, 2018). Since their 2012 genesis *BROCKHAMPTON* has risen to Hip Hop stardom with their *SATURATION* trilogy. The three albums—*SATURATION I, SATURATION II AND SATURATION III*—all became extremely popular when released during 2017 to 2018 (Jenkins, 2018). The group continues to become increasingly popular, especially after their social media hit "SUGAR", which peaked at #66 on Billboard's Hot 100 Chart (Billboard, 2020). Some attribute this popularity to the appeal of the cultural capital of the group. *BROCKHAMPTON* proves itself to be an extremely diverse group, with "black, white, gay, straight, African, South Asian, Irish, and Latin members" (Jenkins, 2018). Because of this, *BROCKHAMPTON* is appealing to multiple audiences, despite the fact that rap music is typically regarded as a 'African American' genre—meaning regarded primarily for African American audiences and created primarily by African Americans. *BROCKHAMPTON*'s appeal and racial diversity has made it an anomaly in the Hip-Hop world, justifying the examination of *BROCKHAMPTON* within this study.

Hip Hop in Academic Literature

Defining Hip-Hop

The academic world has expanded the meaning of Hip-Hop far beyond poetry set to music, but now, to a cultural phenomenon (Dunbar, 2007). Researchers like Dunbar and Alridge even cite Hip-Hop as an expression of 'blackness', as well as a driving influence amongst African American youth. American sociologist Alridge elaborates on this by asserting that rap is merely one of the vessels to convey messages to the Hip-Hop community (Dunbar, 2007; Alridge, 2003). Researchers Miller, Hodge, Coleman, and Chaney agree with this, and go as far as to assert that Hip Hop culture communicates messages "through the five cultural modes of rap music (oral), turntablism or "DJing" (aural), breaking (physical), graffiti art (visual) and knowledge (mental)" (Miller, Hodge, Coleman, & Chaney, 2014). Moreover, the assessment of Hip-Hop as a culture, not just a genre, is consistent in most literature. Therefore, within the context of this study, HipHop is defined as the larger culture surrounding the musical genre and rhythmic style of rap. Historically, Hip-Hop has been used to convey social messages and as a form of advocation (Dunbar, 2007). However, literature frequently identifies varying levels of positive advocating themes in Hip-Hop.

Theorizing Advocacy

Advocacy in rap music could be impactful. Pinn draws off of this idea in his 1999 peer-reviewed article "'How Ya Livin': Notes on rap music and social transformation", where he analyzes differences between the content of Progressive rap and Gangsta rap and their potential for social transformation. Pinn defines Progressive rap as rap that expresses "a lamentation of present conditions, the condemnation of misconduct and its resulting destruction […]", and Gangsta rap as "a response to absurdity and meaninglessness which suggests social transformation through the mimicking and/or signifying of certain ideologies and behaviors". Pinn found that both types of rap, despite Gangsta raps' expression of negative attitudes, work towards combatting oppression. Pinn also found that the success of all rap, no matter how you categorize it, is unknown, due to the quickly changing nature of Hip-Hop and its evergrowing influence (Pinn, 1999). This unpredictable nature of Hip-Hop's success in carrying advocacy is an observation that characterizes a theoretical approach to advocacy in Hip-Hop. However, research has also largely found that in rap, advocacy absorbed by the listener is dependent on the content, subject, and relatability of the music.

Practicing Advocacy in Hip-Hop

There are many examples where an album has contained advocating messages in its content. Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp A Butterfly* (TPAB), an album that has become a canonical piece of rap literature since its release in 2015, has been accredited for its messages on the African American experience (Blum, 2016). Despite the influence of albums like TPAB, content-analyses on rap music and music videos have found that when practicing advocacy, they may advocate for negative social beliefs that go against current social efforts. For example, a 2009 content analysis found that rap music videos promote Eurocentric features in women that cause social esteem issues in African American women (Conrad, Dixon, & Zhang, 2009). This, combined with Hip-Hop's influence, has been viewed as potentially dangerous by researchers like Rutherford, who argues that Hip-Hop has influenced youth through negative images that promote abiding by a "criminal-minded value system that praises confrontation, aggressiveness and crime and shuns humility, kindness and legality" (Rutherford, 2005). Accredited American culture theologists Epps and Dixon further advance the notion of different types of advocacy by defining pro-social and anti-social rap. Pro-social stands to promote positive intercommunity interaction, while anti-social rap presents rap that may be harmful to the psyche of its listener through negative social themes (Epps & Dixon, 2017, p. 467). This study will also use these definitions of pro-social and anti-social rap. Multiple Researchers have contributed arguments that explain both the pro-social

and anti-social sides of rap. However, there are notable patterns within their research findings: while an album with content like Lamar's *TPAB,* meaning the album advocates may be identified as pro-social, the majority of rap albums have been identified as anti-social (Blum, 2016; Epps et. al 2017). Rarely has an album been identified as a mixture of the two. However, as Hip-Hop and its surrounding media it continues to change rapidly, researchers have struggled to keep up. Consequently, rap and its potential for advocacy have yet to be considered in media today. However, Hip-Hop has failed to diversify itself and change as media has.

Hip-Hop and Race

Hip-Hop is still aimed largely towards an African American demographic because the artists behind Hip-Hop are primarily African American. This characteristic is not unique to Hip-Hop— genres that are primarily African American have now been regarded as genres just for African Americans by the color line in music marketing. Barretta (2017) elaborates in his peer-reviewed article, "Tracing the color line in the American music market and its effect on contemporary music marketing". Genres like blues, jazz, and hip-hop are now regarded as music for primarily African American audiences because of the way the music market previously segregated African American and Caucasian music. By segregating the two, music companies could capitalize off authenticity based off the race of the artist, constituting the color line in music. Barretta claims that this color line could still influence music marketing today (Barretta, 2017). However, Gallagher's "Color-Blind Privilege: The Social And Political Functions Of Erasing The Color Line In Post-Race America" asserts that though this color line exists, the new 'colorblind' society view—that is, believing that race has no affect at all on society status rather than acknowledging systemic oppression—has allowed for a separation of race from Hip-Hop. Because of this separation, the white community has allowed itself to connect more with Hip-Hop, removing racial barriers, and consequently, the effect of the color line (Gallagher, 2003). As the effect of the color line diminishes, it has been met with mixed response. Researchers like McLeod recognize the connotated threat that white culture poses to black culture, especially within Hip-Hop (Mcleod, 2017). However, researchers like Travis recognize the positive influence Hip-Hop can have in shaping the lives of youth, regardless of race (Travis, 2013). Despite this growing debate over the color line and its development, research has rarely explored how artists that aren't African American, and their audience are affected by their race and the color line.

Generalizations and literature about rap have often disregarded one, any middle ground between anti-social and pro-social rap in larger bodies of rap work, and two, the effect the color line in music has had on the way Hip-Hop is academically analyzed. This study seeks to address these gaps in the understanding of Hip Hop by analyzing *BROCKHAMPTON*'s *SATURATION* trilogy. Examining this trilogy specifically provides an effective parameter for research by using a current, predefined data set. To address these gaps, it is apparent that the levels of advocacy must be analyzed within the scope of lyrical potential while factoring in race in order to garner a better understanding of HipHop and its influence.

Definitions

The following are terms that will be employed frequently throughout the body of this study.

Social themes: advocating messages in rap music that are often categorized by the content and manner of the advocacy. For example, 'Religion and Spirituality' or 'Criminal Activity' (Epps & Dixon, 2017 p. 467).

Advocacy: expressing support of a cause, belief system, or behavior (Advocacy, 2020). For this study, advocacy in rap is defined as the glorification, support, or citation of a social theme.

Thematic Categories: groups of themes that are either anti-social or pro-social.

Pro-Social Rap: rap that utilizes social themes that promote positive intercommunity interactions (Epps & Dixon, 2017 p. 467). This rap advocates for pro-social behaviors, causes, and belief systems.

Anti-Social Rap: rap that utilizes social themes that promotes negative intercommunity interactions that may be harmful to the psyche of its listener (Epps & Dixon, 2017 p. 467). This rap advocates for anti-social behavior, causes, and belief systems.

Manner of Advocacy: whether the advocacy is pro-social or anti-social.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Using the following methodology, I intend to answer this question and these sub-questions of inquiry: To what extent does the race of a *BROCKHAMPTON* member and the advocacy they utilize, whether it be pro-social or anti-social advocacy examined through the usage of corresponding social themes, influence the popularity of a given song from *BROCKHAMPTON*'s *SATURATION* trilogy?
   a. Does the manner of advocacy—whether it be pro-social or anti-social—have any effect on the popularity of a given song?
   b. Is there any correlation between the manner of advocacy performed in a song and the race that performs it?

Prior to completing this study, my initial hypotheses in response to the preceding questions are: My new understanding of Hip-Hop leads me to hypothesize that the race of a rap artist and the advocacy they utilize will influence the popularity of a given rap song to a great extent.
   a. Although it is unclear if the advocacy utilized in the *SATURATION* trilogy will predominately be anti-social or pro-social, I hypothesize that the most popular songs will either be predominately anti-social with the least popular songs being pro-social or vice versa.
   b. I hypothesize a strong relationship between the kinds of themes utilized by the performing artist and their race exists.

Methodology

This study will use a comparative content analysis with three factors: a thematic analysis of the lyrics of the *SATURATION* trilogy, an examination of the leading race of a song, and the popularity of each song.

   To analyze the lyrics, I did a thematic content analysis on each of the three *SATURATION* albums, with each song being a sample. This method is like the one used by Epps and Dixon in their aforementioned peer reviewed article. When I annotated the lyrics for evident social themes, I used the following parameters and guidelines:
   a. Lyrics were retrieved from Genius Music, a music media platform that publishes lyrics by Genius users. These users can also be the artist themselves. Potential disparities or errors in the lyrics were deemed unrealistic, as each *BROCKHAMPTON* song lyric page had multiple transcribers and consequently, multiple rounds of revision (Genius Media Group Inc. 2020).
   b. All *SATURATION* songs were included in the data sample.
   c. Variances in the platform for annotation i.e. whether a person chooses to annotate digitally or with paper and pen are negligible. For this study, I chose to annotate using a Surface Laptop and the Surface Pen, a computer stylus. Genius Lyric pages for each song were printed to PDF and then printed to Microsoft OneNote, where they were then annotated. Annotations were stored digitally, and the method of annotation was consistent.
   d. *SATURATION* lyrics in Spanish were translated to English with online Spanish-English translator SpanishDict (SpanishDict. 2020). Translator choice was consistent.

e. Social themes that I identify in the lyrics will be linked to the following themes. Epps and Dixon's themes that they identified in their article were grouped into larger categories based off of thematic similarities. Some of the themes were self-generated, sourced from a personal understanding of historical context. The table 1 displays the larger thematic groups used with generated themes italicized.

f. Social themes that I identify must be directly apparent in the music. In other words, social themes noted in the lyrics cannot be metaphoric or symbolic. This guideline was used to stimulate what the average listener hears when listening to any rap song. The figure 1 is an example of this guideline in practice.

Table 1. Social Themes used in Study with Categorization

Pro-Social Thematic Categories

Racial Themes
- Critique of Racism
Mentions, describes instances of, or critique of institutionalized racism (defined as any system of inequality based on race.) This does not include times when the performer themselves was being racist.

Personal Themes
- Gratitude
Mention or promotion of giving thanks or being grateful
- *Mental Health Awareness*
Mention or description of any mental health issues. This may include critique of current mental health stigma.
- Religion and spirituality
Reference to religion (a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values) or Spirituality (an ultimate or alleged immaterial reality, an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of his/her being, or the deepest values and meanings by which people live.)
- Emotional expression
Expression of an intense emotion that may leave performer vulnerable such as fear, sorrow, loneliness, betrayal, insecurity, or romantic love.

Engagement Themes
- Political Engagement
Promotion of political engagement (participating in democratic processes, civil disobedience, or critique of political institution)
- Building community unity
Engaging in actions or settings which bring together a group of people, including but not limited to families or communities, such as neighborhoods or entire social groups based on race or class.

Social Themes
- Critique of Oppressive Institutions
Mention, description, or critique of oppressive institutions. This may include more complex social structures that reproduce themselves such as governments, economic systems, and legal systems or less complex social forms such as conventions, rules, roles, and social norms.
- Female education
Mention, description, or promotion of educated women and the education of women as positive.
- *LGBTQ+ Awareness*
Mentions, describes instances of, or critique of institutionalized homophobia or transphobia (defined as any system of inequality based on identity.) This does not include times when the performer themselves was being homophobic or transphobic.
- *Rape Culture Awareness*
Mention or descriptions of acts of sexual harassment. This may include critique of current rape stigma. This also umbrellas to include the effects of rape culture on BOTH men and women.

Anti-Social Thematic Categories

Criminal Themes
- Criminal activity (general)
Mention or description of any criminal activity witnessed, participated in, or are intending for the future. Criminal Activity includes any non-violent illegal activity (theft, drug dealing, gang activity, prostitution, etc.). This does not include mention of crimes committed by political or financial groups and figures (e.g., critique of war crimes, insider trading, other white collar crimes).
- Gang activity
Mention or description of gang activities. This may include initiation activities (e.g., hazing, jumping), gang violence (e.g., drive-by shootings, gang fights, "banging" on others), and neighborhood patrolling. This may also include references to gang members, gang related language (e.g., "suwoop," "blood," "crip, "cuz") and gang related paraphernalia (e.g., color coded rags, color coded hats, color coded t-shirts).
- Illegal drugs
Mention or description of activities dealing with illegal drugs. This may include illegal drug dealing (a.k.a, moving weight, flipping birds, pushing, slanging, booming, hustling), possession of drugs illegally, preparation of illegal drugs (e.g., cooking crack, cutting cocaine, bagging pills, etc), smuggling, etc. This does include the consumption of illegal drugs. This definition also extends to include drugs that are legal regionally, like marijuana.

Misogynistic Themes
- Sexual Objectification of Women
Sexual objectification is the act of regarding a person as a merely a body or sum of body parts, reducing them to an object available for the use or consumption by others. Examples include talking about a woman as just a particular body part or making reference to lack of interest in the wellbeing or humanity of a woman. This also includes references to a woman's body for the sole use or purpose of providing sexual pleasure.
- Derogatory words in reference to women
Words generally used to demean women, directed toward women (as opposed to men), that are used in a negative context (e.g., bitch, ho, slut, cunt, dyke, skank, hoochie, whore, flip). This includes nouns as well as adverbs and adjectives (e.g., slutty and slut would both count). This does NOT include using the term bitch to denote a female in power (e.g., "I'm the main bitch in charge") or as a term of endearment (e.g., "I got the baddest bitch in the game, wearing my chain.") as well as using feminine derogatory words directed towards men.

Materialistic Themes
- Materialism (general)
Mention of materialism or materialistic behaviors and values. This includes any mention of materialistic items such as expensive clothing, excessive jewelry, expensive vehicles, or liquor, etc.
- Bragging about money
Bragging about how much money the performer has
- Mentioning Materialistic Items
Reference made to materialistic items may include expensive clothing, expensive alcohol, jewelry, expensive cars, and property.
- Bragging about property and assets
Bragging about property (houses, hotels, etc.) and other assets such as business, investments, athletic teams, etc.
- Pro attitude towards materialism
The glorification of materialism, explicit promotion of materialism, and an abundance of materialistic themes used in the song without remorse.

Explicit Themes
- Mentions of Sexualized Body Parts
Mention or description of genitals, breasts, or other sexualized body parts.
- Sexual explicitness (general)
Description or mention of lewd sexual acts. This does not include mentions of kissing or non-graphic affection, as well as any metaphors for sex that are not crude (e.g., "knocking boots" "doing it").
- Words used to describe lewd acts
Profanity used to describe an obscene or sexual act. Examples include fuck (the act of having sex with someone) and obscene acts such as to "shit" on a person (the act of embarrassing or putting someone to shame by being better than them). (Epps & Dixon, 2017)

GOLD Lyrics

[Chorus: Kevin Abstract]
Keep a gold chain on my neck
Fly as a jet, boy, better treat me with respect
Keep a gold chain on my neck
Fly as a jet, boy, better treat me with respect
(Keep a gold chain) Keep a gold chain on my neck
Fly as a jet, boy, better treat me with respect
(Keep a gold chain) Keep a gold chain on my neck
Fly as a jet, boy, better treat me with respect

[Verse 1: Matt Champion]
Rock the boat like a one-eyed pirate
Rick James, I get glitter on my eyelids
2 A.M., 85 on the highway
Whole world get a little misguided

"Keep a gold chain on my neck" can be counted as a "Materialistic" theme because it speaks directly of wealth and material possession.

The lyric "Rick James, I get glitter on my eyelids cannot be associated with any theme. Even though it can be interpreted as a contradiction of traditional masculinity, the line says nothing overt about its intentions.

Figure 1. Exemplifying Direct Identification in Lyrics

g. The albums were annotated one at a time, in released order—meaning *SATURATION I*, *SATURATION II*, then *SATURATION III*. The songs were annotated in the order of the album track list published on Genius Music.

h. Location and time of which I decided to annotate had little effect on the results of my annotations.

i. When analyzing each song, I used the line structure that Genius Music provided to count any line that contained one of the social themes. I also noted the member who contributed the most to each theme in each song. This was done to observe any correlations between race and theme.

j. A line could have had multiple social themes attributed to it if multiple themes were present.

k. If the amount of lines a member contributes to a theme is equal to that of another member for a given theme, multiple members can be attributed to one theme in a given song.

l. These line counts were aggregated into a count for the presence of each social theme in a song. This count (variable x in the following table) was divided by the total lines in a song to determine the concentration of a theme in the song. Along with this, this count was divided by the number of lines that had a theme identified to determine the concentration of a theme out of all of the themes identified. Please refer to figure 2 for sample data.

CASH	Theme	Anti-Social vs. Pro-Social?	$\dfrac{x}{total\ lines\ in\ song}$	$\dfrac{x}{\#\ of\ identified\ themes}$	Main artist behind
	Critique of Racism	PS	2/47	2/18	Kevin/Merlyn
	Gratitude	PS			
	Mental Health Awareness	PS			
	Religion and spirituality	PS			
	Emotional expression	PS	1/47	1/18	Dom
	Political Engagement	PS			
	Building community unity	PS	1/47	1/18	Dom
	Critique of Oppressive Institutions	PS	2/47	2/18	Kevin/Merlyn/Dom
	Female education	PS			
	LGBTQ+ Awareness	PS	1/47	1/18	Kevin .
	Rape Culture Awareness	PS			
	Criminal activity (general)	AS	1/47	1/18	Dom
	Gang activity	AS			
	Illegal drugs	AS	1/47	1/28	Ameer
	Sexual Objectification of Women	AS			
	Derogatory words in ref. to women	AS			
	Materialism (general)	AS			
	Bragging about money	AS			
	Mentioning Materialistic Items	AS			
	Bragging about property and assets	AS			
	Pro attitude towards materialism	AS	8/47	8/18	Kevin
	Mentions of Sexualized Body Parts	AS			
	Sexual explicitness (general)	AS			
	Words used to describe lewd acts	AS	1/47	1/18	Ameer

Figure 2. Sample Thematic Analysis Data

After collecting this data, I turned to comparing it with the popularity of each song. Popularity was determined by data provided by Apple Music, a popular music streaming platform which, as of December 2018, has 58 million users. This number has been increasing at an average of 1 million users per month (Billboard Staff, 2018). Apple Music was qualified for sourcing popularity data because it is used by many users. It also has a popularity ranking for each song an artist releases built into its interface. Apple Music includes a "Top Songs" feature that ranks an artist's songs by streaming popularity. I used this feature to compile the ranking for *BROCKHAMPTON*'s songs.

Observations and Analysis

To answer my research question, I used two observations from two data sets to answer my research sub-questions first:

    a.   **Does the manner of advocacy—whether it be pro-social or anti-social—have any effect on the popularity of a given song?**

To answer this question, I determined whether each song was pre-dominantly anti-social or prosocial from the thematic analysis data. Then, I compared this factor to the song's popularity. To determine if a song was pre-dominantly anti-social or pro-social, I turned to the $\left(\dfrac{x}{\#\ of\ identified\ themes}\right)$ value in the numeric data. This value expressed how concentrated a given theme was when compared to the other social themes. The count for total anti-social themes and total pro-social themes were compared to see which had the greater amount. Songs with a greater amount of pro-social themes are denoted with a green dot, red dots are anti-social, and grey dots are neutral, meaning they have the same number of anti-social and pro-social themes. The following chart represents a relationship between song number and raking, the x and y axis, respectively. The song number is the order in which the song appears in the

SATURATION trilogy, with song "HEAT" assigned song number 1, "GOLD" assigned song number 2, and so on, making it a rudimentary number. Slope is not a negligible factor in this graph.
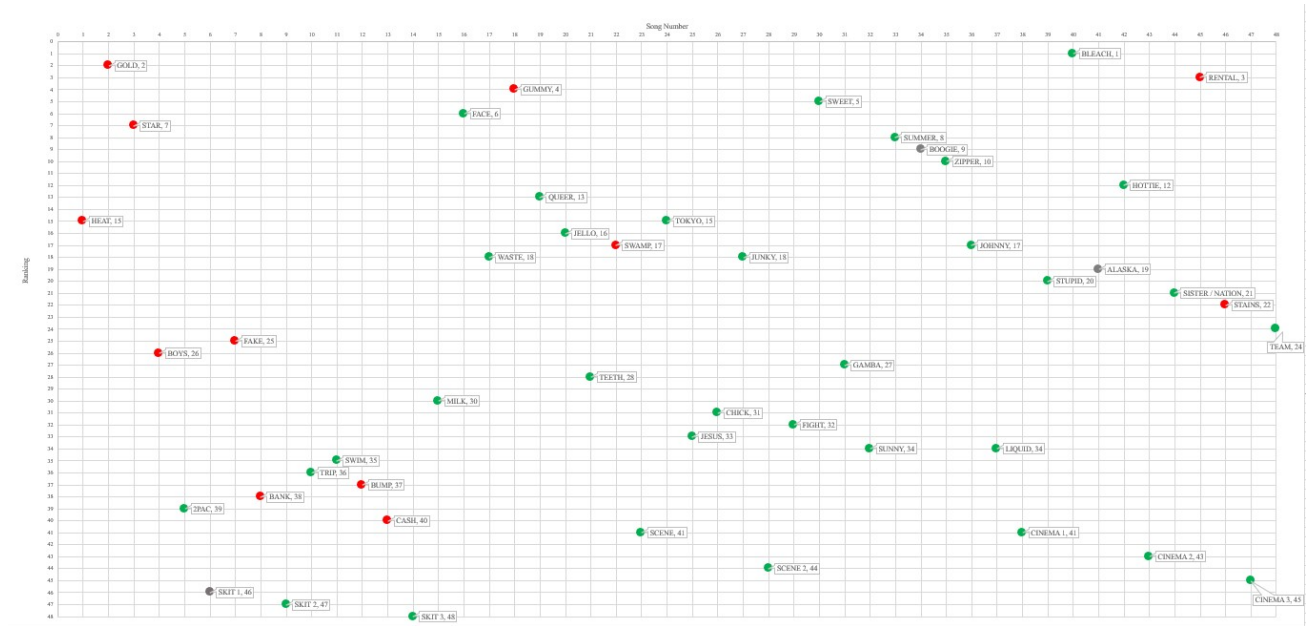

Figure 3. Graph Comparing Popularity and Thematic Category

The *SATURATION* trilogy is predominantly pro-social. To determine if there was any correlation between thematic content and popularity, I divided the graph into three equivalent popularity ranking ranges. These ranking ranges are areas 1, 2, and 3 on the figure below, divided by rankings 1-16, 17-32, and 33-48 respectively, where ranking #1 is the most popular and ranking #48 is the least. Then, I compared how many of each thematic category was represented in each region.
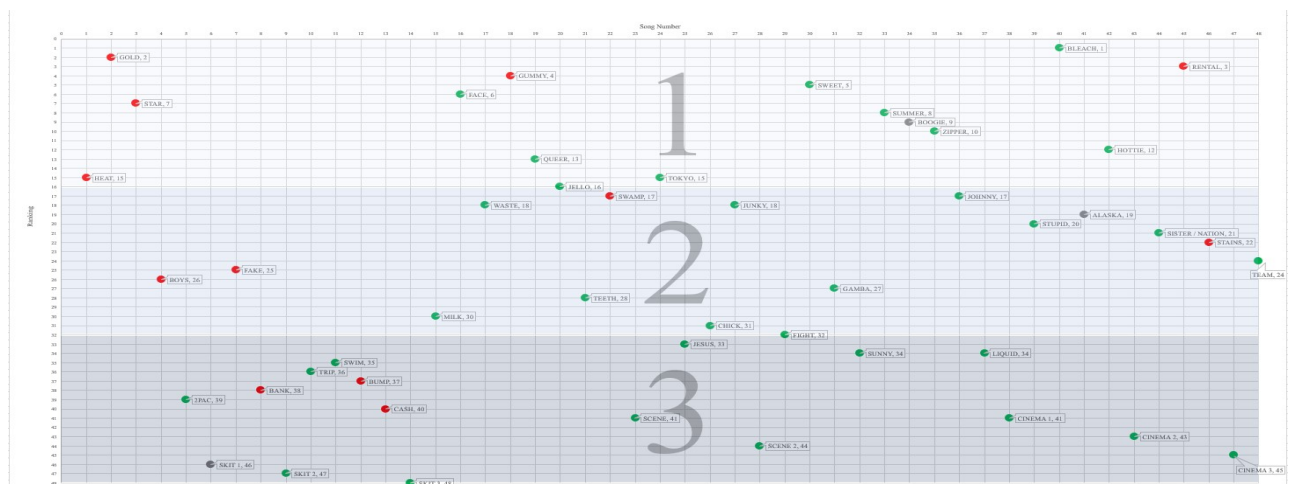

Figure 4. Graph Comparing Popularity and Thematic Category with Popularity Ranking Regions

To evaluate the proportions of the thematic categories in each region, I calculated $\hat{p}$ (p-hat), the standard deviation of all sample proportions for each one, where, $\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{p(1-p)}{n}}$, and variable p equals the proportion in the category of interest and variable n is the sample size (University of Florida Health, 2019).

Table 2. $\hat{p}$ Values of Each Region and Thematic Category

	Mean Proportion $= \{(\frac{n}{2})\frac{1}{n}\}$	$\hat{p}$ of mean	$\hat{p}$ of Region 1	$\hat{p}$ of Region 2	$\hat{p}$ of Region 3
Anti-Social	$\dfrac{4}{12}$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{4}{12}(1-\frac{4}{12})}{12}}$ $= 1.36$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{5}{12}(1-\frac{5}{12})}{12}}$ $= 1.42$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{4}{12}(1-\frac{4}{12})}{12}}$ $= 1.36$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{3}{12}(1-\frac{3}{12})}{12}}$ $= 1.5$
Pro-Social	$\dfrac{11.3}{34}$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{11.3}{34}(1-\frac{11.3}{34})}{34}}$ $= .08$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{9}{34}(1-\frac{9}{34})}{34}}$ $= .075$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{11}{34}(1-\frac{11}{34})}{34}}$ $= .08$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{14}{34}(1-\frac{14}{34})}{34}}$ $= .084$
Neutral	$\dfrac{1}{3}$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{1}{3}(1-\frac{1}{3})}{3}}$ $= .27$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{1}{3}(1-\frac{1}{3})}{3}}$ $= .27$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{1}{3}(1-\frac{1}{3})}{3}}$ $= .27$	$\hat{p} = \sqrt{\dfrac{\frac{1}{3}(1-\frac{1}{3})}{3}}$ $= .27$

Using the principles of standard deviation, a normal distribution with no particular skew of data should have at least 65% of the data—in the context of this study, the $p\hat{}$ values of two regions—within one standard deviation of the mean (Standard Deviation, 2020). All of the data is within one $p\hat{}$ value of the mean (the second column) with respect to the mean (the first column), meaning that there is no skew of any of the thematic categories towards a particular popularity region. Therefore, there is no strong relationship between thematic content and popularity.

After addressing this question, I turned to my second sub-question of inquiry:

    b. **Is there any correlation between the manner of advocacy performed in a song and the race that performs it?**

This sub-question intends to incorporate race into the main research inquiry by examining if the usage of a given thematic category by a given *BROCKHAMPTON* member has any relation with the race of the artist performing it. The race of each performing artist in *BROCKHAMPTON* is in the following table:

Table 3. Race of each member that performs in BROCKHAMPTON's SATURATION trilogy

Name	Race
Kevin Abstract (Ian Simpson)	African American
Joba (Russel Boring)	Caucasian
Matt Champion (Matthew Champion)	Caucasian
Ameer Vann	African American
Dom McLennon	African American
Bearface (Ciarán McDonald)	Caucasian
Merlyn Wood	African American
Roberto (played by Robert Ontenient)	Hispanic

To determine trends within which artist contributed to each theme the most—the "Main Artist" column in the table below—I turned to the "Main artist behind" thematic analysis data. The race of the artist that contributed to a given theme the most was noted in the "Artist Race" column in table 4.

Table 4. Race to Social Theme Attributions

Theme	Main Artist	Artist Race
Pro-social		
Critique of Racism	Ameer	African American (AA)
Gratitude	Kevin	African American
Mental Health Awareness	Dom	African American
Religion and Spirituality	Ameer	African American
Emotional Expression	Dom	African American
Political Engagement	Ameer	African American
Building Community Unity	Kevin	African American
Critique of Oppressive Institutions	Ameer/Dom	African American
~~Female Education~~		
LGBTQ+ Awareness	Kevin	African American
Rape Culture Awareness	Matt	Caucasian (C)
Anti-social		
Criminal Activity (General)	Ameer	African American
Gang Activity	Ameer	African American
Illegal Drugs	Ameer	African American
Sexual Objectification of Women	Matt	Caucasian
Derogatory Words in ref. to Women	Matt	Caucasian
Materialism (General)	Kevin	African American
Bragging about Money	Kevin/Matt	AA/C
Mentioning Materialistic Items	Kevin/Ameer	African American
Bragging about Properties and Assets	Ameer	African American
Pro-Attitude towards Materialism	Ameer	African American
Mentions of Sexualized Body Parts	Merlyn	African American
Sexual Explicitness (General)	Matt	Caucasian
Words used to describe Lewd Acts	Matt	Caucasian

  The theme "Female Education" could not be attributed to a member because it was not mentioned in the trilogy. If a theme has been attributed to two separate members, for example, "Critique of Oppressive Institutions", then two members have been attributed as the main artist of that theme an equal number of times. Both of their races have been noted.

  Overall, *BROCKHAMPTON*'s African American performers were attributed to most of the themes, whether pro-social or anti-social.

Table 5. Percent Attributions by Thematic Category and Race

Race	Anti vs. Pro Social	Percent Attributed
African American	Anti-Social	64.28%
Caucasian	Anti-Social	35.72%
African American	Pro-Social	90.9%
Caucasian	Pro-Social	9.1%

Any thematic content discussed in the *SATURATION* trilogy was predominately performed by an African American. As for *BROCKHAMPTON*'s Caucasian performers, they were attributed to more anti-social themes than pro-social themes. This poses a new point for continued discussion. This is not to say that this displays anti-social themes being dominated by Caucasian artists. Overall, there is no skew of African American performers or Caucasian performers towards one type of social theme. However, the vast number of social themes being attributed to African American performers suggests a newfound relationship; no matter the thematic category, performers who chose to utilize social themes were predominately African American.

Using these two conclusions, I could answer my main research inquiry:

> **To what extent does the race of a *BROCKHAMPTON* member and the advocacy they utilize, whether it be pro-social or anti-social advocacy examined through the usage of corresponding social themes, influence the popularity of a given song from *BROCKHAMPTON*'s *SATURATION* trilogy?**

The race of a *BROCKHAMPTON* member and the advocacy they utilize influences the popularity of a given song from the *SATURATION* trilogy to a minor extent. Answering the second research question revealed that there is no strong correlation between the type of theme and the race that performs it, other than the fact that most thematic content was contributed to by African American performers, no matter the thematic category. The first research question investigated popularity: even though the *SATURATION* trilogy is predominately pro-social, there is no correlation between popularity and the thematic category a song belongs to. Even though it is important to consider that most of the social themes are contributed to by African American performers, it is evident that thematic content—and consequently, the race that contributed to it—has little effect on popularity.

Discussion

Originally, I hypothesized that race and thematic content would affect the popularity of a song to a great extent. Through answering the research inquiry, it is evident that the newfound understanding generated by this study, that thematic content and race has little effect on popularity, refutes the initial hypotheses. This finding, one, helps create a better understanding of the popularity of anti-social versus pro-social rap and two, helps better inform the evolution of the American color line in music marketing and how it affects diverse rap groups.

The findings of this study provide a new grasp on the impact of thematic content in the academic sphere. By finding no correlation between popularity and thematic content within *BROCKHAMPTON*'s *SATURATION* trilogy, this study both corroborates and refutes the findings of other researchers. This study refutes the findings of researchers like the aforementioned Epps and Dixon, who found that the most popular songs on Billboard Charts, a music popularity chart, were less diverse in terms of thematic content (Epps & Dixon, 2017 p. 487). This study found that the most popular songs were as diverse in terms of thematic content as the less popular songs. However, this study also concurs with the findings of researchers like Pinn, who asserts that the success of Hip-Hop and the advocacy within it is always unknown, no matter the content. Just as Pinn concludes, the popularity of the songs within *BROCKHAMPTON*'s *SATURATION* trilogy is not affected by its content (Pinn, 1999). This finding expresses both a continuity and a change in the academic understanding of raps thematic content.

Through this study, I hoped to garner a better understanding of the impact of racial diversity in Hip-Hop. Within the context of *BROCKHAMPTON*, the races behind the themes that are chosen, albeit predominately African American, are not bound to one thematic category. The *BROCKHAMPTON* members and the themes they choose to discuss are not bound by popularity influencing, racially defined credibility. This alludes to a change in the content matter diverse rap groups have chosen to discuss—corroborating the findings of researchers like Gallagher, who found that the racial barriers in Hip-Hop are dissolving (Gallagher, 2003). However, in the *SATURATION* trilogy, Caucasian members were attributed to less pro-social themes than antisocial themes; Caucasian members were attributed to 9.1% of pro-social themes and 35.72% of anti-social themes. The fact that Caucasian members performed more anti-social

themes than pro-social themes—and vice versa for their African American counterpart—could be a product of preference on either the African American member's or the Caucasian member's part. This was not examined in this study. However, studying this could garner a better understanding of how the American color line affects the content artists choose to perform. Moreover, the disparity between the number of anti-social and pro-social themes attributed to Caucasian artists poses one of the few correlations found within this study; out of the few themes Caucasian artists were attributed to, the themes were predominately anti-social. Yet, because of the lack of correlation between theme type and popularity, this correlation cannot expand to answer the larger research question, nor can it fill the gap in knowledge.

Through the discussion of this study's findings and answering the question of inquiry, it is evident that this study does not present a solution to the disposal of the positive, advocating side of Hip-Hop in media. Rather, this study presents a resolution; this study calls for change in the way Hip-Hop is regarded and researched academically. In a world where media, music, and culture are everchanging, research must consider bodies of Hip-Hop works—like albums and discographies—with ambiguity between pro-social and anti-social. Not only this, but Research must also consider the factors that intersect with Rap and Hip-Hop, especially race. By reforming the methods in which Hip-Hop is researched, a better understanding of advocacy in Hip-Hop can be reached. Then, this newfound understanding can be gradually applied to the understanding of the genre in media. This study found a newfound understanding within the *SATURATION* trilogy; the following section clarifies the limitations and implications of my newfound acumen.

Limitations, Implications, and Conclusion

First, it is critical to note that within the context of this study, the lyrics of the *SATURATION* trilogy are viewed as a vessel for social themes. Whether or not a performer chooses to include a social theme in the lyrics they perform is a choice that they make. This assertion can be used to explain the intent of the race data. The intent of this data is to emphasize the choice of the members to include these themes, and if their usage of a given thematic category has any correlation with their race. Even though *BROCKHAMPTON* has more African American members than Caucasian members, the focus is on what themes an artist chooses to perform. Therefore, this unequal ratio was not a factor I chose to consider in this study.

My findings and analysis only intend to explore the content of the lyrics from the *SATURATION* trilogy and its correlation with popularity. This study does not consider other factors—for example, musical sound, media traction, music videos, and artist promotions-- and their correlation with popularity. Along with this, my study used one set of popularity data. If this study were to be replicated using another source of popularity data, the results could be different.

When examining the content of the lyrics, I used the aforementioned guidelines to eliminate the analysis of symbolism in the lyrics. This is not to say that there is no symbolism in the content of the trilogy. However, I chose not to analyze symbolism because of ambiguity of personal interpretation. If this study were to be replicated with the analysis of symbolism, the results could vary. Along with this, limiting the social themes that could be identified in the lyrics also limited the results I received. If this study were to be replicated with a different selection of themes or with more self-generated themes, the results could vary.

Lastly, this study only examines the rap group *BROCKHAMPTON*, which limits the results of this study to the context of *BROCKHAMPTON*. However, I believe that the methodology I used in this study could be applied to garner a better understanding of another rap group or multiple rap groups. However, my findings can only suggest more about *BROCKHAMPTON*.

As I continue to listen and digest Hip-Hop daily, I will be constantly reminded of its implications and influence. While I understand that media and culture may not explore Hip-Hop to the extent that researchers like myself do, I know that the potential is there, waiting to be tapped into. Whether that potential is positive, or negative is up for the artist to decide, but nonetheless, the potential will persist.

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