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Deviant Politics: Hip Hop As A Form Of Resistance Against Hypercriminalization And Structural Violence

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DEVIANT POLITICS: HIP HOP AS A FORM OF RESISTANCE AGAINST HYPER-
CRIMINALIZATION AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my son Ian Diaz; my little warrior Citlali that gives me so much happiness. Everything I do is for you. I am very thankful to my parents. You are my role models and I hope I can parent my son following your example. In particular, thank you mom for always believing in me, never giving up on me, and always being there in the most difficult moments. Dad, thank you for being a good father, I love you. Mayari I know I am not the best sister but you know I love you and I know you love me. Fausto, thanks for being my sweet heart. I also dedicate this to my abuelito and tío Juan who will continue to live in my heart. Lastly, I want to thank my friends and the rest of my family who are always good company.

DEVIANT POLITICS: HIP HOP AS A FORM OF RESISTANCE AGAINST HYPER-
CRIMINALIZATION AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

by

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INTRODUCTION

Life in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México changed quickly and drastically; Juárez went from a relatively safe city to a place where citizens were no longer able to leave their houses after sunset. Around the beginning of 2008, homicide was the number one cause of death among youth (Pizarro, 2013). Indeed, from 2008 to 2012 the state of Chihuahua had highest number of murdered youth in the country and Ciudad Juárez had the highest homicide numbers in the state (Pizarro, 2013). From December 31, 2010 through October 15, 2011, for instance, the number of murders across age groups was 10,135 in the state of Chihuahua (Pizarro, 2013).

The violence affected daily activities including nightlife. Young adults and teenagers could no longer enjoy nightlife because it became the easiest way for criminals to identify and even murder the youth. However, there was no safe space. Dario, for example, a student of sociology at the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez, got shot by federal police during a protest within university facilities. The perpetrator of this crime simply got relocated out of Juárez, and youth were left feeling they have no safe and no justice.

Often it is the fail political and economic structures young males in Juarez are disproportionately blamed for the escalation in the violence (Morales et al., 2013) credit the. Campbell (2010) explains how the violence is the consequence of smuggling drugs to the United. As a response, Ruben Garcia, director of the Annunciation House in El Paso, TX has actively protested injustices on both sides of the border fights to regain the rights of the youth in Juarez who are hyper- criminalized, particularly those residing in poor neighborhoods (Garcia, 2011). In particular, Garcia argues, "We also call for an end of the criminalization and the systematic

repression of Juárez youth, and also an implementation of a true culture of legality beginning with the authorities, police and military forces” (Diario de Juárez 2011).

In 2015, although the violence has been greatly reduced, the situation for the young men of Juárez has worsened. The director of *Casa Juvenile* reported a 26 percent increase in the incarceration rates of young and poor men (Martinez, 2015). Almada, the director of this center, said that the parents of those young men are required to pay high fines in order to free their sons, a tasking endeavor for families who are living in poverty. Police officers profile young men by their dress and overall look when they who are simply walking around their neighborhoods and thus unjustly criminalized (Martinez, 2015). Such encounters with the police have even resulted in death. On March 2015 Ivan, a 16 year-old, was killed by a police officer and to this day the details of Ivan’s death are unclear. Ivan had been arrested in his neighborhood in the past, and the day that he was murdered he was arrested as well and the police officer killed him because he tried to escape. That is the official version; however, Ivan’s brother said that he received a call from Ivan asking for money in order to avoid being arrested by the police officer (Chavez, 2015). This is the context in which the young and poor MCs of Juarez find themselves. Bradley (2010) defines MCs, as hip hop’s masters of ceremonies. Juarez residents, from diverse backgrounds, have protested against the police and the presence of the Mexican military highlighting how they contributed to the impunity by assaulting, robbing, and abusing random citizens, especially adolescents.

Among those denouncing the social injustices facing Juarez residents are the hip hop MCs. The research objectives of this study are two-fold. First, I seek to examine the hyper criminalization of Juarez MCs by examining the structural context in which they live and the deviant labels attached to this group attributed to their status as young, poor, and masculine.

Second, I will illustrate how hip hop is a form of resistance, or what Rios (2011) calls *deviant politics*, that is used to combat the stigma and the lack of legitimate (educational and work) opportunities. The data for this study comes from two sources. First, content analysis will help me to analyze some of the lyrics of the songs that young MCs perform along the border. This part of the analysis will help to contextualize the structural violence that the youth in Juárez encounter in their daily lives. Second, in-depth interviews with sixteen MCs will highlight their structural oppression and how they use hip hop as a form of globalization from below.

Structural Violence

The youth from Juárez live under conditions of structural violence. Departing from a focus on individual forms of violence, I draw from the structural violence perspective first coined by Johan Galtung (1969). Structural violence allows for a macro-level examination of violence and extends micro-level definitions of violence to include social injustices (Morales and Bejarano, 2009). Structural violence is largely indirect because the decision-makers are focused more on profits without caring about the vulnerable population such as the poor and working class (Morales and Bejarano, 2009).

Chasin (2004) described the differences between structural and interpersonal violence, with a key distinction being that structural violence has more victims than interpersonal violence does. However people that suffered from structural violence are not as easily aware of the reasons behind their victimization. Something interesting is that even if victims know that they have been suffering from violence it is difficult to identify their perpetrators. It is very difficult to create awareness of the cycle of structural violence because it is the whole system that is broken,

and even in the cases that communities fight against it, the decision-makers are the ones with the power and the victims are the ones who can lose their lives (Chasin, 2004).

Hip Hop in the US

Hip hop originated in New York, specifically in the Bronx (Rosario and Bishop, 2015). In the 70's, African Americans and Latinos were living in extremely poor neighborhoods. They were segregated and marginalized, and music was a way for youth to express their feelings and tell their story of how it was to live in that place (Rosario and Bishop, 2015). Hip hop was not just music, and according to Chang (2006): "It was Bambaataa's arm-the MCs, the DJs, the graffiti writers, the b-boys and b-girl, the crews they brought and the crowds they moved. They were elemental in their creative power-four, after all, was the foundation number, representing air, water, earth, and fire." (p. 107) Hip hop formed unity between neighborhoods' resilience to unequal opportunities (Chang, 2006).

Hip hop initially started increasing social consciousness and became a medium to claim justice in poor neighborhoods; however, in 1988-1993 the market influenced raps artist to create gangsta rap and become more commercial in order to have profit in this genre (Mohammed, 2012). The music industry saw hip hop as a good genre to promote, leading to rap becoming mainstream. The DJ, the dancer, and the graffiti artists were not useful to this new rap industry (Chang, 2006). This is when gangsta rap defined, by Keyes (2002) as very sexually and violent explicit lyrics.

Music industry created a negative image of hip hop culture, highlighting the use and sale of drugs, misogyny, gang's fights, and all these stigmas that society has about hip hop (Chang,

2006). Conscious rap artists do not have the opportunity in the market to commercialize their work and they get known as underground hip hop because they do not have the image and lyrics that industry music wants to promote (Tickner, 2008).

Hip Hop in México

Hip hop in México started much later than in New York. In the mid-80s break dance was the most popular, and mimicking of rap lyrics primary in marginal areas of México City (Tickner, 2008). In the 90s gangsta rap took popularity in Los Angeles with Cypress Hill, La Raza, and Kid Frost that used Spanish and English lyrics. People in México started in the mid '90s early '00s to get to know this type of rap; however, it was not as popular as in the United States (Tickner, 2008). According to Tickner (2008) "The lack of public exposure led hip hoppers to explore alternative venues for disseminating the genre. In 1997, Control Machete was one of the first Mexican group which use there lyrics to talk about violence, drugs and gangs that took more popularity, however they were not package to global market" (p. 132). Control Machete could not commercialize their work because they do not have the image and lyrics that Mexican industry music wanted to promote, even though they were one of the first groups that became popular in Latin America (Tickner, 2008). The adaptation of hip hop in México can be understood as a process of hybridization. According to Nilan and Feixa (2006) hybridization is:

A process of cultural interactions between the local and the global, the hegemonic and the subaltern, the center and the periphery on the other hand, hybridization is a process of cultural transactions that reflects how global cultures are assimilated in the locality, and how non-western cultures impact upon the West (p. 2).

This mobilization can be physical or cyber networking through YouTube, Facebook, and Television. It is interesting how the youth in Juárez appropriated this genre of music to express their social unhappiness. According to Tickner (2008) hip hop is a global movement, where young in poor neighborhoods share common understandings; however, the problems are not the same in each country. These leads to trans-local movements where youth create lyrics about violence, poverty, and discrimination but in different ways (Tickner, 2008).

Hybridization and domestication facilitated the extension of hip hop from the U.S. to different parts of the world, as such creating something global into something local. So what happens when youth in poor neighborhoods center their identity as hip hop artists but society views hip hop as deviant? As such, does hip hop further impede their opportunities for upward mobility?

Hip Hop in Juárez

Juárez, being a border town, has easy access to the American culture, creating a unique style which is neither fully American nor fully Mexican, but a mixture of both (Anzaldua, 1987). So far, there is scant attention to the meaning of hip hop along the Mexican-U.S. border. An exception is the work of Sanchez (2014), who showed that hip hop is part of Juárez's underground culture, rap artists do not have the opportunity in the market to commercialize their work and they get known as underground. Based on the framework of organic intellectuals from Gramsci (2009) Sanchez found the difference between rappers and MCs. MCs are speaking out against injustices that poor youth have to deal with in their daily lives, and rappers sing more

about bling bling, or for commercial brand products. Sanchez (2014) concluded that Juárez MCs represent a counter-hegemony resistance to the lack of opportunities for low-income youth.

Gomez (2014) in El Diario de Juárez did a news report about a program that some *bachilleres* (high school) students are doing with teenagers called *Sueños y expresiones de la juventud*. It is a program that is trying to integrate and give workshops on hip hop in order to express their memories as young people in Juárez. Gomez (2014) wrote about the purpose of the program as the following:

Dentro del programa cultural también se abrieron espacios en que los alumnos reflexionaron acerca de la realidad que enfrentan a diario en esta ciudad, en los cuales hablaron de las faltas de oportunidades. La estigmatización que sufren los jóvenes de colonias populares, los abusos de autoridad, ente otros. (14 Junio 2014)

This program is helping young people in poor neighborhoods to express their feelings and it is a very good start for teenagers to be more critical of the hard situation that they have to live. These kinds of programs can create more attractive high schools for young people because hip hop is not the traditional art subject and students can be more attached to school and that way students get involved more in academic life; that will help to have more young people graduate from high school and even from universities.

Building off the limited research on hip hop along the border, I am going to discuss how youth in a border city transform a global culture into a local culture. One of the differences that this research has with Sanchez's thesis (2014) is that he explains in detail the difference between hip hop and rap and MCs. Sanchez (2014) looks at the reaction of the audience in Juárez when MCs have their performance in hip hop events. I am more focused on how structural violence is the perfect context for young people in poor neighborhoods to evoke in hip hop culture. I look at

how MCs use consciousness lyrics but they are still stigmatized due to their status as poor, young, males, who look like *cholos*.

In this study I will analyze the manner in which young men in Juárez are criminalized structurally and at the micro-level due to being poor, brown, and male. I will then discuss how young MCs respond to such criminalization through hip hop.

LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Hyper-Criminalization

The history and the context of a country have influence on the music that people listen to. hooks (1994) discusses how gangsta rap hyper criminalizes low income youth of color in the U.S. because of constant references to misogyny, violence against women, and the use and trafficking of illicit drugs. Rios (2011) did research about how young men in poor neighborhoods in Oakland were predestined by society to being incarcerated or in the worst case murdered by gang members or the police. Because the city is very industrialized with high numbers of poor immigrants grows, the 1980's neoliberalism further marginalized poor neighborhoods and citizens with increases in unemployment (Rios, 2011). Rios (2011) defines crime as the following:

The process by which styles and behaviors are rendered deviant and are treated with shame, exclusion, punishment, and incarceration. In this study, criminalization occurred beyond the law; it crossed social contexts and followed young people across an array of social institutions, including school, the neighborhood, the community center, the media and the family. (p. xiv)

Therefore, hyper-criminalization is created first by the desire of those in law enforcement to have control of young men in poor neighborhoods (Rios 2011). Then the media portrayed this stereotype of bad boys in the streets, and this resulted in whole communities internalizing this stigma of men being thought criminals just because of the way they dressed. It is interesting how Rios pays close attention to the easy target that young men are because of their *cholo*

appearance. The school system is one of the important parts of hyper-criminalization when young men are kicked out of the school because of bad behavior.

Indeed, Rios was one of the “bad guys” in Oakland in his poor neighborhood, and he saw how almost all of his friends ended up in jail or getting murdered. He was the only one that went to college and received his Ph.D. I think it is not the fault of those young men who became deviants or criminals; the whole environment of inequalities is the main problem that these young men have to deal with in their daily lives. Rios (2011) research is important to take into consideration because what he looked at was the stories of these young men. He said that the side of the story heard on the news is always that of police law enforcement but the other is never told about.

Rios (2011) argues that marginalization ignites a desire to understand social processes and, “it also sparked a deep desire to know why they were targeted, and some developed a keen sense of dissent, often informal and occasionally more formal” (p. 130). According to Oliver (2008), “the context of mass incarceration generated by repression of the social movements of the mid-twentieth century, we have to pay attention to the new and unique forms of resistance and mobilization taking place among marginalized populations” (p.123). Katz (1999) says that the culture of poverty is the main reason why low income youth are targeted as criminals since 1960 when social sciences such as ethnographers, sociologists, political sciences, etc. research about poverty and blamed minorities in low income families, saying that poor people were deviant and criminals because of the low income they started to participate in illegal business (Katz, 1999). Single mothers and people in welfare were targeted as no-moral and lazy people (Katz, 1999). The stigma of having this label gives this help a double connotation that young

have to deal with in society (Katz, 1999). This kind of research legitimized hyper criminalization of young poor people in the United States.

Carrillo (2013) was in the same position of Rios when he was young. He talks about how he had to deal with being treated as an intellectual inferior and hyper criminality when he was young in a poor neighborhood. Carrillo (2013) said that it was very difficult because even some professors told him that he would not be able to write a book. However, his mother always taught him how to navigate through the system that oppressed poor young people of color, so she was the key person who empowered him to reach his goal of being a professor at Harvard (Carrillo, 2013).

Given that low income youth are targeted as a “at risk” they use the code of the street in order to survive. Rios (2011) states the importance of this code:

The code of the street is not the goal or product of any individual’s actions but is the fabric of everyday life, a vivid and pressing milieu with which all local residents must shape their personal routines, income strategies, and orientations to schooling, as well as their mating, parenting, and neighbor relations. Preemptively attacking an enemy to prevent future victimization is a key element of the code. (p.55)

In their neighborhood, a tough appearance is important when the justice system opposes them (Rios, 2011). Tough appearance is a two-sided coin for young men that are trying to survive in high crime neighborhoods. A tough appearance gains respect. Police officers from the United States, however, cannot distinguish between innocent youth and those that are involved in gangs and drugs (Rios, 2011). When young men are targeted as criminals without committing a crime, they internalize shame and feelings of stigmatization that often lead them to commit more crime in the future.

The code of the street is embedded in the language, body language, and music that are used to create images of a tough man (Katz, 1999).

Deviant Politics

In order to understand the criminalization of young men in Juárez and their adopting hip hop as a medium to speak against injustice, the following thesis is based on Rios' concept of *deviant politics*. Rios (2011) coined the term *deviant politics* to describe the forms of resistance, such as political activism, oppositional consciousness, and even committing other crimes, that young low income man of color use to protest the deviant labels imposed by society. Unfair treatment and punishment leads young people to commit conscious acts of resistance (Rios 2011). The framework developed because young men of color are not passive about deviant labels that society imposes on them and their relatives. Indeed, young men of color from low income neighborhoods are conscious about abuses of power from police and other societal institutions (Rios, 2011). These deviant politics surface as forms of “getting back at the system” at the risk of being incarcerated, being shot or abused by police officers, and/or facing violence from other youth in the same situation through gang violence (Rios, 2011).

In the context of Juárez, *deviant politics* surface through music, dance, and dress not only crime or activism (Rios, 2011). Deviant politics can lead young men to adopt a “tough front” that is associated with hyper-masculinity as a response to society's exclusion of them due to their race/ethnicity and low-income statuses. “Tough fronts” help young men survive in the streets and gain a sense of self-empowerment (Rios 2011). Under such dynamics, hip hop became the medium for young men to express their “tough fronts” (Rios, 2011).

In addition to hip hop, there are also themes of *deviant politics* in the literature on youth rebellion. Oliver (2008), for example, argued that resistance among criminalized youth can take two different paths: 1) Committing crime without knowing the real reason for oppression, or 2) Being active against the system once the youth become aware of the root causes of their oppression. Oliver (2008) states:

There is individual dissent and collective crime, and both are common. The more repressive a system, the more dissent takes the form of individual, often anonymous, acts of resistance.... We need to ask how oppressed people can gain redress under conditions of extreme repression and to understand the forms that resistance can take when the possibility of direct resistance is blocked. (p. 1)

Drawing from Oliver (2008), then, deviant politics is a way for young MCs to re-empower themselves and to display forms of resistance through music. Music provides opportunities to change the social structure through political participation; this participation is usually blocked off to these youth.

The association between hip hop and resistance has also been established by Black feminist scholar Bell hooks (1994). In particular, hooks (1994) argues that white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy are guilty of condemning poor young men of color. Therefore, “Rap celebrates the world of the material the dog-eat-dog world where you do what you gotta do to make it even if it means fucking over folks and taking them out. In this world view killing is necessary for survival.” (124) Ironically, it is largely white young men that are the consumers of the type of “gangsta rap” that hooks is referring to, even though young men of color are the ones who have suffered stigmatization and criminalization.

METHODOLOGY

Before discussing the methodology employed in this study I will discuss my position – the origins of my sociological imagination and the lens through which I analyze situations and experience. I was born in Juárez, in the same neighborhood where my participants are from. I went to middle school with some of them but lost contact when I started high school. After I moved to El Paso in 2008, I did not see them for years. When I started my thesis I was wondering about the hip hop scene in Juárez. When I visited my family in my old neighborhood I saw some of my old friends who had become hip hop MCs. I started to use my sociological imagination and established connections between new hip hop movements (that had evolved in the last couple of years) and that was the foundation for this study. This connection allows for me to better understand the lives of my respondents while understanding that I have a responsibility as a researcher to be objective.

Content Analysis

The respondents in my study are MCs who reside in Juárez. There is a difference between MC and rappers. An MC writes down his own material even if he didn't have a record deal, while a rapper is more commercial (Cobb 2007). This is the main reason why I interviewed MCs in the Juárez -El Paso border; they all write their own songs and they do not have a record deal.

I began my study with a content analysis of hip hop lyrics from Juárez MCs. Content analysis is appropriate as Babbie (2007) states that “Content analysis is the study of recorded human communications. It is particularly well suited to the study of communications and to

answering the classic question of communications research: Who says what, to whom, why, how and with what effect?” (p. 320). With content analysis, people have to pay close attention to the message that songs have, in this case in hip hop songs. In order to provide context, content analysis was also conducted on four songs that are publically available on YouTube. These songs were chosen intentionally because they have context about the different types of structural violence and masculinity therefore showing the reality of how it is to be a youth in the Mexico-USA border.

I also used content analysis to interpret four song lyrics from Juárez MCs. I have listened to many different songs from different Juárez MCs and I paid close attention to the lyrics. I then selected songs alluding to structural violence or masculinity and analyzed them. I listened to YouTube and sound cloud, and some of the songs were sent to me by my participants. I read the lyrics and started to see patterns of violence in their neighborhoods, power abuse from police officers, lack of opportunities for education and employment, and stigmatization from the law enforcement and society in general.

The purpose for conducting content analysis is to gain knowledge of the problems that youth have in their daily life. In particular, I connected the context in Juárez, the development of social consciousness among the youth, and how music is used as a form of expression. This method is useful because it helps analyze the music by identifying and explaining common themes found in the lyrics of certain songs.

In-Depth Interviews

Snowball sampling techniques were used to select participants. Since my respondents are a hidden population due to the criminalization they face in society, they are often distrustful of

outsiders. Being that I once lived in the neighborhood where some of the MCs reside gave an insider status. For respondents outside of this context I used snowball sampling techniques.

Participants were approached at public musical events where they performed. The location of performances varies, but they all take place during the day at parks, clubs, public transport, (buses called *rutas* in Juárez) and festivals in El Paso, TX and Juárez, on the weekends.

Respondents were also approached through Facebook. Hip hop artists use the internet to communicate and to promote their culture and music. MCs post their old and new songs on Facebook, sound cloud, and YouTube. They have Cds to sell; however, it is easier for followers to listen to their songs on the Internet. They just need the access to internet even though they do not get any monetary compensation.

Table 1: Demographics and Social Characteristics of Respondents

Respondent	Age	Gender	Education
Beto	22	M	College
Chico Sucio	30	M	High School
Coyote	35	M	Elementary
Diomer	22	M	Middle School
Dilema	21	F	College
Hedrick	18	M	Middle School
Jota Eme Ka	23	M	High School
Mac	26	M	Elementary
Mash	30	M	Elementary
Neto	18	M	High School
Oveja Negra	24	F	Middle School
Quide	18	M	High School
Roy	30	M	Middle School
Siniestra	22	F	Middle School
Santi	24	M	Middle School
Tuga	32	M	Elementary

The interviews were conducted with 16 hip hop artists (12 = males and 4 = females, 18 years of age to 35 years of age) residing along the U.S. - México border (Table 1). Interviewees were given the option to remain anonymous or to notify the researcher if they wanted their artistic name to be utilized in this study. Participants were asked to participate in an interview, approximately 60 minutes in length. Interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the respondent (Spanish). I received IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using qualitative thematic coding in the N*VIVO qualitative software. I recorded each interview and transcribed it word for word. The themes in my interview guide consisted of 3 general sections: 1) life histories and individual goals, 2) goals and aspirations as MCs, and 3) perceptions about the Mexican government, law enforcement, and their experience as young people living in Juárez (see Appendix I). Codes include themes such as criminalization, violence, and lack of opportunities. I re-coded my data after the initial coding. In this second coding I identify themes that arose in the data such as instances of deviant politics. According to Babbie (2007), established methodologists in sociology, “Data analysis is the discovery of patterns among the data, patterns that point to theoretical understandings of social life. The coding and relating of concepts is key to this process and requires a more refined system than a set of manila folders” (p. 384). Coding themes in my data then facilitated the analysis including the connection to theoretical themes of interest.

FINDINGS

The first section of the findings will focus on outcomes of the content analysis of musical lyrics to contextualize my study. Recurring themes within the music and the connection with the theoretical framework will be discussed. Second, I will examine how poverty interlocks with age to shape opportunities (or lack thereof) and hyper-criminalize the young men living along the México -USA border. Data obtained from participant observations and in-depth interviews will be the basis of this analysis. Third, I will examine what Rios (2011) refers to as *deviant politics* and apply it to my case study.

Content Analysis: The Message of Hip Hop

In order to contextualize my study, I analyzed the lyrics that came from hip hop songs performed by MCs from Juárez. Common themes in the lyrics highlight stigmatization, discrimination, and the exclusion of youth in low-income neighborhoods in Juárez. The violence they describe is structural such as living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, experiencing family disintegration and instability due to parents who are forced to work long hours for family survival, and parents being too physically exhausted from their strenuous *maquiladora* jobs to spend quality time with their kids. Such lifestyles push youth to seek comfort among their peers and encourage the likelihood of joining a gang in the neighborhood.

Structural Violence and Blocked Opportunities

In this section I analyze the MC lyrics that highlight structural violence or macro-level inequalities. When society is designed to provide opportunities for some groups and block legitimate opportunities for others is a form of structural violence (Morales and Bejarano, 2009). A factor that contributes to the inequality at the structural-level is education. In México, all children and teenagers are required to attend school because the government provides free education; however, there are not enough government sponsored schools for all students (Zapata, 2013). Consequently, students must take an exam to see if they can place into middle and high school (Zapata, 2013). The students that do not get placed in government schools have to search for a private school and pay monthly fees. In order to get an education, low income students have to resort to looking for a job to finance their studies (Zapata, 2013). These young people are pushed into a labor market with restricted opportunities and poor wages. Pok 37, a member of *Elites Squad*, a hip hop group in Juárez, for instance, sings about the lack of opportunities for low income youth along the border:

*La verdad no avanza mi ciudad no prospera
no miro esperanza y la gente aún espera
con las manos abiertas sin darse cuenta
que las oportunidades están muertas*

They have a very bleak outlook about the opportunities in Juárez. In the lyrics above, the MCs describe how they have no hope, although they see that others in the city have faith. While structural violence perspectives accentuate that people are not always aware of who the oppressor is (e.g. Galtung, 1969), yet the social realities faced by the MCs make them aware of structural inequalities.

Ratas con Corbata by Adrian and Axel is another song passionately described the lack of hope in Juárez. The lyrics below accentuate the psychological effects of poverty and how people internalize the hurt and try to appear to be happy:

*en la pobreza con la esperanza no alcanza
escondemos los problemas con una sonrisa falsa
si rezas a dios y no te contesta
deja un coment en el Facebook y espera respuesta
una taza de café por 10 de miseria
empeñamos la fe y es a falta de feria*

The MCs are critical of others who turn to social media, such as Facebook, to solve their problems rather than finding real solutions. Once the youth put their concerns out there in Facebook, Adrian and Axel feel the youth then sit back and wait for a miracle.

In other parts of the song, the MCs expressed the structural violence exacerbated by the government when it ignores its citizens and exerts excessive social control. Living in low income neighborhoods they have become aware of the inequalities in the legal system where poor people are not treated equally:

*la fragancia de la democracia
es el control del pueblo basado en la ignorancia
desconsolado por ser menos ante un juez
y nominado al desempleado del mes
no quiero ser presidente todos son unas ratas
nos humillan nos denigran con su división de castas*

In their songs, they describe how the government paints a picture of democracy while it is actually corrupt, unjust to the poor, and robs its own citizens.

Indeed, structural violence in the form of governmental corruption is a common theme among MCs. Pok 37 and MC Crimen lyrics below reflected on the harsh reality encountered by low income youth when they do not have money to pay for school and in some cases not even money for food:

no hay prioridad para mi gente ni comida en la mesa

van sin darse cuenta que el pueblo no interesa

vivimos un sistema sin pies ni cabeza

no es suficiente un rebote de gobierno

Throughout the song, Pok 37 and MC Crimen stressed the lack of structural opportunities such as education, employment, or even how the lack of nutrition for the poor. Knowing first-hand what it is like to live in conditions of poverty they feel the government does not care about people living in their situation. Indeed, at the time they wrote this song they did not have the funds to finance their high school education.

Similarly, Adrian Kamikaze and Axel are two MCs who also live under harsh economic conditions and are critical of the government for implementing a structurally violent system that does not work for the majority of the people. Indeed, the government system only benefits those in power who attend expensive and prestigious schools, travel, and buy luxury cars and houses:

bajo este país los altos funcionarios van a óperas y estudian en paris

bajo la mejor educación tienen buenos coches y una buena mansión

y cuantos niños diarios mueren por desnutrición

eso no sale en los discursos ni cuantos abandonaron la escuela

*por falta de recurso y aumentos de intereses
es un privilegio que se dan solo burgueses
nosotros no alcanzamos y el señor presidente ya se lavó las manos
yo solo pregunto cuando vuelve el trabajo*

Even though these young MCs lack formal education they are critical thinkers and are aware of structural inequalities that shapes their live trajectories. Even though Axel kamikaze, Adrian, Pok 37 and MC Crimen are critical thinkers, they still need formal education to be upwardly mobile.

Another form of structural violence described by MCs surround the harsh economic and political conditions that push people to migrate. Awareness of the displacement of poor people, “Rap lyrics protests that migrants are accused of being law breakers and criminals and assert that they are often victims of police brutality: rappers actually view migration as the only means of survival for many Mexicans” (Ticker, 2008, p. 140). As such, the MCs understand the plight of migrants who face criminalization in the U.S. that is rooted in their poverty status and political systems that favor migrants from other countries and those with human capital. Pok 37 and MC Crimen, for example, acknowledged how migrating to the United States is one of the few solutions that people in Juárez have to overcome poverty and unemployment:

*que no te duele que la gente migre en este vil infierno
y se le haga costumbre dejar su casa
porque quema la lumbre
dejar su patria porque se muere de hambre
su mirar es gris vivir sin vivir humildemente*

Pok 37 and MC Crimen passionately portray the pain associated with leaving love ones behind to search for economic survival. Moreover, the MCs are critical of how as a society we let these conditions to continue and thus we should not be surprised.

Criminalization and Violence

MCs also demonize popular media for promoting negative stereotypes of poor neighborhoods. For instance, it is common for TV programs to show villains listening to hip hop, wearing baggie clothes, and residing in poor communities (Valenzuela, 1998). Even night clubs, restaurants, and schools reproduce these stigmas when they prohibit entry to youth who wear clothing that is representative of barrios (Valenzuela, 1998).

Criminalization can become a life and death issue when young men are profiled by law enforcement, even when they are simply hanging out with their friends and going to work (Rios, 2001). *Segundo Patio* by Jota Eme Ka is the song written by a member of *Sonido Grillo*, a hip hop group in Juárez. Jota Eme Ka's lyrics he described his experiences associated with living in poor Juárez neighborhoods and the mistreatment he experienced by police officers who verbally and physically abuse him and others just for looking like gang members or *cholos*. Aware of the power differentials that exist between the police and poor youth, the MCs' lyrics are passionately about describing how the poor youths' lack of power makes them easy targets:

gobierno policía que reprime día con día

quitándote la alegría

te lo dijo lo he sentido

por qué quitar un joing y no 100 kilos

será porque es más fácil

quitarle a los jodidos reprimidos

In the lyrics above, the MC reflected on how police officers and government abuse their power and blame poor people for the city's problems with crime and drugs. Jota Eme Ka, for instance, pointed to the irony and injustice where smoking a marijuana cigarette is criminalized, while the trafficking of hundreds of kilos of marijuana largely goes unpunished. He is critical of the power that drug traffickers have in the city and of the legal system that would rather focus on criminalizing poor young men.

The song below was written in 2010 when the violence in Juárez took the lives of many of young men. Indeed, two of the members of this group were killed in the drug war. The MC's neighborhood was considered one of the most dangerous during the height of the violence, in part due to gangs competing for territory:

te vengo a platicar de una gran frontera

donde se vive guerra esquina contra esquina

muchos pagan la deuda sin deberla ni temerla

quisiera yo saber por qué no es al revés

mejor dejar la deuda los que la deben

si quieres trabajar te van y te persiguen

como un pinche animal

Jota Eme Ka lyrics also criticized the significant number of innocent people who lost their lives. For example, El Negro, an MC, happened to be outside of a house known as a stash house when he lost his life. The MC's lyrics are a testament to oppositional culture where they are aware that they did not start the war yet they have to pay for it with the threat of violence and even death.

The feminist MCs also discuss victimization. As activists *Batallones Femeninos* describe how young females are kidnapped, raped, and killed in route to their places of employment. Indeed, Juárez is recognized worldwide as the city of murdered women. In the musical lyrics below, *Batallones Femeninos* describes how violence against young women is structural since it was associated with the urban sprawl exacerbated by *maquiladoras* and the lack of security provided for female workers who often walked home after working long hours:

*voy de regreso a casa y es como medio día
noto que me miran mas no me imaginaba
que el miedo me atraparía cuando sola caminaba
sentí que alguien se acercaba
y acelere mi paso cuando jalaron mi mano
grite lo más que pude todos se volvieron sordos
nadie dijo nada, nadie miro nada
violada torturada amenazada amordazada
con lágrimas imploraba que esto terminara
ayúdame gritaba pero lejos estaba y ya no regrese a casa.*

In addition to a class consciousness *Batallones Femeninos* have a feminist conscious that are embedded in their lyrics.

Asi Era Ella is a song portraying the voices of the young women who disappeared and connects their situations to slave labor and dangerous living conditions. Towards the end of the song these female MCs sing how the victims and their family members must have suffered. The message of this song has become popular with feminist NGOs such as *Nuestra Hijas de Regreso a Casa*:

*maría, petra, carolina, 13, 18, 16, los pechos mordidos las manos atadas
calcinados sus cuerpos, sus huesos pulidos por la arena del desierto, se llaman
las muertas que nadie sabe, que nadie vio que mataran.
mi madre preocupada y alterada me buscaba
48 horas, espere la señora le decían
yo desaparecida, ella desesperada, se aferraba
a mi fotografía, pegada en las esquinas*

These female MCs describe the pain that families undergo especially after the first 48 hours of their disappearance and the structural violence that occurs when the government permits the crimes to continue by not providing to solve these murders.

In sum, hip hop is a powerful medium to denounce structural violence. The four songs illustrated above show us how hip hop represents a form of deviant politics. Despite the lack of formal education, MCs take their street knowledge and critical conscious and incorporate it into hip hop lyrics. In the section below, the perspectives highlighted in the content analysis exercised are reinforced through in-depth interviews with MCs.

Developments in Hip Hop throughout the Years

This section utilizes data from the 16 MCs to describe how hip hop and its association with violence and criminalization has changed from the 1990s to the present in Juarez. Mash is one of the MCs that started in the late 90s. He has loved hip hop since the break dance era started and lived through the transition from gang rap to conscience rap when it became a medium for social justice in poor neighborhoods. Mash got kicked out of middle school and his entrée into

the hip hop scene was graffiti. At this time the hip hop scene and gang-life was one of the same. He had many fights with different gangs and with police officers. Below Mash described how police officers abused low income youth verbally and physically:

Los de la preventiva se pasaban de lanza te daban unos patadones si te agarraban rayando y nos pintaban la cara se pasaban de lanza.

Although graffiti can be considered a deviant act, it should not warrant the abuse from police officers who find the youth to be easily targets. Thus, when caught doing graffiti Mash said the police would use excess violence and even paint their faces.

Coyote (35 years old) is the oldest MC among my interviewees; he remembers his life in poor neighborhoods and the lack of educational opportunities. In such a context, hip hop became a way to re-empower himself and thus his way of life. Yet, at this time, the hip hop scene in the 1990s was connected to gang activity:

En el sarahuat, entrabas y tenías que traer el fierro en la mano. Éramos chavillos cholos, teníamos que ponernos un pantalón aguado con una camisa de vestir, pero siempre traíamos los zapatos de punta de fierro, como nos esculcaban mucho pues no podíamos meter un filero, entonces nos poníamos los zapatos de construcción pues es un arma, entonces ya después traíamos los pantalones más aguados pero con una camisa más de vestir como las caramelo.

Even when not in gangs MCs were stereotyped as gang members. Coyote described how the manner in which they dressed could identify as rappers as *cholos* and subjected them to violence.

Coyote said that gang members from different gangs were not the only problems he had to deal with in those days; police officers always targeted him and his friends because of how they looked.

Te miraban tumbado con un diki te paraban a wuevo ya sabían que andabas mari guano ya sabían que traías un filero. Una garra o que acababas de enjaularte, pero cuando yo me vestía como rapero de todos modos me paraban, es que ya no había cholos, de hecho anoche me pararon por eso.

Indeed, on the same day of our interview Coyote had been stopped and questioned by the police for no apparent reason. Coyote suspects that it is because of the way he looks. Indeed, Coyote feels this profiling by police is part of his life and it has created mistrust with law enforcement officials.

Today, the context is not as violent for hip hop artists yet they continue to face criminalization at the hands of law enforcement. In the quote below Tuga reflects on how police officers targeted him since his youth. He feels he has always been targeted by police even now as an adult. In part because he dresses like a *cholo*, police officers frequently stopped him to check for guns and drugs. The police also abuse their power and request money in exchange for keeping him out of jail even when he has not done anything wrong:

Tu sales afuera y te dicen [la policía] a ver mi chavo por qué tan guango a ver cáigase. Yo si creó que en Juárez ya no hay respeto, yo tengo que respetar al Cristiano que tiene una doble moral, por ejemplo con los títeres, traía la canción de moviendo su culito y pues busque la canción editada y después paso a una tienda y una canción a todo lo que da de rompiendo cabezas y cuando se acaba estaba en la zeta, así que hay una doble moral.

Tuga is always in the streets working in different parts of Juárez doing a puppet show performance. Every once in a while he has to bribe police officers just to avoid being arrested. Another contradiction that Tuga has is his frustration that he is criminalized for being a hip hop

artist yet songs that over-sexualize women or glamorize drug dealers seem to be more accepted by society. For instance, *narco-corridos* explicitly describe killing people, which makes the MC wonder why hip hop is targeted when they are promoting a social consciousness.

Diomer is member of the Funky Bless, is in his mid-twenties and came from a poor neighborhood in Juárez like the other MCs in my study. In this case, Diomer was gang member and thus he found it more difficult to escape violence:

Pues que te balaceen pero al igual que yo balaceé pues todo se te regresa, pero gracias a dios me puso a gente buena que se cruzara en mi camino y que me dio sabiduría para transmitir lo que siento. Pues a la gente de aquí que le va a asustar

Even as a teenager Diomer remembers seeing high levels of violence in his neighborhood. Indeed, shootings were common in Diomer's neighborhood.

The transition from the 90s to today also changed the content of hip hop lyrics. In the 90s, Diomer explained the stigma that hip hop was music for *marijuanos*. However, he said that nowadays, MCs have changed the message in hip hop lyrics to something more positive:

y pues hasta la fecha casi todas nuestras rolas llevan un mensaje. Pero mucha gente dice ay no música de mariguanos de violencia y por la violencia, pero como te dijo ay para todas mis audiencias a pesar que la gente de aquí somos estrictos, tengo audiencia de todo.

These testimonies illustrate the transformation that hip hop underwent from the 1990s to the present in Juárez. Yet, throughout the years young and more mature MCs have experienced similar experiences with stigmatization, criminalization, and constrained societal opportunities.

MC Dilema from *Batallones Femeninos* remembers the threat of and actual frequent encounters with violence in Juárez. For example, while recording she recalls how a group

member from *Batallones Femeninos* could not go home because of the rapid gun fire in her neighborhood:

Una vez estábamos grabando y ya era tarde, pero ella lady li, no pudo grabar porque ya era tarde y sus papa la estaban apurando y se va lady y pasan 10 minutos y se regresó porque estaba una balacera y le hablo a los papa entonces se logra grabar en medio de una balacera.

Therefore, even though in the 1990s MCs were exposed to violence through gang membership, today the threats and actual forms of violence continue when MCs are not gang members.

The Voices of the Criminalized Youth

This section utilized in-depth interviews with MCs that highlight how structural violence that creates the conditions for the criminalization of young Mexican men. To start with, the following photograph shows the daily living conditions of the young MCs in my study. Indeed, the neighborhood illustrate below (Figure 1) is home to *Sonido Grillo*, one of the first groups in the hip hop scene in Juárez. At the time of the interview two of the members had already died, one of an overdose and the other was murdered.



Figure 1: *Sonido Grillo* 's Neighborhood.

Tuga, a member of *Sonido Grillo*, passionately discussed the injustices that he has experienced since he was a teenager up to the present day. In 2009, Tuga had to move to Piedras Negras in México, when the violence escalated in Juárez. The violence not only claimed thousands of lives but also created economic displacement. Not being able to find a job Tuga had to leave. After his brother was shot to death in a fight in 2011 he came back a year later to Juárez to continue with *Sonido Grillo*. His murdered brother, El Negro, had also been a member of *Sonido Grillo* as well. Below he describes the tragic impact on Juárez youth when the violence escalated:

Todos llegamos a estar en un punto de estar completamente solos, fue como decir, a ver weyes, todos están tirando mucho rollo a ver si es cierto. En ese camino pues yo digo que a unos nos fue mal y otros les fue peor, ósea a mi carnal le fue mal porque mi carnal era un bato de actitud, el no permitía que le digieran que se quedara dentro, él se la volaba a los chotas, pero pues fue una actitud en el mal momento, y pues le fue mal. Igual a mi compa El Chino igual el bato dijo que me voy a dejar ir, y pues así fue y se murió. Igual

a mí me paso algo gacho porque me robaron todo mi cantón y me dejaron prácticamente con lo que traía puesto, y por eso ya el rollo de estar aquí y lo que vamos a hacer es neto.

Tuga experienced first-hand the gravity of the violence in Juárez and the disproportionate impact that it had on poor youth. He sees the inequality where the violence was bad for everyone but worse for others. In Tuga's case, music provided a way to heal from his brother's death.

These are the neighborhoods where you find many people struggling to survive including those working in the maquiladoras. La Ovega felt that her mother's employment in a *maquiladora* severed family stability by depriving them from quality time with their parents. The long hours that *maquiladora* employment require means that children and youth are frequently left alone at home. Below, *La Ovega* described the impact that *maquiladora* employment has on family integration:

Conforme fui creciendo empezamos a pelear, porque mi mama estaba muy agradecida con la maquiladora porque toda su vida trabajo en ella, y yo pensaba que era lo peor. Y ella me decía que era una malagradecida porque de ay me vestí y comí y yo le decía si pero te secuestraron, me quitaron a mi mama a mi papa y mi hermano entro a la heroína y nos lleva a pelear todos los días peleábamos y de ahí surge eso, porque empiezo a reflexionar quien soy, y dije yo soy parte de esta manada pero no soy igual.

Oveja's situation is connected to the structural violence. The long hours required of maquiladoras meant her mother was absent for important moments in her life. Unfortunately, both *Oveja* and her brother ended up using heroin, another example of how structural violence in the border affects young people in poor neighborhoods.

Having to be in households with limited supervision because parents are working long hours in order to survive, the youth had to follow the code of the street where hip hop represents a way to survive in the streets. According to Anderson (1999), hip hop was one of the ways to survive in the streets in the United States. In particular, the code of the street is:

... actually a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system, and in others who would champion one's personal security. When called, the police may not even respond, which is one reason many residents feel they must be prepared to take extraordinary measures to defend themselves and their loved ones against those who are inclined toward aggression (Anderson 1999, p. 81)

Anderson's study was based on African Americans living in poor neighborhoods in the United States where the youth do not trust police officers because they represent white power. In the case of Juárez, people also do not trust police officers and associate them with corruption and criminals, which is a common theme in hip hop lyrics.

In 2008, the war against *narcotráfico* was the reality that ended the lives of a large segment of the hip hop community. Neto (age 18) from *Hit Fever* described how even though he was very young to be involved in gangs he still lived in fear:

Uno vivía con miedo antes, con tanta matanza que había que mataban inocentes te daba miedo salir a la tienda, bien paniquiado.

Neto knows that victims of the drug war were not just people involved in illicit jobs or those with connections to the drug cartels, as the media and government initially portrayed.

Lack of Opportunities

Analysis revealed that 13 MCs of 16 MCs have been unjustly criminalized by the police or the educational system. Hedreck (age 18) lacks formal employment and education. He prefers to sing in *la ruta* (a form of public transportation) to ask for money because it is more profitable than *maquiladora* employment and it is something he enjoys. At a very young age Hedreck lost his mother and he did not know his father. Without parents, Hedreck was forced to drop-out of school. The educational system failed him because he did not receive any governmental assistance even though he did not have parents. Labelled as a “bad” student he was never granted the opportunity to get a scholarship or some form of financial aid. When he was in middle school, he was labelled as deviant by his teachers resulting in him being expelled from school. Without the funds to pay for a private education he did not finish high school. When I asked what he thinks about the distribution of governmental funds he replied:

Lo que más le reclamaría al gobierno es las oportunidades que los jóvenes tengan no? Porque apoyan a unos por ejemplo con las becas no? apoyan más a los que tienen calificaciones y dispararan mucho dinero en lugar de apoyar a varios estudiantes? Esta un puente que no queremos, están remodelando Juárez. Ahí está una equis que para nada nos beneficia. Yo creo que con eso hubieran alimentado varias cuadras en Ciudad Juárez. Hubieran hecho varios albergues para los pobres.

Hedreck perceived that government should use tax money more wisely. For example, for him *El Parque de la Mexicanidad* is a waste of money that would be better spent to help poor people find housing. While scholarships do exist, Hedreck feels they are only for a small portion of excellent students.

Now that Hedreck wants to be dedicate himself to hip hop even though he knows that it is difficult to make a living in hip hop. Indeed, in Juárez the government does not promote or fund hip hop:

Creo que lo negativo ahorita de vivir en mi Cuidad es el gobierno no? Más que nada si un gobierno que no apoya la juventud como quieres que cambian una juventud. Dime cuantos eventos cultura des hacen el hip hop ha hecho en Juárez. Lo que veo yo prefieren traer a Conjunto Primavera para la gente grande que traerte alguien que te hable de cultura. Dime que cultura es Primavera? Entonces el gobierno es como te tiene negativamente hablando. Mientras no cambies el gobierno creo que negativamente se va seguir hablando de Ciudad Juárez. Es cuando vas diferentes lados de México y dices que eres de Ciudad Juárez esta te salen corriendo.

Hedreck feels that hip hop is seen as deviant and thus MCs are not granted the same opportunities as other popular musicians.

Similarly, Mash felt frustrated because he wants to produce good hip hop, but it is hard when they do not have enough money. I remember when some of his friends were saying that is why Mash was not as popular as Control Machete:

entonces varios me decían cuando salió control machete, mira wey estos weyes se dejan caer más que tú, y yo les decía a wuevo wey, cuando me has visto en un estudio. Yo le he hecho no por el dinero yo siempre quise hacer algo más. Pero si se necesitaba dinero por que el equipo es carísimo, para hacer una cabina.

Start-up funds continue to be a problem for young MCs who lack the instruments in order to record their songs.

Deviant Politics of Resistance: How Hip Hop is used as a Form of Resistance

In the previous section I discussed how the MCs statuses of young and poor interlock, shaping their lack of opportunities, criminalization, and exposure to violence. In this section I utilize Rios' (2011) concept of "deviant politics" to describe how people resist oppression with deviant acts, such activism and exposing others to the oppositional consciousness. I argue that deviant politics arises in hip hop in several ways: as activism, musical lyrics, oppositional consciousness, forms of dress (i.e. dressing like *cholos*), or resisting formal employment (Table 2).

While the type of deviant politics exhibited in my respondents vary they all participated in deviant politics. Less than half of the MCs were activists who resisted the government but the majority used hip hop lyrics as a tool to educate the public. Almost half of the MCs displayed forms of oppositional consciousness and nearly all dressed in socially deviant ways (i.e. like *cholos*). Unexpectedly, 5 out of the 16 MCs were very active about resisting the exploitative conditions in the formal labor market and illustrated their deviant politics by finding alternative and informal ways to making a living.

Table 2: Deviant Politics

Respondent	Activist	Music Lyrics	Oppositional Consciousness	Dress	Employment
Beto		X	X		
Chico Sucio		X	X	X	
Coyote				X	
Diomer	X	X		X	
Dilema	X	X	X	X	
Hedrick					X
Jota Eme Ka		X	X	X	
Mac	X	X	X	X	X
Mash	X	X	X	X	X
Neto		X		X	X
Oveja Negra	X	X	X	X	X
Quide		X		X	X
Roy					
Siniestra				X	
Santi				X	X
Tuga			X		X

Activism as Deviant Politics

Ovega Negra is an MC who is also concerned about low wage workers. As part of the hip hop group, *Sonido Grillo*, she became a social critic of the exploitation inside *maquiladoras*:

Después en el 2007 entro a otra agrupación que es el sonido grillo hay avía chicos que trabajaban en la maquiladora y hay avía un chico que realizaba comics y él tenía un trabajo realizando comics haciendo una crítica a la maquiladora, y pensó por qué no hacerle un sound track al comic cambiando la dinámica de ver un comic leerlo y listo, aparte de leerlo también tener unos audífonos y estar en esta dinámica auditiva visual

Ovega Negra is also very active with the cases of missing girls from Juárez; she travels to different states of México with the mothers of the disappeared females.

There are indications that music has become a counter-movement against structural violence. In Juárez some hip hop MCs are activists—a form of deviant politics. In 2008, 360 Productions, Funky Bless, and Batallones Femeninos (BF) collaborated with social activist organizations such as Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, Las Madres del ABC, and Víctimas de Atenco. They painted murals on public streets, protested, and participated in musical events seeking justice from the Mexican government.

Mac, for example, is an MC whose deviant politics involve activism against the feminicides. As a muralist almost all of his work is about the feminicides and Ayotzinapa (more recently). He did not go to middle school and he was from the Valle de Juárez, outside of the city. He comes from a poor family and he lost his mother at a very young age. His oppositional consciousness developed during a trip to southern México where he witnessed inequalities created by capitalism. Afterward, he decided to come back to Juárez and his deviant politics surfaced as activism. Below Mac mentions how he wrote a song to protest the missing girls from Juárez:

Ejemplo unas que hicieron hay con las jefas no? Nacieron unas rimas así bien locas caminando, tratando y escribiendo. Entonces ahora se las pongo así y la han escuchado y me han dicho así como que ay no manches me recuerda la caminata no? Y pos si o sea ahí los que íbamos en esa ocasión ay uno que se dio ahí y si la escuchan y dicen no mames esa es la caminata wei. Y pues de ahí nacieron y pero ahí va la cosa esta chidata, esta chidata, me gusta.

Mac created these lyrics in collaboration with Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa. He is really proud of this song and even motivated another MC to write his own protest song.

Dilema, an MC from *Batallones Femeninos*, is one of the few MCs in college. She works with *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* and has used hip hop as a tool for empowerment. Yet, her family is concerned about her public role as an activists:

Mi mama me dice que no cante eso porque dice que nos van a visualizar y nos van a hacer algo, y nos dice que tengamos cuidado. Pues si son diferentes pensamientos. Pero ya hablo con ella y dentro de toda esta dinámica está el apoyo pues no queda más.

This is part of the insecurity associated with living in Juárez. Below is a flyer a music festival for women artists that they participated in.



Figure 2: Flyer for the Annual International Women's Day Event

Kolektiva fronteriza is one of the social movements that started after the violence in Juárez. Below is a description of the role of hip hop in this movement:

La kolektiva fronteriza entra todo los performans, hip hop, cumbia, grafiti, la propuesta es hacer todo lo que esté a nuestro alcance, es para resistir, al clima, la ciudad al miedo.

*Como a partir el 2008 los espacios públicos son abandonados, el monumento Juárez
domingo a domingo se convierte en un pequeño lugar se convierte en un lugar sin
violencia*

Hip hop has become an important component of this social movement where at the very least they can find refuge and peace in participating.

Musical Lyrics

Previously, I highlighted results from a content analysis exercise that focused on the critical consciousness embedded in MC lyrics, here I reiterate that hip hop lyrics are forms of deviant politics. Specifically, 10 out of 16 MCs in this study use music lyrics as a form of deviant politics. Some examples are *Ratas con Corbata* by *Adrian and Axel* who sing about the corruption within the Mexican government and how it sold out its citizens in exchange for profits. The song emphasizes how some citizens are frustrated with the high taxes and the abusive power-holders such as the government officials and *narcotráficantes* (drug traffickers).

*quieren mis impuestos y mi plata
van por mi dinero y su poder lo arrebatá
ratatata si no se quiere se mata
quieren mis impuestos y mi plata*

Ratas con Corbata is a song critical about the relationship between the government and *narcotraficantes*. The song demonstrates the oppositional consciousness of the MCs. Similarly, in the lyrics below MCs Adrian and Axel talk about how the Mexican government is just the *narcotraficantes's* puppet.:

*de la mafia marionetas son nuestros gobernantes
grítenle basura Ya nada es como antes
nos tienen presos en el internet a diario
y comprar una casa es como un robo voluntario*

Yet, these MCs not only blame the government for oppressive conditions but also Mexican citizens who are passive about the situation.

Oppositional Consciousness

Another form of deviant politics in hip hop culture is oppositional consciousness. The next photograph was taken in downtown Juárez with a representative *maquiloco* comic.



Figure 3: *Maquiloco*

The robot face and maquiladora uniform is symbolic of how *maquila* workers are dehumanized, the repetitive movements in their jobs, and how the workers have become machines.

The next photograph was taken when El Negro, from *Sonido Grillo*, when he was still alive. When the violence escalated hip hop demonstrations started to take place during the day in public spaces such as parks. Such hip hop performances were more than musical expression they became an educational tool to discuss forms of structural violence.



Figure 4: *El Parque Central*

Now, in 2015, some of these MCs are still creating their crews with ex-gangs or non-gang's members. They are trying to create positive spaces among different crews instead of fighting against each other. Some of these crews are working to prevent the youth from using or selling drugs. One of these groups is called *Alto a la Violencia*; they give graffiti and hip hop workshops to youth in an effort to keep them away from drugs.

Mi música más que nada, cambiar la mentalidad de los jóvenes de mi edad, pero en el aspecto de las drogas de matarse que piensen diferente. Porque yo al igual anduve igual que ellos. Como le dijo con un colega el ukla, éramos de un barrio de acá, pues había rencillas en su barrio y el mío y los 2 formamos parte de ese barrio y a través del hip

hop, en vez de hacer más violencia la contrarrestamos y ahorita somos amigos, de echo si pos casi hermanos.

Pok 37 and MC Crimen are ex-gang members, who after surviving the drug war, organized youth in poor neighborhoods and helped them develop different forms of expression including hip hop. Hip hop then became an alternative to exhibiting violent behavior and using drugs. These two MCs mentored the youth, particularly boys, by conducting graffiti and music workshops.

Diomer from Funky Bless is another hip hop MC that works with juveniles in the criminal justice system. They perform in correctional facilities where musical lyrics teach the youth about positive alternatives to gangs or using drugs:

Si se pueden presentar en cualquier lado?

Hemos estado en el tribunal, nos llevaron a dar un concierto y les contamos vivencias, me cae que a algunos chavos les entramos en la chompa, igual empezamos a dar concejos y termina en vivencias. Mi rap no es así que insiste a la violencia, habla cosas buenas puro positivismo y pues depende de la gente. Pero al igual no me meto a tirarle al gobierno, más que activista soy un difusor.

Diomer said that he promoted hip hop culture without violence; he wants to be a positive role model for the youth.

The next photograph was taken during a noon performance in a Juárez night club. Frontetoon is an internet radio station that is a venue for hip hop MCs. They are trying to create a space for local musicians from Juárez, El Paso, and Chihuahua. They do not receive economic help from any institution and they make special programs every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. For example, one day is about feminism, another day is about social justice, or classic hip

hop. Listeners can request songs through Facebook or a website call Juárez Dialoga. It is very interesting to see how these young people are creating their own space to raise consciousness in Juárez.



Figure 5: Frontetoon Radio

*Frontetoon*s are not just promoting local music, they also make puppet shows of *cholos* or *maquilocos* in Juárez. The MCs are shaping the rebirth of Juárez culture after the drug war. They perform in public parks, such as El Borunda, Parque Central, La X, and even in night clubs. The puppet show tells the story of a *cholo* who falls in love and starts a family with a *chola*, but face job insecurities. The couple then has no other resort but to find employment in a maquiladora.

Resisting Formal Employment as a Form of Deviant Politics

Another form of deviant politics is denouncing the exploitation in formal employment. Neto and Quide are part of a group called *Hit Fever* and are the youngest hip hop MCs in my interviews. At their young age they are very aware of the stigmatization and discrimination against people who are or look like *cholos*. They sing in *rutas*, as other MCs, which is a good way to earn money, instead of doing long strenuous maquiladora jobs:

Por ejemplo tenemos una canción que se llama detrás de lo que piensas, que habla de que nos ven malichas y andamos tumbados, ando robando e incluso la policía se va con la finta de que uno anda haciendo fechorías. Y simplemente uno se dedica a cantar rap y la vestimenta es por que representa. También enseñar la cultura para que no se vayan con la finta. Es como dicen por hay un doctor no puede entrar a operar vestido de civil, tiene que traer su bata, y uno esta consiente de las críticas de la sociedad que piensa que uno es delincuente, malicha, que anda haciendo tonterías, pero detrás de esa canción explica eso.

The MCs mention that they won 1,500 pesos a government sponsored competition for musicians, so they are hopeful about their future prospects in this industry. However, they are not hopeful about losing the deviant labels imposed on them by society.

CONCLUSION

MCs in Juárez use their music as an instrument of resistance against hyper-criminality that is linked to their poverty status, and age in the context of a rapid urban sprawl. The objectives of this study were to answer the following research questions: (1) How are young men from low income families hyper-criminalized in the context of border violence? (2) How does hip hop become a form of *deviant politics* dispensing an oppositional consciousness through musical lyrics? The first method used to analyze these objectives is content analysis. This part of the study helped me to analyze the lyrics of four songs from young MCs performing along the border. This part of the study provided a contextualization on the structural violence in the MCs social environment. The second method was based on the analysis of sixteen in-depth interviews with Juárez MCs about the role that hip hop has in their lives.

Hip-hop groups have been active for many years in Juárez. They have had to fight the stigma that citizens and police have thrown upon MCs; and since decades ago, *cholos* of Juárez and El Paso would listen to this style of music that often was part of forming gangs or crews. These gangs received this stigma because they were associated with crime, such as stealing, drug trafficking, street fights, and many other things that have been increasingly criminalized. In this study, I illustrate how MCs, from the beginning of the '90s, mention how police officers and society targeted them as criminals. On the other side, the MCs from today say that they are a target too; but are more hopeful about the future.

Hip hop culture in Juárez is a result of cross-border cultural hybridization. Yet, MCs in Juárez are not a cultural reproduction of hip hop in the United States, rather, they are a unique form of hip hop adapting to the context of a border city. The hip hop in Juárez reflects the

structural violence that is seen around the city, rather than having commercialization intentions. While hip hop in the U.S. has been a part of the culture for more than 50 years, it is only in the 90s that it became popular, and now it is part of the mainstream culture. On the other hand, Juárez hip hop has been around about 20 years. MCs in Juárez do not see that the music industry is interested on financing their music. As hooks (1994) and Rosario and Bishop (2015) stated that African Americans are over exposed in the hip hop scene we can see that Latinos do not have the same opportunities in hip hop.

After the drug-war, hip hop groups became a form *deviant politics* expressing an oppositional consciousness about life in the Juárez -El Paso border. As survivors of the drug war (Campbell, 2010) MCs in the Juárez -El Paso border are now looking to change their environment in order to live a better life. For them, there are no more barrios or gangs because all the “old school” people either lost their lives or had to run away from Juárez. This gives the MCs an opportunity to re-invent themselves and hip hop became a form of consciousness rising. Through public displays of their music and lyrics, they are creating social awareness to the people of Juárez, which can be the impetus for a social movement. The exclusion of pursuing legitimate opportunities in society and the violence in the MCs environment has fueled their social consciousness. In this study, we see how violence has been normalized in poor neighborhoods since they were children; however, they all were shocked in 2008 when the statistics of murder were so high. Coping and surviving in such social environment was very difficult, and the youth had to sharpen up in what Anderson (1999) calls the “code of the street”. The code of the street for these youth is very important because they can discredit a MC if they are not tough enough for the streets.

Similar to Rios (2011) power abuse, hyper criminality, lack of opportunities, etc. creates resilience displayed through hip hop. Hip hop is then a form of *deviant politics* where they are further criminalized by being a part of the hip hop culture via stigmas associated with the way they dress (i.e. looking like *cholos*) and performing in public spaces, in addition to their statuses as poor, young, and males. The songs are the tools for the youth to speak out about the inequalities that the whole government system perpetrates on young people in poor neighborhoods.

In addition to the oppositional culture embedded in hip hop lyrics, MCs from Juárez use hip hop to ignite social movements. For example the feminist ideologies in *Batallones Femeninos* has encouraged this all-female hip hop group to establish a partnership with NUESTRAS HIJAS DE REGRESO A CASA an activists organization against the feminicides. For Pok 37 and MC Crimen, who lost family members during the drug war, are collaborating with *Alto a La Violencia* is a group that uses hip hop in low income communities to bring peace and unity. Mac had live in South México so he is involved in the Ayotzinapa movement to protest the 43 missing college students in Guerrero, México. While they are all working in various social projects, they all use hip hop as a tool for social equity.

In my study, the young MCs are heroic survivors of structural violence that affects their daily life in Juárez. Despite lack formal education, the MCs are educators of social injustices. While the type of structural violence that MCs are concern with varies, they are all connected with their goal to reinvent themselves by staying away from gang life to promote an oppositional consciousness. Lastly, I want to share this quote which illustrates the MCs consciousness and sense of corruption in the Mexican government:

Omnipresentes nos harán cada vez más a mí y a usted por sus caducas formas de administrar el hambre y la sed.- Mac

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APPENDIX

Comenzamos con unas preguntas demográficas, tu pasado y tus aspiraciones:

1. A que te dedicas?(what do you do for a living?)

-A que se dedican tus papas?(What do your parents do for a living?)

2. En donde naciste y creciste?(where were you born and where did you grow up?)

3. Que escolaridad tienes? (What is your highest level of education?)

4. Como fue tu niñez?(Describe your childhood?)

5. Eventos que marcaron tu vida?(Events that were important in your life?)

6. Personas que han influido en la persona que eres actualmente?(People that have influence on you?)

-Como te influyeron? (How did these influence you?)

7. Cuáles son tus aspiraciones en la vida(what are your goals in life)

-Cómo crees que puedes alcanzarlas (What do you think you can do to reach them)

Ahora pláticame de tus preferencias en la música

8. Que estilo de música es tu favorito?(what style of music do you like)

-Me podrías dar ejemplos de artistas y describirme la impresión que tienes de lo que asan o cómo crees tú que piensan (ideales) (can you give me examples of artists, and describe what you think about them)

- Cuáles son tus influencias en la música, de donde son tus artistas favoritos y sus ideales, sus letras todo lo relacionado a ello/as?(what is the music that influences you, and where did those artists come from?)

9. Qué importancia tiene la música para ti?(What is the importance of music in your life?)

10. Cuanto tiempo al día escuchas música?(daily, how many hours do you listen to music?)

-Cuál es el medio que utilizas (radio, Cd, internet, televisión)? (What do you use to listen to music?)

11. Que tan frecuente asistes a conciertos? A cuales has asistido?(how frequently do you go to concerts) (and what kind of music do you listen at those events)

12.Cuál es tu opinión acerca de la música popular?(what is your opinion about popular music?)

13. Que tanta influencia crees que tienen las letras de las canciones en las personas?(how much importance do you think the lyrics of the music have on people?)

14.Cuál es el objetivo que tienes al escribir y cantar tu música?(what is your goal when you write and sing your songs?)

15. Tu como artista con que limites u oportunidades te has encontrado en el transcurso de tu carrera?(what are the limits and opportunities that you have to deal with in your artistic life?)

-Cuál es el trato de la gente que te han dado por las letras o por el estilo de música?(how is the treat that people have with you when hear your songs?)

Por último quisiera saber tus experiencias como Juarense y como ha sido vivir bajo su gobierno

16. Me podrías decir aspectos positivas de vivir en Juárez? (can you give me some positive aspects of living in Juárez?)

-Ahora los aspectos negativos? (Now can you give me some negative aspects?)

17. Antes del 2008 crees que tenias una vida diferente a la que tienes hoy?(before 2008 did you have a different life style, How?)

-Cual fue el impacto que tuvo en tu vida la guerra contra el narcotráfico?(What was the impact of the narcotráfico-war in your life?)

18. Cuál es tu opinión del gobierno mexicano?(can you talk about your opinion on Mexican government?)
19. Crees que las personas de ciudad Juárez, están teniendo más conciencia social?(do you think citizens in Juárez are having more social awareness about their lives?)
20. Podrías comparar la vida en Juárez con otra parte del país?(can you compare how it is to live in Juárez and how it is to live in different parts of the country?)
21. Cuál es tu opinión de los comentarios que se hacen ahora de Juárez acerca de su renacimiento o de su recuperación de todo lo que se presentó a partir del 2008? (what is your opinion about Juárez after the narco-war?)
22. Como crees que la gente reaccionaria ante este estilo de música si le dieran mas propaganda?(how do you think people would see this style of music if it would have more propaganda?)
23. Cuales serian las exigencias que le arias al gobierno y tus razones?(what are your petitions to the Mexican government and why are they important?)
- Cuál es la importancia de las manifestaciones para exigir al gobierno cambios y soluciones ante las problemáticas que se viven en Juárez?(how important are the manifestations to ask the government changes

CURRICULUM VITA

Selene Díaz was born in Juárez, Chihuahua, México. The first daughter of Maria Marquez and Manuel Ornelas, Manuel Ornelas graduated from Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, in 1982. María Márquez graduated from Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, in 1984. Selene is the first in her family to graduate at a United States university; she has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a minor in Anthropology from the University of Texas at El Paso. In May 2015, she will graduate with a Master's of Arts in Sociology from the University of Texas at El Paso. Selene is dedicated to working with at-risk youth, using her life experiences.

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