

“SEARCHING AND SEARCHING WE HAVE COME TO FIND”: HISTORIES AND CIRCULATIONS OF HIP HOP IN PERU

Kyle E. Jones
Purdue University

While ethnographic and historiographic research on hip hop has predominantly focused on large metropolises, less attention has been paid to smaller regional cities and the specific ways hip hop travels between urban locales. This paper examines the movements of youth and hip hop practices in Peru, tracing moments of exchange and interaction to contribute an alternative perspective for understanding how hip hop has taken shape across Peru. Such an approach extends the scholarship on hip hop’s socio-spatial dynamics and provides a rich lens through which to understand the ways particular hip hop practices and social forms emerge. Situating the experiences and recollections of hip hoppers from several cities in 1990s and 2000s Peru, while drawing parallels with other forms of expression, also illustrates how hip hop’s histories and circulations reflect longer-standing patterns of mobility, cultural appropriation, and the centrality of expressive forms in navigating changing circumstances of Peruvian urban life.

Desde otras ciudades (Arequipa, Puno, Tacna, Cuzco, Canta, Huacho, Barranca, Trujillo, Huancayo, Piura, San Martín, etc.) hay muchísima historia más que contar.

(From other cities (Arequipa, Puno, Tacna, Cuzco, Canta, Huacho, Barranca, Trujillo, Huancayo, Piura, San Martín, etc.) there’s so much more history to tell.)

-Fakir Kumya Iskaywari, “Historia De HipHop En El Perú”

Introduction

Analyses of hip hop's historical contexts, shifts, and continuities have come to occupy a crucial dimension in its growing body of scholarship. This is particularly true in the case of the United States, where scholars, artists, critics, journalists, and others have contributed numerous works documenting various aspects of hip hop's development and historical significance from many points of view (Chang 2005; Keyes 2004; Light 1999; Rebaka 2012; Rose 1994; for review see Kun 2002; Woldu 2010). In much the same way, scholars studying hip hop outside the U.S. have offered insight into the histories of hip hop elsewhere, such as from Japan (Condry 2006), Australia (Maxwell 2003), and European (Prévos 1996; Elflein 1998; Hoyler and Mager 2005) and African (Ntarangwi 2009) countries. As this theme issue conveys, Latin America and the Caribbean have similarly become the focus of growing research on the particular stories and experiences of hip hop. Within this regional frame, the metropolises in Brazil (Pardue 2008), Cuba (Baker 2011; Fernandes 2006), and Colombia (Dennis 2012) have garnered much scholarly attention. The ethnographic and historical richness of these works, as well as others discussed below, tell us much about the lives and locales from which they emerged, while provoking the examination of the trajectories of hip hop elsewhere and the ways in which they might intersect and diverge.

This article pursues this provocation through an examination of some of the parallel and intertwined histories of hip hop practices throughout Peru from the 1990s and 2000s.¹ In particular, this paper foregrounds the movements of youth and hip hop practices, as well as their moments of exchange and interaction to contribute an alternative perspective for understanding how hip hop culture has taken shape across Peru. In tracing these aspects of Peruvian hip hop, this paper grounds the experiences of *hiphoperos* (literally, hip hoppers²) in the pressures and possibilities they faced around the turn of the twenty-first century. In addition to locating hip hop and its adherents amidst recent social, cultural, political, and economic shifts in Peruvian society, this article focuses on the circumstances and locales often overlooked in analyses of hip hop and globalized cultural media in Peru.

As historiography has become a central, if perhaps "en vogue" (Pardue, *Ideologies of Marginality* 33) objective in the rapidly growing arena of hip hop research, "history" itself has

been subject to a wide variety of uses. The most straightforward sense of this—and the one employed in this paper—deals with the stories of experiences and circumstances within specific places and periods of time. Hip hop histories in this vein have been produced not only by academics from the U.S. and Latin American countries, but also by the students, journalists, and quite often hip hoppers themselves who live or grow up in the contexts about which they are writing.³ In addition to this sense of hip hop temporality, Mitchell has influentially noted that “hip hop practices also become vehicles for reconstructing the ‘roots’ of local histories” (32). From this perspective, hip hop provides a way to rethink the past and reanimate collective memories, while also forging connections to present conditions and possible—often presumably better—futures. In much the same way that scholars have suggested for Black and Latino youth in the United States (Flores 2000; Kelly 1993; Keyes 2004; Rose 1994), hip hop elsewhere, including throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, has facilitated the extension or rerouting of social practices and aesthetic ideals as well as the articulation (especially among youth) of ethnic and racial memories and identities (Dennis 2012; Fernandes 2006; Pardue 2004; Pennycook 2009; and Miller 2004). No matter the deployment of “history,” it is important to recall the legitimating power that writing hip hop histories and the establishment of a sense of historicization surrounding hip hop has for those invested in it, be it the canonization of hip hop in academia or the desires for respect voiced by so many young hip hoppers throughout the world.⁴

Even while invoking such broader sociocultural affiliations across time and space, or when analyzing hip hop’s relationships with urban space and sociality (e.g. Pardue 2004 and 2088; Baker 2006; Forman 2002; Condry 2006), historiographic and ethnographic accounts of hip hop, especially outside of the U.S., have focused largely on individuated metropolises, and frequently, capital cities. Though some works on hip hop have specifically focused their analyses on multiple countries (e.g. Tickner 2008; Bennett 2000) or discussed regional scenes within the U.S. (e.g. Forman 2002; Miller 2004; Grem 2006), these have done so from a more comparative perspective rather than exploring the on-the-ground ways hip hop’s musico-social networks have emerged. As Tucker has noted, “even innovative scholarship on urban musics tends to focus on particular sites within large conurbations, rather than the process by which

sounds scatter and recruit listeners” (185). Some hip hop research has already offered moves in this direction, such as Solomon’s analysis of Turkish hip hoppers’ development of affective attachments to, and sometimes physical movement between, Istanbul and Stockholm. Ntarangwi approaches hip hop in East Africa in terms of “cross-border and regional realities,” demonstrating that “rather than limiting understanding of youth identity and agency to fixed locales of nation-states, one does get a better picture of the vibrancy of youth engagement with hip hop through a panoramic lens of regionalism and transnationalism aided by global structures of electronic exchange” (*East African Hip Hop* 15). Lastly, Geidel elides the city entirely by arguing for an attention to hip hop’s rural audience and social uses. Far from signaling a radical shift in hip hop research, these works fit into and extend the already productive line of inquiry dealing with the uses and meanings of spaces and places for those invested in hip hop (Forman and Neal 2004). This article builds on this impetus to look at hip hop not only across multiple urban locales of varying sizes, but also the actual processes and experiences through which hip hop has traveled throughout Peru.

To be sure, mobility—be it physical or imaginative—has become recognized by scholars of migration and globalization as a foundational part of people’s lives, practices, and relations, especially nowadays given the proliferation of media technologies. Nonetheless, Peru makes for an interesting case to look at hip hop in the way outlined above because of its patterns of movement and exchange that have led to its description as a “nation of movement” (Rau 2012). Thus, this article seeks to draw out some of the diachronic dimensions of hip hop and its intertwined movements within Peru. In doing so, this article offers an understanding of the ways hip hop has taken shape outside of, but not disconnected from, the capital metropolis that is commonly held up as the arbiter of globalized cultural media as well as the standard of urban life and the hip hop experience.



Figure 1. Map of Peru. Source: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/cia-maps-publications/map-downloads/Peru_Physiography.jpg/image.jpg

Hip Hop, ICTs, Media, and Society in 1980s-90s Peru

Hip hoppers that I met throughout fieldwork in Huancayo, Cusco, and Lima consistently reported that the practice of various performative elements of hip hop in Peru has generally preceded a sense of a cohesive “beginning” to hip hop, reflecting similar trajectories of hip hop in other countries. These performative elements include breakdancing, rapping, deejaying, graffiti writing, but also other practices such as beatboxing and styles of dress. For example, hip hoppers in Cusco and Lima described how breakdancing has had a longer history of practice than the other elements. In the same way, Paulo, who has been rapping in Huancayo since the turn of the 2000s, explained that hip hop films, especially *Beat Street* (1984), and television shows from the United States have inspired breakdance groups as early as the mid-1980s. He recounted seeing groups of older kids meeting in parks in the district of Chilca in 1992 or 1993 to practice breakdance steps and have small “battles,” or competitions of skill. “Acá en Huancayo, lo que es el baile ha sido más antiguo, ¿no? Los *emcees*, se puede decir, es algo que es un poco más actual” (Here in Huancayo, dancing has been older, right? The *emcees*, you could say, is something that is a little more recent; Personal Interview). The MySpace bio for the Huancayo hip hop crew, BTU, adds more to this:

...algunos de la crew conocimos, primero el BREAKDANCE (1er elemento q empezo acultivarse e el valle wanka con grupos, llamados “los cirujanos” y “aguilas negras” q se juntaban por los, años 90,91,92.. no como crews de rap especificamente pero imitaban la coreografias de grupos,americanos q se veian por tv y uno q otrpo vhs q llegaba con la novedad a nuestra ciudad; hoy quiza ni ellos, sabian q empezaban a sembrar esta cultura en la ciudad incotrastable). otros conocimos el RAP con el material q estaba mas ala mano teniendo en cuenta q el internet era un lujo, en nuestra ciudad por los años, 95,96 y solo escuchabamos algun grupo latino de Argentina o Chile. Ya por el año 99 llego anuestras manos, un cd de hiphop español q nos mostro un panorama distinto, fue como el agua q rego la semilla del Rap en nuestros corazones, porq empezamos a conocer una manera distinta de expresarnos, un consuelo en las noches de soledad, una luz para timidos y extrovertidos... (BTU)⁵

(...some of the crew first knew of BREAKDANCE (the first element that began to be cultivated in the Wanka Valley [the Mantaro Valley where Huancayo is located in the central Peruvian Andes] with groups called *los cirujanos* [the surgeons] and *águilas negras* [black eagles] that got together in the years of '90, '91, '92, not like rap crews specifically, but they imitated the choreography of American groups who they saw on TV and VHS that arrived as a novelty to our city; today perhaps not even they knew that they began to plant this culture [hip hop] in *la ciudad incontrastable* [Huancayo, the “insuperable city”⁶]. Others first came to know RAP through the material that was more at hand keeping in mind that the internet was a luxury in our city in the years of '95 and '96, and we were only hearing some Latin American groups from Argentina or Chile. Later in '99, we got our hands on a Spanish hip hop CD that showed us a distinct panorama. It was like water that watered the seed of Rap in our hearts because we began to know the distinct manner of expressing ourselves, a consolation in the nights of loneliness, a light for the timid and the extroverts...)

While describing some of the different ways people came to take up hip hop practices, this excerpt, in describing the internet as a luxury, also speaks to the larger sociocultural and political economic changes taking place in Peru during the mid to late 1990s. The proliferation of hip hop in Peru’s urban centers corresponds to a period in which the country was attempting to recover from over a decade of bloody internal conflict, and which saw the implementation of neoliberal economic policies and the opening up of the country to foreign investment, tourism, and development projects under the authoritarian government of Alberto Fujimori. For most of Peru’s urban residents, daily life worsened due to a number of factors, such as falling incomes and the perpetuation of a “culture of fear” that undermined democratic governance, feelings of safety, and efforts to protest the widening inequalities or the injustices of the civil war (Arce 2008; Burt 2007). During this same time, information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the internet, proliferated across Peru. Beginning in the mid-1990s, informal urban entrepreneurs began establishing inexpensive *cabinas de internet* (internet cafes), building on the burgeoning informal electronics market and telecommunications networks laid by the organization, La Red Científica Peruana⁷ (The Peruvian Scientific Network) and companies like

Telefónica (Holmes 2001; Fernández-Maldonado 2001). These internet cafes quickly became sites of urban sociality, “the new public plazas where youth meet,” and greatly facilitated access to information and communication technologies among lower classes who could not afford home computers or internet connections (Fernández-Maldonado 29). Indeed, as described by BTU above, many hip hoppers recounted how their first encounters with hip hop music and visual culture were at such internet cafes, often with friends or siblings. These places and the access to media they afforded have (and still do) function as key means of communication among hip hoppers and for the dissemination of their artistic and collective projects.⁸ By the time access to internet and other mass media became widespread in Peru in the mid to late 1990s, urban residents had access not only to hip hop productions from the United States, but also from Spanish-speaking Latin America and Europe where hip hop scenes had been flourishing since the 1980s. As BTU eloquently describes, such sources may have been more influential for some than the sounds and images of U.S. rap and hip hop in the way that they portrayed for them a broader “panorama” of what hip hop is and could be.⁹

Hip hop is not unique in its relationship with globalized media during this time, as evidenced by the meteoric rise in popularity of *techno-cumbia* in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Compared to its predecessor *chicha* (discussed in the next section), *techno-cumbia* incorporated even more genres, styles, and electronic instrumentation from abroad (Romero 2000). Elements of hip hop, such as turntable scratching and rap-like vocals, as well as funk, salsa, samba-reggae, “folkloric,” rock, and pop, among others, have all found their way into *techno-cumbia* (Turino, *Music in the Andes* 122). According to scholars such as Turino, the incorporation of these diverse musical elements signals “a new cosmopolitan subjectivity and youth culture” (122). Unlike *chicha* music, *techno-cumbia* successfully gained mass appeal across many sectors of Peruvian society (Quispe Lázaro 2006). Romero attributes this feat to several factors, including its de-emphasis of Andean-ness, a “sensualization” where minimally clad female singers and dancers were the focus of attention, the “global qualities” of performers that made it relatable to broader Latin American audiences, and lastly, its “mass mediation” through radio, television, and recording industries (“Popular Music” 234-5). The significance of the *techno-cumbia* phenomenon derives from the shift it signals away from the

public and commercial marginalization of the cultural productions of working-class Peruvians of Andean heritage, where a “multiclass and multiethnic majority, rather than a privileged elite, would influence market decisions and media attention” (237).

The spread and increasing popularity of hip hop music and practices took place within this broader social and musical reorientation that occurred in 1990s Peru (which is still playing out), even if it was not necessarily on the radar of the general public and large-scale commercial interests at that time. In addition to shifting signifiers of class, race, ethnicity, and generation that provided a sense of the possibilities that urban youth, especially young men, saw in hip hop, the trend toward the democratization of media and technology allowed hip hoppers to circumvent in some ways dominant structures of distribution that had characterized Peruvian popular music. In our conversations, André, who has extensive experience rapping, recording, and producing hip hop events in Trujillo and Lima since the late 1990s, recalled the indifference or outright resistance he experienced when approaching businesses, radio stations, or municipalities for support. Furthermore, he and many others talked about how hip hop was overshadowed by other genres that were more visible and profitable at the time, such as rock, pop, and later *reggaetón*.¹⁰

Los medios de comunicación los confunden; creen que es lo mismo, hip hop y reggaetón... Cuando uno iba a las empresas, tenía que deslindar, teníamos que separar el hip hop y reggaetón, explicarle qué es el hip hop... Entonces, era eso, el batallar día a día con medios de comunicación, que nos empiecen a prestar atención como cultura hip hop, ¿me entiendes? No que nos confundan con reggaetón, o personas que no saben ni de reggaetón ni hip hop, con pop. (Personal Interview)

(The media confuse them; they believe that they are the same, hip hop and *reggaetón*... When one went to the businesses, one had to delineate, we had to separate hip hop and *reggaetón*, explain to them what hip hop is... It was like an everyday battle with the media so they might begin to pay attention to hip hop culture, you understand? That they not confuse us with *reggaetón*, or, for people who don't know either *reggaetón* or hip hop, with pop.)

Similarly, finding venues for hip hop events, as well as recording and producing music, were other hurdles. In Cusco, rap performances in the early 2000s took place at punk and rock shows,¹¹ while in Huancayo during this time, BTU and other rappers and dancers would often perform at parties they or their friends hosted. As hip hop knowledge and practices had been largely relegated to the outskirts of traditional national media and cultural industries, the networks and exchanges among Peruvian hip hoppers both within and between urban locales largely emerged through the initiatives of hip hoppers themselves. Though, of course, facilitated through such things as increased access to technological media, the formation of hip hop organizations such as El Movimiento Hip Hop de Huancayo or Cusco Hip Hop, and the frequency and patterns of movement (discussed in the next section), these emergent hip hop circuits created the possibilities of decentering music production and circulation.¹²

Movements of Youth and Hip Hop

André, rapping since his early teens but now in his early thirties, was a practicing lawyer before turning to hip hop recording and event production full-time as a means of employment. In addition to currently running one of Lima's most well-known rap studios out of his apartment, he is also one of the founders and administrators of the website, www.rapealo.com. Established in 2005, this website has played a central role in the coalescing and dissemination of hip hop music, culture, and knowledge in Peru. André's combination of legal expertise and ability to support himself with a budding hip hop production business is certainly a rare case in Peru. Nonetheless, his dedicated involvement in aspects of hip hop performance in different parts of the country since the early 1990s has afforded him a unique view of Peruvian hip hop. As he said in an interview:

En Perú [hay] historias paralelas [del hip hop]. Por ejemplo, las tres ciudades que datan en la historia [del hip hop] aquí en Perú, las tres ciudades son Arequipa, Lima y Trujillo. Estamos hablando del hip hop en Perú desde los 90, y en las provincias como Huancayo, Cusco, aparecieron después. O se escuchó después. Pero en Arequipa hay un chico llamado Richard H que ya tenía grabaciones en el año '99, 2000... Acá en Lima, por la historia de todos los conocidos, o de los raperos con los que mayormente hablamos y

que son antiguos, siempre dan como referencia el nombre de Max del Solar. Max del Solar es un b-boy, que ahora también es un emcee. Él hizo los primeros conciertos de hip hop aquí en Lima en el año '97, '98, '99... [En] Trujillo, soy yo... Entonces, en Perú, se podría decir que simultáneamente nació el hip hop en estos, en estas tres ciudades que no tenían conexión alguna, ¿me entiendes? Yo no conocía a Max del Solar, ni Max del Solar conocía a Richard H, Richard H no me conocía y no le conocía [a Max del Solar]. Pero, el hip hop en estas tres ciudades sigue avanzando. [En] Lima, al ser la capital y al tener más gente, había más posibilidades de conseguir música acá. Desde Trujillo, yo venía en el año '97, venía acá a Lima a comprarme casetes, con el padrino de la distribución de hip hop acá llamado Coche Bomba, ¿me entiendes? Nosotros veníamos y comprábamos, veníamos a Lima a comprar porque en Lima había más facilidad de conseguir música, ¿me entiendes? Entonces, veníamos a Lima, comprábamos, y llegábamos a Trujillo... Han habido tres focos, tres pilares principales: Trujillo, Arequipa y Lima. Donde más rápido creció fue Lima, al ser la capital, innegable. Después de Lima estuvo Trujillo, después Arequipa. Y ahora definitivamente está Huancayo, que hay bastantes raperos en Huancayo... en todo Perú, Chiclayo, Piura, todo Perú. (Personal Interview)

(In Peru, the histories [of hip hop] are parallel. For example, the three cities that go back in the history [of hip hop] here in Peru are Arequipa, Lima, and Trujillo... We're talking about hip hop in Peru since the nineties, and in provinces, like Huancayo or Cusco, they appeared later. Or it was heard afterward. But in Arequipa, there is a guy called Richard H that already had recordings in '99, 2000... Here in Lima, according to the history of all the well-known rappers or those that we mainly speak of and that are older, they always mention Max del Solar as a reference. Max del Solar is a *b-boy* [English pronunciation] who now also is an *emcee* [English pronunciation]. He did the first hip hop concerts here in Lima, in '97, '98, '99... [In] Trujillo, it is me... So, in Peru, you could say that hip hop simultaneously was born in these three cities that did not have any connection, you understand? I didn't know Max del Solar, neither did Max del Solar know Richard H; Richard H didn't know me, and I didn't know him. But hip hop in these three cities kept

advancing. [In] Lima, being the capital and having more people, there were more possibilities for getting music here. From Trujillo, I came in 1997, I came here to Lima to buy myself some cassettes, with the godfather of hip hop distribution here called Coche Bomba, you understand?¹³ We came and we bought. We came to Lima to buy because in Lima it was easier to get music, you understand? So, we used to come to Lima, buy, and return to Trujillo... So there have been three foci, three main pillars: Trujillo, Arequipa, and Lima. It grew fastest in Lima, being the capital, undeniably. After Lima, it was Trujillo, and after that, Arequipa. And now, Huancayo, there are plenty of rappers in Huancayo... in all of Peru—Chiclayo, Piura, all of Peru.)

In this characterization, André observes that hip hop throughout Peru's cities is not simply the result of an over-determined diffusion out of the cosmopolitan capital. The earlier well-known (or at least now the most talked about) hip hoppers in the cities of Arequipa (Richard H), Lima (Max del Solar), and Trujillo (André) did not have any connections to each other across these cities, despite their shared interests and the movements of people and hip hop music and material culture described below. As a result, André suggests that hip hop evolved differently in each city, particularly in Lima where opportunities for consumption of media and material culture were more available. Though this gap began to close somewhat as internet access expanded throughout Peru's cities in the late 1990s. However, while André characterized hip hop in Peru as having distinct trajectories in various cities, this seeming independence of localized scenes should not be mistaken for a lack of circulation of hip hop performers, material culture, and knowledge across locales in Peru. Indeed, it was this circulation that brought André at age seventeen to Trujillo from Yurimaguas (and before that from Iquitos), where he (by his and others' accounts) became one of the earliest hip hoppers and organizers of hip hop events in the city.

In this way, André's story of migration is a familiar one in Peru, where waves of rural to urban migration (particularly from the Andean interior to the coastal capital of Lima) since the mid-twentieth century have immensely shaped urban sociocultural dynamics as well as the possibilities and pressures youth face. Often buttressed by moral and ideological imperatives to *salir adelante* (get ahead), migrants' hopes for upward social progress became increasingly

borne onto their children through the increased access to the educational and occupational opportunities offered in cities (Stokes 1995). In particular, the practice of child circulation in Peru and the Andes, in which children move to live with more well-off kin in a larger city, has become a key strategy for socioeconomic betterment in the face of inequality (Leinaweaver 2007; 2008a; and 2008b). As a result, there are aspects of migration unique to children and youth, through which they come to occupy multiple localities and cultivate translocal social relationships (Long 2008). The years of conflict from 1980 to 2000 further complicated these patterns and recent histories of migration, as it displaced approximately 600,000 people and orphaned at least 40,000 children (CVR 2003).

Music has been a central medium through which youth in Peru and other parts of the Andes have dealt with the ambiguities of migration, social mobility, and cultural belonging. So much so that Pedro Pablo Ccopa observed that, “the first item that a first-generation Andean migrant buys when arriving in the city of Lima is a radio” (113). The well-documented florescence of *chicha* music across Peru (though largely associated with the young migrant towns on the outskirts of Lima) from the 1960s to ’80s stands as a prime example of the significance of music in the reworking of what it means to be growing up in circumstances much different from one’s parents. Scholarly analyses suggest that the combination of highland Andean *huayno* with the transnational styles of rock and Colombian *cumbia* indexed the shifting identities of first- and second-generation descendants of Andean migrants who were “caught somewhere in between” the Andean communities of their parents’ homelands and the dominant Limeño society (Turino, *Moving Away from Silence* 178; Turino 1990; Quispe Lázaro 2006). *Chicha* de-emphasized a specific regional cultural heritage as these did not relate to youths’ experiences in Lima or sense of identity based around “urban ways of operating, speaking, dressing, and moving; international youth culture and rock; Latin American urban culture with *cumbia* and salsa; and a lower-working-class background” (Turino, *Moving Away from Silence* 178). Instead, with its mixed musical elements and themes of love and urban experience (e.g., issues of class, employment, and social mobility), *chicha* is said to have fostered a pan-highland sense of belonging within a notion of national (instead of regional) identification (Turino 1993). However, this same newfound articulation of Andean identity also

precluded its larger acceptance across all sectors of society,¹⁴ especially as many Peruvians came to associate *chicha* with the individuals and social ills of the urban peripheries where the music originated and was often performed (Bullen 1993; Romero 2002).

The same anxieties over criminality, violence, and immoral behavior that were attached to *chicha* have also become associated with hip hop (as well as *reggaetón*; see Marquardt 51) in Peru. However, while many Peruvians connect hip hop to the threat of *pandillas* (street gangs), youth delinquency, and a malaise of globalizing urban life, others (including some NGOs, cultural institutions, and hip hoppers' parents) have recently begun to highlight its possibilities for offering the country's ballooning youth population a voice and a way to orient themselves in today's world. Not surprisingly, the latter has been what Peruvian hip hoppers have long argued often through the works of various kinds of grassroots organizations based around hip hop culture (see Jones, but also Pardue 2008). Nonetheless, at the very least, hip hop's connection to contemporary urban youth in Peru can be witnessed in Alan García's 2001 bid for the presidency, when, as part of his effort to address youth voters and issues, he prominently featured a campaign rap song and invited hip hop emcees and breakdancers to perform at rallies (Montoya Canchis 142).

Many of the hip hoppers with whom I have spoken had lived in at least two locations during their lives; or if they had lived only in one city, they were often the first or second generation to do so, and still maintained ties to family in other parts of the country. In André's case, he was born in the lowland Amazonian city of Iquitos in 1980, and moved with his family to Yurimaguas in 1991, a city in the *montaña* (tropical zone on the eastern side of the Andes mountains in which much coca is grown).

En la ciudad de Yurimaguas, había problemas de narcotráfico. ¿Qué es lo que hace Estados Unidos para controlar ese narcotráfico? Envía a la DEA... Y la base la pone en la ciudad de Yurimaguas. Allí se instaló una base grande de donde salieron los aviones, salieron militares, que salieron los carros para hacer rondas... Entonces mi compañero del grupo iba a los norteamericanos que estaban en la DEA, y les pedía casetes, les pedía revistas de hip hop, y los regalaban y nosotros asimilábamos el hip hop. Entonces

nosotros desde niños, desde el colegio, nosotros crecimos con, con harto hip hop, mucho hip hop y del bueno. (Personal Interview)

(In the city of Yurimaguas, there were problems with drug trafficking. What did the United States do to control this drug trafficking? Sent the DEA. And they put the base in Yurimaguas. A big base was installed there where the planes and military left from, and where the army's cars left to make rounds. My friend used to go to the North Americans that were in the DEA and ask them for cassettes, ask them for hip hop magazines, and they gave them to us, and we assimilated hip hop. So since we were kids, since grade school, we grew up with hip hop, a lot of hip hop, and good hip hop.)

The time André lived in Yurimaguas corresponds with a tense climate of conflict in Peruvian national politics. In an attempt to quash the activities of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA, or Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement), Alberto Fujimori, five days after his coup that took over the Peruvian government in 1992, declared a state of emergency. This allowed the Peruvian Air Force to take control of many of the airports in a number of cities across the rainforest and *montaña* (and some in the Andes), including Iquitos and Yurimaguas (Roncken). Yurimaguas was home to a radar installation aimed at tracking the planes these armed groups used to transport their illicit cargo through the “air bridge” between Peru and Colombia (Roncken; Rodríguez). In the early to mid-1990s, U.S. military and governmental personnel from the Air Force, DEA, and U.S. Customs operated radar installations and assisted in “counterdrug operations” out of airstrips such as the one in Yurimaguas (Roncken; Rodríguez). Interestingly, it was this presence of U.S. military and governmental personnel that afforded André and his friends access to hip hop music and material culture. Ironically, though, it was around the same time that politicians, media, and the general public in the United States frequently targeted rap music as the sonic scourge of society, the soundtrack to the crack cocaine and crime boom that was gripping many U.S. cities (Bogazianos). Similar to André's story, Tomás, a middle-class male rapper in his twenties from Cusco, recounted in conversation how hip hop offered a new way of expressing oneself, one that for him symbolized a welcomed turn away from the violence of the 1980s and '90s, as well

as Peru's opening up to the rest of the world—aptly indexed for him by the increasing presence of tourists from other countries in his city.

Yet where hip hop was the terrain of the culture wars in the United States, vilified by an anxious U.S. public as indicative of the deterioration of the social fabric of American urban life, for André and his friends, it was an elusive thing to seek out and share, and a new way to bring people together.

Nosotros vamos a Trujillo. En Trujillo no había nada, o sólo dos, tres personas [que hacían hip hop]. Entonces nosotros llegamos en el año 1997 a Trujillo, y buscamos, y buscamos, y buscamos, y buscamos, no nos cansamos de buscar. Y buscando, íbamos encontrando. Y cuando llegamos, salíamos con nuestro radio, a poner música en la vereda, esperar a que alguien pase y escuche y, y “¿qué estás escuchando?” Y nosotros invitarle [a escuchar]. Hacíamos eso aquí, en mi casa, en su casa. La cosa era ésa. Que poco a poco, buscando, buscando, hemos llegado a encontrar. (Personal Interview)

(We go to Trujillo [from Yurimaguas]. In Trujillo, there wasn't anything, or there were only two, three people [doing hip hop]. So we arrived in Trujillo in 1997, and searched, and searched, and searched, and searched, and we didn't tire of searching. And searching, we were finding. And when we arrived, we went out with our radio, and played music on the sidewalk, and waited for someone to pass by and listen, and say, “what are you listening to?” And we would invite them to listen. We did it like this—in my house, in their house. This was the thing. That little by little, searching and searching, we have come to find.)

As André recalls, the knowledge and affinity of hip hop he cultivated during his teenage years in Yurimaguas were things he took with him and sought out when he moved to Trujillo in 1997. He then used the music he had acquired in Yurimaguas (and also in Lima) to spread the word about hip hop in Trujillo, and soon began performing as a rapper, making hip hop connections in Lima, and organizing hip hop events in the late 1990s—encountering the particular difficulties described in the previous section.

Tracing Hip Hop Exchanges and Collaborations

Stories of the movement and the contours of Peru's hip hop networks can be read in hip hoppers' documentary and expressive practices. Many of the hip hoppers I met in Peru placed an importance on documenting the beginnings of hip hop and their efforts to build a scene, not just for personal remembrance, but also as part of an imperative to contribute to the creation of an awareness of the histories of hip hop in their cities, the country, and globally.¹⁵ For example, one young hip hopper named Jonathan who had been rapping in Cusco since the early-mid 2000s proudly told me how he had taken it upon himself to assemble a catalog of burned CDs filled with pictures, videos, and other digital artifacts documenting the early years of Cusqueño hip hop. Unfortunately, he also told me how upset he was when he lost many of them after his backpack was stolen.

As can be seen in Figure 2, old event flyers and graffiti tags cover the walls of Tomás's bedroom home studio, each one telling, among other things, of past and present collaborations with people in and around Cusco, as well as from various parts of Peru and other countries. The outer wall of the recording booth shows the tags of those who have hung out or recorded there.



Figure 2. Walls of Tomás's bedroom home studio.

The flyers for events themselves (Figures 3-5), frequently compiled in albums on social media websites such as Facebook, listed on blogs, or rotated through www.rapealo.com, offer further illustration of the interconnections of people and groups through hip hop, as well as the ways they are represented. Likewise, the “shout-outs” found mainly at the beginning and end of songs, where recorded or live, make similar references. Taken together, these texts and practices constitute a “cultural connection across time and space,” making up “hip-hop’s spatial communicative forms” (Forman 66).



Figure 3. Flier for the "First Peruvian Breakdance Championship" in 2006, featuring performers from Lima and coastal cities and departments.



Figure 4. Flier for the 2006 "Urban Expression Festival" in Cusco, featuring performers from Cusco, Arequipa (including Richard H), and Lima.



Figure 5. Flier for a concert in Cerro de Pasco circa 2006 featuring performances by groups from towns throughout the Mantaro Valley, as well as Lima.

Works of graffiti writing similarly document hip hop histories and exchanges. In Figures 6-9 *graffiteros* (graffiti writers) from various parts of Lima invited to perform in Huancayo over

the years have left their colorful marks on the outer wall of a school across the street from the one-room apartment of a prominent Huancaíno rapper from the group BTU; a location that is also the main hang out and meeting place for a number of hip hoppers in the city. Close inspection of the walls reveals many different designs, telling of the intermingling of writers and hip hoppers from Huancayo and nearby cities, as well as Lima.



Figure 6. Huancayo, July 2010.

However, unlike the event fliers (Figures 3-5), the pictures of the same stretches of wall in Huancayo three years apart (Figures 6-10) illustrate how these graffiti images are by no means static. Rather, they provide indicators of ways ongoing social ties and translocal interactions materialize through hip hop in Peru. Furthermore, located in the public eye, these works articulate the tension between desires for visibility and the precariousness of erasure.



Figure 7. Huancayo, July 2010.



Figure 8. Huancayo, July 2012 (compare to Figure 6)



Figure 9. Huancayo, July 2012 (compare to Figure 7).



Figure 10. Huancayo, October 2013, (compare figures 6-9)

Conclusion

In presenting these particular stories and experiences of Peruvian hip hoppers, it is important to caution against overstating the role of mobility in hip hop and young lives. As Jean and John Comaroff (“Millennial Capitalism” 307; and 2006) have observed about the sense of “doubling” that characterizes youth experiences in recent decades, the senses of cultural belonging and forms of social inclusion brought on by modern globalization go hand in hand with other restrictions on young lives and an awareness of one’s limitations “to move, to belong, to define [one’s self], and to shape the range of [one’s] daily practices” (Roth-Gordon and Woronov 132). It is for these reasons that Roth-Gordon and Woronov argue that “the study of youth swept up in global ‘flows’ must therefore include the ways that youth are confronted not only with additional possibilities of what and who they can become but also with an increasingly visible and knowable world of possessions, places, and positions denied” (133; Yúdice 2003). In Peru, particular technologies and media (among other factors) allowed for the circulation of hip hop and for multiple hip hop histories to be told. Further, physical movement comprised an integral part of the development of hip hop in Peru as hip hoppers moved between cities, bringing with them hip hop knowledge, artifacts, and practices, as well as establishing important socio-musical ties between cities. However, it must be remembered that not everyone involved in hip hop has equal access to these technologies, media, and mobilities. Thus, these circuits highlight some connections among certain people or places while still sidelining or preventing others—a subject needing further research.

For now, though, by tracing some of the histories and interconnections of hip hop across Peru, this article expands upon the observations of hip hop from other Latin American countries, such as Dennis’s account of the dissemination of hip hop material culture from Colombia’s port cities, or Pardue’s noting of the unevenness of Brazil’s “hip hop imago mundi” (*Ideologies of Marginality* 35). Undoubtedly, it has become painfully obvious to researchers over the past two or three decades that the seemingly disparate connections between places and among people cannot be easily bracketed. However, this article suggests that exploring the various interconnections, circulations, and movements in peoples’ experiences with hip hop provides a rich lens through which to understand how its practices and social forms take shape.

In doing so, this article illuminates some of the practices through which a “national,” if still provisional, sense of a Peruvian hip hop imaginary has emerged. Tracing the paths along which people, sounds, and materials have moved in Peru’s hip hop circuits provides insight into the dynamics of hip hop outside of (but not disconnected from) non-capital and non-megacity contexts—accounts that studies of hip hop are now beginning to address. Moreover, the processes and experiences described in this article offer further clues as to the cultural media through which young people have begun to figure social lives, particularly in ways that reflect longer-standing patterns of movement, cultural appropriation, and the centrality of expressive forms in navigating changing circumstances of Peruvian urban life.

Acknowledgements

For this paper, I thank Javier León, Brian Kelly, Diana Steele, Marcela Poirier, and theme issue editor Christopher Dennis for their insightful comments, as well as participants of the 2013 Indiana University Center for Latin American Studies Graduate Conference for their thoughtful discussion on an earlier draft of this paper. Research for this article was funded in part by the Social Science Research Council’s Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship and the Purdue University Department of Anthropology.

Works Cited

- André. Personal Interview. 12 July 2011.
- Arce, Moisés. “The Repoliticization of Collective Action After Neoliberalism in Peru.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 50.3 (2008): 37-62. Print.
- Baker, Geoffrey. *Buena Vista in the Club: Rap, Reggaetón, and Revolution in Havana*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print.
- . “‘La Habana Que No Conoces’: Cuban Rap and the Social Construction of Urban Space.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 15.2 (2006): 215-246. Print.
- Bennett, Andy. *Popular Music and Youth Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. Print.

- Bogazianos, Dimitri A. *5 Grams: Crack Cocaine, Rap Music, and the War on Drugs*. New York: New York University Press, 2012. Print.
- BTU. "Bio." *Myspace*. Web. 2 Apr. 2013.
- Bullen, Margaret. "Chicha in the Shanty Towns of Arequipa, Peru." *Popular Music* 12.3 (1993): 229-244. Print.
- Burt, Jo-Marie. *Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru: Silencing Civil Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.
- Cadena, Marisol de la. *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. Print.
- Ccopa, Pedro Pablo. "Música popular, migrantes y el nuevo espíritu de la ciudad." *Los nuevos rostros de la ciudad de Lima*. Lima: Colegio de Sociólogos del Perú, 2009. 113-140. Print.
- Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005. Print.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. "Reflections on Youth, From the Past to the Postcolony." *Frontiers of Capital: Ethnographic Reflections on the New Economy*. Ed. Melissa S. Fisher & Greg Downer. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. 267-281. Print.
- . "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming." *Public Culture* 12.2 (2000): 291-343. Print.
- Condry, Ian. *Hip-Hop Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.
- CVR (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación). *Final Report*. Lima, 2003.
- Dennis, Christopher. *Afro-Colombian Hip-hop: Globalization, Transcultural Music, and Ethnic Identities*. New York: Lexington Books, 2012. Print.
- Elflein, Dietmar. "From Krauts with Attitudes to Turks with Attitudes: Some Aspects of Hip-Hop History in Germany." *Popular Music* 17.3 (1998): 255-265. Print.
- Fernandes, Sujatha. *Cuba Represent! Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures in Cuba*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.
- Fernández-Maldonado, Ana María. "The Diffusion and Use of Information and Communications Technologies in Lima, Peru." *Journal of Urban Technology* 8.3 (2001): 21-43. Print.

- Flores, Juan. *From Bomba to Hip Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. Print.
- Forman, Murray. *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002. Print.
- Forman, Murray, and Mark Anthony Neal, eds. *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Geidel, Molly. "Supermaxes, Stripmines, and Hip-Hop." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 17.1 (2005): 67–76. Print.
- Greene, Shane. "Entre lo indio, lo negro, y lo incaico: The Spatial Hierarchies of Difference in Multicultural Peru." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 12.2 (2007): 441–474. Print.
- Grem, Darren E. "'The South Got Something to Say': Atlanta's Dirty South and the Southernization of Hip-Hop America." *Southern Cultures* 12.4 (2006): 55–73. Print.
- Holmes, Victoria. "The Internet, Inequality, and Exclusion in Peru: The Social Impact of *cabinas públicas*." MA Diss. University of London, 2001. Print.
- Hoyler, Michael, and Christoph Mager. "HipHop Ist Im Haus: Cultural Policy, Community Centres, and the Making of Hip-Hop Music in Germany." *Built Environment* 31.3 (2005): 237–254. Print.
- Iskaywari, Fakir Kumya. "Historia De HipHop En El Perú." *Todo para la Cabeza*. 2012. Web. 29 Mar. 2013.
- Jones, Kyle E. "Hip Hop Huancayo: Youth Identities, Performative Sites, and the Politics of Legitimation." Thesis. Purdue University, 2011. Print.
- Kelly, Raegan. "Hip Hop Chicano: A Separate but Parallel Story." *It's Not About a Salary: Rap, Race + Resistance in Los Angeles*. Ed. Brian Cross. New York: Verso, 1993. 65–76. Print.
- Keyes, Cheryl L. *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004. Print.
- Kun, Josh. "Two Turntables and a Social Movement: Writing Hip-Hop at Century's End." *American Literary History* 14.3 (2002): 580–592. Print.

- Leinaweaver, Jessica B. *The Circulation of Children: Kinship, Adoption, and Morality in Andean Peru*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008a. Print.
- . "Improving Oneself: Young People Getting Ahead in the Peruvian Andes." *Latin American Perspectives* 35.4 (2008b): 60–78. Print.
- . "On Moving Children: The Social Implications of Andean Child Circulation." *American Ethnologist* 34.1 (2007): 163–180. Print.
- Lescano, Miguel et al. *Una Galería, Otra Dimensión*. 2007. Film.
- Light, Alan, ed. *The VIBE History of Hip Hop*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999. Print.
- Long, Norman. "Translocal Livelihoods, Networks of Family and Community, and Remittances in Central Peru." *Migration and Development Within and Across Borders: Research and Policy Perspectives on Internal and International Migration*. Ed. Josh DeWind & Jennifer Holdaway. Geneva and New York: International Organization for Migration and The Social Science Research Council, 2008. 39-70. Print.
- Marquardt, Kairos M. "Nightlife Emergency: Controlling Night Spaces and Governing Citizen Security in Highland Peru." Diss. University of Michigan, 2010. Print.
- Maxwell, Ian. *Phat Beats, Dope Rhymes: Hip Hop Down Under Comin' Upper*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003. Print.
- Miller, Matt. "Rap's Dirty South: From Subculture to Pop Culture." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15.2 (2004): 175–212. Print.
- Mitchell, Tony. "Another Root - Hip-Hop Outside the USA." *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*. Ed. Tony Mitchell. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. 1–38. Print.
- Montoya Canchis, Luis W. "Políticas y juventudes post-transición democrática en el Perú." *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* 7.2 (2009): 1229–1254. Print.
- New Media Trend Watch (NMTW). Latin America. 2012. Web. 4 Jan. 2013.
- Ntarangwi, Mwenda. "African Hip Hop and Politics of Change in an Era of Rapid Globalization." *History Compass* 8.12 (2010): 1316–1327. Print.
- . *East African Hip Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Print.

- Pardue, Derek. "Place Markers: Tracking Spatiality in Brazilian Hip-Hop and Community Radio." *American Ethnologist* 38.1 (2011): 102–113. Print.
- . *Ideologies of Marginality in Brazilian Hip Hop*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.
- . "Putting Mano to Music: The Mediation of Race in Brazilian Rap." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13.2 (2004): 253–286. Print.
- Paulo. Personal Interview. 21 July 2010.
- Pennycook, Alastair, and Tony Mitchell. "Hip Hop as Dusty Foot Philosophy: Engaging Locality." *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. Ed. H. Samy Alim, Awad Ibrahim & Alastair Pennycook. New York: Routledge, 2009. 25–42. Print.
- Prévos, André J. M. "The Evolution of French Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture in the 1980s and 1990s." *The French Review* 69.5 (1996): 713–725. Print.
- Quispe Lázaro, Arturo. "Globalización y cultura en contextos nacionales y/o locales: De la música chicha a la tecnocumbia." *Interculturalidad* 3 (2006): n. pag. Web.
- Rau, Pilar. "The New Arrieros: Grandmothers, Buses, and the Tourist Art Archipelago." Paper Presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. San Francisco, 2012. Print.
- Rebeka, Reiland. *Hip Hop's Amnesia: From Blues and the Black Women's Club Movement to Rap and the Hip Hop Movement*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012. Print.
- . *Hip Hop's Inheritance: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Hip Hop Feminist Movement*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011. Print.
- Rodríguez, Manuel A. *En la Boca del Lobo—In the Mouth of the Wolf: The US Military and the Drug War in Peru*. Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, 1997. Print.
- Romero, Raul R. "Popular Music and the Global City: Huayno, Chicha, and Techno-cumbia in Lima." *From Tejano to Tango*. Ed. Walter Aaron Clark. New York: Routledge, 2002. 219–239. Print.
- . *Debating the Past: Music, Memory, and Identity in the Andes*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.

- Roncken, Theo. ““Air Bridge Denial”: El éxito de un fracaso.” Transnational Institute. 1 Aug. 1999. Web. 9 Oct. 2012.
- Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994. Print.
- Roth-Gordon, Jennifer, and T. E. Woronov. “Youthful Concerns: Movement, Belonging, and Modernity.” *Pragmatics* 19.1 (2009): 129–143. Print.
- Solomon, Thomas. “Berlin-Frankfurt-Istanbul: Turkish Hip-Hop in Motion.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 12.3 (2009): 305–327. Print.
- Stokes, Susan C. *Cultures in Conflict: Social Movements and the State in Peru*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995. Print.
- Tickner, Arlene B. “*Aquí en el Ghetto*: Hip-hop in Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 50.3 (2008): 121–146. Print.
- Tucker, Joshua. *Gentleman Troubadours and Andean Pop Stars: Huayno Music, Media Work, and Ethnic Imaginaries in Urban Peru*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Print.
- Turino, Thomas. *Music in the Andes: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
- . *Moving Away from Silence: Music of the Peruvian Altiplano and the Experiences of Urban Migration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Print.
- . ““Somos El Perú’: Cumbia Andina and the Children of Andean Migrants in Lima, Peru.” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 9 (1990): 15–37. Print.
- Vargas, Roxana. “Hip Hop Made in Perú.” *Urbanomania*. 2008. Web. 1 July 2013.
- Van Vleet, Krista E. “Adolescent Ambiguities and the Negotiation of Belonging in the Andes.” *Ethnology* 42.4 (2003): 349–363. Print.
- Woldu, Gail Hilson. “The Kaleidoscope of Writing on Hip-Hop Culture.” *Notes* 67.1 (2010): 9–38. Print.
- Yúdice, George. *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.

Notes

¹ The data presented in this paper was gathered over six months of ethnographic research in Peru between 2010 and 2012.

² I use the term “hip hopper” in this paper as a general way to refer to those who practice one (or more) of hip hop’s performative elements, or who otherwise identify or affiliate with hip hop culture. While also a literal translation of Spanish *hiphopero*, a term people often used to describe themselves or others involved in hip hop in various ways, my usage also follows the sentiment of Pardue (*Ideologies of Marginality* 167).

³ Anthropologist Alexander Huerta, at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in Lima, illustrated this point when, during a meeting at his office in July 2012, he produced a stack of undergraduate research papers about Limeño hip hop. Pardue (*Ideologies of Marginality* 33) describes a similar phenomenon in São Paulo, Brazil.

⁴ Indeed, hip hoppers’ practices of documentation, archiving, sharing, and remembering would be a rich avenue of research, especially when put into relation with larger debates about youth, collective or national memory, and their complex relationship with the culture industry processes of the historicization of tastes and markets.

⁵ This passage came straight from the webpage, and I purposely left the original writing—with all its imperfections—intact.

⁶ Romero, *Debating the Past*.

⁷ Around 2000-2001, there were over 1,000 such internet cafes in Peru, with about 533 located throughout Lima alone (Holmes 1).

⁸ This trend has only intensified as Peru, and especially its ballooning youth population, is one of the most active users of social media websites in Latin America (NMTW 2012).

⁹ Of course, this is not to downplay the significance of U.S. hip hop performers and productions, which I have observed hold a complex, but nonetheless sometimes high symbolic value for many Peruvian hip hoppers.

¹⁰ While people’s actual listening practices tend to blur the distinction, many *hiphoperos* in Peru firmly delineate a boundary between hip hop and *reggaetón*. Conversations, interviews, and a number of internet memes and discussions convey the basic difference that “hip hop is culture,” or a medium for “sincere” expression and identification, while *reggaetón* is “just music” concerned with partying, dancing, sex, “bling,” and drinking (Marquardt 2010). André’s and many other hip hoppers’ tireless efforts to publicly define hip hop in this manner not only resonates with global hip hop discourses, but also taps into the weight given to the discourse of “culture” in Peru, where it signals class- and race-inflected notions of social decency and respect (this theme is the subject of a future paper, but see de la Cadena 2000; Greene 2007). For a more in-depth discussion about the meanings attached to *reggaetón* versus hip hop and the ways they shape social practices and identities among Huancaíno hip hoppers, see Jones (45-46, 72, 102-103).

¹¹ This strategy is still an important one for hip hoppers today, especially in Cusco where the tourism industry (framed by other social and historical factors) has rendered the politics of “culture” and appropriate public performance a sensitive arena to broach for many young hip hoppers.

¹² For these points, I am indebted to Javier León’s insightful comments on a previous version of this paper.

¹³ Coche Bomba is the nickname for Renato Malla. Based out of his hip hop shop, TPM Records, in Galería Brasil in Lima, he has been involved in the promotion and distribution of both international and “national” Peruvian hip hop music and material culture, as well as the production of events, since 1996. As André indicates, he is regarded as a central pillar of Limeño hip hop, and in 2006 and 2008 he was a

judge for the Peru Red Bull *Batalla de los Gallos* (national emcee battle competitions). For more information, see Lescano et al. 2007; Vargas 2008.

¹⁴ For a concise summary of the debates over *chicha* music in Peru, see Tucker (66-72).

¹⁵ At times this was explicitly connected to the so-called “fifth element” of hip hop: knowledge, consciousness, and/or respect.