

NO CHURCH IN THE WILD

Cultivating The Theological Messages in Hip Hop for Youth Ministry among Emerging Adulthood

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THE HOSTILE GOSPEL (BRILL ACADEMIC 2014)

- The Research:
 - The Source Magazine Top 100 albums between 1988-1998
 - Vibe Magazine top 50 rap songs
 - XXL Magazine top 10 albums 2000-2011
 - 120 interviews with young adults ages 14-29

The Hostile Gospel
Exploring Socio-Religious Traits in The Post Soul Theology of Hip Hop Culture

Daniel White Hodge



Hi p Hop

- Hip Hop is an urban sub-culture that seeks to express a life-style, attitude, and/or urban individuality. Hip Hop at its core—not the commercialization and commodity it has become in certain respects—rejects dominant forms of culture and society and seeks to increase a social consciousness along with a racial/ethnic pride. Thus, Hip Hop uses *rap music, dance, music production, MCing, and allegory* as vehicles to send and fund its message of social, cultural, and political resistance to dominate structures of norms.

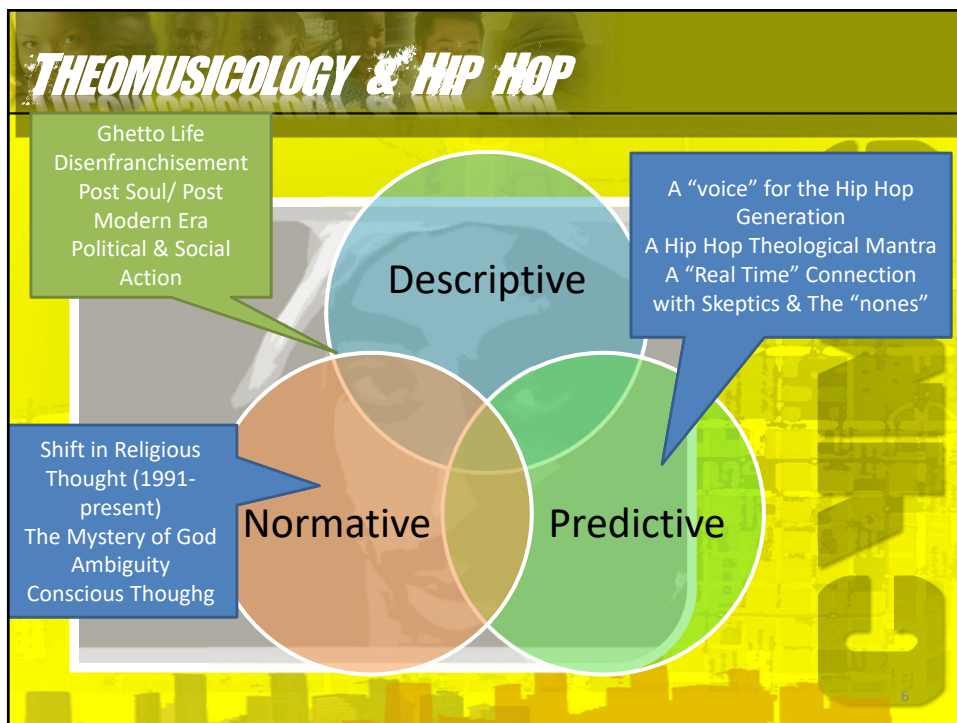
THEOMUSICOLOGY

- “Theomusicology is musicology as a theologically informed discipline. It is a musical method for theologizing about the sacred, the secular, and the profane, principally incorporating thought & method borrowed from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy” Jon Michael Spencer, *Theological Music* (1991, p.3).

- 1) Secular
- 2) Profane
- 3) Sacred

THEOMUSICOLOGY

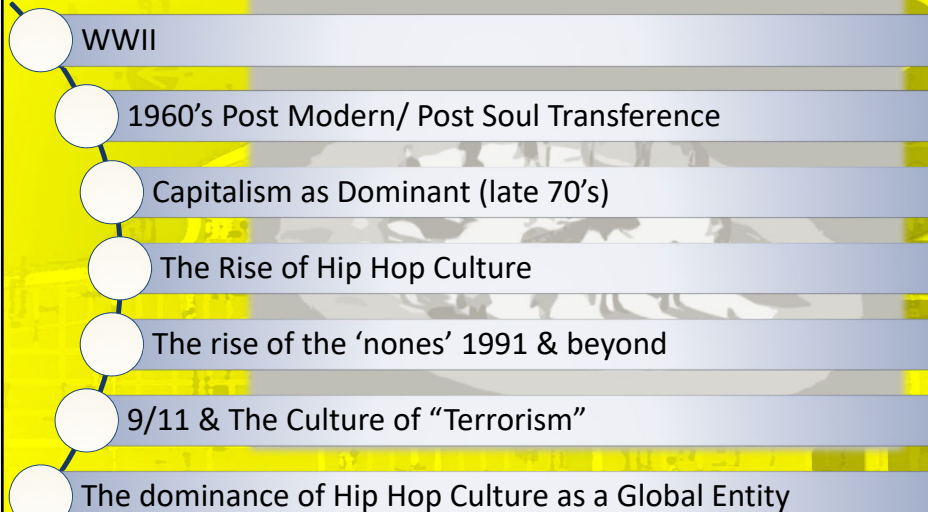
- “Analogously, the theomusicologist recognizes that human beings not only exist *in time*—in the present that is shaped by the past and perceptions of the future—but that during ritual they are caught in another, numinous time: in black religious ritual, because time stands still, and in African religious ritual, because time progresses counterclockwise to the time of the ancestors. Hence, while musicology historically examines music created *at one time*, and ethnomusicology anthropologically investigates music contemporary ethnic cultures produce in *present time*, theomusicology theologically studies music produced in the *diety’s time*—the ‘wholly informed, the pure mood’” (1991, 6).



YOUTH RESPONSES

- “I can feel God smiling on me when I rap”
- “I found the Bible to be deeper & more real when I listen to Pac”
- “Hip Hop is our good news...yah feel me? I mean, its like a church and place we can go. Ya know?”
- “Hip Hop saved my life. Period. If it wasn't for God working in the rap, I'd be dead by now.”
- “I see Jesus as my savior when I hear Tupac's music and Lauryn Hill.”

SOCIETAL SHIFTS



Emerging Trends

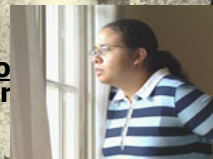
- **Worldviews:**
 - I' m the best, but I don' t need any training
 - I' m connected, cuz I don' t want to connect with reality
 - Reality is what I make it
 - Immediate gratification
 - I' m in charge/ self autonomy/ it' s about me fool!
- **Philosophies:**
 - Many Theological Constructs (Plurality)
 - Systems & institutions are suspect
 - Community is important
 - Mentors needed
 - Life experience over verbal & head knowledge
 - Religion can be boring

Emerging Trends

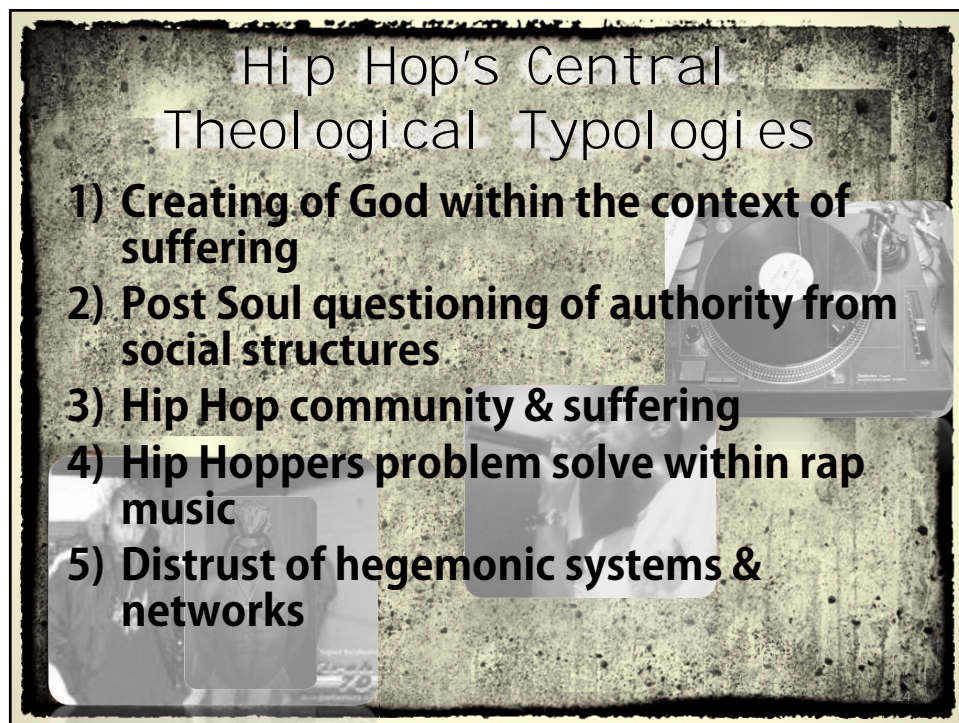
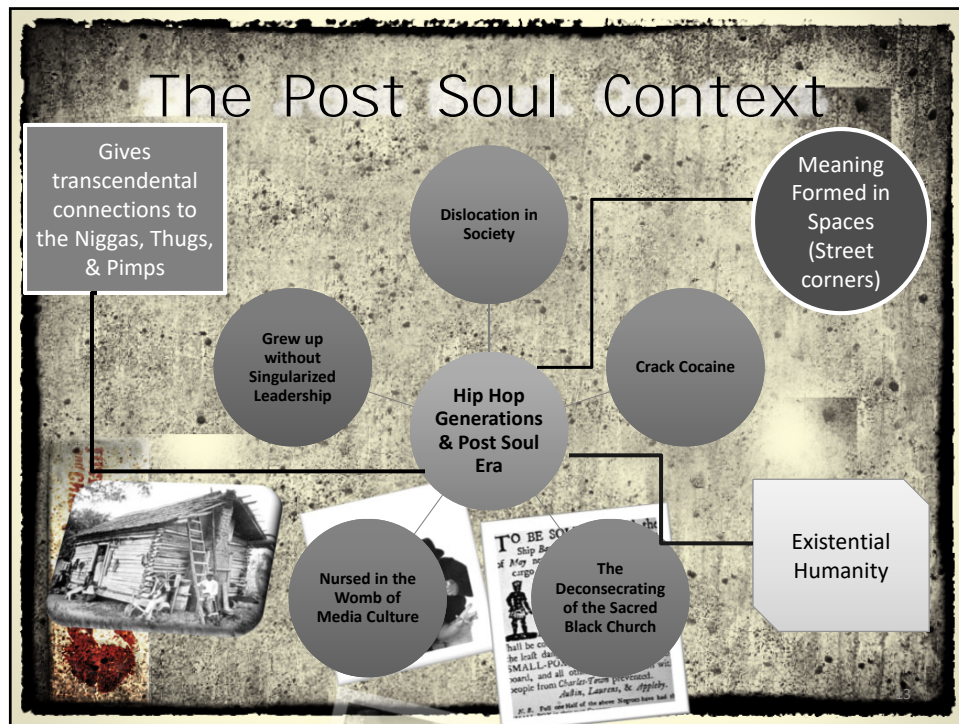
- **The average teen believes that he or she is a "Christian" and that their lifestyle is ok.**
- **86% of youth believe that they are "Christians" & have a weak sense of both theology and spirituality in Christ.**
- **The average teen also believes that the Bible is true, that it is the Word of God, that it is also inspired by God and that it should be followed.**
- **Youth subconsciously think that the Bible is o**
should be rewritten or "amended" to fit their

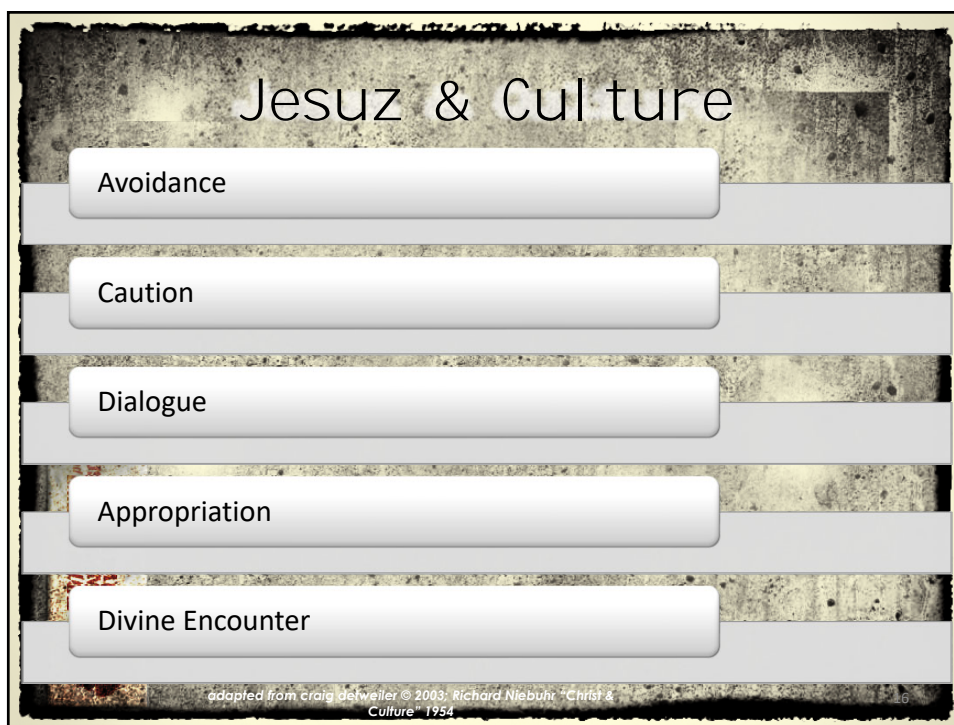


Taken from ARIS (American Religious Identification Survey 2008) & White Hodge Services Research 2005-2009









THE MODELS OF MISSION

- The modern mission movement had 2 major tenets:
 - Replication
 - Indigenization
- A third model has emerged during the late 20th century: **CONTEXTUALIZATION**. It involves:
 - Community
 - Transparency
 - Empowerment
 - People based theology
 - Contextual relations
 - Taking culture, context, geography, socialization processes



See: Wilbert Shenk *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (1999), Orbis Books

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GOD IN THE CIPHER

- The blurring of sacred, profane, & secular: The flawed journey
- Tupac= mediator & translator of theological narratives to the 'hood
- Identifying with a God who became what we are
- Beyond Church: Making God more accessible to the Hip Hop, urban person
- Rejection of utopian religious ideals

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MISSIONS, HIP HOP, & WESTERN YOUTH

- The reason artists such as Tupac and Hill can evoke such a connection with this generation and provide a missiological connection is simple; they:
 - 1) Evoke truth and light within contextual forms of theological inquiries
 - 2) Are multi-ethnic in approach and cultural worldviews
 - 3) Challenge the norms dominant culture and religion
 - 4) Provide ambiguity yet reveal the mystery of who God is within suffering contexts
 - 5) Look for new modes of “church” in a sacred/ profane context while still pointing to God as the ultimate “answer” for life—an aspect that the mosaic generation are interested in

So Many Tears

*I shall not fear no man but God
 Though I walk through the valley of death
 I shed so many tears (if I should die before I wake)
 Please God walk with me (grab a nigga and take me to Heaven)*

VERSE 1: (Exhortation of Lament & Misery)

Back in elementary, I thrived on misery
 Left me alone I grew up amongst a dyin breed
 Inside my mind couldn't find a place to rest
 until I got that Thug Life tattooed on my chest
 Tell me can you feel me? I'm not livin in the past, you wanna last
 Be tha first to blast, remember Kato
 No longer with us he's deceased
 Call on the sirens, seen him murdered in the streets
 Now rest in peace
 Is there heaven for a G? Remember me
 So many homies in the cemetery, shed so many tears

So Many Tears

Chorus:

Ahh, I suffered through the years, and shed so many tears..

Lord, I lost so many peers, and shed so many tears

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So Many Tears

VERSE 2: (Struggles within Life and Society)

Now that I'm strugglin in this business, by any means
Label me greedy gettin green, but seldom seen
And fuck the world cause I'm cursed, I'm havin visions
of leavin here in a hearse, God can you feel me?
Take me away from all the pressure, and all the pain
Show me some happiness again, I'm goin blind
I spend my time in this cell, ain't livin well
I know my destiny is Hell, where did I fail?
My life is in denial, and when I die,
baptized in eternal fire I'll shed so many tears

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So Many Tears

Chorus:

Ahh, I suffered through the years, and shed so many tears..

Lord, I lost so many peers, and shed so many tears

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So Many Tears

VERSE 3: (Confusion & Doubt)

Now I'm lost and I'm weary, so many tears
I'm suicidal, so don't stand near me
My every move is a calculated step, to bring me closer
to embrace an early death, now there's nothin left
There was no mercy on the streets, I couldn't rest
I'm barely standin, bout to go to pieces, screamin peace
And though my soul was deleted, I couldn't see it
I had my mind full of demons tryin to break free
They planted seeds and they hatched, sparkin the flame
inside my brain like a match, such a dirty game
No memories, just a misery
Paintin a picture of my enemies killin me, in my sleep
Will I survive til the mo'nin, to see the sun
Please Lord forgive me for my sins, cause here I come...

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So Many Tears

Chorus:

Ahh, I suffered through the years, and shed so many tears..

Lord, I lost so many peers, and shed so many tears

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So Many Tears

VERSE 4: (A Call for Help & Salvation Amidst the Crap of Life)

Lord knows I.. tried, been a witness to homicide
Seen drivebys takin lives, little kids die
Wonder why as I walk by
Broken-hearted as I glance at the chalk line, gettin high
This ain't the life for me, I wanna change
But ain't no future right for me, I'm stuck in the game
I'm trapped inside a maze
See this Tanqueray influenced me to gettin crazy
Disillusioned lately, I've been really wantin babies
so I could see a part of me that wasn't always shady
Don't trust my lady, cause she's a product of this poison
I'm hearin noises, think she fuckin all my boys, can't take no more
I'm fallin to the floor; beggin for the Lord to let me in
to Heaven's door -- shed so many tears
(Dear God, please let me in)

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So Many Tears

Lament

Lord, I've lost so many years, and shed so many tears..

I lost so many peers, and shed so many tears

Lord, I suffered through the years, and shed so many tears..

God, I lost so many peers, and shed so many tears

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Dr. Rah & Youth Work/ Ministry

- Multi-Cultural/ Ethnic emergence; the growth of the Christian church
- Three major challenges to multi-ethnic urban ministry:
 - Assumptions of normality
 - Unequal distribution of power
 - Color-blindness
- Western White Captivity
- Neo-urban colonialism & “Short-term” missions
- Being mentored by a different Ethnicity; being submissive to someone ethnically different than you
- The damage ignorance can do (Intent vs. impact)
- American, right wing, conservative, Republican= Christianity; being Christian



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