6 Glocalizing *Keepin' it Real*: South Korean Hip-Hop Playas

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1 Globalization and localization of hip hop: res and verba

Globalization is no new topic in academia; in relation to hip hop, however, it has recently entered the realm of sociolinguistic scholarly debate. While Smitherman contends that 'hip-hop refers to urban youth culture in America' (1997, p. 3), this is a questionable limitation for what hip hop is now and has become around the world – a global youth phenomenon, as is recognized by several scholars (see e.g., White, 2004; Chang, 2007; Taylor and Taylor, 2007). Hip hop's influence goes beyond music and has an impact particularly on youth and their speech style, as demonstrated in Cutler's (2009) discussion of Hip Hop Speech Style (HHSS). Chang argues that 'hip hop is evolving into a truly global art of communication' (2007, p. 58). Global youth culture 'emerges as a transnational market ideology' (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006, p. 235), rap music and rap artists being generally recognized as marketable commodities (Smith, 2008). However, the marketability of hip hop, especially in the 'peripheries' of globalization, is closely connected to the local. Chang asserts that 'hip hop is a lingua franca that binds young people all around the world, all while giving them the chance to alter it with their own national flavor,' and its being 'a vital progressive agenda that challenges the status quo' is pointed out as one of the consistent themes across cultures (2007, p. 60).

The prevalence of the hip-hop genre in the music industry around the world is indicative of its global presence, but one should not expect to encounter homogeneous hip hop across the board as 'all hip hop is local' (Watkins, 2007, p. 64). The interplay between the global and the local components in hip hop is clearly addressed in Androutsopoulos's observation that hip hop is 'paradigmatic of the dialectic of cultural globalization and localization' (2003, cited in Pennycook, 2007, p. 103). Such inevitable connection between the global and the local is discussed under different names – 'grobalization' (Ritzer, 2004)

and 'glocalization' (Robertson, 1995). Condry's (2006, p. 208) notion of 'deepening (global) connectedness' and 'widening (cultural) diversity' sums up the complicated dynamics between globalization and localization.

The entertainment industry is an area in which we observe an intriguing interaction between globalization and location. As Shim notes, 'globalization, particularly in the realm of popular culture, breeds a creative form of hybridization that works towards sustaining local identities in the global context' (2006, p. 39). The idea of 'think globally and act locally' is often viewed as synonymous with glocalization. Kjeldgaard and Askegaard summarize it as 'a coexistence of dimensions of similarity and difference' (2006, p. 245). Söderman and Folkestad argue that 'hip hop is a glocal culture' (2004, p. 324). They demonstrate that creating music can be handled globally through the internet, but those involved in this creation process, for instance, beatmakers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, often join forces and contribute uniquely to collaborative projects. Kjeldgaard and Askegaard also support the importance of the 'dialectical process of glocalization' (2006, p. 235) in global youth culture. As Mitchell (1998) articulates, the global and the local are not polarized opposites; rather, they intersect, each defined by the other. Thus, the global becomes localized and the local globalized (Thompson and Arsel, 2004).

Glocalization enables a simultaneous attachment to, and detachment from, the local (Roudometof, 2005). The global music industry is now experiencing increasing hybridization in visual, aural and lyrical dimensions of music production and performance, which is an interesting outcome of glocalization. Shim observes that 'cultural hybridization has occurred as local cultural agents and actors interact and negotiate with global forms, using them as resources through which Koreans construct their own cultural spaces, as exemplified in the case of rap' (2006, p. 38). Omoniyi argues that Nigerian hip-hop artists have made modifications 'in their resistance to wholesale assimilation by global hip hop culture and to carve out an independent glocal identity' (2006, p. 198). Pennycook seems to concur by stating that 'such locally emerging scenes are neither mere reflection of a global culture nor nationally bound local appropriations, but rather participants in a much more dynamic flow of linguistic and cultural influences' (2009, p. 332). I argue that 'global-local musical syncretism', to borrow Mitchell's (2001) term, exists both in the *res* and *verba* of hip hop, affecting its several components ranging from linguistic elements such as social issues and language use to non-linguistic factors such as attire, hairdos and 'bling bling'.[1]

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Hip hop as a form of social commentary against the status quo or the establishment may be a global phenomenon. On the other hand, specific defiant discourses presented in hip-hop lyrics may not and cannot be homogeneous in nature, since the status quo and impending social issues vary from country to country. Pennycook maintains, 'for many hip hop artists, then, the first move toward localization is a rejection of aspects of rap from the United States and a turn toward overtly local themes' (2007, p. 106). Themes such as 'police brutality, racial profiling, gang violence, and political apathy' are common in American hip hop (Chang, 2007, p. 62), while discourses against 'homogeneity of Tokyo urban retailscapes' and 'conscripts from the South Korea army' are featured in Japanese hip hop and Korean hip hop (Watkins, 2007, p. 65). Diverse themes vocalized in hip hop are not necessarily due to the East versus West dichotomy. Even in Africa, whose oral traditions supposedly influenced rap music, social issues featured in music are quite different from those in American hip hop. For instance, Omoniyi's study of Nigerian hip hop shows that it 'departs from mainstream norms by excluding features such as gangsta, heavy sexualization, misogyny, politics and monolingualism' (2006, p. 198).

The need for authenticity in performance seems to be quite widespread in hip hop. Pennycook (2007) notes that there is the 'global spread of authenticity' in the hip-hop world, while globalization itself challenges the idea of authenticity in hip hop: what is real and what is not real. 'Keepin' it real' epitomizes 'the hip hop ideology of authenticity' (Pennycook, 2007). Keepin' it real is construed as 'the hip hop mantra' (Morgan, 2005) and is often viewed as 'real talk' and 'straight talk' (Alim, 2007). As Alim astutely remarks, the authenticity of hip hop is manifested through 'not only is you expressin yoself freely (as in "straight talk"), but you allegedly speakin the truth as you see it, understand, and know it to be' (2004, p. 86). According to Taylor and Taylor, youth culture, which is often discussed in close connection with hip hop, understands being 'real' as 'an unabashed, raw reflection of things adults would prefer not to admit' (2007, p. 211); moreover, 'hip hop culture represents some ugly truths about everything society is and is not' (p. 213). Pennycook (2007) notes that 'global real talk, while easily glossed as keepin' it real, is better understood as a global ideology that is always pulled into local ways of being' (p. 112). He further argues that 'this emphasis on being true to oneself might nevertheless be seen as the global spread of a particular individualist take on what counts as real. The notion of authenticity, however, can be understood not so much as an individualist obsession with the self [but] rather as a dialogical engagement with community' (Pennycook,

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2007, p. 103). As argued in White (2004), 'the authenticity of experience is related to locations' (p. 166).

2 South Korean hip-hop playas[2]

Smitherman notes that 'rap music is rooted in the Black oral tradition of tonal semantics, narrativizing, signification/signifyin, the dozens/playin the dozens, Africanized syntax, and other communicative practices' and the rapper is 'a postmodern African griot, the verbally gifted storyteller and cultural historian in traditional African society' (1997, p. 4). Modern hip hop, however, does not fit this description anymore since its performers and their stories are no longer limited to 'Black', 'American' or 'African'. Hip hop as 'the latest example of African Americanization' (White, 2004) has been disseminated to and accepted by non-African Americans in the US and beyond as a popular art form. Because of this derivative nature of hip hop outside the US, those who view hip hop mainly as the lived experience of African Americans often argue that hip hop appropriated by non-Blacks is not authentic.[3]

Utilizing English expressions in non-English medium pop music is a fairly common practice these days, including J-pop in Japan (Moody, 2000, 2001 and 2006; Stanlaw, 2000 and 2004), K-pop in Korea (Lee, 2004, 2006 and 2007), and Cantopop in Hong Kong (Chan, 2009). An important globalized and yet localized element in hip hop is the issue of authenticity in language use (Pennycook, 2007). In particular, outside the so-called English speaking countries, the use of several different languages seems to be in fashion. English, Swahili and Kikuyu are used in Kenyan hip hop (Watkins, 2007) and Cantonese, English and Mandarin co-occur in Hong Kong hip hop (Chang, 2007). This practice could be view as a way of staying true to who they are – hip-hop artists who have access to the transnational community called the Hip Hop Nation (Alim, 2004) and yet firmly grounded in a local scene.

Cullity (2002) notes indigenization of MTV India in Hinglish – a mixture of Hindi and English – and its less seditious image. In discussing the English lyrics by the Malaysian rappers Too Phat, Pennycook asserts that their language may be global but their register is 'local, generational, cultural, and distinctive' (2007, p. 105). Adelt observes that

> [the] processes of hybridization and indigenization are played against an identification with a global hip hop scene by European rappers and fans. A good example of this dualism is the simultaneous use of local dialects and English expressions as a way of signifyin(g) to the hip hop community. (Adelt, 2005, p. 290)

Omoniyi, for instance, shows that Nigerian hip hoppers use Yoruba and English in their performance and explains that these bilingual lyrics allow the Nigerian hip hopper to express 'the glocal self' as a 'new self [which] is made manifest in fusion code' (2006, p. 202). In discussing the German band Die Ärzte's performance of the song 'Ich bin der rock'n'roll-übermensch' ('I am the rock'n'roll superman'), Adelt demonstrates that German identity takes the form of a 'multicultural hybrid of Nietzschean *übermensch* theories, Japanese monster movies, US rock'n'roll, and remnants of Caribbean reggae − quite a contrast to Rammstein's Teutonic heavy metal, but "German" nonetheless' (2005, p. 289).

The main objective of this study is to discuss the global-local syncretism in the South Korean hip-hop scene and address its glocalizing practice of the hip-hop ideology of authenticity: keepin' it real. The chapter presents a textual analysis of social issues voiced by South Korean hip-hop playas and uncovers what is depicted as their 'lived' experiences.

3 The data

This study examines 68 songs by four major South Korean hip-hop artists whose albums appeared on the top ten yearly album sales chart on http://hiphopplaya.com in December 2007. Hip-Hop Playa is one of the most frequented hip-hop music websites in South Korea and is the self-proclaimed 'No.1 Black Music Portal Site'. The tracks analysed in this study are from four albums listed in the Discography at the end.

3.1 Playas

The hip-hop artists featured in this study are South Korean nationals, but most of them use English stage names. When their Korean legal names are known, they are presented in parentheses. Background information about these artists was compiled from newspaper and magazine articles and their homepages, which often are maintained by their managing companies.

Table 6.1 Profiles of playas

Group name	Members	Main home page URL	Years active
Epik High	Tablo (Lee Sun Woong)[4] Mithra Jin (Choi Jin) DJ Tukutz (Kim Jung Sik)	www.epikhigh.com	2003–Present

(Continued)

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Table 6.1 (*Continued*)

Group name	Members	Main home page URL	Years active
Dynamic Duo	Choiza (Choi Jae-ho) Gaeko (Kim Yoon-sung)	www.dynamicduo.co.kr	2004–Present
Drunken Tiger[5]	JK (Jung Kwon Suh)[6]	www.drukencamp.com	1998–Present
Soul Company	Kebee The Quiett Jerry.k Makesense RHYME-A 화나 (Hwana) D.C. Planet Black Mad Clown DJ Silent P & Q Loquence	www.soulcompany.net	2004–Present

The majority of these artists were born and raised in South Korea but some groups either have a member educated outside Korea or had non-Korean members at the beginning of their music careers. For example, the original members of the group Drunken Tiger had a Filipino and an Italian-Korean band member. Most hip-hop playas currently working in South Korea are young males in their twenties. Those featured in the study fit this profile as well, with the exception of Tiger JK in Drunken Tiger, who is in his early thirties.

Among these groups, Drunken Tiger in particular stands out. The front man Tiger JK, who grew up in Los Angeles, caught people's attention back in 1992 when he performed in reaction to Ice Cube' song 'Black Korea'. 'Black Korea' featured racially charged, unflattering lyrics about Koreans such as 'Oriental one-penny-countin' motherfuckers' and 'little chop suey ass'. A Korean shop owner killed a 15-year-old African American girl who was allegedly caught shoplifting. This incident aggravated the tension between Korean Americans and African Americans in LA. Forrest (2000) explains the situation as follows:[7]

> [N]ot many from the Korean community responded to the song. However, it inspired one young Korean to break the stereotype. After hearing the song, Tiger JK (at the time 18) made it his responsibility to show that these stereotypes were untrue and had to be broken. At a hip hop show that promoted racial harmony, JK spoke

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his feelings in lyrics rather than a speech, and despite the criticisms he received from that crowd, he still caught the interests of some Korean record labels.

JK was reported to have said 'Ice Cube, he was mad racist' and 'Chop suey isn't even Korean' (Forrest, 2000). Furthermore, he asserted that

> something needed to be said . . . If I put my heart into it they would get the message that Koreans can do it, too. The crowd was going, 'Chung-ching-chung,' the good old stereotypical diss. They were booing, but when I started flipping my Korean, I saw fools with their mouths open. (Forrest, 2000)

JK's statement indicates that he was painfully aware of racial stereotypes against Asians in his adopted home, the United States, and seriously intended to rebel against them.[8] He accomplished this by utilizing his heritage language, Korean, which suggests that he embraced his Korean identity and did not shy away from his original ethnic and linguistic background. He used his bilingual and bicultural status to his advantage to position himself as an authoritative orator who is familiar with social issues in both worlds.

4 South Korean hip-hop playas' keepin' it real

4.1 Ageism

The idea of keepin' it real seems to be equated with down-to-earth lyrics and up-front attitudes. The following statement about Drunken Tiger's contribution to the Korean hip-hop world is a revealing example of what is valued by the music industry and aspired to by hip-hop artists.

> Drunken Tiger challenged the system with their unique hip hop sound and *realistic lyrics*. Although their *straightforward attitude* made them one of the most controversial figures in Korea's conservative media, without their willingness to *challenge musical and societal conventions*, Korean hip hop would not be where it is today. (http://drunken camp.com/ spin.htm, accessed 21 September 2009; emphasis added)

Because the statement above was made by their managing company, we may accept it as an objective remark or question its validity. Nevertheless, what is unequivocally expressed in this statement is the band's 'marketed' identity as a maverick to challenge conventions and experiment with something new and controversial.

The South Korean hip hoppers in this study talk about keepin' it real with reference to the kind of hip hop *they* perform and the kind of hip

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hop *others* do. They often launch attacks on rivals, emphasizing the importance of doing 'real' hip hop and condemning 'fake' hip hop. Inauthentic hip hop is mocked as 'blah' done by those caring only for fame with no true passion and love for hip hop, as articulated by Soul Company on *Official Bootleg Vol. 2*. In P & Q's contribution to the album, *Cikhye polkkey* ('I'll be watchin' you'), real hip hop is revered in stark contrast with *kacca* ('fake') hip hop, which is linguistically ridiculed as *kay cicnun soli* ('dog barking nonsense') or *ipman salasse* ('rambling with no substance'), the literal translation meaning that only the mouth is alive and everything else is dead. Fake hip hoppers are identified as young, inexperienced, self-proclaimed gangsta hip hoppers pretending to be tough and acting like thugs but afraid of authorities such as cops. In an attempt to embarrass fake hip hoppers, P & Q belittle them as *elinay* ('child') or *kkomayngi* ('kiddo') and consider them to be not as good as *cincca hyengtul* ('real older brothers'). A noteworthy point is that these South Korean hip hoppers are sensitive to the age hierarchy common in mainstream society and tend to treat an older age as synonymous with more experience.

Any discriminatory action and prejudice solely on the basis of age is ageism. In the West, ageism is generally discussed regarding negative bias against old age. On the other hand, in the East, old age is often a sign of wisdom and experience. The South Korean hip hoppers in the study seem to validate this view. 五倫 (*olyun*) in Korea refers to ethics or moral guidelines governing five fundamental human relations; among these relations, 長幼有序 (*cangyuyuse*) makes specific reference to a proper relationship between the old and the young. It literally means that there should be an order between the adult and the child. In other words, the younger should give precedence to the elder. Along with this general principle, excerpt (1) also draws upon the common Korean saying *hyengmanhan awu epsta* ('Younger brothers never can be as good as older brothers'). Two hip hoppers are often treated as brothers in the same family, although they are not related by blood. Their competition is viewed as sibling rivalry in which the older brother knows and does better than the younger brother. The fact that younger hip-hop playas are labelled various lexical items representing 'the child' is a noteworthy reminder of their subordinate position.[9]

(1)	. . . you got no love for this 넌 힙합인척	'. . . **You got no love for this**. You pretend to do hip hop
	누가 가짜 또 누가 진짜 real thug	Who is a fake and who is a **real thug**
	가사가 어째 flow가 첫째 rhyme은 두번	What about lyrics, **flow** first and then **rhyme**

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. . . blah 말만 떠벌릴뿐 개소리들로편한 언더와 오벌 갈라놓네	. . . **blah** blah dog barking nonsense, alienating underground hip hop from mainstream hip hop
. . . stop being wannabe be real mc	. . . **stop being a wannabe be real MC**
자칭 갱스터 힙합 코스프레쯤 될걸 위험한 척 유난을 떨면서	self-proclaimed gangsta acting like a dangerous man but actually hip hop cosplay
. . . 너 경찰을 무서워해 여전히 어린애진짜 형들의 반에 반도 못가	. . . you are afraid of cops still kids not even a quarter as good as real older brothers'

<div align="center">Soul Company (P & Q), 'Cikhye polkkey'</div>

The term 'cosplay' is telling. It is shortened from the expression 'costume play', referring to a character playing performance based on elaborate costumes and accessories. These characters are normally from comic books, anime[10] and videogames. By being labelled 'hip hop cosplay', these pretenders are dismissed as 'wannabes' who may look like hip hoppers but have no real talent or substance. P & Q's attack against American gangsta hip-hop copycats is evocative of two Korean idiomatic expressions *kethkwa soki taluta* ('The inside and the outside are different') and *enhayngi ilchihacianta* ('Word and actions do not match'). These expressions are often used to disapprove of disingenuous behaviour or hypocrisy. P & Q criticize young inexperienced hip hoppers for superficially mimicking gangsta rap and acting tough but actually being weak inside and behaving cowardly towards law enforcement.

Perseverance and tenacity are key elements often praised in South Korean hip hop. Playas lacking these characteristics are labelled 'hip hop kidz' with no substance and are criticized for taking an easy road to fame and for creating nonsensical controversies. Excerpt (2) from Soul Company's 'A macta' ('Oh, right!') is a case in point.

(2)	Soul company 수많은 Hiphop kidz 그들이 걱정돼 안스러워	'We **Soul Company** worry about many **hip hop kidz**'
	손쉬운 방법으로 그저 관심을 원해	'They just want the public's attention'
	Issue maker의 컨셉, 대중의 의식을 훔쳤네	'With the concept of "**issue maker**", they are robbing the public of its consciousness'

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> Straight up me and ma soul.   'Straight up me and ma soul.'
>
> Soul Company (Kebee), 'A macta'

4.2 Meta-hip hop: career, global ambition and work ethic

In addition to the age-related hierarchy, the dichotomy between 'real' and 'fake' hip hop is discursively constructed in relation to work ethic and passion. The playas in the study seem to be primarily concerned with their artistic identity; their success, failure and struggle with their music career are recurring themes. All four groups express their desire or belief to be the best in the industry. There is a certain sense of dichotomy between *us* and *them*; often *our* supremacy is contrasted with *their* mediocrity. The ways in which these hip-hop playas promote the authenticity of their music and boast superb 'flow' or 'rhyme' are not necessarily connected to natural talent but have more to do with an incredible amount of dedication and sacrifice that goes into their craft. The hip-hop texts in this study suggest that playas themselves view work ethic and passion as greater virtues than god-given talents. In short, perspiration counts more than inspiration. In pursuit of successful music careers, these artists often emphasize how important it is to persevere, not to give up hopes and dreams, and not to compromise their artistic vision and integrity.

When promoting their music career, the hip-hop playas in this study often voice their global ambition, which is reflective of South Korea's globalization drive called *Segyehwa* (Kim, 2000). South Korean hip hoppers' desire to be successful beyond Korea is also closely related to *Hanlyu* (the Korean Wave), which refers to widely reported increasing appreciation of Korean pop culture in Asia and beyond. Their career ambition includes not only local and national success but also global and world recognition. Vales argues that 'hip hop is all about aspiration' (2005, cited in Smith, 2008, p. 88). In particular, global career aspirations seem to manifest themselves more strongly among artists in the peripheries of globalization than those in the centre. There is a clear indication that the South Korean playas in this study have global career aspirations and consciousness, which are linguistically represented by the use of place names outside Korea, for example, ocean names (e.g., the Atlantic), country names (e.g., Germany), or city names (e.g., San Francisco). Dynamic Duo express the band's global expansion ambition in two different songs. In one, they portray themselves as *nolayhanun haycek* ('singing pirates') who travel in the ship called 'beat' and steal everything with the sword of 'language' and 'destroy the order of the sea'. They want to 'destroy' the hierarchy of the world through their beat and lyrics.

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(3) 지금부터 태평양 대서양 인도양
다 우리들이 접수한다

'From now on, we handle the entire Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian'

Dynamic Duo, 'Haycek' ('Pirates')

When addressing their global ambition, the South Korean hip hoppers in this study remind audiences that hip hop is a 'universal language', 'breaking down national boundaries' as expressed in excerpt (4). The so-called *cikwupon* music ('globe music'), which literally refers to the globe itself, is presented as a tool to build a common ground between two distant unrelated spaces and is praised as 'the best' kind of music.

(4) This is 지구본 music
세상에서 가장 근사한 Music
(지 지구본에 선 선을 그어
점 두 개를 연결해 frisco to
seoul)

'**This is** globe **music**, the best in the world, connecting two dots from **San Francisco to Seoul** on the globe

... 노래로 국경을 부셔

... Breaking national boundaries with songs

... 음악은 감정의 통역기 내
꿈을 싣고 높이 날아가는 고무
동력기 이제 조금씩 더 높이
날려볼래 더 멀리 From US to
Germany

... **Music** is a translator of emotions, a balloon carrying my dream high. I am gonna fly higher **from US to Germany**'

Dynamic Duo, 'Cikwupon Music'

Hip-hop music in the data is depicted not only as a universal language but also as a language promoting equality. When artists burn out from their gruelling performance schedule and feel they hit a creativity plateau, they seek opportunities to refuel their passion and to be inspired. In the song 'Cikwupon Music'('Globe music'), Dynamic Duo describe their need to be away from people's expectations and to escape to New York and California for artistic rejuvenation. They explain how 'the language called music' enabled them to become one with non-Korean artists and to feel equal 'in a foreign territory'.

(5) 영혼의 허기를 새로운 열기로
우고 파서 찾아간 곳은

'We wanted to feed our spiritual hunger and fill us up with passion'

New York and Cali let's
ride

Let's ride. So we went to **New York and California**

낯 선 땅에서 먼저 느낀 건
음악이란 언어 앞에 모두
하나인 것

The first thing we felt in the strange land was that we were one in the name of music

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악수를 할 수 있다면 모두가 동등해	If we can shake hands, we are equal
거짓없이 우리도 서로를 존중해	We respect each other with no hypocrisy'

Dynamic Duo, 'Cikwupon Music'

Along with global ambition, the South Korean hip-hop playas in the study assert the importance of work ethic in achieving a successful music career. The general message is that great hip hoppers are not necessarily born but are made through hard work. This view is contrastive with freestyle hip hop in the US, which does not appreciate rehearsed, contrived predictable rap. For instance, several MCs in Soul Company assert that they work harder than their competitors and take their hip-hop career very seriously; they read rhyme books and write lyrics while their competitors watch games on TV.

(6)	니들이 Game TV를 볼 때 나는 Rhyme Book을 볼래	'When you watch **Game TV**, I'll read my **rhyme book**
	니들이 개인기를 연습할때면 난 글을 적네	When you work on your trivial talent, I'll write
	깨있지 못한 자는 바른 말들을 못해	Those not awake cannot say the right things
	니들이 괜히 시비를 걸 때마다 마이크를 쥐었네	Whenever you pick a fight with me, I grab a microphone
	난 토하고 토해. 또 뱉어내고 뱉어내	I speak out and speak out again I rap out and rap out'

Soul Company, 'Ruff Enuff'

In addition, the concept of keepin' it real is manifest in various social issues and concerns that are locally relevant and ring true, including Confucianism-inspired filial piety, the notoriously difficult college entrance exam, and obligatory military service for all men.

4.3 Family

Family is a theme that appears quite often in the data and is depicted in ambivalent ways. It is mentioned positively in the context of a tight-knit support system, such as a hard-working mother and sacrificing aging parents, or negatively in terms of pressuring, pushy and conservative parents who disapprove of their children's choices including, but not limited to, their hip-hop career. For example, Epik High rap about aging parents' suffering and parental sacrifice and dedication in

'Silecung' ('Aphasia'), and conflict with their parents over religion and behaviour problems in 'Paykya' (lit., 'White night', meaning 'night with the midnight sun').

Furthermore, familial obligations, particularly duties to parents, seep into the lyrics. In Confucian thought, filial piety 孝 (*hyo*) represents respect and love for parents and ancestors, which is considered to be a great virtue and a child's duty. The desire to take care of suffering *emma* ('mom') is expressed in the song 'Haycek' ('Pirates') by Dynamic Duo. They use the synecdoche of 'gold badges' to represent South Korean parliament members and express their desire to take all the gold badges from corrupt politicians and melt them into gold magnet bracelets for their parents, considered to be effective in alleviating rheumatic pain. Here we see a glimpse of 孝 (*hyo*) in conjunction with condemnation against corrupt politics.

4.4 Overwork

Hip-hop artists rap about what they actually experience such as 'the Korean problem' and 'the Malaysian scene' (Pennycook, 2007, p. 106). As argued in Pardue, 'local contexts and concerns are not epiphenomenal but actually shape the meaning of hip hop' (2007, p. 675). The theme of overwork, for example, is arguably more local than global to many Koreans; it has arisen as a very serious social issue in the region including Korea and Japan, more so than in the rest of the world. In a country where six days a week and 12 hours a day are considered the 'norm' and where there is even a name for death from overwork – 過勞死 (*kwalosa*) – insane work schedules and overworked employees are appropriately problematized in South Korean hip hop. For example, Dynamic Duo's '출Check' ('Chwul Check', 'Attendance Check') describes an average workweek as 월화수목금금금 ('Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Friday, Friday'), with Saturday and Sunday conspicuously missing. Later in the song, phrases like 'blistered lips' and 'life like war' further depict the fatigue-plagued, tough work environments many South Korean 'salarymen' (corporate employees whose income is salary based) are subject to.

4.5 Education

A great emphasis on academic achievement has produced good results for South Korea, which boasts one of the highest literacy rates in the world, a large number of college graduates, and a highly educated work force. Seth notes that the most contributing factor to prestige and social class in South Korea is likely to be education, asserting that 'education

is a national obsession in South Korea' (2002, p. 1) and reasons that 'the preoccupation with the pursuit of formal school was the product of the diffusion of traditional Confucianist attitudes toward learning and status, new egalitarian ideas introduced from the West and the complex, often contradictory ways in which new and old ideas and formulations interacted' (2002, p. 6). The education fever, however, has also generated problems such as notoriously difficult college entrance exams, expensive test prep courses, excessive competition among students, and parent–child conflicts regarding school choices, just to name a few. Some hip-hop playas in the study reminisce about their own high school days and the parental and social pressure they were subject to when they were younger. 'Still life' by Epik High is a case in point, featuring a defiant discourse about education-oriented society and parental pressure about academic success.

(7)	왜 내가 무슨 이유로 색안경 낀어른들이 택한울타리 밖에 묶인 희생양이 됐나	'How come I became a scapegoat tied to a fence built by adults wearing tinted glasses
	. . . 같은 감옥 속에서 6년을 구속해	. . . confined for 6 years in a prison-like life
	. . . 나는 일류 대학 석사보다 더	. . . more than a first-rate school Master's degree holder
	나는높고 높으신 그 박사보다 더	more than an esteemed Ph.D.
	오직 비트위에 낙서하는 작사가가 더	I'd like to be a lyricist scribbling only (rap) beats'

Epik High, 'Still Life'

They rap about stifling school life and feeling trapped in 'a prison' called school. They feel victimized within the boundaries set by 'adults' who are judgemental and overly critical. Junior and senior high school days are viewed as equivalent to six years of imprisonment. Later in the song they talk about their decision to become hip hoppers at the age of 16 and their rebellion against their parents' wish for them to go to Korean Ivy League schools pursuing MA and PhD degrees. They rap that academic success does not interest them as much as advancement in a music career; it is clearly indicated in the text that they would rather be serious lyricists than serious scholars.

Another common education experience is the notoriously difficult college entrance exam and its gruelling preparation process in the 12th grade, often dubbed 'hell'. Test jitters are expressed by Soul Company member Kebee in the song 'Ko 3 hwuki' ('Epilogue to the 12th grade').

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He raps about how nervous he was, how supportive his friend was, how hesitant he was, and how unsure he was.

(8)	알 수 없는 긴장감에 사로잡힌 시험 전날	'The day before the exam indescribable anxiety came over me
	여태껏 서로를 지탱해주던 친구와 전활 붙잡고	I talked to a friend who was supportive all this time
	대체 우리가 지금껏 무엇을 찾고 있었던가에 대해서 애길했지	We wondered what in the world we were looking for
	이건 누가 우리에게 품고 있는 기대치 때문이 아닌 나 자신을 위한 일이겠지	Are we doing this to please others or for ourselves?
	. . . 익숙한 골목이 오늘따라 괜히 낯설어	. . . Even familiar alleys look totally strange today
	. . . 내 발걸음은 제자리에서 망설여	. . . my feet lingered hesitantly'

Soul Company (Kebee), 'Ko 3 hwuki'

4.6 Military service

Whenever two or three Korean men gather, they need to talk about military service. This is a complaint often made by Korean women who lightheartedly point out their partners' countless retelling of their *kwuntay saynghwal* ('life in the military'). Korean men, on the other hand, often think that talking about their military service is a major bonding experience with other men. Since every Korean man has to go through it, mandatory military service is also a recurring theme in Korean hip hop, as a South Korean DJ in Pennycook's (2007) study asserts. Some hip-hop playas in this study talk about their disillusionment after completing the service with respect to readjusting back into mainstream society. For example, in 'Yeypiyek' ('The army reserve'), Loquence, D. C. and Planet Black from Soul Company lament the unwelcome responses they received from society and how utterly crushed they felt after their military service.

(9)	2년이라는 터널을 건너고 나면모든 게 분명해지고 뭐든 할 수있을 줄알았어	'I thought I would be more certain about things and feel I could do anything when I went through two years of tunnel
	허나 벗어난 순간부터 모든게 쉽지 않았어	But as soon as I was released, nothing was easy

> 세상은 쓸모 없는 날반기지 Society did not welcome useless
> 않았어   me'
>
> Soul Company (Loquence, D. C. & Planet Black), 'Yeypiyek'

Most Korean men take a leave of absence from school when they are freshmen or sophomores to complete their compulsory military service and resume their study afterwards. Many argue that unimaginative, repeated routines and brainwashing regularly reinforced through disciplinary actions dull their intellect while they serve in the military. Consequently, they find it challenging to do well when they go back to school.

4.7 Badass: pirates and dictators

Uncompromising viewpoints about their artistic pursuit are also discursively constructed as essential to the ideology of keepin' it real in the data. When it comes to improving the quality of music and gaining influence in the hip-hop world, 'badass' attitudes are considered desirable qualities by these playas. Unattractive titles such as 'pirate' and 'dictator' become attractive when they are used by South Korean hip hoppers for self-referencing, where obduracy and inflexibility are greatly appreciated.

Building upon the notion that pirates are associated with adventures, exploring new territories and accumulating possessions on their journey, the group Dynamic Duo voice an urgent need to transform current Korean hip hop into mould-breaking new hip hop in the song 'Haycek' ('Pirates'). These artists attach the pioneer spirit to pirates and stress the importance of breaking fresh ground in the K-hip-hop scene. Also, it is significant that the word 'hatchery' is used to refer to a relatively young history of South Korean hip hop and its underdeveloped status. Similar to the disrespect affiliated with young hip hoppers discussed earlier in the chapter, in excerpt (10) the current K-hip-hop scene is equated with a 'hatchery' which serves merely as a commercial site where young hip hoppers are concocted and incubated.

> (10) . . . hatchery 파헤쳐   '. . . Tear up the **hatchery**
>   take off the barrack k-hip hop Take off the barrack k-hip hop
>   신대륙개척   Open up a new continent'
>
>   Dynamic Duo, 'Haycek'

In the same song, Dynamic Duo's global ambition is expressed in the phrase 'travelling all over the world', which echoes the *Segyehwa* spirit – the drive for globalization – discussed earlier in this chapter.

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(11) 우리는노래하는해적	'We are singing pirates travelling all over the world
세상구석구석다니며원하는건다뺏어	We plunder whatever we want
건들면 다돼져	If you touch us, you will get killed
넌나와대적할수 없어	You can't fight me'

Dynamic Duo, 'Haycek'

Pirates' feared and formidable presence is reimagined as a sign of success and reputation beyond comparison in the realm of hip hop. Also, the artists appear to be fully aware of market ideology in the music industry as the idea of possession is incorporated into their lyrics. What is implied is that someone else's proud possession can easily be theirs as they aspire to be globally successful. Later in the song, they list the things they want to steal: fame and fortune. Several references in the song are about American celebrities and their famous possessions. South Korean hip-hop playas' remarks on American pop culture, either celebrities or Hollywood movies, indicate that American cultural influence is quite powerful in Korea. For example, Hugh Hefner's Playboy mansion, Steve Jobs's Apple, and Paris Hilton's engagement ring are mentioned. Their wish list, however, is not composed only of superficial materialistic possessions. They hope to seize North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's personal chef to feed the hungry crew on the ship, criticizing Kim Jong Il's lack of effort to alleviate North Korea's infamous food shortage and his own alleged decadent lifestyle. Thus, in addition to their awareness of global cultural icons, South Korean playas utilize their knowledge of local politics in the lyrics, in this case, North Korean issues. By articulating their desire to punish the 'Dear Leader', they express their brotherly sympathy towards North Korean citizens. Pirates in this song are not portrayed as heartless thieves; rather, they are presented as modern-day socially and politically conscious Robin Hoods, robbing the rich and famous in order to help the poor, fighting against tyranny and injustice.

In addition, these playas claim to be uninterested in pleasing people. In their song 'Tongcen hanniph' ('A penny'), Dynamic Duo tell audiences to listen to their music if they like and turn it off if they don't like it, indicating that they are not going to change their music for the people. They proudly announce that their passion is a fire bottle (gasoline bomb), a major weapon in radical student demonstrations against the dictatorial government of the 1980s in South Korea. These hip-hop playas view themselves as dissidents and depict their music as a weapon to fight the establishment.

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(12) 니가 좋으면 들어 그리고
　　　싫으면 꺼

　　　계속 음악을 할 테니깐

　　　내게 타협은 절대 no
　　　열정은 내 화염병

'If you like it, you listen. If you hate it, turn it off.

I will continue my music.

Never will I compromise. **No.** My passion is a fire bottle'

　　　　　　　Dynamic Duo, 'Tongcen hanniph'

The theme of 'no compromise' in their music is also often equated with anti-commercialism, yet ironically they want fame and fortune. In the same song, Dynamic Duo say that they are not businessmen, hustlers, or crooks who cheat, lie and act cowardly and compromise just to sell albums. In another song, 'Dictator', the same band take pride in their *ttongpayccang* ('foolhardiness'/'daredevilry'), doing their music as they please. The idea of keepin' it real is closely tied to maintaining artistic integrity and not succumbing to commercialism or pressure from competitors and fans, as illustrated in excerpt (13) below.

(13) 나는 내 뜻대로 우겨대는
　　　똥 배짱

　　　거침없이 노래를 불러온
　　　지 오래다

　　　나는두려움 따윈
　　　삼켜버린 고래다

　　　나는 내 일을 지배하는
　　　독재자

'I'm a stubborn hardass. I do as I please'

'I've been singing my song without any constraints for a long time'

'I am a whale who swallowed fear'

'I am a dictator who is in charge of my own business'

　　　　　　　Dynamic Duo, 'Tongcen hanniph'

The same artists appear to present seemingly conflicting views on dictatorship. They position themselves as protesters fighting against dictators with 'a fire bottle' of hip hop in excerpt (12), whereas excerpt (13) portrays them as dictators who reign over the hip-hop world and dominate all the others in the same industry. In other words, political dictatorship is criticized but artistic dictatorship is praised.

5 Conclusion

The four South Korean hip-hop groups featured in this study demonstrate that they subscribe to the hip-hop ideology of keepin' it real, which indicates that they are part of the global ideology of authenticity in hip hop. However, specific ways in which they *practise* this ideology are localized. Behaving just like American gangsta hip hoppers is

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not real, but not incorporating some features from the global hip-hop scene is likewise not real. Thus, hip-hop playas who are not in the so-called centre of globalization feel the need to strike a balance between the global and the local more than those in the centre. I would argue that hip-hop playas in the centre of globalization, like those in the US, are not pressured to incorporate the global, because the local for them can be accepted and identified as the global when their music goes to the peripheries or in-betweens of globalization.

Common themes emerging from the lyrics in the study suggest that South Korean hip-hop playas' practice of keepin' it real demonstrates global-local syncretism. Like most hip-hop artists, they serve as critical social commentators and incorporate global components, for example, English and hip-hop style outfits and accessories in their performance. At the same time, they stay true to who they are – South Korean artists, not American artists – by problematizing 'Korean' issues. Their glocalization of the hip-hop ideology of authenticity is in operation with respect to several social aspects of South Korea including ageism, career, family, education and military service. Although these themes deal with separate issues, they all provide helpful clues as to what it is like to live a life as a young male in South Korea, which happens to be a very hierarchically oriented society where age, family background, academic sectarianism and occupation define who you are and dictate enduring patterns of social behaviour and relations. The South Korean hip-hop playas in the study individually construct and present their own versions of reality, yet they all collectively participate in stereo-typically characterizing Korean men's common experience.

The South Korean hip hoppers in the study reject *kacca* ('fake') hip hop which is claimed to be performed by inexperienced, superficial, 'young' rappers who lack passion and work ethics. In contrast, *cincca hyengtul* ('true older brothers') are respected as real artists. This is a prime example of the types of Confucianism-based, age-sensitive hierarchical relationships routinely implemented in South Korea. The influence of Confucianism goes beyond their relationships with fellow hip hoppers. Some of the lyrics make specific reference to Confucianism-inspired obligations to family. Furthermore, widely identified 'Korean' social issues such as the notoriously dreadful college entrance exam prep dubbed *ipsiciok* ('exam hell'), compulsory military service and overwork are articulated with great concern in the data.

The hip-hop lyrics featured in this study are often quite meta-hip hop, i.e., hip hop about hip hop. South Korean hip hoppers rap about hip hop or other topics pertinent to the genre including their music careers: ups and downs, artistic integrity and passion, skills and work ethic. While these themes may not be truly unique to the South Korean

hip-hop scene, the ways in which they self-praise their music are rather localized. For instance, 'practising' and working hard on crafting skills are more valued than natural god-given talents. This is quite a departure from the more improvisation-oriented, freestyle hip hop in the US, where rehearsed prefabrication is significantly devalued. With respect to their careers, South Korean hip-hop playas reveal global consciousness in their lyrics. This is evident in their desire to be successful beyond local contexts as well as through their belief that music is a universal language which allows them to freely cross cultural and national boundaries and provides a platform for an equal footing for any playa who shares love and passion for it. Their dream of global expansion is in line with the South Korean government's drive for globalization, *Segyehwa*, and is indicative of their desire to be part of *Hanlyu*, the Korean Wave, which refers to the recent surge in popularity of Korean entertainment products in Asia and beyond.

These playas' global aspirations are sometimes depicted rather aggressively, for example, as being on a pirate ship, plundering whatever they can get their hands on, feared by their enemies. Similar to American hip hop, being an outlaw or acting tough is portrayed as 'a cool thing' in South Korean hip hop. Another negative term that is used positively in the data in relation to their career ambition is 'dictator'. For a country such as South Korea that was governed under dictatorship until the 1980s, it is surprising to see the term 'dictator' have any redeeming qualities. What is interesting, however, is the fact that the playas in this study frame that term in two opposing senses. When it comes to their own monopoly of artistic success, being a dictator is viewed positively. On the other hand, dictatorship in a political sense is utilized negatively. Arguably, the dual use of the term itself is an example of localization of keepin' it real. As citizens of a former dictatorship, these South Korean hip-hop playas are aware of the negative consequences of this type of rule, but at the same time they have experienced firsthand the incontestable authoritative power of dictators, a coveted quality in dominating the hip-hop world.

The findings of the study suggest that the hip-hop ideology of authenticity — keepin' it real — is articulated in South Korean hip hop, but what it means to South Korean hip hoppers diverges from how hip hoppers from other cultures understand and practise it. Hip hop is all about lived experience. Local concerns and issues occupy local hip hoppers' minds and are expressed through their creative musical outlet. At the same time, hip hoppers in the peripheries and in-betweens of globalization inevitably incorporate global elements into their artistic creation.

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Notes

1. According to Wikipedia, 'Bling-bling (or simply bling) is a slang term popularized in hip-hop culture, referring to flashy or elaborate jewelry and ornamented accessories that are carried, worn, or installed, such as cell phones or tooth caps. The concept is often associated with either the working and lower middle classes or the newly wealthy, implying that the concept of riches and shiny items is something new to them. Used in this sense, it can be derogatory, suggesting lack of good taste.' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bling-bling>, accessed 29 September 2009.
2. The term 'hip-hop playas' in this chapter refers to those actively participating in hip-hop music production and performance.
3. See, for instance, Farrow (2004).
4. He was born in Korea but lived in Indonesia, Switzerland, Canada and the United States of America.
5. Drunken Tiger originally consisted of DJ Shine ,Tiger JK, DJ Jhig, Micki Eyes (Half Korean half Italian) and Roscoe Umali (Filipino). When their sixth album was released in 2005, DJ Shine left the group, leaving JK as the main front man of the group.
6. He was born in Korea but raised in Los Angeles.
7. <http://www.drunkencamp.com>, accessed 21 September 2009.
8. For an excellent recent study of such stereotypes, see Reyes and Lo, 2009.
9. Switches into English are indicated in bold in the English translation.
10. Anime is animation that originated in Japan around 1917. Both hand-drawn and computer-animated anime exist. It is used in television series, films, video, video games, commercials and internet-based releases, and represents most, if not all, genres of fiction. Anime has a large audience in Japan and high recognition throughout the world.

Discography

Drunken Tiger (September 5, 2007), *Sky is the Limit.* 정글('Jungle') Entertainment (20 tracks).
Dynamic Duo (May 20, 2007), *Enlightened.* Amoeba Culture (15 tracks).
Epik High (January 23, 2007), *Remapping the Human Soul.* 울림('Wulim') Entertainment (14 tracks).
Soul Company (February 20, 2007), *Official Bootleg Vol. 2.* Soul Company (19 tracks).

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