

**Policing hip hop:  
Police and Other Agents of Control in Montreal Night Clubs**

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## **Abstract**

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Hip hop has been a part of urban spaces in the Global North and abroad for quite some time. It began in the predominantly Black South Bronx in 1973. Since then, it has spread across the United States and is arguably the most commercially successful genre of music currently existing. Through the four elements of hip hop – graffiti, breakdancing, DJing, and rapping – Black American youth conveyed their life experience to a broader public. Almost immediately after that was a response by law enforcement to contain this Black expressive artform. This research examines how hip hop is policed in Montreal nightclubs. Focusing on the actions of the police, club bouncers, and other club staff, it reveals the various methods and logics that shape the nightclub environment on hip hop nights, as well as the differences between the policing of Black and white hip hop nights. The findings suggest that anti-blackness in Montreal and Quebec forges imagined associations between Black hip hop artists and fans and street gangs, suturing a perceived relationship between Black hip hop and criminality that invites and justifies excessive policing and a confined public experience for Black Montrealers.

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## 1. Introduction

In the last 50 years, one of the primary vehicles to expressing positionality and experience for Black youth has been hip hop. Hip hop is an oppositional discourse borne from the children of revolutionaries from the Black-led activism of the 1960's and 1970's as noted by Tibbs (2012). It involves break dancing, spoken word, graffiti and most notably, rapping and often has more than one of these elements present. Today, hip hop music is one of the most popular forms of music in the world and a venue of expression of Black and other marginalised communities. Its association with Blackness, however, configures the musical style in relation to longstanding conceptions of Black people, bodies, and politics as “out of place” – a sign of disorder or disruption to the dominant social order (see Muhammed, 2011). *Policing* hip hop, consequently, has emerged in parallel with the growth of the cultural style. While seeming to target a form of cultural expression or behaviours associated with it, policing hip hop can be seen as part of the longer history of policing Blackness (Barrett, 2006).

In recent years, significant literature has emerged around the policing of hip hop. Since its creation in the South Bronx in 1973, the literature shows, hip hop has been the target of policing. One important body of scholarship examines *why hip hop* receives the attention that it does. Hip hop challenges the spatial control of Blackness in the post-civil rights era, that is, the social practices that are in place to maintain the imagined social disorder that Blackness represents. Even though many of the gains from the civil rights movement (CRM) effectively rendered racism illegal and suspicious, the threat to social order represented by Blackness remained. In her book *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Tricia Rose (1994) argues that the policing of hip hop is the policing of hidden transcripts (expressed openly but often in coded language) that criticise and challenge dominant regulatory mechanisms. To respond, law enforcement, legislators, and

government officials have consistently tried to maintain a plurality of forms of surveillance around this inherently Black form of cultural expression (Nielson 2010). Following the gains won for Black people after the civil rights act, new changes taking place at both the local and global scale (Protection of voting rights, creation of commission, supporting desegregation) began to affect their lives and once again, the mobility won by Black people was met with pushback. Unlike the brutal punishments meted out during the North Atlantic slave trade, post civil rights methods of containment and controlling Black people had to now be legal. Policing hip hop is central to the containment of Blackness in the post civil rights era.

A second body of literature examines *how hip hop* is policed. Hip hop has been policed from the moment of its creation. The methods used have evolved over time, becoming increasingly brutal and surreptitious. It is acknowledged by many of its critics that hip hop is not inherently criminal but it has always been received by the general public as a real life example of how Black youth were transforming the city into a lawless and disordered space (Kubrin and Nielson 2014). This is important to note because it demonstrates that at a very early stage there was refusal to make any differentiation between real world crime, violence, and artistic expression from a vehicle of social political resistance (Kubrin and Nielson 2014). Because it provides a platform for the aforementioned group, hip hop is policed in a variety of ways. Tactics range from the controlling of public and private space (Castleman 1982, cited in *Surveillance and Rap Music*), judicial and prosecutorial methods (Nielson 2014), labelling and lyrics (Dunbar and Kubrin 2018), the privatisation of public spaces, policing fashion, policies, forms and online surveillance (Perera 2019).

My research expands on this literature, seeking to understand what methods have been used to transform hip hop in Québec into an extra legal category in a post-civil rights context. As the literature shows, certain forms of racism became less tenable following the movements of the 1960s and 70's (including in Canada and Quebec). New methods were

required to contain and confront Blackness. My thesis, then, examines the policing of hip hop as an entry point to the larger question of how race is policed in Quebec in the post-civil rights era. The policing of hip hop in Montreal came to public attention in the early 2000s, when the Quebec liquor commission either revoked or threatened to revoke the licence of several night clubs where hip hop was played. In some cases, clubs were able to keep their licences on the condition that they ceased to play hip hop. In other cases, clubs elected to stop playing hip hop in the hopes of retaining their licences. My research takes these cases as a starting point, but examines other methods of policing hip hop in Montreal clubs. I focus primarily on three clubs where hip hop is played. Through semi-structured interviews with present and former club staff, I examine how these spaces have been policed by the Montreal police (SPVM), club bouncers, and other club staff. All three “agents,” I show, are engaged in the policing of hip hop – albeit in somewhat different ways and with somewhat different objectives.

The primary argument of the thesis is that policing hip hop is policing race – in particular Blackness. Although their objectives are different, the police, club bouncers, and club staff all associate hip hop with street gangs. In Quebec, moreover, the term “street gang” essentially means Black young men and young adults (Livingstone, 2018). Through a chain of associations, then, hip hop means street gangs, which means Black. In a broad sense, then, this thesis confirms the finding in the existing literature that hip hop, as a form of Black cultural expressive, is viewed as a sign of criminality and disorder. It shows that, in the post-civil rights era, policing hip hop became a new way of policing Blackness. The main contribution of the thesis is to show that racialized police surveillance and violence wasn't taking place only in the United States. It also goes beyond the existing literature by showing how various agents, not just the police, are involved in policing hip hop, and it highlights the slightly different objectives that are served by this policing.



The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first section is a literature review. The review firstly provides insights on the province of Québec, its relationship historically to Blackness, and its evolution. Following this is a brief review of the CRM and how the pushback from the gains of the CRM engendered the policing of hip hop culture. Finally the literature review examines the methods used to police hip hop. After the literature review, I present the research questions and methods. Finally, I provide a three-part analysis of the policing of hip hop in Montreal clubs, and a discussion of how these practices fit within the broader literature. As I suggested, hip hop attracts the attention of police in Montreal due to its association with Black street gangs. They enter clubs on hip hop nights and use various methods to gather intelligence about and criminalise supposed street gang members. For club bouncers and staff, there is also an association between hip hop and gangs. These agents, however, aim to profit from the money of gang members, while minimising potential security problems in the club and, importantly, diminishing the chances of major police interventions. Despite these different methods and motivations, the policing of hip hop in Montreal is the policing of Blackness, and we can see major differences between policing on hip hop nights that attract a Black clientele and those where the crowd is majority white.

## 2. Literature Review

### Deconstructing Québécois Identities

To understand the policing of hip hop in Quebec, we first need to understand how white supremacy and anti-Blackness operate in the province. White Québécois have historically understood Blackness to serve as a tool and an index of measurement for its own advancement into whiteness. Canada's national minority, the Québécois, has in the past

struggled with defining its story of struggle and its vision of independence. Undergirding this struggle is a litany of hero style narratives and mythologies created by cultural curators that conveniently omit any acts of colonisation and slavery prior to the arrival of the British in 1763 (Austin 2010). Advancing to the 1960s, the white segment of the Québécois population developed a unique understanding of the term ‘Nègres’ referring to themselves, not Black people (Austin 2010). The literature (Austin 2010, Hampton 2012, Scott 2010) suggests that the ability of Québécois to liken their economic, social and political struggles to that of African Canadians and Americans is dubious at best and libidinal at worst. Distorting the functionality of a term such as the former presupposes the coercive power to act upon and consume the experiences of others. There remains a latent danger in this process due to its ability to erase the eligibility of Black people in Québec to articulate their own experiences.

In 1968, one of the province's more controversial texts *Les Nègres blancs de L'Amérique* by Pierre Vallières was published. It suggests Québec was well versed in its preoccupation with using the experiences of Black people as a vessel for self exploration, a veneer to express injustice and an index of their own advancement into whiteness (Scott 2010). Simon Brault, General director of the Canadian Council for the Arts elucidates some of the ways in which the experiences of racialized minorities are erased in the province. After 32 years of service (prior to the Canadian Council position) with the l'École National de Théâtre he developed, in the province, the idea that Québec could culturally reaffirm itself through art (Lalonde 2018). This movement carried through up until now with long standing effects leaving Québec's affirmation entangled with ideas of universalism that perhaps advanced Québécois culture out of a sense of personal injustice but not without consequences for Black communities.

Pierres Vallières's work is grounded in a latent imagination about Black masculinity that, as Scott (2010) argues, elides and relies on racism lived by Black Canadians in Québec

and abroad. While *Nègres blancs* is designed to extract from the narrative of slavery (North Atlantic Slave Trade) a pathway to articulate injustice, it also demonstrates the moral outrage of Québécois(e) being treated as poorly as Black people (Hampton 2012). Vallières's work demonstrates the depth and pervasiveness of Québécois relations to Blackness. The province's identity, while linguistically and socially distinct, continues to affirm its racial superiority through a strong reliance on the mythology of Black inferiority.

There are more recently new ways in which the province has used ideas about Blackness as well to position its advancement through its own ideas of struggle. During the 2018 protest of SLĀV, positions on the performance being reductive and racist were, as argued by *Le Devoir*, a position of anglophones and immigrants (Lalonde 2018). Philip Howard in Lalonde's article argues that the assertion that anglophones and immigrants were the only groups demonstrating in protest is false. He goes further to remark that many individuals demonstrating were francophone, anglophone, and longtime Quebecers. He concludes by arguing that this could only be true if we believe francophones in Québec to only be white thereby erasing the positions of leaders such as Marilou Craft, Émilie Nicolas, Ali Ndiaye (Lalonde 2018) which suggests that the province no longer wishes to place itself in proximity to the experiences of Blackness to articulate its struggle but rather to use linguistic positionality to locate race and anti-Blackness as an anglophone issue.

More recently Marc Ouilmet, a professor at Université de Montréal argued that rap music, a predominantly Black expressive art form, is responsible for the increase in crime taking place in the Montréal area in 2021 (Rutland, Bourdages, and Beaulieu, 2021). This is firstly false because the arrival of hip hop culture to the city took place in 1978 (Kapoï Lamort, Phone call to author, 2020). It would be difficult, then, to attribute a rise in crime in 2021 to hip hop. Here again we see a symptom of a social issue (racializing rap music) that sheds light on the province's conduct and it is immediately placed onto the lives of the

province's prized or coveted 'cultural communities' (Austin 2010). Québec has a very strong connection to Blackness and its own understanding of itself is inextricably linked to the former. Whether it be using Blackness to educate itself on its own experiences or to vilify criticism about its own complicity in anti-Black practices citing linguistic difference, Québec has undeniably benefitted from the function of Blackness.

## Post-Civil Rights Racism

The era saw Black activists and their allies assert the right to legal equality in the United States. The protests and mobilizations that took place during that period drew federal intervention into the fight for legal equality. The first act, passed in 1957 by President Eisenhower, was brought into law to prevent intimidation or bias screening methods for voters (predominantly in the Southern United States). Advancing the initial order was the 1964 C R A initiated by John F. Kennedy and executed through the Johnson administration following his assassination, the civil act of 1964 gave federal authorities licence to ensure that public facilities were now integrated. This act boasted new and unprecedented changes to the legal status of Blacks in America but its afterlife suggests other effects (Murakawa 2014). One example of this would be the transition from arbitrary, predictable and private violence into state sanctioned institutional violence against Black African Americans. The legacies of the movement are somewhat ambiguous. Certainly, some forms of racial injustice were curtailed. However, as Michelle Alexander articulates in *The New Jim Crow*, a lot of what came from the movement was pushback.

Post-civil rights, extra legal methods have been used to maintain the suppression of Black struggle. Engagement with the literature helps explain the shifting forms of racial discrimination that took place after the movement. Two main methods of this were to

criminally assault those associated with Black struggle and to criminalise Black expressions of freedom (Bonilla & Dietrich 2014 ). Hip hop culture is grounded in contesting dominant public transcripts about the lives of inner city African Americans. What needs to take place in order to address this as Dunbar argues is a broader contextualization of the mechanisms and socializations that obscure the relationship between rap music, race and crime. The motive for criminal assault by police lies in hip hop's power to disrupt the expected subordination and domination behaviour expected from police (Rose 1994). Hip hop dissolves the consensual authority (Rose 1994) that grew from Jim Crow law. This being a both public and private attempts to demarcate Black life as separate from white life. It is an organisational cultural tool that enables African Americans to organise against new legal methods of pushback from the movement.

With this logic in mind, it is difficult *not* to conclude that disparities would persist in policing rap and hip hop because of post civil rights developments in race, crime and cultural creation. Donald F. Tibbs (2012) research familiarises readers with post civil rights racialist (López 2010) views borne from legislation. His research argues post racial ideology renders racism illegitimate and suspicious in the event that it is claimed to have taken place. I engage further with the literature by examining Murakawa's (2014) research on post civil rights. They reveal how concerns for racial order in post civil rights America were framed and argued as the concerns for law and order over the timeline of postwar struggles. An afterlife of the movement, post racialist thought has *in fact* refined structural violence to suppress Black struggle with new, improved state sanctioned methods. I review the literature in detail here, and it provides a lens through which to reframe our understanding of racial criminalisation and its relationship to the policing of hip hop.

From the perspective of structural law and order, as Murakawa argues, liberal law and order depoliticized white violence against African Americans by dividing private lawlessness

away (arbitrary violence against racialized persons) from institutional forms of violence (carceral state and law enforcement). By correcting the former through criminalization and the latter through rationalisation, this division very much laid the framework and frequency of violence experienced by post-racial subjects. Central to newfound legislation in the literature was what is called ‘The Right to Safety’ which translated to protection by law enforcement against private or illegal violence.

My engagement with the literature here demonstrates that the movement only protected African Americans from violence not generated by state institutions. This created an environment where Black criminality and its extra-legal categories set the index for racial progress and advancement. The categorical creation of “violence” was subscribed *only* to the acts performed by private citizens. This provided a vacuum by which state institutions could exercise violence upon Black people with impunity as long as they were the mechanism tolling out the violence. But as Murakawa notes, carceral (state-backed racial violence) violence was so lethal because it was *not* arbitrary. My engagement with the literature sets the groundwork for what I argue as a significant gain (or loss depending on how you frame it). That the advancements from the movement, once evaluated by state institutions that evolved in tandem with cultural forms of expression to control, monitor, imprison and execute African Americans legitimately and with due process. Policing hip hop, in this view, became permissible racial violence in the post- civil rights era. But then, we need to examine whether and how this actually occurred.

## Hip Hop in the Post-Civil Rights Era

As noted by Tibbs (2012), state and financial structural adjustments between 1979 and 1984 effectively undermined many of the gains from the movement. De-industrialisation, the

closing of the manufacturing industry in opposition to the rise of the financial sector in the United States created a dearth of working-class jobs normally occupied by African American men and women. This was met with a rise in part time, unprotected service sector labour in Black communities. Fifty percent of Black households lost the corresponding amount of their income earning force and Black youth unemployment quadrupled at the same time. Additionally, states from the 1980's to the 1990's furthered their undermining of progress. Cessation of welfare, affirmative action, the rolling back on social structures, and the newfound reliance on the criminal justice system were some of the new *legal methods* used to deal with the effects of these anti-Black assaults.

Tibbs (2012) completes his research by laying the foundation for the response to how race became understood to the generation of youth that were born from the revolutionaries of the era. These children came to know themselves and their role in a racial calculus through what he terms cumulative discrimination. By this term, Tibbs means that the reckoning faced by the children of activists and leaders as they came to know race was an extension of their parents' experiences. The difference being that their parents' struggles, which were centred around legal racial equality and desegregation, the post-civil rights generation came to understand racism through racial profiling, environmental racism, rising rates of incarceration and the effects of capitalist globalisation such as the outsourcing of jobs to lower wage regions of the globe which aggravated unemployment issues faced by the former groups. What this established was a platform for Black youth to articulate their own familiarity with their own unique experience of racism. This was hip hop.

This is not to suggest that the CRM and hip hop have no common ground. In fact, my examination of the literature shows that many of the technologies throughout hip hop transcend the temporal disparity commonly associated with the hip hop generation. As noted by Aldridge (2005) in their article, imaging, sampling, and scratching are all techniques

employed to better place rap within the proximity and spirits of figures. Sampling remains a link to history and tradition of struggle. Scratching overtime began to develop its own musicality and influence when a DJ repeatedly used the technique in a specific place. As a result, the recurrence of the technique became evocative of another time which as Aldridge (2005) argues in the literature allows the DJ to transport the image and mythologies and lived experiences of struggle from the past to the present. The Black youth of this generation, in parallel with long standing traditions of Black expressive vernacular (Tibbs 2012), created a political imaginary that critiqued and articulated all these cultural controversies. It contained beats, graffiti art, dancing and rhymes. It was called hip hop, a spatially conscious oppositional discourse and like the movement, it required containment.

### Methods of Policing hip hop

How was hip hop contained? What methods were used to police this form of cultural expression? One of the first examples of hip hop being policed took place with break dancers and prospective battle spaces. As noted by Rose (1994), many potential areas suited for break dance battles were under police surveillance. In most instances the justification was not for the act of breakdancing but for the potentiality of the cultural form of expression attracting undesirable crowds (Grierson 2016). Second to this in terms of early tactics of policing, graffiti artists were criminalised as invasive and degenerative to the urban environment. The city of New York, in order to address this, created a specialised police unit known as the “vandal squad” (Austin, 2001; Chang, 2005) that erected large fences with razor wire and attack dogs on the other side of train yards that were said to be vandalised (Castleman 1982). In most instances, these inherently cultural and political critiques intrinsic to hip-hop were treated as acts of war against the state and were often met with violence. As an example, in



1983, Black Artist Micheal Stewart was fatally beaten by law enforcement officials for tagging the wall of a subway station (Chang, 2005; Nielson, 2010).

Another way that hip hop has been policed is the submission of rap lyrics in criminal cases. As noted by Kubrin and Nielson (2014), rap lyrics are being introduced as evidence in criminal proceedings. There are three specific ways that scholars have identified that rap lyrics are placed on trial (Peters 2019). The first being that rap lyrics can be interpreted by jurors and prosecution as a confession if written after a crime was committed (Nielson & Kubrin 2014). As an example, in 2008 in the absence of other evidence, a US rapper was sentenced to 30 years in prison after his lyrics were used against him as evidence in an attempted murder case (Kubrin, 2015; Dutton, 2015; Diebelius, 2019, cited in *The Use and Abuse of Music: Criminal Records*). Second, rap lyrics can be treated as proof of intention to commit crime if written beforehand. In a study conducted involving music lyrics without any indication of the genre, Fried (2006, cited in *The Use and Abuse of Music: Criminal Records*) determined that the presentation of rap lyrics disguised as country lyrics made audiences far less critical of the lyrical content. The association of rap to lyrics has an effect on the perceived character of the artist. This can create a prejudicial sentiment from jurors. Third, rap lyrics if written before a crime can be considered as threats if for example the lyrics comprise a menacing message (Ahmed 2016, cited in *The Use and Abuse of Music: Criminal Records*). Defendants do not even have to be accused of committing a crime. In short, the literature demonstrates that a critically important method of artistic expression for people (predominantly Black men) can now be perceived as inherently criminal. In the case of rapper Tosin, they were given a five year sentence when his lyrics were judged to be perceived as making terrorist threats. As noted by Peters (2019), subjecting the artistic expression used by a marginalised demographic with terrorism is quite troubling.

The literature also shows how hip hop is policed through surveillance. Criminality and race have always been leveraged against rappers and have been used to justify both passive and active surveillance. Former NYPD officer Derrick Parker created a document that held an archive of all rappers in the U.S. This book held addresses, dates, car rentals, hotel locations and any existing criminal activity and known gang affiliations. The logic once again being that many of these rappers had known gang affiliations (often simply by distant family relations) and that by keeping tabs on the (over 1000 rappers, all essentially African American) artists. The F.B.I. neither confirms nor denies its existence. In many instances rapper profiles were stamped with various government seals ranging from F.B.I., Homeland security and H.I.D.A. Colourfully titled the *Black Book*, it included a mugshot, data on their travel plans, car ownership and even clubs and hotels that these artists were suspected or known to frequent. The format of the folder is not unlike a dossier created for a repeated criminal offender. In several instances the individuals under secret surveillance have either been acquitted of their charges (Spicer 2006), served their time or had not even committed a crime in the first place! In several instances it was noted that this information from the dossier was being shared with other police agencies across the country and even by the F.B.I. It is illegal to secretly target individuals who fall into the previous categories which stands to reason that hip hop artists are being surveilled by federal and municipal agencies illegally.

This documentary helps us understand the importance of recent scholarly research on gang units in police forces and their relationship with rap music and hip hop culture (Nielson 2014). While most major cities have a gang unit of some sort in the United States there has been a strong increase in the amount of gang units with no discernible justification for doing so. In 2010, the bureau of justice reported 365 gang squads in the United States with 35% of those formed between 2004 -2007 with 40 of those created in 2006 alone. The reasons for this creation are not clear (Nielson 2014). While some gang units were formed in cities in

response to an actual increase in gang activity, many units, such as the gang unit in Phoenix, were invented with no sign of an increase in gang activity. This gang unit was created to secure and increase funding from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies (Nielson, 201). The increase of these gang units and the association of rappers with gang culture has strong effects on the mobility of rappers.

Another manner by which hip hop faces policing is by *incarceralizing venues* where rap shows are performed. Nielson (2010) provides an example of this. In 1989, N.W.A.'s performance of 'Fuck the Police' at a Detroit concert prompted attention from local police and led to the subsequent cancellation of the concert followed by all members being detained and questioned by local officials. More recently at a Young Jeezy concert, the artist, in March 2006 was permitted a performance provided they agreed to a series of "extraordinary precautions" ranging from remaining inside their tour bus until ten minutes before their performance and leaving town right after (Nielson 2010). When Young Jeezy (Jim Jones) agreed to these terms, there was an amendment to the terms through the cities licence regulators that stated that payment for their performance would only be received after the band left town. Needless to say, the show was cancelled (Nielson 2010). Artists and fans of rap music are becoming increasingly subject to types of treatment akin to that of a convicted felon. Whether that be through increased security checkpoints and the presence of metal detectors or one's mobility and economic means are mitigated *even* administratively by the municipality. What could be described as posting bail in order to not only receive compensation but in order to maintain your mobility while touring as a musician is unprecedented in any other music genre.

Another way that hip hop is policed is through their surveillance of private clubs, venues and bars. With the increasing formalisation of nightlife through licences and permits, many business owners have benefitted from the formalisation and legitimacy of the night-

time economy (Talbot 2007). Though some businesses deemed at odds with social order are now subject to exclusion through these formalizations. In 2007, a bar in Croydon was urged by licensing officials to cancel a musical event that was known to be attended largely by individuals of Jamaican ethnicity or appearance. The justification behind this logic is that genres associated with Black cultural expression (including rap) are either indirectly or directly linked with gangs and drug use (Grierson 2016). This prejudice was leveraged against the bar owner with the threat of losing their business or liquor licence if they failed to comply.

Research in the UK reveals a very specific and troubling method of policing hip hop. Here, Barron (2013) examines the longstanding association between rap music, crime, and the creation of form 696. This was a form created by the London Metropolitan police to focus surveillance and attention on events that, according to Ilan (2012) ‘predominantly featured DJs or MCs performing to a recorded backing track’ (London Metropolitan Police Service 2009, 2011, 2017). While the nightlife may host those over 18, policies are being created to curtail the expression of youth as well. Another example of policing rap through policy is the usage of Community Behavior Orders (CBO). These are civil orders that last between one and three years for anyone under 18. It is a criminal offence to breach a Criminal Behaviour Orders. Critics argue they criminalise otherwise legal behaviour (Browne and Hudson 2018 cited in *The Use and Abuse of Music: Criminal Records*). By mid-2018, law enforcement officials from London had applied for Community Behavior Orders with the aim of prohibiting and discouraging youth from making Drill music (a form of UK rap). As noted by Baynes (2018, cited in *The Use and Abuse of Music: Criminal Records*), this is the first time law enforcement have requested orders and tried to enact policies that criminalise a specific genre of music.

Policing hip hop, not surprisingly, also has geographical dimensions. Research on the policing of hip hop culture in the UK shows that the targeting of spaces frequented by groups associated with hip hop culture are becoming subject to police intervention. Perera (2019), in their research identifies the deeply embroiled relationship between civil, criminal and administrative law power and its effects on the cultural expressive mobility of Black subcultures. This has been facilitated by the Anti Social Behavior, Policing and Crime Act of 2014 (Perera 2019) which now targets spaces that this demographic frequent or reside in (housing estates, chicken shops, youth clubs only to name a few). The overall intention is to discourage behaviour and artistic expression by criminalising any attempts at making grime, drill or rap music with these acts. As an example, 2017 saw MOPAC (Mayors Office for Policing Crime) unveil what was called the Knife and Crime Strategy which was aimed at creating a collaborative effort with fast food restaurants in communities frequented by creators or fans of hip hop culture. Creating methods to control WI-FI access in these respective spaces, law enforcement, as argued by Perera (2019) is monitoring working class urban youth, the music they listen to in the spaces they frequent in order to restructure the socio spatial environment and produce the state's model of urban safety.

## Summary and Engagement

My engagement with the existing body of literature provides us with details on the various mechanisms that inform how hip hop is policed. I was able to deduce from the literature above that the province of Québec has for quite some time relied on a fungible relationship with Blackness to maintain an index of its own culture largely derived from the images and mass mediatization of Black life in the United States. What is also clear from the literature is that the gains were met with an extension of generational style forms of pushback. The

literature also reminds readers that hip hop was created directly because of state backed measures that have scanned the timeline of the 1970's up until now. What can be concluded from this literature review is that the policing of hip hop is post-civil rights racism.

What still is lacking is a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between post-civil rights racism and Blackness and Québec. By specifically focusing on Canada's national minority's relationship to a racialized minority within the former's national boundaries, I demonstrated the existence of a relationship between the construction of Québécois identity and Blackness to demonstrate the perception of the latter through the eyes of the former. I situate my research into the body of existing literature by arguing that tactics of racism have been used not just in the US or the UK, but also in Quebec. Like the existing literature, I show that hip hop in Quebec is associated with criminality and blackness. Policing hip hop, then, functions as a way of policing blackness. My research also goes beyond the existing literature in showing how diverse agents, not just the police, are involved in policing hip hop. In Montreal clubs, bouncers and club staff also participate in the policing of hip hop, albeit in slightly different ways and with slightly different objectives.

### 3. Research Outline

The surveillance of hip hop is largely conceived as a technology of containment of Blackness. This thesis examines how hop hip is policed in Montreal night clubs. I focus on three agents in policing: the Montreal police (the SPVM), club bouncers and doorpeople, and club staff (servers, etc.). Through interviews with club bouncers and other staff, I seek to answer two main research questions:

- (1) What methods are used to police hip hop in Montreal clubs? How do police, bouncers, and club staff interact with club patrons on hip hop nights? How do club

bouncers and staff self-police (e.g., limit or otherwise change DJ set lists or other aspects of hip hop nights in order to ensure security or diminish police interventions)?

- (2) What motivates the policing of hip hop? To what extent is hip hop viewed as a security problem in itself? To what extent is it policed due to perceived associations between hip hop and blackness? How do the motivations for policing hip hop differ among the different agents (police, bouncers, club staff)?

To answer these research questions, I conducted 7 in-depth qualitative interviews (Limb and Dwyer 2001) with a selected group of individuals that either have worked, attended or performed at night clubs playing hip hop in Montreal. After being introduced to one primary interviewee (Tokyo Bar tender #1), I was then able to generate a snowball sample of interviewees from the initial interview. Table 1 (included at the end of the thesis) summarizes my interviews. In the interviews, I asked about their own involvement in the policing of hip hop as well as the methods they observed others using. I also asked about motivations: why, that is, methods were used to police hop hop. These interviews were useful for developing a deeper understanding about the policing that takes place when hip hop is played in an establishment. My respondents (security guards, staff, enthusiasts, and performers) provided an important perspective on the actions taken by law enforcement officials and club staff when hip hop is played. Simply put, my in-depth qualitative interviews permitted me to determine how the criminalization of hip hop culture occurs in Montreal night clubs. Additionally, these interviews assisted me in identifying the nuances of this criminalization: how it differed, for example, between police and club staff, as well as between different clubs and different clientele.

Each interview I conducted was audio recorded. I then transcribed the interviews and searched the transcripts for key themes. I searched, in particular, for information about the three agents of policing (police, bouncers, and club staff) and the primary methods used by each agent. My aim was not to identify the most important methods of policing used in the clubs, not provide a comprehensive inventory. I also searched for motivations for policing tactics and, in particular, how the motivations differed between the police, bouncers, and bar staff. Consistent with the literature, I sought to understand these motivations structurally – that is, as part of a broader and longstanding configuration of discourse and practice that seeks to confine and control Blackness. Thus, I read the interview transcripts for connections between what individuals said and what is revealed in the literature on anti-Blackness and criminality globally and in Quebec.

## Methodology

Additionally supporting my analysis was hip hop studies as a methodology. *Hip hop* studies rely on using Black popular culture as a base of origin. Primarily, the subject is guided by the socio-political aspects of the artform (Miller et al. 2014). By re-examining social contexts and historical moments such as the movement, the scholarship helps provide a more accurate presentation of what actually engendered hip hop (Chang, 2005). Additionally, hip hop studies allows us to better understand the surreptitious relationship between policing, hip hop and containment of Black expression and dissent to injustice. As the literature reminds us, hip hop has provided a critical mass of scholars, artists, activists, and the public that live contemporary forms of injustice, discrimination, and prejudice and without apology to unequivocally affirm the positions of the oppressed.



Advancing the methodology of *hip hop* studies is an engagement with Rose (2004). Her work continually seeks to understand the “contextual elements of the culture and musical genre” (Miller et al. 2014, p. 3). This is important as it undergirds many of the questions asked throughout my interviews. This includes lines of questioning pertaining to the aesthetics of hip hop (clothing) and the ways that hip hop is policed. Furthermore, the methodology also provides insight into how the multi-billion dollar cultural expressive plays a part in subverting the socio-economic barriers largely faced by Black youth (Charnas 2010) in Montreal (Miller et al. 2014). Finally, the methodology allows my research to locate parallels between the responses to hip hop of the United States and Montreal and the historical elements which gave rise to hip hop in both contexts (Miller et al. 2014).

What the methodology encourages me to look for is the constant, ever-changing response to hip hop's presence that always comes out in the form of policing in some capacity. In the post-civil rights era, conventional forms of racism are no longer sufficient to confine Black people. Now, what is needed is the ability to create criminality from nondescript behaviours by linking extra-legal categories with race. The hip hop generation was borne from these experiences – the lives of Black revolutionaries whom the state sought to erase. Taking hip hop's mainstream aesthetic cues, using them as extra-legal categories and then granting officers more discretion on assessing physical features translates to a post-civil rights America where it does not matter that you are Black, but emphasises what *kind* of Black now greatly informs the arrest making process (Dabney et al. 2017). The literature thus far suggests that there is a dearth of research focusing on the effects of hip hop culture in Canada. Through semi-structured, qualitative interviews with club staff and some club attendees, this thesis sheds light on the policing of hip hop and/as the policing of blackness in post-civil rights Quebec.

#### 4. The Montreal Police and Hip Hop Nights

This section of the paper will focus on the methods used by police officers to police hip hop clubs in Montreal. The interviewees have noticed that the police are more present on hip hop nights, both outside and inside the club. For example, a former bartender (whose name was kept private for safety reasons) at Tokyo (2021) notes police presence on hip hop nights has “definitely increased.”

The question I pursue in this section, however, is not about the extent of police presence, but about what they actually do. In the following, I will begin by explaining the two kinds of police squads that operate in clubs on hip hop nights. I will then detail the specific actions the police take: checking the customers’ identities to see if they have violated any parole conditions, searching for particular individuals (wanted in relation to specific crimes), and other general surveillance tactics. My research shows these actions subject patrons on hip hop nights to an extra level of police surveillance, but it is not all patrons who experience this. As I explain, the policing of hip hop is related to the police’s assumed association with street gangs. Thus, it is patrons who fit the profile of a gang member (i.e., largely Black men) who are subject to increased surveillance and harassment on hip hop nights.

The police who patrol and intervene in clubs on hip hop nights can be divided into two types: local officers and team Éclipse. Local police have a wide and ambiguous set of roles that are interchangeable and elusive (SPVM site). Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, intervention with communities, protecting the residents, collecting evidence, and locating suspects. These law enforcement officials serve as support for other tiers of the SPVM when they are going forth with an investigation. They also act as first response officers, by responding to 911 calls. When involved with nightclubs, these officers (local police) often deal with complaints about noise nuisances, regulate the crowds outside a club and ensure the nightclub capacity is respected, that liquor bottles are properly stamped etc.

Established in 2004 (under a different name), the Éclipse team is responsible for combating gang related crimes. Éclipse relies on the collaboration with and support of local officers who provide the initial base undergirding team Éclipse's work so they can conduct searches of suspected spaces and individuals effectively. Since the early 2010s, Éclipse has focused largely on bars and restaurants; this surveillance is useful for organised crime and gangs. Relying on previous investigations on subjects of interest (suspects?) and the spaces they frequent, Éclipse officers enter the premises repeatedly and thus acquire sufficient information to further advance the repression of organised crime. The presence of Éclipse officers inside a nightclub (often resulting from police suspicions related to violent, gang or drug related criminal acts.

The SPVM's motives for targeting hip hop nights (which rap music is played) translates to the popular association of hip hop culture with criminal activity and gang members. In this view, hip hop – particularly rap music – acts as an accelerant to criminality and therefore anyone associated with these groups becomes stigmatised and subject to search. Indeed, many staff members I interviewed were told that “it's [the club] was getting too dark [in here]” on those nights, meaning there were too many Black individuals in the space. This is crucial to understand because it demonstrates that there is a coded language being used by law enforcement. In fact, there is very little attention given to rap music on hip hop nights. Rather, it is the type of person in the space on those nights that they focus on.

As noted by Tokyo bar staff (2022) Police presence increases on hip hop nights. In an interview with a frequent party goer who attended many hip hop spots in Montreal during the early 2000s notes that team Éclipse members frequently came to Tokyo “20 deep,” meaning approximately 20 officers were sent to the. It is uncertain in these searches if the SPVM is only searching for known targets or criminals. What is clear however is that on hip hop nights, police presence increases.

One of the main strategies of police officers on hip hop nights is checking the identities of club patrons – ostensibly to see if they have violated any potential probation or parole conditions. This activity is carried out by the Éclipse team. A former Tokyo client who frequented the space (2022) explains one of his encounters with Éclipse officers. While on the dancefloor in a hip hop club on St Laurent Avenue (the interviewee did not disclose the location), he was required to provide personal information as Éclipse were actively “seeking out gang members” and “wanted to see/identify who was there and if there are any conditions placed on them.” Determining what constitutes a demand to present identification reveals noteworthy practices that need to be pointed out.

Another way that law enforcement police hip hop clubs is through the checking of identification cards of clients. This is important to note because it shows not only a different tactic outside of general surveillance but also a refined and more consequential approach to this style of policing. After targeting their suspected subject, Eclipse would verify their identity and through that assess if the subject has any prior violations or more importantly, probationary measures or curfews put in place on them. By identifying individuals with probationary orders or curfews placed upon them, the SPVM and Éclipse can target individuals. This is important to understand because it partially explains why law enforcement officials enter premises and request to see individuals IDs. These curfews and probationary orders are designed to spatially regulate the mobility of these individuals.

These police tactics are consistent with insights in the literature. Research shows that rappers who are convicted or placed on probation are subject to increased police scrutiny. In her work on the criminalization of the youth in London, Perera (2019) demonstrates that the police frequently use so-called “criminal behaviour orders” to police rappers. Such tactics have also been used by the SPVM as shown during an interview with a longstanding Montreal DJ, show organiser and academic: upon entering a nightclub after being charged

and placed on probation as a rapper, you exist in a precarious space. Law enforcement officials can locate you in spaces you frequent such as Tokyo or Muzique and as a result, through direct violation of probation or transgression, you are subject to being policed. What's taking place on hip hop nights with the SPVM is the capitalization upon the vulnerability and precarity of individuals associated with hip hop.

During an interview with a former bartender and a frequent client of Tokyo bar, they stated that “no one contacts these folks [SPVM].”. It is the courts that place probation conditions on people, and parole boards that establish parole conditions. Efforts to check conditions and whether they are being violated, however, result from police discretion. The conditions, then, allow SPVM units such as team Éclipse to now target particular individuals in particular spaces. This is important to understand because it partially explains why law enforcement officials enter premises and request to see individuals' IDs.

The SPVM operates inside hip hop spaces on the assumption of a connection between hip hop and gangs. Aside from background and identity checks, the police also search clubs on hip hop nights to look for particular individuals. Relying on previous investigations conducted by local officers, subjects of interest and the spaces they frequent, officers enter the premises repeatedly and through their efforts, acquire sufficient information to further advance the prevention of violent criminal acts. Their selected targets are chosen based on people with pre-existing criminal records, specific ethnicities, methods of spending and supposed proximity to other criminals. Within this method, race becomes a modality class and criminal imaginaries are.

When determining what constitutes justification for a search there are essentially two broad categories used. That being Black and non-Black. Within that binary, there are extra-legal categories informing the policing process. These can range from clothing and hairstyle to demeanour. These categories, for police, function as signs of potential street gang

affiliation. If the extra-legal category exists, the SPVM will identify whether or not the individual in question is Black. In the event that the latter is sporting any of the traits or accessories related to the extra-legal category of the Black body in the context of hip hop culture, then they will respond accordingly in relation to how close they are to that index of measurement. If the person is Black then that is sufficient grounds (in their opinion) to consider hip hop subject to policing. The SPVM and more broadly law enforcement supervises the proximity to rap of Black individuals slightly differently, however.

It follows that white people are not subject to the same procedures. The police are seeking out a series of physical traits. These traits are extra-legal and are usually seen as markers determining an individual's proximity to rap culture and therefore to gangs. The more markers from these respective categories and individuals from the former category, the more the likelihood of them being subject to forced identification/search. This is important to note because it suggests that the actual crime itself is not necessarily considered when searching *both* Black and white individuals. A former bar staff employee mentions that in the event of a check or search "When they [law enforcement] look at white people, that is interesting, they look at a specific type, which means *a* look. It means...when it comes to a Black table, no matter how you look... they are going to check your table anyway."

Other interviewees go further, explaining to what extent Black individuals experience this process differently from white people. Given his extensive experience in Montreal nightclubs (as runner, door person and bouncer), an interviewee states that unlike their white counterparts, Black individuals in hip hop clubs are often required to present their identification.

The other component of social status, "club money" (i.e., spending large amounts of money) often draws the attention of Éclipse. The interviewee recalls: "There was a group of African and Nigerians, and I was like why are you on their asses like that? It was because

they had a lot of money. So Black people with a lot of money are a target. Because, you know, people are not used to seeing Black people with money. They hate it. They asked them for cards and stuff as if they did something. But they were just rich kids from another country.” Such an incident demonstrates that all Black individuals – especially on evenings during which rap music is played – are presumed to be involved indirectly *or* directly with any crimes. He also notes that, while bikers or organised crime members receive law enforcement’s attention based on their appearance, when it comes to Black people the motivations for suspicion have less to do with their style and more to do with their race/skin colour.

Éclipse also check bar tabs. A frequent party goer (2022) recalls the SPVM “ask staff about methods of payment for bottle service.” What this suggests is that the SPVM are drawing an association between crime, money (and method of payment) and race and that *on* evenings where hip hop is played, this informs which clients might be subject to search. Most likely they are making an association between types of items purchased, method of payment and making assessments about the purchaser on hip hop nights unlike other evenings.

What does explain the extra attention the police devote to hip hop nights and to Black men specifically? All the respondents provided a version of the same answer: the police associate hip hop with gangs and, therefore, police hip hop as a way of policing gangs. As a DJ notes: “[When it comes to] music cultural policing in Quebec versus Ontario for example, you are seeing more of it in Quebec.” He adds about Quebec in relation to gangs: “Even though immigration and crime can develop in similar ways... a perfect correlation would have been like [how] West Indian gangs are affiliated with Toronto and Montreal.” This is important because it shows that some spaces are associated with crime and gangs in Montreal. Such association is largely informed by mass media.

The context in Quebec is important as well. He “the Anglo-French divide means that we are more aware of French artists actions rather than English rap.” This is very important to note as a large part of Montreal’s *Street Rap* scene, commonly described as the DJ notes “More aggressive and POC” also has many members of Haitian descent. Conversely, *Rap Queb* is described as white, polished, funny and non-threatening. This divide is important because he then talks about the normalisation of particular perceptions of ethnic groups as specific to Quebec, “Gang warfare, RDP and Montreal North.” He continues: “[and] for the Quebecois average 45-year-old who grew up with the media narratives that were much more skewed in the past, Black people shooting themselves...The rapper with the big chains, this makes sense to them, and they accept it.” This is important because this long-standing imaginary helps us better understand how the policing of hip hop is the policing of imagined gang violence.

We know that hip hop is policed because of a pre-existing understanding of who creates and perpetuates gang violence. This understanding stems from a deeply skewed, but nonetheless prominent gang violence and Black men. In response to both public and political demands, law enforcement officials engage in a complex tactical form of policing that involves spatial disruption, multiple networks of surveillance, profiling particular individuals in violation of restrictive measures and their proximity to other individuals. However, police officers are not the only ones policing hip hop in Montreal.

## 5. Club Bouncers and Hip Hop Nights

This section of the paper will focus on the methods security guards, doorpersons, and bouncers use to police hip hop. It has been noted that the composition of security guards and their respective teams changes considerably when it comes to policing hip hop on evenings



where it is played. I seek to understand both the type of compositional changes that occur and why the security teams take such measures on nights where hip hop is played. I will begin by describing how security teams and companies came into fruition in the Montreal hip hop scene. Following this I will then discuss the specific actions taken by the former to police hip hop enthusiasts. These actions concern the racial composition of security staff on hip hop nights, the number of security guards present on said evenings, and the types of actions taken by the security staff. These tactics continue to subject Black individuals to exceptional forms of policing when they are in spaces associated with hip hop because of an imagined association to gangs. Again, it is the patrons frequenting and supporting said spaces that are the target of policing on said evenings.

The types of security companies operating in Montreal clubs have changed over time. For a long time, the security companies inside Tokyo, Muzique, and other clubs were informal, non-incorporated small groups of mostly men of colour who knew each other as described by Tokyo bartender #1.<sup>1</sup> Many of these men met at mixed martial arts spaces. As one person found a job in Tokyo in security, they eventually invited some friends and so on. At this point in time, the responsibilities of security guards and bouncers were not as strict and methodical. In the 2000s, however, municipal policies were put in place requiring these individuals to acquire proper training and certification, and only then could they have their services contracted out to local security agencies such as Garda.<sup>2</sup> Some, on the other hand, took on a more entrepreneurial approach and began to create their own security companies. Platinum security was one of those companies. They provided security for Tokyo Nightclub and other venues. As with many of these entrepreneurial security companies, they provided the vast majority of their services to their own selected network of clubs. While these

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18th, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18th, 2021.

companies often had a pre-existing relationship with ownership, there still existed some exceptional practices that took place on more lucrative nights – such as hip hop nights.

My analysis in the following will focus on the period, starting in the early 2000s, when private companies like these provided security to clubs. This is important because it demonstrates one of the first moments when you see both a stronger policing of hip hop in Montreal. The changes in security were, as I noted, promoted by new municipal regulations. There were other drivers of these changes, however. Notably, the increase in police intervention in these clubs in the early 2000s prompted business owners to develop more “legitimate” security forces in order to reduce the potential for police entering the premises. By having a certified and more legitimate security team that carries with it legitimacy and is recognised by the SPVM, night clubs can more easily continue to run their establishments less interrupted on hip hop nights.

One way that security operates differently on hip hop nights can be sought in the composition of security guards. As noted by both staff and frequent customers to Tokyo bar, on evenings when the predominant music being played was hip hop, the staff composition transformed in two ways. First, there were more staff present. Tokyo staff #1 pointed out that on nights where rap music is played, “Size (the size of the security detail) plays a part in security composition.”<sup>3</sup> What he is referring to is the fact that there is an increase in the number of bodies present at the entrance to hip hop clubs on said evenings. Adding to this point, Tokyo owner #1 confirms that he and his security team would increase the amount of security guards on Sunday evenings. This is important to note as Tokyo bar during the mid and early 2000’s was known as one of the best known spots for rap music at the time. The reasoning behind the increase is complicated, as I will discuss below.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Tokyo Staff #1, January 4, 2022.

Another difference on hip hop nights is the racial/ethnic composition of the security team. According to several sources, both Black bouncers and Black security guards are scheduled more frequently on hip hop nights. A frequent party goer from the early to mid 2000's with a familiarity with hip hop clubs confirms the presence of Black security guards. An interview with Tokyo staff #1 also confirms that on Sunday nights at Tokyo bar, there are "slightly"<sup>4</sup> more Black security guards on the premises. Tokyo bartender #1 confirmed this statement as well by stating that there are "more Black security on hip hop nights on Sundays."<sup>5</sup> The use of security businesses largely owned by men of colour are also quite common. Companies like Platinum, a locally owned security company, are one example of said companies.

Why so many security guards? And why Black guards in particular? The reasoning according to staff interviewed is that the presence of Black bouncers and security on evenings where there is a higher volume of non-white patrons is a de-escalation tactic to curb potential violence on those nights. There is a belief, then, that there is more likely to be violence on hip hop nights and that a larger number of bouncers, and Black bouncers in particular, will temper the violence. The situation is perhaps more complex, however. Staff #1 believes that the reasoning behind the volume and ethnic composition is bound up in a complicated series of needs and wants from both the police and the public. It is believed that the combination of both factors will engender a more tempered and safe crowd to be managed at said spaces *and* it will send a signal to police and the public that safety will be ensured. He goes further to argue that the use of these tactics is "a deterrent to racism"<sup>6</sup> that permeates throughout nightclubs. One club staff member with over twenty years of nightclub customer service experience – he worked at several spaces along St. Laurent but primarily worked at Bar

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Tokyo Staff #1, January 4 2022

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Tokyo Staff #1, January 4, 2022.

Terrace – goes further to note that “Black males are often the highest [in rank] in security.”<sup>7</sup>

This means that the desire for Black security guards at hip hop clubs is high in Montreal.

It is important to note the rather different approach used at Buonanotte. At the latter club, the entire interior of the establishment hires Black security guards while outdoors they have a white bouncer vetting potential clients’ entry. This club, as I noted earlier, plays hip hop but caters to a white clientele. The white guards at the exterior of the club clearly send a message to potential clientele; it communicates that the night, and the club, is “for them.” More than that, however, it is a way of communicating to Black people that it is “not for them.” Based on interviews with Owner #1 and Partygoer #3, it seems that white bouncers are used as a deterrent to Black entry in order to ensure a largely white audience on hip hop nights. I will return to the specific measures used at Buonanotte to ensure a white hip hop space in the next section.

But then, the use of Black security inside the club remains to be explained. The reason that *both* white hip hop establishments such as Buonanotte and other establishments such as Tokyo or Muzique both use Black security guards inside is simple. Fear and extension of power. As articulated by staff #1:

The big Black guys are the top security. And it goes with the colour. Big Black [means] people get afraid. People get scared of that. You know? When White people wanted to break someone they’d break the biggest Black guy so you could control him. So as soon as they could control him, they could control the rest of the people.<sup>8</sup>

This tactic is important to note because it demonstrates that while security guards, through their exceptional spatial and racial arrangement created in response to demands from ownership and management, play a vital role in the policing of hip hop.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Watcher #1, January 24, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Watcher #1, January 24, 2022.

Discriminatory practices deeply inform methods of policing by security guards.<sup>9</sup> These range from enforcing dress codes to demanding how much money individuals are planning to spend to refusing entry if women are not present in the group/party. The creation of dress codes used at hip hop clubs grew, in one owner's opinion, "from adapting to expensive hip hop inspired fashion."<sup>10</sup> Through this, sneakers, baseball caps, and "one thousand dollar jeans"<sup>11</sup> became part and parcel of the dress code for admission into Tokyo. This was not always the case. When the nightclub first opened, it initially enforced a much more conventional dress code (dress shoes, no jeans, no baseball caps etc) as noted by the club's owner #1. The demographic, according to them, began to cause disruption and eventually led to what he describes as Tokyo "Sunday nights being more stressful."<sup>12</sup> As a response, hip hop nights began to have clients frisked and no baseball caps on Sunday nights. This was argued by staff as a de-escalation tactic – a tactic to diminish the chances of violence inside the club. This is important to note because it demonstrates that it is the establishments discriminatory practice that plays a part in generating the policed potential behaviour they actively seek to prevent.

Another method of policing hip hop is to have security guards determine how much money prospective clients waiting in line to enter a nightclub possess and are willing to spend. This was done at Buonanotte. Client #3 described the spatial organization of the security guards as follows: "Fuck! There's one security guard at Buena that everyone hated. He was white and tall umm I can't actually he's like the main no he was a bouncer."<sup>13</sup> On the

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that much of the research on security guards was only achievable by interviewing staff that worked closely with these groups. Many of the guards questioned refused to give commentary.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Tokyo owner #1, September 6, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Tokyo owner #1, September 6, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Tokoy owner #1, September 6, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

inside of the club, she continued: “When you walked in they had one Black guy. And I'm inclined to say next to the bathroom they had a Black man.”<sup>14</sup> Within this, she demonstrates that there are a variety of hurdles to go through in order to gain access into spaces such as Buonanotte that are created to police hip hop and are enforced by both security guards and bouncers to decide “who comes in, who does not.”<sup>15</sup>

As with all clubs, it is unrealistic to assume that everyone will gain entry. On any evening, you can expect to have pre purchased tickets, formal attire only and even Bermuda shorts only! (author's personal experience). On nights where hip hop is played, there is no exception save the exceptional rules meted out by the bouncers and security teams that work those nights. What is different is that on hip hop nights their work “excludes hip hop culture, if you ask me,”<sup>16</sup> as noted by Client #3. And this is at first policed by the bouncers and security controlling entry into these clubs. They are the gatekeepers. This demonstrates that the policing of hip hop is also articulated through imaginaries bound up within the criminalization of Black male bodies by nightclubs.

In addition to dress codes, bouncers at this night club would almost exclusively ask clients profiled at hip hop centric or inspired events “are you ready to buy a bottle?”<sup>17</sup> This implies that in order to gain entry, clients are required to explain how much they are willing to spend. Security guards police hip hop by guarding accessibility to spaces based on perceived income on its busiest and most lucrative evenings. This discrimination, as articulated by Partygoer #3, a frequent client of Buananote, is what takes place precisely at the intersection of race and class. It is assumed that Black clientele will spend and have less money, and this is informed by ideas about Black life in nightlife. As mentioned by Partygoer

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

#3, her awareness of this practice deeply informed how she ensured her entry. She goes further to discuss how in order to gain access into what she describes as a space not widely frequented by her Caribbean colleagues, but more commonly by her African colleagues, you had to represent yourself in a different way through appearance based off of the codes enforced by bouncers. In adhering to these codes, Black clients increased (though did not guarantee) their chances of gaining entry into what is described as “the space for privileged Black life.”<sup>18</sup>

This hurdle, of course, is not insurmountable for everyone. Partygoer #3 self-identifies as African. She described never having any negative encounters with security guards due to the amount of money she possessed and was willing to spend. She remarked that because she was “willing to buy more bottles when everyone else bought two”<sup>19</sup> she was *not* perceived as having what club staff describe as “Black money”<sup>20</sup> (a reluctance to spend). As a result, she was able to circumvent being policed. There is thus a racial barrier that money can potentially surmount. It needs to be remembered, of course, that this barrier does not exist for white patrons.

Security guards also develop and maintain relationships with law enforcement. In order to minimise the presence of police officers inside nightclubs such as Tokyo on evenings where hip hop music is being played, management encourages the development of informal and “stronger relationships with the law.”<sup>21</sup> These relationships do not apply to all security staff, but rather a select few. The reason for these stronger relationships is to provide law enforcement with a liaison that can potentially provide them with any information on who is inside; a police incursion, in this case, may be less necessary. While these actions might seem

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Client #3, January 25, 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Tokyo Owner #1, September 6, 2021.

to be a form of solidarity with criminalised people in the club, there are self-interested reasons behind this. Guards work with police in this way, as bartender #1 notes, “so they will be permitted to continue to let gangsters spend money.”<sup>22</sup> She goes further to note that this process is so important that “having the right staff to handle the police”<sup>23</sup> is one of the main functions of heads of security at these nightclubs. This is important because it shows how the action of security guards are influenced by police and developed in the context of relationships with police, though with different objectives than the police. Whereas the police hope to gather intelligence about or arrest criminalised people, security guards hope to provide a safe environment and reduce police interventions while profiting from money potentially earned through criminality.

This is the particular dance that security guards need to perform on hip hop nights. As bartender #1 noted, a large segment of income generated inside nightclubs on hip hop nights is through the informal economy. This is important because we see that the policing undertaken by security guards on hip hop nights is to maintain a relationship between both police and particular clients to ensure profitability inside said spaces. The logic is simple. Hip hop nights tend to gross the highest sales and, in an industry in a city where it is increasingly difficult for small business owners to generate legitimate profits, new negotiations both outside *and* inside spaces such as Tokyo bar or Muzique are created to ensure the former. Security guards and police are not the only ones negotiating the behaviour of the informal economy, however.

It goes without saying that there are individuals involved in informal, illegal, and possibly criminal activities in most nightclubs on any evening. This includes hip hop nights. As noted by bartender #1, management does not always want the intervention of security guards and

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18, 2021.



the subsequent removal of said individuals because of the amount of money they bring into the club. As an example, in 2012 RCMP quelled a debit and credit card scam using cloned cards to withdraw funds from Automatic Transaction Machines. The financial repercussions of this on the nightclub industry were echoed by staff. With the arrest of the gang members involved in the scam, Tokyo Bartender #1 notes, “we lost A LOT of money!”<sup>24</sup> She goes further to describe that “a whole bunch of guys got arrested at the same time and that year I started making way less money.”<sup>25</sup> The prevention of this credit scam, as an example, while preventing the theft of several individuals in Montreal, also generated a direct decline in the amount of money in the forms of spending and tips. In a space that benefits from this type of crime, it is important that police are policed as well.

Alongside bouncers, another important actor that helps to insure money from the informal economy flows into the club without negative affective the safety of the venue is a “watcher.” The watcher is a position that charges the individual with accommodating the needs of the nightclub’s highest paying clientele. Watchers play a unique role in the policing of hip hop. The care and services they provide to clients is determined in advance by the security guards. Watchers are required to provide care to any high rollers who range from doctors, architects, visitors from areas like Dubai, rappers, and even individuals involved in organised crime. When rappers and members of organised crime are present, their accessibility is deeply policed by the security guards. The role of watchers is twofold. They provide customer and client care to individuals interested in spending money *and* serve as liaison and barrier to group conflict.

Their method of policing used by watchers is slightly opaque but becomes clear through our analysis. By providing customer service, special treatment, and mediating

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18, 2021.

potential conflicts, watchers effectively deter police from entering the premises. They reduce the chances of disruptions or conflicts that would bring the police inside. This is important because once inside, the police can begin other disruptive methods (Checking for ID, verifying capacity, turning on lights and stopping music etc) of policing on hip hop nights that can discourage establishments to organise such evenings at all. By providing exceptional treatment to individuals who demonstrably spend the most at said establishments on hip hop nights, watchers ensure both the profitability of the space through the reduction of police interventions.

While hip hop nights at Tokyo and Muzique draw a Black clientele, it is never a solely Black clientele and differences in the treatment of Black and non-Black patrons can be observed. Watcher #1 observed that on hip hop nights “Black people with money are policed.”<sup>26</sup> Building on this, bartender #1 mentioned that she has witnessed law enforcement be “quite rough”<sup>27</sup> with a visibly intoxicated Black male on an evening where hip hop is played, while on the same night a white male, equally intoxicated and disruptive, will receive a far “gentler and softer”<sup>28</sup> form of policing from security guards. This also applies if both individuals possess the same amount of money. These actions aim partly to ensure a safe environment in the premises, but to fully understand these actions we need to consider how the police actually shape the actions of security guards and watchers.

There are similarities and differences in the motivations for police and security guard interventions on hip hop nights. With law enforcement, the policing of Black individuals is based on their perceived proximity to imaginations of gang related types of violence. As I noted above, there are extra-legal markers that suture these associations, such as large amounts of money being spent and proximity to other potential criminals. As for security, the

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Watcher # 1, January 24, 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Tokyo Bartender #1, August 18, 2021.

reasoning is a bit more calculated and bound up within a cost-benefit construct. For most security, it is imperative that Black individuals with money receive good customer service and attention and in the event that those individuals potentially have links of an informal or criminal nature. In this instance, Black individuals are more heavily policed by watchers, bouncers, and security by ensuring their needs are met to prevent any type of conflict or escalation that might result from not being served, encountering opposing groups inside nightclubs.

But of course, security guards and other staff aim to reduce the chances of these conflicts for complicated reasons – first because they want to provide a safe environment in the club, but also because they want to reduce the chances of a police intervention. The reason security guards and other staff engage in racist policing, then, is partly due to their awareness of the type of attention Black individuals attract from the police. Therefore, in order to reduce any of that, the staff try to keep these clients as content as possible *not* only for their own safety and that of others but also for the profitability of the establishment that they work at. These orders to police Black clients differently inside clubs where hip hop is played are not self enacted, however. It all still comes from owners and is delegated by managers. The actions of security guards and watchers, in sum, are partly shaped by the police. Their actions are calibrated partly to reduce the chances of a police intervention. Because the police are more likely to intervene, and are more likely to intervene aggressively, in the case of a Black patron, security guards and watchers *also* need to pay special attention to Black people.

## 6. Other Club Staff and Hip Hop Nights

This section of the paper will focus on the methods deployed by nightclub owners, managers, and staff (aside from bouncers), to police hip hop. Many interviewees admitted to either

witnessing or actively participating in the policing of hip hop the nightclubs they worked at. As noted by Owner #1, hip hop nights, which fell on industry night (usually Sunday nights, when people who work at clubs go out), were always “more stressful.” In order to manage this stress, a series of practices were created. The question I pursue in this section is what types of policing the staff used to police hip hop. I will begin by explaining the kinds of positions filled by staff. Then, I will describe the specific and respective actions taken by each staff member to police hip hop in their nightclubs.

Owners and managers concoct policing tactics which are then diffused among the staff. Bartenders police the purchasing power of clientele on hip hop nights and DJs police the music played in a medley of ways. I will demonstrate that these tactics are not only put in place to police the clientele but to also deter the SPVM from investigating the interior of the space as well. These tactics, I will demonstrate, are created in order to spatially regulate perceived association of hip hop with street gang stereotypes (won't pay for drinks, might get rowdy) in Montreal as well as mitigate the temperament of police officers in the event that they enter the premises.

The policing tactics used by staff are set forth by management and the owners. These two groups are responsible for ensuring both the safety of clients and the profitability of their establishment. As a result, they are methods and tools that enable their businesses to operate effectively, safely, and profitably. Because owners are seldom present in their clubs, and managers cannot be everywhere at once, the methods they develop are delegated to and practised by their subordinate staff. The methods they use, as I will explain below, are different on hip hop nights than other nights. Like the police, club owners and managers expect hip hop nights to attract street gang members. Thus, security needs to be enhanced. Unlike the police, however, club owners and managers also *want* street gang members in their clubs – because they have money to spend. As Owner #1 noted, hip hop nights “were

more lucrative.” There is an interesting tension, then, between the policing of gang related behaviours on hip hop nights and the potential profitability from client spending.

Consequently, owners and managers pursue an ever-changing balance informed by racialized bodies, monitoring their purchasing power, and keeping the police at bay, legally or otherwise.

One way that nightclub staff play a role in policing is through decisions about bar tabs. The ability to show off liquor brands by having bottles delivered to one’s table (bottle service) is a long-standing way to convey wealth and power. On hip hop nights this is no exception. Most often, clients requesting bottle service run up a tab and pay for everything at the end of the night. On hip hop nights, however, clients who are suspected of potentially not paying their bills, are required to provide and leave identification or pay in advance for their drinks as opposed to paying as you go or at the end which is more the common practice. Bartenders serve as the gatekeepers to this land of libation and celebration. Bartender #1 mentions that at pre-shift meetings on hip hop nights: “There are times when unfortunately we are in a position where we might be stereotyping and trying to kinda get folks to pay in advance if they seem like someone who might run off on their bill or just be more difficult at the end as they get more inebriated.”

When estimating which clients are more likely to pay their bills and which are not, racial and social stereotypes play a key role – even when staff would prefer not to use them. Bartender #1 articulates this as “this weird dance you have to play where I don’t want to stereotype people but like if this bill doesn’t get paid, I’m going to eat it. And I know this is 100% illegal but most clubs and bars and nightclubs will charge the waitress or bartender for an unpaid bill.” Once again we see an extension of protecting the profits of the establishment sanctioned by the owners (seeing as how the owners force the staff to pay for unpaid

bills) informed by individuals who catfish long-standing stereotypical views of hip hop culture.

Some of the complexities arising from nightlife can potentially attract the attention of law enforcement if not addressed by staff. Eventually, these issues can result in potential violence, such as conflict between two or more rival groups, clients or even gangs. Staff are used to mediate potential conflicts. As noted by Bartender #1, “having the right staff to handle police” on hip hop nights is part of the intricate dance owners must play with the police. The role of women on hip hop nights in relation to police is quite exceptional. Bartender #1 discusses how several times she witnessed management sending over a young woman who would already be working to party or entertain groups (largely males) to keep potential conflicts at bay.

This is important because it demonstrates how nightclub owners and management respond to potentially detrimental issues that could compromise the spending ability of “the patrons who come in and actually spend the most money on those nights. I hate to say they are the ones who ... they are not the ones making money in the most legal ways.” This demonstrates that another layer of how management and owner police the presence of police is indirect. By addressing their own security concerns related to clients that spend large sums of money, the owners demonstrate their participation in the informal economy by avoiding needing to placate the SPVM by placating the interests of the clients while simultaneously accepting their funds and not compensating the staff.

Another way that hip hop is policed by service staff is related to music. Rap music, one of the primary vessels to convey and articulate hip hop culture, has early on been associated with deviance. It has been noted by several interviewees that the DJs play a vital, unique, and complex role in the policing of hip hop. At times, nightclub managers will pressure DJs to play less rap music or otherwise change their set to please the police and

ensure a less intense police presence in the club. In an effort to quell their concerns about police presence requires, managers and DJs need to maintain a fine equilibrium between appeasing their audience to ensure they remain and make purchases, on the one hand, and also while ensuring they do not create an environment that will attract the attention of law enforcement, on the other hand.

Finding this equilibrium is not always straightforward. Bartender #1 mentioned that on many evenings, they were close to the DJ booth and were privy to “weird conversations” taking place between the DJ and various staff members. She mentions hearing inquiries from staff ranging from “okay, but how many hip hop songs have we played?” to “okay maybe that’s enough” to “hey let’s save the hip hop songs for later when it’s busier and where there’s a bigger crowd if we play it too early then we’ll have played too much.” What’s taking place here is two forms of policing the DJ booth in terms of quantity *and* temporality.

She also remarks that even prior to evening rushes (before 11pm), that staff would often request to hear hip hop music, to which the DJ would reply “no, we want to save it for later! Could you imagine if the cops walked in?” It is unclear if these responses were because of direct requests from the police. What is clear, however, is that management took potential police responses to various DJ sets into consideration and acted to please real or perceived police demands. Clearly, this concern with DJ sets has less to do with the music and more to do with who was doing the dancing.

Aside from DJ sets, there are also choices to be made about the racial and ethnic background of DJs. These choices, too, are framed by the nightclub owners and managers’ security concerns or the real or perceived security concerns of police. Buonanotte is once again a special case. While the club’s most lucrative night was their hip hop nights, Client #3, a regular customer, made an interesting remark on the DJs there. While some of them represented racialized groups, client #3 notes: “I cannot recall ever seeing a Black DJ.” She

goes further to name in detail many of the regular DJs performing on hip hop nights. These included Dj FaFa (Japanese, Finnish and Pakistani), YO-C (White), and The Florez Brothers (Filipino) to name a few. At a location such as Buenanotte described by some interviewees as a place that “excludes hip hop culture” but still acknowledges that “hip hop nights are the busiest” is telling.

Between Tokyo and Buenanotte, we see two different kinds of DJs policing hip hop. The difference being that at the latter location, it is management’s use of non-Black DJs to play rap music to a heavily policed clientele. By playing rap music on hip hop nights inside Buenanotte, non-Black DJs are passively participating in the policing of hip hop. This stems from their role in managerial decisions; to hire non-Black DJs to entertain a deeply policed audience. Client #3 attributes some of this analysis on DJs to their own self-policing and how it helped her become more aware of managerial and internal regulations. Bartender #1 initially described the tactics used by the DJs at Tokyo: saving certain songs for busier service hours, tailoring their sets around potential police presence and enforcing quotas.

At Tokyo bar, it is not the ethnic composition of the DJ that informs how hip hop is policed but the coercive efforts of management that have been informed by the SPVM. This is very important to note because it helps us see that regardless of the differences between how DJs police hip hop, such strategies clearly originate from upper management. I raise this point to remind the readers of the fundamental role owners and managers play in what could be loosely described as the DJs’ participation in vertically policed nightclubs.

The final method of policing on hip hop nights is different from the others. While some of the methods discussed above are about changing the club environment (including DJ sets) to please the police, this method involves pleasing the police *without* changing the environment.



Here, club managers instruct women staff to engage with the police when they enter the space and ensure they are happy. As noted by Bartender #1, “having the right staff to handle the police” on hip hop nights is part of the intricate dance owners play with the police. The role of women on hip hop nights in handling the police is quite exceptional. They note how the owners and the management relate to the police and how maintaining a positive relationship with them was of key importance to the owners, often at questionable costs. As Bartender #1 mentions: “Like I’ve definitely poured out half a Red Bull and filled it with vodka and handed it to a police officer during his shift.”

These techniques are deemed necessary to prevent potential police interventions. For example, the police can strictly enforce club capacities or they can overlook larger crowds. It is obviously more profitable if the club goes over its capacity. The precarity that hip hop nights were placed under informed such behaviours and necessitated that owners take actions to stay open. The exchange (between the owner and the SPVM) was simple: “You might be over capacity but I’ll turn a blind eye to this,” Otherwise the SPVM could take measures to disrupt your evening such as turning on lights, emptying the space to do a head count or asking the DJ to change the music as noted by DJ #1 Describing an SPVM officer telling a DJ: “Aie! Ferme-la cette musique là!” All of these potential liabilities exist at all times and unless the exact equilibrium is struck then the SPVM is likely to disrupt the establishment.

The methods discussed above are all meant to ensure security on hip hop nights. When it comes to decisions about bar tabs and when to send women (what’s the name?) to distract potentially conflicting groups, the calculations are by the club owners and managers. They calculate in the hopes of profiting as much as possible from spending on hip hop nights. With other methods, it is about the real or perceived needs of the police. A few interviewees commented on how real or arbitrary decisions about DJ sets were. On this question, bartender #1 mentioned there might have been a series of fights on evenings where rap music was

played that required police intervention. After this, the SPVM may have spoken with the owner about their music choices, or owners may have their playlists to avoid future police interventions .Bartender #1 recalls:

I don't know how you would know of those previous weekends when all those fights broke through, I don't think anyone would remember exactly what we were playing. But I guess these were assumptions that were made based on the folks who were (involved?) in the fights that were predominantly racialized... So I guess that's how that was chosen. I also think that there is a piece here in terms of hip hop culture where... Yeah I think it is read (seen?) by white supremacy (supremacists?) as more aggressive whereas folks of colour are like 'no that's just how we party.

White supremacy in Quebec informs how club owners, management and staff draw racialized connections between hip hop culture and Black people. This is important to understand because this draws us closer to a better understanding of the motivations behind the policing of hip hop. The general public, police, and the municipality all play a key role in the policing of hip hop. Bartender #1 attributes this to a perception of how racialized groups party vs white groups. They go further to comment on how you are read as a racialized person during festivities: "There are definitely these stereotypes to how we perceive how folks party and when you are a racialized person, it is read as more aggressive and more violent."

She finalises her point on DJ's quite well by explaining that the policing of the DJ booth on hip hop nights is quite sadly the punitive behaviour of white supremacy when the behaviour of racialized groups on hip hop nights is not open for consumption for the former:

Anything that comes from BIPOC culture is acceptable to white supremacy if it's for [their] entertainment. You know if it has entertainment value then we are accepting of BIPOC people. But when that entertainment value is not there anymore, oh and it's cool and I can consume this piece, then we're saying it's *ghetto*, it is problematic. It's the dichotomies that I find that I experience with Quebecois culture.

What we are seeing here is that the policing of hip hop is the policing of racialized life and liberty more broadly and DJs play a vital role in this.

Many Black nightclub owners engage in similar policing tactics. In an interview with DJ #1, he mentions knowing a Black nightclub owner on St. Laurent Avenue “who does more security for rap nights than others, ironically he has his own African, Caribbean night where he does less.” In response to increased security on the nights hip hop is played, the owner stated: “I don't want these artists here.” His reasoning was as the owner put mixed and not dissimilar from the sentiments of the owners of Buonanotte. He goes further to note that these individuals “I don't want these guys here. They're violent. It was a mix of ‘I'm expecting violence and I don't want the cops type of thing.’” This is important because it shows us that while the policing of hip hop remains racialized, even Black business owners share similar sentiments informed by stereotypes. This also demonstrates a different approach to secure profits from. For this Black business owner, it is easier to shut down hip hop shows altogether.

By policing the purchasing power of hip hop clients with the assistance of their staff (essentially all the hospitality branch of the team and not the security), club owners and managers can secure more profits while nurturing their relationships with the police. The primary objective motivating the behaviour and decision-making processes of owners and managers. While the SPVM, owners, and managers all participate in the policing of hip hop, the reasoning is different. It is interesting to note that this practice of anti-blackness is exercised by Black nightclub owners as well.

Owners, managers, and their staff are acting in a two-tiered fashion. The first being to respond to the direct and indirect concerns from the police. The second is securing the profitability associated with hip hop clients. While this final point can be both disrupted by police (by turning the lights on, asking the clients to provide identification or regulating the type of music played) *or* directly by the staff (by making clients pay in advance).

## 7. Discussion

My research has shown that hip hop is policed in Montreal in a few specific ways. Through semi-structured interviews, I have determined that there is a series of relationships between various parties and how they all respond to hip hop culture. What I identify specifically from these groups are various methods of policing hip hop when it is played inside select nightclubs. In my research I first identified what methods police officers in Montreal use. In order to explain this, I first provided a delineation between the respective tasks law enforcement squads undertake (local police versus Éclipse) and how those tasks inform the policing of hip hop. Following that, I then proceed by explaining the variety of methods used by law enforcement. The result is a series of disruption of the mobility of Black individuals (largely) in spaces where hip hop culture gathers. Through my research I have located 4 methods used by law enforcement to police hip hop culture. They were the division of police squads, the amount of police present on nights where hip hop is played, the checking of IDs, refining who they focus on on evenings where rap music is played and checking bar tabs.

Following this, I delved further into methods of policing through learning about the experience of security guards, bouncers and door staff. This section helps readers understand what informed the use of security at nightclubs and then I discovered what types of changes take place with security, bouncers and door persons on evenings where rap music is played (mostly on hip hop nights). These range from the amount of security staff present to their change in ethnic composition on hip hop nights. Following this my analysis took a look at what the relationships are between the SPVM and these respective teams and determined that there is a very strong relationship between the two respective parties that is mutually beneficial and serves to both keep the SPVM from disrupting nightclubs with searches and

ensures businesses make money off of all of their clients regardless of their background or means of economic gains legal or otherwise.

The note of profit brings me to my final section which focuses on the roles of upper tier management and their subordinate staff members. What I determined from this section is that there is a wide series of tactics employed by both staff and management to police hip hop. The first set of methods of policing come from owners and management which involves ensuring the spending capacity of their best clients which they identify to be those from the informal economy. At the same time, however, staff, on nights where hip hop music is played, participate in a series of policing to ensure that clients associated with hip hop culture pay their tabs and do not get involved in any rival skirmishes that could prompt the attention of law enforcement. At its core, there is a deep and long-standing history of policing hip hop culture in Montreal, Quebec.

The ideas that inform the policing of hip hop, as well as the objectives of this policing, differ between the SPVM (the actual police) and the other agents that participate in policing (e.g., bouncers and servers). What is determined from this research is that the policing of hip hop from the SPVM in Montreal is informed by the province's existing ideas toward street gangs which are circulated through mass media, the police, and politicians. These pre-existing ideas as articulated by my interviews demonstrate that when it comes to why the SPVM polices hip hop the answer is that Black males are associated with street gang violence by the police force. What my research also showed, however, is that the charge that hip hop is associated with gang violence is a bit of a smokescreen. As noted with my research at Buonanotte, we saw the effect of a hip hop night that largely excluded Black fans of rap music but that still played the music to non-Black audiences and performed by non-Black artists as well. It is not so much that hip hop is associated with gangs, in other words, but

rather than Black hip hop artists, DJs, and enthusiasts are associated with gangs. White hip hop, *Rap Queb*, inhabits a world outside these negative associations.

When it comes to bouncers and other staff, similar ideas can be found, but the objectives are somewhat different. Consider bouncers and doorpersons. In the event that clients on hip hop nights are Black and male they will almost immediately be subject to policing. Conversely for White fans of hip hop culture, being subject to policing is informed by how much their extra-legal categories satisfy the latent fears previously mentioned regarding street gangs. The closer their attire (baseball caps, baggy jeans and hairstyles) approximates that of hip hop culture, the higher the likelihood of them being subject to any of the methods mentioned. Additionally, we see that if somehow, a party on a hip hop night evades any form of policing from bouncers or security or bar staff, it is largely contingent on the amount of money they are willing to spend and that amount usually has to be a larger sum than that of their White peers. What was apparent was that while staff do police hip hop, it is not as a deterrent to the perceived association with gangs. In fact, my research has shown that they are seeking to police hip hop to preserve its presence in their clubs. The reason for this as my research has shown is that there is a considerable amount of profit to be extracted from these individuals on hip hop nights. My research demonstrates that nightclubs have a slightly more complex relationship with hip hop as they not only try to make money from it they also police to ensure the police do not disrupt it.

At its core, my research demonstrates a wide range of intermediaries and stakeholders surrounding hip hop culture. Hip hop policing affects the spatial, monetary, expressive and celebratory capacity of Black life loosely speaking. It engenders suspicions about Black culture and art. Through the policing of hip hop, we see a wide variety of symptoms of this issue in the form of frustration and discouragement. Many performers of rap music talk about not wanting to even attempt to organise events or performances quite often. Because of the

constant supervision or constant fear of the former, Black people carry with them a very strong sense of self-policing that informs behaviour, attire and sense of worth. In many ways the policing of hip hop is the creation and maintenance of racial othering. Much of the imaginary surrounding the inherently Black expressive is dubious. On the one hand, being tied to hip hop culture reinforces place-based identities that reinforce community building and solidarity amongst the Black urban youth (Rose 1994). Rose goes further to assert that hip hop culture and namely fans and creators of rap music rely on visually coded tools in public spaces. The policing of hip hop, my research shows, is strongly linked to identifying visual cues and as such, subjugates the spatial mobility of Black life in many public and private spaces.

These findings, when situated within the literature on the policing of hip hop, confirm some of the literature's claims. What can be summarised from the literature in hip hop studies is that there has been, since the civil rights era and the emergence of the New Jim Crow, a new architecture of control that informs the shifting tensions of racial discrimination (Bonilla & Dietrich 2014). One form of control is through the category "street gang," a category that appears to designate a form of crime but in practice points to particular racial groups. As we can see from the literature, throughout the early twenty first century, the United States saw a massive increase in the formations of gang squads (Banes 2004). Montreal fits within this trajectory, with the formation of the Éclipse section of their force in 2006. Not unlike the United States, this team was charged with reducing gang related violence the city, but overwhelmingly targeted young Black men in the northeast of the city.

While existing research on the policing of street gangs in Montreal has shown how Black people are targeted by this seemingly race-neutral operation (Montreal sans profilage, 2018; Livingstone, 2018), my research has confirmed that this form of policing has a direct effect on the ways in which Black people can express themselves and are understood in

public spaces (Dabney 2017). Furthermore, my research also confirms that in the presence of an inherently Black form of social expression such as hip hop (Nielson 2010) that the methods of policing used change dramatically in order to maintain the municipality's idea of safe urban spaces. This is not only true for the SPVM but also for non-police agents. As my research has shown, even in the absence of law enforcement on hip hop nights that perceived associations related to being low income, having money illegally obtained or having the propensity toward violence, it has become clear that more parties are set on policing and spatially regulating Black life. And this is especially true in the presence of an inherently Black artform such as hip hop.

What my research largely achieved was twofold. Firstly, my research was able to demonstrate that there is a strong positive correlation between the types of policing tactics used abroad to deal with Black expressive capacity. These tactics were almost always spatial or economic. As noted with the London Metropolitan Police's form 696 which focused its attention on any performances that involved a recorded backing track to the Montreal Regie des Alcools threatening to revoke the liquor licence of Bar Le Pionnier for hosting a hip hop themed event. In conjunction with the timely creation of team Éclipse in relation to the inordinately large increase in gang squads in the United States, it stands to reason that my research confirms that much of the policing of hip hop in Montreal is informed by post-inspired imaginaries of Black social expression. This has not only affected the forms of policing by the SPVM, but also the manners by which the beneficiaries of the formal nightlife economy (bar staff, bar owners, security and DJ's) conduct themselves on hip hop nights. The literature does not discuss at any great length how nightclub staff linked strongly to the policing of hip hop and apart from my own semi structured interviews with bartenders, management, DJs, and other staff there is opportunity for further research into this field.



Finally, my research has demonstrated that the city of Montreal and more broadly the province of Quebec *does* in fact not have any real objection to hip hop fundamentally but rather with the body that performs it. In my interviews it was clearly articulated that much of the experiences of staff and clients on hip hop nights was related very much to phenotype rather than music. This was undergirded by my interviews that noted less attention from the SPVM towards non-Black rap artists who play *Rap Queb* as well as DJs at Buonanotte. Through this my research has demonstrated a present, exceptional form of racial profiling in Quebec (Austin 2010). My research demonstrates how advanced this profiling is by locating the creation of both white, Quebecois rap that receives provincial funding and is celebrated as a means of permitting a linguistic minority the right to appropriate and access the experiences of Black expression while at the very same time, if that expressive is performed or articulated by Black performers (regardless of origin) is at odds with urban order and is subject to a variety of policing, not only that which is found in this research either (Austin 2010; Hampton 2012; Scott 2010).

## 8. Conclusion

Hip hop has, since its creation as a post-civil rights artform, viscerally depicted the outcomes from newfound legal methods of policing Black life in the late 20th century. This has remained not only unchanged in the United States, but as the literature suggests, has expanded to the global North and further and has only evolved in its architectures. A significant scholarly literature has investigated how hip hop is policed in the US and worldwide. It shows how new policing practices are developed to police hip hop artists, as well as listeners, and how these practices function as a form of racial policing in disguise. From legislative policies that use lyrics to prosecute rappers, to various forms of probationary

orders, the ability of Black artists to earn income speaks to the long-standing practice of spatially regulating Black bodies. This kind of policing is the afterlife of plantation logics and anti-blackness. Unique about it is how it operates in the post-civil rights era.

In my research I discovered that within the province of Quebec and its city of Montreal, that pre-existing ideas of Black life largely informed by media sources and the sense of injustice of a culture identifying as a linguistic minority in Canada does to affirm their positionality in the global north by subjecting ethnic minorities to racist treatment. My research has located an exceptional form of policing hip hop culture that goes beyond what law enforcement does but uncovers both the informal relationship between law enforcement and nightclub staff ranging from managers all the way to doorpersons. As my research has demonstrated is that while it illegal to target or profile Black people as a private citizen, there are now, many legal tools at the disposal of law enforcement to do so legally *and for* employees in business such as nightclubs they are justified in their policing strategies as either protective (making sure we don't lose any money) or as de escalating to prevent potential violence (in reality they just want to keep the SPVM from legally searching the premises that are likely accepting funds from the informal economy). This confirms the central claims of literature that the policing of hip hop is the policing of Black mobility.

What is important about my research is that it identifies methods outside of policing that do not involve intervention by law enforcement or the general public, but rather, focuses on employees and business owners extending the long-standing practice of policing Black lives in new and unfortunate matters. This research can help contribute to the existing literature, activism and organising around the policing of Black life by further complicating the architecture of what constitutes policing of Black life and thereby bringing us that much closer to creating a real corrective. As Mugabo states, “Black people are forever ‘searching for ways to halt and/or undo the constraints that enclose them in states of unfreedom’”

(Mugabo, 2019: 14). Hip hop has, in spite of its permutations, served as a vehicle to express and escape the cultural enclosures manufactured through anti-blackness, but it's an imperfect escape in the space of law enforcement and an anti-Black public. The struggle continues, in new and existing Black form, new and existing Black imaginaries and with all Black life.

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Table 1. Breakdown of Interviewees

Interview no.	Role	Venue
1	Bartender	Tokyo, Muzique
2	Owner	Tokyo
3	Client	Tokyo, Muzique
4	Runner	Buonanotte, Muzique, Bar Terrace
5	Dj	Tokyo
6	Bartender	Tokyo, Muzique
7	Client	Buonanotte
8	Staff	Staff