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The Unmaking of a Gangbanger: The Role of Krump Dancing in Understanding Nonviolent Practices Among Inner City Youth

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The Unmaking of a Gangbanger: The Role of Krump Dancing in Understanding Nonviolent
Practices among Inner City Youth

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Sharmaine Tia Jackson

Dissertation Committee:
Distinguished Professor David A. Snow, Chair
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2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF IMAGES

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AREAS OF INTEREST

- Urban Sociology
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- Qualitative/Field Methods

- Political Sociology (exam area)
- Race and Gender
- Culture (exam area)

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2014   Ph.D., Sociology, University of California at Irvine

2002   J.D., Rutgers School of Law-Newark

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CURRENT RESEARCH

The Unmaking of a Gangbanger: The Role of Krump Dancing in Understanding Nonviolent Practices among Inner City Youth. The Krump movement, via krump dancing, provides a window into the world of at-risk urban youth in understanding the everyday ways in which nonviolence is facilitated and maintained in communities afflicted with violence. This project contributes to the literature by analyzing how inner city youth organize to improve their lives.

WORKING PAPERS

"Being Rugged, Raw or Grimey: Krump Dancing, Street Identities and Social Integration."

"Socialization, Dance, and Violence: A Comparative Ethnography of Krump Dancing in Australia and the US."

"Time, Space and Race: Reconciliation in Australia's Far North Queensland."

"From Subhuman to Human: Labor Unions and the Development of Aboriginal People's Rights in Far North Queensland 1955-1970."

"Dehumanized Images of Women in Advertisements: A Content Analysis of African American- and White- Oriented Women's and General Interest Magazines."

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2012   "Being Rugged, Raw or Grimey: Krump Dancing, Street Identities and Social Integration." *The Australian Sociological Association Annual Conference*, The University of Queensland. November 26-29.

2010   "From Subhuman to Human: Labor Unions and the Development of Aboriginal People's Rights in Far North Queensland 1955-1970." *29ᵗʰ Annual Australian and New Zealand Law and History Conference*, The University of Melbourne. December 13-15.

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2011   "From Subhuman to Human: Labor Unions and the Development of Aboriginal People's Rights in Far North Queensland 1955-1970." *Center for Peace and Global Conflict Studies Graduate Student Panel II,* Irvine, CA April 8.

2011   "Time, Space and Race: Reconciliation in Australia's Far North Queensland." *Kugleman Research Fellowship*, Irvine, CA May 17.

2009   "Dehumanized Images of African American and White Women in
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TEACHING POSITIONS

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Unmaking of a Gangbanger: The Role of Krump Dancing in Understanding Nonviolent
Practices among Inner City Youth

By

Sharmaine Tia Jackson

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Distinguished Professor David A. Snow, Chair

Gang violence and youth delinquency remain constant topics of research and discussion among
social scientists. What fails to be highlighted among inner city youth are practices of nonviolence,
compassion and trust. Krump dancing provides a case where inner city youth use street based
tools to improve their lives. This study relies on 16 months of participant observations and in-
depth interviews among krump dancers living in South Los Angeles. To understand how krump
dancing is transmitted and interpreted outside of the US, I conducted three months of participant
observations and in-depth interviews among krump dancers, in Melbourne, Australia. Drawing
from the structures of the violent street gang, inner city youth build families, manage conflict,
and cope with emotional pain and rage. Through their street experiences and identities, inner city
youth create an alternative practice to the violent street gang. In doing so, they retain their street
character, while demonstrating how street and decent are not mutually exclusive practices.

CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION TO KRUMP DANCING

"So you're a student?'

"Yes."

"What do you study?"

"Krump dancing."

"What? What's that?"

"It's a type of urban street dance. Like on television when there are groups of dancers competing. It is sort of like modern breakdancing."

"Oh, yeah. I think I get it. So, you can get a degree for THAT?"

"Yes, and I got funded too!"

This line of questioning has followed me since the beginning of my research on krump dancers. I have been confronted with questions asking how the study of street dancers, such as krumpers, could be of importance. I have been challenged to justify how my research could constitute education. Many times, I have debated with myself on whether I should go into how the process of urbanization and modernity has impacted traditional life and culture. Dating back to sociology's foundings, we know that with the birth of the city came a disjuncture of traditional forms of socialization and control mechanisms, leaving a divide between that which is conventional and that which is "street."

However, on occasion, I meet someone who gets it. That is, they understand the power of dance. In those exchanges, I witness a spark or glimmer in the other person's eyes and a smile emerges as they relate by telling their story. The power dance holds is the power to emote. By connecting the mind to the body, dance communicates where words cannot.

And then there are my informants. "You want to study us? Why? Why would anyone want to know anything about us? What can we teach?" And they, too, found it amusing that I could get a degree studying them. As one krumper asked rhetorically, "Can you believe she is getting her degree on krump dancing?" This statement was followed by laughter. This became a running a joke, as if I was pulling something over on the University. I dealt with the disbelief that this study could have an impact on anyone outside of the group. Sometimes I would try to tell my informants how sharing their stories could make a difference in the life of someone similarly situated or how their experiences could inform social policy from an insider's perspective. But that would bring people down a bit. Who wants to think of themselves as a social problem?

This brings me to the question of why I studied krump dancers. The short answer is because they are unexpected. I used to run along an aqueduct within the city limits. The aqueduct is lined with concrete, and littered with rocks, shopping carts, garbage, old tires and dirt. Over time, I noticed a tiny bit of green growing. I thought to myself, "how unusual." I figured that this tiny plant would not survive for long amidst the harsh environment. But sure enough, I was wrong. Not only did that little plant thrive, others sprung up as well. Seeing that patch of green along my path reminded me that life exists in the most unexpected of places. Just like krump dancers.

South Los Angeles

Born out of the ghetto and violent street gangs, krump dancing was created with the goal of providing at-risk youth with an alternative option to participation in violent gangs. As a style of street dance, krump originated in South Central Los Angeles. Referred to by some as, "the city of dreams," Los Angeles, California ("LA") attracts entertainers of various backgrounds as they

seek to make it big in the entertainment industry. Woven into this landscape of movie and recording studios, celebrities, fortune 500 companies and the glitz and glam of Hollywood are the gangs of LA. According to the Los Angeles Police Department (2014):

> The County and City of Los Angeles are the 'gang capital' of the nation. There are more than 450 active gangs in the City of Los Angeles. Many of these gangs have been in existence for over 50 years. These gangs have a combined membership of over 45,000 individuals.

Other accounts of gang activity in the greater LA area are highlighted in a 2012 press release by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") referencing a study that analyzed city-level data derived from the CDC's National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). The data collected from 2003-2008 across 17 states found the following five cities as having the highest levels of gang homicide: Los Angeles, CA; Oklahoma City, OK; Long Beach, CA; Oakland, CA; and Newark, NJ. According to the Director of the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Linda C. Degutis, Dr.P.H., M.S.N. commented that:

> Violence – including gang homicides – is a significant public health problem. Investing in early prevention pays off in the long run. It helps youth learn how to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence and keeps them connected to their families, schools, and communities and from joining gangs in the first place (CDC Press Release 2012).

Furthermore, the CDC Press Release (2012) found that "in Los Angeles and Long Beach, gang homicides accounted for the majority of homicides among 15-24-year-olds (61 and 69 percent, respectively)."

Growing up in a gang-ridden environment presents challenges to youth, particularly young males in avoiding violence. However, within this landscape exists pockets of protection where individuals on the local level have come together to practice other options beyond the perpetuation of youth violence. Interwoven with the gangs, crime and poverty of LA are thriving centers of hope, compassion and opportunity. These centers are fueled and pushed by

the local residents. Krump dancing is one example of how inner city youth can manipulate the experience of gang life and turn it into an opportunity and a practice of nonviolence.

Practitioners of krump dancing are generally urban males, between the ages of 12-25 who are ethnic and/or racial minorities. Almost all of the founding members of krump dancing are African American, as are most of the dancers in South LA. Dancing is only one facet of krumping as many practitioners talk of krump as a movement. "Pushing the movement," as it is often proclaimed in the scene, is one of the primary reasons why people participate in the dance and signifies a commitment to nonviolence in the everyday interactions among these youth.

From Clowning to Krumping

Around 2000, krump dancing appeared for the first time in South LA. Its predecessor, "clowning" or clown dancing was created by Tommy the Clown, a former "gangbanger" (member of a violent street gang) and ex-convict. Starting off as a children's birthday party clown in Compton, Tommy attracted the attention of some neighborhood kids. By teaching these kids about clowning, Tommy became a role model and mentored these youth in hopes of leading them away from the life of crime that he experienced (Tommy the Clown 2006). Over time, some of his mentees branched out from clowning. Needing a greater range of emotional expression than a clown could embody, two youth, Tight Eyez and Big Mijo, created krump dancing and started the first krump "fam" or family named "The Cartoonz Fam" (Krump Kings 2008).

With the emergence of krump, tensions arose between clowns and krumpers in deciding who the better dancers were. To resolve this tension, competitions in the form of "battles" were waged. In a battle, dancers face off against one another on a stage in front of an audience with the goal of outperforming your opponent and putting your opponent down. Each dancer takes

turns or "rounds" (like in boxing) "attacking" and outshining their opponent. To outshine one's

opponent, a dancer must demonstrate they have mastered the techniques and power needed to

krump. It is not unusual for dancers battling to have the same level of skill proficiency. Therefore,

the attack component becomes the central criterion in determining a winner. The attack consists

of a story or put down of one's opponent that is embodied in the dance. A successful attack is

one that leaves the other in a defeated position with the ultimate attack resulting in a "kill off" –

a move that immediately ends the rounds declaring a winner. At the end of the rounds, a winner

is declared by one or more judges. Often, these judges take their cues from the audience's

reaction to the dancer in the form of yelling out, jumping up or other animated gestures that

indicate approval.

To facilitate these competitions, Tommy the Clown would host events that he called the

"Battle Zone." Of these battles, Battle Zone V, in 2003 had a lasting impact in shaping krump

dancing. Held at the Great Western Forum, an indoor arena located in Inglewood, housing up to

18,000 participants, Battle Zone V was showcased in the 2005 documentary, *Rize,* that was

directed by David LaChapelle. It is during this battle that the clowns emerged victorious over the

krump dancers. Although faced with defeat, this battled served to distinguish and solidify krump

as a legitimate street dance and an equal competitor to clowning.

In speaking with one "lil' homie" (a mentee of a leader of a krump fam or "big homie")

called Worm, he shared how it felt to be a krump dancer after Battle Zone V. Wearing his hair in

locks, Worm, an African American, explains that he got his name due to the fact that "I was the

skinniest guy, the slimmest dude, the smallest one and the way I danced at the time was real slick

and wormy, because I'm flexible." At 12 years-old, Worm entered the krump scene in 2003 but

did not "officially" start krumping until he was 13 in 2004.

Using a plant analogy, Worm describes the loss and resurrection of krump dancing after the Battle Zone V defeat:

> Let me explain it to you like this. Like plants—'cause I'm a gardener—in order for a seed to first be a plant it has to get through that stage where it's growin' roots. It has to get out of the dirt. So, before the Battle Zone, that was the stage where krump was gettin' its roots down. But after Battle Zone, that's when it had to break out of the dirt. I guess the Battle Zone would be the actual dirt. So you have to pass the dirt to be a beautiful flower. So that whole situation is our dirt. [People would tell us] "Yeah, you all lost to the clowners." When you got something against somebody, you say, "You got dirt on them."

> So [people] were like, "Why krump? 'Cause it's getting old ya'll." But at the end of the day, we are a beautiful flower. We do something beautiful—from the heart. And when you do something from the heart, it can't be no better than that. It really can't. When you are doing something you love from the heart it's not a fad—these things that come out every once in a while. … If you're not doing something from the heart, it's hard to say that you are actually doin' it. …[W]hen you're doing it [correct] it's something that you're focused on. Something that your time, effort, blood, sweat and tears went into. That's what we do with our krump. You need to express things like that just to grow. As far as the whole rebuilding thing, that was our dirt. That's our point of actual birth—or rebirth.

> Because there never really was a birth of krump until that [Battle Zone]. People were getting off but it didn't really have a base. It didn't have a name. We'd have a session but it wasn't as arranged as it is now. It was more of like, "We're doin' it." That's why I call it the roots. In a plant, it's more structured—leaves, a stem, a fruit. It's more structured than roots which are all over the place to find energy to feed the plant. It's good now that [krump] has structure because back when it first [started] it didn't have a lot of structure. That's why I would say that it's our actual birth now because we have structure now. We have a way to go about it. We have more characters and mentalities. It's more organized. It's more of a kingdom now really than it was than before the Battle Zone. It's a krump world now instead of just a krump movement. It's a krump world now.

In his analogy, Worm describes the development of krump to the growth of a flower. Here, the groundbreaking that a seed goes through is compared to the renewal of krump dancing after losing at Battle Zone V. The act of losing provided a catalyst for the krumpers to organize and structure the dance. As Worm explains, krump is not a "fad" where a public loss could result in the dissolution of the phenomenon. Rather, krump dancing survives despite being identified

with losing. It does so due to the reaffirmations of the dancers' conviction in krumping, which generated and solidified a collective krump identity.

One of the bases of this collective identity is love. In krump, the source of this love stems from: the dancer's passion in expressing themselves in a safe space, the support, intimacy and belonging big homies (krump fathers) and one's crew (krump brothers and sisters) provide, and the sense of pride and self-worth that comes with performing well. As Worm previously explained, "When you do something from the heart, it can't be no better than that." Worm is only one example of the many urban youth that put their heart into krump dancing. Like a seed which has yet to reach its potential, krump persisted because it provided a medium for urban youth, like Worm, to grow. In such a medium, the unseen flower blooms.

The Meaning of Krump

To fully understand the meaning of krump involves going deeper than just observing the dance moves. It requires an understanding of the dancer's motives of participating in and shaping their fam or crew. To think of krump dancing as unidimensional, that is, as a gathering of youth for the purpose of dancing, misses the importance of the ritual in providing a sense of hope and purpose in the dancer's life. This was not readily apparent in my early observations of krump as I had not been given access to the "backstage" of this scene.

Rather, it was only after gaining the trust of the big homie, Fudd, through demonstrating my dedication to the crew in the form of showing up, asking questions, participating in events (although not by dancing), giving deference to the big homie and taking an overall interest in the lives of the dancers, that I came to be seen as part of the crew. Of all the ways I worked my way in, showing up was the most important. To "show up" means more than being present or in the scene. It also indicates a willingness to pitch in and do your part, lend a helping hand or ear,

word of advice, offer someone a ride, give a free haircut, a few bucks, keep an eye on the kids, be a sounding board for new ideas or old problems, or share in a snack or soda. This is not to say that being physically in the scene is not critical. On the contrary, absences are always commented on as an indication of a lack of dedication, commitment or follow through, with the only reasonable excuse being a commitment to one's non krump fam. Work, school and even illness are not good enough excuses to account for someone not showing up.

My initiation into the crew did not correspond to some spectacular event or rite of passage. Rather, I understood that I was a part of the crew based upon how the others related to me. Instead of strange looks on arriving to the scene, I was greeted with hugs and stories of the latest things that have happened since last meeting. In lieu of sitting against the wall and observing the action, I would be asked to run the tracks, watch children, hold money and give rides. I would be admonished for my nonattendance, and overtime, I too would feel the pangs of guilt for not showing up. However, I mediated this by framing my nonattendance as part of my efforts to push the movement outside of the krump world. Perhaps the biggest sign that I was in was the fact that I was allowed to observe the process of decision making by high ranking members in the crew, and, on occasion, solicited for my opinion. This was made possible because Fudd, one of my key informants, vouched for me.

It was at the beginning of 2009 that I first met Fudd, a 28 year-old, African American man. His link into the krump community came through an old high school friend, Slayer, four years earlier. While krump was getting off the ground in South LA, Fudd was playing football on a scholarship for a local college in West Virginia. His return to South LA was precipitated because the mother of his child and his son were living in LA, so Fudd returned after two years. This was around the release of *Rize* in 2005.

Needing a haircut, Slayer (known as Dragon at the time) stopped by the barbershop where Fudd was working to reconnect. Once part of the Cartoonz Fam and featured in *Rize*, Slayer introduced Fudd to the krump world. At 25, Fudd would not have been a typical krumper as krump dancing primarily is the domain of youth. Rather, it was a desire to get his son involved in dancing that Fudd entered the krump scene.

In explaining his first impressions of being introduced to krump, Fudd told me:

> I thought it was just like a regular dance. I didn't know it had God as a tool to help bring in kids and stuff. I didn't know. But, it kinda made it more better because it was more positive.

His first krump character or identity was Papa Slaughter. The significance of this name is in the word "papa." While papa could be a reference to Fudd's seniority, especially since being 25 years of age from the perspective of these youth is old, it is not. Rather, "papa" refers to Fudd's care giving nature, which exemplifies the archetype of a father, as described in Fudd's statement below:

> I [thought], "Dang," when they gave me the name Papa Slaughter. It was a humbling experience 'cause [I thought], "Dang, I'm more like a daddy in the game to look over these kids."

Although Fudd entered the krump scene for his son, he immediately saw that he could have a positive impact on the children of his 'hood. While Fudd's generous nature is apparent when you first meet him, as he usually has a smile on his face, this generosity comes with a high expectation of loyalty. Acts of disloyalty carry with them the stigma of having "disappointed big homie" and Fudd's distancing of himself from you.

The crew that Fudd runs is called Demotion Crew ("DC"). Because Fudd has multiple characters, such as Papa Slaughter, Doomsday and Fudd, his crew is comprised of youth who fall under one of these identities. But what is common to all crew members is that Fudd is big homie,

the patriarch. Every other Sunday, Fudd holds an organizational meeting at the barbershop where he works in Compton. The purpose of the organizational meeting is to set aside time to discuss long term plans in a setting that is exclusive to people either under Fudd or working with Fudd.

It was during one of these Sunday afternoon meetings, not long after getting into the crew, that I began to unravel the complexities of krump for its practitioners. Sitting in a plastic outdoor chair along a wall in the Barbershop observing krump dancing as I had done on numerous occasions, I suddenly hear, "Hey! Quiet down! Big homie tryin' to talk." Without warning, Fudd brings me into the setting. He starts by telling everyone how I have been following around the group for some time and that I must have some questions that I would like answered. While this was true, I had not approached the subject with him.

Although I had my agenda for studying krump dancing and this crew, it appeared that I was not the only one with an agenda. There were also those in the crew that saw my presence as an opportunity to advance a collective agreement as to the meaning and purpose of the crew. Because of his idealism and background, Fudd's agenda was to provide a place for everyone in the fam. For family is the cornerstone of his hope. However, not everyone derives their hope in the same way. For some, like Quest, an up and coming lil' homie, it is about fame and fortune. And for other lil' homies like Blaze, his hope comes from God and being a moral person.

So the question that I had, according to Fudd, was "What does krumping mean to you?" Even though I had not asked this question, it was a good one. For it revealed the complexities in coming to a consensus of what is krump. Taken from my fieldnotes that day, the following excerpt highlights the different ways these youth use krump dancing to improve their lives:

> Fudd starts off the discussion by telling the group that I would like to know what krumping means to them. Going first, Fudd explains how he saw the movie *Rize* and its effect on him to get involved. He continues by stating that he considers the crew to be his family. Before finishing, Fudd is interrupted by Quest: "It's bigger

10

than that. What is this? Kumbayah time? No, I've got my story but I'm not going to share it. Yeah, I'm from New York but this is not what this is all about."

The barbershop begins to stir with lots of noise and mood of the space becomes tense. People begin talking over one another and I hear someone yell, "Let me answer her question."

Another round of comments, with people talking over one another until some yells, "You can't listen if you are talking!"

Another lil' homie speaks, after introducing himself. He explains how krumping helps him cope with the loss of his family. He goes on to say that krumping relieves his stress. This comment is followed by other dancers telling their stories, including one dancer mentioning his involvement in a gang. However, once again, the commotion builds as people become upset over the meaning of krump.

At this point, I interject and speak for the first time explaining that there is no right answer. This seems to settle things down for the moment.

The next person to speak is B Bucc. He too explains that krumping and the crew are family. Because he struggles with taking care of two babies and has two jobs, krumping gives him "a place to find love from the fam." He is followed by Blaze, a dancer who got into krump after seeing the DVD Krump 101. For him, krump "got me away from trouble."

Quest returns to the discussion and describes the crew as "a good place where he can come to." In line with many other people's comments, Quest also finds family in being a part of the crew. But then he breaks with the discussion stating, "It's time for real talk."

Quest is concerned about the competition since "summer is on and SK [Street Kingdom—another crew] will be showcasing their stuff." He says that "there will be heads from everywhere watching. We need to have a main squad and stop trading on the team." He continues stating they are on the same team and need to "keep in mind the bigger picture—God."

Fudd interjects arguing that krump is "about having a place for the guys to get off."

Quest resumes the conversation arguing back that "some of these guys are getting too old and we need a crew that is going in the same direction. We need new and fresh talent." Quest then tells Fudd that he is the "the oldest guy out here."

"I'm doing the best that I can," Fudd replies.

Someone else chimes in, "Fudd has been giving 100%."

Quest reiterates, "If we are a group, we should be going in the same direction."

"I'd been saying that for a long time. That's why I've been working on the T-shirts," Fudd comments. "I've been coming out of my pocket for the money," Fudd continues.

"We should be able to invest in the group. Everyone should be investing in the group," states Quest.

Too Realz mentions a future event. Quest says that as a crew, "We should be taking $25 per person to dance and $20 to be a part of any event."

"Everyone needs to agree to have $10 by the 28th of the month to contribute to the T-shirts," says Fudd.

"But how much do you really need?" Quest asks.

Shaking his head, Fudd replies, "$10 is agreed upon."

"Then it's a done deal," states Quest. Quest continues talking about the future event and how the crew needs to get ready and start practicing to do well.

B Bucc speaks up and states: "times are hard with my family commitments and work. I don't have a car and it's not easy to get to places." He adds, "I am not so comfortable with the way the crew is being treated like a business because it's a fam for me."

Fudd explains that, "the T-shirts are a branding for the group and like a family those who cannot afford to contribute the ten dollars this time around will be covered and can cover someone else the next time around." Fudd continues stating, "We can pool our resources to help out those who need it."

Fudd then explains how he krumps for his uncle who died. That for him, krumping "is about family and I won't let that be destroyed." Fudd continues stating, "I recognize that SK is the biggest competition but DC has a formula for destroying groups. I'm not worried about failure because we are doing God's work. So long as we stay humble all things will work out." Fudd then diverges into a discussion as to why DC is better than the competition.

There is lots of talking back and forth about the future plans for the crew. Someone yells out to Quest again, "You can't learn anything by speaking! Give everyone time to talk!" Quest continues stating that, "SK will always be at the top of the food chain. They don't have to work as hard because people already like them and know them as the best. So, anything they do will be considered good.

As opposed to DC, we have to prove ourselves. This crew will not become known if we don't work harder."

Blaze speaks up stating, "We dance for the feeling not for the crowd. Everyone has got a different style and it has never been part of this crew to do it for the crowd, because that is not good Krump." He follows this up with "We weed out people that don't belong with us." Blaze then talks about how he krumps for those who have passed away "like, Casino—he is in a box now."

Others follow on saying, "I would have felt DC to go to better places but I stayed." Others comment stating, "I dance because it feels good—not to perform." Also, "I don't dance for the film or for the crowd. To do so is not good."

Fudd agrees with Blaze. He says, "The crowd will like anything."

At this point Quest offers an apology.

Fudd shifts the conversation to talk about how the crew is growing and how he has "a homegirl in Germany calling." Fudd mentions going to Honduras and how he is going to "rip it for the squad." He says that their fan base is growing. "We came in as nobodies but now people are copying us," he states.

Fudd criticizes other dancers for moving too fast. He says, "When people dance fast they are not as good. They just want to please the crowd. The crowd likes fast moves and so it seems like some of these groups are good when in fact they are not."

Blaze adds, that "old krump is where it is. New krump…is not the same." Fudd corrects him saying that it is not old or new krump. "It's just krump." Fudd argues, "There is a benefit to dancing slow because you can analyze the situation, the story. You can't train that skill. Either you have it or you don't."

At this point in the evening, the conversation evolves into storytelling about different events or videos people have seen. There is some discussion about people being upset that the rules of krump are not followed. The session ends with people breaking up and heading out. Quest is going around the room shaking hands with everyone. I overhear Fudd tell Quest, "Jerome, do what you gotta do."

I hang out with Fudd as everyone is leaving. I thank him for incorporating me into the group and for sharing their stories. Fudd seems tired. Exasperated he says, "I try to open the doors [to the Barbershop] and give the guys a place to come and have a session. I could be at home with my wife." We chat a little longer and he tells me that, "I am not going to let just anyone on the squad because one guy can bring it down." Commenting about Quest, Fudd tells me that "his mind be moving so fast. He needs to slow down. That is why he be dancin' so fast."

I use this excerpt from my fieldnotes as an illustration of the different dimensions of krump dancing. By having the question posed of what krump means to these dancers, several themes emerge. Krump creates family, provides a way to release tension, cope with loss, have fun, make money, gain recognition and praise God. In this discussion of the meaning of krump, there is a polarization with God, paying respect or honoring the dead, coping, and family at one end, with fame and fortune at the other. In the chapters that follow, I address each of these aspects in greater detail with the exception of religion, which I will briefly discuss here.

The meaning of krump dancing as a form of spiritual worship is a central concept to the dance. Krump stands for Kingdom Radically Uplifted Mighty Praise. Many youth use krump as a praise dance or form of spiritual worship to honor God. Using krump as a praise dance offers for some youth the chance to remake their lives and claim new identities free from previous stigmas. Many big homies are youth ministers and see krump as an opportunity to evangelize these urban youth. While all krumpers are not praise dancers, all krumpers respect and acknowledge this aspect of the dance.

A former clown turned krumper in the eleventh grade shared with me how he uses krump as a spiritual practice and a way to commune with others in a positive setting:

> Krumpin' is supposed to be to praise God. …God is inside of you. It's not, "Let me praise God that is inside of him." Do your movement—you're a different person.
>
> It's a religious thing. Sometimes you do it, say, because you feel down about somethin' and you know that it [krumping] would make you feel good—it's kinda like somebody praying. With me, it's like God gave me this ability or this gift and I want to present it to everybody else.
> …
> If you notice, when I dance at these events it's always a main event type of thing. It's not an individual battle for me. I never look at it like, "Oh, yeah. I'm gonna beat you and show everybody that I'm better than you are." When I go out there, it's because the crew wants me to dance and I'll do that. But I always say a little

prayer to myself before I actually dance. And I basically just ask God to move me the way that he would want me to move in and [I] tap into myself. That's basically it. I think it's more of a spiritual part for me.

… I'm just dancin' to show what he's [God] blessed me with. Like, this is my creativity that he's blessed me with, so this is what I have. Instead, when [other] people dance, they point at the next person, like they're rippin' somebody to shreds, or somethin' like that [laughing]. I'm not that kind of a dancer. If you see the way that I dance, it's nothing where I try to embarrass you. I do a lot of stuff that makes people say, "Wow" or "That was creative" but I don't do it [dance] to say that your krump is nothing compared to mine. It's nothing really like that for me.

While acknowledging there are dancers that do not treat krump as a praise dance, this krumper finds a way to worship inside the dance. One of the ways he accomplishes this is by avoiding battles or other displays of competition. Instead, he showcases his talent in venues that allow for him to freely express his internal emotions, the basis of which are God derived. In doing so, he is able to spread or share his God given "gifts." Furthermore, should this krumper require a healing, he is able to embody his prayer into his dance.

However, there is tension in how much religion should be affiliated with krump dancing. Some big homies have expressed concern that krumping should primarily be about providing a positive space for youth to belong without ties to religion. Some lil' homies have become disillusioned with conflicting messages, promises that have failed to materialize and personal dissonance. One krump dancer, an African American man who started krumping in his mid-teens, shared with me his perspective to my question: "Is Krumping a spiritual thing for you?"

I'm not a real spiritual person. Of course I believe in God. Of course I believe God's the savior, died on the cross and all that. But I'm not gonna call myself a spiritual person. I don't know. I just don't see myself as a spiritual person. There are people that say yes to questions like that. I don't do that [chuckling]. It's not so much a spiritual thing for me. It's more of a feeling thing. If you feel like it could be spiritual to you, then hey—be my guest. If it's spiritual for you, then let it be spiritual for you. Then if it's not, then it's not.

Since you interviewing me, that's a question that a lot of people get wrong. A lot of people think it's supposed to be a spiritual thing. We don't really know if it's supposed to be spiritual. So a lot of people get mad at other people because they not doin' it for the reasons that this person is doin' it. I see it as this, krump it's all about feelings. Everybody don't feel the same way. Everybody don't feel the same way the same time.

How can you justify your reasons—tellin' this dude, "You krumpin' for the wrong reasons. You're not doin' this. You're not doin' that. If you're not doin' it for God, then you're not doin' it at all." If you see it that way, I'm not gonna tell you that you wrong because that would make me a hypocrite. 'Cause now I'm tellin' you you're wrong for tellin' him he's wrong. That's a wrong thing to do. I'm not going to call you wrong. But it's a wrong thing to do. Because you contradicting the whole purpose of krump. The whole purpose of krump is to be able to be comfortable.

… I wouldn't call myself a spiritual person at all as far as krump. Naw.

Here, this dancer expresses his frustration with dancers judging one another for why they dance. Rather, this dancer argues that "the whole purpose of krump is to be able to be comfortable." In other words, he sees krump as having the flexibility to incorporate a variety of feelings in addition to praise dancing.

Moreover, this dancer prefaces his statement with an explanation of how he "of course" believes in God. In talking with krump dancers in and around South LA, I would always hear a version of how someone was a Christian or believed in God before they questioned or challenged the meaning of krump as a praise dance. The relationship of the Church and African American communities has a long history that goes back to slavery. The Church was one of the few spaces where African Americans could assemble and organize during slavery and after. Because the Church has been instrumental in providing support politically, economically and socially for African Americans, challenging or questioning evangelical practices within krump dancing is done with the utmost care or not at all. However, there is no mistaking that krump has strong

religious ties and is considered within and outside of the community as first and foremost a praise dance.

Some Basics

Krump dancing today has expanded beyond the neighborhoods of South LA. As a dance, krumping appears in mainstream outlets such as movies, music videos, television shows (e.g., "Americas Best Dance Crew") and in dance schools. Even so, most krumpers are at-risk youth and former gangbangers. As mentioned in the previous section, there are various understandings of krump. However, all dancers adhere to a message of non-violence or peace.

In creating a collective identity, spreading the krump movement[1] and promoting an alternative to street violence, social networking sites are an indispensible tool. Using sites such as Facebook and YouTube, inner city youth "assemble," define the parameters and identity of the krump movement, and interact with society at large in spite of geographic, economic and cultural barriers.

Borrowing tools from the violent street gang, krump dancing adapts these tools in creating an alternative to violent, delinquent or criminal youth activities. Similarities include in both groupings leaders called "big homies" with their followers called "lil' homies." Crews or fams organize members into "sets" or affiliations based upon locale or leadership, and members hold varying ranks. Members may be affiliated with more than one crew or fam. Both groupings have a predominance of young males over females. An initiation process exists in both that involves a recruit being tested by the entire group to prove their physical capabilities, commitment and/or loyalty. In the violent street gang, initiation may involve being "jumped in"

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[1] The krump movement is focused on mentoring youth on the practice of nonviolence through dance. It strives to teach youth how to use their bodies to express their emotions in a safe and supportive environment comprised of like minded peers. "Pushing the movement" involves recruiting new members and spreading the word about krump through performances, social media and other educational outlet that have access to youth.

or "beat in" whereas in krump a dancer is "krump jumped" or "caged." Symbols of identification including the dropping of signs (using hand signals to identify ones crew or fam), tattoos and apparel (e.g., colors or logos) signify one's affiliation or level of loyalty or commitment to the crew or fam. For example, having the symbol of your grouping tattooed on your body signifies a greater lifelong commitment than wearing an item of clothing which is easily removed. Furthermore, both groupings require loyalty to the group and respect for the leader. Unlike the violent street gang, the type of loyalty extracted from krumpers does not generate social isolation as found in the violent street gang. Rather, krump seeks to increase social integration by encouraging youth to develop social bonds with mainstream institutions. Time in both groupings is primarily spent "hanging out," a typical adolescent activity as is the recreational use of marijuana. Moreover, both groups engage in conflict management as a collective activity. However the means to achieving resolution differs greatly on the dimension of violence. For example, when confronted with an act of disrespect, there is a need to restore one's honor, reputation or "settle the score." How that manifests in the violent street gang is through a physical altercation, more than likely involving a shooting. On the other hand, in krump the altercation that is demanded can be simulated, with the rage, fury, and embarrassment embodied and channeled through the dance. Lastly, krump differs from the violent street gang in the acquisition of fame and fortune. Instead of dealing drugs or committing other types of crimes as a means to securing economic resources, krump provides a platform for youth to sell their story or experiences as a means to fame and fortune.

Types of dancers

Just as there are different types of gang members, krump dancers fall into a variety of categories as indicated below:

- *Fixtures* – These dancers provide stability to a crew. Often they are big homies and have been krumping since the beginning of krump. They come with resources such as: technology (e.g., video equipment, music, and computers), access to space, money, education, transportation and connections to mainstream institutions and outlets. A key feature in identifying this type of dancer is their constant presence and commitment to the krump fam or crew. These dancers are often heard "pushing the movement."

- *Floaters* – In contrast to Fixtures, Floaters move between crews and fams. While they may be initiated into various crews and fams, they move between groups dependent upon their needs. Often these dancers have many distractions, such as work, school, financial and personal problems outside of krump, which interfere with continuous participation.

- *Drop Ins* – These dancers participate even less than the Floaters. These krumpers often appear when there is a big event or opportunity to see or be seen.

- *Seniors* – "Seniors in the game" are dancers that have been krumping since the beginning of krump. They include the founders of krump. Seniors garner a great deal of respect in any setting.

- *Up and Comers* – These are younger dancers who are making a name for themselves. These dancers exhibit the dedication and commitment of the Fixtures. If successful, Up and Comers may earn the same respect as Seniors.

- *Newbies* – These dancers are not initiated into any fam or crew. They spend much time in the shadow of a big homie in hopes of joining the crew. These dancers seek harmony with all other members of the crew as they hold no rank.

- *Praise Dancers* – These krumpers use the dance as a form of spiritual worship. Generally, part of their "pushing the movement," involves evangelizing for their youth ministries.

- *Big Homies* – These krumpers are always Fixtures as they provide the base for the fam or crew. They provide mentorship, always have social and cultural capital, and sometimes also have economic capital. When a big homie is a praise dancer, they are usually a youth minister or affiliated with a religious order. Depending on the ranking of the setting a big homie may also be a lil' homie to another dancer.

- *Lil' Homies* – These dancers always fall under a big homie and seek out mentorship from them. This mentorship takes place in a group setting with some lil' homies developing an extremely intimate and personal, one-on-one bond with their big homies. These krumpers can fall into any category. Depending on the ranking of the setting a lil' homie may also be a big homie to another dancer.

Terminology

As with any youth subculture, one of its defining features is a unique set of lingo. In the appendix, there is a list of terms commonly used in the krump community. However, there is one term that I want to address here and that is "**liveness**." I kept hearing this word over and over in the scene. Shortening the word to "live," this term would be used as an adjective (e.g. "That was so live.") In expressing the word, a krumper would get excited and happy drawing out the "i" in the word to where it sounded more like, "liiiiiive." Found of using this word to describe his krump, I asked Worm to explain what it meant:

> You know when you have a concert and there's that climax point—the point that the whole concert is building up to. It may be that one favorite song that you want to hear from that one person at the concert. When you hear it your body it is like an adrenaline rush. You're like, "Whoa. This is what I'm here for." When you channel that adrenaline into whatever you're doin' – that's what makes it live. Say I channel that adrenaline into something I do on the ground—ground live—like something crazy on the ground. Or I can channel that liveness into something up top—movin' my arms a certain way as if I was in a concert.
>
> It's more of an essence. It's not so much of a move or something you could practice on. You have to have it in you to be able to pull it out. That's why there are not so many live people out there because you have to already have the live already instilled in you, I guess. That's pretty much liveness.

As described above, liveness is "an essence." It was this essence that I would hear about from time to time. In making sense of what it meant to be live, I came to understand that liveness was more than an emotion. There is also a biochemical reaction which occurs in the body that is exemplified in Worm's statement "it is like an adrenaline rush." It is this adrenaline rush that creates a sense of super-human capabilities all while dulling the sensations of pain. This heightened state of animation generated by the dancer contributes to building the collective effervescence experienced by all youth in the setting.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION: WHY KRUMP?

I became interested in krump dancers because they are unexpected, and as such, my research seeks to understand that if krump dancing can spring from the same seed bed as violent street gangs, why do these youths end up krumping instead of banging? In particular, how does krump utilize street knowledge and street resources to improve the lives of youth?

There are many studies which depict the living conditions of the inner city as described

below:

…Cars drive by with their stereo systems blaring. Father down, young people walk down the street or gather on someone's stoop with their boom boxes vibrating, the bass turned way up. On adjacent streets, open air-drug deals occur, prostitutes ply their trade, and boys shoot craps, while small children play in trash-strewn abandoned lots. This is the face of persistent urban poverty.

…Here phrases like "watch your back" take on literal meaning. … For the most part, public decency gets little respect. A man opens his car door despite approaching traffic, seeming to dare someone to hit him. Farther down the block a woman simply stops her car in the middle of the street, waiting for her man to emerge from a barbershop. … No one complains, no one honks a car horn; people simply go around her, for they know that to complain is to risk altercation, or at least heated words. They prefer not to incur the woman's wrath, which could escalate into warfare. In [the adjacent middle-class suburban neighborhood], where civility is generally the order of the day, people might "call" others on such behavior, but here it is the general level of violence that tends to keep irritation in check—except among those who are "crazy." In this way, the code of the street provides an element of social organization and actually lessens the probability of random violence.

(Anderson 1999:26-27)

Purveying for substance use and abuse provides the material base for contemporary street culture, rendering it even more powerfully appealing than it has been in previous generations. … Contradictorily, therefore, the street culture of resistance is predicated on the destruction of its participants and the community harboring them. In other words, although street culture emerges out of a personal search for dignity and a rejection of racism and subjugation, it ultimately becomes an active agent in personal degradation and community ruin.

…Most of El Barrio's residents have nothing to do with drugs. The problem, however, is that this law-abiding majority has lost control of public space. Regardless of their absolute numbers, or relative proportions, hardworking, drug-free Harlemites have been pushed onto the defensive. Most of them live in fear, or even in contempt of their neighborhood. Worried mothers and fathers maintain their children locked inside their apartments in determined attempts to keep street culture out. They hope someday to be able to move out of the neighborhood.

(Bourgois 2003:8-10)

Gang violence has turned many parts of our nation's cities into war zones.

(Forward in Vigil 1988:ix)

Such shocking, sometimes violent and mostly fearful descriptions of inner city life mimic those which pervade the media and minds of many Americans in typecasting life in urban slums. Embedded within these descriptions is the violent street gang – an iconic image of inner city street life. It is the gang that holds the residents of these communities down, robbing them of their safety, their children, and the children of their childhood.

In his book, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*, Elijah Anderson (1999) describes a code that exists among local residents which operates to regulate how violence is avoided, attracted or justified. In describing the character of the residents of the inner city, Anderson explains there are two types: decent people and street people. Decent people strive to maintain decent families, look to the future and embrace American values such as working hard and saving for the future. On the other hand, street people consist of the bottom ranks of the urban community. They are characterized as manipulators of the social systems they are embedded, having little to no respect for mainstream authority figures, and valuing trickery and criminality over hard work. In using discrete categories such as decent and street, there is a failure to fully recognize the overlapping and intertwining of these qualities within the same neighborhood, family or person.

> **Q.** How did the gang start?
> **A.** It was a dance group. They danced against schools. And the Timeboys just got a group and got into that. … But you see the Timeboys were not originally a gang. They were a dance group. But then all the time they would dance, other guys would get mad and this and that, and they would go at the Timeboys and they would have to fight. And that's how the Timeboys got the reputation they were a gang.
>
> *Bill, Timeboys*

The passage above is an interview from *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City* by John M. Hagedorn (1988:57-58). Tracing the origins and formations of youth gangs in Milwaukee, Hagedorn discovered that some of the gangs formed

out of breakdancing groups. As the passage above indicates, competition between dancers led to fights which entrenched aggressions between school-aged youth, which formed gangs. So while these youth were in school and participating in an extracurricular activity like break dancing, this failed to keep them protected from violence and devolving into a gang. I use this study as an example of the complexities that exist in explaining youth street gangs.

Similarly, my research seeks to offer an understanding of how inner city youth integrate, manipulate and make sense of street and decent norms in the practice of krump dancing, a dance practice that developed out of a gang. Born out of gang interactions and structures, krump offers a case where violence, in the form of violent street gangs, does not breed greater violence, but, rather offers a platform for a practice of nonviolence.

Social scientists have long been interested in the relationship between urbanization and its impact on youth delinquency and gang formation. In defining a gang, researchers use several different distinctions to explain this phenomenon. Organized crime, for example is linked with higher levels of organization, older participants, and economic enterprise as the main purpose for the group, all of which distinguish it from the street gang (Huff 1993). Furthermore, being "engaged in significant illegitimate or criminal activities, mainly threatening and violent" (Spergel and Curry 1990:388), is what some researchers use to separate street gangs from youth gangs. Despite disagreements on how to define youth gangs, previous research has found that these groups share in symbols of identification such as clothing, colors and signs, are concerned with issues of turf and status, and often resort to fighting as a way of resolving these issues (Huff 1993; Spergel and Curry 1990). Moreover, Huff (1993) argues:

> In analyzing youth gangs, it is important to acknowledge that it is normal and healthy for adolescents to want to be with their peers. In fact, adolescents who are loners often tend to be maladjusted. Because adolescents go to dances together, party together, shop together (and in many cases, shop*lift* together), it should not

23

be surprising that some of them join together in one type of social group known as a gang. Group experience, then, is a familiar and normative phenomenon in adolescent subculture, and gangs represent an extreme manifestation of that age typical emphasis on being together and belonging to something. (Pp. 5-6, emphasis in the original)

Here, Huff cautions against viewing the gathering of youth into a gang as something deviant or problematic in and of itself. Rather, for adolescents it is "normal and healthy" for them to seek out their peers. To do otherwise, as Huff notes is a sign of maladjustment on the part of the loner youth.

Ecological and Disorganization Explanations

Almost all street gang and juvenile delinquency studies begin or have a mention of Frederick Thrasher's (1927) work youth gangs in Chicago. Conducting the first survey study of youth gangs, Thrasher went beyond biological explanations for "ganging," finding cultural and structural causes for gang formation. Conducting research in light of massive migration by rural Americans and European immigrants into US industrial cities, Thrasher (1927) argued that gang formation was a function of one's "social habits" as described below:

[Man] is primarily a creature of habit, but the pattern of his habits may be infinitely varied in varied circumstances.

What writers on the gang have attributed to instinct is the result of pervasive social habits arising out of the human struggle for existence and social preferment.

…It is not instinct, but experience—the way he is conditioned—that fixes his social relations. (Pp. 43-4)

Here, Thrasher finds that what appears to be one's nature is actually the product of their habit. According to Thrasher, one's habit is the result of his or her experiences. In struggling to acquire the basic necessities of life and in seeking social recognition or status, people are shaped or "conditioned" by those experiences. That is, the positive or negative feedback produced as a result of one's experiences generates a habit as one seeks to replicate what works and avoid that

which does not. As such, a person's pattern of habits "may be infinitely varied in varied circumstances." In other words, change a person's environment and you will change how they behave.

For Thrasher, the factors that determine whether a neighborhood is ripe for gang activity depend upon its socially controlling institutions. He finds that the "soil which favors the growth of gangs" include societal inadequacies such as institutional failings of the family, schools, religion, politics, the economy (including low wages, monotonous work and unemployment), and a lack of constructive leisure activities (Thrasher 1927:491). Furthermore, Thrasher finds that ecological inadequacies such as substandard housing, poor sanitation, and the day-to-day living conditions of life in the urban slum contribute to gang growth. He argues that the ecological and social conditions are "interwoven" and "must be considered together as a situation complex which forms the matrix of gang development" (ibid.). In understanding the "matrix of gang development," Thrasher recommends studying each of these conditions independently as means to attacking the problem of youth delinquency. Thus, he finds that the gang provides a substitute for society's failures and relief from social controls or "an escape" (Thrasher 1927:38).

As part of his analysis, Thrasher discovers that "interstitial" regions – "spaces that intervene between one thing and another" – provide the conditions that favor gang formation (1927:22). Interstitial regions occur on the borders of social, cultural and economic domains. As such, gangs form in places that are not settled, stable, or socially organized. Similar, findings have been noted in other research. For example, Lewis Yablonsky (1962) found that the disorganized slum appears where there has been a large transition of rural populations into urban areas seeking work and social opportunities. Upon arrival, adults and children are confronted

with values, norms and patterns of behavior which differ from those of the rural areas (Yablonsky 1962:75). As such, Yablonsky argues there is a rise in juvenile delinquency because of a "breakdown of old social controls without any adequate replacement for these forces that would tend to curb deviance" (1962:175).

However, explanations due to social disorganization have been criticized and unsupported in other inner city studies. For example, William Foote Whyte (1943) determined that urban slums are not socially disorganized but are organized around a different set of values other than those of mainstream America as Whyte (1943:xvi) explained:

> In order to understand the [deviant] event, it is necessary to see it in relation to the everyday pattern of life—for there is a pattern to Cornerville life. The middle-class person looks upon the slum district as a formidable mass of confusion, a social chaos. The insider finds in Cornerville a highly organized and integrated social system.

Here, "Cornerville" represents any inner city community where poverty, gangs and juvenile delinquency thrive. Critical of outsider perspectives of the slum as "social chaos," Whyte takes on a community level of meaning in behaviors and determines that there is order in urban slums. Writing during the influence of WWII and popular concerns about the loyalty of Italian Americans to the nation, Whyte addresses the question, "Why can't those people stop being Italians and become Americans like the rest of us?" (1943:274). His response is that ghettoized Italian immigrants do want to conform to American ideals, however they are prevented from doing so in two ways: "by their own organized society and by the outside world" (Whyte 1943:274).

Conducting a four-year study of "Cornerville" in Boston's North End (a community comprised mostly of Italian immigrants), Whyte explains that local politics and racketeering predominate as a function of traditional Italian community controls. He explains that the "[f]irst-

generation immigrant society was organized primarily around the family and secondarily along the lines of *paesani*"—people from the same town who settled together (Whyte 1943:xvii). The creation of extended families benefitted Italian Immigrants because it created "an intricate network of reciprocal obligations" (ibid.). Moreover, in explaining the network of obligations, Whyte finds that, "[t]he individual who suffered misfortune was aided by his relatives and friends, and, when he had re-established himself, he shared his good fortune with those who had helped him" (ibid.). As such, the organization of Cornerville around this network of obligations generated obstacles to the path of Americanization. As Whyte explains, "Cornerville's problem is not lack of organization but failure of its own social organization to mesh with the structure of the society around it" (1943:273). In other words, Whyte is arguing that youth delinquency and deviance only appear disorganized when taking an outsider's perspective. However, inner city communities have a set of rules and structures, such as *paesani*, that organize social relations on a local level, which may, at times come in conflict with the mainstream culture.

Cultural and Economic Explanations

Some scholars have argued that youth deviance and delinquency is rooted in local values, norms, beliefs and patterns of behaviors of inner city communities which differ from mainstream America, which results in a clash of cultures. Theories that seek to explain the rise of a ghetto or street culture fall into two categories. The first type argues that street culture is formed as a result of poverty. These theories take a top-down approach.

For example, street culture may be produced in reaction to the strain or frustration at failed attempts to achieve the American Dream. According to Robert K. Merton (1957), where a society has indoctrinated its people with aspirations for success but fails to provide all members equal opportunity to achieve success, anomie is generated among those who fail to meet the

social goal. Anomie may result in individual adaptations such as crime or drug use, such that "when poverty and associated disadvantages in competing for the cultural values approved for *all* members of the society are linked with a cultural emphasis on pecuniary success as a dominant goal, high rates of criminal behavior are the normal outcome" (Merton 1957:146-7). In other words, inner city residents find it difficult to be a successful American through legitimate means because they are blocked by poverty. This blockage generates a strain for residents, which in turn generates crime.

Additionally, street culture may be created out of frustration (Cohen 1955; Cloward and Ohlin 1960). According to Albert Cohen (1955:7), delinquent subcultures emerge as a collective solution to lower-class youth's failure to measure up to the "middle-class measuring rod." Because of their rejection and loss of status, lower-class youth come together and form delinquent subcultures which are in direct opposition with middle-class values. It is this "reaction-formation" which accounts for the "non-utilitarian, malicious, and negativistic character" (Cohen 1955:25) of the delinquent subculture or gang. According to Cohen, "the delinquent subculture takes its norms from the larger subculture, but turns them upside down. The delinquent's conduct is right by the standards of his subculture precisely because it is wrong by the norms of the larger culture" (1955:28).

Moving the discussion away from values as an explanation for delinquency and deviance, other scholars emphasize the importance of economic and social structures in accounting for the rise of a street culture. These researchers argue that the elimination of street culture will occur as soon as there is a shift in economic status for the urban poor. In his study of African American streetcorner men in Washington D.C., Elliot Liebow (1967) discovers that although streetcorner men may say they do not want the American Dream, he finds that they in fact are only

responding out of frustration to their economic and social circumstances. Rather, the talk of the

streetcorner man is that of fiction and not part of a low-class cultural value system.

According to Liebow, "public fictions," the stories that streetcorner men tell, do not

reveal something about their value system but instead reveal a coping mechanism. As he wrote:

> If, in the course of concealing his failure, or of concealing his fear of even trying,
> [the streetcorner man] pretends—through the device of public fictions—that he
> did not want these things in the first place and claims that he has all along been
> responding to a different set of rules and prizes, we do not do him or ourselves
> any good by accepting this claim at face value. (Liebow 1967:222)

As such, Liebow argues that there is no need for social change to come in the form of disrupting

family values or the transmission of cultural norms for African American inner-city families.

Rather, efforts to interrupt the cycle of poverty and street culture should be aimed at structural

inequalities and creating economic opportunities for inner city men, as he explained:

> Of much greater importance for the possibilities of change…is the fact that many
> similarities between the lower-class Negro father and son (or mother and
> daughter) do not result from "cultural transmission" but from the fact that the son
> goes out and independently experiences the same failures, in the same areas, and
> for much the same reasons as his father. (Liebow 1967:223)

Here, Liebow finds that the cycle of poverty replicated among inner city African American men

can be explained as a function of economic inequalities, which "by guaranteeing failure, cause

the son to be made in the image of the father" (ibid.). As such, a shift in economic status will

eliminate street culture because people will no longer need it as a coping mechanism.

In a somewhat similar approach, William Julius Wilson (1987) addresses whether inner

city poverty is a function of race relations in America. Critical of viewing joblessness among

African Americans as only racially driven, Wilson argues that doing so overlooks the

"distinction between the effects of *historic* discrimination…and the effects of *contemporary*

discrimination" (1987:141). Rather, Wilson finds that it is "the shift from goods-producing to

service-producing industries, the increasing polarization of the labor market into low-wage and high-wage sectors, innovations in technology, and the relocation of manufacturing industries out of the central cities" that has led to joblessness and an increase in poverty for African Americans (1987:142). Moreover, Wilson explains that when middle-class African Americans began moving out of the inner city after the 1960s, they took with them the "strong norms and sanctions against aberrant behavior, a sense of community, and positive neighborhood identification" (Wilson 1987:143). In the passage below, Wilson (1987) explains how this occurred:

> [T]he removal of these families made it more difficult to sustain the basic institutions in the inner city (including churches, stores, schools, recreational facilities, ect.) in the face of prolonged joblessness. And as the basic institutions declined, the social organization of inner-city neighborhoods (designed here to include a sense of community, positive neighborhood identification, and explicit norms and sanctions against aberrant behavior) likewise declined. Indeed, the social organization of any neighborhood depends in large measure on the viability of social institutions in that neighborhood. It is true that the presence of stable working- and middle-class families in the ghetto provides mainstream role models that reinforce mainstream values pertaining to employment, education, and family structure. But in the final analysis, a far more important effect is the institutional stability that these families are able to provide in their neighborhoods because of their greater economic and educational resources, especially during periods of an economic downturn—periods in which joblessness in poor urban areas tends to substantially increase. (P. 144)

Here, Wilson emphasizes the importance of social institutions for instilling mainstream culture in inner city residents. It is the reciprocal relationship between basic institutions and the social organization of the inner city that generates a gap where street culture emerges. According to Wilson, for social institutions to thrive people with "greater economic and educational resources" must live in the community. Therefore, it is the economic status of working- and middle-class families which has the greatest effect in curtailing the growth of street culture in inner cities. Wilson argues that the effect of economic status supersedes even the influence that working families offer as role models. With the loss of families with economic status and the

30

deindustrialization of American inner cities, a residual population develops that Wilson calls the "urban underclass" – a "heterogeneous group of families and individuals who inhabit the cores of the nation's central cities" (ibid.). As social institutions cease to exist, what remains for the underclass are practices, routines and habits that constitute street culture.

What these earlier approaches fail to account for are strategies and motivations of people. Previous explanations argue that the gang and street culture are the result of structural forces which act upon people. However, such explanations fail to account for the variations in outcomes of similarly situated individuals. Acknowledging the influence of structural inequalities and poverty, Ruth Horowitz (1983) explains how changing economic conditions would not erase street culture:

> Many outsiders ask why the 32nd Street residents are not like others. In part the answer lies in the lack of resources and opportunities for upward mobility and in the poor school systems. These are all class-related factors. If these problems changed, some aspects of life would be readjusted. There are, however, other elements of their social world that are ethnically based and freely chosen. These would not necessarily change if the economic situation shifted. For many residents, 32nd Street and ethnic identity offer them something of value. (Pp. 234-5)

According to Horowitz, the residents of 32nd Street find value in elements of their social world which are not restricted to socioeconomic opportunities and structures. Specifically, ethnic based ties and routines factor into why these residents are attracted to street culture. Moreover, inner city residents identify and align themselves with street culture, not in reaction to the social structure but as a conscious decision as explained below:

> Little behavior is purely reactive; each experience is interpreted through existing moral categories. Community culture is not just a reaction to the socioeconomic position of community [as argued by Gans, 1962 and Liebow 1967]. … Its articulation with the wider society is unique because of its own traditions, which have evolved through the experiences of residents and their continuing interaction with each other and with representatives of the wider society. (Horowitz 1983:223)

31

In contrast to top-down explanations of street culture, Horowitz finds that the experiences of inner city residents are filtered through "existing moral categories" and "traditions." As such, "community culture" is created through the experiences and interactions of people and given meaning by people. The interaction of local traditions, morals and knowledge with mainstream American institutions and values form what Horowitz calls, "community culture." Her concept of community culture is used to explain the organization of inner city life as explained below:

> Urban life can be rich in symbols, norms, and values that give meaning and importance to particular social relationships. The study of community culture allows us to study the content of people's lives: the activities and social relationships to which they attribute importance. … It is through local organizational arrangements that…symbols, values, and norms of the community culture become articulated and evolve out of repetitive interaction. (Horowitz 1983:221)

By understanding the meaning and importance that inner city residents attribute to local symbols, norms and values, Horowitz brings the individual into the discussion. This is further emphasized when she writes:

> In my model culture consists of the meaning of behavioral patterns. The uniqueness of a subculture rests in its symbols, that is, in the cognitive and moral categories through which group members appraise and evaluate their behavior and that of others. Cultural symbols acquire meaning when people talk about something, when they agree or disagree about the definition of a situation. … Consequently, culture is neither static nor necessarily the most stable component of social action, but constantly evolves. (Horowitz 1983:20)

Above, Horowitz emphasizes that symbols are "cognitive and moral categories." It is through the interaction with others that the meaning of symbols are created, maintained, merged, shaped and reshaped. As such, culture is alive.

Thus, in accounting for the rise of street culture, Horowitz incorporates the lived experiences of inner city residents in her findings. People are not blank slates, but, rather experience life through moral, traditional and emotional categories. Unlike top-down approaches,

bottom-up explanations of the emergence, persistence and replication of street culture

incorporate a conscious person whose actions are motivated by the "social relationships to which

they attribute importance" (Horowitz 1983:221).

In a somewhat different study of street culture, Snow and Anderson (1987) explore the

lives of the homeless. Similar to gangs, the homeless represent another segment of street culture.

In answering the question, "how do the homeless generate personal identities that yield a

measure of self-respect and dignity?" Snow and Anderson (1987:1337-8) set out to understand

how "individuals who have fallen through the cracks of society and linger at the very bottom of

the status system" derive their self-worth. Built into this question is the assumption that a

positive self-worth is only attainable through conventional social institutions, as explained

below:

> Unlike nearly all other inhabitants of a society, the homeless are seldom
> incumbents of social roles that are consensually defined in terms of positive social
> utility and moral worth. As does any highly stigmatized class, the homeless serve
> various societal functions, such as providing casual labor for underground
> economies, but these are not the sorts of functions from which personal
> significance and self-worth can be easily derived. As a consequence, the homeless
> constitute a kind of superfluous population, in the sense that they fall outside the
> hierarchy of structurally available societal roles and thus beyond the conventional,
> role-based sources of moral worth and dignity that most citizens take for granted.
> (Snow and Anderson 1987:1339)

The importance of social roles for maintaining "moral worth and dignity" is also reiterated in

social ecological and strain theories (Wilson 1987; Merton 1957). Because social institutions

provide the instructions for behavior or the roles that we are to play, the absence of a tie to social

institutions should generate anomie or loss of purpose.

Because of their limited economic and social capital, Snow and Anderson argue that talk,

or conversations and comments of the homeless is their primary method of creating a positive

self-worth. Coined by Snow and Anderson, identity work consists of the actions and behaviors

that people undertake "to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept" (1987:1348). What they discover is that there are three kinds of identity talk: 1) distancing; 2) embracement; and 3) fictive storytelling. Distancing talk is done with the purpose of distancing a person from "social identities inconsistent with their actual or desired self-conception" (ibid.). Conversely, embracement constitutes a case where "[s]ocial and personal identities are congruent, such that the individual accepts the identities associated with his status" (Snow and Anderson 1987:1354). Finally, fictive storytelling is "the narration of stories about one's past, present, or future experiences and accomplishments that have a fictive character to them" (Snow and Anderson 1987:1358-9).

In the context of street culture and identity formation, distancing occurs in situations where inner city community members seek to align themselves with middle-class American society, distinguishing themselves from the local culture. On the other hand, the adoption and incorporation of street behaviors, symbols, norms and values into a person's identity would be an example of embracing street culture. What people choose is best described by Snow and Anderson (1987) when they explain the choice of people to be homeless:

> Homelessness may indeed be a matter of choice for some people, but perhaps only when there is a scant number of alternatives that are no more palatable than life on the street. To the extent that this is true, the choice is of the lesser of evils and takes on a rather different meaning than if it were made in the face of more attractive options. Thus, to attribute homelessness to choice without an understanding of the context in which that choice is made adds little to our understanding of the precipitants of homelessness. (P. 1364)

The argument here is that choice is embedded in a person's milieu requiring that people must make sense of the situation. Whether a person's embracement of street culture is formed in opposition to middle-class identities or is created out of the histories, traditions, and needs of

inner city community members is central to the debate on why ghetto or street culture continues to persist.

However, it is not my intention to advance the idea that deviant subcultures should or even could be eliminated. Rather, what is problematic is what gets couched in nonconformist cultures. Because they exist outside the realm of social institutions designed to control the spread of violence (through legal structures), poverty (through the formal economy) and disease (through an institutionalized medical system), deviant subcultures are vulnerable to these social ills. While street communities are where social ills thrive, they are not the cause. To assume the alignment of street cultures with the embracement of violence, poverty, or disease is to conflate the two.

In the present case, krump dancing provides an example of youth street culture which seeks to rid itself of violence. To do so, the symbols and rituals which define youth street gangs must first be recognized and acknowledged as having value. The wearing of colors, dropping signs, street fams, big homies, declarations of turf, fighting and hanging out all serve a purpose beyond the practice of violence. These youth behaviors exist as a means of finding a place to fit in or belong, as a rite of passage to adulthood, as a means of status seeking, and, as a way to cope with emotional stressors, such as boredom, loss, grief, rage and loneliness.

Violence is one vehicle urban youth use to meet these needs. Krump dancing provides another. By implementing surrogate nonviolent practices, in the form of krump battles, krump crews and fams, and a free form, expressive dance, krump generates a new set of rituals based upon the symbols and rituals of the violent youth gangs. Born from the seeds of violent youth street gangs, krump is a bottom up alternative to ganging that attracts at-risk youth because it accounts for the complexities of youth street culture and youth on their terms.

THE CHAPTERS

The foregoing grounds what is included in this study. This is not a study of gangs. While gang life influences the structure of krump, and the dancers may have or had gang affiliations, this research does not claim to be a study of the gang. Rather, the purpose of this study is to explain the meaning, symbols, structures and practices of street culture through the eyes of urban youth. In defining youth for the purposes of this study, it includes young people between the ages of 2 to 25.

In chapter 2, I discuss the setting and sociological methods for this study. In this chapter, I introduce the reader to how I entered the krump world and provide a backdrop for the actors and events contained herein. Furthermore, I explain the methods of how I gathered my data and offer justifications for these methods.

In chapter 3, "The Dance," I analyze how krump creates space for inner city youth to negotiate conflict and status in a controlled setting. By delineating the three different forms of krump – the session, the battle, and the performance – I show how the levels of intimacy and expertise correlate with audience interaction to create varying practices of krump. Furthermore, as a freeform style of dance, krump creates a space for the creation and replication of a nonviolent street culture. It is the session that provides space to hangout, have fun and let loose one's emotions in an intimate setting. It is through battles that krump dancers assert their superiority, resolve "beef" or conflicts, seek distinction and act out aggression towards another. In a battle, the audience, stage and titles contribute to creating an arena for the establishment, reestablishment, and maintenance of status and territory. Finally, the performance allows for the commodification and consumption of street identities for the mainstream.

In chapter 4, "Embodiment," I explain how the mind and body work in concert to express the rage experienced by inner city youth to facilitate a healing. Here, rage becomes a proxy for a variety of emotions including pain, fear, sadness, anger, despair, grief. By connecting to one's rage and channeling it through krump, the adrenaline produced creates a sense of super human capabilities all while dulling the sensations of suffering. By embodying these emotions and experiences, the dancer transforms and releases these feelings in a nonviolent practice. The heightened state of animation generated by the dancer, as they tell their story, contributes to building of collective effervescence experienced all present in the healing circle.

In chapter 5, "Fams," I examine the relationship between the form and function of families created in the streets, specifically krump fams. This is done by highlighting a conflict when two ideologically different big homies bring their crews together. In doing so, this chapter examines how belonging, kinship and money operate as a source of love for these young men.

In chapter 6, "Krump Down Under," I look at krump dancing abroad, specifically in Melbourne, VIC, Australia. This comparative chapter analyzes the influences of African American urban culture on Australian youth in creating a localized form of Australian krump called Grrilla Step. As a vehicle for change, resistance and counterculture, krump provides marginalized urban Australian youth with a means to express, maintain and capitalize on Indigenous Pacific Islander, Phillipino, Sudanese and other cultural identities.

Finally in chapter 7, I conclude by recapping on the previous chapters and offer some policy considerations. It is my goal that this project will expand understandings of street culture and the communities in which they are embedded as more than just "war zones." Rather, street cultures, such as krump, are creations by inner city youth which reflect the rich diversity of their lives, their laughter and tears, their struggles and choices, and their constant evolving selves and

community. The goal here is to demonstrate how life fails to be a simple component of street and decent but rather a messy and yet organized and emergent set of interactions in sense making. Krump dancing offers a point of view into the ways in which community building occurs for urban youth. In doing so, we gain a better perspective of all that the "street" has to offer (beyond violence) and to develop a broader picture of inner-city communities.

CHAPTER TWO: SETTINGS AND METHODS

The Research Question

The origin of this project is located in a project that I started for my ethnography/field methods class beginning in January 2010. I was interested in learning about field methods for a project that I thought would become my dissertation—the reconciliation process in Australia. However, my field methods class required me to study something a little closer to Orange County. Luckily, I had met someone in Sydney, Australia who would provide the inspiration for this project.

Three months earlier I found myself at the Sydney airport flying back to Los Angeles on one of their busiest days. That morning a dust storm blew in red sand and dirt from the outback that blocked out the sun and filled the air with red particles causing horrible travel delays. Amongst all the chaos, I managed to finally get a bus from the domestic terminal to the international terminal to fly back home. Once on board the full-sized bus, I found only one other passenger with me, a young African American man. I remember being struck by his appearance, which included some kind of designer dark denim jean with white stitching and huge diamond earrings. I was curious to know how his display of "bling" (gold and diamonds) and designer clothing was received by Australians. So, after introducing myself, I asked him about his experiences traveling around Australia dressed in his style and how he was received as an African American man. Smiling shyly he responded, "They treated me like a movie star."

"Wow! Really?" I responded laughing. "That must have made you feel good."

"No, actually I was very uncomfortable with it." He replied.

I asked him why he was in Australia and he told me that he had been invited to judge a dance competition and teach some classes. "Interesting." I said. "What kind of dancer are you?"

"I'm a krump dancer." He replied. "Do you know it?" He asked me.

"Yes." I replied. He paused and stared at me for a moment with a puzzled look. I began thinking maybe I didn't know what krump dancing was, so I asked him to explain what the dance was about. He told me that krump dancing started in South Central Los Angeles which is where he was from. He explained that "Some people krump as a dance, but to do it right you need to krump for God."

Now I was the puzzled one. I did not understand how a street dance could become a mechanism for religion. How could krump dancing be religious? How could religion embed itself in this dance and then become appealing to urban youths? Wanting to explore this further, I told him that I was a UCI sociology student and that I would like to follow-up with him in the future about what it means to be a krump dancer. Laughing, he agreed and gave me his name, Smash, and his email address. We departed at the terminal but ran into each other again, as we were on the same flight but in different sections.

That all happened in September 2009. So three months later, I was hoping that Smash would still remember me and be interested in helping me with my field work. Unfortunately, email after email went out and I did not get a response. I would later learn that he was in Japan teaching a class on krump dancing. Feeling pressured to find a project I searched the Internet, which is where I came across Homeland, a community center in Long Beach, CA. After making several unanswered calls, I decided to show up in person and see where things developed.

On my drive from Irvine to Long Beach, I noticed how the neighborhood changed. Sidewalks became filled with people and buses dominated the roads, as they pulled quickly in and out of traffic, on the busy two lane street. Gone from the landscape were the suburban, chain-based strip malls. Instead, local bodegas, multilingual signs, buildings of different shapes,

sizes and colors dominated in this setting. Ethnically-based strip malls catering to the needs of their Thai, Filipino, Vietnamese and Spanish speaking clientele contained ethnic grocery stores, pharmacies, rental centers, quick cash shops and mom and pop restaurants. As I continued to drive, I was drawn in to the bright colors that adorned the sides of buildings, with depictions of people and objects arranged in various ways to give meaning and tell a story. In some cases, murals spread across buildings going down a block, creating a tapestry of art as they wove together different tales. Every so often, an open lot of dirt, with weeds growing close to the ground would take the place of a building or green space. Of all the structures in this neighborhood, the only building that resembled any type of conventional middle-class American structure was a government building, the public library. Its new construction and sand colored walls stood out in this landscape as sterile and cold.

As I drove, I wondered how the change in the landscape affected the community. Without uniformity how is community created? How does social control exist? Without conformity in outward appearances, how is it possible to relate to one another? How do we know how to behave or what behavior to expect? How can we be safe in such a community of apparent outward chaos? These questions would continue to guide me as I entered the krump community of South LA and Long Beach.

After introducing myself to the krump group leaders—or "big homies"—as a student researcher from UCI, I was warmly received. I was told that they had another student from Cal State Fullerton observe them for a few weeks who was interested in dance techniques. The leaders, Too Realz and Fudd, wanted to know how I got interested in krump dancing. I told them my story of meeting Smash in Australia. This helped to get me access as I learned later that Smash was part of the founding "crew" or group of krumpers, the Krump Kings.

My first observations consisted of me watching a krump "session" or practice of the dance (see Chapter 3, "The Dance" for a detailed description of a session). The session typically involves one person in the middle of a semicircle of onlookers who encourage the dancer through a series of one word comments, deep throated sounds, yelling, laughter, and body movements, such as leaning in, jumping up or waving ones arms. As I watched over the next few hours, I was surprised by the communion of these young men and boys. The way they taught, learned from and encouraged one another held a sense of intimacy which I found surprising. I began thinking about the crisis of African American men and fatherhood. However, in this space I observed these young men fathering their children, as well as others from the community. Watching how the children were included in the circle and the dance felt like I was observing some kind of rite of passage, as those in and out of the circle moved in concert supporting or being supporting by one another. I began to wonder what this circle of men was about. How did it facilitate role modeling and create an urban space for male bonding? These questions would form the beginning of my dissertation, which seeks to understand and explain krump dancing as a practice of nonviolence.

Data Collection Tools

To understand life through the eyes of a krump dancer, I used a combination of field methods. Because little is known about krump dancing, field research allowed me the broadest data gathering tools to understand this phenomenon in its natural setting. I approached this study centering on "methodological empathy" (McGuire 1982:19) or understanding a sociological phenomenon from the position of those on the inside as a way to "understand the substance, coherence, and maintenance of views that may seem implausible to outsiders" (Singleton and

Straits 2005:308). In doing so, I developed a rich understanding of the expressions, creations, struggles and joys that were produced and experienced by the dancers.

One data collection tool I used was participant observation, which is the "process in which an investigator establishes and sustains a many-sided and situationally appropriate relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a social scientific understanding of that association" (Singleton and Straits 2005:17). In this study, being "many-sided" meant that I was a researcher, student, friend, teacher, dancer, family, observer, crew member, DJ and an outsider. These roles shifted on the basis of the setting or situation in response to various actors' expectations and assumptions of me. For example, I would be an outsider when conversation shifted to where I lived and grew up or how I spend my leisure time. Furthermore, time and place would also change the role that I occupied.

In addition, I used both intensive interviewing, which "encompasses both ordinary conversation and listening as it occurs naturally during the course of social interaction" (ibid.), and semi-structured interviewing, using questions to guide the conversation with an informant as tools for collecting my data. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed following the collection of the data. I have provided the interview questions at the end of this chapter. My reliance on these interviewing tools was to understand the "amorphous social experiences" of krump dancing (Singleton and Straits 2005:19). Amorphous social experiences are everyday experiences not "embedded in or peculiar to a specific social context or setting" (ibid.). Examples include explaining the dancer's embodiment of emotion in the dance and how krump dancing provides healing and coping mechanisms for the dancers.

Finally, I collected and analyzed visual data for inclusion in this study. In answering what constitutes data in visual methodologies, Bolton, Pole, and Mizen (2001:506) argue "the

43

important distinction is that images have been created as part of a sociological investigation; the visual element has been part of an active process of seeking and hopefully reaching understanding, rather then merely illustrating findings arrived at by other means." Thus, the act of photography becomes something more than an afterthought but part of the data gathering process to expand on what is under study. In this study, I photographed the dancers as they were performing to capture the essence of their story. While a dancer might have told me what he or she planned on doing, this explanation could not capture all of the nuances and emotional expression exhibited during the dance. Often I would show the dancers photographs of themselves and they would be surprised to see exactly how they moved. Furthermore, by using photography, I could slowdown and frame out the elements of the dance which were faster than my eye could catch during my observations. This data were analyzed using content analysis to identify themes in dance styles as well as used to explain the quality and character of the dance.

Gathering Information

This study draws upon 16 months of active fieldwork among inner city youth living in and around the greater LA area. Following the active period of fieldwork, I maintained ties with my informants on a casual basis through the completion of my dissertation. To collect the data, I relied heavily on my smart phone. Appearing to text, I took notes on what was happening as it occurred. Because texting is such a normal part of youth culture, my texting did not stand out as unusual or obtrusive. The only problem I encountered was texting when I wanted to preserve a direct quote. Even though I would explain to the speaker that I was taking notes, my actions where perceived as being disinterested or distracted. That is, I could not remove the perception that I was texting even though I was note-taking. This is where a notepad and pen could have been more useful. With a paper and pen you send a signal to the speaker that what they are

saying is very important, so much so it requires writing it down. Although that was what I was doing, I could not overcome the rudeness associated with texting while talking to someone. It mattered not if I showed them the screen. So, I would often have to put my phone down and wait until after the exchange to record what was said.

However, using my phone to take notes was ideal because taking notes as "texts" allowed me to preserve the interactions for later analysis and blend in better in the scene. Moreover, in a dance setting, having a smartphone where I could type one-handed was beneficial, as I was constantly moving around and on my feet. Also, with the dim lighting of the setting, the phone allowed me to easily record events. Overall, taking notes in this manner proved to be a useful tool in completing my fieldnotes. Because I had mostly completed my notes in the field in shorthand, I had only to go back through and replace the shorthand with the complete text. I would complete my fieldnotes usually the day following my time in the field as I would often not return home from my field site until after 10 p.m.

Additionally, as mentioned, I gathered information through photography. By taking pictures of the activities and the setting, I was able to record what happened, who was there, where it was happen and how it was happening as it occurred. This data gathering tool helped to preserve the events of my field time until I could write up my notes. These photographs also helped as visual aids in orienting my ideas. My fieldnotes were later coded to produce themes that would guide the basis of my dissertation.

The Sample

To be included in this research, a person had to be a krump dancer living in or near one of the research sites. Typically, most of the dancers in South LA are African American males ranging between the ages of 10 and 25. On occasion, there would be dancers younger than 10.

They would often be in the setting due to a family member, usually their father bringing them there to dance together. Similarly, there would be dancers older than 25, but this was more the exception than the rule. These older dancers typically were krump dancers for a number of years and were often big homies or figureheads within the krump community.

I observed and interacted with around 150 dancers. Most of these interactions were fleeting due to the movement of people in and out of various krump scenes. For example, I might have shown up to a session in a park and be introduced to 20 people and observe another 30. However, I would only interact again with 5 to 10 people. The core people I observed and interacted with on a regular basis numbered around 20. Due to the transitory nature of youth and people in low income settings, maintaining a stable and fixed sample of participants was challenging. In overcoming these obstacles, I relied heavily on my key informants to track down people when they were no longer available. As such, participants for this study were selected using snowball sampling derived from the crews that I observed in South LA. The main crew that I conducted this research around was Demolition Crew ("DC"). While immersed with DC, I was also introduced to dancers from other crews and krump families located in Southern California.

Gaining Access and Key Informants

As mentioned in the Introduction, my interaction with Smash was fortuitous as he operated as a "gatekeeper" in the krump community (Taylor and Bogdan 1984). Gatekeepers or people in authority within a group may provide an outsider access into the group. Here, Smash operated as a master gatekeeper who would open doors for me throughout the krump community. I call Smash a master gatekeeper because he occupied a high rank within the krump community as one of the first four founding krump dancers. As such, by mentioning that I had met Smash, I

was able to use the respect that he had earned in the community to gain access to other gatekeepers of lower rank. This proved true in both the US and abroad in Australia.

My initial goal was to interview Smash about his experiences as a krump dancer. However, when I began my study he was abroad in Japan teaching krump. Needing to begin my study, I searched the Internet and came across a group of dancers in Long Beach that practiced at a community center, Homeland Cultural Community Center ("Homeland"). There, I met Fudd and Too Realz who became key informants.

Fudd, an African American man in his mid-20s, and the father of two young children was my key informant across all settings. However, his role would change with the setting and when other actors were present. My relationship with Fudd changed as we came to know each other better over the course of the study. Initially, Fudd took on the role of teacher and was excited to teach me everything he knew about krump dancing. His excitement as teacher is evident in the role he plays in the krump scene as he goes out of his way to mentor and guide the youth in his community and crew. Eventually, my role shifted from outsider to insider as Fudd included me in discussions and decisions to which all members of the crew were not privy. I became a sounding board for some of his ideas on how to make the crew better. In this regard, I became a friend. I also assumed the role of crew member when I was expected to be present for krump activities. When I could not attend due to my non-krump obligations, my absence would be commented on and I would suffer the silence treatment from my perceived lack of commitment.

Another key informant that I met at Homeland was Too Realz. An African American man in his early 20s who was raising his 2-year-old son, he was responsible for maintaining and running the krump dance space at Homeland. Although he was in charge of the space at Homeland, Too Realz and Fudd maintained an equal position in that setting. That is because in

47

every other setting, Fudd acted as a big homie to Too Realz even though Too Realz was not officially his lil' homie. Too Realz provided me with access to a younger group of krump dancers, their activities and perspectives. My relationship with Too Realz was as a friend and peer. Too Realz would share stories of his future plans and dreams of getting his college diploma. He would share with me the pressures of his peer group's day to day life.

My final key informant was Rob, a biological cousin of Fudd. Rob and Fudd came together for a short while with the idea of bringing together their two crews: Extreme Movement and DC (respectively). Ultimately, this merger failed to be the best arrangement for all parties involved, and it dissolved. However, what did remain was access to the space that he provided for the krump dancers, which is located at Chuco's Justice Center in Inglewood, CA. Rob, also an African American man, in his early 30s introduced me to the professional side of krump dancing. Rob's expertise and experience was taking street arts mainstream. Beginning with his own career, Rob worked hard to give back to his community of South Central LA by helping urban youth take their talents and capitalize on them. Getting in with Rob was a matter of "showing up" – attending sessions, being on time, staying through sessions, and helping clean up afterwards. Even though Fudd vouched for me, Rob had his own set of criteria including requiring me to try to krump dance. After a few weeks of showing my commitment, Rob let me in by treating me with respect. Because he valued education, Rob took a strong interest in my research. However, as in all of these relationships, I very quickly moved from researcher to one of the group and a peer. In Inglewood, Rob, was my key informant who gave me access to the Extreme Movement crew and to Rob's separate organization, called Artists Collective, a professionalizing dance organization.

Presenting Myself

I entered the field declaring myself as a student-researcher and thus tried to maintain a position as *observer as participant* in lieu of *participant as observer*, mostly since I do not krump dance (see Singleton and Straits 2005:308). The difference between these two types of observations is the role that the researcher occupies. If the role existed in the setting prior to the research, then this would constitute a participant as observer role. Alternatively, where a researcher occupies a role that did not exist in the setting prior to their arrival, then they are conducting work as observer as participant.

However, over time my informants came to see me as just another member of the crew who was in good with the big homie. This is why I would get preferential treatment in viewing events or being privy to discussions and decisions reserved for higher ranking members. Part of this perception was due to the meaninglessness of explaining my research to my subjects. While generally people in the setting knew I was a student and writing a paper, they failed to connect how my "hanging out" with a bunch of krump dancers all evening could be related to anything academic. Considering that people who are in my field have trouble connecting krump dancing to sociology, I understand the seeming disconnection on the part of my informants.

Furthermore, my initial attempts at trying to be "a fly on the wall" proved to be a useless and ineffective approach to studying krump dancers. My insistence on remaining in the background was interpreted as disinterest which required me to move to the foreground and take on an active role in krump activities. I would often be asked to help out with organizing or running events. Overtime though, I found this position challenging as I had competing academic interests that did not translate in this community. Furthermore, there were times when I would be asked to decide or pick sides in a conflict. I found this to be an extremely stressful position as I

saw how quickly I could jeopardize my study as it was predicated on maintaining trusting relationships with all informants.

Overall, however, I was a known researcher to my core informants. As for krumpers that I met outside of the main research sites, they were unaware of my research objectives. Because these meetings would occur in large gatherings, on the street or at public events, there was not an opportunity to disclose my status as researcher. Moreover, to have attempted to disclose my identity would have caused an interruption to the events or naturalness of the setting.

The Setting

In conducting this study, I consistently spent time in three different settings. These are not the only places where I collected data. I also participated and observed krump activities in locations throughout the city as opportunities arose. These alternative locations included venues such as public parks (e.g. the "818 Session" in North Hollywood), sponsored performances, and various street locations including parking lots. Below, I describe each of the settings, the actors present, the routines present, and how others understood what I was doing and my role.

Setting 1: Homeland Cultural Community Center (Long Beach, CA)

"The park," as it is known by my subjects, is known officially as Homeland Cultural Community Center ("Homeland"). Part of the City of Long Beach's Parks, Recreation and Marine Department, its functions to provide a space for people in the community to come together to practice and share cultural traditions. Located adjacent to MacArthur Park, Homeland has a neighborhood playground alongside it. The back of the building is tagged with graffiti from students in a graffiti arts class at Homeland. On another wall, a mural is painted with a man's face with the following words:

Buttonwillow**:**

Tiny town in Kern County, California.
1939: My family is picking cotton. My mother drags a ten-foot canvas sack
behind her a white, giant worm glowing in the sun. She stoops over to drag it, her
hands move rhythmically, picking soft, cotton balls from the low, claw-like plants.
It is hot…hot…hot…. I stoop behind her dragging an old potato sack: imitating.
When I tire, I straddle her canvas sack. She pulls white worm and brown child
along the long, dusty row. Dark, Indian eyes determined; her long, black hair a
horse's tail; swaying, and swaying, and swaying. Slowly my head goes down. I
fall asleep on the peaceful cotton-stuffed sack…to the rhythm of the picking, and
the dragging, and the swaying, and the rays of the morning sun.

1934-2000
Manazar Gamboa

<div align="right">Sieani Uti (the artist)</div>

I learned that Gamboa was a poet who wrote mainly from prison, where he was incarcerated for

17 years for a number of robberies and drug offenses. After becoming clean and released from

prison, Ruben Martinez (2001) in the *Los Angeles Magazine* described him as "One of Los

Angeles's most dedicated cultural activists." He is remembered at Homeland because he taught

writing classes there and worked developing plays for the community.

As for the immediate community surrounding Homeland, one can find families,

individuals and gangs milling around. One afternoon arriving ahead of the krumpers, I had a

chance to speak with a manager of the facility. Inquiring as to the dancers' whereabouts we had

the following conversation taken from my fieldnotes that day:

Exasperated, the manager commented, "These kids are always on *their* time."

Smiling I respond, "That may be one of the reasons I like them. I'm the same
way."

The manager stares quizzically at me. He tells me, "You can wait here or there are
some good restaurants nearby."

"I'm okay. I'm going to go for a walk around the neighborhood."

He gives me a strange look. I respond by smiling. "Most people who aren't from around here don't walk around the neighborhood. You should go down to 7th Street near the beach if you want to walk." He tells me.

"What is wrong with walking around this neighborhood?"

"There's too much stuff going on, especially in the park," he responds.

"Do you mean the gangs?"

"Yes," he replies.

"Are you from this neighborhood?" I ask. He tells me that he is.

"Do you walk around the neighborhood?"

"Yes. But *you* would be better off walking near 7th Street near the beach," he insists.

"Why? What's there?" I ask.

He tells me about the nice restaurants and shops. Listening and nodding in agreement I ask, "Why do you think it's better? Is it safer a few blocks over?"

"Because there is more money over there," he replies.

"I see," I reply. Then does that mean there are more police over there?"

He tells me, "No." After some reflection, he says, "There are actually more police in this neighborhood."

"So then why is this neighborhood less safe, if there are more police here?" I ask.

He appears perplexed by the question and does not respond. Sensing his discomfort, I change the subject back to the restaurants that he recommended. Immediately he perks back up and tells me about three restaurants that have good food in the area – a diner, a Mexican restaurant and a Thai place. I leave him with the impression that I will go to one of the restaurants.

I use this conversation to illustrate the neighborhood that Homeland is situated within.

With a mix of decent and street families side by side, Homeland offers a place for the youth of

the community to come together to practice nonviolence in the form of dance, arts or sports.

On the walk that I took that day, I passed children playing in the streets, people congregating on their porches and on the sidewalk having conversations. In the public spaces, including the park and on the street corner, ice cream vendors pushing carts operated their business as did the people selling Mexican corn out of a cooler. While I did observe the signs of gang activity in that same park and near an elementary school, it did not interrupt the flow of events. Rather, the convergence of all of these routines that constitute an ordinary day in the life of this urban community.

The krump dancers that I interacted with in this setting were mostly from South LA and not Long Beach. They traveled to Homeland to dance solely because the space existed. However, getting to Long Beach on public transportation could be cumbersome, so most of the time the dancers would catch a ride with someone. This meant that most people in this setting were friends or familiar with one another. Too Realz had roots in Long Beach, but moved to Compton a year into the study. The only dancers that would routinely be from the Long Beach were young children under the age of 12. who would come into the center on a casual basis. All of the children I observed of this set were male and African American. Where girls stopped by, they would sit on the side and watch the boys and other youth dancing.

As for the activities at this setting, the only krump activities that took place here were sessions. The space that the dancers use is a large open room similar to a dance studio. The floor is hardwood and two walls are lined with mirrors. In the back of the space are restrooms with an industrial grey water fountain. There are grey metal folding chairs collapsed in one corner. The front of the room has a slightly raised platform which constitutes a stage which will not be used by the krump dancers. The sessions here begin with people arriving slowly. There is much socializing and hanging out before any activity takes place. It takes about 30 minutes after a

session is scheduled to begin before any dancers arrive, and krumping generally will not begin for at least another 30 minutes after that. In this setting, the gatherings are always small and intimate. There is a lot of chit-chat and milling about. Part of this is a function of the time that the sessions take place, Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., as an after-school activity. As for my role, in this setting it is easiest for me to declare and be a student researcher. This is due to the small size of the setting and the consistency of the actors participating in the sessions.

<p style="text-align:center;">Setting 2: The Barbershop (Compton, CA)</p>

Located in Compton, CA, the Barbershop represents an actual barbershop whose name I have withheld. Located in a strip mall, the Barbershop provides a space for krump activities after hours on Sundays. Located in the strip mall is a fried chicken restaurant, a nail salon, a women's hair salon adjacent to the Barbershop, a limousine service, a local corner or convenience store and a clothing shop. Across from the strip mall is a vacant lot surrounded by a chain link fence with a Rottweiler sitting guard. There is also a bus stop located on the corner.

Inside the Barbershop are three chairs for cutting hair. Alongside the opposite wall is seating in the form of a park-like bench and plastic outdoor patio chairs. A small television is mounted in a corner that is playing video linked from a laptop computer. On the walls of the Barbershop are pictures. One picture of is of a fight: Muhammad Ali v. Liston, 1965. There is a picture of Frederick Douglas and the First Family (the Obamas). Another picture says, "You can lose money chasing a woman but you can't lose a woman chasing money." There is a poster for the movie *Barbershop*. Another poster advertises Shea butter. There is a football poster displaying an African American man in the picture. There is a lettering sign that lists the price of

services. There is a clock mounted to a wall with scissor hands that keep the time. In the back of the barbershop, there is a restroom with an empty water cooler topped with paper towels. The floor of the barbershop is covered in green and black tile.

Unlike Homeland, where sessions are the main activity for the krumpers, the Barbershop is a site for sessions, battles and organizational activities. Because the space is a private one, the only dancers present are those that were invited. In this setting, Fudd is the person in charge and is the big homie of everyone. Only once was this not the case and that was when his big homie, Slayer was present. Even under that circumstance, Fudd still ran the events of the day and coordinated everyone's movements. Fudd opens the shop for dancers to come by generally after 2 p.m. on Sundays. Sessions at the shop typically go until 6 or 7 p.m.

In this setting, the session attracts many more people than Homeland. Again, time is one factor as this session is on Sunday where many people do not have the same obligations as they would during the week. Another reason is that dancers may be under Fudd as "Fudds," or under Papa Slaughter (aka Fudd) or as part of DC where Fudd is the big homie of that crew. When these dancers come together at the Barbershop, they do so not only to dance, but to also discuss future activities and internal politics.

However, the setting maintains its Barbershop qualities in providing a space for storytelling and joking around for these young males. Outside of the Barbershop, people are hanging out and some toss around a football. Women can also be found in this setting although there is usually no more than four or five. Young children and young adults occupy this space as men bring their children with them as they take time out on their Sundays to relax in this setting. As for my role in this setting, I am considered part of the fam and I maintain a friendship level with the core dancers. However, not all people in this setting are aware of my role as a student

researcher. This occurs mostly with the Fudds and the Slaughters as they generally are not present at DC events.

<center>Setting 3: Chuco's Justice Center (Inglewood, CA)</center>

Located in Inglewood, Chuco's Justice Center ("Chuco's") came to be the new location for DC sessions in place of Homeland. This occurred mostly due to geographic convenience as most dancers lived in South LA. Also a community center, Chuco's is named after Jesse "Chuco" Becerra, a local Youth Justice Coalition activist who was shot and killed at a party in 2005. As part of the Youth Justice Coalition, a movement of community activists seeking relief from government policies and procedures that target racial and ethnic minorities, Chuco offers space for youth to resist violence, as their website explains:

> Chuco's Justice Center serves as a youth and community space, resource center
> and gathering place for organizers, artists, educators and organizations building a
> social justice movement in Los Angeles. CJC works to challenge the
> criminalization and mass incarceration of youth and communities; police
> unaccountability and state violence (ie: police brutality, ICE raids, gang
> injunctions); or the creation and/or expansion of the prison industrial complex.
> CJC is a collective space where the membership and organizations involved work
> together to provide shared leadership that is most beneficial to the community and
> larger justice movement.

Similar to Homeland, Chuco's seeks to provide youth with space to practice arts. Chuco's is located in an old warehouse. Across the street from Chuco's is a large parking lot that goes down the block. A chain link fence divides the parking lot from the main road. There is a bulletin board next to the parking lot. Most of the cars in the parking lot are late model vehicles. One car appears to have someone living in it based on the amount of items in the car, the blankets and the fact that it stays parked in the same location. Surrounding Chuco's are industrial buildings with a few residential units in the mix. On the corner of Chuco's is a traffic light. Stepping into Chuco's,

<center>56</center>

one immediately notices a difference from the outside. Approaching the building, I felt isolated and alone in the dark landscape of expansive and sparsely used parking lots and empty or abandoned buildings and warehouses. But entering the concrete building, I was immediately greeted by the bright colors of posters that youth had put together, flyers announcing a variety of community events, local artwork displayed and the sounds of laughter and music.

Sessions take place at Chuco's on Monday evenings from 6 to 10 p.m. and take place in two different locations. At the front of the building is a dance room with a hardwood floor and a large mirror that lined the front of the room. There are signs on the walls that say, "College prep, not prisons," "Jobs not jails" and "Justice for Oscar G." There is one wall that has a graffiti wall mural. In the center of the room there are two folding tables. One of the tables is used for the music equipment and the computer that holds the tracks. On the other are spot lights which point towards the front of the room for filming the dancers. The other location is in the back of Chuco's where there is a blocked in concrete room that is tagged with graffiti from the ceiling down to the floor. This room is considerably darker than the front room and is preferred for filming. However, access to lighting determines whether this space is used or not. Sessions are held in both rooms however, the front room is preferred for battles as it is larger and there is more lighting. The back room is preferred for filming sessions as it provides an edgy backdrop.

As mentioned earlier, this space was secured by Rob and shared with Fudd as they worked to bridge their crews. Even though both Rob and Fudd are both big homies, Fudd defers to Rob in this space. However, Fudd's deference has its limitation when pushing the interests of his fam. Sessions in this setting start and stop punctually. There is little down time between dancers for silliness, chit-chat and play. Rather, sessions here are structured around practicing the craft and shooting footage to put up on YouTube to increase the visibility of the crews and

individual dancers. By treating the sessions as dance practices, it polarized some dancers as "good" and others as mediocre. Furthermore, competition was created in vying for dance time to make sure that individuals could get their footage uploaded. As a result of these dynamics, tension was generated within the group which resulted in many sessions turning into battles. My role as an observer was easily integrated considering the attempts to mainstream krump in this environment.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DANCE

Watching krump dancing live differed from what I witnessed on television or YouTube. In the krump videos I watched, there were numerous participants in dark, edgy and colorful settings performing on a stage. The action in these videos was explosive with all participants of the dance fully engaged. In contrast, being in person with krump dancers involved an experience which differed from that on the screen. In person, I observed how they created and interacted with the dance and one another in producing this art form.

My first live observation of krump dancing was at a session. My initial impression of the setting was that it appeared as a family friendly space. This was in direct contrast to the "hard" or edgy settings portrayed on film. Instead of being in a setting comprised of graffiti, concrete and asphalt, I was in Homeland community center. The windows of the center were covered in colored paper cutouts celebrating Valentine's Day (Image 3.1). It was the kind of decorations one would expect to find in an elementary school. Along one side of the center was a playground where numerous children played (Image 3.2). Sometimes, the children would come into the center during the krump sessions to use the bathroom or kick a ball. The space itself was brightly lit by overhead lighting as well as by a large number of windows in surrounding the room (Image 3.4).

As for where the dancers performed, it too did not look as I had seen in many krump videos. There was a stage in the room but it was only a foot or two off the floor and was not utilized by the dancers. Instead, the dancers formed a krump circle to the side of the stage where a dancer would enter the middle of the circle to dance. In krump dancing, a circle is formed through a combination of other dancers, the audience and the setting. I would later observe that the composition of the circle changes based upon the form of the dance. In the center of the

circle, is a krump dancer who usually dances alone. The music that the dancers moved to was played on a boom box or medium sized stereo system that was wheeled in on a cart provided by the community center.

Another surprise was the number of people present at the session. In most of the videos I viewed, there were numerous people present. During my first observation of krump dancing live, I was taken aback by the fact there were only seven or eight people present for the session. These youth varied in ages from a two year old to young adults in their early twenties. All of the participants were male and most were African American (Image 3.3).

After conducting my initial observations, it was clear that there was a difference between what I had witnessed in person and what existed on video. Over time, I came to understand that the differences were based upon the form of the dance. I found that krump dancing occurs in three forms: sessions, battles, and performances. Each of these forms serves a unique purpose for the dancer. Sessions, which are the most intimate form of the dance, occur

Image 3.1— Front of Homeland. Image 3.1 depicts the celebration of Valentine's Day with decorations covering the windows of Homeland. Images 3.1 and 3.2 provide a visual context for Homeland and offer an example of how within the same setting coexists street and decent neighborhood elements.

Image 3.2 — Playground Adjacent to Homeland. Image 3.2 shows a playground that is situated next to Homeland and a local park, which is known for drug activity.

between dancers who share a common interest or goal. It is in this form that "labbing" or learning takes place. Sessions provide a shared space for these youth to take time out and have fun interacting with one another. On the other hand, battles are the form of the dance which determines hierarchies. These hierarchies are on the basis of territory, name or crew. This form of the dance also allows for the reestablishment of honor. Lastly, performances are the form of the dance which is guided most by the audience and serves to bridge the dancer with society. In this form, dancers provide entertainment in exchange for money and fame. In this chapter, I will describe each form of the dance in greater detail, highlighting its significance for the dancer and in the practice of nonviolence.

Videos of krump dancing present the form of the dance which falls under the category of a performance. As indicated above, performances are audience driven, which results in the dance being shaped to an imagined or actual audience. This is why in the videos that I observed there was a projection of "hard" images, such as graffiti, concrete, asphalt, the dropping of signs, large numbers of dancers, dark backdrops and an increase in intensity the dance (Image 3.6). That is, to be marketable there is a shaping of what goes in or out of frame to provide a product that is consumable for the masses. While there is no doubt that krump is an "authentic" creation of the street, the demand to consume street culture, and all that is couched in that term, drives the spotlighting of krump's hard side. However, krump and its dancers have many sides to them which contradict images of street people and behavior. My initial observations took place in a session, an intimate and trust building form of the dance.

The Session

The most important function of a session is that it provides an intimate public space for these youth to express themselves. Although the dancers use a session to demonstrate or learn

new moves, the primary function of a session is not about mastering krump, as the mastery of krump is generally attained alone through private practice. Instead, sessions provide a space for dancers to bond, hangout, get off (release tension or stress) and reaffirm their commitment to krump and the practice of nonviolence.

As the most intimate form of the dance, the session provides an opportunity for these young men to bond and develop trust in a street context. Additionally, the session provides a space for these youth to learn and grow. Here, mistakes are expected and embraced. It is safe for a dancer to try new things and experiment as they are among people who will support and guide them. New dance moves or "tricks" (unique combination of dance moves) are practiced as dancers expand they way they express themselves. Where dancers attempt to replicate or master a move, other members of the crew will step in and help the dancer by mirroring the dancer or by providing demonstrations. "Mistakes" in the dance are seen as a part of someone's krump. This is evidenced by Fudd who constantly reminded me, "There is no right way to krump." However, this statement is only true in this form of the dance. At times, these mistakes devolve into groups of people laughing and imitating each other. All of this is done in good nature.

Beyond providing a space to learn, krump sessions provide a public space for these youth to have fun and let loose from the constraints of daily life. From the start of a session until its end, I witnessed various forms of play happening among these youth. I was particularly surprised to see the level of play exhibited by the young males. At sessions, I would witness the guys telling jokes and stories, laughing, running around, jumping and dancing. This behavior was exhibited by young men who carry with them large responsibilities. Most have families to support and have witnessed and experienced huge losses in their lives, including the loss of a

Image 3.4 — Session Space: Homeland. This image provides an example the type of dance spaces found in community centers and dance halls that are used for sessions. Images 3.3 and 3.4 show how the stage is not a prominent feature of the session.

Image 3.3 — Session: Homeland. These images provide an example of a krump session. This session is at Homeland.

63

loved one before the age of 25. Unlike middle class communities where childhood and adolescence extends well into traditional adulthood, for these youth, adolescence and childhood continues to be truncated prematurely. Sessions provide a way for these youth to recapture the play that has been lost through early maturation.

Often times, I observed people in the parking lot or the alleyways around a session smoking weed. Although this behavior is not condoned, it is not sanctioned. I asked one of my informants why people smoked weed. He told me, "It's the 'forget about it drug.'" Looking at him quizzically, I said that I did not understand what he meant. He explained that "Weed helps you relax and forget about the stress in your life. Say you have a light bill you can't pay. You smoke some weed and you forget about it." Because weed is used as a de-stressor in this community, it is not surprising to find its use at sessions where play is a central focus. However, sessions are not the only form where weed is smoked. I observed the use of weed in all forms of the dance. But, it is at the session where it is most pronounced. However, in using the weed, dancers would always excuse themselves and smoke outside of the space where krump was taking place, either by exiting a building, going into a car or around the block. Conversely, alcohol and other types of drugs were not consumed in any apparent manner. Overall, sessions allowed for the temporary suspension of reality so that these dancers could hang out and play in a space where they were removed from their everyday responsibilities.

The dancers present at a session know each other and are members of the same family, crew or both. This contributes to the trust and bond that is forged between dancers. The absence of strangers in this form of the dance allows for the dancers to let down their guard and enter a social space which is supportive and nurturing. This is of particular significance in that young, inner city males do not have many social spaces which offer this kind of protection.

Image 3.5 — Session: Barbershop. Here is another example of a session. This one is held inside the Barbershop.

Image 3.5 — Hardness. These images provide an example of hardness. The krump dancer in the middle, Too Realz, covers his eyes to portray an impersonal character.

There is one exception to this rule, and that is of newcomers. Newcomers are people who are interested in learning about krump dancing. They may or may not decide to join the crew. They come on their own or from other krump families. If they decide they want to join a crew, they do so by making themselves known to the big homie. This is accomplished by spending time with the big homie, learning the big homie's krump style and conforming his or her behavior to whatever the big homie demands. If the big homie accepts the newcomer, the big homie will teach the new recruit their krump style and include him or her in activities of the crew. Furthermore, the big homie will give the new recruit their family name and the new recruit will participate in an initiation ritual before being accepted as part of the crew and/or family. The initiation ritual, called krump jumping, involves battling each member of the crew and/or family.

There are observers at sessions who are not dancers. Rather than operate as an audience like in a performance, they function as supporters to the dancers they accompany. These observers are often women and the partners of the male dancers. However, these observers are few in number and it is not uncommon for there to be no observers present at a session.

Sessions take place anywhere. But to hold a session, the dancers need a minimum of three resources: dancers, music and space. To gather the dancers, there must be some form of communication. Beyond word of mouth, krump dancers find out about sessions using the Internet. The two main Internet sites used by the dancers are Facebook and YouTube. These two sites provide a semi-public forum for the communication of krump news. The Internet provides a better form of communication than the telephone for transmitting information among these youth because telephone access is often cost prohibitive. In addition, by using the Internet sites mentioned previously, communication of events are relayed to anyone with an interest,

known or unknown. This becomes advantageous in expanding crew membership, making a crew known in the krump community, and in spreading the krump movement generally.

A second resource needed for a session is music. This resource involves both the actual "tracks" or songs and a device that will play the music. As for the music, it is not uncommon for music to be mixed digitally by one of the members to make music for all to dance. Sometimes these files would be burned onto cds and sold to make money for the crew or the creator. The music itself does not usually contain lyrics; however, there may be samples from other songs in the track. The music consists of heavy beats with sharp intonations and generally repeats a sound over and over. As for playing the music, most files are digitally created and need only be connected to a speaker. Finding power to play the music presents a challenge in organizing a krump session and ties into the third resource of space. I have seen sessions conducted where the music was supplied by the sound system in the trunk of a car. Ordinarily though, sessions held outdoors need to be near a power point.

Outdoor public spaces are often used because they do not require permission from an authority nor do they cost money. These spaces consist of parking lots in shopping centers or of restaurants, city parks or urban walkways. In addition, outdoor public spaces provide a level of comfort and freedom for these youth to express themselves as opposed to the confines of indoor spaces. Unlike indoor spaces which have more regulations on behavior, outdoor spaces allow for the freedom of movement and have been the domain of youth activity. However, one drawback of using public outdoor spaces is the interference from the police. Often, the police are called out by people who become concerned about seeing a large number of youth, in particular of inner city males, congregating in one area. Aware of this interruption, the dancers have incorporated it into their routine. This is accomplished by designating someone to speak to

the police in a friendly and non-threatening way, usually a big homie. There is a script in that involves such terms as youth, fun, religion and of course dance. There is an expectation that the dancers will have to explain their purpose to the police and these encounters are without incident with minimal interruption or concern shown by the dancers. However, encounters with the police are routine in these communities and youth have been trained from an early age on the proper way to interact with police to avoid harm. Generally, the police do not break up the session unless there is some kind of code violation or noise issue.

The other type of setting used is the indoor space. These spaces are usually found in community centers, dance studios, churches, homes or places of work after hours. These spaces have to be secured by people who have the access. Indoor spaces also have more time restrictions than the outdoor spaces due to facility hours.

Once the resources have been acquired, a session may take place. Arriving to a session involves a ritual of greeting. The first person who should be greeted is the big homie or homies present at the session. To greet someone is akin to saying "Hello," "Welcome back," and "We have missed you" through the use of gestures. For women the gesture is a hug and for men it involves a simultaneous handshake with a brief embrace involving a pat on the back. This is followed by an exchange of information on each other's activities since their last meeting. Where someone is familiar with the big homie's family, there must be an inquiry as to the well being of each of their family members. After greeting the big homie, one must greet each person that they know as they are encountered.

Typically sessions begin with people warming up, which is also known as "labbing." Labbing consists of people alone or with others watching themselves in a mirror as they practice moves. In labbing, the dancer begins to transition from the "real" world into the krump

world. At a session, a krump world is one where a dancer gets to explore who they are without his or her everyday pressures. This takes place by moving the body gradually to the music and focusing in on one's body in expressing their emotion and krump character. A krump character is an identity that is assumed in the krump world that is a reflection of the dancer's emotional state. Gradually, the dancer builds up more and more momentum in his or her moves and the personification of their krump identity or character emerges.

Somewhere between 30 minutes to an hour after a session is set to begin, the dancers finish labbing and create the krump circle where the dancing will take place. This transition is usually communicated either when the big homie changes the track or volume of the music or tells everyone that it is time to get the session started. The ordering of the dance typically involves the big homie going first. The big homie is followed by other members in order of their connection to the big homie or their rank. After everyone has had a turn, the order repeats itself. Dancers start at the beginning of a song but not all krumpers will dance through the entire song. In fact, most do not either because they have finished telling their story or they are fatigued. Finishing a dance is a matter of simply stopping and leaving the center of the circle.

While on the outside of the circle, dancers participate as onlookers who encourage or "hype up" the dancer in the middle. Hyping up involves paying close attention to the krumper in the middle of the circle and verbalizing their understanding of the dancer's story. Sounds such as, "Yeah" (approval), grunts (agreement or connected in feeling), "Woo" (surprise), "Good" (approval), "Whoa" (this one comes when something unexpected happens), "Oh, okay" (when someone understands the story), "Damn" (when someone does something involving a lot of gyration, difficulty, animation or is new), "Yes" (approval), or "Bang" (used to hype up a dancer).

In the session, the dancer tells a story about what they are going through. Sessions provide space for dancers to release their emotions related to their life's challenges, also known as, "getting off." Through the use of their krump characters, dancers share with others their struggles and challenges (Image 3.5). Moreover, sessions provide space for dancers to showcase their efforts in learning and personalizing their krump dancing. The music that is used may or may not be known to the dancer and improvisation is common in this form of the dance.

The Battle

Unlike sessions which encourage dancers to learn, share and be open to one another, battles are all about competition and domination. It is during the battle that dancers measure themselves against one another. Unlike the session where there is "no right way to krump," in the battle there is a clear winner and loser of the dance. In determining a "winner," the role of the audience plays a pivotal role in the outcome. While the dance moves affect the judgment of the competition, it is how well the story is told, or the strength of the insult that is being delivered, with those dance moves that drives audience support.

Battles also serve to push a dancer beyond his or her comfort zone by expanding what the dancer believes is possible. In speaking to Shofu, a young African American dancer who started krumping in high school, I asked him why he battles. He explained to me, "I do it for two reasons. I do it to know how strong I am as compared to my competitors. And because when I'm battling I make up moves that I hadn't thought about before."

Used to determine hierarchies between and within crews and fams, battles help to establish dominance in a particular style of krump or in a krump community. Battles take place between neighborhoods to decide whose krump is better (e.g., LA [Los Angeles] versus the IE [Inland Empire]). They also occur within neighborhoods to claim bragging rights of ownership

71

of a neighborhood or of that neighborhood's style of krump. This is especially important in South LA where krump dancing originated. Gaining recognition as the originators or carriers of krump dancing from LA holds world wide recognition and rewards.

Battles that occur within a crew or fam do so for several different reasons. During one observation, I asked Fudd, "Why were people battling their own fam?" He replied, "They do it to test each other." Within a crew or fam, the test is the right to become a part of the group. One of the tests a dancer faces in joining a crew or fam is the "krump jump." As a tool of initiation, krump jumping is used to bring a new member into a crew or fam. Krump jumping occurs when all of the members of a crew or fam battle the recruit individually. During a krump jump, the endurance of the recruit is tested. Typically in a battle, both dancers' movements will be exaggerated and forceful resulting in each appearing extremely sweaty and winded. However, in a krump jump, the exhaustion of the dancer is amplified as they must battle for an extended amount of time against several different people.

Another reason a person could also be "tested" within a crew or fam is to prove they have the right to hold a name. Krump names involve some derivative of the big homie's name. These names are given ranks within a fam and some examples include: Twin, Jr, Lil', Young, Kid, Boi, Girl, Baby, Tiny, Infant, Prince, Princess, Lady, Mirror, J Dot, J Dash, Soulja, and Mama. If another member of the crew or fam wishes to take over that rank, they battle for the name. In this situation, to survive the test, a person must show both stamina and skill to assume the rank. The outcome of the battle will be determined by the response of the crew or fam with the big homie making the final decision.

Battles also occur within and between crews and fams due to tension. Where there is tension between krumpers resulting from conflict, boredom, or restlessness, battles serve to

maintain and facilitate harmony within the group or community by allowing members an expression and release of these emotions. Specifically, during personal conflicts or "animosity," battles allow for a "clearing of the air" and the reestablishment of honor in a public forum. In the battle, there is a public reckoning for the alleged transgressions committed against another. In this scenario, the aggrieved tell their story of harm while shaming and punishing the other in front of their peer group. The transgressors have the opportunity to defend their actions and likewise seek to shame and punish. Generally, once the two have completed their shaming, punishing and defending dance, the order is restored. It is the telling of one's hurt and the witnessing of the pain by the social group that completes the cycle and allows for the release. On occasion, battles do escalate into physical fights when the tensions and hurt between individuals do not get channeled into the dance. This occurs where there is no chance to tell one's story and in turn be heard by the other party. In these situations, the onlookers intercede quickly (usually by physically restraining the parties) to stop the escalation of violence.

As such, the audience in this form of the dance provides a crucial role in determining "winners" and "losers." Here, the audience is comprised of known and unknown others. The known others consist of the same individuals from the session. As for the unknown others, they come from across the krump community and include their supporters, such as family and friends who do not dance. In addition, there may be people who are not from the krump community that are interested in witnessing the battle. These non-krump community audience members usually occupy a rear viewing position and do not take on an active role in the battle. However, their cheering and applause becomes important in judging the event.

Battles take place in the same locales as sessions, especially when they occur within crews and fams. When battles occur between crews and fams, they often require a larger space

because there will be more people.

In preparing for a battle, there is a certain amount of production that goes into arranging them. First, there is the need for a battle. Competition and conflict battles draw the most crowd support and in turn generate a larger focus on impression management by the dancers. This begins before the event with the production of videos on YouTube announcing the battles. The content of the videos provide a "teaser" of the moves that will be showcased by a dancer as well as the dancers themselves. In addition, the videos provide details of where and when the events will be happening. This is also accomplished on Facebook. Both YouTube and Facebook are utilized to "call people out" or challenge other dancers to the competition. The importance of challenging others in front of an imagined audience is to require the defending of challenged dancer's honor.

Furthermore, challengers require the competition to prove his or her prowess. However, not all challenges are answered due to power relationships. Big homies, in particular those related to the original krump fam, are not required to answer challenges from newer dancers. For a high ranking figure to battle anyone in the krump community requires a need to reaffirm his or her status. Otherwise, why risk losing one's reputation or rank. Yet, where there is competition from an equally high ranking big homie combined with pressure from the community, high ranking dancers will engage in a battle. Generally, there must be some level of doubt in the community that needs resolution or a demand for the silencing of naysayers that brings out this level of competition. Otherwise, most battles occur on a lower ranking level, as there is little to be lost and much to gain.

Once a battle has been agreed upon, there is a certain amount of hyping up that occurs long before the event. Similar to the hyping up in a krump circle, here the dancers use various

Image 3.7 — Pre-battle Huddle: On Stage. This image depicts a huddle on stage between a dancer and his crew prior to battling. Opposite the huddle, the opponent and crew laugh and mock the dancer.
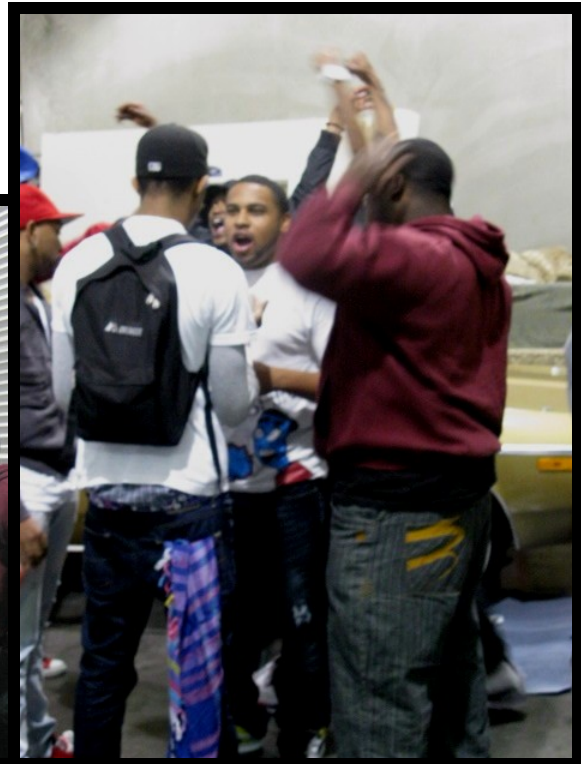
Image 3.8 — Pre-battle Huddle: Off Stage. These images show DC gathered before a battle. In the center of the crew, Fudd hypes up the krumpers. Before the battle, the crew discusses their strategy.

(Top) Image 3.9 — Opening Act: Children.
(Bottom) Image 3.10 — Opening Act: Women.
These images were taken at the beginning of a battle. They provide an example of the types of dancers that open a battle, children and female dancers. The top image is of a seven-year old, Lil' Slaughter. The other two images are of female dancers battling from DC.
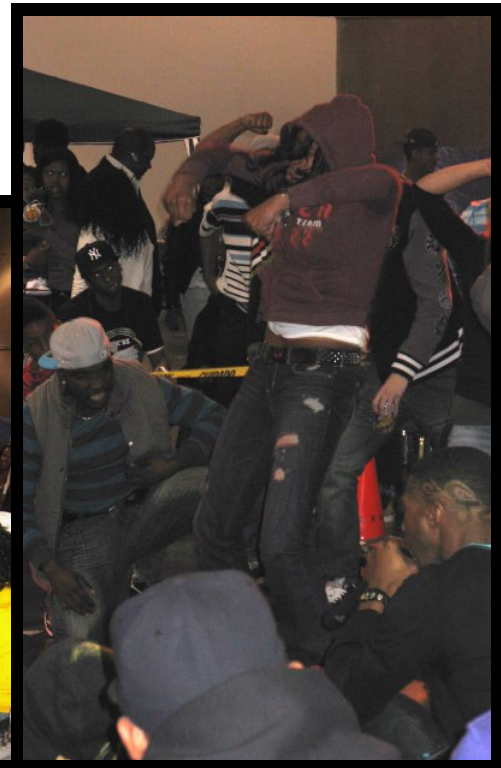
Image 3.11 — Battle Positioning: Opposite Corners. Battles may be arranged in different ways. Here, the competitors are opposing each other from different corners of a battle arena. Alternatively, competitors may be lined up on opposing sides of the krump circle (Image 3.12).

Image 3.12 — Battle Positioning: Semicircle.
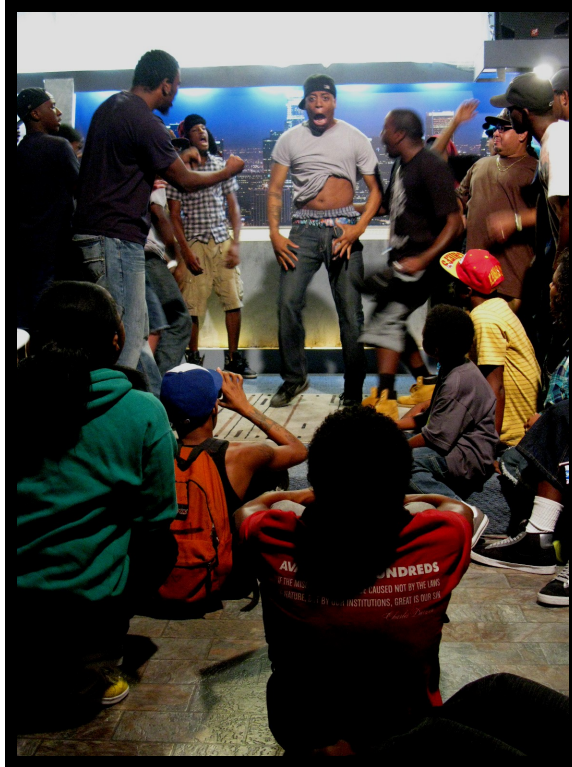
Image 3.13 — Examples of a Successful Battle. A great battle is one where the krump dancer effectively executes an attack that excites the audience communicating their superiority and victory.

methods to build up the energy and interest for the battle (Image 3.7 and Image 3.8). This involves the production of videos where the dancers broadcast to the krump community how great their performance will be or how awful their opponent will perform. In addition, there is talk that occurs both online and in-person which builds up or detracts from the character of the dancers. This talk serves a number of purposes including antagonizing, taunting, provoking, rallying, exciting and engaging the dancers to invest their energy in the battle and their performance.

Additionally, there is a staging of the event and the dancers that takes place both before and during the battle. Before a battle, videos of the crews and dancers that will battle are created to emphasize images that symbolize hardness or toughness. Many of these symbols derive from representations of "street" or inner city images: concrete backdrops; asphalt dance spaces (i.e., parking lots, alleyways); graffiti covered surfaces; abandoned buildings; warehouses; and street wear (i.e., sneakers, loose fitting jeans, and graphic t-shirts). Other images used to signify hardness or toughness includes: darkness; the covering of someone's face or eyes; and traveling in a large group. The purpose of which is done to build up the competitor and excite the audience. During a battle, this staging occurs in the setting of the event. Lighting will often be dim and with many battles taking place after dark. Inner city backdrops such as parking lots and warehouses will be used to accommodate the battle. In this regard, battles share many similarities to performances. However, the purpose of a battle differs as it is about competition and domination.

Battles are lengthy events ranging from a few hours to events that last over multiple days. To have a battle one must have the same resources as a session. In addition, there must be a need to battle, due to a conflict or a test, and an audience. Upon arriving at a battle, greetings

are made but in a less intimate manner. Small talk about one's daily life is limited and so is querying about each other's families and loved ones. Instead, talk is concentrated on the battle—who is present, the forum, the music, and how prepared someone is to battle. As for greetings, they are located only within one's fam. However, big homies will acknowledge and show respect to one another through small talk and head nods. The exception is where there is animosity between the crews or fams. Until the battle occurs, this tension will remain. Overall, apprehension and excitability run high before a battle begins. It is not unusual to see small groupings of dancers discussing their strategy or competition.

In a battle, a stage is usually set up in the middle-front of the forum. Surrounding the stage is ample seating for audience viewing. In this form of the dance, the audience provides the front part of the krump circle enclosing the dancers. The sides of the krump circle consist of the opposing sides of the battle (Image 3.12). The backside of the krump circle is completed by a wall. On occasion, the backside of the krump circle consists of an audience that acts as a wall, since they are not in a participatory or viewing position to the story being told. Similar to sessions, battles begin with labbing. However, it is done in a less prominent fashion as dancers seek to conceal their moves from their opposition until the competition begins. Here, labbing also serves to transition the dancer into the krump world. At a battle a krump world is one where a dancer seeks to establish his or her strength and respect within the wider krump community.

The environment of a battle is similar to a concert or a sporting event in attracting vendors. There are usually tables set up on the outskirts of the event selling food such as hotdogs, nachos, cupcakes, candy bars, and various beverages. Other items commonly sold include t-shirts promoting a particular crew or fam and CDs with digitally composed krump

81

music. The vendors selling these items are usually big homies who want to fundraise for their crew or fam.

Also similar to a sporting event, there is a master of ceremonies ("MC") who facilitates the battle. He or she is responsible for starting and stopping the battle. The MC keeps the audience engaged in the battle when it begins to get restless or distracted. As such, the MC takes on the role of judge in providing the ground rules, maintaining the decorum, keeping things moving, soliciting feedback from the audience and declaring winners on the basis of that feedback. Moreover, the audience performs a role akin to a jury in acknowledging each competitor's story and validating or invalidating claims through approval, surprise or disapproval.

Battles begin with lower ranked dancers (Images 3.9 and 3.10). This serves to warm up the audience and sets up higher ranked dancers in a position where their dances appear stronger. During a battle, one competitor will tell his or her story by enacting their aggression. This occurs through dance moves which depict a competitor punching, kicking, shooting, choking, stabbing, hanging, stomping and/or humiliating his or her opponent. The opponent must watch

Image 3.14 — Fatigue. Exhausted after his battle, this dancer bends over to catch his breath. Part of the effectiveness of battling as a surrogate for actual violence is the physical nature of dance. Because fighting through the dance exhausts the dancer, it helps to release built up tensions and release rage directed at another.

without interruption until it is his or her turn to defend themselves. The dance between the two continues in this manner until they have exhausted themselves in telling their stories (Image 3.14). Each of these turns is called a "round." At the end of the last round, the MC declares the winner on the basis of the audience's approval or reaction as the stories unfolded and in combination with the skill level of the dancer (Image 3.13). Alternatively, a winner is declared where a "kills off" occurs. A kill off consists of a dance move or combination of moves which are so strong that an opponent must relent. To kill off an opponent requires a high level of mastery in the dance in combination with audience support.

The Performance

Similar to battles, performances incorporate the audience into the dance. However, in the performance the audience directs the dance as much as the dancer does. Because the audience has such a strong influence in this form of the dance, performances are sometimes interpreted as detracting from "true" or "good" krump. For example, during an organizational meeting Blaze addressed this issue stating, "We dance for the feeling not for the crowd. Everyone has got a different style and it has never been a part of this crew to dance for the crowd, because that is not good krump." He continues stating that he krumps for those who have passed away "Like Casino—he is in a box now." Blaze says, "I dance because it feels good—not to perform. I don't dance for the film or for the crowd. To do so is not good." Fudd, agreeing with Blaze adds, "The crowd will like anything."

In the above conversation, "good" krump is based upon the personal feelings of a dancer and not the approval of the crowd. An appropriate display of krumping for others is when it is done to honor or pay respect to those who have passed away or are otherwise unable to krump (i.e., because they are incarcerated). Using the crowd's response as a measure of what

constitutes good krump is an invalid measuring tool in determining one's rank in the krump game because "the crowd will like anything." In other words, the crowd is ignorant to the complexities of the dance and will only respond to what they know, which is not derived from the krump community. This may seem like a contradiction as crowd responses are instrumental in battles. However, the audience in a battle predominantly comes from within the krump community or is closely connected to the krump community. In a performance, the audience is from any community and often negotiates the terms and conditions of how the dance will take place.

As such, performances have elements that conflict with the foundational principles of krump dancing. Krump dancing is created to provide urban youth with an alternative space to express their emotions beyond street violence. Therefore, to stay true to one's krump means to stay true to one's roots, origin or identity. Anything other is considered in the community as inauthentic. Krump's underground qualities are what appeals to its practitioners and distinguish it from other dances.

Moreover, there is tension in the community between those who wish to maintain the dance as underground and those dancers who are taking the dance mainstream. By bringing krump dancing mainstream, a legitimation of the dance occurs. In addition, mainstreaming the dance classifies and categories it as the dance seeks to emerge as a separate and distinct style of dance. These externally imposed limitations on krump dancing compromise the dancer's ability to tailor the dance to suit their community level needs.

Performances constitute one way in which krump dancing is mainstreamed. However, with all of the drawbacks of performances, they remain a coveted commodity in the krump community. An example of this is expressed in understanding how the movie *Rize* represents a

pinnacle achievement in krump dancing. Released in 1995, *Rize*, a documentary film produced by David LaChappel, introduced to the world the art of krump dancing. The documentary explained the origins of krump dancing and how it was created as an alternative to gangbanging in the greater Los Angeles community. Following its release, *Rize* becomes an iconic film as it brought fame and fortune to the dancers profiled in the film. *Rize* continues to represent for dancers their beginnings of krump dancing, how profiled dancers gained their ranks, what to aspire to as dancers and the ability to gain notoriety and/or power in producing culture.

While *Rize* does not feature performances of krump dancing, the film itself constitutes a performance of krump dancing which is sold to an audience outside of the krump community. It is these elements that constitute a performance—the tailoring of the dance to an audience derived primarily from outside the krump community in exchange for a price. Performances represent the commodification of krump. It is through the commodification of the dance that it is accessible to those outside of the krump community. The selling of DVDs or tickets to watch live dances, the production of YouTube videos and instructional sessions or dance classes are the main venues for mainstream society to consume krump dancing.

As with any commodity, it must be packaged and marketed with a buyer in mind. This is what creates the tension in the community. By selling krump to the mainstream market, it gains notoriety and establishes itself as a legitimate dance style. These benefits transfer onto those who krump. However, in tailoring the dance for the mainstream market, the dance is altered, most notably in removing the personal aspect of the dancer to the dance. Rather, it is the imagined needs of the market which control the form and content of the story being told.

There are two forms that show how this materializes. In some cases, the result is an exaggeration of the hardness or "street" aspects of the dance and dancers. Desiring to consume

(Top) 3.15 — Performance Venue Example. (Bottom) 3.16 — Commodification of Hip-Hop.
Taking place in venues open to the public, krump dance performances occur among a multitude of
activities. These settings provide an opportunity to consume hip-hop in its various forms from clothing to
dance styles.
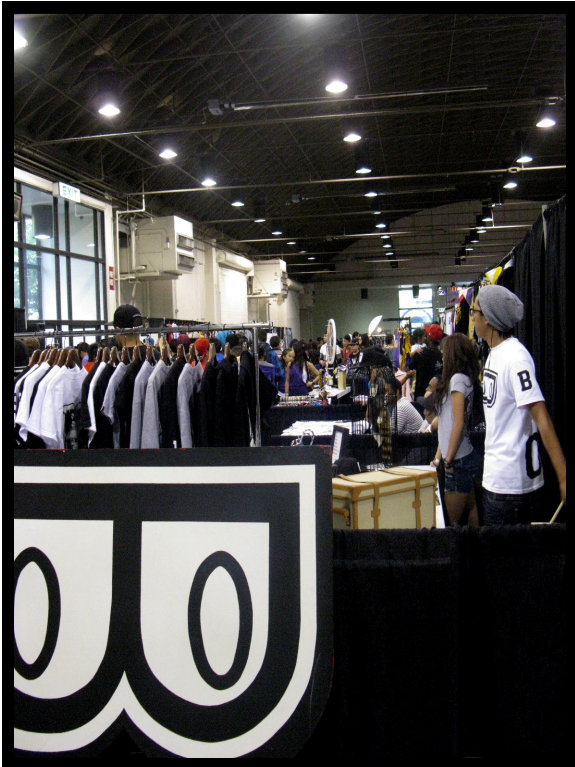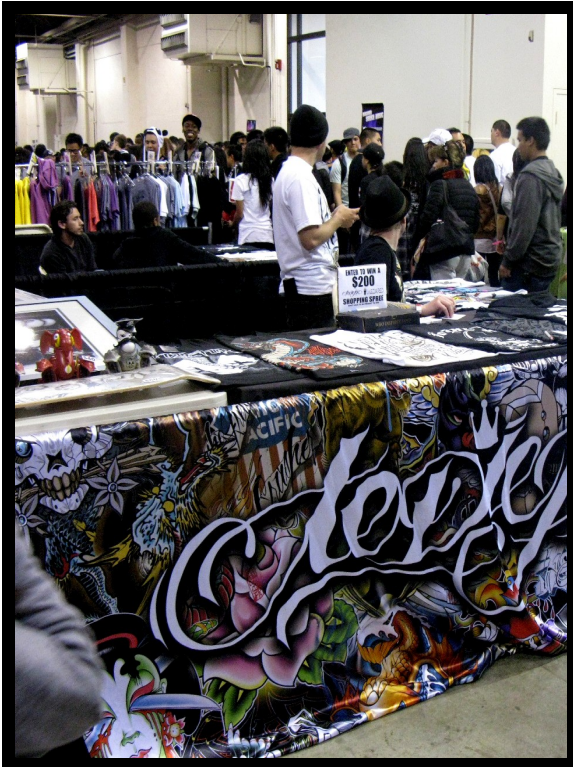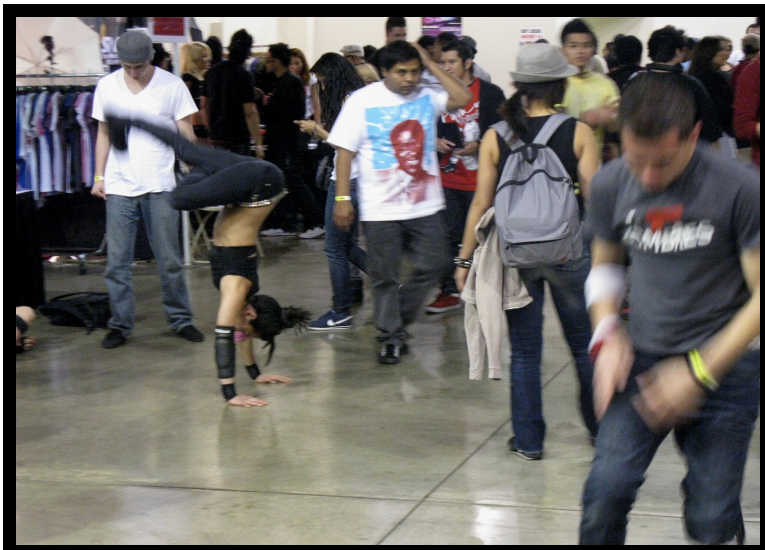
Image 3.17 — B-Boy / B-Girl Dancers. Taken at the performance on the previous page, these b-boys and b-girls warm up in the aisles of the hall. It is common to see multiple styles of dance at performances.

(Top Left) Image 3.18 — Performance: MCs. (Top Right) Image 3.19 — Performance: Staging. (Bottom) Image 3.20 — Audience. These images provide a n example of a krump performance. Present are the staging area, MCs, and audience. Here, the scale of aspects outside of the krump dancer is magnified. Again, the mixing of different hip-hop elements come together, as clowns and krumpers take the stage.
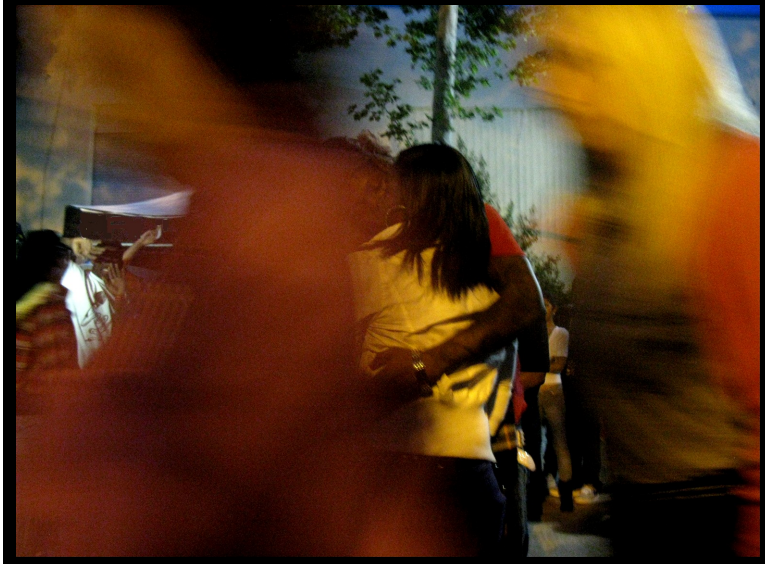
Image 3.21 — Performance into a Session. These images provide an example of a performance transitions into a session. After dark, the performance breaks up with people forming smaller groups by crew with people dancing freestyle, laughing, being intimate and having fun.

or experience a piece of inner city life, mainstream audiences demand to be taken into graffiti lined alleyways, abandoned warehouses, and housing projects with krump crews to experience "gang like" atmospheres. In the other case, the result is a watered down version of krump. Accused of being "scary" or "violent" dancers will perform in a less "wild" manner. In this case, dancers will emphasize their technical skills and minimize emotional displays of the dance. This form provides access to mainstream audiences without fully emerging them in the realities or story of the dancer. Thus, in the performance the "right way to krump" is determined by the audience. And unlike battles, in the performance the audience's criteria of what is "good" is derived from outside the krump community.

Generally, live performances do not occur in the same locations as sessions. However, any recording of krump dancing may become a performance because it may be tailored for an imagined audience. Typically, live performances take place in spaces very different than the session or battle as these spaces are set up for the comfort of the krumper (Image 3.15). Performances, on the other hand, are designed to provide the greatest access of krump dancing to the audience. Therefore, they take place in virtually any location including elementary schools, aquariums or dance expositions. The location is determined by the needs of the audience.

Similar to a battle, there will be advertisements of the performance on YouTube and Facebook. But more traditional forms of advertising will also be used such as leaflets, commercials and billboards to announce the performance. Generally, krump performances are not stand alone events but are combined with some other type of program for example as part of an educational series for youth in schools or as part of series of events celebrating Black History Month (Image 3.17).

Because the space in a performance is chosen for the comfort of the audience, there is usually a large seating area and a stage which offers viewing from different angles (Image 3.20). Similar to a battle, the stage is set up in the middle-front of the forum (Image 3.19). In creating the krump circle in a performance, the audience makes up half of the circle. The other half of the circle is comprised of dancers along the sides of a dancer in the middle of the krump circle. A wall or other backdrop completes the krump circle. The environment of a performance is similar to a battle with vendors selling food and clothing (Image 3.16). However, this is dependent upon the space and the rules of the group or organization that has solicited the performance.

Similar to the other two forms of krump dancing, performances begin with labbing. In transitioning to a krump world during a performance, a dancer concentrates on embodying an entertainer. It is through entertainment that a krump dancer bridges the krump world with the real world. Here, labbing takes place off stage and out of view of the audience. The greeting ritual at a performance involves paying respects to one's crew and big homie. But in this form of the dance, there is also the opportunity to network with high ranked dancers. Like battles, performances begin with lower ranked dancers in building up to the main event or dancers. Also present, is an MC to facilitate the performance. The MC is responsible for starting and stopping the performance and managing the audience, through soliciting feedback and directing their attention (Image 3.18).

Going Beyond the Dance

In explaining how krump is a constructive activity for urban youth to avoid violent street gangs and practice nonviolence, there are three key mechanisms:

1) Fighting to resolve conflict and establish status (through krump battles),
2) Discharging negative emotions and feelings (by embodiment), and
3) Offerings of love (from street fams)

The first mechanism, fighting, was explained in this chapter by describing how battles operate to alleviate and resolve conflict and tension. By simulating a battle or fight, the tradition of fighting work is accomplished, free of violence. Hierarchies and territories are established, maintained or reestablished absent the hands on aggression common in violent street gangs.

In the chapters following, I explain how the other two mechanisms operate as an alternative to banging. In chapter four, "Embodiment," I discuss how negative emotions and feelings are embodied and channeled through krump bringing relief to the dancer. In chapter five, "Fams," I discuss the importance of street families in providing love in the form of companionship, acceptance and attachment. We thus, turn to the second mechanism: embodiment.

CHAPTER FOUR: EMBODIMENT

I heard krump dancing repeatedly described by the dancers as an alternative to youth

violence. Dancers would tell me about how krump dancing changed their lives. In reflecting on

these statements, I wondered how a dance could be a substitute for youth violence, in particular

gang violence. Overtime, I began to understand more about the krump dancer's world.

Structurally, krump dancing enhances the existing institution of family by providing a sense of

belonging and father figures. Functionally, the dance provides space to learn and play, compete

and impact society. However, on an individual level, I struggled with how dancing could

replace the desire to shoot, punch or stab another. This finally clicked for me one afternoon

when a dancer explained to me that when he danced he visualized the object of his frustration.

It is through the connection of the mind to the body that krump dancing works as an alternative

to violence for these youth. Too Realz provides an example of how visualization is used:

> I can be dancin' and there's a person right here in front of me. You don't see him
> but I do. You don't know the story that I'm about to tell but he does [referring to
> a fellow crew member]. He's screamin' for me 'cause he knows my story. He's
> knows what's going on right now. He knows what I been feelin'.
>
> Instead of [me finding] somebody off the street, and he don't know me—but he
> gotta experience what I'm going through in a negative way. And by me
> expressin' it to [a stranger] in a negative way, he gonna express it back to me in
> a negative way because he ain't prepared for me. He will be like, "Whoa. Hold
> on! I don't even know you. Oh, you tryin' to turn it up now. Okay, let me turn
> mines up now too! [indicating a rising level of aggression between two parties]"
>
> Instead, in krump people say, "Oh, he's turnin' it up—YEAH! [Clapping and
> getting excited] TURN IT UP SOME MORE!" [Other guys in the crew] ain't
> gonna worry about his. He ain't gonna tryin' to turn his up. Because he knows
> what I'm expressin' and why I'm expressin' it. He knows it's my antidrug. He
> knows it keeps me calm and positive. […] He's encouraging it instead of being a
> part of it. When it becomes negative, you have to be a part of it. You have to be
> a part of the negativity. When it's positive, you just have to encourage it.
>
> In the statement above, Too Realz describes how he uses other members of the crew to

tell his "story." Here, the crew provides him with the space to share his emotions. Before

finding krump, he would take out his feelings in a "negative way" on random people "off the

street." As Too Realz acknowledges, expressing his feelings this way resulted in fighting with

others. However, by visualizing the person who he is mad at, he releases his feelings through

dancing (Image 4.1).

In addition, the release of emotions by a krumper has a cathartic impact on those in the

krump circle. The interactive nature of krump is made possible by the audience reading the

body language of the dancer and sharing in his or her experience. Enthralled by the story, the

audience vicariously experiences the release of pent up rage and frustration embodied by the

dancer. In turn, the dancer receives validation and acknowledgement for his or her emotional

experiences from the audience (Image 4.2). It is the combination of focusing on the negative

emotion and the reaction of the crew that gives the dancer a release similar to actual violence.

Image 4.1 — Getting Off. The audience engages Too Realz (middle) as he "gets off" or
releases tension at a session.

Image 4.2 — Audience Engagement. Audience engagement and reaction in the dance provides a shared experience. Looking at the faces of those on the circle, expressions of surprise and shock are shown as onlookers partake in the journey of the story that is embodied.

Embodiment

In krump dancing, the body provides the medium upon which dancers transfer and channel their feelings and ideas. As part of religious ceremonies, rituals, celebrations, storytelling, history preservation, and in defining social roles, dance has served as a link between the body and mind in sense making. Today, the healing benefits of dance are part of innovative psychodynamic treatment programs, such as Dance/Movement Therapy, in helping people cope with emotional, cognitive and physical traumas or stressors. Discussing the benefits of Dance/Movement Therapy, Diane Duggan (2001:148) describes the significance of movement in human behavior:

> Movement is a fundamental fact of life; all observable human behavior consists of body movement. Movement has intrapsychic adaptive, and interpersonal significance. A primitive and relatively uncensored expression of inner states, movement is a means of coping with the environment and a communicative link to others.

As a basic element of the human experience, movement provides a means for people to interact and communicate through the body. Duggan (2001:150) continues explaining how movement and/or dance operate as a coping mechanism:

> Movement experiences in the Dance/Movement Therapy session can further aid the individual in managing impulses through the bodily expression of emotion in a safe and supportive environment, which can dispel some of the pain and panic associated with the feelings. This makes emotionally laden situations more manageable and can be a real step toward clarifying feeling, issues, and choices.

> Dance/Movement Therapy supports change through enhancing the capacity for adaptive response and supporting development of more appropriate coping behaviors. The dance/movement therapist, starting with the individual's movement style and utilizing movement affinities and other techniques seeks to enlarge his or her movement repertoire, thus affording a greater range of adaptive response to the environment. Opportunities for trying out alternate means of coping and conflict resolution are provided in the sessions. New adaptive behaviors are identified and supported until they are integrated and available to the individual in everyday life.

By using dance to manage emotional outbursts, pain, overloads or other emotional

dysfunctions, emotions may be explored and released in a safe and supportive space. In

addition, bodily movements help people identify and articulate feelings where verbal language

cannot. Furthermore, the medium of dance allows for a person to tailor specific modalities to

assist him or her in coping. Finally, the body practices learned in a therapeutic session may

extend into the community allowing for positive social interaction and integration.

Similarly, krump dancing provides a physical release of tension in the body, and a

mental release in the telling of one's story or the acting out of emotions. Emotions such as pain,

frustration, sadness, disappointment and anger are embodied, or given form in krump. This

differs from its predecessor, clown dancing, which is aimed primarily at entertaining, as Blaze,

a former clown dancer explains:

> [I like krumping better because] it is more you. Because when you're doing the
> clowning thing, it's like you always have to be happy. There is no way that you
> could be a clown and not be a happy clown. It wouldn't be right. … When
> you're a krumper, you can go under any mood. That's the difference between
> krumpin' and bein' a clown. You don't have to move the way that everybody
> else moves. …You can krump when you are sad. People krump when they're
> angry or when they're happy.

As Blaze describes, krump dancing provided a better fit for him as a teenager because it gave

him a range of emotional outlets as opposed to being a happy clown. With krump, he dances

and expresses himself without regard to his mood. In addition, this dancer argues that clown

dancing is "more entertaining for children" and "to the older people because of its amusement

value. However, the audience's enjoyment plays a minimal role in the form of krump as

compared to other dances. This is due to how the dancers use krump dancing as a healing

practice.

In krump dancing, to embody one's emotions a combination of dance moves are used.

Image 4.3 — Jabs. Using their bodies, these krumpers use movement to share their stories. In this section of images, we see a language out of the dancer's body emerge. Here, jabs (krump move) or punches convey the channeling of force and aggression through the fist.

Image 4.4 — Arm Swings. Depicted here, arm swings allow a krump dancer to increase his or her size appearing larger or taking up more space in the setting. This strategy works well for intimidation purposes.

Image 4.5 — Jumping. Jumping in the air or getting up on one's toes provides an illusion of defying gravity, elevating or raising up an object .

Image 4.6 — Body Contortions. Contorting the body allows a dancer to communicate flipping someone or being flipped, dragging another to the ground, and giving or receiving a blow to the chest.

Image 4.7 — Kneeling. Kneeling is another body movement which depicts pleading for help, being knocked to the ground, or dodging a blow.

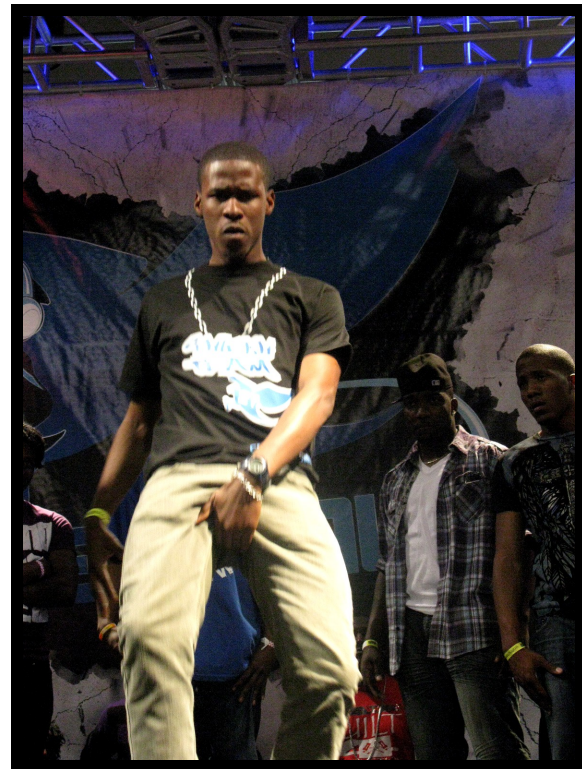Image 4.8 — Crotch Grab. Grabbing of the crotch is one way to taunt an opponent or disrespect the object of a krumper's frustration. Similar to showing one's middle finger or sticking out one's tongue (next page), crotch grabbing is a nonverbal insult.

Image 4.9 — Props. Props such as hats are incorporated into the krump both as a means of storytelling and as a way to demonstrate skill or a "trick."

To do this dancers use four basic or "foundational" moves: arm swings (Image 4.4), the chest pop, stomps and jabs (Image 4.3). Each type of movement allows a dancer to channel different emotions through the corresponding body part (Images 4.5 - 4.8). It is through these moves that dancers give voice and form to their inner emotions. The process of emoting through krump dancing gives the dancer power and control over their feelings and emotions by providing an appropriate space and time for the sharing of their feelings.

In addition to the foundations of krump, dancers also use characters to tell their stories (Images 4.15 - 4.20). A krump character is an identity or alias assumed by a dancer. The character that a dancer chooses is dependent upon who or what the dancer is seeking to portray. For example, Fudd has multiple characters that he embodies when dancing. Each of these characters has a different style, as Fudd explains:

> I've got certain signature moves like that only the Fudds will do or the Doomsdays or the Papa Slaughters.
>
> The Doomsdays, they'll tweek more. Their head will tweek and they'll look, roll their eyes back and stuff like that. Look at people kinda weird, kinda like more aggressive. The Fudds will stumble [more] and stuff like that.
>
> Slayer, he more of a slayer. His slaughter side is more technical so he move a little more precise, so I got a little bit of that too. He pretends like he has swords and cuttin' stuff and that's the way he dances. I don't really dance with swords. I grab poles and stuff like that when I dance. So when you see me I go like this [motioning like he is swinging a sword] or go like this [still motioning]. Ya know what I mean. That's more of my way, my style of it."
>
> Since I have my own small crew, I've been focusing on the Fudds and Doomsdays cause I just branched off. 'Cause we were all under Slayer at one time, was all royal fam.

Here, Fudd explains how each of His krump characters allows him to move in different ways. His "Fudd" character, based off the Looney Tunes character Elmer Fudd, is clumsy and a bit goofy. His "Doomsday" character, based upon the DC comic supervillian, is a bit scarier and

105

destructive. Also a play on its comic book reference, Demotion Crew or DC also links in with this family line. Finally, in his "Papa Slaughter" character, Fudd can enact the role of dragon slayer incorporating a sword into his krump.

Characters provide krump dancers with alter egos who are capable of expressing identities that are suppressed in the real world. For example, in the real world a dancer may be reserved and responsible in their behavior. However, in the krump world this same person may assume a character that is silly or playful. Moreover, characters may have particular attitudes that further define a dancer's style. Some examples of attitudes include: raw, catty, grimey or arrogant. As such, characters and the attitudes they embody allow for a dancer to assume a role that is not otherwise accessible in their everyday life. In the real world, dancers must contain the parts of their experience that are "scary" so they may relate to others in society at large. However, in the krump world, a dancer "can be whoever you want" as expressed by Worm. As such, krump provides a reality for the dancer to express the parts of him or herself that are otherwise suppressed.

As mentioned in chapter one, there is a physical component to krump dancing that assists in the release of emotions as Worm describes:

> Yeah—[krumping is] an outlet. I'm not going to say that I get the same type of satisfaction as I would get punchin' somebody in the face if I'm mad. But, it's like I'm lettin' it out.

> Like in boxing, they say when you swing at somebody you use more energy in missing than in actually connecting. So it's like all you are doin' in krumpin' is swingin' and missing when you're doin' arm swings. You're going to get tired fast. It's not so much that I get satisfaction. It's that I'm startin' to get tired and I don't wanna fight anymore. I don't wanna hold onto this anymore. I'm lettin' it go. When I'm mad about something, I throw a couple of arm swings and now I'm so tired that I'm not thinking about being mad. I'm like, "Whew, I just got off [laughing]." You just thinkin' about what you just did—"That was tight." It changes your whole mentality.

Here, Worm explains how krumping assists in his release of emotions through exhaustion. As he explains, it is not the satisfaction of harming someone that releases his emotions but, rather that "I'm so tired that I'm not thinking about being mad." The act of throwing punches and swinging one's arms allows the dancer to channel their emotions through their body releasing this energy. This results in changing the dancer's mood and mental state as expressed above.

Emotion Management

Another way that krump dancing works as an alternative to street violence is that it helps dancers separate their emotions from the cause. Negative emotions may be generated from causes which are irresolvable for the dancer such as poverty, discrimination or victimization. By isolating their negative emotions from the cause, the dancers channel these emotions into the dance which helps them to feel better (Images 4.10 - 4.14). Through dancing, krumpers improve their emotional states in a community setting without perpetuating violence.

Image 4.10 — Emotional Release. Krump dancers relieving emotional tension in their dance.

Image 4.11 — Tearing at Clothing. In the pages that follow, the emotional expressions of the krumpers are depicted. Here, expressing their rage, pain, frustrations and fears these krump dancers rip at their clothing, as they show their emotions.

Image 4.12 — Intensity. The intensity of these dancers' emotions is shown in their faces.

Image 4.13 — Grimacing. Grimacing their faces, these krumpers express disgust, anger and rage.

Image 4.14 — Screaming. Screaming is one way to release emotions. Here, the dancers scream in fear, like in the top image, or pent up frustrations and rage, in the other two images.

A similar process was found among the Ilongot, an indigenous people located in Northern Luzon, Philippines. While the Ilongot did not dance to feel better, they used another social practice, headhunting, to embody and release their rage. In, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, Renato Rosaldo (1989) studied the headhunting practices of the Ilongot. Speaking with an Ilongot man about why he head hunts, Rosaldo (1989:1-2) discovered:

> He says that rage, born of grief, impels him to kill his fellow human beings. He claims that he needs a place "to carry his anger." The act of severing and tossing away the victim's head enables him, he says, to vent and, he hopes, throw away the anger of his bereavement. … To him, grief, rage, and headhunting go together in a self-evident manner. Either you understand it or you don't.

To manage their grief, the Ilongot men developed a grieving ritual, headhunting, to cope with their pain. Instead of suppressing their emotions, or publicly hiding them, the Ilongot embraced their rage, and developed a ritual to manage their emotions. In isolating the emotions from their cause, headhunting provided relief to suffering.

However, when the Ilongot were not able to practice their healing ritual, it interrupted the synchronicity of their lives as Rosaldo (1989:6) explained:

> The dilemma for the Ilongots grew out a set of cultural practices that, when blocked, were agonizing to live with. The cessation of headhunting called for painful readjustments to other modes of coping with rage they found in bereavement. In the Ilongot case, the cultural notion that throwing away a human head also casts away the anger creates a problem of meaning when the headhunting ritual cannot be performed.

Grieving work or rituals, like headhunting, provide a way to make sense of pain and the range of emotions that surface, including rage. Where traditional forms of emotion management are disrupted, new modes of coping must be take their place and require "pain readjustments" as described above.

Similarly, gang violence is one type of outlet for the rage that is experienced by young

urban males. Releasing tension and displacing emotions, fighting is a social activity which easily channels the rage that forms from a variety of circumstances facing at risk youth. Because of its freeform and street character, krump works as an alternate mode of expression for the emotions that gang violence provide for these youth.

About a year into my study, Fudd's mother passed away. Reflecting on the loss of his mother, Fudd showed me his latest tattoo, which honored his mother. It was krump dancing that helped him to deal with his loss. In relating the details of the session where he and his brother danced, his voice took on a somber tone. He told me of how they danced and "tore it up." Round, after round, Fudd krumped, crying and releasing the rage, the anger, and the pain related to losing his mother. A year later, he again relayed to me the story of how he danced in memory of his mother, furiously krumping, as he worked to rid himself of the pain and sorrow buried deep in his heart, and of how he cried. For it was in krump, that he found solace, a way to manage his grief and rage, and meaning, in the loss of his mother.

Fudd was not the only dancer who used krump to deal with their loss. After his father was killed, Worm explained how krump helped him deal with his grief:

> When my father was killed, I learned that krumping could be an outlet for me. I didn't cry at the funeral. I didn't cry at the viewing of the body or when they told me or when we went to the hospital and I saw his body. I didn't even cry. I was holdin' on for a long time not cryin' because I felt like I had to be strong for my moms. Strong for my family. [But I thought], "DAMN! How do I let this out?" In my head, I knew that if I do not let this out that I'm gonna end up hurtin' someone or doin' somethin' stupid.
>
> There were nights when I tried to cry but it didn't work. You can't make yourself emotional. Either you are or you aren't. With the krump, if I wanted to sock somebody, I can sock the air but it'll be krump. I can use that—the pain of loss, the pain that I felt when my dad [died].
>
> … Of course [krumping] helped. I could be out there channeling that anger towards a person's face or have a gun in my hand and transfer that anger to everybody. Of course it helped. It helped like you wouldn't believe.

For Worm, krumping provided a way for him to process the grief of losing his father. In coping

with his loss, Worm tried to "be strong," through the denial of his feelings. This proved to be an

inadequate coping mechanism, as he knew his unresolved feelings would take form eventually.

Concerned about how his grief would surface, Worm was able to use the tools he learned from

krump dancing as a way to manage his grief. By krumping, Worm could discharge his rage,

anger and grief through a socially approved practice.

Similar to Fudd, Worm also uses krump to honor those who have passed as elaborated

in his comments:

> I krump in honor of my dad. I'll be dancin' with him on my mind. I'm dancin' in
> honor of him. Like, I wish he was here to see me and he'd be so proud of me
> because I dance this way. So, I'll be dancin' to the best of my ability with him in
> my head. I feel like I pull energy down from him and keep going.
>
> When I'm dancin' in honor of somebody I always go for a long time. I try to
> max out all of my abilities at once. They're not here to go as hard. They're not
> here to lift one finger. I could be in the same position so why not go hard. We're
> all gonna go eventually. So when somebody thinkin' of me, they krumpin' for
> me, they go extra hard because they know I woulda went hard.
>
> ... I done seen people cry while they're dancin' thinkin' about people. I done sat
> there and watched people do it, dance for other people. And felt it, what they
> were doin' and start cryin'. Can't help it. It's not because it was tight, it was
> because you dancin' for him — the person that died. Or you dancin' for God.
> Whatever you dancin' for, you dancin' to honor because someone's not here.
> That's a serious thing. Especially my father…. You only get one real one. I
> don't have one so I have to go hard, krump as hard as I can. If I stomp in my
> krump, I got to go BOOM! If I throw my arms, I got to throw it as hard as I can,
> as fast as I can. That's what I mean by go hard. Even if I blink my eyes I draw it
> out to let you see that I'm goin' as hard as I can go.

Above, Worm described how krump dancing allows him to way to honor and remember his

father. Here, going hard, or dancing in a serious manner and to the best of one's ability, is a way

to pay homage. Additionally, Worm uses krump to express and share his grief with others in

coping with his loss.

Image 4.15 — Storytelling: Fudd's Rage. This section of images offer different examples of stories. Here, Fudd embodies his rage as he attacks the source of this rage.

115

Image 4.16 — Storytelling: Fighting. This krump dancer's story involves a fight where someone is hit in the face repeatedly.

Image 4.17: Storytelling: Choking. Here, this dancer embodies the act of choking another.
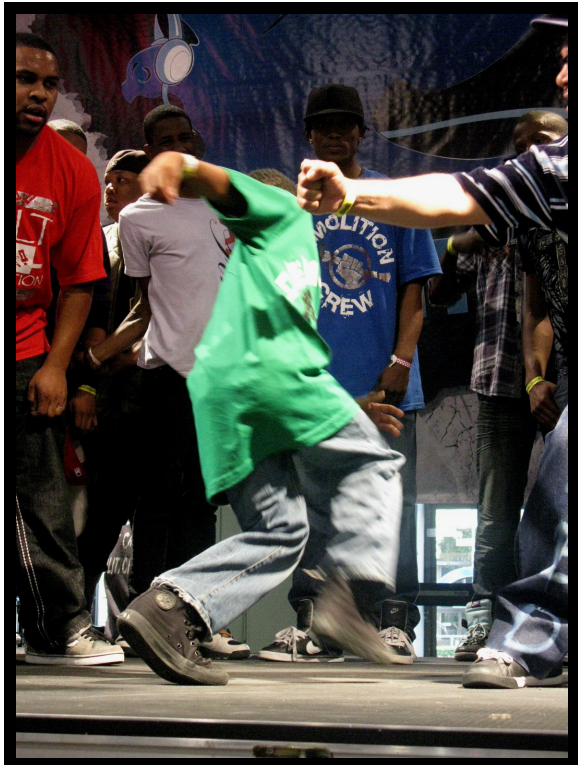
Image 4.18 — Storytelling: Two Dancers in a Fight. Here, two dancers cooperate in the act of a fight.
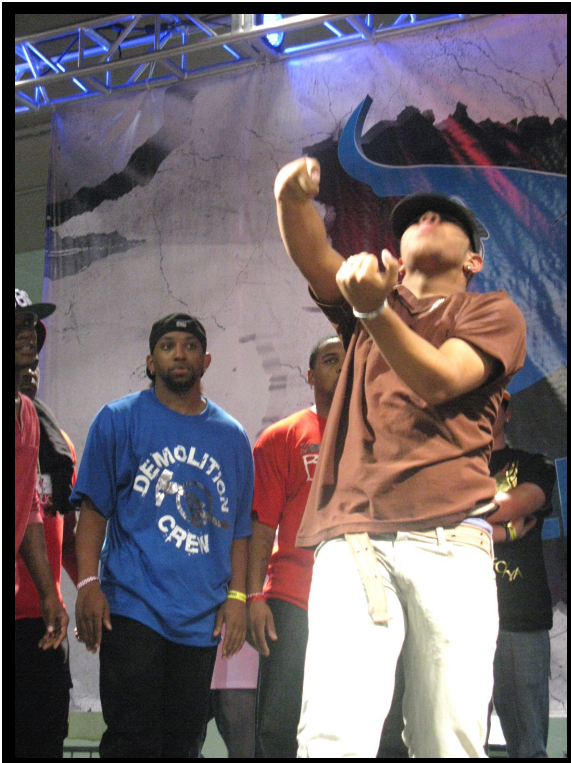
Image 4.19 — Storytelling: A Stabbing. This dancer enacts a stabbing.

Image 4.20 — Storytelling: Hanging. This dancer enacts a hanging.

Understanding of the fragility of life, Worm has come to appreciate the opportunity to dance when he tells me, "I'm blessed to be here." Through krump, he is able to reflect and compare his life course to those in his community. In doing so, he finds a reason to persevere and be his best. By being his best in krump, Worm relates those skills, of going hard and being persistence, to the real world in deflecting violence. He accomplishes this by acknowledging the futility in arguing because, as he tells me, "you can't beat me anyway." Krump provides Worm with a format to express his anger and rage, while keeping his self-worth and -esteem intact. As such, he is able to walk away from conflicts without the need to escalate tensions and anger, because of the surrogate coping practice krump dancing offers.

Gangs, Power and Role Modeling

Avoiding violence, in particular gang violence, is a motivating factor for why Comic, an African American youth, in his early 20s krumps. Calling krump his "antidrug," he describes how krump dancing provided an alternative lifestyle to drugs and gangbanging:

> What I have to express, I express it through my dance. I don't really have to express nothin' at work. I don't really have to express nothin' at home. I don't really have to express nothin' out in the world because I got all of my expression out in my dance. As far as me expressing my anger, as far as me expressing me being sad, as far as me being stressed out about issues, I've expressed that already through my dance. It's already done for and gone. That's why when you see me now I'm so chill, cool, and mellow 'cause I expressed my anger and my negative already. So that's what it is to me. It's my antidrug. It keeps me in a positive mind frame. It keeps me out of trouble and out of harms way.

> …[If I didn't have a place to express anger and sadness], I'd express it in the world. I would express it through drugs. I'd express it through violence. I'd express it through running gangs. Who knows where my mind frame would have been. I thank God that I was introduced to this because I don't know where my mind frame would have been and especially the road I was going down.

> I was introduced to drugs and introduced to gangs growing up around that environment. That's all that I seen—the homies on the corner smokin' a blunt, the homies on the corner jumpin' somebody in the hood. That was what I was introduced to. As a youth, you're a sponge. You soak things up and you absorb

121

things. But when you get older, you understand more. And when I got to the age of understanding, that's what I was understanding — gangs, violence.... So when I got introduced to dance, it showed me another road. It opened my eyes to a whole 'nother world. And I'm glad that I'm in this world 'cause if I wasn't in this world, I'd have been in that world [gangs and violence] and that world right there was a dead end for me. This world right here has the most opportunities for me, positive opportunities. [The other] world has opportunities as well but they were so negative, so vulgar they didn't deserve to be expressed. It didn't deserve me. It didn't deserve my mind, my body, my soul, my spirit.

Here, Comic talks about how he uses krump dancing to express his "negative" or his

anger, sadness and stress. For him, gangbanging provided an outlet for these emotions. Because

this dancer grew up around gangs and drug use, Comic learned to use these tools to cope with

his emotions. However, gangs and drugs proved to be inadequate or "a dead end" for him.

Rather, as Comic explains in the previous statement, krump dancing allowed him to experience

a wider range of emotions and opportunities beyond those that were "negative" or "vulgar."

This is explained in greater detail below:

> Q: How long did you participate in gang activity?

> Comic: Middle school through high school. It was very difficult to get away from that—very. It's just like this. Just like a krump family. It's a brotherhood. It's a dedication. You have to be sincere.

> Q: How did you end up getting involved in a gang?

> Comic: Just where I was born. Where my neighborhood is. It was what I was introduced to. That's what I saw when I came outside. That's who I talked to when I came outside. I was talkin' to the hood. By me growin' up in that environment, seeing and believing that's what I wanted to be in. That's who I saw. I was always a well known kid. I'm a peoples person so I don't mind talkin' to people. Older people or people of my age or older they would know me. But, they were all bangers. By me bein' this little kid and everybody liked me, they would take me under their wing. [They would say], "Yeah, that's my lil' homey. Don't trip on him. He's [special].' It make me feel good, like, 'Yeah. I'm his lil' homey. Don't mess with me. Blat, Blat." And it would install fear in other people—YEAH!—it would make me feel bigger, even bigger—OH YEAH! Ya'll scared of me—OH YEAH! I'M THE MAN!

> But it was a negative thing. They were afraid of me negatively. I prefer you to be

afraid of me positively than negatively. [I want people to think], "I'm scared of him because he's very intelligent. I'm scared of him because he's on a higher level in this world than I am." Not to say [I'm] being conceited or full of myself. [I want people to think] "I'm not afraid of him because of his machoness, I'm afraid of him because of his brains and not his brawn." It's more to life than just being that Hulk. Think about it. People are afraid of the Hulk 'cause he's this big green dummy. When he's talks, Hulk smash, Hulk bash, Hulk this, Hulk that. Can't say a whole sentence for nothing. Big green dummy. But they're afraid of him 'cause he's big and green. Now when he's a smaller man, he's very smart, very intelligent, he's a scientist, he knows EVERYTHING! But he gets no fear. No one's scared of him. No one's threatened by him. He's just a normal person. But when he becomes this big, green, macho dummy, [screaming] everybody's getting nervous. That's not what I wanted for myself. I didn't want to be that big, green, macho dummy that everyone is scared of. I wanna be the little man with the brains. That's what I prefer.

Q: Why?

Comic: It allows me to go wherever I want. It allows me to be free. By having this, I'm free to do whatever I want. Before, I wasn't free to do anything. … All I was doing was running the area, controlling my territory. But when I finally got to that end point, I hit the wall. I didn't bust through the wall, I hit the wall.

...I've always wanted to be an entertainer. I always wanted to dance. I've always wanted to act, sing, rap. As a matter of fact, those are my main talents. I can sing. I can dance. I'm not a rapper but I can put words together and make them rhyme, poems, stuff like that. That's what I was always into. But it wasn't what I grew up around.

For this Comic, gangbanging provided a way for him to have power over his circumstances.

This power was derived through his affiliation with older gangbangers, also known as big

homies, and his ability to instill fear in others. However, by operating from a place of fear,

Comic found his options limited as he had to focus on "controlling my territory." This resulted

in him becoming locked into a role and pattern of behavior that prevented him from fully

participating in life. Below, Comic compares his life as a gangbanger to that of a caged animal:

By being in this negative area, I had this wall up. As gangbangers, think about it. They control the area. They control the hood. They control a block radius. In that block radius, …they're the hardest person. "Ah, do you know [so and so] from [such and such] blood gang. Oh, yeah. He hard. I just saw [so and so] from [such and such] gang in yada yada crip hood. He wasn't hard. He was real soft. He

wasn't sayin' none of that stuff he was sayin' over here—in this block radius." I don't want that. I don't want to have to play a role. I don't want to have to be hard here and soft there. I don't want to look over my shoulder everywhere that I go. I prefer to be free. I can act the same everywhere I go. I don't got to change up for nobody. I can be me and who I really am. Instead of me bein' in my hood, and havin' to get respect from the hood homies, so I gotta play this hard person. I don't wanna get shot at or killed [in someone else's territory] so I gotta play this soft dude.

If you ever notice what gangbangers do, everything shows on their face. If he's uncomfortable and he's in a place he don't want to be, he's not gonna be active. He's not gonna be sayin' nothing. He's gonna be sittin' there lookin' around quiet, staring. He's not gonna be having no fun. He's gonna be ready to go. On the other hand, me—being free—wherever I wanna be, I'm laughing having a good time, excited cause I'm somewhere different. I'm in a new area. I'm in a new free zone. Hey, I'm enjoying this spot. It's not a free zone for him. It's like a zoo animal put in the wild. It's not free for him. He doesn't know the environment. He's not sure what's gonna happen. He's scared. He's nervous. If someone else comes up to him, he's gonna bow down. I don't have to bow down 'cause I don't have anything I have to bow down for. … It doesn't matter because I don't live here. I don't have a hood either. So by you doin' anything to me, it really ain't helpin' you out at all.

Above, Comic uses the concept of freedom to explain the differences of life inside and outside of a gang. Here, freedom is described as the right to choose how "hard" or "soft" to act. It is the ability to let one's guard down and have fun. Freedom is the right to move between spaces without fear of harm. This sentiment is expressed by another dancer, Tiger, an African American man in his mid-twenties, describes how "alone" he felt as a result of his gang activities:

I used to go to a party and the whole party would leave when I walked in the door because they knew that I was a dangerous person. It made me feel powerful but it also made me feel like, "Dang, everybody scared of me." It made me feel alone—powerful and alone. I'd rather be noticed than be powerful and alone. 'Cause being powerful and alone [made me think], "Man, I can't believe these people are really scared of me. I'm not even tryin' to hurt these people." But, just from the rumors of things that I'd done [people were scared]. It made me mad. [I thought], "Oh you guys scared of me. I'll give you somethin' to be scared about." It made mad. It made me want to pull out a gun. It made me want to shoot up the party. It made me. I'm thankful that I never killed or hurt nobody from shootin' up these parties 'cause it could've happened. Either way, anything

could've happened.

For Tiger, being powerful resulted in him being alone. Because Tiger's power was derived from fear, he lost the ability to socialize with others. Here, the cost of gangbanging for Tiger was being isolated. Similarly, Comic describes the cost of gangbanging, as a devaluing of one's life by society as explained:

> If you ever notice, when certain people die—if it was somebody that died from a gang—it's like "Oh. He died. Dang. That sucks." But if it was an innocent person, [people respond], "OH MY GOD!" It hits the news. The person receives more justice than what would have been given to him if he was a gangbanger. There's so much more that comes with that environment [gangbanging] than what comes with this environment [not gangbanging/krumping]. It's so free over here. It's so open. [Clapping] I can do whatever I want instead of bein' over there locked up like a caged animal. It's not me. I don't feel it. And I don't want to have that type of feeling. And I have a two year-old son and I don't want him to grow up in that either. It's not about me anymore. Now, it's about him. By me introducing him to [krump], it'll keep him calm. It'll keep him from spazzing out. He can have a wonderful rest.

Here, krump dancing gives Comic the tools to teach his son how to deal with his emotions. Not wanting his son to follow in his footsteps, this dancer and former gangbanger actively seeks out alternatives to stop fighting his emotions and others and "have a wonderful rest."

Role modeling and teaching other youth in the community by example is another way that krump dancing is used as alternative to the perpetration of violence. Tiger describes how he uses clown and krump dancing to entertain and guide youth away from violence:

> It's a good thing to see some of my homeboys that are still alive and have them recognize how I've changed. Like I tell them, "If I can do it, y'all can do it. You got to have the will power. You got to want to do somethin' else. 'Cause I was worse than every last one of y'all. Half of y'all was kids when I was doin' it, lookin' up to me."

> It hurt me to see a teenager in jail who said he wanted to be just like me. He started gangbangin' cause of me. …I knew of [him from before]. He was young then but now he's 18 fightin' a life term. He said, "I started gangbangin' cause of you. You was the name on the street. I wanted that power that you had." I said, "Man, that power I thought I had I never had it. I never had that power. I thought

125

I did but I never had that power. 'Cause sooner or later, I would've end up right here where you at or in the grave. What power do you have after that? 'Cause all that power you were tryin' to get you ain't got none now. You have to do exactly what they say and when and where they say do it."

I said, "The power that I have now is in entertaining. I have way much more power than I ever had back then in a gang life. This power that I have right now is the power when thousands come and see me perform. Now this is a power of getting people to go in the right direction. That's the kind of power that I want. That's the power that I have, to help people go in the right direction. Not to fall into the trap that I did — where you at now."

I said, 'I wish I would've got to you earlier cause I'd have told you this wasn't it. I wish I would've got to you earlier, man. I would've told you, "You gotta change this. You gotta stop this. Don't be like me. Don't be like that one [gang self]. Be like this one [clown self]. You wanna be like me, be like this one [clown self]. If you get some kind of deal or you get acquitted, if you beat this case and you get out, be like me here [clown self]. If you want to dance, come. I'll teach you. If you want to dance when you get out, you call me and I'll teach you. I'll work on you—hands on. I'll show you a whole 'nother world that this world [gang] didn't show me.

…That's why I stress to anybody and everybody to follow your right path. 'Cause you got a right path and you got a wrong path. And they both knockin'. You feelin' them. You know what's wrong is wrong. And what's right is right. Even though you'll feel somethin' wrong, you'll still be curious and take that wrong path to see where it goes. Stay off that wrong path because it's gonna lead you right to a dead end or over the cliff. The right path is going to lead you to places; it's going to curve; it's going to go in circles; it's going to go strait. You gonna have more options.

Here, krump dancing provided a way out of gangbanging for Tiger. In turn, he uses the tools that he learned in dancing, and teaches it to others in the community, in hopes of helping them avoid or leave the gang lifestyle. The power that Tiger used to get from gangbanging is replaced with dancing. Here, power is the ability to impact others and one's environment. Instead of deriving that impact through violence and fear, Tiger uses entertainment to influence others thereby making him feel powerful.

In sum, this chapter shows how krump dancing operates as a constructive activity substituting nonviolence for violent youth gang participation. Physically, krump dancing

releases tension, adrenaline and exhausts the dancers, all which contribute to emotion management. Psychologically, krump dancing provides coping tools to handle stress and emotions such as loss, grief, pain and anger. And socially, krump provides a practice of expressing rage which is free from violence. This practice becomes a part of the everyday, street routine in emotion management for these youth.

In the following chapter, the importance of krump fams in providing love is examined. Love, in the form of companionship, acceptance and attachment is provided by big homies who operate as father figures, and as a band of brothers and sisters in the form of one's fam or crew. As in any family, however, krump fams have their share of disagreements. In conflict, identities, values, and loyalties become contested and divided. However, should these differences be irreconcilable, they may lead to the dissolution or break up of a fam. Chapter five discusses the struggles of keeping the fam together after the merging of two krump crews, Xtreme Movement ("XM") and Demolition Crew ("DC").

CHAPTER FIVE: FAMS

Fams are the cornerstone of krump. Without supportive relationships built between krumpers, the ability of krump to offer an alternative practice to gang violence would devolve into a hobby. The fam element of the dance facilitates the bonding, commitment and loyalty among krumpers of the same fam or crew. At the head of each krump fam is a big homie or leader who influences and shapes the fam culture.

In this chapter, I describe the issues that can develop when bringing together two different fams, Xtreme Movement ("XM") and Demolition Crew ("DC"), into one new fam called, XMDC. With ideologies running deep, each fam struggles to maintain a sense of self based upon their unique histories and goals, within the new fam culture. If the culture of a crew or fam is governed by their big homie who functions as the patriarch, then to fully understand the culture of a crew, one must understand the man behind it.

The Big Homies

Fudd: big homie of DC

As the big homie, Fudd, is a native of Compton, California. As the child of divorced parents, he was raised by his mother. Although Fudd's father provided him with financial support growing up, he did not provide Fudd and his siblings with certain "keys," as he explains:

> Yeah, cause my father wasn't there for me. He was there when I was like six years old. And after that, it just went sour. … He is pretty much the same person like I am but I think he was more thinkin' about, "Oh, I need to work, to support y'all." He would pay child support and stuff like that. [He was always focusing on], "I need to work. I need to get a house so y'all can have a room."

> It's like he always put so much emphasis on work, work, work, work, work. He didn't play and he had no time to be with me or my little sister. By the time he realized it, we was already grown with our own kids. It kinda broke him down cause he [would say], "Dang, I worked. I worked."

That's why I say, "Shoot, I'm gonna have a job where I'm flexible to do whatever." I can work but at the same time I'm gonna show 'em [my sons] how to do it and that it's still awesome to have fun and chill. And that's why it's such a blessing for me to be able to dance with my sons and enjoy a lot of this time, because when my dad went to work, he went to work and you wouldn't see him. That's why my boys mean a lot to me. Because that's me—part 2 and part 3. If I treat them wrong, shoot, I might as well start slappin' myself up. I don't know.

You wonder why they act a certain way when they get older—'cause they are missing certain keys in their lives. This is how I look at it. With my father not being there, he missed a couple of stages and I had to get information from the dudes in the street. And they gonna teach the way they know. The way they survive. Instead of the way I'm supposed to receive it, which would be from my father, the person whose DNA I have.

I would know what's best for [my kids] because they got part of my DNA and they got their mom's DNA. So it would be like us communicating with them and them understanding because they got that same vibe. Instead of me asking some dude on the street [and him telling me], "Ah, yeah. This is the way you do it." And I do it the way he do it and somethin' go wrong. So that's the key.

In explaining the responsibilities of a father to his son, Fudd emphasizes the importance of teaching and being in his children's lives. For Fudd, it is the role of a father to pass on his knowledge and experience to his son. In the absence of a biological father, the alternative becomes the "dudes in the street." In Fudd's opinion, a biological father has a natural advantage of understanding and guiding his son down the right path because they share the same DNA which gives them the same "vibe." Fudd attributes his mistakes in learning how to be a man to missing out on his father's guidance and learning from the street. As a result, Fudd's approach to fatherhood emphasizes time above and beyond money.

Fudd's dedication to being present and active in his sons' lives extends into his commitment with his family. Through football, Fudd attended Compton College and California State University at Northridge. During that time, he was dating his high school sweetheart who

lived at home with her mother. When her mother passed away and Fudd's girlfriend was unable to pay the rent, Fudd moved in to help her keep the apartment.

At 21 and 20 (respectively) Fudd and his girlfriend got married "instead of us just shackin' up," as he put it. Shortly thereafter, they had a son together and Fudd was offered a scholarship to play football in West Virginia. Fudd moved first and was joined by his wife and child six months later. However, after two years of being away from LA, Fudd's wife decided to return with his son. To keep his family together and be the kind of father he did not have, Fudd left school and rejoined his family. In explaining his internal conflict between his career aspirations and his personal ones, Fudd states:

> I was like, "Man, I can't be without my son." Because, I don't know how to not be there. That's why I said I couldn't put a hundred percent into [college]. Because, I can't just drop my son off and workout all day and not worry about it. Even when I would workout at the gym I'd have him with me or on the football field or he would be my workout partner.
>
> She moved back so I moved back, and pretty much started over. That's when I started working here [at the Barbershop]. I'd been here six, almost seven years now.

The desire to complete his college degree could not override Fudd's sense of responsibility to his family, and in particular towards his son. By being a good father, Fudd attempts to redeem what he lost and save the boy he once was. Once his college degree became an obstacle to his goal of being present for his family, it lost value and importance in Fudd's life. This is not to say that Fudd does not talk about returning to school to finish his degree one day. However, loyalty, time and commitment to his family always come first.

Rob: big homie of XM

On the other side of this merger is Rob, XM's big homie. Unlike Fudd, Rob does not have a character name, as he does not krump. When I asked a member of XM how Rob could be

a big homie without being a krump dancer, he replied, "Oh that's because he is older. You know, krumping is a younger guy's thing. Rob is able to get the space. He has the equipment and puts up our footage." Rob ability to secure resources, all of which are of value to his lil' homies, allows him to assert dominance over the crew and lead. Furthermore, because Rob is viewed as old, he is excused from having to perform or compete with the younger males. Therefore, in maintaining his leadership, Rob must rely on his resourcefulness to provide material and tangible goods, as opposed to his brawn. As such, the youth that he draws in his crew are most interested in fame and the professionalization of their dance. Found on YouTube, a recruitment advertisement for XM states:

> Xtreme Movement is a Los Angeles based professional dance company seeking highly qualified street dancers for upcoming events. XM is for the dancer that's tired of others riding your back pimping you for your god giving talent. This is a chance for you to make your own moves be your own boss. Join the legion - A NEW DAY IS COMING!!! (Killoffclothing 2008)

Here, the enticement for new members to join this crew is to own one's talent and capitalize on it. By becoming a member of this crew, a krumper will gain the opportunity and connections to make money and distinguish one from other dancers.

With this goal in mind, Rob is a natural leader for this crew in light of his experiences. As a native of Watts, California, Rob is no stranger to inner city life, its problems and comforts. As a teenager, Rob played high school football and was a top ranked player. However, it was dance that held Rob's passion. Understanding that it was "not cool" and or very masculine to be a dancer, Rob kept his talent to himself and practiced popping, breaking and locking in his garage. He attributes dancing to keeping him off the streets and out of a gang:

> I realized when I was older I was living in a war environment. Cause if you look at the statistics of the people getting killed in our neighborhood, it's right up there with some of these war torn countries. But how I stayed out of that is because every night I was

literally in my garage trying to challenge myself with what can I create—how can I be better. I knew that this was going to be my ticket to go somewhere. (TEDxYouth 2011)

Before leaving high school, Rob was recruited by four-year universities to play football but chose instead to attend a junior college where he could study dance. As he puts it, "I traded my cleats and football equipment for tights and ballet slippers." He continues:

> You can imagine that my family had thought I had lost my mind. They were like, "What is this boy doing? He's supposed to be going to the pros, get rich, buy us that house. Now he is dancing around. What is that about?"

> It was a really hard time for me because I was used to every Friday night [having] my name was up. I was in the paper all the time and people were always cheering for me. And now I am on my own. (TEDxYouth 2011)

While attending junior college, Rob found a mentor who was also a dance instructor at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). This mentor encouraged Rob to apply for admission to CalArts. He was accepted into the school with a full scholarship. Attending CalArts exposed Rob to many different types of art forms which resonated with his passion. In describing how it felt to attend CalArts, Rob felt that "I'm alive here. Everything makes sense."

During his tenure at CalArts, Rob was approached by a professional dance company that offered him a job. Deciding it was in his best interest, Rob left school to tour with the dance company. That experience opened Rob to different cultures and people throughout the world. In time, Rob decided to start his own professional dance company that incorporated hip hop with street dance and classical ballet. Rob was extremely successful in his dance career but notes one moment of disappointment when he was naïve and did not protect his interests. In that situation, he participated in making exercise videos by providing the choreography. The exercise videos were a hit but Rob never received proper compensation for his contribution. That experience solidified in him the desire to never have his talent exploited again. In talking about the youth that he sees krumping for churches or other audiences, Rob finds it distressing that these

organizations benefit financially off these youth's talent without ever compensating these kids for their hard work. With most of these youth in financially difficult situations, having money would help with their day-to-day expenses. One of his goals is to protect these youth from exploitation and teach them how to capitalize on their talent.

In addition to working with youth in the krump scene, Rob works in the public schools of the greater Los Angeles area providing performances which teach children about dance and self-esteem. Furthermore, Rob spends time in a local juvenile detention facility working with incarcerated youth helping them turn around their lives and giving them hope. His motivation for working with juvenile prisoners stems from seeing his younger brother locked up in prison serving a 25-to-life sentence. He states:

> I never even knew about the prison system because I've always been focused on what I was doing. But now, to go every Sunday and visit [my brother] and see people behind bars and locked up and learn about that whole situation and how it works, that's what actually inspired me to start going into the prisons myself to teach there. (TEDxYouth 2011)

There are similarities and differences between Rob and Fudd. Both come from South LA and have lived in communities where gangs and violence are common elements. However, their approaches to survival are different. For Rob, he used education and networking to leave the neighborhood and improve his financial and social standing. As for Fudd, education was an impediment to his realization of his dream, being the ideal father. While he would very much enjoy having more financial resources than he currently has, wealth for Fudd means having family and friends with whom you share and enjoy your life. Furthermore, Fudd does not seek to overcome the neighborhood, but sees the solution to youth violence in reclaiming the neighborhood and regaining or reestablishing community connectedness.

Krump for Japan Event

Since these two big homies have some fundamental differences on how to accomplish the same objective of helping inner city youth improve their lives, the merger of the two crews created some tension. This tension came to a head the night of the "Krump for Japan" event put on at Chico. The stated purpose of this event was to support the victims of the earthquake and tsunami that occurred on March 11, 2011, in Japan. Rob was the one to come up with the idea and he spent numerous hours advertising the event on YouTube and getting the word out in the community. It was during this time that the krump community was experiencing changes, as the founding krump crew was going through a breakup between its original members. This tension provided an opening where many younger crews perceived an opportunity to advance as the top crew. XMDC was no different in its attempts to assert itself. In particular, Rob was very interested in recruiting some of the top krumpers in the scene and saw this event as his way to capture their attention. To entice some of the top krumpers to come out for the event and showcase their skills, Rob pushed how the footage from the event would be broadcast internationally and how the krumpers could be able to make their mark on the krump scene.

The night of the event I arrived at Chico a few hours before. The event was set to take place in the main hall. The arrangement of the event area included a raised stage in the middle of the space with about 200 folding metal chairs set up facing the stage. Off to left of the stage, large folding portable folding tables were arranged with t-shirts and cds for sale. These items were being sold to raise money for the crew. Some of the people that created the krump music were also present to promote their art. To the right of the stage, similar tables were set up selling food. To the rear of the hall and across from the stage, video equipment was setup to record the event.

Shortly after my arrival, I saw Fudd and said, "Hello." However, he appeared distant, as he is usually happy and gives me a hug whenever we meet. Unsure of the source of the tension, and worried that I had somehow violated some code of loyalty, I wandered around alone to get a better sense of the situation. Not very many people had arrived. Wandering outside, I discovered several people from DC outside of the building. Too Realz was one of these people. After greeting me with a smile and a hug, he tells me that he is mad. Apparently, he was told that he would not be allowed to battle. The decision to exclude him from battling was determined by Rob. Because Too Realz frequently misses sessions, he was excluded from showcasing his talents and skills in the battle. Too Realz told me that many people from DC are upset because they have to pay to get into the event. He also tells me there is tension about who will get to battle versus be a part of the audience. As we are speaking, Fudd comes outside to talk the guys.

Leaving them to vent, I drift back into the main hall and find Rob by the tables selling merchandise. We start talking and Rob tells me that there is tension between the crews. He tells me that the footage is causing problems. At each session, there is someone recording. Usually it is Rob. Afterwards, Rob takes the footage from the session and posts it to YouTube where it will draw views, or "hits." How many hits someone has is a measure to status. To have hits, you must have your footage posted. If your footage is not posted, no one can view it. Therefore, whose footage is uploaded and how quickly generates disputes. Rob explains to me that the XM site generates more hits and so dancers are vying to get their dance showcased. Before the merger with DC, only XM dancers had their footage posted. However, with the creation of XMDC this space must be shared.

He then tells me about a trip that the two crews took to Seattle over the past weekend. Apparently, there were problems with getting some of the DC members to pay their portion of

expenses. Feeling a bit frustrated with a lack of commitment and follow through on the part of some krumpers, Rob explained that there was going to be a meeting between both crews. He shared that he wanted to continue to work with the Fudd fam, but had reservations about the others attached to Fudd. At some point, the topic of conversations shifted to Rob telling me about his work with troubled kids and his organization to support artists who have struggled in their personal lives.

After a few hours of me hanging out and having small talk with various people, the event began. Following an opening prayer, the music starts up. Rob tells me to come on stage and to run the music. I had done this several times during sessions so I was not too surprised when he asked me. The task required that I load the correct tracks for the dancers and start and stop the music as necessary. Once on stage, I saw a couple of different computers set up on two tables, along with other sound equipment. Buckmouth, Fudd's brother and mixer of krump tracks, is running part of the sound equipment. The event opens with a couple of young women and everything appeared to be progressing smoothly.

Not long after, Fudd comes on stage and starts to take over the music by doing my job. I see that he is annoyed that I have been given this task. I respond by telling him that I can turn it over to him. He says that "he's got it" and I leave the stage. I am relieved that Fudd took over because I can observe the entire scene better without being on stage and worrying about the tracks. Once off stage, Rob approaches me and tells me to go back to running the tracks. I begin to understand there is a power struggle happening between Rob and Fudd, and that I am caught in the middle. The basis of the power struggle is rooted in taking care of their respective crews. What emerges from that day's activities is the lack of cohesion between XM and DC. To remove

myself from the situation, I explained to Rob that I needed to take fieldnotes off stage. I quickly located a spot in the rear of the hall to continue my observations.

Many people showed up for the event, but nowhere near the number that Rob had been hoping for. Even though there are over 100 people present, the size of the room made it feel vacant. On stage, I saw that Too Realz managed to secure a role in the event. He was MCing and in good spirits, trying to raise the energy of the event by engaging the audience. I was happy to see that he got to participate. Also, on stage, were a couple of judges who were krump dancers. In surveying the audience, I observed that most people were krump dancers from the community or supporters of the dancers, such as family and friends. In the back of the event, people were socializing and sharing news. There were people coming and going from the event area. Rob spent much of his time filming and giving instructions on the battling order.

About an hour into the event, I observed Too Realz and Shofu start to battle. It appeared that Too Realz negotiated time to battle. Most likely, this was accomplished through his attitude shift. As time went on, fewer people in the audience were sitting. Instead, people moved in close to stand near the dancers forming a semicircle in front of the stage. In doing so, they took on a larger role in the dance, becoming more interactive in their approval and encouragement of the krumpers they supported.

As the evening drew on, Rob asked me to take over the food stand where his family had been selling cupcakes and nachos to raise money for XMDC. After showing me what to do, he started complaining about the vendors contracted with the youth center. He was upset about the profits that were being lost. As the battle came to a close, the dancers began goofing around and having fun with each other instead of battling. The music shifted over to old school hip-hop and people started dancing to it. The evening ended with people breaking into groups headed to

various destinations. I said my goodbyes for the evening and headed home unaware of how this event would be the breaking point of the tension that was building in the formation of XMDC.

Meeting at the Barbershop

On a hot Sunday, during the Fourth of July weekend, a meeting is held at the Barbershop. This would be the meeting that Rob had wanted since the Krump for Japan event. Heading out early from Orange County up to Compton, I decided to run a few errands. Sitting in a parking lot, the phone rang. It was Rob.

After some small talk, Rob begins to fill me in on his frustrations with the merger of the crews. Bringing up the problems in Seattle again, he tells me how disappointed he is with some of the krumpers. Continuing, he shared that he thought the Krump for Japan event was a mess. Specifically, he was mad at how some of the krumpers, affiliated with Fudd, ripped into people. Ripping is a krump term that means to tear someone up or make them look bad. Rob felt that this was not what the event should have been about. Instead, Rob hoped to showcase different dancers and attract new talent. He explained that when krumpers just want to rip somebody, no one "wants to mess with them." Rob goes on by stating, "I don't want to change their style, but to tour the world, you can't shove people around. If you want to stay street and hood that is valid. But if you want to create something that is going to make money in your pocket and become a professional dancer you can't act like a gangbanger." We ended the conversation with him stating that things needed to change and that he needed a break from XMDC for a while.

A few hours later, I arrived at the barbershop. After saying hello to a number of familiar faces in the parking lot, I ask if Rob has arrived. I am told no. Going inside the barbershop, I find Fudd. He says, "Hi" and gives me a hug. I was relieved by his reaction that told me our relationship was not affected by the tension of the crew. I also exchanged hugs with Too Realz

and he comments on the fact that I have cut my hair. After a round of hugs with various people, I settled in and found a seat.

Looking around the Barbershop, I noticed that Fudd put up some pictures of President Obama's family. I overhear Fudd and Blaze having a conversation about some shoes.

Fudd: "You got $100 to spend on shoes?"
Blaze: "I don't got it. Fudd, let me hold it for three months."
Fudd: "Nah, I can't do that."

In another corner, Worm shares a story about his trip to England and how he got paid in pounds. He tells some of the guys how he met some American dancers in England stating, "They were older, but I was looking at their females like, ugh! They were like 30 or 40. But I was only interested in dancing." In the background, I could hear the sound of fireworks exploding. "They shouldn't be doing that in the hood. That's why when cops come here, they start snatching people up," says Blaze. A few people laugh.

About half an hour later, Fudd pulls me aside and tells me that he wants me to be a part of the meeting "to get an outside perspective – adult non-DC ears." This is followed up with Fudd telling Too Realz how he is going to see his mom tomorrow, "because I don't get to see her much." In the parking lot, Fudd's two boys play football with some of the guys. One of them runs up and tries to ask a question, but Fudd tells him to not interrupt. Fudd appeared tense as he was not smiling as he usually did. However, it was not only Fudd that appeared tense, but the entire crew was on edge as we awaited Rob.

Another half and hour passes, and, finally, Rob arrived. Apologizing for being late, he asked me how long I had been there. I responded about an hour. He responded, "Always early or on time." He asked me about my 4th of July plans and I did the same. Shortly thereafter, he and Fudd step out of the barbershop for a private conversation. After they leave, the barbershop

explodes into noise. I hang out for a bit before stepping outside to see what Fudd and Rob are talking about. Both tell me that they are going to have a meeting with the group and then with each other. Rob follows this up by telling me that I will get to see "both sides."

About 15 minutes later, Too Realz announces, "Y'all wanted this meeting." Fudd starts by stating, "Everyone in the circle, it's time to focus." People settle down and stop krumping. Blaze then speaks saying, "We got a lot of confusion inside this crew. Gonna start it off by laying out where you see the crew is going." Too Realz adds, "We are going to be adults, so no interruptions." Moody jumps in adding, "Fudd has a lot to say."

Fudd begins stating, "When we formed the crew [XMDC], we wanted people to have a voice." At this point there is some digression into different issues members are having with each other and people wanting to fight one another. Fudd jumps back in saying, "We imploding because we ain't doing anything else. The only thing we do is go to DCXM sessions. We don't take it out on anyone else. We are taking it out on ourselves, imploding." There is discussion of people being "ranked" above others but Fudd insists that ranking is nonexistent. "We got majority rule, no president." Blaze adds on, whether you are the toe or the heart, we need that." Fudd nods his head in agreement. Blaze continues saying, "Let's get back to the original DC. Let's get back to the basics." Fudd continues, telling people to focus on building their characters and their krump instead of worrying about fighting with one another. He says, "I really love everyone in the crew. That it why I do it."

However, there is a digression back to problems in the crew between members. One woman, Regina says, "I was ready to fight instead of dance. If they can confess to what they lied about, then I can stay in the crew." Blaze tells her, "Whatever that was, it is in the past. Let it go." Regina responds, "I'd like to, but people keep bringing it up." Fudd tells her, "If you had let

it go, you'd be moving on a different path." This tension and emotion leads the others to bring up their issues.

Cedric and B Bucc get into it next. B Bucc yells, "I brought you into my house!" to Cedric. Cedric jumps up ready to fight and starts yelling about his "daddy" and how he "lost his pops." Fudd jumps in the middle saying, "You think you the only one that gets talked about and wants to fight?" B Bucc starts yelling, "You have to move on! I have love for everyone in the crew! I'm not here to fight! Talk to me!" At this point things are extremely tense and there is a lot of yelling and some people are swearing. Fudd reminds everyone that there are kids in the room. He tells everyone, "We got to move on." Blaze adds, "Don't try to bring up old feelings. Forgiveness is the challenge – to turn a cheek." Fudd continues by saying, "This [krump dancing] is supposed to be our outlet."

At this point, Fudd shifts the conversation by mentioning that Rob has some things to say. Rob who is standing near the door responds by saying, "Maybe this needs to happen another day because everyone is not present." Fudd leaves the barbershop to gather people from the parking lot. He returns with the missing people.

Rob begins by explaining that he has other commitments for that day, and that "I got to honor my time and myself." Shifting the discussion to the Krump for Japan event, he states, "In looking at what happened at the Krump for Japan event, I feel that people in my crew were personally attacked." He continues:

> The way Fudd and I came together was because we wanted to build a fam. I try to work with different krumpers and everyone is like, "What is that about?" Everyday I do this, instead of working. Me or Shofu set up everything for the sessions, and it kills my spirit when I hear that, "Rob isn't doing anything." I could go to the 818 and film and not do the session. And I know that Fudd's heart is in it, because he's the peacemaker. But, I need to know what going on, because I'm investing a lot time and money.

Too Realz then defends why he got into it with Shofu stating that he was upset. Rob explains to him that "from a business standpoint we are all after the same thing you are after. Getting paid and traveling." Too Realz responds, "I personally don't feel that when you have an opportunity it's open to everyone." An XM dancer jumps in and says to Too Realz, "Your krump got to do the talking." Rob is still agitated and continues stating, "Why do I have to be the driving force to get people to shine? The original idea in putting up footage was not to give it away for free but to put up teasers. Look at Shofu. He is homeless and he has his own camera and posts footage." Rob continues stating, "People that hit the ball back are fun. I think about you more than you do." Rob references what another krump dancer told him about leaving his fam, quoting him, "The reason I left my fam was that I felt like someone was out to get me…. It was a family for me but I felt like I've got a target on my back." Rob continues, "We don't do that in XM." Fudd jumps in saying "See, we are doin' it—imploding ourselves and those that we are attached to."

At this point, there is some discussion of how to make the crew grow. Other people start bringing up issues to clear the air and apologies are made. Rob interjects with, "I want to honor everyone's time so I want to wrap it up." He mentions his dancing career and meeting the Princess of Brunei while touring. "If we don't want people to think it's an angry thing we have to change." In wrapping things up Rob says, "I don't want people holding onto bad feelings after this meeting. No talking behind the back of others." There is some clapping by people. Fudd agrees saying, "It don't really work—talking behind backs. It comes back on your relationships."

Moody, a DC member, speaks up and asks Rob, "I want to know how you feel about XMDC?" Fudd tries to head off the question but Rob answers. He says, "I'd like to say I feel better but I didn't know that people in DC were not feeling a part of XM. In my heart I feel like

this is a good step but this caught me off guard. I look at everybody as an individual artist. I need to let this information sink through and I need to mediate on it. Real is going to show real. Certain people I feel closer to and with certain people there is distance."

Fudd talks next saying, "We need to expand the movement, we want to spark every state." Rob responds to this saying, "I need to have clear guidelines on what you need to do to move forward. I have to put everyone on a plan. Nobody needs you to make it happen. You need to do it yourself." The XM krumper from earlier speaks again, "That's real talk. You got to bring something. If you are in here, you should be bringing something to the table. We don't need you." Rob reinforces, "If you want to move forward you have got to have a plan."

The meeting begins to lighten up and there is more talking in smaller groups with some people fooling around. I notice Rob glance at his watch as Moody talks about "big boody dance." Fudd addresses the group. He says, "My kid wakes up saying that I want to see B Buck's daughter because she's my sister and we are family. We care about each other." Rob wraps up the meeting talking about making DVDs and getting footage up on YouTube. Fudd continues emphasizing how it is good to maintain positive relationships with people. He concludes saying, "Just add the pieces we need so we can get balanced."

When the meeting ends, Rob leaves promptly. As I am saying goodbye to Fudd in the parking lot, he tells me that "People say, 'Why do you do it [run the crew] when you could have another job?' And I say, 'This is what I love.'" As I leave, Roman candles are being set off in the neighborhood.

During this meeting it is clear that Fudd and Rob have two different approaches to krump dancing and what are the values of XMDC. For Rob, dance was his ticket to improving his life and achieving the American Dream. By embracing values such as individualism, working hard,

143

and delaying instant gratification, Rob has been able to travel, be self-employed and capitalize upon his dancing skills. During this meeting, Rob uses such phrases as: "from a business standpoint;" "I got to honor my time;" "I look at everyone as an individual artist;" and "I have to put everyone on a plan." These statements indicate his commitment to teaching these youth how to incorporate their world into American society.

Fudd on the other hand, talks about unity and collectivity. It is not as though Rob does not value collectivity, but for him a crew or fam is a collectivity of individual artists. This comes through in statements like, "Nobody needs you to make it happen. You need to do it yourself." Conversely, Fudd makes statements such as, "We care about each other" and worries about the crew "imploding." For Fudd, each member of the crew is important and necessary in completing the whole. It is on this point of what it means to be a fam that the two big homies are divided. However, what is evident is that for youth who embrace a "street" mentality or identity, fams with big homies like Fudd are a better fit.

A Crew as a Family

For many people krump dancing offers a place of belonging and kinship. This is expressed in how krumpers define their concept of family. For some krumpers the people in their crews are blood relatives. This is demonstrated by Fudd, when he says:

> [My mother] always taught us to have fun and enjoy ourselves especially with the family. That's why my brother dances, who is Jazz or Buck Mouth. He makes the beats. And my cousin, Blaze…. You know, we always dance, pop lock, break dance. That's why when it came to krump it was a lot easier. So we got my family, my core. And they got my back.

As he explains, Fudd finds support for his krump by incorporating his family into his crew. However, for some, krump dancing creates a sense of family that is missing elsewhere in their lives. As B Bucc explained to me, "Krumping and this crew represent my fam." Because he

struggles with taking care of two kids and holding down two jobs, DC "gives him a place to find

love from the fam."

In explaining what it means to be in a fam versus a crew, Blaze explains:

So, when we say fam it's just short for family. It's just a name that we use. It's a cooler name. So, you have the big homie. And then, everybody that is fond of him or that wanna be under him and have him as a mentor, they take a part of his name. You'll be, Junior, Twin, Lil' or something. That's why we got J Fudd – that stands for Junior Fudd. We have Twin Fudd. We have a lot of Fudd's like Kidd. We look up to him more than you look up to people that are in your crew. People in your crew are along the same lines the same level. But a big homie, they're like a step higher. You look up to them. And you expect them to do different things just like they expect you to do or be out there you know. That's the difference. That's the crew part.

[Fudd's] more of a mentor type. He tries to keep you out of trouble. It's somebody that you view yourself being under. [You think], "Oh yeah. He's cool. He'll look out for me. I'll look out for him. This is who I would wanna be like." You know when you represent somebody, just like when you represent your parents when you go out in front of a lot of people. Everything you do is going to come back to your big homie or your mom or dad. So, you wanna best represent them in the best way that you can. That's the family part.

The crew part is more like you have a band of brothers that you're with. You guys go out there and you wanna basically showcase your talent for the area that you're in. And you want people to [think], "Oh, they work well together." Or, "This group is really nice." It's kinda a family but it's not as much of a family as a fam is. Cause a fam is more like family members. You bond together. A krump crew—you guys bond together but it's in different aspects inside of krump.

Here, the distinction between family and crew is drawn around the concept of "bonding." In a

fam, the bonding is focused on gaining approval and recognition from your big homie. Proving

oneself to be a good representative of the big homie results in rewards which tie you to the fam.

With a crew, the bond is derived in response to external stimuli. Here the common goal of

gaining approval from outsiders forges the bond.

Big Homie Responsibilities

A big homie is the cornerstone in creating and maintaining a krump family. In doing so, a big homie has certain responsibilities. One evening, I attended a battle. Sitting in the audience, I overheard a conversation by two men in the audience discussing the performance of a krumper. They were not happy with his krump and were blaming his big homie. One of the men says to the other that the big homie "needs to get his little homies in the garage and figure out how to help him get a life and krump better." The other says in response, "We're tryin' to grow a man here. If you ain't clockin' in anybody's time clock we got a problem." These statements reflect how the responsibility of a big homie is to mentor or "grow" these youth into men. This happens by spending time and setting a good example.

Setting a good example comes in different forms. After getting "Demolition Crew" tattooed on his arm, Fudd said, "I'm totally official." He continued stating that the "first one always got to lead the pack." He followed this up by telling me how I would be surprised at how many people look up to him and want to be like him because he is a big homie. During a dance competition, Fudd notices that Too Realz has a stain on this t-shirt. Too Realz explains that his two and half year-old son just dropped some food on his shirt. Fudd continues to reprimand Too Realz saying that "it does not make them look good." Too Realz follows Fudd's instructions and puts on a clean shirt.

Being a big homie comes with pressures as well. One evening, several people drove around 80 miles from Los Angeles to Temecula to attend a battle. Several hours after arriving, I noticed Fudd complaining to some people. I asked him what was wrong. He told me that all of these people came from LA and that they did not get a chance to compete. He said, "People rely on me to get them noticed. If I cannot follow through on my promises, then people will lose faith

in me." Getting krumpers "noticed" is one of the exchanges that takes places for a lil' homie's loyalty.

In talking about the pressures of mentoring, Fudd tells me that he makes mistakes because, "I wasn't taught the right way. It's like trying to learn how to fly without every being taught. But he always maintains that he does it for the "kids" and he does it because he loves it. He says, "Everything is cool when I'm enjoying being a big homie. But when it becomes a job, that's when I got to leave."

Because of the responsibilities, being a big homie is not for everyone. Blaze, one of Fudd's lil' homies, comments on why he does not see himself assuming that role below:

> They always tell me, "Oh, you ought to get yourself some lil' homies." But being a big homie, well, you have to put a lot into it. Fudd has put a lot into it. But, as for me, it's a big thing to be a big homie. You have to watch out. You have to make sure the person that you have is not a knucklehead. You got to make sure that their loyalty is there. You have to be there a lot. I don't think with all the stuff that I'm doin' right now I could be a big homie 'cause they'll be like, "Hey, where's your big homie at? Uh, he had to go do this. Uh, he's workin' now. Oh, but I'll see him at the Sunday session though." It's like, "Dang you're only seein' your big homie like one time."

In the above statement, Blaze expresses concern over assuming the responsibility of guiding someone. His worry manifests from the thought of picking a lil' homie who may be a "knucklehead," to concerns with following through with obligations to his lil' homie. In explaining what it means "to be there" for a lil' homie, Blaze says:

> If one of your lil' homies has a battle, you want to be there for support. Parents don't always go to the sessions. It's more of an underground thing that parents don't go to. Bein' a big homie it's like, "Oh, my lil' homie is there. I gotta go support." And not all the time will I be able to go and support. But, if I run into a lil' homie I'll let you know [laughing].

Here, support and being present in the life of another is what it means "to be there" for these krumpers. I asked Blaze how he would know if someone should be his lil' homie, and he responded:

> They start to get fond of you. They want to hang around you all the time. You're real cool with them. It's like, "Who's that?' Like, 'Yeah, that's my lil' homie." I hang around with a lot of people in the crew and we're cool and everything. They have their names already. Bein' a big homie it's like, "Ahhhhh. My lil' homie's callin' right now. Hold on real quick [implying he is on the phone or busy and has to take the call]." I think it's a lot. So you have to be one of those mentors that they can turn to all the time. But, I'm really busy sometimes. Sometimes it will be a long time before you see me. So bein' a big homie—not yet [smiling and laughing].

Potential lil' homies make themselves known to big homies by spending time around the big homies, essentially shadowing them. In my observations, potential lil' homies do their best to win the attention and praise of their future big homies. In turn, lil' homies have an expectation that the big homies will mentor and support them in their activities.

Big Homies as Father Figures

The relationship between big homie and lil' homie assumes the role of father and son even though there may be little if any age difference between the krumpers. What determines the relationship is what contribution or role each brings to the relationship. In many ways, big homies act as surrogate fathers. It is the assumption of fatherhood that Blaze shies away from. Having "to be there," giving up one's free time for someone else's growth and development, and being an example are beyond his comfort zone. Rather, Blaze prefers the role of lil' homie where he can remain carefree and in a learning phase.

Mentoring and being a positive role model is another characteristic of a big homie, as described by Blaze:

> He [Fudd] keeps you mellowed out rather than you goin' out there and bein' all crazy and doin' all the weed smokin' and stuff like that. He's more of a mentor. I

look up to him because he has two kids and the way he treats them is just like—amazing. You see a lot of fathers that—well in this generation they're starting to be better parents but you know there's the guy that runs away [and says] "Oh, I don't wanna take care of this kid." But, being around him and my little cousins you see that it's not all guys that are buttheads and just wanna run away from their kids. So Fudd, he keeps me more grounded and stuff like that.

Similar to fathers, big homies provide guidance on which behaviors are appropriate and which are to be avoided. Constantly under observation by their lil' homies, big homies also provide instructions on how to be a man or in this case, a father. Fudd's dedication and involvement with his children provide a model for young males like Blaze to follow.

Another example of how krump dancing is used to mentor youth in his community is described by Fudd:

I'm just tryin' to get everything straight 'cause I'm tryin' to get a base for this dancin'. Not even just for this dancin'. Because this dancin' is more of a tool for me. 'Cause I wanna get the kids that I do have around us to be encouraged to go to school. If they wanna produce, make music, if they wanna dance, I wanna encourage them more. I don't just wanna use 'em. I just wanna encourage them. If they wanna do skits, let's do skits. They just usin' krump as a tool cause I don't know if they wanna krump dance for the rest of they lives.

Here, Fudd describes how he encourages his lil' homies to use krump to satisfy their needs. Fudd uses various hooks to keep local youth engaged using creativity. Whether it be in the creation of knowledge, music, theater or dance, krump dancing provides the hook that allows Fudd to guide these youth to a more positive use of their talents.

In understanding how big homies assume the role of father for a fam, Worm, one of Fudd's lil' homies explains:

This dude looks out for me. He's like a real father figure. But he's the [Big] homie at the same time. And I do the same for his kids. I look out for them the same as if they were my brothers. I wouldn't be in this position. I wouldn't have somebody else's kids to call my brothers. Somebody to possibly give me a dollar, possibly get a free haircut, if I didn't krump. I just love it. I just love it. I can actually meet different people just through my dance.
…

149

I call him my father figure in the real world and my big homie in the krump world. He looks out for me in the real world so I call him my father figure—like pops—'cause I'm so used to him lookin' out for me in the real world. People who look out for me in the krump world I call them big homies. My father figure that's my pops. … He's the type that if I'm stranded somewhere he's gonna come get me. Take me out to eat. If I ain't got no money to get into an event, he'll pay my way to get me into the event. Give me free haircuts. Only a father does that to his sons. He's a father figure. I call him a big homie but as far as when it comes down to it, he's my father figure.

It is important that a big homie provides a place of belonging and supplies resources in creating the security and comfort required to build a fam. Here, Worm finds value in having "siblings" as it locates him within a family and connects him to others. Monetary resources also play a large role whether in the form of gifts or in being able to assist lil' homies in generating their own income. Additionally, being rescued plays a part in the identification of a big homie as a father figure. It is the translation of these resources outside of krump that allows for the roles within krump dancing to transcend the krump scene and translate to the everyday.

The Significance of Naming

Similar to fathers, big homies give their names to their lil' homies. This happens when a lil' homie takes a part of the big homie's name and adds to it. For example, when I first started attending sessions at the barbershop I met Blaze. He introduced himself to me as "Blaze." However, Fudd quickly interrupted him. Blaze laughed off Fudd's disapproval of how he introduced himself and told me, "I am also known as Mirror Fudd." Fudd commented back, "You don't want to be attached to me no more?" Blaze replied, "No" laughing embarrassedly realizing that he should not have introduced himself as Blaze only.

Later, I talked with Blaze about how he acquired his name as "Mirror Fudd." He explained:

They call me Mirror Fudd because a lot of stuff I do is just like Fudd. It's more of a mirror type thing. So that's the name that he came up with. Instead of being twin or junior, it's Mirror Fudd because we have the same elements inside of our dance. It's gettin' a lil' different now. We're goin' along and everyone is kinda transitioning into their own little style but a lot of my dance moves are similar to his. We're always around each other. I pick up little stuff from him with the majority of stuff I picked up from him.

As for the name Blaze, he came up it as a derivative of his given name and being fast on the football team. In describing the difference between being Blaze or Mirror Fudd, he explains:

With Blaze I can do whatever I want. Basically, I can act how wanna act without watchin' myself as opposed to being Mirror Fudd. Because, if I'm Mirror Fudd then whatever I do it goes back to him [Fudd]. So, if I were to slip up doing something [people would say], "Oh! Mirror Fudd. That's Fudd's lil' homie!" So they [would tell Fudd], "Aye, your lil' homie's over here trippin." I'm not really goin' to go crazy it's just in case. That's the difference. Being Blaze, I'm my own person without havin' to answer to whatever I do according to Fudd.

I asked him, "What does that mean to answer to Fudd?," to which he replied:

If I'm goin' out there and somethin' happens and I'm actin' wilded, he'll say, "Aye, man. Fudds don't do that." Or a disciplinary action would be to krump jump me. Or, I could be put on hiatus from dancin' or something like that. That's more of a krump fam type thing. It's like a discipline thing to it. Where [Fudd says], "You out there goin' crazy. You supposed to be my lil' homie. I don't expect you to act like this cause you're my lil' homie" type thing. But Blaze, it's your own name. It's you.

It [being Mirror Fudd] is like havin' an older brother or something. You're out there and you don't do as good in the video game [as your brother] and they look at you [saying], "Aye, you're not as good as your brother." [And I respond], "But I'm my own person." [And they say], "Ah, but you're lil' somethin' somethin'." So, that's what I think. That's the difference for me.

While a name is an honor for a lil' homie, it also comes with a responsibility to behave according to the characteristics of one's big homie or face the consequences. As such, some dancers seek to branch out and define their identity within the krump scene absent their big homies. This is not unlike the nature of parent and child relationships. And similar to that of father and son, the lil' homie generally always keeps the name of big homie becoming an "also

151

known as (aka)." Even though the lil' homie may create their own fam, the presence of their big

homie will bring a deferential attitude relegating the lil' homie to a status not unlike their lil's. I

observed this during one session, where Fudd's big homie came for a visit where his big homie

ran the session using his style which in many ways is in direct conflict with Fudd's style.

Big Homies and Parenting

Krump also benefits big homies outside of the krump scene. This is most pronounced in

the rearing of children. I have observed many krumpers who are fathers bring their sons to the

sessions and incorporate them into the dance. As for daughters or girls, where they are present it

is usually as observers and not participants. I have watched boys as young as two enter the circle

and krump with and without their fathers. As such, krump dancing provides the medium for

these young parents to be the fathers that they aspire to become.

One dancer, a former gangbanger, describes how clown dancing and krumping helped

him to be a better father:

> [My kids] love what daddy does. And that's good because before, I couldn't say
> that. … My oldest—I was in the streets with her. Even though I was in the streets,
> I still had my daughter. I was gangbanging with my daughter in my arms. That's
> how it was.
>
> One day she was at her grandmother's house and she walked into the room. They
> were all playing dominos and she had a toy gun in her diaper. [They said], "What
> you doin' with that?" [She said], "That's how my daddy holds his gun." Oh, they
> called me and [asked], "Why you doin' that in front of her? She's mimicking.
> You already know she's a daddy's girl. She wants to do everything that you do."
> That right there told me I can't do certain things in front of my daughter because
> she wants to do everything daddy does. To this day, when she gets around me she
> turns like a little baby. She's 15 years old [laughing]. But when she gets around
> me, she turns into a little baby.
>
> All and all she's good. I taught her good. I try to be involved in her [life] even
> though we live in two different places. She's in the community drill team that I
> used to be in. I try to get there and help out with that and play the drums and teach
> the kids and stuff like that still. And she gets excited [saying], "Dad, I need you to

come to practice. Can you please come?" And I'll be busy. … I'm tired but we'll get out there….

I try to keep it going because I know how much she loves what I do. … That lets me know that I really changed from the old me. I really changed and I did something positive with it. To where [my kids can be proud of what I do.] Instead of hearing all the negative stuff of how dad was. Your dad is now somebody that people look up to.

Here, this dancer acknowledges how his actions influence his daughter's behavior. By leaving gangbanging and becoming a dancer he is able to give his daughter something positive to mimic. Beyond setting a good example for his daughter, he is able to take pride in being a good father. He continues telling me how he enjoys giving to other children in the community:

I'm fathering so many children. It's a good feeling to get somebody else's kid in the right direction even though they're not my own. Like I told them, "I can't save every child but I will do my best before I leave this earth to try to save as many as I can." And that's what I can do. I know I ain't gonna be able to get them all. But knowing every day that I reached some kid—that's how I know that God's got a good plan for me.

In this statement, krump dancing provides this father the opportunity to extend his parenting into the community. Through krump, this dancer is able to give something back to the community and help other children in need. Helping children in the community and being a community leader is found in Fudd's mentoring style. In explaining how he got involved with krump dancing, Fudd explains that it was in response to his son's desire to dance:

I wasn't even tryin' to dance. I was tryin' to let my son do his part and I started seein' that I already liked tryin' to help kids, and stuff like that. 'Cause I was always talkin' to kids so [I thought], "Ah, man this is my tool to be able to mingle with my son and enjoy my son." I'm always there too, coming up with different stuff. So, I started dancin' 5 years ago now.

I just want to help and encourage kids to get out there and dance. [And] I want to be a parent who gets their kids instead of just droppin' them off and leavin' 'em at an event or a session. So, it means a lot to me to dance with my kid [and] enjoy the same stuff instead of being in two different worlds. 'Cause my mom she was really involved in everything I did. We would always dance and have fun. Because she was pretty young when she had me, she had me at 16, she was like a

sister. I knew she was my mom but our relationship was like friends. Like a friend, I could talk to her about anything.

For Fudd, krump dancing provided him with a space to spend time with his son. Furthermore, krump is something that can be intergenerational, allowing Fudd to enter his son's world. This is important for Fudd in his parenting style as it helps him relate and build a connection with his child.

In his community, Fudd encourages parents to become more involved in their children's lives through krump. He is motivated to do this because he sees many children struggling without the proper guidance as he explains:

> The way I wanna do it [is] to keep the kids that I'm into outta trouble. Just give them a place to dance, like a standard. …I want to keep you out the streets. Ya know what I mean? In a positive environment so they won't be getting' shot at and stuff like that. So that's the reason I open up the shop [barber] all the time. Cause, one of my lil' homies got killed two years ago. It was some gangbangers that shot him. He was just walkin' ta school. Actually, pickin' up his friend—his female friend from home, when they came. And this was around like 12 or 1 o'clock in the afternoon. So, I don't wanna put no [requirement] that you gotta go to church just to dance.

> A lotta people got different reasons that they dance. I just wanna at least do my part, which is to keep them out of the streets, or around the gangbangin' and all the other stuff. And at the same time, my kids, they love bein' around me. So, I [think], "Just let me open up the shop as much as I can so they can dance. Enjoy theyselves, and not have that many choices to be bored, and wanna go hang out with the bad people, or these gangbangers, or get into some trouble." They can't get into trouble if they out here dancin'. Or they can, but I try to minimize that as much as possible.

Krump dancing offers big homies the opportunity to be leaders in their communities which may not come from other traditional sources such as employment or government position. Rather, these men rise to the top by making a difference in the lives of other youth in their communities. These men take on the responsibility for others, becoming their places of safety, security and belonging. And in turn, these men create stability, family and honor for themselves.

154

In sum, this chapter provides the final link in explaining how krump dancing operates as a constructive activity, in place of violent youth gang participation, and facilitates the practice of nonviolence. Krump fams provide a place to find love in the form of belonging, kinship and money. Through their big homie's leadership, krump dancers construct families, build attachments and bonds, learn responsibility, develop trust and have fun fusing together street and decent values.

In the next chapter, I examine the meaning of krump dancing abroad. This comparative chapter explores the influences of African American urban culture on Australian youth, in Melbourne, VIC, Australia. Through social networking sites, krump dancing has been able to transcend the boundaries of South LA, finding practitioners around the globe.

CHAPTER SIX: KRUMP DOWN UNDER

Image 6.1 — Hit'M Krump Equipment

In this chapter, I examine how krump dancing is understood outside of the US. To do this, I compare krump dancing "down under" specifically in Melbourne, the capital city of the state of Victoria in Australia. Australia makes for a good comparative case due to its close cultural ties with the US. While living in Australia, I easily connected to American culture and politics through television, movies and radio. American syndicated television programs and movies fill most of the free-to-air and pay television channels. American shows such as "Pimp My Ride," "Pawn Stars," "Cops," "Law & Order," "The People's Court," and the "Simpsons" fill the airwaves. While British, other European and Asian imports exist, these programs tend to be located on the public broadcasting stations. As for Australian produced television, it generally accounts for less than a third of all primetime programming. The same could be said for the movie industry. Out of 19 movies playing in a local Melbourne theater at the time of this writing, only 3 were not American. Of the three movies that were not American, two were

156

British movies and one was a Bollywood film. Australia radio also is heavily influenced by American musicians as US top 40 hits are played across Australian radio stations.

Beyond cultural ties, Australia was an obvious choice for me to compare krump abroad as it was the first place that I encountered krump dancing. As I mentioned in the introduction, my first insight into the world of krumping youth came from a chance meeting with Crush in 2009 on a transfer bus at the Sydney airport. After that interaction, I had a number of questions circling in my mind. "Why was there krump dancing in Australia?" "Did they have a 'gang' problem?" "Who were the youth that krumped?" "What meaning did krump dancing have for Australian youth?" "How was krump dancing practiced by Australian youth?" These questions formed the basis of my inquiry into krump dancing in Australia.

The Hub of Australian Krump: Melbourne, VIC

I returned to Australia a year later to explore the viability of a comparative study on krump dancing in the country. Having done some preliminary research via my informants and the Internet utilizing social media tools, I expected a large krump scene in Sydney and Melbourne based upon the size of these cities. As for the rest of the country, there was some indication of krump dancing throughout the State of Queensland. However, due to my resources I decided to concentrate my efforts on the two largest capital cities in Australia.

After arriving in Australia, I arranged meetings with contacts in Sydney and Melbourne. I visited Sydney first where I met with Tyrell, an African American ex pat who had been living in Sydney since the 1980s. We arranged to meet at the food court in a mall near the Bondi Beach train station. When I first saw Tyrell, I was a bit taken back by his age. In his 50s, he was far removed from the age of most krump dancers in the US. In telling his story, Tyrell explained how he used American street dancing to build a name and career for himself in Australia. In the

1980s, he was one of a few dancers who could perform what now would be termed "old school" styles of street dance, such as locking or breakdancing. More recently, Tyrell teaches dance classes to youth in Sydney. In doing so, he modernized his street dancing techniques which accounts for his presence in the krump scene in Sydney. One way Tyrell maintains his street cred with the youth is by his Americanness. This is apparent in his speech, as he maintains a distinct eastern African American accent despite residing in Sydney for over 30 years.

After spending some time chatting with Tyrell, it became clear to me that the Sydney krump scene was not very active at that time. One of the problems with keeping the movement going in Sydney was the location of sessions. Many of the dancers that were interested in krumping lived in Blacktown, a western suburb of Sydney. Located about 21 miles outside of Sydney, Blacktown has been a settlement location for new Australians, in particular those from the country of Sudan. However, getting to sessions in the central business district ("CBD") of Sydney required a long commute making it difficult for people to attend.

Following my visit to Sydney, I headed down to Melbourne, the capital city of the State of Victoria. In Melbourne, I arranged to meet up with Fu Sen ("Fu" for short), an East Timorese krump dancer in his early 20s. We agreed to meet at a Grrilla Step event, which is an Australian form of krump dancing that incorporates traditional music (such as log drumming) and dance of Pacific Islanders with contemporary forms of hip-hop and krump. This is another reason why Australia provides a good comparative case to krump dancing in the US; it is the only country that has created a new form of krump dancing. The Grrilla Step event was set to occur alongside the Yarra River a short distance down from the Flinders Street train station (a main train station) in Melbourne's CBD.

On the day of my arrival, I had some trouble finding the event in the sea of people

taking part in a number of outdoor activities and shows on the riverbank and around the train

station (Image 6.2). After asking a few questions, I then followed the sounds of hip-hop music

which led me to the Grrilla Step show and the following observations:

> On arrival, I see a woman selling DVDs on a table. I approach her and inquire
> about them. The woman introduces herself as Lady Burn and tells me that she is
> a krump dancer. She just finished putting together a DVD that showcases krump
> dancing around Australia. I explain to her that I am an American student doing
> my PhD on krump dancing and that I am interested in learning more about the
> krump scene in Australia. Lady Burn is amused and excited that I am doing my
> studies on krump dancing. I buy a copy of her DVD for $10 and then explain
> that I am supposed to meet Fu. After a moment, she locates Fu and takes me
> over to him.

> The first thing that strikes me about Fu is his warm personality. He is pleasantly
> surprised that I actually showed up to the event. He tells me that the dancers will
> be labbing before the performance and that I am welcome to watch. I thank him
> for including me. The session takes place in front of the stage where the Grrilla
> Step will commence (Image 6.3). On the front of the stage are two flags which
> represent the struggle for independence by two different aboriginal groups of the
> region (Image 6.4). One flag is the Australian Aboriginal Flag which represents
> the Indigenous Aboriginal Peoples of Australia. The other flag is the morning
> star flag representing the Indigenous peoples of West Papuan and their struggle
> for independence and relief from human rights violations from the Indonesian
> government.

> As for the style of krump and the attire of the dancers, I notice that it does not
> greatly differ from the LA dancers that I observed. T-shirts with various
> expressions and symbols suggestive of alternative lifestyles, ball caps, jeans and
> sneakers adorn the bodies of these youth in a similar manner as the youth of LA.
> During the session, the dancers form a similar semi-circle with a dancer at the
> center. This form is reminiscent of my observations in LA. Surrounding the
> dancer are onlookers who hype up the dancer as they tell their story. Even the
> tracks that are used to dance contain similar beats and sounds as the tracks used
> in LA. What is strikingly different is the ethnic make up of the dancers. In LA,
> most of the dancers are African American. Here, the dancers are predominately
> Pacific Islanders and Filipino.

> Between the session and the performance, there is an hour break in activities. It
> is just after sundown that the Grrilla Step show begins. On the stage there are log
> drums set up in three positions with two women and one man playing them. DJ
> Dexter, the visionary for this collaboration, comes out on stage and introduces
> himself, the musicians, and dancers. At this point the music begins. A man
> wearing a skirt made of some kind of natural fiber, which appears as straw, and

159

is marked with white body paint begins to dance in a tribal style in the center of the stage (Image 6.5). His movements suggest that he is telling a story, as he interacts with the environment around him. You hear the thud and rattle of the stage, as he jumps and steps forcefully in his dance. In the background, DJ Dexter mixes music in combination with the log drummers. Between sets, a boy begins to breakdance below the stage where the session took place.

With the next musical set, the krumpers take the stage and begin their dance (Image 6.6). Three dancers form the sides of the semi-circle while one krumper takes the center. To one side, Fu is on the mic hyping up the dancer in the middle. The other dancers lean in and hype up the krumper in the middle. All of these dancers are male. There is a rotation with all of the dancers taking turns dancing and hyping.

The traditional dancer returns to the stage and blows on a shell which makes noise like a horn as he completes a 360 degree circle (Image 6.7). This is followed by more traditional dancing. After a short period of time, he is followed by the krump dancers. The krump dancers take their performance off stage and onto the ground in front of the stage to engage the audience further, as they build more and more energy in the crowd. On the stage, the traditional dancer returns and observes the krump dancers.

The krumpers return to the stage and defer to the traditional dancer who then begins dancing. As he dances, Fu joins him on the stage and begins krumping as the traditional dancer continues storytelling through his dance moves (Image 6.8). Various krumpers and one of the musicians begin to dance with the traditional dancer. As the "modern" dancers and the traditional dancer alternate, there is a blending of the two styles. The show ends with all the dancers dancing together—both the old and the new (Image 6.9).

After the show, I thank Fu for inviting me and inform him of my plans to return in several months to follow up with the Melbourne dancers. I also obtained contact information from Lady Burn thanking her as well.

After witnessing the Grrilla Step show in Melbourne and later reviewing the

documentary on krump dancing in Australia, I realized that Melbourne would provide a viable

krump scene to compare to the dancers I had observed in South LA. Seven months later, I

returned to Melbourne and spent two months conducting my field study of these dancers.

Hip-Hop and & Krump Dancing as Counterculture Down Under

I flew out of LAX at the end of July in the midst of a heat wave only to arrive in

160

Image 6.2 — Riverbank. These two images were taken near Flinder's Street Train Station located in Melbourne's CBD and along the Yarra River. This location was the site of the Grrilla Step show. The crowd assembled here awaits the start of the show during an intersession after the krump perfornamce and before start of the Grrilla Step event.

Image 6.3 — Grrilla Step: Krump Session. This image shows the krump session with Fu dancing, as Erupt MCs.

Image 6.4 — Grrilla Step: Stage. This image depicts the stage setup for the Grrilla Step show. The log drummers are on the right with DJ Dexter in the center.

Image 6.5 — Grrilla Step: Traditional Dancer. These images show the traditional dancer performing during the start of the Grrilla Step show.

163

Image 6.6 — Grrilla Step: Krumping in the Show. Following the traditional dancer, the krumpers perform on stage demonstrating their contemporary urban expression.

Image 6.7 — Hornblowing. These images depict the traditional dancer using a conch shell as a horn. The traditional elements of dance and ceremony resonate with the youth, as linkages to their roots..

Image 6.8 — Grrilla Step: Krumpers and Traditional Dancer. These images show how the krump dancers and the traditional dancer move in tandem. The purpose of this orientation is to demonstrate the similarities between contemporary and traditional dance. One of the goals of Grrilla Step is to provide space for these youth to bring together the past with the present.

166

Image 6.8 — Grrilla Step: Merged Dance Styles. These images depict all dancers, traditional and contemporary, coming together on stage, practicing both cultures in the same space. Their expressions show their joy and fun as they fuse the two styles.

Melbourne and experience a 50 degree drop in temperature. Although I had expected to go from midsummer to midwinter, I had not properly prepared myself for the dampness in air which caused the cold to seep right through my clothes. This would come to haunt me for the remainder of my time in Melbourne as I spent numerous hours outside with the krumper dancers. The krumpers performed in the heart of the CBD between tall buildings which would create tunnels of wind that intensified the wind chill factor. I learned a whole new meaning of layering when it came to negotiating the climate. Often I wore three pairs of socks under my Converse sneakers to keep my feet warm and tights under my jeans for added warmth. Taking shelter inside of buildings was of little help as many buildings in Melbourne were not properly insulated and had old heating systems which were inefficient for heating the large vaulted spaces. I am no stranger to dealing with cold weather growing up in Colorado, but the expectation of creating indoor spaces that would be comfortable for light clothing year round was not part of the Melbournian consciousness. For example, when I complained to a store clerk that I was cold at night and needed to find an electric blanket (which is an electric heating pad in Australia), I was asked why was I not wearing a "jumper" (a big sweater or pullover) to bed? Finding the suggestion that I wear extra clothing to bed odd, I realized a difference in cultural expectations. That is, as an American, I expect my environment be shaped to suit my needs rather than me adjusting my needs to suit the environment.

After landing in Melbourne, I had no idea of where I was going to stay. However, since my exploration into the krump world was by chance, I thought I would leave some details open to see what developed. After getting a sim card for phone and a USB stick for internet at the airport, I logged onto Gumtree, an Australian version of Craigslist, and started searching for accommodations. I found a room in a "share house" that hosted students and travelers from

around the world located in the suburb of Footscray. I exited the airport and sought out a taxi cab to take me to my new residence. Cab after cab would stop, ask me where I was going, and then turn down my fare. Eventually, I complained to the taxi cab manager who responded by yelling at me that it's my problem because I keep telling the cab drivers where I want to go. He told me to stop telling them that I wanted to go to Footscray. I would later learn that getting a cab to take you to Footscray, let alone stop in Footscray, would be a near impossible task. This was compounded further because of my dark skin as some of my white housemates did not have this problem. The solution was always to tell a cab driver that you wanted to go to a nearby suburb and then change destinations when you were close to Footscray. Doing this too early could leave you dumped off far from your destination. Eventually, a different cab manager was able to get me a taxi to take me to my destination, 40 minutes later.

Living in Footscray had its benefits. Beyond being close to the CBD, it gave me street cred among the dancers. When asked where I was staying, my response would always garner a look of surprise and in some situations disdain. One dancer told me that he did not like going into Footscray because it was too dangerous. Nonetheless, my willingness to live in one of Melbourne's worst suburbs and to be on the ground and experience life from that lens communicated my commitment to understanding the challenges facing these youth in their day to day lives. Another advantage of staying in Footscray, unbeknownst to me, was that I was only a few steps down from Lady Burn's studio space she held in Footscray. This made meetings easy and helped to keep me in contact with the dancers.

While Footscray is known for its high crime, drug dealing and addicts, I experienced this suburb the same as any inner city neighborhood. There were areas that were obvious no go zones such as alleys, underpasses and parks where large groups of males congregated with open

169

containers in the middle of the day. After nightfall, walking around alone meant walking with a purpose, in lit areas, staying out in the open and away from buildings and being around others, if possible. However, during the day businesses were bustling with people buying and selling goods. Restaurants and bars operated throughout the night with people coming into town to experience the local cuisine. Because Footscray is home to a large number of Vietnamese immigrants, there is a plethora of Vietnamese restaurants and grocery stores. In addition, a growing contingent of immigrants from the Horn of Africa, comprising countries such as Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan, also contributed to offering an exotic experience in local dining.

After taking a couple of days to settle in, I contacted Fu to let him know that I had arrived. He told me that he was taking some time out of the krump scene due to personal issues. He suggested that I get in contact with Lady Burn who would be attending the next session. My next phone call was to Lady Burn who was extremely warm and excited to hear from me. She asked me where I was staying and was pleasantly surprised to find out that I was staying down the street from her studio that she was currently occupying. She offered to give me a tour of Footscray and then wanted to know how I was doing with the jet lag. I told her I was fine, so she suggested picking me up immediately and taking me into the city to a B-boy and hip-hop event going on at a club. I agreed and less than an hour later we were off.

We arrived in the city parking in a metered space. The club was located in the heart of the CBD down an alleyway. In contrast to my earlier indication of avoiding alleys, in the heart of Melbourne alleys are places to find shops, restaurants and clubs. I would have had no inclination to venture down a dark alley without my guide, but after doing it a few times I realized how normalized this routine was in this setting. In fact, Melbourne is known for its "laneways" with tourists and locals frequenting the businesses located within (Images 6.10 -

6.12).

We arrived earlier than the crowd so we went to dinner while we killed time. During our meal, I asked Lady Burn to tell me more about why there is krump dancing in Melbourne. She explained that there was not a "gang" problem in Melbourne among the youth. Rather, many of the Pacific Islander dancers were from Auckland, New Zealand (colloquially referred to as "N Zed") where there were gang problems. In migrating to Australia in search of a better life financially or socially, many troubled youth brought with them the gang structure. As for the Filipino krumpers, their connection with krump dancing stemmed from a long tradition in the Philippines of hip-hop dancing learned courtesy of a US military presence.

After finishing our meal, we headed back to the club where more people arrived. As we entered, I observed that the club presents more as a lounge than a club with its dim lighting and small space. There is seating in various corners with people talking and watching some of the dancers. Lady Burn introduces me to a well known local B-boy, Lamaroc. We spend time watching him and some of the other dancers as they showcase their dance skills. As I observed them, I noticed how their clothing styles differ from the krump dancers. These dancers wear sweatpants and bright colors reminiscent of old school breakdancers. In the background, there are several large screen televisions playing clips from a variety of movies. The clips consisted of scenes from: a 1990s American film, *House Party* starring Kid and Play, which is a comedy about two teenage African American males and their pursuits during an evening; the American television show, *Soul Train*; an Indian film where the actors are in blackface; a Blaxploitation film; the 1984 American movie *Breakin*; and a jazz performance.

Shocked to see this compilation of images in this setting, I asked Lady Burn about their significance. She casually explained to me that they were "retro" and went with the theme. I

171

Image 6.10 — Melbourne Graffiti: Alleyway I. These images provide an example of how graffiti or street art is incorporated into the city. Taken in Melbourne's CBD, these pictures depict the different facades of the city. Going behind buildings and through the alleys, yields a different view than available on by car. The picture on the left shows an office space with people conducting business dressed in suits. To the right is a close-up of the adjacent building exterior. The incorporation of street art into the everyday lives of Melbournians demonstrates one example of how this environment fosters the growth of street cultures, such as krump dancing. Many of the youth that krump in Melbourne were affiliated with tagging crews prior to joining a krump crew. The adoption of youth subcultures, such as krump dancing or graffiti crews, present opportunities for youth to interact and communicate with society, claim territory and express their individuality.

Image 6.11 — Melbourne Graffiti: Alleyway II. These mages provide one example how alleys appear in Melbourne. This area was heavily trafficked by middle-class people and upscale businesses despite its edgy exterior.

Image 6.12 — Melbourne Graffiti: St. Kilda. Taken from the St. Kilda suburb of Melbourne, these images depict the various types of graffiti around the city. The top image includes stenciling, which is a popular form in Melbourne. Tags appear across the varying walls operating as modes of communication and territorial markings.

queried her further as to the meaning of the films, but she could not offer any further explanation. Looking around the club, I did not see anyone reacting in any negative fashion to the television screens. Rather, I noticed a West African male dropping signs as he chatted with friends. On stage, Aussie rappers participated in open mic night.

From my observations, the only person finding things "odd" was me. I realized quickly that the meaning and rules I assigned to hip-hop culture and American Blackness in general were different than those operating in this setting. For example, in the US, American Black culture is attached with a sense of ownership. That is, African Americans may listen to music produced by African Americans, watch movies and television shows with a predominance of African American actors and wear clothing that is considered "street" or "urban wear." However, when non-African Americans partake in African American culture in the US, an automatic suspicion is raised as to the motives of the individual. There is a questioning as to whether the non-African American is participating in jest, or, rather is suffering from an identity crisis or is otherwise confused. And where the non-African American is sincere in their interests in African American culture, their interest must be undertaken with the utmost respect and honor so as to not be offensive and thereby appear as racist. However, in this setting, non-Black, non-Americans were using African American culture as they might any other tool to be manipulated for their needs without a complete understanding of the context that the culture was created.

For example, Blaxploitation films originally produced for African American audiences in the 1970s have come under heavy criticism in the US as reinforcing racial and sexual stereotypes of African American men and women. Furthermore, similar types of stereotypes are reinforced in the *House Party* film. In particular, one clip that played repeatedly that evening

featured a close-up of a young African American woman's backside as she danced vigorously shaking her butt. This was enlarged across the screen in the club. As for the Indian blackface minstrel production, such caricatures of African Americans have been deemed racist and socially unacceptable forms of entertainment in American society for several decades.

However, it was not the intention of these youth to offend or make fun of Blackness. Rather, for these Australian dancers and club goers, American Blackness symbolized individuality, resistance, and a counterculture—the hip-hop culture. So while I may understand the nuances, history and lived experience of American Blackness, as a global export, American Blackness and the hip-hop culture become synonymous signifying a movement of resistance to mainstream culture. As such, these Australia youth gravitate toward such representations as a means of embracing their identities. Through the hip-hop culture, and specifically krump dancing, Australian youth find ways to express their roots, cultures, and unacknowledged selves in Australian society.

Krump as a Cultural Connection

Among the krump dancers in Melbourne, a variety of ethnic identities are represented. They include Maori, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Sudanese and "Aussie" or white youth. A few of the Maori youth I met grew up in New Zealand and emigrated to Australia to escape troubles back at home or in search of greater earning potential. However, the integration of Maori and other Islander youth into Australian mainstream society is not without its problems. According to a 2012 report submitted by the United Voice of Pacific Island Communities ("United Pacific Voice") on behalf of Pacific Island communities in Victoria and Australia to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration on the Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia, four key issues were identified which have a negative impact on the health, economic and social participation of

Pacific Island communities in Australia. One of the four areas highlighted pertained to youth and crime as explained below:

> Pacific Island children and youths face a highly competitive and individualistic education system that does not reflect their collective experience and shared cultural identity. Furthermore, young Pacific Islanders' interaction with Australian cultural expectations and freedoms often lead to conflict in the home and further complications, including youth gangs. The notion of ethnic youth gangs has become prominent in media reports of youth activities over the past few years. Issues experienced by Pacific Island youths include:
>
> - Changes in their relationship with extended family members. They tend to integrate more easily into mainstream Australian society and this often leads to rejection of parental guidance and the support available from family members and the church.
> - Personal and cultural identity issues – their rejection of parental guidance and community support is often not replaced with access to mainstream support, leading to identity issues.
> - Pacific Islander young people are a highly visible group: body size, skin colour and physical characteristics are quite different to the majority of Anglo Australians. They are also likely to congregate in public spaces. The high visibility and differences in appearances has led to ready identification, labelling and stereotyping, much of which is negative.
> - Dropping out of school early, this could be due to financial problems or peer pressure, gangs or a combination of factors.
> - Lack of employment opportunities and job skills.
> - Lack of access to social and community services.
> - Illegal activities such as drug dealing, burglary/robbery and shoplifting. The most common reason for illegal activities was the need for money.
> - Deaths in custody.
>
> (United Voice of Pacific Island Communities 4:2012)

As the statement above explains, tension exists between traditional Islander values and mainstream Australian cultural values. The points of contention include the retention of family values, identity formation, discrimination and conflict with the law. In addition, youth gangs are identified as an offshoot of the clashing of cultures and expectations. In speaking with some of the Maori dancers, many of them left New Zealand in hopes of leaving behind the influence of gangs in their lives. New Zealand has a history of gang activity since the 1960s with a prevalence of youth street gangs

177

modeled after American Blood and Crip crews. However, facing challenges with incorporation lead some youth to rely on informal solutions or familiar tools to cope, such as involvement with or the creation of gangs within Australia.

In addressing these problems, United Pacific Voice advocated that the Australian Government provide social and legal programs directed at supporting youth and their families. In identifying the Pacific Island community in Australia, United Pacific Voice explains that, "The Pacific Island community in Australia is predominantly Polynesian, including Cook Islanders, Maoris, Samoans and Tongans. Fijians are the single largest group represented followed by Maoris." Furthermore, they describe the community as:

> ...[C]ulturally and linguistically diverse, coming from a range of cultural groups (22 Pacific Island countries and territories). Pacific Islanders are often referred to incorrectly as being from one community. However, the term generally refers to three specific cultural areas of the Pacific Ocean: Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Whilst each cultural group has specific and distinctive social characteristics, there are strong cultural themes that cut across all our communities, e.g. the strength and solidarity of family and community come before the individual need.
> (United Voice of Pacific Island Communities 2:2012)

Here again family and Islander communities are emphasized as a valued cultural aspect over and above individualism, which is an inherent cultural facet of modern societies. It is this conflict of cultural values that lends itself to manifest as a struggle in Islander youth. This same basis for conflict can also be located in the US among African American inner city youth where collective identities have been instrumental in survival. Furthermore, conflicting family values and identities, discrimination and clashing with the law are common areas of struggle for young African American inner city youth as they negotiate their place within American society. As such, krump dancing provides both a path and an alternative option for Islander youth to express and explore their identities.

178

Additionally, religion and church ties are instrumental in Islander communities. In particular, a history of Fundamentalist Catholic and Mormon missionaries infiltrating the region resulted in strong ties between religion and Islander culture. In the krump community in Australia, a large number of dancers belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, informally known as Mormonism. Their connection to the Mormon Church was pivotal in spreading the krump movement as youth shared the dance with other members of their church in addition to family connections. This is similar to the spreading of krump dancing in the US, which occurred through Evangelical Christian Ministries. However, while many of the Australian dancers are religious, it is not the most important element in the Australian setting. According to Fu, sessions used to open with a prayer "because that's how it's done in America." Over time, though, people decided that they had their own reasons to krump. Fu explained that, "everyone respects each other's religious beliefs within the crew." There is a similar distancing of krump from religion among American youth.

Moreover, krump dancing appeals to Islander youth as it connects to and uses traditional Islander forms. Drumming, circles, dancing and mentorship between "Bigs" and "Littles" are familiar social activities that engage youth with their Islander communities, sort out conflict through dance and where boys learn about becoming men. As such, krump dancing lent itself easily to the formation of Grrilla Step. Described as, "Polynesian Krump music," by their manager, Ross Ganf. Explained in the promotional materials Ganf provide me, Grrilla Step fuses traditional and modern culture in the following way:

> The traditional elements of family, sound, dance and story from the Torres Strait Islands, PNG, West Papua and Cook Islands [and] is the anchor point of Grrilla Step, the inner circle that brought us all together. This inner circle revolves slowly as it has evolved over many years in traditional life. [M]any of our songs and dances are rich in stories, ceremonies and rituals. Traditionally, these elements define our relationship with nature and each other.

This way of life started changing with [] urbanisation and migration throughout the pacific. Grrilla Step is made up of people from PNG, Torres Strait Islands, Cook Islands, East Timor, West Papua, Philippines, Samoa and New Zealand… who are Krumpers, DJ's, log drummers, singers, visual artists and dancers drawing on both their roots and modern sensibility for their artistic vocabulary and vision. The rate of change to Krump music, Krump dance and our urban stories is much faster [than traditional life]. Advances in music technology and … applying this technology to Krump music [] evolves the Krumpers into new styles and territory. This is our outer circle, our current circle that spins fast and is constantly re-shaping around our slow, inner circle.

Grrilla Step provides a pathway for Islander youth to integrate their traditional identities and culture or "roots" with urban selves. Here, this is conceived as two circles: "the inner circle that revolves slowly as it has evolved over many years in traditional life;" and the "outer circle" which is the "current" or modern circle. In describing these two circles, the inner circle is seen to move slowly and is a fixed aspect of the self. In contrast, the outer circle is in constant motion and evolution. These circles represent a metaphor for making sense of one's identity. As explained to me by Airi, one of the originators, Grrilla Step is the "meeting point where our roots and culture intersect with our urban identity." The inner circle provides the dancers with a connection to the past, the traditional present and to notions of collectivity. In talking about collectivity, Airi finds that Grrilla Step presents a path to raise one's "collective consciousness and connect to your brothers and sisters in the community." As for the outer circle, it is where one connects to the modern present and the future. The outer circle provides a mechanism for the individual to incorporate their experiences in a changing and fluctuating society build upon individualistic desires. While the current or outer circle moves quickly and is in constant evolution, its evolution is in concert with the core circle. As a result, Airi states that Grrilla Step "brings peace into you."

The concept for Grrilla Step came about from DJ Dexter, a musician interested in underground or "raw" artistic forms. DJ Dexter found krump a good fit for his project because

"it's being unafraid of not being polished (Shuttermain 2009). Incorporating the talents of Papua New Guinean log drummer, Airileke Ingram, they created a new form of Australian music by combining hip-hop, krump dancing and regional tribal music. The music for Grrilla Step is organically driven. That is, it is derived from the dance as opposed to the dance being driven by commercial tracks. This is similar to krump music produced in the US. As a result, there is a sense of communality as the music is shared, created and re-created from the ground up. The sounds of the music produced in Grrilla Step include a percussive beat drawn from traditional Islander log drumming. Furthermore, there are elements of African music which provide an unstructured element to the sound. The participants of Grrilla Step are from various ethnic backgrounds including: Tongan, Samoan, East Timorese, and Maori.

Another ethnic group that is highly visible among krump and hip-hop dancers in Australia is the Filipino youth. Similar to the Islander youth, many Filipino youth in Australia are part of Australia's visible immigrant communities. As such, krump dancing offers an outlet for expressing and incorporating a Filipino identity into Australian society. Unlike, the Islander youth many Filipinos come from a tradition of hip-hop. Whether that tradition stems from the Philippines or within their families, these youth were exposed to hip-hop music and dance at an early age. Hip hop's influence on the Filipino culture can be traced back to the US. As a former US territory, the Philippines have had a significant number of US military bases since the beginning of the 20th Century. With these bases came the American service members who brought with them their music and dance. Additionally, "balikbayans" or Filipinos who return to the Philippines after residing abroad, contributed to the diffusion of American culture in the Philippines. By the 1980s, the Philippines developed their own version of hip-hop called "Pinoy hip-hop." Pinoy is an informal word for a Filipino person.

Thus, the motivation to compete and gain status in the krump scene for these Filipino descent youth is driven from a legacy of Pinoy hip-hop. As such, krump dancing appeals to them as it offers the cultural capital missing in their lives. This is reflected in how these youth krump. In observing the Filipino dancers, I noticed that they adopted "technical" styles of krump or would focus on tricks. This is in contrast to the more aggressive, "rugged" or emotional styles of krump dancing that were prevalent among the Islander youth. The currency to be earned for these youth comes from their ability to master, manipulate and evolve the dance.

A lesser prominent ethnic group found in the Australian krump scene hail from Sudan. While the fam I followed in Melbourne had only one active Sudanese member at the time, Sydney's krump scene had a growing number of Sudanese youth participating in the dance. Following in line with the Islander and Filipino youth, Sudanese youth make up another growing part of Australia's visible immigrants. After 2001, Australia began receiving a large number of people from Sudan who were refugees. However, integrating into Australian society has not been easy. In 2008, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission ("VEOHRC") conducted an inquiry into the integration of Sudanese youth living in the City of Greater Dandenong ("Dandenong). The inquiry was prompted in response to the death of 19-year-old Liep Gony, a Sudanese refugee living in the city. Gony's death sparked a debate in the media and public regarding the ability and willingness of African immigrants to integrate into Australian society. Media reports included comments by former Immigration Minister, Kevin Andrews challenging the ability of Sudanese refugees to live peacefully in Australia. The 2008 report titled, *Rights of Passage: The Experiences of Australian-Sudanese Young People*, found that the racism experienced by Sudanese youth "prevented them from moving freely in the

community and limited their access to services, employment and education" (Victorian Equal

Opportunity & Human Rights Commission. 2008:1). Furthermore, the report found that

Sudanese youth "were also concerned about the way they were treated by police and portrayed

by the media" (ibid.). Such experiences included youth being called "little Nigger," "black

monkey" and "chocolate bunnies" (Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission

2008:22). Furthermore, in a 2010 follow up report, the VEOHRC found that Sudanese youth

experience racism when interacting with the police:

> We were on the train and police came out of nowhere … They said "Where's
> your ticket, where's your ID?" We asked why (did they come up to us) and they
> said "There was a fight and it was Sudanese and we're trying to find out who
> caused it." (Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission 15:2010)

Also, Sudanese youth described their experiences with being discriminated against in
accessing education and employment:

> I applied for a job – they talked to me on the phone then when I got there they
> were like, "Are you black?" I was like, "I'm just looking for a job, does it matter
> if I'm black?" but they were like "We can't take you." (Victorian Equal
> Opportunity & Human Rights Commission 22:2010)

> A lot of kids, they say "Oh I was thinking to do medicine but the teacher told me
> I can't do it." They destroy (their) motivation so they think "Oh I'll just do the
> easy (course)." (Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission
> 19:2010)

Here, these statements demonstrate the lack of social cohesion between Sudanese youth and the

greater Australian community. Lack of access to employment and education pose substantial

barriers for young men and women in ownership of the society. Furthermore, racially motivated

discrimination in the form of police harassment and racial slurs are demoralizing and fuel the

seeds of resentment causing further distance between groups. As such, Sudanese youth seek out

krump dancing as a way to express and cope with the injustices experienced in their lives.

Similarly, in LA, inner city African American youth use krump dancing as a means of

negotiating the day-to-day inequalities and injustices in their communities.

Moreover, Dandenong is where krump dancing in Melbourne originally took off. The first krump family of Melbourne, "Royal Fam," created sessions in Dandenong to reach out to troubled youth in the city. In a similar fashion, krump dancing thrives in LA neighborhoods struck by social and racial disadvantage. In speaking with Fu, he explained how he worked with some of the dancers who had been "in trouble" for stealing and another who had been involved in a stabbing. Surprised about the knife fight, I came to learn that stabbings and cuttings during fights was not an uncommon occurrence. In lieu of guns in this setting, knives and other cutting weapons offer a way for youth to escalate violence in street fights.

Another common group of youth I encountered in Melbourne's krump scene is White Australians. Interestingly, this ethnic group had the highest proportion of women as krump dancers. Of the White youth, one dancer had strong cultural and personal ties to New Zealand and Pacific Islander culture. Another dancer emigrated from Russia with his mother as a child. Based upon my observations, this group is attracted to krump dancing to gain cultural capital. As Whites, this group does not suffer from systemic inequality as darker or ethnically identified people in Australia may. Therefore, the struggle to express one's cultural identity is minimized. However, krump dancing does benefit White youth as they acquire distinction, street cred and hipness.

The Meaning of Krump in Australia

Going beyond cultural reasons, krumping is an activity that has a variety of meanings for the dancers in Australia. In an effort "to pay tribute to the movement and in some small way assist the exposure of krump to a wider audience," Lady Burn created a documentary or "doco" on krump dancing around the country (Shuttermain 2009). Produced in 2009, this doco

184

provides a glimpse into what it means to krump dance in Australia. Interviewing dancers from around the country, the doco provides varying perspectives on krump dancing down under. Titled, *Burncity: A Journey into Melburn and Australian Krump,* this doco was inspired by the American documentary, *Rize,* which profiles the lives and activities of the founders of krump dancing in LA. With Lady Burn's permission, I draw upon the interviews of this doco in explaining how krump is in articulated by its Australian dancers.

The documentary opens explaining that Melbourne aka "Melburn" has established itself as a "powerhouse" in the Australian krump scene (Shuttermain 2009). There are clips of krump dancers in various street locations wearing clothing similar in style to the urban clothing worn by dancers in LA (e.g., t-shirts, jeans and sneakers). As the various dancers perform, their facial expressions assume a similar pattern to those dancers in LA (e.g., exaggerated emotional expressions of anger, sadness, or surprise). Female and male dancers are profiled at the beginning of the doco.

In answering the question "Krump is…" a variety of answers are provided. One dancer replies that it is "an expression" (Shuttermain 2009). Another, states that it is "a radical form of expression. To really krump is to lose yourself. It's boundless" (ibid.). Someone else describes krump as the place where "your inner emotions are brought out into a more physical form" (ibid.). In these answers, the concepts of expression, letting go, and articulating emotions run through these dancers understanding of krump. In other words, krump dancing for these youth gives them voice, using a language that speaks to their inner selves. Describing krump in this way is very similar to definitions in LA. However, what is being expressed does vary as cultures and communities change.

As for krump's ability to offer an alternative path for Australian youth struggling to stay

out of trouble, several dancers shared their experiences (Shuttermain 2009):

> If it wasn't for krump, I wouldn't be here. None of us would be here. I would probably be out at some club doing something stupid. But [instead] I found God and I found krump. It's not the dancing. It's the lifestyle that krump [has given to me.] It's knowing that krump is there that everything is going to be all right.
>
> <div align="right">Jr. Scrappy—Sydney</div>

> Some of the krumpers that I've come across if they weren't in krump would be some of the worst people that you would meet out on the street if they weren't in krump; if they didn't have this form of dance to balance things out.
>
> <div align="right">Shift the Punisher—Brisbane</div>

> [Krump is] a lifeline for me. I've been able to relieve me of a lot of stress. … Krump is the best ever pain reliever.
>
> <div align="right">Pretty Rough—Melbourne</div>

> [Krump has] made me believe I can be something.
>
> <div align="right">Street Kid—Brisbane</div>

Image 6.13 — Praise Dancer. A praise dancer from Hit'M Fam.

Image 6.14 — Praise Dancing: Coming Down. While not all krump dancers "praise dance," the embodiment of religion, spirituality and worship is present in the Melbourne krump scene. The images on the left show a dancer who praise dances coming down or out of his dance.

187

The examples above explain how youth feel about krump dancing and its effect on improving their lives. Finding support, building confidence and connecting to others provides these youth with the ability to cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. In connecting to one another, krump fams are instrumental in building cohesion and trust. As one big homie explains, "Showing your lil' homies that you've got their back, that you love them for being them rather than trying to reconfigure them to suit your needs" is important in his mentorship style (Shift the Punisher—Brisbane). Similar to LA, Australian krump fams operate similarly to biological families in providing belonging, support and role models.

Regarding the relationship of krump dancing and religion, many Australian dancers began their krump careers as praise dancers (Images 6.13 and 6.14). In contrast to South LA, where most praise dancers are affiliated with Evangelical Christian Churches, many praise dancers around Australia are members of the Mormon Church. Over time, however, several of these praise dancers have moved away from krumping as a form of worship. As once dancer explains, "Something that involves heavy competition, especially a dance, I don't believe can be a good way of praise and worship. When you see someone dance, you watch that person and you don't see a manifestation of the spirit" (Roxus, Royal, Fam, Melbourne). Roxus finds that because some dancers are not completely focused on God as they dance, he questions the ability of krump dancing as a form of worship. He continues by stating, "I was never a praise dancer and I don't think I'd ever be a praise dancer. It doesn't mean that I'm not a believer. I keep that separate from this whole concept."

The sentiment that krump dancing and praise dancing are separate activities is also present in the attitudes of dancers in South LA as explained by Comic, who is a Christian krump dancer:

I don't want to mix God with krump. I believe it's idolizing. I do believe in God. I'm a Christian and I do go to church. For what's happening now in the krump thing, I don't feel that God's in it.

There's a lot of division. There's a lot of haters—hateration. A lot of people aren't feeling other people. Before when it started it was unity. It didn't matter what team you were from. It didn't matter how you danced. It didn't matter about any of that. You still got the love. You still got the crowd because they're just feeling you—instead of feeling you out. Now, people are feeling you out. Feeling you out is like [where people say], "Okay, if he does this move and it looks good then I'll scream. If he does this move and it don't look good, I'm not gonna say nothin." Feeling him would be, "He didn't do that move good but I understood what he was doing. Or, I felt what he was doing because he was dealing with something at the time. It wasn't about how he danced. It wasn't about what move he did—what arm swings he did, what chest pop he did." It was just about him being able to express himself through [krump]. Now, it's about the arm swing, the chest pop, the sink, the move—if you're move isn't good, you don't get the crowd. But at first, it didn't matter. You'll get the crowd regardless because they were feeling you. It was a connection there. Now the connection has to be through a move.

…It wasn't about individuality at first. It was about unity. … There's no unity no more. It's a whole bunch of division. And God doesn't work in division—at all. He's a unified, trustworthy God. God doesn't deal in mess. The author of confusion is the devil. By him being the author of confusion, and confusion being in what we're doing, it can't be of God to me. It can't be. God wouldn't allow me to disrespect you. He wouldn't allow your spirit to be angry with mine. He wouldn't allow that division to happen. If it was about God it would have been about unity like it started in the first place.

…There's nothing wrong for Krumping for God if you're sincere and dedicated to doing it. But if you're false preaching about Krumping for God, it doesn't work out. You're saying one thing and doing another. It's like a pig saying he's the dirtiest thing in the world but he's getting scrubbed down with soap. You're saying you're the dirtiest pig but you're clean. It don't make sense to me. How can you be the dirtiest pig, when you're the cleanest person in here. You're the cleanest pig in the sty.

Now if you're dedicated and sincere about putting God in krump, there's nothing wrong with it. I don't see anything wrong with it. It's basically a praise dance. You're giving God reference through your dance. It's understandable. As a Christian, we do it all the time we just do it in a different way. You're not getting knocked for praising God in your own way. That's your own relationship with him. But don't say that you're doing it for God and your overall motive and objective isn't showing what you're speaking.

189

[Krumping for God] is a sincerity, a dedication and a truthfulness that you have came up with yourself. It's a standard that you've made for yourself. You've made this standard that [says], "Okay. I will dance. But if I'm gonna dance, I'm gonna dance for God." That's your standard, that's your moral. And you made that step. You took that dedication and you decided that's what you're gonna do. A lot of people say that's what they're doing but it's not showing. [People say] "I krump for Jesus. I krump for God." But in the background you're saying, "bitch and motherfucker and I'll slap you ho, and nigga." It's not really showing the positiveness that you are talking about. If it's not showing that positive, don't speak it.

If you going to be a Christian, fine. Be a Christian and have whatever religion you gonna have. But don't bring it into this because this is it's own thing. This has a real impact on people—on people's lives. And children, and younger kids. You have people looking up to you. And you have people following you, as far as lil' homies. You don't want to lead them astray. That's not your purpose. You're purpose is to lead them into a kingdom as far as Christians go, as far as God go. You're leading them to his kingdom. If you're doing everything opposite of his kingdom, but telling them that's where you're leading them, it's not right. It's not fair to them. It's not fair to God. It's not fair—at all. So, that's the reason why I wouldn't put God into krump because I'm not all the way there. I believe in him. I believe his son lived and died for our sins and rose again on the third day. But I'm not all the way there to say that, "Yes. This is why I'm Krumping. I'm Krumping for God." Cause I'm not there spiritually. I'm not there whole heartedly to say that. Now if you're there whole heartedly and that's what you're doing [loud clap], kudos [clap again] big ups to you—it's perfect. That's what you're supposed to be. I hope I can be where you are someday.

…Even in the end, if I have a whole heart for God, I still don't believe that I would be Krumping for Jesus. I don't feel that is what he—it was meant for. It wasn't built for that. People try to build it on that but I don't think it was built for that. I think it was built to turn teens around from negative things. … It was built to give these kids a positive aspect in life. Show them that there's other things that you can do that doesn't have to do with killing, stealing, robbing. That there's other good feelings out there. Drugs is not the only other good feeling that you have to have. It's other good feelings out there. That's what I was led to believe. That's what I saw. That's what I felt.

Here, Comic expresses his frustration with the mixing of religion with krump dancing. The

basis of his frustration lies in the hypocrisy of big homies preaching a Christian lifestyle and yet

not expressing Christian values such as unity, authenticity and leading a moral life.

Furthermore, Comic feels that krumping is not about praise dancing as much as it is an

opportunity for youth to turn their lives around and choose a lifestyle that is filled with positive

"feelings."

In a similar statement, Big Wittz, a big homie from Brisbane explains:

I used to teach my lil' homies that krump is not a praise dance because if you are truly that devout of a Christian, you do not need a dance to express yourself in praise and worship. The bible says your life should be about praise and worship so I don't like to box people in saying that krump is strictly for this. That made it a lot easier for me to accept people who don't go to church or just dance because they love it (Shuttermain 2009).

Here, Big Wittz expresses how he negotiates the reality that some krump dancers are not praise

dancers. His solution is to separate the dance from worship which allows him to accept people

who "just dance because they love it."

While krump stands for "Kingdom Righteously Uplifted Mighty Praise," the ability to

use the dance as a form of worship or praise dance is contested in both the LA and Australian

krump communities. However, in both settings, all krump dancers expressed a respect for those

who do krump as a praise dance. Because krump dancing was built upon religiosity and

spirituality, the incorporation of this basis is present in how the dancers in both settings talk

about krump as a praise dance. How the dance is carried out or the meaning to individual

dancers, though does vary greatly in the degree that krump dancing in praise dancing.

Regardless of how many Australian dancers continue to treat krump dancing as a praise dance,

religion played a huge part in initially forming the first krump fams.

Krump Families of Melbourne

As described at the outset of Lady Burn's doco, Melbourne has the largest krump scene

in Australia. This proved to still be the case at the time of my observations in 2010 and 2011. In

his 2008 visit to Australia, Solow found Melbourne to be "where the heart of krump is for

Australia" (Shuttermain 2009). Furthermore, he states that "Melbourne is the LA of

[Australia]" (ibid.). Sentiments such as these were present and reiterated throughout my time in Melbourne. Having the recognition of being a national krump hub served as a source of pride for the dancers I met.

In summarizing the krump scene across Australia's largest three cities, Big Wittz (Shuttermain 2009) explained that, "Brisbane has more of a community feel. You go to Sydney it's more of a professional feel. You go to Melbourne it's really street, real competitive. It's raw, man." But in explaining Melbourne's success, he finds that "Melbourne was very raw, very competitive. I think that is why Melbourne blew up and became one of the top dogs very quick" (ibid.). Similarly, I observed this pattern in my visits to the varying regions. This explanation of dance styles and community are reflective of the ecological components present in each region. Brisbane is located in Queensland, known as the "Sunshine State." Famous for its beaches, theme parks and ecotourism, this region of Australia values small town living and quality of life over the densely populated and fast paced capital cities of New South Wales and Victoria. Stepping in the heart of Sydney, one immediately becomes inundated with skyscrapers, trains and people. Of all the cities I traveled around Australia, the definitive marker that one is in Sydney is the appearance of suits. With Sydney being a major financial and business hub of Australia and in Australasia, there are many people who work in this industry and wear traditional business attire. How this manifests in its krump is through the professionalization of krump mainly in the form of dance schools. Alternatively, Melbourne highlights its cultural and artistic flair. This is present in its modern architecture, numerous art collections and museums, thriving fashion industry, and of course, its recognition and preservation of street art. In this regard, Melbourne and LA share many ecological similarities which provide the material for krump dancing to thrive in this locale.

Melbourne has had a number of krump fams. In 2006, the first krump family, Royal

Fam appeared in Melbourne. Based in Dandenong, Royal Fam was formed to "spread the

[krump] movement throughout Melbourne and Australia" (Shuttermain 2009). The founder of

this fam is Silk-Bones. Some of the original members of Royal Fam include: Erupt; Syk;

Crunch; Kaos; Merciless; Blitz; Roxus; Pretty Ruff; Flyboi and Roar. Most of these members

branched out and formed fams of their own which provide the basis for the current krump scene

in Melbourne.

In explaining how he got into krump dancing, Silk-Bones states, "I got into krump by

watching a [US] documentary called breakdancing vs. krump. I fell in love with

it" (Shuttermain 2009). Krump DVDs are the main way youth in Australia and in LA enter the

krump world. The DVDs operate as an instruction manual or "how to" book for krump dancing.

After seeing the documentary, Silk-Bones decided to start up a crew with the purpose to

"use this krump to reach out to the young ones on the street" (Shuttermain 2009.). This position

is reiterated by Crunch, when he explains how Royal Fam would put on events with the goal of

"reaching out to kids getting them to do something positive" (ibid.). Furthermore, in talking

about his experience in Royal Fam, Kaos explains:

> My original fam, [Royal Fam,] we pioneered krump in Melbourne. … We were
> just a tight knit unit. We were all boys just kickin' it with each other because we
> had that common interest [krump] and common respect for each other. You
> know 'cause the Royal Family is a mixed bunch of mutts. I myself am Filipino.
> We've got a Timorese, Cook Island, Samoan, and an Indonesian. We've even
> got different religions. And yet we are still together, we are still united.
> (Shuttermain 2009).

The statement above offers insight into the camaraderie and connection that being a part of

Royal Fam carried for its members. Regardless of the differences in ethnic identities, these

youth shared a "common respect for each other" based upon a "common interest." Here, krump

dancing provides the basis for unity and belonging in the midst of ethnic and cultural difference found in this multicultural urban setting.

Another fam responsible for the growth of krump in Melbourne is BC Fam. Also originating in 2006, BC Fam was founded by Malachi "to evangelize and disciple the youth engaged in the hip hop culture" (Shuttermain 2009). Malachi explains that BC Fam's mission is "to build relationships with the youth that [are] into krump and hip hop" (ibid.). In building those relationships, they "use krump to connect to kids and reach out and give them a message of hope and make them feel accepted" (ibid.). Based in Roxburgh Park, a northern suburb of Melbourne, this fam includes the following members: Prince Chill; Big Chill; Loyal; G.I. Loyal; Twin S.A.D.; Big S.A.D.; Ugly Boy and Kid Ugly. After watching a krump instructional DVD, Malachi got into krump dancing and taught the foundational moves to other members of the crew. Furthermore, the movie *Rize* was an important influence on several of the members in exposing them to krump dancing. Family connections also spurred the growth of this krump fam. In explaining the attraction of BC Fam, Twin S.A.D. finds that youth "are drawn to krump because we bring a positive perspective to not only the dance but to life as well. Our aim is not only to evangelize but to set people on the right path and to help them out" (ibid.). Similar to Royal Fam, BC Fam is interested in helping Melbournian youth find a "positive" path however their way of getting there involve different mechanisms. With BC Fam, religion becomes the main driving force behind the dance. Whereas Royal Fam, emphasized having fun while participating in a group activity free from drugs, violence and stress.

The youngest Fam in Melbourne's krump scene is United Fam. This fam is comprised of many dancers who have big homies in Royal Fam. Fam members include: Dreamz, Young Kaos, Lil' Erupt, Lil' Kaos, Sunshine and T dot Sunshine. Based in Werribee, a suburb situated

to the southwest of Melbourne, this fam formed in 2007 as Young Koas explains:

> We went to church one day and we saw [Kaos] labbing. We asked him about krumping and he asked us to go to a session. It was me and Dreamz that went to the session. From there we learned the foundations and then we told our friends. That was the beginning of United Fam. (Shuttermain 2009).

Affiliations such as church and school help to spread krump to new populations as explained above. Youth modeling and mentoring one another also strengthens the appeal of krump dancing as its positive messages are communicated through peers as opposed to adults from the community. Relating to each other is also present in the fam's name, "Unity." In explaining how they came up with the fam's name, Lil' Erupt states:

> What we mean by united is that we are always together. We always hang out. We take individual action as a group action. We always look out for each other. We help each other out. Even if we can't help big, we do our best to help out, bit by bit. (Shuttermain 2009).

Working in concert and being together are important values for this group. These elements are necessary in building trust between members to facilitate their reliance upon one another and in providing help. Even though this group is young, they understand and accept the responsibility for the care and growth of their peer group. This is expressed by Dreamz when he states, "We want to use what God has given us, this dance, krump, Kingdom Righteously Mighty Uplifting Praise, to encourage the youth. To get their hopes up" (ibid.). This sentiment is reiterated by Young Kaos who finds that, "We are really inspiring to the youth because some of them go through a lot and we tell them about krump and what's the reason for it and if you are feeling angry you can show your feelings when you krump" (ibid.). Through krump dancing, these youth reach out to their peers in hopes of helping them negotiate their feelings. Relating to one another and providing an alternative form of expression for difficult feelings is how this crew operates.

HIT'M (Heavy in the Movement)

While the fams mentioned above have a history of being in the Melbourne krump scene, at the time of my research in 2011 there was only one crew heavily active which was HIT'M. An acronym for "heavy in the movement," HIT'M is a krump crew with dancers from several different fams including those mentioned above. Founded by Erupt, a member of Royal fam, he started the crew with the goal of keeping the krump movement in Melbourne alive. Moving through adolescence, many dancers have stopped actively participating in krump dancing as personal obligations have increased. Erupt stepped up and with the help of several other dancers kept the krump movement going and growing in Melbourne.

I interviewed, observed and hung out with several of these members including: Erupt aka J Syk, Trinity, Roxus, Blitz, Lady Burn aka Lady Crown, Crunch, Raw, Fly Boi, Antagonize aka J Dash Erupt, Twin Burn, Trouble, Meanz, Young Erupt aka Big Scout, Jr Erupt, Jr Kaos, Pretty Boi, and Trip. While this list does not include all of the dancers I observed, it does represent a group of krump youth who spent much of their time and energy initiating me into their world. Entering the Melbourne krump scene as quickly as I did was only possible with the assistance of two key informants, Lady Burn and Crunch. A main obstacle that they cleared for me was not being a krump dancer. While I had my creds from following Fudd's crew and my contact with Crush, this would only take me so far in Melbourne. I needed to show my loyalty and connection to krump dancing and my commitment to overcoming the kinds of struggles faced by these youth. Solidarity and "brotherhood" is forged within krump families as dancers share in overcoming challenges, revel in their successes, and share in having fun.

Entering this male dominated space was made easier as Lady Burn had already blazed a

path and earned the respect of the male dancers (Image 6.15). In addition, Lady Burn held an elevated status within the group as she increased the visibility of the group through shooting footage and posting it in various forums. In a similar fashion, my study would operate likewise offering some visibility. But for all the gains this may have procured, being a researcher and studying the group raised many suspicions among lower ranked members. However, the overall sentiment to make a difference to the youth of Melbourne, especially among the seniors, helped to balance out my stigma as a researcher or outsider.

Furthermore, I did not share in the nationality, racial or ethnic group of the members, which presented an obstacle to overcome. Here, phenotype helped immensely. Being mixed race allows me to "appear" as part of the group even where members know otherwise. Being able to blend in served to make my presence more acceptable. While being American was a perk in that I came from the land where krump originated, it too marked me as an outsider when it came to relating to the youth of Melbourne. This is where living in Footscray, helped as the dancers knew that I was "in it." Very often when meeting new dancers, my introduction would include that I was staying in Footscray. Immediately, there would be this sense of recognition as if to say, "Wow, you get it." Furthermore, because I chose to live in Footscray, as opposed to being from there, showed my commitment to understanding the struggles of urban life in Melbourne.

Krumping in Melbourne

I spent numerous hours hanging out and watching krump dancing activities with Hit'M Fam. As mentioned earlier, Hit'M would session outdoors in the middle of the CBD. Sessions primarily took place outside of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology ("RMIT") (Image 6.21). The benefits of this location included ease of access, a central location, a large space for

performing and freedom from interruptions by the police or other groups. In addition, holding sessions outdoors created the potential for an audience of unknown others to form (Image 6.18). However, most unknown others would pass by without stopping or stop for just a few minutes to observe. Most session activity remained contained to the krumpers and known others.

The bulk of my observations involved watching sessions. As for battles, they tended to occur between crews in different states. Within the fam, battles centered around dancers vying for ranks as opposed to sorting out beefs. As for performances, they revolved around festivals, public events and the Grrilla Step show.

After spending time observing the krumpers in Melbourne, I realized there were many similarities to the dancers in LA. The music, clothing and moves were alike (Images 6.20 and 6.23 - 6.37). What was strikingly different was the amount of time the fam spent together socializing. While the crews and fams I followed back in LA hung out together, they did not plan organized outings. Here, sessions would segue into dinner at the food court in Melbourne Central, a large indoor mall. Following the sessions, the krumpers would continue on to other activities such as movies. This assisted in forming bonds between one another in building a brotherhood (Images 6.16 and 6.17).

Another difference I observed is an effect of neighborhood. In LA, the dancers would play around with their krump in creating something new. While this did happen in Melbourne, the dancers spent much of their energy focused on the "foundations" and getting it right. The foundations of krump are the basic moves that distinguish krump dancing from other types of dance. They include the arm swing, the buck hop, the stomp, the chest pop and jabs. Thus, for the Melbourne krumpers, authenticity was of greater importance than in LA. This is because being from South LA bestows upon those dancers automatic street cred. This difference is

198

further demonstrated in how the krumpers in Melbourne spoke about Tight Eyez, a founder of krump. In LA, Tight Eyez is spoken about as a competitor. As such, he is accessible, may be taken down or replaced by another dancer in the scene. Because of the geographic distance, for the Melbourne krumpers Tight Eyez is idolized and the dancers look up to him. He takes on a role as the ultimate big homie. As a founder of krump, Tight Eyez commands attention and respect in any krump scene. But the difference described here, is that of a superstar versus a rival.

Overall, the way in which krump is executed in Australia is very similar in style and expression to LA. I was particularly surprised at finding such similarities since there are economic, cultural and ethnic differences in the two krump scenes. This suggests that a shared identity is created and forged through krump dancing in LA and abroad. The basis of this identity is a street identified youth. That is, a young person who comes from, connects to, identifies with or "feels" the streets.

To be "street," as I have learned from my Australian krump companions, is to be "raw." Rawness includes behaviors such as the expression of emotions in public. It shows up in the unorthodox appearances in clothing, hairstyles and body art. It manifests in nonconformist structures and notions of family. It rebels against inauthentic notions of right and wrong, stigma, prejudice and discrimination. And who better to exemplify this rawness, than the youth. For at its core, "rawness" calls forth the inner spirit and desires which youth have not been conditioned to suppress, sanitize and sterilize. Rawness, like rage, comes from a primal place within the self. It carries a history of tradition and honor where connection to life and to each other exists. It thrives against the structures of modernity which seek to order all that is social in the name of efficiency. It is in the "street" that life continues to exist in opposition to forces of

199

policies and procedures that destroy the very cultures out of which they were formed. Rawness is a cry against the dehumanizing processes, which separate people from one another, and themselves that happen when practices of emotional release are suppressed. Rather, it is in the embodiment of rawness that krump dancing provides a practice where the voice of street identified youth is heard.
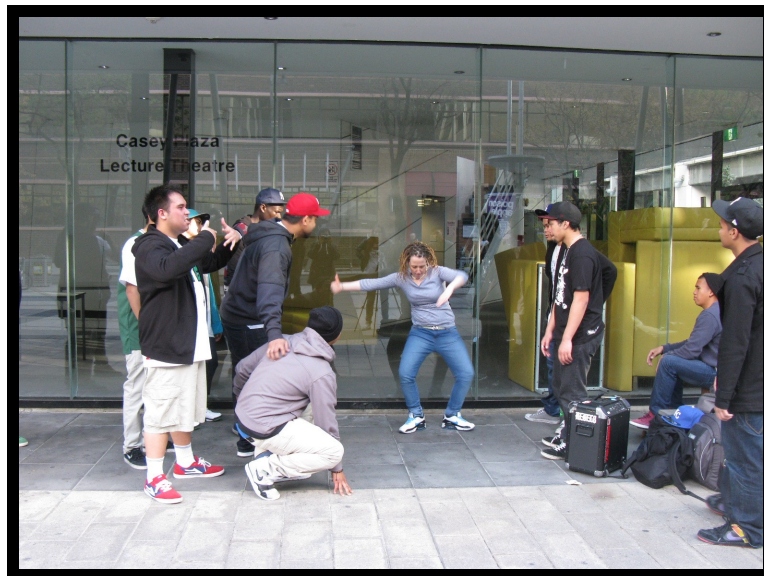
Image 6.15 — Hit'M: Women. While a minority in the krump scene, women made up a small percentage of the crew members in HIT'M Fam. Lady Burn's (top) presence as a female leader in the community contributes to the acceptance of women in this group.

Image 6.16 — Hit'M: Having Fun. These images were taken prior to a session starting. Playing, hanging out and having fun are incorporated into the session routine. This is one example of how krump dancing operates as a bonding mechanism beyond the dance for these youth.

Image 6.17 — Hit'M: Bonding. These images show how sessions offer companionship, affection and create ties to one another.
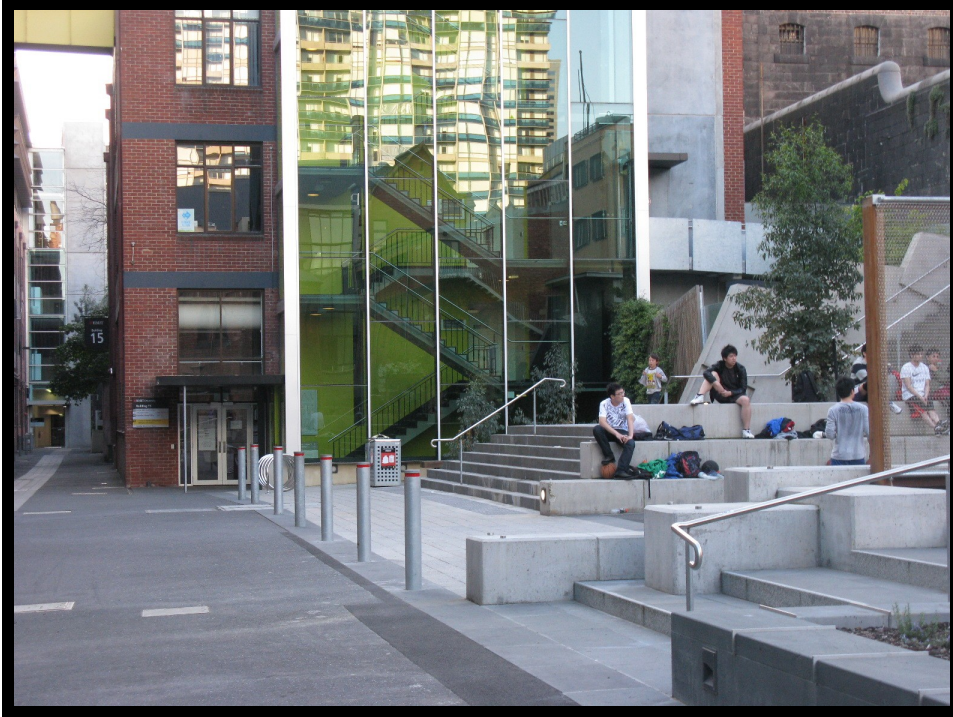
Image 6.18 — Hit'M: Session Space. Sessions were usually held outside of a local city university campus due to the large open space, access to electricity, and acceptance of youth artists. The people in the background of the top picture are not dancers but students and other people using the open space.

Image 6.19 — Hit'M: Labbing. This krump dancer is labbing using his reflection in the window as a mirror.

Image 6.20 — American Symbols. These images show different examples of American symbols, such as sporting team ball caps and the dropping of signs, are incorporated into the Melbourne krump scene.

Image 6.21 — Hit'M: Session. Typical HIT'M Fam krump session.

Image 6.22 — Hit'M: Caging. These images were taken during a "caging" of a new member. Caging is a tool of initiation. Here, the dancer in the black jacket is being initiated. As part of his initiation, he must battle each member of the fam before he is permitted to join the fam. Caging is a test of endurance.

Image 6.23 — Hit'M: Punches. Similar to chapter four, "Embodiment," I observed the Melbourne krump dancers embodying their emotions and experiences. This section depicts the different ways the Australian krump dancers express themselves. Here, punches channel anger and rage and offer a way to visualize the beating of one's enemy.

Image 6.24 — Hit'M: Arm Swings I. Arm swings or movements are used to exaggerate the size of a dancer.

Image 6.25 — Hit'M: Arm Swings II. Contortions of the body exaggerate such moves as throwing someone, going crazy or depicting a fall.
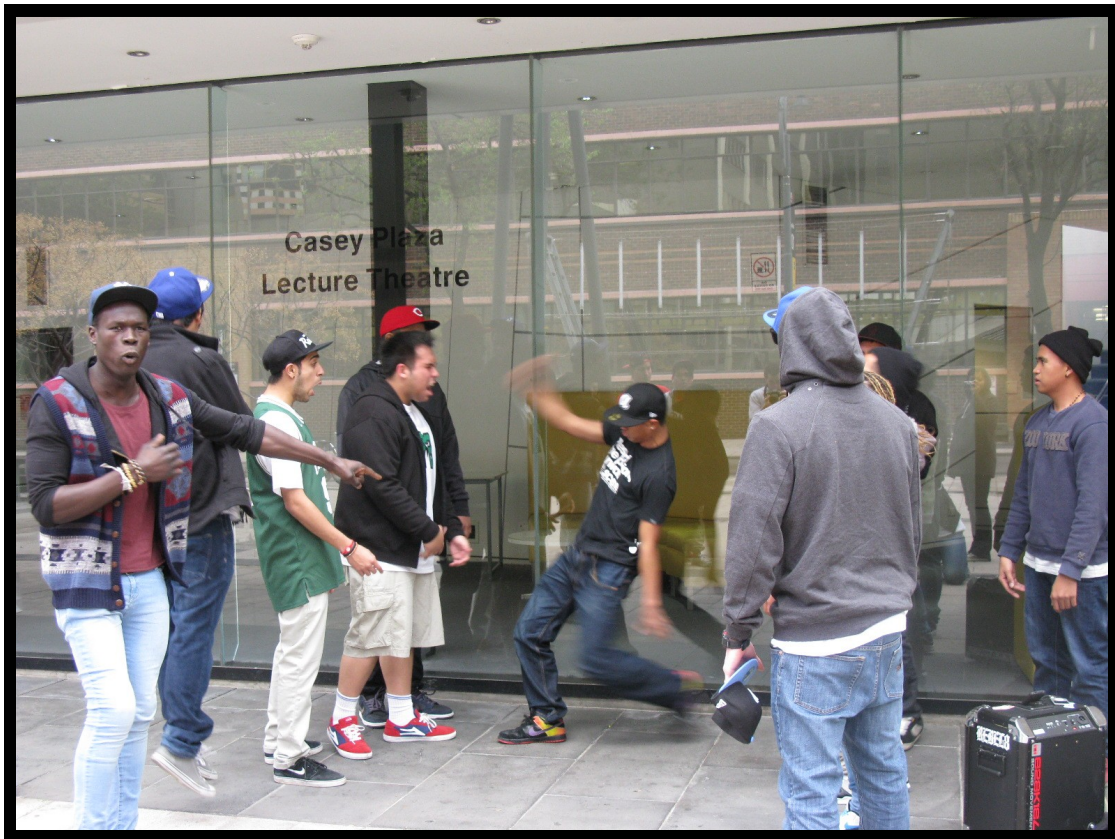
Image 6.26 — Hit'M: Stomps. Here, stomps are incorporated into one's krump. As standard move, it is used to convey strength and power.

211

Image 6.27 — Hit'M: Crotch Grab. Grabbing at one's crotch signifies the expression of an insult .

Image 6.28 — Hit'M: Props. Hats being used as props or tricks in krump dance.

Image 6.29 — Hit'M: Screaming. Similar to the dancers in South LA, these dancers use krump to express their frustrations, rage, and suffering. Here, these dancers are yelling and screaming to get emotional relief.

Image 6.30 — Hit'M: Tongue Out. Similar to crotch grabbing, sticking out one's tongue can be sign of insult or to show one's fierceness.

215

Image 6.31 — Hit'M: Intensity. With their eyes closed, these krumpers convey the intensity of their feelings.

Image 6.32 — Hit'M: Grimacing. By grimacing his face, this krumper expresses his rage.

Image 6.33 — Hit'M Storytelling: Beat Down. Similar to the dancers in South LA, these dancers use krump to tell a story about their experiences and feelings. Here, Erupt gets angry at someone and beats them down.

218

Image 6.34 — Hit'M Storytelling: Getting High.
This story incorporates someone smoking weed
and getting high.

Image 6.35 — Hit'M Storytelling: An Attack. This dancer attacks someone by grabbing them.

Image 6.36 — Hit'M Storytellng: Fighting. In this story, someone is punched and thrown down.

221

Image 6.37 — Hit'M Storytellng: Punching This dancer enacts someone being punched out.

If popular culture is any measure of the tastes of the masses, then we are fascinated and fixated on gangs and gang culture. Movies, television shows and music are replete with images and lyrics depicting gangster life. They stir within our imaginations images of violence, drugs, prostitution, guns, gold, extravagance, displays of grandiose power and human depravity. Always at the center of the action is the "other." That is, a community or group of people who carry one or more of the following characteristics: poor, black or "dark," and a recent arrival often from south of the border, Italy or Russia.

Embedded in these images is the struggle between chaos and order. Questions such as, "Why can't those people stop being Italians and become Americans like the rest of us?" (Whyte 1943:274), or, "Many outsiders ask why the 32nd Street residents are not like others" (Horowitz 1983:234) frame academic discussions on gang formation and juvenile delinquency. Built into their queries is the dichotomy of "us" (mainstream or decent society) versus "them" (deviant, ghetto or street society). This dichotomy goes beyond the ideological and is physical, as the closest most Americans ever get to being in the 'hood is passing it by on the freeway. Thus, media provides the gateway for most Americans to "experience" life in these communities. However, what makes for good media is not always reflective of the everyday. To truly understand the realities facing people living in inner city communities, and how inner city youth make sense of those realities, we must go beyond polarizing characterizations of communities and people.

Through the lives of krump dancers we get a glimpse into the everyday lives of inner city youth as they take the tools of street gangs and reshape them to serve a higher purpose. We see how inner city youth struggle to find a place of belonging, as home may not be with the people you were born to, but rather where your heart lies. As highlighted in chapter five, Worm

describes how his big homie, Fudd, is his "father figure." Although Fudd's affection for Worm was based upon their street connections attained through krump dancing, Fudd performs all of the duties a father would for his son, such as rescuing Worm if he were stranded, taking him out to eat, lending money and grooming services such as providing a free haircut.

We see how inner city youth grow and heal from trauma and socially isolating experiences, as their embedded emotions are released through the act of dance. Chapter four introduced us to one dancer who replaced the power and emotional high that he used to get as a banger with krump. As he explained, "the power that I have now is in entertaining. I have way much more power than I ever had back then in a gang life. This power that I have right now is the power when thousands come and see me perform." It is through the telling of one's story, the giving of voice, and visualization of one's object of frustration that transforms violent expression of rage into nonviolent expressions. For another ex-banger, krump gives him a place to express his anger, sadness and stress, which leaves him feeling "so chill, cool and mellow," as explained in chapter four.

We learn the importance of fighting for these youth in chapter three. Battles provide a place to resolve conflict without actual violence. Waging attacks on an opponent is done through a combination of moves inside a story. The story is one where mocking, beating, stabbing, choking or shooting depicted and one's opponent must similarly attack or accept defeat. Staged and judged before an audience of one's peers, a krumper emerges victorious and redeems what was lost through disrespect or dishonor. However, battles also serve as a status gaining mechanism, as dancers compete against one another as an initiation practice, to move up in rank or showcase their skills. It is what gets expressed in a battle that becomes a source of pride and

accomplishment, as these youth synthesize street with decent, chaos with order, all while negotiating their place in society.

Most studies about inner city youth explain deviant or nonconformist behavior as a function of societal pressures. Be it unequal access to economic capital, structural deficiencies or community values which conflict with mainstream society, behavior is the result of one's position in the social order. As such, these theories propose solutions for street behavior or culture in the form of increasing economic opportunities, strengthening heteronormative families or expanding socially controlling institutions.

As result, a two-pronged picture of inner city communities emerges. One prong consists of the decent families; law abiding, hardworking Americans, who take care of their children as evidenced by their reinforcement of mainstream education, and their ability to save money. The other cluster of inner city communities in this picture are the lumpenproletariat. They are comprised of street thugs, gangbangers, the homeless, drug addicts, and welfare recipients; all of whom seek only to burden others with their needs. It is the struggle of the two groups that fills the pages of urban ethnographies, criminological studies and informs popular understandings of the inner city.

In *Body & Soul*, Loic Wacquant (2004) describes the workings of an inner city boxing gym in the South Side of Chicago. Among the poverty, single female-headed households and street violence, he finds "An Island of Order and Virtue," the boxing gym. In explaining how this island exists among a sea of violence and apparent social disorder, Wacquant (2004:43) attributes it to the social class of the boxers:

> Boxers are generally not recruited from among the most disenfranchised fractions
> of the ghetto subproletariat but rather issue from those *segments of its working
> class that are struggling at the threshold of stable socioeconomic integration*.
> This (self-)selection, which tends de facto to exclude the most excluded, operates

not via the constraint of a penury of monetary means but through the *mediation of the moral and corporeal dispositions* that are within reach of these two fractions of the African-American population (italics in original).

Citing a lack of economic barriers, with low dues and equipment costs, Wacquant (2004:26, 43-44) explains that it is not the earnings of African Americans that separated those who box from the youth on the street. Rather, it is the discipline bodies of the boxers, shaped by their social conditions that contribute to the practice of "*protected sociability* (italics in original)":

> Youngsters issued from the most disadvantaged families are eliminated because they lack the habits and inclinations demanded by pugilistic practice: to become a boxer requires a regularity of life, a sense of discipline, a physical and mental asceticism that cannot take root in social and economic conditions marked by chronic instability and temporal disorganization.

Refuting claims that many professional boxers come from the streets, Wacquant finds most boxers were not street youth, but those just on the inside margins of decency. Because of their "chronic instability and temporal disorganization," street youth lack the habits necessary to practice "protected sociability" or civility.

Here, we see description of inner city communities as divided, "these two fractions." In doing so, it reinforces assumptions that civility, order, decency, or any other name for a set of practices and routines, which define some behaviors as "good" (socially appropriate) and others as "bad" (socially inappropriate or street), are exclusive of one another. Finding an example of order, in an apparent sea of chaos, necessitates an explanation; a way to distinguish good from bad, which ends with the reaffirmation of the original premise, that street and decent are two distinguishable and separate practices.

My own line of inquiry into krump dancing began with that assumption, it was why I initially found krumping so unexpected. When I first met Smash in Sydney, I struggled to understand how religion, youth gang culture, and dance could be embraced in the same practice.

The first time I observed a krump session, I was surprised to discover that it took place in the same space that housed other community youth activities. Moreover, I was taken aback to see young Black men fathering their and the community's children. In time, I stopped looking for an explanation and started seeing and understanding the complex nature of the social order of urban communities. In doing so, I began to question the assumption that decent and street were mutually exclusive states of being. My basic assumption that these youth were unexpected began to lose its force.

What I discovered was that people, communities, and life fail to exist in such clear cut boundaries. I found street and decent occupying the same space, engaging, shaping and reshaping notions of each. This is similar to Horowitz's (1983:223) concept of community culture, introduced in chapter one, as the production of "traditions, which have evolved through the experiences of residents and their continuing interaction with each other and with representatives of the wider society." To understand youth subcultures as components of street and decent fail to fully account for how individuals make sense of these two polarized concepts.

The next time you get your car serviced, order take-out or fast food, enter a junior or community college, or visit a museum or zoo, take a closer look at the people around you. Do not be surprised if the tattoos you see covering the hands of the mother on the playground are gang related, or, those tats that stretch across the neck of a student attending your local community college depict what "'hood he reps" (represents). Look closer at our underpaid service workers. Many of these dishwashers, busboys, mechanics, security guards and call center workers, more often than not, carry the telltale signs of the street, their 'hood, or fam etched onto their skin. Retaining "much love" for their 'hoods or fams, they hold jobs, work hard, sometimes go to college, and raise families.

To argue that youth from disadvantaged families, "lack the habits and inclinations" for such practices as boxing, because "a regularity of life, a sense of discipline, a physical and mental asceticism…cannot take root in social and economic conditions marked by chronic instability and temporal disorganization," fails to fully appreciate the negotiations and strategies implemented by those who live in uncertainty.

To illustrate further, take for example, the position of the single mother, so widely referenced as a variable in explaining street youth. If there is any practice in life where physical and mental acumen is essential, it resides in that role. Struggling to sustain her family on a fixed income, the single mother endures the physical demands of working multiple jobs, simultaneously caring for children sick and well, all while sleep deprived. The places where she lives with her children will also be a reflection of her fixed income. Noisy and sometimes scary neighbors, slum landlords, marginal at best medical care, and sketchy childcare options add to her instability. Toss in a dose of social contempt and apathy, for her poor choice of father for her children, and in becoming a "social burden." To overcome these challenges, and ensure the survival and well-being of her offspring, she digs deep finding the strength to face another day. Relying on self-made routines, while teetering on the edge of devastation, she finds the drive and the discipline to press on. I use this example to highlight the ingenuity, dedication, perseverance and resourcefulness required to negotiate life on the edge in interstitial spaces (Thrasher 1927).

While structural changes may improve the social conditions of inner city communities, they fail to account for variation in outcomes. That is, not every youth experiencing poverty, violence, blocked opportunities or nonconformist family structures is destined for the same future. Furthermore, these solutions envision only one right way of existing, leaving little room for alternative visions of normal or decent. Through krump dancing, I offer an analysis of inner

city youth conduct that accounts for human agency. While the social structure matters in what options or obstacles are available, it does not dictate how people will use them.

Based up the work of Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland, (2006:166), I use an agentic conception of social behavior that "views humans as creative and probing creatures who are coping, dealing, designating, dodging, maneuvering, scheming, striving, struggling, and so forth—that is, as creatures who are actively engaged in and attempting to negotiate their social settings." To explain how krump dancers make sense of their world and practice nonviolence, I use three questions that Lofland et al. offer to understand how people strategize in navigating their social environments, and relate with other humans:

(1) What is the situation, scene or task?
(2) Is it a habituated, taken-for-granted, routinized situation or task, or is it a problematic one in the sense that action has been called into question, thwarted, or derailed?
(3) What are the strategies being employed in dealing with the situation?

Here, the scene is the krump scene. Embedded in the inner workings of the city, krump dancing is one type of subcultural activity where youth practice nonviolence. The task is to survive, grow and negotiate a place in society. Because youth are practicing adults, they have yet to define who they are in society. Furthermore, because adolescence is a time of physical, emotional and psychological change, the task is to make sense of one's body under the rules of social constraint. Contained in the bodies of youth is a reservoir of emotion welling up in search of an outlet. For young urban males, and particularly African American males, the emotional base they often drawn from is the one reflective of their pain, and too frequently their rage. While young urban males have many reasons for being enraged, taking their rage at face value overlooks the social processes that shape emotional expressions. Rage is a safe emotion for males to express because it conforms to social expectations for men. The social world of males is

one which demands toughness or hardness; emotions are the domain of women. As such, the emotional pain men experience is channeled into one emotional state representative of several others. In krump dancing, the task is to find a socially acceptable space for young urban males to be emotional.

The tasks of practicing nonviolence, becoming a man, and of emotion management are problematic, in that there are conflicting scripts as to how these tasks are to be accomplished. To practice nonviolence, can be a problematic due to an array of factors reinforcing and promoting violence in the community. Being thwarted is the default of violent gang participation, social isolation and anomie. The benefits of gang participation are called into question as former gangbangers discover banging provides no protection from feelings of isolation or powerlessness. Problematic is the challenge of making the transition into adulthood and self defining one's experience, identity and future. Called into question are the labels, expectations and limitations externally imposed on urban youth. In the case of emotional expression for males, what is called into question are the social constraints on males emotional states. Problematic is the negotiating of nonviolent space to be emotional while retaining one's masculinity.

To practice nonviolence, krumpers strategize using three key mechanisms: battles, the embodiment and release of emotions, and the formation of krump fams. Battles provide a forum to act out violence, restore honor and claim status in an arena free from physical harm. By embodying their emotions and stories, krumpers release, heal and project themselves into a new state of being or awareness, freeing them of emotional baggage. Because fams create reciprocal responsibilities between members, they are spaces where intimacy, loyalty and trust reign. As

230

such, fams facilitate trust and belonging for krump dancers, as they hangout, share stories and have fun.

Krump dancing offers a different picture of inner city America and the African American youth that hangout in the streets. It is not another story of young Black men fighting or killing one another. Nor, is it another link in a long line of studies that highlight the failings of Black men, especially in raising their children. Instead, krump dancing is about finding love, sharing stories, healing pain, teaching boys how to become men, having fun, and, most of all, it is about hope. Out of the heart some of LA's worst neighborhoods came krump dancing, an example of how street and decent converge.

Because krump dancing uses structures from the violent youth street gang, it offers inner city youth a constructive alternative to gang participation. Considering how at-risk youth use krump dancing can provide a model for anti-gang initiatives. Additionally, dance groups that facilitate gangs, like the dancer groups in Hagedorn's (1988) study, can also be used to thwart the growth of gangs.

Finally, krump dancing provides a window into the softer side of inner city youth. Caring for children, sharing in emotional struggles, public expressions of feelings are all activities which challenge notions of masculinity, especially in inner city environments. Krump dancing gives these youth a way to express their emotions publicly, while retaining the hardness required of masculinity.

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APPENDIX A: KRUMP TERMINOLOGY

Many of these terms are defined using the *Krumptionary* provided the founders of krump

from the Krump Kings website (2008a).

Amp – "Describes a high level of intensity and excitement and is also the highest of three levels of intensity through which dancers attempt to progress during a session (Krump, Buck, Amp). Amp is a state of heightened excitement and is a place where technical dance is transcended by emotion. It is the point of dance where one might have a spiritual experience as well. 'Man, that move you did made me amped!'.'' (Krump Kings 2008a)

Battle – A form of the dance used to: settle a dispute (sometimes called "**beef**") between dancers or crews; or to gain status. See also chapter three for a detailed description.

Buck – "The second of three levels of intensity achieved by Krumpers during competition. This is where a character is identified and involves flawless character execution. It is the part of the dance where a story is told through one's character, and at this level, a dancer demonstrates what makes him or her goofy, antagonistic, etc. This term is also used to describe a moment or move that is 'breathtaking'.'' (Krump Kings 2008a)

Cage (also known as "**krump jump**") – This is the initiation ritual into a krump fam or crew. See also chapter three for a detailed description.

Character – "A persona taken on by a Krumper used to express different dance styles and a variety of emotions. May be described as the sum of technique and attitude." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Chest Pop – "One of the most fundamental Krump moves performed in a variety of styles. Can be used at any level of intensity and is a frequently used move in a dancer's vocabulary. Consists of an in and out motion of the chest." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Crew – A group of krumpers who share a similar identity or purpose. While this term is interchanged with **fam** throughout this paper there are differences. A crew is less intimate than a **fam**, but still central in defining a krump style. A crew is more likely to battle over turf, whereas a **fam** would be more interested in defending its name.

Fam – This term is short for family. Like a **crew**, krumpers that are part of a fam share a common identity and purpose. However in a fam, the identity of the dancers is more closely aligned, there is a greater bond and intimacy between members. This term is interchanged with "**crew**" throughout this paper.

Founders – The creators of krump.

Getting Off – This expression describes a krumper releasing frustration or performing such that others feel or connect with the dancer.

Grimey – "A character or style influenced by a rugged, dirty, carefree attitude." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Gutter – "A character known for having a good heart but a bad attitude." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Kill Off – "Any move or combination of moves that ends a session or a battle. These 'finishing moves' are non-verbal ways to let one's opponent know that he or she has been defeated, and they are often a dancer's strongest moves." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Lab – "Short for 'Laboratory,' any place where dancers create and practice moves in preparation for competition. It is also a place where Krump fams exchange ideas." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Labbing – "Spending time in the Lab." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Power – "A style that is characterized by strong, aggressive moves. This is the foundation for the bully, grimy, or gully characters." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Power Moves – "Raw arm swings, chest pops, and other aggressive moves that accompany the 'Power' style. Technically, these moves require a dancer to push everything out through a single part of the body." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Props – "Visible or invisible items used by dancers to tell a story or express an emotion." (Krump Kings 2008a) Common props in this study are hats.

Raw – "Evoking a rugged street feeling or vibe." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Session – "It's the place where everybody comes to express styles, ideas, and battles take place. Sessions tend to be less organized, similar to a 'jam session' of musicians or a 'rap cipher' of MCs." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Spazz Out – "The point where a dancer's style reaches its highest point and dance is transcended by emotion. Dancers often describe this as an out of body experience where the dancer and spectator become one." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Stomp – "A fundamental move where the dancer pounds one's foot to the beat of the music. Stomps help a dancer keep the rhythm and stay on beat." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Technician – "A dancer who specializes in technical moves such as ticks, shoulder moves, footwork, and chest pops. This is a very unpredictable style that involves a lot of stop and go, or a 'strobe-light-type' of effect." (Krump Kings 2008a)

Wild Out – "The lower level of spaz that occurs when a dancer loses focus of the character but continues to perform well. This is a very emotional state." (Krump Kings 2008a)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

The interview guide for the intensive interviews:

1) How did the subject become involved with krump dancing;
    a. How long has the subject been a krump dancer?
    b. Why did the subject start krump dancing?
    c. Does the subject have a dance history?
    d. Why does the subject krump dance?
    e. Has the subject ever taught anyone to krump dance?
    f. Who taught the subject to krump dance?
    g. What is the subject's krump character?
    h. How did the subject develop this character?
    i. How does the subject's character reflect a part of their personality?
    j. What does it mean to the subject to be a krump dancer?
    k. What does the subject hope to gain from krump dancing?

2) How does the dance operate as an alternative to a gang and/or violent culture for the subject;
    a. How does krump dancing make the subject feel?
    b. Has the subject ever danced when they were happy? Sad? Angry?
    c. When does the subject usually dance?
    d. Where does the subject usually dance and with whom?
    e. For subjects that dance when they are angry or sad, how does krump dancing help them manage their feelings?
    f. If a subject could not dance, what alternative activities would the subject participate?
    g. Has the subject ever been in trouble (this is loosely defined)?
    h. Has the subject ever been involved with a gang or thought about joining a gang?
    i. If the subject identifies their involvement with a gang*:
        i. How old were they when they joined a gang?
        ii. Why did they join the gang?
        iii. Are they still involved with the gang?
        iv. If they left the gang, what motivated this?
        v. Has krump dancing been an alternative to gangbanging? If so how?
    j. If the subject identifies thinking about joining a gang*:
        i. What motivates the subject to join?
        ii. What motivates the subject to avoid gangbanging?
            1. If the subject identifies krump dancing as a source, how does krump dancing deter the subject from gangbanging?
    k. What are the goals that the subject has for his/her life?
    l. Is the subject aware of others who chose krump dancing as an alternative to gang life?
    m. Is the subject aware of others who were members of gangs but then substituted krump dancing for gang or are involved in both?

3) A description of the subject's life history
    a. How old is the subject?
    b. Where does the subject live?
    c. What is the education level of the subject?
    d. Did the subject ever participate in social activities (e.g., sports)?
    e. What was the subject's home life like growing up (structural factors such as neighborhood, dwelling)?*
    f. What is the subject's relationship with his/her family members?
    g. Was the subject raised by his/her parents?*
    h. Who were the most influential people in the subject's childhood and/or present life?
    i. What kind of friends did the subject have as a child? As an adult?*
    j. Is the subject a parent?*
    k. Has the subject ever been employed?*
    l. Does the subject dance with a family member?
    m. Where the subject dances with a parent, how does this affect their relationship with their parent?*

*These questions were modified to be age appropriate for children (2i, 2j, 3e, 3g and 3i) with question 3m only asked to children.

**Although, "why" questions can illicit accounts, I used them to compare to my observations and to measure consistency across dancers.

***The format of these questions varied by context, were not asked in any order or in the exact language as they appear here, and not all questions were posed to a dancer.

This research was conducted with permission from the human subjects review board from the University of California, Irvine. Some names have been changed to preserve privacy and protect the participant.