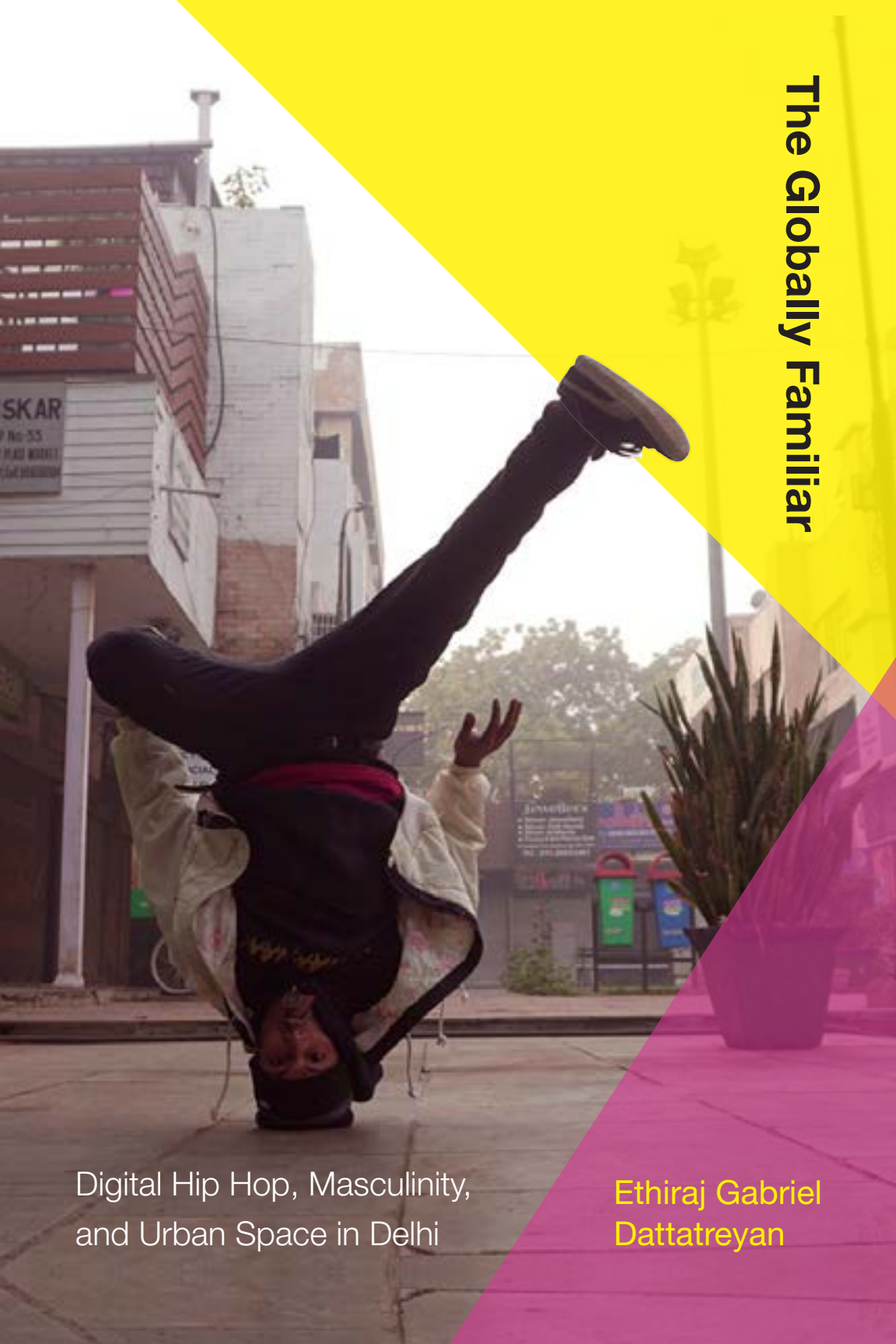
The Globally Familiar



Digital Hip Hop, Masculinity, and Urban Space in Delhi

Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan

The Globally Familiar

Duke University Press Durham and London 2020

The Globally Familiar

Digital Hip Hop, Masculinity, and Urban Space in Delhi

Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Courtney Leigh Richardson
Typeset in Whitman by Westchester Publishing Services
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Dattatreyan, Ethiraj Gabriel, [date].
Title: The globally familiar : digital hip hop, masculinity, and urban space in Delhi / Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020006435 (print) | LCCN 2020006436 (ebook) | ISBN 9781478010159 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781478011200 (paperback) | ISBN 9781478012726 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Music and youth—India—Delhi. | Hip-hop—Social aspects—India—Delhi. | Music—Social aspects—India—Delhi.
Classification: LCC ML3917.14 D388 2020 (print) | LCC ML3917.14 (ebook) | DDC 305.242/1095456—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020006435
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020006436
Cover art: B-boy Ashu in SDA Market, South Delhi, 2019. © Vivek Vision. Courtesy of the artist and Khatarnaak Hip Hop Collective.

Contents

I returned to Delhi in the first week of January 2013 to begin fieldwork in earnest, just in time to bear witness to a fomenting moral panic. A few weeks prior to my arrival, a brutal rape and murder took place, now infamously referred to as *the* Delhi rape case. A young woman and her male friend had attended a film in a South Delhi movie theater located in a garish new mall that opened in 2007, just across the road from where several of the stories that follow in the pages ahead unfold. After watching the film, they went to the main road to find transportation to take them home. Instead of taking an auto-rickshaw, they opted to take an inexpensive minibus, the kind that operates in the peripheries of the city and provides transportation for domestic workers and service laborers whose jobs run into the night. That evening they were picked up by a group of six young men driving a small private bus. The young men operating the bus were all migrants to the city, hailing from various rural villages across the region. They ranged in age from sixteen to thirty and lived in South Delhi's informal housing settlements. To supplement their income, they used the bus to ferry passengers in the late evening. On this night, their entrepreneurial endeavor transformed into a violent encounter. These men, after picking up the young woman—referred to as Nirbhaya (fearless) in the media in the weeks and months that followed—proceeded to brutalize her: raping, torturing, and, finally, leaving her for dead on the side of the road.

Following the incident, candlelight vigils and protests erupted across India. When I arrived in the cold, smog-filled city in early January, India Gate was lit up like it was Diwali. The city's well-to-do as well as those aspiring

toward economic and social mobility had turned out in numbers in support of Nirbhaya as she lay in a hospital bed fighting for her life. They also came out to protest. People from all backgrounds and of all ages rallied to decry the toxic masculinity that produced the possibility for such violence as well as rage against the state and its inability to protect women.

Delhi elections were just around the corner and the rise of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP, Common Man's Party), which had come into being in November 2012 as an official political entity, was portended in the swell of people who rose up just after the Delhi rape case.[1] At the national level, the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had not yet ascended to power. It would be roughly another two years before Narendra Modi would assume office as prime minister on the twin platform of development through privatization and the assertion of so-called Hindu values as central to a successful future India. But the discourse that catapulted both Modi and the BJP into power was on display after the violent incident.

The city, depicted through the Delhi rape case as a place of moral dissolution and a symbol of a failed liberal, secular India, offered a platform to voice another politic that had been lurking just under the surface. This discourse—which had emerged in key moments at local and regional levels since liberalization took hold in the 1990s but had not as yet been articulated at the scale of the national—was one that championed an ascendant Hindu Rashtra that would cleanse the country and its cities of their vices. The image of an unmarried couple going to see a film in the garish consumer space of the mall movie theater was part of the BJP's conservative critique, a way to shift the responsibility of the violence onto the victims by purporting a failure to uphold traditional (Hindu) norms. The figure of the young male perpetrator from a minority community was also mobilized to point to urban India's morass and capitalize on the collective rage, anxiety, and desire for action that the case generated.

Over the next several months, the six young men indicted in the Delhi rape case—their images, their testimonies, their histories—circulated in ways that cast the male migrant as a threat to the city's and the nation's present and future, a narrative that has a long history in postcolonial India.[2] The responsibility for the uptick in violence in cities, so the mediatized narrative went, could be squarely placed on young men like them, the poor, undereducated migrant males who preyed on victims in the public spaces of the city. In the wake of the case, the government of India commissioned a report to review and recommend new sexual assault laws. In this report, produced by a committee headed by former supreme court chief justice J. S. Verma, "young and

prospectless men . . . fighting for space in an economy that offers mainly casual work" were blamed for the uptick in sexual violence.[3] The report effectively legitimized the media narrative about young migrant males in Delhi. Typified as backward, lacking the skills to participate in or contribute to a globalized Indian economy, and devoid of the right moral values, the specter of the feckless male outsider in the city became a ghost to be banished or reformed.[4]

As this shrill discourse demonizing the young, undereducated, and economically marginalized young men of Delhi was being broadcast far and wide, I began to get to know young men from the urban villages and informal settlements of South and West Delhi involved in Delhi's burgeoning hip hop scene. These young men, for the most part, had arrived in the city with their families as young children in the early years of the twenty-first century, in a period when the city had begun to swell in size, both demographically and topographically.[5]

The young men who populate the pages ahead—whether originally from the rural hinterlands of the Gangetic plains, from the northeastern edges of the country, from the mountain villages of Garhwal, or from Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, or Nepal—all contended in similar as well as in quite strikingly different ways with being cast in the media and in their everyday lives as Delhi's Others, potentially destructive outsiders who live on the peripheries of vital change in the city. Yet as I got to know them, it became evident that these young men, like their upper-caste and well-to-do peers in the gated colonies that surround the informal housing settlements and urban villages where they live, were undeniably all part of the diverse, urban cross section of a millennial iteration of the Zippie generation.[6]

That is, despite economic and biographical differences, they were born in the late 1990s and came of age in urban India almost two decades after the nation opened its borders to capital.[7] They are part of a generation of young people who have grown up in Delhi in an era when malls, the metro, and mobile phones are taken-for-granted lived realities. Moreover, they have come of age in an era where the interjection of global capital into urban India has brought economic, political, and social instability that at once produces the appearance that there are opportunities for mobility even as it generates deep anxiety and, in some instances, calamitous friction. Rather than being out of step or disconnected from processes of globalization and the subsequent intensification of urban development it has wrought, these young men saw themselves at the nexus of a changing Indian urbanity that is predicated on digitally enabled transnational connection, distinctive consumption, and creative self-production as key components of social belonging and the basis for potential futures.[8]

This book focuses on these young dancers, rappers, and graffiti artists and offers a different entry point to think through masculinity in Delhi than that of the common mediatized narrative that positions young men like those I got to know as lumpen and surplus labor that, at best, "timepass," waiting for an otherwise seemingly foreclosed urban future to rupture and yield opportunity and, at worst, prey on those more vulnerable than them.[9] To be clear from the outset, this book will not focus on their perspectives on sexual violence in Delhi, a city that has in recent years gained the dubious distinction of being called the rape capital of the world. Nor will it focus on the problematic debates that pit (Hindu) traditionalism in opposition to a secular (urban) modernity when it comes to prescribed gender roles in the city.[10] Rather, the pages ahead offer an account of how a diverse cross section of young male migrants growing up in a globalizing Delhi become gendered, racialized, and classed subjects within a social, economic, and political context marked by uncertainty, anxiety, threat, and possibility—and the profound role that digital communications and media technology has in shaping them.

As importantly, this book tells the story of how these young men mobilize hip hop's creative arts as a means to refashion their embodied difference and their spatial communities' marked Otherness as productive sites of distinction. Throughout the book, I discuss how their creative endeavors in the offline and online worlds they frequented created new social and economic possibilities for them that make visible an alternate mapping of the city in ways that complicate the cloistering rhetoric of fear and threat that animate media depictions of Delhi. In so doing, I show how the top-down world-class city discourse that has reshaped Delhi's spaces in the last decade is being unexpectedly inhabited and interrupted in the second decade of the twenty-first century.[11]

While sexual violence is not at the center of the narrative that follows, the Delhi rape case unavoidably framed my interactions with the young men I met in the Delhi hip hop scene. In the pages that follow, I show how the rape case was explicitly deployed by the young people I got to know as a critique of their cohort living in their spatial communities. In other moments, I discuss how my interlocutors evoked it as a way of marking their own distinction, a way of narrating a masculine subjectivity that could never be like the men who committed such an atrocity.

The young men who populate this book, of course, were not the only young people in Delhi who grappled with the rape case and its implications. As Tara Atluri suggests, the case reframed how young people in the city

and the nation talked and thought about gender, age, and classed power in twenty-first-century India.[12] The case also opened up public discourse about urban in-migration, processes of dispossession, aspirations for the good life, and the ways in which these phenomena are linked. These conversations, as they were simultaneously staged in the media and during the everyday interactions that make up the life of the city, made evident the disjuncture between discourses that posited Delhi as a site of moral dissolution and social disintegration, and those that framed Delhi as a world-class city-in-the-making. They also brought to the foreground the fact that young people are crucial actors in the drama to define the present and future of Delhi and India, not in small part because the under-thirty-year-old demographic comprise a sizable and growing number of the city's and nation's population.[13]

It is my hope that this book, as it offers a take on contemporary Delhi as a site of masculine becoming and digital transformation, captures something of this historical moment and its unfoldings into the present. In the account that follows, the imagined and inhabited Delhi that I was privileged to witness emerging in the young men's articulated dreams, embodied practices, and audiovisual representations is inextricably linked to urbanities elsewhere and otherwise through digital hip hop.[14]

Acknowledgments

It has taken me six years to write this book and many folks have helped me along the way. First and foremost, many thanks to the b-boys, graffiti writers, and MCs I met in Delhi for their openness, enthusiasm, and willingness to share their lives and creative work with me. I hope, if they choose to read this book, they find something of value. This book has been shaped by a number of diligent readers and sharp interlocutors who pushed me to rethink my first assumptions. I owe a great debt to Jaspal Naveel Singh for his thoughtful and critical engagements during fieldwork and for reading my manuscript countless times and, each time, patiently offering his incisive feedback. This book would not exist without him. Many thanks to all the artists, activists, and educators I met while in Delhi. They inspired and instigated thought and brought much joy into my life during my time in the city. Amardeep Kainth, Pooja Sood, Tenzin Lekhmon, Juan Orrantia, Priya Sen, Sitara Chowfla, Radha Mahendru, Aastha Chauhan, He Ra, and the many others I met and learned from during my years in South Delhi: thank you for all your warmth, generosity, and critical feedback.

Radha Hegde, during a South Asia Media Conference held in London in 2014, offered me sage advice and encouragement on my then nascent ideas on digital mediations from below. Faye Ginsburg helped me think through how to articulate the collaborative aspect of this project just before I headed off to Delhi. I received wonderful feedback when I attended the Yale Modern South Asia Workshop in 2015. Special thanks to Kasturi Gupta, Rohit De, Kathryn Hardy, Tariq Thachil, and Tejaswini Ganti for facilitating the event. While I was a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania,

several friends helped me develop my thinking around gender, race, space, digitality, audiovisuality, and ethnography. Many thanks to Arjun I. Shankar, Mariam Durrani, Sandra Ristovska, Krystal Smalls, Savannah Shange, Roseann Liu, Sofia Chaparro, Tali Ziv, Shashank Saini, and Andrew Hudson, for all their brilliant insights that continue to shape my work.

While at the University of Pennsylvania, a few key mentors shaped my thinking and helped me articulate my commitments. Throughout the development of this project, John Lester Jackson Jr. and Deborah Thomas have offered me steady, unwavering, and enthusiastic support, advice, and critical engagement. Thank you both for your friendship. Kathy Schultz, Kathleen Hall, Stanton Wortham, Lisa Mitchell, and Sharon Ravitch: thank you for all your support. I owe Jesse Weaver Shipley a great debt for providing an intellectual home at Haverford College just after graduate school to develop this project and start others. Several of my colleagues at Goldsmiths, University of London have generously read and commented on my chapters. As importantly, during casual chats in the pub, they have pushed me to articulate my investments and critiques of anthropology in wonderfully productive ways. Special thanks to Isaac Marrero Guillamón, Martyn Wemyss, Alice Elliot, Elena Gonzalez-Polledo, Les Back, and Emma Tarlo for all their feedback and support along the way. Many thanks to Sareeta Amrute and Debanuj Dasgupta, who read versions of the introduction to this book and helped me strengthen it. A huge thank you to Sahana Udupa, whose warm and vivacious intellect has sharpened my own over the years since we first met in Philadelphia. A big shout out to H. Samy Alim, who read some of the earliest drafts of chapters from this book and has been a champion of my work since. Brent Luvaas, thank you for helping me think through the relationship between co-optation and cooperation. Thanks to the Wenner Gren Foundation for funding my research, on which this book is based. This project owes a great debt to Ken Wissoker, the Duke University Press team, and the two anonymous readers who reviewed this manuscript. All their hard work and thoughtful feedback and guidance helped me immensely. I am grateful.

To my heart, Karin, for holding me down while I did this thing: all my love.

Introduction

Picture a young man, about seventeen years of age. His family originally hails from the agrarian heartlands of eastern Uttar Pradesh but moved to Delhi to find work in the early twenty-first century. They live in a diverse and dense urban village in South Delhi, a place where migrants reside.[1] At his age, he would normally be attending senior secondary school or college, or working as a driver, a construction worker, or in a shop in one of the many malls that have cropped up all over the city, like the other males in his immediate and extended family. Instead of attending school or working, he practices his b-boy moves in the park close to his house with other young men from different ethnic, caste, and national backgrounds. He walks around his neighborhood and the city "battle ready," striding with an arrogant confidence—almost as if a soundtrack that we cannot hear and he alone can affords him a different embodied relationship to the streets he frequents.[2]

He and his friends write graffiti on the cement walls of their neighborhood and in other parts of the city. They spend their time traveling across the city on the Delhi metro, doing spontaneous dance performances in malls, parks, and historic ruins across the city. They rap in Hindi and English to each other and, occasionally, to an audience, microphone in one hand, the other pointing outward toward the crowd. They take photos and make videos of these performances and their other acts of creation and post them on social media.

Some people who witness their creative performances (and social media circulations of them) are excited and enthusiastic as they come across a familiar representation of youthful urban life from elsewhere laminated onto the urban terrain of Delhi. For them, these young men's hip hop play offers the opportunity for a quick news story about globalization in the so-called slums of the city.[3] Their performances also provide a viable image for a marketing campaign to promote a global sneaker brand in India or a narrative of political valence that could support an ongoing activist project.

For others, it is strange, unsettling. An old man in a South Delhi urban village mutters, "*Kya fyda?* What is the value?" under his breath as he stands in front of a graffiti mural painted by this young man and his friends. A former government school teacher of his says, "What will he do in the future? How will he earn money? He is already disadvantaged and poor. What will he do with this singing and dancing?" His parents are uncertain that this will lead anywhere. "Dress normally," his mother says. "Stop wearing your pants so low. Why this music?"[4]

In his recent monograph, D. Asher Ghertner argues that Delhi has been remade through the elites' (the planners', developers', politicians', and entrepreneurs') aesthetic vision of the future that places Delhi in comparison to, say, Paris or Singapore.[5] He suggests that urban development projects in Delhi that began soon after economic liberalization policies in India were enacted in the 1990s and that picked up pace in 2006 after the Delhi Master Plan 2021 was drafted have been mobilized through an image of these idealized world-class cities rather than by surveys, synoptic maps, or demographic data.[6]

This hegemonic image of a future Delhi, he contends, valorizes familiar scenes of urban life elsewhere toward the goal of making Delhi, to quote the authors of the Delhi Master Plan 2021, "a prime mover and nerve centre of ideas and actions, the seat of national governance and a centre of business, culture, education and sports."[7] Ghertner contends that, as this top-down aesthetic regime becomes policy and practice and taken-for-granted doxa, it generates the city's spatial everyday, its subjects, and its futures. It makes, if we play with the old anthropological adage a bit, the familiar of a Delhi past strange and the strange of a Delhi future familiar.[8]

The diverse young men who populate the pages ahead also use imaginaries of an urban elsewhere to conceptualize and produce sonic, visual, and embodied representations of themselves, the city they live in, and the potential futures of both. However, the key resource they utilize to imagine a different city and self, steeped in the familiar images and sounds of an urban elsewhere, are found in hip hop. This book is about these young men—the

children of newcomers, ethnic or caste others, and laborers in the city—as they come of age on the margins of Delhi's economic and social transformation with the promise that through transnational media consumption *and* production, they can fashion themselves and the worlds they inhabit.

Throughout this book, I use the synthetic term *globally familiar* to describe and theorize how smart phones and social media platforms offer these young men the means to reimagine and remake self and city through hip hop practice. The globally familiar, broadly speaking, is the technological infrastructure that facilitates connection across place and time as well as the diversity of media these technologies can be made to conjure. These mediations offer those from "below" an opportunity to reimagine the city and themselves on different and productive terms.[9] Perhaps more importantly, the globally familiar is a feeling of connectedness made possible through media-enabled participation and practice and the affective economy and structure of aspiration this feeling produces.[10] It suggests that by cultivating the self through the consumption, production, and circulation of transnational popular culture, a different present and future, replete with unanticipated participation and opportunity, is possible.[11]

Since the 1990s, media consumption has become a key site to track the effects of what was somewhat faddishly (in both hopeful and pessimistic ways) called globalization—a term used to describe not only the economic but the social, cultural, and political changes that arrived in the post–Cold War era in national contexts, like India for instance, which were previously economically "protected."[12] As Arjun Appadurai argues (as does Stuart Hall, in a different moment and context), by listening to, reading, and watching the "popular," people are not simply interpellated as docile subjects.[13] Rather, the explosion of access to TV, films, music, and the news—whether produced elsewhere or "locally"—offers people a site by which to understand, engage, and even contest changes that the flow of capital, in its myriad forms, produces in a particular place as it reconstitutes livelihoods, lifestyles, and personhood.

I pick up this idea in the contemporary, digital moment when a clear distinction between media consumption and production of media forms has collapsed.[14] The availability of inexpensive smart phones that allow for the possibility to access and repost (and remix) existing media and creatively capture our everyday experiences profoundly shapes how we come to know ourselves in the world. In this moment, media is not simply something to consume and imagine with but a way to actively create oneself and the world anew and communicate these understandings to others.[15] As Donna

Haraway presciently argued almost three decades ago, "communications technologies . . . are the crucial tool recrafting our bodies."[16] In the present moment, digital communication technologies hold the potential to remake bodies *and* places precisely because of the speed of continuous and recursive connectivity and comparison they facilitate.

I deploy the globally familiar in this book to specifically engage with "digital hip hop" as a site of gendered becoming and spatial transformation in Delhi. The globally familiar, in the close ethnographic reading that follows, is Black American masculinity as it is digitally broadcast, received, and retrofitted for rebroadcast through hip hop's sonic, visual, and kinesthetic sensibilities. I draw from a range of research that has engaged with hip hop as a global phenomenon and that recognizes the reach of American Blackness beyond African diasporic circuits to explore how digital hip hop becomes the key *global familiar* by which the young men I met in Delhi's hip hop scene come to understand and creatively mobilize their perceived and experienced gendered (classed, and racialized) difference in ways that produce new relations in and with the city they call home.[17] To focus on digital media circulations as a site of gendered becoming in Delhi is, as Joshua Neves and Bhaskar Sarkar argue, to move away from "normative imaginations of global technoculture" that center Europe and North America.[18] To engage with hip hop in urban India is to recognize the reach of African diasporic arts as they are amplified through digital means to produce unanticipated subjects and places.

In the last decade, feminist hip hop scholars working in the United States have paid close attention to how hip hop envisions, articulates, and shapes normative and deeply problematic ideas about gender and sexuality as well as offers opportunities to interrupt them.[19] However, while there has been plenty of research on hip hop's "global linguistic flows," there has been little work on how hip hop's aesthetics, in its global travels, have shaped gendered subjectivities elsewhere.[20]

As importantly, there have been few close engagements with contemporary embodiments of working-class masculinity in the complex social worlds of postliberalization urban India. As Sareeta Amrute argues, contemporary scholarship on India has tended to focus on either the so-called urban middle class or on the rural caste, religious, ethnic, and tribal subject.[21] The urban and peri-urban poor and working class, as a result, tend to get subsumed into one analytical project or the other or are left out altogether. With regard to the study of masculinity, this tendency has resulted in two strands of scholarship. The first strand has engaged with colonialism's impact on the male gendered body, with an analytical focus on caste Hindu male sexuality, bodily

cultivation, semen conservation, religious-nationalist identity formation, and consequent sectarian violence.[22] The settings for these engagements, with some notable exceptions, have been either in the village or in one of India's many second-tier cities or large towns.

The second strand has delved into "middle-class" masculinities and sexualities in the postliberalization period, touching upon the impact of consumerism, national and regional mass media, and a newfound sense of publicness.[23] The settings for these studies have included cities but have, with few exceptions, failed to differentiate male subjects based on their laboring opportunities, racialized positions, or spatialized conditions.[24] In other words, there has not been a close engagement with how in-migration and expropriative development have impacted how the male children of workers, as they come of age in urban spaces of transformation, imagine and perform themselves as men.[25]

In the pages ahead, I foreground how transnational media circulation influences the aspirations and everyday gendered performances of a diverse group of young working-class men growing up in urban India as well as think through the ways in which media *production* becomes a site of transformation and opportunity. In particular, I push for an attention to the ways the miniaturized screen—as it brings notions of personhood and place from elsewhere into immediate and productive conversation with the here and now—provides a diverse cross section of working-class men in Delhi the opportunity to self-fashion themselves *as* men in the context of the city they call home.[26]

I engage with masculinity in my participants' social (media) play, physical embodiments, conceptual understandings of gender, aspirations for the future, and their opportunities for work. In each case, I look at the ways in which their social performances and gendered aspirations are influenced as much by the context they live in as by the media content they consume and emulate in their online productions and everyday hip hop embodiments. By situating my account among a diverse group of working-class young men living in the city, I push against readings of masculinity as regional (South Asian) or national (Indian). Rather, I focus on the fluid and complex assemblages of gender in relation to class, caste, race, and ethnicity within the context of Delhi but linked to transnational circuits of becoming.[27]

By engaging with Delhi as a spatial field of transformation made optical, audible, and visceral not only in the ethnographic *cut* I inhabited with these young men who generously included me in their cipha but also in their audiovisual productions, I offer an alternative narrative to the ways in which

urban place-making is often discussed in South Asia—as a project that is ruled by experts and ratified by the desires of the so-called middle class.[28] Brian Larkin poetically argues that "the quotidian landscapes of life—posters on the walls, shop signs, dancing girls, bestsellers, panoramas, the shape, style, and circulation of city buses—are all surface representations of the fantasy energy by which the collective perceives the social order."[29] In the pages ahead, I show how digital hip hop offered these young men the opportunity to claim and reimagine the spaces of their city—the parks, the malls, the historical ruins, the cement walls surrounding the streets of the slums and urban villages where they reside—in ways that productively disrupted normative understandings of twenty-first-century Delhi's social order.[30]

In their renderings and inhabitations, contemporary Delhi was reimagined as global or world class not because of the new roads to accommodate the surge in privately owned automobiles; the new glass, steel, and concrete private housing developments; the shiny international airport; or the countless shopping malls and private hospitals that have come to dominate the city's built environs.[31] Rather, the young men I met in the city utilized hip hop to reimagine their city as global because of its slums, its graffiti murals across the city's expanses, and its regular hip hop events. Their hip hop–inspired self-fashioning projects in the city, in this sense, not only indexed their gendered becoming but was constitutive of *Delhi as a place*.[32]

Consider that much of the scholarship on twenty-first-century Delhi has focused on either a top-down reimagining of the city or on the urban poor and their plight as a result of slum clearances and the like.[33] In each case, Delhi's urban poor and working class are depicted as homogenous and either passive recipients or, at best, as examples of anachronistic resistance to an urban Indian present and future that, ultimately, does not include them in its imaginaries. This book provides a different entry point to engaging with Delhi than those offered by scholars, literary writers, or the mainstream media, who portray the city in terms of clear demarcation and division where the cosmopolitan elite have access to the global—literally and metaphorically—while the masses do not.[34] What emerged—in the images, videos, and social media narrations of the diverse young male hip hop dancers, MCs, and graffiti writers' everyday border crossings and relational entanglements in the city coupled with my ethnographic deep dive into the contexts of their production—was a picture of Delhi that did not seem so clearly divided on some counts but was deeply unequal (and segregated) in others.

This doubling, where the young men I got to know deployed hip hop to spatialize Delhi as a site of productive mobility and recalcitrant inequality, at once

challenged and reinforced the logics of a top-down aesthetic vision of Delhi as a world-class city. In this sense, the pages that follow will not offer a simple tale of celebratory subaltern resistance against the dominant aesthetic that has in the last twenty years transformed many of India's urban spaces into what media theorist Ravi Sundaram has argued are "middle class utopias."[35] Rather, the story that unfolds centers on how these young men negotiated the changing economic, social, and spatial conditions around them through hip hop–influenced modes of consumption and performances of distinction that did not, for instance, critique their economically and socially privileged peers but were meant to productively grab their attention even if that sometimes meant calling into question the structural forces that produced their shared reality.

Nor does this book offer a dismal narrative of digital subjectification, global consumerist interpellation, and capitalist dispossession: the kind of ethnographic account that Sherry Ortner has described as "dark anthropology" and that Jodi Dean argues exemplifies the (digital) communicative turn in capitalism.[36] The mere fact that these young men have taken up the hopeful, creative, and vitally embodied and spatialized practices of hip hop, with its political history of representing racial capitalism and its effects, would make that impossible.[37] Rather, I endeavor to explore and unwind the stories of how my participants' digital hip hop practice in Delhi reflects the complicated relationship between their desire to participate in global capital's reworking of the city and the opportunities and exclusions they encounter *as* marginal male subjects otherwise in the shadows of globalization's transformation of the city and the country.

If the anxieties their elders and parents have about their hip hop practice reflect the limits linked to these young men's economic and social futures in the city (*Kya fyda*? What is the value?), my participants' insistence on pursuing hip hop art forms and developing digitally enabled transnational communities of practice reveals the ways they imagine the transformative potential of digital technology and hip hop to create new possibilities for life otherwise. Taken in this spirit, my analysis of masculinity, urban space, and digital hip hop in Delhi offers something akin to what Lila Abu-Lughod describes as a "diagnostic of power."[38] This diagnostic concerns itself, in large part, with the ways in which the young men who let me into their lives positioned themselves (and were positioned) as gendered subjects in the fast-changing urban terrains of the city more than two decades since economic liberalization changed the country and its cities irrevocably.

In this sense, this book—with its focus on transnational (digital) media, hip hop praxis, masculine becoming, and urban change in India's capital

city—offers the latest "digital take" on a body of literature concerned with how economic liberalization in India in the 1990s and the consumptive flows it has since let loose have transformed public space, understandings of gender, and aspiration for young people.[39] Anthropological work that has focused on the liminal category of youth in the postliberalization era has carefully engaged with the ways in which access to global circulations has ushered in tastes, desires, aspirations, and political sensibilities that anxiously reconstitute gender roles, reimagine public space, and, in some instances, fatally mark aspiration as future death.[40] These accounts have offered opportunities to critically reflect on how young people living in India, as they reimagine and reposition themselves through sartorial choice, consumptive habits, and articulations of their hopes and dreams, at once transgress and reinforce class, religious, caste, and gendered difference in the lifeworlds they inhabit. Some of this rich corpus of scholarship on youth in postliberalization India has highlighted mass mediation as a key element in the reformulation of gendered subjectivities, social practices, and spatial relations.

For instance, Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella's account of young men in small-town Kerala going to the cinema and Sarah Dickey's theorization of film-star fan clubs in a second-tier city in Tamil Nadu provide a way to think about how national and regional cinema shapes everyday life for young men in India. In their accounts, what emerges are the kinds of gendered relations, political sensibilities, and spatial inhabitations produced through the act of watching together in an era marked by a consciousness of elsewhere and otherwise.[41]

I also think of Devan, the young low-caste college student based in small-town Kerala who appears in Ritty Lukose's work on youth transformations in postliberalization India. In Lukose's account, Devan, in part by watching the Tamil film *Kaaladan* (Loverboy), began to shop for and dress in what Lukose describes as a Ragga-inspired style (baggy pants, loose shirts, sneakers, and a ponytail) in an effort to be "*chethu*," cool or sharp in Malayali. Global Blackness, mediated through Tamil cinema, offered a different gendered and racialized possibility for Devan and, in turn, produced different social practices and aspirations for him and his peers.

In more recent ethnographic work, there has been a focus on reality television shows like *Indian Idol* and the ways in which youthful aspirations for national fame are sparked and cultivated by the promise and possibility of televisual appearance.[42] Simply watching the show—modeled after an American show by a similar name—sparks the desire in young people to fashion themselves as musical performers, even if the possibility to access

the requisite training to become one is limited based on gender, class, and caste and the particular aesthetics of the show favor the reproduction of a dominant aesthetic.

These ethnographies of youthful media practice have not (and, in some cases, could not have, given their timing) paid close attention to the ways in which transnational, networked media connectivity has become a taken-for-granted horizon of possibility that shapes desire, personhood, relationships to space, and dreams for the future.[43] As with previous shifts in media infrastructure in India—for instance, the cassette tape boom in the 1980s or the advent of satellite television in the 1990s that caused the proliferation of a broad variety of local, regional, and globally circulating media forms—the post-2008 digital explosion has opened up the possibility for new modes of consumption, communication, and production.[44]

For instance, as of 2019, India has the largest number of regular Facebook users in the world (approximately 269 million people).[45] These users are concentrated in India's urban centers, particularly first-tier cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru where there has been a rapid creation of digital infrastructure in the last decade, especially after 2008, when 3G and 4G spectrums were auctioned by the government to private interests that rapidly expanded internet connectivity.[46]

The globally familiar takes up this new spatialized media ecology and the concomitant social practices, acts of self-fashioning, and unbridled aspiration it motivates among India's diverse youth—an under-twenty-five-year-old demographic that comprises more than half the nation's population.[47] The globally familiar pushes us to think what happens when the silver screen is miniaturized, when media of all sorts can be evoked with a swipe or a click of the button, and when collective viewing practices consist of a group of young people (in the case of this book, young men) gathered around one small blue-lit screen in public space.

In the current moment, quite literally, the global can fit in one's pocket to be summoned in an instant. This emergent digital infrastructure has provided young people across various social divides in urban India with, among other things, access to popular cultural content from around the world: global news (fake and otherwise), English Premier League football, K-pop, Naija pop, Japanese manga, and, of course, hip hop, all of which supplement their previous diet of the popular produced by national and regional mass media industries as well as web-based media directed at "Indian" youth.[48]

The globally familiar, in this sense, demands a recognition that in the age of social media, the popular, in its various media manifestations, is more

diversified than ever before. Amateur YouTube videos shot by youth living in cities around the world are just as likely to be accessed as corporate-produced media depictions, and the ways young people in India gain access to what they consume is increasingly a function of the online and offline web of relationships they find themselves enmeshed in.[49] These media forms, taken as a whole, are constitutive of how young people in urban India make sense of who they are and where (and when) they live. In this sense, the globally familiar suggests that transnational circulations of media content open up a site by which to understand how places and subjects are produced that are neither global nor local but in excess of both.[50]

Why Hip Hop?

"Why hip hop?" was a question I asked b-boys, graffiti writers, and MCs quite frequently early on in my stay in the city. The response I got was an affectively charged one: hip hop is freedom; hip hop is life. Hip hop, as these young men described, allowed them to create a feeling of connection and belonging through stylistic play and embodied practice that exceeded their conditions of possibility as the children of laborers, refugees, and caste Others.[51] For these young men, digital connectivity offered access to youth cultural worlds beyond what they deemed "Indian" popular culture, which they argued they felt no connection to because they were outside the dominant narrative these popular representations portrayed. In their accounts, they imagined regional and national cinema and TV as local, even though they too were in global circulation within and beyond diasporic circuits.[52]

"Bollywood films. I hate them. They are horrible," said Jay, in a mixture of Hindi and English. Jay was eighteen years old when I first met him in 2012. A talented MC and b-boy, he moved with his father from Garhwal district in the mountains of North India to South Delhi in 2003 but claimed Nepal as home. "*Ghazals*? Filmy music? That is not for me. That is for Indians. *Aam aadmi*.[53] Ordinary man. *Main alag aadmi hoon*. I am a different man." For Jay and his peers, their positions as *alag aadmi* could only be articulated and aestheticized through hip hop. Their reclamation of *alag* (difference) through hip hop transformed their outsider positionality in Delhi into a globally familiar one—where a creative embodiment of spatialized, gendered, and racialized difference becomes a resource and strategy for realizing social and economic mobility. As such, hip hop fulfilled itself in Delhi as it has throughout its forty-year history since its inception in Black and Latinx neighborhoods of urban America: as a technology of creative bricolage that opens up

opportunities to self-fashion as a response to processes of disenfranchisement, and to generate new social and economic possibilities as a result.[54]

In this sense, practicing hip hop in Delhi reveals what Achille Mbembe describes as the "manifest dualism" of Blackness as it circulates across the world. Mbembe argues that "Blackness was invented to signify exclusion, brutalization, and degradation, to point to a limit constantly conjured and abhorred." And yet, he argues, Blackness, in its travels across the world as art and merchandise, also "becomes the symbol of a conscious desire for life, a force springing forth, buoyant and plastic, fully engaged in the act of creation and capable of living in the midst of several times and several histories at once."[55]

The dual nature of Blackness—its capacity to generate vitality, relationships, and economic value while indexing or becoming synonymous with violent exclusion—has been foundational to hip hop's aesthetic and its success globally and was on display in Delhi. Through hip hop, the young men I got to know in Delhi were able to first imitate and then embody the circulating image of Black masculinity clothed in hip hop's bravado and rebellion to make sense of themselves, individually and collectively, as marginalized subjects in the capital city of India.[56] Blackness vis-à-vis hip hop became a political category of possibility and inclusion for these diverse young men, an incipient possibility for solidarity and friendship across ethnic, religious, caste, and racialized difference.

Yet hip hop's practices, styles, and embodied ways of being, especially when coupled with the potential for social media circulation, also offered them the means to frame their unequal experience as a global hustle: a way to get by, even succeed, in a city striving to become world class precisely because of hip hop's capacity to signify subversion and sovereignty in its public affect and its embodied experience as socially and economically valuable. Which is to say, digitally enabled hip hop offered these young men a means to self-fashion themselves as unique, creative, even entrepreneurial individuals who could participate in urban India's aspirations for world-class status.[57]

By remaking themselves and the city, even if uncomfortably and unevenly, to fit the narrative capital has produced about a world-class Delhi through their claims to Black masculinity, (some of) these young men made friends they would otherwise have never met, found unanticipated work, explored the breadth of the city, and (in some cases) were even able to participate in activist-driven initiatives in ways that would have otherwise been foreclosed to them. Yet despite the opportunities that arose for some, the potential for fracture and dislocation lurked in the background, linked to a postponement

of a prescribed reproductive future of marriage, children, and a steady paycheck (likely from a casual service labor job, which is all they would be able to obtain given their social backgrounds, access to education, and so on).

These potential and delayed futures evoked a specter of normative masculinity in Delhi's migrant and working-class neighborhoods that the young men explicitly pushed against through hip hop praxis, even as some of them had to succumb to living a dual life of being a wage laborer and a hip hop artist to help their family pay the bills. The promise of fame and fortune also created competition, disagreement, and hostility between Delhi's aspiring young hip hop artists in ways that fractured solidarity as it became evident, over the course of the several years that I have known these young men, that only some would succeed financially as digital hip hop artists—in part because their claims to an authentic "Indian" hip hop urbanity stuck better than others.

The globally familiar, as it manifests American Black masculinity in Delhi, is thus an ambivalent optimism (rather than a cruel one).[58] Why? Because it offers a hip hop otherwise that is always already saturated in racialized capitalist realism of the Atlantic world.[59] It feeds aspiration by providing the resources for the self-cultivation of an affectively charged and globally manifest gendered and racialized subjectivity that promises a different (economic and social) future. It delivers on its promise in the moment when vital embodied practice and the thrill of digital documentation offer a way out of the everyday and a chance to connect with unanticipated others. Yet over time, it only partially, at best, lives up to the expectation it generates, even if social media promises something more.

Throughout the book, I think through and theorize hip hop practice for social media circulation within and beyond one's existing networks as a key aspect of the globally familiar. The relationship between media consumption and production in the digital age is recursive.[60] What one consumes shapes what one produces and vice versa. The do-it-yourself (DIY) media content one produces beckons, cajoles, invites, and, invariably, offers the potential for new relations as it travels through the digital circuitry of social media: #dmforcollab.[61] The content that gets ratified on social media through "likes" intensifies the circulation and production of particular gendered, classed, and racialized subjectivities laminated onto space and place. One never knows how far what one makes will travel. One's affectively charged audiovisual self-productions on platforms such as Instagram, as Alice Marwick teasingly and tantalizingly writes, might even create "instafame."[62]

As Kathleen Stewart explains, affects do not work through explicit meaning but rather "in the way they pick up densities and texture as they move through

bodies, dreams, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds."[63] The globally familiar, in this sense, asks us to pay attention to the ways in which digital content channels and organizes affect through circulation as well as during the behind-the-scenes work that needs to be done to produce the audiovisual artifacts in the first place. It also asks us to pay attention to the sign-concepts that travel in the media that are consumed and reproduced as citation in everyday interaction and in subsequent social media representations.[64]

In the chapters ahead, I explore the ways in which aspiring b-boys, rappers, graffiti artists, and DJs in Delhi's margins evoked and deployed gendered, spatial, racialized, classed, and kin concepts linked to their hip hop media consumption but also animated in other transnational popular discourses—friend, swag, racist, nigga, nation, race, slum, and bro, to name a few—and the ways in which these concepts both disrupted previous and generated new understandings and embodiments of masculinity, reimagined the city's spatial coordinates, and indexed their aspirations as well as the uneven social and economic opportunities available to them.

The globally familiar, when theorized as a tracking of mediatized moving concepts as they shape life in a particular place and time, animates what Michael Lampert argues is the role of contemporary "global" anthropology as it "prides itself on critically pluralizing concepts that purport to be the same across contexts . . . to work as connoisseurs of the 'not quite' rather than peddlers of the strange."[65] To engage with the hip hop–inflected concepts these young men use to understand, theorize, and aestheticize their situated subject formation is to recognize that media consumption generates new ways of seeing, hearing, understanding, and articulating difference as well as opportunities for producing place.[66] It also pushes us to recognize how moving concepts, held together and intensified in hip hop's aesthetics, produce social, economic, and political value for the young men who remade themselves in and through them.

Indeed, if I could go back in time and respond to the old man who looked at the graffiti mural and wondered aloud about the value of such an endeavor, I would tell him that the mural, when made into an image that can travel with a caption that might read *Delhi swag*, opens up worlds of deferred possibility and potential capital.[67] If he gave me the time, I would explain that hip hop's technologies of practice, as they have been picked up across the globe, have always been about productive appropriation of concepts, materials, and technologies to, as James G. Spady argues, "loop link," or "reenact, enact, and update the aesthetic, political, and social impact of Black cultural movements in new and very different contexts."[68]

The globally familiar asks us to consider how the "loop links" of hip hop practice, as it is intensified through digital media production and circulation, generates vitality in a specific place and time and with particular young people: in Delhi in the second decade of the twenty-first century among young men who are otherwise imagined to be on the margins of change. Moreover, it pushes us to consider how hip hop's aesthetic of flow and rupture, as Arthur Jafa describes its practices of omnivorous bricolage, when made digital, amplifies offline practice of b-boying, rapping, or painting through an online representation *of* practice (a practice of practices, as it were).[69]

In so doing, the globally familiar suggests that hip hop's aesthetic of assemblage and improvisation is now eminently digital in the ways it is consumed, practiced, and produced. One could argue that videography and photography and perhaps even social media literacy are integral skills (maybe even hip hop elements in their own right) for an aspiring twenty-first-century hip hop artist.[70] As such, the globally familiar pushes us to consider the ways in which hip hop brings its musical, lyrical, visual, and kinesthetic modalities together into multimodal relations in ways that push against scholarly reductions of hip hop that pose its traveling traditions as solely musical and linguistic. As Delhi b-boy Sudhir once said to me: "It's not enough to learn a b-boy move from YouTube. One has to learn how to shoot it properly. Lots of cuts. Then, what music to put on? *Yeh bhi zaroori hai*. That is important too."

Sudhir's recognition that shooting and editing are important (too) marks the ways in which the young men in Delhi's hip hop scene imagined how their experimentations with hip hop, what Jeff Chang calls "the most far-reaching arts movements of the past three decades," created opportunities for social, economic, and political participation in ways that recursively shaped how these young men came to see and produce themselves and the city they call home.[71] Their interest in generating social and economic capital through their hip hop self-making projects opened the door for me to enter into their worlds as a collaborator and, with them, to imagine and theorize a digitally enabled shared anthropology.

An Ethnography of the Globally Familiar

It was February 2013. I waited with Jaspal Singh for Soni at the mouth of a South Delhi metro station. Singh is a sociolinguist from Germany with roots in Punjab, and Soni was, at the time, a nineteen-year-old Sikh b-boy and aspiring rapper from an economically depressed postpartition Punjabi enclave in West Delhi. As we waited, I found a sliver of shade on the edge of a

parapet so Singh and I could sit and talk a bit before Soni arrived. Singh had connected with Soni at a hip hop concert featuring Snoop Lion (now, once again, Snoop Dogg) and various local hip hop acts a few weeks prior. Singh had asked him to come to South Delhi for an interview and a conversation about music production and generously invited me along for the meeting.

Singh and I had recently met after we found out we were both doing research projects on the emergent hip hop scene in Delhi. Singh had stumbled upon a conference abstract I had written about clandestine and improvisational hip hop dance sessions in South Delhi malls the year prior and contacted me to tell me he was going to be in Delhi in 2013 doing fieldwork.[72] Once we figured out we both would be in Delhi at the same time, we planned to connect. Soon after I arrived in Delhi in January 2013, we met over a reassuring meal of *dal chawal* (rice and lentils) and committed to supporting each other in our fieldwork endeavors.

While we sat waiting for Soni and took the commuter bustle in, Singh told me that he was planning to set up a recording studio in his new apartment, where he could invite dancers in Delhi's emergent hip hop scene who were interested in expanding their hip hop repertoires to record their raps and learn to produce beats. Studio time in Delhi, he reasoned, as anywhere else in the world, is expensive. Moreover, there were not many professional recording studios available in Delhi for young people to experiment with their hip hop–inflected musical ideas, even if they had the money to spend.

The idea of a providing DIY studio space, he believed, would not only give him the opportunity to develop relationships with young aspiring musicians in the Delhi scene and to capture the kinds of stylized articulations of self and world that they made available in their lyrics; it would also allow him to offer something back in return for the access that they provided him into their worlds. As we leaned against the parapet, I told Singh about the music video I had filmed for a crew of rappers from South Delhi the previous summer (in 2012) when I made my first foray into the scene. I described how, until the moment that this group had needed me to shoot this video, I had a difficult time getting in touch with them or having them take my interest in them seriously (once they found out I was not a journalist or a contemporary or legendary hip hop practitioner from afar). The digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera I brought with me to Delhi, I explained, facilitated access. Much like his music studio, the camera promised the exciting possibility for what our interlocutors perceived as a paraprofessional opportunity for self-production and circulation. Singh, after a momentary pause, said, "You should keep making music videos with the rappers and dancers we meet in Delhi."

Throughout my days in Delhi, I engaged with the young men I met as their cameraman, as their producer, as their personal photographer, and, eventually, as their collaborator. In so doing, I marked myself as another kind of familiar the global makes possible—the twenty-first-century male, Indian American anthropologist who arrives (largely because of the media representations of hip hop I saw from afar) and stands just offstage to document events and performances as they unfold.

During the two years I lived in Delhi, I took up any and all opportunities to create audiovisual content in conversation and, in certain instances, in explicit collaboration with young men in the scene. Throughout this book, I touch upon these digitally enabled shared ethnographic moments as instantiations of a hip hop–infused ethnography, or "hiphopography." For H. Samy Alim, James G. Spady, and Samir Meghelli, hiphopography is a way of conducting research that takes seriously hip hop practitioners' efforts to theorize and represent themselves in the world to become someone new. As such, hiphopography is an approach to research that attempts to displace the power differentials between experts and participants in typical social science endeavors by harnessing hip hop's aesthetic and epistemic sensibilities toward dialogue and improvisation such that all participants are imagined as experts.[73] Our coproduced knowledge was composed of the images, sounds, and videos that we made and, as importantly, the discussions we had about framing, producing, or locating them. These collaborative media artifacts could at once become the site for my (future) analysis as it traveled in social media as well as the vehicle that reaffirmed existing relations (through "likes" on Facebook) or created new ones for them.

Making together, while mutually beneficial, also generated moments of discomfort, uncertainty, and, at times, disagreement. These moments of difficult conversation centered around how best to represent the city and a subaltern Delhi masculinity through the aesthetics of hip hop as well as how far I would be willing to go to share my resources. These challenging moments drew attention to how my presence, as an older male Indian American from New York whom they perceived as closer to an authentic Black masculinity than them, could and should influence the ways in which they imagined an emergent Delhi hip hop scene. Moreover, my presence pushed them to think through and articulate what they valued as they actively shaped themselves as men coming of age in a city, as I described in the preface, that was grappling with its mediatized reputation as a place hostile to women and full of dangerous, itinerant, and unemployed men.

In the chapters that follow, I think through these instances of shared making as sites of possibility and friction to reflexively engage with what it means to do media ethnography in the digital moment and what sorts of surprising insights emerge when making together becomes an activity that, ultimately, is just as much about the cultivation of value as it is about the energetic immediacy of coproduction.[74] In this sense, the pages that follow offer a way to think through and engage with what Amit Rai has recently described as an affective ethnography in and of the media—one that traces the feelings of excitement, anxiety, and hopefulness linked to improvisational making with others against the backdrop of neoliberal valorizations of entrepreneurship and self-cultivation.[75]

The first two chapters foreground masculinity, its embodiments, and its relationalities in and through digital hip hop. In chapter 1, I discuss the ways in which cultural producers in the scene mobilize the globally familiar to forge friendship and enact heteronormative romance across difference in Delhi. I focus on Jay, an upper-caste Hindu Nepali living in a *jhopadpatti* (informal housing colony) in South Delhi, and discuss a music video we worked on together, ostensibly for the parents of his unrequited love, a young Christian woman originally from Mizoram (a state in the Northeast of India) who lived on the other side of the city and whom he met in a hip hop jam months prior. I argue for an attention to the ways Jay imagines his creative production and play through hip hop as a means to make, maintain, and deepen friendships across ethnic and class difference as well as bridge the religious difference and familial disapproval that separates him from his love interest. In so doing, I theorize how the globally familiar becomes central to constituting intimate relationships and emotive masculinities in the context of the globally ubiquitous social media logic of friend and the fracturing discourse of "love jihad" currently circulating in India while also revealing Jay and his crew's spatialized understandings of gender in the city.

In chapter 2, I discuss my travels with several b-boys and rappers as we sought out clothes, hats, sneakers, and other material signs in shopping malls, markets, and online spaces. I use our forays across the city to think through, as they remake their bodies in the visage of a normative hip hop masculinity, what sorts of relationships with urban space emerge through their search for the things they feel are essential to being and becoming hip hop. Along the way I theorize how *swag*—a globally circulating, gendered, and gendering popular term hip hop practitioners in Delhi deployed to understand the things they wanted (or, in some cases, rejected)—articulates with *fetish*, a term used to think through the magic of a thing's ability to congeal relations

as well as its power to alienate. In so doing, I put the globally familiar into conversation with recent theorizations of style, citationality, and consumption to argue for a transnational gendered and racialized understanding of style and stylistic choices in relationship to the changing urbanity of Delhi.

The next two chapters foreground what I call digital hip hop and the kinds of exciting yet conflicted work and networking opportunities it generates for the young men I got to know in Delhi. Chapter 3 dives headlong into the relationship between the youth culture industry and the DIY digital hip hop production of my participants. I discuss how the globally familiar articulates what has been called immaterial labor in the twenty-first century. Specifically, I trace the ways in which Jay and others in the scene participate in the various gendered and racialized laboring opportunities that arise as a result of their online and offline hip hop creativity in Delhi's (and India's) emergent youth culture industry. I argue for an attention to the ways in which the kinds of cooperative, aspirational, and often free labor that my participants offer as artists and media producers reveal how capitalism continues to unfold in ways that create novel arrangements of gendered labor and aspiration.

In chapter 4, I discuss how digital hip hop creates a complicated political economy of recognition between visiting international hip hop actors as they seek out "authentic" Indian hip hop and young people in the scene as they mobilize their (media-influenced) understandings of class, race, masculinity, and urban spatiality to get the attention of these actors. Utilizing the example of the Indo-German Hip Hop Project, a soft diplomacy initiative sponsored by the German consulate and the Goethe Institut in 2011–12, I discuss the frictions that emerge between differently situated international actors as they all sought the same "authentic" male hip hop subjects from the same 'hoods, and the opportunities that arose for those young men who were able to effectively channel and perform a globally familiar spatialized subaltern subjectivity.

The final two chapters foreground hip hop place-making and an emergent racialized spatiality in Delhi. Chapter 5 focuses on the ways in which Sudhir and his crew's globally familiar representation of their urban village as a global 'hood is utilized by artists and activists to make their case for an alternate development model situated in a new urbanism discourse that calls for the scaling down of urban space. I discuss the consequences of how this move to champion urban villages as potential models for a future Delhi coincides with processes of urban change that have remade several urban villages in South Delhi as centers for nightlife and boutique consumerism.

In chapter 6, I explore how the category of race is summoned and deployed by the young men in my study to describe their experiences of exclusion in the city and their relationship to the neighborhoods they live in. I focus at first on a Somali refugee in the city, as he and his crew recount the anti-Black racism they face in Delhi through their raps. I use their testimonial to think through how other young MCs and dancers from diverse backgrounds mobilize race to describe their experiences of discrimination. In this reckoning, the globally familiar draws attention to how digital media circulations of hip hop, as a discourse that directly engages with discrimination based on essentialized notions of difference across the globe, produce a shared vocabulary and aesthetic by which to articulate and embody a sense of common difference among the diverse practitioners in the Delhi hip hop scene. I also discuss how potential solidarities across difference made possible through hip hop are fractured when certain actors are excluded from a Delhi hip hop scene as it seeks to understand itself in an Indian imaginary.

I conclude with an epilogue that describes where some of the young men, whom I first met in 2011 and who populate the pages ahead, are in their lives as I write the final draft of this book. Much of the anthropological writing on youth assumes its ontogenetic timeframe to be liminal, a period of time where an exploration of life leads to a blurring of social norms as young people learn to labor and come to terms with their ascribed social positions.[76] What does a return to their lives regularly over the course of several years, a return at least in part made possible by social media, tell us about the present and future for these creative young men, about Delhi, and about the global itself?

I also argue for an attention to how anthropologists can be tracked and summoned as familiars through the digital, long after we have returned home from the so-called field. I pose some thoughts about the ethical and political conundrums that arise as a result of this constant state of connection even as I discuss the opportunities that open up for us to think differently about how ethnography might be done in the digital age. The globally familiar, in this (final) instance, requires us to pay attention to how our intellectual work, as it circulates online, blurs as it comes into contact with our social media personae when we become searchable in online worlds. As it grounds us in the same everyday practices as our interlocutors, the globally familiar ultimately asks us to recognize ourselves as equally steeped in the enchantment and precarity that the digital produces.

Preface

1 Moonis Zuberi, "The Rise of the Aam Admi: A New Season for Indian Politics?," *Wall Street International*, May 30, 2015. See also Webb, "Short Circuits," for a more detailed account of the links between AAP and its links to the anticorruption movement, which started a few years prior to the formation of the party.

2 Kapur, *Makeshift Migrants and the Law*.

3 Atluri, "Young and the Restless," 362. See also Rupa Subramanya, "The Perils of Unfulfilled Indian Youth," *Wall Street Journal* (blog), February 28, 2013, https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/02/28/the-perils-of-unfulfilled-indian-youth/, which offers an interesting view into the popular discourse on youth in India as at once a promise and a peril to the nation's future.

4 Rohit Dasgupta and Debanauj Dasgupta discuss the discursive production of the "monstrous" working-class male subject in urban India in relation to emergent Indian queer publics. Dasgupta and Dasgupta, "Introduction: Queering Digital India." Sareeta Amrute argues that the Delhi rape case offers a way to look at gender in relationship to spatialized labor in the ambivalent postliberalization era and argues for an attention to the discourse of "immobility" that surrounds men from the urban and peri-urban working class. Amrute, "Moving Rape," 334.

5 The expansion of the city was in part demographic, the result of tremendous in-migration as people from near and far sought out opportunities in the city. It was also topographic, as the borders of what constituted the city expanded outward, swallowing rural peripheries into the fold of what is now called the National Capital Region (NCR). For a historical account of Delhi's growth and development, particularly from the late colonial period to the present, see Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities*. For a more recent account of the ways Delhi has transformed through simultaneous processes of dispossession and accumulation that expand the perimeters of the city, see Searle, *Landscapes of Accumulation*.

6 Ritty Lukose discusses the popular discourse of the Zippie, the middle-class child of liberalization who literally zips about from one consumer experience to the next. Lukose, *Liberalization's Children*.

7 For detailed accounts of India's transition into an actor in the global market and its impacts on public culture and social life, there are several wonderful books to choose from. See, for instance, one of the first books to capture India's postliberalization transformation of public life: Breckenridge, *Consuming Modernity*.

8 Since the late 1990s, several scholars of South Asia have focused on the ways in which economic liberalization created the possibility for what Lukose has aptly termed *consumer citizenship*. This project looks at consumption in relationship to audiovisual production for social media circulation as a key force shaping subjects in urban India today. Lukose, *Liberalization's Children*; Leichty, *Suitably Modern*.

9 Jeffrey, *Timepass*.

10 Sanjay Srivastava rightly suggests that this mediatized discourse that offers a binary opposition between tradition and modernity is not grounded in history. Srivastava, "Masculinity of Dis-Location."

11 For a detailed engagement with the world-class city discourse in relationship to urban India, and Delhi more specifically, see DuPont, "Dream of Delhi as a Global City," which I engage with more directly in the introduction.

12 Atluri, "Young and the Restless."

13 In India there are approximately six hundred million people under the age of thirty. The majority of this demographic already live in or will eventually move to the larger cities and towns of the nation as they come of age. "Population Enumeration Data," Census of India, 2011, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/population_enumeration.html.

14 Anand Taneja has compellingly argued for an attention to present-day Delhi as a city of *jinns* (spirits) tied to the city's Mughal past. In this book I think with the young men I met in Delhi about the city's present and future as it is imagined in and through hip hop and its evocation of urbanity and masculinity elsewhere. Taneja, *Jinneology*.

Introduction

1 In the Indian context, urban villages are preexisting agrarian settlements that have been subsumed by the expansion of the city and have absorbed migrants who have come to the city to find work and life. Urban villages, importantly, fall outside the jurisdiction of city planners due to legal precedents from the colonial era and thus take on a unique development trajectory. In the period just after independence, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) continued to use colonial *lal dora* (redlining) practices to demarcate urban villages as exceptional (from a planning and development perspective) in the city. These redlining policies continue to the present day. I discuss urban villages and their relationship to a Delhi hip hop scene in some detail in the chapters ahead. For detailed discussions of urban villages and their political economic histories, see Govinda, "'First Our Fields, Now Our Women.'" See also Mehra, "Urban Villages in Delhi."

2 Joseph Schloss writes about New York b-boys as "intense and yet totally in control" and constantly in "battle mode" in their movements across the city. I witnessed a similar self-orientation in Delhi. Schloss, *Foundation*, 70–71.

3 Stories about hip hop in India's slums have been published by national and international news conglomerates like *The Hindu*, the *Times of India*, and the BBC as well as newer online players, such as *India Times*, since 2011. Many of the publications feature short videos that offer a space for young men to showcase their talent and share their hopeful aspirations. The videos, in particular, played a role in why I wound up in Delhi doing fieldwork on hip hop in the first place. Some of the videos (and articles) are discussed in the chapters ahead as analytic fodder for thinking through the ways in which the *globally familiar* is produced and circulated.

4 While I heard skepticism from some parents, I also met parents who were very supportive of their children's creative zeal and saw an (economic) future in it (see chapter 1). The more cynical responses on the street by elders and from some of the parents I met, as Jaspal Singh (a sociolinguist I met in the "field" who played an important part in my fieldwork, my thinking, and my writing) and I discussed one day, were reminiscent of the representation of hip hop cynicism and competing conceptions of masculinity in the classic hip hop film *Wild Style*. In the film, Zoro, the protagonist, is confronted by his older brother, who has just returned to his family's apartment in the Bronx from military duty. When he enters Zoro's apartment, he sees spray cans, sketches, and tagged-up walls and says, "You're just sittin' at home doin' this shit? Stop fucking around and be a man. There ain't nothing out here for you." Zoro replies, "Yes, there is! This!" He turns his head to gaze at a graffiti-painted wall. In Nas's music video "The Genesis," which samples Zoro's dialogue with his brother, we see the expansive landscapes of the Bronx and its above-ground trains open up in front of us as we hear their voices. Charlie Ahearn, dir., *Wild Style* (Los Angeles: Rhino, 1983); Nas, "The Genesis," *Illmatic* (New York: Columbia, 1994).

5 Ghertner, *Rule by Aesthetics*. See also A. Roy, "Blockade of the World-Class City."

6 Economic liberalization marks a historic moment in India's postcolonial history. In the early 1990s, the state, in fiduciary crisis, decided to open its protected markets to foreign investment. In so doing, it ushered in a period of tumultuous change that has subsequently and profoundly reshaped the nation. Much of the contemporary scholarship on India begins with this watershed historical moment as a starting point from which to think about changing political, economic, and social conditions in the nation.

7 "Delhi Master Plan 2021," accessed February 6, 2013, http://delhi-masterplan.com/about-delhi-masterplan-mpd-2021/.

8 Llerena G. Searle uses the phrase *internationally familiar* landscapes to engage with the real estate developments that have reconfigured urban space in the NCR of Delhi since the 1990s. This phrase works well when thinking through the ways that media of and about urban life elsewhere evoke new imaginaries and, in so doing, materially shape urban landscapes. Searle, "Constructing Prestige and Elaborating the 'Professional,'" 271.

9 By evoking infrastructure in relation to the media, I draw on Rahul Mukherjee's work on infrastructural imaginaries that "lie at the intersection of structured state

policy/corporate initiatives and lived experiences/affective encounters of ordinary citizens." Mukherjee, "Jio Sparks Disruption 2.0," 177. See also Larkin, "Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure." Amit Rai makes a related argument with regard to digital media bricolage and its potential to create rupture even as it reinforces contemporary discourses of entrepreneurship in India. He argues for an attention to *jugaad*, a Hindi term he glosses as a "hack," a way to creatively make a life in a system that is otherwise exclusionary. Rai, *Jugaad Time*.

10 I borrow the term *affective economy* from Sara Ahmed, who argues for an attention to how emotions "play a crucial role in the 'surfacing' of individual and collective bodies through the affective relationships that link bodies and signs." For Ahmed, "surfacing" has everything to do with the ways in which the internet links embodied experience and circulating discourses of how and who to be in the world in ways that generate value. Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 117. *Structures of aspiration* was a phrase that was eloquently deployed by one of my anonymous reviewers to remind me to think through the ways ongoing processes of development linked to liberalization have reshaped how young people think/feel about their present and future. The term is a bit of a play on Raymond Williams's phrase *structure of feeling*, which he used to describe and analyze historical ruptures that make visible the way otherwise silenced or unattended subjects see and respond to their political, social, and economic realities. Williams pushed against Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony as a totalizing sphere of influence, offering instead a way to think about how multiple and simultaneous understandings of the past and future that float in the public sphere structure the present. In the Indian context, Sareeta Amrute uses the term *postliberalization* to describe the kinds of ambivalent multiplicities of experience, affect, and mobility—what could easily be glossed *as* structures of aspiration—that have been unleashed since the early 1990s in urban India. See Williams, *The Long Revolution*; and Amrute, "Moving Rape."

11 In her recent book, Purnima Mankekar looks at the affective links that Indian diaspora creates between the United States and India and that rely on the circulation of images, texts, and objects. She argues that these affectively charged and image-mediated links unsettle the idea of India. In this book I am less interested in unsettling the national as I am in thinking through how digital consumption and production shape gendered subjects and produce different opportunities for participation in the city. However, I suspect that by starting not with the category "India" but with masculinity and urban space, the possibility to unsettle the national might be more realizable. Mankekar, *Unsettling India*.

12 What I am marking here are the ways in which the "global turn" offered a way for anthropology to rethink its objects of study. For instance, William Mazzarella argues that the global—exemplified in the movement of media forms—creates opportunities for anthropologists to shift the increasingly tenuous burden of representation back onto those we meet in the field who are reflexively assessing and representing their relationship to a politics (and political economy) of cultural practice. Mazzarella, "Culture, Globalization, Mediation." See also Hegde, "Disciplinary Spaces and Globalization."

13 Louis Althusser coined the concept *interpellation* to explain how ideology shapes individuals into subjects with normative ideas about the world that fall in line with state and other forms of power. For Althusser, subjects are always subject to power but are also a locus of agency. See Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. In the mid-twentieth century, Theodor Adorno, having witnessed the power of mass media in Hitler's Germany, argued that mass media played a crucial role in interpellating individuals into a state-supported capitalist apparatus. For Adorno, mass media was the ultimate tool in producing docile citizen-consumers by subjecting them to the "humiliating conditions" of their lives—thereby reproducing their subordination. Adorno, *Culture Industry*, 282. Hall, working in the postcolonial Atlantic world context of the United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s, recovers Althusser's theorization of the subject who is at once a product of structure and agentic force, arguing for a more complex understanding of mass mediation that accounts for reception, contestation, and reformulation. See Hall, *Representation*; and Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular.'" Appadurai takes up a similar argument in the late 1990s, arguing for an attention to the twin axes of media and migration as way to understand the world beyond established boundaries of subjectification. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*. We might also think with Radha Hegde, who recently has argued for an attention to media consumption "from below" to think through unanticipated processes of globalization linked to media circulations. Hegde, "Disciplinary Spaces and Globalization," 60. Mazzarella offers a lovely way to think about mass media as an interpellating discourse *and* site of agentic reformulation, arguing for an attention to *encounter*. An (ethnographic) engagement with encounter—that moment where media is received, produced, interpreted, and cited—opens up the possibility of seeing the subject in relation to media circulations anew, in tension between the past and the future, between structure and agency. The *globally familiar* takes up this call and looks at digitally enabled media in the moment it is consumed/produced and the affects and embodiments that it constitutes as social performance. Mazzarella, *Mana of Mass Society*, 5–7.

14 The concept of (the) "prosumer," since critiqued as ahistorical and overly celebratory, attempted to capture this collapse in distance between what we consume as media and what we produce as digital content. See, for instance, Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.

15 While the move to think about media production and consumption simultaneously is linked to digital processes of mediation, I also borrow from Juan Flores, who argues (in a predigital moment) that Hall's invocation to engage with media as a site of contestation and negotiation often prefigures media engagement as a site of consumption rather than production. Flores encourages us to think with underground musicians and media producers in addition to those who consume the popular. Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*.

16 Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 164. See also Miller and Horst, "Introduction."

17 See, for instance, Partridge, "Occupying Black Bodies and Reconfiguring European Spaces." For a broader take on globally circulating forms of Blackness and their effects, see Clarke and Thomas, *Globalization and Race*.

18 Neves and Sarkar, "Introduction," 6.

19 For examples of powerful work on gender, queer subjectivities, and hip hop, see Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*; J. Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*; Rose, *Black Noise*; and Shange, "A King Named Nicki."

20 Much of the work on global hip hop has focused on how hip hop shapes linguistic practice and localized debates around authenticity among young people. For instance, some of the scholarship has focused on how the introduction of English or the American racial schema shapes the way young people think about their local contexts. See Alim, Pennycook, and Ibrahim, *Global Linguistic Flows*, for a good example of the kind of attentive scholarship that has been produced as hip hop has traveled across contexts. For an exception, see Pardue, "Getting an Attitude."

21 In the early twenty-first century, a wave of scholarship on the new South Asian middle class emerged as way to specify liberalization's effects in the urban centers of India (adjacent to ongoing rural or village studies). The new scholarship deployed the category "middle class" to think through the emergence of an aspiring urban consumer citizen as the driver of cultural, social, and political change in India and, indeed, in the region. The category of the "middle class" was utilized as a way to track the ways in which this growing demographic with disposable incomes and newfangled aspirations—a demographic that cut across traditional lines of caste demarcation and upended classical definitions of class in relationship to property—negotiated their subject positions. See, for example, Fernandes, *India's New Middle Class*; Leichty, *Suitably Modern*; and Brosius, *India's Middle Class*. In this book I steer clear from using the fuzzy logics of the "middle class" as an analytical category to describe the gendered and economic positions of the young men I met in Delhi. I think this category, even if useful as an index of shared consumption and desire in contemporary urban India, obfuscates the economic, social, and political lives of my interlocutors as spatially, economically, and racially marginalized subjects. As Amrute has argued, there is a lacuna in the literature of South Asia regarding the "ill-defined place of urban and peri-urban working classes in everyday life." Amrute, "Moving Rape," 337. See also Agarwala, "From Work to Welfare."

22 For examples of historical and anthropological scholarship on "Indian," "Hindu," and "South Asian" masculinities (which are often conflated), see McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Krishnaswamy, *Effeminism*; Alter, *The Wrestler's Body*; Alter, *Moral Materialism*; and Hansen, *Wages of Violence*.

23 For contemporary scholarship on masculinity in postliberalization India, see Nakassis, "Youth Masculinity"; Osella and Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*; Srivastava, "The Masculinity of Dis-Location"; Srivastava, "Modi-Masculinity"; and Dwyer and Pinney, *Pleasure and the Nation*.

24 The notable exception is Sanjay Srivastava's work, which, while it mobilizes the category of middle class to engage with masculinity and sexuality in Delhi, also punctures its categorical sameness. See, for instance, his discussions of working-class male same-sex sexual relations—where he credits Stacy Pigg for reminding him that working-class subjectivities mediate same-sex intimacies. Srivastava, "Semen, History, Desire, and Theory."

25 The limited (and relevant) scholarship on working-class (heterosexual) masculinities in urban India has offered insights into how young working-class men are

directed toward particular forms of labor, say, in construction or security, while young women from similar backgrounds find themselves in "pink collar" service work. See, for instance, Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, "Circular Migration and the Spaces of Cultural Assertion"; Roychowdhury, "'The Delhi Gang Rape'"; and Ramamurthy, "Why Is Buying a Madras Cotton Shirt a Political Act?" In chapter 3, I discuss how working-class masculinities are shaped as a result of the new opportunities for work that emerge in India's burgeoning creative and culture industries.

26 I have found it productive to think with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope as it is picked up by media and linguistic anthropologists alike. For Bakhtin, chronotopes are narrative devices that locate the relationship between otherwise seemingly disparate times, spaces, and histories. Kathryn Hardy argues for an attention to chronotopes "as mass mediated representations of space allow images and sounds of places that do not otherwise exist to emerge into social imaginaries . . . [and] produce sketches of futures and pasts alike." Hardy, "Introduction," 7. Asif Agha extends the chronotope as a traveling space-time configuration to argue for its capacity to produce subjects. He argues, "A chronotopic depiction formulates a sketch of personhood in time and place." Agha, "Recombinant Selves in Mass Mediated Spacetime," 321. For the young men I got to know in Delhi, space-times elsewhere and otherwise (hip hop in 1990s New York, for instance) allowed them to produce a different understanding and representation of the space-time they inhabited in Delhi as well as fashion a different subject position.

27 I argue that an ethnographic engagement with mediatized masculinities in Delhi also opens up the way to see how notions of racial and ethnic difference play out in relationship to gender formation in Delhi as it relates to an urban American past and present. Formulations of gendered difference in contemporary Delhi draw from India's colonial history, which used precolonial caste and religious logics to differentiate racialized, gendered types according to laboring needs so that men from some groups were discursively produced as virile and martial while others were seen as effeminate and fit for cognitive labor. These systems of classification prevail in South Asia and, in the experiences of the young men I met in Delhi, become enmeshed with the processes of racialization in the United States (and elsewhere) that are depicted in circulating media forms. In this sense, I am writing against accounts that seek to essentialize a regional "South Asian" masculinity or masculinities. Rather, I push for an attention to the ways in which masculinity coarticulates with race, caste, ethnicity, and class at different spatiotemporal scales. For an example of "South Asian masculinities literature," see Chakraborty, "Mapping South Asian Masculinities." To engage with the ways in which ethnicity, race, and caste shape male experiences in Delhi, I draw from scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's conceptualization of intersectionality. See Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins." By evoking intersectionality, I do not wish to suggest that preformulated categories of experience (such as caste, race, class) shape lives. I think with intersectionality, rather, to signal an attentiveness to multiplicity of sociohistoric factors that shape how subjects are made and make themselves and the ways in which these factors come together, in motion, in their performative self-representations in space. Here I draw from Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar, who argue that

to deploy intersectionality as a useful analytic in contexts outside the United States requires "that we reconceptualize difference as constituted and (re)configured in relation to place-specific struggles over rights, resources, social practices, and relationships." Swarr and Nagar, "Dismantling Assumptions," 514. See also the work of Jasbir Puar, who suggests that recent intersectional approaches attempt to "still" the otherwise disruptive force of perpetual motion that an explicit deployment of a multiplicity of subject positions creates. Instead she deploys the Deleuzian-inspired method-theory of assemblage to get at the kinds of fluid, ephemeral, and performative subjectivities that circulate in the present moment. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

28 *Cipha* is a hip hop term that indexes the improvisational space-time for sharing experience and demonstrating skills. See Spady, Meghelli, and Alim, *Tha Global Cipha*. I draw from scholarship on urbanity and urban infrastructure in South Asia that calls for an approach to the city that takes as its starting point the kinds of popular understandings that emerge from the street. See Chattopadyay, *Unlearning the City*, which pushes for an attention to the conjunctural spaces "where pleasure and politics might come together to create performative anchors and enlarge the imagination of public space" (xxi).

29 Larkin, *Signal and Noise*, 125–26.

30 Here I am thinking with Setha Low, who argues for an attention to the person as a "mobile spatial field—a spatio-temporal unit with feelings, thoughts, preferences, and intentions" so we might see place differently, from the perspective of people who socially create the spaces they inhabit. Low, "Claiming Space for an Engaged Anthropology," 393.

31 The idea (and heuristic) of the global city was originally developed by sociologist Saskia Sassen, whose careful scholarship revealed how certain cities—New York, London, Tokyo—emerged as key nodes in the circulation of finance capital in the post–Bretton Woods era. For Sassen, the global city is marked not only by capital's influx and the development of links between global cities but by the kinds of global scalings that produce uneven and unexpected laboring opportunities and social subjects. Sassen, *Global City*. The world-class city, in contrast, is a popular imagistic discourse of urban comparison used to drive development initiatives in India and elsewhere. See A. Roy, "Blockade of the World-Class City"; Brosius, *India's Middle Class*.

32 See, for instance, *Demonic Grounds*, Katherine McKittrick's intersectional work on gendered geographies that argues for an attention to place as dialectically constituted through intersections of subjectivity. In their introduction to *Culture, Power, Place*, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argue for an attention to "social and political processes of place making conceived less as a matter of ideas than of embodied practices" (6).

33 Ananya Roy discusses this either/or split in urban studies—where the global city is imagined as the creation of the elite while the megacity is seen as the inheritance of the urban poor (and the problem for developmentalists to solve)—in her article on subaltern urbanism. For Roy, the term *subaltern urbanism* suggests a different orientation to the city, one that starts from the bottom up and accounts for the self-representational projects that imagine the "slum" "as a terrain of inhabitation, live-

lihood and politics." Roy uses subaltern, a Gramscian concept that has a particular intellectual history in South Asia, as a means to interrogate dominant epistemologies and methodologies in urban studies that privilege simple binaries. The *globally familiar* recognizes the digital popular culture as a site where an aestheticized subaltern urbanism can be imagined as global. A. Roy, "Slumdog Cities," 224. For an example of research on Delhi that places an emphasis on the dilemmas of the megacity and the disconnect of the urban poor, see Bhan, "'This Is No Longer the City I Once Knew.'"

34 For a popular account of how the elite/subaltern division is represented, see Dasgupta, *Capital*. For a scholarly account, see Brosius, *India's Middle Class*. Writing about a decade ago, Brosius explains that "the lower middle class and the urban poor (in Delhi) are at the receiving end of globalization and urbanization" and suggests a focus on the "new upper middle classes and Indian diaspora to engage with the mediatized concept of world-class in Delhi" (ii). For a critique of this sort of tendency to describe Asian cities in terms of their sharp schisms, see Neves and Sarkar, "Introduction." For an exception to this sort of binaried approach, see Srivastava's exploration of Delhi and "the ties that bind the city, simultaneously, as they appear to produce self-contained realms." Srivastava, *Entangled Urbanism*, 7.

35 Sundaram, *Pirate Modernity*, 5.

36 Ortner describes dark anthropology as an anthropology that focuses on the "harsh dimensions of social life" and the totalizing effects of governmentality. Ortner, "Dark Anthropology and Its Others," 47. Dean argues that digital communications technology pushes us to perform our politics in ways that channel and tame its affects so that we become more deeply ensconced in capitalism. Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*.

37 *Racial capitalism* is a term coined by Cedric Robinson to complexify Karl Marx's universalizing history of capital. Robinson argued that as capitalism emerged in Europe and spread across the world, it did not break from the feudal order that supposedly preceded it but used its logics to reproduce a racialized and class hierarchy during colonial and imperial expansions that exist to the present day. Robinson, *Black Marxism*. Hip hop artists have, since the early days of its practice in New York, pointed out the racial underpinnings of capitalism and subverted its exclusionary logics to produce (aesthetic) value. In so doing they have, ironically, contributed to its project. Yet these contributions to capital cannot be seen as totalizing, as hip hop also offers a possibility for embodied freedom.

38 I reference Abu-Lughod's germinal article on resistance as a diagnostic of power rather than a subversion of it. Abu-Lughod, "Romance of Resistance."

39 For recent engagements with youth, aspiration, and gendered becoming, see Chua, *In Pursuit of the Good Life*; Nakassis, *Doing Style*.

40 Lukose, *Liberalization's Children*; Chua, *In Pursuit of the Good Life*; Nakassis, *Doing Style*; Sancho, *Youth, Class and Education in Urban India*.

41 Osella and Osella, *Men and Masculinities*; Dickey, *Cinema and the Urban Poor in South India*.

42 Desai-Stephens, "Singing through the Screen."

43 Snighda Poonam's recent book offers a snapshot of the youthful structures of aspiration linked to India's emergent digital infrastructures. However, while its ethnographic material is captivating, it does not theorize the digital (or differentiated aspiration) in any meaningful way. Poonam, *Dreamers*.

44 Manuel, *Cassette Culture*. See also Liang, "Porous Legalities and Avenues of Participation"; and Udupa and McDowell, "Introduction."

45 "India: Number of Facebook Users," Statista, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/.

46 Mukherjee, "Jio Sparks Disruption."

47 Poonam, *Dreamers*.

48 Since 2012 there has been an explosion of YouTube-hosted media produced in India. For instance, All India Bakchod (AIB), a comedy collective out of Mumbai, started broadcasting their skits on YouTube. By 2018 they had more than three million subscribers to their YouTube channel before they stopped producing new work as a result of sexual harassment allegations.

49 For a discussion of networked media consumption, see Deuze, "Participation, Remediation, Bricolage." See also Uricchio, "Peer-to-Peer Communities." Networked media consumption pushes against the analytic "mass media" that suggests a singular, perhaps national, public. Rather, it asks us to think about the astonishing variety of user-generated and mass media content that circulates in and through networked publics such as algorithmically curated platforms like YouTube. The *globally familiar* picks up on these circulations and pushes us to think about the effects of networked media consumption and production, specifically on the lives of young working-class men living in Delhi.

50 In "Youth Masculinity," Constantine Nakassis rightly argues that debates in globalization studies have often framed the local in relationship to an amorphous global in ways that do not account for the complexities of how new meaning is made that exceeds both constructs. In "Global Situation," Anna Tsing argues against the binary of local places and global forces and suggests that we should think instead of place-making and force-making projects as at once global and local.

51 Vinay Gidwani and K. Sivaramakrishnan discuss how consumption becomes a site by which young Dalit and tribal men can reject caste hierarchies. Consuming and producing hip hop allowed the young men in the margins of Delhi to recognize and recalibrate their relationship to localized and global forms of hierarchical difference. Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, "Circular Migration and the Spaces of Cultural Assertion." Halifu Ousumare discusses how hip hop offers a way to recognize and articulate what she describes as *connective marginalization*, a way to recognize shared conditions of impossibility across difference and thus create new relations. Ousumare, "Beat Streets in the Global Hood." I discuss Ousumare's work in detail in chapter 6.

52 See, for instance, *Signal and Noise*, Larkin's account of Hindi cinema in northern Nigeria. See also Gopinath, "Bollywood Spectacles," in which the author shows how the increasing popularity of Bollywood among American audiences in the post-9/11 era signals the ways in which "popular culture becomes the contested terrain for consolidating ideologies of nation, race, gender, and sexuality" (160).

53 *Aam Aadmi*, "ordinary man," is a term coined by and for a political party that emerged in Delhi in late 2012. The party has since come to national prominence. Jay's play on the term where he referred to himself as a strange man was something I heard repeated by several young people in the scene, who felt the politics of the Aam Aadmi (or the Congress and BJP, for that matter) had very little to do with them or their families.

54 For a US history of hip hop, see Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*; and Rose, *Black Noise*. For a global history, see Spady, Meghelli, and Alim, *Tha Global Cipha*.

55 Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 6.

56 In "Linguistic Techniques of the Self," which focuses on on Brazilian MCs and their claims to American Black subjectivity, Jennifer Roth-Gordon pushes for an engagement with linguistic refashionings of racial subjectivity. In this book, I am interested in the multimodal refashionings of gender, race, ethnicity, caste, and class in Delhi.

57 To think of hip hop and media production as entrepreneurial closely aligns with the Modi-era Make in India, Shining India, and jugaad discourse that has sought to mobilize the enormous youth demographic in the country to fuel economic growth and sidestep the social upheaval that would undoubtedly come with youth unemployment. Rai, *Jugaad Time*; Poonam, *Dreamers*.

58 I am referring to Lauren Berlant's well-cited concept of cruel optimism, which, to quickly gloss, suggests that we often want what will do us harm. Ambivalent optimism suggests a kind of bittersweet knowing that the objects or subjects of our desire might provide us something that we need—recognition, relationship, connection—but will also, ultimately, fail to fulfill their full promise. Ambivalent optimism is necessarily aware of its classed, racialized, and gendered affective and material position. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*.

59 *Capitalist realism* is a term Mark Fisher coined to describe the feeling that there is no alternative but to work within capitalism's framework and no future outside it. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*.

60 See, for instance, Deuze, "Participation, Remediation, Bricolage"; and Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.

61 The (transnational) hashtag #dmforcollab exploded in the Delhi scene (and across India) in 2016, a couple of years after I left the city. The hashtag makes explicit the aspiration that images or videos one posts can lead to unexpected collabs—opportunities to make with others but also, more implicitly, unexpected sexual encounters. While this hashtag had yet to come into being when I lived in Delhi from 2012 to 2014, its prelinguistic affect was palpable.

62 Marwick, "Instafame."

63 Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 3.

64 For a discussion on the analytical purchase of citation as a way to understand social performativity and media's role in shaping particular deployments of concept, gesture, and so on, see Nakassis, *Doing Style*.

65 Lampert, "Imitation," 380. See also *The Gay Archipelago* for Tom Boellstorf's discussion of dubbing culture as a way to understand the familiar or "not quite." Dubbing, where a linguistic concept moves from one sociocultural context to another but is rendered differently in its usage, bears a resemblance to how I am conceptualizing

the (globally) familiar. I extend the linguistic focus of dubbing, however, to think about how images and sounds in the digital age also become sites of translation.

66 There has been a growing interest in the ways that media forms, as they connect disparate contexts, create persistent relations through the migration and adoption of linguistic concepts, what Agha has called enregisterment. Media-enabled enregisterment, when accompanied by the potential for commodification, is what Agha has called processes of mediatization and is a very relevant concept to think with when we engage with the *globally familiar*. Agha, "Meet Mediatization"; Agha, *Language and Social Relations*.

67 For an engagement with "street art," social media, and processes of commodification, see Molnár, "Street Art and the Changing Urban Public Sphere."

68 James G. Spady, "Looplinking the Outlawz to the History of Mass Based Black Cultural Consciousness in the 21st Century," *Philadelphia New Observer*, December 13, 2000, 16.

69 Jaffa in Rose, *Black Noise*, 52–56.

70 Ismaiel-Wendt and Stemmler, "Playing the Translations."

71 Chang, "It's a Hip-Hop World," 60.

72 The presentation is now a book chapter. See Dattatreyan, "Small Frame Politics."

73 Spady, Meghelli, and Alim, *Tha Global Cipha*; Dattatreyan, "Critical Hip Hop Cinema." See also Jesse Shipley's film, *Living the Hiplife* (New York: Third World Newsreel, 2007).

74 I am thinking with David Graeber, who discusses how economic, social, and cultural value are inextricably entangled with one another, even if economics in the market fundamentalist view of contemporary capitalism says otherwise. What we come to understand as valuable constructs the world we live in and how we inhabit it. Graeber, *Towards an Anthropological Theory of Value*.

75 Rai, *Jugaad Time*.

76 Willis, *Learning to Labour*.

1. Friendship and Romance

1 A barsati is a top-floor apartment in a building consisting of three to four flats. It usually has a large outdoor space and a very small, sheltered indoor space. A barsati, while I was living in Delhi, was spoken of as fashionable; it was the accommodation of choice for cool, young urban professionals and creatives. There was also a sense of nostalgia regarding barsatis among well-educated, well-to-do Delhiites in their late twenties and early thirties: a feeling that their time as spaces of refuge, creativity, and alternate possibility had already passed. I would hear that "just a few years ago" one could find a barsati for under 10,000 rupees a month. Now, they would say, you cannot find one for under 15,000 rupees.

2 Ahearn, *Invitations to Love*.

3 Manuel Castells theorizes "portfolios of sociality," the potential for online relationships to translate into offline relationships and the offline relationships to continue in perpetuity long after face-to-face contact ceases to be a possibility. Castells, *Rise of the Network Society*.