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"RAPPING ABOUT AUTHENTICITY": EXPLORING THE DIFFERENCES IN
PERCEPTIONS OF "AUTHENTICITY" IN RAP MUSIC BY CONSUMERS

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my love, my soul mate, Tamika Wright. Your quiet support during this process was a motivating factor in my completing this project. I will always love you. To my mother, Carolyn Jenkins. Only a mother can guide children from a far. Thanks for your listening and supportive ears when times got tough. There is a reason why I chose to defend on December 1st. To my grandmother and grandfather, Mary and Jesse Wright, you have always supported me in everything I've done. I really appreciate and love you both. To my children, Lexie and Tyler Wright. Words can't express how much your love and support has inspired me to complete this journey and reach my goals.

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Abstract

Historically, social scientists have not only marginalized rap music as a viable unit of scholarly analysis, but failed at attempts to understand the thoughts and actions of rap music consumers. This study analyzes the connection between rap music's (and the artists') authenticity and how those perceptions of authenticity affect music consumers' decision making process, thus providing a possible explanation as to why music fans purchase rap music. The goal of this research was to see if the reasons rap music fans provide explaining the rationale behind their purchases match the images and perceptions presumably held by the general public about rap music.

A snowball sample was used to survey a total of 30 rap music "experts." The findings from this study indicate the concept of authenticity is very important in validating not only rap music, but rap artist, rap music fans, and hip hop culture as a whole. The findings from this study provide empirical evidence supporting the importance of authenticity as a construct and the use of rap music as a unit of scholarly research analysis. By justifying the importance of authenticity to rap music and hip hop culture, this research proposes that authenticity may well

be used as a means to maintain existing relationships with a fan-base and as a marketing tool used by record companies to attract new fans and generate album sales.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Music can be a powerful influence in people's lives, serving as a background for everything from car rides to social gatherings and providing views about the social world through the lens of artists' performances. Studies of popular music by Lipsitz (1994) and Bennett (1999) also suggest that it may act as a device for building unity within and across distressed populations. Popular music may represent the social experiences of those in identifiable communities but also it transcends those communities' boundaries, capturing the attention of people from other social locations. As a musical genre rap music and hip-hop presumably represents the contemporary urban generation. Rap's driving beats, vivid lyrical depictions of poverty stricken inner city life and tales of hope and prosperity provide narratives of the trials and triumphs of young urban poor. As Chuck D (1999: 8) of the rap group Public Enemy suggests, "[rap] is the antithesis of country music, but the two do pretty much the same thing - reflect upon their environments with stories and statements."

Most researchers (Bennett 2001; Lipsitz 1994; Merriman and Merria 1964) focus on music as a universal language; for

example, by interpreting musical scores. An alternative more comprehensive approach “treats music as a functioning part of human culture and as an integral part of the wider whole” (Merriman and Merria 1964:3). With this approach researchers examine: a) the role of music in culture, b) its functions and meanings in the organization of cultural groups, and c) musical origins and its expression of cultural values, beliefs, worldviews, and behavior (Maultsby 1996).

Music is generally recognized as an important component of contemporary African American culture. Music reflects social and cultural organization by translating life experiences into sound and providing opportunities for community members to represent the experiences of their marginalized status within society (Maultsby 1996). Emerging from inner city neighborhoods onto the music scene in the late 1970s (Powell 1991), rap music is often assumed to reflect the concerns and aspirations of urban black youth of the late 20th century.

Rationale

By the 1990s, the rap genre had a significant mainstream audience and associated commercial success, so the impact of commodification on rap music and hip hop culture should be explored. Through the process of commodification, rap music and

hip hop culture gained “popular” appeal, reaching out to populations beyond, black inner city youth. As rap music became commodified, that is, consumed and purchased by mainstream segments of society; questions of rap music’s authenticity began to surface. The time period in which questions of rap music’s authenticity emerged are considered, i.e., did the question of authenticity surface as the music increased in popularity (around 1990) or was it present from the beginning when its primary audience was black youth from the inner city. Theory and research based in cultural studies and sociology provides a basis for this project.

Purpose and Questions

The notion of authenticity in relation to rap music is the focus of this research. Examples of questions that are addressed are: what does authenticity mean to the fan; who “determines” what is authentic in rap music (the artists, listeners, or critics); why is authenticity important (e.g., validation of the artists’ existence and the message contained and articulated in the music; increased record sales); and who are the people raising questions about rap music’s authenticity.

Rap and Hip Hop

People need to understand that there is a difference between rap and hip-hop. Rap (ping) is an art form...it must be perfected and treated as a craft in order to be recognized as one of the greats. Hip-hop is a culture...a way of life...part of an individual's daily routine. Don't get the two confused...not only can you not have rap without hip hop...but you must realize that there is power in hip hop and the vehicle for social, group, and collective movement is rap (ping). Rapping is a call to action. KRSOne: VH-1 Hip Hop Honors 2006.

Rap music and hip-hop are terms that are often used interchangeably, creating some confusion. While rapping involves the use of lyrics, combined in a rhyming pattern across a musical terrain, hip-hop is a mosaic of jazz, rhythm and blues, and rap music (Hall 1998). The term hip hop describes an entire culture that includes rap music, break dancing, writing (graffiti and art), dress, and speech (Dalzall 1996; Smitherman 1997). Hip hop "headz" (Cutler 2003) or followers of hip hop similarly say the culture is composed of "four pillars": writing (graffiti), b-boying (breakin), DJing, and MCing. DJing is the art of mixing records, especially the practice of "scratching" or manually reversing the direction of the record on the turntable with the needle in place, providing a musical backdrop for the MC ("master of ceremonies" or "microphone controller"). The MC performs his or her rap on top of the rhythm supplied by the DJ. The art of MCing is often called "rhyming" and involves

the performance of pre-scripted lyrics or the spontaneous creation of music, called "free-styling." Rap music is a product of hip hop culture (Cutler 2003).

Hip hop incorporates samples, segments from previously recorded records, from rhythm and blues songs, as well as lyrical excerpts from political leaders such as Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X, as "texts of freedom," i.e., inspirational lyrics presumably designed to positively motivate black youth. These "texts of freedom" were like inspirational self-help guides for black youth. The interweaving of individual and group experience in lyrics was prevalent in early singles such as "The Message" (1982) by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (Clay 2003). "The Message" is often identified as the proverbial "song that put rap music on the mainstream music map," due to its nationwide airplay.

Another characteristic was its reflection of life in urban ghettos. Lead Melle Mel's vivid depiction of ghetto life provided an example of "authentic street culture" that mirrored the experiences of the black youth who became listeners. In "The Message," Melle Mel described poverty, poor living conditions, broken homes, and drug addiction. Such depictions of ghetto life lead to Gilroy's (1997:85) claim that hip-hop is the "very

blackest culture – one that provides the scale on which all others can be evaluated.”

The emergence of rap music coincided with changes occurring within American society. The late 1970s marked the end of a two decade long urban exodus for blacks in the United States; a time when the black middle class moved out of segregated urban communities. As middle class blacks moved out of the inner cities, drugs became more prevalent in those areas. The evolution of rap coincided with the beginning of a period Clay (2003:1348) depicted as one of “deindustrialization, economic restructuring and a resurgence of racism.” Rap music in cities such as New York was listened to by minority youth with poor educations and limited job opportunities, offering them both hope in messages and the possibility of becoming successful rappers themselves. Reflecting the influx of drugs and economic restructuring in black neighborhoods, these stories were ones that were increasingly “defined by the hood, the block, or the corner” (George 1999:41).

Despite rap’s popularity, social scientists, including sociologists, have not fully utilized the data presented them by the artists who produced firsthand accounts of urban street life nor those who consume this art form. The studies analyzing rap are for the most part qualitative and theoretical, focusing on

the role of rap music in popular culture (Fenster 1995; Martinez 1997) and its use as a form of resistance (Berry 1994; Martinez 1993; Rose 1991). Martinez (1997) and Rose (1991) identify a “golden age” of rap and suggest that since then rap’s more critical voices have been marginalized. While these studies provide useful insight into the world of rap music and hip hop, studies using multiracial samples or those designed to ask specific questions focusing on the attitudes of rap’s audience have not been conducted (Sullivan 2003).

Epstein, Pratto, and Skipper (1990) analyzed the relationship between behavior problems and preference for rap and heavy metal music. They found that preference for heavy metal and rap was highly correlated with race: 96% of those who preferred heavy metal were white, and 98% of those who preferred rap were black. Individuals who indicated they had no musical preference did not display behavior problems.

Tyson (2005) and Berry (1994) focused on young people’s opinions and perceptions of rap music. Berry’s (1994) study supported the belief that rap helps low income African American youth develop empowering beliefs by connecting with their culture and developing positive identities. Tyson’s (2005) study provides insight into how disadvantaged minority populations perceive how many images presented in rap music, i.e., drugs,

crime, and explicit sexual imagery, may affect their lives and the broader community.

A detailed study of rap's effect on adolescents was conducted by Kuwahara (1992) who found that 13.3% of black college students listened to rap all the time, and 29.7% listened to rap often. Black males had a stronger preference for rap than black females. Drawing on qualitative responses from black students, Kuwahara argued that rap music and the styles of dance associated with it served as forms of resistance to the dominant culture. About half (51.6%) of the white male students and over two-thirds (68.9%) of the white females seldom or never listened to rap. When the two groups were compared, white students were less knowledgeable of rap acts regardless of their preference for rap music. Whites and blacks gave similar reasons for listening to rap with both groups citing the beat first and the message second. Whether these findings hold true today is a question as rap's popularity has increased significantly among whites since 1992 (Bennett 1999; Thompson and Brown 2002).

Stephens and Wright (2000) proposed that rap lyrics could provide data for sociologists interested in analyzing the lived experiences of urban Americans. Examination of rap music lyrics may further understanding of the effects of growing up in the ghetto on black youth. Researchers could investigate the

influence of rap music on both urban and suburban American audiences and the relationship between rap music and “social problems” (Stephens and Wright 2000). Rap lyrics are a source of data on perceptions of controversial subjects such as sexuality, sexism, racism, poverty, disenfranchisement, and criminality. Early rappers contended that their aim was to educate listeners (Henderson 1996) and spark social change (Powell 1991). In sum, rap music is a source of data on urban life and its analysis could possibly be used to stimulate social policy changes. Yet, rap music lyrics and the personal narratives told by rappers are controversial. Some (Berry 1990; Keyes 1991, 1992; Clay 2003) argue rap music represents a display of deviant/criminal, violent, and misogynistic behavior and contributes to social problems. Others (Rose 1994; Stephens 1996) suggest that rappers’ lyrics are just a reflection of their lived experiences – an extension of the frustrations of the lived experiences of African Americans, specifically men, in contemporary society.

Subgenres

Analysis of rap music requires recognition of its subgenres. Gangsta rap contains graphic and derogatory language, advocates violence, and the use and distribution of drugs. The lyrics

include many obscenities and derogatory depictions of women (Abrams 2000). Political rappers' lyrics focus on black power struggles, criticizing the police, government, and "organized establishments." Commercial/pop rap is a mainstream form that is less negative both in the language used and the messages (Hall 1998). Whatever the subgenre, the impact of rap music and hip-hop culture on the lives of the listening public and African Americans in particular, is worthy of social analysis.

Authenticity

An increasingly frequent question is whether rap music is an authentic representation of life in poor black urban neighborhoods. The goal of this project is to understand the process by which claims of authenticity emerged, the challenges to the claims, and the usefulness of such claims.

Chapter Summary

This project explores perceptions of authenticity in rap music of those who consume the music. Rap music has been both the center of controversy and praised for its "real" tales of the black experience. Rap music and hip hop culture deserve further examination.

Overview of Remaining Chapters

The remainder of this dissertation is organized in four chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 review relevant literature and present both theoretical and empirical issues associated with the analysis of rap music and the perceptions rap music listeners have of authenticity. The history of rap music and hip hop culture is presented, along with an analysis of the cultural significance of rap music and hip hop culture. Identity issues of those individuals who see themselves as active participants in and with rap music and hip hop culture will also be examined. How authenticity is defined, perceived, and understood by fans of rap music and hip hop culture is explored. Within the literature authenticity is defined as an accurate, “real-life” representation of life in poor black urban neighborhoods. The goal is to gain a better understanding of when claims of authenticity (keeping it real) are invoked and contested by fans of rap music, e.g., based on social location and/or attempts to gain credibility.

Chapter 4 details the process used to collect data, i.e., how the survey questionnaire was designed; how variables were identified and operationalized; how the sample for the study was obtained, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 5 presents the findings. Descriptive data are presented along with results

from the hypotheses tests run on the data. Chapter 6 provides a summary of the project and examines the implications the commodification of rap music has on the question of the music's authenticity. Focus is on individuals' understanding of social images associated with rap music and hip hop culture and how those images, once internalized by those who consume the music and culture, may affect their identities. Future research directions are suggested.

Chapter 2

Rap Music and Hip Hop in Context

This chapter explores literature bearing on the analysis of rap music and hip hop culture. The chapter first explores the historical evolution of rap music, the rap musical genre, and hip hop culture; then, the cultural significance of rap music and hip hop culture.

The Historical Evolution of Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture¹

The historical evolution of rap music and hip hop culture are discussed below. The discussion is divided into two sections: the spatial and territorial context of rap music and hip hop culture and the evolution of the rap music genre and hip hop culture.

Spatial/Territorial Context

Rap music is an American minority creation that emerged about 30 years ago and has evolved into what some call the most popular music genre in America (Rhodes 1993). The musical origins of rap have been traced back to the West African professional singers/storytellers known as Griots and Jamaican

¹ See Appendix C for Rap Music / Hip Hop Evolutionary timeline.

disc jockeys (DJs) who talked over the music they played. This style was developed in Jamaican dancehalls and was representative of ghetto life in Jamaica (Rhodes 1993).

Rap and hip-hop culture are intertwined. Hip hop culture rose out of the gang-dominated street culture, and aspects of the gangs are defining features of hip hop – particularly territorialism and the battling tradition. As hip hop evolved in the 1970s, prominent DJs claimed specific territories as their own, forming “crews,” comprised of the four essential elements of hip hop: DJing, rapping, B-boying, (e.g., hip hop/break dancers), and graffiti (or tagging). The crews would “battle”, or compete in your skilled area, with other crews for territorial supremacy.

The tagging of territory with graffiti marking one’s area and tagging rivals’ territories to defile them is a very important aspect of hip hop culture and a common link to street gangs. Graffiti artists aren’t gang affiliated per se, but do create tags as identifying territorial markers and or crew logos. Battle dances were refined as an alternative to violence, though they were sometimes only a prelude to it (Fricke and Ahearn 2002). Well known territorial MC battles, i.e. Mc Shan (Queens Borough) v KRS-One (Bronx); Kool Moe D (Manhattan) v L.L. Cool J (Queens Borough); and more recently Nas (Queens Borough) v Jay-Z

(Brooklyn), established a neighborhood or territorial context to rap music.

Rap music can be traced back to specific locations, such as the ghettos of New York City, in particular the South Bronx (Fricke and Ahearn 2002; Chang 2005). During the 1970s and 1980s, a large percentage of African American youths there were unemployed and impoverished (Rhodes 1993). Rap music lyrics reflected this ghetto background of hardship, drugs and gang related violence.

The Evolution of the Rap Music Genre and Hip Hop Culture

One DJ pioneer was Kool Herc (Clive Campbell), who started spinning records in 1973 in the Bronx, New York. Kool Herc is now regarded as one of the founders of hip-hop. Kool Herc used break beats, non-instrumental percussion sections of a track, spun back to back. The technique was given the name "Merry-Go-Round" and other DJs began to adopt it. He is credited with being one of the first to use two turntables to quickly mix and fade one song into another (Cross 1993; Fricke and Ahearn 2002; Chang 2005).

As the mixing and scratching art form evolved, vocals were added, which started with a call and response game between the DJ and the audience and progressed into a "rap" or talking

phrases by the DJs. With the creation of a MC (master of ceremonies; microphone controller) DJs started to collaborate with MCs who rapped over the sampled music. These DJs performed in front of live audiences rather than in studios (Chang 2005). At the same time DJing evolved and its popularity increased in the Bronx, it spread into areas such as Harlem, Queens, and Brooklyn.

Another DJ pioneer who made a significant contribution to the evolution of rap music and hip-hop culture was Bronx, New York native Afrika Bambaataa. Afrika, who has worked with a wide array of artists from other genres, e.g., James Brown, Johnny Rotten and UB40, played a significant role in the 1979 Sugar Hill Gang release "Rappers Delight". This album is generally identified as the first serious attempt to achieve a commercially successful rap record. Other tracks for which Afrika Bambaataa collaborated were: "The Breaks" (1980) by Kurtis Blow; "Planet Rock" (1982) which he recorded with the Soul Sonic Force and "Looking for the Perfect Beat" (1982). In addition to his musical creations, Afrika Bambaataa tried to play a role in the direction of the hip hop community when he created the Zulu Nation and Organization, whose stated mission was to bring peace to the hip hop community.

Other recognized rap pioneers from New York who were instrumental in the emergence of the genre were (Fricke and Ahearn 2002):

- Blondie, a punk rock/new wave band whose 1980 release, "Rapture," was one of the earliest songs containing elements of rap vocals to reach number one in America.
- African Americans Sylvia and Joe Robinson founded Sugarhill Records in 1979. Along with "Rappers Delight," other rap classics were released and distributed on that label.
- Grandmaster Flash was so nicknamed due to his speed on the turntable. He formed the group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five which included himself, "Cowboy" Keith Wiggins, GrandMaster Melle Mel (Melvin Glover), Kid Creole (Nathaniel Glover), Duke Bootee (Ed Fletcher), and Raheim (Guy Todd Williams).
- Harlem native, Kurtis Blow, was one of the first rappers to be managed by an emerging rap mogul, Russell Simmons, an African American who formed a company called Rush Management. Blow was the first rap artist signed to Mercury records in 1979. His single "The Breaks" became a major hit in 1980.
- Russell Simmons was also instrumental in the formation of Run DMC, arguably one of the most successful rap groups. Comprised of Russell's brother, Run (Joseph Simmons), DMC (Darryl McDaniels), and DJ Jam Master J, the group is widely recognized

within the music industry for making rap music mainstream and giving the genre crossover appeal. With hits like "The King of Rock," "Walk this Way," "Raising Hell," "It's Like That," and "Hard Times," Run DMC merged ghetto music with rock, collaborating with rock icons Aerosmith and heavy metal guitarist Eddie Martinez.

During the 1980s, hip-hop began to diversify and develop into a more complex form. At the same time, rap music's boundaries expanded beyond the five boroughs of New York and more sophisticated musical techniques were used, including electronic recordings. By the late 1980s a number of new hip-hop styles and subgenres began appearing. Hip-hop artists collaborated with rock bands and the subgenres identified earlier were developed, that is, political and gangsta rap, and emerged artists such as (Fricke and Ahearn 2002):

- Public Enemy brought another aspect to the rap musical format by focusing on cultural and political issues facing the black community and inner city urban dwellers in particular. Their 1988 album *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* covered issues such as economic oppression, racial inequality, and drug abuse in the black community. In 1990, their album *Fear of a Black Planet* hit the US top 10 (Light and Linn 1990).

- Compton, California based group NWA (Niggaz With Attitudes), formed in 1987 and was comprised of Eric 'Easy-E' Wright, Ice Cube (Oshea Jackson), and Dr. Dre (Andre Young). Their second album *Straight Outta Compton* (1988) contained the track "Fuck the Police," which drew attention nationwide (Allen 1993). Ice Cube split from NWA and began a solo career. His album *Amerikkka's Most Wanted* (1990) produced hits like "Dead Homiez," "Kill at Will," and "The Product." Dr. Dre also went on to experience solo success. His album, *The Chronic* (1992), was one of the first rap albums to go platinum, selling over 1 million units (Tyrangiel 2001).

By the mid 1990s, gangsta rap was arguably the preferred subgenre of rap. Artists like Snoop Doggy Dogg, Tupac, Eminem, Notorious BIG and others sold millions of records. Samuels (2004) asserts that data collected by *Billboard Magazine's* "soundscan" system, designed to track record sales by barcode scanning suggested that by the mid-1990s over 75% of hip hop record buyers were young and white. Hip-hop had become popular and mainstream.

Jay-Z's *Hard Knock Life* album reached the number one position in the United States for five weeks in 1998 (Birchmeier 2007). Other artists/bands such as Ice T, Will Smith, and the Fugees also achieved great chart success. New York's Mary J Blige was

proclaimed to be the queen of hip hop (soul) by some with her 1992 album release *What's the 411?* That included hits like "You Remind Me," "Real Love," "Love no Limit" and others (Larkin 1998). As evidence of the phenomenal success of rap in 1996, Cleveland based rap group Bone Thugs N Harmony tied the Beatles' 32-year-old record for the fastest rising single with "Tha Crossroads" (Brackett and Hoard 2004). Rap music had officially become *America's* music; not just *New York's* cultural art form. Rap music was listened to by many people from diverse background and rap artists shared similar backgrounds of those who listened to the music.

For rap music, the 1990s time period was marked by controversy. A prolonged confrontation between the West Coast gangsta rappers and East coast rappers began. This confrontation directed attention again to rap music's gang cultural origins. It ultimately led to the deaths of two major figures, Tupac and the Notorious BIG in 1996 and 1997 respectively (Wikipedia 2008).

Socially, rap music and the larger hip-hop culture have affected many facets of mainstream American culture. From dancing and art, to fashion and slang, the popularity of rap music and hip-hop culture has changed the social fabric of America. For example, the late 1990s saw the rise in popularity

of the “bling bling” lifestyle in rap music, focusing on symbols of wealth and status like money, jewelry, cars, and clothing. Although references to wealth existed from the birth of hip-hop, the “bling bling” culture had its roots in the enormously commercially successful works of Sean ‘Puff Daddy’ Combs, Master P, and the Cash Money Millionaires, who coined the term “bling bling” (Light 2004).

While these popular rappers pursued and celebrated their bling bling lifestyles and commercial success, others criticized (Krohn and Suazo 1995; George 1998; Light 2004) the pursuit of commercial success and the possible negative impact of gangsta rap. The egotistical or self centered attitudes portrayed in the lyrics and videos of certain artists were occasionally paralleled in the negative behaviors of some of their fans. Youth may adopt the clothing and behavior associated with the gangsta persona just as they may adapt the clothing and behavior of other celebrities (e.g., Parris Hilton or Britney Spears). While the majority of rap music fans or any type of music do not model the artists or the messages in lyrics, a case can be made a pseudo-gangsta subculture arose amongst North American youth that could be linked to gangsta rap (Rose 1994; Alexander 1996).

The Cultural Significance of Rap and Hip Hop Music

Early studies of rap music focused on how rap music influenced its listeners' perceptions and behavior. Early critics of rap music argued that its lyrics, which oftentimes contain violent content, encouraged violent behavior by listeners. Rap music and hip-hop culture may provide a model for identity construction and action. The assertion that music and rap lyrics have the power to shape the actions of people justifies further study of rap (Aldridge and Carlin 1993).

Critics of rap music suggest that rap lyrics promote violence, along with the glorification of sexual exploitation and the degradation of women (Samuels 1991, 2004). They assume the attitudes and behavior of listeners are affected by the themes and messages within the lyrics, promoting a decline in social morality, especially amongst the presumed primary listeners, young people. While no one denies rap music and videos often contain violent and misogynist content and images, it is not clear how rap audiences interpret these messages and images. As Travis Dixon and TaKeshia Brooks (2002) argue, we need to examine the meaning of this genre.

According to Charles Keil (1970), black music generally and rap music in particular reflect historical conditions and lived experiences. Rap lyrics presumably provide a narrative account

of daily happenings within the lives of inner city youth. The perceived tales of “real” experiences is what makes rap and hip-hop culture appealing to fans. Heather Aldridge and Briana Carlin (1993) argue that the language of inner city residents and African Americans in particular, is an expression and reflection of the difficulties and struggles of black lived experiences in the United States. Thus, rap lyrics based in that language are a form of cultural communication and are reflective of historical experiences and realities.

Toop (1984) argues that a certain attitude emerges from the daily stresses experienced by black youth, based on the conditions in which they live. Poverty and the ghetto environment lead young ghetto residents to experience feelings of despair and a negative attitude towards society. Hip-hop and rap music express an attitude of opposition to white cultural domination and commercialization (Toop 1984; Aldridge and Carlin 1993). Thus, rap music and its lyrics may be viewed as “a spoken newspaper, a fax from the wax” (Toop 1984:188).

Problems facing black inner-city youth are rhetorically represented. Such problems include: an overwhelming sense of hopelessness, the existence of ghettos, and the collapse of economic opportunities. Some analysts (Quercia and Galster 1997; Turner 1998) suggest that America’s ghettos are among the worst

places to live in the world. With limited resources to meet their basic needs, some youth turn to gangs, drug trafficking, and violence. Others argue that the violence conveyed in rap music is a reflection of the frustrations experienced in the daily lives of inner city residents (Aldridge and Carlin 1993).

Researchers have explored how musical lyrics may affect people's perceptions (attitudes, beliefs) and behavior. Psychologists Mary Ballard, Alan Dodson, and Boris Bazzini (1999) studied the perceived effects of lyrical content of rap songs on behavior. They found that most (83%) of their 160 research participants reported believing that people are influenced by song lyrics and that lyrics with a negative message were perceived as more likely to inspire negative/deviant behavior. Both the lyrical message(s) and the genre of music affected expectations of the impact of lyrics on behavior. Specifically, negative (e.g. violent, misogynistic) rap lyrics were perceived to have the potentially most detrimental impact on behavior. On the other hand, lyrics labeled as pop or country were viewed in a more positive light (Ballard et al 1999), and presumed to have no behavioral effects on listeners.

Much of the controversy associated with rap music revolves around its negative lyrical content. These lyrics could be

viewed as expressing themes of alienation and powerlessness among youth (Ballard et al 1999). In the GrandMaster Flash and the Furious Five hit "The Message," group lead rapper GrandMaster Melle Mel paints a vivid picture of these themes:

The bill collectors, they ring my phone
and scare my wife when I'm not home
Got a bum education, double-digit inflation
can't take the train to the job,
there's a strike at the station
Neon King Kong standin' on my back
can't stop to turn around, broke my sacroiliac
Mid-range, migraine, cancered membrane
Sometimes I think I'm goin' insane
I swear I might hijack a plane!

In the early 1990s social activists like C. Delores Tucker and Tipper Gore urged Congress to pass legislation requiring the music industry to create a labeling system, designed to warn fans of lyrics containing strong language, themes of sex, violence, or drug abuse and trafficking (DigitalDreamDoor 2007).

More recently, public outcry about lyrical content focused on the "gangsta" rap subgenre, known for its vivid imagery of gang-banging, violence, and drug using and dealing. The criticisms of gangsta rap were: the content had negative behavioral effects on

listeners (Johnson et al. 1995; Zillmann et al. 1995); and young people would emulate popular rap artists held in high esteem (Dotter 1987). Concern was heightened by violent incidents that were linked back to popular rap songs, for example, the 1990 incident during which a police officer was attacked and shot, and the rifles used in the shooting were inscribed with the letters N.W.A., signifying the gangsta rap group NIGGAS WITH ATTITUDES. N.W.A. was known at that time for its controversial rap song, "F*** the Police." Another event allegedly occurred in a North Carolina housing project years later (Hansen 1995). Such incidents are used to argue that the lyrical content of rap music may influence people's attitudes, perceptions, personal identities, and beliefs about society and their social environment and subsequently, their behavior. These issues require further review.

Issues of Identity

To more fully understand the role rap music and hip hop play in popular culture and how it affects individuals who listen to rap, the possible identity as a hip hop community member should be considered. Richard Jenkins (2004) argues that a community is categorized by its boundaries; consensus and cooperation amongst its members; and interpersonal relationships. Community

is a powerful construct by which people organize their lives, providing an understanding of the places and space in which the members live, along with managing relationships with others. Community provides a source of collective identification. People become aware of their culture when they understand the cultural boundaries that affect them (Cohen 1985). A sense of community membership involves understanding the inner-workings of that community and how it may differ from other communities.

Jean Cohen (1985) suggests culture – the community as experienced by its members – is not confined by social structures nor a set of identifiable social behaviors. Culture is a cognitive construct that relies on the members' thoughts. In this sense we can speak of the community as a symbolic construct, providing a level of "awareness" associated with being affected by a social condition, e.g. being oppressed and disadvantaged.

Closely associated with Cohen's explanation of community is Zygmunt Bauman's (1991) description of consumption-based collectives. For Bauman, consumption-based collectives reflect the need of individuals to find meaning by bonding with others. The continuity of the group is dependent upon maintaining boundaries established by the community. For rappers and the hip hop community, these consumption-based collectives would be

symbolized by items that are different from those deemed acceptable by mainstream society, i.e. the language (slang) used, style of dress (baggy clothing), and values (Cutler 2003). Personal acceptance of these items and of them as representative of the hip hop community provides opportunities for people to bond and participate in a community. Researchers (e.g. Carter 2005) have suggested that rap music and hip hop culture can be a tool through which youth, black youth in particular, negotiate their identities, establishing a form of cultural capital instrumental in developing a “real” identity (Clay 2003; Squires et al. 2006). African American youth who participate in hip hop culture and listen to rap music may see the music as a reflection of their lives and may use it as a vessel for empowerment, to establish a connection with the culture, and to create a positive identity (Berry 1994; Sullivan 2003).

Culture is both tangible and intangible. In the case of music, fans can read musical scores and lyrics and purchase CDs or tickets to a performance. They can proclaim their musical preferences verbally as well through the clothing they buy. These are tangible ways association with rap music and the hip hop community could be proclaimed. But, what about the intangible, that is, the identity associated with rap music and hip hop culture?

Cecilia Cutler (2003) suggests that identity can emerge through participation and/or membership in the hip hop community. One identity is that of "rap appreciator," distinguishing those who like rap music from those who do not like or who are unfamiliar with rap. Another identity is "defiantly black" for those who view hip hop and rap music as a means to express disdain for the social oppression and discrimination experiences of a disadvantaged population. A "streetwise identity" refers to a person who has a "working knowledge" of the inner-city and may have a criminal background. Yet another one is "rebellious," for those who experience a level of success as hip hop artists and have run-ins with legal authorities.

Individuals who identify with hip hop culture may simply refer to themselves simply as members of the "hip hop nation" or simply the "nation." Toure writes, "The nation has no precise date of origin, no physical land, no single chief, but it exists in any place where hip hop music is being played or hip hop attitude is being exuded" (1999: 10). The hip hop nation may be like an imagined community as described by Benedict Anderson (1983), in that it is not based on face to face relationships.

To this point community and identity were discussed as emerging out of participation in and involvement with rap music

and hip hop culture. Hip hop community membership and identity are linked to race and gender. Although there were early white (The Beastie Boys, Third Bass, House of Pain, and Vanilla Ice) and female (Queen Latifah, MC Lite, Roxanne, and Yo Yo) rap performers, the predominant image of performers and fans was young black males from impoverished urban neighborhoods. Early listeners were people living in the hood because that was where the performances occurred and the records were distributed. With commercial success (that is wider distribution of records and increased air time), some white suburban males adopted rap music and hip hop cultural mannerisms. Today, young adult females listen to rap. So when we talk about the meaning of the music and "keepin' it real" in particular, we must attempt to understand whose perspective is being used to measure if artists are "keepin' it real" and whether "keepin' it real" affects their understanding of their personal identities. The expression "keepin' it real" is an admonition for individuals to be true to their roots and not to "front" or pretend to be something they are not (Rickford and Rickford 2000: 23), represents a powerful discourse within rap music and hip hop. This issue will be discussed in chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Exploring Authenticity in Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture

This chapter explores literature bearing on the analysis of perceptions rap music listeners have about its authenticity. The concept of authenticity is explored and questions surrounding authenticity in relation to rap music are addressed below. Drawing on the authenticity concept, the mantra of “keepin’ it real” is investigated. The social location of rap music listeners’ participation in hip hop culture is explored, along with identity claims, e.g., of authentic “blackness,” and how they fit with questions of authenticity.

The Structural Basis for Emerging Questions about Authenticity

Don’t be poverty pimping...when you don’t live in the hood and write about claims you saw...you poverty pimpin’...when you act like you’re not vulnerable to the same things that you glorify...you poverty pimpin’. Rhymefest 2006.

When is it not cool to be you...I will not sell myself out to get money. Young Jeezy 2006

Rap music is often portrayed as a cultural expression of black voices from the margins of urban America (Rose 1994; Krohn and Sauzo 1995). Rap music and hip-hop emerged as arguably one of the most powerful cultural phenomena of the post-Civil Rights

era. As they evolved, rap lyrics described and analyzed the social, economic, and political issues that rappers argue led to its emergence and development: drug addiction, police brutality, teen pregnancy, and various forms of material deprivation (Dyson 1996; 2001; 2004). As many rappers reportedly had problems with the law, the style gained an anti-establishment reputation amongst listeners (Sims 1993; Krohn and Suazo 1995).

Into the 1990s, hip-hop music reflected and was depicted as at the center of an African American, youth oriented culture (McLeod 1999; Neal 1999). It continues to provide an alternative public realm for African Americans to express themselves in the face of systematic discrimination. Deindustrialization, global economic competition, the new ethnic division of labor, and federal abandonment of cities provided the economic context. Policy and service inequalities (i.e., access to housing, employment, social services, and health care) provide the racial context (Basu 1998). Many teenagers and minority group members apparently viewed rappers as their spokespeople because they communicated in street dialect and bluntly expressed their frustrations. That street dialect is used to depict negative elements of urban life including illegal drug use and violence (Krohn and Suazo 1995).

In the early 21st century, American teenagers rated rap as their favorite musical genre (Tunes and Tudes 2002), and rap had achieved global recognition (Bennett 2001). In 1990, rap music generated 600 million dollars in profit (Basu 1998). A year later, rap music generated 700 million dollars in profit (Basu 1998). In 1996, rap had over 800 million dollars in revenue, a significant proportion of the record industry's gross 12 billion dollars in earnings that year (Basu 1998). Rap music is placed in the category of urban music, an industry euphemism for black created music. Gangsta rap is the music's dominant subgenre as other kinds of rap are categorized as either "alternative" (Bennett 1999) or part of the "non-gangsta wing of hip hop" (Armstrong 2004; Pareles 2000).

As part of its commercial success its fans' characteristics changed, so many of hip-hop's most visible current fans are white youth (Neal 2004). In light of its increased popularity and the commercial success of artists, questions developed regarding rap music's authenticity (Basu 1998). In order to address questions about the authenticity of rap music, the concept of authenticity must be reviewed.

Socially Constructing Questions of Authenticity

Richard Peterson (1997, 2005) addresses authenticity in popular music by focusing on it as a social construction. Authenticity is a claim that is made by or for someone, something, or a performance that is either accepted or rejected by relevant others (McLeod 1999). Questions associated with authenticity may surface when the artists' personal characteristics are inconsistent or do not match the message detailed in the music (via lyrics).

Fans' questions of authenticity can address an artist's individual identity, group membership, and/or work performed. Questions of authenticity may focus on whether the performers' perceived identity is consistent with the identity they have constructed and that their performances remains "untouched" by external influences.

In what Gary Fine (2004:65-68) refers to "identity art," when the value of the work is judged not by its quality, but by the perceived authenticity of the artist. Richard Schechner (2001) goes somewhat further discussing the expectation that the authentic self must flow out of the artist naturally.

Research by Reinard Nauta (2003) and Phillip Auslander (2006) analyzing the expectations of authenticity emphasized the importance of the artists' performance. Nauta (2003), analyzing

the performance of religious pastors, suggests that a pastor's performance of a religious sermon can invoke questions of authenticity. Even if pastors have doubts about their religious convictions, they should have faith in the authenticity of their performances. If pastors deliver sermons with conviction, they can, through their performances, embody authenticity. In this instance, authenticity can only be realized by playing the role of pastor; therefore, authenticity is grounded in pastors' faith in their performance.

Auslander (2006) suggests that a performer is expected to maintain a stage persona consistent with his or her "real life" identity. Here, authenticity is mandated by the musicians' ability to appear on stage as themselves; not as any other persona or character. He suggests that a musician's performance of authenticity is a natural extension of self performance, as even the most natural of events are performances in which authenticity is constructed. Again, the expectations of the audience are essential to the process of producing authenticity. Performers must convince their audiences of their authenticity before their performances or music is taken seriously.

Audiences may closely examine the performances of artists who are not perceived to be part of the culture. Lindsay Calhoun (2005) proposes that what matters to fans is being able to find

the cultural nuances, narratives, and identifiers of an 'authentic urban hip hop legacy.' This fits with Cesar Grana's (1989) argument that ascribed group membership (e.g., race or ethnicity) is presumed to give artists the right to represent the group. Henry Louis Gates (1991) cites numerous examples of African American, Jewish American, and Euro-American writers whose work is highly regarded, but only when they write about their own group. To overcome this "requirement" contemporary performers may seek authenticity by claiming an association with earlier artists, types of music, or lifestyles. Peterson and Bruce Beal (2001) found such associations had been made in their study of the authenticity claims and lyrical themes of contemporary alternative country music performers.

Some people may claim authenticity by immersing themselves in what they take to be authentic experiences (i.e., the environment where the music comes from--the streets). For example, they may tell stories of how they succeeded in "coming from the gutter to being a success," or adopt the hair and clothing styles, or language and demeanor of participants in the focal experiences (Peterson and Bennett 2004).

A final type of authenticity work involves awareness of the presentation of self, self-reflexivity (Taylor 1992). Examples of authenticity gained through presentation of self can be found

among rap artists (Judy 1994; McLeod 1999). The process by which authenticity is claimed is perhaps never as clear as when it is loudly proclaimed by a person seeking to be identified as authentic.

The "Question" of Authenticity

Questions of authenticity in the music industry are not new as they can be traced back to folklore studies (Bendix 1997). Questions of authenticity have permeated every point in the history of popular music (Leach 2001) and were asked of even the most popular groups, i.e., the Beatles, who were questioned about whether they actually wrote the songs they sang (Peterson 2005). In the 1980s, rock and roll groups of the "glam-rock" era like Motle Crew, Poison, Ratt and others were questioned based on their appearance. Today, questions of authenticity are raised about boy bands, i.e., the Backstreet Boys, N'SYNC, 98 Degrees, etc., created by professional managers to appeal to a particular demographic category, e.g., young girls between the ages of 13-22. The commercial success of these groups is presumably tied to young fans perceiving them as real.

In the case of country music Peterson and his collaborators (Peterson 1997, 2005; Peterson and Beal 2001; Peterson and Bennett 2004) suggest that a cycle of authentication exists

involving everyone active in the field. Performers and songwriters offer their best efforts at creating what they think country music should be. Out of all their efforts, a few performers and songs are selected by the record companies. How artists are dressed and presented, and in the case of some, the very names they use, are products of agents, managers and record companies. If a song is a hit, artists, songwriters, and those in the industry will look for other songs that could be shaped along the lines of the hit song. Decisions are officially made to meet fans' taste, but in practice they are made largely to satisfy the expectations of the next gatekeeper in the decision chain (Ryan and Peterson 1982). In the case of country music, fans initially may have more control in the authentication process by making a song popular, but critics, historians, archivists, teachers, documentary makers, and music reissue specialists play an increasingly more important role in establishing authenticity within the genre over time (Peterson 2005).

"Marketing" Black Culture

Mark Anthony Neal (1997) suggests that the key to understanding the authenticity argument in rap music revolves around understanding how black culture is marketed. Barry

Gordy's (founder of Motown Records) success in marketing black popular music, which he called "the sound of young America," (Neal 1997:117) to largely white audiences served as a blueprint for corporate takeover of the black popular music industry. His master plan was to make his music popular with white Americans through the mass consumption of "soul," via an efficient mass production process. His actions coincided with broader social efforts to integrate blacks into American society and America's consumption oriented economy.

Gordy marketed his soul music to the youthful, mainstream American audience. He described his product as enticing, appealing, or wholly repugnant, as market tastes demanded, particularly when viewed through the various lenses of race, class, age, geographical location, and sexual preference. Given the post Civil Rights Movement social climate, many corporate marketing strategies were designed to exploit the remaining translocal narratives that remained (Neal 1997).

As the marketing of soul and African American culture increased, so did their acceptance by mainstream America. "Soul" became an important market commodity merchandised to black and white fans alike in the form of music, television shows and hair care products (Neal 1997). Soul and African American culture in particular, became a commodity. The commodification of soul had

an impact on African American popular expression, in that political resistance was often parlayed as an element of style. Many African American entertainers who actively participated in the black power component of the Civil Rights movement displayed some form of oppositional expression. For example, one of the most active entertainers in this era, James Brown, created a song encouraging African Americans to "say it loud" and be "Black and Proud." This was an important anthem for blacks during this time period, but it was also very popular with white America as well, peaking at number 10 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1968 (Billboard 1968). Presumably, the popularity of this song exemplified by its place on the Billboard chart challenged the message contained within the song. The mass production of soul reduced blackness to a commodity that could be bought and sold without the cultural and social markers that defined blackness (Neal 1997), challenging the distinctiveness of the black cultural identity.

During the post-Civil Rights the entertainment industry diversified its marketing activities, acknowledging black buying power and the whites would buy "black." In their efforts to sell soul to the masses via blaxploitation, corporate America's stereotypical portrayals of blackness led to the introduction of both cartoonish and surreal constructions of blackness. Steven

Haymes (1995:51) drawing on Jean Baudrillard argues that these processes transformed black culture:

...into signifiers, absent of historical references to black life and absent of signification other than making luxury fans goods pleasurable to middle class whites. This stripping of history and signification from black culture has reduced it to a simulacrum.

An example of corporate America's attempt to sell "blackness" is the show "Soul Train." On the air from August of 1970 through the 2006 television viewing season, "Soul Train" is recognized as the longest running black show in television history. "Soul Train's" success was partly generated from the immediate exposure it afforded to many of the newer dance styles within the black community (Neal 1999). Given the role of dance within traditional black social experiences, "Soul Train" offered a visual affirmation of the history associated with black communal ethic. But the theatrics associated with the program are perceived to have eroded key historical elements associated with the dance tradition found in black culture, leading to questions about the show's authenticity (Neal 1999).

Commodifying Black Music

One of the challenges faced by corporations in their efforts to take over the black popular music industry was the ability to deliver a commercial product that would be deemed “authentic,” particularly to black audiences. The term “authentic” appeared in descriptions of black popular music during the 1970s, when taste and style of black music began to segment according to increased class divisions (Neal 1997). One of the strengths of independent black record labels in the past was their ability to locate artistic movements within the black community, i.e., rap and neo-soul, before they were commercially viable to those outside of segregated black communities. Record companies hired young African American talent scouts who were responsible for identifying, developing, and promoting black talent for wider public consumption.

The integration of the popular music industry significantly eroded African Americans’ financial control over a segment of the industry which segregation had empowered them to control. This was not only an issue of who would most financially benefit from the reproduction and distribution of black popular music, but also encompassed questions of artistic integrity, creative autonomy, communal input and general aesthetic quality, as these related to the larger traditions of black popular expression. As

a result of music industry integration, soul was commodified and in turn, gave way to disco, a popular mainstream genre (Van Dorstein 1990).

A more recent example of the commodification of black music occurred with rap music "going" pop and allegedly losing its edge. The basic elements of rap music preceded the commercial success of Run DMC, the first rap group to experience mainstream appeal, by more than a decade. As rap music emerged from post-Civil Rights America, the genre resulted emerged with its unique sound and style. Rap music became the buffer to mask the erosion of inner city communities, i.e. no formal infrastructure and a lack of community resources. Hip hop thrived in part by embracing creative instability, making it a stylistic characteristic. Relying largely on resources available, i.e. rumors, taggers, and live performances, rap represents the most recent black musical genre to be derived from the experiences of black culture. Its close association with black culture allowed the genre to maintain its artistic integrity in the face of initial attempts to commodify it (Neal 1997, 1999, 2004).

However, by the late 1980s, rap music/hip hop producers entered into distribution deals with corporate conglomerates. The sale of the Def Jam label to CBS/Columbia gave that company access to multi-platinum artists and producers as well as their

black fans. A promotional boost came in the fall of 1988 with the debut of *Yo! MTV Raps* on MTV. The production of hip hop music videos presented the genre to a new audience; youth from Middle America, who apparently relished the rebellious “otherness” that the music and its artists represented. When “gangsta rap” became one of the most popular subgenre of rap, a significant portion of rap music was purchased by young white Americans. Rap music crossed over into mainstream America (Neal 1997, 2004).

Many marketing plays essentialized blackness to mainstream America as intensely deviant, i.e., as accurately depicted by the gangsta rap subgenre. The mass commodification of rap music/hip hop for white fans was seemingly more effective than that of soul music a generation earlier. Hip hop contained the narratives of difference companies could use to market perceived notions of “blackness.” As prior generations embraced Motown music and black culture as social critiques and in defiance of parents, suburban youth embraced rap music/hip hop as a measure of their own dissatisfaction with contemporary American life. Thus, the mass commodification of rap music/hip hop provided an avenue for white youth to symbolically align with “ghetto” black youth by listening to gangsta rap critiques of police brutality. Some argue without evidence that critical

narratives like the NWA anthem “Fuck tha Police” appealed to white youth who experienced similar situations (Neal 1997).

Challenging Authenticity in Rap Music

Rappers and their fans often challenged the authenticity of artists who had mainstream commercial appeal, arguing that their music and message challenged historical depictions of black powerlessness. Assertions of authenticity within the rap music/hip hop genre did not emphasize artistic ability and quality, but rather narratives describing the realities of black urban life; the more vivid, the more real they were assumed to be.

At the same time record companies were capitalizing on the narratives described in rap music/hip hop, increasing their takeover of black popular music in the early 1990s. More than 80% of all music recorded in the US was controlled by six major corporate entities (Neal 1997, 2004). “Black music” accounted for approximately 25% of the total record sales during this time (Neal 1997, 2004). Black music was no longer controlled by those that made the music, but by profit driven corporations.

In the musicology literature, authenticity focuses on the relation between performer and composition (Rudinow 1994), a relationship that Geoff Boucher (2000) argues is more important

to rap music than to any other musical genre. In line with Boucher's argument is Michael Albrecht's (2008) analysis of Dr. Dre's *The Chronic* album, which commercializes an urban, Southern California lifestyle by advertising specific patterns of consumption: low ride cars, guns, 40s of malt liquor, and of course, "the chronic" slang for marijuana. The videos created to support songs on the album contribute to the image of Dr. Dre and his protégé, Snoop Doggy Dogg, as "hard" gangstas and reinforce their credibility as "authentic" voices of the west coast urban lifestyle. In the video "Fuck Wit Dre", Dr. Dre characterized an estranged former band mate as having become a sellout, compromising his authentic roots in the gangsta community in favor of an artificial performance that solely served the interests of the record industry. The song serves to constructing the rappers' authenticity through their symbolic performance of a certain lifestyle.

Part of the success of *The Chronic* relies upon the persona of Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg as tough, masculine, authentic representations of the African American communities in Compton and Long Beach. Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg go to considerable lengths to demonstrate that their immersion in the gangsta lifestyle is not a performance, but is in fact an authentic expression of their real life experiences.

Authenticity can be negotiated through performance; which in turn is used in an attempt to meet audience expectations. The ways in which the performance conforms to or differs from audience expectations of authenticity and the ways in which the performance produces distinctions between the artificial and the authentic are important. For rap music, authenticity questions seem to revolve around three issues. First, there is a concern about the artist being true to him or herself ("keeping it real"), as self-creation and individuality are valued in the rap community. Next, there is association with a particular location or place. The rap community prioritizes artists' local allegiances and territorial identities, i.e. being from the Bronx or Brooklyn; east coast or west coast (Armstrong 2004). Lastly, there is the performed persona, i.e., one revolving around a form of "blackness" or criminality. Each of the issues associated with authenticity is discussed below.

"Keepin' It Real:" Authenticity in Hip Hop

The expression "keepin' it real" in hip hop culture means that people should be true to their roots and give "props" or credit where credit is due (Morgan 1996). True hip hoppers are obsessed with issues of authenticity. Changing elements of hip hop culture to make it more acceptable for middle class suburban

whites is likely to have limited success with the core hip hop if they recognize what has been done. If white youth recognize a product has been toned down in a bid to make it "cross over," or appeal to a mainstream audience, they may avoid it. Those who think of themselves as true hip hop aficionados prefer music with a blunt, urban sensibility; the hard edged material Chuck D (1999) of Public Enemy called "CNN for Black America." Statistics from 1994 indicate that $\frac{3}{4}$ of hard core rap albums were sold to white fans (Spiegler 1996).

Hip hoppers publicly criticize those who "front" or pretend to be something they are not (Rickford and Rickford 2000). Being real is a complicated construct with multiple aspects, but one recurrent idea is it involves socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural proximity to the urban, African American community where hip hop emerged, "the street." Alim (2004) describes the street as "the center of hip hop cultural activity," which is not simply a physical space but a "site of creativity, culture, cognition, and consciousness" (388). Establishing a connection to the street is a must for rappers. It is perceived to be such an important element of hip hop that some middle class white youth try to play up their connections to the ghetto or to some imaginary ghetto by forming crews and engaging in certain

"gang"-style activities like the "preppie gangsters" described by Sales (1996). "Keepin' it real" has two main themes: 1) the idea that realness has to do with being connected to and achieving respect on the streets, and 2) the idea that people should present themselves as what they are (Cutler 2003).

"Keepin' It Real:" Maintaining Ties to Urban Areas

For some, "keepin' it real" refers to the lives of those who are "active" participants in a vibrant "street" culture. "True" hip hoppers are differentiated from those that are "frontin'." This differentiation is based on not only class, income, and race, but also on geographic location and residence; that is, proximity to the urban black "street" culture. The closer a person is to the "street", the more authentic the person is perceived to be. "Keepin' it real" is also used to refer to behavior deemed "street-like" usually erratic, destructive and violent. For some people, "keepin' it real" is an attempt to gain respect on the streets by possessing a gun or coming off as being "hard" or very tough (Cutler 2003).

Authenticity is also defined by both literal and symbolic proximity to a prototypical urban African American core hip hop

community. Rap music and hip hop culture is an African American male-dominated art form. For other performers to be accepted into the community, they have to prove themselves. The white rapper has to have something in common with the black rapper, be it same residential locale, or be introduced by a reputable member of the community, e.g. Eminem was introduced by Dr. Dre and was a resident of the notorious 8 Mile community in Detroit. The female artist has to either have exceptional lyrical skills or be as vulgar as her male counterpart (Cutler 2003).

"Keepin' It Real:" Delivering Personal Autobiographies

According to Moore (2002:214), first person authenticity is established when artists succeed in communicating to their audiences that the messages portrayed in their lyrics are representative. Thus, some rappers claim the subject matter is not as important as being true to oneself. Lyrics are the vehicle for expressing identity and revealing personal truths (Snyder 1994; Armstrong 2004), a phenomenon known as "keepin' it real." Toure (1999:1) states:

As long as upper class white men stay in charge of the United States Senate, urban black men will remain our leading speakers. Within hip hop, mantras like "keepin' it real" and

the more contemporary 'I'm just trying to do me', have expressed the ambivalence of black hip hop artists and audiences with the commercial success and widespread visibility afforded the genre over the past 15 years or so. Ice Cube (1994:57-61) suggests "if you're black and live in this country, it's an experience. You got a story to tell and you're legit in telling it." "Keepin' it real", for some, becomes an autobiography; a life lesson about life in black America. Yet, with commercial success artists' lives change and they are effectively distanced from life on the street.

The commodification of any art form involves turning cultural products associated with the art form (the artists themselves and their lyrics) into things that are bought and sold. Goods that were once an aesthetic expression of artists (their lyrics and their persona) are no longer a part of them; they become a product of the artists' labor and are manufactured with the goal of being bought. Commodification typically brings to the masses an inferior manufactured product, which then undermines the unique qualities of the art form (Haralambos and Holborn 2000). This process may affect the creativity of the artist, whose work becomes a source of revenue instead of artistic creativity. An example of this is seen in the conflict between Warner Brothers Records and its artist, Prince. In 1993, during negotiations

regarding the release of Prince's album *The Gold Experience*, a battle between Warner Brothers and Prince ensued over the artistic and financial control of Prince's work. During this time, Prince changed his name to a symbol and appeared in public with the word "slave" written on his cheek, a symbol of his struggle to regain his artistic creativity (Wikipedia Sept 5, 2007). Prince's struggle with Warner Brothers exemplifies how an artist may feel his artistic expression is stymied when his music is commodified. When music becomes a reflection of manufactured images of artists, artists' authenticity is challenged.

Daley (2003) refers to the process of commodifying the lived experiences of a culture as "othering." One culture begins to mimic another based on the appeal of perceived differences of the culture being mimicked. During "othering," the culture being mimicked becomes a measuring stick for how to pursue and obtain prestige and status. This argument can be applied to rap music and hip hop culture in particular, especially when applied to youth culture. Oftentimes, commodified rap music and hip hop culture present stereotypical images of "authentic" black experience via verbal and visual outlets, e.g., the lyrics in the music, the style of dress, and the display of materialism. When internalized by young people, the process of "otherness"

described by Daley is displayed and the images and words used by those who have internalized the images of "blackness" become a way to obtain status and prestige. As a result, "blackness" is sold to the masses as a way of life. Those who consume the stereotypical images of "blackness" assume a lifestyle based on a commodified representation (Stallybrass and White 1986).

Originally, rap music was raw. There was the griminess and grittiness of the beat machine that played behind the artist; music made by turntables scratching; the muffled sound of the microphone with no filter; the overall lack of studio production that made the rap album. Commercialization of rap is viewed by various rap pioneers and hip hop journalists as "the loss of innocence," and a direct challenge to rap music authenticity.

Seeking to avoid this transformation, artists may go to great lengths to "remain true to themselves" and "keep it real." As one record executive stated, "instead of seeking to produce crossover products that dilute the black experience, [rap] embraces its own culture and makes the best of its success...it's about people coming over to us...and remaining true to the game" (Basu 1998:372), instead of forfeiting authenticity for commercial success. By taking this approach, the artist resists the temptation of mainstream popularity and the associated potential monetary success. Otherwise, an artist could be

labeled as a “sellout” – becoming a pawn of the music industry, foregoing artistic freedom, and becoming wealthy (Basu 1998). Some rap artists would suggest that Sean “P. Diddy” Combs “sold out” because he went from producing rap artists like the Notorious BIG and Mary J. Blige, to churning out what has been characterized as dull, overproduced music that lacks the hard defiant edge that originally characterized rap. The product from which he makes his money is criticized.

“Keepin’ It Real:” Identity and Personal Experiences

“Keepin’ it real” has many meanings, relating both to the basic tenets of creativity and artistry, as well as a sense of identity and experience. In relation to artistic endeavors, there appears to be a broad distinction between rap artists who consider themselves “hip hop heads” and those that call themselves “niggaz” (Basu 1998). Common to both is the notion of cultural authenticity, paying heed to the musical and cultural roots of the sounds, and its communal basis in the African American community. “Hip hop heads” emphasize turntable wizardry and masterful rhyming skills as symbolic of rap’s authenticity – “keepin’ it real” – rather than studio-based music perceived to be overproduced, over-sampled work. “Hip hop heads” openly embrace other components of hip-hop culture such as dance,

graffiti, and spoken words. "Niggaz" can be best described as both a music form and an identity. "Niggaz" often come from poorer and less racially integrated backgrounds and are more open to other forms of black music such as reggae, dancehall, and R and B than hip hop heads. The lyrics of "niggaz" provide images of being a social menace. "Niggaz" became the dominant image of and instrumental to the emergence of hard-core gangster rap, as a particular expression of hip hop around 1987. Since then, niggaz have been associated with hip hop and hard-core rap (Judy 1994; Wood 1991). Employing the nigga identity in this way leads to consideration of the question of authenticity in relation to commodification: can a commodified identity be authentic? Are artists' original identities lost within attempts to portray themselves as authentically bad?

In the cases of both "hip hop heads" and "niggaz," "keepin' it real" is associated with the artists' identities, representing who they claim to be as individuals. If artists are able to retain their self-proclaimed identity and creativity, their followers will remain loyal, resulting in the artists' ability to maintain their connection with urban black youth culture, while simultaneously attracting suburban white youth. The artists' realness will result in cross-cultural and commercial appeal. Even when the consequences of commercial

success and being mainstream are recognized, this recognition may be perceived as a way of continuing to live by the credo of the 'hood', whose organizing principles are taking care of business (making money) and gaining juice (respect) (Judy 1994; Basu 1998). On a more general level, "keepin' it real" refers to being true to yourself; not losing your identity and integrity; and not faking it, which is, talking about what you believe to be true and within the realm of your experience, while not representing other people's experiences as your own.

From the mid-1960s, the rhetoric surrounding rock music portrayed it as counterculture to the popular world of entertainment: it represented a critique of pop music, progressive values and opposition to the crass commercialization of the music industry (Basu 1998). In the 1960s when an artist sold too many records the artist had ipso facto sold out and selling out by white rock and folk musicians was treated as a sacrilege. They were inauthentic. This oppositional discourse did not prevail in the long term as rock and roll rebellion turned into what some derogatorily labeled baby boomer accommodation and dinosaur rock (Basu 1998). Some argue the same process is taking place with rap, that is, massive record sales mean that rap music is no longer authentic.

As one record executive suggests:

“Keepin’ it real is about identifying with your blackness...if they ain’t down they’re selling out ‘cos they ain’t feeling their peoples on any level...as long as you’re still about your peoples...being in the game as a businessman we are in a position to call the shots”(Basu 1998: 376).

While some members of the black music industry criticized more successful rappers, producers and artists for diluting their blackness for success, others perceived that commercial success enabled rap to reach larger audiences and hence make visible their culture on largely their own terms (Basu 1998). The following quote illustrates how the notion of “keepin’ it real” is interpreted as maintaining an outlook that resonates with key elements of black cultural life by one rap artist and entrepreneur making a living from rap:

Keepin’ it real is not about money or getting paid – it’s about really feeling from yourself – keeping your roots intact, ‘bout where we come from... the rap game lets us make money from something that is ours... (Basu 1998:379).

Compared to their rock and pop counterparts, rap artists have fewer alternative ways of earning a living. MC Hammer is a prime example. When he released his first album *Feel My Power* in 1987 (which was re-released as *Let’s Get it Started* in 1990 after he

signed a lucrative deal with Capital Records), MC Hammer's work received a lot of play on black radio. His second album, *Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em*, released in 1990 included the smash hits "U Can't Touch This," "Have You Seen Her," and "Pray." *Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em* went on to become the first rap/hip-hop album to reach diamond status, selling more than 10 million units (RIAA Diamond Awards 2003). With MC Hammer's success came criticism of his lyrics, his clean cut image, and his perceived over-reliance on sampling hooks from previously recorded music was viewed as an attempt to become mainstream. MC Hammer had "sold out" in the eyes of members of the rap community (Hess 2005). MC Hammer's decline in popularity followed. He subsequently made an attempt to harden his image and resurfaced in 1994 with the release of *The Funky Headhunter*, which did not compare in success with his previous albums. In contrast, white rapper Everlast emerged on the music scene in 1992 as a member of the rap group House of Pain. After hits like "Jump Around," House of Pain split in 1996. Everlast reemerged in 1998 as a rock artist and released the critically acclaimed *Whitey Ford Sings the Blues*, which sold over 2 million records. He had the option to crossover. He is still active in the music industry. An unidentified rapper compares these examples below:

Look, we're black people, we don't have the luxury of saying 'oh don't pay us because its about art'- our art comes about because of our everyday reality-the ghetto, the frustration, the broken promises...we're about trying to get out of being poor 'cos that's our reality...(Basu 1998:379).

Some black rappers justify their commercial success by allusion to social background, particularly racial and class identities, as one rap artist states on the basis of anonymity:

Being a black man in this society is like two strikes...if you getting paid to get your shit off the street and start making an economic difference and still feeling it for the black culture or hip hop culture than you still be keepin' it real... (Basu 1998: 379-380).

Active involvement in hip hop culture is perceived as "keepin' it real," particularly for artists and their performances.

"Keepin' it real" is viewed as "dropping science," where accurate depictions of issues facing the black community are conveyed through music (Basu 1998). Here, "keepin' it real," emphasizes the need for cultural pride and self-determination and indirectly sees as a tool to educate the masses. Taken together with black cultural speech idioms, expression, and style, "keepin' it real" reaffirms black identity, as seen in the following quote by an anonymous rap entrepreneur:

America was built on genocide, betrayal and violence. We're doing what Booker T Washington, Malcolm X, Public Enemy spoke of economic self-determination, black nationalism, etc. [Rap] is about keeping our culture ours...not letting people take our music and turn it into music that denies our influence (Basu 1998:384).

Rap is filled with the contradictions of consumption and commerce, generating the question: is there a moral dilemma in benefiting monetarily from a culture born of social and economic marginality, gun toting fantasy and macho militant posturing? Yet, rap was never anti-commercial, so entrepreneurs cannot be accused of hypocrisy. Hip hop in many ways seems to personify many representations of black identity; the house nigga versus the field nigga; revolutionary versus the Uncle Tom; the gangsta rapper versus the progressive, free styling rapper. Hip hop is also stunts, blunts and uzis; sneakers, afros, free styling, and body popping. Hip hop is a style, nuance, a voice. Like the music itself, "keepin' it real" is complex and diverse. Rap music has given a substantial number of black youths a worldview, a political philosophy, a language and an aesthetic that has become the articulating principles for economic activity and artistic creativity. In other words, hip hop

culture has provided economic incentives, as well as artistic goals.

The paradox for an artist is the need to be “authentic” to be successful and if successful, to have questions of authenticity raised. Ronald Judy (1994) argues that authenticity is itself hype, a hyper-commodified affect. Hard core rap is akin to the once traditional depictions of the blues: an oppositional cultural movement that is thoroughly symbolic in the face of political domination (Judy 1994).

In a related vein, “keepin’ it real” is, according to Christian Metz (1982), a floating signifier whose meaning changes depending on the context in which it is used. “Keepin’ it real” has become a sign representing those characteristics used to validate a rapper’s artistry and message. This argument does not deny that most hip hop artists may presumably want their music to be an accurate representation of their life experiences (McLeod 1999).

Social Location

Geography was the first crucial marker of authenticity in rap (Krims 2000:178). Geography remains central to defining value, meaning, and practice within hip-hop culture (Forman 2000). By location, is meant the scene; the setting where the music is

produced; the inner cities of America. As noted earlier, the Bronx was the home of rap, where Kool Herc invented rap in the park near the Riverside 1600 apartment building in the South Bronx. Toure (1999:1) states:

...if you live in the hip hop nation, if you are not merely a fan of the music but a daily imbiber of the culture, if you sprinkle your conversation with phrases like "off the meter"; or "got me open," if you know why Dutch Masters make better blunts than Philllies ...then you know the hip hop nation is a place as real as America on a pre Columbus atlas.

The coast supremacy, east versus west, was challenged in the early 1990s as artists such as NWA, Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg, Tupac, emerged as some of the genre's most bankable performers. At the core of the east coast versus west coast conflict was a fundamental belief that the experiences of those on one coast marked them as more authentic--more gangsta, more ghetto, more hard core--than those on the other coast. In other words, one hood was claimed to be more authentically hip-hop by its advocates, and by extension, more authentically black, than the other (Neal 2004).

Robin Kelley (1994; 1996; 2004) links bicoastal authenticity debates to the fascination with ghetto life among social scientists and urban ethnographers. According to Kelley, some of

these scholars treated culture as if it were a set of deviant behaviors: the young jobless men hanging out on the corner passing the liquor bottle, the brothers with the nastiest verbal repertoire, the pimps and the hustlers, and the single mothers who raised streetwise kids who began cursing before they could walk. These researchers apparently assumed that there is an identifiable ghetto culture, and what they observed was it.

In recent years, researchers have revised the interpretive frameworks developed by earlier urban ethnographers (Kelley 2004). Traditionally, most social scientists (Lott 1992; Kelley 1996; 2004; Neal 2004) explained black urban culture in terms of coping mechanisms, rituals, or oppositional responses to racism. Using an essentialist interpretation of culture, some continue to look for that elusive ghetto sensibility, the cultural practices that capture the reality of urban life for blacks. Today, this perception is hip hop. While studies of rap and hip-hop culture have prompted contemporary poverty researchers to address expressive cultures, they have not done much to advance the culture concept. Like its predecessor, the dozens, rap has been the subject of conflicting interpretations.

Some commentators insist that rap music is the authentic, unmediated voice of ghetto residents. Tommy Lott's (1992) essay critiques neoconservative culture-of-poverty theories and

challenges the assumption that the culture of the so-called underclass is pathological. Lott nevertheless reduces expressive culture to a strategy for coping with the negative aspects of street life. For Lott, the hip hop "nation" represents the voice of the black lumpen-proletariat. Many rap artists and their followers presumably are entrenched in a street life filled with crime, drugs, and violence. Having street values is adaptive for living in that environment. Lott does not consider that all rap music is not about a nihilistic street life, and the majority of rap artists were not entrenched in crime and violence, for he apparently is convinced that hip hop narratives of ghetto life can only come from personal experiences on the streets.

Yet, the core meaning of the rapper's use of the term "knowledge" is often perceived to be politically astute, or to have a full understanding of the conditions under which black urban youth must survive (Kelley 1994; 1996; 2004).

Historically, Robin Kelley (2004) argues, attempts to investigate authentic black culture revolved around attempts to generate revenue. Thus, hip hop artists, their culture and their personal experiences had commercial appeal and were used to represent "authentic" black ghetto experience.

Authentic "Blackness": "Street Cred(ibility) and Criminality

Assertions of authenticity often include criminal credentials or racist statements. Press releases mention artists' police records, which on examination may be overstated. When Def Jam star Slick Rick was arrested for attempted homicide, Def Jam incorporated the arrest into its publicity campaign for Rick's new album. Def Jam bartered exclusive rights to the story to news media in exchange for the promise of publicity (Samuels 2004). The Muslim group Brand Nubian proclaimed its hatred for white devils in its lyrics, especially those who plotted to poison black babies with medicalizing behavior (Samuels 2004). That Brand Nubian believes the statements in its lyrics is unlikely: the group had a white Jewish publicist, Beth Jacobson of Electra Records. Racism may be reduced to fashion, by the rappers who express it and by the white audiences to whom such images appeal. What is significant here is not so much the intentions of the artist, but the audience as consumers for whom anti-Semitic slurs and black criminality are presumably equated with authenticity and the belief that such authenticity sells records (Samuels 2004).

David Samuels (2004) argues rap's influence on the street has declined and attributes its decline to the young whites who buy the music, effectively complaining that white youth stole black

culture. In his view, rap forfeited whatever claim it may have had to particularity by acquiring a mainstream white audience whose tastes increasingly determined the nature of the form. What whites wanted was not music, but black music, which as a result of its mainstream popularity, was not (Samuels 1991; 2004).

The rappers, the black middle class, and white fans of rap all contribute their own visions of street culture (Gates 1991). The black middle class and white fans presumably buy rap music containing explicit lyrics believing they are participants in authentic black experience (Samuels 2004). Gates (1991) suggests these fans may believe that by buying records they have made some kind of valid social statement. The assimilation of elements of black culture by whites once required a degree of contact between the races (e.g., in clubs). Yet, the street is now available in stores or at the flick of a cable or radio channel – to black and white middle class alike. Hank Shocklee, producer for the group Public Enemy, states:

Suburban white kid who wants to find out what life is like for a black kid from the inner city will buy a record by NWA. It's all about being in control. Records are safe. Rap music is driven by fear; if you don't like what you hear, you always have the choice of turning it off (Samuels 2004).

Samuels (1991; 2004) argues that consumption of rap – of racist stereotypes, or brutality toward women, or even of tributes to Dr. Martin Luther King, does not promote understanding or efforts to remediate problems, but instead normalizes black on black violence.

Chapter Summary

Contemporary literature that addresses culture and race framed this chapter. For example, Judy (1994: 214) who argues hip hop is:

A kind of utterance of a habit of thought toward an increasingly rationalized and fragmented world of global commodification. Rap is a way of thinking that cannot itself be thought about without thinking hip hop. Thinking about rap in the way of hip hop is to think it hard core, to think it like a nigga.

Judy's argument fundamentally is based on the argument that there is a black culture. Hip hop does meet key elements of Carbaugh's (1988) definition of a culture: patterns of symbolic action and meaning that are emotionally experienced, commonly intelligible, and widely accessible to members of the community.

The criterion of authenticity was invoked by rap music fans and artists throughout the 1990s, spoken in terms of being true,

real, or keeping it real (McLeod 1999). Focusing on the authenticity of rap serves a conservation purpose keeping the African American experience at the forefront of discussion through its conversion into knowledge. That knowledge gives significance to the African American experience. But, in the process that significance is separated from lived experience (Judy 1994).

Authenticity is invoked around a range of topics that include hip hop music, racial identification, the music industry, and social location. Profanity and slang are often used to support claims of authenticity (McLeod 1999). In the final analysis, an audience confers authenticity on the object; it is a socially agreed upon construct (Peterson 1997).

Rap may be a source of information about one's group, and it can also be a (re)affirmation of one's identity. Rap music can provide information about groups that are different as well, (re)affirming the idea of otherness, or one's separation from those individuals or groups who do not share one's identity or group membership. Research needs to examine not just how much respondents report they like listening to rap but their knowledge and commitment to the music.

This research seeks to further understanding of the context(s) within which claims of authenticity and the "keepin' it real"

mantra in particular are invoked and contested by fans of rap music.

Chapter 4

Methodology

This chapter is organized in the following sections: First, I explain my personal interest in the topic. Then the research questions and hypotheses derived from the review of the literature are presented. Next, the survey design and research population, along with the data collection and statistical analysis procedures are presented.

Personal Perspective

This research explores authenticity in relation to rap music, how it is understood by fans and how their perceptions of authenticity affect their consuming behavior. Specifically, the goal is to understand the criteria fans stress in categorizing rap music as authentic. I report my personal involvement with rap music and hip-hop culture, to address my values and possible biases as they relate to this research.

I have strong values and interest in rap music and hip-hop culture. "I am rap music. I am hip-hop." I have lived and breathed rap music and hip hop culture since 1979, when I got my first "boom box" for Christmas and "dubbed" my first tape (recorded music from the radio onto a cassette tape). I break

danced on make-shift mats made of old cardboard boxes and wore my Adidas with no shoe strings, mimicking Run DMC. I wore the Kangol hats like LL Cool J and the LeCoq Sportif warm-up suit like Eric B and Rakim (Run DMC, LL Cool J, Eric B and Rakim are all artists instrumental to rap music's emergence). I continue to listen to rap and participate in hip hop culture. Therefore, I acknowledge my values. Gunnar Myrdal (1984) suggest that it is not possible to keep one's research pure, objective, and untarnished by one's interests or values or presence, but to recognize and state such bias and to be aware of ideals that seem important to us.

My goal is to understand how and why questions of authenticity are raised concerning rap music as well as who is responsible for raising them. Finally, I am interested in how this controversy affects the fans' decision to consume rap music.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, rap music authenticity is defined as: 1) accurately depicting life on the streets of urban black ghettos (regardless of whether one lives there now or indeed has ever lived there); 2) reflecting a performer's own life experiences (past or present); 3) representing a particular

image of life on the streets (whether accurate or not); and 4) presenting oneself as a product of urban street-life (whether true or not). The literature suggests that claims of authenticity are context specific, invoked when the validity of the art form is questioned. Authenticity questions challenge the essence of the music and its African American cultural identity. For example, some argued with increased popularity, the focus of rap shifted to providing messages of prosperity, not messages detailing struggle and oppression. Commercial success resulted in the commodification of the genre, transforming rap music from an art form to an object produced for consumption. Rap music's authenticity is thus based on the fans' perception of whether the music and the artist who produce the music are "keepin' it real," providing details about their life histories. To explore these issues, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What does authenticity mean to the fans?
2. Who determines what is authentic in rap music (the artists, listeners, or critics)?
3. Why is authenticity important (e.g. validation of the artists' existence and the message contained and articulated in the music; increased record sales)?

4. Who has and is raising questions about rap music's authenticity?

The following hypotheses are tested:

1. Rap music fans' perceptions of rap music's (lyrical) authenticity (e.g. accurate representations of life in poor black urban neighborhoods, providing insight into the lives of disadvantaged populations) will vary by race.
2. Rap music fans' perceptions of rap music's (lyrical) authenticity will vary by annual income earned.
3. The environment (e.g. suburbs, inner city, etc.) rap music fans were raised in will affect their perceptions about rap music's (lyrical) authenticity. As rap music emerged in inner city areas (predominantly African Americans), authenticity may be perceived differently by people from inner cities than people from other areas.
4. Rap music lyrics will affect how rap music fans perceive issues of (lyrical) authenticity found in rap music. Perceptions of rap music (lyrics), according to the literature, suggests that people, regardless of race (white or black), listen to rap music because they think it is truthful and provides insight into the lives of disadvantaged populations.

5. Rap music fans' perceptions of rap artists' lived experience will affect how those fans perceive authenticity.
6. Perceptions of rap artists' lived experiences held by rap fans' will correlate to the reasons why they listen to rap music.

To test the hypotheses, the following concepts are operationalized;

1. A rap music fans can listen to and read musical scores and lyrics and purchase CDs or a musical performance. They can verbally proclaim their musical preferences as well through the clothing they buy. Fans are identified by yes/no responses to a set of questions pertaining to rap music consumption.
2. Race is a dichotomous variable: African American or white.
3. Income is defined as the self-reported annual family income of survey respondents. Low income relates to those respondents with family incomes less than \$19,999; middle income refers to those respondents with family incomes between \$20,000 and \$69,999; and upper income refers to those respondents with family incomes above \$70,000.

4. The environment refers to where survey respondents were raised. One measure is region of the country. The other measure addresses whether it was an urban city, rural or suburban/metropolitan.
5. A rap artist is a person who performs within the rap musical genre.
6. Perceptions of rap music (lyrics) are measured using a Likert Scale in which survey respondents indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements that address issues of perception of rap music.
7. Authenticity is measured using a Likert Scale with which survey respondents indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with questions that address rap music's authenticity.

Survey Design

A survey questionnaire was developed to: 1) Measure the attitudes of self-identified rap music experts (those individuals who have a great deal of experience and knowledge about rap music and the rap music industry) and their understanding and/or perceptions of what is authentic rap music; 2) Provide information about the reasons behind fans' decisions to purchase or download rap music; and 3) Measure the extent to

which rap music fans agree or disagree with general public perceptions of rappers and their music.

Based on the literature review, a pre-test of 33 questions was developed. The pre-test survey instrument was administered in July of 2007 to 32 individuals. The pre-test was used in an educational setting to demonstrate how surveys are constructed and implemented, supporting information contained in a sociological research chapter of an introduction to sociology textbook. To test the effectiveness of the survey and research hypotheses, a series of frequencies, indices, and correlations were formed. Frequencies were calculated.

Two indices were created to measure rap listening. The first index, "raplistening," was created using six questions addressing the various ways in which rap music is listened to. The second index "ylisten" combined six reasons why respondents might listen to rap music.

To address subgenres, a one question measure "rapsubgenre" was used. Focus was on the negative images usually associated with the 'gangsta' subgenre. Two indices were created. The index "rapconsume" used five questions. This index was used to get a variable that would identify the various ways in which rap music is consumed. A second index, "rapperception" was created using

the three components within a question that addressed public perceptions associated with rappers and their music.

For t-tests run using the variable "rapconsume," the only significant relationship was when the variable was related to whether respondents listened to rap music that was downloaded to an Ipod or PDA device. The correlation was significant at the .05 level. This suggested that rap music might be consumed via a portable media device as opposed to being consumed / purchased via a traditional format, i.e., CD.

The results of this pre-test indicated that the survey instrument needed to be revised. The revised instrument was presented to 5 self-identified rap music "experts" for review. To establish the sampling process, the 5 rap music "experts" were asked a series of questions to establish their expertise on issues relevant to rap music and the hip hop community. The experts were asked the following questions: (1) In what state is rap music universally recognized as originating in?; (2) What rap group performed "Rapper's Delight?"; (3) What rap group performed "The Message?"; (4) What rap group is responsible for creating the "gangsta" subgenre of rap music?; (5) Do you see yourself as involved with rap music?

The survey instrument was revised based on feedback obtained from the “experts” (see appendix A). The final instrument consisted of 6 major parts:

1. Individual(s) attitudes and perceptions of rap music/hip hop.
 - a. Twenty-one questions asked respondents about: how often they listened to music, the setting within which they listened to music, and their music listening habits/participation in rap music/hip hop.
2. When respondents first realized they were interested in rap music.
3. The reasons why respondents listened to rap music.
4. Respondents’ perceptions of which rap artists were most and least authentic and reasons why.
5. The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with general public perceptions of rappers and their music.
6. Demographic information about survey respondents.

Target Population and Sampling Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Tennessee for use of human subjects (See Appendix B). The survey population was identified using a snowball sampling method. The experts were asked to provide the names of

others who they thought had a great deal of knowledge and experience of rap music and the industry. The goal was to validate the literature addressing issues of authenticity in rap music and hip hop culture. Respondents were asked to participate in the study to analyze possible racial differences in perceptions about authenticity in rap music. All participants were advised that participation in the study was voluntary.

The structured interview instrument was administered to 30 respondents. Of these 30 respondents, 23 were African American and 7 were white.

Presentation of Data

The data were entered and analyzed using SPSS. To test the hypotheses correlations were computed to determine the strength of the relationship between variables being tested in the hypotheses.

Five measures were proposed for key elements of this study. The first proposed index, "Why Listen (to rap music)" was based on question 24 which addressed respondents' reasons for listening to rap music. The second proposed index "Authentic Experience" was created using question 26 from the survey. This proposed index addressed respondents' thoughts about general

public perceptions of the lived experiences of rappers and their music (authentic experience). The third proposed index, "Authentic Lyrics" included items in question 27 of the survey. This proposed index addresses the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the general public had certain perceptions of rap music lyrical content. The fourth measure, "Income (Groups)" is an ordinal variable created from question 33. Responses to this question was recoded to create 2 distinct income groups: "lower" (income less than \$20,000) and "higher" (income \$20,000+). The fifth proposed measure, "Environment" is a nominal variable created from questions 31 and 32 from the survey. The measure is used to determine the residential location of survey respondents, regardless of region of the country. The categories are "rural," "suburban," and "inner city."

The analysis chapter assesses the methodology and suggests future research directions. Results illustrate the rationale behind consumption of rap music and possible sources of questions pertaining to rap music's authenticity. Implications for future research are suggested based on the analysis.

Chapter 5

Analysis

This chapter is organized into 2 main sections. First, the characteristics of the respondents are presented. Second, results of tests of the major research questions developed in chapters 2 and 3 are presented.

Descriptive Results

The descriptive data are divided into three sections: the demographic characteristics of the respondents; information about the respondents as fans of rap music; and responses to open-ended questions.

Data Collection

Using snowball sampling 30 potential respondents were identified. There were no refusals to participate in the survey. The structured instrument was administered to 30 respondents in the presence of the researcher. Each respondent answered the instrument in writing a process which typically took about 30 minutes. Then each participant orally responded to open-ended questions asked by the researcher. In the oral sessions, they often expanded on or offered explanations for their perceptions,

e.g. of various artists then they wrote down those perceptions on their surveys.

The 5 “experts” were used to initiate the snowball process and are included in the 30 respondents. The “experts” helped with obtaining respondents by referring the researcher to possible respondents. Respondent referrals were mainly intra-racial, i.e., white respondents were more likely to refer other white respondents, but there were instances where white respondents were referred by blacks.

The first 20 respondents were fairly easy to obtain. There seemed to be a common friendship network between the 5 “experts” and survey participants referred. The remaining 10 were difficult to obtain due to an inability to satisfy the necessary criteria required to identify participants as “experts.” All respondents were identified as “experts” based on the criteria in the previous chapter and their self-identified rap music consumption.

Population Demographics

Of the 30 respondents, 23 were African American (77%) and 7 were white (23%). Of the 27 male respondents, 5 were white (19%) and 2 of the 3 female respondents were white (67%). The low female participation may be explained as resulting from non-

membership in the male friendship network and the gender of the researcher. Eighteen respondents were between the ages of 21-29 (60%); 10 respondents were over 30; 2 were 20 or younger. For analysis they were divided into two groups; under 30 and over 30 (See table 1). Ten of the 30 respondents were college students.

Geography was important to early claims of authenticity in rap (Krimms 2000) and it remains an issue in hip-hop culture (Forman 2000). Respondents identified the region of the country in which they were raised. Of the 30 respondents 22 were from the south (73%); 5 from the mid-Atlantic region of the US (17%); 2 from the Midwest (7%), and 1 respondent was from the west coast (3%). Thus, their responses probably did not reflect the coastal division discussed in the literature.

Half (15) of the respondents identified the area where they were raised as suburban or metropolitan (50%); 11 as inner city (37%) and 4 as rural (13%). Thus at least some of the respondents had the inner city experience presumably described in rap music. The majority of respondents (21) indicated their income fell in the middle range (70%); 7 were in the lower range (23%); and 2 respondents identified themselves as being in the upper range (7%) (See table 1).

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

	African American							White								
Total	23							7								
Gender	Male				Female			Male				Female				
	22				1			5				2				
Age	<30		>30		<30		>30	<30		>30		<30		>30		
	17		5		0		1	1		4		2		0		
Income	L	M	U		L	M	U		L	M	U		L	M	U	
	6	14	2		0	1	0		0	5	0		1	1	0	
Region	MA	S	MW	W	MA	S	MW	W	MA	S	MW	W	MA	S	MW	W
	3	17	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	1
Environment	R	Su	IC		R	Su	IC		R	Su	IC		R	Su	IC	
	2	11	9		0	0	1		2	3	0		0	1	1	

Note. L = Lower Income, M = Middle Income, U = Upper Income; MA = Mid-Atlantic Region, S = South Region, MW = Mid-West Region, W = Western Region; R = Rural, Su = Suburban, IC = Inner City

Rap Music Consumption

A fan of rap music is defined as someone who listens to and reads music lyrics and purchases CDs or tickets to musical performances. They may verbally proclaim their musical preferences, as well as display them through the clothing they buy and wear. Questions asked how often they listened to music, the setting within which they listened to music, and their music listening habits/participation related to rap music/hip hop. All

respondents were frequent listeners with 22 of the 30 respondents listening at least once a day (73%). For analysis, they were divided into two groups; once a day or more and 2 or more times a week (See table 2). The respondents were also asked how many hours in a typical day they listened to rap music. Of the respondents 19 said they listened between 1 and 3 hours a day (63%); 6 stated they listened more than 3 hours a day (17%); 5 stated they listened less than an hour a day (17%) (See table 3).

For many rap listening appeared to be a solo experience, as 15 respondents said they listened to rap music most while driving and/or riding in a car (50%) and 6 listened most while walking and/or working out. The other 9 respondents said they listened to rap most while at home, work and/or school (30%) (See table 4).

Table 2. Respondents' Frequency of Music Listening

	Frequency	Percent
Once a day or more	22	73%
2 or more times a week	8	27%
Total	30	100%

Table 3. # of Hours A Day Listen to Rap Music

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour a day	5	17%
1-3 hours a day	19	63%
More than 3 hours a day	6	20%
Total	30	100%

Table 4. Setting Rap Listened to Most

	Frequency	Percent
Driving/riding in a car	15	50%
At home/work/school	9	30%
Walking/working out	6	20%
Total	30	100%

Questions regarding respondents' consumption of rap music using either portable music devices (e.g. Ipods, Zunes) or new media outlets (e.g. magazine subscriptions, internet sources) were also asked. Of the 30 respondents 26 said they downloaded rap music to a portable device (See table 5). Of those respondents, 15 indicated they downloaded rap music to their devices at least twice a month, while 11 said they downloaded rap music to their devices at least 1-2 times a week.

A majority (18) said they purchased rap CDs at least once a month. Twenty respondents said they read articles or interview transcripts about rap music, hip hop culture, or rap artists (See table 6). Of these respondents, 11 relied on magazines they subscribed to for information; 7 relied on the Internet and 2 relied on other sources.

People can have a sense of participating in hip hop culture by listening on Ipods and other electronic devices. Yet, for some participating in musical events with other aficionados is

Table 5. Respondents Download Rap Music

	Yes	No
Total	26	4
At Least 1-2 Times a Week	11	
Twice a Month	15	

Table 6. Read Articles About Rap Music/Hip Hop

	Yes	No
Total	20	10
Magazine Source	11	
Internet Source	7	
Other Source	2	

important. Over half of the respondents (17) said they attended a live rap music performance at least once a year, with one attending 5 or more. Those seeking to hear music that is more “real” (less commodified) may seek out live performances. Of the 17 respondents who indicated they attended live performances, 5 attended live performances at night clubs, while 9 attended live performances at cultured and/or music festivals (See table 7). Three (3) respondents said they performed as artists (2 are DJays and 1 performs spoken word).

Issues Pertaining to Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture

Participants responded to questions asking about their reasons for listening to rap music, their perceptions of which

Table 7. Venue Live Performances Attended

	Yes	No
Total	17	13
(Night) club	5	
Stadium/arena	3	
Culture/music festival	9	

rap artists are most and least authentic, and the extent to which they thought the general public held certain perceptions of rappers and their music. Respondents shared similar reasons for listening to rap music, either agreeing or strongly agreeing with a majority of questions asked (See table 8). Virtually everyone (87% strongly agreed and 10% agreed) listened to rap music because they liked the beat. The lyrics produced somewhat less agreement; 60% strongly agreed and 10% agreed that they listened to rap music because they liked rap lyrics. As the literature raised questions about gender differences, the perceptions were examined by gender. All females strongly agreed they listened to rap music because they liked the beat. One strongly agreed and two agreed that they listened to rap music because they liked rap lyrics.

Attitudes were favorable with regard to: (1) the rap music format (40% strongly agreed; 23% agreed); (2) rap music being viewed as a form of (African American) cultural expression (57% strongly agreed; 10% agreed); (3) support for a favorite

Table 8. Percentage Listening to Rap Music for Specific Reasons

	Percentage				
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
I like the music's beat	87	10	0	0	3
I like the lyrics	60	10	20	10	0
I like to dance to the music	17	30	30	6	17
I like its popular musical format	40	23	30	3.3	3.3
I like it as a form of expression	56.7	10	20	10	3.3
I like to support my favorite artists	70	16.7	10	3.3	0
I like the themes my favorite artists present	63.3	13.3	10	13.3	0

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NAD = Neither Agree or Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

artist(s) (70% strongly agreed; 17% agreed); and (4) the themes presented by a favorite artist(s) (63% strongly agreed; 13% agreed). The greatest divergence in attitudes among respondents revolved around the statement "I like to dance to the music," where 17% of respondents strongly agreed with the assertion; 30% agreed and 30% had no opinion; and 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed. As the literature suggests gender is important, with two females strongly agreeing and one agreeing that they liked to dance to rap music. Thirty percent of African American respondents either agreed or had no opinion and a similar percentage of white respondents either agreed or had no opinion.

When comparing black and white respondents' reasons for listening to rap music, minor differences in attitudes were found with regard to: (1) the music's beat, where 83% of African Americans strongly agreed and 13% agreed, while all white respondents strongly agreed; and (2) support for a favorite artist, where African Americans (61% strongly agreed; 13% agreed) were slightly less positive than white respondents (72% strongly agreed; 14% agreed) (See table 9). The greatest differences by race were found with regard to support for rap music lyrics, where more white respondents liked rap lyrics (86%) than African American respondents (65%). As for the rap music format, more African Americans were neutral (35%) and a minority of whites strongly in disagreement (14%).

Table 10 presents whether respondents thought the general public perceived rap music and rappers focused on African Americans' life experiences. The respondents split fairly evenly with 43% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 40% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the public thought they reflected African Americans' life experiences. As this finding may appear contradictory with the concept of "keepin' it real," the responses were more closely examined to see if there were differences in perception based on age, race or gender.

Table 9. Comparison of Reasons for Listening to Rap Music by Race

	African American (N=23)					White (N=7)				
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
I like the music's beat	83	13	0	0	4	100	0	0	0	0
I like the lyrics	57	8	22	0	13	72	14	14	0	0
I like to dance to the music	18	30	30	9	13	13	29	29	0	29
I like its popular musical format	39	22	35	4	0	43	29	14	0	14
I like it as a form of expression	56	9	22	9	4	58	14	14	14	0
I like to support my favorite artists	70	17	13	0	0	72	14	0	14	0
I like the themes my favorite artists present	61	13	13	13	0	72	14	0	14	0

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NAD = Neither Agree or Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Table 10. Perceptions of Rappers' Lived Experiences

	Percentage				
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
Rap music gives a fairly accurate picture of African Americans' life experiences	30	13	17	20	20
Rappers present their own experiences in their music	33.3	26.7	23.3	16.7	0
Rappers primarily are interested in making money	50	40	3.3	6.7	0

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NAD = Neither Agree or Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

When analyzing white participants' beliefs about whether the general public perceived rappers and their music were accurate reflections of African Americans' lived experiences, a majority of them either strongly agreed that rap music gives an accurate picture of African American's life experiences (86%). In contrast, only 30% of African American's either strongly agreed (22%) or agreed (8%) the public believes rap music accurately represents African Americans' lives. Whites overwhelmingly agreed (43% agreed strongly and 43% agreed) that rappers accurately presented their lives in the eyes of the general public. African Americans agreed with that view (30% strongly agreed and 22% agreed), but 30% were neutral and 18% disagreed. Most African Americans believed (96%) the general public perceived rappers were interested in acquiring "bling bling" (See table 11) and 71% of whites agreed with 14% neutral and 14% disagreeing. In sum, African Americans perceived the general public as recognizing that rap music does not necessarily represent African Americans' life experiences while whites generally do. Further, African Americans perceive the public is more likely to recognize that rappers may not accurately represent their lives and be interested in making money than whites.

Table 11. Comparison by Race of Perceptions of Rappers' Accurate Representations of Lived Experiences

	African American (N=23)					White (N=7)				
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
Rap music gives a fairly accurate picture of African Americans' life experiences	22	8	22	22	26	57	29	0	14	0
Rappers present their own experiences in their music	30	22	30	18	0	43	43	0	14	0
Rappers primarily are interested in making money	48	48	0	4	0	57	14	14	14	0

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NAD = Neither Agree or Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

There were age differences in beliefs about the general public's perceptions of the lived experiences of rappers and their music (See table 12). Of respondents under age 30, 30% strongly agreed or agreed that the general public believes rap music accurately reflects the life experiences of African Americans, while 55% strongly disagreed or disagreed. In contrast, an overwhelming majority (70%) of respondents over age 30 believed the public presumed rap music presented an accurate picture of the life experiences of African Americans. Differences in beliefs about the public's perceptions of the life experiences of rappers also varied by age, with 80% of respondents over age 30 either strongly agreeing or agreeing

Table 12. Comparison by Age of Beliefs about Perceptions of Rappers' Lived Experiences

	Under 30 (N=20)					Over 30 (N=10)				
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
Rap music gives a fairly accurate picture of African Americans' life experiences	25	5	15	30	25	40	30	20	0	10
Rappers present their own experiences in their music	25	25	30	20	0	50	30	10	10	0
Rappers primarily are interested in making money	45	45	5	5	0	60	30	0	10	0

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NAD = Neither Agree or Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

that rappers are presumed to present accurate pictures of their own experiences in their music, while 50% of respondents under age 30 strongly agreed or agreed. Regardless of age, respondents (90%) thought rappers were perceived by the public as being primarily interested in making money. In sum, respondents who were white and over 20 were more likely to agree that the general public perceives rap music as an accurate reflection of African Americans' life experiences and or rappers' own life experiences. Whites may perceive that others do not know African Americans' lives as they do, if their personal perceptions hinge from those they believe the general public holds. Or, they may be projecting their own beliefs on

the general public. Those over 30 may be responding with the music of earlier rappers in mind or their views about what the public thinks African Americans' lives are like may reflect an older reality.

Specific questions regarding beliefs about the general public's perception of rap music content were asked based on the literature review (See table 13). The majority (20% strongly agreed and 43% agreed) thought the public believed "rap lyrics present the right amount of sexual imagery." Yet, 43% strongly agreed and 23% agreed that the general public perceived "women are often presented in a bad light." All female respondents disagreed with the statement "rap lyrics present the right amount of sexual imagery" and two of the three strongly agreed that the public perceives "women are often presented in a bad light." These findings suggest some reasons for believing the general public does not perceive rap is an accurate representation of African Americans' lives.

When asked about public perceptions of the representation of drug use, 17% strongly agreed and 53% agreed with the statement "drug use is presented in a positive light." Respondents agreed (27% strongly agreed and 43% agreed) the public perceives "rap lyrics promote drug related crimes." With regard to public

Table 13. Views of Public Perceptions of Rap Music Lyrics by Percentage

	Percentage (N=30)				
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
Rap lyrics present the right amount of sexual imagery	20	43.3	0	20	16.7
Rap lyrics are often too violent	20	16.7	50	10	3.3
Women are often presented in a bad light	43.3	23.3	26.7	6.7	0
Homosexuals are positively presented	0	0	23.3	13.3	63.3
Drug use is presented in a positive light	16.7	53.3	6.7	3.3	20
Rap lyrics promote drug related crimes	26.7	43.3	26.7	3.3	0
Acquisition of "bling bling" (material possessions) is encouraged	53.3	43.3	0	3.3	0
Rap music expresses what I think is wrong with society	33.3	26.7	20	16.7	3.3

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NAD = Neither Agree or Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

perceptions of the "acquisition of "bling bling" being encouraged," 53% of respondents strongly agreed and 43% agreed.

When asked to respond to the statement "rap lyrics are often too violent," half of the respondents neither agreed nor

disagreed (50%) with the statement. This was the only item producing this type of reaction.

On the other hand, responses to the reverse worded statement that the public perceived "homosexuals are positively presented," were clear (63% strongly disagreed and 13% disagreed) and no one agreed. In other words, they perceived the public thought homosexuals were not presented positively.

The majority of respondents generally strongly agreed or agreed the public perceives that rap music provides an accurate picture of society and its ills. When asked to respond to a statement indicating rap music expresses what is wrong with society, over half agreed (33% strongly agreed and 27% agreed) and does not support research indicating that rap lyrics, and gangsta rap lyrics in particular, are perceived to be too violent.

Testing of Major Research Questions and Hypotheses

The statistical procedures utilized for data analysis are presented and the results are reported and discussed in this section. The data being analyzed were ordinal and nominal. To assess the internal consistency of the indices discussed in the previous chapter, an item-total analyses were performed to test whether the items in the indices measured the same construct.

Correlations were computed to determine the strength of the relationships between variables being tested in the hypotheses. Six hypotheses were tested to determine whether relationships existed between the variables identified in the methodology chapter (chapter 4).

Indices and T-Test

The “Why Listen” index, created from question 24 on the survey, contained 7 items reflecting issues that emerged in the review of literature pertaining to general public perceptions of reasons why people listen to rap music. Theoretically, the item score totals range from 7 to 35, with lower values suggesting very positive views of rap. To assess the internal consistency of the “why listen” index an item analysis was performed on the 7 items. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient (.740) indicated the 7 items measured the same construct. Respondents’ demonstrate very positive views of rap.

The index “Authentic Experience” was created from question 26. The 3 items in this index reflect issues that emerged in the review of literature pertaining to general public perceptions of rap music as an authentic representation of the lived experiences of rappers. To assess the internal consistency of the “authentic experience” index an item analysis was performed.

Based on that analysis the third item "rappers primarily are interested in making money" was dropped from the index leaving an item score total range from 2 to 10, with higher values suggesting greater perceived authenticity. The Cronbach's Alpha run for the remaining index items yielded a coefficient (.852) that indicated the two item index measured the same construct, the assumed general public perception that rap music authentically representing African-Americans experiences.

The index "Authentic Lyrics" was created from question 27. The 8 items in this index reflect issues that emerged in the review of literature pertaining to general public perceptions of authentic rap music lyrical content. To assess the internal consistency of the "authentic lyrics" index an item analysis was performed. Based on that analysis, the questions "the lyrics present the right amount of sexual imagery"; "drug use is presented in a positive light"; "acquisition of "bling bling" is encouraged"; and "it (rap music) expresses what I think is wrong with society" were dropped from the index leaving 4 items with a score total range from 4 to 20, with higher values suggesting greater perceived authenticity. The reverse worded question "homosexuals are positively presented" was recoded. The Cronbach's Alpha run for the remaining 4 items yielded a coefficient (.712) that indicated the index items measured the

same construct, general public perception that rap music lyrics authentically represent rap music.

Independent samples t-tests were run comparing the indices described above with race, income, and gender indicators based on the literature suggesting that general public perceptions of rap music are influenced by these characteristics. The only independent samples t-test that yielded significant results was the test comparing the mean scores of African American respondents' responses regarding authentic rap lyrics with those of white respondents ($t(28)=3.335$, $p,<.05$). The mean for African American respondents was significantly higher ($\mu=18.52$, $sd=3.67$) than the mean for white respondents ($\mu=16.14$, $sd=1.95$) suggesting African Americans agree with general public perceptions that rap music lyrics authentically represent rap music. Thus, the above data supports hypothesis 1, which suggests that people, regardless of race, listen to rap music because they feel the lyrics are authentically represent rap music. No significant differences were found between black and white responses regarding why they listened to rap music or authentic rap/hip hop experience. Thus, hypothesis 4 is not supported.

When analyzing income effects on perceptions, the only independent samples t-test that yielded significant results was

the test comparing the mean scores of lower income respondent's perceptions of general public perceptions of rap music lyrics to those of higher income respondents. A positive significant difference between the means of the two groups was found ($t(28)=2.243$, $p,<.05$). Higher income respondents tended to agree with public perceptions of rap music lyrics ($\mu=17.09$, $sd=3.49$), which suggests rap music lyrical content accurately represents life in poor black urban neighborhoods, more than low income respondents ($\mu=20$, $sd=2.55$). This data supports hypothesis 2, which suggests perceptions of rap music's lyrical authenticity will vary by annual income earned. No significant difference was found between respondent's environment raised in and responses regarding perceptions of authentic rap/hip hop experience, therefore hypothesis 3 was not supported. No significant gender relationships existed.

General Findings

To explore the meaning of authenticity in relation to rap music, respondents were asked to identify those artists/groups they viewed as most and least authentic and explain their choices. The respondents were not given a list to select from. Six artists were most authentic for all respondents: Notorious

BIG, Common, Jay Z, Outkast, The Roots, and Tupac. Nas was identified as most authentic by 29 of 30 respondents.

One difference between male and female responses was female respondents identified females, Salt N Pepa and Queen Latifah as most authentic and the males identified no female groups and, four performers identified by all males were named by no females (Lupe Fiasco, A Tribe Called Quest, Public Enemy, and Mos Def).

Of the unanimous artists, 6 released albums after 2000 and would be considered "new school" artists (Kanye West, Lil Wayne, Little Brother, Ludacris, Lupe Fiasco, and TI). Two artists, Notorious BIG and Tupac are deceased. The list of the most authentic artists by gender appears in table 14.

When asked to provide reasons for their choices of artists they viewed as most authentic, two themes emerged: (1) the lyrics and beat were important and (2) the content was "real" and/or "reality-based." Many expressed strong approval of the lyrics presented in the music of their most authentic artists, as seen in the responses below:

"I like their lyrics."

"The lyrics are deep."

"They aren't afraid to utilize proper grammar while mixing in southern grammar."

The artists' stories were also important to respondents.

Authenticity was linked to offering an accurate, "real life" representation of life in poor black urban neighborhoods, which is supported by the biographies of most of the artists identified in table 14. Reasons why survey respondents believed these artists were most authentic include:

"His lifestyle speaks for itself."

"Raps about his experiences and speaks on what he knows."

"Few artists actually write music that mirrors their actual sentiments about life."

"Produces lyrics that tell a story everyday life."

"These stories could actually happen to anybody that doesn't have big time money."

"He always talks about real life and how to change the world."

"One of the most authentic because he spoke and rapped about what he went through in life."

"They are genuine in their story-telling and try to present a realistic picture of their struggle."

"Legitimate music done the way hip hop was meant to be."

"I like these artists because I feel that they spoke to me and were the voice of my generation."

Table 14. Rap Artists Identified as Most Authentic

Artist	Male Responses	Female Responses
Notorious BIG@^	27	3
Black Moon*	10	0
Common	27	3
Gangstarr*	15	0
Jay Z	27	3
Kanye West	20	3
Lil Wayne@	15	2
Little Brother*	10	0
Ludacris	10	2
Lupe Fiasco	20	0
Mos Def	20	0
Nas	27	2
Outkast*	27	3
Public Enemy*	20	0
Queen Latifah\$	0	3
Salt N Pepa*\$	0	3
The Roots*	27	3
TI@	20	3
Tribe Called Quest*	20	0
Tupac@^	27	3

*Rap Group
 @Gangsta artist
 \$Female artist
 ^Deceased

"These artists truly represent the hip hop culture."

Respondents also explained authenticity in terms of the artists' ability to "keep it real," maintaining personal integrity and not selling out to the record industry. Reasons why survey respondents believed these artists were most authentic (less commodified) include:

"He doesn't conform to the industry."

"These artists are real and tell the truth about their lives and their experiences...both good and bad. They don't care about record sales, just making good music."

"Good, real music. Not something just to sell records."

One performer that both males and females identified was Kanye West; the self-proclaimed "Louis Vuitton Don." While other artists on the most authentic list provide tales of poverty, struggle, and urban street life, West acknowledges that he was raised in middle class, suburban America and cannot speak on the struggles of those that are poverty stricken. Yet, he was viewed as authentic because he was not fake or manufactured. One survey respondent described him best, stating:

"He (Kanye West) doesn't speak about the dope game and getting bitches. He didn't grow up like that and he doesn't try to be a poser. He also can switch up his flow and his approach."

Therefore, an element of authenticity may be simply being truthful with your audience.

When asked to identify rap artists they viewed as least authentic, males identified more artists/groups than females due in part to the uneven sample distribution. Five artists were least authentic for all respondents: Hammer, Plies, Soulja Boy, Vanilla Ice, and the Ying Yang Twins. Camron and Bow Wow were identified as least authentic by 28 of 30 respondents. Of these artists, only Hammer and Vanilla Ice released albums before 2000 and would be considered "old school" artists (Camron released an album in 1998, but it apparently went relatively unnoticed) (See table 15).

Three themes emerged in the reasons they gave for lack of authenticity: (1) the artists delivered messages with no substance; (2) the artist had no artistic quality and presumably was just in it for the money and material possessions (bling bling); and (3) the lyrics degraded women. Respondents stated the following about the messages in the music of the least authentic artists:

"Has no serious content."

"Has no substance...just random garbage."

"No viable message presented. Just dance music."

Respondents' answers included a second theme for why they viewed particular rap artists as least authentic:

"...in it for the money...the bling bling."

"He's just not that great. Just in the game for the money in my opinion."

A theme common to the least authentic artists identified by respondents was their misogynistic messages. As one female respondent stated:

Table 15. Rap Artists Identified as Least Authentic

Artist	Male Responses	Female Responses
Bow Wow	27	1
Camron	25	3
Hammer	27	3
Jim Jones	20	2
Lil Jon	15	1
Nelly	20	0
Plies	27	3
Rick Ross@	10	0
Soulja Boy	27	3
Vanilla Ice\$	27	3
Ying Yang Twins*	27	3

*Rap Groups
 @Gangsta Artist
 \$White Artist

Another female respondent stated:

"All he talks about is what he is going to do to women. I hate his music."

"They have no real message. They're just womanizers."

A male respondent stated:

"... [the rap artist/group] is only interested in talkin' 'bout bitches, hoes, and pimp juice...nothing of substance."

In essence these respondents are indicating that songs that degrade females do not fit with their views of what rap is and should be.

Correlations

A correlation matrix was created to test the strength of the relationships between the 5 measures described in chapter 4 and the race variable. The results are presented in table 16.

The correlation matrix reveals two statistically significant relationships that support hypotheses discussed in chapter 4. Respondents' perceptions of whether the public believes rappers' lived experiences are accurately represented ("authentic experience") were positively correlated with the reasons they personally consumed/listened to rap ("why listen") ($r=.561$, $p=.001$). Thus, hypothesis 6 was supported.

Table 16. Pearson Correlations

		Race	Why Listen (To Rap Music)	Authentic experience	Authentic Lyrics	Income	Environment
Why Listen (To Rap Music)	Pearson Correlation	-.051					
		.394					
Authentic Experience	Pearson Correlation	-.342*	.561**				
		.032	.001				
Authentic Lyrics	Pearson Correlation	-.295	.232	.254			
		.057	.108	.088			
INCOME	Pearson Correlation	.189	-.346*	-.056	-.390*		
		.158	.031	.069	.016		
Environment	Pearson Correlation	-.222	-.191	-.277	-.114	.088	
		.120	.156	.069	.275	.323	
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).							
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).							
N = 30							

There was a statistically significant negative relationship between presumed general public perceptions of rap music content (Authentic lyrics) and the respondents' income category ($r = -.390$, $p = .016$), suggesting that lower income respondents tend to disagree with how they think the general public perceives rap lyrical content. These findings supported hypotheses 2. There

was no significant relationship between rap music fan's perceptions of rap artists' lived experiences and how fans perceive authenticity.

The correlation matrix reveals other significant relationships not addressed through hypotheses testing. Income had a statistically significant negative effect on reasons why respondents personally consumed/listened to rap ($r = -.346$, $p = .031$). Suggesting that lower income respondents tend to disagree with reasons the general public provided about why they consumed/listened to rap.

Race had a statistically significant negative effect on one key variable analyzed, "authentic experience" ($r = -.342$, $p = .032$), meaning that African American respondents were less likely to believe that rap music accurately represented African Americans' lived experiences than whites. This is important because it raises questions about arguments presented in the literature, suggesting that rap music is a representation of the concerns and aspirations of urban black youth and challenges the argument that rap music is used as a form of resistance (Berry 1994; Martinez 1993; Rose 1991) against mainstream society.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reported on perceptions of 30 rap music experts. The analysis focused on perceptions respondents had regarding the authenticity of rap music lyrics; rap music and rappers as accurate representations of the lived experiences of African Americans; and the reasons why respondents listen to rap music. T-tests revealed significant results when comparing the mean scores of responses regarding racial effects on perceptions of authentic rap lyrics and comparisons of mean scores of income effects on perceptions of rap music lyrics. There were no significant results when analyzing the effects of race on why respondents listened to rap music or responses regarding authentic rap/hip hop experience, nor income effects on responses regarding perceptions of authentic rap/hip hop experience.

The correlation matrix revealed four statistically significant relationships: (1) perceptions of rap music being an authentic representation of rappers' lived experiences positively affected the reasons why rap music fans listened to rap music; (2) income group membership negatively affects perceptions of rap music lyrical content; (3) income group membership negatively affects the reasons why rap music fans listened to rap music; and (4) race negatively affects

perceptions of rap music being an authentic representation of rappers' lived experiences.

Results from this study illustrate why fans' purchase rap music and how they relate to perceptions of rap music's authenticity. Most of the artists identified as "authentic" were viewed by respondents as being genuine, creating music that was an accurate reflection of society and providing lyrics that reflected the artists' personal circumstances.

Results from data analysis produced three significant hypotheses. Mean scores from t-test indicate African American respondents' scores were significantly higher than it was for white respondents, supporting hypothesis 1. Results from data analysis suggest perceptions varied by income level supporting the hypothesized relationship and suggesting those more distant from the poor urban experience may perceive more stereotypical views of it, thus supporting hypothesis 2. Data analyzing hypothesis 6 yielded statistically significant results, suggesting perceptions of rap artists' lived experiences held by rap fans would correlate with the reasons why they listened to rap music.

The data also produced 3 non-significant hypotheses. There was no statistically significant relationship between a proposed relationship between the environments the rap music fans were

raised in and their personal perceptions about rap music's (lyrical) authenticity, thus hypothesis 3 was not supported. No statistically significant relationship exists between perceptions of rap music lyrics and why rap music fans listen to the music, which does not support hypothesis 4. Lastly, hypothesis 5, which proposed rap music fans' perceptions of rap artists' lived experience would affect how those fans perceived authenticity, was not statistically significant.

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusions

Rap music and the hip hop culture with which it is associated are a contemporary cultural phenomenon that lends itself to many forms of investigation. Analyses of the perceptions of those who are heavy consumers of rap music (univores) have been limited. This study explored how young adult aficionados of rap personally perceived and thought the general public perceived aspects of their preferred musical genre.

Social scientists have addressed topics such as the music's influence on adolescent behavior (Epstein, Pratto, and Skipper 1990; Kuwahara 1992); its place with popular culture (Fenster 1995; Martinez 1997); and the musical lyrics as narratives of the lived experiences of urban Americans (Berry 1994; Martinez 1993; Rose 1991; Tyson 2005). Among the many topics needing analysis are variations in perceptions of artists' authenticity (e.g., by race and gender). The primary goal of this research was to see whether the perceptions of rap fans thought were held by the general public were in synch with themes identified in the research literature on rap.

Snowball sampling was used to identify 30 people who frequently consumed rap music. The majority of the respondents

were African-American and male. Consumption turned out to be predominately a solo rather than social activity as they consumed rap music most when driving and/or riding in a car and when using portable music devices, i.e., Ipods, Zunes, etc. They relied on media sources (online and print) to remain current on news and events concerning their favorite rap artists of issues relevant to the genre and hip hop culture. Most did not attend live performance, although a few did.

The research literature suggested various reasons why people might like or dislike rap music. Respondents indicated how they viewed various aspects of rap. They liked the beat and lyrics. And, they agreed that rap music was a form of (African American) cultural expression. The themes/messages presented by their favorite artists also were endorsed. Taken as a whole their responses indicated they perceived rap as an authentic reflection of the lived experiences of urban black youth.

How the general public perceived their favored form of music was addressed next. While the majority strongly agreed that the public thought "rappers present their own experiences in their music," their responses to the statement "rap music gives a fairly accurate picture of African Americans' life experiences" were more neutral. They generally agreed that the public perceived rappers as being primarily interested in making money.

The younger respondents thought the public held somewhat less positive views than those who were somewhat older.

Some respondents agreed that rap included too much of the often depicted negatives in its lyrics, that is, the excess sexual imagery, the misogynistic portrayals of women, the violence and overt homophobia, as well as the emphasis on materialism, "bling bling." Yet, the majority still agreed that rap music provided an accurate picture of society and its problems, that it was an accurate representation of the black urban experience.

Hypothesized Relationships

Prior research suggested that race (Bennett 1999; Kuhawara 1992; Neal 2004; Thompson and Brown 2002) and socioeconomic status/income (Clay 2003; George 1999; Gilroy 1997; Powell 1991) might affect rap music fans' perceptions of rap music's (lyrical) authenticity. Hypothesis 1 proposed African American respondents' responses regarding the general public's perceptions of the authenticity of rap lyrics would differ from those of white respondents. The mean for African American respondents was significantly higher than it was for white respondents supporting the hypothesized relationship. Hypothesis 2 proposed the respondents' with lower incomes would

view the general public's perceptions differently (agreed less) than those with higher incomes. Perceptions varied by income level supporting the hypothesized relationship and suggesting those more distant from the poor urban experience may perceive more stereotypical views of it.

The development of rap music involved a split between performers on the east and west coasts. And, examinations of the listening audience have revealed that suburban youth and young adult females listen to rap. As a consequence, Hypothesis 3 proposed a relationship between the environments the rap music fans were raised in and their personal perceptions about rap music's (lyrical) authenticity. There was no statistically significant relationship. As where a person was raised was a weak test of a possible relationship, future research might use other measures of environment.

Rap music lyrics have been the subject of extensive public criticism for their depiction of misogyny, criminality, and homophobia among other things (e.g., Basu 1998; Clay 2003; Gilroy 1997; Henderson 1996; Krohn and Suazo 1995). Whether these themes are defining components of rap could be related to perceptions of authenticity. Hypothesis 4 proposed rap music lyrics would be related to how rap music fans perceived the (lyrical) authenticity of rap music. There was no statistically

significant relationship. Yet, in their responses about why they listened to rap, lyrics were one of the reasons suggesting the need for further exploration of this relationship.

Peterson (1997; 2005) and others (McLeod 1999; Peterson and Beal 2001; Peterson and Bennett 2004) suggest perceptions of authenticity influence fans' acceptance or rejection of artists and their products. Hypothesis 5 proposed rap music fans' perceptions of rap artists' lived experience would affect how those fans perceived authenticity. The relationship was not statistically significant. Examination of the respondents' comments about artists they thought were most and least authentic suggests this relationship requires further examination. Respondents' comments indicated those rap artists they viewed as most authentic provided accurate representations of life in poor black neighborhoods (were "keepin' it real") while maintaining personal integrity. Those designated inauthentic were depicted as sell-outs, materialistic, and womanizers. The comments suggested that perceptions of authenticity were tied to whether artists' perceived identities were consistent with the public identities they had constructed and disseminated to fans.

As the street is presumably the epicenter of rap music and hip hop culture (Alim 2004), a rapper's ability to establish a

connection to the street is generally considered a must. Hypothesis 6 proposed perceptions of rap artists' lived experiences held by rap fans would correlate with the reasons why they listened to rap music. The relationship was not statistically significant. The comments that respondents made suggest the relationship requires further examination, for their open-ended responses suggested that perceptions of "keepin' it real" influenced consumption of artists' work.

Race and Gender

While race was statistically significant for Hypothesis 1, race and gender were not statistically significant predictors of change for some of the dependent variables examined. As this was an exploratory study with a small number of respondents (30) unevenly divided by race (23 African American and 7 white) and gender (27 male and 2 female), a larger number of respondents might reveal more differences. For example, white respondents and African American respondents more removed from life on the streets may be more likely to hold stereotypical images.

Rap is often seen as male. The vast majority of artists are black males. Male respondents did not identify any female performers as authentic (or inauthentic), while all female respondents identified authentic female artists. Females'

responses indicated they had some concern about the misogynistic lyrics, but also that they may have focused more on the beat and ability to dance to the music than males did.

Income

An "income group" variable was used to analyze possible variation in fans' perceptions. The literature suggests rap music's (lyrical) authenticity is validated by the accuracy of its representation of life on the streets in urban black ghettos. The performer's accurate representation of his or her life experiences is important to establishing the performer's authenticity. Rap artists often portray rising from poverty stricken environments through criminal activities (e.g., drug dealing) and ultimately acquiring material signs of success (e.g., luxury cars and "bling bling"). The accuracy of various artists' life stories (e.g., criminal activities) is sometimes questioned, as is their increasing separation from the streets as success leads them to a different lifestyle. The important variable to examine may be respondents' personal knowledge/experience of life on the streets rather than their current income. A number of the study respondents were college students, so their income probably was not the best measure.

Significance of the Study

While previous research provided a useful foundation for this study, the contribution of this study was its focus on aficionados' perceptions of rap and their views about how the general public perceives rap. Underlying this analysis was interest in the perceived authenticity of rap artists and their music, i.e., how did fans view authenticity. A related interest was how consensual were perceptions of authenticity. Apparently aficionados share views about what constitutes authenticity for in response to an open-ended question about who were the most authentic artists there were high levels of agreement. The two deceased focal figures in the east coast/west coast dispute were identified by all respondents suggesting they hold a solid place in the history or lore of rap. The other artists were all more recent (2000 or later) reflecting contemporary agreed on tastes, as there was a high level of agreement about who they were. The respondents had high levels of agreement over who was inauthentic. The criticisms they offered of those deemed inauthentic paralleled the criticisms of ten leveled at arts forms that have undergone commodification. In the case of rap, recording companies appeared to play a role in the growth of the "gangsta" rap subgenre that may have appealed to new audiences, whites and others living outside the ghetto.

Record companies apparently use the aura of authenticity as a tool to market those artists whom they think can generate album sales to a mass market that would include large numbers of people around the world who were not from the urban ghettos of the United States. Even if an artist were from the streets, the process of becoming a musical artist recognized around the world involves using the artist's personal biography, persona as part of a marketing kit to increase profits. As rap artists become wealthy and lose control of their personas to meet the expectations of the recording companies and their fans, they may be transformed into materialistic consumers of "bling bling."

Conclusions

People consume music for many reasons ranging from a desire to relax to a call for social action. People who are heavy consumers of a particular musical genre (univores) presumably identify with that music, e.g., as a statement about who they are or were; as a statement about who or what they identify with or oppose). As a result they may be the most knowledgeable about the music and the most concerned about its authenticity. Authenticity is socially constructed. Rap artists, rap fans/listeners, and music/hip hop cultural critics reach agreement about the authenticity of artists and their works. In

turn the label of authentic may be an important tool for selling artists and their music to more diversified audiences. But, in the shorter term rap aficionados' perceptions of authenticity served to form and maintain symbolic ties one another and hip hop culture. Overall, the findings from this exploratory study clarify some of the issues surrounding usage of the term "authentic," at least as it relates to the rap genre.

Limitations of the Study

A strength of the study was also a weakness, that is, the limited number of respondents. The goal was to better understand the perceptions of heavy consumers, aficionados. A snowball sampling process seemed to be the best approach to finding such people. Yet, such an approach led to limited diversity in the survey population. Every alternative approach has limitations as well. For example, recruiting respondents via online sites might skew the results in terms of particular artists or income categories. Before trying to obtain a broader, more diverse set of respondents, a number of important questions about authenticity could be addressed through in-depth interviews of aficionados and artists. The qualitative responses were very informative suggesting the value of using more open-ended questions in future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research analyzing the transformation of the rap music genre into a cultural commodity that may misrepresent the reality of life on the streets of urban ghettos and/or the lived experiences of its performers is necessary. Recording companies and their marketing divisions may have more of an effect on the perceptions fans have of artists than could be ascertained from this research. Future research could consider questions how record companies manufacture and commodify artists to generate sales, while presenting the artists and their music as authentic. Future research could include both commercially successful and unsuccessful rap artists to obtain first hand accounts of their “lived experiences” and their experiences with the music industry, their role in creating their public persona, and finally their views on authenticity.

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Appendix

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

My dissertation research focuses on understanding the appeal of rap music. I hope you will find it interesting to think about the music you like. Please do NOT write your name on this questionnaire, so your responses can be kept confidential. By answering the questions you are consenting to participating in the study. Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

The first set of questions will ask you about the type of music you prefer to listen to, the amount of time you spend listening to music and your music listening habits in particular. Please answer the questions below.

- Q1. How often do you listen to music?
1. At least once a day
 2. Twice a week
 3. 3+ times a week
 4. I do not listen to music --> **skip to Q21**
- Q2. In what setting do you listen to rap music?
1. driving/riding in a car
 2. at home
 3. at work/school
 4. walking/working out
- Q3. How many hours on a typical day do you listen to rap music?
1. less than 1 hour a day
 2. 1-3 hours a day
 3. 3-5 hours a day
 4. more than 5 hours a day
- Q4. If you indicated you listen to rap music, do you consider yourself as actively involved with rap music / hip hop culture? (Actively involved refers to music listening, fashion, spoken word/poetry, magazine reading/subscriptions, etc.)
1. No --> **skip to Q21**
 2. Yes

If your answer to question 4 was yes, please tell us in what way you participate in rap music / hip hop culture most

Q5. Do you listen to a radio station that plays rap music?

1. No → **skip to Q9**

2. Yes.

Q6. (If yes): What station(s) do you listen to?

Q7. (If yes): How often?

1. Every day

2. 3-4 times a week

3. 1-2 times a week

4. Twice a month

Q8. Is your listening device set to a station that plays rap music?

1. No

2. Yes

Q9. Do you download rap music to an Ipod or PDA?

1. No → **skip to Q11**

2. Yes.

Q10. (If yes): How often?

1. Every day

2. 3-4 times a week

3. 1-2 times a week

4. Twice a month

Q11. Do you ever purchase rap music CD's?

1. No → **skip to Q13**

2. Yes.

Q12. (If yes): How often?

1. Weekly

2. Twice a month

3. Once a month

Q13. Do you attend live performances by rap music artists (concerts)?

1. No --→ **skip to Q16**

2. Yes

Q14. (If yes): How often do you attend live performances / concerts?

1. 1-2 times a year
2. 3-4 times a year
3. 5 or more times a year

Q15. (If yes): Describe the venue where you attend live performances/concerts.

1. (Night) club
2. Stadium/arena
3. Culture/Music festival

Q16. Do you perform as a rap music artist?

1. No → **skip to Q21**
2. Yes

Q17. (If yes): When did you start performing?

Q18. Describe what you do when you perform.

Q19. How would describe the venue in which you perform?

1. (Night) Club
2. Stadium/arena
3. Culture/Music festival
4. Unorganized gathering (i.e. freestyling on the corner/block, impromptu performance)

Q20. (If yes): How often do you perform?

1. 1-2 times a year
2. 3-4 times a year
3. 5 or more times a year

Q21. Do you read articles/interview transcripts about rap music, hip hop culture, or featured rap artists?

1. No→**skip to Q23**
2. Yes

Q22. (If yes): What source do you rely on most heavily to obtain your information?

1. Magazine article/subscription (i.e. The Source, Rolling Stone, etc.)
2. Internet source (i.e. Datpiff.com, Rapstation.com, etc.)
3. Other source (please indicate):_____

The next question asks you about when you first realized you were interested in rap music.

- Q23 A. Year you became interested: _____
 B. Who turned you on to rap music?
 1. Parent
 2. Sibling
 3. Friend
 4. Media source
 6. Other (Please specify):

The next set of questions will ask about the reasons why you listen to rap music.

Q24 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Neither Agree / Disagree 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5	
					1 2 3 4 5
					1 2 3 4 5
					1 2 3 4 5
					1 2 3 4 5
					1 2 3 4 5
					1 2 3 4 5
					1 2 3 4 5

Q25 Please indicate which artists you view as most authentic / least authentic and why.

A. Most authentic:

B. Least authentic:

The next questions ask you about how the general public generally perceives rappers (not just your favorites) and their music.

Q26 Circle the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Neither Agree / Disagree 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
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A. Overall, rap music gives a fairly accurate picture of African Americans' life experiences.

1 2 3 4 5

B. Rappers present their own experiences in their music.

1 2 3 4 5

C. Rappers primarily are interested in making money.

1 2 3 4 5

Q27 To what extent do you agree or disagree with various comments about rap music.

Strongly Agree 1	Agree 2	Neutral 3	Disagree 4	Strongly Disagree 5
A. The lyrics present the right amount of sexual imagery.			1	2 3 4 5
B. The lyrics are often too violent.			1	2 3 4 5
C. Women are often presented in a bad light.			1	2 3 4 5
D. Homosexuals are positively presented.			1	2 3 4 5
E. Drug use is presented in a positive light.			1	2 3 4 5
F. The lyrics promote drug related crimes.			1	2 3 4 5
G. Acquisition of "bling bling" (material possessions) is encouraged.			1	2 3 4 5
H. It expresses what I think is wrong with society.			1	2 3 4 5

The following responses will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential. Please answer the following questions by circling the number of the best response.

Q28. What is your race or ethnic group?

1. Black or African American
2. White or Caucasian
3. Asian or Asian American
4. Hispanic / Latino Descent
5. Indian or of American Indian Decent
6. Other (Please specify): _____

Q29. Please indicate your gender.

1. Male
2. Female

Q30. What is your current age group?

1. 20 or younger
2. 21-29
3. 30-39
4. 40-49
5. 50-59
6. 60+

Q31. What region of the country are you from?

1. North or New England region
2. Mid Atlantic region
3. South
4. Midwest
5. West Coast
6. Not from the United States

Q32. How would you classify the area within which you were raised / your parents live?

1. Rural / Farm
2. Suburban / Metropolitan area
3. Inner City

Q33. What is your current annual income level?

1. 10,000 or less
2. 10,001 - 19,999
3. 20,000 - 29,999
4. 30,000 - 39,999
5. 40,000 - 49,999
6. 50,000 - 59,999
7. 60,000 - 69,999
8. 70,000+

Thank you for participating in this survey. If you would like to make any additional comments about why you do or do not like rap / hip hop, please use the space below.

FORM A

**Certification for Exemption from IRB Review for Research
Involving Human Subjects**

A. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(s) and/or CO-PI(s): James L. Wright;
Dr. Suzanne Kurth

B. DEPARTMENT: Sociology

C. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER OF PI(s) and CO-PI(s):

James L. Wright	Suzanne Kurth
4712 Brentwood Drive	901 McClung Tower
Chattanooga, TN 37416	Knoxville, TN 37996

D. TITLE OF PROJECT: "Rapping About Authenticity": The Music, the Performer, and the "Keeping It Real" Dilemma

E. EXTERNAL FUNDING AGENCY AND ID NUMBER (if applicable): NA

F. GRANT SUBMISSION DEADLINE (if applicable): NA

G. STARTING DATE (NO RESEARCH MAY BE INITIATED UNTIL CERTIFICATION IS GRANTED.): When Form A certification is granted.

H. ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE (Include all aspects of research and final write-up.): July 31, 2009

I. RESEARCH PROJECT

- 1. Objective(s) of Project (Use additional page, if needed.):**
The purpose of this research is to obtain a better understanding of adult participation in and with music. Adults over the age of 18 will be given a survey questionnaire for which they will indicate their preferred listening format (e.g., radio, downloaded music), preferred music genre (e.g., country, rap, r&b), and overall participation, if any, with music (e.g., listening, attending concerts, personal performances).

2. **Subjects** (Use additional page, if needed.): Adults over the age of 18 will be used for this study. Individuals who are self-proclaimed rap music listeners will be surveyed. It should take the participants approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Survey participants will not receive rewards for participating.
3. **Methods or Procedures** (Use additional page, if needed.): The survey questionnaire will be administered to approximately 30 subjects. The survey instrument will be administered by the researcher. Subjects are in no way obligated to participate in this study. To ensure anonymity, there are no identity identifiers on the survey instrument.
4. **CATEGORY(s) FOR EXEMPT RESEARCH PER 45 CFR 46** (See instructions for categories.): Research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from IRB review:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employment, or reputation.

J. CERTIFICATION: The research described herein is in compliance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) and presents subjects with no more than minimal risk as defined by applicable regulations.

Principal Investigator:

Name	Signature	Date
------	-----------	------

Student Advisor:

Name	Signature	Date
------	-----------	------

Department Review Committee Chair:

Name

Signature

Date

APPROVED:

Department Head:

Name

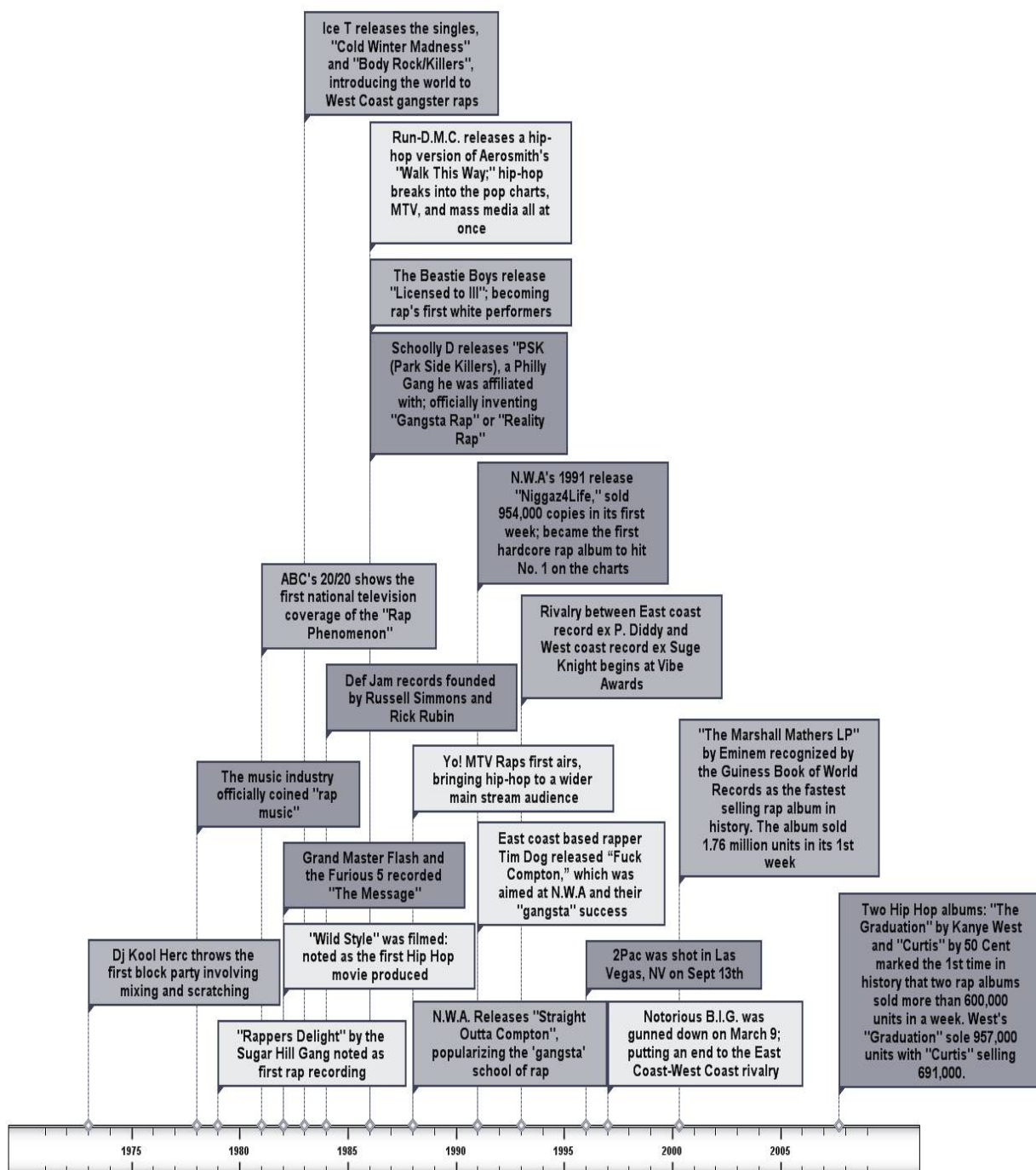
Signature

Date

**COPY OF THIS COMPLETED FORM MUST BE SENT TO COMPLIANCE OFFICE
IMMEDIATELY UPON COMPLETION.**

Rev. 01/2005

Rap Music / Hip Hop Culture: Evolutionary Time Line 1970 - 2007



Vita

James L. Wright was born in Hampton, Virginia and was raised in Winston Salem, North Carolina. He earned his Bachelors of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Appalachian State University in December of 1995. In 1999, he graduated from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga with a Masters of Science in Criminal Justice. James completed his Doctorate in Sociology with an emphasis in Criminology and Social Psychology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in the spring of 2010. Dr. Wright has spent the past 6 years as a full-time professor of sociology and criminal justice at Chattanooga State Community College and much of his adult life working with at-risk youth in various capacities.