



LUND UNIVERSITY

# Being Real By Being Me

Authenticity Production and Consumption  
Between an Independent Artist and Her Musical Followers

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## Abstract

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'Keeping it real' is a common expression of authenticity in the music business, especially in subcultures such as hip-hop and reggae. By examining the dialogically constructed authenticity between an independent hip-hop and reggae artist and her audience referred to as musical followers which takes place on a stage oscillating between web-based and non web-based contexts, this thesis investigates how this authenticity informs and influences the processes of music creation, art production and artist identity. I will argue that authenticity is constructed by the artist deconstructing the expected connections between on the one hand particular cultural belongings and ethnic origin, and on the other hand a certain appearance, style, use of language, values and behavior. Thus, global and transnational perspectives play their part in the authenticity construction. Emotions and affects are depicted as a driving force in the thesis as well as the construction of authenticity. This study suggests a new fandom created between the online, offline, private and public contexts where support plays an important role in identifying as a fan and a Friend. The study also provides insights into how these changed conditions of the processes of music creation, art production and artist identity due to authenticity construction can be beneficial to various parts of the music business.

This is an ethnographic study based primarily on participant observation, and interviews with the artist and her audience. Other materials include articles written about the artist during the fieldwork period, her music, social media content, and images from the artist's album cover. Theoretical perspectives used include cultural analysis, constructivism and the cultural study of music.

Key words: authenticity; authenticity construction; underground and commercial; relationship between artists and audience; fans; skills; artist identity; oscillation between the online and offline contexts

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## 1. INTRO

It is the day after Valentine's Day, I am sitting at the kitchen table and my first webcam interview ever has just begun. The topic is the musician Hanouneh, an independent reggae and hip-hop artist from Sweden. Her politically infused music is often linked to the Middle East and she has made several songs about the Gaza Strip, where she has lived for a period of time. The interviewee, Noah seems nervous and happy at the same time while sitting in the couch in her living room in another part of the country. During the period of a year that she has been listening to Hanouneh's music, she has seen her perform live two times and spoken to her on both occasions.

*Andrea:* What's the first thing you think of when you think about Hanouneh?

*Noah:* Oh my... as a person or her music?

*Andrea:* Both...

*Noah:* When it comes to her as a person I think about that she is very very happy and very nice and sweet... and when it comes to her music, that she is passionate about the things she writes about, that she knows what she writes about and that's really cool because, yeah... (laugh)... It feels more real if one really feels that "she is really passionate about this".

*Andrea:* In what way do you feel that she really is passionate about the things that she does or sings about?

*Noah:* I'm thinking about the fact that she has lived in Gaza... I don't know if she has roots in Palestine as well. I just know that she has lived in Gaza, and that makes it feel like it's for real.

*Andrea:* So this connection to Gaza and the Middle East is important?

*Noah:* Yes, I think so... Of course it's possible for those who haven't lived there to write good music about things that they are passionate about, but this feels extra somehow...

(Interviews and fieldnotes j. Noah)

Noah describes in this excerpt the main focus of this thesis – authenticity production and consumption. Lived experience from a specific geographical location, here represented by Gaza, is one ingredient mentioned by Noah for the authenticity and realness she links to Hanouneh. When asked what she thinks of the artist Hanouneh, Noah mentions the two given personas which constitute and define Hanouneh – ‘her as a person’ and ‘her music’ referring to her as an artist. This relationship with the artist and her audience serves as a stage for this analysis of the production and consumption of authenticity. Barker and Taylor (2007) point out the importance of this relationship in discussing the artists’ need to portray themselves as ‘real’, and the listeners’ need to accuse them of faking it (p. xi). ‘Keeping it real’ has become an essential goal for most artists in the music industry today (Barker and Taylor 2007, p. xi). Media and the internet are spheres where music is shared, consumed and created in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Johansson, 2009, p. 141) and thus where authenticity production and consumption take place.

### **Aim, research questions and limitations**

As an ethnologist and a cultural analyst I am interested in individuals as culture builders meaning that ideas, values, experiences and worldviews are my main focus. I view authenticity as a construction, a system of values defined by the situation and the people involved.

I am examining how the independent artist Hanouneh and her audience, whom I refer to as musical followers, construct authenticity associated with Hanouneh and her music. Therefore, *the aim of this study* is to examine dialogically constructed authenticity between an artist and her audience. What function does the construction of

authenticity have for Hanouneh and her musical followers? Through this construction, the study aims to:

1. Examine how the construction of authenticity taking place on a stage which oscillates between the online and offline contexts informs and influences the processes of music creation, art production and artist identity.
2. Provide insight into how this gained knowledge about authenticity which instructs changed conditions for the music creation process, art production and artist identity can be beneficial to various parts of the music business – both the ‘independent’ and ‘commercial’ spheres as well as other potential industries and parts of society.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

When and how does the dialogical construction of authenticity risk crossing over to its opposite – the ‘inauthentic’? Hanouneh is considered by herself and her musical followers as anti-commercial with strong political messages. What happens when an artist such as Hanouneh seeks marketing advice? The construction of authenticity is constantly negotiated between the artist and her musical followers resulting in a balance containing indicators. These indicators show when the authentic and alleged ‘real’ risk becoming ‘inauthentic’ and alleged ‘fake’ and play, therefore, an important role in the construction of authenticity by being the ‘guards’ of the balance of values authenticity is based on.

What role do aspects of identity such as gender, ethnicity, cultural experiences, and age play in the construction of authenticity? This intersectional study explores the interplay of ethnicities and gender identities that derive from cultural experiences gained through living in certain places, spending time with certain people and so on. Thus, I view both ethnicity and gender as parts of identity created in a social context. As

some scholars have pointed out, it is necessary sometimes to think outside the triad of sex/gender, class and race/ethnicity which often constitute intersectionality (cf. Bäckman, 2009, p. 19). Therefore, age is another part of the intersectionality. The subcultural values based on hip-hop and reggae cultures often fused with political messages inform the ideas of gender and ethnicity as well as various notions associated with authenticity.

In this study, the construction of authenticity and music creation process takes place on a stage which oscillates between the online and offline contexts. How do these contexts inform and complement each other? What role does an active social media presence play in the construction of authenticity between an artist and her audience? What is there to learn from this oscillation between online and offline?

Throughout the thesis, I use the terms 'production' and 'consumption' of authenticity to emphasize and remind of its constructed nature. They are both parts of the ongoing construction and are often difficult to separate (cf. Werner, 2009, p. 37). The terms are also a reminder of the *use* of authenticity. The construction can be applied and used in various situations for different purposes.

It is important to note that while I am describing Hanouneh's music as caught in the web of hip-hop and reggae, I do not use any terms developed within the academic community of reggae studies in my analysis nor do I explicitly discuss Hanouneh in terms of a reggae musician. My emphasis is rather on applying hip-hop scholarship and discussing Hanouneh from the perspective of hip-hop culture. The reason for this is my own aim to develop hip-hop scholarship. This is a deliberate limitation resulting in a less balanced perspective of the subcultures with the aim of producing knowledge specifically relevant to hip-hop.



## Structure of thesis

Chapter 1, *Intro*, consists of all necessary discussions regarding the point of departure of this study. In the next section I present the fieldwork which the study is based on followed by a methodological discussion including issues of anonymity and the chosen term for the people involved in the study. I then introduce the participants of the study to the reader which is followed by a discussion on the importance of reflexivity and situatedness. This chapter ends with the theoretical framework and overview of previous research.

In chapter 2, *Hanouneh is her name*, I address the construction of authenticity through an analysis of the name by focusing on the meaning of the name and what it signifies. The various personas (Hanna Hanouneh) are discussed as a part of the construction of authenticity along with the storytelling of ethnicity and cultural belonging.

In chapter 3, *Girly style resistance*, I consider the aspect of struggle in Hanouneh's music and imagery by discussing it through the perspective of her musical followers. Skills and factors such as age and musicianship are depicted as examples of authenticity construction. The chapter ends with a discussion on the interplay between humor, self-irony and the color pink as a part of the construction of authenticity.

Chapter 4, *Rhythm-based friendship*, explores the authenticity construction in the relationship between Hanouneh and her musical followers. I start with a discussion on the meaning of the term 'fan'. The chapter argues for the development of a new fandom in the intersection between the contexts of online and offline as well as private and public as united by friendship.

In chapter 5, *Outro*, I conclude the main findings, develop concluding reflections and discuss indications of further research.

### **Presentation of the fieldwork**

I first got in contact with Hanna “Hanouneh” Cinthio in January 2009 when I sent her a fan mail through MySpace, a social networking site with the intent of promoting music from established as well as independent artists worldwide. After having heard her song “Stay Strong (Ya khawati)” on the radio, I looked her up on the internet and sent her a message because I wanted to show her my support. The song is about young girls and women who feel that it is their own fault that they are stuck between two ways of life – the traditional Muslim way and the Western way. Hanna responded the following day with a happy and grateful message. A month later we happened to bump into one another at a conference where she was an attendee and I presented a paper. After realizing who she was, I walked up to her and we chatted for a short while. More than a year later, in April 2010, when the time approached for me to decide where to do my internship as a part of my Master’s program I thought of the communications I had already had with Hanna and decided to contact her again. The several meetings that followed resulted in a project plan for an internship with the aim of finding out the best strategies for an independent artist to release music in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century when consumers download music and only few buy physical CDs. Hanna needed more knowledge about this matter since she planned to release her debut album on her own indie record label by the end of 2010.

A recurring theme during this project was the conflict between authenticity production and the risk of becoming a ‘sellout’<sup>1</sup>. My view of Hanouneh as a political artist with strong opinions, one that I shared with her fans that I came in contact with, appeared to be at odds with her need to get information on how best to market her upcoming debut album. How can an anticommercial artist, who criticizes Israel and the police in her songs justify using commercial marketing strategies? I found this tension between the allegedly “real” and “fake” interesting since it is such an important aspect of music and decided therefore at that point that it would become the focus of my thesis.

The musical consumers, fans, or musical followers<sup>2</sup>, became an important part of the internship project shortly after it was initiated. The consumers’ views of Hanouneh and her music gave new insight into the perception of her as an artist. During the time that I was in contact with Hanna regarding the project, an American follower had offered to create a new artist website for her for free which indicated that she had very committed followers. I decided to recruit the consumers of her music through the internet since many of them had gathered at her two Facebook accounts<sup>3</sup> and YouTube. Hanna named my project on her Facebook page encouraging her Facebook friends to contact me if they would like to take part in it. This resulted in three of them contacting me. In order to reach out to more listeners of her music, I asked Hanna to make a list of fans who had been in touch with her by writing fan mail or who had in other ways expressed

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<sup>1</sup> Sellout is a term commonly used in the context of authenticity production within the music industry. Thornton (1995, p. 124) describes ‘selling out’ as a process “by which artists or songs sell beyond their initial market which, in turn, loses its sense of possession, exclusive ownership and familiar belonging”.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the choice of this term, see “Anonymity and labels for the knowledge-based producers”.

<sup>3</sup> Hanna has a private Facebook account where she is called Hanna Hanouneh Cinthio and another more public profile where she is called Hanouneh. The search results for Hanouneh include both of these profiles resulting in her having both friends and musical followers at each accounts.

that they liked her music. With the help of this list I got in touch with nine musical followers from different parts of the world primarily through Facebook with the exception of two people whom I contacted through email and another through YouTube. These nine musical followers answered a list of questions I had compiled and sent out to them. Several of them became my interviewees further on in the fieldwork when I had decided on the focus of my thesis. The fieldwork consisted of two phases: September to late November 2010 and January through February 2011 resulting in a total of five months<sup>4</sup>.

### **Methodologically dwelling in online and offline contexts**

The internet entered my life at the age of eleven (1995) making me part of the first generation who grew up “existing and participating in online and offline contexts simultaneously” (Kendall, 1999, p. 60). This being a normal state for me, I remember being surprised when I started my university studies and got my initial training in ethnography –that I view as collection of methods for finding out about how people organize their realities and view the world – that the online aspect was not taken into consideration. Focus was on historical archives, going into a field referred to as an offline (physical) place and face-to-face interviews. It was only years later that I found out about the online research being conducted within my department.

The fact that Hanouneh’s music is available, shared and consumed both online and offline resulted in the initial realization of the necessary oscillation between these two contexts in order to grasp the field within this study. Hanouneh’s music is primarily

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<sup>4</sup> The personal communication conducted after the fieldwork is for clarification and supplementary purposes.

accessible and consumed in an online setting through the various websites where her music is uploaded (the official Hanouneh website, SoundCloud, MySpace, YouTube etc.). The music has also been played on regional and national radio, an example of an analogue (offline) setting. I realized that in order to understand how Hanouneh is perceived by others and how she portrays herself in an online setting meant that I would have to spend time with her offline since the two contexts are somewhat co-dependent and constantly influence one another.

This study crosses “the boundaries between online and offline in wanton fashion to pursue its topic, aiming to explore cultural constructions in a field without assuming its boundaries in advance” (Hine, 2009, p. 12). Therefore, I find it difficult to state what the online and offline contexts have contributed separately. The divide between online and offline contexts is becoming less and less useful in contemporary society where technologically mediated communication is constantly becoming more and more important (Garcia, Standlee, Bechloff & Cui, 2009, p. 52, 57). However, one aspect of this argument which I do not believe is discussed enough is the fact that for parts of our society this technology is a luxury – contingent on class and generational perspectives but also on the country of residence, since some governments try to restrict their citizens’ access to the internet (Hesmondhalgh, 2007, p. 257; Lavenda & Schultz, 2007, p. 198). For this reason expressions such as ‘the contemporary society’ become loaded with meaning and a rhetorical question one might ask is: What kinds of people are included in this society where technologically mediated communication is the norm?

Since the boundaries between online and offline have become complex, my initial aim was to avoid using the terms online and offline, but I found it difficult considering that this is where existing research on the topic seems to have gotten “stuck” (cf. Hine,

2000; Itō et al., 2010; Markham & Baym, 2009; Miller & Slater, 2000). I argue for a development of more useful terms than online and offline; ones that are successfully able to mirror and analyze everyday settings where an obvious swing between these two contexts result in a more fruitful discussion than can be provided by focusing on the demarcation between them. Despite the difficulty in foreseeing what these terms might be, I would argue that they would have to include the social aspect of which social media is an example (cf. Itō et al., 2010).

Coming from a European Ethnology background, I am not used to having to travel far away in order to do fieldwork since European ethnologists have mainly focused on their own surroundings, unlike anthropologists who have mainly traveled great geographical distances for their research (Amit, 2000). Yet, I would claim that the importance of personal face-to-face relationships, represented by participant observation, is still highly valued (Davies, 2008). Conducting parts of the fieldwork offline in my own surroundings in the south of Sweden enabled me to do participant observation. I did three 'interview sessions' with Hanna and another hip-hop scholar at Lund University in October 2010 who at that time was writing an article on the connection between hip-hop artists in Sweden and the Middle East. These sessions, lasting between an hour and a half to three hours in length, consisted of unstructured interviews and discussions between the three of us focusing on hip-hop, Hanna's musical background and how she became a member of a hip-hop crew in the Middle East. I also accompanied Hanna to Sveriges radio (Sweden's radio) in November 2010 when she was a guest on *Din gata* (Your street), a live radio show in Malmö, Sweden.

Interviews have been the main method of this study because of its aim to analyze ideas, values, experiences and worldviews. The construction of authenticity is expressed

through language as a part of a narrative resulting in a certain type of storytelling which is another reason why interviews have been the method of choice. This echoes Davies (2008) who states that online research is “heavily dependent on interpretation of discourse and narrative presentation” (p. 159). I conducted five unstructured offline interviews and two semi-structured offline interviews with Hanna. I also conducted nine semi-structured online interviews<sup>5</sup> lasting from one to two hours with eight of her musical followers between the ages of 19 and 41 based in Sweden, Italy, Bosnia, Germany, USA and Saudi Arabia as well as two 45 minutes to 90 minutes long offline interviews with two musical followers in Malmö, Sweden during February 2011. The interviews with participants living in Sweden were conducted in Swedish, the interview with the participant in Bosnia was conducted in Bosnian/Croatian (a political question I will not further address here) and the interviews with the participants in other countries were conducted in English. Although I speak all three languages fluently, I am the least fluent in Bosnian/Croatian, which resulted in my asking Herbares for clarifications of the meaning of some of the words that he used. Only one participant was a native English speaker.

This study was my first experience of getting in touch with interviewed participants through the internet. One shortcoming in the process of conducting online interviews was the difficulty in getting the informants to express themselves through long and detailed answers during instant messaging (IM) interviews where the common way of expressing oneself is in a short form which is a consequence of the technology and how it is commonly used (the fast pace embedded in the conversation inhibits long and

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<sup>5</sup> An eleventh online interview was conducted with a musical follower in April 2011 since circumstances enabled the interview to take place in Feb along with the others. Unfortunately, I have not been able to use this interview due to time management and other circumstances.

detailed answers). An advantage with IM interviews, email interviews as well as those conducted through Facebook messages (non-instant) is that by replacing the interviewer with a computer potentially self-protective motives on part of the interviewee can be reduced (Joinson, 2005, p. 34). In other words, without the possibility of evaluating the interviewer's reactions to her/his own behavior, the interviewee might be more honest and open resulting in a more balanced power relation. I found the audio online interviews provided a clear focus on the spoken word that was not present in face-to-face interviews where the physical and social norms that are strongly linked to it played a major role. The webcam interviews where both the interviewer and the interviewee are able to see each other and talk resembles the face-to-face interview the most, which I was personally the most comfortable with since that was the only type of interview I had previous experience of. The face-to-face interviews enable the presence of body language and the abovementioned physical which can be a positive aspect when used as a complementary addition to the spoken word and can add emphasis to certain statements. But it can also be a negative aspect when given too much emphasis since different people have different kind of body language and when meeting someone for the first time there is no way of knowing if the interpretation of the body language is what the interviewee might have intended.

Davies (2008) reminds us of the importance of being conscious of the contexts in which interviews take place (p. 122). During two of the online interviews I became very aware of this aspect because it affected the interview situation for me. The first interview was with Big H at the end of January 2011 when parts of Saudi Arabia, including the city he was in at the time, were flooded. The other took place in the



beginning of February 2011 with Herbares who lives in Bosnia. Here is an excerpt from my fieldnotes:

One thing that struck me in connection with the beginning of both the interview with Big H and the one with Herbares was the uneasiness I felt regarding the terrible events in their everyday lives because it reminded me of my own "privileged guilt" by not having those kind of worries. In the case of Big H it was the flooding of the part of Saudi Arabia where he was at the time and his statement "*and the most terrible thing is that there is NO DRAINAGE SYSTEM here*". In the case of Herbares, he described the tension among the ethnically mixed population in Bosnia which still has not eased despite the civil war ending in mid 1990s (the same war which caused my family's escape to Sweden) and the economy preventing people from finding work. How can I in any way justify a discussion about music when the conversations are initiated with issues revolving personal safety - to have the freedom and luxury of feeling good and live your life the way you want to? I did not know how to turn the conversation to the topic of Hanounch. Luckily both of the interviewees did that for me.

(Fieldnotes, February 6, 2011)

This description indicates the power relations embedded in every interview and how the interviews initially started out focusing on something other than the topic relevant to my research (Davies, 2008, p. 120). I did my best to be sensitive to the situation and talk about what the interviewees found important. I took part in the conversation as much as I could, trying to avoid being the listening interviewer who is only getting information. In some situations I was asked many questions that I had not prepared for but I answered them since I was aiming for a conversation where give and take balances the power relation of the interview situation (Davies, 2008, p. 113, 121). Also, I could relate to Herbares' reality about the ethnic tension in former Yugoslavia, which is a part of my heritage and can also become a present reality in certain situations and places. I am of Croatian descent but was raised in Sweden from the age of 8.

The interviews were conducted during a period of one month (from the end of January until end of February, 2011) which did not enable any deeper knowledge of the informants' views, thoughts and practices that might have changed over a longer period of time. An important aspect is the fact that the artist's album was released during the time that I conducted most of the interviews, which might have affected the popularity of and the interest in Hanouneh at the time. The key participant in this study, Hanna, is the only participant that I can claim to have gained a deeper knowledge of, since the fieldwork focusing on her lasted for four months in total.

Yet, the authenticity construction stretches further than the language sphere which is why other methods are used. Besides the abovementioned participant observation, these include image analysis and photo-elicitation (Davies, 2008, p. 135). I have also kept a fieldjournal during the fieldwork period. Other materials used include articles written about Hanouneh during the fieldwork period, her music, the activity on her Facebook accounts (profile material) and images from Hanouneh's debut album cover and her website. This material has mainly resulted in a deeper understanding the main interviewed participant, Hanna, but through the discussions about the imagery a deeper insight has been gained about the other participants also.

### **Anonymity and labels for the knowledge-producers**

Sociologist Gary Alan Fine (2004, p. 13) describes the use of pseudonyms as a common ethical consideration in ethnographic research. In this study I have decided to give the participants, except for Hanna, the freedom to choose their own pseudonym which is the reason why they are very different from one another. The reason for this is because I wanted them to be able to decide how they would be represented. Some of them have

chosen “common” first names while others have chosen their own nicknames or in some cases names inspired by the reggae and hip-hop scenes. I did not ask them to provide the reason for their choice of name, but in some cases they explained it without me asking. As for the main co-participant, Hanna Hanouneh, I did initially ponder whether she would also be anonymous, but the realization that making her anonymous would inhibit the necessary analysis<sup>6</sup> I decided that it would not be possible. Another aspect of this is the fact that Hanouneh is a public figure, which makes it difficult to apply anonymity (Davies, 2008, p. 60). All the participants have also been informed that they will have an opportunity to read the finished text before publication in order to avoid any potential misunderstandings.

I initially used the term fan and fans when referring to the participants in the study but ‘fans’ as a concept turned out to be more complex than I thought, and loaded with meaning I was not aware of in the beginning<sup>7</sup>. Some of the participants identified themselves as listeners, others as activists and users of music. Therefore, I have decided to use the collective term *musical followers* when referring to the participants who are listening to, taking part in Hanouneh’s music and have an interest in her as an artist. Being a follower is in this context someone who is in some way interested in taking part of Hanouneh as an artist by listening to her music, going to her live performances, following her on various social networking sites such as Facebook or showing her support in some other way.

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<sup>6</sup> Making Hanouneh anonymous would inhibit the use of her name and imagery associated with her debut album and the website launched on the day of the album release. This would have made the analysis weak. Because of this, and with the nature of the thesis topic not being ethically sensitive, I decided that anonymity would not be an option. Hanna approved this choice and agreed that there would be no point in making her anonymous.

<sup>7</sup> See ch 4 for a longer discussion on this.

The people in the field who share information with researchers about their lives have traditionally been referred to as ‘informants’. In recent years anthropologists and ethnographers have started to question this label because of its main focus on the information these people provide resulting in a view of them as one-dimensional research subjects. In ‘reality’, however, these subjects have often been known to the researchers as for example friends and neighbours (Lavenda & Schluts, 2008, p. 5-6; Amit, 2000, p. 2-3). This is also the case for this study. The main co-participant, Hanna Hanouneh, has with time become a friend, as well as an adviser on the music community through her role as an artist. Some of Hanouneh’s musical followers added me as their Facebook friend which has resulted in us getting to know each other beyond the scope of this study.

Since the ethnographic community has not yet agreed on another term which would work better than informant (Lavenda & Schluts, 2008, p. 5-6), I have decided to use the term participants and co-participants. One reason for this choice is the description of the ethnological field “not as a laboratory but rather an endless river of events, stories, symbols and feelings” [my translation] by ethnologists Billy Ehn and Orvar Löfgren (1996, p. 124), a view which I share, and would argue that participant is an appropriate name for the people in these stories. Focusing on the contribution to the study of everyone involved, myself included, is a more reflexive perspective in the sense that it portrays the field as something constructed by the researcher and the co-participants (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 59). These relationships constitute ethnographic fieldwork, especially the method of participant observation (Amit, 2000, p. 3; Davies, 2008, p. 88).

### Meet the participants

*Hanna "Hanouneh"* is the main participant in this study. She was in her mid-30s at the time of the study and was born and raised in the south of Sweden. In her late teens she traveled to Jerusalem to explore the area through backpacking. Since she did not have much money she had to get a job in order to be able to stay. Her language skills in English and French helped to get her a job as a waitress. The restaurant owner and his relatives became the host family with whom she ended up living. This Palestinian family became "her second family" throughout the period of 1994 to 2001, which she spent on and off in the Middle East. She describes this period of her life as formative in the sense that she was not yet an adult and lacked the academic filter she has today. During this period she also lived shorter periods of time in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip and Egypt. While living in Gaza City, she experienced Israeli attacks on Gaza where people (herself included) had to seek refuge from bombs and live in fear for their lives. This is what forced her to return to Sweden.

Hanna comes from a family where the men played music, mostly jazz, which inspired her to make music and gave her the opportunity to jam at family reunions from an early age. She says that she has always composed music in her head. She played double bass in a folk jazz band and later bass guitar in a garage punk band. In 2004-2005 she formed another band, this time with her brother, and chose reggae as its main expressive style. The band lasted for approximately a year and was the first time she had the role of vocalist. Singing was something she later came to prefer to playing instruments because of her being "too lazy". In 2005 she started recording her own music on her computer and digitally sent it to others for mixing. In the fall of 2008 she started Don Dada Productions, a music production company, together with a reggae

producer, also from south of Sweden, known by the name of Sloap. The debut album was released in February 2011. (Fieldnotes, Oct 18, 2010 and personal communication with Hanna, Jan 13, 2011). Throughout the text, I refer to Hanna as Hanna when I am referring to her real person dimension<sup>8</sup>, as Hanouneh when I am referring to her performer dimension, and Hanna Hanouneh when the emphasis is on the combination of the real person and the performer dimensions (cf. ch 2).

*Aisha* is a 19 year old student who lives in the south of Sweden where she was also born and raised. She was 15 the first time she met Hanna in the context of an interview she did with the artist for a school paper on the topic of honor-based violence. Hanna's experience of living in Palestine along with her continued travel there to visit friends and her host family is described by Aisha as an important source for information on life in Palestine, from where her parents hail. Aisha has never been there but dreams about going there one day. At the time of the interview she had listened to Hanouneh's music for approximately a year. (Interviews and fieldnotes i. Aisha).

*Alexander* is a 37 years old selecta (DJ within the reggae scene) from Berlin, Germany, where he was also based at the time of the interview. He was introduced to Hanouneh's music through a compilation album he came across on the internet approximately two years before the interview took place. (Interviews and fieldnotes m. Alexander).

*Big H* is a 29 year old media company employee from Saudi Arabia where he was living at the time of the interview. He writes a blog which he describes as "a platform for non-commercially based music and art". DJ Lethal Skillz introduced him to Hanouneh's music. (Interviews and fieldnotes b. Big H).

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<sup>8</sup> See ch 2 for a discussion of the terms the real person dimension and performer dimension.

*Bob* is a 24 year old student who lives in Milan, Italy. He studies literature and theatre, but at the time of the interview was working on a thesis with a professor who was very interested in Islam. He discovered Hanouneh's music during his student exchange in Poland: "I listened to music on YouTube and there was this guy called roxs90 who shared a lot of reggae music and I used to listen to his playlist. One of the songs was by Hanouneh". (Interviews and fieldnotes l. Bob).

*Caleb* is 41 years old. He was born in Germany but has lived in many places throughout his life ("always as a US citizen") and has lived in the USA for the last two decades. He works with web based technology and DJing, among other things. Caleb found Hanouneh's music online by accident, liked what he heard and googled her to find more. (Interviews and fieldnotes f. Caleb).

*Herbares* is a 22 year old economy student from Bosnia where he was living at the time of the interview. He came across Hanouneh's music accidentally on YouTube when searching for reggae music, approximately a year before the interview took place. (Interviews and fieldnotes d. & g. Herbares)<sup>9</sup>.

*Leo* is 40 years old and married with three children. He was born in the north of Sweden but has lived in the Stockholm area for many years. He works as a teacher in compulsory school (Interviews and fieldnotes h. Leo).

*Matsimilian* is 22 years old, from the middle of Sweden and works as a personal assistant. 4-5 months before the interview took place he had been advised by a friend to look up Hanouneh, who the friend described as the "best in Swedish reggae". (Interviews and fieldnotes e. Matsimilian).

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<sup>9</sup> The IM interview (Facebook chat) ended up unsuccessful due to technical problems with the program resulting in us doing the interview through Facebook messages (non-instant) at another time. This resulted in two different interviews.

*Mr B* is a 38 year old carpenter. He was born in Poland and moved to the south of Sweden at the age of 3 and has lived there ever since. He started listening to reggae when he was 15 and before that listened to a lot of hip-hop music. He was introduced to Hanouneh through the internet two years before the interview took place, when he found out that she was playing at a music festival together with another Swedish reggae artist. He went to the gig and walked up to her afterwards and told her that he liked her reggae, especially the songs she sings in the Skåne (a province in the very south of Sweden) dialect. He has followed her on Facebook ever since the event. (Interviews and fieldnotes k. Mr B).

*Noah* is 29 years old, lives in a university town in Sweden and is studying to become a High school teacher. She is originally from a small town in southern Sweden, but has lived in various parts of the country as well as other countries. She was introduced to Hanouneh's music by one of her roommates approximately a year before the interview took place (Interviews and fieldnotes j. Noah).

I, that is, the researcher, was 26 years old when the fieldwork took place and by the time I had finished writing this text I reached the age of 27 and a half. I was born in Croatia. At the age of 8, my family and I fled because of the civil war to Sweden and I have been living here ever since (except for an exchange year in Canada). Music has played an important role in my life for as long as I can remember and hip-hop culture, along with the mid-1990s version of r'n'b and soul, became the soundtrack of my upbringing. My scholarly ambition to research in hip-hop culture is rooted in its complexities and possibilities which I believe to be important perspectives on contemporary society.



### Being situated and reflexive

Amit (2000) argues that despite the choice of label for the co-participants of ethnographic studies, the intimacy created in these relationships is being exploited by ethnographers. She continues by stating that “[p]articipant observation is therefore often uneasily perched on the precipice between the inherent instrumentalism of this as of any research enterprise and the more complex and rounded social associations afforded by this particular method” (Amit, 2000, p. 3). I have done my best to be aware of and to try if possible to avoid the exploitation that Amit discusses by being an active and embodied participant in the social relationships and situations described in this thesis. The short presentation of myself among the other participants of the study is an example of this. Another is my ambition to have longer quotations from interviews and excerpts from the fieldnotes in order to let the reader take part in the analysis, to expose my role as a researcher but also as an individual and a musical follower myself.

As mentioned above, my initial relationship with Hanna was that of a musical follower with an artist which was confirmed for me in an unexpected way in February 2011 when her debut album, “Love & War”, was released both online and as a physical CD. I got it mailed to me (in a physical CD format) by the artist. The first thing I did after opening the album cover was to read the Thank you-list and I was pleasantly surprised to read the following: “and nr 1 fan andrea dankic for commitment and great advice”. After the initial overwhelming feelings of honor and joy had settled as well as the realization of a childhood dream – growing up I had fantasized about having my name in a CD cover one day – I returned to the researcher in me leading to questioning and worry about how this would affect the material and with it also the end result. Thoughts such as “I’m now officially a part of the material I am studying!” would not

leave me alone. How could I study the relationship between an artist and her fans when the artist has assigned me the title of her “nr 1 fan”? This meant that the study would involve me in ways that I had not foreseen in the beginning, and with this realization entered the term ‘situated knowledges’ by Donna J. Haraway (1991), a feminist theorist and philosopher of science and technology. Haraway describes this term as a feminist objectivity consisting of partial perspectives based on limited location enabling us to “become answerable for what we learn how to see” (Haraway, 1991, p. 190). She continues by arguing that being somewhere in particular is the only way to find a larger vision (Haraway, 1991, p. 196).

I share Haraway’s view that the only objectivity possible is one situated in a certain situation and perspective. I believe that my position as an insider in some aspects (being a musical follower of Hanouneh, and a passionate music lover) and an outsider in others creates a specific point of departure and partial vision which together shape a kind of “responsible scholarship” (Lavenda & Schultz, 2007, p. 228). I view research as an “embodied activity” based on the entire person including all the identities shared by the researcher (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 9). The fact that I was around the same age as several of the other musical followers while being almost a decade younger than Hanna Hanouneh is a part of the research production. Had I been in another phase of my life I might have seen other things in the material. This can be applied to other parts of my identity – gender, social class, ethnic background, cultural knowledge, geographical location, passion for music and hip-hop culture – which together shape and produce the research. This thesis was originally scheduled to be finished in June 2011 but due to family circumstances (my mother’s terrible illness) I was not able to focus during spring 2011 and let it rest until later that year when my focus returned. This is an aspect of my

social circumstances which has influenced this thesis. Thus, it is important to keep in mind the ‘lens‘ through which this story about contextualized stories is told. The text you are reading is a story of a certain period in time among a certain group of people whose accounts and actions are culturally analyzed by a situated scholar.

### **Theoretical framework**

This section serves as an introduction to the theoretical perspectives and concepts I use and develop in my analysis and arguments. The construction of authenticity as a concept is the focus of the thesis and thus also in this section with the theoretical perspectives and other concepts used in order to analyze it. The common approach to theory in Swedish ethnology can be described as eclectic (Schough, 1997, p. 13), of which this thesis provides an example of.

*The cultural analytical perspective* as defined by Swedish ethnologists draws on the notion of varied definitions of ‘culture’ providing varied kinds of knowledge. One of the common definitions of ‘culture’ is defined by the codes, ideas and values that people more or less consciously share, communicate and cultivate/process through their actions (Ehn & Löfgren, 2001, p. 9). The goal of this perspective is to conceptualize the cultural glasses of the Other based on these codes, ideas and values (cf. Nilsson, 1999, p. 208). In other words, a cultural analytical perspective aims at trying to figure out how people view, deal with and structure their world. This perspective (and methodological approach) is the foundation of this thesis.

Swedish ethnological research has during the last decades had cultural relativism as its point of departure which promotes a view that people should be understood through the perspective of their own ‘culture’ (cf. Bäckman & Ekström, 2001). The ethnologists

Maria Bäckman and Simon Ekström (2011) argue for the need of an increased focus on the political aspects of cultural relativism, such as how power is created, which, by ignoring, many ethnologists give the impression of pretending that it does not exist. This is connected to the sympathy often expressed by ethnologists for the people who take part in their studies with emphasis put on describing them respectfully and as good and reasonable members of society (Ehn & Löfgren, 1996, p. 174). This is something I have constantly had in the back of my mind during both the fieldwork period and later on during the writing process of the text you are currently reading, which has caused feelings of ambivalence. I was worried the outcome would result in portrayals of the co-participants, particularly the protagonist Hanna Hanouneh, as helpless victims to the discourse of popular understandings of authenticity – views of the ‘mainstream’ as the evil and the ‘underground’ as the good. My intention and aim have instead been to respectfully portray the participants, along with myself, as reflexive individuals who deal with the complexities of the imagery associated with, the consumption and the meaning music plays in their lives. This also includes showing their human contradictions and prejudices, also argued for by Bäckman & Ekström (2001, p. 172). Therefore, I have aimed at trying to understand *why* the participants understand themselves and the object of the study as they do instead of only *understanding* them (Bäckman & Ekström, 2001, p. 172).

*Authenticity* is a concept that has been in debate for centuries (cf. Bendix 1997, Lindholm 2007, Taylor 1991, Vannini and Williams 2009). Several scholars mention Rousseau as an important source for the development of the idea of authenticity as we know it today (Lindholm 2007, p. 8; Taylor 1992, p. 26-29) because he was one of the first to advocate that the idea of striving to be honest with yourself and your

surroundings was the ultimate authentic human experience (Lindholm 2007, p. 8). This view of authenticity is often criticized as “false consciousness” (Lamla 2009, p. 171). Some even go so far as to argue that there is no authenticity in the contemporary society of early 21<sup>st</sup> Century where cultural capitalism – the interrelationship between culture and economy – is the ruling ideology which to some degree uses authenticity somewhat as a fuel for consuming authentic products and experiences (Lamla 2009, p. 176-179).

In line with the work of ethnologist Regina Bendix, I believe that the interesting question is not so much what authenticity is, but rather how it is being used (Bendix 1997, p. 21). Sociologist Richard A. Peterson (1997) mentions six uses of authenticity. The construction of authenticity in the context of an artist and her musical followers is mostly linked to one of them: “real, not imitative” which deals with a person who, or performance which is solely able to produce a certain image, style or to record particular music which makes her/him real and unique (Peterson 1997, p. 206-209).

Barker and Taylor (2007) mention three different kinds of authenticity applied among musicians during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: personal authenticity, cultural authenticity and representational authenticity. Personal authenticity can be garnered through sincerity and autobiography, i.e. ‘keeping it real,’ singing about personal pain and vision (p. x, 22) and is exemplified by the grunge/alternative rock group Nirvana (1987-1994) who are described by the authors as seeming genuine in everything they did, especially the singer Kurt Cobain’s highly personal songs:

His words not only reflected his pain, but they were sung with a raw, stripped-down passion. He had gone to tremendous lengths to ‘keep it real,’ to rebel against commercial expectations, and to expose his problems to the public.

(Barker and Taylor, 2007, p. 2).

Cultural authenticity is based on traditional instruments and the usage of old songs (Barker and Taylor 2007, p. x). Representational authenticity means “simply that something is what it claims to be and not counterfeit” (Barker and Taylor 2007, p. 23).

Hip-hop culture, which Hanouneh is a part of, is loaded with authenticity markers often based on the statement of ‘keeping it real’ (cf. Asante 2008, Chang 2005, Condry 2007, Dyson 2001, Perry 2004). Growing up in Sweden with (predominately American) hip-hop culture, ‘keeping it real’ was constantly echoed in my surroundings but with a frustrating lack of any actual explanation of its meaning. Several years later I figured out that realness in the context of American hip-hop culture was immersed in implicit storytelling of blackness based on poverty and identification with ‘the ghetto’ (e.g. Asante 2008, Condry 2007, Dyson 2001). Several scholars have argued that stereotypes associated with ‘authentic’ blackness ranging from the “ignorant, womanizing, hypermasculine thug to the oversexed, loud, quick-to-get-an-attitude-over-nothing bitch”, have resulted in keeping African Americans and the imagery surrounding them in a mental prison (Asante 2008, p. 29; Collins 2005).

How is authenticity used in the scope of this study? As previously mentioned, I view authenticity as a contextualized construction, or a system of values. Authenticity is being used as “real, not imitative” throughout the thesis, as well as personal authenticity when analyzing the construction of authenticity. The second chapter explores the authenticity construction based on the storytelling of cultural experiences from the Middle East where Hanouneh gained double-membership through her nickname and is depicted negotiating her own ethnic background with the claiming of the link to the Middle East. The third chapter examines authenticity construction by focusing on

various kinds of struggles articulated through radical markers. The fourth chapter focuses on the construction of authenticity through authenticity as the negotiation of the term 'fan', which most musical followers opposed, and ends with a discussion of authenticity construction through the focus on the importance for Hanounch to be believable, both online and offline, in order for a certain kind of Friendship to be created between her and the musical followers.

*Identity through gender, ethnicity and music.* When viewing knowledge from a constructivist perspective concepts such as identity, gender and ethnicity are defined as being created in a social context, through the interaction with other people's experiences and ideas (cf. Nilsson, 1999, p. 28). That is the foundation for those concepts in this study where identity plays an important role in the music creation process as well as the artistic image. Feminist and gender studies scholars referred to in this thesis (cf. Ganetz, 2009; Ganas, 2009; Haraway, 2003; Werner, 2009) share this perspective on gender as something negotiated and constantly created.

*Perspectives of the cultural study of music* is my collective term for ethnomusicology and musicology which share a general understanding of music as something which is produced by people for people in different social and cultural situations (cf. Nordström, 2010, p. 24). These perspectives inform my material through the understanding of what music is, how it is created as well as by applying theories and arguments by various scholars from these perspectives in my analysis.

## **Previous research**

The cultural study of music has produced several studies discussing the link between authenticity and music as a side focus (e.g. Ganetz, Ganas, Huss & Werner, 2009;

Lilliestam, 2009; Thornton, 1995). Arvidsson (2008, p. 361-381) depicts through the construction of 'good' and 'bad' music also authenticity production within the study of the link between music and politics in Sweden during the period of 1965-1980. One example of a study focusing on authenticity is Peterson (1997) which explores the use of authenticity within the development of American country music. Another example is Moore (2002) which focuses on the process of authenticity construction in American rock and contemporary folk music arguing that the focus should be on *who* is being authenticated instead of *what*. A study worth mentioning for its contribution to the study of construction of authenticity is Fine (2004) which discusses use of authenticity in the context of American self-taught artists. My ethnographic study contributes with ethnographic knowledge of authenticity production among a musician and her audience. Another contribution is insight regarding music-making through the perspective of authenticity in a context which oscillates between the online and offline resulting in a more global study than the other studies on authenticity I have gotten hold of.

This study also belongs in the academic field of hip-hop scholarship or academia. One of the most common topics in that field is the link between (ethnic) identity and hip-hop culture (e.g. Kitwana, 2002; Basu & Lemelle, 2006). The few ethnographic studies that exist are devoted to the practical creative aspects of b-boying/b-girling<sup>10</sup> and DJing (cf. Schloss, 2004; Schloss, 2009). Authenticity tends to be an aspect of hip-hop culture which is mentioned in some way in most studies, but the focus on it tends to be overlooked. Thus, my study contributes with the focus on authenticity construction within hip-hop culture. Another contribution is the fusion of reggae and hip-hop culture

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<sup>10</sup> A hip-hop term for breakdancers who are often considered to invest more time and energy in their dance than the common 'breakdancer'.



as it is constructed in a oscillated setting between the online and offline contexts filtered through the intersection of ethnicity, gender, age.

## 2. HANOUNEH IS HER NAME

*So it's New Year's Eve, got my glass filled  
 Bottle of champagne chilled  
 Lookin' at the crowd around me bubblin' like they all thrilled  
 DJ's looking real skilled  
 Mek we hit the dancefloor and forget about reality like all dem likkle youth killed  
 All dressed up, got plenty dollar bill in me pocket  
 Dem fireworks a-blastin' me eyes out their socket  
 But I know some people get a different kind of rocket  
 I feel my mind drifting south/ I get a bitter taste in my mouth  
 And as the celebration 'round me increases  
 I know my old block gets smashed into pieces  
 As the sky lights up from bonfiring  
 I know some people be running from gunfiring  
 Dem be looking for cover until the enemy's done firing  
 Not every blast be non-violent*

Hanouneh – "Gaza N.Y.E."

This chapter examines the construction of authenticity through an analysis of the artist's name which is a word in Arabic. I will start with a discussion of the relationship between Hanna and the meaning of the name Hanouneh. I then continue by arguing the interplay between the double-naming of Hanouneh and the appropriation of different dimensions of performer personas. Finally, I analyze the importance of emotions used in the storytelling about Hanouneh's cultural link to the Middle East and the role her Swedish ethnic background plays.

### Being hanouneh

Hanouneh means caring, considerate, thoughtful and pleasant in Arabic. Hanna, who learned Arabic during the periods when she lived in the Middle East and continued to study the language at university upon her return to Sweden, adds that the word is often

used in the context of a mother's care, tenderness and affection (Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh). Henry Diab, a lecturer in Arabic at Lund University in Sweden, agrees with this description of the word. Diab states it as a very positive word and explains that it comes from the Arabic word *hanun* (masculine) and *hanuna* (feminine) and claims the spelling of *hanouneh* to be the way he would transcribe the word (personal communication, April 27, 2011).

To musical follower Aisha, [this] Hanna *is* Hanouneh. As I mention above, Aisha met Hanna for the first time four years before our interview took place when she interviewed Hanna for a school project on honor-based violence after which they stayed in touch.<sup>11</sup> Aisha first got to know her outside of the musical context. When I ask Aisha if she connects the name Hanouneh to any particular country her automatic response is:

*Aisha:* I'm Arab... Hanouneh means considerate, thoughtful.<sup>12</sup>

*Andrea:* (laughs with surprise) That was easy...

*Aisha:* Yeah... (chuckles)

*Andrea:* So you only think of the Arabic word?

*Aisha:* Yeah... I don't think of it as Hanouneh but as *hanun* as we say it in our language and that means being considerate and thoughtful.

*Andrea:* But do you then think of it as her nickname?

*Aisha:* No, I rather think that it's her.

*Andrea:* In what way?

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<sup>11</sup> Hanna is a lecturer and specialist in the field of honor-based violence.

<sup>12</sup> Aisha uses the Swedish word "omtänksam" which I have tried to translate as closely as possible into English.

*Aisha:* Names tend to reflect one's personality and for me, I've always thought of her in this way... As I told you before, she always puts everyone else first, so... Yeah...

*Andrea:* So you think that the name suits her well?

*Aisha:* Yeah, I do (chuckles).

*Andrea:* Because she has told me that since her name is Hanna... when she was over there [the Middle East] it became Hanouneh just like any other nickname, it was a natural nickname... And then it just happened to have this meaning...

*Aisha:* Okay, but my sister's name's Hanna, but it's never been... I don't know... I don't actually know how it is in Palestine, but in my family it hasn't been like that....

*Andrea:* Aha, okay... So you've never called your sister hanouneh?

*Aisha:* Eeh, no...

*Andrea:* Maybe she's not considerate? (chuckles)

*Aisha:* (serious) No, but it's like... Hanna means happiness in our language but Hanouneh means considerate and thoughtful, so they are two completely different things...

*Andrea:* So you see no connection?

*Aisha:* No...

(Interviews and fieldnotes i. Aisha)

For Aisha, the meaning of Hanouneh is tightly woven into who Hanna is as a person. Ethnologist Charlotte Hagström (2006) argues that names contain notions of identity for who the person who carries it is, how s/he thinks, acts and views life (p. 12). Hagström has researched the connection between names and cultural identity with a focus on how cultural identity is created, maintained and changed (2006, p. 24). Names play an important role in social and cultural classification and are a vital aspect of the personal and cultural identity for many people. It is thus difficult to separate the person from the

name (Hagström, 2006, p. 13, 16), which is what happens when Aisha argues that Hanna *is* hanouneh. By comparing this Hanna with her own sister who is also called Hanna, Aisha explains that Hanna is hanouneh because she views her as a caring and thoughtful person who always puts others first.

Musical followers Big H and Alexander, who both work with music, associate the Arabic word hanouneh with musical ability. Big H is a blogger and radio show host in Saudi Arabia who promotes what he defines as “good music that doesn’t disrespect your mind” (Big H, personal communication, February 14, 2011). When discussing Hanouneh’s name with him he describes it as “a great name... Mixed in a way between Arabic & Western... I like it. Hanouneh means ‘soft’ in Arabic, in a way she’s silently killing on the mic, softly killing it, like the fugees ‘killing me softly’ lol. (Interviews and fieldnotes b. Big H). Alexander, a DJ and radio show host as well, did not know that Hanouneh was an actual word before our interview. After I told him the meaning of the word he said that it fits her and connected it to musical talent:

*Alexander:* To do music in our time is a tough thing to do. It’s really hard work... You have to... There’s a lot not so nice things happening. You have a gig and there’s a contract that you will get your money but you don’t get your money, stuff like that... And...

*Andrea:* But hasn’t that been the case like, always?

*Alexander:* Yeah, but it’s about the music, you know, not the food, it’s about the music. That’s the thing about the arts, and you have to take care of it... It is a gift that was given to you so you have to take care of it...

(Interviews and fieldnotes m. Alexander)

Alexander finds the name fitting to Hanouneh since he believes that she is taking care of her musical talent which he believes musicians should do.

Hanna claims that if she had chosen an adjective based on qualities she possesses she would not have chosen hanouneh since being “soft, tender, affectionate” is not how she views herself. Yet she does appreciate the fact that the name is difficult to place but that it still indicates an association with the Middle East (Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh). This is an example of when self-identity, the way a person views her- or himself, is in conflict with ascribed identity, the way other people think of and view a person (Hagström, 2006, p. 18-19). Hanna claims not to identify herself with the *meaning* of her Arabic nickname but rather the fact that it *speaks of* the Middle East, of which her statement that Hanouneh is “a natural Arabic nickname for Hanna” is yet another example. I would state the importance of this Middle Eastern cultural identity to be an example of the authenticity production between Hanna and her musical followers. Thus the word hanouneh contains in this context both the ascribed identity given by the musical followers – being considerate as a person, and being considerate with one’s musical skills and talent – and a part of Hanna’s self-identity – the Arabic link.

### **Double-naming into being me**

Nicknames can also function as ways of integrating in a certain setting or community (Holland, 2006, p. 101). Hanna has told me on several occasions that the Palestinian family she lived with in Jerusalem gave her the nickname Hanouneh among the rest of the family members. By being called Hanouneh she is constantly reminded of her connection to the family she lived with. The fact that the name Hanouneh was given to her by the family can be viewed as a symbolic act – a new beginning in a new geographical place as a part of a new community represented by the Palestinian family (Hagström, 2006, p. 84).

After years of having Hanouneh as her nickname within the Arabic context and community, Hanna decided to pursue her music career and therefore she had to choose an artist name. The person whom she acknowledges as having chosen her artist name is DJ Lethal Skillz. She got in contact with him through MySpace in 2005 resulting in her becoming a part of the 961 Underground, an international hip-hop crew with roots in Lebanon of which Skillz is a member. Hanna describes the naming ritual as Lethal Skillz saying: “Ah, well, we need to call you something so why not call you Hanouneh?!” and in that moment her Palestinian family-affiliated nickname became her artist name as well (Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh).

I would argue that this double-naming of Hanouneh in the two contexts of the Palestinian family and hip-hop culture in the Middle East works as a confirmation of officially becoming a part of several new communities (Hagström, 2006, p. 84-85) which becomes a part of the construction of authenticity by granting her the possibility of representing these communities through membership. The fact that the name was given to her by other people in the Middle East is another part of the authenticity production. This is not a name she made up on her own in any way, which is the case for many artists, and I believe this is an important aspect since it adds to the impression of being more real and authentic. One example of this is when Hanna describes Hanouneh as “moderately her own”:

The name chose me which is good since I’ve never thought of myself as an artist... It would have been weird to call myself by my first name and Hanna Cinthio feels very associated with the family, so it’s really nice to have a name which is moderately my own... I’m very happy it turned out this way because it would have been really tough being forced to pick an artist name.  
(Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh)

Claiming the name to have chosen her points to the relationship between the name-givers and the agency of the name which is based on the abovementioned symbolic act. By being “moderately her own”, Hanouneh becomes, with an inherent element of an artist persona, a part of her self-identity. Hanna describes this artist persona as something almost forced upon her. She mentions several times in the interviews that she never dreamed about performing on stage, and compares herself with the many people who do that throughout their upbringing as well as later in life. The expressed resistance to dreams of performing on stage as well as the ambivalent relationship to the idea of an artist persona are parts of the authenticity production by being references to the idea of the artist role as something that chose *her* - not the other way around.

Performance scholar Philip Auslander (2006, p. 4) discusses three layers of a popular performer: the real person (the performer as a human being), the performance persona (on- and off-stage presentation, how the performer presents her/himself) and the character (a figure portrayed in a song). Auslander states that these different layers are often hard to separate from one another, which I would argue is the case with Hanna. She tries hard to argue that she simply *is being* the real person and not the performance persona, to use Auslander’s terms. The complexity of constantly having to refer to and put herself in relation to this performance persona is articulated here:

*Hanna:* (chuckles) “Come on, over act!” “But what do you mean, I’m not acting!” It’s not a role, it’s an extension of myself which might sound extremely pretentious now when I say it, but I have really never thought of it in any other way and it becomes so obvious when I’m expected to do these typical posing things. It’s still me and how am I supposed to, if it doesn’t feel natural to me, how am I supposed to do it? And that it also could be more like the more attention it generates, the more people more or less take me as an individual into consideration. There is an exposure in that which in a way would be easier if... I feel that if I have to think through some kind of reference you have on the one hand artists such as Lady Gaga



for example with the special creations, half a meter long false eyelashes and really spectacular productions. She's probably living another kind of life when she's not on stage, I have to almost assume that, when she's not this artist (...) I can imagine that Amy Winehouse, for example (chuckles). She feels as if she is the same person on stage, off-stage or at a rehab clinic. I think that she behaves the same and says the same things, which leads to a certain vulnerability since you can't say "*But that's not me!*"

*Andrea:* Mmm...

*Hanna:* ...I can also imagine that you get more sensitive to criticism when you're more accessible as a person who is not always so uncomplicated... Because I notice it in people who contact me and who don't know me personally and are writing to the artist Hanouneh and that it might come as a surprise that I am like this, that I have this way of addressing people in a more personal way, but how else would I go about? (laughs). It gets weird and that's when I start to think that it would be different if I had a very separated artist persona/role that I had to step into and out of every time... Like "*Now I become this person, now I become this alterego*" and later on jump back to being me. It might have been more convenient in a way but I think that you either are that way or not... It's difficult to create it.

(Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh)

In the excerpt above Hanna provides two concrete examples of various degrees of the performer persona by referencing Lady Gaga and Amy Winehouse, two popular contemporary artists. Lady Gaga is described as the artist with a distinct performance persona referred to by Hanna as an artist persona while Amy Winehouse is described as lacking this persona and instead representing "the real" Amy whether on stage or not. Hanna identifies herself with the Amy kind of performer and points out one of the disadvantages with this kind of position: the lack of freedom to deny something about oneself as a person when you have no clearly defined performer persona such as Lady Gaga. When there is no clear definition of who you are it gets difficult to claim that something is "not me".

I would argue that Hanouneh is a performance persona since it differs from her real person dimension which includes among other things being an entrepreneur, lecturer, consultant, PhD student, mother of three and a wife. Her real person dimension is the one of the three dimensions to which “the audience has the least direct access, since the audience generally infers what performers are like as real people from their performance personae and the characters they portray.” (Auslander, 2006, p. 5). I agree with Schechner that performance is something inbetween the performers not being themselves and not not being themselves (as cited in Auslander, 2006, p. 5). Auslander claims the logic of the double negative to be represented by the names used by pop music artists which at first designate their persona and are later associated with the real person (2006, p. 5). Hanna’s Hanna Hanouneh Cinthio Facebook account is an example of this double negative. Hanouneh belongs to Hanna, the real person, as much as it belongs to the performance persona making her Hanna Hanouneh. This conjunction of Hanna Hanouneh is a part of the authenticity production in the sense that Hanna through Hanouneh speaks of the abovementioned Middle Eastern cultural identity. Therefore, the musical followers who contact her on Facebook, through email, YouTube, MySpace and in person at live shows are talking to her performer persona since that is what they know about her and are familiar with. The ones who know her real person dimension might have another approach to her and also other expectations. Aisha is an example of this since she got to know Hanna as an expert in issues surrounding honor-based violence. Her music is something that came along much later and this has constructed a specific view of Hanna as a real person and Hanouneh as the performer persona - the dimensions of her identity which according to Aisha should not be mixed. (Interviews and fieldnotes i. Aisha).

### Storytelling about cultural belongings and claiming of place

Hanna remembers the early beginning of MySpace in 2005 as a time when there were not that many profiles making it easy to surf around the social media site which is how she discovered DJ Lethal Skillz from Beirut. She added him as a MySpace friend and they started collaborating through the internet by him sending her a lot of beats to write lyrics and record vocals for. This is when the internet collaborations started off for Hanna. She got beats from producers to which she recorded vocals. She says that she initially did not know how to go about the home recordings on her own computer but that she taught herself by trial and error. (Fieldnotes, October 18, 2011).

With time DJ Lethal Skillz introduced her to his hip-hop crew 961 Underground<sup>13</sup> which consists of eight other members who are geographically located in Lebanon, other parts of the Middle East and Europe. Hanna tells that it all began in late 2006 when she got the beat to the song that later was named “Lost at midnight”. At the time there was no song title and he did not tell her what it was about. The only instruction she got was to interpret it on her own and write lyrics from there.

It felt as if everything clicked between us when I [Hanna] a couple of days later sent him [DJ Lethal Skillz] my recorded lyrics: he told me that the beat came about in the midst of Israel’s heaviest bombing of Beirut, that the war made him feel despondent and desparate, and that I had completely captured his feelings in my lyrics (...) In 2007, Skillz entered the song to a Polish competition, but it reached them too late and could therefore not be accepted in the competition, but one of the members of the jury who listened to the song was so fascinated by it that he invited the crew to perform at Vena Festival in Lodz, Poland, that year. The guy told us that he was willing to pay living and travel expences for all the members of the crew despite the fact that we had to travel from Lebanon, Cyprus and Sweden. At first we didn’t think it was for real, but in October we ended up meeting at Warszawa airport for the first time and had a couple of days festival and performance ahead of us. I became an official member of the crew the following year when I went to Lebanon.

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<sup>13</sup> 961 is the Lebanese country code for telephones and mobile phones.

(Hanna, personal communication, Jan 13, 2012)

In her description of how she became a part of 961 Underground there is also a story about how Hanna passes something similar to a test as a songwriter and a musician by “hearing” war and pain in the beat Lethal Skillz made in the midst of war in Beirut years after her own experiences of Israeli attacks of Gaza City. She writes the words that Lethal Skillz felt when he made the beat, which is the beginning of the musical bond between them. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), Sara Ahmed, professor in Race and Cultural Studies, examines how emotions move between, “get stuck” on and shape the surfaces of both individual and collective bodies. Ahmed suggests that “while the experience of pain may be solitary, it is never private. A truly private pain would be one ended by a suicide without a note.” (2004, p. 29). I interpret this as pain being something that is always shared with other people. Ahmed discusses a sociality of pain based on an ethics that starts with your pain but most importantly “acts about that which I cannot know, rather than act insofar as I know” (2004, p. 31). Hanna’s ability of “hearing” war and pain in the musical piece by Skillz is connected to Ahmed’s sociality of pain in the sense that Hanna did not know exactly what the pain was about but she felt it conveyed in the music. She acted on that which she did not know, with the difference that she once *did know* having lived through similar experiences during her time in Gaza. I would describe this as applying a recollection of previously experienced pain in a new situation.

Hip-hop scholar Imani Perry (2004) argues that artists within hip-hop culture should be understood within the context of a community (p. 6). I claim that situatedness is of the essence not only for me as a scholar, but also for Hanna because she does not

exist in a vacuum (Perry, 2004, p. 6). Through the name Hanouneh, the Palestinian family she lived with for years, membership in the Lebanese-oriented hip-hop crew, and her own experiences of war and destruction in a specific geographical place her music often focuses on, Hanna becomes a part of a particular community through which she is understood.

This situated community in a Middle Eastern context is the reason why most of the musical followers either were not quite sure of Hanouneh's ethnic background or simply assumed that she has a Middle Eastern background. Her ethnic background is Swedish and Sweden is the country where she was born and raised except for her late teenage years spent in the Middle East. Yet on her Hanna Hanouneh Cinthio Facebook profile (Cinthio, 2011) it says that she is from East Jerusalem, which Hanna explains as being an expression of her longing for the place. She mentions several times that the years she spent there shaped her as an individual (Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh). Perry (2004, p. 21) argues that the origin of an artist is important in hip-hop, but "more so as a symbolic affiliation rather than as a clear and specific historical truth" which is the case here.

Swedishness as a national identity is not viewed as something worthy of bringing forth in Hanna's storytelling about struggle, war and pain. I claim one reason for this to be the strong association between Swedishness and "a hegemonic white ethnicity that never speaks its presense" (Mirza as cited in Lundström, 2007, p. 89) which in a Swedish context is expressed by the term "anti-cultural" coined by ethnologist Karl-Olov Arnstberg (1989) and refers to culture as being something found in other countries but not in Sweden where "everyone is normal". For Hanna this normality was associated with boredom when graduating high school which was the reason why she

decided to travel abroad and ended up in the Middle East (Feghali, 2011). This view of culture as abnormal (and boring) has resulted in the right-wing extremist political parties' claim to fill this lack of culture with meaning based on xenophobia<sup>14</sup>, which is another reason why the link between Swedishness and a storytelling about the struggle Hanna brings forth in her music becomes problematic. These reasons make it difficult for Hanouneh to claim an expressed Swedish national identity. As a result, Swedishness in the context of Hanouneh and her music becomes something unspoken and replaced by something else which in this case is the struggle in the Middle East where she has lived (cf. Bäckman, 2009, p. 104).

The fact that Hanna has Western citizenship matters more. There is an evident awareness of the associations linked with this citizenship: Luxurious first-class treatments are made possible in the context of war and conflict enabling the one with the Western/Swedish passport to be taken to safety. This is expressed in the song “Mad respect to the 961” where Hanouneh sings:

*Got brothers n sisters all over the world / but while I ride first class they  
stuck in third/ Political crisis, another attack / One step forward and two  
steps back/ I try to relate to my boys and my girls / Truth is we be living in  
separate worlds/ I'm a different species / a privileged class / I know that my  
passport is saving my ass*

Feelings of discomfort and anger with her own “privileged class” position and experiences compared to the members of her family in the Middle East result in a double-edged sword when she is given the choice to leave the conflict area while they cannot (Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh). This double-edged sword is also described in the excerpt of the song “Gaza N.Y.E.” quoted at the start of this chapter

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<sup>14</sup> For a discussion on the connection between contemporary Swedishness and xenophobia, see e.g. Arnstberg (2010), Mattsson (2010), Orrenius (2010), Orrenius (2012), Uvell, Meier Carlsen, Svarrer, (2010).

where Hanna describes how “her old block gets smashed into pieces” while she is celebrating, having fun and not having to worry for her life at a New Year’s Eve party somewhere far away from Gaza. For Hanna these feelings of “privileged guilt” turned into feelings of responsibility to speak on behalf of people who are not able to speak for themselves:

I chose to be in that situation. I experienced it and lived in the middle of it, but it was my own choice. My sisters and cousins down there have never had a free choice to actually leave it as I have. I have seen up-close how some people very dear to me have suffered tremendously because of it, and this has pushed me to become involved in matters that concern structural oppression both within families but also societies, the situation in Palestine, both internally and politically, the occupation, Israel (...) These experiences cause a feeling of obligation. There is a huge privilege to view this from the outside and actually choose to leave it. I’m not subjected to the honor-norms if I don’t want to, I’m not subjected to the occupation and stuck in fucking misery like the family down there... I have the possibility of being here and then I have to speak about it. No matter if the lyrics are about girls and their situation or Palestine, no matter the level I’m convinced that the drive comes from there. Even if it’s an enormous privilege it is also a difficult feeling to be the one who can get out of there, that doesn’t feel good. It’s weird how the world works that just because I have my passport and I happen to be born here enables such an enormous freedom of choice regarding what I want to do with my life (...). This has turned into a responsibility that has come naturally. If my sister Nadja can’t rise up and say what she feels then I have to say it instead of her in a song.

(Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh)

In the case of Palestine, there are two sides to this privilege. Hanna has the freedom to leave and seek refuge whenever she wants, but also to go to Palestine whenever she chooses. According to Aisha, who has both Palestinian and Swedish citizenship, her Swedish/Western passport does not help her when traveling to Palestine because she claims that the Israeli authorities on the border to Palestine would not let her enter because of her Palestinian citizenship, despite the fact that she has never been there (Interviews and fieldnotes i. Aisha). Aisha expresses a wish to change places with

Hanna in order to be granted the opportunity to travel to Palestine which she refers to as her home country. Aisha's wish to switch places with Hanna demonstrates the power relations inbedded in this "privileged guilt".

The guilt is also based on living with someone elses pain, as vividly articulated by Ahmed (2004) through her own experiences of growing up with a mother diagnosed with a serious illness:

It is my mother who has pain. She has to live with it. Yet, the experience of living with my mother was an experiencing of living with her pain, as pain was such a significant part of her life. I would look at her and see pain. I was the witness towards whom her pleas would be addressed, although her pleas would not simply be a call for action (sometimes there would be nothing for me to do). Her pleas would sometimes just be for me to bear witness, to recognise her pain. Through such witnessing, I would grant her pain the status of an event, a happening in the world, rather than just the 'something' she felt, the 'something' that would come and go with her coming and going. Through witnessing, I would give her pain a life outside the fragile borders of her vulnerable and much loved body. But her pain, despite being the event that drew us together (...) was still shrouded with mystery. I lived with what was, for me, the unliveable.

(Ahmed, 2004, p. 29-30)

This description of living with someone else's pain, I would argue, contains elements of how Hanna might feel with regards to the pain of the Palestinian family she has lived with, but also the Palestinian people<sup>15</sup> as a whole often associated with political struggle (cf. Ch 3). By recognizing the witnessed pain through her music, Hanounch is granting their pain the status of a happening in the world. Witnessing in the sense of telling the story of ones surroundings and experiences is another important aspect of hip-hop which can be applied to Hanounch (Perry, 2004, p. 88). Hanna feels obliged to tell the suffering stories of the Palestinian people. These stories are about various kinds of

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<sup>15</sup> For an analysis of the Palestinian people's history, see e.g. Sayigh (2007).



oppression: Honor-based norms, war and occupation forces. This is also connected to a specific kind of representation found in hip-hop culture: “to scream for the unheard and otherwise speak the unspeakable” (Chang, 2005, p. 328). Representing others by speaking for them results in a production of authenticity by linking Hanouneh to this view of authentic suffering and struggle. Gary Alan Fine (2004) states in his study on self-taught artists within the art world that “the claimed authenticity of objects rubs off on the purchaser, particularly in a society that values diversity and an expansive tolerance as expressed through commodified markers of taste” (2004, p. 275). I believe this to be comparable with Hanouneh’s construction of authenticity in the context of speaking for others. The claimed authenticity associated with the specific emotions and experiences of the specific physical place “rubs” in the same way “off” on Hanouneh.

Another example of this “rubbing off” of authenticity is found in Hanouneh’s song “Real Gaza me seh!”<sup>16</sup> where a hip-hop representation is applied. ‘Gaza’ is in the context of Jamaican dancehall culture a reference to a ‘ghetto’ neighborhood of Kingston with ‘Gully’ being another such neighborhood<sup>17</sup>. There are two “groups”<sup>18</sup> within Jamaican dancehall representing each area and the conflicts between them have escalated into actual gang wars with many lives wasted. Hanouneh states that the aim with her song was to do a wordplay with the dancehall Gaza but also to show that there is a “genuine, deeper conflict in the real Gaza which at the time of the writing was partly overshadowed by the Jamaican and in my opinion pretty pointless

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<sup>16</sup> Jamaican patois for “Real Gaza, I say”. Jamaican patois is the form of English spoken there.

<sup>17</sup> “It is commonplace in Jamaica for impoverished urban areas to be informally named after locations known globally as war zones. Thus there are locales named ‘Angola’, ‘Tel Aviv’, ‘Vietnam’ and of course ‘Gaza’”. (Paul, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Gaza (Empire) is associated with the artists VybzKartel, Popcaan, Beenie Man etc. Gully (Alliance) is linked with Bounty Killer, Mavado, Busy Signal etc. In 2009, Beenie Man released the song “Ah Gaza mi seh” which Hanouneh paraphrases with her song (Hanna, personal communication, Feb 13, 2012).

conflict” (Hanna, personal communication, February 13, 2012). In the song, Hanouneh sings:

*No need fi count how much blood dem shed/ Cause one single drop turns the ocean red/ Dis da real Gaza me seh/ Wicked crime scene pon di Gaza mi seh/ Try to justify murder with war and strife/ But you kill all mankind when you take one life/ Dis da real Gaza me seh/ Eyes of di world pon di Gaza mi seh*

The song came about in 2010 in the midst of the Ship to Gaza<sup>19</sup> convoy and was Hanna’s reaction to the attack of the convoy but also as a claim to have access to and knowledge about the real Gaza City in the Middle East by singing in patois together with Promoe, another Swedish hip-hop and reggae artist (Fieldnotes, October 25, 2010). During her trip to Jamaica in early 2011 she was introduced to the Jamaican musicians as “Hanouneh who has lived in the real Gaza” (Karlsson, 2011). This claim of the “real” Gaza, actual life experience from the geographical place Gaza City, becomes another production of authenticity by claiming the geographical place from a musical but also another geographical place in another part of the world. The song enables Hanna to witness à la hip-hop, that is to speak about what she finds important to tell about her surroundings. Gaza was not her geographical surrounding when she wrote “Real Gaza Me Seh!” but it is a place where she has lived and has experiences from. These experiences constitute the foundations of the struggle and resistance which serve as the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>19</sup> Ship to Gaza is described as “an initiative for practical solidarity with the people of Gaza” with the aim of sending actual ships with necessities from Scandinavia ([www.shiptogaza.se/en](http://www.shiptogaza.se/en), accessed 5 February 2012).

### 3. GIRLIE STYLE RESISTANCE

*You brutalize us, you terrorize us  
Now how can you ask for a truce  
When you left us with nothing to lose  
It's like we're lost in the night  
Paralyzed by the fright  
We seem to forget who we are  
Can't run from the shadows of war*

961 Underground – "Lost at midnight" (Hanouneh's verse)



The album cover of Hanouneh's debut album "Love & War" released in February 2011 © Jenny Bäcklin

This chapter elaborates the discussion of the construction of authenticity conducted in the previous chapter by expanding on the importance of struggle.

She is a strong woman with strong opinions which comes across in her lyrics... She sings good reggae, has a good sound. She brings hope to the people who like reggae as well as hip-hop... Through her lyrics she brings hope to oppressed people, the oppressed woman, against the ruling regime. Simply listen to her! Especially her lyrics...

(Interviews and fieldnotes k. Mr B)

Mr B's description of Hanouneh summarizes how most of her musical followers would describe her. She is viewed as a 'strong woman' singing songs about oppression and freedom which are caught in the web between reggae and hip-hop. The message behind the music is a trademark told not only through the lyrics but also through the imagery, which has the function of a companion providing a visual story of what Hanouneh is about. Therefore, I will begin by addressing the musical followers' interpretation of Hanouneh's imagery and message, and the roles they play in the production and consumption of authenticity. I will then depict how the artist's real person dimension with focus on aspects attained with age, such as a career and a family, enables the existence of Hanouneh and along with it the struggle for being 'underground enough'. Following this is a discussion on the various skills used by Hanouneh in her role as an artist. The chapter ends with a concluding analysis of the interplay between humor, self-irony and the color pink in the Hanouneh imagery.

### **A "Love & War" kind of fighter**

During the interviews I conducted with the musical followers after the release of Hanouneh's album in February 2011, we discussed the imagery used on the album cover

and the official Hanouneh website. Mr B uses the pink gun-shaped bag on the album cover when talking about the message behind Hanouneh's music:

The bag itself says '*I'm a rebel!*' (chuckle) '*I'm gonna fight this war*' (...)  
She fights a war for freedom, freedom of speech, against oppression. The message is that people are valuable, that they should have the guts to express themselves, say something!

(Interviews and fieldnotes k. Mr B)

Aisha continues along the line of Hanouneh being a rebel but takes it further and uses the word terrorist:

Terrorist, but in a good way... A terrorist doesn't really look like this, and I don't know how one looks like, but propaganda, media, everything is based on the idea of terrorists looking like this, you know what I mean, so I think that she's probably trying to show that '*I'm a terrorist, but I'm not the one you think I am*' ...

(Interviews and fieldnotes i. Aisha)

Bob mentions the imagery's association with Islam through the connotations of terrorism:

...the bag looks like a gun or something like that and I think that's a way of reflecting about what Islam is today because she looks like a Muslim woman, and her scarf and her bag is like a weapon. It's the image that a lot of people have of the Islamic reality today, they are all terrorists putting bombs everywhere...

(Interviews and fieldnotes l. Bob)

The link between Islam and terrorism as described by Bob is a common one in the post-9/11 era – a term alluding to a world where terrorism and the war against it play an important role. Historian Richard English mentions the possibility of interpreting the terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' in a pejoratively and obscure way in this era (English, 2009, p. 1). Despite its common usage the loaded term 'terrorism' lacks a clear definition and "has been used in so many ways, to refer to so many different (though

often partially overlapping) kinds of act, that it has become rather blurred in its usage” (English, 2009, p. 2). English continues by suggesting that the literal meaning of the word ‘terrorism’ – derived from the Latin ‘terrere’ meaning to frighten, terrify and scare away – inaccurately proposes to be linked to the meaning of the word ‘terror’ (2009, p. 5-7).

This, according to English, ambiguous meaning of the word terrorism makes it possible for Bob and Aisha to compare Hanouneh’s imagery to one of a terrorist. Aisha alludes to this ambiguity when stating that she “[doesn’t] know how one looks like, but propaganda, media, everything is based on the idea of terrorists looking like this” when referring to Hanouneh carrying the gun-shaped purse and wearing a Palestinian scarf (keffiyeh/kufiya in Arabic) covering her face except for her eyes. The link to the Middle East becomes evident through the scarf in two ways. The first is the political meaning attached to the scarf itself since it has been a symbol for the Palestinian people since the 1930s making it pro-Palestinian, even if it during the last couple of decades has become a fashion statement among hipsters and left-wing youth across the world (Kim, 2007). The second is the possibility of interpreting it in a militant way because of the way it is worn. Hanouneh is using it to mask herself allowing only the eyes to be visible. The latter interpretation is what Aisha refers to in her reading of Hanouneh resembling a terrorist.

Bob points out a third possible interpretation of the way the scarf is worn – as a hijab – when addressing her gender and potential religious affiliation in the statement that “she looks like a muslim woman” and claiming the imagery to be about what Islam

is today<sup>20</sup>. Both Noah and Alexander point out the possibility of interpreting Hanouneh's scarf as a hijab, but also as a 'fighter', a revolutionary (Interviews and fieldnotes j. Noah and m. Alexander). The focus on women, Islam and revolutionary ambitions was in the limelight at the time of the release of "Love & War", which came out in the midst of the Arab Spring (cf. Booth, Chrisafis, Finn, Marsh, Rice & Sherwood, 2011). The discourse of women in the Middle Eastern countries being depicted as having an important role in these revolutions is found in the musical followers' statements as well as the Hanouneh imagery connoting a female activist (or terrorist) on her debut album released in the midst of the demonstrations and protests in the Middle East. The important role of the protesters is supported by Time magazine appointing The Protester as the person of 2011 (Stengel, 2011).

The protester metaphor resonates in the debut album title "Love and War" which Hanna states as being representative of its content: a mix of the private represented by stories of relationships and the political being represented by "angry social criticism" (Svereggae, 2011). This emphasis on emotions runs through the imagery of Hanouneh as well as her music as previously discussed in ch 2 with regards to anger and pain. Hanouneh describes her music as emotion-driven focusing on pain, anger and self-therapy with regards to personal relationships (Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh). Gender theorist Ann Werner suggests in her doctoral dissertation about teenage girls' uses of music and their constructions of gender that songs about social problems are viewed as more real and authentic compared to songs about lust, money and joy in spite of the fact that there is nothing claiming the longing for money to be

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<sup>20</sup> See gender theorist Joan Wallach Scott's (2007) discussion on the background to and repercussions of the French government's ban of conspicuous signs of religious affiliation in public schools which mainly affected hijab-wearing girls.

less of a first hand experience than agony (Werner, 2009, p. 189). A certain type of authenticity based on writing about personal experience and feelings has served as a defining quality for rock music for several decades, argues gender theorist Hillevi Ganetz (2008, p. 62-63). She continues by stating that this kind of authenticity has found its antithesis in pop music defined by inauthenticity based on production and image, which is the focus in her study about a Swedish reality talent show, Fame Factory (Ganetz, 2008, p. 63). The show aired on TV3 on Swedish Television for four seasons from 2002 to 2005 and was portrayed as a school for future artists with their own staff of teachers and a principal (Ganetz, 2008, p. 28). Håkan Hellström, a Swedish pop singer, has expressed strong negative opinions about Fame Factory referring to it as “a disease” he hopes will “die out” because of its extreme commercial approach (Ganetz, 2008, p. 63-64). This strong opposition to commercial success is common among artists who want to keep themselves as far away from the label ‘sell-out’ as possible (e.g. Huss, 2009)

### **Musical oldness provides underground affiliations**

Fame Factory eventually did “die out” but only to be replaced by Idol, an originally British reality show with different versions in several countries among them Sweden where it was aired in 2004 for the first time (Ganetz, 2009, p. 130). Håkan, who is born 1974, is almost the same age as Hanna making them part of the same generation. Hanna argues that there is another (musical) Zeitgeist now compared to her upbringing:

The entire Idol phenomena and talent shows, the idea of being spotted, styled and assigned an identity and expression... And then everything is measured, weighed and voted about. There is something about that concept that I oppose very strongly. I don't understand how it's connected to music



anyway, and then I think that it's possible that if you're 15 or 16 today this becomes a part of your frame of reference when it comes to what it means to be an artist. I, on the other hand, imagine (chuckle) that there was another frame of reference when I was that age (...) The people who created my frame of reference were dead by the time I reached that age, they had already overdosed (chuckle), they were old punks and Hendrix...

(Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh)

The fact that Hanna is older than most of the contestants in reality talent shows such as *Idol* matters since they are growing up in a time and society where artists are created and produced in a way that was not a part of her frame of reference when growing up. This is another aspect of the production of authenticity. By belonging to another generation, which enables reminiscence and romanticizing in another way than for teens and young adults today, Hanna can claim an opposite upbringing to the one for those growing up today with shows such as *Idol* promoting a recipe for becoming an artist. During her upbringing artists were viewed as different individuals who in most cases were already dead, as she describes, by the time that she got old enough to appreciate their music. Ethnologist Alf Arvidsson (2008) depicts the period 1965-1980 in Sweden as a time of a widespread anti-government attitude which expressed through music, the youth culture of the time, among other things. During this period, music became a metaphor in a left-wing political climate where the issue of 'us' vs. 'them' became important and emphasis was put on the weaknesses of the capitalist society (Arvidsson, 2008, p. 382). With this background, Hanna's view of musicians can be understood as generational. Being considered as an artist with political messages who might be compared to a "good" terrorist as well as her generational belonging, are aspects of the production of authenticity. They distinguish her from the majority of the *Idol* contestants in three ways. First of all, a pop artist of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not supposed to be known as

a political activist which is the case with Hanouneh. Secondly, her age puts her in another category when compared with the average 20-something year-old in Idol. Thirdly, controlling her own music and her musical creativity is very important to Hanouneh.

This musical oldness expressed by Hanna implies other possible roles and aspects of life which in her case are represented by motherhood (she is the mother of three) and having a determined and successful career independent of the music-making. In the beginning of the internship project during which I started to get to know Hanna, I was surprised by these aspects of her life based on the different outlooks and expectations in the music business for men and women. The portrayal of Britney Spears as a bad mother while the bad fathers among musicians remain unmentioned is an example of not only the expectations of the music business but also of the society in which they dwell (Huss, 2009, p. 221). In their article about the ageing female artist, ethnologists Marianne Liliequist, Marika Nordström and Tove Liliequist (2011) depict through the example of Anna, a musician in her 50s who has been working as one since her late teenage years, the conditions of ageing for women in the Swedish rock music scene. Anna describes how age and gender interact in the context of being a musician by stating that the older the woman is the bigger the possibility of her having a family to take care of, which she claims to be the main reason why there are few women her age who are still active musicians (Liliequist et al., 2011; cf. Bossius and Lilliestam, 2011, p. 46). The authors state that Anna expresses at several occasions during the interview the luck she has had with her husband who has taken his share with the child rearing and that there was a demand for her as a musician after her maternity leave (Liliequist et al., 2011, p. 34). Similar descriptions of being lucky with the parenting support of a

husband as well as parents who take care of their grandchildren when necessary are found in Hanna's statements. Being a young woman myself who is yet to experience the combination of motherhood and a career, which is surrounded with a halo of impossibility, has resulted in informal discussions of how Hanna makes this work at several occasions which I have not written down in my fieldnotes.

Hanna's family life coupled with a successful career enable the existence of the artist Hanouneh. Unlike Anna, Hanna's serious musical aspirations started years after having her first child resulting in the family existing *before* her artist persona. This along with her career as a lecturer, entrepreneur and doctoral candidate provide the family-oriented and economical stability necessary for having a musical career on the side. It is difficult to discuss the uniqueness of Hanna's situation compared to other female artists with families since I lack the data to base it on, but considering Anna's statements it seems as if it is uncommon. Hanna describes music as an expression that makes her happy, but without which she knows that she would still survive. It is not "a matter of life and death for her" like it is for some of her friends but rather an "ego thing" she does because she is able to:

I know that I can make my living in many different ways, I know that I can write, I know that I can work with many different things. I live a life where I don't have to worry about becoming successful [in the music business] from an economic point-of-view since I earn my living in other ways (...). But when it comes to other people in my surroundings in this business, I'm thinking mainly of those in Lebanon, it's kind of *it's that or nothing* because it's not like they have a thousand other things to fall back on or that they already have well-paid jobs and music is a great bonus they can devote their free time to. It's kind of that this thing is the thing they feel is what they are best at and they want to live off it, and I'm not in that situation. It's not a fair comparison. This is very much an ego thing for me (chuckle). It's something I find joy in doing, it's fun and that's why I do it.

(Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh)

Music-making is a privilege for Hanna. It is something she invests time in because she finds enjoyment in it. How can this be connected to authenticity, if at all? In this excerpt Hanna depicts herself as a contrast to the image, and myth, of the economically struggling ‘underground’ artists who devote their entire beings into the music and strive to make it their living. It might seem that Hanna through this contrast is constructing her own inauthenticity in a context where the myth of the struggling underground and more often than not working class artist is very strong and connected to authenticity (Lilliestam, 2009, p. 230-233), but I would rather claim that other strategies are used to compensate for this possible inauthenticity accusation such as running her own music production company/record label, Don Dada Productions. The following could be read on Hanna Hanouneh Cinthio’s Facebook profile on the day of the release of her debut album:

Hanouneh’s album “Love & war” is finally ready! I decided to keep it underground and released it thru my own label DonDada... and now I need your support! The cd will be available for purchase on the website hanouneh.com in a few days (digital & physical), but pre-orders can be made by sending me an email on fb

(Cinthio, 2011)

Her own label conveys a struggle which goes hand in hand with the claim of being ‘underground’. The support called for is not to buy an album released through a major (commercial) label but rather an independent label runned by the artist herself providing her with control over her own music. Hanna is quoted in an online article as having said that she does not care about selling as much as possible but that the goal with the music rather is to “reach people’s minds with intelligent lyrics rather than brainless dance hits” which resonates Big H’s description in ch 2 of the music he promotes on his blog and

radio show. She continues by stating that the commercial aspect of the music becomes uninteresting since she does not expect to live on her music (Feghali, 2011). The statement of having music as a hobby comes across as a defense mechanism against becoming commercial and therefore a possible sell-out. The privileged position of having enough money to make the kind of music Hanna wants to make without the worry of becoming commercial does not necessarily mean that there is a guarantee that she will *not* become commercial. Rather, with the help of various radical markers such as the straightforward political message in her music along with the usage of connotations to Islam and terrorism in the Hanouneh imagery she becomes ‘underground enough’. This is a clear example of the balancing of the construction of authenticity and inauthenticity. The access to money (from her other career as a lecturer), which in the context of authenticity construction within the music business can be associated with being a ‘sellout’ and therefore ‘fake’ and inauthentic, is rather what allows Hanna to be the independent and underground artist Hanouneh.

### **Necessary skills**

In my study of how a band creates hip-hop music and culture, I depicted their version of hip-hop music to include various knowledge and skills such as singing, rapping/emceeing, freestyling, beatboxing, sms-battling, song- and music writing (Dankić, 2008). Skills play an important role for Hanouneh as well. They are the medium used in her production and consumption of authenticity, which I will be discussing now.

Most of the informants have described Hanouneh’s voice as strong and powerful. Musical follower Matsimilian uses following adjectives when talking about her voice: “beautiful, cute, pure but yet very strong” (Interviews and fieldnotes e. Matsimilian).

Several of them also claim not to be able to pinpoint exactly what they like about her voice. Noah describes it as something in her vocal pitch (Interviews and fieldnotes j. Noah) which Matsimilian agrees with and gets even more specific about: “Her voice is pure... she has an infallible sense of pitch” (Interviews and fieldnotes e. Matsimilian). The word strong is often used when describing Hanouneh and especially her voice, just like in Matsimilian’s description. This goes along the line of the participants in Werner’s study on music usage who viewed a powerful voice as a positive quality and part of authenticity production in rock music unlike the high-pitched voice many women are associated with (Werner, 2009, p. 190). This view of women as the exception and not the rule in authenticity production is also connected to Mr B’s quotation at the beginning of this chapter where the word strong is repeated several times: Hanouneh is depicted as a strong woman with a strong voice proclaiming strong messages.

The musical followers who were either currently still into hip-hop or who grew up on it have all associated Hanouneh to hip-hop in a positive manner. Mr B claims to “hear hip-hop in her voice” (Interviews and fieldnotes k. Mr B). This positive link with the “important” hip-hop is a part of the authenticity production of Hanouneh (Werner, 2009, p. 187). Hanna uses her voice as an instrument which has traditionally been considered to be the only instrument women have been viewed as having a special talent for (Ganetz, 2009, p. 131). To Alexander it is very simple: the power in Hanna’s voice is based on training (Interviews and fieldnotes m. Alexander).

The simplicity of the lyrics is another of Hanouneh’s skills. Singing strong messages with a powerful voice seems to be proclaimed best when done in a way which is easy to understand. Hanna expresses a strong opposition to the hip-hop tradition of building lyrics based on overly complicated wordplay in her own lyrics. She states that

she can find that impressive from a skill perspective, but that those lyrics rarely move her. She continues by claiming it to be a front based on fear of using simple words and sentences thinking that it is too simple. Hanna wants to be able to express the way it feels instead of seeking protection in irony or cleverness and claims that lyrics based on simple words can on the contrary be stronger by being unprotected. I interpret this unprotected to mean honesty. (Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh). Alexander mentions the importance of using language that everybody understands when being a part of modern political movements which he considers Hanouneh being a part of, and he thinks she does it the way it should be done (Interviews and fieldnotes m. Alexander).

Several of the musical followers point out the importance of Hanouneh's collaborations with certain producers and artists. The choice of these collaborators and other people she chooses to work with seems to be noticed by the followers as something Hanna does well making it another of her skills. Big H calls her smart for knowing who to "build with" and mentions her collaboration with DJ Lethal Skillz as an example since he introduced her to the Middle Eastern hip-hop scene (Interviews and fieldnotes b. Big H). Hanna was in Jamaica at the time for the interview with Alexander which I happened to mention to him to which he replied: "Great! That's important connections. When you're doing reggae music you need Jamaican connections (chuckle). Yeah, it's crazy because no one's producing in Jamaica anymore but you still need connections from there. Why I don't know" (Interviews and fieldnotes m. Alexander). Alexander and another musical follower, Caleb, both mention the producer Doobie Sounds and Mr Sloap as a reason how they found her music alluding to the importance of knowledge about producers in reggae music (Interviews and fieldnotes f.

Caleb and m. Alexander). This is also noticed on the album cover of “Love & War” where the songs are presented along with their producer. Hanna has also mentioned that her musical framework has often been based on her musical collaborations – through Lethal Skillz she ended up doing hip-hop music and through the band she was in alongside her brother it was reggae (Fieldnotes, October 18, 2010).

Werner (2009) describes the importance of the visual among her informants in her study about teenage girls’ usage of music (p. 77-82), which is an important aspect even in this study. The mix of symbols in the picture on her album cover, as discussed above, is described by Hanna in the following way: “It represents me and what I want to say, not necessarily the musical expression [the style connected to music]”. (Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh). The fusion of different styles, genres and expressions is another of her skills used as accessories which are implemented in different situations depending on the mood and the playfulness of that given moment. These accessories play an important part in the strategy to get Hanouneh’s message of love and war across in particular situations. Taking into consideration the term *subcultural capital*,<sup>21</sup> as coined by sociologist Sarah Thornton (1995), these deliberate accessories can be viewed as Hanna’s deconstruction of subcultural authenticity by showing the possibility of mixing different subcultural expressions, such as hip-hop and reggae, and getting away with it. Her clever collaborations with the right people gain her a high level of subcultural capital which Thornton equals to being ‘underground’ (Thornton, 1995, p. 117) which Hanouneh strives for through various strategies, as mentioned earlier, and which gives her the freedom to deconstruct it.

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<sup>21</sup> Subcultural capital refers to a kind of applied knowledge within a group of people who focus on being ‘in the know’ of what ‘hipness’ is in that particular moment often expressed through looks and speech. It is often defined by what it is not and what it does not like (Thornton, 1995).



From a marketing perspective, it seems to be a sharp approach as it provides the audience with a smorgasbord of styles and expressions to choose from thereby increasing the chances of a bigger appeal. At the same time there is a risk that this smorgasbord might be viewed as inconsistent. Aisha is the only musical follower who did not understand the point of the mixture of styles in the imagery on Hanouneh's album cover and website. The other musical followers appreciated her mixture of hip-hop and reggae viewing it as a unique trait of hers making it a part of the production of authenticity.

### **The pink twist**

The color pink is the focus of social anthropologist and gender scholar Fanny Ambjörnsson's (2011) book which examines why pink is charged with emotional and associative significance and how this is manifested in the context of contemporary Swedish society. She depicts the history of the color pink's association with femininity in a Western setting as approximately sixty years old (Ambjörnsson, 2011, p. 10). The author views the color pink as "a contemporary key symbol creating feelings, commitment and devotion while simultaneously marking, maintaining and challenging various borders in society" (Ambjörnsson, 2011, p. 11). Ambjörnsson portrays how some parts of the Swedish society including middle class children of different ages along with their parents, men with different sexualities and feminist activists use pink to signal different kinds of feelings, taste and gender relations (2011). Pink speaks of structures based on cultural ideas about masculinity and femininity (Ambjörnsson, 2011, p. 11) which is also a part of Hanna's use of the color. Hanna describes how she uses the common associations of pink as girly and cute in the Hanouneh imagery:

*Hanna:* I can understand one might think that it's aggressive in some way 'eh, using a mask' but the fact that it's pink works as a contrast to that... Despite it all there is humor in it (chuckle). I have never meant for these pictures to look tough... For me this is a way of playing with this aggressive expression, that everything actually is pink... It's a twist somehow.

*Andrea:* Why did you choose the color pink?

*Hanna:* Because I think that it's a great color (chuckle) and because it's a color that's often linked with the opposite of everything that that picture signals and stands for...

*Andrea:* This kind of girlie...

*Hanna:* Yeah, exactly, this girlie, feminine and cute thing. I thought that it would be nice to mix it somehow... And then I found this gorgeous purse in Amsterdam and thought 'I have to have this!' (chuckle)...

(Interviews and fieldnotes c. Hanna Hanouneh)



Another image on the album cover & zoomed in on Hanouneh's website

The cute femininity described by Hanna is used to make the symbolism of war and political activism less serious supporting the argument shared by some gender theorists that masculinity is viewed as serious, hard and authentic, while the kind of femininity Hanna is playing with is seen as this conception of masculinity's inauthentic opposite (e.g. Ganetz, Gavanas, Huss and Werner, 2009). Hanna's claim that her intention was never for the imagery to come across as tough imparts a deliberately humorous aspect, which prevents the imagery from being viewed as a legitimate threat (cf. Werner, 2009, p. 160) while allowing for possibilities of reading it differently. Despite the fact that Hanna claims her music is emotionally driven and fuelled by anger, the question remains whether she would feel okay with the imagery of Hanouneh being depicted as angry without any possibility of reading it differently. Queer feminist activists are an example of when pink is used as an "anger tool" for making resistance against the society they are critical of (Ambjörnsson, 2011, p. 175). They, along with the rest of the feminist movement, use a specific shade of pink – the darker vivid cerise pink used in the Hanouneh imagery. (Ambjörnsson, 2011, p. 173). Noah, who describes herself as interested in the issue of the Palestinian people, has several Palestinian scarfs herself and mentions that she associates the color pink with feminism and the color red with Palestine (Interviews and filednotes j. Noah). Another similarity between Hanouneh and queer feminist activists is the mix of pink and black in the imagery compared to the action group Pink Shock in the Black Block (r) who masked themselves in black and the same dark cerise pink during a Pride parade (Ambjörnsson, 2011, p. 178). Hanouneh's various links to feminism function as producers of authenticity by validating her previously discussed portrayal as a strong revolutionary woman who sings about oppression and wants to support her sisters both symbolically in terms of women in

general but also particularly her sisters in the Palestinian family that became her second family. “Stay strong (Ya khawati)” is a concrete example of the struggle fought by her Palestinian sisters and women in other places as told through Hanounch’s perspective.

Hanna has expressed a felt contradiction and parody of the fact that women who live up to the Western ideal of what a woman should look like are the ones encouraging girls and women to be strong, to “be themselves” and that they are fine just the way they are (Fieldnotes, Jan 28, 2011). I believe self-irony and humor through the statement *I am whatever you think I am* depicted in the Hanounch imagery to be a strategy for Hanna to cope with this contradiction. In line with the work of philosopher and feminist theoretician Rosi Braidotti, the choice of the cute and girlie femininity in the imagery can be viewed from the perspective of the concept of ‘woman’ as a set of options which Hanna chooses from and plays with in order to create new meanings and femininities (as cited in Sundén, 2002, p. 22-23). Braidotti states self-distance and humor as a means of imagining new gender identities by applying traditional gender definitions (as cited in Sundén, 2002, p. 22-23). I would argue this to be what Hanna is doing through the imagery of Hanounch containing masculinity (black, leather jacket, terrorist and rebel associations, war) and femininity (pink, heavy eye make-up, love) resulting in a gender twist. Aisha depicts this twist in Hanounch’s imagery by stating that she has the looks of a woman and behavior of a man which to Aisha is defined by being straightforward and very strong (Interviews and fieldnotes i. Aisha). The strong link between rebelliousness and masculinity can be complex for girls and women to negotiate since they by their gender are associated with the very opposite of being rebels (cf. Werner, 2009, p. 190) which I believe is successfully achieved through this imagery.

Another mix of traditional gender definitions can be found in the study on female DJs in the electronic music scene by social anthropologist Anna Gavanas (2009). Gavanas describes the importance for women within the DJ community to be tomboys (more aggressive and confident) rather than ‘girly-girls’ since masculinity in a certain dose provides credibility while too much feminine behavior and looks result in no credibility (Gavanas, 2009, p. 104). This inferiority associated with femininity is thoroughly examined in feminist scholarship while the various resistance strategies against women’s inferiority and with them also feminine identity are still unexplored making them somewhat invisible (Ambjörnsson, 2011, p. 183). Ambjörnsson states that a part of the queer feminist movement, *femmes*, acknowledge femininity as something worthy of their time and attention using it as a resistance strategy towards the society which undervalues it (2011). I would argue this focus on emphasizing the importance of femininity in a positive light to be found in the Hanouneh imagery. By the strong symbolism of being a clear feminine marker in contemporary Western society, the color pink gives feminine authority to the gender twist represented by the Palestinian scarf, the heavy make-up and the gun-shaped purse. Thus the feminine symbolism highlights the toughness associated with the masculine and takes on the function of the overall filter through which the resistance is carried out.

Alexander tells me that he laughed first time he saw the images of her wearing the scarf and the gun-shaped purse because it represents the way he thinks of Hanouneh. He calls this representation *girlie style resistance* which he explains in the following way:

*Alexander:* If you’re forced to carry a weapon, what would it look like when a girl would do it? A pink gun-shaped hand bag (chuckle). No comment needed, says it all... And it’s also this Palestinian stuff, I guess she’s Palestian-based or her parents are from there, I’m not sure, and it’s like,

yeah so what you expect... what the people think when they hear "Palestine", they expect guns and this Palestinian scarf (...) and she's playing with it in a way a man would never do...

*Andrea:* Now you have to explain that (chuckle), that was interesting...

*Alexander:* I never would wear a pink Palestinian scarf (chuckle)

*Andrea:* Why?

*Alexander:* That's a good question... I'm not a pink guy... I'm more of a blue guy... Maybe I'm too old school. I'm not that post-gender... Yeah, in Germany they call it post-gender... Yeah, this is representing to me a female signal... For me pink signals female, something female about it... I don't know, maybe it's because female babies get pink and the male babies get blue... Is it the same in Sweden?

*Andrea:* Yeah, but they tried, I don't know if it was the same in Germany but here in the 1960's and 70's, when the political situation was the way it was and gender equality became important it was very taboo to have pink for girls and blue for boys so then it was more like neutral colors like yellow, green, brown, orange and so on... But actually, these days, I've met women who were young at that time and they think that we have like gone back... in the sense that we have somehow gone back in time but jumped over this as they view as development, you know, and that we have like started from the beginning because it's much more... Maybe with all the media and tv and Sex and the city and all that kind of stuff it's still very much important to see if the baby is a girl or a boy and then it's still very much pink and blue...

*Alexander:* yeah, of course, and that's why I say that if you use pink stuff on the website, at this time, at this moment you signify something female. That's what I was trying to say. That's one of these tough parts of Hanounah, because who in reggae and I guess also hip-hop music would do this? And that's why I guess she's more like dancehall...

*Andrea:* You think it's radical to use pink in this way?

*Alexander:* Yes, totally! And I'm totally sure that she knows this...

*Andrea:* But in what way is it radical? I'm not sure if I understand...

*Alexander:* Ok, my point-of-view... There's a shift in the Arabic world, I guess we can see it on tv at the moment and this has a lot to do with women taking part in it, without women in Egypt, Tunisia or Lybia there wouldn't

be any revolution at all. I think that these, especially the young women, that it's the first time they have a part in a thing like this and this is I guess for some people there still taboo... They let it happen, I think so, I'm not sure, I have some friends from Iran and Egypt and they told me about it... There are a lot religious leaders there who have a lot of problem with this and this is also like our blue and pink stuff is based in the heads of the people living there... And there are a lot of other things like wearing a scarf... But I'm not sure, I'm not an expert, I just go with what I see and Hanouneh is with her connections to this part of the world a sign for this new independence of women... With this strong base you can do women-like stuff and you can play with it and she's doing it really good!

(Interviews and fieldnotes m. Alexander)

This discussion between Alexander and myself focuses on the color pink as the supporting tool in this girlie style resistance, which sums up the usage of femininity in the imagery as both a way of providing a positive meaning to it as well as using it as a tool for resistance. This 'radical' usage of femininity described by Alexander prevents him from identifying with the imagery and he uses the term post-gender<sup>22</sup> to describe that he has a view on gender that might be considered conservative since pink signals femininity to him and he is "more of a blue guy". This is interesting when considering Ambjörnsson (2011) who depicts the relationships children and middle class parents in contemporary Sweden have to the color pink which are far from the "beyond-masculine-and-feminine sense" Alexander is alluding to (Haraway, 2003). Instead, Ambjörnsson (2011) depicts their usage of pink as a clear marker of gender division. Boys and girls are taught from a very young age that pink is more than only a color but rather a marker for femininity resulting in some parents avoiding letting their children

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<sup>22</sup> Donna Haraway is often credited for coining the term post-gender, but does not associate herself with it since she believes that it has been misinterpreted and used in a way she never meant for it to be used. Alexander's usage of the term is an example of the misinterpretation of the term. See Haraway (2003) for a discussion on the subject.

wear or in any other way use the color in order not to become associated with the symbolism it speaks of (Ambjörnsson, 2011).

From a musical perspective, the usage of pink can be interpreted in different ways. Alexander links the radical usage of the darker shade of a vivid cerise pink in the imagery on the website and album cover to dancehall since it, according to him, defies both the hip-hop and reggae aesthetics and crosses over to dancehall in a way "only a woman could do". I interpret his perception of dancehall as being the genre where this kind of strong feminine attitude is allowed unlike the male-oriented hip-hop and reggae subcultes. Mr B does not quite agree and rather claims that the pink signals the bling-bling in hip-hop making it contemporary. Thus, pink's association to various musical genres seems to depend on the perspective one has of the genres in the first place. Considering that Mr B and Alexander are old hip-hop heads themselves it is interesting to see that they view the link between hip-hop and pink differently.

The link to Palestine and the Arab Spring is evident in Alexander's discussion of the symbolism in the imagery. Hanouneh is by her gender and used symbols of the scarf and purse described as a part of the revolutions in the Middle East that took place at the time of the interview with Alexander. This combination of symbolism based on traditional gender, religious, and political markers ascribed to a female body are important parts of the production and consumption of authenticity associated with Hanouneh. Through the humor, self-irony and usage of the color pink, Hanouneh opens up for a possibility of stating that this is what a "real" female activist and revolutionary fighter might look like in the sense of simultaneously claiming that such a thing does not exist. Thus the result becomes a reference to the inauthentic which is the closest thing possible to an imagined authenticity: women and revolutionaries are too complex



to be portrayed as symbolisms in an imagery. Through this imagery she leaves several versions for its reader to interpret. The imagery could be read as representations of traditional female symbolism associated with the success of how convincing the gender performance is (cf. Ganetz, 2009). Through the gender performance her gender twist is based on, Hanouneh performs a quiet provocation producing authenticity by questioning the clear borders and divisions between femininity and masculinity but also what it means to be a “real” and a “fake” revolutionary. Criticism, provocation and humor inform the only possible way of dealing with authenticity in this situation.

## 4. RHYTHM-BASED FRIENDSHIP

*If you call on me...  
I'm gonna run for my guns and come set you free  
If you call on me...  
Until the last stand said you know where I'll be  
Said if you call on me...  
I'm gonna stick by your side for the whole world to see*

Hanouneh – "Call on me"

This chapter focuses on the processes of authenticity construction that take place in the relationship between Hanouneh and her musical followers. First, I will discuss the loaded meaning of the term fan which I will argue to be gender and age-dependent. This will be followed by a depiction of Hanna's views of her fans, a term she has no problem with, unlike her musical followers. Finally, I will suggest that the relationship between Hanouneh and her followers speaks of a new fandom created in the intersection of online/offline and private/public contexts united by friendship.

### **To be or not to be a fan**

As previously mentioned, I initially used the term *fans* to refer to Hanouneh's musical followers but I quickly realized that it was a loaded category most of them opposed (cf. Bossius and Lilliestam, 2011). One reason for this can be found in the linguistic meaning of the word. The Oxford English dictionary describes the word *fan* as an abbreviation of the word *fanatic* which used to refer to extreme religious devotion and is now rather used to describe inappropriate enthusiasm (Williams, 2011, p. 175). Other reasons for the musical followers opposition to referring to themselves as fans are

depicted by sociologist J. Patrick Williams (2011, p. 175) who states that both words fan and fanatic share negative connotations which have resulted in the following associations:

fans devote inordinate amounts of time and effort cultivating “useless” knowledge; they act “irrationally” toward the object of their fandom, either as mindless consumers who will buy anything, or as emotionally and intellectually immature people unable to maintain “proper” boundaries; they are social misfits who forego the larger social world of “healthy” relationships in favor of feeding their fan “obsessions.”

These associations with fans and fandom go along the line with other scholars. Music fans know everything about, identify with and spend a lot of time consuming their favorite music (Werner, 2009, p. 95). Fandom is at its best viewed as a passing phenomenon and at its worst as an unhealthy deviation (Lilliestam, 2009, p. 138). These associations are shared with the musical followers in my study. Bob says that he likes Hanouneh’s music but that he is “not so involved, I’m not so fanatic as a lot of people, but I like her” (Interviews and fieldnotes l. Bob).

Fandom in a musical context is also connected to age as expressed by Mr B: “(Chuckles) I came to think of a funny thing, I mean not fan as in a teenage fan who’s like ‘Waaa!’ and yells ‘Hanouneh!’” (Interviews and fieldnotes k. Mr B). Werner (2009) suggests that even teenagers might be too old for the fan category. The teenage girls in her study view fandom as something they have outgrown and some of them state feeling ashamed of the fact that they used to be fans of the Swedish Idol pop star Darin, who was in the 2004 edition of the show. Fandom in the sense of artist worship is for these teenage girls not a dignified uses of music but rather something associated with younger girls and children they themselves once were (Werner, 2009, p. 95-96). By claiming separation from (female immature) fans they are simultaneously separating themselves

from the stigma associated with the fan category and claiming that they have matured since being Darin's fans. A similar comparison between a younger version of herself as a "true" fan and the more mature fandom of today is found in Noah's description of her relationship to Hanouneh:

*Noah:* When I was a fan of Backstreet Boys my walls were covered with posters and pictures of them. That was the only thing I listened to. I went to their concerts, even to Göteborg which is like 250 km away... That's when I can say that I was a fan... But Hanouneh feels more like... More grown or how I should put it... I mean, it's not like I'm obsessed with Hanouneh (chuckles).

(Interviews and fieldnotes j. Noah)

The association with obsession and fandom is imagined being something only young fans devote their time and energy to, but as musicologist Lars Lilliestam (2009) suggests being a fan in the sense of having someone to look up to is universal even though it tends to be a somewhat taboo topic among adults (p. 138).

Music fans can also fall under the category of the *groupie*. A term coined in the rock scene of the 1960s, it is used to refer to the female fans who are more than loyal followers but rather "intimacy aspirants who vicariously derive power of fame (however small) from knowing men privately" (Sharpley-Whiting, 2007, p. 86-87). The link between *groupie* and women is a strong association that gets even more complicated when age is involved resulting in older women who lack the experience of being a *groupie* not being able to identify themselves as fans (cf. Thomas, 2002, p. 133).

There is a tradition within popular music of women as music consumers rather than producers and musicians (Liliequist et al., 2011, p. 31). Ganetz (2009) argues that the age- and gender-oriented meaning of the label 'fan' is connected to the status of artists and bands in the popular music hierarchy – the bigger active young and female audience

is the lower place in the hierarchy. She continues by suggesting that this correlation might have been a reason why the Beatles changed their live shows from the cute boyband image for the studio in 1966. The new sound and image provided with time an audience partly consisting of educated males and improved the status of the band (Ganetz, 2009, p. 176). The authoritative role of the knowledgeable male fan seems to be widespread. In their study on people's usage of and attitude towards music as well as the meaning it has in their every day lives, musicologists Thomas Bossius and Lars Lilliestam (2011) discuss the gender distribution in their study and state that the music collectors and experts are exclusively men (p. 49, 228). They continue by stating that there are obviously women who share the same interest, but that the existing research speaks of this same sort of male dominance (Bossius and Lillestam, 2011, p. 49)<sup>23</sup>. When considering my own study there is a similar tendency: Eight of the musical followers are men and two are women. One reason for this could be the usage of the word fan when recruiting the co-participants. There is a possibility that the women might have been discouraged from participating for two reasons: one being the associations connected to the term fan as discussed above, the other being the knowledge-oriented fan associated with men. Several of the women whom I contacted through Facebook during the recruitment of musical followers wrote back stating that they do not consider themselves to be Hanouneh's fans and therefore didn't consider that their statements would be of particular interest to my study.

The male musical followers produce authenticity in the context of the term fan by sharing neither the sex nor the age markers of the typical fan which in the context of Hanouneh's musical followers is for the most part an inauthentic role to have. For Noah,

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<sup>23</sup> For research on music and gender, see e.g. Ganetz (1997), Ganetz et al. (2009), Nordström (2010).

who is a woman, the focus is on depicting traditional fandom as something she has outgrown, making age the authenticity producing element. According to Alexander, Hanouneh's music needs listeners instead of fans and by listeners he refers to an audience who cares for the message behind the music which, as already mentioned is *not* a part of fandom as associated with intellectually immature people who cultivate "useless" knowledge (Interviews and fieldnotes m. Alexander). This is another part of the authenticity production associated with Hanouneh. She becomes authentic by being "worthy" enough to have listeners instead of fans stressing her political and underground affiliations. All of the musical followers seem to express a reluctance towards the idea that she should be worshipped. Alexander, who is a DJ, states that besides the fans and listeners there are also people like him who work with the music and simultaneously consume and produce it (cf. Condry, 2006, p. 132)<sup>24</sup>. This is an important perspective regarding the production and consumption of authenticity since it provides an example of musical followers who engage in both in their work.

Hanna does not share the opposition to the term fan. Her views of how a fan should be goes along the line of discussion above with a focus on investing time and energy. She describes her ideal fan as someone from another country who has no connection to her as a person nor her circle of friends and gets in touch with her to tell her how much they like her music. She states getting positive energy boosts from those who find her music on their own and manage to connect it to their own life. Hanna appreciates the fact that people from all over the world seem to find relevance in her music, not only those connected to Palestine in some way. An example of this is a fan from Indonesia

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<sup>24</sup> For an insightful discussion on performance, consumption and production of music in hip-hop turntablism (DJing), see Snapper (2004).

whom she has chatted with through Facebook chat, an instant messaging program, when she had spare time. During their conversation consisting of him telling her how much he loves her music and asking about the meaning of the songs in Swedish, he told her about the three different home-made t-shirts he had made with “Hanouneh” printed on them: “Isn’t he like the fan of your dreams? I think that it’s so incredibly sweet and resourceful that he decided to make his own since he couldn’t find any Hanouneh t-shirts, all the while being a bit giggly about the whole idea of how weird it is that there is someone in some other country walking around in Hanouneh t-shirts!” (Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh).

She appreciates fans who show that they are fans by contacting her through email, comments, expressing their views and even giving her advice on what she could improve since it shows that they care. (Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh). Hanna describes here another unusual, somewhat odd but still flattering encounter with what to her is a genuine fan based on the enthusiasm and name choice when referring to her:

Last time we were in Uppsala and had just arrived and were going to rehearse, yeah I went up there on the same day and was on my way to the rehearsal studio/space and a guy on the street is like “*Hanouneh!*” (laugh) and we’re like what the fuck? You know. Not even Hanna but specifically that name... And he started talking, yeah like really a fan... ”*Ah, shit, I knew you would be here this weekend... I saw that it said that you would come up here and rehearse*” and I’m like “*Yes...*”, and he’s like “*Yeah, so will there be a gig? I’m listening...*” and really like... And it was really sweet to be recognized! That has almost never happened before. It happens at the Reggae festival which might not be that strange if someone has been to a gig some time “*Oh, but it’s you!*”... But like this in the middle of the street in Uppsala, it got a bit strange and sweet... So it feels like there is a small nice fan base in Uppsala and even though it’s minimal it’s still kind of dedicated (chuckle).

(Interviews and fieldnotes a. Hanna Hanouneh)

### **New fandom – “More like watching a friend perform”**

In the early second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and other web-based as well as mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue have become part of the everyday lives of the people who have access to the necessary technology (cf. Itō et al., 2010). Therefore it might not come as a surprise that the possibility of communicating with Hanouneh through social network sites<sup>25</sup> such as Facebook is of importance to her musical followers.

Friendship is a concept used by several musical followers when describing their relationship with Hanouneh<sup>26</sup>. Bob states that he finds it nice to be friends with Hanouneh on Facebook because it enables him to stay in touch with her as well as it being a great opportunity to share immediate ideas with a musician. He appreciates the fact that Hanouneh replies to his messages and thinks that it would have been different if she would not, but that she is different [from artists who are not as active on social media sites] and that he likes this way of communicating. (Interviews and fieldnotes 1. Bob).

Noah got in touch with Hanouneh in the same way that I did – by writing her an email. A short email correspondence resulted in Hanouneh adding her as a Facebook friend. After seeing her live for the first time in the summer of 2010, her roommate who was there with her wanted them to approach Hanouneh, but Noah found it embarrassing because of their Facebook friendship. Noah describes the pleasant surprise when Hanouneh recognized her:

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<sup>25</sup> For an overview of social network sites and their history, see boyd and Ellison (2007).

<sup>26</sup> The setting of the relationship between Hanouneh and her musical followers is mainly digital even though some of the interviewees have seen her perform live and spoken to her in private.



She asked “*Aren't you [Noah's real name]?*” and I was blown away that she recognized me from all the people she probably sees and gets in touch with through Facebook... every day! (chuckle). That's one thing that makes me feel that she really cares about those who listen to her music and that's real to me... And then these two times I've met her have felt... I've felt that she's genuinely sweet and nice.

(Interviews and fieldnotes j. Noah)

Leo mentions the same kind of genuine feeling about Hanouneh, that her person “shines through” the written words on her Facebook unlike other artist's profiles controlled by someone else:

I've read her status updates on Facebook where she describes the joy and longing to rehearse with her band in Uppsala before they would go on tour. It is very clear to me that she writes as an honest person and not only as a concept or with a marketing purpose. The person she is, as I interpret it, shines through the written words.

(Interviews and fieldnotes h. Leo).

Anthropologist and hip-hop scholar Ian Condry (2006) states that fans in most cases only have access to the persona dimension of the musician and not the real person dimension (p. 112). Condry describes musicians as never engaging in “heart-to-heart talk[s]” partly because of the profit-making aspect (Condry, 2006, p. 112). I would argue that in the case of Hanouneh and her musical followers the feeling of “cutting through” the performer persona and finding the real person dimension is a part of the authenticity production and consumption. As suggested in chapter 2, Hanna claims to lack a performer persona and to “be herself” both on and off stage comparing herself to Amy Winehouse in this aspect. By claiming to always be her real person dimension, she comes across as more authentic and genuine which is consumed by her musical

followers who might not have any “heart-to-heart talks” with her, but the feeling that they *could* means a lot to them, and because of this she becomes compared to a friend<sup>27</sup>.

Social media researcher danah boyd (2006) argues that “friends” in the everyday sense of the word and “Friends” in a social media context are not necessarily the same. The Friends on social network sites imply all types of relationships regardless whether it is family, acquaintances or interesting companies (boyd, 2010, p. 94). Hanouneh being a musician brings the musical dimension into consideration and with it the expressed support felt by her musical followers. To Herbares, Hanouneh’s music is very much connected to the struggles of unemployment and the conditions in a country still not recovered from war which are a part of his everyday life. Aisha, who uses music as mood-enhancer, finds comfort in Hanouneh’s music. It soothes her when feeling down, and intensifies her joy.<sup>28</sup> Big H uses his blog to promote music such as Hanouneh’s which he considers being “real”, i.e. underground and political, in need of more recognition and support in order to show that another world is possible. To Noah, Hanouneh’s music is a part of the support she shows to the struggle of the Palestinian people. But the shown support is reciprocal. A musical follower made her new website (without any charge) in time for the debut album release. Musical followers help to spread her music through word-of-mouth and by inviting her to radio shows in order to help her promote her music. (Fieldnotes, November 18, 2010).

Therefore, the friendship between Hanouneh and her musical followers needs to be understood in a contextual frame based on several layers with the first being the

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<sup>27</sup> For an insightful discussion of the negotiation of friendship and intimacy among American youth in a digital and networked media setting, see Itō et al., (2010).

<sup>28</sup> For discussions on music as mood-enhancer and support tool, see e.g. Bossius & Lilliestam (2011), Lilliestam (2009), Werner (2009).

oscillation between the digital and offline contexts providing development in the relationships and dimensions of Hanouneh's personas. The digital sphere enables an opportunity to deepen the relationship of a stranger to acquaintances, acquaintances to friends (cf. boyd, 2010) while the offline sphere provides the real person dimension of Hanouneh which in some situations might be put to test. Does she live up to the genuineness (authenticity construction) portrayed on Facebook? Most of the musical followers in my study who have met her would say yes. The second layer is the link between the social media friendship and being a fan. Noah depicts the importance of the Facebook friendship with regards to her view of being Hanouneh's fan. Noah can see herself becoming a fan when several ways of communication are possible which in her case are Hanouneh's music, Facebook, email and live shows. She mentions that the last live show with Hanouneh felt more like it was a friend performing since Hanouneh treated her as a friend by being nice and even smiling at her during the performance (Interviews and fieldnotes j. Noah). Being a Friend, to use boyd's term, and a fan is joined by the presence of support.

The ability for Facebook users to gather many aspects of their lives there (interesting companies, various interest groups, artists, family, friends, acquaintances) result, in my opinion, in fluid borders between the private and the public making it possible for music consumers to develop friendship-like relationships with artists in ways which were not possible before. The case of Hanouneh and her musical followers illustrates the importance of the independent artist being in charge of their own Facebook profile and other social network profiles<sup>29</sup>. The independent status of the artist

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<sup>29</sup> The commercial artists often have managers who write on their social network profile for them just as they used to reply to the hand-written fan mail of the past (cf. boyd, 2006).

means that s/he has one foot in the “underground” world. Being underground enough to produce your own social media updates and comments is an important part of the authenticity production and consumption. By taking part in a “genuine” musicians everyday life and opinions whom they can contact as any other Friend, musical followers consume the produced authenticity (cf. Cornby, 2006, p. 112-113). By choosing to be Friends with Hanouneh on Facebook and other social media sites, they build on the “public they are addressing through their presentation of self, bulletins, comments and blog posts” (boyd, 2006). To the musical followers, the authenticity production and consumption they create in collaboration with the artist in Hanouneh’s non-commercial approach and image along with being able to deepen the relationship through online and offline contexts result in a new fandom fused by rhythm.

## 5. OUTRO

The aim of this study was to examine the dialogically constructed authenticity between an artist and her audience taking place on a stage oscillating between the online and offline contexts, and how this construction in turn influences the music creation process, art production, artist identity, and the musical followers. The study depicts the importance of Hanouneh's Middle Eastern cultural identity in the construction of authenticity. This cultural identity is signified by the name Hanouneh. The meaning found in the name contains both the ascribed identity, focusing on personal qualities, given by the musical followers and the Arabic link which is a part of Hanna's self-identity. The Middle Eastern cultural identity is also found in the double-naming of Hanouneh in two communities in the Middle East granting her the possibility of representing them through her membership. This is one of the factors that enable Hanouneh to speak for and represent these specific communities through which she also should be understood. This study challenges the suggestion that fans, or in this case musical followers, are first and foremost consumers (cf. Condry, 2006, p. 113) by analyzing Hanouneh and her musical followers taking part in a collective authenticity construction resulting in them both being producers and consumers.

The study analyzes the interplay of ethnic backgrounds and citizenships resulting in the privilege associated with some of them and the oppression associated with others exemplified with the case of Aisha's double-citizenship. Hanna's feelings of "privileged guilt" along with her ability to "hear pain" are argued to be parts of the construction of authenticity. Music is suggested to be Hanna's way of dealing with the felt agony of

living with the pain of the Palestinian family and also, on a wider scale, that of the Palestinian people in general.

Resistance strategies found in the imagery and the music such as the protester metaphor, the humor, self-irony and criticism of representations of women and “revolutionaries” are by their deconstructing nature suggested as being part of the authenticity construction. Hanna’s description of her music as emotion-driven is supported by the driving forces of anger, struggle, humor, radicality and maturity.

The musical followers’ negotiation of whether to call themselves fans or not is suggested to be another construction of authenticity where factors such as age and gender play an important role. Friendship is analyzed as another important aspect of authenticity production. By being viewed as a Friend in the context of oscillation between online and offline, Hanna Hanouneh takes part in reciprocal support with her musical followers. The function of support is found in the new fandom where being a fan and a Friend is based on the presence of support.

The authenticity construction analyzed in this thesis takes place on a stage filled with the oscillation of the online and offline contexts, and the focus on the global and transnationality. This stage frames the deconstruction of the authenticity construction. Throughout the thesis, Hanna Hanouneh is depicted as constructing authenticity by deconstructing the expected connections between a particular background or origin and a certain appearance, style, use of language, values and behavior (cf. Bäckman, 2009, p. 218). The study analyzes Hanouneh’s and her musical followers shared construction of authenticity which produces Hanouneh as an artist with a certain image and style mix who makes music somewhere inbetween hip-hop and reggae which makes her ‘real’ and ‘unique’ (cf. Peterson, 1997, p. 206-209). When discussing her own view of authenticity

in a hip-hop context, Hanna provided two possible options for constructing it: “Either you are skilled and talented in what you do making your background and past experiences of less importance, or you have experiences of war and get credibility based on that resulting in your music not having to be as good” (Fieldnotes, October 18, 2010). This study shows how Hanouneh aims to strike a balance between these two options.

I would argue that the description of Hanouneh’s music as emotion-driven can be applied to this thesis where emotions and affects are a driving force in the analysis of the authenticity construction: in chapter 2 it is “privileged guilt” and pain, in chapter 3 it is anger, struggle, humor, radicality and maturity, and in chapter 4 it is reciprocal support and honesty. This study suggests that Hanouneh and her musical followers’ feelings together with their identities, histories and the norms of their cultural contexts figure prominently in their constructions of authenticity (cf. Krause, 2005, p. 187-188). Emotions and affects are analyzed as social and culturally controlled activities and structures which bind people together (cf. Nilsson, 1999, p. 212). I argue emotions to be an important part of the message in Hanouneh’s music. They not only serve as the filter through which the stories in the songs are told, and as the frame of the Hanouneh imagery. By being simultaneously specific and general, private and political, they are also an end in themselves through the authenticity construction.

The DIY (Do It Yourself) approach is another part of the authenticity construction between Hanouneh and her musical followers. This study suggests the importance of Hanouneh being in charge of her own music by releasing it through her own indie label, controlling her social media content and portrayal, and promoting her music herself mainly in an online context. The example of Hanouneh’s DIY approach, which takes

place in an oscillation between online and offline contexts, suggests that an aspect of the authenticity construction is to aim at enacting the struggle of the musicians in the past who did everything on their own. Peterson states the importance of the DIY culture among the American country music artists in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century where the artists in order to become successful “not only had to perform for an audience, but they often had to book their own engagements, arrange, transportation, plan publicity, find new songs, and collect the money owed to them” (1999, p. 10). This time before the managers, talent agents, and publicists is what the construction of authenticity in this study suggests to be the ideal producing the ‘underground’ associations, which are part of the authenticity construction. The struggle of doing it on your own seems to guarantee ‘underground’ status.

This thesis also shows various strategies used by the artist in order for her to uphold her ‘underground’ affiliation and through that remain ‘real’. The economic stability made possible through her career as a lecturer and consultant enable Hanna Hanouneh to be ‘underground’. In other words, ‘selling out’ in the context of this study does not necessarily only refer to crossing over into the ‘commerical’ sphere where the money is, but more importantly it is about granting someone else the control of ones image and music. Hanna Hanouneh does not need to compromise with record company employees, but has to instead convince her musical followers of her ‘realness’ by positioning herself as ‘underground enough’.

Global and transnational perspectives play their part in the authenticity construction. The name Hanouneh, the Hanouneh imagery and her music are examples of such perspectives. Through this, the artist Hanouneh and her music become a part of a storytelling about the multiculturalism wind spreading through Western Europe and



the rest of the world. Her musical collaborations and choices of expressions reflect this: reggae in Jamaica, hip-hop in the Middle East, and both reggae and hip-hop in Sweden. Hanouneh is depicted as speaking through the perspective of the Other - the multicultural individual - who is a part of her cultural experience. The collaborations as well as the musical creation process often take place in an online context in the case of Hanouneh, which I would claim to be a reality for most contemporary musicians. Their musical networks are found online where communication is enabled with likeminded individuals world-wide who might eventually meet up (offline), which was the case with Hanouneh and the 961 Underground. This oscillation between the online and offline was depicted as a part of the Arab Spring where “the oldest of techniques” was combined with “the newest of technologies” (Stengel, 2011) making it a common way of being a protester in the year 2011.

### **Applying the results**

The insights about new fandoms and other aspects of authenticity construction are of obvious interest to the music business as a whole (including the independent and commercial parts). This study provides an analysis of some of the music creation processes that take place in the everyday setting of an independent artist engaged in authenticity production together with her musical followers. The study also provides a discussion about the complex term ‘fan’ which could be useful for the music business to know more about. The oscillation of the online and offline contexts is of particular relevance today when music streaming programs such as Spotify aim at providing music to consumers who use music in this oscillation between the contexts. The independent music business might be interested in the discussion about the overall focus of the

authenticity construction which might work as a reminder of the fact that authenticity consists of values, emotions and ideas which are constantly created in the here and now: it is not something that exists independently. Also, I view this study to be a commentary about the focus on authenticity in contemporary society functioning as a reminder of its construction. Therefore, the 'real' and the 'fake' are two interdependent parts of a dichotomy which plays an important role in capitalist society.

### **Further research**

This study argues for a new fandom which takes place in the oscillation of the online and offline, and private and public. But what might the increasing focus on the communication and various Friendships between artists and their audience through social media result in? I see a possibility for the "aura" associated with many commercial artists to eventually disappear with the increasing digital presence of music. But I also see a possibility for the opposite – that a commercial/popular artist's digital presence through social media increases the magic and "aura" surrounding her/him which then rather is associated with authenticity claims ("s/he is so genuine"). I also see a possibility for the borders between artists and their audience to become if not completely deleted then blurred. What happens when the consumer and the producer is the same person? How does this affect the production and consumption of music? More research is needed in this area.

The conditions provided in the oscillation between online and offline contexts should be examined further in order to find out more about their influence on the music creation process, artist identity and relationship between artists and their audiences.

What role does the radio (something inbetween online and offline, digital/analogue) play in a time of social media?

I argue for a more in-depth study of the new fandom suggested in this study in order to find out more about the relationship between artists and their audiences which takes place in the oscillation between online and offline. Also, I claim for further examination of the construction of authenticity in order to find out more about its function and to strengthen the argument that the ‘underground‘ and ‘commercial‘ are in need of each other and that they are both cultural and social products (cf. Thornton, 1995).

## 6. REFERENCES

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All interviews and fieldnotes in the author's possession.

- a) *Hanna Hanouneh* (Jan 23, 2011) Face-to-face interview, length 1 h 50 mins
- b) *Big H* (Jan 27, 2011) Online interview over an instant-messaging program, Gmail chat, length 2 h
- c) *Hanna Hanouneh* (Jan 28, 2011) Face-to-face interview, length 1 h
- d) *Herbares* (Feb 6, 2011) Online interview over an instant-messaging program, Facebook chat, length 1 h
- e) *Matsimilian* (Feb 8, 2011) Online interview over an instant-messaging program, Skype chat, length 1 h
- f) *Caleb* (Feb 10, 2011) Online interview over an instant-messaging program, Skype chat, length 1 h 30 mins
- g) *Herbares* (Feb 13, 2011) Online interview over private Facebook messages
- h) *Leo* (Feb 14, 2011) Online interview over an instant-messaging program, Gmail chat, length 1 h 30 mins
- i) *Aisha* (Feb 15, 2011) Face-to-face interview, length 45 mins
- j) *Noah* (Feb 15, 2011) Online web cam interview, Skype, length 1 h 30 mins
- k) *Mr B* (Feb 17, 2011) Face-to-face interview, length 1 h 20 mins
- l) *Bob* (Feb 21, 2011) Online web cam interview, Skype, length 1 h 15 mins
- m) *Alexander* (Feb 21, 2011) Online audio interview, Skype, length 1 h

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