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***Keepin' It Real vs. Bling-Bling:
Shopping for Identity among Swedish Hip-Hoppers***



Graffiti mural, depicting rap legend 2Pac, in New York City

http://assets.nybooks.com/media/photo/2010/12/21/Chiasson_1_jpg_630x423_crop_q85.jpg

Abstract

This paper describes the discourse of authenticity and the creating of identity through popular culture, using hip-hop, as a case to study. Based on data from how Swedish youth take in hip-hop through music lyrics, rapper stereotypes, the gangster rap subgenre and rap battles, it shows that including oneself into this culture can lead to changes in one's identity and the redefinition of one's persona. It discusses how hip-hop influence leads to youth creating their own local oppositional culture, re-constructing perceptions of authenticity and acts as guidance in the quest for an independent identity during adolescence and early adulthood. The theoretical material considering authenticity will primarily be provided by Charles Lindholm and David Boyle.

Keywords: social anthropology, authenticity, identity, popular culture, hip-hop, culture, youth, community

List of Hip-Hop slang and terms

- **Battle (Rap Battle)** – A contest where you orally recite rap or hip-hop lyrics back and forth between at least two individuals. The crowd decides who the better emcee is after they have battled it out for a couple of rounds.
- **Beef** – Slang for fighting someone or being aggressive. Have a grudge or starting one with another person in the Hip-Hop industry. (*Beef is not what these famous niggas do on the mic. Beef is what George Bush would do in a fight* – Mos Def – What is Beef?)
- **Bling- Bling/Ching/Ice** – A slang term for expensive jewellery; like diamonds and gold chains and other accoutrements that are eye-catching.
- **Bling-Bling culture** refers to the lifestyle in itself that surrounds excess spending and flaunting wealth ostentatiously as a rapper.
- **Crew** – Gang, posse or set. It could be a somewhat organized group of graffiti artists or a very close group of friends that you can count on.
- **Deejay** – Disc Jockey, the one who plays, mixes or spins records in hip-hop.
Emcee – Master of Ceremony/Mike controller, term for the rapper in hip-hop.
- **Game** - A term for knowledge, skill and expertise. Having a knack for something like rapping or hitting on the members of the opposite sex ("*He got game*" – He has skills). It is also a reference to the street life and also Rap Game being a term for the rap industry (*And the rap game paralyzes the street life, I'm not sellin' drugs I'm, selling CD's globally* – Gucci Mane feat. Master P – Brinks)
- **Gangsta - (Gangster)** – A member of a street gang or a reference to a certain attitude/style that is applied on actions, objects and ideas.
- **Hood** – Neighbourhood or the place you came from before you hit it big time.
- **O.G** – Meaning Original Gangster, from the beginning referred to the founder of a gang but is now considered a term for any older gang member or originator of something in Hip-Hop.
- **Playa (Player)** – Being a ladies man, someone who cheats on his girlfriend/wife or simply being really good at something (*He's a big playa in the game*, referring to the hip-hop industry).
- **Scratchin'** – A deejay creating music by manually moving a record under a stylus.

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¹ C.R.E.A.M: A famous rap song from Wu-Tang Clan and a slang term for money.

1. Introduction & Aim

What is authenticity? And would we recognize it hidden behind layers of contrived personas and ideas? In a world where the process of globalization is a fact we see how many aspects of the real and the fake are being challenged everyday through the paradoxical search for the old - while still craving and wanting the new. There are arguably no areas for discussion where authenticity and identity are not brought up at some point because it has influence on who we are and who we want to be; what we are doing and what we want to do. People are being challenged by corporations, media and other sources to re-evaluate themselves each time they see a marketing ad in the news paper, a commercial on TV and a billboard sign on the highway or magazines like Cosmopolitan that constantly shows you who is considered beautiful enough to end up on a cover. Through the use of popular culture I want to provide a look on how it can challenge, re-shape and market different aspects of what is considered authentic and by doing so also pushing for a change in how people view themselves and re-think who they want or should be as individuals to fit into a certain type of pattern.

Hip-hop is one of many social phenomena in our society that can be linked to the creating and marketing of authenticity and identity among its supporters and practitioners; as well as those who are firmly against everything that rappers and hip-hop culture provide to people. The norms of authenticity are embodied in rap artists, who in their style and their engagement with the concepts within the music they create on a regular basis reaffirm what is and what is not authentic. However, critics claim that what hip-hop really provides is a forum for rappers to use very misogynistic lyrics, sexist music videos and lets them encourage social defiance against any authority that is in opposition to whatever they consider good. One aspect of how rappers influence their audience was shown to me by Swave Sevah, who had broken his arm a day prior to the concert, yelling out to the audience about wanting a marijuana joint to smoke on and the audience that mostly consisted of white males between ages 18-25 who looked as if they never had smoked a regular cigarette one day in their life started cheering and yelling out that they had a joint for him. Perhaps the legalization of smoking marijuana is not the greatest influence that rappers have on their fans, but promoting marijuana smoking through their lyrics and their own everyday life actions sends a clear message to their audience that by doing so themselves they reach a new level of connection to their rap idols.

1. Introduction & Aim

Just understanding the impact of globalization on hip-hop was thrown right at me while standing in a crowd at Mejeriet during a concert by Cunninlynguists. Rapper Kno (a.k.a. Ryan Wisler) from the group starts telling the crowd how much he appreciated Sweden after we made it possible for Cunninlynguists to record an album and how he liked the burgers at Viggos, a local restaurant in Lund just by the train station. By studying anthropology, I also realized how much academical institutions like ours can benefit from studying this popular culture with a perspective on authenticity and identity; like for example aiming to show how globalization has affected changes in how people joining the hip-hop community want to portray themselves and act in their everyday life, how the background of hip-hop is linked to young black men's identity in general but in particular in their view on higher education or how young women are influenced by the portrayal of females in hip-hop music videos.

Hip-Hop culture has been proven to be more than a fad and has instead become an institution that affects people at local and global levels on everyday basis. The music in itself is a part of my everyday life and has been for a long time, however these past years I have realized that the critical side of me towards the hip-hop industry and the social problems that have been arguably enhanced through some rappers within the culture has been replaced by the catchy lyrics and the amazing beats in the songs. Hip-hop, according to most practitioners and supporters, consists of four elements; graffiti, breakdancing, deejaying & MC-ing (emceeing). Out of the four elements of hip-hop, this paper will mostly focus on the MC-ing, because rappers have become the main focus of the hip-hop scene these past decades from in the past being dominated by deejays like DJ Kool Herc. Furthermore, I will try to present how rappers give meaning to self-identification for youth and how authenticity is generally evaluated by the participants within the hip-hop community. I will argue that hip-hop can be understood as a growing social phenomenon that transcends the local origin of the Bronx and is used for creating a collective by young adolescents in their everyday lives all over the world.

2. Method & Questions

This paper will primarily be based on secondary material provided from books, articles, movies, songs and lyrics, while also including to some degree discoveries based on participation in hip-hop concerts and events since September last year. In this paper the sources of data has been collected from people with different backgrounds varying from sociologists, globally well-known rappers, social and cultural anthropologists, music and entertainment journalists, culture critics, urban studies and also black history professors.

A mixture of books collected and several articles from the fields of cultural studies, Black American studies, sociology and anthropology, hip-hop films (*Wild Style & Beat Street*) and documentaries (*Planet Rock & Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes*) and a lot of playlists filled with arguably the best of hip-hop music. While graffiti and break dancing are an integral part of hip-hop, I have chosen not to focus on them because the popularity of rappers among youth today is interesting to study due to the widespread mass media focus on them. I have chosen hip-hop as a case because it is a good example of how popular culture and the music discourse can become more than entertainment and instead a source for personal development. In particular, an anthropological approach to hip-hop can help elucidate issues of authenticity and identity that would otherwise be overlooked or misunderstood like for example in female rappers, gangster rappers and white rappers in Sweden.

▪ In this paper the following questions will be answered:

- Why do Swedish youth today use popular culture such as hip-hop to create their identity and evaluate what is actually authentic within the community?
- What is authenticity in hip-hop and what type of characters are considered authentic?
- How does hip-hop build, re-build and market different forms of identity for young people in Sweden?

3. Disposition

This paper begins with a discussion on authenticity and identity by using different aspects of hip-hop culture as a case to draw evidence from. Through the use of a hip-hop friendly metaphor, I could explain this paper as a mix-tape where every chapter is a track consisting of beats and rhymes that were made for the purpose of intriguing someone to want to hear, or in this case read, more about how youth today are influenced by popular culture in their making of an identity.

Chapter 4. discusses how authenticity is presented in general and especially in popular culture much as yet another outcome of globalization and increased consumerism today. In chapter 5.1 the authenticity of hip-hop will be confronted and how it is viewed by different sources such as the old school rappers or supporters from different sites. Chapter 5.2 will provide a chart for different variations of rappers in hip-hop and 5.2.1 will give short descriptions about each type of rap artists. Chapter 5.2.2 will showcase the gangster rapper persona that has become a stereotype for hyper-masculinity in hip-hop. The issues in chapter 6 will be regarding in what ways hip-hop, as a cultural phenomenon, has travelled from the Bronx to a different culture where it has been embraced by white middle class adolescents like in Sweden. Chapter 6.1 will be about the aspect of being white in a popular culture dominated by blacks and how this affects authenticity. In chapter 6.2 the Swedish concept in hip-hop known as "*Förortsrap*" will be presented and chapter 6.2.1 will be discussing rap battles in their original settings as well as in Sweden. Chapter 6.2.2 will discuss the representation and lack of female rappers in the global hip-hop community as well as in Sweden.

How the business and entrepreneurial side of the rapper can be ground for questioning someone's authenticity due to marketing merchandise instead of only doing music. Chapter 7.2 will highlight the effects of consumerism within hip-hop culture based on clothing, style and other merchandise that are used by fans to assert authenticity and strengthen their positions in the community. Finally, Chapter 8 will include a summary of all the chapters mentioned prior and chapter 9 will have the conclusion of the findings resulting from writing this paper. Lastly, all references used for the data written in the paper will be shown in chapter 10.

4. Keepin' it real

“Authenticity” is a term that covers all possible areas of everyday life, from it being authentic art, food and music to authentic roots and authentic meanings to name a few. It is something experience intimately and personally by people who feel satisfied upon finding it and a sense of loss and emptiness when it is lost again. Therefore, since all of us are looking for what that “real” essence or feeling which is connected to authenticity we become a sort of global collective of people searching for the same thing. According to anthropologist Charles Lindholm, we are gathered together in this adventure for authenticity which provides us with a feeling of having a greater purpose and lets us experience a sense of belonging with our fellow seekers. Furthermore, we search for this authenticity within ourselves in our transformative or everyday actions and by consuming all products that by our perception are not “fake”; like designer clothing over cheap copies. There is also a great difficulty in defining the concept of authenticity except for mentioning the most common values connected to it such as it being sincere and honest, original and rooted, real and natural. In a sense it could be argued that what decides authenticity is based on two categories of characterization that are genealogical or historical (*origin*) and identity or correspondence (*content*) (Lindholm: 2008). These forms of categories to determine authenticity co-exist as counterparts to what is considered by as fake, unreal or false by people in our everyday society. Jean Jacques Rousseau strived as a first to become a spokes person for authenticity In his time as a man who revealed his true nature to full extent with total disregard to whatever others would think of him. Rousseau contributed to a new ideal through his revelations in which value was place on showing one’s true character even if it challenges societal norms of conduct; since a real and sincere life could only be lived through the experience of authenticity (Lindholm: 2008). However, Rousseau believed as some argue today that cultural and social surface hinders self-expression of authenticity and in some sense that is correct in the case of actors within the popular culture like in hip-hop; due to censorship laws and restrictive social politics. When you look around the world today the word “authentic” is presented time and time again in advertisement and used by people from all kinds of businesses to stress how they are the ones who can distinguish what is real from fake. Authenticity was used before to indicate the opposite of a copy in marketing, this meaning that the authentic became what is the genuine product but now the term has evolved into meaning something deeper and more difficult to explain.

4. Keepin' it real

There is underlying fear in people today that everything shown by mass media and in advertisement, as well as all experiences offered to us, is solely a scheme to somehow force us into submission to accept whatever we are given. Moreover, during adolescence in particular young people shape their reasoning abilities and reflexive thinking while at the same time creating their own self-concepts and media becomes likely an influence in this development (Gruber & Thau: 2003). Searching for authenticity without it having effect on how people build their identities would be impossible since our work to perfect ourselves to be the best and most honest version of ourselves is synonymous with us wanting a truthful living in all aspects. If we look at identity as a place where social and cultural discourses meet while being used to create a form of *true self*”, the work of creating an identity is done by thought and action (Hall:1996). This leads to the search in every area for something authentic, in the meaning of something honest and real, without persuasion or manipulation. Economy author and journalist David Boyle discusses how the real and fake hardly really contradict each other in life because people simultaneously react against the artificially created world they live in as they enjoy some parts of the constructed reality, while constantly finding the importance of authenticity in everyday encounters. Everyday encounters including popular culture such as different genres of music where you can not find a specific object to emulate or adore like in other categories for art like painting. How is then authenticity created in music? In today's society we can encounter and engage in a whole volume of extraordinary experiences through both the development of Internet and the possibilities for artists to tour the whole world where they perform for fans of different backgrounds. This means that what every person shares is a desire to get a hold of what is genuine and authentic in music, we crave for musicians who put artistic creativity before capitalistic aims and they want real rapping instead of auto tune songs and real singing instead of playback. In the discussion concerning music and authenticity it foremost presents two approaches that involve one hand historical/genealogical views and on the other romantic and expressive notions. It is a question of how various genres and periods emphasize different takes on authenticity; such as whether the performance in itself shows the emotional side of the music or if it sticks to the original qualities from its start. The importance of how popular culture can become a discourse for self-identification and authenticity is presented by the affect it has on youth in various societies.

4. Keepin' it real

One example of popular culture is hip-hop, which has changed the way young adolescents view themselves in terms of being authentic and real, being a part of a collective and how they use this music discourse for their self-identification. If we interpret hip-hop as a form of constructed community where membership is based on being authentic and following generally accepted principles that have existed within this popular culture from start then once again it is proven how much of an importance realness actually has in different settings. For example in classical music there is a requirement to stick to authentic performances stress the use of musical instruments from the right era and that they are played in the same manner as in the past. The irony is that most musical instruments used today are so called imitation originals that can create the original sounds of the past but are not from the “*right*” era or played quite the same due to improvements. This attempt to use original methods in performances of music as another aspect on authenticity can also be found in hip-hop; in the DJ’s vantage of old school methods like scratchin’ and using vinyl records on turntables to produce sounds manually with turntables. The DJ was the most important on stage in the beginning of hip-hop culture, but has been outshined by the rapper these past decades. However, the authenticity level of a rapper and a performance is also measured by who the DJ is behind him on stage and what kind of methods he uses. At every hip-hop concert and event the rappers described who the DJ was, expressed that he is more authentic than others today and that it is so because of the classic methods used during the musical performance (See Chapter 10: References). This is an example of how historical authenticity matters within this popular culture and is an aspect of it that is interesting to investigate since DJ’s have changed their methods in deejaying due to advanced technology. Does using arguably improved technologies and instruments to enhance performances make them less authentic? In hip-hop there are constant discussions about it, where both rappers and DJ’s have gotten criticism for changing the original methods; like one of the biggest rap artists today Kanye West who used auto tune to change his sound on his album “*808’s & Heartbreak*” from 2008. Nowadays, according to philosopher Walter Benjamin, due to technological progress, mechanical reproduction of music sets it free from ritual and traditional production methods in popular music. The difference now is also that the criteria for authenticity of the historical aspects on music production in hip-hop has gone lost and been replaced by a practise of power; like for example with copyrights by corporations (Schumacher:2004).

4. Keepin' it real

The search for authentic sound in popular music is difficult to find, because most songs include some sort of sampling from older records produced in a previous time which means that assuming that music exists in pure form would be untrue (Durant, 1990: 180.) Nevertheless, the opinions of what should be considered authentic are conveyed and decided mostly by practitioners or enthusiasts in any popular culture who see themselves as being the representatives of what authenticity should look like. This is also a question of how the performers in music use their backgrounds to produce certain images that sell their music easier or make their lyrics more authentic for the audience. In spite of all the paradoxes and the difficulty in defining the term “*authenticity*” the most important elements in it have to be “*pure*” and “*original*”; with an essence that is spiritual, personal or cultural.

So, how do we as fans of different music genres define what the truth is and who is authentic? The credibility of an artist is based on him being honest about different aspects; like telling the truth about his experiences or events which can be verified by the audience, expressing opinions truthfully about larger social issues and sharing music which fans can relate to because of the content. An artist should speak his or hers mind, express thoughts and feelings through autobiographical music, in interviews and be seen as a “*real person*” who is approachable to the fans. There is also a necessity of the artist being consistent in his everyday life and maintain the reputation of being authentic through actions and keeping up appearances (Armstrong: 2004). According to musicologist Richard Middleton, the effort to contextualise popular music, such as hip-hop or rock, as a cultural expression needs to be approached in relation to the concepts of authenticity and honesty become factors that validate the criteria of musical value whether it is in the live performance or the studio produced records. Another important factor of authenticity in popular music is how young people use the cultural resources and use their meanings to create own forms of meaning and perception on what is considered real to them (Bennett, 2000:27). In addition, Thornton (1995) discusses how “*subcultural capital*” like clothing, language and style is closely connected to mass media messages and people use the information they get from Internet, newspapers or gossip magazines to internalize what is necessary to have for being considered as authentic as a rap artist or even a hip-hop fan.

5.1. Authenticity in hip-hop

According to myths told by rappers today, almost 30 years later, the word hip-hop was coined by the pioneer and music journalist Michael Holman who led the first America TV-show called *Graffiti Rock* during the early 1980's. To become a part of the hip-hop culture, Holman decided to go to block parties and different events downtown; so he made a venture into a setting that he had never been before to explore a rumoured new culture created by marginalized people in an area where poverty was dominating. Holman's first experience with hip-hop and its participants could be seen as something equivalent to a modern kind of anthropological fieldwork based on participant observation which ended in a thesis or in his case an article that baptized this whole popular youth culture birthed by the working class. In the hip-hop community the actions of actually going to the events and being amongst other fans of the music, as well as the praxis within the culture, would categorize him as a real fan and not a fake by most people because he shows engagement. Hip-Hop authenticity could be defined by being true to oneself, asserting "*local allegiances and territorial identities*" and strong connection to original rap music through methods, language and styles or an established artist (Armstrong: 2004).

Hip-hop is the story of the rapper from the urbanized concrete jungle of the Bronx growing up listening to DJ Kool Herc, running around with other kids to different block parties in the neighbourhoods with deejays and rappers, watching the subway train cars roll by with graffiti tags and murals on them, or seeing b-boys at the central station battling it out and through this experiencing hip-hop culture at a local level back in the 1970's. Economist and lecturer of education at Harvard University, Ronald F. Ferguson postulates that hip-hop has transcending from the realm of entertainment to become an integral aspect of identity and a tool to use for comprehending the world for black youth. Hip-hop has become something more than entertainment for not just black youth in America, but has transcended into a new way to create an identity, strive for personal success and a sense of belonging for people of all ethnicities all over the world. The question of what is authentic in hip-hop has existed from its very beginning and sociology professor Michael Eric Dyson postulates that it was because of this community having to defend itself against older members of black culture and society at large (2007:6).

5.1. Authenticity in hip-hop

In the world of hip-hop, there is also a constant contemplation regarding of how the original rapper persona is supposed to be and who actually fits, or does not fit, into this image out of the artists in the business as well as their fans. Who is then the real hip-hop fan and who is just posing as one? The appeal hip-hop has on white fans in particular is clear through them being the foremost consumers of hip-hop music in way of buying albums, concert tickets and other merchandise like clothing or products from rap artists other ventures outside of their environment. Although, it can be argued that hip-hop has a stronger effect on the beliefs of black youth since they partly use it to define a sense of blackness, black masculinity and also history in a sense (Coleman: 1961). The idea of a strong hyper-masculinity of black males have been stressed by the “*thug*” persona that exists in hip-hop and is said to influence youth to perpetuate this stereotype through not caring about school or education and instead putting hustlin’ on the street as a priority because otherwise they are considered soft.

However, an unexpected occurrence happened at the concert with Immortal Technique when his fellow rapper Swave Sevah, showcased his vulnerability and a soft side that is not perceived as usual for the stereotypical masculine hard and unemotional rapper. Swave Sevah shared, with tears in his eyes, the story of his brother being shot to death a few years ago on Christmas Day and dedicated a song to him. However, Sevah still stuck to the stereotypical portrayal of masculinity in hip-hop by telling the audience that he would kill the perpetrator even though real emotions were there for every fan to see. There is this notion that even though you can care for your crew, it is difficult to show your love and support for the individual males in it because it is seen as you being soft or even a “*fag*”. “*You can still love your man and be manly dog*”, is a line from a song by rapper Kanye West who tries to promote the stance of males having a positive relationship with other men without them being considered less masculine or strong; which is a good start to invoke reflection of the hyper-masculinity stereotype that is defining for most male artists in hip-hop. How these personas that rappers create for themselves actually affect their audience is an interesting question and what kind of criteria is there for one to be considered an “*authentic*” or real fan of hip-hop?

5.1. Authenticity in hip-hop

One rapper who has been accused of creating his own rebellious fantasy lifestyle and personal background is Rick Ross a.k.a. William Roberts, whose artist name was taken from "Freeway" Rick Ross who was one of the most successful drug traffickers during the early 80's in L.A. However, rapper Rick Ross was accused of not only borrowing this drug seller's name but also his entire persona; after he had worked as a correctional officer in the same jail where "Freeway Ricky" had done his sentencing (Planet Rock: 2011). This being a way for rapper Rick Ross to enter the hip-hop industry as a more legitimate player and hustler than him previously being the one who locked up people similar to Lil'Wayne and others in hip-hop who have been to prison. It is not unusual to create an alter ego, like Eminem did with Slim Shady, but the "stolen identity" being exposed leads to great controversy regarding his music seeming less authentic and "hood". As there is in most fields, there is also a general notion of things you have to know if you have any interest in hip-hop beyond just listening at some songs from time to time and maybe at clubs or concerts. These things you should know vary depending on who you ask, but to be a hip-hop fan you should know who some of the most prominent figures in the beginning were, the four elements of hip-hop (coined by pioneer Afrika Bambaataa), a couple of underground rap artists and knowledge of mainstream artists. Still, just because you know of the mainstream rappers it does not mean that a real hip-hop fan actually gets credit for listening to an artist who is on the Billboard Top 10 list. The market of hip-hop is based on different categories of rap and rap artists; some are considered mainstream and closer to pop/hip-hop, some are underground rappers, some are political and socially conscious rappers. There are several categories and also subcategories that rap artists can be taken in and out of on an average basis by their fans. This depends on the type of music they produce and the message they send out through it. Rap music is also used by rappers for different purposes and the same goes for the texts they write which often narrate negative images. For hardcore fans of any music genre the romantic identification with the rappers are connected to a fear that those who make it big, from being in a subgenre like underground rap or local unknown artist getting airtime on the radio, will abandon their roots, fake their feelings and let down those whom have helped them on the way through support (Lindholm: 2008). Therefore, you get often discredited as a fan if you listen to only mainstream rap and have little or no knowledge of the classic hip-hop songs or rappers from the 80s and 90s.

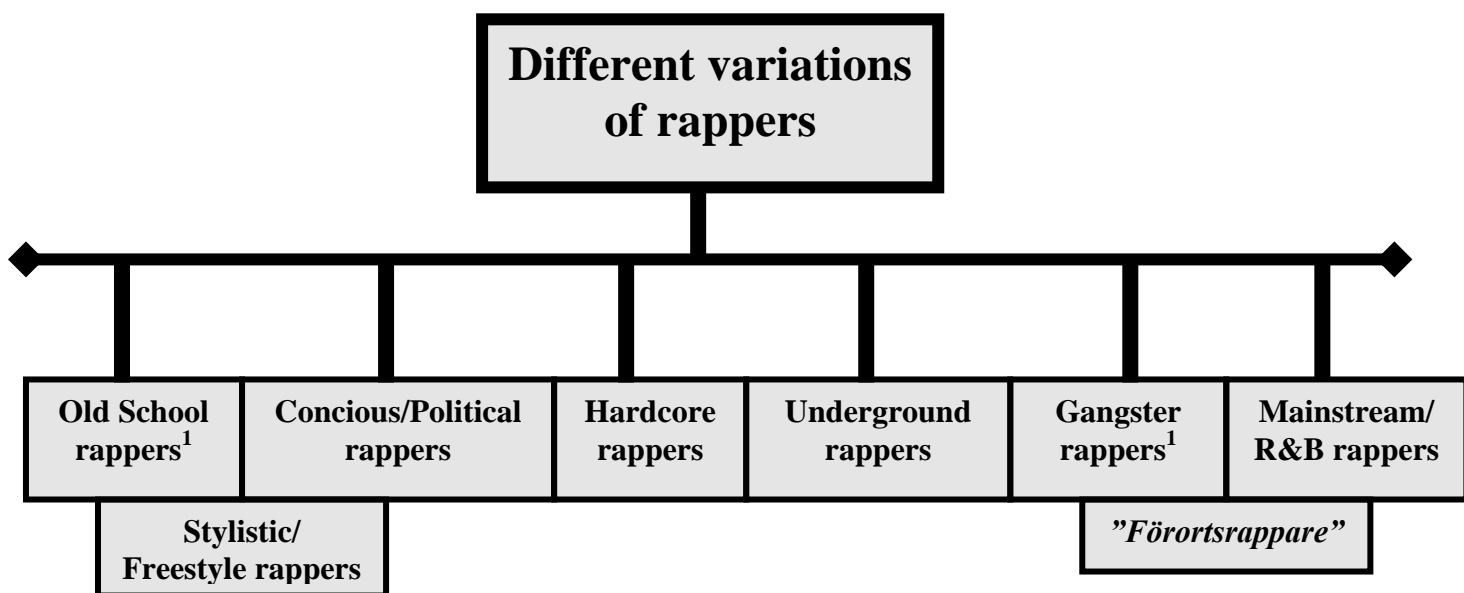
5.1. Authenticity in hip-hop

The most hard core hip-hop fans often consider the statement “*Hip-hop is dead*” true, because of the content and production used for most mainstream rap music today is not as authentic as it was back in the days of political rappers like Public Enemy or pioneers like KRS-One. At the concert in Copenhagen with mainstream rapper Drake, the audience was very varied from a 12 year old boy going there with his dad to 35-40 year old couples and in front of the stage during the concert even two 8-year-old girls in their ballerina outfits were there with their mom. What these underage kids were doing at the concert from the first place could be a good question, but the main point is that the range of audience and influence that Drake has as a popular rap artist today is undisputable. However, there is a fear from hip-hop artists, fans and critics over the relationship between hip-hop and the mainstream marketplace, which is rooted in an anxiety that passive consumption will replace active musical production; as well as decrease the engagement with cultural traditions and community (Blair: 2004). Hardcore hip-hop fans are sharing the anti-consumerism and capitalism stance that is taken in by underground rappers or conscious rappers who try to enlighten their audience with the problems of a society that today focuses more on material goods than on helping people.

Today, one of the most acknowledged political underground rappers and activists is Immortal Technique (a.k.a. Felipe Coronel), an American rapper who hails from Harlem with Afro-Peruvian descent. During a concert at Mejeriet in Lund, as he does in all of his concerts, advocated to his audience that they should never forget that they have a voice in the Swedish society and therefore they should use it to push forward changes for a better future instead of being complacent to whatever faith politicians decide for them. Immortal Technique, also gave a shout out to all of his new fans and participants that came to his concert unknowing of the type of music he produces. After that he emphasized his position as underground/conscious-rapper going against mainstream and “*bling-bling*” rap by saying that if anyone from the audience came there looking for “*some pop hip-hop, bitches and cars and bling-bling music*”, they had come to the wrong concert with the wrong rapper. By openly addressing the problems with mainstream hip-hop and showcasing his opposition to the commercialism within the industry he asserted his authenticity as an underground rapper while further stressing him “*keepin’ it real*” by having a typical anti-societal and rebellious attitude.

5.2. Different variations of rappers

In the hip-hop community there are subgenres and different types of rappers who all have special characteristics in their music. It is not always easy to distinguish the different variations because a lot of rappers belong to several subgenres and travel between these throughout their careers. All hip-hop fans do not always agree with each other over the distinction of subgenre for different rappers. However, there are certain characteristics in the different variations that generally all in the hip-hop community agree upon even though the performers ending up in each subgenre is a topic for discussion among fans; as well as artists who want to be portrayed as specific kinds of rappers.



¹ In general, Old school rap is considered to be a product of rap artists from the East coast, while Gangster rap was born on the West coast.

5.2.1. Short descriptions of rappers

Old School rappers: include rap artist like Grandmaster Flash, Afrikaaa Bambaataa, and Dj Kool Herc who are generally considered to be the pioneers of hip-hop from its origin in the Bronx. The rappers who fit into this category are primarily those from the 70's and 80's that have contributed to the foundation of hip-hop music; which new rap artists draw knowledge and inspiration from today.

Stylistic/Freestyle rappers: include artists who are known for having a distinctive style or approach in their rapping, like Jay-Z for knowing how to freestyle words without planning or writing them down. Other artists are rapper Twista for his fast-paced rap, and Kanye West for his production/beats.

Conscious/Political rappers: include rap groups and artists who discuss social or political issues but these two categories are not quite the same. Conscious rap sends out an uplifting message to its listeners while painting a picture of problems in society by artists like KRS-One, Lauryn Hill, Common and The Roots. Political rap is more often delivered in a militant fashion by artists like Public Enemy and Dead Prez.

Hardcore rappers: is a style that uses themes like partying and boasting, social and urban issues, violence and guns, nudity and sex, drugs and gangs. These are similar themes that can also be found in gangster rap, but the hardcore rappers came before gangster rappers with rap group RUN-DMC. Categorization is difficult since the themes are so similar, but some who are considered hardcore rappers are Rakim, Big Daddy Kane, Slick Rick, 2Pac, Biggie Smalls, Wu-Tang Clan, Nas, Eminem and Lil' Kim.

Gangster rappers: is seen more as an approach or background describing a culture and subject rather than a style of rapping. Gangster rap has evolved from hardcore hip-hop through rappers like Schoolly D and Ice-T in the mid-1980's. It is the most controversial subgenre of hip-hop that according to gangster rappers show the "*ugly truth*" about how society looks in America. Famous gangster rap groups and artists are considered to be N.W.A (Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, Eazy-E), Cypress Hill and Boogie Down Productions.

5.2.1. Short descriptions of rappers

Underground rappers: include rappers who are or want to be outside of the general commercial mainstream category of hip-hop. These rappers are mostly associated with independent labels where they produce socially conscious music that goes against materialism, commercialism and other problematic discourses found in hip-hop. Some underground rappers are Immortal Technique, Jurassic 5, Brother Ali, Talib Kweli, Sage Francis and Blackalicious.

Mainstream/R&B rappers: include those rappers who do not mind the commercial success which comes from producing dance and pop/R&B-friendly hip-hop music that reaches out to the general mainstream audience. These rappers often use stereotypical lyrics about bling-bling consumerism and glamorize the hustler lifestyle to sell records. The music is often softer with themes like relationships, partying, crew love and making money. Popular mainstream and R&B rappers today are among others Drake, J. Cole, Nicki Minaj, Lil' Wayne and Flo Rida. In Sweden, these rappers would be fond in popular rapper Timbuktu (*who could also be considered a conscious rapper*), rap duo Snook, Petter, Adam Tensta, J-Son and Lazee.

“Förortsrappare”: are rappers from the Swedish suburbs who have created a category of their own with themes and characteristics from the gangster-, underground-, mainstream-, conscious- and political rap subgenres of hip-hop. These rappers are from suburban areas in Sweden that are densely populated by immigrants, like Norsborg, Rinkeby, Hallunda, Tensta and Rosengård. These neighbourhoods are often compared by to ghettos in the US because of the problematic circumstances due to unemployment, criminal activity, alienation and also mass media portrayal of these places. Some Swedish rappers who could be categorized as “Förortsrappare” are The Latin Kings, Ken Ring, Labyrint, Mohammed Ali and Advance Patrol. Advance Patrol’s song “Betongbarn”, depicts what “förortsrappare” see in the reality for those living in marginalized suburban neighbourhoods with these rap lines:

Vi e ungdomar som flummar/ Aggressivitet i vår personlighet/ Problemet är att vi inte hittar vår identitet/ Glamorösa drömmar är seriösa/ /jag är uppväxt med föräldrar som är långtidsarbetslösa/ Så pass vilken underklass/ Att jag trampar fel oavsett vilket slags kompass.

5.2.2. Gangster rappers

The different types of hip-hop fans are many and hard to distinguish. Nevertheless, for those fans who like old school hip-hop with its community-building, anti-materialism and no violence messages and everything else they are mostly open to the conscious, underground and political rappers than the gangster rappers or hardcore rappers, as well as the mainstream/R&B rappers who send out the opposite messages from the original hip-hop artists. However, since hip-hop is an acclaimed youth culture that has given a voice to the voiceless from the beginning of it, there is no wonder that the emergence of gangster rap came in the mid 80's during the worst crack epidemic in USA. Gangster rap is also generally considered the most controversial subgenre of hip-hop of all due to the explicit content containing everything from cop killing to drug dealing. In the beginning of it all the crack epidemic created a fast-food economy in the likes of McDonalds that was based on a quick product turnover so that the buyers could get their next fix at a speed rate and in conclusion the regular dealers turned into big drug kingpins in their neighbourhoods. The profits from dealing crack cocaine were enormous for young male adults who had nothing before dealing and this led to the creating of violent gangs/crews due to escalating competition of the street zones. These functioned as small enterprises competing against each other for the most sales and profit, however the altercations were not resolved through meetings and sit-downs but rather by the use of bigger and more lethal weapons like shotguns killing their opponents.

At the end of the decade, most people were armed with guns whether as drug dealers or simply citizens being concerned over their own well-being living in a community filled with raging gangs, drug lords and crack heads. The failure of law enforcement and police while trying to clean out the neighbourhood, as well as the corruption and complicity in the trade, created alienation and increased cynicism in citizens. Young adults living in the midst of communities filled with violence and crack cocaine wanted to speak their minds about what was going on next door from them. Another consequence of crack invasion was an evil increase in the numbers of incarcerated black males, around 610 000 men between the ages of 20-29 were behind bars according to a report (The Sentencing Program: 1990). This resulted in most African-American families in impoverished communities having someone close to them trapped within the justice system, as a victim or a perpetrator.

5.2.2. Gangster rappers

All of the social problems that had affected primarily African-Americans due to the crack epidemic ended up causing a deeply wounded mentality of black culture; which was filled with an emotionless stance towards violence and invoked grave feelings of social alienation in communities. The crack epidemic had led to the incarceration of thousands of young black males and led to a sort of “*jail mentality*” being formed not only in prison but also in the communities and through gangster rap its messages travelled from the local cities in the US to all over the world. Gangster rap became a product of the mentality created by young black males during the 90’s who were incarcerated and during that time they developed several central themes that are used in the music. Although, there exists a misconception that those rappers who are considered gangster because of their militant and arguably excessively hard lyrics only use the same themes in all of their music which is grossly mistaken. A lot of the gangster rappers from the period of rap group N.W.A and Ice-T wanted to use rap as an outlet for them to tell what they see everyday in their neighbourhoods, but the explicit music led to an outcry from the Republican government officials about them poisoning the minds of youth and censorship of the records went into order. 2Pac is an infamous rapper who has been placed into several categories and has also been accused of perpetuating the violent thug-life and gangster image to his fans. However, one central stance in the music of 2Pac, is about blacks being trapped in an American nightmare where poverty, discrimination and violence has control over them; this leading to a decreased psychological well-being, gender relations and family formation especially through the lack of opportunities in society. 2Pac saw education and protection of the black community as a way of getting achievement and escaping in some sense the power of the white man, as well as it becoming an authentic part of the black male identity which he calls the “*Thug-N.I.G.G.A*”. The stance 2Pac had against authorities like the police have been taken in by many Swedish hip-hop fans, mostly by multi-ethnic youth from the suburbs, since they have themselves experienced distrust for law enforcement and the justice system in Sweden. Another aspect shown by Swedish youth in terms of inspiration from gangster rap is the creation of “*klikas*”, taken from the Chicano gang culture in L.A., by Latin-American men from suburbs like Hammarkullen or Angered. These “*klikas*” function as a subcategory crew that consists of close trustworthy friends that is specific to the local place where it was developed and is used to shape identities through the creating of an “*imagined community*” within the more global Swedish hip-hop community.

5.2.2. Gangster rappers

The gangster rap themes were and are still filled with suspicion of women and snitches, emphasis on staying loyal to the crew, hatred towards the justice system, police and law enforcement; as well as a profoundly hard exterior that in reality is based on hurt and disappointment of the society that they live in. There was also a consumption of the music by fans all over the country and for the white suburban kids they got the image of crack and violence being the most prominent thing in the hood; which also leads to them loving the feeling of rebelling against the norm by listening to the gangster rap. Nevertheless, the affect of gangster rap is probably mostly shown through the form of “*fake insensitivity*” created by fans to go along with the hard exterior that is presented by rappers through their lyrics as well as in their mannerisms, gesticulations and expressions outside of their music. There is also a creating of personas for the rapper by their audiences who want to adore their idols based on them being deities of spontaneity, authenticity, rebelling against the norm and other elements that are found exciting. The pressure of having all qualities needed to succeed in the business of hip-hop and being accepted as “*real*” by the fans leads rappers to internalize the fantasy. Rappers play the role that has been created to fulfil their audience wants and needs as performers so they live lives that embody the self-image to its fullest. They not only create and perform their music, but also live it which often leads to a lifestyle full of heavy drinking, womanizing and conducting in a rebellious fashion; so that the fantasy does not get ruined by a normal daily life that ruins the conjured up image. However, the violent images portrayed by rappers both in their creating of a thug persona as well as their lyrics are not a product of hip-hop in itself, since its noted that the true essence of the culture is based on bringing people from different sites together in peace through the vision of pioneer Afrika Bambaataa. In Sweden, the closest artists to be categorized as a gangster rap group would be Kartellen who is a self-proclaimed gangster crew cited in their song “*Programrebeller*” featuring Jacco. In their music they appropriate themes and characteristics of gangster rappers from the US like N.W.A. with a focus on using firearms and violence for retaliation, drugs, segregation in society and excessive hate for authorities like the Swedish police (referred to as “*aina*”). Another rapper who could be considered making gangster rap is Ken Ring who was arrested in 1999 for his song “*Spräng regeringen*” that includes rap lines like; “*Har ni tröttnat på förnedringen, Lägg då bomb spräng regeringen*”, which makes this a Swedish version of a gangster rap song.

6.1. White boys

White youth of all countries have embraced this black popular culture and are now estimated to be the biggest consumers of hip-hop records, even though Tricia Rose states that these overwhelming numbers do not include music download from the Internet, bootleg street sales and music shared among friends. In addition, Rose postulates that the trajectory of mainstream acceptance of hip-hop is one that moves from rejection to reluctant acceptance and appropriation. There is also a historical continuity of white teenagers engaging in black culture because they are fascinated by “*the Other*”, the differences and exoticism. White youth perpetuate black culture as a forbidden narrative using it as a way to rebel in a time when they develop their own identities and free themselves from their parents and authority (Sernhede, 2002:179, Rose, 1994:5). The first wave of hip-hop culture was brought into Swedish society by the element of break dancing taken which was practised by immigrants during the 1980’s. Swedish hip-hop as seen today seemed to have developed overnight and rooted itself in major cities for rappers today like Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. The issue of authenticity in hip-hop has been just as important in Sweden as everywhere else in the world for both the artists as well as their fans. For many people the hip-hop genre seemed to have gone from a relatively small subculture to during these last past years become deeply rooted in every other music aficionado here in Sweden. In an episode of Musikbyrå, a TV-show, it was discussed how the very first released Swedish hip-hop song “*Don’t Stop*” had been written as well as produced by Per Tjernberg from former pop group Dag Vag. However, the song “*Don’t Stop*” was released by his new group Per Cussion All Stars, who lacked any members who could rap the lines for their song, so therefore they reached out to a black American rapper by the name of Grandmaster Funk; who in fact was the only individual rapping on the record that is widely considered the very first Swedish rap song (Musikbyrå, SVT: 2003-09-17). Therefore, the fact that the first ever rap song released by a Swedish hip-hop could only be produced by using another rapper who is black and from America becomes a topic of discussion. The authentic character of the production and the first hip-hop song in Sweden being released by a former white pop singer without any rap skills, contradicts the fact that most of the hip-hop fans connect the term “*authenticity*” to who the artists actually are, or in this case that they were not rappers at all. It is important that the message from their lyrics coincide with how their personal reality has looked like or does look like. This being crucial when the focus shifts from the historically rooted authenticity to a more romantic emphasis on the true character of the musician.

6.1. White boys

There have not been many acknowledged white rappers who have made a big impact on hip-hop, but white rapper Eminem and rap group Beastie Boys managed a successful immersion within hip-hop culture. Beastie Boys presented themselves as white middle-class suburban rebels, which earned them authenticity since they did not portray an image of being poor or making up stories about a fake hustler lifestyle. Beastie Boys made it big and changed hip-hop because of their talent and nitsch, as well as them showcasing the difficulties of being white and trapped in an industry where blackness counts as legitimacy for a lot of people. Eminem acknowledges in his song "*White America*" how no one wanted to sign him when he was an underground rapper because of his skin colour. For Eminem, the only one who looked past the fact that he was white in hip-hop industry was Dr. Dre, from the famous gangster rap group N.W.A., who signed him to his label. This partnership between Eminem and Dr. Dre was further explored by the rap lines; *Every fan black that I got was probably his/ In exchange for every white fan that he's got/ Like damn we just swapped/ Sittin' back look at this **** wow/ I'm like "My skin, is it startin' to work to my benefit now?"*, that discusses how they both gained new fans from opposite race by working together. Eminem points out sarcastically the fact that he was seen as less authentic as a rapper before because of his skin colour, but since he got initiated into the industry thanks to Dr. Dre the element that held him back is now working to his advantage. Dr. Dre gave Eminem a sense of legitimacy due to his position in the rap game and through cultural collateral since he is a black rapper who considered this white rapper legitimate.

However, for many hip-hop fans Eminem also made himself authentic in the community by sharing his shortcomings, both as a person and as a rapper, with the world in his music. The mainstream success of Eminem these past 2 years could be interpreted as a sign that the conflict in hip-hop over the few white rappers is not drawn by race, but by power and socio-economic origins. There are many poverty-stricken whites in the US as well and the common ground between Eminem, coming from a trailer park, and black rappers from the ghettos is the common disadvantage which bonds them together in a quest for better living conditions for all people in the country despite of race. Eminem used to his advantaged the same themes of socio-economical problems in the neighbourhoods that black rap artists use in their lyrics and therefore also represented the hardcore rapper attitude that rebels against society.

6.2. “Förortsrap”

The problems that most of the black rappers and artists like Eminem have experienced at some point have led to a rebellious attitude shining through in their music due to disappointment and scepticism towards politicians, police, the educational system and other institutions in society. This has been acknowledged and emulated in some sense by immigrant youth who live in suburban neighbourhoods with socio-economical or racial disadvantages in Sweden. A lot of young immigrant males, and some of the females as well, identify with cultural romanticized expressions of marginalized people that have been locked into an underdog position by society. As Sernhede discusses the conditions under which Swedish immigrants live under in places like Angered or Rosengård are not comparable the circumstances of blacks in the US ghettos like the Bronx (2002: 180). Hip-hop and other subcultures have also shown to provide an identity and haven for troubled adolescents who have problems at home, with parents or family, in school and other institutions, popular music. Young people then often use hip-hop as a form of “*oppositional*” subculture, through which youth express resistances of social institutions, norms, common values and practises (Lull: 1992). The fascination with black culture has existed for a long time among white youth, but two of the most noticeable aspects of it are based on constructing stereotypical images of heterosexuality and masculinity; which is clearly seen in hip-hop. The parallel between the ghetto culture portrayed in hip-hop and how Swedish males are influenced by the message coming from rappers is mostly shown through these young men carrying weapons to school or using steroids to assert hyper-masculinity and get self-esteem. According to Sernhede, to become a man in Swedish society is more out in the open then before with past normative types of manhood being re-constructed and more unclear for young men. Moreover, this leads to some groups consisting of young men acting in an overcompensating hyper-masculine manner due to the uncertainty of how to create a strong male identity in society (Sernhede: 2002). The instructions for how a “*real*” man should be like are found in hip-hop’s most controversial genre, gangster rap, where hyper-masculinity becomes asserted through violent behaviours, promiscuous attitudes towards women and a “*machismo*” that is incorporated into groups of men who use these elements to go against norms in Swedish society. These young men then start creating their own patterns on how to interact with everyday routines like how to speak (language slang) or how to look like (dress code).

6.2. “Förortsrap”

In the late 1990's Swedish hip-hop was mostly part of a mainstream fascination and lacked an underground scene, but Hammarkullen, a part of Göteborg, became a creative and dynamic meeting place for rappers from suburban areas in cities like Stockholm, Lund and Växjö. The emergence of gangster rap, a subgenre with descriptive lyrics of the hardships and struggles in the West Coast ghettos; as well as themes depicting violence and guns, drug substance abuse, robbery, gangsterism and powerful hyper-masculinity. This subgenre in hip-hop became embraced by multi-ethnic youth from the suburbs during the early 90's because they could relate to the texts and artists frustrations. Gangster rap from artists like Ice-T and Dr. Dre became the soundtrack for multi-ethnic youth in Sweden. These youth were predominately young men who connected to the lyrical context and used the genre for inspiration to express their own situation in the suburbs as alienated members of a country where there is ethnical segregation. Most of today's male gangs, whether it is a break dancing crew or a “*klika*” in the hip-hop community, are acting as a safety-net to provide partial seclusion and security in a world that is menacing and demanding. (Sernhede, 2002: 1999). Young men who feel like they are alienated from the rest of Swedish society can through the membership in a bigger collective become empowered and be able to mask hidden insecurities under pre-determined attitudes within the group. Moreover, due to Swedish youth living under marginalized and stigmatized conditions they develop the need to symbolically charge their own community by using opposite meanings and myths to assert status and create a sense of self-respect. It created a form of romanticized nationalism in the community for the Million Programme which lead to most multi-ethnic suburban families living in concrete housing. This form of suburban-nationalism is based on the necessity of having a haven where the youth do not have to feel as if they are second class-citizens in Sweden (Sernhede, 2010: 54). “*Förortsrap*” became the representative subgenre for Swedish hip-hop that gave voice to those people living in the suburbs who were experiencing the affects of social and political decisions made by the state. The disadvantaged youth found a common ground with rappers from the black ghettos in the US and “*Förortsrappare*” began comparing the two environments with each other in their music. Today some of the most popular “*Förortsrappare*” are a multi-ethnic rap duo called Mohammed Ali, who has released songs like “*Ghettobarn*” that discusses struggles of young suburban kids, and Labyrint a rap group who discuss their neighbourhood as “*Vår betong*”, which asserts suburban nationalism.

6.2.1. Rap battles in Sweden

There is also a competitive and tough side of rappers have existed since the beginning of hip-hop, but it is mostly shown for example through rap battles; that consist of one or more people slinging insults at one another by using rhymes to prove who the better lyricist and rapper is of the two. It could be said that the roughness in gangster rap got transferred to rap battles later on in the intensified use of derogatory language and hard insults. These battles are meant to be non-violent ways to build up your reputation and status as a rap artist in the hood, while improving your skills by for example reading the dictionary to take the words and rhyming into a whole other dimension. For many in the hip-hop community being able to freestyle (*make up rap lines on the spot without any preparation*) is the ultimate test of authenticity and talent in rap artists. Nowadays in Sweden, there is a project called O-Zone battles that let local rappers to battle each other at different events held at Lunds nationer or Mejeriet, Babel in Malmö and other clubs all over the country for a larger audience of both prior aficionados and new curious aficionados of the hip-hop culture.

According to sociologist Ove Sernhede (2011), a rap battle is the ultimate way to express your “*habitus*” as a rapper in your own field which allows you to get a greater reputation but also leads to a collective interest in hip-hop that was seen already in the 1970s when people came to clubs to witness rappers battling it out. Sociological studies have also revealed that verbal virtuosity is highly valued in the black urban ghetto to use for asserting superior social status; which can be dated back to “*the griots*” (storytellers) before slavery in West Africa (Shusterman, 2004:462). This is something that Swedish male adolescents have incorporated into their own struggles to create masculinity and a strong identity by using this verbal prowess to assert their status in settings like rap battles. Nonetheless, verbal skill is, as Hannerz (1969) has discussed, used and appreciated by “*ghetto men*” not only for competitive practical purposes but for entertainment value; which is something that rap battles in Sweden are created for as well. A lot of the idolizing of black culture by Swedes can be traced to the search for exoticism in a monotone everyday life through which being different leads to having an individual personality and is therefore seen as authentic. There is nothing wrong with the Swedish hip-hop community borrowing cultural forms from the Bronx hip-hop community, or any other for that matter, if there is a respect for specific symbols and meanings within it that are vital to its existence (Der Meer, 2004: 497).

6.2.1. Rap battles in Sweden

For Swedes to borrow cultural forms is not unusual since young people have used popular music since at least the 1950's to create socially shared meanings and common states of awareness, as well as creating common characteristics within these communities, according to sociologist David Riesman. The argued hyper-masculinity and insensitivity found in rappers from the US and Canada has been transferred into Swedish rappers who use the stereotypical male characteristics as a way for them to actually be connected with the origins of hip-hop; while still stressing their commitment and authenticity in the Swedish hip-hop community. All rap battles at the 2-year anniversary of O-Zone Battles in Sweden, included rappers who reinforced the use of derogatory language as attempts to exude an image of themselves as more masculine, strong and talented than their opponents. However, the language used by rapper who battled at the event from the US, such as Dirtbag Dan, was accepted and so was the perpetuation of how the ultimate masculine stereotypical male rap performer should be like through using derogatory terms like "*faggot*" and "*bitch*" to insult his opponent. Rap battles are not only a way to elevate the most talented rappers but they are also a showcasing of the integral competitiveness that exists within hip-hop that has been transferred from its roots in the marginalized Bronx to a relatively small club in Malmö, Sweden. During this event, the majority of the participants who had bought tickets for the event were white kids who had adopted hip-hop culture as their own. For the rappers from Sweden, it was about celebrating the tradition of rap battle that comes originally from the US, while appropriating own elements like using Swedish language, anecdotes and jokes that are related to local topics, popular themes from Swedish newspapers and figures that are well-known in the country and by the audience who participated in the event. For many participants of events like O-Zone battles, it is also a kind of exotic experience to try and get included into a popular culture created by black people from the hood. The statement regarding adoration for black culture by white kids in the sense of having a cool persona and style could have been seen in the majority of people at the event. It could be seen as something equivalent of a club where you gain membership through emulation so that you blend in within the community or subculture but still stick out outside of it because it is not for everyone. Therefore, for some people it is seen as credible when an actor within the hip-hop scene implements certain characteristics, gestures, language and attitude that are in fact foreign to him or her because of their backgrounds or origin.

6.2.1. Rap battles in Sweden

The authenticity part of the rap battles occurring in the US and other places is also an important part of Swedish hip-hop in general but it was further exemplified during this event. The most notable battle in the context of authenticity was one between Joakim “*ThirdEye*” Görtz and Noah “*Nomad*” Sebnat. Although ThirdEye was arguably the funnier and more animated character of the two, Nomad delivered a hardcore rap battle blow with a line that told the audience that the former mentioned rapper had stolen lines from someone else and used them in during another battle a while ago. This action did not only destroy the credibility of ThirdEye as a rap battle artist in the eyes of the audience and a reminder of the most important quality in hip-hop, but also won Nomad the battle. There is a need to be as real as possible even if you are not black or come from the original birthplace of hip-hop and especially young adolescents who were part of the audience acted in ways that would make them seem more authentic as hip-hop fans.

One example of this was demonstrated by several Swedish white males in their early 20’s at club Babel when they had concluded that through mimicking slang and using hand gestures used by the performers hailing from Canada and the US they were a part of their posse. These young men were using copying or mimicking the style of the rap artists, who were arguably acting normally, to fit into the hip-hop community. The same went for clothing and appearance in general. After a couple of hours at the club one of these young men approached a white female dressed in regular jeans and a black top without any specific hip-hop related accessories and questioned why she was there since she obviously was not an avid listener or fan of the music because of her dress code. She was then suggested by this guy to at least wear “*baggy jeans*” or a “*hoodie*” at next event, because she did not look like a “*hip-hop girl*” according to him. Why could this white girl go to the event without settling into displaying certain hip-hop exterior and still feel comfortable? This experience could be seen as a display of trying to assert one’s own authenticity in the community, but also an insight to the insecurity some white males feel regarding their position within a dominated black culture. There are also those fans that travel in between the posers and the hardcore fans that go to hip-hop events because they like the music or want the comforting feeling of belonging to a subculture in a different setting than one that their peers might be found on a Saturday night.

6.2.2. Women in hip-hop

Popular culture is an important source that people draw ideas from that can shape their views of themselves and others, which has led to rap lyrics being analyzed by many for their contribution to sexism within the family, community, and society (Moody: 2011). This is because popular culture has a big influence on how adolescents from different countries and backgrounds use it for self-identity formation nowadays. *"If hip-hop only mirrors the existent pathologies of the parent society (ala sexism or outright misogyny or homophobia) then of what good is it to a subjugated community trying to emancipate itself?"* asks political scientist Jeff Watts. Is Hip-hop being treated as a scapegoat for society so that we will not have to deal with the bigger problems that can be found outside of popular culture? Rappers can not run from the issues of misogyny and sexism because they have seen it on the streets everyday. These rappers are not only artists but also influenced citizens in a world that is most prominently dominated by men and therefore their actions perpetuate a problem that exists in society; for instance in politics and media where women more than often are treated unequal to men.). The complacent nature of the hip-hop industry in deciding how women should and can achieve success, are portrayed as in music-videos and can accomplish in the business is a big problem. Some rappers advocate against misogyny and sexism, while some contribute unconsciously to its existence in the industry because they want to sell records or have an idea about categorizing women depending on their status in the rap artist's life. One aspect of why the derogatory language is used in rap may be because males the use of sexual domination over females in general creates a false sense on self-worth that actually is based on high insecurity of being rejected (Rose:1995). There are also black rappers who assert their subjectivity in rap music at the expense of black female subjectivity through *"femiphobia"*, which is a part of the social hierarchy that plays in role in hip-hop (Michael Eric Dyson It is not just about rappers in the US perpetuating these problems, but also Swedish male rappers and hip-hop fans hearing rap lyrics that institute a sense of apathy towards the misogynistic content as well as the derogatory language. These leads to young men from Sweden using the same vocabulary and language, including terms like *"bitch"* and *"hoe"*. This derogatory language for naming different types of women and asserting a problematic hyper-strong male stereotype is often used in Swedish rap battles; only that the terms become translated into the native language instead together with homophobic slurs to showcase dominance by rappers over their opponents as in the US.

6.2.2. Women in hip-hop

There is an excessive exploitation of women that uses the field of hip-hop to assert patriarchal power and perpetuate that men are the superior sexes; as is seen being dominate in the most powerful positions of society. This disregard of females is shown in hip-hop in particular through the perpetuation of unappealing stereotypes; like the sexually promiscuous black women that is also known as the “*oversexed-black-Jezebel*”. Jezebel is generally equivalent of women in hip-hop who lacks self-respect, loves money and does anything to get it, uses her sexuality to achieve success in the business and can not be trusted. The opposite of Jezebel would be the “*mammy*”, a black women who is nurturing, passive and also a “*welfare queen*” who lives off of public assistance (Moody: 2011). These characters become a way for a lot of rappers to subconsciously or even consciously justify their oppression of females in their music, since none of these qualities attached to stereotypical black women seen in a positive light. These mythological female stereotypes can in their duality also be found in Western societies like the classic separation between the “*madonna*” and the “*whore*”. These two categories become representative for sexual desire and a need for security that exists in most men (Sernhede, 2002:180). Sernhede makes a comparison of the relationship between the men and women in hip-hop coming from “*förorten*” to those in for example motorcycle gangs that are also part of a culture dominate by males and centred around their activities. However, the attitudes and language in hip-hop (especially in the gangster rap category) have been influences to the Swedish youth in suburbs densely populated by immigrants. The young men that Sernhede encountered in stigmatized suburbs were well-aware that their slang and name calling for women was not appropriated by others outside of the neighbourhood, however they pointed out that they do not use the language to degrade all women instead they used it for certain females. Some of women from the suburbs that the terminology is used on are complacent about it because they do not feel as if they are placed in a victimized position and do not see themselves as being more oppressed than other young females in Sweden. There is also the matter of context and between being a part of the hip-hop community, where someone calling you a “*bad bitch*” in fact means that you seem to be “*a good lookin’ and strong female*”, and hearing it from a guy in the suburb without any backdrop whom you have just met. During the event at Babel, several females that were dressed up in typical hip-hop gear were using the term “*bitch*” to denote both females acting badly in the club and their girlfriends as “*bad bitches*” in a familiar humorous manner.

6.2.2. Women in hip-hop

Swedish hip-hop has also taken in the same problem as the community in the US when it comes to the lack of prominent female rappers. So, why do we not see more prominent female rappers in Sweden and all over the world re-constructing and dominating the hip-hop industry today; even though it is booming with more versatile music and artists than ever before? The documentary “*Nabila*“, follows a popular political rapper in Sweden, who also happens to be a Muslim female trying to make her voice heard in a male dominated society and popular culture. Nabila expresses frustration in one sequence of the documentary that concerns a common problem for female rappers in the hip-hop industry, namely the fact that she is always considered good but only in the category of a woman in the game due to her not being regarded in the same light as other male rappers. There have been female rappers like Leila K. and Feven who got acknowledge by the Swedish masses, but today there are few commercially successful rappers who are women. One popular female rapper is Gnucci Banana who became popular through her featuring on Looptroop Rocker’s single “*Do*” in 2011 and she got acknowledged by the mainstream in particular through her appearance at the Swedish music award show Grammis Galan in 2012. A couple of other female rappers in who have not caught the eye of the mainstream audience yet are Lilla Namó, Yahrah Bravo, Mapei, Cleo and rap duo Silversystrarna. In Sweden, there is no real discussion regarding the lack of strong women in hip-hop, how young men receive the messages of sexism in rap music videos from US rappers and the gender issue plaguing Swedish female rappers. There are male rap artists in Sweden who speak of problems that exist in the society like important issues concerning violence against women or misogyny against women; like Swedish rap duo Mofeta & Jerre in their song “*Lilla flicka*” or Organism 12’s song “*Karlakarl*”. However, there is a need for female rappers to assert their position in Swedish hip-hop to show a contrast to the over-sexualized portrayals of women in hip-hop from the US that are shown to Swedish fans through mass media and music videos. There is a need for more conscious female rappers in Sweden to speak their minds about aspects that are a concern for young women like issues of gender, sexuality, self-esteem and self-respect. In the US, there the most prominent female rappers since the mid 90’s has become Nicki Minaj (a.k.a. Onika Maraj). Minaj’s attitude towards topic that are taboo in hip-hop let’s her take up space, to make her voice her voice heard, that mostly belonged to males in the past.

7.1. The Bling-Bling culture

“Cash rules everything around me” is not only the full title of a popular song by rap group Wu-Tang Clan, which is foremost based on what was lacking in the poor prominently Black communities during and after the birth of hip-hop in the late 70s. This phrase expresses what marginalized people from impoverished places need the most, but somehow have to learn to cope without while understanding that without money they will never have the amount of power to entirely shape their own fate in their lifetime. Young people grow up listening to rap songs like C.R.E.A.M and relate to what is being said in the lyrics by rappers whom have lived in the street under the same poor conditions as them. Unlike a lot of rap songs during the 1980s this particular pinpointed the importance of getting/saving money instead of spending it and at the same time sent out the message to fans of hip-hop that using street hustle in the form of drug dealing or other criminal behaviour was not the key to obtaining a steady cash flow. This song stressed how hard work and creativity in the long haul would lead to a better life while get-rich-schemes that lead into a vicious circle of criminality and depression, as the Wu-Tang Clan members experienced for themselves during their youth.

The consumerism in hip-hop began through drug dealers having the most money in the hood, which lead to them also always having the coolest clothes, the biggest gold chains around their necks and the flashiest cars that they later on flaunted in the neighbourhood. In the hood where rappers grew up it were the drug dealers who set the fashion trends that young kids and teenagers wanted to follow, however the people selling drugs were also the first sponsors of hip-hop artists because they bought their albums and popularized them in the neighbourhood. However, young fans listening to songs of this type understand that money should not be the key element to having a voice in society, but having is still something they long for to have since they see people around them struggling with food stamps; mothers and fathers killing themselves by working three jobs to support their family while they see politicians on TV talking about America being the land where dreams are made into reality. *“A man with a dream with plans to make C.R.E.A.M. Which failed; I went to jail at the age of 15”*, is one line from the song which defines what happens when shortcuts are taken by especially young men in the streets to getting money because they see drug dealers being the only ones with cash to spend in neighbourhoods where people have scarce if any money to spend.

7.1. The Bling-Bling culture

The conditions are ironic and rappers like for instance those who were part of Wu-Tang Clan have experienced firsthand what happen life becomes when you value dollar bills over lives by selling drugs to members of the community and inevitably going into a spiral of destruction yourself. The messages by rap artists like Wu-Tang Clan to youth are in opposition to the majority of rap songs today that contain a different message with vulgar lyrics about making, having and spending a lot of money on cars, expensive jewellery, alcohol and women. Hip-hop has been used as a marketing tool for a long time but it has increased more and more in addition to rappers contributing to the culture being turned into a capitalist tool for corporations. The feelings that we associate with a product, such as fans buying merchandise and clothing that are connected to their favourite rap artists, are more important to the world of consumerism than the product in itself because people are not looking for material things to satisfy their needs but it goes deeper than that. It is a search for the purpose of life and creating an identity that goes with this adventure to find something authentic and pure. People want to buy merchandise not for the benefit of having new things all the time but rather acquiring products that will represent us and place us in relation to who we want to be and how we want to be perceived by others (Gilmore & Pine, 2007a).

Consumerism in hip-hop is linked to social identification for youth, which occurs when a person feels a connection with some other individual or group and this bond is formed through markers of identification. During adolescence the language, clothing, taste in music, and other symbolic systems are a part of how you connect with your peers and become therefore markers of identification (Danesi: 1994). Hip-hop becoming commercialized is generally considered to have happened when the first official song *Rapper's Delight* by the Sugarhill Gang got acknowledged by people outside of the hip-hop community. Nonetheless, this record and group were not considered authentic from start because they were created by a company that had caught on the fad of hip-hop in the streets and wanted to exploit it in many people's eyes. The commercialization lead to some rappers being angry about the culture being sold out to big companies, but a lot of people also saw it as a possibility for rappers to actually reach a larger audience and engage a bigger part of society in it.

7.2. Look the part

Many fans today, even young ones that were not alive at the birth of hip-hop around the 1980s, claim that the music produced nowadays is not real hip-hop and there are a lot of discussions concerning what rappers must do to maintain the fine line between commerce and art. However, to some rappers the *commercializing*-part of the industry is in fact simply fans wanting to buy and listen to the music; but hip-hop is too important for creative and personal expression to be seen as entirely a commercial product (Jay-Z: 2010). Nowadays, most rappers and clothing companies use each other mutually to sell the idea of being a “*real*” fan through consumerism. But what happens with the sense of authenticity in street rappers who become billion dollar entrepreneurs and businessmen? What happens when it is not only about the music? Hip-Hop artists like Pharrell, P.Diddy and Drake market their product and name through their clothing lines and manufacturers of merchandise with the help of their fans. Wu-Tang Clan was the first rap group who took the hip-hop clothing line business to a new level in 1995, with their Wu-Wear collection that still is very popular today. However, Wu-Tang Clan has arguably from the beginning of their careers established almost a community of their own within hip-hop with their own history and myths, alter egos and associations, stories and language, appearances by clothing and accessories (RZA: The Wu-Tang Clan Manual). Nevertheless, the styles of hip-hop have been transferred from places in the US to all over the globe and the items worn by rap superstars are highly in demand for fans of hip-hop to establish themselves as more hardcore because they now “*look the part*”.

At the 2 year anniversary of O-Zone Battles in Malmö, there were multiple styles of fashion but there were a lot of items that are typically associated with hip-hop fashion that have not been made into a fad in Sweden. Items like the dookie chain, snapback hats, letterman jackets, oversized hoop earrings, Adidas jackets or sneakers, baggy jeans and similar things seen on rappers from the US were displayed in some manner on the majority of guest at this event (Babel: 2012-05-12). Several conversations held between few of the participants at the event were concerning the topics of “*fitting in*” and “*looking like a hip-hop fan*”, in which one discussion was, as mentioned prior, driven by a white male in his early 20’s who questioned a young woman on her devotion to hip-hop since she was not wearing any “*hip-hop gear*” according to him.

7.2. Look the part

The fact that this young man was concerned about her not fitting in could be interpreted as him in reality feeling that to fit into the hip-hop community it is not only necessary to know the music but also to have a clothing style that matches the interest for the culture. When this young woman did not dress up in any stereotypical uniform to the event she was perceived to not belong there according to a few people, but it could be argued that it was mostly because she opposed the notion that you have to acquire certain hip-hop merchandise to be an avid and authentic fan of hip-hop. There is also a preoccupation among young adults about how they appear to their peers and the opinions of others become then a source for how they feel about themselves. This relation between a young adult and the people surrounding him in everyday life develops a quest for a “*uniform identity*”, which fits into others’ perception and his own perception of him as a part of the collective (Erikson: 1968). This can often lead to “*over-identification*”, meaning young adults appropriating an identity by temporarily copying the most prominent and popular representatives of a group or a clique to fit in; like mimicking rappers in the hip-hop community. Moreover, youth often create a peer group within subcultures like hip-hop based on ideology, style, values and lifestyle to find solace in their period of “*identity confusion*”; which occurs in the search for a identity (Brake: 1980).

Nevertheless, the popular hip-hop signs like the Adidas-jacket or the Air Jordan-sneakers, the slang and language filled with words like hood or ghetto struggles are in reality used within a greater mythology in the community. These symbols become commodities of hip-hop that turn an everyday fan into a hardcore one through because they create a direct connection to the hood myths and locality that are meant for insiders of the culture (Goldman & Papson, 2009: 92). This is also a result of big corporations using hip-hop as a way to market clothing lines and products in the sense that these can provide authenticity for fans of rappers. Since the beginning of hip-hop its listeners have been fashion icons and stylists for how to look cool in the streets; which became obvious to designer labels. During the first decade when hip-hop was still in its starting phase there were special shops where drug dealers and people who had money could buy fake custom made designer clothing and merchandise. However, when the designer labels found out they did not take any action against these shops because Louis Vuitton, Gucci and other labels were seen (and also popularized) further in the streets with rappers and fans as living walking advertisement.

8. Summary

Authenticity in hip-hop is valued through the acquiring, as Bourdieu (2001) would call it, “*subcultural capital*” that conceptualizes specific tastes, preferences, attitudes and knowledge that are dominating factors of this particular subculture; but outside of its domain in the main culture they are irrelevant (Thornton:1995). The search for authenticity in popular culture and in hip-hop appears in different shapes and forms, which was discussed in chapters 4 and 5.1. There exists a hierarchy as well among the participants in hip-hop culture that value rappers who are real, honest and have integrity. In hip-hop there are many different types of subgenres and rap artists who each bring something new to the hip-hop culture that transcends local borders into countries like Sweden, which was explored in chapter 5.2 and 5.2.1. The gangster rapper is as a stereotypical image for artists in hip-hop has proven to be something that youth in general use as a method to affirm hyper-masculinity for young men, which was investigated in chapter 5.2.2. Today, there are not many mainstream white rappers but rap artists like Eminem has been a proof of the fact that the biggest issue is not so much what race you are but what the content of your music is about and how you portray yourself in the rap game. This was dealt with in chapter 6.1.

In the case of Swedish “*förortsrappare*”, the characteristics of gangster rappers have been used as way for young males to hide away insecurities due to alienation; which was discussed in chapter 6.2. The element of rap battles is discussed in 6.2.1 and how there are few female rappers who have made it big in hip-hop, both globally and in Sweden in chapter 6.2.2. Authentic new rappers are not as easy to find today due to excessive consumerism tactics created by corporations, record labels and artists who only want to make money by all means; which was discussed in chapter 7. This problem is mostly found in mainstream hip-hop and R&B rappers who like to collaborate with pop artists to sell records, which does not suit well with hardcore fans. “*Real is an art. Real doesn't necessarily sell. Sometimes it sell. Sometimes it doesn't. The only way you can be real is not to equate your art with your financial success*”, said rap pioneer KRS-One (Erlich: 1996). KRS-One presented the answer to why underground hip-hop is more valued today by its fans than other forms and rappers who glorify the excessive bling-bling culture, make sexist music videos that exploit women and do not seem to be bothered by the content or influence of their music on their audience at all. Chapter 5.2, elaborated further on this part of hip-hop.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, further study is needed of how different areas within popular culture are being appropriated to the creating of an identity for young people, as well as investigation of how the prosperous and paradoxical it can be for these pre-adults to get educated about different aspects of life through sources like rappers or rock artists. Hip-hop as a popular culture is an area full of traps, labyrinths and contradictions but to diminish the influence that it has by concluding that it mostly just creates a glorifying image of excessive consumerism, sexism and misogyny as something good is to limit the large possibilities to actually investigate this culture. For my paper, I had the opportunity to investigate and participate in the hip-hop community at events and concerts which offered me a new perspective. Before I had read all sort of literature in books and articles as well as watched movies and documentaries on the different discourses existing within hip-hop; but nothing gave me more than to experience the issues first hand by being in the settings where identity and authenticity is evaluated.

Therefore, to get the whole picture of how things actually look like within hip-hop and popular culture I argue that you have to participate and engage in it. By conducting fieldwork, either long term in a more Malinowskian-anthropology or modern anthropology like George Marcus's multi-sited investigation, the possibilities to get a bigger take on the different takes on authenticity and identity could be explored. The limitations are limiting, but the possibilities are endless; with the consumer society we have today it could be argued that most hip-hop fans are buying themselves a place in the community through what they wear, say and know. What they wear is based on what they see in music videos and appearances by rappers in the mass media. What they say is based on the lyrics in the music produced by rappers and phrases especially coined during for example TV-appearances or interviews, like rapper Snoop Doggs' who popularized the catch phrase "*Fo Shizzle*" meaning "*for sure*". What fans know nowadays depends on how deeply they want to get involved with the hip-hop community, but there is a need to be aware of the most known deceased contributors s are to the music we hear today like 2Pac, Jam Master Jay, J..Dilla and MCA, just to name a few. In a time where youth turn to media and popular culture for guidance in how they should look, act and be in a modernized world. Furthermore, the literature that can provide for the theoretical aspects on popular culture and hip-hop are growing in piles so there are many authors out there to use as a backdrop for more practical fieldwork investigation.

9. Conclusion

How does the changes within different popular culture due to globalization and increased consumerism influence youth? The mutual exchange between corporations and fans of popular music has been shown, as well as some aspects of the relationship between global and local hip-hop in Sweden. The re-shaping of values and ideas while figuring out one's own identity in relation to the world happens during adolescence and early adulthood (Brake, 1980:25). Therefore, it would be interesting to look further into how popular music is being used today by youth and if it has replaced other sources for creating a sense of self-identification and authenticity. A need exists for an individual strong identity which separates young adolescents from the expectations and roles imposed on them by society, institutions, family and politics (Brake, 1980:166). The myths of the “*mammy*”/”*madonna*” or “*Jezebel*”/”*whore*”, can be seen as used by young male as a way to mitigate against strong feelings of vulnerability and rejection. Other myths about stereotypical rap masculine behaviour are also included in this strife and search for methods to become less vulnerable in an environment that requires you being hard and tough to survive (Dimitriadis, 2005:117-118). Hardcore fans of hip-hop go to hip-hop events often only if the setting still goes against the mainstream, where people have commitments beyond hyped commercialism and where everyone is still bond together through their enthusiasm for the music. Authenticity for these hardcore fans is not about the commerce sold by companies through rappers or wearing the right uniform to the events. These fans search for something more local, often underground and away from the limelight of the media that in their eyes spoil the realness of the music and manipulate performers (Lindholm: 2008).

There are many aspects to investigate of popular culture and hip-hop is a good well to draw information from since its popularity among young people is higher than ever in the mainstream. For people all over the world in stigmatized areas hip-hop has become a way to show and gain respect in a positive way that provides them with a creative outlet for their discontent of the circumstances that they are forced to live in. It is also about getting attention, feeling a connection to the birthplace of hip-hop since it began in a stigmatized area and perhaps most of all gaining the sense of being in a collective together with other oppressed individuals. Future studies are beneficial to find out more about how susceptible youth are to various areas in popular culture and how they use them for self-identification and authenticity.

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Dirtbag Dan, R-Man, O-Hund, Dizaster, Henry Bowers, Illmaculate J-Ro, Yukmouth,

Zeps, Spakur, Jimmy Pistol, Mr. Cool, Nomad, The Saurus, WC, ThirdEye, MadChild,

Luck Kennedy, Pziclone, Styliztik Jones, Krayzie Bone, Okwerdz, Pat Stay)