Word of the People

Hip –Hop has recently received attention in academia and in the rest of the world. This form of expression has been analyzed by scholars because of its “radically honest”[[1]](#footnote-1) and sometimes brutal descriptions of certain societal ills, while at the same time poetically expressing some of the more positive views regarding human nature. Some of the political and philosophical truths that hip-hop artists rap about are difficult to express in a politically correct and radio-friendly fashion, therefore examining this cultural form provides one with a unique worldview on many hot topics.

In my research, I examine the different schools of thought regarding the role of hip-hop. Is this form of communication only “feel good music,”[[2]](#footnote-2) that produces little or no political change, or do the streetwise lyrics activate the conscience of listeners, therefore inspiring some type of positive political action? Some critics argue that hip-hop music is particularly destructive for young listeners because of its lyrics discussing violence, the undermining of authority, anti-intellectualism, anti-social behavior, and homophobia. The contrasting arguments point out the positive role that hip-hop has played in areas such as anti-racism, the American Dream, poverty reduction, egalitarianism, democratic participation, self-actualization, and perseverance.

I examine the arguments for and against hip-hop music by adopting two research strategies. First, I use the case study method by focusing on one of the more notorious American hip-hop artist named “Eminem” who has been credited, along with other powerful figures, for mainstreaming hip-hop and bringing it onto the international stage.

Second I use the comparative method to examine the influence of hip-hop in Japan, a wealthy industrialized country like the United States but with a different history and culture. I also examine hip-hop music in Africa, and finally, I compare hip-hop to *rai* music in Algeria; a musical tradition that is often seen as a voice of the rebellious youth. My research demonstrates that hip-hop and *rai* take on political themes such as terrorism, the Iraq War, 9/11, World Peace, political participation, and American hegemony. I show how hip-hop has provided a fresh global perspective about these issues though the lens of those that are impoverished or live on the margins of society.

Word of the People

Hip-hop artists and their lyrical content bring to mind many political and philosophical questions. There are many different perspectives and disagreements about the role that hip-hop artists have played in American culture and in other parts of Global society. There are also many contrasting views about the influence and importance of hip-hop and other types of similar music.

There are some who think that hip-hop is only music that “feels good”[[3]](#footnote-3) to listen to. They think that the music is all “about the beat,”[[4]](#footnote-4) and that it has little to do with inspiring or producing real political change. Critics like this think that real political change comes from hard work alone and not from listening to or producing music.[[5]](#footnote-5) Those with this pragmatic perspective, suggest that *real* political change in impoverished communities might better be achieved by teaching illiterate children how to read[[6]](#footnote-6) for example.

Others that dismiss the significance of hip-hop do so because they believe that it is only a cultural form that has been “canonized” by those in powerful positions in order to make a profit.[[7]](#footnote-7) One of the reasons that some from this school of thought dismiss the significance of hip-hop is because they know that teenagers play a significant role in both the American and Global economy. Teenager’s choice in clothing and other purchases is heavily influenced by the hip-hop industry[[8]](#footnote-8). Certain styles of clothing worn by teenagers, act as markers to represent that one is either a part of the hip-hop community or not, therefore advertisers can benefit from knowing what the current hip-hop trends are. Those from this school of thought encourage consumers to “… watch *who’s* on MTV, whose *not* on MTV and *why*, and who’s *making the decisions* and for what *reasons*,”[[9]](#footnote-9) meaning that we should look at who is behind the scenes as opposed to just watching or listening to the hip-hop artist. Those from this school of thought support their argument by pointing out that some forms of hip-hop do not receive global recognition until the music catches the attention of either governmental figures[[10]](#footnote-10), large international corporations, or the media.[[11]](#footnote-11) [[12]](#footnote-12) They believe that hip-hop has been become a commodity instead of an art form because of it’s “contaminat[ion] by money and commercialism,” [[13]](#footnote-13) and they also support their position by pointing out that the role of the “middle men” and entrepreneurs in the music industry is so influential that they are capable of being puppet-masters deciding what the political messages of a hip-hop artists’ are.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Another school of thought does not question the significance of hip-hop but strongly criticize its hold on society. Those from those from this school of thought see hip-hop as a negative and destructive force. For example, former president George Bush said that Marshal Mather’s, a popular American hip-hop artist also known as Eminem, is the “worse thing to happen to children since polio,”[[15]](#footnote-15) The criticism about the negative effects of hip-hop does not stop in America, other countries also see this type of music as rebellious and useless because it offers no solutions to complex social problems. The critics of hip-hop, especially in the American context, blame it for causing violence, homophobia, anti-intellectualism and anti-social behavior in teenagers.[[16]](#footnote-16) They have tried to boycott the music, and they have protested against certain artists as well.

Another school of thought regarding the role of hip-hop involves those who also recognize its significance and legitimacy. However, they thinks that it can and has been used for *positive* purposes in society. They think that some of the lyrical content and the success of some of the hip-hop artists inspire others to strive towards upward mobility.[[17]](#footnote-17) They also think that the lyrical content mentioned in some of the music regarding poverty points out that there is a correlation between poverty and broken homes. Therefore, listening to the music will inspire people not only to reach for economic success, but also for the stable family structures that go along with it.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Some other hip-hop supporters who see the positive side of this poetic art form, point out how it gives artists and listeners the chance to reflect upon one’s thoughts.[[19]](#footnote-19) They think this is healthy because it challenges people to engage in brutal reality checks[[20]](#footnote-20) about themselves and current world events. These supporters think that hip-hop allows people the outlet needed to ponder upon important issues like ones identity[[21]](#footnote-21) in their nation and the newly globalized world. Instead of criticizing hip-hop for not making active steps towards change, these supporters of hip-hop who see it as a positive force, point out that the *self-actualization process* which occurs during the singing and listening of hip-hop *eventually leads* to change because it allows people to first examine who they are which then gives them the ability to then decide where their place in the world is.[[22]](#footnote-22) This process, according to those from this school of thought is *important and necessary* because eventually after this self-reflective transformation has occurred, one is *ready to move forward* and pragmatically tackle some of societies’ larger problems.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Those that see the positive side of hip-hop point out how the musical form has been used not only to express racial tensions in a non-violent way, but in some cases it has lead to the easing of racial tensions and anti-racism. Eminem, a Caucasian American rapper who rose to stardom in a business dominated by African Americans is one example of how certain qualities such as talent can transcend race.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Finally, those that see the positive side of hip-hop do so because they recognize how it can be a cultural form that is listened to and not ignored by certain members of society that have become disheartened and unengaged by the words of traditional political and spiritual leaders.[[25]](#footnote-25) Julie Rak states,

During a time when political and spiritual leaders are becoming hard for the general public to trust, auto/biographical representations by celebrities and by “ordinary” Americans are on the rise….In a nation where democratic participation in public elections is very low, self-representation and the consumption of other people’s identities in popular culture has become central to how Americans are getting, distributing, and consuming information. Making and consuming narratives about individual lives and experiences has become a **way to be democratic outside of democratic institutions** and to make identity into a commodity that can be bought and sold.” (327,328 Emphasis Mine) [[26]](#footnote-26)

The lack of sincerity of some of the ministers in the American African American Ghettos’, and the increasing suicide rates and imprisonments for African Americans due to their poor living conditions and a system that appears to be set up against them, leads many on the margins of society in America and other countries to respond and listen to political statements that are spoken from the words of people who have *lived* on the streets or *understand* the suffering that comes from living on the margins of society. [[27]](#footnote-27)

Finally, some of the literature that I read discusses a different form of hip-hop which has been given a different name. In Algeria *rai* is very similar to hip-hop in that it is “raw and earthy”[[28]](#footnote-28) and is mostly sung by members of the lower class. Rai singers sometimes give themselves special names to show that they are authentic in their lower class struggles, similar to American hip-hop artists.[[29]](#footnote-29) Rai music is flexible and adopts elements from other cultures such as Bollywood, Latin America, and France. Rai’s popularity might be due to its post-colonial roots and the way that Algerian society has had to adapt to its independent status. It has been criticized just as American hip-hop has been, due to its foul language, its “destabilizing effects on its listeners,” and it’s general “lack of respectability.”[[30]](#footnote-30) It also does not create solutions to political problems, but instead provides an outlet for expression of hot topics.

South Africa is another part of the globe that has used hip-hop as a cultural form of expression. The younger citizens of South Africa have had to examine their new identities in post-apartheid society. Apartheid was when a small group of Caucasian elites dominated South Africa and used oppressive laws to prevent blacks from opening their own businesses and obtaining privileged positions in society.[[31]](#footnote-31) The older forms of hip-hop in South Africa originated as a form of opposition to this apartheid system, although the “new skool”[[32]](#footnote-32) of hip-hop in South Africa addresses issues such as finding ones identity in the globalized society with out abandoning ones unique African culture. South African hip-hop like other forms of hip-hop, provides a way for citizens to feel like they have a sense of belonging and participation in society, even though they are not a part of the traditional political process.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Japanese hip-hop is my last point of focus before moving on to my case study of American hip-hop artist Eminem, and to my comparative perspective on Japanese, Algerian, South African and American hip-hop. The research that I did on Japanese hip-hop shows how it has been used to address issues of world piece and globalization. One of the most dramatic hip-hop performances in Japan used images of Hiroshima to make a dramatic statement, when rapping about the 9/11 catastrophe. This shows how “world politics can be reimagined” [[34]](#footnote-34)through different lenses and the hip-hop group King Gidra did this effectively. Japanese hip-hop has also used its lyrical content to point out that there are many places in the world similar to ground zero[[35]](#footnote-35) and that the ones who often suffer the most from catastrophes like these are usually the refugees and the people on the margins of society.[[36]](#footnote-36) Japanese hip-hop points out that many endure extreme suffering around the world because of larger conflicts between governmental elites. Japanese hip-hop, like American hip-hop also raps about economic suffering, like the economic crisis that occurred in Japan 1990’s.

Finally, my case study involves Eminem who is one of the most famous hip-hop artists in America.I have studied his career in depth. He has received a lot of criticism in America like other hip-hop artists around the globe for various reasons. After the massacre at Colorado’s Columbine High School in April of 1999[[37]](#footnote-37), artists like Eminem and others were subjected to extreme scrutiny because of the potential harm that their lyrics have been said to inspire in their listeners. In one of Eminem’s songs titled *The Way I Am*, he defended another target in the media, Marilyn Manson because of the way that Marilyn was also blamed for the Columbine shooting. Part of the song, *The Way I am,* sung by Eminem states, “…when a dude’s getting bullied and shoots up a school… and they blame it on Marilyn and the heroine… **Where were the parents at?**” [[38]](#footnote-38) He brings up an important point in his music by questioning the role of parents, when addressing who is to blame for youthful rebellion. As I have pointed out the critics of hip-hop blame the music itself, however the breakdown of nuclear families could also be to blame for violence.[[39]](#footnote-39) Eminem discusses the lyrics of this song defending Marilyn Manson when he states that Marlilyn “… was catching a lot of heat at the time so I figured I would maybe take some off of him, and bring it on me.”[[40]](#footnote-40) The lyrics of Eminem defending Marilyn Manson in Eminem’s song according to Marilyn Manson himself, “…made people realize how ridiculous it was that I got blamed for so much.”[[41]](#footnote-41) However, many concerned parents do not think that the blaming of hip-hop’s “radically honest lyrics,” is ridiculous at all. [[42]](#footnote-42)

Other political figures have publicly spoken out against Eminem, and have tried to boycott his music. As a result Eminem states that “Artistic expression and freedom of speech only can go so far before you have Mrs. Cheney knocking at your f\*\*\*\*ng door.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Lynn Chenney who is the former chair woman for the National Endowment for The Humanities has expressed her discontent about an “…entire industry honor[ing] this man whose work is so hateful.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

Another critic of Eminem’s music is Helen Grieco, the Executive Producer of California NOW. She has stated that his music “… is capitalism at its worse. We don’t even care if it makes a lot of money, it’s just wrong! We are here to say for all of the social justice organizations that try to make the world a safe place, that this is not art, this is hate speech.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

Other critics, who think that some of Marshal Mather’s more disturbing songs with homophobic lyrics have hurt American homosexuals. Organizations such as GLAAD (Gay And Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) have protested against him, and lobbied to try to stop the release of his Marshal Mather’s LP album.[[46]](#footnote-46) Romaine Patterson of GLAAD (Gay And Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) states that “Eminem’s anti-gay lyrics encourage young men to go out and really enact their emotions through violence towards gays and lesbians.”[[47]](#footnote-47) The organization says that after the artist’s Anger Management Tour which featured other famous hip-hop artists like Snoop Dog, they received “…hundreds of hate emails…many from Eminem fans.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

In response to the GLADD criticism, Eminem preformed with another artist at the 43rd Annual Grammy’s. This artist was Elton John, who is an open homosexual. The two of them gave an “…unlikely duet that shock[ed] America.”[[49]](#footnote-49) Many viewers interpreted the performance as “…an act of solidarity in the ongoing struggle for free speech.”[[50]](#footnote-50) Eminem’s attorney and manager states that “Elton understood him as an artist and said ‘you know don’t you people get it. He’s only saying these things because you people are saying that he is homophobic.”[[51]](#footnote-51)

However, GLADD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation) was not impressed with the performance at the Grammy’s. Scott Seomin of GLADD states, “His Grammy nominations sends a really dangerous message to the music industry…that not only can you write and produce and release any lyric that you want, but that you will be rewarded for it.” The organization convinced CBS to do a public service announcement during the Grammy’s that year that showed a distraught mother who was morning the loss of her homosexual son because someone fatally acted out their hatred towards gays on him.

Eminem’s song named *Mosh* also created a controversial response in America because it encouraged listeners to not vote President Bush into his second term due to the Iraqi war. The video expresses the anger of many Americans who were going to fight a war that they did not support.

Eminem’s music can be extremely eye-opening and sometimes shocking for the listener. For example when another artist named “Busta Rymes” heard one of Eminem’s songs for the first time called *Guilty Conscious* he reacted in an explosive way. A fellow artist tells the story,

When [he] heard *Guilty Conscious* there was a commotion at the front of the bus. I came out to see a crack in the windshield that was eight, nine, ten inches…maybe a foot long and very thick, [and] about an inch wide. Busta Rymes broke the windshield with his forehead from listening to *Guilty Conscious.* Something about the music…or as he says “You don’t know how I feel about this music…something about this…this kid…Oh my God this is crazy.” And that was it for the windshield.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

Eminem apparently does not think that his success is due only to his shock value, but instead he thinks that his music sells because it expresses the frustrations of many impoverished people. He comments on his success and the high sales of one of his albums in an interview by saying,

I think one of the reasons that it is selling so many records is probably because there’s so many kids that can relate to what I’ve been through. You know there’s kids that can listen to the music and say “I’ve been there. I’ve been through that.” Their’s a lot of poor people in the world. Theirs a lot of lower-class people that have been through a lot of stuff.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

He also addresses racism when he states that he thinks that “…overall hip-hop is like any sport,” meaning that if you have talent, the color of your skin does not matter.[[54]](#footnote-54) Due to his talent he has been able to crossover a racial boundary that was much more tangible in the hip-hop industry before his rise to stardom. If well known artists like Dr.Dre[[55]](#footnote-55) who was rumored to say “I don’t care if he’s purple… as long as he can rap,”[[56]](#footnote-56) have looked past racial boundaries due to Eminem’s talent, than his story sends the message that talent and hard work can also lead to *any* American or Global Citizen crossing a racial boundary in the workforce, educational setting and other environments.

Although Marshal Mathers is a Caucasian hip-hop artist he still grew up in the slums of Detroit. It has been speculated that his “white-trash” identity was beneficial in his crossing over the racial barrier in the industry and in gaining respect from other hip-hop artists.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Some of Eminem’s frustrations expressed in his music are said to be due to the first phase of assimilation of the white man into the more diversified, politically correct and multicultural American society.[[58]](#footnote-58) Eminem’s home town of Detroit which was once one of the largest manufacturing cities in the world now leaves many blue collar men feeling pushed aside and undervalued because of women’s rights and the growing economic power and increased influence that minorities have.[[59]](#footnote-59) This analysis shows that Eminem is said to be someone who “… embodies all of America ... a hip-hop artist from the inner city that crosses every border.”[[60]](#footnote-60) This might explain why he has been able to strike a chord with so many different Americans from different backgrounds. He represents and symbolizes many different things for a variety of people.

I will now move on to my comparative analysis of hip hop in Algeria, South Africa, America and Japan now. The term rai, which is Algeria’s form of hip-hop means “an opinion,” “a point of view”, or “an aim,”[[61]](#footnote-61) so it’s purpose is very similar to other forms of hip-hop. It has been used as a way to express discontent about issues such as unemployment, poor housing and a lack of connection with the government.[[62]](#footnote-62) It has also been criticized, like other forms of hip-hop for the negative effects that it has on its listeners and its lack of respectability in Algerian society. However, like American hip-hop and other forms of hip-hop, it gives younger citizens the opportunity not only to express their frustrations, but also to examine their identity in the ever changing globalized world. This allows Algerian youth to articulate problems and reflect upon them, therefore, “…facilitate[ing] consequent demands for social transformation.”[[63]](#footnote-63)

South African hip-hop has similarites to other forms of hip-hop as well. The older forms of hip-hop in South Africa were primarily used as a form of opposition to the small dominant Caucasian group that had control of South African Society. Now that the political system has changed, the rap in South Africa is used for different purposes. It is still used for as a form of opposition, but now its aim is to assure that the younger South Africans do not loose their identity due to strong global pressures. South American youth want to keep their unique African identity while still surviving and being a part of the Globalized World.

Clothing is also used for symbolic reasons in South Africa just as it is used in other hip-hop cultures around the globe. This allows those who wear the close to identify with others in the hip-hop culture. Also, like other forms of hip-hop around the globe, South African hip-hop is used to make political statements and to create social movements in non-conventional ways.

Japanese hip-hop is my last comparison. It also focuses on the people of the world who have political concerns, but do not express them or do anything about them through the traditional means, primarily because they feel like second-class citizens without a voice. Japanese hip-hop is just as energizing and moving compared to other forms of hip-hop and the hip-hop culture in Japan also revolves around night club scenes and other places outside of the traditional “halls of power”.[[64]](#footnote-64) Many Japanese hip-hop artists focus on global issues but through the lens of the Japanese citizens. One of Japanese hip-hop songs that is emotionally moving sings about 9/11. The hip-hop artist compares 9/11 to Hiroshima, not only to point out that Japan has been resilient to different types of adversity, but also to show that American hegemony has caused others around the globe to suffer.

Japanese hip hop also shows how the identities of the younger generation are becoming more diversified due to globalization. The stereotype of Japanese people who are “…reserved, polite, soft spoken,” is challenged by the popularity of hip-hop in Japan, which is loud and sometimes shocking. Japanese hip-hop is energizing and as a result the messages of the lyrical content spreads and it used to influence larger social networks in Japan.

As I have shown, American, Algerian, South African, and Japanese hip-hop all have similar characteristics. They are all methods of communicating and articulating political concepts outside traditional means. They all use radio, nightclubs, and social networks to get their message across instead of running for office, protesting, or writing to politicians. My analysis for why this non-traditional form of political participation occurs is due to the opinions that many hold about how the formal system of government in their country is set up to keep them succeeding and to keep them as second class citizens. In some cases the system appears to have them set up for failure. Those on the outskirts of society have usually experienced some form of oppression, so they resist it through their music and they legitimize only those who have suffered as well.

All four forms of hip-hop that I have researched are also similar in that they have all been accused of being commercialized and controlled by larger forces. I would argue that entrepreneurs in the entertainment industry and other larger corporations *do* have an influence on hip-hop, but they *do not* have complete control of the art-form. If hip-hop was just a cultural form that has been canonized by larger forces than the fad would have disappeared long ago and replaced with something else. Hip-hop still has meaning to the people, and the audiences constantly challenge the authenticity of the artists. I would argue that hip-hop has its *own* influence and power that is separate from the pressures and influences from other forces. History has shown that the masses are not stupid, and they can tell when an artist is “keeping it real.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

All four forms of hip-hop have also been looked at as a useless form of complaining, without acting. It has been criticized for not offering solutions, however I disagree. I think that that expression of the way one feels about important events it the *first step* in finding solutions. Change takes time, and is sometimes it is a complex process. Often, world events, national events, or even personal events are so traumatic or complex that in order to find any kind of solution, one first needs the chance to reflect and express certain ideas. Hip-hop provides this needed outlet. It is an important part of the process of change. Even if the lyrical content is sometimes disturbing or disrespectful, that might be a needed part of the process before one is ready to tackle complex issues. Many complex issues are disturbing and uncomfortable to think about, therefore the more rough parts of hip-hops lyrics are to be expected.

Another similarity that I found between all four forms of hip-hop is that they are all concerned not only with authenticity, but also of evidence that the artist has experienced some kind of struggle. Some artists associate themselves with those that are oppressed by the clothing that they wear, and others even go so far as to give themselves different names. This shows their audience that their place in society is similar to the listeners who are struggling with similar forms of oppression, injustice, or other types of suffering.

All four forms of hip-hop are also very flexible. Their style and lyrical content evolves and changes depending on the circumstances. South African hip-hop which first focused on apartheid oppression now focuses on the struggles of finding a new identity in a globalized world. Rai, in Algeria has also been flexible by adopting language from other cultures and focusing its attention on some of the stressors that are related to modernity. It has changed its style due to its audience and location.[[66]](#footnote-66) American hip-hop has evolves and been flexible as well. In Eminem’s case, it has changed in that it has embraced and given recognition and respect to a Caucasian hip-hop artist. Finally, Japanese hip-hop has also evolved from rapping about economic problems in the 1990’s to globalization and national identity issues of today.

Other than flexibility, authenticity, and the ability to motivate others to change, there are also many differences in the forms of hip-hop that occur around the globe. My research has shown that American and South African hip-hop has addressed and done more to ease racial tensions compared to Algerian and Japanese hip-hop. The success of Eminem, in an industry dominated mostly by African Americans has spoken volumes about the way that one can achieve success in an environment where those around you are of a different color. In one of Eminem’s videos an African American friend puts his arm around him as if to signify to the African-American community that he is a respectable artist. South-African hip-hop is also symbolic of how different races can co-exist, without limiting the opportunities for each other. Although it has been a struggle, South Africa has moved past the days of apartheid and the younger generation is finding ways to heal old wounds and move forward in global society.

Another difference between the hip-hop in Algeria, South Africa, Japan, and America involves the concept of flexibility. Although all forms of hip-hop that I have researched have proven flexible, some appear more so than others. Rai in Algeria has embraced language and influence from America, Bollywood, Arabia, Spain and France. The location of Algeria is perhaps one of the reasons that it has been influenced by so many other countries and American hegemony would explain why it has been influenced heavily by American culture.

The final difference that I have observed regarding Algerian, Japanese, South African, and American hip-hop involves soft power. “Soft power refers to a nation’s ability to influence other nations through sympathetic responses rather than coercion or payments. Soft power ‘arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies’. [[67]](#footnote-67)The Japanese form of hip-hop appears to have used soft power more effectively compared to other forms of hip-hop around the globe. Learning about the singing of the 9/11 catastrophe from the site of Hiroshima provides the listener with sympathy towards the Japanese people for all of the suffering they have gone through.

In conclusion, there are many notable lessons that can be learned from examining hip-hop and Eminem in particular, and by comparing global forms of hip-hop. There are many different ways to inspire change and action in people and I would argue that hip-hop can be used as an effective medium for political change, although obviously it can be a destructive force as well. Hip-hop has the ability to activate the conscience of listeners and it allows people the ability to expresses and articulate frustrations which are sometimes needed before change can take place. I think that most forms of hip-hop can and has been inspirational music that communicates to listeners that “…someone cares, whether that be God, a mother, or neighbors.” [[68]](#footnote-68) I would argue that the music has the ability to inspire listeners to participate in politics at the grassroots level, so that certain societal ills such as poverty can be eliminated. It might already be doing this, because when people’s suffering is sung about in such powerful and moving ways, not only does it give the singers an outlet for their frustrations, but it also wakes listener’s up to the fact that some of the richest and most powerful countries in the world have many people suffering unnecessarily. Relative to other countries, it wakes listeners up to fact that new ideas and ways of thinking might be needed due to Globalization.

After the 2008 election, I think that more and more Americans think that they have both a voice and an influence in political life even if they feel like they were previously on the margins of society. John McCain put it well in his concession speech when he stated,

“In a contest as long and difficult as this campaign has been, [Barack Obama’s] success alone commands my respect for his ability and perseverance. But that he managed to **do so by inspiring the hopes of so many millions of Americans, who had once wrongly believed that they had little at stake or little influence in the election of an American president, is something I deeply admire and commend him for achieving** (Emphasis Mine)”.

With any hope one will look at Eminem’s life story and other hip-hop artists experiences around the globe and conclude that can “do anything [they] set [their] mind to.”[[69]](#footnote-69) For many Americans and other Global Citizens, the pursuit of happiness will not be achieved by becoming a hip-hop artist, but it can be achieved through the self-reflection that occurs by listening to the music, getting an education, participating in societal groups[[70]](#footnote-70) even if one initially does not feel like they are a valued member, voting, and *willingly* joining the social contract.[[71]](#footnote-71) I think that hip-hop can be used as one of the first steps in encouraging this type of behavior.

Annotated Bibliography

8 Mile. Dir. Hanson, Curtis. Universal Pictures, 2002.

This movie tells the life of a struggling and impoverished young man who is trying to better himself and find respect in the community that he is growing up in. He not only succeeds in gaining his piers respect, but crosses a racial boundary which is extraordinary. He expresses himself and gains mastery over his situation through language, and through painful reality checks that force him to confront aspects of his environment and himself that are not pleasant. The movie is a cleaned up version of the life of Eminem and it sends an inspiring message to anyone that is trying to better themselves….when “success is [their] only option [and] failure is not.”

*After* *Innocence* Documetary Produced by Showtime.[[72]](#footnote-72)

The most notable story was of a man who was incarcerated when he was not guilty. After the DNA evidence proved his innocence he turned to hip-hop and started rapping about his experience. I typed his name into youtube.com but did not find anything about him. I guess he is not famous, but his CD would be interesting to listen to.

*The Angry Blond* Documentary[[73]](#footnote-73)

This documentary tells of Eminems’s success and also tells of why he has received so much criticism and how he has dealt with it. It shows interviews from many other hip-hop artists. Some interesting parts of the documentary are bullet pointed.

* As the album parked itself atop the pop charts, Em came under fire from organizations like the Gay And Lesbian Alliance Against Defimation. GLAAD maintained that the rappers incidary rymes were fanning the flames of hate. “Eminem’s anti-gay lyrics encourage young men to go out and really enact their emotions through violence towards gays and lesbians.” Angry Blond Documentary
* Romaine Patterson-GLADD
* “The Marshal Mathers LP by Eminem has been one of the most blatently homophobic albums and lyrics that we have ever seen at GLAAD.” Angry Blond Documentary
* Helen Grieco Executive Producer California NOW “This is capitalism at it’s worse. We don’t even care if it makes a lot of money, it’s just wrong. We are here to say for all of the social justice organizations that try to make the world a safe place, that this is not art, this is hate speech.” Angry Blond Documentary
* Joan M.Gary-Executive Director GLAAD says that Eminem’s “…satirical argument assumes a level of sophistication in his listeners, many of whom are not old enough to get a drivers license.”
* Rom Paterson-Gay rights activists pressured label bosses, radio and retailers to refrain from promoting the record. “We sit back and wonder where is their responsibility…corporate responsibility…to the listeners, to the parents who are out there and hearing the promotion of Eminem.”
* Other groups have testified at Senate Hearings and organized boycotts aimed at getting Em’s record off the shelves.
* Lynne Chenney-Former Chairwoman-National Endowment for The Humanities “Can you imagine that the entire industry honors this man who’s work is so hateful.”
* Eminimen says “Artistic expression and freedom of speech only can go so far before you have Mrs. Cheny knocking at your f\*\*\*\*ng door.”
* Jimmy Iovine-Chairman Interscope/Geffen/A&M Records- “People will react in a positive way, in a negative way, but that is the way our system is set up. You know its freedom of the press… freedom of speech.”
* Eminem says “Like anybody with half a brain should be able to listen to it and see that that is what I’m trying to do…push your buttons.”
* In one verse of *The Way I am*, Eminem came to the defense of a fellow media target*. “When a dude’s getting bullied and shoots up a school, and they blame it on Marilyn and the heroine. Where were the parents at?”*
* Shock Rocker Marilyn Manson had been blamed for inspiring the massacre at Colorado’s Columbine high school in April of 1999.
* Eminem “He was catching a lot of heat at the time so I figured I would maybe take some off of him, and bring it on me.”
* Marilyn Manson: It made people realize how ridiculous it was that I got blamed for so much. And it probably made a bunch of people take a second look and think …a…. well if Eminem is mentioning this it might be something that is of interest to me.”
* Chris Gentry-Professional Skateboarder: “It’s great to live in a country where you can say anything that you want, and put it on a CD, and sell 6 million records of it. I mean..I don’t think you can do that anywhere else on the planet. Angry Blond Documentary
* GLAAD- “The most clear manifestation of that [The Anger Management Tour] for GLADD has been the hundreds of hate emails we have received…many from Eminem fans.”
* Despite their best attempts the anti-Em lobbyist failed to halt the albums momentum….by the time Em dropped Stan as a single in December the Marshal Mathers LP had sold upwards of 8 million copies.
* “An unlikely duet shocks America”- Narrator of Angry blond
* At the 43 annual Grammy awards
* Many saw Elton John’s acceptance as an act of solidarity in the ongoing struggle for free speech.
* Em’s Manager- “Elton understood him as an artist and said ‘you know don’t you people get it. He’s only saying these things because people your saying that he is homophobic.”
* But Gay Rights activists from GLADD were not buying it. They believed the Grammy Performance invitation and nominations were advancing Eminem’s hateful agenda. Scott Seomin-GLADD “His Grammy nominations sends a really dangerous message to the music industry…that not only can you write and produce and release any lyric that you want, but that you will be rewarded with it.
* Jens’ words/notes: Gay Rights Activists convinced CBS to air an anti-gay bashing public service announcement during the Grammy broadcast. Its message was from a mother who lost her homosexual son because of hatred towards gays.
* Eminem’s comment about the Elton John performance. “It was my way of shutting people up I guess.”
* Em capped his performance with one final act of reactionary defiance, letting all of America know just how he felt with the lifting of two fingers.”

Bernard-Donals, Michael. “Jazz, Rock ‘n’ Roll, Rap and Politics.” *Journal of Popular Culture.* Journal of Popular Culture. Volume 28. Issue 2 (1994): 127-138.

This article discusses how jazz and hip hop provide a way for people to experience upward mobility when other professions make upward mobility more difficult. It also discusses how there is a cycle where cultural forms on the margins of society are “canonized” (made sacred and acceptable) by those in academia and others who have power. In other words, certain cultural forms are kept outside of society and are not mainstream until other these powerful bodies embrace them. Then once these people and institutions have grown tired of a cultural form they choose to embrace a different one and the cycle continues in this way.

The article made hip-hip artists look like pawns that are made and destroyed by people in powerful positions and how artists like M.C Hammer have served the purpose of re-affirming black stereotypes. Public Enemy is another hip-hop artist who was successful because he allowed “…a highly charged theater of race in which white listeners became guilty ease droppers on the putative private conversations of the inner city, conversations that consciously rejected white icons and authority and set upon alternative ethic.”

Bernard-Donald’s also thinks that the only people who take raps lyrics seriously are the ignorant, who are ironically sometimes academics, who “know too much”. He says that academics “…should know the economy that lies behind such lyrics.”

Other than showing how the economics of rap exploits African Americans, he discusses other artists like Madonna who is more than skin deep. She managed to hang on to her individuality while ignoring the concerns of special interest groups. The author points out that she had the *choice* to do this unlike many other African American artists.

This article was written in 1994 before Eminem’s success and I would say that he is in a similar spot that Madonna once occupied. He is already wealthy and dominant in the industry so he can produce music about what he wants. However the question still remains, does anyone in the hip-hop industry ever completely ignore powerful special interests groups? Their desire for fame and power might be so addictive that they never fully stop serving these bodies. Marshal Mather’s mentions in his latest album that fame and success became his cocaine and that he became a hypocrite. Can anyone ever fully break away from such temptations?

Bernard-Donald’s stresses that “We should watch *who’s* on MTV, whose *not* on MTV and *why*, and who’s *making the decisions* and for what *reasons*.” Obviously rappers are artists, but who is chosen to be a celebrity might depend mostly on the decisions from those behind the scenes. In one of Eminem’s songs he states, “You think I give a f\*\*\* about a Grammy? Most of these critics can’t even stomach me, let alone stand me.”

Then a voice from another voice sings “…but Slim… what if you win… wouldn’t it be weird?” Eminem responds with “Why? So **guys could just lie to get me here!”**

Bowser, Benjamin P. *The Black Middle Class Social Mobility - and Vulnerability*. New York: Lynne Rienner, 2006. Print.

This book discusses how African Americans who are considered middle-class citizens are very vulnerable compared to their Caucasian neighbors. They are often the first fired and the last fired in American society and by examining their life, the reader receives a glimpse of some of the weaknesses of American middle class in general. The book also discusses how difficult it is for many African Americans to keep their families in tact due to their impoverished conditions. The book points out that having secure economic resources a pre-requisite for maintaining strong family structures because a secure economic foundation adds the stability that a family needs in order to survive.

Condry, Ian. *Hip-Hop Japan Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. New York: Duke UP, 2006. Print.

This text shows how the dichotomy between global, local and national politics is not the dichotomy that some have assumed. It shows how Japanese hip –hop has been used to express discontent about global issues such as 9/11, the Iraq War, World War II, Western hegemony, and world peace. The book discusses racism in Japan along with the sex industry. It also discusses whether or not large media corporations have brought hip-hop the international attention that it now enjoys, or whether or not grassroots connections have led to the music echoing so far for so long.

Eberstadt, Mary. “Eminem is Right.” *Policy Review.* Issue 128 (Dec 2004/Jan 2005): 19-32.

Eberstadt points out that many parents should start questioning their *own* lifestyles instead of trying to crucify Eminem. She points out that music today is darker because the average teenager and listener is draw toward music that they can relate to, and since teenagers are dealing with the “highest marital breakdown in U.S history,” they are drawn toward music that “rage[s] over what not having a nuclear family has done to them.” Eberstadt shows that Eminem’s music “tells the truth that parents do not want to hear.”

She also points out that his misogyny is not diabolical, but linked to being abandoned several times, by not being nurtured by women, and by being betrayed by women. She also suggests that he is easier to attack because he is white and she feels that there is a “…fine line that a poor ambitious and unguided man has to walk between catastrophe and success.”

Eminem: Diamonds and Pearls. Dir. Not Available. Chrome Dream Films, 2009.

This documentary tells of the artist’s childhood and how he might not have had a choice in exposing his personal life because he did not have much else to rap about at the time. The critics also point out how some of his songs are “masterpieces” which is very interesting given that one that was called a “masterpiece” discussed chopping his ex-wife up!

The critics also picked up on how many hip hop artists are expressing their discontent with the powerlessness experienced when living in impoverished conditions and how many have dealt with these circumstances by expressing themselves through their music. Eminem is different in that he takes a more intimate, vulnerable and soul searching approach.

The critics on the video also discuss how Eminem and Dr.Dre signed on a new rapper named 50 Cent that had been incarcerated previously, and lived in the projects of Queens. By doing this they added some street legitimacy to their hip-hop music and label.

One final part of the documentary that stood out was a quote from President Bush that said that Eminem is the “worse thing to happen to children since polio.” Also Dick Cheney’s wife has openly criticized the rapper.

According to this documentary and other interviews that I have seen about him….the criticism has been somewhat effective. He states that he eventually changed his music and he mentions in an interview that he does not know whether it was a “conscious or subconscious” decision on his part. As a result he tried to make his latest CD much more like his first ones that were shocking and somewhat disturbing.

These issues bring to mind my study of John Stuart Mill. In Liberty discusses how he thinks that everyone should be able to discuss their opinions freely without interference from the government. He wrote In Liberty when England did not have the laws that they do now that allow for the freedom of speech, but Mill also discusses how people will naturally disagree with some people’s opinions and as a result they will socially stigmatize them. Mill was against any form of social stigmatization because it assumed the infallibility of the person trying to stigmatize another.

I question what Mill would think about Eminem’s music and its impact on American society. Why would these politicians speak out against it the way that they have been? Could all of their motives be bad and could they just want to attack someone instead of examining their own policies? I don’t think that it is that simple. His music could realistically do harm to the listeners. A puzzle. A puzzle. A puzzle!

E True Hollywood Story: Eminem. 2003.[[74]](#footnote-74)

A documentary on the life and rise to stardom of hip-hop artist Eminem.

Some of the interesting comments from this documentary worth noting:

* “He embodies all of America and he crosses every border”
* “A hip-hop artist from the inner city who defied every stereotype”
* Rapper “Reverend Run” of RUN-DMC says that “Hip-hop is birthed out of pain…out of the harsh realities of the streets, and the crack sales, and the drugs, and in that pain that we suffer we come out on top.”

Gosa, Travis L. “All about the Beat: Why Hip-Hop Can’t Save Black America.” *Popular Music and Society.* Volume 32. Issue 4 (2009): 567-569.

Gosa pleads with those in academia and asks them to stop trying to analyze hip hop. Even though some have said that hip-hop is the “CNN of black folk,” Gosa disagrees. He says that hip-hop is only feel good music that is a-political. He says that it is not useful for creating political change and he states that it would be better to lobby for poor black kids who cannot read. Gosa says that rappers complain a lot, but offer little practical advice on how to tackle complex political issues. He thinks that hip-hop is all about “glamour and spectacle,” and real political change takes hard work. He thinks that hip-hop music only offers good beats and that most do not listen to the actual words.

Hayes, Jason. “Political-Cultural Exodus: Movement of the People.” *Black History Bulletin.* Volume 72. Issue 1 (2009): 7-13. Academic Search Premier. Monmouth College Library. Monmouth, Il.

Hayes tells how Hip-Hop has had a global impact and how it has been used as a form of protest. He thinks that hip-hop represents “...capitalism, materialism, democracy, freedom, anti-racism…and the American dream.” He says that anti-racism is one of Americas “greatest gifts to the world.”

Hobson, Janell. “Hip-Hop Hegemony.” *Meridians: Feminism, Race and Transnationalism.* Volume 8. Issue 1 (2008): 15-18.

This poem is written after the author tells of the rape a young woman. Her rape might have been because she looked like a popular hip-hop artist. The poem discusses how the world is dominated by a small group of people and how they use their influence through means of the media and hip-hip to control people. The poem also has a phrase that says that the “commercial radio is a spiritual medium owned by the same powers that spill blood over this planet.” The author also expresses her fear that people will not vote because the rhymes in the songs convince listeners that our present system is OK. She fears that there will be consequences worse than Hurricane Katrina because of hip-hop.

Morgan, Marcyliena. “Hip-Hop Women Shredding the Veil: Race and Class in Popular Feminist Idenity.” *South Atlantic Quarterly.* Volume 10. Issue 3 (2005): 425-444.

Morgan argues that the violence and misogyny in hip-hop is a result of a male-dominated culture and should be criticized. She points out that it is especially hard for the black female artists and how they express in their lyrics their dreams of becoming respected members of America. The author also points out than until 1960 submission to whites meant that blacks were not to communicate with whites. The author points out how black speech went from polite and deferent to in-your-face, impolite, loud and aggressive, apparently as a response to the previous mistreatment by blacks from whites who expected them to only speak when spoken to.

The article also mentions a situation where a radio station was fined by the FCC because it was to explicit sexually. The FCC later reversed its ruling but the situation shows how a male dominated society thinks that it is OK to have sexual lyrics sung by men but not by women. The incident with the FCC also shows how the FCC protects America from women speaking their minds, but it expects women to fend for themselves when it comes to the misogyny (432).

The article also tells of how the rapper Nellie was no longer invited to a University because some of his lyrics were distasteful towards women. The women at the school knew that he was scheduled to attend the University to promote a cure for medical condition that help blacks, but they did not care since his lyrics were so disrespectful towards women. The article also tells of how “…the right to talk and represent oneself and one’s community is a fundamental aspect of citizenship,” but this is especially hard for black women.

Morgan, Micheal L. *Classics of Moral and Political Theory.*Indianapolis, IN, 2005.

This text has readings from political philosophers such as Socrates, Rousseau, Mill, Marx, and Hobbs.

McPherson Lionel K. *Hip Hop and Philosophy: Rhyme 2 Reason.* Chicago and LaSalle, Illinois, 2005.

McPherson discusses how in Hobbs’s social contract, those who do not feel that the state is fulfilling their obligation to protect them, can resort to protecting themselves. (Lionel McPherson, 161).He tells that members of the hip-hop culture which are mostly African Americans have not been honored by the contract, for them the “contract has been broken.” (McPherson,162).

He moves on to discuss how African Americans in the hip-hop culture do not feel the same loyalty to the U.S because they do not feel that their “…actions are a part of …history” (McPherson,165). McPherson tells of many of the lyrics in hip hop, some of which discuss how the authorities do not protect people in urban black neighborhoods, how the educational system teaches lies and gives inaccurate information in order to interfere with African Americans succeeding economically.

The article also told of how there are scholars of Hip-Hop, some of the most prominent being Todd Boyd and Michael Eric Dyson. Scholars have discovered that many in the African American community view hip-hop as a “continuation of the Civil Rights struggle,” which would explain why some think that Eminem is a cultural vulture. (McPherson, 172)

Finally it is mentioned that the “old school messages” regarding politics is no longer effective and that hip hop “speaks of the unfinished business of social justice” (172). He also says that many of hip-hops messages are liberal and they “find support in prominent theories in political philosophy.”

Overall the chapter or “disk” was interesting to read especially since I read Hobbs for the first time a few weeks ago. According to Hobbs, voluntarily joining the social contract is key, and it appears that some who live in rough neighborhoods, have chosen to choose hip-hop to be their CNN instead of joining other mainstream organizations. I can not say that I blame them, however I question if hip-hip will loose some of its popularity after the election of Obama. I think that one of the lessons that Americans learned from the election of Obama is that grassroots organizing can be effective regardless of your socioeconomic or racial standing. Again, this was a very interesting article to read.

Munoz-Laboy, Miguel A. “Condom Use and Hip Hop Culture: The Case of Urban Young Men in New York City.” *American Journal of Public Health*. Volume 98. Issue 6 (2008). 1081-1085.

Munoz-Laboy does a study to see what the correlation between condom use and enmeshment in hip hop culture is. The findings suggest that the there is not a significant correlation between condom use and hip hop culture. There *is* however a correlation between a lower use of condoms and frequency at hip-hop nightclubs. In other words dancing to hip hop music leads to a lower use of condoms or a more infrequent use. He also pointed out that people are often under the influence of alcohol or drugs while they are at these nightclubs, so that could influence their condom using decisions as well as the music they are listening to.

For those in the study that had hip hop culture as a major aspect of their lives, 53% were in high school, 24.4% had a G.E.D, 16.6% were in college, 4.4% had completed a college degree, and 47.7% were in the labor market. Munoz-Laboy did not discuss whether or not these factors were related to condom use and the reader is led to question these statistics because from what I have read in sociology classes, children are more prized in working class families compared to wealthier ones.

Munoz –Laboy also discussed the commercialization of hip hop and he shows how important the American teenager is to the American economy. He also shows the reader that hip-hop culture has changed from its original roots in the 1960’s when it was dominant only in inner city New York neighborhoods. Now it is one of the “…worlds most influential cultural movements,” and is “… the dominant influence on youths fashions in cities around the worlds.”

Patrick, Brian Anse. “Vikings and Rappers: The Icelandic Sagas Hip-Hop across 8 mile.” *Journal of Popular Culture.* Volume 41. Issue 2 (2008): 281-305. Academic Search Premier. Monmouth College Library. Monmouth, Il.

Patrick compares the movie 8 Mile to other ancient stories and points out that many heroes in movies and stories live on the edges of society and are “outlaws”. He points out that to rise above the Hobbsian state of nature it takes *strength* and *will* and that once one rises above such circumstances they are more human. He points out that Eminem learned to control his unpleasant environment instead of letting it control him and Patrick stresses that the use of language is what enabled him to rise above this depressed Detroit atmosphere. This article along with the movie and ancient sagas show how language gives people clarity and allows them to bond with others. The article also shows readers that we should not underestimate the power of language.

He also discusses that one of rap’s purposes is to express the discontent that many feel about not being loved and not having any opportunities. Through the use of language rappers and others can find meaning in their lives. Personally I think sources other than rap should be sought for this purpose, even though I recognize that both language and music have the power to move people.

The most interesting part of the article is when Patrick points out than in 8 Mile, the protagonist “Rabbit,” goes through a journey where he has to set aside his self-delusions and face the unpleasant reality of his situation. Once this reality check occurs was the protagonist is ready psychologically speaking to go through the “…painful process of transformation.” This transformation is necessary for his upward mobility. Since the protagonist finally came to this place in his life where he could *accurately* acknowledge his life circumstances, sense of self, and environment he is now ready to successfully pursue a happier life.

Powers, Ann. “Album Review: Eminem’s ‘Relapse’”. Los Angeles Times. 14 May.2009: Pop & Hiss: The L.A.Times Music Blog.

This article digs pretty deep into the meanings of Eminem’s latest CD. It also discusses how listeners react to his message. The author suggests that when those that are disgusted by his work feel this way they see themselves as morally superior. The author also suggests that everyone has already decided where they stand in regards to Eminem even though I do not know exactly where I stand. The author did point out that “those who [are] honest about succumbing to his sick humor… [have] to confront something frightening within themselves.”

The author of the Times was also able to pick up on some of Eminem’s messages about the culture of rehabilitation (Drug Rehab centers) in his latest album, and concluded that Eminem thinks that things still turn out bad regardless of the efforts of these healthcare professionals. The author suggests that this is because the artist has a “fundamental mistrust of pleasure and love.”

On his last interview with Jimmy Kimball Eminem was wearing a cross around his neck with a plane shirt which is altogether different compared to his usual hip hop attire and in his new album he discusses opening a piece of fan mail that mentioned how someone was praying for him. He indicates in this song that he thought that it was strange that he chose that particular piece of mail given that he does not open very much fan mail, but dismisses the possible spiritual significance in his lyrics by saying that “people didn’t pray for him when he was local.” This shows that perhaps the Times article is correct in that he has difficulty accepting pleasure and love. Would it have been so hard to accept that a higher power intended for him to read that piece of mail? In a later interview I watched on you tube he states that at the time that he made the Relapse album he was in a dark spot and was doing too much self-loathing. Perhaps self-loathing interferes with seeing spiritual signs?

Rak, Julie "Pop Life: An Introduction." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 38.3 (2008): 325-331. Academic Search Premier. Monmouth College Library. Monmouth, Il.

This article addresses how public mistrust of political and spiritual figures leads to Americans seeking out celebrities and ordinary citizens viewpoints. It also suggests that “…in the public sphere…more than ever, the personal is political.” Reading the article brings to mind Rousseau’s question of whether or not ones private life and persona should dominate or if ones public life and persona should rule.

Rak states, “In a nation where democratic participation in public elections is very low, self-representation and the consumption of other people’s identities in popular culture has become central to how Americans are getting, distributing, and consuming information. Making and consuming narratives about individual lives and experiences has become a way to be democratic outside of democratic institutions and to make identity into a commodity that can be bought and sold. Why would this be? As a discourse, auto/biography keys into classic liberal ideas about representativeness as a democratic ideal because one person’s life can “represent” the whole and into a specifically American idea of history as the record of individual achievement, which originated into eh thinking of Emerson.” (Rahl, 328).

1999 Throwback Interview. AXS Uncut January 21, 1999.[[75]](#footnote-75)

This interview shows Eminem talking about how hip- hop is basically like a sport where race does not matter as much as talent. He also discusses how many can relate to his music because it deals with the struggles of the poor and working class.

Transcript Of John McCain’s Concession Speech. November 5th, 2005.

I picked out the part of McCain’s concession speech where he speaks about how many Americans once wrongly assumed that they had little say in the political process, but now know otherwise.

Wade, Carole and Carol Travis. *Invitation to Psychology.* Fourth Edition*.*Upper Saddle River, NJ. Person Prentice Hall, 2008.

This psychology book makes references to the correlation between violence and videogames. Even thought rap and hip-hop is not a videogame, both can be watched on TV so I thought the information mentioned would be worth noting. One interesting quote:

“Social-cognitive theorists argue that because people differ in their perceptions and beliefs, they may learn different lessons from the same event or situation. For example, some people become more aggressive after observing violent images, but most people do not. Moreover, cause and effect also work in the opposite direction: Aggressive individuals tend to be drawn to violent images and are more affected by them than other people are.” (327)

From what I have gathered from reading the textbook so far is that it is still a mystery as to how much influence violent videogames and images have on ones behavior, but the textbook seems to purposely leave room for the reader to have a lot of doubt in their mind about any strong correlation. Even though they provide convincing evidence, I think that it should be noted that these authors’ persuasive skills are rather transparent. When discussing consciousness, they gave examples of how other creatures just naturally gravitate toward foods that give them an escape from consciousness, and it seemed to me that they were trying to tell the reader that it is just natural to want to be high all the time.

Here is an interesting quote from the text, “The reasons for taking such drugs vary: to alter consciousness, as part of a religious ritual, for recreation, to decrease physical pain or discomfort, or for psychological escape. But human beings are not the only species that likes to get high on occasion; so do many other animals. Baboons ingest tobacco, elephants love the alcohol in fermented fruit, and reindeer and rabbits seek out intoxicating mushrooms.” (172).

My point is that obviously the author is for the use of drugs for recreational use and in the text book they state that the classification of marijuana is “controversial” but when the teacher did the power points she put it in the psychedelic category. Again, the point is that even though the author dismisses some of the effects of watching violence, one should still question if hip-hop can be harmful when if discusses child molestation, cannibalism, misogamy, and homophobia.

Another though from this textbook includes a quote that states that “Punishment, when used properly, can discourage undesirable behavior, including criminal behavior. But it is frequently misused and can have unintended consequences.” (327). I think that hip-hop is one kind of response to injustices in the criminal justice system. Since many feel like the social contract has been broken for them, they do not see the need to obey the laws. A documentary called *After Innocence* produced by Showtime, tells of a man who was incarcerated when he was innocent. Afterwards he rapped about the injustice of his situation.

Watts, Eric King. “Border Patrolling and “Passing” in Eminem’s 8 Mile. *Critical Studies in Media Communications.* Volume 22. Issue 3 (2005): 187-206. Academic Search Premier. Monmouth College Library. Monmouth, IL.

Watts shows how Eminem represents national aspirations. He also suggests that racial passage is “…preformed by social mavericks.” He suggests that it might be easier for white artists to experience success, but it is harder for them to get respect amongst blacks in the hip hop community. He concludes that the protagonist “Rabbit” in *8 Mile* “…represents everyone’s potential to persevere,” and he also says that Rabbit’s crossing over the 8 Mile road is heroic because it “restores the myth of the American dream.”

Watt also analyzed the “Free World” who was a group of the protagonist’s enemies on *8 Mile*. To Watt the “Free World” is symbolic of any dark force and dark forces can “not exercise an enterprising spirit without being corrupted or diseased.” Watt also points out that if one wants to escape from a bad situation or as he calls it “hell,” than they have to do it themselves.

West, Cornell. The Cornell West Reader. New York, NY: Basic Civitas, 1999. Print.

Cornell West addresses how American hegemony has caused its musical style to be recognized around the globe. He discusses Motown music and tells of how it originated in Detroit, just like Eminem. He mentions how the music melted the hearts and souls of people other than African Americans and he discusses how rap music is a cry from the people who live in the ghetto. He thinks that rap is class specific, which I disagree with because many middle and upper class musicians listen to Eminem. West also gives graphic and depressing statistics of African American suicide rates and imprisonments for African Americans and he tells that rap music offers hope to those who are suffering because it leads people to believe that someone cares.

White, Russell. ‘“Behind the Mask”: Eminem and Postindustrial Minstrelsy.” *European Journal of American Culture.* Volume 25. Issue 1 (2006): 65-79. Academic Search Premier. Monmouth College Library. Monmouth, Il.

White discusses how Eminem is a “tricky” person for many critics. He discusses misogyny which is hatred for women. Some Greek philosophers thought misogyny stems from a *fear* of women, and many feminists believe that misogyny is one of the causes of patriarchal social structures. White also points out that Eminem’s music is polemic which means that he disputes or controverts religious, philosophical or political topics. Eminem does this through humor and through shocking statements, and therefore the author thinks that we should not take his music to seriously.

White also thinks that Eminem’s music expresses the frustrations of the white working class male. According to the author the white working class male is a figure that feels disempowered and not valued in society because we live in such a politically correct world that has turned over power to women and minorities. White also points out that Eminem’s “white trash” identity has helped him in his career because he stands in the middle of a web of relationships and therefore he can appeal to a larger audience that is oppressed or feels underprivileged.

White also discusses how many blacks think that Eminem has robbed rap of its cultural roots and is a “cultural vulture.” He also analyses some of Eminem’s costumes when he plays the actor from *Texas Chainsaw Massacre.* White points out that poor Caucasians are often referred to as homicidal, cannibalistic and deformed, which is why Eminem plays this character. Even though these are negative traits, White points out that they have been good for Eminem’s career because what is privileged in Hip-Hop culture is anti-intellectualism, profane language, and working class struggles.

Since American Culture is now supposedly dominated by political correctness the blue collar workers in Detroit and elsewhere, have lost their power and Eminem is allowed to play out these type of frustrations through his music. At times he does this by playing “Slim Shady.” Some think that the Slim Shady character that Eminem created is a poor mask and a poor excuse for “indulging in some distasteful and disturbing impulses.” Patrick closes with discussing the killings of Tupac and other rappers. He reminds the readers that there can be problems when we choose not to view rap music as figurative, and choose to take it seriously.

Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

This article discusses a musical tradition in Algeria called rai. It is very similar to American hip-hop in that it is sung by a young audience who sit on a low social status due to their impoverished environment. The rai music has embraced other forms of hip-hop from the West, Africa, and Bollywood in India. It has received international attention due to its content that discusses issues such as post-colonialism, and disillusion with the government. It has been criticized like hip-hop in other countries due to its lyrical content that complains about society’s ills in society without offering pragmatic solutions.

1. Young, 2003:71. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Gosa, 2009:567. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Gosa, 2009:567. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gosa, 2009:567. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Gosa, 2009:568. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gosa, 2009:568. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Manoz-Laboy,2008: 1081-1085. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Manoz-Laboy, 2008:1081-1085. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Bernard-Donals, 1994:137. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Young, 2003:76. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Becker, 2008: 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Condry, 2006:207. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Becker, 2008:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Young, 2003:72. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Eminem: Diamonds and Pearls*. No cited director. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. *The Angry Blond* Documetary. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Watts, 2005: 200-204. Eminem: Diamonds and Pearls. Documentary. No cited director. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Bowser,2006, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
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