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Codi Yhap

Ursinus College, coyhap@ursinus.edu

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Codi Yhap

The Shape of You: Music's Impact on Identity

Department: Music/History

Mentors: Rosa Abrahams and Edward Onaci

Abstract: Investigating the multiple functions of music, scholars from various fields have expressed that music can regulate moods and emotions while providing listeners a way to navigate their identity. Focusing primarily on the genre of rap, this research has placed the field of Music and Emotion in conversation with Hip-Hop studies. The field of Music and Emotion has thoroughly measured/examined listener thought processes, bodily response, and cultural influences when engaging with music. Despite the rise in scholarship addressing popular music and emotion, the field rarely includes popular music in its discussions unless, perhaps, the genre is jazz. Recognizing that there are cultural, social and political factors that influence the listener in addition to one's current environment; the field of Hip-Hop studies provides an in-depth analysis on social forces often overlooked in Music and Emotion. Together these factors create the listener's context which is a key component in the types of musical responses that occur in the Music and Emotion studies. Conversation across these disciplines has highlighted that popular music, especially rap, reflects aspects of identity which, in turn, impact one's emotional response to music. This literature review is needed in order to further investigate claims of listener context being a powerful influence on emotion or mood. It also will provide each field insight on aspects of their research which are crucial yet, underrepresented in their field.

Keyterms:

Aesthetic emotions: Emotions that are determined by individual preference. They do not negatively affect well-being (Schere and Zentner 2008).

Affective prosody: Sound and voice quality which help to convey emotions (Koelsch 2014).

Black nationalism: Advocacy of unity among black people that encourages self-rule (Alridge 2010).

Dynamics: musical instructions that inform a performer about how loud or soft a note or phrase of music is to be played (Wikipedia).

Emotional contagion: The tendency of two individuals, or in this case individuals and music, to converge emotionally (Koelsch 2014).

Enculturation: A gradual process in which individuals grasp an understanding of existing cultural norms. Listeners learn to associate musical features with emotion through the process of enculturation (Labbé and Grandjean 2014).

Extra-musical variables: (Juslin and Sloboda 2010)

Intonation: The emphasis or stress of certain sounds and words (Wikipedia).

Melody phrasing: Grouping of notes that together express a musical idea. Multiple phrases are used to collectively form a piece (Wikipedia).

Mood: Less overt feelings that are not immediately apparent (Juslin and Sloboda 2010).

Mood congruent cognition: information that is interpreted, acquired and attained in a way that agrees with your mood (Eich et al 2007).

Mood-dependent memory: events encode in certain mood states making them more retrievable in that state (Eich et. al 2007).

Notations: The all-encompassing term used for the musical instructions written by composers, interpreted by conductors and performers (Wikipedia).

Pan-Africanism: An identity and ideology that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the African diaspora (Ohadike 2008).

Piano: A type of notation that indicates soft playing.

Physiological responses: When your body senses and responds to signals about a particular stimulus sent to your brain (Juslin and Sloboda 2010).

Racial Project: (Love 2010)

Self-determination: (Alridge 2010)

Timbre: The characteristics of a musical sound or voice distinguished by pitch and intensity (Wikipedia).

Vestigial structure: A structure which has lost all or most of its original function and may no longer serve a purpose (Wikipedia).

Music is integral to human society. There is not a civilization that exists today without music. Theories which regard music as a **vestigial structure** or “auditory cheesecake” cannot overlook the fact that music continues to thrive and take on new roles in society (Pinker 1997).¹ The million, or more aptly the trillion, dollar question is why. Although this cannot be answered in full in this literature review, music’s role in the identity formation process provides us with part of the answer.

As mood regulation and emotional responses are commonly reported as functions of music, it seems apt to investigate the field of music and emotion. While the field of music and emotion mentions the impact of **extra-musical variables** and social context (i.e. sociopolitical status, race, gender, sexual orientation etc.) such comments are often in passing. Instead, the field continues to investigate music’s ability to represent versus elicit emotional response. Often citing enculturation as the rationale for elicited emotional response. However, there appears to be a parallel between music eliciting an emotional response and identity/identity formation. This has been investigated extensively by the field of Hip-Hop studies. Through lyrical analysis and historical interrogation, scholars have revealed that rap enables young people to reassert and construct aspects of identity found in music (Cox 2010; Rose 1994; Ohadike 2007). Recent studies have shown that this goes beyond black urban youth in America to include those in the African diaspora and white youth as well (Clark 2018; Ohadike 2007; Kitwana 2005). It is then in our best interest to place these two separate fields in conversation with each other and

¹ Please note that all terms in bold can be defined in the glossary located in the appendix.

uncover how music, emotion and identity are interwoven. With each field posing different questions; the collective findings can create a more wholistic narrative and provide future directions for scholars. Shedding some light on a popular music genre that is underrepresented in music and emotion scholarship.

Music and Emotion

The field of Music and Emotion has a vested interest in music-elicited emotions and how they are special or differ from everyday emotions evoked by words or memory.² Determining whether music can elicit emotions is one thing but, if music generates a unique emotional response there is evidence of the relationship between music and emotion. Discussed in terms of its ability to influence one's mood, music has been found to represent/convey emotions and generate physiological responses (Young 2013; Gabrielsson and Juslin 1996; Labbé, and Granjean, 2014; Kruhmhansl, 1997; Sloboda 1991). Therefore, it would be reasonable for music to evoke a unique emotional response. If everyday emotions evoked by words or memory can be substitute for music, then previous claims of music's impact on mood appear less significant. Thus, leaving the field to reexamine the "why" behind the relationship between music and emotion.

Music psychology, music cognition and music sociology are a few of the disciplines investigating music and emotion. Looking at the precursors of behavior, associated brain regions, and social order respectively, these disciplines discuss varying aspects of the field. Still,

² Music-elicited emotions are generated in response to music. They are not new emotions rather; they are emotions which can be achieved by listening to music. They may also depend on the environment (i.e. emotional state, physical location, memories etc.).

each discipline must be placed in conversation as they inform each other. Actively communicating across disciplines allows scholars to exercise their expertise and provide rationale for music emotion connection. Currently, scholars are exploring music's ability to represent and/or elicit emotions, differentiating complex and basic emotions, and exploring which musical features may elicit universal versus preferred emotion(s) (Gabrielsson and Juslin 1996; Scherer and Zentner 2008; Krumhansl, 1997). Under certain circumstance, scholars have even noted that music-induced emotion can lead to life changing behavioral consequences and construct self-identity and feeling states (Juslin and Sloboda 2010, DeNora 2010). While scholars mention this complex relationship between music, emotion, and identity it is rarely examined in depth.

From a philosophical standpoint, if music arouses emotion it then represents emotion (Young 2013). Using preexisting source knowledge, music provides an illustration through sound. This preexisting source knowledge is gained through the process of **enculturation**. Defined as one's understanding of existing cultural norms; it is something an individual must learn. How then are composers and performers able to convey emotion? It begins with **affective prosody**. Just as volume and **intonation** help to characterize and identify emotion in speech, musical features (including tempo, **timbre, dynamics, mode or melody phrasing**) are used to express emotions through music. Scholars have recognized that there are several associations between music features and emotion. On one study, investigating the affective associations between modality and dynamics, asked participants to choose one of four emotions (happiness, sadness, tenderness, and passion) to describe the lyrics of a piece. The authors went on to examine the musical features of these pieces and found a strong correlation

found between happiness and the major mode/**forte** dynamics and sadness with minor mode/**piano** dynamics (Tiemann and Huron, 2011). While participants did not listen to any of the music; there was still a trend in musical features. Thus, showing that musical features can help convey emotion. A similar study tasking performer to incorporate happiness, sadness, anger, tenderness, fear, solemnity, or no emotion had similar findings. Sadness was represented through piano dynamics and slower tempos while anger was denoted through forte dynamics and faster tempos along with distorted tones (Gabrielsson and Juslin 1996). As performers take the music from the page and convey emotion based on the composer's **notation**, they create the music the audience will internalize. Therefore, the incorporation of emotion by performers should come as no surprise. These tendencies are dependent on the musical tradition one is accustomed to performing in/listening to. Meaning, emotional adjectives are not universal. These associations between musical structures and emotion differ across cultures although they may share limited similarities (Labbé, and Granjean, 2014; Krumhansl, 1997). Outside of Western Art Music, enculturation in other musical traditions is an area that must be examined and discussed. Discovering/expanding on said limited similarities across traditions will show the degree in which these associations are innate in humans. Some scholars have already made claims that affective prosody is innate (Young 2013; Koelsch 2014). However, most scholars acknowledge that these associations are learned through enculturation (Tiemann and Huron 2011; Gabrielsson and Juslin 1996; Sloboda 1991; Labbé and Grandjean 2014; Krumhansl 1997).

While scholars recognize that music can be a catalyst which represents/conveys emotion, these studies do not necessarily provide further insight on how music elicits emotion.

Listeners that describe a song as “happy” or “passionate” due to enculturation may do so without considering how the music made them feel. Using emotions to describe music is tricky as there are intended emotional labels and realized emotional labels.³ The field has not always been careful when making distinctions between music’s ability to represent emotion(s) and music eliciting an emotional response (Juslin and Sloboda 2010). However, this is necessary as the field continues its research. If music elicits an emotion that is contrary/opposite to the represented emotions this should be indicated by scholars. Clearly, other factors are at play influencing the listener response. Information is often interpreted, acquired and attained in a way that agrees with your mood (Eich et al 2007). This **Mood congruent cognition** is only one example however, the field continues to study enculturation and its impact on emotion. Other variables must be taken into consideration as listeners report emotions contrary to those conveyed (Saarikallio and Erkkilä 2007).

When Investigating music’s ability to elicit an emotion, the field has be careful to include both **objective** and **subjective** studies. Objective studies commonly use **physiological responses** or expressive behaviors (i.e. facial expression) to measure emotion while subjective studies often rely on self-report from participants. Physiological response appears to be the defining factor as emotions, in psychology, are defined as noticeable stimuli marked by unique feelings of physiological change or distinct facial and vocal expression (Juslin and Sloboda 2010). A

³ Intended emotional labels are based on cultural norms learned through enculturation. These labels convey emotions as determined by their musical tradition. Realized emotional labels would describe how music makes you feel in a given moment. They may be contrary to the emotions a composer or performer intends yet; they are just as real.

survey study testing Meyer's 1956 claim that individuals are unable to recall physiological responses elicited by musical moments concluded that participants could recall such moments (Meyer, 1965; Sloboda, 1991). Participants were not asked to recall musical structures although, they were often able to. In fact, these responses tended to enhance after multiple hearings rather than be forgotten (Sloboda 1991). While this survey reports participants physiological response, it relies on self-reporting rather than medical instruments to measure physiological response. Asking participants to recall a physiological response is not always the most accurate method but is significant. Participants are consciously acknowledging the body responding emotion. They Participants may do their best to recall these moments, however recollection of these moments depends on other factors like environment, **mood-dependent memory**, preference, familiarity etc. Ultimately, the fact that participants were able to able to recall musical features associated with their response and reported an enhanced response after multiple listens is noteworthy. Participants which identify as musicians made up an overwhelming majority of those who could identify musical features. Nonetheless, at some point and time these physiological responses were generated, linked, and attributed to music and the experience was remembered. No matter their (in)formal education with music.

Other studies, using physiological sensors, have also found music can induce and maintaining emotion for extended periods. Decreasing heart rate and skin conductance levels were observed with sad musical excerpts while pulse transmission increased with fear excerpts and decreasing respiration depth was observed with happy excerpts. The author even noted that the participants emotional state converged with that of the music. (Krumhansl 1997). When there is a convergence or synchronization of the emotions between listener and music it

is known as **emotional contagion**. Similar to empathizing, the body responds to the emotions conveyed by the music. In addition to measuring the body's response, scholars also examine which brain regions activate when listening to music. A meta-analysis of conducted by Koelsch recognized that there are three main brain regions associated with music-elicited emotions: the amygdala, nucleus accumbens and hippocampus. Each of these brain regions plays a significant role in the emotional, reward, and memory networks respectively; demonstrating that music simultaneously activates and elicits more than just emotion (Koelsch 2014). Introducing a new, complex relationship between music and emotion which moves beyond physiological response and begins to incorporate the individual.

This new complex relationship lead scholars to suggest music-elicited emotions are tied to musical preference, social context, and lifespan development stage (Bonneville-Roussy et. al 2013; North and Hargreaves 2010).⁴ Immersed in questions surrounding enculturation and the resulting physiological response, the field has glossed over the listener and listener situation. The relationship between music, listener, and listener situation (or listener context) are the three main stimuli that govern one's response to music (Hargreaves, Miell and MacDonald). Such **musical responses** include one's emotional response to music therefore, the listener and listener environment should always be taken into consideration. While Scholars have mentioned that, "social and institutional contexts exert a powerful influence on the response to music..." it is imperative that the field goes beyond acknowledgement and recognizes these influences in future studies (Hargreaves and North 2010, P.520).

⁴ There are 6 stages of Life span development: infancy, childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle age and older age (Erickson 1950). Each stage marks a change in biological, cognitive and psychosocial change.

Categorized as **aesthetic emotions** a few scholars have stated that there are emotions dependent on listener preference. (Scherer and Zentner 2008). The field may not agree with this categorization of emotion however, when investigating the role of music in adolescence mood regulation one studied included an insightful caveat: music's ability to regulate mood and elicit positive emotions was based on listener choice (Saarikallio and Erkkilä 2007). Participants said that choosing the music helped place them in the right mood to accomplish their goals and provide a source of entertainment. Indicating that music's ability to regulate mood/elicit positive emotion is based on listener choice/preference (Saarikallio and Erkkilä 2007). Other studies have gone one step further claiming music is a vehicle for self-discovery and self-expression (Bonneville-Roussy et. al 2013). This self-expression/ self-discovery is then exemplified by musical preference. Studies looking at musical preference have primarily revolved around adolescents as this development stage is characterized as a time of uncertainty. Musical preference is shaped during adolescence as the helps adolescents form relationships and explore their own identity through music. This, evidently, strongly influences musical preference over the course of one's life (Bonneville-Roussy et. al 2013). Though the previous two studies are subjective there is clearly a larger conversation to be had about the cognitive significance of emotion. Emotions cannot be explained by stimuli alone in the words of Juslin and Sloboda. Thus, physiological responses used to mark, and measure emotion are significant and depend on the listener's context (Juslin and Sloboda 2010). These **extra-musical variables** are influencing how individuals respond, emotionally, to music. Listeners are not simply moved by music but, actively work and establish conditions in order to be moved (DeNora 2010). Therefore, when discussing the use of music to achieve certain psychological

states, like emotion, researches still recognize that this social context is critically important (Hargreaves and North 2010).

Still, the field has made such claims without reaching outside the Western Art Music cannon.

Despite the rise in Popular music scholarship, popular music genres are placed at the margins of the field while, arguably, they are more socially prominent.⁵ When looking at the genre of rap there is much less scholarship available. Still, this has not stopped some scholars from making claims about rap. One conversation on musical preference had said, “ This raises the question of the relationship between antisocial behavior and preference for certain ‘problem’ music styles such as rap and Hip-Hop (Hargreaves and North 2010, p.540)” Previously characterized as a reflection of identity rather than a compensation for personality, Hargreaves and North go on to suggest that the **speculative aesthetics** of rap have a relationship with violent and criminal behaviors.⁶ Not far from the pseudo-individuality that Adorno and Horkheimer insists comes with popular music, Hargreaves and North have depicted listeners of rap music as unconscious consumers (Adorno and Horkheimer 1994). On the other hand, Hip-Hop studies scholars insist that rap helps listeners navigate their identity and not simply reflect them. Meaning, rap only represents *aspects* of identity or experience. Listeners then must parse through these depictions of blackness found in the music industry which highlight only a fraction of black urban life. This “ghettocentric” view of rap may be derived from inner city life yet can define the black experience for a broader audience which views rap as a form of entertainment or truth (Jackson and Camara 2010). Popular music is constantly being scrutinized and redefined

⁵ Jazz has been the acceptance among popular music due to its recognition as an academic art form.

⁶ Speculative aesthetics are looking at the meaning and nature of art. This type of aesthetic will not be discussed in the literature review.

by media and listeners alike, ultimately shaping how listeners see reflections of their identity. While listener interpretation of identity in music is not mentioned in Hargreaves and North's assertion it is constantly investigated and examined in the field of Hip-Hop studies, making it imperative to place each fields in conversation. The topics of identity and musical preference are intimately linked to music and emotion. Allowing the two fields to inform each other will provide further insight into this relationship for rap and other genres.

History of Rap

Precursors to Hip-Hop

Rap and the other genres across the African diaspora have been recognized for their recounting of historical events, protest of oppression, and entertainment. Not all aspects are present simultaneously however, protest of oppression or resistance can be seen from rap's beginnings. These characteristics of rap are a continuation of the **Pan-African culture of resistance** as Don Ohadike puts it. The Pan-African culture of resistance is a protest-based pattern of behavior created to combat white cultural domination facing the African diaspora.⁷ Fostering survival, identity and unity among black people, music and dance have been characterized as non-violent forms of resistance which ease the pain of oppression and preserve history (Ohadike, 2007). Incorporating ideologies from the Civils Rights movement, Black Panther party, Black power movement, and the Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths; rap has used lyricism, sampling, and imagery of social movements to link historical events and become a platform for social and political critique/commentary (Alridge 2010; Dahbovie 2010; Cheney 2010; Onaci

⁷ Describe Pan-African culture of resistance and how it is related to Black existentialism and black nationalism.

2010). Reoccurring themes of **self-determination** and **Pan-Africanism** have been present even before the previously mentioned movements, yet they continue to recirculate in rap today. References back to such ideologies have been found in the sub-genres of rap nationalism and gangsta rap alike.

Before the emergence of rap, Rhythm and Blues (R&B) exuded political commentary shaped by social climate and major events during the Civil Rights Movement which greatly influence Hip-Hop culture today (Stewart 2010). The circumstances facing African Americans across the country determined the lyrics of R&B. The message in the music was either directed towards African Americans or Americans in general, as it reflected the voice and realities facing African America during the mid-1960s and early 1970s. Emerging in the early 1970s these harsh realities continue to be expressed through rap while incorporating the Civil Rights movement and other contemporary social movement (Alridge 2010; Cheney 2010; Onaci 2010). Along with ideologies the techniques of sampling, scratching and imagery recycled and reintroduced previous musical genres to new audiences and markets. This reintroduction of musical genres, history and ideologies makes rap a powerful tool for teaching. Recounting the history of oppression and resistance through concepts of self-determination and **knowledge of self**, rap helped prepare African Americans to determine their own future (Alridge 2010). Knowledge of self is one of five elements of Hip-Hop (Clark 2018). Knowledge of self includes internalizing African American history, questioning “authentic” representations of the blackness, and understanding of past ideologies. It places one’s individual experience within the common experience black. Intended to, “foster healthy black youth identity and contribute to American

social and educational reform.” This is needed although scholars Pero Dagbovie notes those born in the late 1970s-1980s seems less exposed/interested in black history Dagbovie (2010, 322-323). While Black history is needed to understand the symbolism and meaning in rap, those who see rap strictly as entertainment will overlook this aspect of rap.

Some artists and listeners engage with rap strictly for entertainment purposes. While this appears to contradict scholars view of rap the literature indicates that entertainment and resistance found in rap work hand in hand. Rap is a form of entertainment and a platform for resistance. The genre not only entertains and provides an escape for listeners but offers a place to voice social critique. While many of the ideologies examined earlier show elements of resistance, they have not reached the U.S. mainstream in a substantial way (Alridge, 2010). Still, expressed or not, they can be found within the genre although violence and explicit language are the primary themes media has chosen to focus on (Rose 1994). Even In the absence of explicit language, ideologies may be undermined as artist use the same oppressive expression they condemn when conveying such ideologies (Cheney 2010; Phillips et. al 2010; Jackson II et. al 2010 Love; 2010). It is more complex than some scholars may admit, or mainstream media will portray. That is why, “Further research must be done to understand how youth make meaning of commercial Hip-Hop music (Love 2010,.236).” The field risks making assumptions on behalf of the listeners when referring to rap as a vehicle for navigating identity without including the voice of the listener. Including those outside the African American community. For example, oppressed communities outside the African diaspora and white youth (Ohadike 2007; Clark 2018; Kitwana 2005). These communities are not commonly

represented in the literature, yet they also use rap to navigate their identity within Hip-Hop culture.

Representation in Hip-Hop: Culture, Commodity, and their Complicated Relationship

In Hip-Hop, the most pervasive of the five elements appears to be knowledge of self (Clark 2018). Knowledge of self can be found through the other four elements: graffiti, breakdancing, DJing and emceeing. Incorporate knowledge of self within their respective practices is critically important to Hip-Hop culture since it contextualizes the foundation of the art and artist. It also provides the listener with an understanding of where the art originates or stems from. Another note: Hip-Hop includes rap, the two are not synonymous. The field of Hip-Hop studies commonly uses the two interchangeably but, this has its downfalls. Rap culture informs Hip-Hop culture but weaving the two together as Hip-Hop creates generalizations. This distinction is not made to encourage binaries rather, it informs the general audience that styles, rhetoric, attitudes and behavior in Hip-Hop culture exist beyond rap. Hopefully this clarification helps mitigate stigma surround rap and Hip-Hop (i.e. rap characterized by its most prevalent sub-genre: gangsta rap or Hip-Hop culture and attire equate to criminal bodies).

Representation in rap is highly coveted as it takes aspects of blackness from the local or national stage and presents them around the world. In Clark's discussion of Hip-Hop and Pan-African dialogues she notes that cultural representation is firmly present in the production and consumption practices of music. It may reflect, express or construct meaning as, "truth and reality are not neutral but constructed (Clark 2018, p.2). Hip-Hop in general becomes a catalyst

that lets artist represent location, experience, and identity (Clark 2018). In terms of location, scholars recognize the Bronx in the early 1970s as the birthplace of Hip-Hop (Chang 2005; Phillips et. all 2010). Still each categorization of rap whether it be conscious, black nationalist, gangsta, or mainstream; the “ghettocentric” view of rap remains a prominent point for the scholarship today (Cheney 2010; Alridge 2010; Clark 2018; Stewart 2010). “Ghettocentricity” is about the realities of urban life and should not be limited to race. The field acknowledges that the Puerto Rican community in was/continues to be influential in shaping rap since they faced the same harsh realities of blacks in the city during raps genesis (George 2004, Rivera 2003,). However, Hip-Hop’s most visible consumers today are white youth (Neal 2004). Why then is representation of black urban life still critically important if it is to be consumed by communities it does not directly voice? because this rap is deemed (in)authentic based on its ability to represent “ghetto” life.⁸

The field of Hip-Hop studies marks the transition from underground to mainstream media as a pivotal period in rap. Once esteemed for being the music of the people, rap transforms into the music of the oppressor as Bettina Love would put it (Love 2010). The majority of the field seems to agree with this statement too. Claiming that Hip-hop has turned from a reflection of black urban youth realities into a **racial project**. Love, and other scholars agree that commercial Hip-Hop supports and maintains stereotypes about African Americans

⁸ Here the term “ghetto” has been used to discuss how Hip-Hop artists, scholars and media perceive black urban life. Each have a perspective that characterizes the “ghetto” differently along with varying connotations when using the word. This does not mean that any individual perspective provides a holistic view of the ghetto however, it is important that each perspective be used to uncover what scholar Kelley calls the, “ghetto real. (Kelley 2004, p. 59)”

(Love 2010; Cox 2010; Judy 2004; Jackson II et. al 2010). These stereotypes tend to stem from rap artist focusing on the realities the inner city also known as the ghetto.

Hip-Hop does not just come from the streets, rather its origins are the streets. The harsh realities of inner-city life needed a voice which manifest through rap and was exemplified by Hip-Hop culture. This voice was modeled after the political critique and commentary found in R&B during the Civil Rights era (Stewart 2010). Like its predecessor, the connection back to inner-city life is a sign of authenticity since rap was the platform that allowed artists to express communal values and pride in where they came from. Articulated through song, this let the audience know who was still in touch with their roots, their people. In fact, when reflecting on the East versus West coast rap “Civil War” the battle was about which coast authenticity represented such realities (Neal 2004 P.58). Rap was deemed more authentic if it was more ghetto, gangsta, and hardcore. Ultimately, this provided the “ghettocentric” view of Hip-Hop which argues the more “ghetto” the music the more authentic the Hip-Hop (Neal 2004). As Hip-Hop became a representation of black life in the eyes of black youth and the general public, this led many to equate the black experience to urban life and raises more questions about what it means to be authentically black (Neal 2004; Cox 2010; Jackson and Camara 2010; Clark 2018). An Ethnographic study noticed this trend when asking young black women to articulate their understanding of Hip-Hop culture and its relevance to their self-defined identities. The participants in the study either lived in homeless shelters or transitional living programs. The author notes that labels of ghetto, poor, early pregnancy, gang-affiliates and drug abuser/seller were a few socially assigned labels applied and negotiated among black girls. The study goes on to find that “ghetto” and “Hip-Hop” were often used interchangeably as terms to describe style

of dress, attitude, language and behavior deemed unacceptable. Participant also spoke of their frustration locating space and a voice for themselves in Hip-Hop culture. Deemed a commodified version of blackness that others can buy, the young women in the study could only partially identify with Hip-Hop and could not claim it as their own (Cox 2010). In order to fully understand the breadth of Cox's study I would like to unpack the relationship between the ghetto-centric view of Hip-Hop and mainstream media.

Entering mainstream media in the 1980s, rap put black voices center stage rather than at the margins (Rose 1994). As previously discussed, rap was frequently used as a platform for political expression in the 1980s. However, beyond reinforcing ideas of self-determination and **black nationalism** or the reflecting urban communal values, African American youth navigate and reclaim their identities on local and national levels. In the words of scholar Charise Cheney, "The golden Age of Rap Nationalism" included a reclaiming of black masculinity within the black nationalist agenda (Cheney 2010, p.70). Countering their compromised gender identity and counter images of feminine blackness expressed in mainstream media, young black males turned to performative blackness and mas(k)culinity in the words of Cheney (Cheney 2010). Multiple scholars have recognized this performative blackness and it links back to "ghetto" life (Rose 1994; Judy 2004; Kelley 2004; Jackson II et. al 2010).

As it remains a criterion for authenticity in rap, connections back to the ghetto have also proved to be problematic. Exemplified by Gangsta rap, which illuminates issues of police brutality, unjust political issues and ways to address/solve said issues, the resistance elements in Gangsta rap are rivaled by commercialized stereotypes of the black body, themes of violence,

and sexist language (Alridge 2010; Love 2010; Judy 2004; Cheney 2010; Rose 1994). These themes are not only a representation of the artists and their communities, but they also exemplify the environment and context in which the art is made. Conceptualized through mainstream media and the individual, members of the ghetto (including pimps, thugs, gangstas or their female foils, Ruff Ryders) exist in the ghetto yet are internalized based on interpretation (Love 2010; Cox 2010; Jackson and Camara 2010). These images are deeply rooted in urban black youth culture and prove to be counterproductive; perpetuating stereotypes while simultaneously connecting back to authenticity and the black experience which are foundational to the global youth's definition of blackness (Jackson and Camara 2010; Cox 2010, Clark 2018; Kitwana 2005; Rose 1994). For instance, MTV's acceptance/gatekeeping of rap has increased rap artist visibility to all youth but also inspires anti-rap censorship groups and those fixated on violence. As Rose puts it, the ironic assault on rap music is part of a later sociological discourse which recognizes black influence as a threat to American society. Meanwhile, white rap artists use the connection to the ghetto for white authenticity in rap. MTV then moves the music market toward music video, providing a visualization of music primarily focused on themes of identity and location (Rose 1994). Glorifying incarceration and an illegal lifestyle the music Love adds that of the five hours of TV consumed by 8-18-year-old African Americans most of the time is spent watching their race as oversexualized, undereducated, non-contributors to society (Love 2010, p. 229). Images that reflect experience can be internalized and spread when viewed repeatedly even as new meanings emerge from Hip-Hop culture rather than simply being accepted (Cox 2010). Although the previous comment

comes from Cox's ethnographic study, it can apply to anyone listening to rap or observing and engaging in Hip-Hop culture.

It should also be noted that women's role in rap as artists, commercialized/oversexualized bodies or both, is not often discussed. Though Hip-Hop is grounded in urbanized black and brown masculinities and popular expression, women have helped sculpt aesthetic standards and techniques used by men and women (Neal 2004; Phillips et. al 2010). A few scholars have even advocated that female artists confront black men about sexism while expressing solidarity with African American men to resist oppression facing black people (Phillips et. al 2010). Facing discourse from men of their communities and society at large, female artist attempt to spread awareness of women's oppression, dignity and inherent worth although it still may be conveyed through oppressive rhetoric similar that uses by male artists and hegemonic masculinities (Cheney 2010). This may be true for some songs and artists however; this is certainly not how women are generally portrayed in rap. Rather, they are oversexualized and intertwined with social stigma as Cox noted earlier. Steven Buechler adds that when observing the structures of class, race, and gender, women have the least consistent collective identity. Due in part to the range of social groups women are a part of and the tendency to place class and race privilege over gender disadvantage. However, it would be more practical to see these structures as mutually shaping rather than mutually coexisting (Buechler 2000). Yet, when faced with aspects of identity found in rap there remains a hierarchy which places these social structures on top of one another.

Conclusion

With music reflecting aspects of identity it is important to ask who is recognizing the identities in the music. Social influences appear to dictate identities in music and can no longer be overlooked. Along with assigning identities in music, those identities are then perceived by the listeners and often expressed via emotions. This is frequently addressed by Hip-Hop scholars however; the field has focused on the lyrics and images associated with the rap. The field of music studies can help music theory analysis has been conducted on rap songs and would help Hip-Hop studies parse through all the aspects of rap. There needs to be more musical analysis examining musical structures within rap and how they influence emotion. As the field of music and emotion clearly marks and indicates which musical structures have been encultured Hip-Hop studies can begin to unpack stigma associated with them. Clearly both fields must work together to provide a wholistic view of rap's relationship with identity and emotion.

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