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From the hood to your neck of the woods

Carina E. Capella

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FROM THE HOOD TO YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS
FROM THE HOOD TO YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the University Honors Program University of South Florida, St. Petersburg

April 24, 2008

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Honors Thesis

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This is a warning for the reader of this thesis. There may be language and content that could cause offense. Please proceed with caution.
Yo, first and foremost I want to thank my family for helping me through this writing process. If it wasn’t for them, I probably would have gone crazy.

I want to give much props and thanks to a special someone. You know who you are. Without your guidance, this thesis would have never been possible. Your encouragement will never be forgotten.

I want to give love to all of the rhetorical geniuses and great hip hop artists. Without you, there would be no hip hop.
"I'm fascinated by rap and by hip-hop. I think there's a lot of poetry in it. There's a lot of anger, a lot of social energy in it. And I think you'd better listen to it pretty carefully, 'cause it's important" (Kerry).
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ........................................................................................................... viii

Introduction: Hip Hop Lives ........................................................................... xi

Track 1: Hip Hop's Blue Print ......................................................................... 1

Track 2: Thug Life .......................................................................................... 8

Track 3: Ain't Nothin But A She Thang ........................................................ 19

Track 4: Shake Yo Ass ................................................................................... 30

Track 5: The Business Of Hip Hop ............................................................... 37

Track 6: Conclusion ....................................................................................... 45

Works Cited ................................................................................................... 47

Hip Hop Glossary Of Terms ......................................................................... 53

Appendix: Lyrics ........................................................................................... 56
  KRS One "Step Into A World" ..................................................................... 56
  Queen Latifah "U.N.I.T.Y." ....................................................................... 58
  Salt-n-Pepa "None of Your Business" ....................................................... 60
  Wu-Tang "C.R.E.A.M." .............................................................................. 62
  2Pac featuring Nas "Thugz Mansion" ........................................................ 64
Preface

“I was sitting at home after school one day watching MTV when a music video for Eric B. and Rakim’s "Don’t Sweat the Technique" came on. I remember watching it and not believing what I was hearing” (Capella).

My introduction to hip hop began in 1998 at the age of thirteen when my older brother Domenic picked me up from school one day. As we were driving home, he was listening to a cassette of a genre of music that I had not heard before. It was different. The rhythm was not like anything I had heard. I began to focus on what the artist was saying:

I’m bout to hit you wit that tradional style of cold rockin
Givin options for head knockin non stoppin
Tip-toppin lyrics we droppin but styles can be forgotten
So we bring back the raw hip-hoppin
Just like the records and tapes you be coppin
Cop some breakdancin, boogie poppin, and lockin
Tic tockin, guaranteed to have you clockin
We only get better and only better we have gotten
This type of flow don’t even think about stoppin
Beware; the length of the rhyme flow can be shockin (KRS One, "Step Into A World").

I’ll remember that moment for as long as I live. That moment allowed me to choose hip hop as the subject for my thesis. Anything that can make someone remember an exact moment in his or her life is worth learning more. During my research for this thesis, I interviewed several individuals and I asked them all the same question; “Do you remember where you were when you first listened to a hip hop and song and what song was it?” Each person would always pause, look away and a smile would appear on their faces. Their eyes would expand and light up and I knew they remembered where they were the first time they experienced the cultural force that is hip hop.
As I walked towards the library on campus, I felt a bead of sweat dripping from just below my hair line. I stopped to put my school bag, my laptop bag, and my bottle of water down to wipe it away. As I gathered my things once again, I made my way into the main entrance of the library. No study rooms were available so I went to the third floor where I knew there is a quiet corner. As I turned the corner, I noticed that all of the tables are full of students; it's the end of the semester which means last minute cramming. Before I turned away to search for another location, I noticed a man waving for me to come over. He began to move his bags and books to make room for me to sit.

Whispering "thanks", I immediately sit and begin to unpack my things. After the laptop is plugged in, booting up and several of my research books are on the table, I begin to dig around for a pencil. As I retrieve my pencil, I notice that the man is staring at me; “hip hop?” Caught off guard, I quickly smile and respond “Yes I’m writing my thesis on hip hop.” Nervously I waited for a reaction. I had never told anyone other than my family and my thesis committee, that I was doing my thesis on the hip hop culture. I never knew how people would react to it. Many in life either love it or hate it. His response, “wow, that’s interesting” sparked a conversation that would lead us away from the quiet study area to get a coffee at the downstairs Starbucks. His name was Nick and he was a chemistry major whose foray into hip hop began by listening to his parents’ collection when he was very young. We talked about our favorite rappers and MCs, and our first memory of listening to a rap song; his was “It’s Tricky” by Run D.M.C..

Later, Nick wished me luck on my thesis and went on his way. As I exited the library, I checked my bags to make sure I didn’t leave anything behind; I could hear the
bass to the new Rick Ross song "The Boss" over a car radio. When I looked up, I noticed that a group of students were standing around a bench listening to Flo Rida's "Elevator". As I began to walk towards my next class, I thought to myself this thesis is something that makes sense. It's a topic that has infiltrated high school and college campuses, radios, movies and even advertising campaigns.

I can recall two instances that showed me the global impact that hip hop has had on today's society. I remember watching a television clip of a shopping street in a remote town in Iran. On one of the walls in the background, I could see posters of American hip-hop artists advertising the release date of their upcoming albums. I thought it was interesting that during a moment, with such hostility towards America, something that is considered to be "predominately American" can still embrace other individuals and cultures thousands of miles away.

Another memory would be my many travels to Europe where I have witnessed first hand, the influence of hip hop music. While spending my summers with my friends in Germany, I noticed that when an American hip hop artist's song begins playing, everyone began singing; but do they understand what the artist is saying? For me, it is hard to understand a language well enough to know the meaning behind the songs of another culture. I asked one of my friends Andreas if he knew what 2PAC was saying in "Keep Ya Head Up". He replied that just because he couldn't speak English fluently, didn't mean that he did not "feel" the struggle that 2PAC was talking about. Each of my personal experiences has influenced my thesis, reminding me of the cultural force of hip hop. As a creative touch, the chapters in the thesis are written as tracks to help the reader experience the musical style of hip hop. Please enjoy.
Introduction: Hip hop Lives

Hip means to know
It's a form of intelligence
To be hip is to be up-date and relevant
Hop is a form of movement
You can't just observe a hop
You got to hop up and do it
Hip and Hop is more than music
Hip is the knowledge
Hop is the movement
Hip and Hop is intelligent movement
All relevant movement
We selling the music
So write this down on your black books and journals
Hip Hop culture is eternal
Run and tell all your friends
An ancient civilization has been born again
It's a fact (KRS One, "Hip Hop Lives").

The story of hip hop is considerably more intriguing than its critics recognize. Popular American culture has reached new forms of expression in terms of this nearly three decade old genre of music. Since the beginning, audiences have been captivated by the hip hop culture. It has been so visible, so vocal, so empowered through the success that it has had; it has become a dominant form of art that educates and entertains audiences about American society. It has captured attention globally, while helping to shape the identities, attitudes, languages, fashions and political stance of America's youth.

Hip hop's poetry is unlike anything the world has ever heard. It is a vital source of creativity; yet, it is consumed with street credibility, pop celebrity, and possesses the capability of transforming young lives. As I prepared to write this thesis, I set out to address several questions; why does hip hop matter and how has the use of hip hop
music as a means of self-expression for artists, had an impact on American society? To address the first question, I sought to understand where hip hop started. As noted in Track 1, critics are unsure of the exact place and year that hip hop was launched, in terms of America's birth of hip hop, New York is undeniably the focus of the conversation. This track also provides an introduction to the historical context of hip hop and explores the four elements that helped to define hip hop, DJs, MCs, breakdancing and graffiti. Within the four elements, I've introduced some of the most influential figures of hip hop's blue print years to inform the reader about the key players in this culture. I also included the first hip hop song that pushed this cultural force into the attention of mainstream America.

In Track 2, an examination of one genre of hip hop is explained, gangsta rap. This chapter focuses on the portrayal of violence and gang life in the lyrics of this musical form. Key MCs and rappers from this particular genre are introduced to present audiences with the significance behind the context embedded in the lyrics of those particular artists. Track 3 focuses on the influential women MCs who impacted the hip hop culture while in a predominately male industry. Their stories show the significant obstacles that were overcome in order to achieve success.

Finally, Tracks 4 and 5 relate to the current environment in the hip hop culture and its influences on society. Beginning with one of the most current and controversial topics in hip hop, music videos and their influences on audiences. A comparison of hip hop music videos from the blue print years to the present is included to demonstrate the progression that has taken place. The concluding track (Track 5) in the thesis focuses on the business aspect of the hip hop culture. It begins with an analysis of the
underlying aspect of paid product placement between corporate America and hip hop artists. An explanation of the first instance of product placement is included to inform the reader when the commercialization began.

Hip-hop and rap artists’ lyrics are among the most controversial aspect of the music industry. Many believe that they are promoting racism, sexism and violence by creating music that embodies that particular lifestyle. Current hip-hop and rap artists praise the “glamorous” lifestyle of the big house, fancy cars, and a large amount of money. My thesis emphasizes artists who have impacted American culture through their music, lyrics and image as shown in an assortment of research.

*From the Hood to Your Neck of the Woods* is an attempt to shine a light on the influence that the hip hop culture has had on American society. The spoken, sung and ‘rapped’ word has become a powerful art form; each person should understand the integrity that holds it together. In a society where almost everyone walks with an mp3 player, music has influenced Americans significantly. In writing *From the Hood to Your Neck of the Woods*, I found it impossible to avoid answering why hip hop had reached so many people. Today’s society is naturally drawn to the unknown, which allows hip hop’s audiences to begin to understand a culture that includes a truth of sexism, racism, violence and poverty. While having my own ideas about the significance of hip hop, I also wanted to investigate communities, artists and individuals that influence the movement as a cultural phenomenon.

I chose hip hop as the topic for my thesis because I wanted to understand why this genre of music matters to me the way it does. Hip hop has developed into a force that operates on a global scale. Having started in Bronx, New York and then moved
through America and into the global culture, hip hop has become a form of expression that has maintained its roots, but also can become integral of other cultures. Hip hop is nationally recognized, internationally acknowledged and locally accepted. It can be found in affluent neighborhoods, and ghetto projects where it was created. Hip hop has evolved into a worldwide phenomenon. Hip-hop culture is something that cannot be escaped because it has reached and continues to affect so many individuals.

"It's a youth centered culture that is self motivating and only requires its participants to have a mouth and the ability to listen" (Kitwana).
"A certain administration which I won't call by name took the arts out of the schools, and that left the brothers out on the street with nothing, so they went to the turntables and started rhyming. Then they had a way to express themselves, and that's the birth of hip hop" (Hayes).

Hip hop culture has grown to impact American society like no other artistic phenomenon. The story of the origins of hip hop is as controversial as the topic itself. Many artists and cultural critics trace hip-hop’s birth in America to the early and middle 1970’s in the Bronx, New York commonly known as "Boogie Down Bronx" (Watkins 9). What began in basements, on street corners, in public parks, and throughout block parties would provide America's young people with the freedom to create new identities, explosive art forms, and later, whole industries.

Hip hop’s birth as a cultural movement and a genre of groundbreaking music, incorporates elements of DJing, MCing, breakdancing and writing (graffiti art) each influencing the ways in which the others evolved. DJing, also known as instrumentalists, are disc jockeys who create rhythmic sounds and music by touching and moving records on phonograph turntables, while using a DJ mixer. Turntable techniques like "beat mixing and matching, scratching, and beat juggling" were made popular through hip hop music (Watkins 18). DJs carried complete sound systems, including huge speaker systems and two or more turntables.

Adam Sexton's *Rap on Rap: Straight-Up Talk on Hip-Hop Culture* is a collection of essays and editorials that either dismiss rap's unique message or reveal the message that the artists are attempting to display through their lyrics and rhythms. Sexton's text is divided into a series of parts that take the reader through a journey of
understanding hip hop through the eyes of people who live, breathe and write about this culture. Several of the essays are written by hip-hop pioneers such as Run-DMC, Ice Cube and Ice-T. While the majority of the essays and editorials featured, compliment hip hop as a cultural force, some also illustrate the negative beginnings of the hip hop movement.

In Part One, “Looking for the Perfect Beat”, Sexton implements editorials that describe the origin of hip hop, the plethora of hip hop artists who use acronyms as their stage name, and the “rhythm and polyrhythmic layering” that was derived from African music. He also shows the importance of turntables for disc jockeys (DJs) and the ethical battle regarding sampling other artists’ music (Rose 44). Focusing on the force of rhythmic repetition was Professor Tricia Rose, a scholar of African Studies from Brown University, who specializes in 20th century African-American culture, pop culture and gender issues. In Rhythmic Repetition, Industrial Forces and Black Practice, Rose compares harmony and rhythm with “the distinctions between Western classical and African and African-derived musics” (46). While many listeners cannot hear the musical techniques that are used in all hip-hop songs, Rose states that hip hop music “involve[s] the repetition and reconfiguration of the rhythmic elements in ways that illustrate a heightened attention to rhythmic patterns and movement between such patterns via break and points of musical rupture” (48). Perhaps the reason that individuals are seen bobbing their heads and swaying their bodies to the rhythm is due to the underlying loops and sounds that are then assembled in critical moments that allow the memorable chorus to dominate.
One of the most acclaimed DJs credited with helping to found Hip hop music was Clive Campbell, better known by his stage name as Kool Herc. Kool Herc was originally born in Jamaica, and moved to New York City in 1967 at the age of twelve. He began DJing in the South Bronx in impoverished neighborhoods surrounded by gang violence and isolated from the rest of New York City, following the construction of Robert Moses's Cross Bronx Expressway. Herc was the pioneer who experimented with breakbeats, manipulating the instrumental breaks of "old funk", R&B and soul tracks to form the basis of hip-hop. Herc's breakbeats, where the breaks of funk songs became the most danceable part, were isolated and repeated for the purpose of all-night block parties (Watkins 26).

As block parties grew in popularity in New York, so did DJing. During the beginning of Kool Herc's popularity, another DJ began to transform hip hop into a new level. Afrika Bambaataa, also from the South Bronx, was a founding member of the Bronx River Projects-area street gang, The Black Spades. The Black Spades was one of the largest and most violent Black street gangs in New York City during the 1970s. During its prime, it reportedly had twenty-nine chapters in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn areas. Bambaataa decided to use his leadership to turn those involved in the gang lifestyle into something more positive for the community. This started the development of the Universal Zulu Nation, a group of socially and politically aware rappers, break dancers, graffiti artists and other people involved in hip hop culture (Watkins 29). By 1977, inspired by DJ Kool Herc, Bambaataa began organizing block parties throughout the South Bronx. Because of his prior status in the Black Spades, he already had an established a "party crowd" drawn from former members of the gang.
Bambaataa's harmonious range included bits of “African, Caribbean, soca and D.C. go-go music” which gave his music an electric, multiethnic quality (George 18). He later became known as one of the best DJs in the Bronx by his many colleagues.

While DJs were recognized for performing as the entertainment, MCs were acknowledged for attracting the crowd to the DJ. MCing also known as lyricists is the rhythmic spoken delivery of rhymes and wordplay, delivered over a beat or without. Essentially, MCs were purely the host of the live performances. They were the entertainers selected with keeping the crowd prepared for the real performer—the DJ. Since the MC had far less control over what was happening musically, their only alternative in creating something new was in the uniqueness of the flow and lyrical content.

Early MCs often emceed at parties and street corners for hours at a time, with some improvisation and a simple four-count beat, along with a basic chorus to allow the DJ to gather his thoughts (such as “one, two, three, y'all, to the beat, y'all” and “wave your hands in the air, wave ’em like you just don’t care”). Later, the MCs grew more varied in their vocal and rhythmic approach, incorporating brief rhymes, often with a sexual or obscene theme, in an effort to differentiate themselves and to entertain the audience. Originally, DJing served as the forerunner in live performances and MCs were merely added to keep competitors from stealing their two most prized possessions: their records and their techniques. A few years later, the roles reversed, with MCs becoming the main attraction and DJs serving, in many instances, as background complement (Watkins 30).
As MCs began to grow in popularity, rappers began to appear, and hip hop became more commercially recognized. Individuals may ask, is there a difference between MCs and rappers? In William Jelani Cobb’s To The Break of Dawn: A Freestyle on the Hip Hop Aesthetic, hip hop artists are “judged by [their] ability to move units; the measure of the MC is the ability to move crowds...the MC gets down to his task with only the barest elements of hip hop instrumentalization: two turntables and a microphone” (Cobb 9).

One of the pioneers of MCs was Melvin Glover, better known by his stage name as Mele Mel. Mele Mel was the lead rapper and main songwriter for Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, a highly influential hip hop group that became the first group of this genre to ever be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Mele Mel reached notoriety due to his creation of “The Message,” a song that predicted a socially conscious hip hop (Cobb 12). Mele Mel was one of the first MCs to use his lyrics truthfully to portray the lifestyle that was common in parts of New York City. He was able to use a combination of talent and political insight to reach audiences that no other artist had done before, and establish hip hop as a cultural force on American culture.

Another element of the hip hop culture is one that allows the audience to express itself by “showing your energy to the music that was making you feel good, that gave you life that gave you a spiritual funk that makes you get so into the music that you felt god was in you that you had to let you had to let god out of you” (Rap: Looking for the Perfect Beat). Breakdancing is a street dance style that evolved as part of the hip hop cultural movement among African American youths in the South Bronx, during the early 1970s. Since its beginning, breakdancing has provided adolescents with a constructive
alternative to membership in violent urban street gangs. “Breaking” became popular when street corner DJs would take the rhythmic breakdown sections or "breaks" of dance records and string them together without any elements of the melody. This provided a raw rhythmic base for improvising and for further mixing, and it allowed dancers to display their skills during the break (George 14).

The last element of the hip hop culture that impacted American audiences through its art form is graffiti. Graffiti is often regarded by many as unwanted vandalism, and can be anything from simple scratch marks to elaborate wall paintings. The relationship between graffiti and hip hop culture rises both from early graffiti artists practicing other aspects of hip hop, as well as areas where other elements of hip hop were evolving into art new forms. Graffiti is recognized as a visual expression of hip hop, while breakdancing is the physical expression.

While all four elements of hip hop began to flourish, it was not until the first hip hop song began playing on the radio that this cultural phenomena took off. In October 1979, American pop culture would be forever changed. African American music could not be defined solely by disco or rhythm and blues (R&B). After the introduction of Sugarhill Gang’s “Rapper’s Delight” to radio, hip hop was able to reach not only the neighboring New York boroughs, but spread throughout the nation. S. Craig Watkins, an associate professor of African American studies at the University of Texas at Austin wrote Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement, and he introduces the idea that the birth of hip hop to the masses was a sensible decision in 1979:
In a strange way, 1979 represents both the beginning and the end of the hip hop movement. The events that unfolded that year ushered in a new era in hip hop while essentially closing the door on a previous one. Hip hop, once invisible, became visible to the wider public. Hip hop, once largely recreational, became increasingly commercial. Throughout the year hip hop, unbeknownst to most, was embarking on a journey that would make it a cultural and economic juggernaut (10).

Many of the hip hop guardians and critics believe that the Sugarhill Gang were "outsiders who were exploiting the culture," and who lacked the tenacity of the real hip hop culture. Regardless of the controversies, "Rapper's Delight" was the first hip hop song to gain attention beyond the small hip hop community. Many worried that with hip hop’s new found popularity, it would be easier to “learn, imitate and even modify the genuinely creative flourishes that flowed through the movement” (Watkins 14). What direction would hip hop move into? Would it stay true to its “real, organic and deeply connected to its grass roots?” (10)

Previously it was about battling to earn one’s reputation as one of the fiercest DJs or MCs on the block. In the broken down boroughs of a poverty stricken New York City, reputation was what defined them. In many cases, it may have been all they had. Many of hip hop’s pioneers such as the aforementioned DJ Kool Herc, Mele Mel and Afrika Bambaataaa and others earned their battle scars, and now legendary status in this movement. Hip hop’s blue prints remind audiences of a simpler time in the movement’s history when DJing, MCing, breakdancing and graffiti writing were a secret obsession that only a few new about and few had mastered.
"I think I'm being responsible but it's hard once you start worrying about what you're saying; I get writer's block. Can't say that...that's too harsh...can't say this. Now I just have to block it out and trust my heart that I'm doing the right thing" (Tupac "2PAC" Shakur).

Audiences' perception of hip hop changed drastically due to the media's sensationalizing of its lyrics. As the cultural force of hip hop spread across the United States, many different genres of "rapping" began to appear. Each new subgenre allowed its respective environment to influence its lyrical content. One subgenre of hip hop music that became the most controversial was "gangsta rap." With its formation in the late 1980's, and its mainstream beginning during the 1990's, gangsta rap caught the media's attention, becoming one of the most disputed subgenres of music since the conception of rock-n-roll (Quinn 3).

Critics of gangsta rap attribute the rise in gang activities, as portrayed in mainstream media's exposure, to the genre's promotion of gang lifestyles (Shelden, Tracy and Brown 4). Gangsta rap's lyrical content is often believed to portray the gang environment. The music is often composed of words that depict street gangs, violence, profanity, promiscuity, misogyny, rape, homophobia, and drug use. Author Adam Krims utilizes theoretical perspectives to analyze the continued growth of rap. Gangsta rap became a segment of a cultural force that would become notorious for their descriptive lyrics while causing extreme criticism. Krims' Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity is an observation that describes how rap music is assembled musically, and how it adds to the structure of cultural identities for both artists and audiences. Krims argues that skeptical attitudes towards rap music in popular music studies are misplaced and need
to be re-evaluated. While critics often struggle to compare a rap song with a Beethoven symphony, Krims discovered that several "scholars" have asked for elaborations of "rap's musical poetics" demonstrating that rap music is a "cultural practice" supplied with expressed meaning (38). In his introduction, Krims contends that the support of rap "via expositions of some of its poetics, turns out to be a project of a surprisingly high percentage of scholarship, occurring far more frequently than in any other genre I know of" (13). This form of hip hop is often justified by authors like Krims to explain the effects of its popularity in mainstream American society.

Gangsta rap, the most commonly known of all rap subgenres, can also be described as rap music that depicts gang life or more importantly, life in a ghetto (Krims 70). This is one of the most controversial genres, and gangsta rap is what fuels many of the protests against rap that stems from religious and political groups. These groups attempt to include all of rap censored and/or removed from the airwaves. Krims believes that gangsta rap is more of a representation of an artist's reality than an accurate reflection of life for most ghetto residents.

Philadelphia MC, Schoolly D is credited as the first rapper to coin the term "gangsta" in his lyrics as well as the originator of the gangsta rap genre. Schoolly D, or Jesse B. Weaver Jr., was born June 22, 1966 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He partnered with his DJ, Code Money, and began assembling beats that contained more of a hardcore element than any other rap song. In "P.S.K. (Park Side Killers) What Does It Mean?", Schoolly D makes direct references to his gang (P.S.K.) while detailing putting his gun against another rapper's head for imitating his style

Clinton Road one Saturday night
Towin on a cheeba I was feelin alright
Then my homie-homie called me on the phone
His name is Chief Keith, but we call him Bone
Told me 'bout this party on the Southside
Copped my pistols, jumped into the ride
Got at the bar, copped some flack
Copped some cheeba-cheeba, it wasn't wack
Got to the place, and who did I see
A sucker-ass nigga tryin to sound like me
Put my pistol up against his head
I said, "Sucker-ass nigga, I should shoot you dead"
A thought ran across my educated mind
Said, man, Schoolly D ain't doin no time
Grabbed the microphone and I started to talk
Sucker-ass nigga, man, he started to walk

While Schoolly D may have originated gangsta rap, it was not until rapper Ice-T's "6 n the Mornin" that gangsta rap began to be noticed throughout the United States.

Tracy "Ice-T" Marrow was born on February 16, 1958 in Newark, New Jersey (Erlewine "Ice-T"). After both of his parents died of a heart attack while a child, Ice-T moved to south central Los Angeles, California in the Crenshaw district to live with his aunt. It was here, his high school that Ice-T was introduced to rapping. After graduating from high school, Ice-T joined the U.S. Army but didn't "like total submission to a leader other than myself" (Erlewine "Ice-T").

After leaving the Army in 1973, Ice-T began his career of recording raps for various studios (Erlewine "Ice-T"). His first gangsta rap "6 in the Mornin" was influenced by the Schoolly D record P.S.K.. Shortly after this, Ice-T landed a deal with a major recording label Sire Records. There he released his debut album Rhyme Pays in 1987.

That same year, he recorded a theme song for Dennis Hopper's Colors, a film about inner-city life in Los Angeles. The song "Colors" was stronger, both lyrically and musically, with more incisive lyrics, than anything he had previously released. Ice-T's third studio album, released in 1989, The Iceberg/Freedom of Speech... Just Watch
*What You Say* established him as a true hip-hop superstar by matching abrasive music with fierce, intelligent narratives, and political commentaries, and focusing on hip hop censorship.

Ice-T credits himself with being the “inventor of gangsta rap” and the first MC to perform the Crip Walk on stage in front of the camera ("Russell Simmons Presents: Hip Hop Justice"). The Crip walk was a signature walk that the Crips, an infamous Los Angeles gang, performed. This added to his already controversial image, and gave rise to the Crip walk’s mainstream presentation in other videos with other gangsta rappers as Snoop Dogg, Warren G and other Crip-affiliated rap artists during the mid 1990s. Ice-T’s performance of the Crip walk provides an example of the glorification of gangs that was being portrayed in gangsta rap. This is accentuated sometimes by songs like Ice-T’s heavy metal band Body Count’s “Cop Killer” which sparked national media attention. This created a debate in American culture helping to make gangsta rap a mainstream.

Ice-T released his fourth album *OG: Original Gangster*, which is regarded as one of gangsta rap’s defining albums due to its “traverse[d] of hip hop, traditional R&B and rock & roll – a juncture that represents perhaps the most exciting development in popular music since rap itself” (Coleman). Questioned by the media on why he chose to only write lyrics about the gang lifestyle, Ice-T responded “I did it because I didn’t know anything else to rap about” ("Russell Simmons Presents: Hip Hop Justice").

Gangsta rap tapped into the hatred, fear and profound distrust of the criminal justice system, stemming from the lack of equality, everyday experiences of intimidation and “profiling” of black youth (Quinn 54).
It's very a-political, it's my way this is how I see it and I don't care if you don't understand. I think that's once side of it that really shocks people. It's about a culture and the way we see things and if you don't live inside of that culture it'll scare the shit out of ya cause it seems so different.

("Russell Simmons Presents: Hip Hop Justice")

In "The Message" section of his book, Sexton presents essays which express the underlying meanings behind hip-hop artists' lyrics and the violence often associated with each artist. Brent Staples, an African American editorial writer for the New York Times and a commentator on American politics and culture wrote an essay that focuses on the negativity of hip-hop artists' messages. Staples' "The Politics of Gangsta Rap" focuses on the "myths that the hip-hop artists use to 'tell is like it is'" (79). Here Staples refers to gangsta rap as music that is "hard-core and bristles with guns" (79). While there is a difference between hip-hop and gangsta rap, Staples believes that rappers use their music to "play at rape and murder in a way that celebrates them" rather than using this form of expression as a means for severely and impoverished individuals to explain the circumstances that they face each day. Staples' writing provides an important perspective that not all African Americans were approved of hip hop and many opposed it.

Jared Green's Rap and Hip Hop: Examining Pop Culture a compilation of essays examines hip hop as a cultural force and provide critical insights on a movement that can be deemed both vital and volatile. Many of the essays present arguments about one of American society's most hotly debated topics; does rap only glorify sex and
Green's text provides challenges to several of society's issues with rap music, author Robin D.G. Kelley provides an argument for the artist's violently charged lyrics.

Kelley, a professor of history and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California, implies that gangsta rap is an inevitable response to continued racial inequities in America. In "A Culture of Violence: Gangsta Rap in Context," Kelley illustrates an attempt to "make sense of gangsta rap in late-twentieth-century Los Angeles" (114). Kelley compares the Los Angeles riots of 1992 following the acquittal of four white police officers involved in the March 3, 1991 beating of Rodney King, an African-American taxicab driver, to gangsta rap as a way to provide insight into "and critique of, the criminalization of black youth" (115). This beating raised a public outrage against police brutality, which many people found racially motivated and gratuitous. It raised tensions between the black community and the LAPD, and increased the level of anger over police brutality and issues such as unemployment, racial tension, and poverty in the black community of South Central Los Angeles. Kelley argues that while gangsta rap's lyrics are violently charged, it is a way for artists to acknowledge "rather than apologize or preach, they attempt to rationalize and explain" their view of stereotypical ghetto criminals or primitive rebels (115).

Moreover, the authenticity of these violent lyrics allows critics to wonder if rappers are writing about a social realism or a fantasy in order to catch the listener's attention. Coined "street journalism", Kelley deems these gangsta lyrics as being no less a political statement than "nineteenth-century slave narratives in defense of abolition" (Kelley 120). Should society refer to all gangsta rappers as street reporters doing society a favor by keeping people informed? According to rapper Ice Cube, who is
infamous for his first album, AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted which dealt with straightforward topics such as poverty, racism and drug abuse in the ghetto, “we just tell it how we see it, nothing more, nothing less” (120).

While gangsta rap maintained its roots in Los Angeles, the practice of this cultural form has been allowed to migrate from the west coast across the country. Kelley cites an excerpt from David Mills’ article in the Washington Post titled “Rap's Hostile Fringe” hard-core street rappers attempt to defend their violent lyrics as a reflection of “reality”, they tend to imagine pulling the trigger rather than “laying flat on the ground with a knot of lead in his chest, pleading as death slowly takes him in” (qtd. in Kelley 119).

One of gangsta rap's notorious artists who vocally predicted his own death in his lyrics was Tupac Amaru Shakur. Tupac “2Pac” Shakur was born on June 16, 1971 in East Harlem, Manhattan (Hoye 3). His mother, Afeni Shakur, was an active member of the Black Panther Party in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1984, his family relocated to Baltimore, Maryland, where he enrolled in the Baltimore School for the Arts, studying acting, poetry, jazz, and ballet. He performed Shakespeare and played the role of the Mouse King in The Nutcracker (Hoye 5). Although he lacked popular clothing, he was one of the most popular kids in school because of his sense of humor, superior rapping skills, and ability to join with all crowds (Hoye 6). As a teenager, Tupac read several of novels and wrote several poetries that helped to make him one of hip hop's best lyricists in American culture.

In June 1988, Shakur and his family moved once again, this time to Marin City, California, where he attended Tamalpais High School (Hoye 7). He joined the Ensemble
theater company (etc) to pursue his career in entertainment. after his mother's crack addiction worsened, tupac moved in with leila steinberg, an influential oakland promoter and community worker at the age of seventeen (quinn 135). not long after, he dropped out of high school. steinberg became a mentor to tupac encouraging him to read novels such as j.d. salinger's catcher in the rye, herman melville's moby-dick, and the feminist writings of alice walker and robin morgan (tupac: resurrection). steinberg also helped establish tupac in the music industry. in 1989, she organized a concert with tupac's rap group, strictly dope, which led to him becoming a back-up dancer and roadie for up-and-coming rap group digital underground (hoye 11).

shakur's professional entertainment career began in the early 1990s, when he rapped on "same song" from the digital underground album this is an ep release (tupac: resurrection). after "same song", tupac performed again on another digital underground album and later released his first solo album, 2pacalypse now. tupac's first solo album attacked social injustice, poverty and police brutality in america, but it was also publicly criticized for its graphic language and images of violence by and against law enforcement. vice president dan quayle proclaimed that tupac had "no place in our society," after a teenager in texas claimed 2pacalypse now inspired him to murder a state trooper (quinn 176). this began both a media and political outcry against gangsta rap music. his politicized lyrics and ideological battles with politicians contributed to his growing gangsta reputation.

his second record, strictly 4 my n.i.g.g.a.z., was released in 1993 (quinn 176). the album, featured singles, "keep ya head up" and "i get around". "keep ya head up" addresses issues concerning a lack of respect towards females, especially poor
black women. It has a positive message, and is often used as an example of Tupac's softer side. Many consider it to be one of the most authentic rap songs ever made, and it is often referenced by other artists in their work, building Tupac's character as an influential rapper.

On the night of November 30, 1994, the day before the verdict in a sexual abuse trial was to be announced, Tupac was shot five times and robbed after entering the lobby of the Quad Recording Studios in Manhattan, New York, by two armed men in army fatigues (Tupac: Resurrection). He would later accuse Sean Combs, Andre Harrell, and Notorious B.I.G. of setting him up after seeing them in the building after the shooting. Tupac's accusation would spawn one of hip hop's most notoriously known rivalries, and east coast versus west coast divided the hip hop audience for years. Tupac became increasingly celebratory of violence after being released from jail after being found guilty on three counts of molestation.

After serving eleven months, Tupac was released from prison on an appeal financed by Marion "Suge" Knight, the CEO of Death Row Records. In exchange for Knight's assistance, Tupac agreed to release three albums under the Death Row label (Tupac: Resurrection). Many believe that Suge's bitterness towards Sean Combs and his east coast record label Bad Boy Records increased Tupac's "badman portrayal" and fueled the east coast versus west coast rivalry that became a national awareness among hip hop audiences (Quinn 176). He then began a new group, Outlawz, and with them released the "diss" track "Hit 'Em Up", a mocking lyrical assault on Notorious B.I.G. and others associated with him. Both sides remained bitter enemies until the deaths of Tupac and Notorious B.I.G.
While Tupac’s work is known for advocating for political, economic, social and racial equality, as well as his raw descriptions of violence and conflicts with the law, his image became a complexity for many. Battling between hard and soft, street and decent, toughness and tenderness, the media found it difficult to know the true side of Tupac. While his lyrics bordered sincere and vulgar on many of the same albums, Tupac knew that his “thug” message was targeting the correct individuals:

There’s a bad part because the kids see [the gangsta lifestyle] and they mimic it. That’s the part I haven’t figured out yet. But the positive side is that the kids who live in a household where the mother is a crack head and he hears the rap he is like ‘oh’, it’s an everyday thing for them. So I don’t have to feel ashamed. It cuts both ways. To me its like when I say ‘I live the thug life, baby I’m hopeless’ one person might hear that and just like the way it sounds you know what I’m saying, but I’m doing it for the kid that really lives the thug life and feels like its hopeless. So when I say hopeless and when I say it like that, it’s like I reach him. You understand? And even if when I reach him, it makes it look glorious to the guy that doesn’t live that life. I...I mean I can’t help it. It’s a fad. He’ll drop the thug life soon enough but for the person that I was trying to reach he’ll be able to pick it up and I will be able to reach him again (Tupac: Resurrection).

Gangsta rappers often defend themselves by claiming that they are describing the reality of inner-city life, and that they are only adopting a character, like an actor playing a role, which behaves in ways that they may not necessarily endorse.
Before the late nineties, gangsta rap and all genres of hip hop, had always been seen as an on the edge genre that remained outside of the pop mainstream. However, with the rise of Bad Boy Records, a major change in gangsta rap, as it morphed into a new subgenre of hip hop which would become even more commercially successful. Gangsta rap was influenced by popular culture continues to be successful in American society, with many artists straddling the divide between the gangsta hip hop audience and the commercialized audience, described in Track five. While gangsta rap was fighting the media’s increasingly controversial analysis and scrutiny, female MCs were struggling to establish themselves in a rigid male dominated industry.
Track 3: Ain't Nothin But A She Thang

Who said the ladies couldn't make it, you must be blind
If you don't believe, well here, listen to this rhyme
Ladies first, there's no time to rehearse
I'm divine and my mind expands throughout the universe
A female rapper with the message to send the
Queen Latifah is a perfect specimen (Queen Latifah “Ladies First”).

While the hip hop culture is often criticized for its misogynistic, sexually charged portrayal of women in lyrics and videos, many females continue to enter the industry, and strive to leave an impression in the male conquered industry. The number of male MCs and rappers seem to be never ending while the number of female MC’s and rappers can be counted on two hands. Could the shortage of female MCs and rappers in hip hop be the result of reluctance and pessimistic reactions from audiences and fellow male MCs and rappers? Even so, if the minimal number of female MCs and rappers is attributed to the dominant nature of male artists, what message do these female artists have to communicate to an audience? Does it challenge the American cultural stereotype of man versus woman?

In the beginning of hip hop, females played the role of audience, and were subjects of lyrical content. It was not until the early 1980’s, that women found a voice within the hip hop culture. Lana Michele Moorer, better known as MC Lyte is credited with being one of the first influential female hip hop MC artists. MC Lyte was an original female rapper who placed sexism and misogyny in her lyrics in an attempt to confront male ideology. She came from the same areas of New York as her fellow male MCs. A young woman MC Lyte was born on October 11, 1971 in Brooklyn, New York (Prato). Her roots in hip hop were also encouraged by her two older brothers Milk Dee and
Gizmo, who recorded under the name Audio Two, at the age of twelve. Her first recorded song “I Cram to Understand U” was produced by Audio Two and referred to a lying boyfriend’s crack cocaine addiction. First Priority Music signed Lyte, and in 1988 she released her first studio album *Lyte as a Rock* (Prato). Lyte’s second studio album *Eyes on This*, included the hit “Cha Cha Cha,” which made Lyte the first female rapper to debut at number one on the rap music charts, and “Cappuccino” which popularized the beginning of the anti-violence movement in the music of the late 1980’s. Her popularity signaled to other females who lived in impoverished neighborhoods that a female could become successful in a predominately male dominated industry. Lyte would continue to incur more firsts for female rappers. On her fourth studio album *Ain’t No Other*, Lyte turned to writers and producers Wolf & Epic for a more “soul music-based work” and the single “Ruffneck” earned Lyte a Grammy nomination for Best Rap Single; this also became the first gold single ever to be achieved by a female rap artist (“Grammy”).

As MC Lyte continued to succeed, another female MC would also establish herself in the late 1980’s as arguably the first woman MC who could be described as impacting American culture. Dana Owens, aka Queen Latifah, was born on March 18, 1970 in Newark, New Jersey. Her mother, Rita, was a schoolteacher and her father, Lancelot, was a policeman (Huey). At the age of eight she received, what would be her stage name to date from her Muslim cousin; the nickname Latifah - an Arabic word meaning “delicate” or “sensitive” (Huey). Two years later, her parents divorced. This made Latifah a part of the national statistics of 71 percent of families headed by an African American female (Shelden, Tracy and Brown 204). Latifah began rapping and
beatboxing in high school with an all female group known as Ladies Fresh; it was not
until college that she adopted the title “Queen” (Huey).

After recording a demo tape, Queen Latifah secured a record deal with Tommy
Boy Records where she launched “Wrath of My Madness” in 1988, at the age of
eighteen. It was then that Queen Latifah met the legendary Afrika Bambaataa who
brought a more optimistic “Afrocentric consciousness” to her lyrical style (Watkins 40).
Queen Latifah’s debut album *All Hail the Queen* was released in 1989. Her second
single “Ladies First”, featuring English born rapper Monie Love, established her in the
ears of the hip hop audience. Not only did it feature Queen Latifah’s rapping abilities, it
also showcased her vocal skills. It illustrated black women’s contributions in the struggle
for black liberation in America, Africa and around the world (Huey). While beginning in
hip hop, Queen Latifah’s “Ladies First” lyrics attacked any “haters” quick to ascertain
that:

The ladies will kick it, the rhyme that is wicked
Those that don’t know how to be pros get evicted
A woman can bear you, break you, take you
Now it’s time to rhyme, can you relate to
A sister dope enough to make you holler and scream

*All Hail the Queen* not only established Queen Latifah as a female MC, but also
showcased her ability to attempt rhythm and blues (R & B), reggae and duetting with
established male MC’s such as KRS One and De La Soul (Huey). Queen Latifah joined
with the Native Tongues Posse, a collection of male and female MCs, of late 1980’s and
early 1990’s. They were celebrated for their positive-minded, “good natured-
Afrocentric lyrics,” and for pioneering the use of eclectic sampling and jazz-influenced
beats (Huey).
Following the success of her first album, Queen Latifah began a management company, Flavor Unit Entertainment, which would later be credited for discovering hip hop phenomena group Naughty by Nature in 1989. She is known as one of the first hip hop female artists to establish a company without the influence of a male artist. This startles the culture to witness an African American woman become successful on her own terms. After *Nature of a Sista* was released, Queen Latifah’s second studio album, she left Tommy Boy Records and signed with Motown records in 1992. That same year, her brother Lance died in a motorcycle accident. Latifah considered herself to be responsible for Lance’s death; she had purchased the motorcycle as a gift. To this day, she still wears the ignition key to his bike around her neck as a symbol of his death. Latifah’s third studio album *Black Reign* was dedicated to him. *Black Reign* became her most popular album, eventually reaching gold status, and featured “U.N.I.T.Y.”, which won a Grammy award in 1994 for Best Rap Solo Performance (“Grammy Winners Search”). It also was the first album by a female MC to reach gold status, a commercial breakthrough that paved the way for a talented group of women rappers and MCs to make their own way onto the charts as the ’90s evolved. Queen Latifah was successful in both terms of music and mainstream America.

"U.N.I.T.Y.," with its smooth saxophone introduction and breaks, spoke out against the independence of women in American society, both from without and within. The song’s lyrics, written by Queen Latifah and Kier "Kay Gee" Gist of Naughty by Nature, ranged from sexual and physical misconduct to females attempting to enter the gang societies. In its lyrics of female strength, several radio and television stations would play the song without censoring the words "bitch" and "ho", which appear often in
the lyrics of male MCs, particularly the chorus and the line "who you callin' a bitch?!" that ends each verse (Huey). In the music video, Queen Latifah catches a key in the beginning (wears throughout the video) and rides a motorcycle as an additional dedication to her brother Lance (U.N.I.T.Y.).

While Queen Latifah established the feminist role and MC Lyte attacked controversial topics in her lyrics, hip hop’s first all-female rap group used their sexuality and the male appreciation to show strength and intelligence in all women. The significant impact of Salt-n-Pepa’s emergence in the late 1980’s helped to solidify the female MC movement in hip hop. Their emergence gained popularity among an audience that was influenced by a male dominated industry. Originally known as Super Nature, Salt-n-Pepa consists of Cheryl "Salt" James, Sandra “Pepa” Denton and the group’s DJ, Deidra "Dee Dee" Roper aka Spinderella (Erlewine). Salt and Pepa worked together at a Sears store in Queens, New York when Salt’s boyfriend, Hurby “Luv Bug” Azor, asked the duo to rap on a song he was producing for a class. The duo wrote The Show Stopper, a response to Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick’s “The Show,” which sampled the theme song to “Inspector Gadget” (Erlewine).

Salt-n-Pepa also released Hot, Cool & Vicious in 1986 under Next Plateau music label with “Luv Bug” as their manager and producer. Their first studio album featured the singles “My Mike Sounds Nice”, “Tramp”, and “Chick on the Side” (Erlewine). It was not until Cameron Paul, a DJ from a local radio station in San Francisco remixed their single “Tramp” to “Push It”. “Push It” became a national success for the group and DJ Spinderella replaced DJ Pamela Green. “Let’s Talk About Sex” helped to further the groups visual image of strong, sexual females by confronting one of America’s most
controversial topics at the time, sex. The single was later re-recorded to "Let's Talk About AIDS," which served as the perfect platform to challenge the growing epidemic of AIDS. Salt-n-Pepa became the first women to address the aids epidemic in the hip hop culture (Erlewine).

*Very Necessary*, was the group's fourth studio album which provided them with the national success and the demand that would last for years to come. Their impact on American culture would grow despite their consistent sexual image. They separated from their manager "Luv Bug" and signed with a new label London/Polygram. The album featured successful singles such as "Shoop", "Whatta Man", and "None of Your Business" which included production by Salt, Pepa, and Spinderella (Erlewine).

For the video, "None of Your Business", Salt-n-Pepa confronted the criticism that the group was still too sexual, and continued promoting a sexual lifestyle, approving of sex, interracial and same sex gender relationships. The video showcases Salt-n-Pepa dancing provocatively in between shots of a group of women in a male strip club, and an interracial couple kissing and several homosexual couples hugging:

If I wanna take a guy home with me tonight
It's none of your business
And she wanna be a freak and sell it on the weekend
It's none of your business
Now you shouldn't even get into who I'm givin' skins to
It's none of your business
So don't try to change my mind, I'll tell you one more time
It's none of your business

Confronting America's stereotypical views on relationships and sex, Salt-n-Pepa drew widespread recognition from the glorification in their lyrics. As the emergence of female MCs and rappers grew, many new artists were beginning to leave their mark in what was still a small arena of the hip hop culture, dominant females of the 1990's.
Lauryn Hill is often considered the "mother of hip hop invention" (Raftery). She is one of the few female MC's who has been able to be recognized by her peers; both male and female. Talib Kweli, wrote a song titled "Ms. Hill" rapping reverently that "Ms. Hill got skills, that's a gift, its real, get ill, What you spit got the power to uplift a hill...you give us hope, you give us faith, you the one" (Raftery). To this day, she is the highest regarded female MC in terms of lyrical ability and delivery. Lauryn Noel Hill was born on May 25, 1975 in South Orange, New Jersey. She is the second child from Valerie Hill, a high school English teacher and Mal Hill, a computer programmer. Music was always an integral part of Hill's youth. Her father sang at weddings, her mother played the piano and her older brother, Melaney, played the drums, guitar and saxophone (Raftery). As a child, Hill grew up listening to significant albums from the Motown and 1960's soul eras. Many attribute her lyrical compositions to her musical background. Hill demonstrates that her emergence from a middleclass background allows for a connection between hip hop and American culture.

It was not until high school, where Hill met Prakazrel "Pras" Michel and his cousin Wyclef Jean, that Hill's career in hip hop began. Hill began adapting her poetry into rap verses and together the group formed the Fugees. The Fugees debut album, Blunted on Reality did not receive much recognition. The Score, the group's second studio album, achieved international success; due largely in part to the single "Killing Me Softly"; a cover of the song by Roberta Flack. The album illustrated the group's ability to incorporate rap, soul, reggae and R&B into their own sound and won their first and only Grammy awards for Best Rap Album and Best R&B Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocal ("Grammy Winners Search").
After the group dismantled in 1997, Hill released her first and only solo studio album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* in 1998. Hill wrote, arranged, or produced almost every track on the album, which is filled with influences from her musical background. By the end of the year, as the album topped virtually every key music critic's best-of list, Hill was being recognized for helping absorb hip hop into mainstream American music. The momentum finally ended at the February 1999 Grammy awards, where Hill won five of her eleven nominations, including Album of the Year, Best New Artist, Best Female R&B Vocal Performance, Best R&B Song, and Best R&B Album; the most ever for a woman of any musical genre ("Grammy Winners Search").

In a male dominated industry, female MCs such as MC Lyte, Queen Latifah and Salt-n-Pepa were notable artists in hip hop. As the music and lyrics that defined rap strengthen, female MCs are fading from the forefront. Hill has become distinguishable; breaking through the strict gender barriers that often restrict the female MCs. Hill does not shy away from female sexual power and pleasure. She chooses to not make such issues the only characteristic in her appeal and self-representation. Her strong lyrics about relationships, self pride and community break the mold in an industry that typically required women to accentuate their sexuality rather than their lyrical abilities.

Only a few of the past female MCs have used extremely charged lyrics to promote themselves. No other female MC, past or present, has been able to include a strong vision of sexual promiscuity as Lil Kim. She increased the level of sexual promiscuity more than any other female MC to come before. Kimberly Denise “Lil Kim” Jones was born on July 11, 1974 in Brooklyn, New York (Richardson 56). After her parents separated at the age of nine, Lil Kim went to live with her father and older
brother, Christopher after her parents fought over custody (Richardson 66). Lil Kim struggled to choose between her mother and father, and she found herself living between both parents during her childhood years. In 1994, after meeting hip hop icon Christopher “Notorious B.I.G.” Wallace, Lil Kim found herself a member of the Brooklyn based group Junior M.A.F.I.A. Notorious B.I.G. would help Lil Kim develop her rhyming skills and also help cultivate her rapping career.

In 1996, Lil Kim released her first solo studio album, *Hard Core*. *Hard Core* was the first of its kind in the genre of hip hop. It was the first album that included lyrics “concentrated on edgy hardcore rap” and also explicit sexual tendencies; “two territories that had long been the province of male MCs and rappers” (Erlewine “Lil Kim”). The marketing strategy of *Hard Core* was the first of its kind as well. Advertisements showed Lil Kim in skimpy bikinis and furs while posing provocatively. The album continued to sell, using the advertising motto, “sex sells”. Lil Kim refers to herself as “the queen of the streets, the Queen Bitch, the Queen Bee, the Black Madonna of rap music” (Richardson 60).

Lil Kim followed with *Notorious K.I.M.* in June, 2000 from her own label Queen Bee Entertainment. Her second studio album drew additional hip hop fans, both male and female, that were attracted to the overtly sexual Lil Kim image. Men and women were intrigued by how openly sexual and lewd Lil Kim spoke in her lyrics and some women admired her assertiveness for taking charge in hip hop. *La Bella Mafia*, Lil Kim’s third studio album was rated 4.5 microphones by music magazine *The Source* (Erlewine “Lil Kim”). It also included the single “The Jump Off” featuring Mr. Cheeks, showcased Lil Kim’s politically charged lyrics:
Spread love that's what a real ma do  
Keep it gangsta look out for her people (For her people)  
I'm the wicked bitch of the east, you better keep the peace (Aiyyo!)  
Or out come the beast  
We the best still there's room for improvement  
Our presence is felt like a Black Panther Movement

*The Naked Truth*, Lil Kim's fourth studio album was released in 2005 and was awarded five microphones from *The Source*. She is the only female MC thus far to have achieved this distinction. The album did not garner sales success due to Lil Kim's inability to promote the album; she was serving time in jail for conspiracy and perjury for lying to a grand jury about her friends' involvement in a 2001 shooting outside a radio station (Richardson 57). Lil Kim's, *The Naked Truth* album provides an example of a double standard that is taking place in the hip hop culture. While the album failed to garner expected sales, many male MCs and rappers have received the opposite effect after being incarcerated. For them, advertising was not needed due to the media's ability to promote the gangsta lifestyle for a man effortlessly.

Of course, Kim's near pornographic sexuality and "hard-edged rhythms" made her an exception within hip-hop. However, her existence paved the way for other female MCs and rappers to establish themselves as sexually charged, promiscuous women. This impacted American culture by showcasing a more sexually dominant female image into mainstream was not previously accepted in American society. This fueled the desire for more provocative photos, videos and lifestyles of women. What was once a totally male dominated industry must now make way for female MC’s and rappers who are able to express their societal views naturally. What barriers MC’s such as MC Lyte and Queen Latifah attempted to break down, have risen again with the emergence of
current female rappers such as Lil Kim who are choosing to present themselves overtly sexual to sell records. After all sex sells, doesn't it?
Track 4: Shake Yo Ass

The formula is platinum chains, champagne and fantasy cars. Oh and ass and tities.” (Ford).

As the years progressed, hip hop has reflected the culture. From its humble beginnings of DJing, MCing, breakdancing and writing (graffiti art), hip hop has evolved into a culture that began, or fell into, seeking influences from corporations/record companies, rather than the streets. Music videos became the essential component for the artists to expand their exposure and for record companies to generate more sales.

In American society, the idea of the music video has morphed into a trend where one cannot simply promote their song; they must promote a lifestyle and an image. Hip hop videos are no different. While their beginnings were as raw as hip hop once was, modern day hip hop videos have been transformed into a marketing tool that has lead numerous media driven discussions.

As the soaring popularity of hip hop in the early 1990’s increased, so did the need to promote the music (Watkins 211). Hip hop took notice of fellow rock-n-roll artists reaching new audiences with an innovative visual art form; the music video. It is unclear who is credited with being the first hip hop artist to create a music video, but the need for more of them expanded. Soon, almost all hip hop artists were creating music videos for their singles. Rock-n-roll began with the big hair, smoke machines and screaming fans holding the “rock on” hand gesture; hip hop began with poverty, racism and police officers. In fact, hip hop videos were used as another form for artists to get their message out visually as well as in an auditory context.
Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five’s 1982 music video, “The Message” was set in New York City during a time where the class structure in American society was evident. The song’s lyrics were some of the first in the genre of hip hop to talk about the struggles and the frustrations of living in the ghetto. The video portrayed the disparity between

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Broken glass everywhere} \\
\text{People pissin’ on the stairs, you know they just don’t care} \\
\text{I can’t take the smell, can’t take the noise} \\
\text{Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice} \\
\text{Rats in the front room, roaches in the back} \\
\text{Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat} \\
\text{I tried to get away but I couldn’t get far} \\
\text{‘Cuz a man with a tow truck repossessed my car}
\end{align*}
\]

This video was approximately seven minutes, and it highlighted New York City from many angles, from the business district to the ghetto neighborhoods. Flash and the Furious Five performed at the foot of a run down brown stone wearing clothing that seemed like their own; jeans, t-shirts and jackets. As the video progresses, the MCs are rapping at various locations and showing examples of their lyrics.

One of hip hop’s most revolutionary groups, Wu-Tang Clan, has been known for its ability to convey accurately messages from their lyrics into their music videos. Wu-Tang was formed in 1992 by three of the group’s members, RZA, GZA and Ol’ Dirty Bastard, because of the frustration with the developing hip hop industry. Their idea was to turn the “concept of a hip hop crew inside out” and form a “loose congregation” of nine MC’s; U-God, RZA, Raekwon, Ol’ Dirty Bastard, Method Man, Masta Killa,Inspectah Deck, GZA and Ghostface (“Wu-Tang Clan Biography”). All of the MCs were from one of New York’s most infamous poverty stricken boroughs, Queens, Staten Island, Brooklyn and the Bronx. Wu-Tang’s plan included releasing the group’s debut
album and subsequently releasing as many solo projects as possible. This plan allowed for Wu-Tang to "overtake the industry in as profitable a fashion as possible" (Wu-Tang Corporation). As the group grew in popularity, so did their recognition. Touré, the Rolling Stones' famed album review writer, wrote that "in Brooklyn, N.Y., right now and extending back a few months, the reigning fave is the Wu-Tang Clan, who are to the channel what Guns N' Roses are to MTV" (Touré).

Wu-Tang portrayed domestic abuse, poverty, friendship and the desire for C.R.E.A.M. (Cash Rules Everything Around Me) with the video for "C.R.E.A.M.", the group's second single off their debut album Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers). It is a dark video that provides a contrasting view to the later hip hop videos that would dominate the television screen. "C.R.E.A.M." featured verses from two of Wu-Tang's members, Raekwon and Inspectah Deck and a chorus by Method Man became one the group's most successful singles. Its lyrics dealt with the struggle within poverty and need to earn money, by any means necessary (C.R.E.A.M.).

The verse by Inspectah Deck is often admired as one of his finest verses, as he attempts to summarize his entire life growing up in the ghetto at the age of twenty two. His verse portrayed a life of growing up without a father, resorting to drug dealing and becoming incarcerated. After being arrested, Inspectah Deck had a new, reflective view on society; he believes society is "no different from a cell" (C.R.E.A.M.). Toward the end of the verse, Inspectah Deck discusses how entering prison forced him to become mature, and now he tries to persuade young black youth to stop associating with the street life and to, instead, try to use their talents to better themselves and society:

"Who explained working hard may help you maintain to learn to overcome the heartaches and pain"
We got stickup kids, corrupt cops, and crack rocks
and stray shots, all on the block that stays hot
Leave it up to me while I be living proof
To kick the truth to the young black youth
But shorty's running wild smokin sess drinkin beer
And ain't trying to hear what I'm kickin in his ear
Neglected, but now, but yo, it gots to be accepted
That what? That life is hectic

The music video for "C.R.E.A.M." features all the members of Wu-Tang with the projects of Staten Island as the back drop filled with trash can fires and graffiti. Each of Wu-Tang's members and the majority of the people in the video wear classic '90s urban New York styles of dress including goose-down vests, hoodies, black skullies and Timberlands. As the video progresses, both Raekwon and Inspectah Deck perform their respective verses in scenes that match their lyrical messages. Raekwon begins with images of his parents' physical abuse towards each other and follows with meeting with friends in subway plastered with graffiti. Inspectah Deck performs the majority of his verse with members of Wu-Tang behind bar rails in the projects as a symbol for the struggle he went through while being locked in prison. As the video ends, members of Wu-Tang are gathered around a table in an executive setting with champagne, images of Mercedes' in their minds and bags full of money. These images portray the idea that with the success of hip hop, these nine MCs were able to move on to a fetishism of money. Fetishism of money is considered one of the core values of American culture and hip hop music reveries this dream (Shelden, Tracy and Brown 168).

"The Message" and "C.R.E.A.M." music videos embody what hip hop was about during its blue print years. It was a genre that was trying to explain where they came from and what they were feeling. Hip hop videos allowed the artists to create another art form to collaborate with their lyrics. As times changed, so did hip hop videos. From
Ghetto neighborhoods to fifty foot yachts and water front mansions, the days of rapping with friends around a trash can fire are lost. With the emergence of the “bling-bling” lifestyle, hip hop videos took notice and were changed forever.

One of the most influential early music video directors in hip hop is Hype Williams. Recognized for several signature styles', Hype has become a legend in the hip hop culture as the “go to” director for classic hip hop music videos. Harold "Hype" Williams was born in 1968 in Hollis Queens, New York to working class parents. Williams showed interest in art, particularly graffiti art. He would leave his signature graffiti tag, Hype, on local billboards, storefront, playgrounds and alleys: "that's probably what stimulated my interests in color...I wanted to be Basquiat or Keith Haring of the streets" ("Biography"). After leaving Adelphi University's film program just after two years, Williams began his music video career working with Classic Concept Productions where he swept floors on the set of hip hop videos and was a gopher for director Lionel Martin (Watkins 212). Hype worked on the set of several classic hip hop videos including Biz Markie’s “Just a Friend”.

As hip hop was rising in popularity, Williams recognized and found a home for his quirky colorful and creative abilities. He launched Big Dog Films in 1993 and began producing and directing hip hop and rhythm and blues (R & B) videos for up and coming artists (Hype Williams). Williams was disappointed with the lack of creativity from hip hop video directors citing “no color, no originality” as the concern with the earlier videos (Ogunnaike AR35). After directing Wu-Tang’s video “Can It Be That It Was All So Simple” in 1994, Williams earned acknowledgment from within the hip hop industry and began a 200 plus music video career. Williams was able to find his sense of style and it
"affected the tone of videos, the thing [he] did and how people responded to it" (Watkins 213). He found the perfect combination between song, story and video clips to create a visually appealing video like no other in hip hop. As a way of increasing the artist's power of their celebrity, Williams filmed them from different perspectives and several different camera angles to portray an amplified tone (Watkins 213).

It was not until the mid 1990's, that hip hop videos were changed. Williams introduced hip hop to videos that included women in bikinis, champagne and money. With the making of the late great Notorious B.I.G.'s "Big Poppa" video in 1995, Williams presented a party scene filled with dancing, bottles of champagne and women dressed in bikinis in a jacuzzi tub. Williams was also one of the first video directors to shoot hip hop videos in exotic locations, and transform the gritty hip hop videos of the past to vibrant, colorful videos full of money, women and glamorous cars. Williams’ most infamous sexually charged video was Jay Z’s "Big Pimpin" in 2000. The video was filmed mainly on a yacht filled with women dressed in bikinis, and high heels being doused with expensive champagne by men. The ghetto fabulous movement of the late 90's was attributed to Williams’ larger than life lifestyle portrayed in hip hop video productions. While Williams will not deny the cultural impact hip hop has made on music, he also realizes that he “made them look much more talented than they actually were. The mastering and manipulation of technical qualities like sound, camera angles and lighting have a way of creating a presence and that impacts the customer” (Watkins 214).

The customer, or the audience, has been heavily influenced in viewing the hip hop video lifestyle, through the music video. Cigars, pool-side mansions, luxury cars
and yachts became a regular staple for these videos, as are the female images of promiscuous dancing. Scantily clad women became the foundation of hip hop videos which helped to introduce “video hoes” into today’s vocabulary (“Hip Hop Videos: Sexploitation on the Set”). They may become necessary ornaments in the adolescent fantasies of male audiences, and are constantly viewed as endorsing intense sexuality while posing strictly for the male artists and viewer’s attention.

Hip hop music videos developed the reputation for being controversial. Originally they showcased police brutality, poverty, and racism whereas as modern hip hop videos faunt the female body and money. While many critics have chosen to blame the hip hop artists’ and industry Sean Cummings, editor of Smooth Magazine believes “it’s the public’s responsibility to force these artists to be more creative but if that’s what the public is buying than so be it” (“Hip Hop Videos: Sexploitation on the Set”). Early hip hop videos included some of hip hop’s fundamental elements; DJing, MCing, breakdancing and graffiti art. Audiences felt that classic hip hop music videos were honest; there was integrity about them. Any true hip hop enthusiast can explain the difference between current hip hop videos and those from the past. They were real, raw and authentic. Artists were not only trying to sell an image but sell a message. Which is what hip hop was about in the beginning of their blue print years.
"Hip hop has gone from black people's CNN to everybody's Home Shopping Network" (Tanz).

Hip hop is one of the first industries that has “risen like a phoenix out of the poorest neighborhoods of America” and has become not just a cultural phenomenon, but an industry that generates predicted revenues, employs thousands and affects the lives of billions of people around the globe (Oliver and Leffel 2). Stating a message is a fundamental value in hip hop. This is the same in corporate America which is why hip hop's recent relationship with commercialization and product placement has been prospering. In an era where TiVo and satellite radio have allowed audiences to bypass advertisements of popular products, corporate America began seeking a more creative way to promote its products, enter the cultural force that is hip hop.

It is not hard to see why corporate America would turn to hip hop as a marketing platform. First, this cultural phenomenon has become overwhelmingly popular with society's youth in the past decade. With over 30% of the music market share, America's younger audience has become the desired consumers to capture in terms of advertising (“2007 Consumer Profile”). Cultural critic Jason Tanz offers one of hip hop's four fundamental elements as the source for its fascination with advertising in its lyrics, videos and lifestyles. Tanz believes that hip hop's past MCs, DJs and graffiti writers have allowed the cultural movement to “blur the distinction between art and advertising” (182). For example, graffiti writers placed their signature tags across subway trains and alley ways as a way of creating billboards for themselves. The first MCs acted as
pitchmen who existed solely to praise the DJs skills. Rappers turned themselves into icons by giving themselves nicknames, creating logos and adopting a new speech.

Hip hop's original MCs and DJs never refused the opportunity to make money; they rarely stopped to believe that the art they were creating could "command money-paying patrons of any significance beyond their immediate environment" (Watkins 25).

Nelson George, a hip hop critic, states that the emergence of Run D.M.C.'s "My Adidas" in 1986 helped to establish a relationship between hip hop and commercialization. "My Adidas" was a tribute to the athletic shoe at the height of its appeal;

Now the Adidas I possess for one man is rare
Myself homeboy got 50 pair
Got blue and black cause I like to chill
And yellow and green when it's time to get ill
Got a pair that I wear when I'm playin ball
With the heal inside make me 10 feet tall
My Adidas only bring good news
And they are not used as selling shoes
They're black and white, white with black stripe
The ones I like to wear when I rock the mic

Russell Simmons, known as the godfather of hip hop and Run's older brother, saw the monetary potential that could be gained from a partnership with the German shoe manufacturer. Athletes were capitalizing on the success of endorsement deals with athletic shoe and clothing companies, why not hip hop? During a Run D.M.C. concert in Madison Square Garden, Russell brought several Adidas' executives to watch the impact that hip hop had on American society. With an audience of 20,000, Run told the crowd to hold up their Adidas sneakers before performing My Adidas. As a "sea of three-stripped athletic sneakers emerged like white leather clouds over the heads of most of the fans," the Adidas' executives were astonished and offered Run D.M.C. a $1.5 million deal to market their sneakers and various accessories (George 158).
Corporations began to realize there was a huge unconquered urban market. The beginning of hip hop’s commercialization impacted American culture by showing repetitive advertisements to audiences, causing them to become more product aware.

Hip hop’s ultimate strength lay in making and selling records, but during an era where record sales have decreased due to the expanding digital technology, hip hop artists have begun to use their celebrity status as a means of advertising products to generate capital. It has been easier to turn every element of the culture associated with hip hop into a product, be it Tommy Hilfiger selling clothing, Verizon Wireless selling cell phones or Hewlett-Packard’s (HP) “The Computer is Personal Again” marketing campaign.

Corporations have also begun to use brand names to attract hip hop artists to promote their products. In 2007, Chevrolet, a subdivision of General Motors, reported an 8.7% decrease in sales, while the market expected only a 5.2% fall (Isidore). Falling behind competitors such as Toyota and Honda, whose customers are mainly under the age of twenty-five, Chevrolet went to hip hop artists to help attract the auto manufacturer’s image to the youth. During the 2007 Super Bowl XLI, Chevrolet debuted their new marketing campaign with a one minute commercial featuring Johnny O’Connell, an American racecar driver, and rapper T.I.. O’Connell is shown rapping about his Corvette as he prepares for a race and T.I. raps in front of an Impala SS with 24" rims. The cost to advertise this thirty second commercial during the 2007 Super Bowl was a reported $2.6 million (La Monica).

Opportunities like the abovementioned have allowed hip hop artists to become entrepreneurs in many facets of the business arena. P. Diddy, aka Sean John Combs,
Russell Simmons and Shawn Carter, aka Jay Z, have launched clothing lines Sean John and Sean by Sean Combs, Phat Farm and Roc-A-Wear respectively. Each has also created record companies that host revenues in the millions of dollars. Empires that are being built by some of hip hop's moguls are multi-million dollar empires with a global reach, selling a huge variety of products to some of the most desirable demographics, America's youth.

Brand placement is no stranger to hip hop. In Atlanta based hip hop group OutKasts' "Hey Ya" song, the chorus "shake it, shake it, shake it like a Polaroid picture" helped Polaroid to "raise the profile of our brand and was a positive influence on it" (Tanz 188). Part of the appeal to include products in rapper's lyrics stems from the business aspect that audiences are not made aware. Companies are beginning to pay in advance for a product plug in lyrics, and videos prompting audiences to buy into what hip hop artists are saying. This is a contrast to what early hip hop stood for. While many artists from an earlier generation believed that selling their songs to be used as ad jingles for products was another form of selling out, hip hop musicians are now assertively attracting marketers, often using brand placement in their music as 'bait'. They consider big brands to be a part of their identity and willingly weave them into their music, their videos and their public images. Monetary gains are just another benefit from this relationship. By attracting corporations for brand placement, hip hop has redefined the concept of marketing in American culture.

"Without three or four business deals with major brands, you aren't seen as cashing in, and cashing in is part of the hip hop culture," says Josh Taekman, former executive at P. Diddy's Bad Boy Worldwide Entertainment Group, and now president of
marketing firm Buzztone (Kiley). When rapper Busta Rhymes and P. Diddy included Courvoisier cognac in their 2001 single “Pass the Courvoisier”, sales rose by 4.5 percent allowing for Courvoisier’s vice president of communications to refer to hip hop product placement in their songs as “the holy grail of marketing” (Tanz 188). It was later revealed that Russell Simmons had previously made a deal with the cognac brand prior to the creation of the song. Simmons denied that money was exchanged in the deal. Busta’s management company Violater originally stated that including the cognac into his lyrics was purely an artistic choice (Kaufman). With almost every hip hop song on the market including at least one product in their lyrics, audiences and critics are left wondering “how do we know that it came about as a product of the rapper’s honest enthusiasms and not as the result of some under-the-table deal?” (Tanz 189).

While some brands welcome the support of the hip-hop community, one brand that did not was Cristal champagne. Cristal has been used in hip hop’s lyrics and videos but also at red carpet events as a symbol for establishing credibility among audiences. After several comments were made in a 2006 article from The Economist magazine by Cristal’s managing director Frederic Rouzaud, hip hop icon Jay Z, announced that Cristal would no longer be served at his chain of 40/40 nightclubs, and he called for a consumer boycott. Roederer was asked about whether the brand’s identification with the hip hop culture could affect the company negatively. His response “that’s a good question, but what can we do? We can’t forbid people from buying it. I’m sure Dom Pérignon or Krug would be delighted to have their business” (Kiley). Since the comment, awards shows such as Black Entertainment Television’s BET Awards showed no signs of the champagne, instead showcasing Dom Pérignon and Veuve...
"You normally see Cristal around these festive events, and it was noticeably absent this year," said Marvet Britto, the head of a New York public relations and brand strategy company (Century). Since the boycott, nightclub owners and retailers have noticed a slight decrease in Cristal's sales.

While hip hop is based on a foundation of "keeping it real", there is also the underlying tone of profiting from their celebrity status. With album sales continuing to fall despite it still being a popular genre, hip hop's current mainstream popularity is focusing more on singles, rather than full-length albums that the customer can download on the internet. An example of this is Mims' "This Is Why I'm Hot" was hugely successful, while his album only reached number four in the U.S. Charts ("Charts"). Due to the audience's lack of purchasing power, hip hop artists have found that by commercializing their art, they can maintain their celebrity lifestyles. George considers the artists as "entertainers whose visibility and effectiveness as messengers are subject to the whims of the marketplace" (155). Most advertisements for products tell a story which is what makes the bond between hip hop and corporate America so perfect. However, hip hop's attitude about product placement makes audiences and critics question the meaning of the music.

Many hip hop artists, critics and audiences have stated their discontent about the current commercialized state of hip hop. Local radio DJ and program director, Orlando from WLLD 98.7 fm in St. Petersburg, Florida, considers the appeal of celebrities and artists is due to society's fascination with a glamorous lifestyle that not everyone can achieve; "audiences don't respect talented artists anymore. They crave seeing something that catches their eyes whether it is a nice Bentley or a diamond encrusted
watch. They want something they can see, not hear" (Orlando). Hip hop's expressions have lost its ways of promoting socially aware messages and has been replaced by mindless redundancy of themes we're all too familiar with; cars, jewelry and alcohol.

Like any great cultural phenomenon, hip hop is subject to falter, but is fluid in order to transform itself continuously. Several critics believe that the current state of hip hop is at low point and has room for development. Orlando is quick to state his displeasure with the current state of hip hop because of its continuation as a commercial enterprise: “because we are a culture and an industry that can continuously change and evolve, I believe that the present time is just another facet of hip hop. We will change again and become something completely different in a year or two” (Orlando).

The evidence of American society is everywhere. One can look on billboard signs, movies, automobile commercials and the local library to observe the impact hip hop has made on the American culture. On February 28, 2006, the Smithsonian announced that it was launching a new program for its National Museum of American History, “Hip Hop Won’t Stop: The Beats, the Rhymes, the Life” (“Hip-Hop Won’t Stop: The Beat, The Rhymes, The Life”). At the opening for the event, hip hop’s most influential artists were present: Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, Kool Herc, Ice-T and Russell Simmons. It was troubling for some to think of hip hop albums being displayed next to “such iconic American objects as Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone” (Tanz 209). Marvette Pérez, curator of the National Museum of American History praised hip hop for being “amazingly creative and embodying innovation and invention” (qtd. in “Hip-Hop Won’t Stop: The Beat, The Rhymes, The Life”). Hip-hop has reached
well beyond its urban roots to diverse national proportions and has been an integral part of American culture for almost 30 years ("Hip-Hop Won't Stop: The Beat, The Rhymes, The Life"). The significant contributions from hip hop have forged a significant place in today's American culture.
Track 6: Conclusion

"The beautiful thing about hip hop is it's like an audio collage. You can take any form of music and do it in a hip hop way and it'll be a hip hop song. That's the only music you can do that with" (Kweli).

In the preceding tracks, I tried to present the impact of hip hop in today's society. Each of the tracks are specific examples of elements in the hip hop genre that have shaped mainstream culture. As one of music's dominating genres, hip hop has delved into different cultures around the world; influencing young people significantly. From their language and dress to their multifaceted styles, hip hop artists have left a lasting impression.

The origin of hip hop's creativity and attraction was introduced in Track 1. In this part of the text, I was able to define the historical context of hip hop, and explore the four elements that define hip hop; DJs, MCs, breakdancing and graffiti. While its birth is often traced to the influence of other countries, hip hop's introduction to America began in New York. The focus of this thesis was to analyze the impact of hip hop on American society. In Track 2, an examination of a subgenre of hip hop is explained, gangsta rap. This track focused on the portrayal of violence and gang life in the lyrics of this musical form. Several MCs were also examined to establish audiences with the significance behind the context embedded in the lyrics of this form of hip hop.

Track 3 focused on the influential female MCs that impacted the hip hop culture while in a predominately male industry. Their stories showed the significant obstacles that were overcome in order for the women to achieve a lasting impact on American culture. This track also illustrated the progression that female MCs have taken from
aggressive, feministic artists to MCs who chose to use their sexuality as a means of gaining success. Track 4 examined a current example of why hip hop is such a controversial form of music, the music videos. The purpose of this track was to illustrate the impact of hip hop music videos and the media's often negative perception. Since their origination, hip hop music videos have been controversial in terms of their images that promote a destructive environment, and a denigrating portrayal of women.

The concluding track (Track 5) in the thesis focused on the business aspect of the hip hop culture. It began with an analysis of the underlying aspect of paid product placement between corporate America and hip hop artists. It also addressed the fact that audiences are not aware of this marketing strategy. An explanation of the first instance of product placement was included to inform the reader when the commercialization began and how far it has evolved in this cultural phenomena.

The purpose of this thesis was not to influence audiences to listen to hip hop. It was written to emphasize the impact that this particular genre has had on American society while providing a synopsis of this cultural phenomena. From the Hood to Your Neck of the Woods is an attempt to show the influence that the hip hop culture has had on this society. Audiences are naturally drawn to the unknown, which allows hip hop's audiences to begin to understand a culture that expresses a reality of sexism, racism, violence and poverty. While known for being one of music's most controversial art forms, hip hop has captivated American society leaving a lasting impression on its pop culture history.
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Hip Hop Glossary of Terms

alternative hip-hop n 1: also known as “underground rap,” a subgenre of rap that encompasses art forms such as sampling, breakdancing, spoken word, freestyling, beatboxing, turntablism and more. Alternative hip-hop often includes artists on independent record labels and features socially conscious and politically oriented lyrics.

battling v 1: a competition, often between DJs, rappers or MCs, judged often on originality, flow and skill.

beats n 1: the basis of hip-hop—the instrumental music itself

beat boxing v 1: creating sounds, beats and rhythm using one’s mouth, lips, tongue, voice, and other body parts that replicate rhythmic patterns and percussion.

bling bling v 1: brazen display of wealth; the shine from diamonds and platinum

block parties n 1: large public celebration in which many members of a single neighborhood congregate, either to observe an event of some importance or simply for mutual enjoyment. Many times, there will be a celebration in the form of playing music and dance. Block parties were often held outdoors and power for the DJ’s sound system was taken illegally from street lights.

break dancing v 1: a dance style stemming from the early 1970s hip-hop scene, evolving from such diverse sources as jazz, martial arts, capoeira and tap dancing. Break boys and girls, who later became known as b-boys and b-girls, first started dancing during DJ breaks at Bronx hip-hop parties. B-boying soon became a skilled and competitive art form.

chopping v 1: altering a sampled phrase by dividing it into smaller segments and reconfiguring them in a different order

conscious rap v 1: addressing the reality of a situation as the rapper perceives it. Conscious rap encompasses both black nationalist rap and gangsta rap. Its musical style varies widely, but this genre is marked by complex examples of what Krims calls speech-effusive flow

C.R.E.A.M. v 1: cash rules everything around me. The phrase "C.R.E.A.M." has become a slang term for money.

crew n 1: a loose collection of MCs, DJs, producers, often b-boys (breakdancers) and other hangers-on. The size of a crew varies and is usually in flux at any given time
crunk n 1 : a style of Southern hip-hop featuring heavy bass and aggressively chanted lyrics.

dirty south n 1 : a term used to describe the Deep South region of the United States, including the states Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas. Rappers from the Dirty South began to dominate hip-hop in the early 2000s.

dissin v 1 : insulting an opponent; derives from oral traditions such as signifying and the dozens

DJ n 1 : in hip-hop, Djing originally encompassed the art of mixing and scratching music to create new music.

flow v 1 : a lyricist's rhythm or cadence, his or her ability to combine words with the music.

freestyle v 1 : the art of vocal improvising, usually for battling.

gangsta rap n 1 : originally popularized by West Coast rappers in the 1980s, often containing "hardcore" rap lyrics related to gangs, gang members and their lifestyle.

gangsta n 1 : Gangsta is a corruption of the word gangster. A type of conscious or reality rap with west coast origins

graffiti v 1 : markings, as initials, slogans, or drawings, written, spray-painted, or sketched on a sidewalk, wall of a building or public restroom, or the like. Also known as "writing."

hook v 1 : a repeated, unifying element of a song; can be rapped, sung or instrumental

looping v 1 : sampling one or more measures and repeating the sampled material throughout a song, with little or no alteration

MC n 1 : a hip-hop performer or rhymer. The title MC has been thought to mean a number of acronyms such as "Microphone Controller," "Microphone Commander," "Master of Ceremonies," "Mic Checka," "Music Commentator," and one who "Moves the Crowd."

old school n 1 : early hip-hop style, usually spanning the 1970s to the mid-to-late 1980s.

outro v 1 : the concluding material after the final chorus or final verse of a song. The outro is typically a place for MCs to give "shout-outs" to friends

phat v 1 : of high value or quality
pimpsta n 1: part gangsta part pimp persona

sampling v 1: the process of using sound segments from one musical piece to form sounds in another musical piece.

scratching v 1: moving a record manually under a needle to create new musical sounds.

shout-out v 1: a form of acknowledgement and respect. MCs give shout-outs to friends and colleagues by mentioning their names in song lyrics and album linear notes.

turntablism v 1: playing the record turntable as if it were an instrument. Techniques might include scratching or mixing in order to create rhythms and manipulate sounds.

underground v 1: traded, sold, and performed in minor, local and non-traditional venues. Underground hip hop music tends to have primarily local appeal.
Appendix

Song Title: Step Into a World (Rapture's Delight)
Artist: KRS-One

Intro/Chorus: sung to the tune of Blondie's "Rapture"
Step into a world (Klaka klaka, klaka klaka!)  
Where there's no one left (Buku, buku! Alla de massive!)  
But the very best (Klaka, bo bo, BDP crew, bo bo bo bo!)  
No MC can test "cut and scratch of KRS saying "but one""  
Step into a world, where hip-hop is me  
Where MC's and DJ's  
Build up their skills as they play every day  
For the, rapture

Yeah, what what!  
Yes yes y'all, ya don't stop, KRS-One, rock on!  
Yes yes y'all, ya don't stop, KRS-One, rock on!

Verse One:  
I'm bout to hit you wit that tradional style of cold rockin  
Givin options for head knockin non stoppin  
Tip-toppin lyrics we droppin but styles can be forgotten  
so we bring back the raw hip-hoppin  
Just like the records and tapes you be coppin  
Cop some breakdancin, boogie poppin, and lockin  
Tic tockin, guaranteed to have you clockin  
We only get better and only better we have gotten  
This type of flow don't even think about stoppin  
Beware, the length of the rhyme flow can be shockin  
All music lovers in the place right now  
That never understood the way that KRS got down  
Yo I'm strictly about skills and dope lyrical coastin  
Relying on talent, not marketing and promotion  
If a dope lyrical flow is a must  
You gots to go with a name you can quickly trust  
I'm not sayin I'm number one, uhh I'm sorry, I lied  
I'm number one, two, three, four and five  
Stop wastin your money on marketing schemes  
and pretty packages pushin dreams to the beams  
A dope MC is a dope MC  
With or witout a record deal, all can see  
And that's who KRS be son  
I'm not the run of mill, cause for the mill I don't run
Yes yes y'all, ya don't stop, KRS-One, rock on!
Yes yes y'all, ya don't stop, KRS-One, rock on!

Chorus

Verse Two:
Yeah, yeah
Everybody on the mic in the party sound alike
until I recite, in black and white what's right
Let me take flight, my style is TIGHT AN GOOD
TIGHT AN GOOD, come is it TIGHT AN GOOD
Old styles I pass dat, slow down on fast rap
All in yo' ass crack, old King go Blast dat
Conjure to ask dat, hyper type of flashback
I publish like ASCAP lyrics for hand clap
No past rappin, youth trackin, talent lackin
MC's more worried about their financial backin
Steady packin a gat as if something's gonna happen
But it doesn't, they wind up shootin they cousin, they buggin
I appear everywhere and nowhere at once
I know my style is bumpin, even though some people front
It's the God of rap, you heard of it
The one that rhymes toward the sky givin airplanes mad turbulence
In rap tournaments, I reign permanent
Don't you think by now the number one spot I'm not concerned with it
The course of rap I'm turnin it
Back to that good old fashioned way of getting cash money by earning it
No bogus hocus pocus, I bring back to focus
Skills if you notice my position is lotus
Now quote this, MC's are just hopeless
Thinkin record sales make them the dopest

Yes yes y'all, ya don't stop, KRS-One, rock on!
Yes yes y'all, ya don't stop, KRS-One, rock on!

Chorus
**Song Title:** U.N.I.T.Y.
**Artist:** Queen Latifah

**Intro:**
U.N.I.T.Y., love a black man from infinity to infinity
(Who you calling a bitch?)

**Chorus:**
U.N.I.T.Y., U.N.I.T.Y. that's a unity (You gotta let him know)
(You go, come on here we go)
U.N.I.T.Y., Love a black woman from (You got to let him know)
infinity to infinity (You ain't a bitch or a ho)
U.N.I.T.Y., U.N.I.T.Y. that's a unity (You gotta let him know)
(You go, come on here we go)
U.N.I.T.Y., Love a black man from (You got to let him know)
infinity to infinity (You ain't a bitch or a ho)

**Verse One:**
Instinct leads me to another flow
Everytime I hear a brother call a girl a bitch or a ho
Trying to make a sister feel low
You know all of that gots to go
Now everybody knows there's exceptions to this rule
Now don't be getting mad, when we playing, it's cool
But don't you be calling out my name
I bring wrath to those who disrespect me like a dame
That's why I'm talking, one day I was walking down the block
I had my cutoff shorts on right cause it was crazy hot
I walked past these dudes when they passed me
One of 'em felt my booty, he was nasty
I turned around red, somebody was catching the wrath
Then the little one said (Yeah me bitch) and laughed
Since he was with his boys he tried to break fly
Huh, I punched him dead in his eye and said "Who you calling a bitch?"

(Here we go)
**Chorus**

**Verse Two:**
I hit the bottom, there ain't nowhere else to go but up
Bad days at work, give you an attitude then you were rough
And take it out on me but that's about enough
You put your hands on me again I'll put your ass in handcuffs
I guess I fell so deep in love I grew dependency
I was too blind to see just how it was affecting me
All I knew was you, you was all the man I had
And I was scared to let you go, even though you treated me bad
But I don't want my kids to see me getting beat down
By daddy smacking mommy all around
You say I'm nothing without ya, but I'm nothing with ya
A man don't really love you if he hits ya
This is my notice to the door, I'm not taking it no more
I'm not your personal whore, that's not what I'm here for
And nothing good gonna come to ya til you do right by me
Brother you wait and see (Who you calling a bitch?)

(Here we go)

Chorus

Verse Three:
What's going on in your mind is what I ask ya
But like Yo-Yo, you don't hear me though
You wear a rag around your head and you call yourself
A "Gangsta Bitch" now that you saw Apache's video
I saw you wilding, acting like a fool
I peeped you out the window jumping girls after school
But where did all of this come from?
A minute ago, you was a nerd and nobody ever heard of ya
Now you a wannabe... hard
You barely know your ABC's, please
There's plenty of people out there with triggers ready to pull it
Why you trying to jump in front of the bullet (Young lady)
Uh, and real bad girls are the silent type
Ain't none of this work getting your face sliced
Cause that's what happened to your homegirl, right? Fucking with nobody
She got to wear that for life (Who you calling a bitch?)

(Here we go)

Chorus
Song Title: None of Your Business
Artist: Salt-n-Pepa

Intro:
What's the matter with your life?
Why you gotta mess with mine?
Don't keep sweatin' what I do
Cuz I'm gonna be just fine check it out

Chorus:
If I wanna take a guy home with me tonight
It's none of your business
And she wanna be a freak and sell it on the weekend
It's none of your business
Now you shouldn't even get into who I'm givin' skins to
It's none of your business
So don't try to change my mind, I'll tell you one more time
It's none of your business

Now who do you think you are
Puttin' your cheap two cents in?
Don't you got nothin' to do
Than worry 'bout my friends? Check it...

Verse One:
I can't do nothin', girl, without somebody buggin'
I used to think that it was me, but now I see it wasn't
They told me to change, they called me names, and so I popped one
Opinion's are like assholes and everybody's got one
I never put my nose where I'm not supposed to
Believe me, if he's something that I want, I'm steppin' closer
I'm not one for playing high-pole
Like the house of ditty-nine-oh-two-one-oh type of the ho
I treat a man like he treats me
The difference between a hooker and a ho ain't nothin' but a fee
So hold your tongue tightly, wish you could be like me
You're poppin' all that mess only to stress and to spite me
Now you can get with that or you can get with this
But I don't give a shit cuz really it's none of your business

1993, S and P, packin' and mackin'
Bamboozlin' and smackin' suckers with this track
Throw the beat back in!

Chorus
Verse Two:
How many rules am I to break before you understand
That your double-standards don't mean shit to me?
I know exactly what you say when I turn and walk away
But that's ok cuz I don't let it get it to me
Now every move I make somebody's clockin'
Don't ask me nothin', will you just leave me alone?
Never mind who's the guy that I took home...to bone

Verse Three:
Ok, Miss Thing never givin' up skins
If you don't like him or his friends what about that Benz?
Your Pep-Pep's got an ill rep
With all that macaroni trap for rap you better step
Or better yet get your head checked
Cuz I refuse to be played like a penny cent trick deck of cards
No, I ain't hard like the bitches on a boulevard
My face ain't scarred, and I don't dance in bars
You can call me a tramp if you want to
But I remember the punk who just humped and dumped you
Or you can front if you have to
But everybody gets horny just like you
So, yo, so, yo, ho - check it, double deck it on a record butt-naked
Pep's ass gets respect, and this butt is none of your business

Chorus
So the moral of this story is: Who are you to judge?
There's only one true judge, and that's God
So chill, and let my Father do His job

Cuz Salt and Pepa's got it swingin' again
Cuz Salt and Pepa's got it swingin' again
Cuz Salt and Pepa's got it swingin' again
Cuz Salt and Pepa's got it swingin' again...
Song Title: C.R.E.A.M.
Artist: Wu-Tang

Intro: Raekwon the Chef, Method Man

What that nigga want God?
Word up, look out for the cops (Wu-Tang five finger shit)
(Cash Rules) Word up, two for fives over here baby
Word up, two for fives them nigga got garbage down the way, word up
Knowhatl'msayin?
(Cash Rules Everything Around Me
C.R.E.A.M. get...) Yeah, check this ol fly shit out
Word up
(Cash Rules Everything Around Me) Take you on a natural joint
(C.R.E.A.M. get the money) Here we here we go
(dolla dolla bill y'all) Check this shit, yo!

Verse One: Raekwon the Chef
I grew up on the crime side, the New York Times side
Staying alive was no jive
At second hands, moms bounced on old men
So then we moved to Shaolin land
A young youth, yo rockin the gold tooth, 'Lo goose
Only way, I begin to gee off was drug loot
And let's start it like this son, rollin with this one
And that one, pullin out gats for fun
But it was just a dream for the teen, who was a fiend
Started smokin woolies at sixteen
And running up in gates, and doing hits for high stakes
Making my way on fire escapes
No question I would speed, for cracks and weed
The combination made my eyes bleed
No question I would flow off, and try to get the dough all
Sticking up white boys in ball courts
My life got no better, same damn 'Lo sweater
Times is ruff and tuff like leather
Figured out I went the wrong route
So I got with a sick ass click and went all out
Catchin keys from across seas
Rollin in MPV's, every week we made forty G's
Yo nigga respect mine, or anger the tech nine
Ch-chick-POW! Move from the gate now

Chorus: Method Man
Cash, Rules, Everything, Around, Me
C.R.E.A.M.
Get the money
Dollar, dollar bill y'all

Verse Two: Inspector Deck
It's been twenty-two long hard years of still strugglin
Survival got me buggin, but I'm alive on arrival
I peep at the shape of the streets
And stay awake to the ways of the world cause shit is deep
A man with a dream with plans to make C.R.E.A.M.
Which failed; I went to jail at the age of 15
A young buck sellin drugs and such who never had much
Trying to get a clutch at what I could not... could not...
The court played me short, now I face incarceration
Pacin -- going up state's my destination
Handcuffed in back of a bus, forty of us
Life as a shorty shouldn't be so ruff
But as the world turns I learned life is hell
Living in the world no different from a cell
Everyday I escape from Jakes givin chase, sellin base
Smokin bones in the staircase
Though I don't know why I chose to smoke sess
I guess that's the time when I'm not depressed
But I'm still depressed, and I ask what's it worth?
Ready to give up so I seek the Old Earth
Who explained working hard may help you maintain
to learn to overcome the heartaches and pain
We got stickup kids, corrupt cops, and crack rocks
and stray shots, all on the block that stays hot
Leave it up to me while I be living proof
To kick the truth to the young black youth
But shorty's running wild smokin sess drinkin beer
And ain't trying to hear what I'm kickin in his ear
Neglected, but now, but yo, it gots to be accepted
That what? That life is hectic

Outro:
Chorus - 4X

Niggas gots to do what they gotta do, to get a bill
Yaknowhatl'msayin?
Cuz we can't just get by no more
Word up, we gotta get over, straight up and down

Chorus -- 3X
**Song Title:** Thugz Mansion featuring J. Phoenix and Nas  
**Artist:** 2PAC

**Intro:**  
Shit, tired of gettin shot at  
Tired of gettin chased by the police and arrested  
Niggaz need a spot where WE can kick it  
A spot where WE belong, that's just for us  
Niggaz ain't gotta get all dressed up and be Hollywood  
Y'knahmean? Where do niggaz go when we die?  
Ain't no heaven for a thug nigga  
That's why we go to thug mansion  
That's the only place where thugs get in free and you gotta be a G  
... at thug mansion

**Verse One: 2Pac**  
A place to spend my quiet nights, time to unwind  
So much pressure in this life of mine, I cry at times  
I once contemplated suicide, and woulda tried  
But when I held that 9, all I could see was my momma's eyes  
No one knows my struggle, they only see the trouble  
Not knowin it's hard to carry on when no one loves you  
Picture me inside the misery of poverty  
No man alive has ever witnessed struggles I survived  
Prayin hard for better days, promise to hold on  
Me and my dawgs ain't have a choice but to roll on  
We found a family spot to kick it  
Where we can drink liquor and no one bickers over trick shit  
A spot where we can smoke in peace, and even though we G's  
We still visualize places, that we can roll in peace  
And in my mind's eye I see this place, the players go in fast  
I got a spot for us all, so we can ball, at thug's mansion

**Chorus:** J. Phoenix + (Nas)  
Every corner, every city  
There's a place where life's a little easy  
Little Hennessy, laid back and cool  
Every hour, cause it's all good  
Leave all the stress from the world outside  
Every wrong done will be alright (I wanna go)  
Nothin but peace (I wanna go) love (I wanna go nigga)  
And street passion, every ghetto needs a thug mansion

**Verse Two: Nas**  
A place where death doesn't reside, just thugs who collide  
Not to start beef but spark trees, no cops rollin by
No policemen, no homicide, no chalk on the streets
No reason, for nobody's momma to cry
See I'm a good guy, I'm tryin to stick around for my daughter
But if I should die, I know all of my albums support her
This whole year's been crazy, asked the Holy Spirit to save me
Only difference from me and Ossie Davis, gray hair maybe
Cause I feel like my eyes saw too much sufferin
I'm just twenty-some-odd years, I done lost my mother
And I cried tears of joy, I know she smiles on her boy
I dream of you more, my love goes to Afeni Shakur
Cause like Ann Jones, she raised a ghetto king in a war
And just for that alone she shouldn't feel no pain no more
Cause one day we'll all be together, sippin heavnly champagne
where angels soar, with golden wings in thug's mansion

Chorus without Nas

Verse Three: 2Pac
Dear momma don't cry, your baby boy's doin good
Tell the homies I'm in heaven and they ain't got hoods
Seen a show with Marvin Gaye last night, it had me shook
Drippin peppermint Schnapps, with Jackie Wilson, and Sam Cooke
Then some lady named Billie Holiday
Sang sittin there kickin it with Malcolm, 'til the day came
Little LaTasha sho' grown
Tell the lady in the liquorstore that she's forgiven, so come home
Maybe in time you'll understand only God can save us
When Miles Davis cuttin lose with the band
Just think of all the people that you knew in the past
that passed on, they in heaven, found peace at last
Picture a place that they exist, together
There has to be a place better than this, in heaven
So right before I sleep, dear God, what I'm askin
Remember this face, save me a place, in thug's mansion

Chorus