

'Give us a million dollars!'

Hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism as a break in the structures of cultural consumption

Thomas van Gaalen
4303024
t.vangaalen@students.uu.nl
MA Cultural History of Modern Europe
Supervised by dr. Jochen Hung

Abstract

This thesis addresses a central question posed by the popularity of hip hop. Hip hop, which integrates both explicit counterculturalism and commercialism, does not fit the dominant 'countercultural idea' as described by cultural historian Thomas Frank. According to Frank, the 'countercultural idea' is the implication of a dichotomous distinction between authentic, free countercultures and the grey, commercial mainstream. This assumption, argues Frank, has formed the foundation of cultural consumption in the second half of the 20th century. As such, a culturally dominant genre such as hip hop's rejection of the 'countercultural idea' implies a break with the dominant structure of cultural consumption. To understand hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism, this thesis explores an alternative theoretical framework based on a suggested new structure of cultural consumption, the structure of 'omnivorous' consumption. This structure is defined by an increasingly individual approach to culture, resulting in the demise of traditional countercultures, as well as a more open, 'cherry-picking' approach to cultural consumption. This theoretical framework is applied to source material from the New York hip hop scene around 1980-1990, the period hip hop rose to mainstream popularity in the USA. This leads to several conclusions. Firstly, hip hop combined counterculturalism with commercialism early on. Whereas earlier African American genres such as jazz and rock 'n' roll also showcased a similar integration, and as such, a break with the 'countercultural idea', hip hop's business-focused approach functioned well within the increasingly neoliberal cultural market of New York in the early 1980s, thus resulting in a large, black-owned hip hop business. Jazz and rock 'n' roll, on the other hand, initially showcased a similar approach but were filtered through the 'countercultural idea' when white record labels and artists popularized the genre. Secondly, hip hop's success can be explained by a substantial white middle class that consumed hip hop early on without strictly adhering to hip hop culture. This suggests the rise of the 'omnivorous' consumer. As such, this thesis concludes that hip hop's rise in popularity coincides with the rise of a new structure of cultural consumption that allows for its integration of counterculturalism and commercialism.

Contents

1. Hip Hop vs. Hip Consumerism: Breaking the 'Countercultural Idea'?	4
Commercial and Countercultural: a Hip Hop Paradox	4
Hip hop, the Countercultural Idea and Hip Consumerism	6
Hip Hop as a Deviation from the Countercultural Idea	9
Omnivorous Consumerism as an Alternative to Hip Consumerism	10
Research Question: Understanding the Place of Hip Hop in Cultural Consumption	11
2. Methodology and terminology	13
Countercultures/Subcultures: a Terminological Distinction	13
Defining 'Cultural Consumption'	14
Primary Source Material and Research Methods	15
3. Structures of Cultural Consumption Contextualizing the History of Cultural Consumption	17
The Structural Development of Cultural Consumption	17
The Structure of the Civil Society	20
The Structure of Hip Consumerism	20
The Structure of Omnivorous Consumption	21
Omnivorous Consumption, Countercultures and Hip Hop	23
4. From Primitivism to Merchantry: African American culture, counterculture and cultural consumption	25
Black Art in a Civil Society	25
The Commodification of Blackness: from Civil Society to Hip Consumerism	26
Hip Hop and Liquid Society	28
5. Uptown to Downtown: From Street Hustler Economics to Omnivorous Consumers	31
I. Hip Hop Business: Black-owned, Street-level and Commercial	31
II. Uptown to Middle Class: Hip Hop, Yuppie Culture and Omnivorous Consumerism	36
Hip Hop in Yuppieworld: Hip Hop Economics and American Business Culture	37
Hip Hop Meets the Omnivorous Consumer	39
Conclusion: Hip Hop as a Break with the Structure of Hip Consumerism	43
6. Conclusion: From Pop Culture to Social Structure	45
7. Bibliography	47

1. Hip Hop vs. Hip Consumerism: Breaking the 'Countercultural Idea'?

In this introduction, a paradox at the heart of the genre of hip hop is addressed. This paradox, namely hip hop's openly expressed integration between counterculturalism and commercialism, does not correspond to popular discourse surrounding counter- and subcultures and, as such, raises a research question that aims to explain hip hop's paradox through the construction of an alternative theoretical framework.

Commercial and Countercultural: a Hip Hop Paradox

In 1986, hip hop group Run-D.M.C. gained widespread success with the first single of their third album.¹ The single, titled "My Adidas", went right against the grain of the common cultural depiction of countercultural movements. In its lyrics, Run-D.M.C. praised sportswear brand Adidas:

We travel on gravel, dirt road or street
I wear my Adidas when I rock the beat
On stage front page every show I go
It's Adidas on my feet high top or low
My Adidas
My Adidas²

The single marked the start of a sponsorship deal between Adidas and Run-D.M.C.³ In the following year, Run-D.M.C. participated in several Adidas commercials and released a music video for the song.⁴ Part of the video consists of Run-D.M.C. rapping an a capella verse about Adidas, before shouting "give us a million dollars!"⁵

Run-D.M.C.'s rise to success forms a cultural narrative that is wholly different to the group's openly commercial ambitions. The New York hip hop formation's eponymously titled first record exemplifies the countercultural nature that is often attributed to hip hop. Released in 1984, the debut album *Run-D.M.C.* proved popular among the predominantly African American neighborhoods of New York; Run-D.M.C.'s gritty, sparse beats and aggressive rhymes were praised for their "realness" and influenced many harder-edged hip hop groups such as Public Enemy and Niggaz With Attitudes.⁶ "It's Like That," the first single of the album *Run-D.M.C.*, was an aggressive, angry track protesting the unemployment in African American neighborhoods and Reaganite neoliberal economics.⁷ Run-D.M.C.'s sound epitomized what became hip hop's characteristic anti-establishment stance. Through combining hard, minimal sounds, angry, socially critical rapping and referencing the lifestyle of the American ghettos, hip hop became known as a subversive, hard-edged musical genre and culture.⁸

¹ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, via Netflix, directed by Darby Wheeler, HBO Canada, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

² *Genius.com*, "Run-D.M.C. – My Adidas", <https://genius.com/Run-dmc-my-adidas-lyrics> (version June 22 2019).

³ Bill Adler, *Tougher Than Leather. The Rise of Run-D.M.C.* (2002), 49.

⁴ Adler, *Tougher Than Leather*, 49.

⁵ Gary Warnett, 'How Run-DMC Earned Their Adidas Stripes', in *Mr. Porter Daily Style*, (May 2016), <https://www.mrporter.com/daily/how-run-dmc-earned-their-adidas-stripes/939> (version June 23 2019).

⁶ Adler, *Tougher Than Leather*, 51.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 48.

⁸ Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011), 10-15.

The manner Run-D.M.C. combines a socially critical, subversive, gritty sound with outspoken commercial ambitions is exemplary for hip hop. On the one hand, hip hop historically has a subversive and countercultural reputation. The genre has been used to express a radical and political message of African American emancipation. Proto-hip hop pioneers such as Gil-Scott Heron and The Last Poets arose from the late 1960s civil rights and black nationalism movements.⁹ Their politically charged music incorporated socially critical spoken word, influences of traditional African music and allusions to radical socialism and black nationalism.¹⁰ In the 1970s and 1980s, the genre of hip hop arose in urban African American neighborhoods.¹¹ Early rap scenes were a distinctively local phenomenon; lyrics explicitly referred to the circumstances in local neighborhoods and hip hop communities were tied to specific urban spaces.¹² As such, it can be said that American hip hop is explicitly tied to the experiences and social position of African Americans. Hip hop samples frequently refer to African American past, incorporating material from jazz, funk and soul music.¹³ Furthermore, hip hop lyrics explicitly stem from the social position of African Americans. Many hip hop lyrics refer to the experience of discrimination and disillusion in the American ghettos.¹⁴ The local, distinctive African American style of hip hop, combined with its roots in the black emancipation movement, has led to the establishment of a musical tradition that radically opposes the white mainstream, both lyrically and stylistically.¹⁵ Hip hop artists varying from 2pac to the Fugees and from Kendrick Lamar to Joey Bada\$\$ are known for their social critique of the white mainstream. The successful subgenre of gangsta rap explicitly and harshly critiques white mainstream culture, even employing motifs of violence as a means of lyrically and musically attacking authorities.¹⁶ Thus, hip hop can be perceived as explicitly anti-mainstream and countercultural.

On the other hand, however, Run-D.M.C.'s stunt with *My Adidas* marks another characteristic aspect of the genre of hip hop; for at least the last thirty years, hip hop has been a worldwide business that involves brand endorsement, billion-dollar deals and explicit commercial ambitions.¹⁷ Hip hop is a commercially successful music genre. Since the 1970s, hip hop songs have frequently topped the Western music charts.¹⁸ In 2017, hip hop even surpassed rock as the USA's most popular music genre in terms of "total consumption", according to analytics company Nielsen's year-end report.¹⁹ The commercially successful character of hip hop is very much prevalent in the genre itself; financial success appears in a lot of its lyrical content and aesthetics. Critics have frequently pointed out hip hop's materialistic tendencies, ranging from the "bling-bling" braggadocio of 1980s groups such as Run-D.M.C. and N.W.A. to the flagrant brand placement of contemporary artists such as Migos and Drake.²⁰ Golden chains and grills, diamond

⁹ Michael Eric Dyson, 'The culture of hip-hop', in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011), 61-63.

¹⁰ Dyson, 'The culture of hip-hop', 63.

¹¹ Ibidem, 62-63.

¹² Murray Forman, "'Represent': Race, Space, and Place in Rap Music", in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011), 201-205.

¹³ Richard Susterman, 'Challenging conventions in the fine art of rap', in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011), 459-460.

¹⁴ Susterman, 'Challenging conventions', 460.

¹⁵ Dyson, 'The culture of hip-hop', 63.

¹⁶ Forman and Neal, *That's the joint!*, 9-10.

¹⁷ Derek Conrad Murray, "Hip-hop vs. high art: Notes on race as spectacle," *Art Journal* 63.2 (2004), 6-7.

¹⁸ John Lynch, 'For the first time in history, hip-hop has surpassed rock to become the most popular music genre, according to Nielsen', in *Business Insider* (January 4 2018), <https://www.businessinsider.com/hip-hop-passes-rock-most-popular-music-genre-nielsen-2018-1?international=true&r=US&IR=T> (version april 2 2019).

¹⁹ Lynch, 'For the first time in history'.

²⁰ Murray, "Hip-hop vs. high art", 6-7.

rings and brand clothing have become staples of the materialistic rapper-archetype.²¹ Many successful hip hop artists have boastfully described their financial success in their lyrical material, unabashedly showcasing their fame and wealth.²² Hip hop thus employs motifs that could be interpreted as countercultural, while at the same time unabashedly showcasing an interest in the commercialism that is associated with the cultural mainstream.

It is this combination of counterculturalism and commercialism that does not allow hip hop from being understood through the dominant narrative regarding countercultures. Over the past fifty years, countercultures have been characterized as “life-affirming, dionysian cultural rebels” that resist commercial mainstream normativity by the pen and through their records.²³ Fitting this idea of a subversive counterculture, the genre of hip hop has in the media often been depicted as a subversive, countercultural genre.²⁴ However, instead of adhering to the idea of a dichotomous struggle between countercultures and mainstream, hip hop combines these popularly supposed opposites by embracing both commercialism and subversive counterculturalism. A cultural historical lens that adheres to the dominant idea of a constant clash between subversive countercultures and a commercial mainstream culture falls short when seeking to understand the genre of hip hop. As such, this thesis seeks to understand hip hop’s integration of socially critical counterculturalism and explicit commercialism through the construction of an alternative cultural-economic analytical framework. How can it be explained that the successful genre of hip hop integrates both commercialism and counterculturalism, two values that are commonly juxtaposed in dominant cultural narratives?

Hip hop, the Countercultural Idea and Hip Consumerism

In *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, cultural historian Thomas Frank describes the dominant Western way of thinking about countercultures since the 20th century. Frank introduces what he calls the ‘countercultural idea’. According to Frank, this standardized cultural narrative regarding countercultures forms the basis of how Western societies perceive the relationship between countercultures and mainstream culture. Cultural philosopher Joseph Heath explains Frank’s notion of the ‘countercultural idea’ by describing how Western culture is frequently framed through the notion of a dichotomous struggle between the “monolithic, homogeneous, and hierarchical” conformity of mainstream consumerism and the “authentic” rebels that form the countercultures.²⁵ According to this narrative, these authentic countercultural individuals are “able to elude the mesmerizing effects of consumerism, and create their own, spontaneous, vibrant and authentic cultural communities”.²⁶ The established order, on the other hand, is always intent on imposing its monolithic values on the free, bohemian countercultures through a process of commodification and appropriation. According to this ‘countercultural idea’, Western society forms the playground of a perpetual struggle “as the counterculture subverts the mainstream, while the mainstream attempts to co-opt the subculture”.²⁷

Thomas Frank argues that this ‘countercultural idea’ is not only an oversimplified cultural motif, but also obscures the economic and cultural structures that have shaped Western society

Janée N. Burkhalter and Corliss G. Thornton, "Advertising to the beat. An analysis of brand placements in hip-hop music videos," *Journal of Marketing Communications* 20.5 (2014), 366-367.

²¹ Murray, "Hip-hop vs. high art", 6.

²² *Ibidem*, 6.

²³ Joseph Heath, "The structure of hip consumerism," in *Philosophy & social criticism* 27.6 (2001), 1-2.

²⁴ Murray, "Hip-hop vs. high art", 6.

²⁵ Heath, "The structure of hip consumerism," 2.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 1-2.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 2.

since the 20th century.²⁸ The idea of the independent, authentic counterculture versus the normative and commercial mainstream, argues Frank, is far from a radical critique of mainstream consumerism.²⁹ In his analysis of consumer culture, Frank suggests that marketing before the 1960s was primarily based on status within the normative categorizations, building on the imagery of an all-American suburbia of law-abiding citizens, grateful housewives and working fathers with brand new cars.³⁰ However, the baby-boom generation, being the largest and most prosperous generational cohort in recorded Western history, started to form an essential new target market.³¹ The generational clash between the baby-boomers and their parents influenced the subversive, Marxist-tinged cultural expressions of the new generation. To reach this subversive target market, marketing shifted towards *hip consumerism*. Hip consumerism started promoting and selling the ideal of individuality, coolness and hipness as opposed to normativity.³² Since the 1960s, states Frank, the central drive of consumerism is the 'hip consumer' or 'rebel consumer'. Fashion, music and home decorations are tailor-made to fit the expression of an individual, 'hip' subculture. Thus, countercultures that stress an individualistic, free-thinking and creative resistance to the mainstream sustain and glorify the narrative that has shaped commerce since the 1960s. According to Frank, "business is amassing great sums by charging admission to the ritual simulation of its own lynching".³³ Thomas Frank's idea that the structure of hip consumerism has become the dominant drive of consumerism since the 1960s fits the theory of *subculturalization* as put forward by numerous academics. Sociologist Herbert Gans denotes what he calls a 'cultural divergence' since the 1960s. According to Gans, the rise of varied subcultural groups in a process of social diversification has steadily come to replace the distinction between high- and low class culture as the dominant model of Western cultural consumption.³⁴ In his article "Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics", historian Timothy Scott Brown argues that subcultures have become the primary factor in determining Western cultural taste.³⁵

The 'countercultural idea' that legitimizes the structure of hip consumerism has formed an explicit aspect of countercultures' self-representation. The counterculture of the 1960s saw itself as an authentic, free and creative movement that opposed the smothering normativity of mainstream culture.³⁶ The idea of a dichotomous struggle between the counterculture and its mainstream opponents was continuously performed through the counterculture's musical expression, visual style and ideological and spiritual views.³⁷ When San Francisco neighborhood Haight-Ashbury became a popular refuge for countercultural artists and thinkers from all over America, popular and commercial attention for the district grew.³⁸ Commercial bus tours and an influx of young 'hippies' that had found their new identity in television commercials and the bargain bin of their local record store drove the original counterculture from the district. These original hippies were quick to stress that the commercialization of their neighborhood was part of a cultural struggle between the empty, commercial mainstream and the free-thinking hippies. On October 6, 1967, radical hippie collective the Diggers – one of the few original hippie groups that had not yet left the Haight-Ashbury – held a mock funeral procession in the neighborhood

²⁸ Heath, "The structure of hip consumerism", 1-2.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 3-4.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 3-4.

³¹ Heath, "The structure of hip consumerism," 13-14.

³² *Ibidem*, 13.

³³ *Ibidem*, 2.

³⁴ Herbert J. Gans, *Popular culture & high culture. An analysis and evaluation of taste* (1999), 11-12.

³⁵ Timothy Scott Brown, "Subcultures, pop music and politics: skinheads and "Nazi rock" in England and Germany," *Journal of Social History* 38.1 (2004), 169-172.

³⁶ Hans Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig. Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict* (Amsterdam 1995) 19.

³⁷ Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig*, 18-19.

³⁸ Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (1984), 5.

to announce the 'death of hippie' and the end of the summer of love.³⁹ Requesting an end to the "rabid commercialization" of their lifestyle, the group of hippies renounced their social and cultural experiment and burned symbols of the hippie image that they now perceived to be in the hands of the mainstream.⁴⁰ Similarly adhering to the notion of the dichotomous struggle inherent to the 'countercultural idea', Sam Cutler, tour manager of countercultural band The Grateful Dead, expressed his discontent with the commercialization of hippie culture in the 2017 documentary *Long Strange Trip*. Due to commercial "business", states Cutler, "the Haight-Ashbury was destroyed by becoming popular".⁴¹

Although this way of thinking along the lines of a dichotomy between authentic hippies and mainstream business is a common phenomenon among the counterculture of the 1960s, it was exactly this emphasis on the 'countercultural idea' by the counterculture itself that formed the basis of mass consumerism during the 1960s.⁴² The counterculture's anti-mainstream attitudes were largely expressed through the consumption of records, fashion, and art on a massive scale.⁴³ Even the communal ideals of numerous countercultural groups in the Haight-Ashbury were largely sustained by consumerism; spiritual shops, drug shops, record stores and music venues formed the economic basis of the countercultural communities.⁴⁴ In accordance with the notion of hip consumerism as defined by Frank, the supposed dichotomy between countercultural authenticity and mainstream commercialism is far more interwoven than popular narratives suggest. Later countercultures also tie in with Thomas Frank's idea of hip consumerism. Both the punk and grunge subculture's anti-mainstream sentiments were expressed by the consumption of fashion and records. At the same time, both punk and grunge adhered to the 'cultural idea' of an incompatibility between their countercultural lifestyle and the consumerist mainstream. After punk rock rose to the music charts in the late 1970s, the subculture was declared 'dead' by its adherents. Just like Sam Cutler claimed that the counterculture of the Haight-Ashbury was killed by becoming popular, subcultures such as punk, grunge and techno declared their own demise after rising in popularity.⁴⁵

Hip Hop as a Deviation from the Countercultural Idea

Thomas Frank's idea of the structure of hip consumerism is applicable to most countercultural movements in the latter half of the 20th century. The 'countercultural idea' of a supposed clash between countercultures and mainstream is inexplicably tied to subcultural movements since the 1960s. On first glance, hip hop still frequently adheres to the countercultural idea and the notion that the materialistic side of hip hop is incompatible with 'real', socially aware hip hop. The case of Joey Bada\$\$, a rapper critically lauded for his technical dexterity and social criticism, showcases this dichotomous juxtaposition:

[Joey Bada\$\$] is depicted as the opposite of the gauche, materialistic and bellicose artists who rap about designer brands, guns and strippers, instead writing tracks that attack Wall Street.⁴⁶

³⁹ Peter Golding, *Rock Graphic Originals: Revolutions in Sonic Art from Plate to Print* (2018), 36.

⁴⁰ Golding, *Rock Graphic Originals*, 36-37.

⁴¹ Amir Bar-Lev, *Long Strange Trip* (2017), via DVD.

⁴² Tom ter Bogt, *One Two Three Four* (Den Haag 1997) 35-37.

⁴³ Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (1984), 6-7.

⁴⁴ Golding, *Rock Graphic Originals*, 33-34.

⁴⁵ David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, *The Post-subcultures Reader* (2003), 12-14.

⁴⁶ Lanre Bakare, "Joey Bada\$\$: 'They call me a Marxist and anti-white gangster rapper – they don't know anything'", in *The Guardian* (January 29 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jan/29/joey-badass-they-call-me-marxist-anti-white-gangster-rapper> (version april 3 2019).

Within the rap scene, authenticity debates that are rooted in the assumption of the countercultural idea are prevalent as well. The Sugar Hill Gang, the rap group behind the 1978 hit *Rapper's Delight*, faced harsh criticism from the New York hip hop community for “selling out” to a major record label oriented towards mainstream culture.⁴⁷ Validating one’s “realness” is an important factor of credibility in rap music.⁴⁸ Seemingly tying in with the idea of a juxtaposition between commercial rappers and ‘real’, socially critical rappers, A Tribe Called Quest member Phife Dawg raps the following lines on the 1993 track *We Can Get Down*,:

Straight from the heart, I represent hip hop
I be three albums deep, but I don't wanna go pop
Too many candy rappers seem to be at the top
Too much candy is no good, so now I'm closing the shop⁴⁹

Phife Dawg, referring to his legitimacy as an authentic rapper, distances himself from the “candy rappers” that achieve commercial success without any real lyrical and musical substance. Phife Dawg’s lyrics on *We Can Get Down* showcase the longstanding authenticity debate in hip hop culture. Hip hop’s close ties to discriminated African American culture, combined with its roots in the emancipatory movement of the 1960s, result in a political aversion to hip hop that breaks with the African American emancipatory roots of the genre.⁵⁰

However, hip hop’s combination of a radically anti-mainstream – and sometimes anti-capitalist – message and its commercial character does not simply fit the countercultural idea as exemplified in dichotomous distinction between socially aware rappers and ‘candy rappers’. On first glance, New York hip hop group A Tribe Called Quest fits the image of the authentic, socially critical rap group. However, on *Buggin’ Out*, track two on *The Low End Theory*, Phife Dawg raps:

I sport New Balance sneakers to avoid a narrow path
Mess around with this you catch a size eight up your ass⁵¹

Phife Dawg later advocated the sneaker brand New Balance in several interviews. In 2017, A Tribe Called Quest even appeared in a commercial for New Balance.⁵² In 1994, the group already appeared in a Sprite commercial, with Phife Dawg rapping:

Grab a cold, cold can
And obey your thirst



Still from the video for Kendrick Lamar's *HUMBLE.* (2017)

⁴⁷ Alan Light, “About a Salary or Reality? Rap’s Recurrent Conflict,” in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011), 137-138.

⁴⁸ Light, “About a Salary or Reality?”, 138.

⁴⁹ *Genius.com*, “A Tribe Called Quest – We Can Get Down,” <https://genius.com/A-tribe-called-quest-we-can-get-down-lyrics> (version april 5 2018).

⁵⁰ Light, “About a Salary or Reality?”, 138.

⁵¹ *Genius.com*, “A Tribe Called Quest – Buggin’ Out,” <https://genius.com/A-tribe-called-quest-buggin-out-lyrics> (Version April 1 2019).

⁵² Alvin Blanco, “New Balance #TCSNYC Marathon Commercial Features A Tribe Called Quest,” in *Hip Hop Wired* (November 5 2017), <https://hiphopwired.com/558849/new-balance-tcsnymarathon-commercial-features-tribe-called-quest/> (Version April 10 2019).

Similar to the case of A Tribe Called Quest, there are many hip hop artists that engage in social



Still from the video for 2pac's *Hit 'Em Up'* (1996)

commentary and send emancipatory messages while engaging with large, mainstream, commercial brands at the same time. Run-D.M.C.'s commercials for Adidas on the one hand and their socially conscious, gritty image on the other also emphasize this integration. On his critically lauded album *To Pimp A Butterfly*, rapper Kendrick Lamar critically reflects on race in the music industry.⁵⁴ However, Kendrick Lamar also appears in commercials for sneaker brand Reebok and headphone- and lifestyle brand Beats by Dre.⁵⁵ Furthermore, he showcases his material wealth in several of his music videos. In the video for 2012 single *Swimming Pools (Drank)*, the camera explicitly focuses on the artist's golden jewelry and sports car.⁵⁶ In the video for his 2017 single *HUMBLE.*, Kendrick Lamar is depicted lying on a desk full of dollars bills. Three bikini-clad women are sitting around him, working on typewriters that produce a continuous flow of dollar bills.⁵⁷ Influential gangsta rapper Tupac Shakur, although being an outspoken Marxist, typically wore brand clothing and golden jewelry as well. In the video for his track *Hit 'Em Up*, 2Pac is shown moving towards the camera while counting dollar bills.⁵⁸

Frank's analytical framework seems inapplicable to the case of hip hop. The fact that hip hop, as the most dominant form of popular music, explicitly combines countercultural characteristics and a commercial stance, suggests that the 'countercultural idea' and the structure of hip consumerism may not be the dominant basis of cultural consumption anymore. As such, it is valuable to explore hip hop's paradoxical integration of commercialism and counterculturalism in order to comprehend the changes in cultural consumption that occurred around the genre's rise in popularity. Since the popular notion of the 'countercultural idea' seems largely inapplicable to the case of hip hop, this thesis presents an alternative theoretical framework on the structures of cultural consumption in order to understand hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism.

Omnivorous Consumerism as an Alternative to Hip Consumerism

Since the 1990s, an increasing number of academics has put forward an alternative to the structure of hip consumerism and subculturalization that might shed some light on the case of hip

⁵³ *Genius.com*, "A Tribe Called Quest – Sprite Commercial," <https://genius.com/Sprite-a-tribe-called-quest-1994-commercial-lyrics> (Version April 1 2019).

⁵⁴ Natalie Weiner, "How Kendrick Lamar Transformed Into 'The John Coltrane of Hip-Hop' on 'To Pimp a Butterfly,'" *Billboard* (2015), <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/the-juice/6509665/kendrick-lamar-to-pimp-a-butterfly-jazz-robert-glasper> (Version March 10 2019).

⁵⁵ "Kendrick Lamar Stars In New Reebok Commercial For The Revamped Ventilator," in *Okayplayer* (2015), <https://www.okayplayer.com/news/kendrick-lamar-new-reebok-commercial-video.html> (Version March 16 2019).

⁵⁶ *Youtube.com*, "Kendrick Lamar – Swimming Pool" (August 3 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5YNiCfWC3A> (Version April 3 2019).

⁵⁷ *Youtube.com*, "Kendrick Lamar – Humble" (March 30 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvTRZJ-4Eyl> (Version April 3 2019).

⁵⁸ *Youtube.com*, "2Pac - Hit 'Em Up (Dirty)," (March 28 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41qC3w3UUuU> (Version April 3 2019).

hop. Herbert Gans denotes an increase in scholars that view the idea of the 'omnivorous consumer' as an alternative, new primary model in understanding cultural consumption.⁵⁹ According to several academics, economic mobility and the increased accessibility of (digital) information have led to a tendency of cultural cherry-picking, resulting in the demise of strict cultural groups.⁶⁰ In her oration *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving*, professor of media and culture Susanne Janssen describes the different structures of cultural consumption in Western society since the 1950s. Janssen argues that since the 1980s, the omnivorous cultural consumer has steadily broken down the barriers between class-related and subcultural tastes of cultural consumption.⁶¹ As such, the idea that the 'countercultural idea' is still the default of cultural consumption is being increasingly questioned by academics, most of whom favor the 'omnivorous consumer'-theory. Applied to the genre of hip hop, this theory might imply a structural change at the heart of cultural consumption that is exemplified through hip hop's deviance from hip consumerism's central notion of the 'countercultural idea'. Therefore, the transition of a structure of hip consumerism to a structure of omnivorous consumerism may provide insight in hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism.

Research Question and Thesis Structure: Understanding the Place of Hip Hop in Cultural Consumption

By explicitly blending commercialism and a countercultural stance, hip hop breaks with the countercultural idea. According to Frank, the assumption that countercultures and the mainstream are caught in continuous dichotomy forms the basis of the structure of hip consumerism, the dominant structure of cultural consumption since the 1960s.⁶² However, hip hop dissolves the idea of a dichotomy between the authentic, anti-establishment, rebellious counterculture and the commercial, normative mainstream by showcasing the *compatibility* of commercialism and a countercultural stance. This thesis argues that this implies that Frank's theories regarding cultural consumption based on the 'countercultural idea' fall short in seeking to understand the genre of hip hop through an analytical framework regarding cultural consumption in Western society. Since the 1990s, there has been an increasing number of academics who have presented alternative models for understanding of the structures of cultural consumption. Therefore, this research paper seeks to reinterpret the genre of hip hop in order to understand its combination of commercialism and counterculturalism. The question this thesis addresses is: how can hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism be understood through the construction of an alternative framework regarding the structures of cultural consumption?

In my research, I focus on whether hip hop's paradoxical integration of commercialism and counterculturalism signifies a change from the structure of hip consumerism to the 'liquid' structure of the omnivorous consumer. As such, I analyze *if* hip hop's trajectory from an underground, African American form of cultural expression to its contemporary commercial success denotes a different dynamic between the mainstream, countercultures and consumerism, rather than *why* this hypothetical change might have taken place. Over the course of this thesis, I suggest several explanations for this structural change, but my main focus is to understand the extent to which hip hop's paradox signifies changing dynamics between the consumer, countercultures and the mainstream.

In order to answer my research question, the first chapter sets out a theoretical debate regarding the structures of cultural consumption. Using literature by Thomas Frank, Herbert Gans,

⁵⁹ Gans, *Popular culture & high culture*, 11-12.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 12.

⁶¹ Susanne Janssen, *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving* (2005), 15-16.

⁶² Heath, "The structure of hip consumerism," 2.

Wolfgang Streeck, Susanne Janssen, Richard Peterson, Jerrold Seigel and Zygmunt Bauman, I propose a theoretical framework that describes the process towards an increasingly 'liquid' and omnivorous society and its impact on cultural consumption. An understanding of the cultural mechanisms that have played out during hip hop's rise to global success provides insight into hip hop's integration of counterculturalism and commercialism and its ambiguous relationship to the dominant cultural narratives regarding countercultures and the mainstream. To understand how hip hop, a genre that seems to deviate from the structure of hip consumerism, fits into the interplay of structures of cultural consumption, a clearly defined schema of the structures of cultural consumption is essential. As such, I have opted for a Braudelian approach that integrates cultural historical perspectives on cultural consumption and sociological analyses of historical structures. Based on a larger historiographical debate, I present a model based on three main structures of cultural consumption, and also describe a larger development that is signified by these structures. The model operates on a similar scale as that of the medium-term conjunctures in the *Annales* School system. As defined by influential *Annales* School historian Fernand Braudel, 'medium term conjunctures' denote periods, from decades to centuries, in which profound cultural changes can take place.⁶³

The second chapter aims to provide an understanding of the specific place of hip hop within these cultural structures, specifically zooming in on the crucial aspect of race throughout the history of cultural consumption. I argue that the success of hip hop, a genre that is defined by its ties to African American culture, signifies a change in the dynamic between countercultures and mainstream that has been dominant since the 19th century. To understand how the counterculture/mainstream dynamic intersects with race in the historical structure before hip consumerism, I integrate literature on the representation of black art in 19th and 20th century Western culture with primary sources. Then, I explicitly analyze how this intersection influenced the structure of hip consumerism. Analyzing the way hip hop, as an African American art form, fits within the structures of cultural consumption arguably signifies a fundamental change in the counterculture/mainstream dynamic that is prevalent in the structure of hip consumerism. This change suggests an explanation for hip hop's paradoxical integration of commercialism and counterculturalism.

In the third chapter, I use primary sources on New York hip hop culture between the late 1970s and late 1980s. This period represents hip hop's transition from a genre that was tied explicitly to the culture of African American ghettos to a genre that experienced worldwide success. First, I describe the way hip hop's integration of both commercialism and counterculturalism can be explained through primary sources from hip hop's early business culture. Then, I focus on hip hop's transfer to a larger American audience in order to understand how hip hop's integration between commercialism and counterculturalism found success in a culture that, at least up to that period, adhered to the 'countercultural idea'. By using primary sources regarding the early interaction between hip hop culture and a wider American audience, I argue that hip hop's rise to success suggest a change in the cultural consumer and structure of cultural consumption itself.

⁶³ Richard Lee, *Fernand Braudel, the Longue Durée, and World Systems Analysis* (2012), 2.

2. Methodology and terminology

In this chapter, I explicate the terminological and methodological debates behind the concepts, research methods and types of primary sources used in this research paper.

Countercultures/Subcultures: a Terminological Distinction

Countercultures play a major role in this paper. To be able to comprehend the relation between countercultural movements and a perceived mainstream on a larger historical and theoretical scale, I use both the terms 'counterculture' and 'subculture' throughout this research. The distinction between these two terms has been the subject of academic scrutiny. Media theorist and sociologist Dick Hebdige's influential writings on subculture only refer to 'subcultures', even though his definition of the word seems to correspond to Thomas Frank's notion of countercultures. Hebdige refers to subcultures as 'noise' or 'interference in the orderly sequence' of daily mainstream life.⁶⁴ Arguing subcultures craft their own narrative and culture to counter the assumed natural state of the mainstream, Hebdige's definition ties in with the 'countercultural idea', as it stresses a constant struggle between the directly opposed groups of subculture and mainstream. Hebdige sees the commodification of subcultures as the conclusion to this cultural clash:

As the subculture begins to strike its own eminently marketable pose, as its vocabulary (both visual and verbal) becomes more and more familiar, so the referential context to which it can be most conveniently assigned is made increasingly apparent. Eventually, the mods, the punks, the glitter rockers can be incorporated, brought back into line.⁶⁵

As such, Frank's use of the term 'counterculture' in his accompanying framework for the 'countercultural idea' and the structure of hip consumerism corresponds to Hebdige's idea of 'subculture'.

However, other scholars make a clear distinction between 'counterculture' and 'subculture'. In their analysis of the semantics in discourse regarding subculture, sociologists Todd Crossett and Becky Beal refer to Milton Yinger's 1960 essay "Contraculture and Subculture" to signify a widely accepted distinction between these two terms.⁶⁶ According to Yinger, subcultures "differ in such things as language, values, religion, diet, and style of life from the larger social world of which they are a part".⁶⁷ However, this difference is a *deviation* from larger mainstream values, rather than an explicit *opposition* to the mainstream.⁶⁸ In Yinger's work, 'contraculture', or 'counterculture', "describes those groups in which the normative system contains as its primary element conflict with or rejection of a dominant culture".⁶⁹ To be able to better distinguish between cultural groups that tie in with the countercultural idea by rejecting the perceived mainstream and cultural groups that shape their own cultural ecosystem without displaying anti-mainstream traits, Yinger's distinction is used throughout this thesis.

The dominance of the countercultural idea became so commonplace in the period following the 1960s that most subcultural groups in this time frame contain countercultural ele-

⁶⁴ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The meaning of style* (2012), 90-92.

⁶⁵ Hebdige, *Subculture: The meaning of style*, 92.

⁶⁶ Todd Crossett & Becky Beal, "The use of 'subculture' and 'subworld' in ethnographic works on sport: A discussion of definitional distinctions," *Sociology of Sport* 14.1 (1997), 74-75.

⁶⁷ Crossett & Beal, "The use of 'subculture'", 74.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 75.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 75.

ments. Subcultures such as mods, rockers, (early) disco, punk and reggae all contain a certain degree of rejection of mainstream values.⁷⁰ However, it has been noted that explicit rejections of the mainstream are not as easily identifiable in more recent subcultures such as emo, pop punk, hipster and indie.⁷¹ As such, I distinguish between ‘countercultures’ and ‘subcultures’, tying in with Yinger’s distinction, but emphasize that, in specific historical contexts, the terms ‘countercultures’ and ‘subcultures’ may converge and be used to signify the same groups.

The term ‘counterculture’ has also frequently been used to denote the specific counterculture of the 1960s. In popular media, the counterculture of the 1960s has often been portrayed as the first, quintessential counterculture, thus validating the use of ‘the counterculture’ to refer to this specific cultural movement. Other terms used for the counterculture of the 1960s include ‘hippies’, ‘freaks’, ‘flower children’, ‘the underground’ and ‘the youth culture of the 1960s’.⁷² To acknowledge that the counterculture of the 1960s did not only comprise the narrow cultural archetypes of ‘freaks’ and ‘hippies’, but also included groups such as Marxist activists, black youth from the civil rights movement and experimental artists that did not fit the ‘hippie’ image, these latter terms are not used to denote the whole of the counterculture throughout this paper.⁷³ To avoid confusion between the counterculture of the 1960s and ‘counterculture’ in general, this paper always refers explicitly to the ‘counterculture of the 1960s’.

Defining ‘Cultural Consumption’

Another concept that is central to this thesis is ‘cultural consumption’. Cultural consumption is defined as the consumption of goods that signify a certain ‘culture’ associated with a social group or class. Herbert Gans’ concept of ‘taste cultures’ provides some insight into the way social groups validate themselves through consuming cultural goods. According to Gans, taste cultures are social groups that share a common interest in culture.⁷⁴ In accordance with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of ‘cultural capital’, Gans sees cultural taste as something that is transmitted through education and upbringing and signifies a hierarchical social class.⁷⁵ Historically, for instance, a taste for classical music requires an upbringing by higher or middle classes since the culture surrounding the genre is run through with symbols and conventions that stem from these social classes.⁷⁶ In turn, middle classes and higher classes validate their membership of their social taste culture by consuming classical music.⁷⁷ As such, cultural consumption can be seen as the process of consuming goods that thereby construct one’s social identity or ‘taste culture’.

⁷⁰ Muggleton and Weinzierl, *The Post-subcultures Reader*, 11-12.

⁷¹ Alexis Petridis, “Youth subcultures: where have they gone?”, *The Guardian* (2014), via <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/mar/20/youth-subcultures-where-have-they-gone> (version June 12 2019);

Stephen Pritchard, “Hipsters and artists are the gentrifying foot soldiers of capitalism”, *The Guardian* (2016), via <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/13/hipsters-artists-gentrifying-capitalism> (version June 12 2019).

⁷² Barry Miles, “Spirit of the underground: the 60’s rebel”, *The Guardian* (2011), via <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/jan/30/underground-arts-60s-rebel-counterculture> (version June 12 2019);

Jon Savage, “1966: the year youth culture exploded”, *The Guardian* (2015), via <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/nov/15/1966-trip-good-vibrations-pop-revolution> (version June 12 2019).

⁷³ Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History*, 4-5.

⁷⁴ Herbert Gans, *Popular culture and high culture: An analysis and evaluation of taste* (2008), 7-8.

⁷⁵ Gans, *Popular culture and high culture*, 8.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 9-10.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 10.

Cultural consumption can be differentiated from cultural consumerism. Cultural consumption can be read as simply owning and processing cultural goods that imply a specific taste culture, whereas cultural consumerism implies that the consumption of cultural goods is tied to a system of economic consumerism. Cultural consumerism implies that cultural consumption is realized through a social and economic order that encourages the acquisition of goods and services. As such, the term 'cultural consumption' is used to refer to a more general historical interaction with cultural goods, whereas consumerism is used to denote a specific social and economic order.

Primary Source Material and Research Methods

In the third chapter of this research paper, I carry out a case study of hip hop's rise to success to explain hip hop's paradoxical integration of commercialism and counterculturalism. The primary sources that have been selected for this case study stem from the late 1970s up to the 1980s and mostly concern New York's hip hop scene. This historical context is relevant for my research question; the genre of hip hop originated in New York during the 1970s, and 1980s New York formed the forefront to hip hop's rise to widespread success.⁷⁸ Of course, New York is not the only context that gave birth to a highly influential form of hip hop that contained the paradoxical integration of commercialism and counterculturalism. A distinct commercially successful and artistically influential form of hip hop sprung from America's west coast during the late 1980s, and the U.S.A.'s southern regions gave rise to a wholly different form of hip hop that became dominant in the 2010s through the widespread influence of its 'trap'-style.⁷⁹ However, this research paper focuses on hip hop's original context because New York hip hop's swift trajectory from a closed subculture in the Bronx and Harlem to a nation-wide success allows for closely monitoring how hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism originated and soon found its way to mainstream culture. As such, a clear process from the origins to the dominant position of hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism is discernible from the context of New York during the late 1970s up to the 1980s.

My primary source research is divided in two parts. The first part focuses on the first sub-question: to what extent can hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism be explained through the role both of these factors played in hip hop's early context of 1970s New York? To answer this question, I use primary sources from hip hop's early culture in 1970s New York and analyze the way hip hop artists, hip hop record labels and hip hop entrepreneurs perceive their relation to artistry, to the African American neighborhoods in New York and to commerce. I use contemporary accounts of hip hop artists and entrepreneurs from 1970s New York that are mostly taken from music magazines such as *The Source*, *New Musical Express*, local papers such as *Soho News*, and transcripts from conversations and interviews found in Cornell University's Bill Adler Hip Hop Archive. Bill Adler, an American music journalist, critic and hip hop publicist, has focused on hip hop since the late 1970s, interviewing numerous influential figures from its early New York scene. His archive, donated to Cornell University, comprises of transcripts from interviews and conversations, snippets from newspapers and other media, and photographic material related to hip hop's early New York scene.⁸⁰ Additionally, I use retrospective accounts from documentaries such as *Hip-Hop Evolution* and magazines. Of course, all of these sources are, in the first place, self-representations. The retrospective interviews were recorded or written down decades after the 1970s. As such, it is possible that the

⁷⁸ Forman and Neal, *That's the joint!*, 9-10.

⁷⁹ Forman, "Represent", 203-204.

⁸⁰ Cornell University, "The Adler Hip Hop Archive", <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/hiphop/adler.html> (version 18 June 2019).

artists and entrepreneurs that are used throughout this part of the case study present a different view on their role in New York's hip hop than they originally, or actually, might have believed. This is characteristic element of research based on autobiographical records or oral history. Since oral history became a prominent method during the 1960s, the risks and values of such an approach have been debated widely.⁸¹ When aspiring to find an empirical historical 'truth', oral and autobiographical source material is often perceived as too distorted or inconsistent to use.⁸² However, this research paper is focused on a historical change in *ideas*. My aim is to understand how hip hop, a genre that breaks with dominant ideas on the countercultures/mainstream dynamic through its integration of commercialism and counterculturalism, came to take such a dominant place in contemporary culture. As such, I am focusing on how the *idea* of hip hop allows for a perceived compatibility of commercialism and counterculturalism, as well as on what the dominant position of hip hop tells us about a change in *ideas* regarding cultural consumption. The primary sources used in my case study correspond to researching these ideas; first-hand accounts of hip hop entrepreneurs and artists provide valuable insight into the ideas regarding the relation between commerce and counterculturalism that were fundamental for hip hop. Using close-reading as my main method, I compare the different primary sources I use to each other and to my theoretical framework to come to a conclusion regarding the dominant way of thinking about art, commerce, counterculturalism and African American identity in hip hop. The retrospective sources I use are more problematic in researching the central ideas of the New York hip hop scene in the 1970s and 1980s. These sources refer to this historical context in hindsight, integrating later views and narratives in their understanding of the 1970s New York hip hop scene. However, relatively few interviews with influential hip hop figures of early 1970s New York have been recorded, thus necessitating the use of later sources. As such, my primary source research is based on historical source material from the context itself as much as possible. I only use retrospective source material as additional material or to underwrite ideas that are also apparent in contemporary source material.

The second part of my case study focuses on the way hip hop's integration of counterculturalism and commercialism was able to gain widespread success in a culture that, at least up to that point, adhered to the 'countercultural idea' as a dominant narrative. For an extensive part, I use similar primary sources to those used in my first case study. I analyze interviews, autobiographical accounts and documented conversation that describe the way hip hop managed to appeal to a larger audience throughout the 1980s. I specifically zoom in on Def Jam, a record label that exemplifies hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism and found unprecedented success. The black-owned label Def Jam was a pioneer in commercializing hip hop, but Def Jam also paved the way for harder-edged, socially critical and subversive hip hop. Among Def Jam's acts were the radical anti-racist group Public Enemy and Run-D.M.C., whose combination of 'My Adidas'-commerce and a gritty sound is discussed in the introduction of this paper.⁸³ I also focus on the narrative of Fab Five Freddy, a hip hop DJ and graffiti artist that played a crucial and exemplary role in linking hip hop to a white audience. In this second part of my case study, I analyze the way artists and entrepreneurs related to New York's hip hop scene characterize the way hip hop appealed to an audience outside of the ghetto, specifically focusing on hip hop's transfer to a white American middle class. Using these sources, I argue that the way hip hop found widespread success represents a change in the dominant counterculture/mainstream dynamic, thus allowing for a widespread acceptance of hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism.

⁸¹ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (2010), 250.

⁸² Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 251.

⁸³ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

3. Structures of Cultural Consumption

Contextualizing the History of Cultural Consumption

In this chapter, I set out a theoretical framework that allows for an understanding of the development of cultural consumption. To be able to explain hip hop's integration of counterculturalism and commercialism and the way this integration might signify a change in cultural structures regarding countercultures and the mainstream, it is essential to provide an understanding of the cultural mechanisms that have played out during hip hop's rise to global success.

The Structural Development of Cultural Consumption

This chapter presents a model that offers insight in the structural development of cultural consumption since the 19th century. The model (see *fig. i*) is based on three main structures that are distilled from a range of academic literature.

First, I introduce the 'civil society'-phase that is largely based on cultural historian Jerrold Seigel's writings on the dichotomous nature of high culture in the 19th century. Additionally, sociologist Herbert Gans' work on high

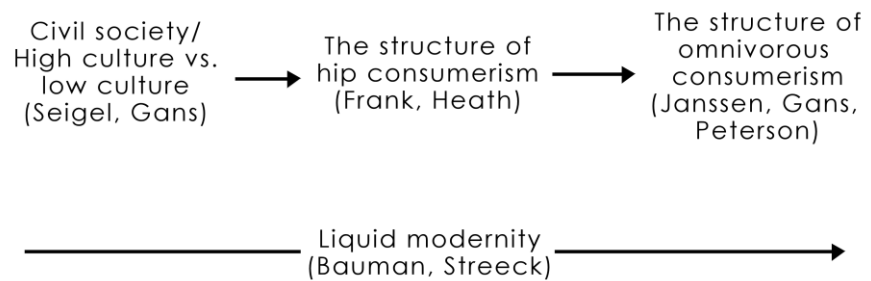


fig. i: structures of cultural consumption

and low culture is incorporated, which provides a framework for the understanding of this first structure of cultural consumption. Getting to grips with this first phase sheds light on the fundamentals of modern cultural consumption, and specifically illuminates the fundamental assumption of the structure of hip consumerism. Since it is the structure of hip consumerism that hip hop seems to break with, it is important to provide a thorough understanding of the fundamental notions that influenced this structure through looking at the 'civil society'-structure.

Then, I introduce a second phase: the structure of hip consumerism. This structure is largely based on Thomas Frank's definition of consumer culture in the 1960s and its focus on the dichotomous countercultural idea that, according to Jerrold Seigel, can be traced back to the post-French revolution civil society. I use cultural philosopher Joseph Heath's writings on hip consumerism to provide context to this second structure. As such, a framework is provided for the dominant way of understanding cultural consumption over the last fifty years.

The last structure I introduce is the structure of omnivorous consumerism. Using literature by Susanne Janssen, Herbert Gans and Richard Peterson, I establish a framework aimed at understanding the structural changes in cultural consumption since the phase of hip consumerism. Since hip hop seems to signify a change in the ideas regarding the counterculture/mainstream dynamic, it is essential to understand *whereto* this change might lead. As such, this last structure presents a hypothetical structural change that might explain the implications of hip hop's deviation from the countercultural idea.

Using the work of Wolfgang Streeck and Zygmunt Bauman, I end this chapter by introducing a larger process, based on Bauman's concept of liquidization, that allows for a more thorough understanding of the structural development of cultural consumption, and as such an

understanding of what hip hop's deviation from the countercultural idea might signify as part of a larger cultural process.

The Structure of the Civil Society

In his book *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*, sociologist Herbert Gans seeks to describe the historical development and interaction of 'taste cultures', that is, social groups defined by their commonalities in cultural consumption.⁸⁴ Gans considers the distinction between high and low culture to be the basis of a differentiation of taste cultures in Western society. In his introduction to the revised 2008 edition of *Popular Culture and High Culture*, Gans acknowledges that his belief that a distinction between high and low culture is still the definitive model to understand contemporary taste cultures is not widely shared; he describes how several academics have argued that subculturalisation has structurally changed the distinction between high and low culture in the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, he describes a rising number of academics that argue contemporary cultural consumption is defined by the omnivorous consumer.⁸⁵ Although Gans' idea that contemporary culture is still dominated by the distinction between high and low culture is debatable, his overview of the historical development of high and popular culture provides valuable insight into the rise of modern cultural consumption. Gans describes how the 19th century saw the rise of a new, modern distinction between high and low culture. In the civil society that came to prominence after the French Revolution, high culture gradually came to be dominated by the upper middle class instead of the nobility.⁸⁶

During the same period, the *bohème* came to the forefront of civil society. In his book *The Music of the Spheres*, Jamie James describes the rise of the romanticist movement and the way its redefinition of art shaped the *bohème* and later countercultures. According to James, the romanticist movement broke with the idea that art should aspire to be a mathematical representation of universal order. Instead, this movement defined art as individual, human, subjective expression.⁸⁷ This focus on individual expression tied in with the rise of liberal values in Western society during the late 18th and 19th centuries.⁸⁸ Adhering to values such as authenticity, individuality, creativity and inspiration, the romanticist movement laid the foundations for later countercultural movements and can be seen as the first definitive form of the *bohème*.⁸⁹

In *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life*, cultural historian Jerrold Seigel analyzes the rise of the liberal Western culture that came into being after the French Revolution. In his description of the trajectory towards a society based on the norms of upper middle class bourgeois values, Seigel argues for a different approach to the widely presumed dichotomy between the *bourgeoisie* and the *bohème* that defined the era. Seigel describes how the romanticist movement and later incarnations of the *bohème* defined themselves primarily by their opposition to the bourgeois order.⁹⁰ This dualistic relationship between *bohème* and *bourgeoisie* can be seen as a precursor to the countercultural idea as described by Thomas Frank. In accordance with Frank, Seigel also argues the *bourgeoisie* and the *bohème* are more

⁸⁴ Gans, *Popular culture and high culture*, 7-8.

⁸⁵ Gans, *Popular culture and high culture*, 12-13.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 27-28.

⁸⁷ Jamie James, *The music of the spheres. Music, science, and the natural order of the universe* (1993) 3-9.

⁸⁸ James, *The music of the spheres*, 9-10.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, 10-11.

⁹⁰ Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, politics, and the boundaries of bourgeois life, 1830-1930* (1999), 9-11.

intricately intertwined than popular discourse would suggest.⁹¹ According to James, the values of 19th century bohemian movements ultimately adhered to liberal ideas as much as the bourgeois order. Civil society, writes Seigel, can be seen as a diptych of *bourgeoisie* and *bohème*. Although these groups are popularly presumed to represent a clash of values, Seigel argues that both aspire to the liberal ideal of self-realization and progress through social and economic freedom.⁹² The bourgeoisie represents the promise of a successful self-made class that is spurred by economic freedom and social mobility. The bohème represents the freedom of expression, movement and creativity that is essential to liberal society.⁹³ According to Seigel, the supposed clash between these two liberal groups *itself* is also an essential part of liberal society.⁹⁴ Liberal society, says Seigel, is built on the cultural promise of continuous progress through its openness in the economic, social and cultural spheres. This idea of openness is legitimized by allowing freedom of movement to seemingly opposing social groups.⁹⁵ Allowing a cultural dialectic between the *bohème* and the *bourgeoisie* would result in a process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, thus facilitating cultural progress.⁹⁶ As such, Seigel argues counter-cultures can be considered as inherently intertwined with the mainstream through their codependency in the legitimization of the fundamentals of liberal civil society.

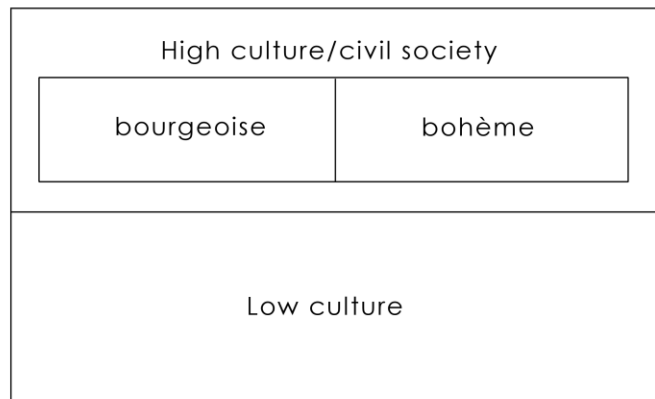


fig. ii: the first structure of cultural consumption, based on the distinction between high and low culture and the dichotomy between the *bourgeoisie* and the *bohème*

Figure ii represents the fundamental aspects of cultural consumption in the 19th century, based on Seigel, Gans and James. As described by Gans, cultural consumption was mainly differentiated by high and low culture, with high culture being the new, liberal civil society. This civil society, argues Seigel, can be seen as a diptych that consists of the *bourgeoisie* and the *bohème*. In this dualistic relationship, the bourgeoisie represented the economic profit and socially mobile middle class culture that stemmed from liberal society. The bohème represented the freedom to be able to move on the margins of liberal society. As such, both groups prove integral to the rise of liberal civil society. Not only did both the bohème and the bourgeoisie mostly stem from educated, middle class backgrounds and base their ideas on liberal values, but these groups also represented the openness and progress of the liberal society due to their constant dialectic. The widely assumed distinction between these two intertwined groups provides a fundamental basis for the Frank's characterization of the model of hip consumerism and the accompanying counter-cultural idea.

⁹¹ Seigel, *Bohemian Paris*, 10-12.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 16-19.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 19-20.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 12-16.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 5-11.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 6-11.

The Structure of Hip Consumerism

In *Popular Culture and High Culture*, Herbert Gans describes the rise of mass culture in the early twentieth century. Technological development gave way to new media such as film, radio, television and music records. What differentiated these products from most earlier cultural goods was their reproducibility. As such, these new mass media interacted with an unprecedented audience, thus giving way to a new approach to cultural consumption.⁹⁷ The ability to widely disseminate cultural goods soon became interesting to countercultural movements. Spreading music and film through new media effectively helped construct a countercultural identity. Subsequently, movements such as the flapper culture integrated countercultural stances such as gender-bending and anti-bourgeois musical taste with the consumption of commercial mass media.⁹⁸

This blend of a *bohème*-like attitude and mass consumerism initially took place in higher social classes that disposed of the wealth to consume new media. However, during the 1960s, a shift in Western economy brought this new type of countercultural consumerism to the forefront of Western culture. In his article *Citizens as Customers*, economic sociologist Wolfgang Streeck analyzes this economic shift. According to Streeck, during the 1960s a shift from the economic public sector to the economic private sector took place. Post-war wealth, resulting in unprecedented disposable income among all layers of society, decreased the need for a strong public sector.⁹⁹ Post-war affluence had taken care of most basic needs – and a broader segment of the population started spending disposable income on goods provided by the private sector, resulting in a growth of the private sector.¹⁰⁰ According to Streeck, the private sector has since proved itself adequate in appealing to a society with large quantities of disposable income. The public sector, being public, can by definition only present generalized, egalitarian, ‘public’ goods – thereby appealing to no specific individual consumer. The private sector, however, can appeal to the individual needs of the customer.¹⁰¹

At the same time, the generation that grew up during this post-war affluence displayed an unprecedented tendency towards countercultural values. According to historian Hans Righart, the younger generation of the 1960s opposed themselves to the bourgeois order as an effect of a generational clash in post-war Western society.¹⁰² The lingering trauma of the Second World War and the unwillingness of the older generation to address their problematic involvement in the war gave way to this generational clash.¹⁰³ The post-war baby-boom generation resisted their parents’ ways of thinking by adhering to values that contradicted the Western bourgeois order. Thus, the younger generation took to Marxist thought, non-Western philosophy and religion, drugs, new approaches to sexuality and marriage, and music, art and literature that represented a perceived bohemian opposition to the societal mainstream.¹⁰⁴ This opposition to mainstream values resulted in a gradual weakening of the hierarchical schema of high- and low culture. Artists such as The Beatles, Bob Dylan and Andy Warhol deliberately broke down the barriers between high culture, low culture and mass media.¹⁰⁵ Many of the countercultural values of the baby-boom generation were expressed through the consumption of mass

⁹⁷ Gans, *Popular culture and high culture*, 26-29.

⁹⁸ Ole Reinsch, “Flapper Girls: Feminism and consumer society in the 1920s,” *Gender Forum* 42 (2013), 4-6.

⁹⁹ Wolfgang Streeck, “Citizens as customers: considerations on the new politics of consumption”, *New Left Review* 76 (2012), 43-47.

¹⁰⁰ Streeck, “Citizens as customers”, 46.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, 46-47.

¹⁰² Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig*, 5-13.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, 12-13.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ Simon Frith & Howard Horne, *Art into pop* (2016), 104-105.

media and cultural goods. Due to their size and affluence, the baby-boom generation became an essential target market and started to dominate popular culture, thus shifting countercultural consumerism towards the center of cultural consumption. According to Thomas Frank, both bohemian countercultures and bourgeois mainstream culture were rooted in an ideal of liberal individual self-realization, be it a realization of middle class comfort or bohemian artistry.¹⁰⁶ Now, the mass consumerism collided with the structure of the civil society as described by Seigel, resulting in a popularly assumed dialectic between countercultures and mainstream that both based their self-realization on consumerism. Wolfgang Streeck presents a similar theory, stressing that since the 1960s, expressing one's authentic identity became tied to consuming the according cultural goods.¹⁰⁷

As such, Frank's idea of hip consumerism, became the basis for cultural consumption. Since the counterculture of the 1960s took their inspiration from earlier bohemian countercultural movements – in particular the romanticist movement – and applied these inspirations to fuel a cultural clash between their generation and their parents, the counterculture of the 1960s strongly reiterated the dichotomy between bourgeoisie and bohème. The presumed clash between the bohème and the bourgeoisie had originally been a liberal affair between two groups that stemmed from the same middle class background. Now, the 'countercultural idea' that came up in 19th century liberal society had blended with mass consumerism and was carried by a countercultural group unprecedented in size and affluence. New post-war affluence broadened middle class culture considerably, providing fertile ground for the countercultural tendencies of the baby boom generation. This large and affluent group of young people brought the 'countercultural idea' to the forefront of cultural consumption. Thomas Frank describes how, as a result, the liberal idea of self-realization that was dominant in both countercultures and the bourgeois mainstream was now carried out through consumerism. As such, both groups adhered to the same dominant structure that placed consumerism at the basis of self-expression and identity.

The Structure of Omnivorous Consumption

In 1992, sociologists Richard A. Peterson and Albert Simkus conducted a survey regarding taste cultures. Their survey was largely based on influential sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, social groups not only legitimize their hierarchical positions through their financial capital, but through their cultural taste, or cultural capital, and social network, or social capital, as well.¹⁰⁸ The results of the survey turned out to be different from Peterson and Simkus' expectations that were based on Bourdieu's theories. Instead of finding a clear cultural hierarchy between high and low culture that would form the basis of cultural capital as described in Bourdieu's *La Distinction*, Peterson and Simkus found a tendency of "eclectic, even 'omnivorous'" taste in both upper and middle class culture.¹⁰⁹ Intrigued by the results, Peterson conducted a new survey in 1996. This research concluded that the omnivorous taste culture that had started in upper- and middle class culture had spread throughout American society in the period between 1982 and 1992, especially in younger generations.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool. Business culture, counterculture, and the rise of hip consumerism* (1997), 43-44.

¹⁰⁷ Streeck, "Citizens as customers", 46.

¹⁰⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, "The forms of capital", in: red. Imre Szeman & Timothy Kaposy, *Cultural Theory: an anthology* (2011), 82-83; Janssen, *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Janssen, *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving*, 15-16.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 16.

This tendency towards omnivorous consumerism was complemented by a study into cultural distaste, conducted by sociologist Bethany Bryson. According to Bryson, cultural consumers from higher- and middle classes not only had a more varied palette of cultural preferences, but less distaste of 'lower' culture as well.¹¹¹ In Herbert Gans' *Popular Culture and High Culture* and Susanne Janssen's *Het Soortelijk Gewicht van Kunst in een Open Samenleving*, this increase in omnivorous consumption is discussed. Sociologist of media and culture Susanne Janssen argues that the idea of an omnivorous taste culture has become an accepted academic theory and notes how the mainstream press seems to acknowledge the spread of omnivorous cultural consumerism.¹¹² Gans stresses that the distinction between high and low culture is still very much prevalent.¹¹³ Although his focus on a high-low culture distinction is in line with Peterson, Kern & Bryson's findings that omnivorous consumption originated as a higher middle class affair, even Gans acknowledges that a profound change has taken place in cultural consumption over the last twenty years.¹¹⁴ This shift from a schema based on high culture versus low culture, or even a dichotomy based on the countercultural idea, towards a form of omnivorous consumerism that disregards a constant allegiance to a specific taste culture can even be characterized as a new phase in cultural consumption.

The theory that omnivorous consumption has become the most prominent form of cultural consumption over the last twenty years also implies a fundamental break with the phase of hip consumerism. Hip consumerism is built on the prevalence of a countercultural idea that implies a dichotomous incompatibility of mainstream and counterculture. The fact that anyone can listen to "...Mozart and pop music, visit an opera but now and then a musical too" and "put down Homer for a minute to watch an enjoyable trash film on SBS [a commercial Dutch television channel]"¹¹⁵ implies that the incompatibility between high and low culture has become increasingly irrelevant, but the fact that anyone can listen to a 1960s protest record in the morning, visit a Picasso exhibition in the afternoon and watch *Love Island* in the evening also implies a break with the belief in the countercultural idea. As such, the phase of omnivorous consumption implies a fundamental break with the hierarchical dichotomy of high and low culture as well as the countercultural idea. Not only does the omnivorous consumer consume cultural products all over the scales of high, low, countercultural and mainstream culture, but the omnivorous consumer also breaks with the idea of self-realizing his authentic identity through consumerism, an idea that Frank sees as integral to hip consumerism.¹¹⁶ The omnivorous consumer's eclectic taste proves that his consumption is not directly associated with the realization of one specific cultural identity. Therefore, the dominance omnivorous consumerism can be seen as a break with the previous structures of cultural consumption.

The historical trajectory from the civil society-phase and the structure of hip consumerism to a structure revolving around omnivorous consumerism can be understood as a larger process with the theories of Zygmunt Bauman and Wolfgang Streeck. In his book *Liquid Modernity*, the Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman argues that a trajectory of liquidization has taken place since the latter half of the 20th century, ultimately resulting in the 'liquid

¹¹¹ Ibidem, 16.

¹¹² Ibidem, 15-17.

¹¹³ Gans, *Popular culture and high culture*, 12-13.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem, 13-14.

¹¹⁵ Translated from Herman Franke, *NRC* (2000):

'...die naar Mozart en naar
popmuziek luistert, die naar de opera maar af en toe ook
naar een musical gaat en die Homerus even
weglegt omdat er op SBS een lekkere shitfilm begint'

in: Janssen, *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving*, 15.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 43-44.

consumer' of the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹⁷ In accordance with Thomas Frank's idea of the importance of the 'hip' and non-mainstream in hip consumerism, Bauman emphasizes the enticing role of the strange and subversive in modern consumer-oriented economies.¹¹⁸ However, Bauman writes that the ongoing process towards a 'liquid' society based on cultural mobility, individuality and consumerism has eroded the coherence of cultural groups, instead boiling society down to the sum of all individual 'liquid consumers.'¹¹⁹ This theory is exemplified by the title of his chapter "Divided, we shop."¹²⁰ As such, Bauman's theory underwrites the idea of the omnivorous – or 'liquid' – consumer as the basis for contemporary cultural consumption. His idea of a larger process of liquidization ties in with the development of structures of cultural consumption as characterized in this chapter. The process from fixed hierarchical social categories based on high and low culture to a more fluid range of taste cultures based on subcultural identity in the structure of hip consumerism suggests an increasingly 'liquid' society that has shed off traditional fixed categorization in favor of a more culturally mobile, individually focused system. The structure of omnivorous consumerism can be seen as a next phase in this process of liquidization; the previous subcultural groups have more or less broken down into small, individual islands of fluid, socially mobile and omnivorous cultural consumption.

German economic sociologist Wolfgang Streeck also identifies a trajectory towards individual omnivorous consumerism in the latter half of the 20th century. Streeck describes a process of 'sociation by consumption' that started in the 1960s.¹²¹ During this new structure of hip consumerism, consumption facilitated a cultural mobility between social groups and subcultures that had not been possible in the previous structural hierarchies. Through the symbolic associations of their consumption, individuals could form their own cultural identities. Since the post-war period, buying a record was not only a means of validating one's fixed taste culture, but also a means of *constructing* one's identity by tapping in to the cultural consumption of one's preferred subcultural group. According to Streeck, this 'sociation by consumption' has since grown, replacing (sub)cultural groups with an increasingly individualistic, socially mobile, malleable system of constructing identities through consumerism.¹²² Streeck's analysis fits Bauman's theories of increased liquid societies and again underwrites the idea that the 'omnivorous consumer' is the result of a larger process towards increasingly individualistic, fluid cultural consumption. As such, the trajectory from the structure of hip consumerism towards the structure of omnivorous consumerism is a cultural and economic change that increasingly emphasizes the role of consumerism as a means of expression, but reduces this expression more and more to an individual level.

Omnivorous Consumption, Countercultures and Hip Hop

The rise of this omnivorous culture goes hand in hand with the arguable decline of countercultures that adhere strongly to the countercultural idea. Whereas several new subcultures appeared since the 1980s, their focus on a countercultural narrative gradually became of less importance to their identities. Subcultures such as grunge culture and rave culture gained prominence during the 1990s, but their resistance to mainstream norms was largely expressed through an apathy towards these mainstream values, rather than through the reiteration of the

¹¹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid modernity* (2013), 82-84.

¹¹⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, "Modernity and ambivalence," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7.2 (1990), 168-169.

¹¹⁹ Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, 89-90.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, 89.

¹²¹ Streeck, "Citizens as customers", 33-34.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 35-36.

cultural skirmish between counterculture and mainstream that was prevalent in the counterculture of the 1960s and the punk counterculture.¹²³ Political scientist Thomas Shevory denotes the way subcultures since grunge step away from a clear-cut political clash, instead focusing on an increasingly individual affair:

Early punks "knew who the enemy was" (Ferguson 61): authority, order, power, and just about everything else. In the ideology of grunge, the enemy turns out to be the self.¹²⁴

According to *The Guardian*, more recent subcultures such as emo, pop punk, hipster and indie do not emphasize the social struggle of the countercultural idea.¹²⁵ Moreover, the hipster subculture has even been argued to explicitly tie in with capitalist, mainstream values, unabashedly uniting their authentic, subcultural self-representation with capitalist consumer values instead of attempting to construct a narrative based on the countercultural idea.¹²⁶

In the light of this context, the subculture of hip hop provides a unique case. Chronologically, hip hop can be seen as one of the first subcultural movements that combined an anti-establishment, countercultural stance with an explicit focus on commercialism, thus dissolving the dichotomy that is inherent to the countercultural idea. Moreover, hip hop is very much tied to this trajectory since it has become the world's best-selling musical genre during this process towards omnivorous consumption. Hip hop can also be seen as a unique case due to its African American origins. In most previous cases, subcultural movements only rose to prominence after the interference of a white middle class that reinterprets the movement through the narrative of the countercultural idea, making it a middle class affair in the process. Working class subcultures such as the mod culture and (British) punk, as well as black subcultures such as jazz and blues culture, only came to widespread prominence after being appropriated by white cultural movements and filtered through their bohème vs. bourgeoisie-narrative.¹²⁷ The genre of hip hop, however, came to prominence with black artists themselves and has not been associated with a distinct white cultural movement. To understand what this factor of race can tell us about the way hip hop fits into the structures of cultural consumption, the next chapter focuses on the place of black culture in the structures of cultural consumption.

¹²³ Thomas C. Shevory, "Bleached resistance: The politics of grunge," *Popular Music & Society* 19.2 (1995), 23-25.

¹²⁴ Shevory, "Bleached resistance", 26.

¹²⁵ Alexis Petridis, "Youth subcultures: where have they gone?"

¹²⁶ Stephen Pritchard, "Hipsters and artists are the gentrifying foot soldiers of capitalism".

¹²⁷ Shevory, "Bleached resistance", 23.

4. From Primitivism to Merchantry

African American culture, counterculture and cultural consumption

American hip hop has, from the outset, been explicitly tied to the African American experience and social position. To be able to analyze the process the distinctly African American genre of hip hop went through from its local roots to its worldwide commercial success, it is essential to understand the historical context of African American culture and its place in the structures of cultural consumption as described in the previous chapter.

Black Art in a Civil Society

In 1907, Pablo Picasso painted his controversial work *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*. Its exhibition provoked widespread outcry. Not only did the painting depict several prostitutes in provocative poses, but the painting's aesthetics – or rather, what the larger bourgeois audience perceived as a lack of aesthetics – went right against the grain of early 20th century bourgeois taste. The painting is widely held to be a prime example of Picasso's cubist phase, a distinctive style largely inspired by traditional African art.¹²⁸ Art historian Patricia Leighton argues Picasso's enthusiasm for African art can only be understood through the social context of Paris in the early 20th century. As part of the modernist movement, Picasso espoused radical views in art and politics. Deliberately attempting to break with what he saw as the bourgeois standards of the French art world, Picasso, a devout Marxist, turned elsewhere for his inspiration. Influenced by his opposition of the French colonial regime in Africa, Picasso became fascinated with the traditional art of the indigenous peoples – and turned these inspirations into his controversially anti-bourgeois cubist style.¹²⁹ Picasso was not the only modernist that used African influences to provoke the bourgeois order; painters such as Maurice Vlaminck and Kees van Dongen were also largely influenced by traditional African art.¹³⁰ Modernist writers like Alfred Jarry and T.S. Eliot integrated influences from African folklore and poetic meters inspired by traditional African rhythms in their work.¹³¹ However, in their opposition of the cultural mainstream, these countercultural modernists copied the bourgeois order's black-and-white schema with regard to race, simply flipping it upside down:

...the modernists did not extend their social criticism to a radical critique of the reductive view of Africans that was promoted for colonial justification. Instead, they embraced a deeply romanticized view of African culture (conflating many cultures into one), and considered Africa the embodiment of humankind in a precivilized state, preferring to mystify rather than to examine its presumed idol-worship and violent rituals.¹³²

As such, the modernist movement's fascination with African culture largely stemmed from a desire to embrace African culture as a mysterious, anti-bourgeois 'other'. This countercultural provocation was ultimately a Western affair; a European interpretation of black culture was appropriated as a means of provocation against the bourgeois Western order.

The modernist movement is exemplary for the way black culture fits in Jerrold Seigel's dichotomous model of the civil society in the 19th and 20th century. This dominant system of

¹²⁸Patricia Leighton, "The white peril and L'art nègre: Picasso, primitivism, and anticolonialism," *The Art Bulletin* 72.4 (1990), 610-611.

¹²⁹ Leighton, "The white peril and L'art nègre", 610.

¹³⁰ David Chinitz, 'T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide', *PMLA* 110,2 (1995), 236-247.

¹³¹ Leighton, "The white peril and L'art nègre", 612.

¹³² *Ibidem*, 612.

cultural consumption forced black culture to be understood in the terms of a dichotomy between mainstream and counterculture. As such, black culture was forced into a model based on white cultural expression. In the civil society, black art inherently differed from the white, bourgeois norms and was thus disregarded by the cultural mainstream. The bourgeois disregard for any form of black cultural expression during the 19th and 20th centuries was exactly what made black culture appealing to countercultural movements; because of its status as 'other', inherently differing from the cultural mainstream, black culture was frequently adopted by white countercultures to oppose and provoke the bourgeois norms of the mainstream. The 'black culture' that inspired countercultures such as the modernist movement, the romanticist movement and the flapper culture of the 1920s was a European depiction of blackness that tied in with the exoticism and primitivism that was associated with black culture during the 19th and 20th centuries. As such, during the context in which Seigel's model of the civil society was the dominant structure of cultural consumption, black culture was perceived as inherently countercultural due to the subversive, non-mainstream associations with blackness.

The Commodification of Blackness: from Civil Society to Hip Consumerism

In 1958, influential American writer Jack Kerouac published *The Subterraneans*, a semi-autobiographical novella based upon the protagonist Leo's affair with Mardou, an African-American woman in New York. Jack Kerouac is considered a prominent member of the beat generation, an American literary scene influenced by modernist writers of the early 20th century.¹³³ *The Subterraneans* was controversial upon its release in the racially segregated USA.¹³⁴ A film version attempting to capitalize on the beatnik craze of the period changed the protagonist's love interest to a French woman to avoid racial controversies and was derided by Kerouac.¹³⁵ *The Subterraneans* was, however, well received by Kerouac's 'progressive' contemporaries in the world of art and literature. In the 1960s, the book gained significant popularity among the counterculture along with other seminal works by the beat generation such as Kerouac's *On The Road*, Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*.¹³⁶

Nevertheless, *The Subterraneans* has increasingly received criticism over the course of the 20th century. Literary critics and activists have since argued that Kerouac portrayed the black characters in the novella as essentialist stereotypes, a criticism that was also addressed to his seminal work *On The Road*.¹³⁷ In her analysis of the role of race and gender in Kerouac's work, literary scholar Nancy McCampbell Grace argues that Kerouac's semi-autobiographical protagonist:

...perceives [Mardou] as a redeemer, a young, "cool," black subterranean symbolizing his entry into San Francisco's intellectual, jazz-oriented avant garde. This "coolness" is a modern version of the stereotype of black women as exotics [...] In this respect, Leo fetishizes Mardou's blackness.¹³⁸

This association of "coolness" with a fetishized stereotype of blackness appears throughout the works of the beat generation and is very similar to the way countercultures such as the modern-

¹³³ Nancy McCampbell Grace, "A White Man in Love: A Study of Race, Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Jack Kerouac's *Maggie Cassidy*, *The Subterraneans*, and *Tristessa*," *College Literature* 27.1 (2000), 39.

¹³⁴ Grace, "A White Man in Love", 39-40.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, 45.

¹³⁶ Steve Watson, *The Birth of the Beat Generation* (1995), 5-6.

¹³⁷ Grace, "A White Man in Love", 61-62.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, 44.

ist movement and the romanticist movement were fascinated with a white, exoticized depiction of black culture.

The central ideal of the beat generation sheds more light on its fascination with blackness. According to Kerouac, he and his fellow writers took up the term “beat” – in itself a term stemming from African American jazz slang – as a way of elevating the social repressions of African American culture to the romanticist ideal of the bohemian artist.¹³⁹ The adjective “beat”, meaning “tired” or “beaten down” within the African-American community, suggested a culture of impoverished jazz musicians, street hustlers and, using “beat” in the sense of “rhythm”, musical expression.¹⁴⁰ As such, the beat generation is also exemplary for the way Western counter-cultures, in their opposition to a perceived mainstream, adhere to an essentialist reduction of black art. Just like the modernists that influenced them and the romanticists that influenced Picasso, Kerouac and his contemporaries sought to fit black culture into their countercultural, bohemian image in order to validate their resistance to the hegemonic, white, bourgeois mainstream.

The beat generation was a major source of inspiration to the counterculture of the 1960s. As such, its romanticized views on the discriminated position of African Americans were handed over to this new counterculture. In their resistance to the mainstream, the counterculture of the 1960s developed a fascination of all things non-western. Countercultural artists turned to Indian classical music and African American blues and rock ‘n’ roll as major sources of inspiration. The idea of the ‘beat’ black musician creating authentic, emotional music from his discriminated position translated itself into the *British Blues Boom*¹⁴¹ and the *Blue Eyed Soul* movement, which involved white musicians attempting to build on a perceived tradition of ‘authentic’ black music.¹⁴² British countercultural band Humble Pie’s song *Black Coffee* is exemplary for the way these musicians based their admiration for African American music on essentialist notions of blackness. “My skin is white but my soul is black,” sings lead singer Steve Marriott in a bluesy croon, validating his countercultural image and musicianship through an association with blackness.¹⁴³

As Thomas Frank argues, it was during the 1960s that the structure of hip consumerism became the primary model of cultural consumption. Hip consumerism essentially built on the same countercultural idea that was prevalent in the civil society as described by Seigel. As such, this new structure of cultural consumption built on the same discourse with regard to race. The perception of black culture as inherently ‘hip’ during the 1960s was strongly related to the countercultural fascination with blackness in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, hip consumerism added a new dimension to the previous structure of the civil society. As Wolfgang Streeck describes, consumerism has since the 1960s become a primary way of shaping one’s identity.¹⁴⁴ The increase of wealth during the postwar period led to a saturation of primary needs. As such, consumption became focused on shaping one’s individual lifestyle – and ‘hipness’ became a primary aspiration in this context. This increased consumption of ‘hip’ cultural products has allowed for a commodification of black culture itself. The popularity of African American music such as rock ‘n’ roll during the 1950s, blues rock in the 1960s and funk in the 1970s has strong ties with countercultural notions of subversion and resistance to a white hegemonic system. This subversive aspect of African American culture has since the 1960s led to a commodification

¹³⁹ Watson, *The Birth of the Beat Generation*, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem, 3.

¹⁴¹ Roberta Freund Schwartz, *How Britain got the blues: the transmission and reception of American blues style in the United Kingdom* (2016), 16.

¹⁴² Schwartz, *How Britain got the blues*, 16-17.

¹⁴³ Ibidem, 30.

¹⁴⁴ Streeck, “Citizens as customers”, 46.

in what literary critic Satya Mohanty refers to as the *race industry*: “an industry that is responsible for the management, commodification, and domestication of race.”¹⁴⁵ As such, the interaction between *hip consumerism* and countercultural appropriations of black culture has led to a system in which “black is profitable.”¹⁴⁶

Hip Hop and Liquid Society

“When the revolution comes,” rapped The Last Poets on their eponymous set of recordings from 1970, “guns and rifles will be taking the place of poems and essays; black cultural centers will be the forts supplying the revolutionaries with food and arms... when the revolution comes.”¹⁴⁷ These lyrics are typical for the influential style of the Last Poets. Combining revolutionary Marxist attitudes with a strong focus on black emancipation, this spoken word collective from Harlem translated the sentiments of radical civil rights groups such as the Black Panther Party for Self Defense to rhythmic jazz poetry jams.¹⁴⁸

On the other side of the New York riverbanks, a movement sprung from the crowded streets of the Bronx. Under pseudonyms such as Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa and Kool DJ Herc, young African American artists took to their turntable to pioneer a wider interpretation of DJ'ing. Blending their record crates full of African American musical history into rhythmic beats based on snippets of funk, soul, rock and traditional African music, these Disc Jockeys not only played their records at parties, but used their records as an instrument in itself.¹⁴⁹ The result was a lively new party culture among young African Americans. Inspired by the do-it-yourself-attitudes of these DJ's, a large number of young inhabitants of the Bronx took up the pursuit of making music with the records they possessed.¹⁵⁰ Soon enough, the politically charged jazz poetry of Harlem natives The Last Poets and the rhythmic, party-oriented DJ culture started to blend. This resulted in an early form of what we now call hip hop.¹⁵¹ Although this new genre underwent a rapid development in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it remained relatively secluded to its original African American neighborhoods. Hip hop's close ties to locally oriented civil rights groups and its focus on constructing a party culture by and for African American communities did not resonate far outside the neighbourhoods surrounding the Bronx and Harlem.¹⁵²

At around the same time, African American culture was experiencing an unforeseen degree of popularity. Not only did records by African American artists such as Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, James Brown and The Jackson 5 climb to commercial heights, but a young generation of white musicians found musical inspiration in soul, blues and rock 'n roll.¹⁵³ It was during this period that youth culture was at its commercial and popular peak – and it was during this period that the structure of hip consumerism started to form the basis of cultural consumption. Countercultural artists took to black music to express their own subversive character, thus pop-

¹⁴⁵ Mohanty, "On race and voice", 184.

¹⁴⁶ Susannah Walker, "Black is profitable: The commodification of the Afro, 1960–1975," *Enterprise & Society* 1.3 (2000), 536-564.

¹⁴⁷ *Genius.com*, "The Last Poets: When the revolution comes", via <https://genius.com/The-last-poets-when-the-revolution-comes-lyrics> (version June 6 2019).

¹⁴⁸ Forman and Neal, *That's the joint!*, 10-15.

¹⁴⁹ Nelson George, *Hip hop's founding fathers speak the truth*, in: Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011), 45-46.

¹⁵⁰ George, *Hip hop's founding fathers speak the truth*, 46.

¹⁵¹ Forman and Neal, *That's the joint!*, 421-422.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, 421.

¹⁵³ Schwartz, *How Britain got the blues*, 2-6.

ularizing black music as a 'hip' product among a large audience of young, white consumers. At the same time, hip hop's secluded character and lack of interaction with a white, countercultural demography meant that it remained a largely unseen phenomenon up until the 1970s.¹⁵⁴

During the 1980s, Western society moved towards an increasingly 'liquid' society under a wave of neoliberal policy spearheaded by politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. This neoliberal political focus on the private sector went side by side with an increased focus on individuality; individual financial mobility and economic gain took to the forefront of the cultural stage.¹⁵⁵ It was during this context of increased liquidization that hip hop, originally a secluded African American movement, became a commercial success. As music journalist Dan Charnas writes:

In 1977 hip-hop was a marginal urban subculture, largely confined to two of the most notorious ghettos in the United States, Harlem and the South Bronx. Over three decades later, hip-hop has become global culture itself, spanning music, language, film, television, books, fashion, sports and politics.¹⁵⁶

Somehow, the genre of hip hop seemed to correspond to the changing structures of cultural consumption in a way that allowed it to become the world's best-selling musical genre. Although hip hop's early New York context could not be more different from the big business-oriented Thatcherite culture that influenced neoliberal policy in the 1980s, there are some fundamental aspects of hip hop culture that allow for an understanding of the success of hip hop within this context.

In his influential journalistic book *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop*, Dan Charnas argues that hip hop's rise to commercial success cannot be understood without analyzing the role of the artist in hip hop culture.¹⁵⁷ Although early hip hop had ties with Marxist collectives that showcased dominant tendencies of the counterculture of the 1960s, the genre found itself at the sideline of the dominant system of hip consumerism. Hip hop was made by and for African Americans from economically disadvantaged black neighbourhoods. As such, hip hop artists did not aim to correspond to the 'countercultural idea' that was rooted in a tradition of white civil culture and formed the basis to the system of hip consumerism. Early hip hop did not fit the idea of a countercultural *bohème*, and did not aspire to bohemian characterizations of the artist. Charnas stresses that, from the outset, hip hop should also be analyzed as:

...the *business* of hip-hop, and the relationship between artist and merchant – who, in hip-hop, are often one and the same.¹⁵⁸

Charnas describes how hip hop artists were spurred by a combination of motives, ranging from creating art for art's sake, having "fun" and, not least importantly, pursuing financial gain.¹⁵⁹ Hip hop often prides itself on being "real" and true to life in the ghetto.¹⁶⁰ Through its focus on the day-to-day struggles of African Americans without romantically polishing up poverty and discrimination, hip hop distances itself from the bohemian tradition of the countercultural idea, instead acknowledging the need of earning money when creating art in impoverished and dis-

¹⁵⁴ Dan Charnas, *The big payback: The history of the business of hip-hop* (2011), 1-2.

¹⁵⁵ Alfredo Saad-Filho & Deborah Johnston. *Neoliberalism: A critical reader* (2005), 1.

¹⁵⁶ Charnas, *The big-payback*, 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 3-4.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 5.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Charnas, *The big payback*, 7-10.

criminated contexts. As such, hip hop breaks with the countercultural idea by conflating the artist and the merchant, combining the individual expression of the former with the commercial focus of the latter.

This business-focused approach to making art might have risen from the necessity of being able to make a living from hip hop, but it corresponded to a larger change in cultural values during the 1980s. This period saw neoliberal policy, an increase in free market competition in Western society and a stronger focus on individuality as part of a larger process of liquidization.¹⁶¹ Hip hop's focus on individual, defiant expression on one hand and financial aspirations on the other resonated with these changing values in a way countercultures that adhered to the countercultural idea could not; the conflation of economic success and individual, creative expression that is prevalent in an increasingly liquid and neoliberal Western society is in itself a break with the countercultural idea of the structure of hip consumerism.

During this same period, the omnivorous consumer arguably rose to prominence. As such, the way hip hop explicitly refers to its local ties and African American background would arguably prove less of a problem to listeners from a different taste culture. Statistics company Medi-mark Research Inc. seems to confirm this notion; a 2004 study researching the racial self-identification of hip hop's US audience concludes only 40% of hip hop's American audience was African American.¹⁶² Nielsen's 2018 study into hip hop also suggests hip hop's global popularity took place among various cultural groups.¹⁶³ This also seems to suggest that hip hop's success can be understood through an increasingly omnivorous way of cultural consumption.

The economic conditions in the African American neighborhoods that gave rise to hip hop necessitated a commercial approach. This explicit goal of financial success set hip hop miles apart from the middle class bohemian countercultures that adhered to the countercultural idea. Hip hop's focus on individual expression and commercialism did, however, seem to correspond to changing norms in the 1980s. This, and the rise of the omnivorous consumer, allowed for widespread success of a genre that found its roots in a local, distinctly African American context.

In the next chapter, I use primary source material from hip hop's early New York scene to come to an understanding of hip hop's business culture. Using the theories regarding the idea of the hip hop artist as both 'artist' and 'merchant' as sketched in this chapter, I analyze sources from hip hop record labels such as Def Jam, Enjoy Records and Sugar Hill Records to explain how hip hop's paradox seems to stem from hip hop's specific economic and cultural context. The fact that hip hop, as a genre that does not adhere to the prevalent countercultural idea, managed to gain widespread success makes hip hop's paradox noteworthy. As such, I also use sources regarding hip hop's transfer to a broader American audience to explain how it could be that hip hop, with its integration of commercialism and counterculturalism, could become such a widespread cultural genre.

¹⁶¹ Saad-Filho & Johnston, *Neoliberalism*, 1-3.

¹⁶² Carl Bialik, "Is the Conventional Wisdom Correct In Measuring Hip-Hop Audience?", *Wall Street Journal* (2005), via <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB111521814339424546> (version June 2 2019).

¹⁶³ Lynch, 'For the first time in history'.

5. Uptown to Downtown

From Street Hustler Economics to Omnivorous Consumers

Using sources from hip hop businesses such as Sugar Hill Records, Enjoy Records and Def Jam Records, the first part of my primary source analysis focuses on hip hop's integration of counterculturalism and commercialism and explains how this deviation from the 'countercultural idea' came to be. Using various interviews and primary sources from the period hip hop rose to mainstream popularity in the 1980s and 1990s, the second part of my case study documents the way hip hop managed to gain a strong position on the cultural market and find widespread success among a white middle class audience. The third part concludes whether or not this primary source research suggests a change in the structures of cultural consumption.

I. Hip Hop Business: Black-owned, Street-level and Commercial

"Everyone was disco crazy," says Run DMC-member Darryl McDaniels in a 2016 interview, referring to his recollection of the disco craze that was at its peak in late 1970s New York.¹⁶⁴ "So everybody's perception of New York city was like: yo, look at the fur coats; look at the rolls royces; look at the diamonds, look at the sex".¹⁶⁵ However, circumstances were rather different in African American neighborhoods such as the Bronx and Harlem. In the 1970s, disco did not resonate with many young African Americans from neighborhoods plagued by gang violence, drugs, fires and poverty.¹⁶⁶ As such, these young African Americans took to more gritty and obscure African American music.¹⁶⁷ Young DJs like Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa started playing these underground funk records, mixing snippets of rhythms, riffs and breakbeats to create a rawer, minimalist alternative to disco.¹⁶⁸ In a retrospective interview, Afrika Bambaataa states that he believes the rise of this new style was unavoidable. Black youth, he says, needed a relatable genre that on one hand represented the gritty lifestyle of the Bronx and Harlem, but also gave way to a party culture to relieve young African Americans of their day to day struggles.¹⁶⁹ As described in the previous chapter, this party culture of DJing collided with the socially conscious spoken word art that, according to Afrika Bambaataa, "was always there" in African American neighborhoods, from the oral traditions of African immigrants to jazz poetry in the 1930s.¹⁷⁰ During the late 1970s, the combination of rhythmic rapping and DJing gave way to what was called hip hop. In 1981, New York paper *Soho News* documented the increasing popularity of hip hop, tying in with the notion that it functioned as an alternative to disco. Hip hop, described *Soho News*, was:

...the minimal punk music of the hundreds of thousands of record-buying, urban black teenagers to whom even the omnipresent dance-music radio stations of this town do not speak sufficiently.¹⁷¹

Even though hip hop had only just taken its first steps outside the Bronx and Harlem in 1981, *Soho News* notes that Harlem, soon after the rise of this new genre, has immediately "become

¹⁶⁴ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, via Netflix, directed by Darby Wheeler, HBO Canada, "Episode 1: The Foundation".

¹⁶⁵ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 1: The Foundation".

¹⁶⁶ Hip hop studies reader

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, "Episode 1: The Foundation".

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, "Episode 1: The Foundation".

¹⁷¹ Cornell University Library, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092, *Soho News*, "Bobby Robinson: Up from the streets", via <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:13450422> (version June 20 2019).

the focus of entrepreneurial activity” from the black community itself.¹⁷² The genre, created by and for urban black youth, immediately contained an entrepreneurial slant. This seems to point at Dan Charnas’ theory that hip hop, from its outset, integrated the ‘artist’ and the ‘merchant’ as central aspect of its scene.

Bobby Robinson, record store owner and boss of Harlem hip hop label *Enjoy Records* describes the rise of hip hop’s business side to *Soho News*. Robinson explains how his previous record label recorded some hits during the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷³ “When the gap that existed between black and white music in the ‘50s increasingly narrowed, culminating in rock ‘n’ roll,” writes *Soho News*, “Robinson inched closer to crossover popularity”.¹⁷⁴ However, his label went bankrupt when white bands with major record labels took over the rock ‘n’ roll market.¹⁷⁵ This implies the process African American art repeatedly underwent up until this point. As described in the previous chapter of this study, African American music was often transferred to a white mainstream through the filter of white countercultures. African American music found widespread popularity among these white countercultures during the 1950s and, even more so, the 1960s.¹⁷⁶ A considerable aspect of the initial fascination with African American music stemmed from its subversive effect in white mainstream culture.¹⁷⁷ The white bands that were interested in African American blues and rock ‘n’ roll soon presented their own depictions of the genres; as such, these African American genres became white, countercultural genres that were dominated by white bands and white record labels.¹⁷⁸

In the late 1970s, a lively new scene appeared in Harlem. Fascinated by this new hip hop culture, Robinson started recording young hip hop artists, which resulted in renewed success for his label. In *Soho News*, Robinson expresses his surprise regarding the fact that, although hip hop now enjoyed major success, hip hop was still run from record labels based in Harlem and the Bronx.¹⁷⁹ This suggests that, somehow, hip hop was not made into a countercultural affair by white bohèmes during its initial popularity. The *Soho News* article describes that suddenly, “arch-rivals’ Joe and Sylvia Robinson, the proprietors of black-owned hip hop label Sugar Hill Records”, enter the room during the interview.¹⁸⁰ To his surprise, interviewer Aaron Fuchs notes how these important figures from the New York hip hop community immediately start talking business:

I sat in awe as this summit meeting of rap entrepreneurs unfolded in a conversation that was superficially chatty but fraught with importance. Did Bobby think the cassette was a good configuration for rap music? Yes, if it’s put out no later than the record. Did Joe think that Bobby should come with a greatest-hits package? And where did Bobby find those Puerto Rican rappers, Spanish Fly, so quickly after Sugar Hill had come with its own Hispanic rap record by Mean Machine?¹⁸¹

This description demonstrates the business-oriented approach of these early hip hop labels and thereby corresponds to Dan Charnas’ ideas regarding the business-focused nature of hip hop. A *New Music Express* article from 1982 ties in with this business-savvy image of these early “rap

¹⁷² Cornell University Library, “Bobby Robinson: Up from the streets”.

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁶ Schwartz, *How Britain got the blues*, 9-10.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 11.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ Cornell University Library, “Bobby Robinson: Up from the streets”.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

entrepreneurs.”¹⁸² Though Sylvia Robinson’s Sugar Hill Records is based in the economically disadvantaged neighborhood of Harlem, she fits the mold of a success story in the neoliberal yuppie context of the 1980s. The *NME* article opens with a description of Robinson’s characteristic “Rolls Royce Silver Shadow with all the trimmings”.¹⁸³ According to *NME*’s Val Wilmer, “It’s a fitting means of transport for the queen of rap who, together with Joe Robinson, owns the largest independent record company in America”.¹⁸⁴ “We don’t go to the big functions,” says Robinson to hip hop publicist Bill Adler according to transcripts from his interview with the Robinsons in 1982.¹⁸⁵ “We are only involved in what *we* are doing, so basically I don’t really know what the outside world is doing”.¹⁸⁶ Robinson tells Adler about how hip hop is a very closed scene that is not very focused on the outside music world.¹⁸⁷ This is also confirmed by Joe Robinson, co-owner of Sugar Hill Records, who tells Adler about the advantages of being a black-owned record label that stays in touch with Harlem’s community. “As far as records,” says Joe Robinson, “an independent label can do things a major could never do. We can hear a thing tonight and have it on the street in four or five days, which they could never do”.¹⁸⁸ Throughout the conversation, the Robinsons pride themselves on being close to street level Harlem, but not only from an artistic outset. The Robinsons openly stress the commercial advantages, which points to a more commercial attitude than in the dominant bohemian idea that good art stems from a “beat” background. Young hip hop artists, says Joe Robinson, “need to make a living. The independent distributors of America need product at this time, so they’re out, running faster than the majors. All you gotta do is give ‘em hit product – if you give ‘em hit product they can outrun the majors”.¹⁸⁹ The Robinsons describe attempting to conquer the hip hop market as fast as possible to keep it local and in touch with the streets; this street level approach gains them many benefits in recording the newest and best hip hop artists. As Charnas describes, this approach is typical for early hip hop business culture. The fact that young African American artists need to make a living drives them to small record labels in the neighborhood that instantaneously provide income; these labels, in turn, profit from bringing the newest and locally popular artists to their target audience “in four or five days.”¹⁹⁰ This income-oriented approach is typical of the economically disadvantaged African American community in New York and contrasts with the idealistic, white, bohemian countercultures that claim to separate their art from commerce.¹⁹¹

Of course, independent businesses like local record labels have also formed the cornerstone of white countercultural communities in the structure of hip consumerism. During the 1960s, the counterculture expressed their alternative way of living through establishing a range of independent record labels, concert venues, drug shops and spiritual shops.¹⁹² This system of commercial enterprises formed the economic basis of the countercultural community in San

¹⁸² Cornell University Library, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092, New Musical Express, “Interview with Sylvia Robinson”, via <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:9061414> (version June 20 2019).

¹⁸³ Cornell University Library, “Interview with Sylvia Robinson”.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁵ Cornell University Library, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092, Bill Adler, “Transcription of interviews with Sylvia Robinson, Joey Robinson Jr., Joe Robinson Sr.”, via <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:13450476> (version June 22 2019).

¹⁸⁶ Cornell University Library, “Transcription of interviews”.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹¹ Charnas, *The big payoff*, 10-11.

¹⁹² Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury*, 6-7.

Francisco.¹⁹³ These shops were also very much focused on keeping their enterprises bottom-up and rooted in the community itself.¹⁹⁴ As Thomas Frank describes, the consumption of the goods provided by these businesses was seen as integral in aspiring to a self-realization of the countercultural identity through consumerism.¹⁹⁵ On first glance, this seems to correspond to the Robinson's street level approach and hip hop's often-emphasized focus on "staying real." Hip hop artists that aspire to "realness" can be understood through the liberal notion of "self-realization" as an idealistic idea of aspiring to an authentic identity, and hip hop's street level business can be compared to countercultural head shops in San Francisco.

However, whereas the counterculture of the 1960s mourned the death of San Francisco's community due to commercialism, Sugar Hill Records adheres to business policies that seem more at home in the neoliberal *zeitgeist* of 1980s yuppie culture than in a countercultural head shop in San Francisco. Not only do the Robinsons distinguish themselves through the explicit display of their wealth through "Rolls Royces" and "fur coats", but their business approach is openly commercial. When asked if he is open to selling out to bigger businesses, Joe Robinson answers: "We had inquiries from the majors (about takeover), but it's never got to the point of seriousness that I would have to sit down and talk with them, and I don't want to waste my time".¹⁹⁶ However, Robinson emphasizes: "Anything I got is for sale – except my wife, my kids and my dog, okay? If there's anything else they want, there's a price on it".¹⁹⁷ Robinson describes that he is open to any offers, if these offers are serious. Although Robinson sees being in touch with the black community as an asset for increasing the *quality* of their hip hop records, he also casts it as a *market* advantage.¹⁹⁸ As such, the street level "realness" that is prevalent in hip hop culture can also be read as more of a practical and commercial advantage in staying in touch with the young African American market, rather than a liberal ideal of self-realization. This forms a fundamental difference with white bohemian countercultures that adhere to Thomas Frank's 'countercultural idea'. Thus, the Robinsons exemplify hip hop's integration of subversive, bottom-up expression and commercialism; they see artistic benefits in staying in Harlem, but also emphasize the commercial values. This approach breaks with the countercultural idea that is at the core of countercultural business such as the 1960s San Francisco independent business scene.

In a 2004 interview in hip hop magazine *The Source*, New York DJing pioneers Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa explain that this hard-edged, competitive, street hustler-like approach to business helped keep the hip hop industry in the hands of black-owned business for a long time:

THE SOURCE: Almost all the people who came at this point were still Black though, am I right?

BAM[BAATA]: Record companies, yeah they were still Black.

FLASH: These were little record companies that were selling records out the trunk of their car. They were only looking for cream of the crop rappers to do this. At that time, all they wanted was what Sylvia [Robinson] was doing.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Golding, *Rock Graphic Originals*, 33-34.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 34.

¹⁹⁵ Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 43-44.

¹⁹⁶ Cornell University Library, "Transcription of interviews".

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁹ Forman and Neal, *That's the joint!*, 53.

These recollections underwrite the immediate commercial aspirations that were part of New York's early hip hop scene. Sylvia Robinson's openly commercial approach was seen as an example in the hip hop scene and inspired a considerable amount of aspiring hip hop merchants "that were selling records out the trunk of their car".²⁰⁰ This is also noted in Robinson's 1982 *NME* interview; reporter Val Wilmer notes Robinson has earned a lot of respect in her native Harlem.²⁰¹ Robinson, in turn, prides herself on rising from her Harlem background and "poor social conditions" through her economic success.²⁰² In her conversation with Wilmer, Robinson notes that, "when it comes to money, success and power, 'your fantasy is my reality'".²⁰³ Not only hip hop artists inspired inhabitants of impoverished neighborhoods such as Harlem and the Bronx; the "fantasy" lives of hip hop entrepreneurs was also seen as an example throughout the neighborhoods. The conditions of "poor" African American ghettos gave rise to an approach to art that deviated from the countercultural idea. Whereas white bohemian countercultures often pride themselves on what they perceive to be their anti-commercial stance, the hip hop scene eagerly accepted the commercial possibilities the genre offered.²⁰⁴

In the 2016 documentary *Hip Hop Evolution*, Russell Simmons, co-founder of black-owned hip hop label Def Jam, also emphasizes hip hop's competitive business approach that was focused on commercial success as much as creating good art.²⁰⁵ Simmons explains he came to New York's African American neighborhoods as a teenager. Soon, he became immersed in the new hip hop scene. Simmons' brother DJ'd, and Simmons helped produce and record hip hop songs during his teenage years.²⁰⁶ As Dan Charnas describes, the early New York hip hop scene was full of entrepreneurial characters such as Simmons that applied a street-hustler approach common to the ghettos to convert hip hop culture into income.²⁰⁷ In *Hip Hop Evolution*, Simmons and Run-D.M.C. member Darryl McDaniels recollect Simmons' various innovative marketing stunts and methods to creatively plug hip hop songs to radio jocks and big business sponsors.²⁰⁸ McDaniels proudly refers to Simmons as "the first mogul of hip hop".²⁰⁹ Whether or not these stunts actually happened, these proud self-representations contain a stark contrast to the preferred self-representations of most bohemian countercultural movements. *Long Strange Trip*, a critically acclaimed documentary on countercultural 1960s band Grateful Dead that was released a year after *Hip Hop Evolution*, is exemplary in the way bohemian countercultures generally resort to the countercultural idea in recollecting their past. In *Long Strange Trip*, Grateful Dead members, managers and other associates proudly express the band's unwillingness to follow the methods of business-oriented music organizations such as booking agencies and record labels.²¹⁰ "Oh, man, we drove them *mad*," grins Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart after describing how the band took drugs, refused to record singles and even refused to partake in photo sessions during their costly tenure with several record labels.²¹¹ As singer Jerry Garcia puts it, the band instead just wanted to "have fun" and perform lengthy, experimental live im-

²⁰⁰ Ibidem, 53.

²⁰¹ Cornell University Library, "Interview with Sylvia Robinson".

²⁰² Ibidem.

²⁰³ Ibidem.

²⁰⁴ Charnas, *The big payback*, 11-12.

²⁰⁵ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, via Netflix, directed by Darby Wheeler, HBO Canada, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁰⁶ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁰⁷ Charnas, *The big payback*, 11-12.

²⁰⁸ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁰⁹ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

²¹⁰ Amir Bar-Lev, *Long Strange Trip* (2017).

²¹¹ Ibidem.

provisations.²¹² Once more, this emphasizes the fundamental difference between hip hop and bohemian countercultures in their approach to business. The Grateful Dead adhere to the countercultural idea, taking pride in their art versus business-narrative. Simmons and McDaniels, on the other hand, express as much pride when discussing the social criticism and innovative stylistic elements of Def Jam acts Public Enemy and Run-D.M.C. as when they discuss Def Jam's business success.²¹³

Hip hop, originating in impoverished neighborhoods, was instantly set on commercial success, and used a hard, street business approach to obtain this commercial success. This is expressed by influential hip hop entrepreneurs such as the Robinsons and Russell Simmons and ties in to Dan Charnas' idea that hip hop was, from the outset, a business as well as an art form.²¹⁴ As such, the integration of commercialism and counterculturalism that defined hip hop from the outset was not so much a paradox as a reflection of the economically disadvantaged ghettos that gave rise to hip hop. In the past, a similar context gave rise to earlier African American genres such as jazz and early rock 'n' roll.²¹⁵ These genres thus integrated a street-hustler approach to business with subversive, countercultural expression in a similar way.²¹⁶ Whereas white bohemian countercultures adhered to the countercultural idea and attempted to uphold an assumed distinction between art and commerce, black genres such as jazz and hip hop did not tie in with the white, bohemian notion of countercultures and, as such, saw no problem in blending business with art. As such, hip hop's context explains why the genre cannot be understood as a counterculture in the middle class, bohemian sense of the word, which answers the first part of my research question and allows for an understanding of hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism.

However, the case of hip hop differs fundamentally from other African American genres that sprung from economically disadvantaged contexts. Whereas jazz, blues and rock 'n' roll, as described in chapter ii of this study, were popularized among a large, 'mainstream' white audience through white countercultures, hip hop somehow found its way to popular success without shedding its integration of counterculturalism and commercialism in favor of a narrative based on the countercultural idea. As such, hip hop presents a drastic change from the structure of hip consumerism that is based on the narrative of the countercultural idea. So how did hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism achieve widespread success on the cultural market? To answer this question, the next part of this chapter analyzes how hip hop found its way to a 'mainstream' audience.

II. Uptown to Middle Class: Hip Hop, Yuppie Culture and Omnivorous Consumerism

In his interview with Bill Adler, Joe Robinson expresses disdain for the RIAA (Record Industry Association of America) and other white institutional record organizations.²¹⁷ "What is the RIAA?," Robinson asks, "Look, I'll take the black market and sell nothing else – and I'm satisfied with that".²¹⁸ This is characteristic for hip hop culture; hip hop was created by, run by and made for young black New York audiences. Record owners like Joe Robinson and Russell Simmons, as

²¹² Ibidem.

²¹³ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

²¹⁴ Charnas, *The big-payback*, 5-6.

²¹⁵ Randall Sandke, *Where the dark and the light folks meet: Race and the mythology, politics, and business of jazz* (2010), 167-170.

²¹⁶ Sandke, *Where the dark and the light folks meet*, 170.

²¹⁷ Cornell University Library, "Transcription of interviews".

²¹⁸ Ibidem.

well as artists such as Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five and Run-D.M.C. state that they made music for their own African American environment.²¹⁹ This is also prevalent in Sylvia Robinson's interview with Bill Adler. Robinson explains that Sugar Hill Records tests its new singles on young African American audiences in Harlem and the Bronx, thus focusing only on that specific African American target market:

There are a few places where we'll take the records, or we give it to one of the DJs, you know, or one of the rappers, and they'll play it at the club and let us know what kind of response there was, how it has been received by the people. If we don't get a good response on something, we won't go forward with it.²²⁰

Hip hop was originally focused on a young African American market. However, hip hop soon found its way to widespread mainstream success, treading vastly outside its original African American territory. So how did hip hop become so successful outside of its original demographic base, despite of its focus on its African American context? To answer this question, this part of my case study focuses on two aspects of hip hop's widespread success. First, I analyze why hip hop managed to gain a strong position on the American cultural market during the 1980s. To do so, I use primary source material regarding hip hop artists and entrepreneur that describe the way hip hop business fit into the larger American business culture. The second aspect I analyze is the cultural transfer from hip hop's roots in African American neighborhoods to a mainstream white audience. Combined, these aspects shed light on the way that hip hop's business-minded approach managed to climb to commercial heights – and whether this implies a change in the structures of cultural consumption.

Hip Hop in Yuppieworld: Hip Hop Economics and American Business Culture

In a 2014 letter, Questlove, drummer and frontman of the Roots, a successful hip hop group in the 1980s and 1990s, writes about the prevalence of consumerism in hip hop culture. Recollecting his experiences of the 1980s and 1990s, Questlove argues hip hop's tendency towards commercialism stems from the historically disadvantaged social and economic position of African Americans:

The reasons are complex, of course, but the aspirational strain in African-American culture runs all the way back to slavery days. Slaves couldn't own property because they were property. When freed, they were able to exist politically, and also economically. Owning things was a way of proving that you existed — and so, by extension, owning many things was a way of proving that you existed emphatically.²²¹

The commercially “aspirational strain in African-American culture” Questlove notices corresponds to the commercialism showcased by hip hop entrepreneurs such as the Robinsons, Russell Simmons and Grandmaster Flash's description of the numerous “little record companies” that immediately sprung from hip hop's early New York scene. In his essay, Questlove suggests that this specific African American culture of commercialism tied in with a larger American business culture:

²¹⁹ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, “Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream”.

²²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²²¹ Questlove, “Mo' Money, Mo' Problems: How Hip-Hop Failed Black America, Part II”, in *Vulture* (April 29 2014), <https://www.vulture.com/2014/04/questlove-on-money-jay-z-how-hip-hop-failed-black-america-part-2.html> (version June 30 2019).

I'd argue that when people think of hip-hop, pretty quickly they think of bling, of watches or cars or jewels or private jets. They think of success and its fruits, and the triumphant figures who are picking that fruit. This linkage isn't limited to hip-hop — all of American celebrity, to some degree, is based on showing what you can buy.²²²

This remark suggests an overlap between hip hop's commercial attitude and the commercialism of American culture in a broader sense. In *The Big Payback*, Dan Charnas also suggests that hip hop's commercial attitude functioned well in a broader American business culture.²²³ As described in the previous chapter, hip hop rose to popularity in a period of increased neoliberal economics and a more competitive American business culture. The commercially aspirational values of hip hop entrepreneurs corresponded to this business culture; as such, hip hop managed to find its place in this cultural context. In 1991, Susan Orleon interviews influential graffiti artist, DJ and hip hop entrepreneur Fab Five Freddy.²²⁴ Orleon notices that, to her surprise, Fab Five Freddy's lifestyle matches that of a yuppie businessman, despite his rather different background.²²⁵ According to Orleon, this is also reflected in his living conditions:

His present apartment has sensational views in three directions, quite a few mirrors, a vacuum-sealed ambience, and, to my eye, a sort of Wall Street yuppie gleam, which makes it exactly not the place I would have expected Freddy to live in.²²⁶

In the article on Fab Five Freddy, Orleon follows him throughout his daily business and reflects on his lifestyle. Orleon describes how Freddy meets filmmakers, hip hop artists, entrepreneurs and record label executives.²²⁷ While in his apartment, Fab Five Freddy takes numerous calls from record companies, film producers and other business associates, handling his business in an informal, street-like way:²²⁸

[Fab Five Freddy] started yelling into the phone: "Yo, I said I'd consider being in the movie for the *marquee* value, but no one's telling me where anything is at!" These negotiations—for Freddy to play himself in an upcoming movie called "Juice"—went on loudly for many minutes. Freddy hung up. Then he took a call from Ted Demme about Mario Van Peebles, who had appeared that afternoon on the daytime "Yo! [MTV Raps, a hip hop television program presented by Fab Five Freddy]," saying things about "New Jack City" that Freddy didn't like. Then he dialled an executive at a record company with whom he was negotiating to direct a video of a record by Shabba Ranks. He put the executive on his speaker phone and continued to open mail. [...] "Damn, damn, that's wack," Freddy said.²²⁹

Just like Russell Simmons and Darryll McDaniels of Run-D.M.C. present themselves as business-savvy, commercial negotiators in the 2016 documentary *Hip-Hop Evolution*, Fab Five Freddy is, in Orleon's article, portrayed as a street-smart entrepreneur who "has a gift for getting himself and his undertakings [...] noticed".²³⁰ Although Fab Five Freddy, like McDaniels and Simmons,

²²² Questlove, "Mo' Money, Mo' Problems'.

²²³ Charnas, *The big payback*, 28-29.

²²⁴ Susan Orleon, "Living large. The world of Fab Five Freddy", in *The New Yorker* (June 17 1991), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1991/06/17/living-large> (June 30 2019).

²²⁵ Orleon, "Living large."

²²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²²⁹ *Ibidem*.

²³⁰ *Ibidem*.

learned his style of doing business from New York's African American street hustler culture, Fab Five Freddy fits perfectly within the competitive, business-oriented yuppie lifestyle of downtown New York because of his style of street-smart dealings.²³¹ This suggests that hip hop's distinctive street hustler economics, as described by Dan Charnas, were not at all inapplicable to the neoliberal American business context of the 1980s and 1990s, and thus opened up a position for hip hop in New York's cultural market.²³²

In *Hip-Hop Evolution*, Simmons describes that Def Jam's method of business proved successful in the context of 1980s New York.²³³ Def Jam was one of the first hip hop businesses that managed to secure a product sponsorship by a major brand after Adidas signed a contract with Run-D.M.C.²³⁴ Def Jam's street hustler-influenced, competitive ways of promoting their acts were mostly successful; stunts like Run-D.M.C.'s "My Adidas" launched Def Jam several sponsorships with major brands.²³⁵ In turn, these sponsorship propelled even grittier, culturally critical hip hop to the attention of a large audience.²³⁶

Hip hop's competitive, street-wise approach to doing business, as exemplified by Simmons, the Robinsons and Fab Five Freddy, fit New York's yuppie business culture that had come to prominence in the late 1970s and 1980s. Whereas earlier African American genres such as jazz and rock 'n' roll failed to sustain its own economies through a lack of capital in the ghettos, hip hop's street hustler-influenced way of doing business corresponded to changing norms in New York's business world. As such, hip hop gained a considerable presence in New York business culture.

Hip Hop Meets the Omnivorous Consumer

In the documentary *Hip-Hop Evolution*, New York hip hop stars such as Fab Five Freddy, Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa note that hip hop, after spreading throughout African American neighborhoods in New York, sought out new spaces outside of Harlem and the Bronx.²³⁷ Dan Charnas describes that hip hop soon found its way to downtown New York and was received positively among the white fans that dominated the audience.²³⁸ In a retrospective interview, Fab Five Freddy notes that, with some surprise, he found that his activities as an artist in downtown New York "...turned a lot of people in the downtown art scene on to the whole visual art of hip hop culture".²³⁹ Orleon's 1991 article on Fab Five Freddy confirms that Freddy had dealings with various figures in the art scene, as well as with African American hip hop artists from the Bronx and Harlem.²⁴⁰ Orleon writes that painters such as Julian Schnabel and Keith Haring were even influenced by hip hop culture after Freddy introduced them to graffiti art.²⁴¹ According to Fab Five Freddy, the people of the white art scene in downtown New York "were definitely open to different ideas".²⁴² Fab Five Freddy recalls how, soon after his arrival in the downtown, the New York art scene expressed an interest in his hip hop background:

²³¹ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

²³² Charnas, *The big payback*, 28-30.

²³³ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

²³⁴ *Ibidem*.

²³⁵ Charnas, *The big payback*, 123-124.

²³⁶ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

²³⁷ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²³⁸ Charnas, *The big payback*, 28.

²³⁹ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁴⁰ Orleon, "Living large."

²⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

²⁴² *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

I was friends with an artist that went by the name of Keith Haring. So I'd be telling Keith, you know, there's one guy named Afrika Bambaataa, a former gang leader, who's also known as the master of records. And Keith, I remember, said, "Hey, man. Do you think he might wanna come down and spin at one of our parties?"²⁴³

In a retrospective interview, Afrika Bambaataa notes that the bohemian New York art scene soon became interested in hip hop.²⁴⁴ Aside from painters like Haring, "it was the new wave punk rockers who was the first to open the doors for us to, to play in they type of clubs. [...] And at first, everybody thought there was going to be a riot, but when the music came on, everybody was doing them dances".²⁴⁵ The way the New York art scene and the punk/new wave subculture responded to hip hop fits the way white middle class countercultures regularly bear a fascination for the 'different' culture of African American movements. As described in the previous chapter, countercultures in the structure of hip consumerism have historically adapted African American art to the countercultural idea by stressing its subversive and countercultural element in the light of a mainstream versus counterculture-narrative. Countercultures, as the dominant basis for cultural consumption, regularly popularize their countercultural depiction of African American art among a broader white middle class audience.²⁴⁶ Russell Simmons also confirms that New York's bohemian circles displayed a fascination for hip hop early on, describing how it was not just the black urban youth that flocked to hip hop's "real", gritty sound. "Alternative kids, the white boys who liked new, creative, innovative music, gave rap its props," recalls Simmons.²⁴⁷

Soon, new wave bands started to display hip hop influences in their music. Successful American new wave band Blondie, who were acquaintances of Fab 5 Freddy, released "Rapture", a hip hop influenced single, in 1981.²⁴⁸ Even British band the Clash integrated rapping on their 1980 single "The Magnificent Seven".²⁴⁹ In a 1981 interview, Sylvia Robinson notes that Blondie's "Rapture" helped expose white New York kids to hip hop music.²⁵⁰ In *Hip-Hop Evolution*, several hip hop artists express mixed feelings regarding the success of "Rapture", though, according to Grandmaster Flash, Blondie "opened up a huge door".²⁵¹ "There was always the cool alternative whites who bought in to a new black phenomenon, a new cultural phenomenon," says Russell Simmons.²⁵² "How many people heard rap for the first time through that record, without understanding it was the tip of an iceberg?," adds Fab Five Freddy with a somewhat mournful tone.²⁵³ The reluctance that is enclosed in the way these black artists and executives from the hip hop community recollect Blondie's success with "Rapture" can be explained through the social mechanisms that are inherent to the structure of hip consumerism. In a culture based on the countercultural idea, a white, bohemian counterculture usually brings black subversive sounds to the forefront, initially to provoke the bourgeois order, before slowly making these sounds acceptable to mainstream white middle class culture – not before appro-

²⁴³ Ibidem.

²⁴⁴ Ibidem.

²⁴⁵ Ibidem.

²⁴⁶ Schwartz, *How Britain got the blues*, 16-17.

²⁴⁷ Ibidem, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁴⁸ Ibidem, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁴⁹ Antonino D'Ambrosio, *Let fury have the hour. The punk rock politics of Joe Strummer* (2003), 55.

²⁵⁰ Cornell University Library, "Interview with Sylvia Robinson".

²⁵¹ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁵² *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 3: The New Guard".

²⁵³ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

priating black culture into a white narrative based on the 'countercultural idea'.²⁵⁴ As such, Blondie's success with "Rapture" and the responses of Fab Five Freddy, Simmons and Grandmaster Flash seem to suggest that the structure of hip consumerism still plays a dominant role in the way the interaction between bohemian countercultures and black cultural movements is perceived.

However, to the surprise of hip hop artists and hip hop business executives alike, hip hop's journey to acceptance by a white audience did not entirely follow the standard narrative of the white counterculture that enthusiastically appropriates a subversive, new black genre before becoming the main vehicle that transfers the originally African American genre to a broader white culture. In 1982, Sylvia Robinson argues: "I don't really think Blondie opened the way, because she didn't sell as many copies of her record as we do on our records".²⁵⁵ Robinson adds that, to her surprise, Sugar Hill Records found that it does not sell its records "...only to blacks. We sold two million of [Sugar Hill Gang single] rapper's delight and it's still the best selling 12 inch single of all time".²⁵⁶ As it turned out, the white groups that were open to hip hop were surprisingly bigger than expected. Not only bohemian artists and countercultures, but also the larger public turned to the consumption of hip hop records very soon. Joe Robinson confirms this in 1982: "[Afrika Bambaataa single] *Apache* now is being exposed on the white stations. The record goes number one on whatever white station puts it on. So it's something that the white people want too - they just have to be exposed".²⁵⁷ Def Jam publicist Bill Adler remembers that hip hop culture was taken up in white neighborhoods very soon after its breakthrough success in the Bronx and Harlem: "You didn't have to go to the Bronx to hear rap music; you could be a college kid at NYU and walk three blocks away."²⁵⁸ Hip hop's rapid transfer to a larger white audience suggests a considerable initial openness of white consumers. Afrika Bambaataa stresses the larger white audience's initial interest in hip hop when recollecting his experience of playing middle class clubs in downtown New York for the first time:

So I took it way downtown, to the clubs where it was primarily white people, and they were saying 'do what you normally do'. Really? 'Do what you normally do...?' Okay, so here comes *The Bells*, here comes *Apache*, here comes all the heat in a room full of 95% white people. What are they going to do when they hear this? That shit went off - they was flocking to that! They couldn't get enough of us, we were booked all the time there.²⁵⁹

In *The Big Payback*, Dan Charnas describes that hip hop DJs indeed started to play middle class venues in downtown New York on a regular basis.²⁶⁰ Not only the instrumental DJ tracks performed well among the New York middle class. Harder edged, culturally critical songs such as Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five's 'The Message' were also picked up very quickly among broader white audiences all over America. Grandmaster Flash recollects that, to his surprise "...radio started playing it, the song really took off, and it became the first critically acclaimed hip hop song".²⁶¹ His recollections correspond to popular media from the period; mainstream magazines and radio and television channels were instantly very positive.²⁶² Throughout the 1980s, harder acts such as Run-D.M.C. and Public Enemy also managed to attract a white, om-

²⁵⁴ Heath, "The structure of hip consumerism", 8-10.

²⁵⁵ Cornell University Library, "Transcription of interviews".

²⁵⁶ Ibidem.

²⁵⁷ Ibidem.

²⁵⁸ *Hip-Hop Evolution*, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁵⁹ Ibidem.

²⁶⁰ Charnas, *The big payback*, 28-30.

²⁶¹ Ibidem, "Episode 2: From The Underground To The Mainstream".

²⁶² Charnas, *The big payback*, 32-36.

nivorous audience. Despite their gritty sound and social comment on racism and the economic conditions in the ghettos, Run-D.M.C. and Public Enemy managed to attract widespread success among white audiences as well as black audiences.²⁶³ In her article on Fab Five Freddy, Susan Orleon notes that hip hop has found widespread acceptance in white American culture:

A recent survey showed that twenty-four per cent of all active music consumers in this country had bought a rap recording in the last six months. More significant is that over half of those customers were white. Most significant, by pop-culture standards, is that this year the soap opera "One Life to Live" added a rap group to its cast of regulars.²⁶⁴

Even though the harder style of acts such as Public Enemy, Run-D.M.C. and N.W.A. had become the dominant strain of hip hop at the time Orleon wrote her article, middle class white culture fervently embraced new hip hop artists.²⁶⁵

In the 1980s and early 1990s, Public Enemy toured throughout the USA and Europe, playing many venues in predominantly white areas and appearing on channels that were primarily focused on a white audience, such as MTV, the BBC and the Dutch VPRO.²⁶⁶ In a 1992 interview, Chuck D from Public Enemy tells the *Los Angeles Times* about this young white audience.²⁶⁷ According to Chuck D, young white middle class Americans display a more open mindset to hip hop than previous generations did to distinctly African American culture:

When I was growing up, there was a big gap between me and the white kids. They'd be off listening to Led Zep, long hair, smoking hash. I was into playing ball and my own vibe. Now, you see a white kid and there is a white understanding of black culture 25 and under, and a feeling of, "Damn, things really have been kinda (expletive) up."²⁶⁸

This corresponds to the rise of the 'omnivorous consumer' that, according to Peterson and Simkus' 1992 research, came up among a young, white, American middle class.²⁶⁹ As described by Peterson and Simkus, white youth displayed an increasing openness to forms of culture that were not tied to their specific taste culture.²⁷⁰ In the *LA Times* interview, Chuck D shares further reflections on young white middle class culture's increasing openness to hip hop, even noting that media aimed at a young white middle class demography are more open to hip hop than a substantial part of black radio stations:

Pop radio plays more rap than black radio. Right now, 70% of the black radio format is "quiet storm," those slow ballads. That's because their advertisers basically want to reach females 25 and older . . . and their researchers say that audience doesn't like rap. So they play the ballads. I hate it. I can't take another ballad. Rap gets more exposure on

²⁶³ Ibidem, 173-180.

²⁶⁴ Orleon, "Living large."

²⁶⁵ Charnas, *The big payback*, 173-180.

²⁶⁶ NPO3, "Public Enemy over hun strijd" (October 16 1988), https://www.npo3.nl/public-enemy-over-hun-strijd/16-11-2016/WO_VPRO_6034584 (version June 30 2019).

Charnas, *The big payback*, 175-176.

²⁶⁷ Robert Hilburn, "Checking in with Chuck D.", in *L.A. Times* (November 8 1992),

<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:CDhtefapoXYJ:https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-11-08-ca-29-story.html+&cd=18&hl=nl&ct=clnk&gl=nl> (version June 30 2019).

²⁶⁸ Hilburn, "Checking in with Chuck D."

²⁶⁹ Janssen, *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving*, 15-16.

²⁷⁰ Ibidem, 16.

video channels. . . the Box and MTV and BET. That's how rap is staying in the marketplace. That and talk on the streets.²⁷¹

Chuck D notes a discrepancy between the conservative attitude of black radio stations and the omnivorous tendencies of mainstream “pop radio” and the “video channels.”²⁷² His observations suggest a willingness of mainstream audiences to embrace hip hop, a genre that does not explicitly fit their taste culture and once again points to an increasing omnivorous approach to culture. As such, by 1992, hip hop could refer to its roots in African American neighborhoods and adhere to an integration of commercialism and counterculturalism that did not fit the countercultural idea and still find its way to a large, white audience all over the Western world.

Conclusion: Hip Hop as a Break with the Structure of Hip Consumerism

In the first place, hip hop's hard, competitive, commercial business style within a neoliberal free market economy allowed the black-owned hip hop businesses to gain a strong position in the cultural market in and around New York. Hip hop's street hustler-approach to business tied in with the New York yuppie business culture that had come up in the 1970s and 1980s, which thus allowed hip hop to gain a platform while maintaining its connections with its native neighborhoods of Harlem and the Bronx. This is exemplified by Fab Five Freddy; Fab Five Freddy's life takes place in two different worlds that somehow seem to match more than *The New Yorker* journalist Susan Orlean could have expected. On the one hand, Fab Five Freddy navigates Harlem and the Bronx and deals with rappers and graffiti artists native to the neighbourhood. On the other hand, Fab Five Freddy schedules meetings with record executives, pop artists and Manhattan entrepreneurs – using the same business techniques. Hip hop's street-wise business-focused approach functioned well within the cultural space of 1980s New York yuppie culture.

At the same time, a larger public seemed to accept particular, subversive black sounds much more eagerly than before. Hip hop, even in its most culturally critical, gritty form, found its way to a large white middle class demography very soon after the genre rose from Harlem and the Bronx during the late 1970s. On the one hand, the willingness of a large middle class culture to immediately accept the distinctly African American genre points to what Peterson and Simkus described as the ‘omnivorous consumer’ when he performed his study during this same context of early 1980s America.²⁷³ The fact that the young American middle class took to hip hop soon after the genre had risen in African American neighborhoods suggests that clearly, this omnivorous white middle class did not need to identify with the distinctly African American hip hop culture to be able to culturally consume the genre. As such, this points to a rise in omnivorous consumerism among this group.

In hip hop's cultural transfer to this white middle class audience, the role of bohemian countercultures has decreased when compared to the processes earlier African American genres such as jazz and rock ‘n’ roll went through. In accordance with the frequent fascination for black cultural movements by white bohèmes as characterized in chapter ii, the white new wave counterculture and the New York art scene were among the first groups to express interest in hip hop. However, it is crucial to note that hip hop soon found its way to a larger white audience on its own accord. Instead of being appropriated and cast into the narrative of the countercultural idea by a white bohème that subsequently transferred hip hop to a broader white culture, hip hop seemed to rely on white bohèmes to a lesser extent than earlier African American

²⁷¹ Hilburn, “Checking in with Chuck D.”

²⁷² Ibidem.

²⁷³ Janssen, *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving*, 15-16.

movements. As such, hip hop's integration of commercialism and counterculturalism – a combination of values that is intrinsically linked to hip hop's early context in African American ghettos – did not pass through the filter of the countercultural idea and found its way to a culturally open, omnivorous demography.

The combination of these processes denotes an increase in neoliberal, liquid economics that fit the business approach of hip hop, an increase in omnivorous consumerism, resulting in a large middle class audience willing to accept hip hop early on, and a decrease in the dominant role of countercultures as a 'filter' through which black culture is transferred to the cultural mainstream. Due to an increasingly liquid, neoliberal market in New York on one hand, and a rise in omnivorous consumerism on the other, hip hop managed to get popular among a white middle class without the interference of a bohemian-type counterculture. This explains the fact that an integration of counterculturalism and commercialism can exist in a genre that is such a dominant cultural force in the contemporary world: as a genre that came up among the decreased importance of the traditional counterculture/mainstream dynamic and an increase in liquidization that manifests itself in omnivorous consumerism as well as an increasingly neoliberal business culture, hip hop represents a change in the structures of cultural consumption.

6. Conclusion

From Pop Culture to Social Structure

In the first chapter of this research paper, I noted that the genre of hip hop frequently adheres to an integration of two values that are often juxtaposed in the dominant cultural narrative of the 'countercultural idea'. This paper sought to understand this paradoxical integration through the construction of an alternative theoretical framework to the dominant countercultural idea.

Hip hop's popularity represents a break with the structure of the civil society and the structure of hip consumerism that both stress a dichotomous struggle between bohemian countercultures and a bourgeois mainstream as fundamental to Western society. The fact that hip hop does not adhere to the countercultural idea can be understood through its cultural context. Hip hop, as an exponent of African American culture, does not fit the ideas of the white, middle class *bohème* and, as such, does not adhere to the countercultural idea. Hip hop thus explicates its commercial goal as well as its artistic views. Earlier African American genres also broke with the countercultural idea, and hip hop is no exception.²⁷⁴

However, these earlier African American genres were often propelled to mainstream success after being passed through the filter of white *bohèmes* that cast these African American genres in the mold of the countercultural idea. Initially, New York's bohèmes were the first white audiences that took to hip hop, thus fitting the standard processes of the structure of hip consumerism. However, although the new wave scene and artists such as Keith Haring helped popularize hip hop, they did not play a role that was as essential to the popularization of hip hop as, for example, white countercultures were in widely popularizing jazz. A considerable part of hip hop, including the hard-edged sound of Def Jam records, was transferred to a mainstream white middle class directly from bottom-up African American record labels. Genres such as rock 'n' roll and jazz, on the other hand, were widely popularized by white record labels and white artists.

This leads to two key conclusions. Firstly, African American culture gained a larger and more autonomous economic and cultural role. This was due to the decreased importance of a bohemian countercultural 'filter' and the way hip hop's hard-edged, street hustler business approach corresponded to the neoliberalization of American business culture. As such, the stronger position of black-owned cultural businesses facilitated a direct cultural transfer between black business and a larger white middle class audience.

The second key conclusion regards a change in the mentality of a broad middle class audience. Of course, hip hop would not have been as successful if a white middle class audience still responded to hip hop as it responded to African American culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. Whereas earlier countercultures deliberately took to black culture in order to provoke the mainstream white middle class, hip hop was picked up by this white middle class demography very early on. This increased openness, or 'omnivorousness', corresponds to Peterson and Simkus' research. The fact that a large part of white middle class Americans was open to consuming culture outside of their taste culture represents a change from the heavily subculturalized structure of hip consumerism. Instead, it seems this new middle class generation did not adhere to subcultural taste cultures as strictly as before.

As such, this thesis concludes that hip hop's rise to popularity deviates enough from the structure of hip consumerism to be able to call it a break with this structure. Of course, this does not imply that the values of the structure of hip consumerism are suddenly 'over'. In *Popular Culture and High Culture*, Herbert Gans even argues that the traditional system of high and low

²⁷⁴ Charnas, *The big payback*, 12-14.

culture that originated in the 19th century is still prevalent today.²⁷⁵ The structures that are discussed in chapter three of this research paper can be seen as Weberian ideal types; although they represent fundamental changes in cultural consumption throughout the last centuries, there are no clean-cut breaks and the actual transition from one structure to another is a complex process that involves continuity as well as change. Further research that explicitly addresses the continuity and development of earlier structures of cultural consumption could gain more insight into the extent to which hip consumerism still permeates contemporary cultural consumption.

As is described in this thesis, hip hop is a distinctly African American genre. As such, hip hop did not tie in with white middle class bohemian values from the outset, just like earlier African American genres such as jazz and rock 'n' roll did not.²⁷⁶ To be able to understand how encompassing the structural change from hip consumerism to omnivorous consumerism is, it is important to analyze whether bohemian subcultures themselves are also deviating from the countercultural idea. In this study, I included several sources relating to this subject, but more primary research into bohemian subcultures would shed light on the question whether a deviation from the countercultural idea is so widespread that even the bohemian countercultures themselves partake in this deviation. The case of the hipster subculture may provide valuable insight; hipsters fit the middle class, bohemian image of a traditional counterculture. They stem from a white, educated, middle class background and express an explicitly countercultural, 'hip' stance.²⁷⁷ However, academics and popular journalists have both noted that hipsters also explicitly adhere to commercialism and neoliberal economics.²⁷⁸ This suggests that hipsters do not entirely fit in with the structure of hip consumerism. Research into recent bohèmes such as the hipster subculture may provide insight into whether or not a structural break with hip consumerism can also be denoted in other forms of culture.

To be able to understand the way hip hop compares to earlier forms of African American culture might also shed light on the way hip hop represents a structural change. Genres such as jazz and rock 'n' roll initially did not display an adherence to the countercultural idea. These genres were then popularized through white bohèmes that *did* stress the countercultural idea. How did black artists from these genres view their place in the structures of cultural consumption? Documenting the way black artists in the 20th century found success provides insight into the structures of cultural consumption they were part of, which provides interesting comparative material to the case of hip hop. A comparative analysis between hip hop and jazz, blues or rock 'n' roll might shed more light on the way the structures of cultural consumption around black American culture have changed throughout the 19th and 20th century.

All of these questions stem from research into the ideas behind popular cultural phenomena. As such, the values, narratives and self-representations that are prevalent in popular culture point to our very social, cultural and economic foundations. What initially seemed a paradoxical integration between commercialism and counterculturalism pointed to a history of increasing liquidisation, the circumstances of impoverished African American artists, changes in taste culture and the dynamic between countercultures and the mainstream. Therefore, it is essential to keep delving into popular culture in order to increase our understanding of the structures we are a part of.

²⁷⁵ Gans, *Popular culture and high culture*, 12-13.

²⁷⁶ Charnas, *The big payoff*, 12-14.

Sandke, *Where the dark and the light folks meet*, 167-170.

²⁷⁷ Deborah Cowen, "Hipster urbanism", *Relay: A Socialist Project Review* 13 (2006), 22-23.

²⁷⁸ Stephen Pritchard, "Hipsters and artists are the gentrifying foot soldiers of capitalism". Cowen, "Hipster urbanism", 23.

Bibliography

Literature

- Adler, Bill. *Tougher Than Leather. The Rise of Run-D.M.C.* (2002).
- Bauman, Zygmunt. "Modernity and ambivalence," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7.2 (1990).
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid modernity* (2013).
- Bogt, Tom ter. *One Two Three Four* (Den Haag 1997).
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The forms of capital", in Imre Szeman & Timothy Kaposy, *Cultural Theory: an anthology* (2011).
- Brown, Timothy Scott. "Subcultures, pop music and politics: skinheads and "Nazi rock" in England and Germany," *Journal of Social History* 38.1 (2004).
- Burkhalter, Janée N., and Corliss G. Thornton. "Advertising to the beat. An analysis of brand placements in hip-hop music videos", *Journal of Marketing Communications* 20.5 (2014).
- Charnas, Dan. *The big payback: The history of the business of hip-hop* (2011).
- Chinitz, David. 'T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide', *PMLA* 110,2 (1995).
- Cowen, Deborah. "Hipster urbanism", *Relay: A Socialist Project Review* 13 (2006).
- Crosset, Todd, and Becky Beal. "The use of 'subculture' and 'subworld' in ethnographic works on sport: A discussion of definitional distinctions," *Sociology of Sport* 14.1 (1997).
- D'Ambrosio, Antonino. *Let fury have the hour. The punk rock politics of Joe Strummer* (2003).
- Dyson, Michael Eric. 'The culture of hip-hop', in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011).
- Forman, Murray. "'Represent': Race, Space, and Place in Rap Music", in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011).
- Forman, Murray, and Mark Anthony Neal. *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011).
- Frank, Thomas. *The Conquest of Cool. Business culture, counterculture, and the rise of hip consumerism* (1997).
- Frith, Simon, and Howard Horne, *Art into pop* (2016).
- Gans, Herbert J.. *Popular culture & high culture. An analysis and evaluation of taste* (1999).
- Golding, Peter. *Rock Graphic Originals: Revolutions in Sonic Art from Plate to Print* (2018).
- Grace, Nancy McCampbell. "A White Man in Love: A Study of Race, Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Jack Kerouac's Maggie Cassidy, The Subterraneans, and Tristessa," *College Literature* 27.1 (2000).
- Heath, Joseph. "The structure of hip consumerism," in *Philosophy & social criticism* 27.6 (2001).
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The meaning of style* (2012).
- James, Jamie. *The music of the spheres. Music, science, and the natural order of the universe* (1993).
- Janssen, Susanne. *Het soortelijk gewicht van kunst in een open samenleving* (2005).
- Leighten, Patricia. "The white peril and L'art nègre: Picasso, primitivism, and anticolonialism," *The Art Bulletin* 72.4 (1990).
- Light, Alan. "About a Salary or Reality? Rap's Recurrent Conflict," in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011).
- Miles, Barry. "Spirit of the underground: the 60's rebel", *The Guardian* (2011), via <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/jan/30/underground-arts-60s-rebel-counterculture> (version June 12 2019).
- Muggleton, David, and Rupert Weinzierl. *The Post-subcultures Reader* (2003).
- Murray, Derek Conrad. "Hip-hop vs. high art: Notes on race as spectacle," *Art Journal* 63.2 (2004).
- Perry, Charles. *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (1984).
- Petridis, Alexis. "Youth subcultures: where have they gone?", *The Guardian* (2014), via <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/mar/20/youth-subcultures-where-have-they-gone> (version June 12 2019).

Pritchard, Stephen. "Hipsters and artists are the gentrifying foot soldiers of capitalism", *The Guardian* (2016), via <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/13/hipsters-artists-gentrifying-capitalism> (version June 12 2019).

Reinsch, Ole. "Flapper Girls: Feminism and consumer society in the 1920s," *Gender Forum* 42 (2013).

Righart, Hans. *De eindoelzame jaren zestig. Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict* (Amsterdam 1995).

Saad-Filho, Alfredo, & Deborah Johnston. *Neoliberalism: A critical reader* (2005).

Sandke, Randall. *Where the dark and the light folks meet: Race and the mythology, politics, and business of jazz* (2010).

Savage, Jon. "1966: the year youth culture exploded", *The Guardian* (2015), via <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/nov/15/1966-trip-good-vibrations-pop-revolution> (version June 12 2019).

Schwartz, Roberta Freund. *How Britain got the blues: the transmission and reception of American blues style in the United Kingdom* (2016).

Seigel, Jerrold. *Bohemian Paris: Culture, politics, and the boundaries of bourgeois life, 1830-1930* (1999).

Shevory, Thomas C.. "Bleached resistance: The politics of grunge," *Popular Music & Society* 19.2 (1995).

Streeck, Wolfgang. "Citizens as customers: considerations on the new politics of consumption", *New Left Review* 76 (2012).

Susterman, Richard. 'Challenging conventions in the fine art of rap', in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011).

Tosh, John. *The Pursuit of History* (2010).

Walker, Susannah. "Black is profitable: The commodification of the Afro, 1960-1975," *Enterprise & Society* 1.3 (2000).

Watson, Steve. *The Birth of the Beat Generation* (1995).

the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader (2011).

Source Material

Bakare, Lanre. "Joey Bada\$\$: 'They call me a Marxist and anti-white gangster rapper - they don't know anything'," in *The Guardian* (January 29 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jan/29/joey-badass-they-call-me-marxist-anti-white-gangster-rapper> (version april 3 2019).

Bar-Lev, Amir. *Long Strange Trip* (2017)

Bialik, Carl. "Is the Conventional Wisdom Correct In Measuring Hip-Hop Audience?", *Wall Street Journal* (2005), via <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB111521814339424546> (version June 2 2019).

Blanco, Alvin. "New Balance #TCSNYCMarathon Commercial Features A Tribe Called Quest," in *Hip Hop Wired* (November 5 2017), <https://hiphopwired.com/558849/new-balance-tcsnymarathon-commercial-features-tribe-called-quest/> (Version April 10 2019).

Cornell University, "The Adler Hip Hop Archive", <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/hiphop/adler.html> (version 18 June 2019).

Cornell University Library, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092, Soho News, "Bobby Robinson: Up from the streets", via <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:13450422> (version June 20 2019).

Cornell University Library, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092, New Musical Express, "Interview with Sylvia Robinson", via <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:9061414> (version June 20 2019).

Cornell University Library, Adler Hip Hop Archive, #8092, Bill Adler, "Transcription of interviews with Sylvia Robinson, Joey Robinson Jr., Joe Robinson Sr.", via <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:13450476> (version June 22 2019).

Genius.com, "A Tribe Called Quest - Buggin' Out", <https://genius.com/A-tribe-called-quest-buggin-out-lyrics> (Version April 1 2019).

Genius.com, "A Tribe Called Quest - Sprite Commercial", <https://genius.com/Sprite-a-tribe-called-quest-1994-commercial-lyrics> (Version April 1 2019).

Genius.com, "A Tribe Called Quest - We Can Get Down", <https://genius.com/A-tribe-called-quest-we-can-get-down-lyrics> (version april 5 2018).

Genius.com, "Run-D.M.C. - My Adidas", <https://genius.com/Run-dmc-my-adidas-lyrics> (version June 22 2019).

Genius.com, "The Last Poets: When the revolution comes", via <https://genius.com/The-last-poets-when-the-revolution-comes-lyrics> (version June 6 2019).

George, Nelson. *Hip hop's founding fathers speak the truth*, in Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader* (2011).

Hilburn, Robert. "Checking in with Chuck D.", in *L.A. Times* (November 8 1992).
<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:CDhteapoXYJ:https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-11-08-ca-29-story.html+&cd=18&hl=nl&ct=clnk&gl=nl> (version June 30 2019).

Lynch, John. 'For the first time in history, hip-hop has surpassed rock to become the most popular music genre, according to Nielsen', in *Business Insider* (January 4 2018), <https://www.businessinsider.com/hip-hop-passes-rock-most-popular-music-genre-nielsen-2018-1?international=true&r=US&IR=T> (version April 2 2019).

NPO3, "Public Enemy over hun strijd" (October 16 1988), https://www.npo3.nl/public-enemy-over-hun-strijd/16-11-2016/WO_VPRO_6034584 (version June 30 2019).

Okayplayer, "Kendrick Lamar Stars In New Reebok Commercial For The Revamped Ventilator", (2015), <https://www.okayplayer.com/news/kendrick-lamar-new-reebok-commercial-video.html> (Version March 16 2019).

Orleon, Susan. "Living large. The world of Fab Five Freddy", in *The New Yorker* (June 17 1991), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1991/06/17/living-large> (June 30 2019).

Questlove, "Mo' Money, Mo' Problems: How Hip-Hop Failed Black America, Part II", in *Vulture* (April 29 2014), <https://www.vulture.com/2014/04/questlove-on-money-jay-z-how-hip-hop-failed-black-america-part-2.html> (version June 30 2019).

Warnett, Gary. 'How Run-DMC Earned Their Adidas Stripes', in *Mr. Porter Daily Style*.

Weiner, Natalie. "How Kendrick Lamar Transformed Into 'The John Coltrane of Hip-Hop' on 'To Pimp a Butterfly'," *Billboard* (2015), <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/the-juice/6509665/kendrick-lamar-to-pimp-a-butterfly-jazz-robert-glasper> (Version March 10 2019).

Wheeler, Darby. *Hip-Hop Evolution*, via Netflix, HBO Canada.

Youtube.com, "2Pac - Hit 'Em Up (Dirty)," (March 28 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41qC3w3UUKU> (Version April 3 2019).

Youtube.com, "Kendrick Lamar - Humble" (March 30 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvTRZJ-4EyI> (Version April 3 2019).

Youtube.com, "Kendrick Lamar - Swimming Pool" (August 3 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5YNiCfWC3A> (Version April 3 2019).