Abstract

In the late 1970s the culture of hip hop emerged from the streets of New York. It was an outlet for identity, expression and boasting among communities of young people who were raised in disadvantaged circumstances. Hip hop allowed for creative innovators to form a niche within the entertainment industry that has generated billions of dollars.

The purpose of our study is to investigate how hip hop artists utilize entrepreneurial methods in their ventures. Specifically, we explore how these entrepreneurs build empires from storytelling and narrative creation. Entrepreneurial research has found storytelling as an increasingly validated method towards success. Much has been written about how entrepreneurs frame their ideas, how they have to be raconteurial in the early stages of their ventures in order to access resources, and how a “great” pitch is invaluable in capital raising. Hip hop artists rely on stories and storytelling, and the listeners response to the pitch dictates its value.

The primary methods used in our study were theoretical and text analysis. We relied on content analysis, discourse analysis and critical discourse studies to analyze our data. We compared literature from various research disciplines including cultural studies, business studies, entrepreneurial research, post structuralism and philosophy.

Our results indicate that hip hop artists negotiate experiences and create narratives that are then commodified.

Our conclusions indicate that narratives that provide consumers a glimpse into communities of “others” while keeping listeners at a safe distance, sell. Furthermore, we find that rappers who exploit vulgarity and glamorize violence, misogyny and aggression are time and again rewarded with fame and fiscal success.
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1. Introduction

You know, life is funny
If you don't repeat the actions of your own success
You won't be successful
You gotta know your own formula, your own ingredients
What made you, YOU
-KRS-One, *Hip Hop knowledge*

“For the first time in history, hip-hop has surpassed rock to become the most popular music genre, according to Nielsen” (Lynch, 2018). So read the headlines of *Business Insider* on January 4th in 2018. Nielsen is the global measurement and data analytics company that conducts analysis of consumer markets worldwide. In the same year, Billboard published “*U.S. Music Consumption up 12.5%, R&B/Hip-Hop is Year’s Most Popular Genre*” (Caulfield, 2018). Hip hop’s popularity is undeniable and the impact that hip hop has had on cultural and creative industries is extensive. The music genre of hip hop has influenced fashion, culture and marketing, as will be illustrated in this paper. However, within the field of entrepreneurial research, hip hop is almost entirely unresearched. The aim of this paper is to argue that hip hop, a marketable cultural production, as an act of entrepreneurial imagination and that it’s impact has been far-reaching. We argue that hip hop has relied on, as well as created, entrepreneurial approaches to commodifying story, as well as products and services. We explore how hip hop artists utilize discourse to contextualize themselves as both ‘the entrepreneur’ and ‘the product’. As Schumpeterian entrepreneurs hip hop artists manage to disrupt, create and annihilate norms and rappers exhibit both genius and "the gale of creative destruction" (Schumpeter, 1942). These artists attain recognition through their stories of the “ghetto sublime”. Hip hop artists can grant us thrilling proximity to a form of social danger while simultaneously providing us safety from the object of our fascination (Smith, 2003). This story, this pitch, works to exotify and ameliorate the black urban experience in order to define it within a transactional framework.

Our paper studies how hip hop has established itself as an entrepreneurial activity for mostly disenfranchised black and brown communities in the United States. We explore the legacy of first wave entrepreneurs in hip hop and elucidate hip hop’s continued disruption of “capitalism’s scheme of values...the civilization of inequality and of the family fortune.” (Schumpeter, 1942). Our argument is that by using rap as a means to signify the experiences of urban black communities in the post-civil rights era, young black people have been able to
make a dent in the white domination of entrepreneurship in the United States. However, while these conspicuous fractures in the “white ceiling” have made a lot of “noise” they have substantively done little to change the ongoing inequity for African American entrepreneurs (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

**Wealth by Race and Ethnicity, 2007-13**

*Median net worth of households, in 2013 dollars*

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Note: Blacks and whites include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Survey of Consumer Finances public-use data

**Figure 1: Wealth by race and ethnicity, 2007-2013**

Our research questions are:

(1) How/where does the narrative and discursive nature of entrepreneurial language exist in hip hop?

(2) What are the outcomes for utilizing entrepreneurial tropes in hip hop?
Growth in small business owners, 2007 to 2012

Figure 2: Growth in small business owners, 2007-2012

Note: Includes non-farm and non-publicly traded businesses only.

Source: National Women's Business Council
Chart: Stacy Jones, Data Editor, Fortune
2. Background: The history of hip hop

In order to contextualize our argument, we will give an overview of the origins of hip hop as a cultural phenomenon. We will not aim to give an in-depth description of the environment that spawned the hip hop culture, neither will we attempt to conduct any analysis on the socio-economic landscapes that hip hop was born out of. Rather, for the sake of our argument we will provide an overview.

Hip hop music is a musical genre, a genre that developed as a part of culture by the same name – hip hop. Hip hop, as a culture, is defined by four stylistic and expressive elements; MC-ing (rapping), DJ-ing, break-dancing and graffiti art.

MC-ing/rapping is an oral expression that has been referred to as ‘verbal acrobatics’, a rapid wordplay which is often used as a vehicle to boast and brag. DJ-ing is a manipulation of sounds often utilizing two record players and a mix table to ‘mix’ different songs. Break-dancing is an expressive, rhythmic form of dance. Among the innovators of the hip hop culture it was often referred to as ‘poetry in motion’ and formed “…a link between the street and the night-club” (Forman 2004, p. 11). Graffiti art is the visual representation of hip hop culture.

Rap music as a “localized form of cultural expression” is the subject of Andy Bennett’s article Rappin’ on the Tyne: White Hip Hop Culture in Northeast England - an Ethnographic Study (Bennett, 2001) in which it is argued that hip hop is often used as a vehicle for discussions of localized discussions of political subjects. Tricia Rose describes a similar localization and societal problems: “Los Angeles county, Oakland, Detroit, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta, Miami, Newark and Trenton, Roxbury, and Philadelphia developed local hip hop scenes that link various regional post-industrial experiences of alienation, unemployment, police harassment, social, and economic isolation to their local and specific experience via hip hop’s language, style and attitude” (Rose, 1994, p. 60)

“The modern history of hip hop probably starts in 1979 with the song ‘Rappers Delight’ by the Sugarhill Gang”, referred to as “the signal barrier breaker” when hip hop was presented to the world (Dyson, 2004). The first documented hip hop party was thrown on August 11th 1973 (Laurence, 2014). The first hip hop party in history, was advertised via handwritten flyers on ruled index cards: “A DJ KOOL HERC PARTY, BACK TO SCHOOL JAM, $.25 LADIES, $.50 FELLAS” (Charnas, 2011). Hip hop had been forming, in parks, clubs and at block-parties (Chang, 2005). In the early 1970s in Harlem, the cradle of hip hop,
the nightclubs, that had previously been venues for live music and dancing, were vanishing, and bands were replaced by disc jockeys that spun records for the audiences that came to dance (Charnas, 2011). These disc jockeys mostly played ‘disco music’ (Charnas 2011; Chang 2005) and the “DJ$s” were becoming the stars. The DJs honed their skills and came up with new innovative approaches to DJing, blending songs and beats seamlessly utilizing two turntables simultaneously, using headphones to listen to one record while another one was playing. It was common that DJs would sell their “mixing sessions” on cassettes and eight track tapes (Charnas, 2011). It wasn’t long before the DJs started utilizing microphones in their sessions, communicating with the crowd and performing rhyming routines. DJ Kool Herc was one of the first DJs who had taken to playing only the ‘break’ sections of songs. Those were the parts where only the break, or the beat of a song would be played and it seemed to appeal to the crowd, as members of the audiences would dance to those breaks (Chang, 2005; Charnas 2011). Thus, was born, according to Charnas and Chang, another element of hip hop culture, namely the breakdance.

Graffiti art, yet another element of hip hop, was a cultural expression where writings or drawings are sprayed or scribbled on walls or other surfaces, usually in public spaces, without permission. Janice Rahn describes the phenomenon in the book Painting Without Permission: Hip-Hop Graffiti Subculture as: “The complex issues layered behind a residue of signatures, characters, and text, illegally painted in public space” (Rahn, 2002, p. 52). The culture of hip hop is comprised of the four elements mentioned above, all of which were subjects to battles. Those involved in culture of hip hop would compete and prove their worth, through ‘breakdance battles’, ‘MC battles’ and the claiming of territory through graffiti.

This competitive component of the culture was embedded in hip hop from the very start. Rapper’s Delight by The Sugarhill Gang, illustrates this in a rhyme by Master Gee:

“I said M-A-S, T-E-R, a G with a double E
I said I go by the unforgettable name
Of the man they call the Master Gee
Well, my name is known all over the world
By all the foxy ladies and the pretty girls
I'm goin' down in history
As the baddest rapper there ever could be
Now I'm feelin' the highs and you're feelin' the lows
The beat starts gettin' into your toes”
-Sugarhill Gang, Rapper’s Delight
**Rapper’s Delight** was very influential. It showed, via sales and commercial popularity that there was a way to profit from duplicating the street- and club performances in the studio settings. The song has, however, been criticized for lacking in key elements of hip hop: “…the most crucial elements of hip hop practice – turntable scratches and cuts from record to record, audience call-and-response, breakneck battles on the mic – were all absent” (Potter, 1995, p. 45).

Despite that criticism *Rapper’s Delight* was an inspiration and it wasn’t long until other musicians started releasing hip hop music. The artform continued to develop, and the essential elements of hip hop began taking up more space. The music itself deviated from the ‘disco sound’ and rappers started using rap as a narrative, or even an analytical tool. Describing their lived realities, in the inner cities: “…rap began do describe and analyze the social, economic, and political factors that led to its emergence and development: drug addiction, police brutality, teen pregnancy, and various forms of material deprivation” (Dyson, 2004, p. 61).

An example of this narrative shift in hip hop is *The Message* written and performed by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five in 1982. Through the lyrics the MCs give an insight into their ‘lived realities’, a glimpse into the life in the Bronx at the time. The lyrics described the social state, poverty and sensation of entrapment:

“It’s like a jungle sometimes
It makes me wonder how I keep from goin’ under
Broken glass everywhere
People pissin’ on the stairs, you know they just don’t care
I can’t take the smell, can’t take the noise
Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat
I tried to get away, but I couldn’t get far
‘Cause a man with tow-truck reposessed my car”
-Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, *The Message*

These lyrics were quite unlike the ‘party raps’ that had previously dominated the genre. The musical creation was now accompanied by social protest and cultural expression (Dyson, 2004). This reality described through the medium of hip hop, was indeed the reality for those in the urban, inner-city people of color.
“Law and order” had been a central theme in Richard Nixon’s presidential election campaign in 1964, where his campaign called upon voters to reject the lawlessness of civil rights activists and reports and imagery of violence, and chaos, were utilized in order to strike fear into the hearts of voters (Alexander, 2010). These methods of vilifying civil rights activists escalated, especially after drugs started flowing in and out of the urban black neighborhoods. On June 17th 1971, Richard Nixon declared a war on drugs, stating that drugs were “public enemy number one” (Payan, 2013). Civil rights advocate and scholar Alexander Michelle describes the percussions of the turmoil that was ignited by this ‘war on drugs’ in her book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*:

“Poor people of color, like other Americans—indeed like nearly everyone around the world—want safe streets, peaceful communities, healthy families, good jobs, and meaningful opportunities to contribute to society. The notion that ghetto families do not, in fact, want those things, and instead are perfectly content to live in crime-ridden communities, feeling no shame or regret about the fate of their young men is, quite simply, racist. It is impossible to imagine that we would believe such a thing about whites” (Alexander 2010, p. 170).

Alexander speculates about the effects of the realities of being black, urban, poor youth born and raised in these disadvantaged and entrapping circumstances. She argues that it should not be surprising that there are distrust issues when it came to authority and social structures. Alexander addresses that this is a youth raised with a healthy fear of authority, “who are constantly followed by the police and shamed by teachers, relatives, and strangers” (Alexander 2010, p. 171). The result of such conditions, according to Alexander, became that the stigma of criminality became embraced as a political act, or an act of rebellion. In Alexander’s words: “an attempt to carve out a positive identity in a society that offers them little more than scorn, contempt, and constant surveillance.” (Alexander 2010, p. 171). This act, of embracing a criminal lifestyle, contributed to a rise in opportunities for the disadvantaged youth:

“For those residing in ghetto communities, employment is scarce—often nonexistent. Schools located in ghetto communities more closely resemble prisons than places of learning, creativity, or moral development. And because the drug war has been raging for decades now, the parents of children coming of age today were targets of the drug war as well. As a result, many fathers are in prison, and those who are “free” bear the prison label. They are often unable to provide for, or meaningfully contribute to, a family. Any wonder, then, that many youth embrace their stigmatized identity as a means of survival in this new caste system? Should we be shocked when they turn to
gangs or fellow inmates for support when no viable family support structure exists? After all, in many respects, they are simply doing what black people did during the Jim Crow era—they are turning to each other for support and solace in a society that despises them” (Alexander 2010, p. 172).

The roots of hip hop emerged from the political uprising and artistic freedoms of the Black Power Movements of the early 1970s and the increasingly disenfranchised inner-city America. Fairly early-on young hip hop entrepreneurs found that “the problems of black urban life” (Tricia Rose 1994, p. 4) were marketable and held the promise of fiscal liberation in the face of systematic racism and cultural imperialism. While hip hop came into existence in the mid-1970s as a local artistic expression it has since developed into a multi-billion dollar industry (Figure 3).

Moving from a substantially black form of art for black audiences to attracting white audiences in droves – the art form moved from being socio-political into being “gangsta” and “ghetto”. Music television (MTV) played a large part in taking the music of marginalized communities and exposing it to white audiences. MTV debuted its hip-hop-centered program “Yo! MTV Raps” on Aug. 6, 1988. “Yo! MTV Raps was responsible for bringing hip-hop to the masses.

“If you were from Compton, CA, you could understand what was going on in New York via hip-hop and vice versa. We would go interview the late great Eazy E and Tupac Shakur and Biggie and show their videos and we'd go to where they came from and where they lived and shoot shows with them.” (Hoye 1998 p.2)

While the hip hop music industry is predominately black, studies have shown that over 70% of its consumers are white (Figure 4) (Hall, 2010). In 2018, 23 out of every 100 streams on YouTube were hip hop and hip hop dominates other streaming services as well, accounting for 27% of all music streamed on Spotify and Apple Music (Figure 5) (Day, 2019). In the United States of America, 54% of 20-24 year olds identifying Hip Hop as their preferred genre of music (Statistica 2018).
Figure 3: Hip hop artists ranked by earnings in U.S. dollars from June 2016 to June 2018
Figure 4: Analysis of hip hop consumers

Figure 5: Total downloads of top 10 Ranked Billboard albums
3. Theory, Literature Review and Definitions

3.1. Defining the entrepreneur

“What a difference a day makes
What about all the effort that a day takes?
The winding road of uncertainty
That undying feeling of urgency
Did I do all that I could do to ensure my success?
Did I really give my all, and am I really at my best
...today?”

-Big K.R.I.T., 8:04AM

Entrepreneurship as a term is most commonly associated with the discovery and the pursuit of new opportunities in the realm of business. (Gartner, 1988, Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Literature on entrepreneurship has a tendency to be typically concerned about individual value and wealth creation (Landström, 2005). However, at its very heart, entrepreneurship seems to be defined as the undertaking of activities whilst facing uncertainty (Knight, 1921, Miles, 1949). The broad definition of entrepreneurship refers to the discovering and the pursuit of a new idea, a new project, a new venture that goes above and beyond, that transgresses rules and structures already in existence (Holmquist, 2003) and the difference means, or vehicles, utilized to push those ideas and project into existence (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2003).

The origins of the term entrepreneur can be traced from the French verb *entreprendre* (Henrekson and Stenkula, 2016). In French the verb means to supply, or to create space in order for something to be done. The term has also been translated into “to begin something”, or to “undertake”, and the French verb can be divided into two parts; preneur is a ‘between-taker’, or ‘go- between’” (Filion, 2011). The term was first used in literature in the year 1253, according to Filion. A literal-translation of the term entrepreneur, could thus be “the one that goes between”, or “the one that begins something”. A common consensus of the term entrepreneur does not seem to exist, arguably the lack of a common consensus could be pinned on the fact that the term has been used to formulate a specific meaning in great many fields and disciplines and, thus, an agreed upon definition is relatively vague. Stenkula and Henrekson argue: “The role of the entrepreneur does not readily lend itself to a mathematical formalization, which partly explains why entrepreneurship was once excluded from the
mainstream framework.” (Henrekson and Stenkula, 2016). Similarly, Dieter Bögenhold (2011) argues, in the chapter Schumpeter, Creative Destruction and Entrepreneurship:

“Entrepreneurship seems poorly defined and, furthermore, the concept is almost based on non-questioned assumptions. One has to differentiate what entrepreneurship is (and can be) and what the phenomenon is more complex in reality than public discourse sometimes suggests” (Bögenhold, 2011, p. 385).

Bögenhold continues and suggests that entrepreneurship has, at least, two sides – in public discourse on the one hand, and within the public policy arena on the other (Bögenhold, 2011). His argument is that:

“Scanning the history of economic thought in the area of entrepreneurship shows that the contents of what is captured by the term entrepreneurship has also been changing and is far from being universally shared, so that competing and changing conceptions can be found” (Bögenhold, 2011, p. 386).

This emphasis on the problems that face those who embark attempts to properly define entrepreneurship is a common feature amongst scholars (Cooper, 2005; Gartner, 1990 Schumpeter 1934). Anderson and Starnawska (2008) argue that “…the diversity of ways of being entrepreneurial and the diversity of ways that people entrepreneurship call for a reassessment of how people conceptualize entrepreneurship.” (Anderson & Starnawska, 2008). In their article Research Practice in Entrepreneurship the authors state that a part of the problem, when it comes to defining entrepreneurship, lies in the richness, the complexity and the diversity of the manifestations of entrepreneurial activities. They claim that entrepreneurship has been described as an intellectual onion and “when you start to peel it apart, you are left with nothing and come away in tears!” (Anderson & Starnawska, 2008, p. 1). Anderson gives a broad description, or definition, of entrepreneurship by stating that the term refers to “the creation and extraction of value from an environment” (Anderson 2000, p. 92). Such definitions are vague to say the least.

Bruyat and Julien (2000) attempted to define the field of research in entrepreneurship in their article “Defining the Field of Research in Entrepreneurship” rather than provide another definition of the entrepreneur, as they claim that this “would be impossible and quite useless, since there are already so many” (Bruyat and Julien 2000, p. 166). The authors claim that
research on entrepreneurship is fragmentary and has a very narrow focus on aspects of entrepreneurship. Bygrave and Hofer stated in their article, *Theorizing About Entrepreneurship*, that “good science has to begin with good definitions” (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991). When it comes to definitions, entrepreneurship seems to be a problematic term to define, but dominant positions have indeed been laid down. Bruyat and Julien argue that these foundations were laid by Cantillon, Turgot, Say and Schumpeter. Cantillon stated that the entrepreneur was someone who assumed risks and potentially appropriated profits legitimately. Turgot and Say made a distinction between the entrepreneur and the capitalist; while the capitalist assumed the risk or the uncertainty the entrepreneur obtained and organized the production factors for value creation. Schumpeter viewed the entrepreneur as someone who performs the functions of innovation which allow the liberal system to persist by going beyond its contradictions (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991).

Israel M. Kirzner has contributed greatly to the body of literature of entrepreneurial research and especially with suggesting that ‘alertness’ is an essential mechanism for entrepreneurs as he illustrates in these words: “My emphasis on the entrepreneur as the agent driving the competitive-equilibrative forces if the market focuses attention on the entrepreneur not as creator, but as merely being alert.” (Kirzner 2009, p. 150). By highlighting the alertness of entrepreneurs to seize opportunities, Kirzer claims that he was not denying that innovativeness, boldness and creativity were characteristics of the entrepreneur. That is to say, Kirzer did not intend to suggest that there is no effort behind entrepreneurship. “Rather, my theory sees the Schumpeterian entrepreneur – with all his brash creativity – as being the agent who is responding to existing imbalances in the market” (Kirzner 2009, p. 150)

When it comes to ‘grasping’ the term entrepreneurship William Gartner (2008) wrote a rhyme that was published as an article cleverly titled *Entrepreneurship-hop*:

> “Entrepreneurship is a phenomenon, not a theory
> To always look for some causal explanation makes me weary
> I know scholarship seeks to answer the “why?”
> But I am interested in “’what”, “how”, and the nature of try”
> (Gartner 2008, p. 362)

Gartner continues:
“He (Schumpeter) gets cited for posting an entrepreneurial dynamic, 
That the idea of equilibrium is rather pedanitic, 
He states that the primary function 
Of entrepreneurship is desctruction 
The level of ananlysis is, then, that of the environment, 
Which is more often the ‘sociologists’ and economists’determinant“ 
(ibid. p. 363)  
....  
“There is not an inherent correlation, 
for entrepreneurship’s identification, 
with ideas only about organization, 
a better start might be through the heart: 
humanities and art. 
Entrepreneurship is as large as the people in it, 
the focus on profit and rationality is a counterfeit 
(ibid. 365) 

Gartner, here, makes it clear that in order to understand entrepreneurship there is a need to look to a broader spectrum, entrepreneurial activites are to be found in places where the scope has not been focusing and that entrepreneurship is, really, found in people that act, that it is not all about the commodification, the rationality, but also about the ‘heart’, namely the humanities and art. 

Ivo Zander hypothized, in his article Do you see what I mean? An Entreneruship Perspective on the Nature and Boundaries of the Firm, that “In the eyes of the entrepreneur, “windows of opportunity” are open during limited periods of time.” and that such opportunities might be intepreted differently – depending on the individual (Zander 2007, p. 1142). Such opportunities, according to Zander, become real in the mind of the entrepreneur, fueled by creativity. The instigator of an idea, the entrepreneur, cannot breathe easily and wait for changes to happen, for markets to develop and converge. Rather, the entrepreneur must embark on the journey into uncertainty. In Zander’s words the entrepreneur: “may indeed start the entrepreneurial venture without reference to available information.” (ibid, p. 1148).
Karol Śledzik explains, in his paper, *Schumpeter’s View on Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, how Schumpeter described development as historical process of structural changes, driven, to a great extent, by innovation and innovative processes. (*Theory of Economic Development, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest and the Business Cycle*)

Innovation, was according to Śledzik, divided into five types:

“1. The launch of a new product or new species of already known product;
2. Application of new methods of production or sales of a product (not yet proven in the industry);
3. Opening of a new market (the market for which a brand of the industry was not yet represented);
4. Acquiring of new sources of supply of raw material or semi-finished goods;
5. New industry structure, such as the creation or destruction of a monopoly position” (Śledzik 2013, p. 90)

This division that Śledzik has proposed, based on the foundations of Schumpeter, are useful in analyzing our research matter. In common language, the entrepreneur tends to be described as an almost mythical figure. Sørensen (2008) states that entrepreneurship theory is mythological, and has been researched as such and reports that “mythological figures play a long and constituting role in the entrepreneurship discourse” (Sørensen, 2008). The perceived ability to see things before other people do is, according to Lindqvist, a potential reason for why entrepreneurs are associated with mythical abilities. (Lindqvist, 2011)

In an article titled *A Rhetorical Theory of Transformation in Entrepreneurial Narrative: The Case of The Republic of Tea*, scholar Sean D. Williams made the point that there is not such thing as an ‘entrepreneur’, rather, Williams proposed, “instead, one “performs” entrepreneurship, just as one performs “masculinity” or just as one performs “management.”. (Williams 2010, p. 16). William’s approach, even though stated in a more vulgar manner, is very much in line with much of entrepreneurial literature (Kirzner 2018; Zander 2007; Henrekson and Stenkula 2016). Following this approach, throughout this paper, we will not target individual entrepreneurs as such, rather will we attempt to identify entrepreneurial activities performed amongst hip hop artists and other stake-holders in the hip hop industry.
3.2. Entrepreneurs as storytellers

In a similar manner as explained above, Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) stated that the field of entrepreneurship is generally concerned with how future goods and services are brought into existence – created, discovered and exploited. The authors research added another component into the speculations and research, namely stories. Lounsbury and Glynn propose that stories play an essential role in all processes that enable new opportunities to be explored and new businesses to emerge (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). The argument is that the stories that are told by, or even about, entrepreneurs are crucial in defining new ventures in ways that are understandable and “can lead to favorable interpretations of the wealth creating possibilities of the venture” (ibid, p. 547) thus, aiding the resource flows to bring a new, novel, idea into reality. Lounsbury and Glynn claim that too little attention has been paid to the “dynamics of culture and symbolic activities” (ibid, p. 549) in entrepreneurship literature, and furtherly illustrate that: “entrepreneurial research rooted in the discipline of economics has ignored the study of culture while that grounded in psychology and sociology has theorized about culture in a very limited way – typically as a set of abstracted beliefs that motivate entrepreneurial actions” (ibid, p. 549). This rhymes with the ideas of William Gartner, presented earlier, who also criticized the lack of attention on humanities. Lounsbury and Glynn describe how each and any story consists of three elements. In order to illustrate that they quote Fiol (1989) who described the three elements in a story as such:

“A narrative subject in search of an object, a ‘destinator’ (an external force, the source of the subject’s ideology), and a set of forces that either help or hinder the subject in acquiring the desired object” (Fiol 1989, p. 279).

Lounsbury and Glynn tweek that description and claim that following the pattern described by Fiol the entrepreneurial story might be structured like this:

“The narrative subject as the individual entrepreneur or the new venture; the ultimate object or goal of the narrative as successful new enterprise, profitability, VC (venture capital) funding, or positive reputation with potential stakeholders; and the destinator as the corporate and societal environment in which the narratice subject operates” (Lounsbury and Glynn 2001 p. 549)

The stories, then, operate to “translate” new, unfamiliar ideas to external audiences and are used to illustrate the quality of the idea. The telling of the story is intended to create
objectification and order according to the authors and the storytellers goal is to shape and legitimize – through a narrative – the identity of the idea, the enterprise. In order to do so the story can either emphasize the uniqueness or the distinctiveness of the idea through elevating the distinctive characteristics of the idea, or stress the normative aspects or appropriateness of the new venture by comparing it to similar organizational forms or ideas (ibid, p. 550). Lounsbury and Glynn argue that in order to gain legitimacy and access to resources the entrepreneur must tell stories that are solidly constructed and have the potential to inspire others, even encourage them to partake in the venture.

Similarly, Martens, Jennings and Jennings (2007) came to the conclusion in their article *Do the stories thye tell get them the money they need? The role of entrepreneurial narratives in research acquisitions*. The authors conducted a research where the primary goal was to “examine the belief that successful entrepreneurs are effective storytellers” (Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007). The results of the study indicated that the belief that entrepreneurs tell effective stories was actually based on actuality: “Revealing that effectively constructed stories do help entrepreneurs acquire the money they need to exploit identified opportunities” (ibid, p. 1125). The findings supported the claims that “storytelling is an essential component of the entrepreneur’s toolkit” and “successful entrepreneurs often possess reputations as effective “raconteurs” (ibid, p. 1107). These findings suggested that exceptionally strong narratives have a threefold impact, firstly in the construction of explicit or unambiguous identities for entrepreneurial enterprises. Secondly, in emphasizing the risk avoidances for the venture, without giving overly complicated explanations and thirdly, in invoking “familiar elements to contextualize ground those less familiar” (ibid, p. 1125). Storytelling is, thus, a crucial mechanism that can be utilized by entrepreneurs to leverage their capital and potentially attract and acquire additional resources according to the authors.

Aldrich and Fiol (1994) also gave special importance to narratives in their research on entrepreneurship in their work *Fools Rush in? The Institutional Context of Industry Creation* and asserted that ‘framing’ had been documented to have “powerful psychological effects” (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994). Beyond having powerful effects Aldrich and Fiol argued that ‘issue frames’, or the way that an idea is presented, have values as they legitimate and motivate symbols. Through their research they came to the conclusion that:

“Charismatic leaders appeal to a common bond with followers, even when breaking established values, so as to appear trustworthy and credible to society. The do this the frequent use of inclusive referents such as “we” and “us,” as opposed to “I” and “you.”
Second, charismatic leaders frame issues using high levels of abstraction, thus fostering a degree of ambiguity around their innovative ideas” (ibid, p. 651)

Furtherly, the authors claim that entrepreneurs must construct a knowledge base “that outsiders will accept as valid, and yet they have no external source of validation from which to argue” (ibid. 652). The chosen form of communication for entrepreneurs, thus, often tends to be in the form of creative narratives to state their case, to validate and build solid grounds for their ideas.

William Gartner’s research and studies have also reflected upon the narratives of entrepreneurs, as illustrated in *Entrepreneurial Narrative and a Science of Imagination* where Gartner points out that approaches and methodologies of narratives are reflexive and that researchers in the field of entrepreneurship need to keep that in mind – that the process of analyzing stories should remind researchers, also, to keep in mind their own stories, why and how their research is conducted. (Gartner 2007)

### 3.3. The entrepreneur and the artist

“Rap is an art you can’t own no loops
It’s how you hook ’em up and the rhyme style troop
So don’t even think you could say someone bit
Off your weak beat come on you need to quit”
-Gang Starr, *Take it Personal*

Scherdin and Zander state, in the introduction to the book *Art Entrepreneurship*, which they edit: “In many ways, the creation of art captures the essence of entrepreneurial activity.” (Scherdin and Zander 2011, p. 1). The authors argue that the genuine uncertainty that is associated with the creative process is an element that characterises the work of both artists and entrepreneurs:

“In the context of art, entrepreneurship is about the discovery and pursuit of new art ideas, using a multitude of artistic expressions and organizational forms as vehicles by which to express and convey these ideas to the public. This is a process that displays many of the characteristics that have also been associated with entrepreneurial processes in the business context.” (Scherdin and Zander 2011, p. 3).

Another combining element, according to Scherdin and Zander, is the introduction of “novelty”, which has remained a focus of attention to entrepreneurship literature since
Schumpeter published *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest and the Business Cycle* in 1934. The book *Art Entrepreneurship* focuses on the two elements of ‘novelty’ and ‘uncertainty’. Katja Lindqvist emphasis in the chapter, *Artist Entrepreneurs*, in the same book, how both artists and entrepreneurs challenge contemporary conventions and norms and how that is another defining characteristic. Lindqvist goes on and states that the same fundamental relationship between creative destruction and norms and tradition lies at the very heart of entrepreneurial function, and there refers to the ‘creative destruction’ that was introduced by Schumpeter in 1912:

“From Schumpeter’s perspective as an economist, the entrepreneurial function and role is played by an actor who by introducing novelty in input, output, production or some other dimension of the economic system, changes the overall pattern of production, consumption, perception or similar if that particular item or industry.” (Lindqvist 2011, p. 12)

According to Lindqvist, entrepreneurship and innovation have close links in the research of entrepreneurship. Her chosen approach to entrepreneurship is distinguished as the action taken in order to implement innovation, that is, to introduce a new product or service to the market. “Artistic originality, on the other hand, is usually linked to style innovation only” (Lindqvist 2011, p.12). This, Lindqvist says is likely “due to the repression in art history organizationally or economically related dimension of artistry“ (12). Both the artist and the entrepreneur have, according to Lindqvist, perceived mystical status:

“The aura of the entrepreneur is linked to this mystical and mythical perceived ability to see things before others, of doing something new, that cannot be described or measured with existing value scales. Thus, there is a parallel between the myth of the entrepreneur and the myth of the Artist as charismatic, alchemist, visionary, undertaker, and creator, standing out against a blurry, grey environment of day-to-day routine and mainstream action without reflection.” (Lindqvist, 2001, p. 14)

Being ahead of others, or even of the times, is one of the characteristics of both entrepreneurs and artists – both are portrayed as being visionaries of sorts, those that see and seize opportunities where others do not. Their actions based on gut feelings and personal convictions rather than relying on rational, analytical processes (Guve, 2007).

When it comes to entrepreneurship in the world of arts a possible definition could be alternative approaches or practices that contrast the more dominant practices (Steyaert & Jerome, 2004). The artist then, like the entrepreneur, is defined by the reaction of the market,
the way that the work is perceived can make or break both the artist and the entrepreneur. Both rely on their creation, their novelty and the acceptance of the market. In the words of Lindqvist:

“…consumers construct the Entrepreneur and the Artist through their appreciation or lack of interest in particular novelties. Entrepreneurial offers need to be appreciated in order to actually become consumed, and in the same way artworks are completed only in their consumption moment.” (Lindqvist 2011, p. 15)

The artist, and the entrepreneur, base their activities on opportunity recognition. That is to say that both rely on finding a need of sorts. Of course there are those that fill the criteria of an artist whilst having temporary project employment, those that occupy teaching positions and rely upon grants for their work. For the sake of argument our definition of an artist, in this paper, are those that rely solely on their creation and their social value in terms of income, freelance artists. When an artist creates the chosen career through creativity and innovative production of artistic work and makes a living through resources brought forth by such processes. Processes such as those described sound similar to entrepreneurial activities as described above, but, nonetheless artists often shy away from being associated with entrepreneurship. Scherdin and Zander (2011) suggest that the reason might be that “many artists remain fundamentally suspicious of anything that has to do with commerce and business” (Scherdin and Zander 2011, p. 1). If entrepreneurial (public) discourse has the primary focus on running businesses, there will be a problem when it comes to considering artist entrepreneurs. Christian Steyart and Daniel Hjorth have been amongst scholars that have been broadening and stretching the ways in which to view and approach entrepreneurship. Steyart and Hjorth have attempted to approach entrepreneurship not only as a phenomenon of economics but as something that involves society as a whole (Steyart and Hjorth 2003; 2004; 2009). The idea of the entrepreneur as a social actor is not a new one. Schumpeter’s concept, and role, of the entrepreneur was a very social one, especially in his essay Economic Theory and Entrepreneurial History, according to Richard Swedberg in the introduction to Essays on Entrepreneurs, Innovators, Business Cycles, and the Evolution of Capitalism: “every social environment has its own way of filling the entrepreneurial function” (Swedberg 1989 p. xxvi).

Hjorth and Bjerke coined the concept ‘public entrepreneurship’ to describe artistic actions in society and shied away from utilizing the concept ‘cultural entrepreneurship’ in
order to not reduce the agency of artists to merely a producer of market-based products (Hjorth & Bjerke, 2006). Steyart, Hjorth and Bjerke are amongst scholars who have made attempts to increase the awareness of linguistic usage in entrepreneurial discourse. In doing so actors that have been excluded from the discourse may be including artists.

“being entrepreneurial is not only about realizing new things or things in a new challenging way – it is also about a social game and balancing innovation against acceptance” (Lindqvist, 2011, p. 10)

### 3.4. Word Play

Discourse is not solely a representation of the world, it also informs those descriptions. Indeed, “we do not just report and describe with [discourse], we also create with it” (Boje et al., 2004). Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) wrote further about the link between new venture legitimacy and entrepreneurs’ use of discursive strategies such as issue framing and symbolism. Research seeking to understand the cognition and behavior of entrepreneurs is devoting increasing attention to how entrepreneurs construct and utilize discourse and linguistic devices such as narratives are recognized as foundational (Roundy, 2018). Lounsbury and Glynn (2007) examined the role of discourse in the resource acquisition for entrepreneurs in high-tech industries and found that the identity constructed for new ventures through entrepreneurial discourse has an influence on resource acquisition.

We argue that the artform, lifestyle and the culture of hip hop has had a tremendous impact on the landscape of business, marketing and entrepreneurship. In the context of hip hop the entrepreneur, the expert, was prior to hip hop, a muted voice; young, black and, usually, male. Dyson explains, "Rap artists explore grammatical creativity, verbal wizardry, and linguistic innovation in refining the art of oral communication." (Rap is) “a blend of reality and fiction, rap music is a contemporary response to conditions of joblessness, poverty, and disempowerment” and is” encoded within the rhetoric of racial resistance”(Smitherman, 1994).

Meaning is derived from difference. Rappers are marketed as “gangsters” not businessmen. Hip hop artists have become the new black superheroes invested with dangerous and uncontrollable powers” (McLaren, 2000). According to McLaren, society's response to these powers have been “bimodal—economic and iconographic exploitation on the one hand, and cultural denigration and containment on the other.”
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is “a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias.” (Van Dijk 1998, p. 1) When applied to hip hop, CDA reveals the crossovers and divergences, the misnomers and modifications, the word plays and linguistic juggling that subverts and “destruct norms or traditions” to create “entrepreneurial opportunities within economic and societal systems” (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 93) Hip hop entrepreneurial communication necessitates an ingrained level of “situational code-switching” or “raciolinguistics” that are often masked ways of highlighting blackness (“Barack Obama is so articulate”) and erasing whiteness. Rap as communication is “ the process of differentiating, fixing, naming, labeling, classifying and relating – all intrinsic processes of discursive organization – that social reality is systematically constructed.” (Chia, 2000, p. 513).

Hip hop affords its listeners a peek into the life of the “other” from a safe distance. But one man’s “imagined community is another man's political prison.” (Appadurai, 2006). As the “subjectivation” (Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 1977) of communities of color has increased in the United States, the economic picture of the life of a rapper are increasingly asymmetric with reality. In 1978, Edward Said foreshadowed this contemporary notion of cultural representations as a means of domination and control through the “colonial fantasy of knowing, circumscribing, or reifying the unknowable other in order to master it and thus wield power over it” (Said, 1978). Hip hop has been successfully packaged as ”the” story of inner city black lives and hypermasculinity is presented as both culturally acceptable and expected for black men. Franz Fanon explained the onus of this “facade” as "the native intellectual having clothed his aggressiveness in his barely veiled desire to assimilate himself to the colonial world" (Fanon, 1963). Appadurai speaks of this space and person as imagined:

The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms.
of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order. (Appadurai, 1996, p. 31)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes, of how language works within power relations (Taylor, 2001).” The process of analysis is always interpretive, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint” (Wetherell 2001, p. 380) (Wetherall, 2001). Critical Discourse Analysis gives us a qualitative analytical approach with which to explore discourse and the conscious and unconscious ways it constructs inequalities. New or non traditional entrepreneurs establish their legitimacy and habitus through “contextualizing 'fitting in' with field rules versus 'standing out' as a rule breaker”(De Clerq and Voronov 2009, p. 407). Entrepreneurs’ language also influences the processes of attention, identity construction, legitimation, and sensemaking, which, in turn, shape entrepreneurs’ performance (Roundy & Asllani, 2018).

Norman Fairclough defines a framework in CDA including “the situation, the institution and the social formation.” Young urban entrepreneurs have taken ownership and shifted language that was formerly exclusively used by the dominant norm in defining success. Within the context of our research Fairclough’s framework looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAIRCLOUGH FRAMEWORK</th>
<th>HIP HOP APPLICATION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Situation</td>
<td>Systematic Racism and creative responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Institution</td>
<td>Dominant culture on the macro level and the music industry on a micro level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Formation</td>
<td>The shift from a socially dominant understandings of language, towards a culturally accurized version.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Drawing from Bourdieu’s work on power structures and cultural fissures, we see an opportunity to explore traditional entrepreneurial vernacular as a tool of symbolic capital for inner city African Americans. “Language games that construct alternative realities, grammars that transform the perceptible into non-obvious meanings, and language as a form of action that generates radiating chains of connotations while undermining its own assumptions and assertions” (Edelman 1988, p. 103).
Language and didactics work to legitimize both business and businessmen. The success of the initial presentation of a business idea, “the pitch”, to potential investors is wholly dependant on clarity of communication. Howard Gartner famously said “Stories are the single most powerful weapon in a leader’s arsenal.” (2014). “When we say ‘story,’ we’re talking about much more than a progression of events that leads to an outcome. “All of our knowledge is contained in stories and the mechanisms to construct and retrieve them” (Schank and Abelson 1995, p. 1). “Your entrepreneurial story isn’t a timeline, it’s a culmination of key moments, lessons learned, pivots, motivation, frustrations, and successes.” (Bruce, 2017). Bruce goes on to discuss what she calls “the power of prose”, the dialectical component of the fundraising process. By signifying the narrative of your business (in hip hop that encompasses both the story and the storyteller) you add both interest and value.

Discourse is not solely a representation of the world it informs. Indeed, “we do not just report and describe with [discourse], we also create with it” (Boje and Arkoubi 2009, p. 114). Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) wrote about the link between new venture legitimacy and entrepreneurs’ use of discursive strategies such as issue framing and symbolism. Research seeking to understand the cognition and behavior of entrepreneurs is devoting increasing attention to how entrepreneurs construct and utilize discourse (Roundy 2018). Linguistic devices such as narratives are recognized as foundational. Lounsbury and Glynn (2007) examined the role of discourse in the resource acquisition for entrepreneurs in high-tech industries and found that the identity constructed for new ventures through entrepreneurial discourse has an influence on resource acquisition. Discourse can be defined in a variety of ways. Foucault refers to it as ways of “constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations” (Weedon, 1987). Ferdinand de Saussure talks about “a linguistic system as a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas” (Saussure 1916, p. 6). James Paul Gee created recognized discourse as language in use vs. discourse, which is the combination of social practices and language (Gee, 1989). Particularly interesting to our research is Gee’s Discourse Community theory, in which discourse is learned and shared within particular groups, and inevitably marks ones background.
3.5. **Poststructuralist theory**

“Reality no longer has the time to take on the appearance of reality. It no longer even surpasses fiction: it captures every dream even before it takes on the appearance of a dream” (Baudrillard 1983, p. 142). The dream/nightmare rapped version of the streets include money, drugs, vigilante justice, and disempowered women; signifies a notion that poor black families are content to live in crime-ridden communities. This signifier is, quite simply, racist. The “signification is grounded in the surface area of form rather than in the depth of content” (Collins 2017, p. 393). Poststructuralism offers an important framework with which to look at one of the possible identities in hip hop to be an entrepreneur. Within a poststructuralist framework, the responsibility for differentiation between the fact and fiction in the stories of hip hop is on the consumer. All “fans” will bring their personal experiences into an interpretive and visceral experience, as well as to their interpretation of the meaning of the lyrics. Words are empty symbols that can never fully represent ideas. As signifiers, words are always deeply removed from what they signify and are open to a multitude of interpretations through their sheer lack of specificity.

Derrida proved the theory of “différance”, the taking of words and notions out of context and revealing their “traces” (Derrida 1982, p. 17). For white and or suburban kids consuming the “strange fruit” of hip hop, at issue is not their empathy as much as the stability, the “always already” nature of whiteness and privilege. Hip hop artists find a great deal of success in “petits récits”, localized stories of life in the ‘hood. Paul Gilroy reflected, “if the ‘hood is the essence of where blackness can be found, which ‘hood are we talking about? How do we weigh the achievements of one ‘hood against the achievements of another? Can there be a blackness that connects, articulates, synchronizes experiences and histories across the diaspora space?” (Gilroy 2004, p. 89) Hip hop represents a (re)valuing of localized knowledge, and of an oral tradition of storytelling. It is a story often wrought with supernatural skills, hardships and extreme success. Because of the dichotomy of experiences, the “pitch” or the rap, act as both a repellent and a force of attraction. “Hopelessness can be as naïve as hope” (Dempsey and Rowe 2004, p. 48).

With the power to create successful individuals out of the hand of the “man”, it is seemingly in the hand of the individual. “Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society. (Foucault 1978, p. 93)
Discourse can be defined in a variety of ways. Foucault, refers to it as ways of “constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations” (Weedon 1987) Ferdinand de Saussure talks about “a linguistic system as a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas” (1916). James Paul Gee created recognized discourse as language in use vs. Discourse, which is the combination of social practices and language. (1989) Particularly interesting to our research is Gee’s Discourse Community theory, in which discourse is learned and shared within particular groups, and inevitably marks ones background.
4. Methodology

Given the scope of our research, interviewing our research subjects, innovative artists and renowned hip hop artists based in inner city America spanning over the last 40 years would be, to say the least, problematic. We designed our research as a qualitative content analysis, as well as a discourse analysis. Content analysis is a research method that can be used with either qualitative or quantitative data, either in an inductive or deductive manner (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Content analysis has been described as a multidimensional method, with three distinct approaches: conventional, directed and summative (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The three distinct approaches can all be used to derive and interpret meaning from the content of secondary data, such as text data. Krippendorff claims that “content analysis entails a systematic reading of a body of texts images and symbolic matter, not necessary from an author’s perspective” (Krippendorff 2004, p. 3). The systematic reading of a given body of texts narrows down “the range of possible inferences concerning unobserved facts, intentions, mental states, effects, prejudices, planned actions, and antecedent or consequent conditions” (ibid. p. 25) Thus, we considered a content analytical approach to be appropriate for our study. Critical discourse studies was also a point of reference throughout our study, as critical discourse studies can help researchers bring their focus on “units” of communications that go above and beyond solely isolated words and sentences and can be utilized to analyze texts, communicative events, speech acts and discourses (Wodak & Meyer, 2014). By relying on critical discourse analysis, a researcher can also direct the attention on the context of language use, be it social, cultural, cognitive or situative. Critical discourse studies vary from discourse analysis as they are not focused merely on a linguistic unit per se, but on the understanding of social phenomena that are, in their nature, complex and require multidisciplinary approaches, as well as multi-methodological (Wodak and Meyer, 2012). Discursive practices can have severe ideological effects; “that is – they can help produce or reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways they represent things and position people” (Fairclough & Wodak , 1997). The approach, critical discourse studies that is, can be defined as being interested in analyzing hidden or vague and visible structures of dominance, power, discrimination and control that is manifested in language.

Our research has an epistemological approach that is interpretive in its nature, as we aim at interpreting cultural and historical situations. Bryman gives a description of phenomenology as an angle of philosophy where people set out to make sense of the world
that surrounds them (Bryman, 2012). Even though our research topic is that of hip hop artists and cultural producers, from the late 1970s and onwards, our research has a strong phenomenological element to it. We try, in this research, to make sense of the phenomenon that is hip hop and how hip hop artists have used their talent, their image and their narratives to commodify themselves.

We understand that the approach is prone to subjective biases and have taken that into account whilst approaching our data. The question whether a researcher should bring values along for a research is something that is always evident in social sciences (Becker, 1970). In conducting a research on lived realities that rely on interpretations there is often a dilemma that arises in regards of values. To some claiming to be value free is something that should be emphasized and technically correct where, on the other hand, there are those that consider such work shallow and lacking in commitment (Becker, 1970). Research methods are not considered to be tools that are neutral in their nature (Bryman, 2012), but rather should they be considered to be “linked to the ways in which social scientists envision the connection between different viewpoints about the nature of social reality and how it should be examined” (Bryman and Bell 2011, p. 4).

As our research relies heavily on individual interpretations, meanings and motivations, as well as values of social actors that we have limited means to approach and interview or study “in the field”, we have had to rely on content analysis and discourse analysis. Initially, as we started our journey in this project, we had specific research questions to guide us through our research. But as our empirical data started mounting up, we started generating new meanings, relationships and patterns. The research questions were then revisited and reformulated according to the findings in the data.

We utilized Uppsala University’s library services and databases in order to gather material, and data for analysis and dozens of articles, books, interviews as well as lyrics from songs by prominent hip hop figures were found. Our aim was to generate new patterns, new meanings and understandings from the “world out there”. Qualitative research, which is the approach that we relied on, is according to Steinar Kvale, a preferred way to approach the “world out there” as it is, rather than in laboratories or fixed settings, and can be considered an approach to understand and describe, or even explain, social phenomena “from the inside” (Kvale, 2007).
The nature of our research was deductive, that is say that we gathered as much information as we could on our research domain and with our theoretical considerations formulated a hypothesis. Our hypothesis is that pursuing a career as hip hop artist is entrepreneurial, and that these entrepreneurs utilize language and methods that bear resemblances to those utilized by innovative businesspeople and Schumpeterian entrepreneurs.
5. Analysis

There are varied definitions of entrepreneurs as encompassing mystical elements concerned with the creation of value and wealth (Gartner, 1988, Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), as bold and courageous figures, as innovative disruptors of norms (Schumpeter, The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest and the Business Cycle, 1961), as being alert to opportunities and possibilities where they arise (Kirzner, 2009) – and as someone who does not shy away from exploiting such ‘given’ opportunities. If these are the defining characteristics of the entrepreneur, then hip hop artist entrepreneurial legitimacy is ‘bond’. Utilizing the surrounding symbolic language and behaviors of entrepreneurship, rap artists strive to gain the legitimacy that assists in the building blocks of their careers. Hip hop artist hone their skill as cultural operators, the peddlers of cultural products, namely themselves.

5.1. The Hip Hop Entrepreneur

“I heard the barbershops be in great debates all the time
'Bout who's the best MC? Kendrick, Jigga or Nas
Eminem, André 3000, the rest of ya'll
New niggas just new niggas, don't get involved
And I ain't rocking no more designer shit
White T's and Nike Cortez, this is red Corvette's anonymous
I'm usually homeboys with the same niggas I'm rhyming with
But this is hip hop and them niggas should know what time it is
And that goes for Jermaine Cole, Big K.R.I.T., Wale
Pusha T, Meek Millz, ASAP Rocky, Drake
Big Sean, Jay Electron, Tyler, Mac Miller
I got love for you all but I'm tryna murder you niggas
Tryna make sure your core fans never heard of you niggas
They don't wanna hear not one more noun or verb from you niggas”

-Big Sean featuring Kendrick Lamar, Control (this verse is Kendrick’s)

In its essence hip hop is built on entrepreneurial activities. Defining “the entrepreneur” is a complex task (Bygrave and Hofer 1991; Bögenhold 2011; Bruyat and Julien 2000; Gartner 2008). However many definitions seem to embody an element of “hustle”, grinding to make things work, or going against the (main)stream, disrupting norms and working with scarce resources.

Dan Charnas is a culture and business writer, producer of music and television and a professor. Charnas wrote for The Source in the early years of the magazine’s publication,
writing cover stories and features, reviews and columns on pioneering hip hop artists. Later Charnas became involved in the business aspect of the industry, first as an employee for Profile Records, and was later recruited by Rick Rubin, Def Jam founder, to run the rap department of American Recordings, a joint venture with Warner Bros (Charnas, 2010). Charnas went on to write about the cultural phenomenon, which he had been so embedded in, in his book *The Big Payback: The History of The Business of Hip Hop* in which he argues that the hip hop artists possessed the same characteristics as did the salesmen, the businessmen. To illustrate this, Charnas stated in an interview:

“If there are no institutions, no record companies that support you, you have to basically sell those records out of the trunk of your car, you have to learn salesmanship. And since rappers are salesmen anyway, they’re selling themselves on stage” (Charnas, 2016).

In the last words of that paragraph, “they are selling themselves onstage”, Charnas illustrates the fact that hip hop artists are entrepreneurs. They commodify themselves, their talents, their persona, their stories – their narratives. We argue that the artform, lifestyle and the culture of hip hop has had a tremendous impact on popular culture. Prior to the emergence of hip hop these entrepreneurs largely existed as muted voices; young, black and, usually, male.

In order to contextualize our argument, it is important to attempt to “set the scene” and give an overview of the origins of hip hop as a cultural phenomenon, as was done in the Background chapter above. From “back in the day”, to use hip hop terminology, rap artists have been elevating their qualities through their rhymes. One of the main reasons for this is that the form of rhyming developed through rap “battles”, still a relatively popular form amongst artists but not very commodifiable. MCs, or rappers would compete in what can be described as “oral showdowns” (Sköld and Rehn 2007, 54). Such battles have been prominent in the culture from the very beginning of hip hop culture and Sköld and Rehn go as far as stating that battles could be considered the “the fuel” in the culture (ibid, 54). Battles can be considered the training grounds for rappers, a place to hone the skills and practice the tactics (Lee, 2016 ) and since the battles are, in their nature, very competitive MCs would use lyrical tactics to showcase their talents, their superiority is it were, focusing on their greatness, bragging and boasting. In this fashion the battle exists as a hip hop versions of “the pitch”, quick linguistic format in which to sell one´s skills. This aspect of the hip hop culture
seems to have surpassed the streets, and successful hip hop artists, that are on ‘top of the game’ rely on this tactic. Examples of this can be found in the lyrics of Jay-Z, Kanye West, Wu-Tang Clan, Nas, Sean “Diddy” Combs, J. Cole and great many other artists, as these examples show:

“Ball so hard motherfuckers wanna fine me
So I ball so hard motherfuckers wanna fine me
But first niggas got to find me
What’s a fifty grand to a motherfucker like me?
Could you please remind me?”
-Jay-Z & Kanye West, Niggas in Paris

“Last name Ever
First name Greatest
Like a sprained ankle boy, I ain’t nothing to play with
I started off local but thanks to all the haters
I know G4 pilots on a first name basis”
-Drake, Forever

A part of the competitive element of hip hop culture has been to brag, not only about stylistic approaches and skills in the art of spitting rhymes (i.e. rapping), but also bragging about material things, money, jewelry (often referred to as ice), the price of clothing worn. As a part of this materially oriented focus hip hop artists are also prone to talk (about) their innovative ways of earning a living and getting businesses started. Mainstream media, such as magazines that focus on culture, finances and other social aspects, tend to label successful hip hop artists as entrepreneurs. Examples of that are The Source and Vibe (magazines dedicated to the culture of hip hop), Rolling Stone Magazine (dedicated to popular culture), Forbes (business magazine), Business Insider (financial and business news website) and Entrepreneur (a magazine that specializes in stories about entrepreneurship). Headlines such as; “How Jay-Z's 'absolutely contagious' entrepreneurial spirit turned him into a mogul worth over $800 million” (Lynch, 2017, Business Insider), “How these 5 strategies helped Jay-Z build an $800 million empire” (Connley 2017, CNBC.com), “Lessons on Innovation and Evolution from 3 top hip hop artists” (Toren 2015, Entrepreneur), “10 startup Tips From Hip Hop Lyrics” (Robehmed 2013, Forbes.com) are common in the media.
Hip hop artists tend to refer to themselves as entrepreneurs in their lyrics, in the same sense as they represent themselves as successful, rich, powerful. According to Sköld and Rehn entrepreneurial characteristics are emphasized and elevated amongst rappers:

“Being able to find and exploit new business opportunities, and thereby creating what could possibly become a business empire, are character traits that seemingly outrank both sexual prowess and, for that matter, ostentatious spending habits. Narrations about the various business endeavors rappers are engaged in are told and retold in rap lyrics and in hip-hop magazines, prominent rappers are featured as tycoons and super-entrepreneurs in business and current affairs magazines such as TIME. (Sköld and Rehn 2007, p. 55)

Even scholars use the entrepreneurial terminology, occasionally, to describe hip hop artists (Smith, 2003) and upon analyzing rap lyrics it is evident that entrepreneurial mentality, or spirit, is something that is quite regularly a subject matter for artists within the hip hop culture. To illustrate:

“With majors they´re scared to death to pump these
First of all, who´s your A&R
A mountain climber who plays an electric guitar?
But he don´t know the meaning of dope
When he´s looking for a suit and tie rap
That´s cleaner than a bar of soap
And I´m the dirtiest thing in sight
-Wu Tang Clan, Protect Ya Neck!

This rhyme from Wu-Tang Clan illustrates the group’s attitude towards the record industry, which will be addressed later in this paper. In the first line the band takes a stance to point out that major labels are reluctant to let their music be released as is, from there the approach is to mock ‘white’ corporate employees of the record industry, painting a picture of an individual that knows more about “traditional” music, relying on electric guitars – potentially a rock music fan, with a passion for stereotypical, non-urban activities – mountain climbing. Someone unfamiliar with the essence of hip hop music, someone aiming for a “safe” act whereas the group identifies as dirty.

Pound for pound I´m the best to ever come around here
Excluding nobody
Look at what I embody
The soul of the hustler, I really ran the street
I CEO mine
The marketing plan was me
And no I ain´t got shot a whole bunch of times
Or make up shit in a whole bunch of lines
And I ain´t animated like say, a Busta Rhymes
But the real shit you get when you bust down my lines
And the fact that I went plat a bunch of times
Times that my by influence
On pop culture
I supposed to number one on everybody’s list
We’ll see what happens when I no longer exist
-Jay-Z, What More Can I Say?

Here, Jay-Z, the most financially successful hip hop artist of the year 2018 (according to Forbes and Business Insider) takes a more direct approach than did Wu-Tang Clan in the precious example. Jay-Z starts by stating that in the “game” (i.e. the business, or the industry) he is better than all the rest – pound by pound, which is a terminology, for ranking, often used in violent sports such as boxing and mixed martial arts. Nobody is excluded from the comparison, so one could assume that he is not specifically referring to the rap industry, competitors on that market, but rather all human beings. From there, Jay-Z goes to state that he embodies the soul of the “hustler”, another term often used by rappers to describe either illegal activities, such as running numbers (a gambling activity with deep roots in New York historically), also used to describe working hard, being dedicated and describes, in that context, trying to gain upward social-mobility. “I really ran the street” refers to a time in the protagonist’s life when he sold drugs, which Jay-Z has openly talked about. “I CEO mine” does not need to be deciphered as it speaks for itself. Jay-Z handles his own business. By stating that he has not been shot a bunch of times could be translated as a disrespectful remark aimed at 50cent, another rapper, who was shot nine times and was very prominent at the same time as Jay-Z released What More Can I Say? The following line, “And I ain’t animated like, say Busta Rhymes” seems to be a direct disrespect aimed at another rapper, Busta Rhymes. Jay-Z then argues that his own rhymes contain “the real shit”, i.e. authentic. ‘Real’, as we have touched up on in a previous section, often refers to being authentic. Authenticity is greatly emphasized in hip hop culture, honing on that which is real, original, and expresses one’s lived reality. In the next line “And the fact that I went plat a bunch of times” embodies the truth which is, in this context, that Jay-Z’s albums have sold millions of copies. The song appeared on The Black Album, released in 2003, Before its release the artist had already received seven platinum albums. A platinum album is used to define success in the record music industry, it in the case of North-American markets, a platinum record indicates that an artist has sold over one million copies (RIAA, 2019). When boasting those “bunch of plats”, it should be taken into consideration that Jay-Z not only was, at the time, a rap artist, but he was also a co-founder and C.E.O. of Roc-A-Fella Records, a company that was established accompanying Jay-Z debut album, in order to have control and ownership over the material (Brown, 2005 ). The rapper then goes to claim that his impact on pop culture is significant, arguably that is a true statement. Not only had he proven himself to be a best-selling artist, but his company had an impressive catalogue of other artists. His
entitlement to be in the first place on everybody’s list is then elevated, and then he states that after his days history will tell. As it turns out, in 2019, 16 years after the release of What More Can I Say? Jay-Z has indeed proven to be an influential figure in the world of hip hop, and in the world of marketing and sales. He topped the list of the rappers with the highest income in the year 2018 according to Forbes Magazine with earnings that were, according to Forbes, $76.5 million (Figure 3) (Greenburg, 2018).

Jay Z has continued to build his empire through the commodification of self. His early life story, of escaping the streets through illegal and illicit activities sold millions of records. But it his current incarnation of marrying “Queen B” Beyoncé and collaborating in a ultra-mainstream environment while holding onto his “street cred”, he is nearing the distinction of becoming a billionaire. In his own words, I am not a business man, I’m a business, man!” (From the lyrics of Diamonds from Sierra Leone)

Big Sean, another well-known rap artist used his lyrical abilities to paint a relatively clear picture about his goals in his Intro for the album Finally Famous:

Finally famous in this
Getting everything
I say
I’m still dreaming bigger than I’m living
And just sleeping long enough to dream
Spent long enough in the sheets
It’s time to turn it to a real thing
And turn these ideas ‘to millies
Business in the buildings
-Big Sean, Intro

The message presented by Big Sean is clear. His aspiration to claim fame, to get “everything”. Even though he considers himself to have reached the status of fame, his dreams are still bigger than his lived reality and his ambition is greater. With barely the time to rest, his intentions are to turn his ideas into “millies”, or millions of dollars and bring business into buildings.
As illustrated, in Figure 6, hip hop has as a consumed cultural product grown exponentially from the late 1980s.

5.2. **Humble beginnings**

“Started from the bottom, now we're here
Started from the bottom, now my whole team fuckin’ here”
-Drake, *Started from the Bottom*

“On your tape, putting food on your plate
Many crews can relate, who choosing your fate (yo)
We went from picking cotton
To chain gang line chopping, to be-bopping, to hip-hopping
Blues people got the blue-chip stock option
Invisible man, got the whole world watching
(Where ya at?) I’m high, low, east, west, all over your map
I’m getting big props, with this thing called hip hop”
-Mos Def, *Black on Both Sides*

Rap lyrics were initially a reflection of “true” social conditions speaking directly to social structural conditions and social relations (Gwen Hunnicutt Kristy Humble Andrews 2009). As contemporary rap music has become popularized and mainstreamed, it has become somewhat dislodged from lived experience. Truth condition exists for the white consumer based on cultural assumptions of black culture and are mirrored in song lyrics. This is a racial framing of societal types, racial narratives and interpretations, racialized emotions, and inclinations to discriminatory orientation to whites and whiteness and a negative exploited
non-whites (Feagin, 2010). Rousseau eloquently wrote that if we believe books, or within a more contemporary mode of communication, rap, “in place of our senses it teaches us to believe much and know little.” Dyson (1996) connects “vulgar rhetorical traditions and practices expressed in gangsta rap as intricately linked to dominate cultural constructions of “the other” and market driven strategies for rampant economic and human exploitation.

Tricia Rose, in her book Black Noise (1994) chronicles the urban context out of which hip hop sprung from the Bronx, New York in the 1970s. New York was a city that was deep in a financial crisis and thus had not been capable of managing its institutional structures such as social services (Rose, 1994). Rose lays special emphasis on The South Bronx, which was it the time infamous for its gangs, abandoned buildings, drugs and general poverty. Those were, according to Rose, the conditions from which hip hop emerged, conditions Rose called “ashes of destruction” (Rose 1994, p. 33) and in her description, hip hop culture was a token of hope and inspiration for the disadvantaged youth. Though it can be argued that hip hop acted as a symbol of hope and opportunity it was still, in its very nature, highly competitive (Chang, 2005; Charnas, 2010; Rose, 1994; Veran 1999). Made evident by in the words of Kid Freeze: “Competition, of course, is the very essence of every aspect of hip-hop culture, be it graffiti, MC-ing, DJ-ing – what makes it real is the battle” (Veran, 1999). Kid Freeze here refers to what has been called the ‘elements of hip hop’ which have already been introduced in this thesis.

Dyson explains, "Rap artists explore grammatical creativity, verbal wizardry, and linguistic innovation in refining the art of oral communication." (Rap is) “a blend of reality and fiction, rap music is a contemporary response to conditions of joblessness, poverty, and disempowerment” and is ”encoded within the rhetoric of racial resistance”(Smitherman, 1994).

The history of the rise of hip hop includes great many characters that fullfil the criteria of being, rightfully, called entrepreneurs – or at least people that have embodied the entrepreneurial spirit. People that came from disadvantaged circumstances and through innovative ideas, hard work and courage proved to impact the history of popular culture. Those were in some instances people that were in the forefront, in the limelight and received attention, examples of such individuals are Kool DJ Herc – the master of ceremonies that entertained guests as the first documented hip hop party, Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five as the collective that released The Message, and Afrika Bambaataa, a pioneering hip hop DJ

Wu-Tang Clan’s rise to fame truly embodies, we argue, entrepreneurial behavior on the behalf of the members of the collective. Lead by Robert Diggs, whose rap alias was RZA Wu-Tang Clan introduced themselves, and their cultural production, “to the world cloaked in a shroud of mystery, Claiming their hip hop hinterland of Staten Island as their homeland” (Mlynar 2013). According to Charnas:

“Diggs’ entrepreneurial vision would lead the way in transforming not only the music business, but American business itself – from an age in which hip hop had to sell out to gain access to its audience, into one where some of America’s major corporations sought the imprimatur of authentic hip hop to market their products and services to a new, multicultural generation of Americans.” (Charnas 2011 p. 432)

Wu-Tang Clan self released their single Protect Ya Neck in 1994, after deciding never to sign up with a major label (Charnas , 2011). After gaining some traction and popularity as well as an underground following , the group went on to release their debut album Enter the Wu Tang (36 Chambers), which reached a platinum status by selling over one million units (Smith, 2003). The group’s tough stance to never put their intellectual property into the hands of music business corporates, as well their “Afrocentrism, and humourus martial arts movie lingo” (ibid, p. 361) made the band stick out, and their approach to the music industry was unique among hip hop artists. Wu-Tang Clan, as a collective owned the rights to all of their music and creative products, while at the same time each individual member was allowed to sign solo deals with different labels. This was unheard of at the time (Charnas 2011; Smith 2003). But, as a collective, Wu-Tang Clan also paved the way for musicians to own their own clothing lines. In 1995 the Wu Wear clothing line was introduced to the public. The man behind the idea of launching a clothing line came was Oliver Grant, better known as Power. Power felt that his talent was untapped in the artist collective as he was not a rapper (Charnas 2011). Wu Wear was initially sold exclusively in Wu Wear stores and as tour merchandise. The clothing line proved to be immensely successful and influential on the culture of hip hop (Charnas , 2011). Other artists followed in the footsteps, among which are Sean “Diddy” Combs with his clothing line Sean John, Jay-Z with Rocawear and 50Cent with G-Unit. Wu-Tang Clan showed that they were daring, innovative, disruptive and creative in their rise to stardom, and utilized, what has been described as, entrepreneurial spirit in the process.
Other figures have had a tremendous impact on the hip hop industry and the cultural industry, but have been acting behind the scenes. Sylvia and Joe Robinson were the founders of Sugar Hill Records, their studio and record company had released disco music in New York in the 1970s and as their business was faced with a decrease in sales Sylvia Robinson decided to shift the focus of the company and focus on hip hop music, which was in its infancy stages at the time (Charnas, 2011). Sugar Hill Records released *Rapper’s Delight* by Sugarhill Gang, as well as *The Message* by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five.

Steve Rifkind was another individual who early on spotted the potential of the culture of hip hop. Rifkind had founded a collective which he labelled “street awareness team”. The mission of this team was not the creation of music, but rather the creation of hype, or buzz. The team consisted of rap enthusiasts and acted as promoters. Rifkind was said to have:

“….sensed an opening – he could sell his ready-made team´s services to small rap labels on a record-by-record basis, or in a retainer. But the biggest opportunity lay in major labels – some of which had signed rap artists and brought on rap A&R people but had zero hip hop promotion experiences to protect their investment” (Charnas 2011, p. 445).

From his entrepreneurial experiences of operating the “street awareness team”, Rifkind took to marketing in general and that task he approached with the “street knowledge” that he gained from working closely within the culture of hip hop (Charnas, 2011).

The collaboration of Rick Rubin, the producer, and Russell Simmons (a promoter at the time) also proved to be highly influential and entrepreneurial. Rick Rubin was a punk rock enthusiastic a student of New York University in 1983 who was inspired by the hip hop movement in the city and “was the only white guy in the hip hop world” (Hirschberg, 2007). Rubin found an element of punk in this newly formed genre and was excited about the scene, but according to an interview with Rolling Stone Magazine the young follower felt that the essence of a live hip hop performance in a club was never successfully translated into a recording. Thus, Rick Rubin decided to experiment and try to recreate the intensity and rawness of the life experience in studio-settings (Grow, 2016). The result of these experiments became *It’s Yours*. “So, *It’s Yours* was almost a documentary-style attempt at what it felt like to go to a hip hop club and experience real hip hop music. That’s what it is” (ibid). Rubin brought this recording to Russell Simmons, who he knew was involved in the hip hop culture. Soon after the two of them founded Def Jam Records, which operated out of
Rubin’s dormitory room in Weinstein Hall at New York University. Before long Def Jam were working with young artists such as LL Cool J and Beastie Boys (Charnas, 2011).

5.3. *The Gangsta*

> “Straight outta Compton, crazy motherfucker named Ice Cube
> From the gang called Niggaz With Attitudes
> When I'm called off, I got a sawed off
> Squeeze the trigger, and bodies are hauled off”
> -Niggas With Attitudes, *Straight Outta Compton*

Gangs and gangsters were something that was not of scarceness in the inner-cities, the birthplace of hip hop. The ‘hustle’ of selling drugs and illicit prostitution were well known in Harlem and the Bronx but the most common hustle had been ‘running numbers’ from the 1950s (Charnas, 2011). Running numbers refers to a gambling enterprise that was run illicitly before the first legal state lottery was introduced. The people, or the organizations, that ran these illegal operations were commonly referred to as gangs and they had made themselves prominent figures in these neighborhoods. (ibid)

> “Gangsta” rap spawned from the realities described above, an embodiment of the reality in which many of the artists lived when they wrote their rhymes. As, described by Alexander, started to embrace the reality where resources are limited, and opportunities are not evident. In order to pursue “the American dream” those young men sought the possibilities that were present, some turned towards a life of crime, where drug distribution was a common trade, and some turned to rapping. The appeal of rhyming and performing about lived realities had already proven to be successful when it came to sales, consumers and audiences were drawn towards this imagery of the “inner-city life”, the “hustlin” and the reality in which these rappers lived and operated. Within the “mainstream” (white, middle-class) imagination, African American lives have long held “narratives that expressed collective cultural values.” (Barthes, 1966) Starting with slavery, the commodification of African Americans has been justified through the lens of existing as danger, intrigue, and the “other” for whites. The belief that the Hip Hop version of the “elevator pitch” could possibly be “truth” is entrenched in “ancient stereotypes of black identity and sexual proclivity through the society's circulation of “brutal images of black men as sexual outlaws and black females as “ho's” (Dyson 1996, p. 178). A polysemic nature of the “verse” broadens the truth conditionality under which meaning can be ascertained. “Because many rap mists are college
educated, and most are adept at code switching, they obviously could employ "standard English" in their rap lyrics. However, in their quest to "disturb the peace," they deliberately and consciously employ the "antilanguage" of the Black speech community, thus sociolinguistically constructing themselves as members of the dispossessed” (Smitherman, 1997)

The production of rap, and gangsta rap in particular, corresponded with crucial shifts in the material worlds inhabited by young minority males. S. Craig Watkins (2001) notes, “the hyper-segregated conditions of the postindustrial ghetto became a fertile reservoir of cultural production” (p. 389). Rap music “anticipated the racial mood shifts and growing discontent of a generation of young black Americans who were either disillusioned by the racial hostilities brought on by participation in the societal mainstream or dislocated from the center of social and economic life altogether” (Watkins, 2001) Hip hop music had been spreading from the boroughs of New York, and prominent rappers were surfacing in different cities across the country, and even beyond. One of the pioneers of the wave of gangsta rap is Schoolly D, who honed from Philadelphia, a rapper with a narrative style that was coined “hardcore”, as he would give such harsh descriptions of his life, fictional or actual.

“Got to the place, and who do I see? 
A sucka-ass nigga tryin’ to sound like me
Put my pistol against his head
And said, “You sucka-ass nigga I should shoot you dead”
-Schoolly D, P.S.K

Other rappers soon followed down this trail and made names for themselves, Ice-T, hailing from New Jersey, reflected through his lyrics; sexual bravado, violence and urban realism. Niggas With Attitudes (N.W.A.) from Compton, Los Angeles rapped about their run ins with the police (Fuck tha Police), and crime life on the streets. This form of rap music emerged in the late 1980s, and the tone – as described – shifted from the former “radio-friendly” and festive style with its competitive and “braggadocio” rhymes towards a criminal oriented and nihilistic narrative. The style was narrated without a conventional ethical and moral voice. The competitiveness and confidence, the bragging and boasting was still there, but now, infused with described criminal activities, misogyny and anti-authoritarianism (McCann, 2017).

Gangsta rap soon caught attention of consumers and became a very eminent form of hip hop due to its vulgarity, controversy and, importantly, its commercial success and influence on the culture (Chang, 2005; Charnas, 2010; Quinn, 2005). To some, this rise of socially
provocative rap music was considered problematic, and criticized for the glorification of
violence, sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, hustling, nihilism and explicit content
(Harkness, 2014). The genre was, however, highly profitable. Gangsta rappers sold millions
of albums (Ross, 2013).

“Do rappers – including gangsta rappers – just want to make the pleasures of
patriarchal capitalism available to all black males?” asked Peter McLaren in his article
Gangsta Pedagogy and Ghettocentricity: The Hip-Hop Nation as Counterpublic Sphere
(McLaren, 1999). In his article, McLaren emphasized how many rappers associated with
gangsta rap were the products of, what he called:

“economic and cultural upheavals that had assaulted and displaced numerous
multiethnic urban communities; their futures were bound up in the dimming job market
by inner-city trade vocational schooling” (McLaren 1999, p. 26).

Furtherly emphasizing that many of these young rappers, were former members of
gangs, before finding their success in the music industry, and that they simply shared their
insights from days tainted by illegal activities and narrated those insights through the vehicle
of their music.

“These working-class black youths were able to escape the uncertain futures constructed
for them in an era of deindustrialization. They were some of the lucky few to succeed as
part of a financially lucrative musical phenomenon” (McLaren 1999, p. 27)

These young people, usually male, coping with their situations by “turning to each
other and embracing their stigma in a desperate effort to regain some measure of self-esteem
– we, as a society, heap more shame and contempt upon them” (Alexander , 2010). Alexander underlines the dire importance not to interpret and use this argument as an excuse
for violence and decadence, known as gangsta culture, but rather to use this same argument in
order to understand the context and the perspective.

What is the difference between being a “businessman” in hip hop, and a business in hip
hop? Does “gangsta” mean criminal, successful, both, neither? Is the real hip hop experience
the gritty rags to riches stories of NWA or the (relative) riches to riches story of 21 Savage?
When you say “gangsta” you associate that with an inner city black man, whereas when you
say businessman, you associate it with corporate structure. This “trace” of underlying meaning is key to deconstructing the “dependance on legitimate meaning” (Kubrin, 2015).

Illustrated in Figure 7 is the duality of the identity construction amongst hip hop artists. Perhaps one of the more vulgar examples in hip hop is the cover for Ice-T’s album from 1991, Original Gangster O.G. The album artwork shows the artist on one hand as what appears to be a successful, almost business-like man, dressed in a suit posing in front of a massive house. On the other hand Ice-T poses as a villain, handcuffed and sporting clothing that are familiar as those worn by gangs and gangsters.

![Figure 7: The cover artwork for Ice-T’s Original Gangster O.G. album](image)

5.4. Using Lyrics to ‘Lock & Load’

“Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete? Proving nature’s laws wrong, it learned to walk without having feet.
Funny, it seems to by keeping it's dreams; it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else even cared.”
— Tupac Shakur, *The Rose That Grew from Concrete*

Entrepreneurship is much more than starting a business, it is the introduction of truly revolutionary changes, including launching new products, production techniques, and organizational structures. Entrepreneurship is in fact, the driving force that upends normative economic structures. Many researchers have wrongly identified entrepreneurial successes as the result of an elitism (Mark Zuckerberg), a unicorn (Daniel Ek), or an oversized confidence and crazy vision (Branson and Jobs). But the standard tropes in the story of the “gifted” entrepreneur (often attributed to Schumpeter) is, although not exclusively, relevant and specific to white men.

As suggested by Lounsbury and Glynn in regards of entrepreneurs (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), successful hip hop artists have showcased their skills as cultural operators, they have shaped the discourse that is needed for their production to be appealing through storytelling. Rappers speaking from personal experience take on the identity of a narrator who is sharing lived experience via rhyme. Often claiming social status, or social upwards mobility in a way that is meaningful locally. (Rose, 1994)
6. **Conclusions**

I’m up on your list, your party therapist
Beat programmer and lyricist
Ladies love Cool James, studio user
A million or more screaming people abuser
I predict, this jam will hit
The tightest plateau in the world of music
Paparazzi, wealth and fame
The total propulsion of my name
-LL Cool J, *I need a beat*

Hip hop artists exemplify the key attributes of the Schumpeterian Entrepreneur, one who is both the creator and disruptor of norms and expectations. Hip hop has always bridged cultural chasms through its linguistic attractiveness and the primacy of its salesmanship. Selling the “real” (the mythology of hip hop stories being non-fictionalized or exaggerated version of “ghetto life”) exist like a “funhouse mirror” version of the “life story” version of the pitch for a “traditional” entrepreneurs. Willingness to provide financial backing is the outcome for Hip Hop artists who utilize entrepreneurial tropes in their lyrics. “When we are selling our ideas, the audience must first buy us” (Coughter 2012, p. 51). This poststructuralist sense of identity has everything to do with “the framing and packaging of possibility and not outright containment or foreclosure” (Smith 2003, p. 76)

Hip hop culture proved to be entrepreneurial almost out of necessity, that is to say the culture was met with skepticism in the earliest days, as artists showcased innovative ideas and methods to sell their products and services. Hip hop culture has been able to create and extract value from the environment which it stems from, taking circumstances that are by most qualitative standards disadvantaged, and create means for value creation. In a struggle over public space and access to commodified materials, hip hop became a profit-making process.

Rap’s explosive growth during the better part of the 1990s led to unprecedented black economic clout for hip hop moguls (Smith 2003, p. 75). During the 1990s, an entirely new repertoire of keywords emerged to refer to such moments of hierarchical deconstruction. “Ghetto-fabulous”, “flossing”, “bling, bling” – now more commonly shortened to “bling” – became normalized as mainstream catchphrases that described the hyper-consumption of luxury goods by both celebrity and everymen (Smith, 2003). This linguistic process has shattered the old cultural hierarchy, the old high-low which was predicted on “good
breeding”, i.e. good education and aesthetic appreciation. The music industries egalitarian deviation in the value of the individual has changed the “game” allowing for etymologically entrepreneurial outcomes to become relevant story lines for inner city black youth.

Although the typical representation of the entrepreneur in mainstream consciousness remains both white and college educated, “the hip hop mogul” “becomes a figure that is charged because he, or she, appeals to varied sensibilities of what seem to be separate public spheres, a bridge between unconnected parts of society” (Smith, 2003).

The capitalist engine is first and last an engine of mass production which unavoidably also means production for the masses. . . . It is the cheap cloth, the cheap cotton and rayon fabric, boots, motorcars and so on that are the typical achievements of capitalist production, and not as a rule improvements that would mean much to the rich man. Queen Elizabeth owned silk stockings. The capitalist achievement does not typically consist in providing more silk stockings for queens but in bringing them within reach of factory girls. (Schumpeter, 2008)

This research has aligned hip hop artists with communities of “others” who aims to attain the entrepreneurial dream. The Hip Hop mogul has disrupted the norms of business plans, validations, iterations, pivots, pitches, investors, raising more capital, sell-out, buy-out, high growth rates etc. The hip hop mogul never had to sell his customers anything other than his belief in his own fantasies. His trade is purely in the realm of socially mobile aspirations – the quintessential pixie dust of the post-war American dream (Smith 2003, p. 80). The hip hop version of the dream refuses to “lie down” and accept disenfranchisement as death to upward mobility.

Our study has led us to broaden our appreciation of the “innovativeness and self-confidence” (Rauch & Frese, 2007) that connects entrepreneurs. The hip hop mogul simultaneously symbolizes inclusion within and resistance toward mainstream capitalism and emerges as a potent blend of the “speculative con,” the “disciplined self-made man,” and an entrancing figurehead of racial double-consciousness with a capitalist twist” (Lears , 2003). The hip hop entrepreneur becomes a figure that is charged because he, or she, appeals to varied sensibilities of what seem to be separate public spheres, a bridge between unconnected parts of society, so to speak. Smith’s approach for his argument is a semiotic one, claiming that codes and symbols represented to generate social recognition are utilized by these figures fall under a semiotic methodology (ibid, p. 69).
7. Future research

“The mogul is a self-made aristocrat, a former member of the underclass who’s raised himself up from its ranks and seized his chance to “shine” (Reynolds, 1999). The struggle to be allowed to enter business through the same door as the dominant culture is one that every minority group has faced throughout history. Whether it be Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792 or Harvey Milk in 1977, for immigrants across the globe or underrepresented communities locally, the mogul achieves his version of utopia via social isolation from, and antagonism toward, less successful ghetto residents – even as he claims, paradoxically, to represent their aspirations for greater glory (Smith, 2003).

Our project has allowed us to locate and conduct research around a gap of knowledge in defining the self-commodification of Hip Hop Artists as Entrepreneurial. We have defined entrepreneurial activities starting with the French idea that the Entrepreneur is “the one that begins something” but generally choose to stick with Schumpeter’s assessment that the entrepreneur “creates new combinations” (Schumpeter, 1934). Ideas on how to identify and market black cultural knowledge and tastes have come to embody dynamic management solutions. Herein we find the hip hop moguls primary mandate, namely the effective identification, packaging, and symbolic management of the politically and socially volatile minority underclasses expressive culture (Smith, 2003).

We consumed an enormous amount of information and analysis rooted in the fields of Black Studies as well as Semiotics. We have chosen to eliminate those readings in our final paper when the nature of those texts did not overlap with our other fields of analysis. We made this choice in direct response to the word count allowance.

Interesting next steps in our research would be to collect data regarding outcomes for varied groups of “outside entrepreneurs”. Further we would like to utilize Venn diagrams to demonstrate a graphical relationship between outcomes for Hip Hop moguls and those of other marginalized entrepreneurial cohorts.
References


Fanon, F. The Wretched of the Earth. Grove.


