

**‘One of the boys’ or a sexual object?**

A qualitative study on the role of gender and race in the perception of Dutch hip-hop music

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### **ABSTRACT**

Hip-hop music is a genre that has grown extremely popular over the last few decades. Starting out as a political cultural form in the South Bronx, hip-hop became one of the most important ways of expression for young members of the black community in New York. How does this translate into different cultures all over the world ever since the genre has spread globally? This study investigates to what extent and how racial and gendered stereotypes play a role in the perception of mainstream hip-hop music in the Netherlands. Relatively few researchers have tackled this phenomenon of ‘Nederhop’, making this thesis relevant in today’s climate. As this is an inductive research using qualitative in-depth interviews, ten young adults of mixed genders were interviewed and asked about their opinions on hip-hop artists of different races and genders. The current work includes a theoretical framework that focuses on the development of hip-hop, gender inequality in the music industry, and several audience perception theories. Using these theories as a base, thematic analysis provided three main sensitizing concepts and themes that arose from the data. The first theme concerns stereotypes that are often used by the audience of Dutch hip-hop artists. Many stereotypes came forward from the interviews, and a lot of them focused on women, describing them as sexual beings that are objectified in different layers of hip-hop music, such as lyrics, video clips, and especially the representation of women overall. In fact, most interviewees could not even name any female rappers when asked about it. In the second theme that came forward, these stereotypes are discussed in relation to black women in particular, who are even more likely to receive such negative backlash and are more prone to stereotyping. The third theme explains that audiences experience the show of emotions and ‘real’ stories as a form of authenticity. Insights provided by the interviewees reveal a double standard that rests on female hip-hop artists, in which they are expected to show emotions to be authentic, but at the same time they do not receive the reception one would expect. In addition, there is a clear difference in perception of stereotypes between men and women, where men argued that women do not have the right voice for the rough image that comes with hip-hop, and women mainly focused on the reasons why women are so terribly underrepresented in the Dutch and international hip-hop industries.

**KEYWORDS:** *Hip-hop, Gender, Race, Audience Perception, Stereotypes*

## **Preface**

The basis for this research originally stems from my personal passion for female hip-hop music. From my teenage years and onwards I always enjoyed listening to my favorite artists, such as Nicki Minaj. In recent years, I noticed that there were more female rappers that were able to reach international and commercial success. This development in combination with my interest in music studies inspired me to find out more about this socially relevant subject. As rap music is one of the most popular genres worldwide, I hope this thesis will be interesting to a broad audience and that is able to contribute to the larger debate on sexism and racism in the music industry.

This thesis could not have been written without the great support of several important people in my life. First, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Marc Verboord, for being extremely flexible and understanding, and always providing useful feedback. Second, a huge thank you to my parents and my brother for the unconditional love and support during this busy and stressful period of my studies. Especially thank you to my amazing mother for all the hours that she put into helping me with the transcription process. Third, I would like to thank all of my friends for their encouraging words and for cheering me up when I was down. To my dear friends that recently became my new roommates, thank you for supporting me with so much love and understanding. Especially Nina, I am so proud of us for finishing the process together, your presence in the living room was really appreciated and always made me happy. Finally, a special thanks to the people that are the reason this whole paper could be written, my interviewees. Thank you, Nick, Lars, Amy, Jill, Bo, Tim, Pien, Hugo, Kaya, and Mia.

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## 1. Introduction

Hip-hop is a music genre that has become immensely popular over the last few decades. According to Statista (2020), the most consumed genres by streams in the USA are R&B and hip-hop. Furthermore, a more global overview by Spotify shows the same finding (Wood, 2020). The success of hip-hop dates back to the late 1970's in the Bronx, where young black artists used the music as a way to express themselves and their underrepresentation (Flores, 2012; Rose, 1991). The genre quickly grew through commercialization and globalization, leading it to its worldwide success that the world knows today. But despite this mainstream popularity, there are still many inequalities in the hip-hop field. (Berggren, 2013; Schaap, 2019).

One of these inequalities is the underrepresentation of women and overall sexism that poses a general problem in the music industry as a whole (Coffey-Glover & Handforth, 2019). Scholars have found that women are often marginalized through lack of access and opportunities within the industry, leading to them earning less royalties, being underrepresented in the charts, and having shorter careers in comparison with their male counterparts (Björck, 2013; Strong & Raine, 2018). To specify, rap music has often been described as being hyper-masculine in regard to its musical practices, lyrical themes and visual images (Lafrance, Burns & Woods, 2017). Not only are female artists underrepresented in the population of hip-hop artists, but the genre often takes very masculine discourses within the music itself. For instance, women being called 'bitches' or 'hoes' as opposed to men who are praised for using this type of language (Haugen, 2003). Consequently, few female hip-hop artists manage to achieve mainstream success, partly because of these barriers in the music industry.

Unlike the struggle that women face in the hip-hop industry in order to reach mainstream success, this is not necessarily a problem for people in the black community of the hip-hop genre. In fact, hip-hop was created within African American culture, which makes hip-hop music an African American dominated genre (Karvelis, 2018). In Europe many hip-hop artists come from ethnic minority backgrounds. This can be explained due to the origins of hip-hop in the United States, where black communities used the art form as a way to express their emotions and voice their daily struggles (Rose, 1991). Later, the genre spread overseas and reached ethnic minorities all over the world, where it was reinvented to fit each country (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2012). The music is used by the children and grandchildren of immigrants from the former colonies as a form of expression (Rollefson,

2017). However, even though many minorities, especially black people, are well represented within the rap scene, that does not mean that they do not have to endure other forms of discrimination. Similar to African American hip-hop artists, European hip-hop artists often face racial biases in their careers (Rollefson, 2017, p. 19). For instance, rap music is often associated with aggressive lyrics, drug use, sexually depicted women and other negative stereotypes (Neguț & Sârbescu, 2014). These associations lead to negative views on the people that make this type of music as well.

In order to understand the way gender and race play a role in the formation of different stereotypes, this thesis will examine how female hip-hop artists of different ethnicities are perceived by audiences. To do so, this study takes an intersectional approach to gendered and racial representation in hip-hop music. Here, women are often portrayed as sexual objects in both music videos as well as lyrics (Lafrance et al., 2017), and black women are more objectified when it comes to their sexuality in comparison with white women (Ward et al., 2013). Hip-hop music has become so popular with a wider audience, it could be described as having ‘crossed over’ into mainstream media, surpassing ethnic and territorial boundaries (Jeffries, 2011). However, most people still implicitly associate ‘blackness’ with rap music, both in the USA and in the Netherlands (Schaap, 2019). This means that there is a discrepancy between the message that hip-hop artists try to make with their lyrics and their videoclips and the way that the audience views and interprets these messages. In order to better understand this, this research will use different audience perception theories, which will be further explained and elaborated upon in the theoretical framework of this study.

### **1.1 Research gap**

While there has been research conducted on gender and race in relation to hip-hop music (Haugen, 2003; White, 2013), these studies have focused on a specific element and are mostly set in a North American context. Furthermore, research has been done on ethno-racial boundaries in music within a Dutch context (Schaap, 2019; Schaap & Berkers, 2020), but this has specifically focused on rock music. This implies a lack of academic literature on the role of gender and race-ethnicity on consumers’ perception of hip-hop music. Furthermore, the Dutch context is relevant for this study, as the public issues of racism have only relatively recently been under attack in comparison with the US (Schaap & Essed, 2017).

Acknowledging this research gap, this study will focus on answering the following research question:

“To what extent and how do racial and gendered stereotypes play a role in the perception of mainstream hip-hop music in the Netherlands?”

In order to better formulate an answer to this question, multiple sub questions were formed to break down the different concepts. Firstly, different stereotypes should be defined and explained in the context of racism and sexism in today’s society. This leads to the following sub question:

1. Which stereotypes play a role in the perception of female hip-hop artists of different ethnic origins?

This question aims to find out how different people view women of color in particular in comparison with men and white women. This is linked with audience perceptions studies. Secondly, the intersectional aspect of this study will be taken into consideration in the second sub question:

2. To which degree do racial and gendered stereotypes go together or even strengthen one another?

Here, the combination of racism and sexism in the hip-hop industry will be discussed and elaborated upon with new insights on the opinion of the Dutch audience. The expectation of this combination originates from an intersectionality framework in which black women are often subject to both gendered and racial stereotypes (White, 2013). The third sub question that will be answered in this study is the following:

3. Which differences do we find between how female hip-hop artists of different ethnic origins are perceived?

This question will be used as a sub question that focuses on the audience perception aspect of this research, similarly to the first sub question. Only this question will not be as concerned with stereotypes and focus more on the different audience perception theories that are introduced in the theoretical framework of this study. This aspect will be highlighted through insights from interviews with both men and women. It will focus on the difference between

gender in the audience and the way they use their own backgrounds as a way to perceive social injustice in the hip-hop industry.

## **1.2 Academic and societal relevance**

As mentioned before, the role of gender and race-ethnicity on consumers' perception of hip-hop music in the Dutch context has not been investigated in recent research, creating a gap in the literature. Therefore, this study aims to discover patterns in audience perception and contribute to the larger debate on racism and sexism in the music industry. Both sexism and racism have been socially relevant subjects of public debate in the past decades. The fourth wave of feminism has been characterized by a focus on female empowerment through the use of internet tools and intersectionality. With the use of hashtag feminism such as #MeToo and #FemFuture, the topic of gender equality in the creative industries is more relevant than ever (Loza, 2014; Mendes & Keller, 2018). Similarly, the rise of anti-racist movements, such as 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Kick Out Zwarte Piet' have been on the rise over the past few years, contributing to the current relevancy of this study (Schaap, 2019).

Furthermore, the subject is internationally relevant, as hip-hop is an African American art form, which has gained immense popularity all over the world (Flores, 2012). Thus, this study is not bound by borders concerning the international reach that popular hip-hop music has. In addition, social issues surrounding gender and race are also being recognized all over the world at the moment (Mendes & Keller, 2018).

## **1.3 Thesis outline**

To formulate an answer to the research question, this research is based on 10 qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviews that were held with Dutch young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. Because the participants in this research needed to have specific characteristics, purposive sampling was used in combination with snowball sampling (Marshall, 1996). All interviews were between 45-60 minutes long and were held over Skype due to the current pandemic in which this research was conducted. Thematic analysis was then used to analyze the data, as this allows recurring patterns of meaning to flow from the participants' answers (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Herzog et al., 2019). These patterns lead to several main themes that help find the answer to the research question.

This thesis will further explore the topic the perception of gender and race in Dutch hip-hop music among young adults. First, the main concepts will be discussed in the



theoretical framework. Second, the methodology will concern the general research design. Following the methodology, the results will be presented after which a discussion in combination with a conclusion will be provided to summarize the findings and provide suggestions for future research.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

In this chapter, previous studies will be discussed from a more general point of view, as well as specifically related to hip-hop music. First, the development of hip-hop as a genre that stands up for marginalized voices is presented, which is followed up by a discussion on the rise of this genre in the Netherlands. Second, a general overview of previous research on gender inequality within the music industry in a more general sense is given, after which this is related to hip-hop more specifically. Third, this chapter will focus on audience perceptions. This is split up into audience research on perceptions of both hip-hop as well as gender and race representations.

### **2.1 The rise and importance of hip-hop**

Rap music as an art form has a very complex history (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2012). The genre originated in the 1970's at the east coast of the United States. Although it appeared to just be an entertainment form in the club scene at first, it quickly grew to be a political cultural form (Rose, 1991). During the 1970's and 1980's, hip-hop became one of the most important ways of expression for the young members of the black community in New York City, giving them a public voice where minorities often were not represented (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2012). This cultural impact still plays a role today. To understand this, it must first be clear how hip-hop has risen both in the USA and globally to be of such an impact on the representation of minority groups.

#### *2.1.1 Hip-hop as a public voice*

In her work, Rose (1991) was one of the first people to actually study the African American phenomenon of hip-hop culture. According to this research, the roots of hip-hop can be found in the South Bronx of the United States. Here, the construction of the Cross-Bronx expressway displaced many people of color in the area, and in return many white people moved elsewhere (Flores, 2012). In addition, there were other renewal projects that led to the relocation of the people that were most economically unstable, namely black and Hispanic people. Because of this, black and Hispanic families with unstable incomes were the main inhabitants of the South Bronx at this time (Flores, 2012; Rose, 1991). These citizens did not receive a lot of city resources or help from the government, which led to the Bronx feeling lifeless and drained of energy (Rose, 1991). Underemployment, poverty and racial discrimination ruled the urban setting (Wright, 2004).

In response, the youngest generation of African American members of this community began searching for a way to let out their aggression and to channel their creativity in non-violent ways (Flores, 2012). From this, hip-hop culture emerged. This culture does not only consist of rap music, but also of deejaying, breakdancing and graffiti art, in which young African Americans found a way to express their emotions, which gave them a feeling of belonging (Flores, 2012; Wright, 2004). The origins of hip-hop culture in the United States were nicely formulated in a study by George (1998), who defines hip-hop culture as “[...] a product of post-civil rights era America, a set of cultural forms originally nurtured by African American, Caribbean-American, and Latin American youth in and around New York in the '70s.” (p. 8).

While at first hip-hop artists were mainly driven by their personal frustrations about life, soon the urban genre gained more purpose within the social agenda it created (Rose, 1991). In addition to reclaiming black history, institutions such as the police, the government and the media were getting called out by hip-hop artists for the oppression of black Americans and the everyday forms of racism that they had to endure (Dyson, 2004; Flores, 2012). This introduced a way of harmless criticizing through an art form that is still used to this day to stand up for minority voices. One of the most important examples of these criticizing lyricists is the hip-hop group Public Enemy, who formed in 1985 and used their music as a way to criticize how black people were treated in American society (Walser, 1995).

Although the genre has its roots in the 1970's, it quickly grew in popularity and audiences in the 1990's (Ogbar, 1999). The style of hip-hop expanded a lot in this time as well. For instance, there were many technological, lyrical and thematic innovations that took place during this time (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2012). One sub-genre that emerged during this time is that of gangsta rap. This 'harder' version of hip-hop music raised a lot of controversies with its especially aggressive tone, while simultaneously appealing to a young audience due to its rebellious nature (Riley, 2006). The genre was not only popular amongst young people of color, but also became a hit with suburban middle-class white youths. As these audience members have such different life conditions than the predominantly black, lower-class youths that many studies claim are the target audience of gangsta rap, these people may perceive the message of gangsta rap differently (Riley, 2006). This shows the impact that hip-hop music had on different layers of society.

Something that is even more telling of the impact hip-hop music had in the 90's, is the fact that the genre spilled over many borders, and in the process developed an ability to “mix

and mesh with other musical styles and genres, reinventing itself in each setting to reflect the needs and desires of each community that practices it.” (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2012, p. 120). In other words, the genre slowly became more popular in other areas outside of the U.S., but this mostly worked when elements of the genre were used in genres that are more native to each area. Gradually, hip-hop became more prominent in these genres. Because of this, rap music became extremely popular in areas over the whole world, affecting nearly every country in the world, including the Netherlands (Osumare, 2001; Pennycook, 2007). This shift from local to global also meant that the audience perceived the genre to go from more personal to a more commercial scene, which has both positive and negative consequences. As mentioned before, hip-hop music first reinvented itself in each new country and area it became popular (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2012). However, soon major labels started to purchase the smaller labels that were often associated with rap music, and the genre turned more Industry-based instead of Scene-based (Lena & Peterson, 2008). As a result, hip-hop music’s innovative technologies and political agenda have slowly been pushed aside to make room for hip-hop music that is more suited for the masses, that is focused on creating the most revenue (Lena & Peterson, 2008). The following sections will zoom in on the development of hip-hop music in different places around the world, in specific the Netherlands.

### *2.1.2 The spreading of hip-hop*

As hip-hop culture has transcended any existing barriers of ethnic, linguistic and geographical boundaries, the genre can be described as a Diaspora (Motley & Henderson, 2008). Increasing globalization and migration have led to more hybrid forms of different genres that have spilled over into each other (Mitchell, 2001). Also, with the rise of the internet, these hybrid forms of genres are even easier to form. People from different backgrounds and cultures can discover all types of music, as the internet offers an easy way for people represented in different musical genres to communicate with each other (Motley & Henderson, 2008). Because of this, each country has its own hip-hop scene with different artists (Krimms, 2000; Osumare, 2001). It should, however, be taken into consideration that the marginalized voices of black Americans in the Bronx are not relatable to a lot of other people in the world. Therefore, local elements are combined with the global success of rap music, creating the ‘glocalization’ of hip-hop music (Motley & Henderson, 2008, p. 252

In their study, Motley and Henderson (2008) have found that the phenomenon of glocalization may lead to tension within the hip-hop scene amongst different countries and cultures and the values that they hold for hip-hop music in its own right. They have found three components that can explain glocalization in the rap industry.

The first component is appropriation (Motley & Henderson, 2008). When hip-hop first started out in the South Bronx, it was never really believed that it would leave that area and become popular elsewhere. So, when it did cross boundaries in the 90's, the adaption of the genre by other people could be perceived as a form of cultural appropriation, which is broadly defined as "the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture" (Rogers, 2006, p. 474). In the case of hip-hop music, the product was intended for oppressed and marginalized black audiences, so when the music is marketed to and consumed by a different ethnic group, this can be seen as a form of cultural appropriation (Motley & Henderson, 2008). However, hip-hop outside of the U.S. is often made by ethnic minority groups in their respective countries. It should be noted that they can sometimes understand the struggles of African American rappers, although these artists started adopting hip-hop components in their own culture.

The second component, as formulated by Motley and Henderson (2008), is adaption. After the genre initially crossed over and the direct consumption led to a lot of appropriation, early non-U.S. adopters of hip-hop music decided that the direct consumption of African American art was not relatable in other parts of the world. Here, people listened to this music with different socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, rap artists started adapting the lyrics and technologies to their own environments, making it more relatable for themselves and their intended audiences (Motley & Henderson, 2008). For instance, in the 90's in Germany, the genre grew along with German nationalism, where rap music was used to protest against racist and xenophobic government actions (Cheeseman, 1998). Similarly, Italian youths used hip-hop as a way to address political issues, such as the Mafia and the neglect of South Italy (Mitchell, 1995). When rap is adapted and adjusted for a certain audience, some might say that the music is no longer true to its origins and might not even be classified as hip-hop music anymore (Motley & Henderson, 2008). Therefore, new classification labels have emerged to signal the difference. Examples of such labels are Rap Francais in France (Ghio, 2010) and Nederhop in the Netherlands (Markus, 2012).

This leads to the discussion on the third component, namely authenticity (Mortley & Henderson, 2008). It has been established that the popularity of rap music in different continents is partly due to its commercialization. In the hip-hop scene, there is a tension

between authenticity (keeping it real) and profitability (selling out) (Mortley & Henderson, 2008). Thus, for a rap song to be authentic, it would have to be about real feelings and political justice. This does not have to be bound to black Americans, as Mortley and Henderson (2008) have found multiple other cases around the world where hip-hop is an authentic form of art.

One example of this glocalization of hip-hop music can be found in Athens, Greece, where the three steps formulated by Mortley and Henderson (2008) were all part of the development of Greek hip-hop (Elafros, 2013). The first contact that the youth of Greece had with the hip-hop culture was through mediated representations, for instance in films. However, the genre was not easily popularized, as the traditional Greek music had such a strong influence on all popular media (Elafros, 2013). New genres that tried to reach commercial success were often not accepted due to the popularity of more indigenous and traditional music genres, which was because it was perceived as appropriation. This changed when in 2003 the Greek hip-hop genre started adopted traditional Greek elements into its music, such as instruments and lyrics (Elafros, 2013). In other words, adaption happened. The point of authenticity has been a debate for a very long time in Greece, as some say that the inclusion of traditional Greek elements leads to a less authentic hip-hop sound, even though it might be more authentic to the standard Greek listener. Similarly, Cheyne and Binder (2010) found that hip-hop that is linked to specific places in this way can also be seen as more authentic, and therefore reviewed more positively in comparison with commercial hip-hop that does not include these authenticity signals.

So, although hip-hop music can create a global hip-hop community through appropriation, adaption and authenticity, glocalization often takes place when it comes to a hip-hop form generated in another country. These types of music take on their own genre, such as ‘Nederhop’, a Dutch form of hip-hop that has been established in the Netherlands (Pennycook, 2007, Wermuth, 2001).

### *2.1.3 Hip-hop in the Netherlands*

In the Netherlands, early forms of hip-hop started out in the late 1970’s in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where young rappers from the Dutch Antilles and Surinam made music ‘appropriating’ American hip-hop (Wermuth, 2001). Dutch hip-hop reached a wider audience in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, when the genre got an international boost from which the

Dutch scene also profited (Markus, 2012). Dutch rap music got its own abbreviation called ‘Nederhop’, which is still widely used in the country to this day (Wermuth, 2001).

Although there were some significant Dutch rappers present in the hip-hop scene in the 90’s, during the early 00’s of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there was a new wave of rappers that took the Dutch charts by storm (Markus, 2012). Most of these artists had Moroccan descent, who were often badly represented by the Dutch media and who were marginalized voices in the Netherlands like the black Americans in the Bronx had been in the US. This way, these Dutch Moroccan hip-hop artists used glocalization to create rap music that was relatable in that time for a larger Dutch audience. Many of these successful artists had Dutch lyrics, which proved to be more successful than Dutch artists rapping in English (Markus, 2012). This can be related to the aforementioned concept of authenticity (Mortley & Henderson, 2008).

Nederhop is strongly influenced by its American predecessor in a way that Dutch rappers adopt the same type of language and behavior that many black rappers from the US possess (Markus, 2012). On the one hand, it can be argued that Dutch rappers are authentic, as they stay true to the roots of hip-hop music and try adopting the mannerisms that American artists became famous for. On the other hand, however, these Dutch musicians can be seen as inauthentic for doing this, as they appropriate another culture by using it as their own. In this light, Nederhop artists can actually be authentic by creating music that focuses on the local problems of the Netherlands and using these issues as fuel for their creative outlets such as music.

In the last decade, hip-hop has grown even more in the Netherlands. With the rise of the ‘internet generation’ of hip-hop artists called the “New Wave”, the genre has spread to mainly young listeners all throughout the country (Huismans, n.d.). In 2018, almost half of the most streamed artists in the top 50 of the Netherlands was a Dutch hip-hop artist (Duijsings & van Niekerk, 2018). The problem is that none of these artists were female rappers. The following section will tackle this underrepresentation in the music industry, with a focus on the hip-hop scene.

## **2.2 Gender inequality in popular music**

Although people of color have experienced many forms of racism and discrimination, which they often voice in hip-hop music, they are the dominant group active in the hip-hop scene. They are very well represented in the hip-hop industry, as opposed to women. As seen in the recent charts of the Netherlands alone, female hip-hop artists are terribly underrepresented,

sometimes not even visible musicians. This is, unfortunately, not just a problem in the hip-hop scene, but can be observed in the music industry overall, and in all countries over the world. Gender inequality is a universal, continuing problem in the music industry (Strong & Raine, 2019, p. 2). Therefore, this issue will first be discussed industry-wide, before it will be discussed in more detail related to rap music.

### *2.2.1 Women in the music industry*

In the last decades, a lot of research has been done regarding the underrepresentation of women in music on all levels imaginable. Leonard (2016) describes the music industry as a ‘boys’ club’, in which women have trouble accessing information and networks in comparison with men. This same problem exists not only in the gatekeeping of information, but in many other aspects of the music industry. In this section, some of these problems will be brought to light.

First, women are generally found to be underrepresented on an industry-based level (Strong & Raine, 2019, p. 2). Not only are there less women active in the work field, but there is also a huge gap in salary between men and women. Women are earning less in royalties and have a general lower income for the same work practices as men (Berkers, Smeulders & Berghman, 2019; Cooper, Coles & Hanna-Osborne, 2017). Thus, there exists a big gap between men and women who work in this creative industry, not even focusing on the artists themselves.

Second, the media and music critics often classify and discuss female artists with underlying stereotypes and negative prejudices. For example, the way women are portrayed by critics is also affected by the so-called ‘boys’ club’, as can be seen in the role of gender in music reviews that has been studied by Schmutz, Pollock and Bendickson (2018) who have found a multitude of themes in which gender plays a role when it comes to evaluating hip-hop albums and artists. This study focuses on the case of a Taylor Swift album in comparison with a cover album, including the exact same titles, performed by a man. Schmutz et al. (2018) found several ways in which women were presented differently to men. The most notable one is that of the explicit mention of gender and/or sexuality. Almost 80% of reviews of Taylor Swift had some form of depiction of her gender or sexuality, while this only happened for around 20% of her male counterpart (Schmutz et al., 2018). The female version was also found to be less legitimate, authentic, and of a lower degree of high art (Schmutz et al., 2018; Schmutz & Faupel, 2010). Through these mechanisms of taste-making that music



critics are in control of, popular music is highly focused on men, where women are not taken as seriously as their male counterparts. Women are portrayed stereotypically.

Third, women that are present in the industry in a more passive way are also treated negatively and disrespectfully in multiple ways. Think for instance about the portrayal of women in the lyrics of popular music and how women are used in video clips of popular songs. Aubrey and Frisby (2011) studied the presence of women in video clips over multiple genres. They measured sexual objectification and how this correlates to music videos across different genders and genres. Not surprisingly, the research showed that female artists were more sexually objectified than male artists, mostly in pop and hip-hop music. Their findings suggest that “contemporary music videos serve to reinforce the cultural notion that women are valued first and foremost for their bodies and their appearance” (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011, p. 494), suggesting that women in the music industry are more successful when they dress and act to please the male gaze.

In their study, Aubrey and Frisby (2011) found that this sexual objectification takes place way more often in pop, (hard) rock and hip-hop music rather than other genres such as country music. For hip-hop specifically, sexual objectification naturally goes together with racism towards black women, who are more likely to be sexually objectified than white women (Ward et al, 2013). This will be discussed in the following section.

### *2.2.2 Gender norms in hip-hop*

Although the music industry in itself lacks representation for female artists, this inequality is magnified in the hip-hop scene. In hip-hop music, male artists have always dominated the charts, number of sales and the number of songs that are produced (Mohammed-Baksh & Callison, 2008). In this culture and economy, a clear male dominance is established over their female counterparts (Mohammed-Baksh & Callison, 2015). Not to forget, that women that are successful in the hip-hop scene also have to deal with racial stereotypes as well, given that most of them are black women (White, 2013).

In her study, White (2013) examined black female sexuality in hip-hop culture. Black women and girls have always faced a lot of discrimination and racism in all kinds of ways, and the music industry is partly responsible for this (Crooks, King & Tluczek, 2020). Therefore, White studied two of the biggest female rappers of the 10's, Nicki Minaj and Missy Elliot (2013). Between these two, Nicki Minaj is someone who often dresses more ‘sexual’, and Missy Elliott often wears a lot of baggy clothes that are associated with male

fashion. White found that when women in hip-hop try to dress more masculine and use sexually explicit words and curse words in their lyrics, they are often perceived as trying to be ‘one of the boys’ (White, 2013, p. 620). However, when black women choose to wear more ‘sexually provocative’ clothing and dance in a ‘sexual’ way, they are doing something wrong according to both critics as audiences (White, 2013, p. 620). As Estes-Wynne (2019) mentions, the audience expects women to act a certain way, and if this does not happen, they are not taken seriously. “Audiences want their voice, the soul, the character, the emotion, but do not want the color of their skin. And if they do want their looks, they have to look a certain way” (Estes-Wynne, 2019, p. 1).

Not only are female hip-hop artists mistreated in the industry, video clips by females and (mostly) males featuring women often represent them as sexual objects as well. In these video clips, rappers are often surrounded by several (black) women in bathing suits or some other form of scarce clothing, dancing in a sexual manner (Perry, 2004; Pough, 2007). Women are often portrayed as ‘strippers’ and their sexuality is used as bait in video clips. This way, female sexuality is commercialized for a mass public (Hunter, 2011). As black women are historically portrayed as sexual beings, this might affect the difference between white and black female representation in music videos.

## **2.3 Audience perceptions**

When it comes to evaluating and consuming art, objective standards are often hard to come by, as can be seen in the representation issues presented in the previous section. People all have their own lenses through which they perceive the world. Some of these lenses can be seen as gender or race which can be used as a primary tool to evaluate literature or music (Chong, 2011; Ridgeway, 2011). Not only do these personal characteristics of the consumer play a role in the way they perceive certain artists, the background of a musician can also change the way audiences consume their music. In this section, the audience perceptions of hip hop will be discussed, with a focus on gender and race representations.

### *2.3.1 Audience perception theories*

There are multiple theories on mass media as an influence on the audience through communication processes. One of these is the cultivation theory as developed by Gerbner (1998). He studied violent television programs and how the continued watching of such shows would alter audience perceptions of violence in everyday life (Rosenberry & Vicker,

2009). This approach can also be used in other forms of media consumption by interpreting individuals' reactions to certain content, such as music (Gundiff, 2013). So, when people are exposed to a lot of racism and sexism present in modern hip-hop, they might actually start to experience this behavior the real world as normal behavior, leading to an increase of misogynistic attitudes in everyday life (Gundiff, 2013).

Another theory that is often used in audience perception studies is the encoding/decoding model of communication by Stuart Hall (1973). This model is based on the perception that meaning is created on the side of the producer of a message as well as the side of the receiver of that same message. Encoding happens with the sender who develops and sends a message. Decoding of this message happens when the receiver interprets or decodes this message for themselves (Hall, 1973). Decoding can be described as the process where communication is turned into thoughts (Hall, 1973). This process was originally applied to the television industry but can also be used to understand discourse in the music industry. For instance, when looking at the way that female rappers present themselves in music videos can be interpreted by the audience as reinforcing the sexualization that was normalized by the male musicians in their industry. However, this might not be the message that these women want to send to their audience. Phillips, Reddick-Morgan and Stephens (2005) have examined the way that women encode a message of a 'street-level' interpretation of black women's experiences when certain audience members will decode this as misogynistic views on women. Social context matters on whether these messages in music are perceived as feminist movements, as is often meant by black women themselves (Phillips et al., 2005).

The last audience perception study that will be discussed in relation to hip-hop music is that on the changing nature of audiences by Sonia Livingstone (2004). In her research, Livingstone argues that due to the rise of the internet, mediated communication, such as music, is no longer mainly mass media. This means that messages in media are no longer communicated from 'one to many', but rather from 'one to one' or 'many to many' (Livingstone, 2004, p. 76). And although music is certainly not always a form of 'one to one' communication, new media and technologies concerning music are often text-centered and they carry 'multiple, diverse and changing symbolic messages' (Livingstone, 2004, p. 84). In addition, audiences make sense of a piece of media before, during and after they consume it. According to Livingstone, this means that they are heterogenous in their interpretations and are sometimes not aware of the intended message by the artist or producer (2004, p. 79). An audience member is also influenced by their socio-economic position, gender, ethnicity etc.

All in all, there are many different factors at play that might influence the way an audience member decodes a message, especially in the era of the internet in which different messages are easily spread.

### *2.3.2 Perceptions of gender and race representations*

Multiple studies have been conducted on the influence of rap music on its audience. For instance, Volgman (2013) found that rap music significantly influenced young women's perceptions by making them insecure about their own appearance. They can make young girls feel that they should be sexier or thinner, just like the female rap artists that they look up to (Volgman, 2013). Studies such as these "help to illustrate the devastating effects of sexualized and misogynistic rap music lyrics on younger generations of listeners, and more specifically, its influence on perceptions of the black female identity" (Moody-Ramirez & Scott, 2015, p. 59). In other words, black women are being viewed as sexualized objects in day-to-day life, as a result of misogynistic rap lyrics sung by both men and even women. When women try to become successful in the hip-hop industry, they might try to be 'one of the boys', which can lead to them adopting this sexist view of women themselves in order to be more accepted in the male-dominated genre (White, 2013, p. 620).

However, the way black female artists portray themselves is different from the way that men portray them. In some ways, black female hip-hop artists succumb to the stereotypes that the industry lays down on them. Yet, some successful rappers have succeeded in rejecting these stereotypes, by making bold fashion statements and rapping about their own sexuality, they create agency (White, 2013). Artists such as Nicki Minaj use their clothes, lyrical contents and their own created image to either differentiate from or subvert the stereotypes that the male-dominated industry has laid upon them (White, 2013). This way of creating agency may have a positive effect on the audience perceptions of black female artists. While this is one way of looking at it, there could also be some disagreement on that, as stereotyping is also very much about personal interpretation. Stereotypes partly reflect existing differences, in this case between men and women, and they are partly prone to the way men and women define themselves and the way that they are treated by others (Ellemers, 2018). Therefore, some might see provocative styles as showing independence, while others see it as playing the industry game more extremely. This is also in line with the encoding/decoding model by Stuart Hall (1973) and the study on audiences by Sonia

Livingstone (2004). Different background characteristics of audience members or users of media can impact the way they perceive a rap song by a black female artist.

The current study aims to understand the opinions of active and passive audiences of hip-hop music created and performed by black female hip-hop musicians and whether audiences have different opinions on white female rappers than their black counterparts. In order to shed a light on the difference that gender can make on the decoding of the message of a song, both men and women were interviewed. The following section will focus on the methodology that was used to select interviewees and find the answers to these questions.

### **3. Method**

In this chapter, the methodology of this study will be discussed. First, an outline of the general research design will be provided which will be explained in detail. Second, measurements and operationalization are given in relation to the theory that was introduced in the previous section. Third, the steps of thematic data analysis are included. Last, the research methods will be critically evaluated, and the ethics of the study are reflected upon.

#### **3.1 General research design**

To answer the research question, 10 in-depth interviews were held with Dutch young adults that often listen to Dutch hip-hop music. For this study, a qualitative approach was considered the best option, as this aims to use language to understand concepts based on people's personal experiences. (Brennen, 2017, p. 4). Qualitative data collection is an effective method to answer the question of how Dutch young adults perceive female hip-hop artists of different ethnicities and why this is the case. In other words, qualitative researchers understand that reality is socially constructed and might not always be expressed the right way using numbers (Brennen, 2017, p. 4). Qualitative research attempts to understand the many complex relationships that exist in our society, rather than finding a specific correlation, effect or influence as is the case with quantitative research (Brennen, 2017, p. 5). The interviewees in this study have spoken about their own opinions when shown content such as lyrics and video fragments of male and female hip-hop artists of different ethnicities. These opinions have helped to understand how people make meaning of different personal characteristics of artists, and what this means for their listening behavior and perceptions of their favorite artists.

The chosen type of data collection for this research was the use of in-depth interviews. According to Brennen, qualitative interviews are concerned with the context and meaning of the opinions and experiences that interviewees express (2017, p. 29), which provides context to the answers that are given by the interviewees. Furthermore, the interviews that were held with the interviewees were semi-structured, which entails that they were based on fixed and structured questions, but with an extra flexibility as it allows the interviewer to ask questions that were not planned, follow-up questions, or switch up the order of the interview (Brennen, 2017, p. 29). This can lead to clarity on certain topics, as participants are stimulated to elaborate on their answers, which gives the researcher more and clearer data to analyze later (Brennen, 2017, p. 29).

With regard to the research units, Dutch young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 that often listen to Dutch hip-hop music were selected to partake in this study. This choice was made due to the findings that hip-hop is most popular amongst young adults and teenagers (Statista, 2018). Moreover, both male and female interviewees were selected in order to get a more varied view on the topic matter, as the perceptions of men and women may very likely differ when it comes to decoding messages in hip-hop music (Phillips et al., 2005). In addition, exclusively Dutch interviewees were interviewed as this research focuses on the developments in the Netherlands with Dutch hip-hop music. There were no selection criteria on the race of the participants. However, through the sampling method only white people were selected to participate in this study. The limitations that come with this will be further discussed in the conclusion.

The sampling method that was used can be described as a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Firstly, the participants were selected upon the specific profiles that are necessary for this research project, which is purposive sampling (Marshall, 1996). In this case, that means they needed to be Dutch, between the ages of 18 and 25, and active listeners of Nederhop music. As this study is not concerned with the ethnicity of the audience members, this was not used as a selection criterium. In the end, the ten selected interviewees were all white Dutch people, of which the limitations will be further elaborated upon in the discussion section of the conclusion. Although the purposive method of sampling is useful to find the specific profiles of interviewees, it should be taken into consideration that this form of sampling is highly prone to researcher bias, as the participants have been selected based on the judgement of the researcher alone (Sharma, 2017). Secondly, several participants that were selected through purposive sampling were able to recommend other useful candidates for this research, which then led to snowball sampling (Babbie, 2008). Snowball sampling is useful here, because the researcher does not have direct access to a list of people that often listen to hip-hop music, and this technique will allow for a bigger sample available to the researcher (Sharma, 2017). However, it should be noted that this method makes it difficult to make generalizations, because they are not selected on random selection.

Data collection took place over the course of three weeks in April and May of 2021. At the start of the interview, all participants were made aware of the aim of this research and what their answers would be used for. Then, they gave verbal consent for the researcher to use their answers with the use of a pseudonym to protect their privacy. During the interview, rapport was established by questions on their background and their overall listening behavior. Establishing rapport is important for the respondent to feel understood and more willing to

open up on their personal opinions (Brennen, 2017, pp. 32). When all the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed using Google Docs voice typing.

The overall sample consisted of four men and six women that all varied between the ages of 18 to 25 (see Appendix A). Each interview took between 45 and 60 minutes and took place either face-to-face or via an online environment such as Zoom or Teams as a result of the lockdown concerning COVID-19. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B. In the following section, certain parts of this guide will be highlighted and elaborated upon with the aim to operationalize the theoretical concepts into real-life experiences that the interviewees could relate to.

### **3.2 Measurements and operationalization**

To answer the research questions that were posed in the introduction section of this study, the theoretical framework that followed introduced certain concepts from previous research. Some of the most important concepts are glocalization (as a result of the spreading of hip-hop), gendered and racial stereotypes, authenticity, and several audience perception theories that explain the way an audience member decodes a message in a song or videoclip. In the interview guide (see Appendix B), these concepts have been incorporated in such a way that they can be easily applied into the interviewee's personal experiences. For example, the concept of glocalization is translated into questions that are scattered through multiple categories. Under the heading of hip-hop, the participants are asked whether they also listen to American hip-hop which is followed up by the question "what is your opinion on Dutch hip-hop in comparison with American hip-hop?".

Another example can be found under the headings that focus on stereotypes. Interviewees are first asked about racial stereotypes with questions such as "How important is it that music stays with its intended audience?" and "what is, according to you, the difference between white and black rappers?". These questions aim to find out whether the participant sees any differences between people of different ethnic background, and more importantly, what these differences are. These answers are likely to lead to insights on racial stereotypes that an audience has. A slightly different technique is used when participants are confronted with gendered stereotypes. They are all asked to say the first names that pop up in their head when they are asked "when you think about Dutch hip-hop artists, what names do you immediately think of?". Here, it will become clear whether people will name mostly men or



if they also think of female artists. Then, they are asked whether they can also name women in the hip-hop industry, and what they think the difference between the two genders might be.

The concept of authenticity is translated into several questions that describe authenticity, but do not explicitly mention the concept. For instance, the interviewees are asked “how important is it that a musician stays close to themselves?” which is followed by the question whether their answer has anything to do with the background of said musician. Staying true to oneself is an important point in authenticity, and it has been measured by this in multiple previous studies that focus on authenticity of female musicians (Schmutz & Faupel, 2010; Schmutz et al., 2018).

Finally, all of these questions are formulated with audience perception taken into consideration. To fully understand how young adults view women with different skin tones, three video clips were shown and afterwards their opinions about them were asked. Links to all three video clips are attached to the interview guide (see Appendix B) and will be further elaborated upon here. The first clip is a video by Frenna, who is a Dutch rapper and singer, both as part of hip-hop formation SFB and as a solo artist. Frenna is a black male musician and the video clip that the participants got to view was of song ‘Give Dem’ from 2019. In the clip, Frenna is driving in cars and dancing around with several other people. He is shown rapping at the camera surrounded by other rappers and female dancers. The second clip is of a video by Latifah, who is one of the more well-known female Dutch rappers. Latifah is a black woman and the music video that was used in the interviews was of the song ‘Bounce Back’ also from 2019. In this video, Latifah is shown rapping and dancing along with two female back-up dancers. There is a car with two men that Latifah walks towards. The last clip that was shown was also of a woman, namely S10, who is white. S10 is a Dutch rapper and singer and the clip that was shown to the interviewees was that of Diamonds, which was also released in 2019. In this video, S10 is seen in an old mansion, where there are people sitting in a circle with blindfolds before their eyes. These specific videoclips were chosen because they were all brought out in the same year, namely 2019, and are all quite popular tracks from their respective artists. Also, the artists that were chosen are overall well-known musicians in the Netherlands, which led to most interviewees knowing whose content they were viewing. This led to a more educated reaction to the music videos as those were not the only pieces of music from the artists that the interviewees had been exposed to. These clips were used in this interview to record people’s genuine reactions when faced with different rappers and their content. This is supposed to generate sincere reactions and honest opinions from the respondents.

The overall structure of the interview guide follows these operationalized concepts, and also focuses on some background information of the participants. First, interviewees are asked to describe their music taste and talk about their favorite artists. Then, they are asked how they would define hip-hop, and are asked to elaborate on their relationship with their favorites, and which traits they value in their music. After this, racial stereotypes are examined by asking about rappers from different ethnic background. The same is then done for gendered stereotypes by asking the interviewees how many women they know and how they view female (re)presentation in the Dutch media. Last, authenticity is discussed with the respondents and the different examples are discussed with them, which marks the end of the interview.

### **3.3 Data analysis**

The next step in the method focuses on the use of thematic analysis to get results from the collected data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is the best option here, because it is a very flexible way of meaning-making, which is focused on creating new themes that rise from the analyzed data, instead of the researcher having to rely on pre-existing theories for the results to form. Although several theories based on previous research have been discussed in the theoretical framework, they do not make up all the themes that can be found within the raw data set. The multiple steps to thematic analysis as identified by Herzog et al. (2019) were followed in this study and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

First, the researcher became familiar with the data. This was achieved through the transcription of all of the interviews, which were done by the researcher. During this process, all of the raw data was heard and written multiple times. In this initial process, patterns and meaning came forward, so that it became clear how the data stands in relation to the main research question that was posed (Herzog et al., 2019).

Second, 867 initial codes were formed from the raw data using analysis software ATLAS.ti. In each interview transcript, different paragraphs were taken together, and several codes were assigned to them. These unique codes were relevant in the context of the research question, as suggested by Herzog et al (2019). Moreover, the coding was carried out in both a 'data-driven' way as well as a 'theory-driven' way, as this leads to flexible outcomes that are still related to the theoretical framework that was created beforehand (Herzog et al., 2019).

Third, the researcher started searching for themes (Herzog et al., 2019). This means that every single individual code has been grouped under three themes and seven sub-themes, in an attempt to find emerging patterns within the data set. In order for this process to be fully transparent, a coding tree has been added to this paper and can be found in Appendix C. In addition, a sample of ten codes for each subtheme has also been included in Appendix D.

Fourth, the researcher reviewed the themes, which entails that the themes have been reviewed and critically evaluated to make sure that all themes work together coherently and make meaning of them (Herzog et al., 2019). In this phase, there were still around 15 themes that could be improved upon. Some of these were fused together as they were overlapping or lacked actual relevance to the research question. This process has been documented in Appendix C.

Fifth, the themes were defined and named so that they could be used to answer the central question of this research (Herzog et al., 2019). Some names could be taken from several concepts that were introduced in the theoretical framework, while a couple of themes also completely generated new concepts. These themes were then written out in the last step.

Last, the report was produced using the found themes (Herzog et al., 2019). The last step focuses on the actual writing process in which the results are discussed, and a conclusion could eventually be drawn from them. Although it should be taken into consideration that the writing of useful findings should actually start in phase one and happen throughout all of the previously mentioned steps. This is not the only evaluation that should be done when it comes to the methodology of this study, which is why the following section will discuss some ethical considerations that should be made regarding the current research.

### **3.4 Evaluation and ethics**

In this section, the aforementioned method of this study will be critically evaluated with the help of the concepts credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Furthermore, this project will be reviewed based on the ethics and limitations of the methodology and problems with this will be addressed.

First of all, the current research can be described as credible, as Korstjens and Moser (2018) describe credibility as the researcher becoming familiar with the participants of the study. This was done in multiple ways. For instance, the researcher established rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee by asking questions about themselves and their music taste in general, which created trust between both parties involved. Second of all, this

study is transferable, as thick descriptions of the interviews are provided in the results section. This means that answers by the interviewees are given along with the context of their answer and additional explanation on their motivations. This makes the study more transferable, as readers can decide for themselves if the results are useful and applicable in a different context (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Thirdly, there is a form of dependability, as the entire process of data collection, data analysis and the formation of results was documented and added in the results or as appendices. Because of this, the reader knows what led to the findings when reading the interviews (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Lastly, there is conformability, as the findings of this study could be confirmed by other researchers. There are plenty of other projects that have focused on stereotypes in hip-hop music, in which most researchers found comparable results.

Concerning the ethics of this research, each participant was made aware of the topic of the interview and what their answers would be used for. Moreover, each interviewee gave their spoken informed consent at the beginning of the interview, which is included in all of the transcripts. It is important that the privacy of the respondents is respected (Brennen, 2017), which is why for each respondent there was the option to use a pseudonym when quoted and referenced in this project.

## **4. Results**

This section will focus on the findings that came forward from the data collection and analysis. The results will be presented in different sections and will each focus on one of the three main sensitizing concepts and the themes that were found accordingly. First, the theme of stereotypes in hip-hop will be discussed, which is separated in gendered and racial stereotypes. Second, the perceptions of black women in particular will be highlighted with a focus on the objectification of these black, female artists. Last, the perception of hip-hop artists can be explained by authenticity, as the data showed that the audience appreciates lyrics to contain personal stories, background information and emotions of their favorite rappers.

### **4.1 Stereotypes**

The first sub question of this research asks what stereotypes play a role in the perception of female hip-hop artists of different ethnic origins. In the theoretical framework, some of these stereotypes, mainly about black women, have been introduced. In addition, different stereotypes were mentioned by the interviewees in several instances, such as women being softer than men and that black artists have more struggles to rap about. These findings will be presented here both in relation to existing concepts as well as the inclusion of new findings provided by the data collected during the interviews. The theme of stereotypes is divided into three subthemes. The first one focuses on stereotypes that are very general and are applicable to each person in hip-hop, not specifically men or women or black or white people. Then, gendered stereotypes focus on the negative connotations that come with female hip-hop artists specifically. Finally, racial stereotypes focus on the negative connotations that black people in general endure in the hip-hop industry. These themes will be elaborated upon by subthemes and direct quotes from the participants.

#### *4.1.1 Hip-hop in general*

In order to understand the way an audience perceives a piece of music, it should be clear how they view hip-hop in general. It quickly became clear from the interviews with white men and women, that hip-hop means something entirely different to every single listener. When asked how they would define hip-hop, each of the participants gave a different answer. For instance, one participant said the following:

I think it is street music. There is something with people that come from a low socio-economic environment. You often hear that boys who come from nothing and don't have anything that they want to become a rapper. I think hip-hop is still described as the success story of the low socio-economic class. Coming from me, that sounds very white and highly educated, but I mean that is something that you often see in hip-hop. (Jill)

In this example provided by Jill, it can immediately be seen that she thinks of very typical stereotypes of hip-hop music, she thinks that most artists are boys that come from nothing and have made their way up on the social scale. When the same question was asked to another female participant, she responded with “a genre in which timing, feel, and beat are important, so that the song becomes a great dance track” (Bo). Here, there are no real stereotypes being named at first, as the interviewee fully focuses on the musicality of hip-hop tracks. Not everyone instantly thought of specific stereotypes.

However, when asked what would typically describe a ‘standard’ hip-hop song, most people mentioned the same couple of themes, patterns and stereotypes. One of the most remarkable stereotypes that came forth apart from racial and gendered stereotypes is the materialistic side of hip-hop music. Something that people find typical for older hip-hop music is “someone with a hat, sunglasses and ‘bling bling’ necklaces” (Tim). However, Tim also mentioned that this might be a bit outdated and that modern hip-hop focuses on money in a different way. He says that artists become more focused on the commercial side of the music industry, which takes a toll on the lyrics that they are able to produce:

I think, when they get more famous, they start making songs with which they can make more money [...] and maybe they start talking more about money and showing it off. I think you can see that very well with Lil' Kleine, because I feel like his songs have been very monotonous lately, and he keeps using the same couple of sentences that he uses in all of his songs. (Tim)

In this quote, Tim associates commercialization with using the same couple of successful lyrics over and over again, as artists have found a ‘success-formula’ with which they can make the most money with each single. In a way, Tim describes this commercialization as a way for rappers to show off their wealth in a new and modern way. All in all, money, expensive cars and fancy jewelry are still very present stereotypes with the wider audience,

that get named easily when asked about a typical hip-hop artist or song. This plays into the ongoing discussion on authenticity and commercialization as described by Motley and Henderson (2008), in which they explain that ‘selling out’ is not a form of authentic music.

Furthermore, hip-hop music in both the Netherlands and the U.S. is often described as being a mix of party music on the one hand, and emotional music with sensitive lyrics on the other hand. Sometimes, this contradiction can be seen within one interview, where the interviewee mentions both aspects to be of importance. Both some interviewees are divided in various perspectives. A clear distinction in responses can be seen in the gender of the interviewees. Most of the women said that they can appreciate sensitive lyrics in hip-hop music. For instance, one female participant said the following: “[...] it is of course a little bit the standard that men are not really allowed to show their emotions, so then they don’t do it in their music, but I do like it when they do show it” (Amy). Similar to Amy, Pien said that “hip-hop means putting your emotions out in the open without feeling ashamed of them” (Pien). In most cases, the female interviewees mentioned lyrics as an important part of music, while most men claimed to not be too interested in the lyrics. The main reasons for them to listen to Dutch hip-hop are the beat and the ‘flow’ of the music, as put into words by Hugo, who said; “With certain artists I find the structure and the flow very well done and well put together. They actually spent time thinking about it” (Hugo). What happens here with the answers of the respondents is a reflection of the real-life expectations that are put on both men and women, where the former is expected to be tough and not show too many emotions, and the latter is expected to be caring and full of emotion (Plant et al., 2000). The finding that women and men have different priorities when it comes to their hip-hop consumption can also be seen in the different stereotypes that the interviewees could name for hip-hop artists.

#### *4.1.2 Gendered stereotypes*

The music industry has previously been described as a ‘boys’ club’, in which women are greatly underrepresented in many ways, especially in the genre of hip-hop (Leonard, 2016; Mohammed-Baksh & Callison, 2015; Strong & Raine, 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that almost none of the interviewees talked about female artists when asked who they listened to the most. Both male and female respondents admitted that they seldom listen to female rappers in the Dutch hip-hop scene. And the people that could eventually name an artist or two, who were mostly women themselves, admitted that they generally do not like listening to female musicians. One reason for this is given by Nick in the following quote

when asked about the difference between male and female hip-hop artists: “Well, it is generally seen as a man’s world. And I personally listen more to men because I find a man’s voice nicer to listen to. Women’s voices can be very high, and I just don’t enjoy high voices” (Nick). This statement was also elaborated upon by Lars, also a man, who said something similar, which also shows the difference in tastes between men and women.

Women have a higher voice than men, and that doesn’t appeal to me [...] and when you start looking at the overall level of female hip-hop music, then there are a lot of artists that just do not produce good music. The overall level is way lower, which is comparable with the difference between men’s soccer and women’s soccer. (Lars)

Female hip-hop is described to be underdeveloped due to the lack of female artists and the idea that their sound does not appeal to a male audience. However, while Lars argues that women are less present in the industry due to their abilities and their sound, other participants voiced different thoughts on the topic. For instance, one female participant said the following: “I think that when you want to make it in the music world as a woman you get held to entirely different standards than men” (Mia). Similarly, tapping into the idea of a ‘boys’ club’, as found by Leonard (2016), a female participant said that due to the glass ceiling in many male-dominated workplaces and areas, women have a way smaller chance of success:

I think it’s still a male circle and that is the same as with all the other areas that are male dominated, it is hard for a woman to get in there. I also think that as a female hip-hop artist, you don’t get taken seriously in the beginning, and that makes it so hard to become a part of it. It’s actually the same thing you see in every other business that are predominantly male. (Jill)

Again, the difference between male and female participants can clearly be seen in the way they voice their opinions on the matter. While both genders don’t often listen to female rap music, they perceive the problem of female representation in the music industry in different ways. Gender inequality issues seem to be noted and addressed by the female interviewees more often than by the male interviewees.

In addition to the absence of female representation, there were several stereotypes that came forward from the interviews. One thing that was pointed out by numerous participants



is the tone of voice that is used in hip-hop music. The data shows that people view the hip-hop scene as aggressive and very rough, as the genre has been controversial due to its violent contents since its rise to popularity (Epps & Dixon, 2017). This is something that fits the male voice as well as the male attitude, as several interviewees said that men make more ‘angry’ music and women make ‘soft’ music. As one female participant points out, male rappers can get away with more controversial lyrics, which can be the reason that women have “in general more careful lyrics, or cleaner lyrics than men” (Amy). Furthermore, women are more often associated with other genres than with hip-hop music. When asked to name the female hip-hop artists that they know, many participants named women that have previously featured on hip-hop tracks with a singing chorus or other feature. From the data, it can be seen that women are more often associated with singing parts rather than actual rap parts, as is voiced by Bo, who said the following:

I think with women its often more like singing, instead of real rap. With men it can actually purely be rap without any singing, of course it depends, but then it is real rap. But for example, Tabitha is definitely more singing. It is closer to pop music than male hip-hop, I think. (Bo)

All in all, this section shows that women are often perceived as softer and cleaner when it comes to the music they make. Clean music refers to the language that they use, which is less often associated with curse words and slurs. This is more often perceived by the male audience as a qualitative difference, while the female audience is more likely to perceive this in relation to the existing problems in the music industry.

#### *4.1.3 Racial stereotypes*

In addition to women being perceived differently than men when it comes to hip-hop music, there are also several racial stereotypes that came forth from this study. First of all, it should be noted that none of the interviewees thought that hip-hop music is something that should be kept as an African American art form. White people have every right to become rappers themselves, as long as they respect the culture it comes from, many mentioned. Something that recurred in the data is that participants said it should not matter what ethnicity or race someone has when they want to pursue a rap career. In the words of one interviewee, “well you don’t have to have a background as a gangster to be a rapper” (Hugo). However, it is

widely acknowledged that rap music comes from the suburbs in the United States, which makes multiple interviewees recognize the racism that is commonly spoken about them in hip-hop music made by black artists. As response to this, several people mention that white people (especially in the U.S.) have different struggles that they can rap about. This is illustrated by this quote; “In America there is so much economic inequality that white people have experienced. If you look, for example, at Eminem, he has had many similar struggles to black artists, with drugs for instance” (Jill). Although Jill demonstrates the finding that in theory there should not be many differences between people from different ethnicities when they make hip-hop music, when asked about minorities in the Netherlands and the difference between music made by white Dutch people, Moroccan rappers came up quite often.

As Motley and Henderson (2018) mention, when rap music is adapted and adjusted for a different audience than the intended audience, it can be perceived as inauthentic. However, there have been many cases in the past where artists have adapted the genre to their own socio-economic environments (Motley & Henderson, 2008). Something similar has happened in the Netherlands with Moroccan rappers. Moroccans have been an ethnic minority in the Netherlands for a very long time, making them experience racism on a daily basis similar to black Americans.

When you look at middle eastern rappers, they often have a bit of an aggressive tone, not that they are always aggressive, but yeah, they have a more aggressive way of speaking. They often talk about being treated differently as a result of racism [...] it leads to a different vibe than with white rappers. (Tim)

Tim is not the only interviewee who views Dutch Moroccan rappers this way. Almost everyone in this study acknowledges that white rappers have less struggles to rap about. However, when they were shown a videoclip by a white female artist, they suddenly all thought that she had more struggles and deeper lyrics than her black female counterpart that they were also shown. The difference between female artists of different races will be elaborated upon in the following section.

#### **4.2 Perceptions of black women in hip-hop**

In the aforementioned theme, it could be seen that certain stereotypes about both women as well as people of color exist within the audience perception of hip-hop music in the

Netherlands. However, this study aims to find out how these elements intersect with black female hip-hop artists. When asked what the difference is between black and white female rappers, most interviewees could not name any distinct features of either one. The real discovery came when they were shown a video clip by Latifah, who is a black woman, and S10, who is a white woman. Eight out of the ten interviewees said that they preferred the clip made by S10, including her lyrics. One participant said that “this clip really tells a story, which I did not get from the other two, those were just showing the standard hip-hop images [expensive material, women], while here a real story is being told” (Tim). The clip is not described as a ‘typical hip-hop clip’ by any of the interviewees, but it is often seen as the one of better quality. The participants mentioned that the clip is more modest than that of a black hip hop artist, and that makes it better. S10 is seen as “less sensual, maybe in a different way, but she is not showing her body or moving in a sensual way” (Nick). Similarly, S10 is described as the counterpart of Latifah in this quote by Bo: “Because it’s more like the stereotype when there is a man and women dance around him, [...] that is still often associated with hip-hop and yeah, I think S10 is a counterpart to that” (Bo).

It can be seen that a white woman is less associated with sexual dancing and other behavior than a black woman is, although it should be acknowledged that some of this can be linked to the music videos that were shown. Previous research has shown that when women in hip-hop try to dress more masculine and use sexually explicit words and curse words in their lyrics, they are often perceived as trying to be ‘one of the boys’ (White, 2013, p. 620). However, this seems to predominantly be the case for black women, because nine out of ten interviewees saw S10 as unique, not trying to be one of the boys, while most did see Latifah this way.

#### *4.2.1 Sexual objectification*

On the one hand, the interviewees found Latifah to be more of a traditional rapper than S10, while still arguing that S10 makes better songs. On the other hand, they did not find Latifah to be a better rapper than Frenna, who is a black man. So, in line with previous research, black women are faced with a lot of stereotypes in the hip-hop scene that work against them. For example, one interviewee said the following when asked what the difference is between Latifah and S10: “I think in the one of Latifah [videoclip] maybe has less clothes, it is more nude” (Amy). Here, the black woman is described as having on less clothes and when asked which one of the two videos is more like a ‘true hip-hop video’, the participant said Latifah,

showing the pattern of sexualized black women being the stereotype in the hip-hop scene. This can also be seen in the responses of interviewees who were asked what they think of when they think of hip-hop and when they are shown a hip-hop clip by Frenna. For instance:

It is a show with riches and success, which they show with expensive cars, fancy watches, Cartier sunglasses etcetera, and that it is almost exclusively black women who you see, there are a lot of women with boobs and butts and long hair, and all of those female aspects are being accentuated. (Jill)

In the eyes of the audience, hip-hop includes a lot of sexual images of black women who dance in a sexual manner. Not only are black women being portrayed as sexual objects in their own videos, they are often also shown in a hypersexualized way in male videoclips.

According to White (2013), black women tend to show themselves in this sexual way in order to be more acceptable in a male dominated music scene (p. 620). The findings in this study are in line with this claim, as one male participant highlights the following after watching the music video by Latifah: “I think female artists still use their body to get a lot of views and I think this video clip is very standard because of that” (Lars). Moreover, another interviewee highlighted that Latifah “presents herself as an object with the lyrics that she raps, it is in line with the way that male rappers talk about women” (Tim). By presenting herself in scarce clothing and by having half-naked men stand in an expensive car, several people argue that she just wants to be part of a man’s world, but that it is not really working, as it just seems less authentic that way. However, previous research shows that black women have trouble finding this authenticity, as the audience will easily find something wrong with them (Estes-Wynne, 2019).

### **4.3 Authenticity**

As mentioned before, there is a persisting tension between authenticity and profitability in the hip-hop scene (Mortley & Henderson, 2008). How this authenticity is achieved by rappers differs in each region or country. It has already been established that black women have a hard time being perceived as authentic, as the previous sections show that they are often believed to copy what their male counterparts are doing, or they are being too sexual in comparison with white women. There are three subthemes within authenticity that rose from the data analysis. There were some questions that were asked regarding authenticity, as it is

also a sensitizing concept that rose from the theory. However, the subthemes that will be discussed in the following sections were not specifically asked for but were rather reconstructed from their answers to other questions. In general, the interviewees described authenticity as an artist staying true to themselves without being too concerned with creating revenue. This mention of ‘staying true to oneself’ can be divided into three subcategories, namely personal stories, background information and emotions.

#### *4.3.1 Personal stories*

One thing that was said in every interview that was held, is the belief that rap music should be about personal stories in order for it to be authentic. Again, there was a difference between the male respondents, who mostly said that they appreciate a good beat more, and female respondents, who said that they found touching lyrics more valuable in good hip-hop music. However, everyone agreed that rap music is often about the struggles that rappers live through.

When you have struggled through something, I think that plays a very big role in music, because it makes you actually tell a story. You make something a discussable topic while creating a piece of art, in which people can also find themselves. And not everyone lives through the same thing and can understand that feeling, and that’s what makes it special in my opinion. (Jill)

Jill acknowledges that rappers often face struggles that a white audience member cannot recognize, but she argues that that is what makes it special. A good rapper is also described as someone that has lived through bad times in their lives. According to several participants, it makes them more authentic when you know that they came “from the streets” (Hugo). What is noticeable in the answers that the interviewees gave, is that none of them mentioned any female artists that have experienced bad times that they now make music about. Only when shown a piece of the clip by S10, some people said that S10 has an interesting story. Mia says the following: “What I like about her is that she makes music about her depression, which makes her music less shallow. She is really telling a story.” (Mia). Even though this depression is not mentioned in the clip that was shown, multiple interviewees were aware of the background of S10, which is also seen as an important factor in the authenticity that artists often try to reach.

### *4.3.2 Background information*

Not only do personal stories within the actual music make a difference in the music that people choose to listen to, background information on the personal lives of these artists also plays a role. More than half of the interviewees mentioned that they often google the hip-hop musicians that they listen to. Not only that, but multiple participants also actively follow their favorite artists on social media. As Nick explains: “I follow some on Instagram. I just find it chill to follow them because then I know when new music is coming out. And I like to follow their daily lives.” (Nick). It can be seen from this quote that people prefer to have knowledge on a musician’s life, as it makes them feel closer to them. This is not only achieved through following them on their social media platforms, but also by learning more about them through podcasts, interviews or documentaries. Learning about their personality is important to feel closer to an artist, which makes their music feel more authentic.

Well, some artists have like a fun personality or something which you can see in interviews, and that makes me follow them on Instagram as well. [...] And sometimes I listen to podcasts about those kinds of artists, it has an influence on what I think about them. (Amy)

Amy explains that she likes to form an opinion about the personalities of artists, which she does by listening podcasts about their day-to-day lives. She says that she is more likely to listen to artists who she feels connected to in some way. A connection with an artist is described as being important in order for their music to feel authentic as well. For another participant this can be found in the way they grew up and their education, as well as their daily hobbies:

I think it is very interesting to know what they do outside of making music and performing. Or maybe what they have done and where they came from, whether they went to school or did not go to school. Whether they became famous out of nowhere or not. I always think that is interesting. (Kaya)

Of course, this all in close relation with the personal stories that people value in hip-hop music. When people know the way a person grew up, what they were like when they were younger, how they are now, etc. they are more likely to understand the personal stories that

hip-hop artists want to tell with their music and lyrics. This also ties into the vulnerability of emotions in songs, which also seems to be greatly appreciated.

#### *4.3.3 Emotions*

The last subtheme that rose from data analysis is that of emotions portrayed by musicians in their music. Several interviewees argued that rap music often contains a lot of emotional lyrics. As Nick says, “you always hear that people make the best albums when they have just broken up with someone. It sucks for them, but it makes them emotional which leads to better music” (Nick). In other words, emotional music is perceived as better music than songs that do not contain emotional messages. The element of emotion would even make an artist more authentic when they do it right. This can be seen in this quote by Tim that he said when he was asked how much he values sincere emotions in music: “Yes a lot. Because it does make an artist more authentic when you are able to add elements that are able to move people. I think that can only be positive” (Tim).

What is interesting about the association between emotions and good music is that several participants also stated that women are more likely to produce emotionally loaded music. They are described as softer, which often clashes with the ‘aggressive’ undertone of rap music, which is the reason that multiple interviewees said that they prefer male rap music over female rap music. This contradicts with the finding that emotions enhance the quality of music, as Amy says the following: “I think that there are especially more emotions being shown in hip-hop that was made by women” (Amy). This would make female music more authentic, as emotions are important factors in good music. Still, women are described by most participants as being too soft and not ready to perform well in a man’s world such as the hip-hop industry. Even S10, who is seen by most participants as ‘different’ and authentic, cannot be compared to male rap music according to certain audience members, as is shown in this quote by Lars:

I think the industry is pushing her, as you can clearly see from the clip. Because this clip [by S10] is of higher quality than you would expect from an artist who only gets like 100.000 views. And it really doesn’t speak to me music wise. There are probably a lot of people who are big fans of her, but I really don’t like it and I also understand why this isn’t mainstream and why it doesn’t have many views. And this one even has

a collaboration with a well-known producer, so in that sense it also gets promoted.

(Lars)

Here, Lars tries to explain that he thinks women in the industry get extra help from producers and labels in order to become more successful, but he does not believe that women produce music of the same quality as men. A duality can be found in the soft side of women which is seen as authentic, and the way that this does not feel like 'real hip-hop' according to a large part of the male audience. This is in line with the findings by Mortley and Henderson (2008), as (black) female hip-hop artists do not seem to fit in whatever road they decide to take within the genre. The difference between male and female opinions on this matter can be explained with audience perception theories that have been introduced in the theoretical framework. A more detailed evaluation of the similarities and differences between the literature and the results will be discussed in the conclusion section of this study.



## 5. Conclusion

This research aimed to find out to what extent and how racial and gendered stereotypes play a role in the perception of mainstream hip-hop music in the Netherlands. Based on a qualitative approach that used ten in-depth interviews, several sensitizing concepts and new themes got formed that provide an answer to the central research question of this study. The answer will be presented through the explanation of the sub-questions in the following paragraphs. Following this, there will be a section dedicated to the discussion of theoretical implications and the limitations of the study will be explained along with suggestions for future research on the topic.

The first sub-question that was posed was the following: “Which stereotypes play a role in the perception of female hip-hop artists of different ethnic origins?”. Many stereotypes regarding hip-hop music emerged from the data, and a lot of them focused on women as well. Women in general are often described as sexual beings that are objectified in different layers of hip-hop music, such as lyrics, video clips, and especially the representation of women overall. Female hip-hop artists in the Netherlands are still very scarce and not many people listen to their music for different reasons. One stereotype that came forward from this finding is that male audience members feel that hip-hop is too much of an aggressive genre for women to be able to find their place within the industry. Aggressive lyrics and themes are more often associated with men, and that can be seen in the listening behavior of the Dutch young audience.

The second sub-question focused on the following: “To which degree do racial and gendered stereotypes go together or even strengthen one another?”. In the previous paragraph, the focus was on the difference between women and men in hip-hop. Here, there is an emphasis on the difference between white women and black women in the industry. This difference did not really show much in the initial answers of the participants, as they did not admit to any differences that they see between women of different colors. However, when the two videoclips of a black and a white woman were shown, it became clear that black women are more often associated with sexual images, such as showing a lot of skin and dancing in a sexual way. This was not brought up once when talking about white women, which implies that it is a stereotype that is reserved for black women in particular. Black women active in the hip-hop scene are more often objectified than white women. It should be acknowledged that this was mostly pointed out by female respondents, which will be discussed in the following paragraph.

The third sub-question that was formulated was the following: “Which differences do we find between how female hip-hop artists of different ethnic origins are perceived?”. This question centers around the audience perception aspect of this study. One of the most important findings to answer this question lies with the gender of the participants of this study. There was a big difference to be found between the way that men perceive female hip-hop artists and how women perceive them. No women said that they do not enjoy their music, but they mainly focused on the reasons why women are so terribly underrepresented in the Dutch and international hip-hop industries. Multiple male interviewees said that women do not have the right voice, do not fit the description of a hip-hop artist, or are too soft to be successful in hip-hop music. This implies that there is still much sexism in the hip-hop scene, not only within the industry itself, but also deeply rooted within the audience. Because of this, there seems to be a circle of stereotyping going on in the hip-hop industry. When many artists confirm the aforementioned stereotypes, audiences seem to take this for granted, as it is often popular songs that do this, which leads to more stereotyping in the industry. The reason as to why women are more aware of certain sexist issues and whether their perspective can change these problems will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

In short, there are many racial and gendered stereotypes that still exist within the Dutch hip-hop scene. Although no one wants to admit to it, these deeply grounded issues in society do play a role in the way that different audience members perceive female hip-hop artists. These musicians are viewed through a sexist lens that black women are even more targeted by, as black women are more likely to be seen as sexual objects than white women. Mainly the male audience members perceived the music video by Latifah as shallower, admitting that they do not like ‘those type of clips’ because she was just showing off her body to get more views. So, part of the problem is the perception by audiences, and part of the problem lies within the image building of black women by the industry.

## **5.1 Discussion**

In this section, the implications of this study will be discussed and linked to the theoretical framework. Overall, the findings that came forward in this project are in line with the previous research. For instance, the phenomenon and different forms of glocalization that Motley and Henderson (2008) examined are also apparent in the Netherlands. Here, adoption took place with both black and other minority groups in the Dutch society having a lot of impact on the local rap scene. In the current research, it became clear that non-white artists

are seen to make more authentic hip-hop music, as they are perceived to be more likely to have struggled during their lives as a minority in the Netherlands. These personal stories, background information and emotions have been found to have a great impact on the quality of hip-hop music as described by its young adult audience. However, it is not entirely clear how and why these authenticity factors come into play with female rappers.

In fact, there seems to be a paradox between female rappers being described by the audience as being more emotional, personal and 'soft', which has proven to be a factor for success with a large part of the Dutch audience. These elements are often perceived in relation to authentic music, which would make female hip-hop artists more authentic themselves. However, this does not reflect in their success and popularity, as women in the industry are still not comparable to men when it comes to revenue or views on YouTube. Part of this can be explained by the difference between types of rappers, in which some female rappers are oversexualized, under pressure of the industry one can assume. Based on the interviews, it can be speculated that the stereotypes of hip-hop and the association of the genre with a 'rough' and 'hard' image overshadow the need for emotions, especially when those emotions come from women. Female emotions are likely to be associated with calmer music than the 'typical' hip-hop as described by the interviewees. Moreover, male listeners apparently prefer male voices in hip-hop music, while female listeners often listen to both. This makes the male artists more popular as well. One male interviewee even said that producers are more likely to choose male artists to work with, as they have a higher success rate than women. All this leads to the finding that women never seem to be able to please audience members as well as men can. Anything they do can be seen in a negative light.

Another implication seems to be that male artists can get away with more than female artists can when it comes to content production. When men use women in their music video to dance, that is called normal or in line with what other rappers often do. When women dance in their music videos, they are too sexualized, using their bodies to rise to fame. These stereotypes seem to be engrained in the hip-hop industry internationally. However, in the U.S. there are more female rappers becoming more popular recently. As is mentioned by several people in the interviews, the Netherlands is always a bit behind the U.S. in the trends and development of the music industry. This might mean that female artists can become more popular with a Dutch audience in the near future as well. Perhaps the double standards that are put on (black) female artists will be shattered along with them, but it might need to start with tackling the sexism that is engrained in society.

Furthermore, it became apparent from this study that there is a big difference between the perceptions of male and female audience members. It seems that women are more aware of the sexism that is playing out in the industry. The reasons for this can be found in the study done by Livingstone (2004), in which she explains that the messages that are encoded by artists are often decoded differently by people of different genders. This might also be why women are more aware of these issues in relation to the hip-hop industry specifically. The argument that personal characteristics play such a big role in the perception of hip-hop music has also limited the current study in some way, which will be elaborated upon in the following section.

## **5.2 Limitations and future research**

It should be acknowledged that this research project has some limitations to it. These limitations can mostly be found within the sample of interviewees. First of all, it should be noted that this study was conducted with Dutch respondents only. This means that international transferability of the findings is limited, especially since the situation of hip-hop development is at different stages at different parts of the world. Each country has their own specific elements and hip-hop artists that convey different messages (Motley & Henderson, 2008), meaning that the results of this study could play out entirely different anywhere outside of the Netherlands. Despite this, a transferable theory has been created for other researchers to use, as explained in the methods section.

Second of all, the sample only includes white people, which is not a very accurate representation of the Dutch society. In addition to this, the questions asked in the interview touched upon some heavy subjects. The interviewees could be a bit embarrassed by their answers at times or feel like they were not the right person to speak on certain subjects, such as racism. This study only focused on the difference between gender within the sample. Future research should focus on the difference in perception between white people and black people as well, as black people are more likely to relate to the stories that hip-hop artists have to tell (Sullivan, 2003). Furthermore, race or ethnicity are part of the characteristics that influence the way an audience member interprets a song (Livingstone, 2004). Therefore, it could make for an interesting addition to this study to include such other elements as well.

Lastly, this research focused mostly on the difference between black and white female artists, as there was previous research that showed difference between the two. However, from the interviews it became clear that there are other marginalized groups in the

Netherlands, such as Moroccan people, that are also underrepresented in the music industry. So, not only should future research focus on the inclusion of people of different races within the sample of interviewees, but it would also make a great addition to include more artists of different races. Perhaps this will shed more light on the paradox that was introduced in this study, and will it help to make the hip-hop industry overall more inclusive.

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## Appendix A

### Overview of respondents

Number	Name	Age	Hometown	Gender	Additional information
1	Nick	19 years old	Rotterdam	Male	Studies specific target groups at MBO level
2	Lars	23 years old	Rotterdam	Male	Studies accounting and financial management
3	Amy	21 years old	Rotterdam	Female	Studies teachers' college for primary education
4	Jill	22 years old	Amsterdam	Female	Has a degree in social sciences
5	Bo	22 years old	Hook of Holland	Female	Studies media studies and works as a photographer
6	Tim	21 years old	Rotterdam	Male	Works as junior editor for a national paper
7	Pien	21 years old	Amsterdam	Female	Studies interdisciplinary social sciences
8	Hugo	18 years old	Breda	Male	Studies in high school
9	Kaya	22 years old	Gouda	Female	Works as a freelance communications agent and is a tutor at a high school
10	Mia	22 years old	Amsterdam	Female	Is currently in a gap year

## Appendix B

### Interview guide

#### Openingsvragen

1. Kun je je kort aan me voorstellen en iets over jezelf vertellen?
2. Naar wat voor muziek luister je graag?
  - a. Hoe vaak luister je naar muziek?
  - b. In welke setting?

#### Muzieksmaak

3. Hoe zou je je muzieksmaak omschrijven?
4. Zijn er bepaalde artiesten waar je veel naar luistert?
  - a. Zou je jezelf als fan van een bepaalde artiest beschrijven?
    - i. Zo ja, hoe uit je dit dan?
5. Hoe vaak luister je naar hip-hop muziek?
6. Wie zijn je favoriete hip-hop artiesten?
7. Ben je veel bezig met de achtergrond van hip-hop artiesten waar je naar luistert?
  - a. Zoek je ze op het internet?
  - b. Volg je ze in het nieuws?
8. Kun je me vertellen waarom je graag naar hip-hop luistert?
  - a. Wat trekt je aan in deze muziekstijl?
  - b. In vergelijking met andere genres?

#### Hip-hop

9. Hoe definieer jij hip-hop?
10. Wat maakt in jouw ogen een goede hip-hop artiest?
11. Zijn er volgens jou bepaalde dingen typerend voor hip-hop muziek?
  - a. Wat zijn volgens jou thema's die veel besproken worden in rapmuziek?
  - b. Wat voor rol spelen persoonlijke ontwikkelingen in het leven van een artiest?
12. Wat is je mening over Nederlandse hip-hop en Amerikaanse hip-hop?
  - a. Zit er veel verschil in?
  - b. Wat vind jij betere muziek? Waarom?

#### Stereotypen – ras

13. Wat weet je over de oorsprong van hip-hop muziek?

14. Hoe belangrijk is het dat muziek bij zijn oorspronkelijke doelgroep blijft?
15. Mag iedereen rapper worden, ongeacht je etniciteit of ras? Waarom?
  - a. Ken je veel witte rappers?
    - i. Zo ja, wie?
    - ii. Wat vind je van hen?
16. Wat is volgens jou het verschil tussen witte en zwarte rappers?
  - a. Zit er kwalitatief verschil in?
  - b. Zijn er uitzonderingen?
17. En ken je veel rappers van een andere afkomst? (Bv. Marokkaans)
  - a. Wat is het verschil met zwarte rappers?
  - b. En witte rappers?

#### Stereotypen - gender

18. Als je denkt aan Nederlandse hip-hop artiesten, welke namen komen dan het eerst in je op?
19. Kun je ook vrouwelijke artiesten noemen?
  - a. Wat vind je van hun muziek?
  - b. Wat is volgens jou het verschil tussen mannelijke hip-hop artiesten en vrouwelijke hip-hop artiesten?
  - c. Wat vind je van de kwaliteit van vrouwelijke hip-hop muziek?
    - i. Zit er verschil in Nederlandse muziek en Amerikaanse muziek?
20. Hoe vind je dat vrouwen in Nederland gerepresenteerd worden in de muziekindustrie?
  - a. Zijn er bepaalde stereotypen waar je aan denkt bij vrouwen in de muziek?
    - i. Hoe worden zij neergezet door de media?
      1. Wat vind je hiervan?

#### Authenticiteit

21. Hoe belangrijk is het dat een artiest dicht bij zichzelf blijft?
  - a. Is de achtergrond van een rapper hierin belangrijk?
22. Hoeveel waarde hecht jij aan oprechte emoties in hip-hop muziek?
  - a. Is hip-hop muziek beter als het over real-life problemen gaat?
  - b. Hoe uit zich dit bij mannen?
  - c. En hoe bij vrouwen?
23. Wanneer is een rapper authentiek? Wanneer niet?

### Voorbeelden

24. Kun je kijken naar dit stukje uit een videoclip van Frenna. Wat valt je op?
- Vind je dit clipje een typisch hip-hop clipje? Waarom (niet)?
25. Kun je nu kijken naar dit stukje uit een videoclip van Latifah. Wat valt je op?
- Vind je dit clipje een typisch hip-hop clipje? Waarom (niet)?
  - Wat is het verschil met de video van Frenna?
  - Wie is de betere rapper? Waarom?
26. Kun je nu kijken naar dit stukje uit een videoclip van S10. Wat valt je op?
- Vind je dit clipje een typisch hip-hop clipje? Waarom (niet)?
  - Wat is het verschil met de video van Latifah?
  - Wie is de betere rapper? Waarom?
27. Welk van deze drie artiesten is de betere hip-hop artiest?
- Waarom?
  - In hoeverre heeft het te maken met zijn of haar achtergrond?
28. Wie vertoont meer 'rap-gedrag'?

### Slotvraag

29. Is er iets wat je nog wil bespreken wat nog niet aan bod is gekomen?

Videoclip Frenna:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Slx-yGzVumc>

Videoclip Latifah:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDPPeuyESHE>

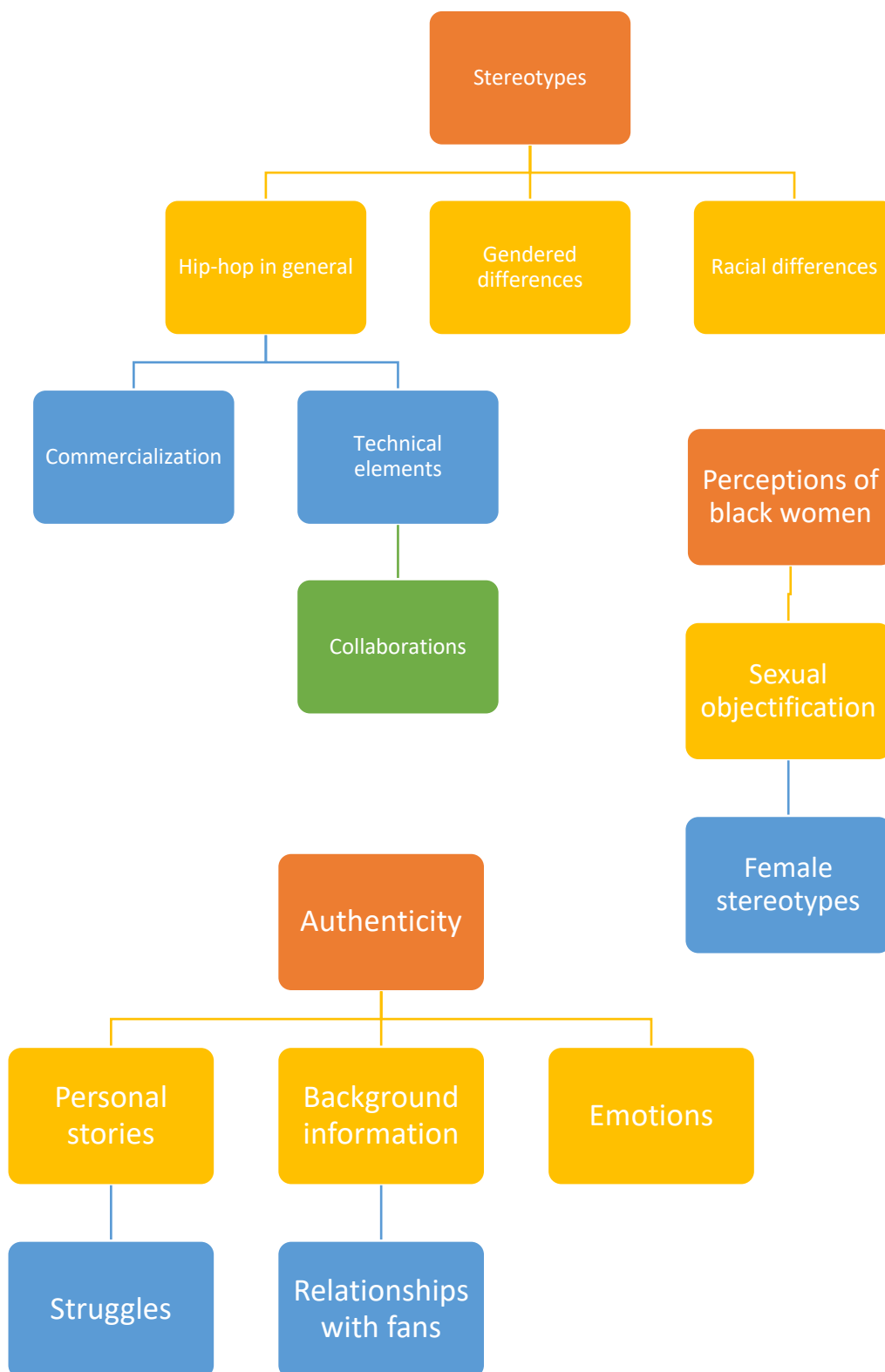
Videoclip S10:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ7lkt33fo>



## Appendix C

### Hierarchy of theme construction



## Appendix D

### Overview of codes per subtheme

A total of 867 unique codes were found from the data. They were distributed over the different subthemes as can be seen here (in sample form):

<b>Hip-hop in general</b>	<b>Gendered differences</b>	<b>Racial differences</b>	<b>Sexual objectification</b>
Collaborations	Emancipation	Hip-hop transcends race	Lyrics objectify women
Music more important than lyrics	Doesn't listen to women	Frenna and Latifah similar	S10 less sensual
Rappers are artists	Few women in the industry	Moroccan is aggressive	Twerving women
Dutch hip-hop includes more singing	Hip-hop is a 'man-thing'	More black rappers	Women dance sexy
Gangsters	Hip-hop is misogynistic	Rap is not about color	Women objectify themselves
Origin is important	Latifah is more modest than Frenna	S10 is not hip-hop	Sexualized women in clip
Street music	Man's voice is nicer	White people can rap	Latifah sexier
Theme; expensive cars	Men are angrier	White rappers imitate black rappers	Black women in clips
Frenna is commercial	Female lyrics are more careful	Racism	Women are sexual

<b>Personal stories</b>	<b>Background information</b>	<b>Emotions</b>
Appreciates personal stories	Fun personality	Music should be from the heart
Good stories make for better music	Artists have a rich history	American artists show more emotion

Hip-hop is about personal experiences	Can relate to female artists	Hip-hop as an emotional outlet
Linking artists to own experiences	Difference in background	Emotions are important
Listening to lyrics	Google artists	Autotune takes emotion away
Moroccan rappers have stories	Likes to know background	Women show more emotions
Personal growth	Learning about artists' personal lives	Feelings
Rap tells a story	Listening to podcasts	More understanding through emotion
Real-life struggles make it more interesting	Watches interviews	Respect for emotional music