

Cyborg: Modern Perspectives on French rap's UFO, Nekfeu

A thematic interpretation of French media visual representations and audience interview perceptions of Nekfeu



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Master's Thesis

June 2022

ABSTRACT

At the core of this research paper was the objective to investigate the ways in which online magazines represented French rapper, Nekfeu in comparisons to the perception mechanisms experienced by audiences aged between eighteen and 30 years old. Media representations in general have an impact on societies as they actively contribute to the meaning-making process undergone by audiences while engaging in social developments. Music is one of the most influential types of entertainment media as it participates vigorously in the elaboration of social identities and cultures. The following research question led the investigation: *How does the media representation of French rapper, Nekfeu, compare to the French young adults' perceptions?*

Previous research suggests that media outlets in general and music in particular play a critical role in the collective mind by shaping and influencing societies' point of views and mindsets. Furthermore, they also conclude that there is a trend in representing rap music and rappers according to rather negative stereotypical depictions. Although research have been led on the representation of rap music by media, very few studies focused primarily on specific rappers and/or French rap.

This study was performed through the combination of a qualitative visual and thematic content analysis of fifty pre-selected pictures retrieved from online magazines discussing Nekfeu and eight semi-structured in-depth interviews. This was done in order to retrieve overarching patterns informing the reader on the way Nekfeu is represented in modern media and opinions.

Contrary to what has been exposed in the literature review, the analysis of the 50 images tend to depict Nekfeu mainly according to positive stereotypical representation associated with rap music nowadays. Themes portraying French rappers as actively promoting togetherness and community but also showing Nekfeu as a diversified creative artist of a discreet and altruistic nature were uncovered (Lang, 2000 & Gonzales, 2005). However, the thematic and visual analysis also brings to light the persistence of certain negative depictions such as the presence of themes relating to violence and threats to society (Koza, 1999). The results extracted from both the visual and thematic content analysis have pointed out that the representation and perception of rap have positively evolved, although this remains a slow and complicated process. Therefore, the media contribute as much as the public to revive the image of current French rap by putting forward rappers such as Nekfeu who embody a more diverse and inclusive urban culture. In that sense, this thesis expands on pre-existing literature by demonstrating the importance of rap in the French culture and vice-versa. It also contributes to the common stereotypical representations associated with rap by nuancing them.

KEYWORDS: *Nekfeu, media representation, audience, star studies, French rap*

PREFACE

“Cyborg: Modern Perspectives on French rap’s UFO, Nekfeu”, the basis of which is a thematic interpretation of French media visual representations and audience interview perceptions of French rapper Nekfeu. It has been written to fulfill the graduation requirements of the master’s degree in Media and Creative Industries at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam (EUR). I was engaged in researching and writing this dissertation from January to June 2022.

The project was undertaken at the request of Erasmus University of Rotterdam, where I undertook a master's program. My research question was formulated together with my supervisor, Dr. Alexandre Diallo. The research was difficult but conducting extensive investigation has allowed me to answer the question that we identified. Fortunately, both Dr. Diallo and my tutors from EUR, were always available and willing to answer my queries.

I would want to express my gratitude to my supervisors for their wonderful guidance and assistance throughout this process. I would also like to express my gratitude to all of the participants: Justine, Marion, Emma, Victoria, Guillaume, Matteo, Raphaël, and Nicolas without whom I would not have been able to do this analysis.

To my fellow EUR colleagues, especially Cielo, Jas, Cat, Soleil, Ynes, and Henriette, I would want to express my gratitude for your excellent cooperation. It was always beneficial to bounce research ideas off of you. Debating topics with my friends and family was also beneficial to me. You kept me motivated if I ever lost faith. My parents deserve special thanks: your wise advice and warm comments have always been helpful to me.

I wish you a pleasant reading experience.

Carla Ferlin

Rotterdam, June 23rd, 2022

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1. Introduction

“In the view of both the culturally elite and the so-called general public, rap music lurks in the underworld of aesthetic respect-ability” (Shusterman, 1991). Shusterman (1991) sheds light on how rap is growing as the most common genre of popular music. In the United States, Hip-hop and rap music amounted for 21.7 percent of total music consumption per capita in 2018, more than double R&B music sales (Götting, 2021). Rap music has its origins in the history of racial minorities in the United States and has become inextricably linked to them. The cultural and racial profile of its public and the musicians who perform it grew as it extended outside of its traditional circles and more extensively throughout the United States (Hammou & Simon, 2018). It is a musical genre that is still distinguished by its initial racial identity nearly forty years later, reflecting a broader state of social connections and the fragmentation of the music industry in the United States (Hammou & Simon, 2018). If rap was initially an urban practice in the United States before spreading to the media, the path in France was inverted: according to scholar Sébastien Barrio (2007), rap initially invaded the media before spreading to the provinces and poorer areas.

As a matter of fact, after a duration in which rap fans and songwriters represented a little proportion of the population; the rap universe, rap, and more extensively hip-hop, rapidly became the cultural and artistic tendency of the Parisian suburban areas before reaching the province's big cities and becoming permanently registered in the French cultural panorama (Cléret, 2013). The business dimension, fueled by the attention of record labels and cultural organizations, was added to rap's media and popular surge in the early 1990s, propelling it to the forefront of the industry charts (Cléret, 2013). Although rap first arose when the Internet was being developed, it is apparent that French rap and its adherents have adopted this new medium to communicate, disseminate, and share (Cléret, 2013). Prévos (2001) argues that, on a more rational level, and in many of the cases, corporate publications have acknowledged the role of rappers as a highly integrated aspect of business world, both at the national level or at the scale of one or more regions, when looking at the academic discourse linking rap and the French media. On the other hand, as indicated by the rise in the number of rap albums made in France since 1995, record companies in France verify and recognize rappers' potential profits (Prévos, 2001).

In the development of rap in France, two ethnically biased tendencies have played significant roles (Hammou & Simon, 2018). The music and entertainment sectors are the first. From the early 1980s onwards, when rap became a recognized musical and choreographic style in France, it was an outgrowth of Atlantic cultural flows in which the color line between "black" and "white" within artists, musical genres, dances, and so on played a significant role. Rap evolved from funk music, and as such, it is the successor of the imaginative, as well as the distribution networks, connected with African-American music in France (Hammou & Simon, 2018). The public designation of rap in France as a musical style in the early 1990s is the second stage at which the ethnic identity of French society is manifested. Rap was characterized during this time period in light of the interpretive package of the

crisis of the lowest social class, a media framing that makes it a song of the Others, whose otherness is indissociably social and racial. Artistes inherit this racialized paradigm and are forced to deal with it in a variety of professional situations. The first and ongoing approach used today, is to publicly criticize discrimination at different times and in different contexts (Hammou & Simon, 2018).

1.1. Social Relevance

Socially, urban music such as rap, hip hop or often funk are often disregarded as they do not fully qualify as traditional disciplines (*Why Study Hip Hop?*, 2012). In this sense, rap and hip-hop originated in the communities living in the Bronx in the United States. Funk on the other hand, is a musical style that began in African American communities in the mid-1960s when musicians combined soul, jazz, and rhythm and blues to produce a rhythmic, danceable new type of music (Vincent, 2020). Perhaps the initial aversion to studying rap stemmed from its African-American roots, its urban, street allure, and academia's sometimes tacit dismissal of popular culture (Williams, 1995). Many academics foresee and work for change, while others in our teaching practices can only hope for a better day. Throughout the last five years, an increasing number of academics have attempted to explain and examine rap rather than ignoring it (Williams, 1995). However, multiples reasons explain the relevance of studying rap scholarly. Indeed, research on the topic allows for a better understanding of the representation of marginalized communities (Shaw, 2014). Rap acts as a gauge for the sociocultural difficulties that culturally diversified young people face today. It allows to emphasize the difficulties incurred by the minorities in the current society by exposing the living conditions of the latter. Also, rap is a kind of music that is used by younger people from all walks of life to create self- and societal identities (*Why Study Hip Hop?*, 2012). In this way, the emerging generation has the necessary tools for externalization and the right to express itself. Finally, rap is so pervasive and widespread that it has become ingrained in the structure of culture. As a result, it is important to everyone and must be recognized by all who experience it. The dynamic, current, and vital challenges of our day are revealed through culture. Various fields of expertise such as musicology, business, and identity take advantage in the study of rap (*Why Study Hip Hop?*, 2012).

1.2. Academic Relevance

Academically, rap has not only been studied as a form of entertainment but also a primary structure for educational purposes, crossing school boundaries (Powell, 1991). Indeed, rappers use this art as a way for self-expression and emotional reinforcement. Media in general and magazines in this case play an increasingly important role in the negative portrayal of this type of music by associating it with violence. The depiction of rappers as others built an immense gap between them and the society (Koza, 1999). Also, rap has mainly been studied under the Unites-States' lenses providing very few research in other countries such as France. Therefore, this paper aims at bridging this existing gap by analyzing current trends and opinions regarding rap in France. In addition, the long-term relationship

between media representations and audience perception have often been studied (Hall, 2003 & Shahwar, 2013), thus this research will further explore the underlying mechanisms of this complex relationship.

Rarely does media studies uncover an easy, one-way causal connection between research and the audience (Washer, Joffe, & Solberg, 2008). Previous theories such as the one of the “hypodermic needle” and the “magic bullet” in which the media injected ideas directly into people’s heads have been mostly debunked. Audience study proposed a vision of various types of customers, all with different social traits and viewing habits, instead of a single population. Interpretation is found not just in the content, but also in how the audience reacts to the object, which can be affected by factors such as class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, and even the larger cultural environment (Washer, Joffe, & Solberg, 2008). Even though comprehensive studies have generally recognized advancements in the depictions of minority communities in marketing since the 1960s, academicians and researchers agree that more common and more optimistic portrayals, as well as a wider variety of roles and a higher degree of precision in the depictions, are still needed. Some argue that ethnic news is, socially significant and in-language media—is a superior option to achieve and depict ethnic minorities (La Ferle & Lee, 2005). Since stereotypical pictures in mass communication are usually straightforward and have minimal complexity, they are widely embraced. However, when skewed pictures are reproduced and accepted as fact by culture, they can have severe implications, especially for some ethnic minority individuals. When ethnic minority adopt negative views and mistrust of the media, the atmosphere can become a barrier to successful advertisements (La Ferle & Lee, 2005).

1.3. Thesis Outline

In order to better comprehend the tensions between rap media representation and its audiences’ perception, a case study will be analyzed, namely an analysis of Nekfeu, young French rapper. Indeed, Nekfeu is a French rapper who was born in the south of France and moved to Paris when he was 11 years old. He started to make a name for himself in the 2010’s and then he had a big breakthrough in 2015 with the release of his first album *Feu*. Becoming famous in the early 2010’s, Nekfeu is a complete case study as much coverage of his public image can be found. To do so, the following research question must be answered: *How does the media representation of French rapper, Nekfeu, compare to the French young adults’ perceptions?*

To do so, a first section of this research will focus on studies that have been conducted in recent years. This literary review will highlight the key concepts of this thesis, emphasizing in particular the importance of the notions of media representation and the star system. Then, the presentation of the research and analysis methods will be made. This thesis is based on a combination of thematic analysis of interviews and visual analysis of images. Afterwards, an exposition of the results will be given with a discussion allowing to highlight the underlying mechanisms that allow to point out the similarities and differences perceived between the representation of rap and Nekfeu by the media in

France and the perception of these same subjects by music consumers forming an informed public. Finally, conclusions will be drawn in order to answer the problematic posed and to give leads for potential future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Media representation

The umbrella concept of media representation is highlighting the importance of representation as a whole as well as social, media and self-representations of rap and rappers. To begin with, the notion of representation sets the base for further understanding of media representations of rapper, such as Nekfeu. Orgad (2014) argues that the concept of representation refers to the “process of re-presenting, the process by which members of a culture use systems of signs to produce meaning”. As representation aims at creating meaning for certain population, it is argued that it is often constructed from social norms and values (Koza, 1999).

The broader notion of social representation highlights the idea that individuals and social constructs have a crucial impact on how cultural objects are portrayed. Indeed, nowadays, it has become increasingly crucial to better comprehend the notion of social representation and how media intervene in this system. According to Wagner et al., (1999) social representation can be defined as the way through which communities and societies elaborate by communicating and interacting with the creation of social objects. It is argued that the elaborated object holds value in society because of how the community shapes it. Social representation can be seen as the combination of overt thoughts, feeling and behaviors expressed by actors in regard to a specific common object (Wagner, et al., 1999). Social representation can take root through many symbolic, historical, social, and economic constructions. As a matter of fact, these dimensions hold an important role in the modelling of what people and citizens perceive as the truthful reality.

However, these factors should be analyzed with objective lenses – point of views and opinions aiming at reducing biases as well as subjectivity at all costs – as social structures are often constructed based on personal psychological meaning-making process (Wagner, et al., 1999). This is even more important as audiences must be sensible to homogenic communication when consuming media as people usually tend to converge towards outlets sharing their values, opinions, and beliefs, reinforcing pre-existing inequalities and prejudice (Wagner, et al., 1999).

In that sense, media representation is highly influenced by social endeavors as it is because the intervention of the media in the social representations is mainly based on the cohesion and the integration of the markets between different social and territorial contexts (Orgad, 2014). Therefore, media representation depends on how much resourced the various networks put at its disposal (Orgad, 2014). The research on media representations encompasses the examination of representation as texts, as well as their textual, auditory, visual, and discursive properties, in order to gain a more thorough understanding of what is called the process of producing meaning and understanding it (Orgad, 2014).

As mentioned previously, representation is based on social constructs and therefore, mass media representations are often used to advocate and market products to various audiences (Koza, 1999). Unfortunately, by selecting and limiting meaning, media representations seem to validate dominant social ideologies which highly contribute to the ongoing debate of unequal power relations. Terms

such as generic characteristics, first coined by Fiske, highlight the social imbalance portrayed in the media (Koza, 1999). Indeed, it is not uncommon to find stereotypical depictions of social matters in media that include in their description some generic traits.

Furthermore, Rettberg (2017) insists on the idea that there is a massive gap between what people perceive as presentation and representation. As a matter of fact, he argues that in comparison to presentation, representation aims at mimicking. Similar to Hall's reflective approach, the authors states that in order to be convincing in representation, the represented object should be as truthful as possible to the real world (Rettberg, 2017). This notion becomes critical when discussing the sub-genre of media representation: self-representation. This can be done in three ways, (1) visually, (2) written, and (3) quantitatively (Rettberg, 2017).

The first self-representation method echoes the ways users choose to use social media like Facebook and Tumblr to express their identity through, for instance, selfies and icons. The written self-representation process consists of all published writings that update social networks on one's opinions and life status. This can be seen through online diary entries, but also social media comments, and likes. Finally, and due to the increasing usage of smartphones and online apps, mediated self-representation can also be quantified. This process refers to all the techniques used by audiences to track through numbers and graphs each and every movement, or decisions taken online and offline. It also implies that the users decide the way through which they portray themselves on social media, with snapchat filters for example (Rettberg, 2017).

When delving deeper into the core of this research and keeping in mind that the goal of this paper is to better understand media representation of urban music and Nekfeu, it's important to remember that the way rap and rappers are portrayed in the media actively shapes their public image. Aiming at nuancing this idea, Koza (1999) argues that the way news outlets use general characteristics to describe rap, rappers, and their fans, have led to be seen as deviant, lacking and undesirable. Indeed, these depictions were linked to worries of a black world and confinement ideologies. They, therefore, engage in what is known as the commodification of otherness. This is defined as the "the ways that discourses of domination, including inside/outside binaries that construct the outside as the undesirable other, speak through these texts, reinforcing and reinscribing unequal power relations along lines of race, social class, and gender" (Koza, 1999, p.66). The image construction of rap and rappers as others was completed with the help of two processes. First, media outlets displayed specific textual content. Second, by emphasizing specific pejorative characteristics and traits with the help of generic conventions of news reporting.

Often, the depiction of rappers and rap still remains rather pessimistic (Arango & Nwoko, 2018). Magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Times magazine* and *U.S. news and World Report* play an increasingly important role in the negative portrayal of this type of music by associating it with violence (Koza, 1999). The depiction of rappers as others built an immense gap between them and the society. Rap was, for a long time, described as music from the ghettos, highly seen as the "others" in contrast to

“white city man”. The otherness experienced by rappers was even more present as rap, music of the streets, often echoed crime, and poverty in public mind (Koza, 1999). Thus, Koza (1999) argues that it remains crucial to open up to other sources of information in order to have reliable knowledge on the genre and its representatives. The idea that media highly shape the public’s opinion regarding rap music in negative directions is also stated by Lewis (2003) as he explains that rap music is often depicted as a threat to the nation and in constant opposition with public matters. However, it seems that the last few years have allowed the media to soften their articles concerning rap, notably by mentioning its incredible growing popularity. It would thus be a question of continuing in this way because much effort remains to be provided to pay homage to rap music (Lewis, 2003).

It is according to new developments concerning media coverage, that many artists and prominent rappers choose to make use of all the media means necessary. They aim at making their image profitable as well as actively participating on the remodeling of the cultural industry’s image (Gonzalez, 2005). Thus, the correlation between media representation of urban music and the strategies used by artists roots itself in the need to raise awareness about rap and its advocates. Many music artists and rappers therefore use synergy, defined as “a strategy of diversifying into directly related technologies and areas of entertainment and using the opportunities that this provides for extending the exposure of specific pieces of music and artists” (Gonzalez, 2005). Gonzalez (2005) discusses the fact that traditional rap themes such as hedonism or criminal lifestyle/characters are still of interest to audiences although their depiction in media stays rather negative. Lastly, it is stated that rap music and rappers operate in ways that promote community and togetherness which also brings nuances to how it is depicted and represented by media (Gonzalez, 2005). As a matter of fact, studies tend to reveal that a gap still lies between media representations of rap music, portraying it as violent and sexist, and the current true message delivered by artists promoting a sense of community and fraternity.

Overall, this section highlights the importance of a fairer and more balanced media representation in order to show the population the extent of the urban world by moving away from the common representation of a violent and different society. This would allow in the long term to change mentalities and to build new social norms associated with rap and rappers.

2.2. Audience engagement

Another crucial concept in the comprehension of this research paper is the notion of audience which has shown an important increase in relations to media culture (Barker, 2021). It has indeed known a growth in the last 25 years as it is a multi-layered concept encompassing various implications regarding the way audience engage with media. It relies on the assumption of interactions, in which the outputs of diverse narratives of producers and receivers/users collide - yet the definition of an encounter is immensely flexible (Barker, 2021). Audience engagement works on the fundamental stage of belongingness, with significant rates of engagement producing productive resonances — and

identifying the various ways in which audiences engage about their media/culture is still mostly incomplete. Importantly, the relationship between producers and audiences/consumers plays a critical role in the understanding of the latest's engagement (Barker, 2021).

Barker (2021) has provided within his research an overview of the various existing audiences' studies which allow for a comprehensive view of how consumers decide to interact with media products. Five types of audiences' studies can be distinguished namely: (1) effects research, (2) uses and gratification, (3) encoding-decoding, (4) psychosocial tradition, and (5) engagement tradition. First, effects research argues that the audience is seen as gullible, although now it might have evolved quite a bit because the depending on the topic, the relevance can vary. The relationship between the audience and the content/producer is coercive as the producers force the content into the audience. Very much like the hypodermic needle theory, the message is injected directly. Unfortunately, this approach remains rather superficial, without much scientific inputs, thus less relevant (Baker, 2021). Secondly, the uses and gratification theory view the audience as active but might have passive absorptions. In other words, the audience takes in what they need to fulfill their need. Audience and producers entertain a close relationship and are emotionally engaged as the audience is particularly interested in the content in order to result in gratifications (Barker, 2021). Third, the encoding-decoding approach describes the audiences are having more autonomy but also acknowledging the fact that life matters influence the way a message is received. Audiences and content/producers share a two-sided relationship as the message is all about the meaning given and the meaning created. To do so, content creators use specific words, indicators to induce certain types of responses from participants. This approach mainly aims at giving meaning to products (Barker, 2021). Fourth, the psychological tradition treats audiences as being active but hardly triggered, or with very quiet control. Finally, Barker (2021) introduced the engagement tradition which argues in favor that audiences are seen as more in control of their content consumption and creation. In this specific case, consumers are also makers which makes their relationship very hybrid. The inclusion of discursive methods and considering what matters to the audience, allows them to have more control and be more engaged.

Audiences have been able to better engage with entertainment content since the rise of the digital world. Two specific domains have enhanced this growth namely social media and new technologies. First, social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are gaining academic and media exposure (Pérez-Latre, Portilla, & Sánchez-Blanco, 2012). Their meteoric rise and widespread public attention have prompted a tremendous quantity of study. Accountability, collaborative learning, audience involvement, and globalization, according to Poier (2007), are altering markets and organizations, and social networking sites like YouTube and Myspace are essential. According to Pérez-Latre, Portilla, and Sánchez-Blanco (2012), digital networks fill a need: bridging the physical and digital realms. Furthermore, social networks may be used to categorize audiences and markets, as well as to analyze specific or "niche" consumers. Second, smart technology (such as smartphones, laptops, and artificial intelligence) that provide audiences more power and decision over when, and how they ingest media

are altering the interaction between consumers and the media business. Simultaneously, new tools for measuring and tracking media consumption are exposing hitherto unknown elements of how and why people consume media (Napoli, 2008). Evolving socio-cultural factors, such as increasing literacy or per capita growth, according to the Napoli (2008), can modify the media landscape in ways that affect not just the amount to which a platform is used, but also how it is used and even the type of information it delivers. With this inclusive mindset, it becomes clear how media allow new possibilities for consumers.

With the rise of internet and online media/technology, users have had to adapt their usage patterns in order to maximize their experiences with media technologies. This shift allows consumers to gain more control on their consumption and narrow their interactions (Deuze, 2007). As a matter of fact, media has always impacted the way consumers disclose personal information and shaped the way they regulate what is being consumed and produced. A notable consequence in the rise of digital technologies is the increasing engagement perceive within co-creation devices. Indeed, in order to gain peer recognition and built upon reputation, users have progressively interacted with media such as Wikipedia and Wattpad where they can easily participate in the formation of articles and narratives, modifying the media environment (Deuze, 2007).

Also known as participatory media, this process has resulted in the production of both common and individualized media. Media ecology defined by Deuze (2007) as “an environment where consuming media increasingly includes some kind of producing media, and where our media behavior always seems to involve some level of participation, co-creation, and collaboration” is an important notion to keep in mind when analyzing the way audiences interact and participate with rappers and rap music. Historically, mass media was recognized as influencing people’s reality and knowledge which explains the current pattern of users relying heavily on entertainment to access information (Kurtin, 2016). Thus, the line between citizen and fan is blurring as they, for instance, follow celebrities and consider them as valuable sources of judgment in terms of values and social norms (Kurtin, 2016).

Moreover, the notion of customer engagement defined by Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014) as “a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object” also plays an important role in the process of better understanding the ways in which audiences can react and interpret certain media content in relationship with celebrities. In that sense, the authors Smith and Gallicano (2015) argue that the way people engage and participate in relationships with stars are constituted of two crucial notions, namely trust and satisfaction. This is reinforced by the comprehension of engagement as an information-based activity. It is therefore necessary that a greater link between audience research and civic participation must be evoked, in which audiences' behavior is impacted by their relationship with their community, as well as a sense of belonging to a place and playing an active role in helping its culture develop. The social implications of 'engagement' are brought to light where participation decisions are seen as altering the group cultural experience through the sharing of beliefs and possibilities.

When looking more deeply into the connection between audience engagement and rap music, it is proven that this type of music often requires a contact person in order to promote a sense of community. To do so, a study conducted by Pisfil (2020) shows how songs drive audience participation through the notions of call and response, intertextuality, and other rhetorical methods such as addressing the audience in the present tense. An alternative perspective aims at looking into the liveness of such genres as a tool for analyzing music. This method allows for consideration of audience interaction beyond the artist, such as the stages infrastructure, or audio systems in the transmission of live music (Pisfil, 2020). Furthermore, a united front would considerably improve rap's capacity to improve necessary sociopolitical changes (Kitwana, 2004). Hip-hop through its music, style, mentality, aesthetic, and vocabulary is clearly one of the fundamental inspirations for young people, according to the author (2004). This effect is linked to an intention to participate with rap music in favor for young people to develop their identity (Mullen, 2020). It is indeed argued that hip-hop culture, with its emphasis on authenticity and assertions of cultural appropriation, puts identity front and central in a way that really is nearly unique in the traditionally and gendered realm of urban music.

To conclude this section, a better analysis of the audience markets, especially with the incorporation of new technologies and the Internet, is crucial to better understand the desires and motivations that push certain individuals to consume cultural products such as rap. This allows us to highlight the reasons why audiences play a huge role in the success of a product: they are the ones who drive market trends.

2.3. Star studies

This last section aims at exploring the notion of star studies. Indeed, a deeper study of celebrities permits to comprehend how their public image can be influenced and impact social spheres. Historically, the term of stars was born in the cinema with the emergence of Hollywood and actors with international fame such as John Wayne in the United States or Jean-Paul Belmondo in France (Morin, 2016). At that time, the celebrity seems to be both the asset and the downfall of some artistic production, especially due to its large cost. With time, in 1937 the notion of stars has greatly evolved and leaves the strict framework of the cinema, becoming icons of television, advertising, and influence, whether political, cultural, or social (Morin, 2016).

This paper focuses on stars but more precisely on an artist, French rapper, Nekfeu. Sagot-Duvaurox and Moureau (2010) state that eight dimensions exist to define if a person qualifies as an artist: (1) time devoted to the activity; (2) amount of earnings from the artistic activity; (3) reputation with the public; (4) recognition by peers; (5) quality of work; (6) membership in a group or association; (7) professional qualification and (8) self-subjective identification. It is difficult to be an integral part of the art world because often entry into the art profession comes down to luck. The artist knows that, statistically, he has a great chance of losing, it is a double or nothing bet because if he

wins, he will be able to hit the jackpot. That is why many young artists try their luck in this professional field (Sagot-Duvauroux & Moureau, 2010). Celebrities are seen as different of the rest of the population due to what Schulberg refers to as star quality. The term can be defined as "mysterious amalgam of self-love, vivacity, style, and sexual promise" (Shumway, 1997). In other words, stars differ from commoners because of their attributed characteristics.

While looking at the celebrities who are popular among young people, we noticed a noticeable generation divide. Gen Z consumers, those born between 1997 and 2010, were more likely than older Millennials to choose an internet celebrity as their favorite public figure (*How Much Gen Z Cares About Online Celebrities, In 5 Stats, 2020*). The majority of people in both groups follow digital stars on social networking sites, designated as bloggers, content creators, YouTubers, Instagrammers, and so on. However, Gen Z is more inclined to do so, with 60% of 13-18-year-olds reporting they do compared to 54% of 19-37-year-olds. Social networking stars, such as gamers, fashion models, cosmetics influencers, and wannabe musicians are also more popular among Gen Z than among Millennials. Despite the fact that they may have only seen them in brief snippets, videos, and images, 74 percent of Gen Z said they want to see internet stars in more conventional entertainment such as TV shows and movies (*How Much Gen Z Cares About Online Celebrities, In 5 Stats, 2020*).

The most talented singers and composers are now worth millions of dollars and are followed by the audience in the same way that the most famous actors are (Statista, 2021). Individuals can now listen to their favorite tracks whenever they want, rather than having to wait for them to play on the air, thanks to the arrival of streaming platforms and online material. Whilst the recording music industry in France has been on a decreasing trend for the past two decades, it has just seen a tiny uptick in 2016. In regard to both producers and consumers, that time period reflects a substantial shift in the sector. Certainly, online earnings have been increasing and in 2017 surpassed physical sales for the first time. By 2020, online music sales were nearly twice as much as traditional revenue. For instance, in 2020, the digital revenue of the music industry reached 474 million euros in France (Statista, 2021).

The work of artists, and in this case in particular, rappers are often subject to many difficulties and unforeseen events. Indeed, there are considerable financial risks that must be thought through and circumvented. To do this, many artists combine three types of income, the first directly related to the artistic activity performed, the second related to the activity but excluding the notion of production and creation, and the third which is often the result of an annex activity (Sagot-Duvauroux & Moureau, 2010). In addition, rappers have to face the fact that audiences sometimes mistake them for unreal beings (Boorstin, 1992). As a matter of fact, since the 1900th fame, or better coined as knownness by Boorstin (1992), is human made. This entails those individuals still make a correlation between knownness and power/greatness. Often seen as heroes or deities, stars are more than just objects of admiration. They are also subjects of worship (Morin, 2016). Celebrities are therefore created by the will of audiences to fulfill the urge of looking up to someone, like a godly figure (Boorstin, 1992).

Stardom is viewed as a wider societal phenomenon centered on the reality that celebrities are a group of individuals whose power and privilege is very limited or non-existent, but whose actions and lifestyles provoke a great deal of attention (Dyer & McDonald, 2019). Celebrities hold a lot of power over how individuals are portrayed in society, and how they are portrayed in the media has a lot of influence. Although it can just serve as reinforcement, it impacts how people are in societal structure. Stars hold a privileged position in the construction of social and traditional norms as well as roles and types, which has substantial implications for how people believe they may and should act (Dyer & McDonald, 2019). Stars are like fictional characters; they are people's perceptions. As a result, they are linked to perceptions of what people are, or are meant to be. This means that when studying celebrities, one should pay attention to the way the public portrays and discusses the star to better understand the social expectations lying beneath. This might result in common issues and rise a tension between reality and expectation. Indeed, celebrities, unlike fictional characters, are also actual individuals who still remain free of choice and behaviors (Dyer & McDonald, 2019). It is therefore crucial for star studies to delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms of the star system to grasp all complexities that are usually left out in traditional media coverage.

Moreover, Feasey (2004) explains the idea that celebrities and their public images are highly impacted and constructed by a combination of filmic and extra-filmic texts. This means that in the example of an actor or actress, the star is not only recognized and constructed through the films in which he/she stars but rather through external communications. However, this can be applied to various celebrity domains such as the music industry. In that case, this would entail films festivals, promotional tours, public appearances, and interviews. It is also interesting to notice that their public celebrity image is impacted by written pieces such as biographies, and news coverage of their private lives (Feasey, 2004). This notion is however balanced with the idea that star studies are generally more interested in the notion of agenda-setting rather than the persona itself. Usually, even biographies do not tend to locate the real persons behind the celebrity but instead aim at unraveling what is represented through such depictions of the star system. Thus, when looking at different types of celebrities, such as rappers, it is crucial to look past the public's perception by combining it with news coverage and previous research.

The notion of audience engagement is explored by Shumway (1997) as he delves into the idea that a celebrity's public image is often a collaborative instance between audiences' perceptions and deliberate sharing. Stardom and celebrity's public images are therefore the result of the relationship between the celebrity and its fans/audiences (Shumway, 1997). From this statement, four different types of relationship emerge between a star and its fans (Dyer & McDonald, 2019). First, the emotional affinity, seen as the weakest and most common bond, describes a superficial and standard attachment from the fans towards a star through for example similarities in personality and narratives. The second type of relationship named self-identification refers to when the fan can perceive him/herself in the shoes of the star. Ideally, this means that the audience member feels like the star is

similar to them in terms of lifestyle and personal events. Third, imitation is used to describe the most common among younger populations relationship in which usually young audiences are inspired by the star. This means that the celebrity encompasses a role model for the fan who can directly relate and grow mimicking the stars' behaviors. The last relationship between celebrities and audiences, namely projection happens when the fan goes even further than simply mimicking the star but also projects him/herself as being the celebrity. This is stronger than copying clothing, hairstyles, etc., it deals with deeper connections (Dyer & McDonald, 2019). Thus, research has shown that two aspects of audience response correlate to the dimensions of celebrity potential: identification and desire (Shumway, 1997).

It is important to remember that the vision and definition of a star have evolved over the years. Indeed, the stars held a very particular and important role in the cinema of the time as a symbolic figure of deity. Nowadays, with the emergence of social networks, celebrities seem to be more accessible to the general public. However, a similarity persists, that of being associated with social constructions developed by the public and its desire to share a para-social relationship with the star.

2.4. Nekfeu

This last section serves as a summary of the most important information about Nekfeu, the French rapper, in order to better understand the entirety of this thesis. Nekfeu is chosen as the case study of this paper as he is an experienced rapper whom has had time built a reputation. It was on April 3, 1990, in La Trinité, near Nice, France that Nekfeu, whose real name is Ken Samaras, was born of a Scottish mother and a Greek father (Kristanadjaja, 2015). He grew up for about ten years in the South of France before moving to Paris in the 14th arrondissement where he joined a high school and met some of his fellow rappers such as Mohamed Amine Khemissa aka Sneazzy, Alpha Omar Wann known as Alpha Wann, and Antoine Valentinelli more commonly called Lomepal. Thereafter, he began to write his first rap songs in 2001 and create his first group named 1995 in 2008 (Kristanadjaja, 2015) with very famous songs such as "La Source" and "La Suite". It is immediately a huge success that results in a victory of the music in the category urban music during 2014 (NRJ, 2020). He is also known with his three acolytes, Mekra, Framal and 2zer in their group the \$-Crew and integrates the collective of rappers the Entourage (NRJ, 2020). It is this same year that with his group Seine Zoo he fills for the first time an Olympia in Paris. He thus undertakes a career alone which is composed to date of three albums: (1) *Feu* released in 2015 and its reedition in 2016 classified diamond record, (2) *Cyborg* which also makes its appearance in 2016 and is certified diamond record and finally (3) *Les étoiles vagabondes: Expansion* released in June 2019 which is also awarded a diamond record (Marolle, 2020). The latter is accompanied by a unique cinema screening of a film of the same name that traces the artistic and spiritual journey undertaken by the artist during the production of the album (Marolle, 2020). In January 2016, Nekfeu and his group S-Crew are chosen to perform the closing song of the film "Creed", "Jusqu'au bout" which will make them a musical reference for the film and propel them to the top of sales. The same year, thanks to his solo album, he won the "Best Urban

Music Album" award at the Victoires de la Musique in February and performed a live medley of his songs. A few days later, he appears on one of the tracks of the MZ, another duo of rapper in vogue "Les Princes", whose clip exceeds the million views after only three days of online (NRJ, 2020).

Like many young artists of his generation, Nekfeu acquired his popularity on the net by posting videos of his freestyles with his friends. He quickly became a phenomenon on YouTube and extended his fame after his appearance in the battles of Rap Contenders in 2011, a contest known to propel young rappers to the forefront of the scene and broadcast on the sharing platform (NRJ, 2020). However, Nekfeu is often perceived as an unusual artist who defies the stereotypes too often associated with the world of rap. Indeed, he relates in his tracks chronicles of post-adolescent life and what it creates in him: often uncertainty, a lot of questioning and a somewhat growing solitude. It is also through his clothing style that the rapper stands out, he appears as a UFO in the field of urban music by wearing a rather minimalist and common style (Kristanadjaja, 2015). It is still a wink to his education and his environment during his adolescence because he grows in a well-to-do district and not in the typical Parisian suburbs of the known rappers before him. Moreover, he advocates a certain intellectual freedom by posting regularly and giving interviews in which, he refers to many novels that forge his spirituality as well as his point of view on the current world. He also makes several references to this thirst for learning by naming several of his titles after well-known books such as Maupassant's *Horla*, or Jack London's *Martin Eden* (Kristanadjaja, 2015). He also shows himself different from the rest of the young rappers by being more and more discreet on social networks, deleting them one by one: from twitter to Instagram and finally YouTube (Echaïeb, 2020).

A great way to delve into Nekfeu's mindset and his relationship to the world of rap is looking deeper at an interview (Bihan, 2017) made on September 20th, 2017, by the music French media outlet Yard and conducted by Julien Bihan. The following snippets were retrieved from the interview as the most important excerpts (see Appendix G for the entire version).

“Nekfeu: Whereas rap, since it was a buddy thing, we were in emulation: a buddy makes a sound, so you start writing, you make a sound... That's really what I liked about rap: the community side, open mic, battle, contest.

[...] Nekfeu: Rap is not ready to be exhausted, I feel like I'm just starting. And the fact that it worked, it gives me an almost infinite playground. It's amazing.

[...] Nekfeu: For me, as soon as there is something after rap, it breaks my balls: literary rap, committed rap, alternative rap... It means that you don't know how to rap in fact, I'm not interested.

Julien Bihan: Has the uniformity of the trap genre in France allowed you to stand out? Aren't you the incarnation of the anti-trap?

Nekfeu: No. What has always bothered me is the standardization, but I also see it in the guys who want to rap exclusively in the old way and who define themselves as "purists". This standardization I find also disgusting.” (Bihan, 2017)

The interview sheds light on important notions defended by the artist, notably his desire to succeed and what seems to be a brake on creativity and originality in the world of rappers, which according to him is the standardization of what is the essence of 'real' rap. However, he explains that some aspects of his career make sense in retrospect, such as passing for a literary rapper at the beginning of his success, which allowed him to differentiate himself and make a name for himself. However, he fully assumes his position and defends the fact that he is now 'just' a rapper (Bihan, 2017).

On a broader level, some people question the veracity of the criteria affirming that an artist or a group has entered the Pantheon of French rap. Da Cruz (2020) gives four factors to quantify the popularity of an artist. First, it is possible to measure this popularity by sales figures. Second, the singularity of an artist allows to judge his impact. Thirdly, it is possible to make a value judgment on the quality of his discography through references and writing style. Finally, the influence in the world of rap itself allows to value an artist more than another. Moreover, one may wonder what determines the strength of an artist compared to others in the field. To this, Da Cruz (2020) gives a concrete answer: he explains that the strength of a rapper is measured "by his impact on the genre in terms of influencing other artists or opening up avenues for others to flourish".

Coming back to Nekfeu, in ten years of releases as a group and then as a solo artist, he has managed to impose himself in the world of urban music thanks to two correlated achievements: his musical progression and the creation of his public identity as an artist (Bernard, 2019; Interlude, 2020). Through his three albums, he was able to get rid of his image of a young talented but scholastic hunk in order to become and be recognized as a rapper. Firstly, by a federating and fiery first album Feu. It is one of the most popular albums of its era, having sold over 500,000 copies (Renard, 2017). Then, taken by doubts about human nature and his own past and present choices with his second album Cyborg. Within the first week of commercialization, it counts 42 391 sold copies, which was published only in digital with 18 099 copies and streaming comparable to 24 292 copies (*Nekfeu: les chiffres de ventes de son album « Cyborg »!*, 2016). Finally with the release of the third album Les Étoiles Vagabondes: Expansion showing his perpetual personal and universal questioning.

Thanks to this, Nekfeu embodies nowadays a new ideal in the rap world. He is indeed from the middle social classes and generally white, precursor of a new genre after the years of rock and electronic music. Like in their time, Diam's and Akhenaton, Nekfeu illustrates himself as coming from a middle-class with immigrant parents and a pervasive passion for rap and an incorruptible desire to speak about youth-related issues. It is because he is white, that he must defend what he believes deserves to be defended, especially the injustices caused to minorities. It is in this optics that all three played a media role appearing by example on television platforms in order to extend on subjects of society while taking an active part in remodeling the image of the rappers. In addition, Nekfeu also illustrates himself in his choice of textual motifs with revolting themes around the love of music in its simplest form, without the inclusion of the capitalist market, as well as through his sorrows of

professional and personal life. Nekfeu describes through his own ills those of a generation ultra-connected to the world but often disconnected from itself.

3. Methods

This section aims at developing the data collection method, the operationalization of the concepts and the data analysis method relative to this thesis' research process. This research investigates the media representation of French rapper Nekfeu in comparison with the way audiences perceive him as well as tries to understand the underlying mechanisms of how media and audiences portray this artist, the study will be conducted through qualitative lenses. Indeed, this paper aims at uncovering the current perceptions and representations of rap music and rappers in France today.

In qualitative data analysis, there are two distinct approaches: inductive and deductive (Armat, et al., 2018). Deductive reasoning starts with a broad observation and leads to a more particular conclusion. It starts with theories and ends with assumptions being validated (Armat, et al., 2018). Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, progresses from specific facts to broader generalizations (Armat, et al., 2018). This ensures that data including various observations are acquired first, and then theories and hypotheses are investigated. In this research, the data was studied using an inductive approach, and then qualitative approach was employed to get to a broader conclusion regarding the ways in which media representation compares to audience perceptions. Nevertheless, because the research relies on pre-existing assumptions produced regarding the representation of rap in media, this thesis might also be classified as deductive. Overall, the interpretation of results will remain open to themes that emerge from the data and that may be unique to rapper's portrayal, explaining the combination of both a deductive and inductive approach.

3.1. Research Design

A qualitative research strategy was considered as the most suitable way to investigate the ways in which media and audiences contrast in their representation and perception of French rapper Nekfeu. Qualitative technique, according to Boeije (2012), allows for a methodical and intuitive approach to emphasizing and interpreting daily life events, as well as imputing meaning to them. Content analysis is a qualitative analytical approach that is used to investigate interactions in order to draw conclusions about human behavior (Boeije, 2012). Indeed, all types of visual or textual interpersonal language, such as television ads, books, newspapers, journals, tv, speeches, films, and so on, is used to study human behavior (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In this specific case, the research studies a current social phenomenon, namely Nekfeu and French rap, as it rap is growing as the most common genre of popular music (Shusterman, 1991) and its relation to ongoing social dilemmas and human behaviors such as the battle for equality of genres, ethnicities, and socio-economic status. With this in mind, the qualitative research design will highlight patterns of representation and perception specific to Nekfeu's portrayal.

For this research, two qualitative methods will be performed in order to collect conclusive results on both the media depiction approach and on the audiences' perceptions. First of all, a qualitative visual critical discourse analysis, VCDA will be conducted on several articles' photos. The method's

uniqueness arises from the fact that it focuses on the aspects in which visuals can convey meaning and play a significant role in the exhibition of information about power dynamics (Machin & Mayr, 2012). According to Machin and Mayr (2012), images are frequently made of underlying theme, requiring the observer to pay close attention to visual elements and evaluate these underlying meanings. Various techniques are used to retrieve meanings from photos in order to perform VCDA successfully. There are four main steps to follow: (1) seeking for denotation and connotation in images, which is enabled by (2) looking attentively at the items in the image and determining what interpretations they express, (3) examining at the contexts in which a picture is placed, and (4) paying attention to the image's salience (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Furthermore, Hall, Evans, and Nixon (2013) have expanded on these processes by incorporating key tools into the analytical process. They begin by explaining the concepts of denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the interaction among a signifier and a signified that results in the development of a sign at the broader level of the visual. Connotation, on the other side, digs deeper into the meta level of the picture by connecting the denotative sign to wider, contextual relevance. Hall, Evans, and Nixon (2013) then go on to talk about the relevance of intertextuality, or how generated symbols are interrelated and impact one another. The way the signified can be transferred from one individual to another is the third tool. This implies that it is crucial to remember that one derived interpretation can be applied to a variety of additional denotations. These devices are commonly referred to as myths or codes. Ultimately, myth is defined as the concept that signs can relate to an infinite number of meanings. Two semiological systems emerge from this assertion: one consists of a signifier and signified, while the other considers how these two notions might be combined into a larger mythical symbol (Hall, Evans & Nixon, 2013).

VCDA is suitable for this study because it enables for the identification of latent meaning in images, such as those seen in magazine articles. Using the tools and techniques outlined above, it is possible to have a better understanding of how Nekfeu is portrayed in the various publications. Because it participates in the process of segmenting data and reassembling it to highlight significance and trends emerging from distinct units of analysis, VCDA is also an effective method (Boeije, 2010).

In order to select the most appropriate units of analysis, the best approach was non-probability sampling. As a matter of fact, it was required to utilize a purposive sample method for the purposes of the study (Babbie, 2010). According to Babbie (2010), "purposeful sampling" is a sort of non-probability sampling wherein the items to be examined are chosen based on the researcher's opinion as to which units will be the most valuable or indicative. This is why, in selecting fifty photos to analyze for this study, a criterion-sampling logic was used. This logic ensures that the most relevant and appropriate features are considered when selecting the research subjects. Thus, the fifty units of analysis were selected based on the following criterias. To begin with, the selected photos were retrieved from newspaper articles discussing Nekfeu or even French rap. This would ensure that the topic remains suitable to analyze the picture. Another important criterion consists of focusing

primarily on French newspapers outlets only. Mainstream success is still guaranteed by the mainstream media. Their relative significance must also be viewed in context; it reflects rap's growing importance (*Rap et médias, de la dépendance à l'indépendance?*, 2019). Between them, the two magazines have more than 1,300,000 visitors per month (Team Mouv', 2022 & Interlude, n.d.). This is a critical aspect to keep in mind as the thesis mainly relies on French depictions and audiences, this it is crucial to stay in that mindset. Finally, all fifty pictures must differ from each other to make sure that the data set is sufficiently large to conduct a proper analysis.

The second qualitative method of data collection consists of eight in-depth interviews. Johnson (2001) argues that in depth interviews allow for a deeper understanding of the interviewee's assumptions, practices, and underlying meanings. In depth-interviews aim at gaining clarity at all costs (Johnson, 2001). The best way to gather personal information and opinions about individuals is to dig into their habits through a one-to-one discussion. This method's major purpose is for the investigator to have a greater understanding of the interviewee's sentiments and intentions. The co-production of meaning is at the heart of in-depth interviews (Johnson, 2001). This means that both the researcher and participants must interact in attempt to comprehend the topic at hand. The concept behind this strategy is based on the dual meaning-making process, which is bolstered by thorough preplanning (Johnson, 2001). As a consequence, both protagonists, the interviewee, and the interviewer, are more involved. The investigators' purpose is to learn the interviewee's fundamental understanding of Nekfeu's depiction, and the tough themes addressed by the artist, hence qualitative in-depth interviews are the best way for conducting this study. It is critical to establish reciprocity and rapport with the interviewee in order to learn more about them and form connections (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009). Both principles make it easier for participants to talk about sensitive topics and hence provide more opportunities for data collection.

An interview guide was written in order to foster key discussing elements and pointing out important concepts. The interviews will be focusing on young adults which encompasses individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 years old. Thus, all eight interviewees will be required to fit within the age gap. Between this age range, individuals consume, embrace, and produce culture as well as content which makes them even more interesting to study (Na et al., 2017). In this specific case, gender will not be an issue, and respondents identifying as female, male, or other would be useful. Another important factor relevant to the target audience is the necessity for them to be French which will allow them to have more core knowledge on the culture discussed by Nekfeu but also better understand the underlying social processes around French rap.

Emerging adults between 18 to 26 should indeed be treated as a distinct group in research and practice because they are in a vital developmental stage where their accomplishments or disappointments can have a significant impact on their life paths (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). More academic, financial, cultural, and physiological assistance for all young people — particularly those at risk of facing the most challenges — could strive for equality,

minimize inequities, and empower them to embrace their responsibilities as healthy employees, families, and citizens. When comparing young middle-aged individuals to late middle-aged persons, the link between nationality and isolation was higher. The greatest link between quantity of interaction with peers and loneliness was found among young adults (Franssen, et al., 2020). These are the reasons why studying young adult's relationship to music can highlight important demographics and conclude on larger social matters such as inclusivity and diversity.

This age range is interesting to study as target audience as it has been proven that young adults are usually not subject to cultural biases which allows them to be fully open and objective when discussing social matters (Na et al., 2017). In addition, the National Research Council et al., (2015) show that young adults have seen their social functions evolve towards a certain role acquisition positioning them as key social individuals. This target audience is also crucial to investigate as individuals between 18 and 30 years old become citizens of their own, away from parental spheres. This results in socioeconomic changes led by young adult's norms and values (National Research Council et al., 2015). They have become increasingly more aware and tech-savvy which allows them to stay on top of the information flow and better fit with social and cultural implications (National Research Council et al., 2015). With this information in mind, young adults seem to be the best target audience for this research as they hold minimum subjectivity regarding media representations and personal perceptions of rappers.

In regard to rap music, and rappers in general, Gladding and Henderson (1998) stated that the "creative arts are a positive force in transcending cultures and advancing growth...While differences in cultural background emerge in creative expression and interpretation, unity, harmony, and positive interactions dominate the process" (p.183). This could be interpreted as the fact that urban music is sometimes seen as a social therapy empowering this specific age group (Sims, 2011). Through connections to rap music, audiences are able to build social frameworks helping them make sense of the surrounding world.

3.2. Operationalization

To answer the research question *How does the media representation of French rapper, Nekfeu, compare in terms of how the French young adults perceive him?*, the driving notions of media representation and audience perception were used. In order to comprehend if the selected newspaper pictures depicted Nekfeu according to the very anchored negative media representations of a rap which wants to be violent (Koza, 1999), misogynist and anarchists, their content was theoretically analyzed in regard to stereotypical depictions of the genre. Previous research helped in the recognition of potential stereotypes.

On the other hand, this paper also aims at understanding and analyzing whether the selected newspapers' pictures portrayed a more positive and contrasting reality regarding the depiction rappers such as Nekfeu. Thus, the images were looked upon in search for distinct positive characteristics

attributed to the genre according to positive descriptions. From this observation the codebook, retrievable from Appendix E was designed.

Regarding the conduct of the interviews, an interview guide was drafted beforehand to allow a more fluid and complete discussion. In order to perform all eight in-depth interviews, you must first make an appropriate interview guide. Even though the in-depth interview allows for the researcher to stray and discuss other issues, they should still cover all of the important themes in the interview guide (Morris, 2015). The information gleaned from the inquiries should enable the researcher to answer the research concerns you're looking into. The interview guide is made up of critical topics that serve as the foundation for the discussion. Despite the fact that the interviewer has a degree of leeway, and the conversation will take several unexpected turns, each issue should be addressed (Morris, 2015). According to Wheeler (2021), the process of creating an interview guide is constituted of seven steps. Substantial work is required to translate the study ideas into relevant qualitative interview questions in the first stage. Evaluating what has already been known regarding your research issue is the second stage of constructing a proper interview guide. At this point, the researcher should undertake some self-reflection and independent investigation on the pre-existing research question. In the third phase, the interviewer uses the information gathered in the second stage to create a list of possible interview subjects. In the fourth stage, the researcher must take the probable range of topics and create a sequence of questions that will elicit information on those themes (Wheeler, 2021). At the fifth step, it is important to cross-check the list of probable subjects and questions across the main research question to see if they are truly supporting the process of answering this question. Later, the researcher should improve and structure the list of questions into a flexible, but specific view in the sixth stage. The piloting of your interview guide is the seventh and final step. The value of evaluating the guide prior scheduling the key interviews in the research cannot be overstated (Wheeler, 2021).

Before dwelling into the three main concepts of the interview, the interviewer must cover all aspects of confidentiality, as well as the consent to document and use the details available during the discussion (Adams, 2008). Additional to consent and privacy, the prerequisites for anonymity must be established if the respondent requests it. The interviewee will next be given a brief and comprehensive overview to the interview topic, although this explanation should not be overly extensive. Adams (2008) proposes a detailed plan for organizing the interviews. The interrogator should introduce himself/herself and encourage the respondent to do so as well. This stage allows to learn more about each other's devices and usual impression. The idea here is to build a trusted relationship rather than to beg for personal information. In order to accomplish so, ice-breaker inquiries will be offered to help the candidates feel more at ease. Likewise, the candidates ought to have the feeling of conversing with a partner or friend who is really attentive and responsive (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013).

When looking at the first concept, “music”, the questions aim at better understanding the relationship between the interviewees and their daily media and music consumption. Music consumption or hearing is a big and ubiquitous element of everyday life (Larsen, Lawson & Todd,

2010). Music is consumed in a number of manners for a myriad of purposes, the most intriguing and essential of which, is identity development, preservation, and expression. Music, like other things, has the power to convey social or symbolic meaning, and is used by people to form their identities (Larsen, Lawson & Todd, 2010). This is due to the fact that music is a metaphoric, cultural, and political outcome that 'arises as a sort of divine realm that can enthrall audience members, offer additional cathartic and personified thoughts and feelings, and ground identities and societies, but also expose us all to rich transactions among citizens while also both reinforcing and undermining structures of power (Larsen, Lawson & Todd, 2010). Thus, the first section of the interview will focus on discovering the interviewee's relationship to music and the way they experience it.

The second concept, "rap representation" is of importance to better uncover the underlying mechanisms of how audiences perceived the various portrayals of rap. The audience evaluates and interprets information regarding subjects on which they have little or no understanding in a different manner than news about issues about which they are more aware (Binder, Hillback & Brossard, 2016). According to Koza (1999), the definition of social representation promoted the fact that community and social constructions have a significant impact on how cultural artifacts are portrayed. Thus, this section aims at testing the opposite saying and looking at the ways in which media portrayals can influence audience's perception of a topic.

Asking questions about Nekfeu is a critical section of this interview as the entire research revolves around him. As explained earlier in the thesis, some individuals doubt the validity of the factors in determining whether or not a musician or a collective has been inducted into the French rap Pantheon. As a result, Da Cruz (2020) devised four parameters for determining an artist's reputation. For this reason, the questions asked in this section will be based on how the interviewees perceive the artist himself but also his media coverage, his music, his popularity, and their relationship to Nekfeu.

3.3. Data Analysis

After both data collection methods have been processed, a thematic analysis will be conducted on the interview transcripts to uncover the underlying common patterns present in all eight discussions. Thematic analysis is a type of data analysis that begins by removing preconceptions and determining the data's overall impressions (Williamson et al., 2018). Rather than relying on preconceived frames and ideas, thematic content analysis identifies similar themes in the raw material collected - in this case, the transcripts of all eight in depth-interviews. In other words, qualitative thematic analysis enables researchers to investigate meanings encased in a message (Williamson et al., 2018). The goal of the study was to uncover common patterns in the data. There are six steps in this unique procedure. First, the data must be better acquainted, which means all eight transcripts must be read and annotated multiple times; second, preliminary codes must be assigned to the documentation; third, trends and themes must be identified in the various transcripts; later, the themes must be assessed; fifth, all themes must be characterized and named; and finally, the assessment can be generated (Mortensen,

2020). This will highlight important factors explaining the ways through which Nekfeu is perceived by this specific targeted population.

In regard to the fifty images, a visual analysis will allow to draw conclusions on the choices made by media to portray the rapper Nekfeu. This will allow for overarching concluding statements looking at the similarities and disparities between his representation and perception. It is thanks to this that this research will be able to shed light on the importance and the impact of rap in France while bringing precisions on the current representation of this genre.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

There are benefits and drawbacks to qualitative approach in general and content analysis in particular. To begin with, content analysis is an unobtrusive data gathering method since data is evaluated without direct participation of respondents who might be affected by the investigator (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). In fact, content analysis is concerned with valid analyses of meaningful texts. Furthermore, content analysis involves a set of processes that other scholars may easily duplicate. Finally, this method is extremely adaptable because it may be used at any time and in any area with no investment (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). Its goal is to be as methodical, objective, and open as possible.

Content analysis, on the other side, is chastised for its reductive nature. Indeed, when focusing on individual components of transcripts, such as phrases or sayings, the context might be overlooked, resulting in oversimplification and the omission of complex interpretations. Because the overall process of data gathering and analysis is based on the researcher's perceptions, qualitative content analysis can also be described as subjective. Finally, because this method frequently necessitates human coding, it is exceedingly time intensive (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). To mitigate these uncertainties, all eight transcripts have been meticulously analyzed several times to guarantee that initial impressions were not based solely on subjective opinions.

In terms of validity, Leung (2015) defines it as the proper application of instruments to determine whether or not the research objective is acceptable for the study design and expected outcomes. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the quality standards for qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). All four characteristics are important in determining the level of confidence readers feel when reading research. The term credibility refers to the assurance that the findings are believable in regard to the data under consideration. Transferability assures that the investigation can be extended to other situations to some extent. The term reliability refers to the consistency of results throughout time. Finally, confirmability is the degree whereby the conclusions can be replicated by other studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

On the other hand, in the research project, reliability, which refers to "perfect replicability of the methods and results," is also significant (Leung, 2015, p. 326). In terms of this study and the use of qualitative content analysis in particular, it is reasonable to claim that the research's dependability rate

is pretty high. Indeed, if the basic resources, such as the transcripts themselves, are available, the circumstances for data collection and analysis are convenient and straightforward to replicate. However, as previously said, this type of approach might be subjective in some aspects of the process. This implies that, while the study's settings can be virtually precisely replicated, the outcomes may differ depending on the researcher's sensitivity or experience.

3.5. Ethics & Credibility

There are several ethical values that must be taken into consideration when doing research. Ethics can overall be defined as “the philosophical study of moral values and rules, that inform decisions about wrong and right” (Park & Allaby, 2017). Ethics is a cognitive method that enables individuals to understand the scope and repercussions of their morality. It allows researchers to use broad moral beliefs to evaluate or defend a behavior that will have an impact on others. Investigators are required as experts to follow core values reducing the occurrence of actual risks and consider owed to every study participant as entities, which differ due to the nature of the questions examined and the methodology employed (Plaisance, 2008).

A system of ideas that influence the study designs and procedures is known as ethical concerns in research (Emanuel, Abdoler & Stunkel, 2010). While gathering data from participants, research teams must always follow a set of rules. Comprehending real-life occurrences, exploring successful therapies, examining habits, and enhancing lifestyles in other aspects are all shared purpose of human studies. The topic of investigation and the way the researcher undertakes it are both ethically important factors. Such factors help to preserve information regarding the respondents' freedoms, improve the validity of the results, and promote objectivity (Emanuel, Abdoler & Stunkel, 2010). Seven ethical standards sit at the heart of ethical ideals, emphasizing some need to (a) serve benefit, defined as beneficence, as well as (b) do no hurt also called non-maleficance (Lærd Dissertation, n.d.). Throughout the discipline, this means that the researcher must acquire informed consent from potential research subjects, minimize the potential negative effects, protect the anonymity of the respondents, avoid fraudulent tactics, and provide respondents with the option to pull back from the study (Lærd Dissertation, n.d.).

A few regulations must be followed by the investigator in order to fulfill those ethical norms (Lærd Dissertation, n.d.). First and foremost, respondent involvement must be voluntary, which means that subjects must be able to opt in or out of the research at any moment. Subjects ought to be supplied with a consent form to clarify the study's goal, advantages, concerns, and financing before agreeing or declining to participate. Furthermore, respondents might request anonymity, which means that the study does not reveal the participants' identities or reveal recognizable characteristics. Participants are provided with a certain level of confidentiality, which is similar to anonymity (Emanuel, Abdoler & Stunkel, 2010). This implies that the researcher is aware of the respondents' identities, but that this data is held hidden from the rest of the group. The investigator anonymizes personally identifying

information so that no one else can associate it to other material. Furthermore, these ethical norms strive to reduce the risk of physiological, societal, or psychological damage. Finally, the manner in which the results are disseminated should be carefully considered, as the researcher's goal is to prevent plagiarism and misinformation at all costs. As a result, the outcomes must be reported correctly (Lærd Dissertation, n.d.).

It is difficult for readers to accept the research's results if implied the techniques are morally problematic, therefore breaking research ethics will endanger the researcher's reputation and the study's credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) first proposed four characteristics for developing trustworthiness in qualitative studies: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Later on, in 1994, the authors Guba and Lincoln added the fifth and last requirement, authenticity. Credibility indicates the accuracy of the information or respondent perspectives, as well as the researcher's assessment and portrayal of them (Polit & Beck, 2012). The researcher's credibility is strengthened by sharing his or her study expertise and validating the study results with the respondents. When the representations of life experiences are instantly identified by people who have had similar stories, qualitative research is regarded as credible (Sandelowski, 1986). The investigator should exhibit participation, methodologies of observing, and audit reports to establish credibility when conducting qualitative research.

Nowadays, the problem of research findings' trustworthiness is a major topic. Similar flaws generate substantial and unneeded credibility issues in both of the areas discussed in the paper by Schmidt (2017), and the worries they raise about research credibility may sadly be erroneously applied to other study fields where these issues do not exist. As a result, it is critical that this issue be addressed and resolved. However, and because credibility is crucial in research, some studies manage to overcome those challenges and pose as example of perfect trustworthy projects.

Various strategies are made use of by researchers to insure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. To begin, triangulation is the mechanism of drawing findings from many sources. Triangulation is when a researcher employs many data gathering methods to try to get a clear, complete picture of an occurrence (Cope, 2014). Discussions, observations, and diaries kept during the study process are all examples of data collection methods. Extended involvement, sustained monitoring, and reflective practice are some of the later researcher tactics that aid this procedure. The act of establishing trusting relationships with respondents in order to elicit rich, comprehensive answers is known as prolonged engagement (Cope, 2014). Allowing enough time for data collection and gaining an understanding of the issues and phenomena under study might help this process forward. Maintaining an audit log is another important method for increasing the credibility of qualitative studies. Internal validity is a crucial phase in qualitative research that significantly improves trustworthiness (Cope, 2014). When the analysis of the data is finished, the researcher sends out a synopsis of the topics that developed and asks the respondents for input or a member verification. The last section will highlight the methods used to provide proof to the audience. The

user can evaluate the research's trustworthiness and support the conclusions by reading an explanation of the techniques used (Cope, 2014).

4. Results

4.1. Interviews

After analysis of the eight interviews, several lines of interpretation emerge. This section will delve into the notions of artists, the evolution of French rap and Nekfeu himself.

4.1.1. Artist

First of all, the notion of artist is put forward. Sagot-Duvauroux and Moureau (2010) have developed eight dimensions that allow us to gauge the qualification of an artist. First, it can be measured by the amount of time given to the activity. Second, this qualification can be perceived through the financial return obtained from the activity. In third place is the reputation with the public. Fourth, it is important to be recognized and validated by other artists. In addition, the quality of the work provided plays a major role in this qualification. Sixth, being part of a group or an association allows one to be qualified as an artist. The seventh dimension explains that it is necessary to have a certain professionalism to be perceived as an artist. Finally, Sagot-Duvauroux and Moureau (2010) explain that self-subjective identification also measures the qualification of an artist as such.

From this, and from the analysis of interviews transcripts two observations are interesting. First, all eight interviewees seem to agree that today's French rappers can be characterized as artists for a variety of reasons. Indeed, according to Justine (21, female), professionalism as well as the time invested in their work helps explain why some people are called artists. She says, "for me, they are really artists, people who work" as well as "yeah, being an artist is an association between a lot of work and quality behind it". Another reason used to explain how some people qualify artists is the notion of self-subjective identification. In this optic Nicolas (26, male) explains that "they say to me that I am an artist without boasting because I create things; everyone creates things in the course of his life whether it is to create a piece of furniture of A & Z, whether it is to make a painting or to arrange an apartment it is art in a way because art is made to please whether it is visually or audibly". This highly related to Nekfeu whom also qualifies himself as an artist as he says in the lyric of *Malevil* "I didn't sign up for this, I'm an artist". In this way, we can argue that the notion of artists is specific to each one and that it allows to emphasize certain aspects of the definition of this term. In sum, all of the people interviewed have various reasons for thinking that rappers are artists, but that they are artists, nonetheless.

The second interesting observation to be drawn from this analysis around the notion of artist is that all eight interviewees agree that Nekfeu can be qualified as a quality artist along the dimensions outlined by Sagot-Duvauroux and Moureau (2010). Indeed, Justine echoes the artist's reputation with the public by mentioning "we haven't heard much about him for two or three years, almost three, and I think that if he came back tomorrow, it would be a scandal, everyone would talk about it because it is not talked about in everyday life". She explains that according to her, Nekfeu can be seen as an artist

because the public that follows him adores and value him. These statements are corroborated by Emma (22, female) who also expresses the fact that Nekfeu can be seen as an artist because he speaks to the public, and he builds a good reputation towards them. Emma says, "he is a very private person and I have always respected this kind of artist [...] yes, he is a good person who protects himself, his family, and the people he loves, so I respect him a lot". In another way, Marion (25, female) mentions the quality of the work provided by Nekfeu which allows to explain his artistic side. Indeed, she says "No but I think he is a complete artist. He is able to make completely different sounds but without losing quality. I find that he has several strings to his bow, there is a musicality in his sounds".

4.1.2. Evolution of rap in the French media representation

To continue, a second line of investigation emerges from the analysis of the eight interviews and focuses on the notion of media representation of rap and more precisely its evolution. During the research carried out for the literature review, two visions of rap and rappers in the media were opposed. Indeed, a large part of the research and researchers tended to say that the way rap was represented was rather pessimistic and negative, often being associated with stereotypes such as violence (Koza, 1999). On the other hand, a more objective and positive view of rap seems to be gaining ground among some researchers. Indeed, the optimistic perspective argues in favor of a growing popularity (Lewis, 2003).

The analysis of the eight interviews allowed us to highlight this evolution in the way both French rap and rappers are represented in the media. Indeed, whether it is in the interviewee's opinion, or as seen in media, it seems like there has been an evolution of how rap is represented and portrayed. For instance, Matteo (18, male) explains this evolution that can be seen in the comparison of the themes addressed by the rappers. He says "Reine du bal is a rap, and if you listen to this song, it's a lot softer than for example Jauné by Booba where the themes are not at all the same, one speaks about a woman but in a, you can say bad way but by devaluing her". In this same perspective, Victoria (21, female) argues that this rather positive evolution is mainly due to the fact that many media such as *Rapelite* and *Booska-P* are now specialized in rap and therefore more accurate in their representation. She explains in particular that "often when it's national media, recognized and that target all types, age groups, there will be a bad connotation of rap, it will be assimilated to something a little neighborhood, not taken seriously. But when I see it in the media which are rather addressed to the young people of the blow presented by young people or other, it is a little more positive, one makes a little the praise of the rappers". As a result, there is indeed an evolution in the way rap is being discussed.

In spite of this, the analysis of the interviews shows the persistence of certain negative stereotypes associated with this style of music that taint the global vision of rap. In particular, we note the recurrence of negative associations of rap with themes such as the place of women, drugs, and violence (Koza, 1999; Wester, et al., 1997; Dunbar, Kubrin & Scurich, 2016). Emma, for example,

corroborates this opinion by saying that rap often speaks of "the objectification of women, like saying yeah, I'll fuck you, very negative things like that, um, that put women as objects, not really as human beings, we'll say". Here, she mentions the misogyny present in the urban context that is often associated with the masculine world that is rap. Nicolas explains that according to him, there are "few careers of female artists in rap, there are some of course, but the majority of rappers are men". Moreover, the theme of violence is also always topical as Raphaël (21, male) explains by saying that we hear "stories of drugs, we often hear stories of settling of accounts, things like that, and often it is retransmitted in the texts, so I think that it is where we will say, there is this negative image which is shown". This explains why negative prejudices persist and continue to tarnish the image of rap by being negatively discussed and portrayed.

To finish this section on the media representation of rap, it is important to note that most of the people interviewed maintain that the media representing rap in a negative light are not specific media and are mainly aimed at advertising. It is indeed a way to attract attention by mentioning provocative topics that attract readers and audiences. Guillaume (29, male) explains perfectly well this notion by saying that "if we don't want to target an informed public to rap, I have the impression that we rather use rap as a Buzz, in particular political and so on, to demonstrate the somewhat harmful sides of rap". From this fact, we can deduce that indeed, a split is perceived in the media representation of rap in accordance with the fact of being an informed and concerned public or not.

4.1.3. Who is Nekfeu?

Finally, after analyzing these eight interviews, a large part of the interpretation of the results revolves around Nekfeu, the rapper studied for this thesis. Several points of analysis can be cited. To begin with, the rapper is seen as a successful artist who appeals to a multitude of Francophone music consumers ranging from online streamers to concert lovers. Here, the notion of success is defined by his general appreciation. There are several reasons why Nekfeu seems to be appreciated and listened to according to the interviewees. Emma explains that she likes the rapper because his music is soothing. She says "I like the music he makes because it calms me down a lot and he has a nice voice too, the subject that often speaks about love and friendship is something that I like and relaxes me and I like...yes...I like it a lot". It is for her, the fact that he approaches new subjects more personal and intimate that make the artist is recognized. Another reason for his success is the fact that he is perceived as a committed rapper and denouncer of social facts. Rap is known as an artistic movement that denounces politics and injustices (Beru, 2006). Indeed, Nicolas expresses his admiration for the rapper who, according to him, "denounces a lot of politics, whether it is French or world politics". Thus, Nekfeu highlights important humanistic notions.

Then, the statements of the interviewees tend to express the idea that the French rapper has a discreet personality that does not seek perpetual attention. Discussing Nekfeu's presence on social networks, which is inexistent, Raphael argues that Nekfeu is "someone who is quite discreet. Already

as a rapper, it is not the one who goes the most exposed on the networks". This shows that even without being active in the media sphere, the rapper knows how to be recognized at his true value and that this is even praised by rap consumers. He does not particularly seek to draw attention to his private life which is not, according to him, of particular importance. This idea of being practical and pragmatic is also put forward by Guillaume who explains that the rapper "is very discreet, it's not his clasher side, it was just with Rap Contenders, and it was more as a Buzz. It's not someone who is going to have the criticism towards other rappers, the free criticism so I think that it restores, it's a little bit restore the image of the image of rap, that some people have". In this sense, by being discreet and polite towards others, the rapper allows to give a new image of music genre and to renew the vision that the public has of rap.

Finally, most of the interviewees mention the multi-platform aspect of the French rapper. Indeed, Nekfeu seems to seek to diversify by participating in productions of other creative industries. He has notably created a documentary and participated in films with French actors. According to Victoria, this allows him to express himself in ways other than through his music and to be recognized as having many strings to his bow. She says that "it's kind of the only way for them to be able to talk like they do in their music, but directly to the public. And some of them also do it through feature films or media that produce themselves from the hit". Nicolas confirms these statements by adding that "he also released a film that I went to see in the cinema although Nekfeu is not an artist that I particularly liked; I like a lot what he does". As a result, the artist reaches new audiences and allows individuals to discover him in a new light. It is also by mixing with other projects such as creating music for films that the rapper diversifies. Justine explains that "Nekfeu who had made a sound, even several raps, for example *Reuf*, on the brothers therefore on the friendships which was also taken in a film". The rapper manages to pass his messages and ideas through other creative platforms, showing his desire to be heard.

We can deduct from these analyses on the way in which Nekfeu, is perceived that the rapper participates actively and not necessarily voluntarily in the evolution of the social perspective on rap. Indeed, through his image of committed and discreet rapper, he conveys strong messages without necessarily disturbing the public opinion. Five interviewees confirmed that Nekfeu is a rapper with a soft image that allows to value rap and urban culture.

4.2. Visuals

4.2.1. Nekfeu as an urban rapper

The analysis method aiming to evaluate the impact of certain images published by French magazines and their influence on the performance of the rapper Nekfeu leads to several observations. First, a large number of images allow us to deduce that the French rapper is perceived as being representative of urban culture in France. This can also be equated to the idea that rap is an urban music. In fact, according to Bussy (2018), rap is derivative and closely linked to a community-based

hip-hop culture of marginalized and often discriminated people, such as African Americans. Bussy (2018) also says that "rap is everywhere, even in the wastelands and sidewalks". The author explains that rap has become very popular in the streets, among young people and disadvantaged populations. This explains the correlation between the urban world and rap music.

Following this idea of urban culture embodied by the French rapper Nekfeu. We can see on several images, for example images 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 that the rapper wears an outfit that can be associated with street style. According to Prévos (2001), a remarkable aspect of suburban culture is highlighted by the fashionable clothes worn by young people of all ethnic origins in France, especially those associated with what is called the ghetto fashion or the ghetto world. In this sense, we see caps worn on his head, in photo 1.4. He is also often dressed with jewelry such as gold chains and rings, as in photos 1.42 and 1.43. Finally, this urban style of clothing is also seen when he wears bomber jackets on picture 1.26 or city sneakers as on picture 1.42. This image of the urban culture that the rapper seems to convey through these photos calls upon his origins as well as his education. From this fact, we can deduce that the French rapper seeks to promote this world by putting it forward.

In the same idea that Nekfeu is a spokesman for urban culture, he is often seen in the company of people with different origins and ethnicities on photos. According to Raymond (1988), living in the urban world is closely linked to the idea that the latter appears as a refuge of overlapping cultures, without influencing each other in any way other than through long-term phenomena such as mixed marriages. It is a refuge and undoubtedly a conservatory of these cultures coming from the most diverse territories, and which possess capacities of adulteration and very different transformations (Raymond, 1988). In this sense, we can indeed note images, such as 1.30 where Nekfeu poses next to a French rapper of Guinean origin, Alpha Wann. The latter is also known to have grown up in the Parisian suburbs and is 32 years old, close to Nekfeu age. We can also see Nekfeu in the company of rappers NOS and Ademo, of North African origin on the photo 1.24. It is also interesting to see him with the actress Diane Kruger, in picture 1.39, who is a little older, 45 years old and of German origin. This cultural diversity shows Nekfeu's attraction for inclusion and his open-mindedness. Indeed, he is therefore open to other cultures and does not seem to pay attention to the origins of his friends or work partners.

In summary, and according to the pre-established codebook, the fact that Nekfeu embodies through its style of dress and knowledge, the urban environment can be perceived in both positive and negative ways. First, and on a positive note, this appeals to Lang's (2000) concept of urban development, which he defines as representing "the voice of a disenfranchised people who have been excluded from conventional channels." Indeed, Nekfeu emphasizes the idea that urban culture and the suburban environment are of added value to society because they expose a number of diverse cultures and advocate for social equality and inclusion of different ethnicities. On a more pessimistic note, this idea of the urban world is still and always confronted with stereotypes that persist in showing this environment as threatening to society (Fried, 2003), illegal (Dunbar, Kubrin & Scurich, 2016) as well

as violent (Wester, et al., 1997). We can therefore conclude that the analysis of these images shows a positive evolution of the media representation of rap through its affiliation to the urban world despite the persistence of certain prejudices.

4.2.2. Nekfeu as a diversified rapper

Moreover, the visual analysis of the fifty images lead to the observation that Nekfeu is represented by the media as an artist open to different creative industries, making him a diversified artist. Indeed, we can first see Nekfeu in his element when we see him in events directly related to the world of rap and urban culture. In particular, in the photos 1.13 and 1.18 we can see that the French rapper is on stage with a microphone, so we deduce that he is doing a concert and that he is in his element. In this same idea, another image showing Nekfeu in a rap related environment is the photo 1.23 where he is seen in the music video of his friend and rapper Sneazzy. Fifteen of the fifty images analyzed show Nekfeu in a context directly related to the field of rap. This means that 30% of the selected images represent the French rapper in rap-related events. This figure is interesting because it shows the interest of some media for the rap music industry and do not choose to dissociate the artist from his favorite field.

However, as explained, some media chose to put forward an image in which the rapper is in a different context than the one naturally associated with him. Of the fifty photos originally analyzed, nineteen of them feature the rapper in events such as movie promotions or ceremonies. Indeed, in the image 1.47 for example, we perceive Nekfeu dressed in a black suit over a black shirt. His hair is medium-length but is styled backwards and held back by his ears. This is one of the rare images of him, where the artist is dressed soberly and in a rather classy way. Behind him, a plain background consisting of a bright red color and some darker undertones can be seen. We can deduct from this image that the rapper is at the Cannes Film Festival. Indeed, being well dressed he is participating in a ceremony, and we can associate the red background to the carpet known for the arrival of artists. Another image that features Nekfeu in a different context than the one associated with rap, is the photo 1.50. In this one we see the French rapper attending a fashion show. The photo was taken by the photographer Laurent Benhamou during the fashion show of Agnès b for its collection fall-winter 2018-2019 in Paris. The fashion designer is known for her simple and elegant world. Therefore, Nekfeu is associated as someone who is interested in other artistic fields while respecting his values: humility and creativity.

To finish this section aiming to show that Nekfeu is a complete artist and knows how to diversify, he is often seen in company of other artists coming from different artistic horizons. We can observe that on the photo 1.9 for example where we can note two individuals, Nekfeu and the British singer Ed Sheeran. The English singer is a star known all over the world for his pop universe. The fact that Nekfeu is photographed next to him shows that the rapper has surrounded himself with recognized artists and that he is open to new collaborations. It's interesting to see that the media choose this image

because it also shows an open-mindedness of the rapper and a desire to diversify his productions. The two artists communicate with their public but also between them in two different languages which shows their adaptability. Another artist seen alongside Nekfeu in three different photos is the French actress, Catherine Deneuve. Indeed, on the images 1.16, 1.17 and 1.39 the two artists are visible. The fact that the actress comes from a different creative industry than the rapper, that of the cinema shows once again the fact that Nekfeu tries new projects. In this case, the two artists turned in the film *Everything Separates Us*, released in 2017 and seem to promote this project. To conclude, the rapper is often put forward thanks to his participation and his involvement with artists of all horizons showing his desire to diversify.

4.2.3. Nekfeu as Mr. Everyone

Finally, the process of analysis of the fifty images allows us to observe that the French rapper, Nekfeu can be perceived as Mr. Everyone. This expression refers to the fact of being a banal man, who looks like everyone else, who does not differentiate himself from others. In other words, it is a man who does not stand out, who looks like the average. First of all, this simple and humble aspect of Nekfeu can be found in his values. Indeed, several photos aim to show that the rapper is altruistic by nature and that the world around him interests him. This desire to help those around him can be seen in particular on the photo 1.33 on which we can see the French rapper surrounded by 25 young people with black skin and dressed in the same way. We can estimate that this photo was taken during a trip to Africa for a humanitarian mission showing the humanist and altruistic side of the rapper. The latter seems happy to share this moment and the children too. It gives a voice to the most disadvantaged communities. Also, this photo advocates for a community spirit. Finally, we can deduce a musical heritage and abilities as rap music has some value in the educational setting. This moral value that Nekfeu wants to do good around him is also found in the photos 1.31 and 1.49 in which we see the artist being surrounded by his fans. This tells us that the rapper wants to be accessible and follow their requests. We can deduct from these photos that the artist puts himself on the same level as his fans, especially by posing with them but also by appearing on the same footing because he is in the crowd with them.

We can also deduct from the analysis of these images that Nekfeu is a simple person having similarities with the common mortals by the presence of emotions conveyed in these photos. Indeed, the presence of emotions is the property of Man. We can note several types of feeling through these fifty images. First of all, we can see on the photos 1.6 and 1.14 for example that the French rapper is wearing a smile showing his jovial mood and his contentment. Another emotion that can be perceived in these images is reflection. Indeed, on the pictures 1.29 and 1.38 the rapper shows a pensive air with the eyes in the void and the hand put on the chin. Finally, we can see that Nekfeu seems concentrated with the features of the face tightened and the questioning glance as on the photos 1.41 and 1.43. This

same idea of concentration is accentuated by the props present, notably a pen testifying to the rapper's creative process.

Finally, Nekfeu's Mr. Everyone aspect is accentuated by the notion of comparison present in some of the images analyzed. We see for example on the image 1.24 that the photo of Nekfeu is juxtaposed with two other photos, one of the rappers Ademo and NOS, of the duo PNL and the other one of Vald. In this particular case, Nekfeu is compared with other French rappers, which gives credibility to his status as an artist. However, the fact that he is not the rapper on the picture also shows an idea of accessibility to the rap world by showing that any individual coming from various origins can succeed in this field. Indeed, Vald is a white rapper and comes from a rather uptight social class whereas the brothers composing PNL are of Maghrebian origins and come from a more popular background. Another image that shows that the comparison of Nekfeu makes him more human is the photo 1.46 in which the French rapper is next to a man dancing in a club. This image allows to highlight the similarities that can appear between the French rapper and an ordinary man leading a banal life.

5. Discussion

As it was stated in the first chapter of this dissertation, the research question the present study aimed to answer is how French media and audiences are portraying and perceiving French rapper Nekfeu through the analysis of fifty visual analysis and eight in-depth semi-structured interviews. The first goal of the research was therefore to discover how these two entities compared and contrasted according to the way Nekfeu was referred to in the data. In this section, similarities and differences in media representations and public perception will be exposed so that patterns emerge from this analysis.

To begin, this section will focus on the similarities that were noted during the thematic analysis of the fifty magazine images and the eight interviews. First of all, both the media and the public seem to agree in defining Nekfeu as an artist in search of creative diversification, whether it be in the way he raps and writes, or in the various projects in which the rapper has participated. Indeed, in the visual images, the rapper is shown as an artist involved in a multitude of projects not directly related to the rap scene. Nekfeu can be seen in movies, at ceremonies or during fashion shows. This idea can also be found in the statements of the people interviewed who explain that they like the rapper because he is in a film with actors like Catherine Deneuve and Diane Kruger and also at the head of the production of his documentary *Les Étoiles Vagabondes*. This helps to explain why the French rapper is so successful with his audience. He knows how to diversify to please the greatest number of people. This aspect of his career also allows him to highlight his many talents, which revive the media image of rap and rappers. It is thanks to this palette of projects and various commitments that Nekfeu gives a more open and accessible image of rap. The media is therefore more inclined to give a positive overall perspective of the rapper.

Another aspect on which the French media and young people between the ages of 18 and 30 seem to agree is the fact that Nekfeu representation and perception always seem to be subject to recurrent and persistent prejudice. Unfortunately, the perspectives that Nekfeu is part of the rap world and therefore associated with negative connotations persist. Indeed, through the thematic analysis of the images, one line of interpretation aims to portray the French rapper as part of the urban universe often connoted as unhealthy and less elegant. Nekfeu is repeatedly perceived as the embodiment of the popular class that can be found in the suburbs, whether through his style of dress or the people who accompany him. This more negative image of the rappers from the suburbs is also somewhat explained in the interviews. The people interviewed agree that despite the fact that Nekfeu is less flashy, he still embodies the image too often associated with rap music of a brutal milieu to be avoided.

Moving on, with regard to the differences in the analyses made between interviews and visual analyses in the media, two are important. First, it seems that the French media make a point of showing the rapper as part of a multi-cultural milieu in which a multitude of origins and ethnicities evolve. Indeed, while in interviews, no one seems to really mention Nekfeu's affiliations with others,

the images speak for themselves. On several occasions, the French rapper is in the company of other artists or personalities on the photos. These include people of North African and Central African descent. This allows to highlight the open-mindedness that Nekfeu has on the world and its humanism. In this sense, the media participates in the elaboration of an inclusive and altruistic image of the French rapper. Himself being of mixed origin, from a Scottish mother and a Greek father, Nekfeu embodies through his affiliations the cultural diversity which is proper to France. It is therefore because this multi-cultural aspect is not mentioned at all by the interviewees that a first difference is perceived between the representation and the perception of the rapper. It is possible that this difference is explained by the fact that the interviewees decided to speak only about the rapper himself and not necessarily about what surrounds him.

Another dimension that highlights the differences in perceptions between the way Nekfeu can be discussed by the public and his representation in the French media is the evocation of a different personality of the rapper. Indeed, on several occasions during the discussions with the interviewees as well as through the analyzed images, interpretations about Nekfeu's attitude could be concluded. First of all, it seems that the audience perceives the French rapper as being discreet by nature. Indeed, all the people who were interviewed mention at least once the fact that Nekfeu is not known for his demonstrative side and does not seem to be looking for targeted attention. It is explained many times that his absence on social networks actively contributes to his discreet and secluded image. In addition, the rapper wants to be rare in his appearances in concert and interview which further mystifies his reserved character. Thus, it is possible to assume that it is this modest and measured side that allows Nekfeu to please the consumers of music and French rap more precisely by moving away from the flashy image often associated with the rap scene. On the other hand, and surprisingly, the images analyzed and therefore the French media selected do not seem to show this same image of him. Indeed, from the analyses, Nekfeu is more represented with an extroverted personality, surrounded by other people and who dare to show his emotions and feelings. The French rapper can be seen jumping up and down or smiling a big smile when he holds a microphone which demonstrates his exuberance and communication. This can be explained by the fact that this kind of image is more attractive and selling than the one where the rapper is less jovial.

To conclude, this comparison between the public's perception of Nekfeu and the representation made of him by the French media allows us to highlight the similarities and differences perceived. This comparison calls upon many negative and positive stereotypes previously researched and conceptualized in the codebook of the methodology section. From the analysis of interviews and images, a few negative-sounding prejudices are easily found. Indeed, the concept of illegality in the world of rap and the urban environment exposed and defined by Dunbar, Kubrin and Scurich (2016) is present in the media representation and public perception of the French rapper, Nekfeu. Dunbar, Kubrin, and Scurich (2016) state that the term illegal can include notions of censorship, regulations, or even by the rapper's presence being stopped by the police, or the law. This also echoes the use of

profanity towards society and citizens. This can be seen in a selected image where Nekfeu is in the presence of police officers and has handcuffs on his hands. This is also the case when the interviewees mention the presence of illicit substances such as drugs. Secondly, the concepts involving negative stereotyping are a combination of references to violence and social threat. The idea of violence is defined by Wester, et al. (1997) as links to anti-social attitudes that aim to glorify physical and mental violence. For his part, Fried (2013) explains that the notion of social threat appeals to fraudulent activity and derived from hate that harms society. This is particularly emphasized by the interviewees who repeatedly mention the violent and unhealthy suburban universe in which Nekfeu evolves and grew up.

On a more positive note, the thematic analysis of the visual data with the fifty selected images and the eight interviews carried out also makes it possible to highlight stereotypes with optimistic consonances on the glance which can be carried towards the rap and the French rappers like Nekfeu. First, it is the author Gonzales (2005) who sheds light on the notion of togetherness in rap, which he defines as being the set of uses and customs of rappers that promote a spirit of community and unity. In this sense, the analysis of the images makes it possible to argue this matter by putting forward the human aspect of the French rapper. We see him in the company of young people during a humanitarian mission in Africa. This is also demonstrated through the images in which Nekfeu is in the company of other artists of different origins which shows an open-mindedness and a desire to bring cultures together. This notion is also supported by the interviewees who affirm that the rapper is of humanist and altruistic nature and that he advocates in his songs the desire to reach equality and brotherhood between all ethnicities. This notion is thus closely linked to the concept of urban development defined by Lang (2000) as a means of liberating the speech of minorities by giving them a voice and a spokesperson. Finally, these analyses also allow us to show that rap in general and the French rapper Nekfeu in particular is more philogynist. Indeed, as the authors Tyree and Jones (2015) explain, rappers are now more comfortable expressing their feelings. This is supported by a multitude of images in which the rapper is seen smiling and laughing with others. This is also an aspect mentioned in the interviews when interviewees mention the new themes in Nekfeu's songs such as love and despair.

6. Conclusion

At the core of this thesis is the objective to uncover the mechanisms through which both French media and audiences between the ages of 18 and 30 years old, represent and perceive French rapper Nekfeu. With the combination of interviews, visual and thematic analyses, clear and rich insight have arisen on the different ways of portraying this specific rapper.

6.1. Summary of main research findings

By answering the following research question: *How does the media representation of French rapper, Nekfeu, compare to the French young adults' perceptions?* various takeaways must be addressed. This thesis is based on the idea that Nekfeu embodies a relatable model of what can be the rap in France nowadays. Therefore, the combination of thematic analysis of interviews and visual analysis of images collected in French media allows us to conclude two main result statements highlighting what the rapper represents for the French society.

To begin with, after analysis, the fact that similarities between the perception and the representation of Nekfeu becomes clearer. Indeed, as previously explained, the French rapper is perceived as a full-fledged artist in search of creative diversity by both the public and the French media. Moreover, these same groups agree and aim to show that despite everything, French rap and Nekfeu in particular are still subject to negative connotations feeding the bad reputation of the urban environment and rap. These similarities can be explained by the idea that the public is still to some extent influenced by what is said and represented in the media. Conversely, it is also important to note that the media is more open and neutral and therefore also draws on public opinion to create more accurate and attractive portrayals.

Then, and despite the similarities observed previously, some differences remain in the way Nekfeu is seen by the audience and represented in the media. Indeed, the most notable difference is the personality of the French rapper. For the media, it is more of an extrovert person who is open to the world and does not try to hide his emotions. On the contrary, the people interviewed seem to perceive Nekfeu as an introverted and discreet person in his everyday life. We can deduct from these disparities that the media choose to show Nekfeu in a more outgoing light because this is what allows them to sell better and attract attention. As a result, the audience's perception can be more realistic and accurate.

6.2. Answer to the research question

Once again, the thesis aimed at answering the following research question: *How does the media representation of French rapper, Nekfeu, compare to the French young adults' perceptions?* The results extracted from both the visual and thematic content analysis have pointed out that both the representation and perception of rap nowadays have positively evolved, although this remains a slow

and complicated process. In that sense, all fifty images and eight interviews tend to show a rather beneficial image of the French rapper Nekfeu.

The analyses conclude on the use of positive concepts such as the themes of inclusion and cultural diversity (Lang, 2000 & Gonzales, 2005) which are in stark contrast to previously established theories such as that of Arango and Nwoko (2018) who asserted that rap was always portrayed in a negative way. However, this conclusion must remain nuanced because the analysis of the results also shows that unfortunately and despite a large decrease, some pre-existing negative preconceptions such as that of violence (Koza, 1999).

In this sense, it is possible to argue that French rap consumers between the ages of eighteen and thirty, as well as the French media, tend to agree that rap is not just about protest and anti-government, but that it also provides a form of entertainment and even a way to bring cultures and communities together. It is therefore interesting to note that despite different expectations, the media contribute as much as the public to revive the image of current rap by putting forward rappers such as Nekfeu who embody a new way to give voice to minorities in France by emphasizing a more diverse and inclusive urban culture.

6.3. Limitations of the study

This thesis aimed at understanding the underlying mechanisms used by French media and audiences to portray and discuss French rapper Nekfeu. The research has been done in order to avoid any potential biases and weaknesses however some of them persist. There are two major elements that could have influenced how the analysis was carried out. For starters, because I am French and was raised with French cultural references and values, my perception of the interviews and visuals may have been influenced by my upbringing and culture. From a French native perspective, the analyses could have been interpreted according to specific expectations. In that sense, the use of purposive sampling (Babbie, 2010) was justified for the purpose of the study, however, questions of biases can also arise from this sampling strategy. Purposive samples are particularly vulnerable to researcher bias. When it comes to eliminating possible weaknesses, the argument that a purposive sample was created based on the researcher's judgment is not a good defense, especially when contrasted to probability sampling procedures that are meant to remove such biases. This subjective, judgmental aspect of purpose sampling, on the other hand, is only a substantial drawback when such judgments are ill-conceived or wrongheaded (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Furthermore, the sample size is one of the study's limitations. Indeed, the thesis only considers fifty individual images and eight interviews, implying that the data sample is not representative of the entire population of French media and audiences debating rap and Nekfeu. Unfortunately, this was difficult to avoid due to the thesis's logical and time constraints. However, the gathered results remain valid nevertheless as they have been deducted in an ethical and credible way. Indeed, results were gathered with no major ethical concerns (Emanuel, Abdoler & Stunkel, 2010). Finally, due to geographical constraints, most of the interviews

were conducted via online video platforms, sometimes making it difficult for the participants to connect with me and engage in a deep and meaningful discussion (Johnson, 2001).

6.4. Suggestions for further research

In order to provide larger insight on the matter of rap representations in media it could be interesting to further research its depiction in media. The use of other social media platforms to see a better global outlook on the sample would be of interest and enhance credibility. The term credibility refers to the assurance that the findings are believable in regard to the data under consideration (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Also, because content analysis is an easily reproduced method, generating results from other media such as social platforms like Twitter, would render this thesis more credible and valid (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). Analyzing rap and rappers' portrayals in social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram could be an insightful addition to this thesis as it would give other perspectives on the subject.

Other suggestions for further research could be analyzing and understating the comparison between media and audiences regarding rap representation in other countries to see if culture and perspectives impact these depictions. As Busy (2018) and Prévos (2001) explain in relation to the United-States and France, rap communities are tightly linked to suburban cultures. Looking deeper in the correlation between music and culture around the world would allow for updated insights on the importance of creative industries in social identities. Indeed, because rap is a current ongoing social aspect, looking at how various communities shape society's opinion on such subjects could be of interest.

Finally, in view of the fact that this thesis is mainly focused on the case study of Nekfeu as a French rapper, it might be interesting to ask the question for another rapper in France coming from instance from different upbringings or cultures. Orgad (2014) argues that representation refers to the "process of re-presenting, the process by which members of a culture use systems of signs to produce meaning". Thus, the connection between social meaning-making and music has yet still to be further explored. This would allow us to highlight the differences and similarities between the media representation and the audience perception of another type of rapper and thus allow us to understand if this positive evolution is a global conclusion.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Participants overview

Name	Age	Location	Education	Occupation	Nationality
Victoria	21	Paris, France	Master's degree in geomatics	Student	French & American
Marion	25	Besancon, France	Master's degree in business	Unemployed	French
Emma	22	Amsterdam, The Netherlands	Bachelor' degree in communication and media	Intern	French & Italian
Justine	21	Nice, France	Bachelor' degree of chiropractor	Student	French
Matteo	18	Genève, Switzerland	Highschool graduate	Student	French & Australian
Guillaume	29	Besancon, France	Bachelor' degree in watchmaking	Employed	French
Raphaël	21	Rotterdam, The Netherlands	Bachelor' degree in business	Student	French
Nicolas	26	Grasse, France	Bachelor' degree in computer network	Employed	French

Appendix B: Interview guide

Introduction

Welcome the interviewee and thank them for their time.

Present the research, the topics being addressed and the goals of this thesis.

Consent questions:

Are you aware that this interview is for educational purposes only?

Do you give your permission to be recorded?

Furthermore, would you wish to remain anonymous?

If no, are you willing to have your name mentioned?

Do you agree to this information being used for secondary data analysis?

Make them sign the consent form.

Ice-breaking questions:

What is your name?

How old are you?

Where are you from?

Where do you live?

What is your current occupation?

Do you enjoy your current occupation?

Ask if they have any prior questions before we start.

Key concept n°1: Music

Introduce this section by explaining that the aim of this section is to aim at better understanding the relationship between them and their daily media and music consumption.

Music consumption:

When do you listen to music?

How much time do you spend listening to music daily?

What are the reasons why you listen to music?

What music genre do you usually listen to?

Why is that?

The genre of rap:

Do you listen to rap music?

Do you listen to French?

Why is that?

If yes, can you list some rappers you listen to?

How would you define rap music?

What topics do you associate with rap music?

Key concept n°2: Rap Representation

Explain that this section will go deeper into their opinions on the representation of rap and that it is important to better uncover the underlying mechanisms of how audiences perceived the various portrayals of rap.

Media representation:

Do you ever come across media outlets discussing rap music?

On which platforms do you encounter rap related news?

Are you interested in what social media outlets say about rap?

Are you interested in what online articles say about rap?

In your opinion how do these media depict rappers?

And how do they talk about rap?

Negative representation:

Explain that according to some studies, media often depict a negative image of rappers and rap in general.

Would you say that current rappers talk about negative topics?

If yes, what kind of negative topics?

Why do you think that is?

Can you give example of rappers that show this negative influence?

Do you believe that these topics are still important nowadays?

Why is that?

Positive representation:

Explain that according to other research, rap have known an evolution in its media depiction that tends to portray it a more positive light.

Would you say that current rappers talk about new positive topics?

What kind of topics?

Why?

Do you agree that media depicts rap more positively?

Can you name artists that show this positive evolution?

Key Concept n°3: Nekfeu

Introduce this section by giving a broad background on the artist. Explain that this part aims at better understanding their perception on the artist himself but also his media coverage, his music, his popularity, and their relationship to Nekfeu.

Rappers:

How do you perceive rappers?

Do you think rappers play a role in the way their music is portrayed?

Why?

Are you active in your engagement with rappers?

If yes, how?

Nekfeu, the artist:

Do you know Nekfeu?

Do you listen to his music?

Why?

When did you first listen to Nekfeu?

How would you define a fan?

Provide an official definition of what a fan is. While being a consumer of a medium is one thing, “to be a ‘fan,’ however, is to participate in a range of activities that extend beyond the private act of viewing and reflects an enhanced emotional involvement” with the narrative (Merskin, 2008).

In light of this definition, would you qualify yourself as a fan of Nekfeu?

Why?

What do you think of him?

Could you cite any topics of his songs?

Are these topics specific to his music?

Do you believe his songs enhance the representation of the media?

Why?

Do you follow Nekfeu on social networks?

Do you know that he does not have a personal account?

Do you think this is a good marketing strategy?

And what about his relationship with his audience?

Conclusion

Conclude the interview and ask if they have any additional question.

Thank them for their participation and time.

Appendix C: Email to participants

Dear all,

My name is Carla Ferlin, and I am currently writing my master's thesis under the supervision of dr. Alexandre Diallo (Erasmus University Rotterdam). It focuses on the comparison between how media represent Nekfeu and how audiences tend to perceive him. The aim of this paper is to investigate the ways in which people between 18- and 30-years old experience and talk about the French rapper. To do so, I will conduct interviews. These interviews will last 45 minutes and will focus on rap culture, its media representation and Nekfeu.

Would you be willing to participate in an interview with me? The interview would be conducted in French for practical reasons and your participation is of course voluntary and can remain anonymous if wished.

If you are willing to help me in this project, please contact me letting me know when you would be available.

In hopes that you will be able to participate in this interview.

All the best,
Carla Ferlin

Appendix D: Transcript section

Carla: Hi, first of all I would like to thank you for being here today to answer these questions. It's very important to me that you take this time and that you participate in this research. First, I'm going to tell you a little bit about the research itself, what I'm doing, and why I'm doing it. So, as you may have guessed, I'm in a master's program, so I'm studying the creative industries in relation to the media, and as part of my final year thesis, I'm conducting eight interviews. The interviews are going to be based on my main question, which compares how the media, specifically online magazines represent rappers nowadays compared to how the public may perceive rappers. In order to do this, I have chosen to work with one artist, who will be my case study, and that is Nekfeu. To begin with, just to be sure, I am going to ask you for oral consents which aim to make sure that you agree to be recorded and that I can use this data to do my work. So, you know, this interview is for educational purposes. Do you want to remain anonymous during this interview?

Justine: Not necessarily.

Carla: Okay, and so do you agree to have your first name mentioned in the interview but also in my written research?

Justine: Yes yes, first name yes.

Carla: Perfect. And finally, do you agree that this information will be used for the analysis of the secondary data, that is to say that we will do the first analyses and then I will use the transcript of this interview to do my analysis?

Justine: Yes, yes, perfect.

Carla: Okay. So then I'll send you a document to sign, this is the consent form, which you'll send back to me when you have time, that's fine.

Justine: Okay, all right.

Carla: So, we're going to start this interview. It's going to be divided into four themes, major themes, but first I'm going to ask you a few questions about yourself so that we can get to know each other a little bit better and so that I can have a little bit of a database about you, so that I can know how to analyze you afterwards. So, can you introduce yourself, your name, your age, where you come from?

Justine: My name is Justine, I'm 21 years old, I'm studying physiotherapy in Nice, so I'm in my third year and I'm from Valbonne, so I don't live very far from here. And what can I tell you, as hobbies I do a little bit of sport, I listen to music and I see friends, that's it.

Carla: Okay, and do you like what you're doing now? Are you fulfilled in it?

[...]

Carla: Okay, very good. So we're closing the first part, the theme of music in general, and now we're going to go into the second theme of this interview, which is the representation of rap. And this section aims to deepen and to know more about your opinions on the way rap is represented because it's important for me to understand what are the mechanisms that take place in the public opinion of rap in fact. So, to begin with we're just going to look at the representation in general in the media and could you tell me if you come across any media from time to time that talk about rap music?

Justine: Well, I think it's considered as a media but for example on YouTube, I watch, I couldn't tell you the name of it but, they organize a rap game, and they invite, I think it's four rappers in general and they make little games related to rap. For example, they'll listen to the beginning of a song or

whatever, so they do something around rap. And for example, it made me learn, well it made me know several rappers and then we meet them in a way, well not like in their music or in a basic interview between quotation marks, there we see they really play games they laugh between them; they make jokes and so it gives another, well we see the person in another way. And so, a little more like well, not like our buddies but they are more familiar with us. Afterwards in the media, apart from YouTube, I don't see it, I'm not that interested in it.

Carla: So, you're talking mainly about YouTube, which is a video platform, you don't have any other platforms in mind? Could it be social networks, could it be certain types of magazines for example that you are confronted with from time to time?

Justine: Yes, for example podcasts on Spotify, or more oral interviews, I listen to them a little bit but I've already seen a lot of them, but I don't often listen to them. Then, yes, on social networks, for example, I think Konbini makes little videos about a rapper or something like that, well, about a lot of things, but sometimes about rappers. Videos of two or three minutes so that I watch in general after if not yes on Instagram sometimes I see between quotation marks the gossips finally the news a little crunchy on rappers and so I watch two minutes but I am less confronted with it I think.

Carla: Okay, so you guys are mainly mentioning YouTube and Instagram right now. Are you more or less interested in what social media in general can say about rap?

Justine: Yes and no. Yes in the sense that sometimes they can have a pretty constructive opinion but then I have my opinion and I've talked about it a lot with friends so I form my opinion and then it can be modulated depending on what they say or what I read and then if I see a magazine that's a bit old fashioned that's going to say rap sucks because, well an opinion that's not open, that's just going to say it sucks because it's talking about sex or drugs. When none of the people who will write this article have seen rap music that is a little bit deeper, well, I'm not going to read it and I'm not going to pay attention to what they think, but when it's something constructive, yes, and maybe it will modulate my vision of rap a little bit.

Carla: Okay, noted. And now you mention something important, you just mentioned magazines. Do you think that there is a difference between the articles in magazines, in newspapers, and their representation in social networks?

Justine: Yes, because I think that a magazine is more formal and therefore maybe, except that there are some magazines that obviously talk about it more quietly, more to adapt to young people without necessarily saying that it's like that and describe it and impose an opinion. I have the impression that on social networks we will make little jokes about something, we will talk about it, give a fact without necessarily criticizing it, say if it's good or bad, but more give a fact, make jokes around it and then it's up to us to make our own opinion. Whereas a magazine, after I haven't, I haven't seen a lot of them but from what I know on other subjects it's more I give a fact and I say I think that about this fact and so after it's harder to make your opinion when you just read a magazine.

Carla: Well, it's interesting knowing that now we're going to talk mainly about the media as magazines and newspaper articles specifically and so if we focus mainly on these articles, how do you think these media can portray the rappers?

Justine: Well I think that there are some who portray them as good for nothing, who have missed their lives and who have only had that, and it's possible that there are some who didn't study or who only have that to do but there are some, there are many rappers and more and more today, the rappers put a lot of time into their rap, they think about their sounds, They think about their sounds, what they say in them, their lyrics, and for me, rappers who are perceived in the general thought as a good-for-nothing who does nothing, who says yoyo, and who smokes weed, it's a basic thing, it's a bad thing, whereas I honestly think that there are some who do that, but there are few of them, and it's not the ones who are going to make it, and who are going to please many people.

Appendix E: Codebook

Key concepts	Sub-concepts	Definition	What to look for?	
			Visual	Transcripts
Negative stereotyping	Threat to society (Fried, 2003)	“This includes references to crimes against others, gang activity, and aggression / anger.”	Poses, face expression, setting	Vocabulary, hesitations
	Misogynist (Peterson, et al., 2007)	“Women are often portrayed as hypersexual, materialistic, and amoral.”	Presence of female	Vocabulary, feelings
	Illegal (Dunbar, Kubrin & Scurich, 2016)	“Including censorship, regulation, and artists being arrested for lewd and profane performances.”	Drugs, weapons, body language	Vocabulary, opinions
	Violent (Wester, et al., 1997)	“Lyrics normalize antisocial behavior and glorify physical abuse, rape, torture.”	Weapons, facial and body language	Vocabulary, emotions
Positive Stereotyping	Urban development (Lang, 2000)	“Represents the voice of a disenfranchised people who have been excluded from conventional paths.”	Setting, skin color, clothes	Vocabulary, feelings
	Philogynist (Tyree & Jones, 2015)	“Rappers showed the capability to freely express their emotions, experiences, love, and adoration toward their female peers.”	Facial and body language, setting	Vocabulary, emotions
	Educational (Anderson, 1993)	“Rich language and musical heritage and abilities, rap music has some value in the educational setting.”	Setting, clothes, facial expressions	Vocabulary, genuine approval
	Togetherness (Gonzales, 2005)	“Rap music and rappers operate in ways that promote community and togetherness.”	Individual or group, setting, facial expressions	Vocabulary, mention of relatives

Appendix F: Visual analysis example



Denotation

Setting

The image is a collage of several elements. Indeed, we can see a main image in the foreground, then the background is made of several other photos and annotations. In addition, the edge of the image seems to have been torn.

Foreground

In the foreground appears the main image of Nekfeu who is stuck on the whole.

On this first image, we see Nekfeu wearing a white fur jacket that is closed to the top.

He wears a black cap that is partially covered by a black hood too.

The artist stares at the camera and does not smile. His posture is slightly tilted to the right, and he holds both hands below his face as if he is putting his jacket back on.

This part of the image is in color.

Just below it we can read "Nekfeu le retour?" meaning "Nekfeu comes back?" The lettering is big and in white and red and stands out quite well.

At the bottom right, we can see the logo of Rapp'lume, a media specialized in rap.

Background

The background consists of six different images that are all modified with a filter that makes them appear darker than the foreground image.

On the two images on the left, we can see Nekfeu dressed in rather simple and dark clothes. He is probably at a gas station filling up his car. The building behind looks quite old. He wears on these two photos, a cap and a black hood hiding partly his face.

At the top, we find a black and white picture with the same outfit as on the main picture. On this one he hides half of his face with his hand which is put on his mouth.

On the top right, an album cover with a man on a horse is placed. It is the album Don Dada, of Alpha Wann, a sidekick and rapper close to Nekfeu.

Finally, on the two photos on the left we can see Nekfeu in a grocery store buying a can of soda.

Connotation

These images show Nekfeu in everyday activities such as putting gasoline and shopping. This gives him a more accessible and therefore more human image. Like all of us, he does simple tasks.

His rather dark accoutrements seem to show his desire to pass incognito and to remain discreet in his everyday life.

Appendix G: Interview conducted by Bihan (2017) with Nekfeu as interviewee

“Julien Bihan: Why did you choose hip-hop rather than literature to express yourself?

Nekfeu: By accident. I already wrote some stuff when I was a kid, but I never finished, I made drafts, as I have a lot of imagination I had little ideas, but I'm a slacker so I gave up. Whereas rap, since it was a buddy thing, we were in emulation: a buddy makes a sound, so you start writing, you make a sound... That's really what I liked about rap: the community side, open mic, battle, contest. This sporting approach between friends.

[...] Nekfeu: Rap is not ready to be exhausted, I feel like I'm just starting. And the fact that it worked, it gives me an almost infinite playground. It's amazing. I have ambitions for my label, I'm starting to think bigger.

Julien Bihan: Don't you think that this "rapper who reads" spring is the eternal spring of a part of the media?

Nekfeu: France Inter was the first radio I did for the album; I was happy that they noticed it. It allowed some kids who don't have a rap culture to say: "Oh yeah, there's an artistic value". But now when I'm in interviews I tell them, "No, I don't do literary rap. I just do rap. After I made references, I scratched books but like I could have talked about a Scorsese movie or a Rohff song the old-fashioned way. It's just that I put everything on the same level. For me, as soon as there is something after rap, it breaks my balls: literary rap, committed rap, alternative rap... It means that you don't know how to rap in fact, I'm not interested.

Julien Bihan: Has the uniformity of the trap genre in France allowed you to stand out? Aren't you the incarnation of the anti-trap?

Nekfeu: No. What has always bothered me is the standardization, but I also see it in the guys who want to rap exclusively in the old way and who define themselves as "purists". This standardization I find also disgusting.”



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title and version	Master Thesis Cyborg: Representations and Perceptions of French rap's UFO, Nekfeu
Name of Principal Investigator	Carla Ferlin
Name of Organisation	Erasmus University of Rotterdam
Name of Sponsor	Dr. AM Diallo
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted for a master's thesis. I am inviting you to participate in this research project about French rap and rapper Nekfeu. The purpose of this research project is to better understand how audiences perceive him.
Procedures	You will participate in an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. You will be asked questions about your music consumption and habits. Sample questions include: "What is your opinion on Nekfeu?". You must be at least 18 years old, less than 30 years old and hold a French nationality.
Potential and anticipated Risks and Discomforts	There are no obvious physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
Potential Benefits	Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. As a result of participating, you may better understand how media portray rap nowadays. The broader goal of this research is to compare your perspective to the media one.

Standard EUR Informed Consent Form template

M. Nariman and M. Domingus, December 2016 (incl. adjustments ESHCC)




Sharing the results	Your plan for sharing the findings with the participants should be provided. If you have a plan and a timeline for the sharing of information, include the details. You may also inform the participant that the research findings will be shared more broadly, for example, through publications and conferences.
Confidentiality	<p>Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Moreover, only trained research staff will have access to your responses. Within these restrictions, results of this study will be made available to you upon request.</p> <p>As indicated above, this research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' offices or on the researcher's password-protected computers and will be destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.</p>
Compensation	N/A
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the primary investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Carla Ferlin</p>
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>For research problems or any other question regarding the re-search project, the Data Protection Officer of Erasmus University, Marlon Domingus, MA (fg@eur.nl)</p>

Standard EUR Informed Consent Form template

M. Nariman and M. Domingus, December 2016 (incl. adjustments ESHCC)



	If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.	
Audio recording (if applicable)	I consent to have my interview audio recorded <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	
Secondary use (if applicable)	I consent to have the anonymised data be used for secondary analysis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	
Signature and Date	NAME PARTICIPANT	NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Carla Ferlin
	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE 
	DATE	DATE 28/03/2022