

Brenda Fairley
1008, F street, Arcata, Ca, 95521
blf9@humboldt.edu
(707) 825-8949

To: Daniel J. Canary, Editor
Western Journal of Communication
Hugh Downs School of Human Communication
Arizona State University
PO Box 871205
Tempe, AZ 85287-1205

Since 2001, when I first picked up a copy of your journal, I've been constantly intrigued by the quality. Your journal is well known, professional, and contains many innovating authors and topics. I believe with your wide variety of topics, my article on Fantasy Theme theory with an emphasis on Rap music, may play an intricate part in continuing that tradition. My topic is a unique piece of rhetoric criticism and an easy read. I keep in mind your audience, which may include high school students interested in communication, undergraduate communication majors, graduate school students, and common people interested or working in this field. Many of them, like me struggle with the use of language and sometimes lose interest. This article will reach millions not just fans of rap; it's an area many journals like to stay away from. My paper is a professional unbiased, look at the contemporary art form of Rap music and the subjects it affects. Please take a look at the article and reply to me via the contact information above. Thank you for your time, I wish the best for you and the success of your journal.

Sincerely,

Brenda Fairley

Just Like Music; Fantasizing about Rap.
Brenda La'Nell Fairley
Humboldt State University

04/22/03

Abstract

The objective of this article is to explore characteristic's related to the fantasy theme theory involved in the success of rap music. It directly answers the question "what are the rhetorical factors/characteristics rap music exhibits that unite a diverse audience? This paper will look at the roots of rap as a small group, and the fantasy shared. The author concentrates less on commercialism and focuses the basic characteristics of Rap that have always been present. Author also look at how interpretation of the world is based on this shared idea, assuming reality is shaped by communication. Author made correlations, between the similarities of music genre to similarities on how they interpret the world. The author used Ernest Bormann's, Fanstasy theme theory as support to the ideas expressed in this article, and used Rhetorical Vision as unit of analysis.

The Message

Music is the only sensual gratification in which mankind may indulge to excess without injury to their moral or religious feelings. -Joseph Addison (Webster, 1994)

When you think of a person who is a fan of rap, who comes to mind? Does this person wear baggy clothes? Does he/she wear their hat backwards and/or uses slang? Whether you answered “yes” or “no” to the previous question you’re correct. Rap music has a very diverse audience. These fans not only buy the music, they purchase clothing, posters, and magazines closely related to the Rap genre and/or artist within that genre. Some fans even use the same slang terms as their favorite artist. A great example is during a skit at the 2002 MTV Music Awards; Jimmy Fallon made a joke distinguishing “Hot in here” from Nelly’s “Hot In Her.” Nelly is a rap star whose lyrics deviated little from the modern rap blue print.

Most rap artist and fans share the same sense of reality in regards to settings actions and characters. These ideas support the Fantasy theme theory, created by Ernest G. Bormann. Fantasy usually defined as “an unfulfilled psychological need”. (Random House 1991). Bormann defines fantasy as “creative and imaginative interpretation of events.”(Foss,1996) He begins his research by explaining the base of the Fantasy theory. He began with the assumption that communication creates reality and symbols can converge and create a shared reality. This theory is based on a Study done by Robert Bales, when looking at Small group communication. Small Group communication is defined as the “ transactional process of using symbolic behavior to achieve shared meaning among group members over a period of time.”(Harris,2002) Bormann Suggest that the group share a sense in reality when it comes to actions, setting, and characters.

The purpose for this article is to understand the influence, not find causality. Explore how “people communicate in a variety of contexts”, relating specifically to Rap music. Use all the fantasy themes, to illuminate the Rhetorical Vision of rap audiences. Surveys and interviews played a big part in this research. I focused on group interviews, and open-ended interviews. Replication was not important because working with human’s means your results will not ever totally be the same. This article explores underlying patterns that may constitute as rules, within rap music.

Traditional this has been done by sociologists that have no credibility as “insiders” in the Rap culture. “Sociological investigations analyzing the lived experiences of African Americans, the poor, and other disadvantaged groups are often conducted using either “unbiased” qualitative methods or qualitative methodologies conducted by “outside” researchers in a world in which they may not possess the “insider” status, yet investigate anyhow.” (Wright and Ronald, 2001) I used an “insider” role, by distinguishing to participants my credibility of once being a poor, African American, who lived in Compton, California. I also used intensive one on one interviews at the local prison, with individuals who are in prison because they had been proven by law to have been living and/or participating in the same life styles as many rap artist describe (i.e. poverty, murder, hunger, sex crimes, ect..)

Literature Review

Making Cents of it all

“The real world is a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.” Edward Sapir

The world of Rap music has been largely based on the cannons of Neo-Aristotelian form of communication, by its strong emphasis on arrangement, style and delivery. It’s also relates to the idea of ethos, pathos and logos; where as success is based largely on emotional content, credibility of the artist and logic of the message. Before there were music videos’s this art form was restricted to live performances at parties, clubs, street corners and designated “sypher” locations. The importance of language has always been an issue in this musical art form.

Many critics don’t care about the bass or treble in the music, they focus on the lyrical content. It is directly against many societal standards and sociologically considered deviant. To be successful in this art form you must understand the importance of language in your daily life. “Language is mental rather than physical. Language is a body of knowledge stored within our brains. As such, it can never be examined directly but must be inferred from speech.”(Trenholm, 2001)

Many scholars and theorist fail to link Rap music to its roots in small group communication and group think methodology. This art form was initially hard to come across before the emersion of music videos on TV. The group of men and women who participated were mainly those in lower-socio economic environments, such as ghettos. Many Americans who weren’t living in the ghettos nor have direct access to them missed

out on the upcoming musical innovation. The participants used the art as an outlet for their shared, understanding and involvement (realities) while living in the ghetto. This is closely related to the Fantasy theme theory proposed by Ernest G. Bormann. Their definition of Fantasy (Bormann and Bormann, 1992), as “the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfills a group’s psychological or rhetorical need to make sense of their experience and to anticipate the future”, supports the idea of rap music as an outlet for dealing with societal issues. With recent success of rap music, you can fully understand the big picture today. It wasn’t always commercialized with “Nike’s”, “Air force Ones” shoe jingles, or selling of cars and other materialistic ideas.

Earl Wright II and Ronald Stephens suggest “rap music is at its basic level, an extension and analysis of the greater frustrations of the lived experiences of African Americans, specifically men, in today’s society.” They suggest that, “this expression of the frustrations of a certain segment of the united states population is a beneficial qualitative data source, if triangulated with other methodologies, could have major social policy ramifications.” They argue that if you take the basics of rap music without the video’s, magazine interview, and other qualities that mass media brought, you will find a greater message related to many methodologies.

You can’t leave out the involvement of mass media because it is partly responsible for where and how rap is seen today. With the creation of Music Tele-Vision (M.T.V.) and Black Entertainment Television (B.E.T.), hip-hop/rap radio stations, and magazines like the Source and XXL, rap music is easily accessible. When trying to distinguish certain characteristics of rap music, “a more complex picture emerges, one in which it is not so easy to differentiate rappers’ social production from their marketing

strategies.” (Wahl,1999) There is a line between selling to mainstream or credibly living the rap artist life style. If today “Kid Rock” were said to have been a rich kid living in the State of Wisconsin. Many people would no longer consider him credible or support his music. For people to care whether it’s easily accessible is part of the big picture. More importantly what characteristic did it have initially to give producers, record companies, ect... the idea of it being a good investment? You have to go back to its roots.

Since it’s beginnings in 1970’s, Rap music has become a multi-million dollar business. Besides the rap artist; producers, dancers, extra’s, animation techs, photographers, featured artist, journalist, music video directors, and more gain from involvement in this genre. In the last decade Rap music has surpassed and competed with the top country, pop and rock sales which previously topped charts. When exploring the question of what are the rhetorical factors/characteristics rap music exhibits that unite a diverse audience, you have to look at its significance.

Literature Review

I was once in a short term relationship with a young man that ended abruptly. I missed my menstrual period one month and decided to mention that fact to him. He instantly concluded that I might be pregnant, and that I “must find out how” I’m “going to get an abortion.” I hadn’t known for sure at the time if I were pregnant or not but I knew he wasn’t going to be supportive either way. I decided to break up with him early on so he would understand; “I’m not trying to make something up just to keep you.” I prayed to God that I was pregnant and didn’t get a STD instead. I was afraid of finding out the answer. I waited two weeks to see if any changes in my body would give me a

sign, to indicate some sort of diagnosis. I remember I had just gotten Lauryn Hill's new C.D, The Mis-Education of Lauryn Hill. On the album there was a song called Zion that inspired me to go get the pregnancy test.

Unsure of what the balance held

I touched my belly overwhelmed

By what I had been chosen to perform

But then an angel came one day

Told me to kneel down and pray

For unto me a man child would be born

Woe this crazy circumstance

I knew his life deserved a chance

But everybody told me to be smart

Look at your career they said,

"Lauryn, baby use your head"

But instead I chose to use my heart

I thought of how selfish I had been by acting as if this was only my decision. I knew what my family would say, "Brenda how could you do something so stupid?" I was afraid of their reaction, and of my ex boyfriend if I decided to keep it. But I had to remember if I was pregnant this is my body I would be sacrificing, and a life I would have killed. No one else had to take responsibility for the action of having sex and getting an abortion. I have to be responsible socially and religiously, for my situation. What would Jesus do? I had to ask myself. I have no job, living with my mom, not

finished with high school, and the daddies gone. These factors had no competition with the fact that religiously abortion was a sin.

How beautiful if nothing more

Than to wait at Zion's door

I've never been in love like this before

Now let me pray to keep you from

The perils that will surely come

See life for you my prince has just begun

And I thank you for choosing me

To come through unto life to be

A beautiful reflection of his grace

For I know that a gift so great

Is only one God could create

And I'm reminded every time I see your face

I remember learning that Jesus traded his crown in heaven to die for my sin's on earth. Religiously a child is supposed to be a blessing. Non-religiously it's still a blessing because getting pregnant over some of the STD's I could get was a better deal. All of these thoughts were invoked by one rap song, think of all the topics rap music covers. Imagine all of the shared realities people must find in listening to the music. I knew Lauryn Hill, had been on drugs before, and thorough God found rehabilitation. I also knew she had recently been pregnant without the father being present. She was a credible source for what I was going through and was able to speak to me through her music. I never met her or seen her live in concert, but she will always be a part of that reality.

Many may ask “isn’t that the purpose of music?” or “all good music is supposed to have that qualities isn’t.” The difference with Rap music is that the artists have to write their own music. If you don’t you are not credible. In many genres you simply can sing the song, relation to it or not; if it sounds good then it’s a good song. You can sing a song written by someone else’s and give them credit silently on your album jacket. In rap music there are many rules to this, including one in which you must have your own unique style, arrangement and delivery, to be authentic. Even if your song has the potential of evoking emotions of the targeted audience, and bring out your personal emotion, if you are not personally credible, in rap music your song will not be a success. There are many other general characteristic that an artist must have in relation to fantasy theme theory. All of the artist used in the literature review fit one or more of these characteristics. The all have also gained the credibility needed to be successful is rap. Many of them have gone down in rap history in one way or another.

Lauryn Hill’s, Doo Wop (that thing), was a song off her album released in 1998 entitled *The Mis Education of Lauryn Hill*. This song as well as many others on her album helped her win many distinguished awards, “February 1999 Grammy awards, during which Hill took home five trophies from her eleven nominations, including Album of the Year, Best New Artist, Best Female R&B Vocal Performance, Best R&B Song and Best R&B Album -- the most ever for a woman.” (Raftery, 1998). She was raised in South Orange, NJ and attended Columbia University. This song includes themes such as religion, self respect, natural beauty, violence against women, and materialism.

Nas’s *Stillmatic* is a continuation of his 1994 *Illmatic* album, which got him the title as one of the top Emcee’s in Rap. **Nasir Jones**, better known as **Nas**, had many

names such as Nasty Nas, Esco, and Escobar. “In September 2001, fellow New York rapper **Jay-Z** dropped *The Blueprint* and attacked Nas on the song "Takeover." With *Stillmatic* set to drop in December, the hip-hop world was left wondering if Nas would respond and still be able to hold his own. Not only with Jay-Z, but with an undoubtedly solid hip-hop album. Nas immediately responds with a great opening track that leads you into the Jay-Z diss song "Ether." Nas takes shots at Jay's looks ("what you think you getting girls because of your looks? Negro please!"), his status as an emcee ("Eminem murdered you on your own shit"), and plays Jay off as a pupil rather than a worthy opponent ("Now I smile like proud dad watchin' his only son that made it").” (Mac 2002) For this album ideas such as commercialized rap music, religion, sexual preference, death, and sampling are all touched upon. This song was specifically used to highlight the idea of battling in rap music and the grounds for victory.

Jay-Z's *Blueprint* album was released in 2001 with lyrical attack of Nas, proving to be one of the reasons for success. Though Jay -Z has proved to be a multi-million dollar rap star, he lost the battle between him and Nas. He still maintains his status as a credible rapper and continues to sell a ridiculous amount of albums. This song was specifically used to show the initial lyrically attack on Nas. The messages this song dealt with included death, murder, heterosexism, credibility, and sampling.

Grand master flash and the furious five's the message, is known as one of the first rap songs, as well as the first political rap song. It clearly created the setting themes, characters, social issues, education, credibility and actions that make rap music what it is today. This song came out in 1982 and was on a single, not an album. “1982's edgy, apocalyptic single "The Message" zeroed in on social decay and despair in black

America, and the following year's "White Lines (Don't Do It)" examined the destructive nature of cocaine with an eye on racial and socioeconomic injustice." (Freedom du Lac, 2003) It was truly one of the first rap songs to think about the future, and less about partying and beats.

Combating the rhetoric with an artifact

Characters (credibility)

In relation to fantasy theme theory a character is the agent or actor that is portrayed. In rap music the character has to follow certain ground rules. One is they have to be **heterosexual**. Meaning they do not have any sexual relationships with the opposite sex. This is even present with the female rappers. The only exception is that rap artist can suggest that people of all genders fantasize about them because they are the best looking or sexiest, ect. You must be **confident** in your demeanor, lyrics and lifestyle. This makes perfect sense since rap is so reliant on lyrics, having a shy and p.c. rapper wouldn't be interesting. Partly because many people spend their life trying to not to offend others, and don't expose their true feelings. This also differentiate rap music from other genres, because its historically know to be against mainstream idea's. They must have a **religious stand point**. Although many rappers today have been convicted of crimes and lived dangerous lifestyles, many are still openly religious.

They must at one point be from the **ghetto**. Whether present day or not ,rappers must be able to give an account on their experience from the ghetto. This is important in establishing connection with the roots of the genre, and relating to others in the genre, as well as the targeted audience. Rappers must exhibit a unique use of **vocabulary**,

descriptive words as well as slang terms. They must be **authentic** as far as style, delivery and arrangement goes. This means they must come up with lyrics not said before, and if they use another's lyric must give full credit to them and not themselves. All of these factors of the character deal with elements of **credibility**, which is arguable the overall accomplishment for a rapper. The motion picture 8 miles starring Eminem, shows how not until he establishes credibility did anyone listen to him rap

Actions (survival)

The actions of the character can be called the plotline. Actions are what the character engages in. One of the actions a rapper has to do is **keep it real**. They do this by dressing how they want to dress, saying what they want to say and doing what they want to do. If any action of rapper seems forced, by the producer, the record company, or new marketing strategy, it's not seen as a genuine action. If the rapper didn't really live the lifestyle they claimed this goes directly against the definition of keeping it real. Many people wonder how rap fans can still support certain rap artist who have recently got out of jail, or convicted of a crime. Their answer more than likely will be he's "doing what he got to do" or "he was just keeping it real." Many rappers consider **hustling** a major part of being a rap star. Hustling is just a slang term for working hard at what you do best. Some rap stars started out in the ghetto selling drugs, others free styling on the corner, stripping, ect. That was their initial hustle, you'll hear rappers make reference to their old hustle and how they replaced it with rapping. Many rappers consider their rap music their new form of hustling. Hustling may constitute as part of the plotline, in the action of a rapper. Rappers must be **educating the audience** in some way. Whether it's about their

life, the mean streets of the ghetto, their prospective of what's going on in the world, or how good they are compared to everyone else, there has to be a lesson. A good example is Nelly's song 1#, where the whole song was about him being the best rapper and the characteristics about him that made him the best. They must still engage in actions **associated with the ghetto** either real or stereotypical. For instance you might hear a rapper, saying he's eating a mayonnaise sandwich. This is a sandwich which contains no meat or vegetables just mayonnaise it is stereotypical and some what fact based foods that people in the ghetto might eat. Not because it's good or nasty but because it requires making the best out of little resources. A rapper must also know how to free style. **Free styling** is the art of hearing a beat and being able to make rhymes to it with out prior practice, reading off a paper or memorization. The free styles consists of rhymes you came up with directly on the spot. You don't necessarily get instrumentals of rap songs either; some one may be **beat boxing** for you. This is a slang term for creating a beat with your hands and your mouth for the rapper to flow to. **Battling** is an action taken in the original form of rap music. This is when rappers compete lyrically for the title of number one. Sometimes they have beat boxers or instrumentals playing. Some times you have to battle with free-styles only, meaning competing with lyrics created on the spot. Battles were initially just for respect as a rapper, practice and fun. Now in days battling if instigated by the media could result in deaths, but not always the case. Many rappers make a career out of picking people to battle, making fun of, or challenging their character.

Setting (Extreme)

Setting is the name of the scene and the characteristics of that particular scene. It is closely related to the actions and character traits of the rapper. For example if a rapper is still hustling in the ghetto, his scene will more than likely be his hometown; his particular ghetto. If he's hustling by rapping and making big bucks at it, his scene may be the new rich neighborhood he lives in. A good example of this is Puff Daddy, in his video of "We aint goin no where (bad boy 4 life)," where he is approached by his neighbor Ben Stiller. Puff Daddy has just moved into his new House, in an upper class neighborhood. In this video he is casing ruckus with the neighbors. Rapper's scenes are easily defined now that music videos are around because they can make a rap video right in the middle of the rappers particular neighborhood. Initially it was all based on the rappers lyrical description of the scene. More commonly you see two extremes with in the setting for rap scenes. It's either extreme wealth or extreme poverty. **Extreme poverty** rap scene will take place in the ghetto, or any place with the worst conditions (i.e. hospital in the ghetto, school in the ghetto, local restaurant in the ghetto.) **Extreme wealth** rap scenes take you to exotic beaches, vacation spots, private flights, riding in an expensive car or inside their mansion. Another common scene is glimpse at the **daily struggles**, at the studio, trying to go to the store, getting in the club, fighting, performing at a concert, or at the street corner free styling, selling drugs, or hanging out. With new technology rap artist can be doing something **imaginary** like being a spy, blowing up building, jumping out of cars, ect. This is something mainly for commercialism, being comedic, or grasping audience attention so they'll listen to the song.

It's been three weeks since you've been looking for your friend

The one you let hit it and never called you again

*'Member when he told you he was 'bout the Benjamins
 You act like you ain't hear him then gave him a little trim
 To begin, how you think you really gon' pretend
 Like you wasn't down then you called him again
 Plus when you give it up so easy you ain't even fooling him
 If you did it then, then you probably fuck again*

As Miseducation began a long reign on the charts through most of the fall and winter of 1998 -- initially thanks to heavy buzz and overwhelming radio support for "Doo Wop (That Thing)" -- Hill became a national media icon, as magazines ranging from Time to Esquire to Teen People vied to put her on the cover. By the end of the year, as the album topped virtually every major music critic's "best-of" list, she was being credited for helping fully assimilate hip-hop into mainstream music. (Raftery, 1998)

Lauryn Hill's song, Doo Wop (that thing) is a song that has an overall **action theme of educating**. This song is about to people involved in **heterosexual** relationships. In these lyrics she is educating a woman on how her action spoke louder than words. She's describing a scene where a woman has done multiple sex acts with man, who hasn't shown any compassion for her feeling. The woman in this song is looking for this man. The scene is not too clearly defined so that you can place your self in this person's shoes. Her character has a clear **standpoint** on the situation and is **confident** in speaking about it very bluntly; "If you did it then, then you probably fuck again."

*Talking out your neck sayin' you're a Christian
 A Muslim sleeping with the gin*

Now that was the sin that did Jezebel in

Who you gon' tell when the repercussions spin

Lauryn is making a direct **standpoint** on her religious beliefs, educating the women on her actions in relation to **religion**. Jezebel is a woman in the Bible who is promiscuous and god punishes her for it. Lauryn uses distinctive **vocabulary**, mixed slang, to get the message across.

You know I only say it 'cause I'm truly genuine

Don't be a hardrock when you're really a gem

Babygirl, respect is just a minimum

Niggas fucked up and you still defending them

Now Lauryn is only human

Don't think I haven't been through the same predicament

These lyrics are there to give the audience the idea that Lauryn is a **credible** source on this topic. She highlights that she's been in the same situation. She even makes reference to how genuine she is or character wise how **authentic** she is.

The pretty face, men claiming that they did a bid men

Need to take care of their three and four kids men

They facing a court case when the child's support late

Money taking, heart breaking now you wonder why women hate men

The sneaky silent men the punk domestic violence men

The quick to shoot the semen stop acting like boys and be men

These lyrics clearly define her **standpoint** on responsibility of men when it comes to children. She speaks directly to the men who don't pay their child support for their

children. She paints the picture of daily struggle the men are having with the court by not being responsible. She **confidently** calls men who engage in domestic violence punks.

Financial situations for many people haven't changed much if not gotten worse for the American people. Since the beginning of this country the rich were getting richer and the poor, poorer. The first rap songs were really focused on partying and having fun. Grand Master flash and the furious five were a 1980's rap group, who saw the big picture. Rap with its upcoming popularity can be used to tell the story of living in America from their point of view. They used rap as a means for voicing their opinion and communicating the harsh realities of their world. The overall theme of this song is describing the **setting of extreme poverty**.

Broken glass everywhere

People pissing on the stairs, you know they just don't care

I can't take the smell, I can't take the noise

Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice

Rats in the front room, roaches in the back

Junkie's in the alley with a baseball bat

I tried to get away, but I couldn't get far

Cause the man with the tow-truck repossessed my car

This is a great example of setting in **extreme poverty**. They describe how the side walks look, the people they run into, situations that happen to them within the setting. They describe their financial situation and the possibility of getting out. They give you a clear visual of the animals and bugs you run into and sense of smell with the piss. This song was clearly made before videos were very popular. The detail they include is under

the assumption that the audiences won't be able to turn on the TV and see exactly what they're talking about. The **credibility** is established in these lyrics because it's an example of actions happening directly to the character (rapper), in the **ghetto**.

Cause only god knows what you go through

You grow in the ghetto, living second rate

And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate

The places you play and where you stay

Looks like one great big alley way

You'll admire all the numberbook takers

Dogpitchers, pushers and the big money makers

Driving big cars, spending twenties and tens

And you wanna grow up to be just like them

Smugglers, scrambles, burglars, gamblers

Pickpockets, peddlers and even pan-handlers

You say I'm cool, I'm no fool

But then you wind up dropping out of high school

Now you're unemployed, all null 'n' void

The actions of the artist in these lyrics explain their life style in the **ghetto**. The purpose of these lyrics is to **educate** the audience on the do's and don'ts, while living in the ghetto. Explain some of the different **hustles** available for the people who live within it, and the repercussions of it. The lyrics show the economic status of some of the individuals living here, their means of survival and self-fulfilling prophecies.

The mass media plays a large role in instigating issues between rival, in any profession. Propaganda in the current Iraq war, Bush vs. Saddam themes are a great example of mass media at work. Logging on to the internet, opening a magazine, any TV station, will be bombarded with updates on the war. The same was the case with the rivalry between Tupac and the Notorious B.I.G., which ended in the death of both rappers. The mass media created a fantasy war between the east and west coast, that cost lives. The rappers had been competing lyrically on albums for months. The audience took sides on the issue and felt personally involved, which was in part due to lyrics. The most blame is put on the media for constantly challenging the artist to give a rebuttal to statements made. They used the same propaganda used in wars, with polls, interviews, posters, signs, and more or less publicity determined upon who was winning. They allowed rude and inappropriate statements including death threats to be passed via mass media. The deaths of both rappers continues to be unsolved mystery, and people associated with both murders, have gone missing or been killed. The most recent battle between Jay-z and Nas in 2001 was a based upon the original purpose, the respect of being number one, the fun of the challenge and unleashing your lyrical talent. Though battling is a action theme the premise on which you battle is directly related to discrediting the character of the opponent. The overall theme of Nas's- Ether and Jay's- Take over is not only the **action of battling** but, questioning the **credibility of the character**.

It's like an AIDS test, what's the results?

Not positive, who's the best? Pac, Nas and Big

Ain't no best, East, West, North, South, flossed out, greedy

I embrace y'all with napalm

Blows up, no guts, left chest, face gone

How could Nas be garbage?

These lyrics clearly highlight the character themes Nas exhibits. He compares himself to the rappers Tupac and the Notorious B.I.G who were before and after death considered the two number one rappers of all time. It's still debated over which one is the best, it's differs depending on the style and delivery you like and partly on which coast your from (east or west.)

I am the truest, name a rapper that I ain't influenced

Gave y'all chapters but now I keep my eyes on the Judas

With Hawaiiin Sophie fame, kept my name in his music

Check it

These lyrics are speaking directly to Jay-Z, from a **religious, standpoint**. Nas is comparing him to a biblical figure Judas. Judas is one of twelve apostles, who followed Jesus. Judas specifically betrayed Jesus Christ, and is arguable to blame for his death. He speaks about Jay-Z sampling his music in one of his songs, which is a direct insult to his **authenticity** and **credibility**. Sampling was outlawed due to people not giving full credit to creators. Some forms of sampling with credit being given to the artist are some what acceptable. When Puff Daddy made his way to the rap scene he had done a lot of sampling which caused debate over his skills as a producer and rap artist. Nas gives **credibility** to himself by showing his **confidence**, calling his self the "truest". He also claims to have influenced every rapper on the genre.

Chorus]

(I) Fuck with your soul like ether

(Will) Teach you the king you know you

(Not) "God's son" across the belly

(Lose) I prove you lost already

[talking]

Ay yo, pass me the weed, pour my ashes out on these niggas man (no doubt)

Ay, y'all faggots, y'all kneel and kiss the fuckin ring

He makes even more relation to his **religious standpoint** by calling himself “gods son.” He claims by that alone he will win over Jay-Z. He questions Jay-Z’s sexual preference and confidently calls him “faggot.” This is a direct insult to his character that is supposed to be **heterosexual**.

I've been fucked over, left for dead, dissed and fogotten

Luck ran out, they hoped that I'd be gone, stiff and rotten

Y'all just piss on me, shit on me, spit on my grave (uh)

Talk about me, laugh behind my back but in my face

Y'all some well wishin (bitches), friendly actin envy hidin snakes

With your hands out for my money, man, how much can I take?

When these streets keep callin, heard it when I was sleep

That this Gay-Z and Cockafella Records wanted beef

Nas is describing his view from the streets (**ghetto**), and how he came across the news that Jay-Z wanted to battle him. He was “sleeping” career wise, and heard it not by the radio or the album but from in the neighbor hood, or the “streets.” Makes reference to Jay-Z’s **heterosexuality**. He describes his **daily struggles**, how people treated him, and their wishes for his future.

In '88 you was gettin chased through your buildin
 Callin my crib and I ain't even give you my numbers
 All I did was gave you a style for you to run with
 Smilin in my face, glad to break bread with the god
 Wearin Jaz chains, no teecs, no cash, no cars
 No jail bars Jigga, no pies, no case
 Just Hawaiian shirts, hangin with little Chase
 You a fan, a phony, a fake, a pussy, a Stan
 I still whip your ass, you thirty-six in a karate class
 You Tae-bo hoe, tryna' work it out, you tryna' get brolic?

Nas claims to have given Jay-Z his style which questions his **authenticity**, as well as his action of **keeping it real**. He claims Jay-Z is creating this macho image, but back in the **ghetto** he spent his life running and calling on Nas to save him. He calls him “fake”, and describes Jay-Z’s previous lifestyle “no teecs, no cash, no cars No jail bars Jigga, no pies, no case.” Meaning Jay-Z was poor, and was not **hustling** in his early years. He calls him a “stan” which is related to Eminem’s song Stan describing a fan who goes over the edge (literally) trying to follow Eminem. In this reference Jay-Z is the fan trying to model himself after Nas. Nas **confidently** claims he could beat up Jay-Z, even though he’s thirty six.

Jay-Z’s Blue print album was released months before Nas’s Stillmatic, with the song battling Nas. Jay-Z doesn’t denote the whole song to battling Nas he talks about anyone making negative comments about him. It is arguable why he made this song. Jay-Z claims to have slept with Nas’s baby mother, and claims Allen Iverson did too. This issue doesn’t answer why Jay-Z would come out with a battle song first. Some claim they have been making negative references to each other for awhile and that this is the most blunt.

*Youse the fag model for Karl Kani/Esco ads
 Went from, Nasty Nas to Esco's trash
 Had a spark when you started but now you're just garbage
 Fell from top ten to not mentioned at all
 to your bodyguard's "Oochie Wally" verse better than yours
 Matter fact you had the worst flow on the whole fuckin song
 but I know - the sun don't shine, then son don't shine
 That's why your - LAAAAAAME! - career come to a end*

Jay-Z uses some of the same tactics as Nas, while battling him. He starts with the credibility of the character. He calls Nas a “Fag model,” for the clothing line Nas models for, which question’s his **Heterosexuality**. He talks about Nas not being a **credible** source because he is no longer **Authentic**, he describes him as “garbage.” He describes him as a has been, that he used to be in the “top ten”, now one cares. He claims Nas’s career has “come to an end,” because his rhymes were no longer good use of **vocabulary**.

Nigga; you ain't live it you witnessed it from your folks pad

You scribbled in your notepad and created your life

I showed you your first tec on tour with Large Professor

(Me, that's who!) Then I heard your album bout your tec on your dresser

Jay-Z is questioning the actions of Nas, he claims Nas isn’t **keeping it real**. He believe Nas never had or seen a Tec (gun) until he showed him while they were on tour together. Jay-Z explains how he witnessed a lot from his parents and not from living it. Nas is not doing what he wants to be doing, according to Jay-Z he’s making it all up.

So yeah I sampled your voice, you was usin it wrong

You made it a hot line, I made it a hot song

And you ain't get a corn nigga you was gettin fucked and

I know who I paid God, Serchlite Publishing

Use your – BRAAAAAAIN

These lyrics suggest that Jay-Z did sample Nas's voice on one of his song's. His explanation is that Nas didn't use it right; it was a good line in a song. Jay-Z claims he made it what it is by making a good song out of one good line. Meaning Jay-Z used his own skills to create a master piece with Nas's good line, and that it's really Jay-Z's **authentic** creation.

Literature Review, Findings

G-unit

Vacaville California is about 300 miles away from my current residence in Arcata California. These two areas differ completely as far as diversity, population and landscape goes. Vacaville is home to about 92,300 people, most of which are living in middle to upper middle class status. Vacaville offers a booming commercial enterprise, unlike Arcata. Currently there is an outlet offering over 120 stores, a one mile stretch of car dealerships, and dozens of restaurants. In 1982 they built a prison with a medical institute. Around 1992 they split the faculties into a prison and a medical center with different deans, staff, and programs. These inmates have committed crimes ranging from murder to fraud. The inmates will play a major part in the unit of analysis for this article.

The unit of analyses in this article has been both fantasy theme and rhetorical vision, based on the assumption that symbolic convergence theory is true. The "symbolic convergence theory is based that symbols not only create reality for individuals but that individuals' meanings for symbols can converge to create a shared reality." (Foss, 1996) This article further suggests the symbolic convergence theory is accurate, and can be applied to Rap music. The audience is drawn in to the shared reality

and that is how it accumulates such diversity. You can live the reality through a credible source which is what the rap artist characters serve as. According to Ernest Bormann the process of convergence works by “several or many people develop portions of their private symbolic worlds that overlap.....have jointly experienced the same emotions, they have developed the same attitudes and emotional response to the personae of the drama: and they have interpreted some of their experience in some way.” (Foss,1996)

Audiences of the rap music including the author of the article suggest a sense of having the same emotions, attitudes, and response; to the way they and the artist interpret the experience. The rhetorical vision is a “unified putting together of various shared fantasies or a swirling together of fantasy themes to provide a credible interpretation of reality....The presence of a rhetorical vision suggests that a rhetorical community has been formed consisting of participants in the vision or members who have shared the fantasy theme. The people who participate in a rhetorical vision then constitute a rhetorical community.” (Foss, 1996) The inmates in this study constitute the rhetorical community. These are the fans of rap music that have gone to the extreme. This article is not trying to blame the rap music for the crimes of the individuals; it is instead suggesting the extreme fans would live out the fantasy. Similar to the way shared fantasies in religion don't cause terrorist. It is their extreme belief in the fantasy that causes them to act out the suicide bombing, or in Rap music's case commit crimes. The theory is that through convergence, this rhetorical community (inmates), had a shared vision with rap artist who, Fantasy theme matched their own interpretation of similar events. They then act out crimes with a fantasy that they are doing what any other individual (rap fan)

would do in this experience. If this is the case in with inmates, then further exploration of the subject on not so extreme cases, could be done to add to the credibility of the theory.

I got a dollar hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!

The overall finding will incorporate the surveys and interviews from the inmates. The initial survey is used to find out who is a fan of the genre. It will ask several questions not alluding to the fact that this will be a study. Example question would be; what genre of music do you consider your favorite? Do you have any favorites artist within that genre? If so list some. I don't want people who don't listen to rap music, to participate in the observation. This is not an experiment so I don't need a control group. The interviews would be to document specific examples of a sense of shared realities with the rap artist around the time of the crime. A good example would be if an inmate were to share the fact that they listened to Tupac before the crime because it gets them excited; that would constitute as a further finding.

So far my findings have concluded there to be a Rhetorical vision within the Rap Music, with three themes. **Character** wise the artist have various shared traits that lump together to form **credibility**. They use different **action** theme to describe their means of **survival**. They describe the **setting** theme in mainly **extreme**, setting so to further legitimize the character and action themes. One rap artist used above, Nas, highlighted his character credibility, extreme setting, and survival tactics to prove he is one of the best in the field. In his song he speaks about beating up the opponent Jay-Z and causing harm to him. This action may only be lyrics to mainstream American but to rap's rhetorical community this is something Nas may realistically do. "Actions that make little

sense to someone outside of a rhetorical vision make perfect sense when viewed in the context of that vision, for the vision provides the motive for action.”(foss 1996)

For a person inside of the Rap rhetorical vision beating up or killing an opponent may constitute as a realistic approach. Nas, one of Rap music’s top artists describing how he’ll harm another even if he isn’t really going to do it, the fantasy that he would is already created. Because this message is repeated constantly in rap music, this is considered a fantasy type. “A fantasy type is a stock rhetorical vision that appears repeatedly in the rhetoric of a group. Once a fantasy type has developed, rhetors do not need to provide the audience with details about the specific characters engaging in actions in particular setting.” (Foss, 1996) So regardless if Nas would really do it, the criminal history of previous rap artist, mass media’s interpretations of the artist and lyrics from the artist have already added to the rhetorical vision of all artists in the rap genre. In other word Nas doesn’t have to prove he’ll beat Jay-Z up, because previous crimes committed by rap stars, and mass media interpretation have already legitimized his claim.

The **Fantasy themes** within rap music are supported by the **fantasy types**, repeated in it. All the themes present in the characters, their actions and the setting, reach out to people of all backgrounds. These feed **diverse audiences** the ideas that rap artist share their, realities of the world. The **characters** being regarded as **credible**, in actions constituting as **survival** methods in an **extreme setting**, give the **extreme fans**, a rhetorical vision they can relate to. In this case the extreme fan is a **prison inmate** who has acted out crimes based on that rhetorical vision. As Sonja Foss suggests “fantasy theme analysis and symbolic convergence theory have much to offer as rhetorical scholars seek to understand new forms of communication and the changes they generate

in rhetorical practices.” (Foss, 2003) This article may also serve as further proof of Bormann’s fantasy theme theory as, a credible, reliable and relevant source for today’s rhetorical scholars.