White Chicks with a Gangsta' Pitch: Gendered Whiteness in United States Rap Culture (1990-2017)

Melvin L. Williams

The current research analyzed the authenticating strategies employed by White female rappers to establish legitimacy in Rap culture. Specifically, the study investigated the lyrical content of 109 Rap songs, produced by seven White female rappers signed to major record labels from 1990 to 2017 in the United States. An analysis of Rap lyrics from Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Sarai, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, K.Flay, and Iggy Azalea revealed a number of findings that complicated and supported Edward Armstrong and Mickey Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies. These rappers emphasized authenticity in their lyrical content and chronicled the multiple systems of oppressions facing White women in Rap, among other strategies. The seven rappers also presented themes that articulated a new Hip Hop authenticating strategy: "Look but don't touch." This strategy indicated a shift in the tactics used by White male rappers to establish legitimacy in the musical genre and captured the unique standpoints of White women in Rap culture.

The majority of the discourse in Hip Hop has primarily been about the thoughts, feelings, and ethos of Black men.[1] While Hip Hop has experienced some diversity over the years with the acceptances of Eminem, Macklemore, and Ryan Lewis, and more recently, Mac Miller, Logic, and Post Malone, White female rappers still have not achieved the same level of mainstream success as their White male counterparts. The advent of a White female "rocking the mic" is still heavily questioned and scrutinized by Hip Hop artists and fans. In Rap, "rocking the mic" is used to describe Rap artists, who are able to rap "effectively and impressively" and "use or wield Rap lyrics effectively with a sense of style or self-assurance."[2]

Despite changes throughout the years, Hip Hop remains a hypermasculine and heteronormative subculture, where White women are minimally represented. Rap lyrics coming from a White woman have been viewed historically as comical attempts to embody the attributes of Hip Hop's vision of Black masculinity and hysterical gender disjunctions that are similar to a woman wearing her husband's clothes.[3] However, there is an existing lineage of White female rappers, who strived to make a mark in Rap and Hip Hop. From Blondie's "Rapture" in the 1980s to the mass popularity of Iggy Azalea in 2014, the occurrences and significance of White female participation in Hip Hop culture have evolved over the past three decades.

[1] Touré Neblett, "Challenging Hip Hop Masculine Ideal," *New York Times*, December 23, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/25/arts/music/white-female-rappers-challenging-Hip Hops-masculine-ideals.

[2] Ben Zimmer, "When Did We First Rock the Mic," *New York Times*, July 9, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/11/magazine/11FOB-onlanguage-t.html?_r=0

[3] Ibid.

White female performers have aimed to challenge the masculine dominance of Hip Hop, although their small surge has barely garnered notice.[4] Despite the growing history of White female performers in Rap culture, the historical contributions and authenticating strategies of White female rappers remain topics largely unexamined in academic research. A review of scholarship and articles from refereed and mainstream publications concerning White participation in Rap and Hip Hop suggests authors have established a robust discussion on the authenticating strategies of White men, but not those related to White women.

Recognizing this void in Rap research, the current research investigated the discursive space of White women in Rap through an analysis of the authenticating strategies used by White female rappers to attain legitimacy in the musical genre. Specifically, the current research investigated the lyrical content of 109 Rap songs from nine studio albums and three extended plays (EPs), produced by White female rappers signed to major labels in the United States from 1990 to 2017, to examine the presence of Edward Armstrong and Mickey Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies in the following seven White female rappers: Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Sarai, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, Iggy Azalea, and K.Flay.[5] This twenty-seven-year time period was particularly significant for the current research because it captured the onset of White female rappers signing to major labels and releasing full-length albums in the Rap genre. More specifically, Tairrie B recorded the first Rap studio album released by a White female rapper signed to a major label in 1990.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Critical Whiteness Studies, Gendered Whiteness, and Rap Culture

Drawing from the theory of social constructionism, Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) raised questions about the construction of Whiteness and investigated how diverse groups in the United States "came to identify, and be identified by others, as White—and what that has meant for the social order."[6] CWS aims to critique and destabilize the hegemonic conceptualization of Whiteness by providing researchers with the tools to "look behind the privilege that Whiteness provides."[7] By investigating racial division and racial hierarchy through the lens of the dominant racial group, CWS

[4] Carolyn Corrado, "White Noise: Negotiating Boundaries and Constructing Whiteness in Hip Hop America" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Albany, 2013).

[5] Edward Armstrong, "Eminem's Construction of Authenticity," *Popular Music and Society* 27, no. 3 (2004): 335–55; and Mickey Hess, "Hip Hop Realness and The White Performer," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22, no. 5 (2005): 372–89.

[6] Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (2002): 155.

[7] Aida Hurtado and Abigail J. Stewart, "Through The Looking Glass Implications of Studying Whiteness For Feminist Methods," in *Off White: Readings on Power, Privilege, and Resistance*, ed. Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Linda Powell Pruitt, and April Burns (New York: Routledge, 2004), 297.

complicates notions of race by "studying up" the racial hierarchy.[8] Under this prism, Whiteness is systematically dissected, rather than taken for granted and left unexamined.

Scholarly writing and empirical research on Whiteness can be organized into three major themes: 1) the omnipresence, yet invisibility of Whiteness, 2) White privilege, and 3) the social construction of Whiteness.[9] Indicative of such power relations is third wave Whiteness, an emerging area of CWS research that illustrates an analytical shift in the study of White identities towards a more complex investigation of Whiteness to include gender.[10] Drawing on this contemporary wave of CWS, the researcher's conception of "Gendered Whiteness" considers the similarities and differences in the ways White masculinity and White femininity are constructed and signified through Rap culture. The social construction of White femininity has encouraged White women to be demure, deferential, and delicate to warrant the protection and support of their White fathers and husbands.[11]

Connecting Gendered Whiteness and CWS to the current research, Hip Hop culture stands as one of the few cultural spaces where Whiteness is regarded as the "Other" and considered subordinate to Blackness.[12] When examining Whiteness through the lens of Hip Hop culture, the three major themes of CWS research studies become complicated because Whiteness is not as invisible or privileged in the musical genre when compared to the society at large. The relations of power and privileges that make Whiteness powerful in a societal context make the racial category powerless for White artists in Hip Hop culture due to rising fears of cultural appropriation and imitation among other factors.

Because of the strong influence of gender order on society and Rap's push for female rappers to be hypersexual and tough in their deliveries, White women must embody Rap's cultural styling differently than their White male counterparts. Carolyn Corrado noted White women in Hip Hop and Rap culture have often taken on "stereotypically Black feminine identified traits (for example, being short tempered, quick to engage in physical altercations with other girls, aggressively yelling in another girl's face, and using particular hand gestures in these enactments), but not necessarily dressing the part."[13] Under this prism, White women in Hip Hop and Rap culture have

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[8] Michael Messner, "Becoming 100% Straight," in *Inside Sports*, ed. Jay Coakley and Peter Donnelly (New York: Routledge, 1999), 104–10.

[9] Kathryn Sorrells, *Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2015).

[10] France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher. "Introduction: The Future of Whiteness: A Map of the Third Wave," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008): 4–24.

[11] Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina 1896–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[12] Todd Boyd, *Am I Black Enough for You: Popular Culture from the Hood and Beyond* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

[13] Corrado, "White Noise," 68.

performed an alternative enactment of Black feminine characteristics that both guarded a White feminine aesthetic and complicated the borderlines of racialized styles.[14]

Authenticity in Hip Hop and Rap

Authenticity claims have been pervasive in Hip Hop music communities, which previously existed on the margins of mainstream American culture.[15] In popular music studies, the concept of authenticity deals with the performance's proximity to an original culture that once existed outside of the record industry.[16] Peterson summarized the scholarship of Maurice Halbwachs by stating, "Authenticity is not inherent in the object or event that is designated authentic but is a socially agreed upon construct."[17] This "socially agreed upon construct" serves as a discursive formation with multiple meanings.[18] According to Imani Perry, Hip Hop music is "Black American music" that is reluctant to accept White artists because of its history as a resistant culture.[19] Since its dominant culture is Black, "Whiteness stands outside of Hip Hop as a force that threatens to appropriate its culture."[20] Despite the racial tensions that underpin Rap's reluctance to render White Hip Hop artists as authentic, a White rapper's performance of authenticity is still his or her biggest asset in the genre's hypermasculine and consumerist world.

Katja Lee noted, "The discourse of authenticity in Rap has been and continues to be bound up in the performance of self, although what constitutes an acceptable performance of identity and even what constitutes a legitimate identity have changed over the years."[21] Hip Hop journalist David Drake addressed the changing dynamics of authenticity in the musical genre, stating, "Authenticity in Hip Hop is less about appealing to an objective truth—after all, there are as many truths as there are people on the planet—than it is a social code."[22] According to Drake, authenticity is a "loose, unspoken set of rules that orient credit to the art form's creators" and is "flexible, always in flux and decided by audiences in different ways in different places."[23]

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Kembrew McLeod, "Authenticity within Hip Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation," *Journal of Communication* 49 (1999): 134–50.

[16] Hess.

[17] Richard A. Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 5.

[18] McLeod.

[19] Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 10.

[20] Hess, 375.

[21] Lee, 352.

[22] David Drake, "No Idea's Original: Authenticity in Rap Is a Myth," *Complex.* Accessed July 25, 2015, http://www.complex.com/music/2015/07/rap-authenticity-myth-meek-mill-drake-action-bronson-ghostface-killah.

[23] Ibid.

In the context of the United States, authenticity is particularly complex, given its legacy of stolen labor, capitalism, and the commodification of Black art forms.[24] When situated within this sociopolitical context, the veneration of authenticity in Hip Hop is equally about providing credit and more importantly, money to those who have "done the work," a factor that opens the door for multiple creators of a Rap artist's identity and art forms.[25] Acknowledging these trends, contemporary Rap record labels have become increasingly strategic about how Rap artists' identities are created, performed, and distributed to a mass public, especially in the case of White female rappers.

Despite Rap's push for an "authentic self," White female cultural production in the musical genre often results in a carefully constructed process of manufacturing by music executives, who alter components of the White female rapper's identity to market to a larger Rap audience. White rappers have historically presented multilayered identities constructed by Rap record labels to 1) appeal to contemporary and historic Rap trends, 2) acknowledge and reject White privilege, and 3) advance a narrative of Hip Hop authenticity to foreground a presumably "original" and "authentic" self.[26] Within this complex process, White female rappers navigate through multiple systems of oppression to immerse into a Black masculine culture that is presumably foreign to them. As a result, the authenticity claims and identities advanced by these artists are products of both lived and manufactured experiences that are equally important for Rap audiences, as they choose to validate or not validate them based on the genre's socially agreed upon construct of authenticity and its larger consumer culture.

Exploring Rap's racial politics and its implications for White rappers, Edward Armstrong identified three forms of Rap authenticity evident in the authenticating strategies of Eminem.[27] Eminem's music conveyed to Rap fans the traditional characteristics that represent authenticity in Rap, but also renegotiated those same attributes to construct his identity as a strong performer in a historically Black culture.[28] Acknowledging the autobiographical nature of Eminem's lyrics and articulations of authenticity, Armstrong advanced the following authenticating strategies based on his declarations of authenticity to both the Rap music industry and popular culture: 1) "being true to oneself" or "keeping it real," 2) claiming "local allegiances and territorial identities," and 3) establishing a connection to "an original source of Rap" through locale, style, or links to an established artist.[29]

Extending Armstrong's model of Rap authenticity, Mickey Hess constructed the concept of "Hip Hop realness." According to Hess, Hip Hop realness is "conveyed when an artist performs as a unique individual and maintains a connection with the

[24] Michael Hodgman, "Class, Race, Credibility, and Authenticity in the Hip Hop Music Genre," *Journal of Sociological Research* 4, no. 2 (2013): 402–13.

[25] Drake, "No Idea's Original: Authenticity in Rap Is a Myth."

[26] Hess, "Hip Hop Realness and the White Performer."

[27] Armstrong, "Eminem's Construction of Authenticity."

[28] Katja Lee, "Reconsidering Rap's 'I': Eminem's Autobiographical Postures and the Construction of Identity Authenticity," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 351–73.

[29] Armstrong, "Eminem's Construction of Authenticity," 336.

original culture of Hip Hop."[30] Hess detailed three forms of Hip Hop authenticity employed historically by White artists over a three-era time period of White male participation in Hip Hop and Rap culture: 1) Pre-Vanilla Ice era, 2) Vanilla Ice era, and 3) Eminem era, respectively. According to Hess, each era had its own distinct authenticating strategy, which described the strategies used by White artists to frame their Rap identities as a personification of "real" Hip Hop. The three Hip Hop authenticating strategies are:

1. Cultural immersion—The White Hip Hop artist(s) asserts his or her immersion in Hip Hop culture without imitating a model of Black authenticity.
2. Imitation—The White Hip Hop artist(s) imitates explicit models of the Black aesthetics including, but not limited to, language, oral culture, musical traditions, and political location.
3. The inversion of the rags-to-riches success stories of Black Rap stars—The White Hip Hop artist(s) frames his or her Whiteness as a career disadvantage in a form that remains dominated by Black artists.[31]

Literature Review

History of Prominent White Female Rappers in United States Rap

The 1980s saw the audiences of Rap music increase dramatically, as the genre transformed from a fad to a musical form with great commercial appeal.[32] From the widespread popularity of LL Cool J and Salt N' Pepa to Run DMC's $1.5 million endorsement deal with Adidas, rappers absorbed and recontextualized popular culture as White audiences warmed up to Rap in the 1980s.[33] Although the Sugar Hill Gang was able to land on the *Billboard* Hot 100 in 1979, wide-scale public attention was not paid to the genre until a White female artist appropriated it, or at least helped it along.[34] Blondie's "Rapture" became one of the first Rap songs to get substantial radio airplay and was the first Rap song to reach number one in the United States in 1981.[35] "Rapture" infused a combination of new wave, disco, Rhythm and Blues (R&B), and Hip Hop that pioneered a nationwide interest in Rap music and was notable for acknowledging Hip Hop pioneers Fab Five Freddy and Grandmaster Flash. When asked about the

[30] Hess, 374.

[31] Ibid., 375.

[32] Steven Stoute, *The Tanning of America: How Hip Hop Created a Culture That Rewrote the Rules of the New Economy* (New York: Gotham Books, 2012).

[33] Sorrells, *Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice*.

[34] Paul J. Olson and Bennie Shobe, "White Rappers and Black Epistemology," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 41, no. 6 (2008): 994–1011.

[35] "The Hot 100," *Billboard*, March 28, 1981, http://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100/1981-03-28; Alex Ogg and David Upshal, *The Hip Hop Years: A History of Rap* (New York: Fromm International, 2001).

significance of Blondie's "Rapture" for Whites in Hip Hop during an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, MC Serch (former member of White Rap group 3rd Bass) discussed his initial reluctance to take the Pop singer seriously.[36] He stated, "At the time, I thought she was just goofing around. It wasn't until later that I appreciated it as a piece of Hip Hop history."[37]

Whether an attempt at cultural appropriation or a sincere showcase of her identification with Hip Hop culture, Deborah Harry's rap on "Rapture" increased the number of White female rappers signed to record deals in the United States.[38] Following the widespread success of "Rapture," record labels began to recognize how profitable the merger of Pop and Rap could actually be. The 1990s brought on a surge of White female rappers backed by record labels who were looking to cash in on the new phenomenon. Rap's popularity and audience, also grew considerably throughout the 1990s and 2000s, making room for many technological, lyrical, and thematic innovations to reflect its expanding White audience.[39] Materialism, licentiousness, dumb misogyny, and violence were main themes of the genre during this time period, a factor that impacted White female rappers as they attempted to position themselves within its hypermasculine, violent culture.[40]

In spite of these challenges, White female participation in Rap crystallized in 1990 and 1991 with the release of studio albums from Tairrie B (*Power of a Woman*) and Icy Blu (*Icy Blu*). These albums were the first full-length Rap albums released by White female artists signed to major record labels. While their albums did not perform well on the *Billboard* charts, the commercial failures of Tairrie B and Icy Blu did not stifle the increasing number of White female Rap acts during the decade. In 1990, former *Soul Train* dancer Misa signed to the historic Motown label and released a modest single, "Shake the House," which failed to garner much attention from the public.[41] Consequently, Misa's self-titled album was never released due to management issues.

The trend of White female rappers signing to major labels and releasing extended plays and studio albums continued in the 2000s with the following White female Rap acts: Sarai, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, K.Flay, and Iggy Azalea.[42] These

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[36] Michael Endelman, "White Rhymes: A Brief History of Pale-Faced Rap," *Entertainment Weekly*, January 26, 2007, http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20010033,00.html.

[37] Ibid.

[38] "The 50 Biggest White Girl Rap Moments of All Time," *Spin*, October 2, 2012, http://www.spin.com/gallery/50-biggest-white-girl-rap-moments-of-all-time/.

[39] Guilermo Rebollo-Gil and Amanda Moras, "Black Women and Black Men in Hip Hop Music: Misogyny, Violence, and the Negotiation of (White-Owned) Space," *The Journal of Popular Culture,* 45, no. 1 (2012): 118–32.

[40] John Seabrook, *Nobrow: The Culture of Marketing. The Marketing of Culture* (New York: Knopf, 2000), 74.

[41] Kyleigh, "Rare and Obscure Music: Misa," June 5, 2009, http://musicrareobscure.blogspot.com/2009/06/misa.html

[42] Sarai. *The Original*, Epic Records, 2003, compact disc; Lady Sovereign, *Public Warning*, Def Jam Recordings, 2006, compact disc; Kreayshawn, *Somethin' Bout Kreay*, Columbia Records, 2012, compact disc; K.Flay, *Eyes Shut*, RCA Records, 2012, compact disc; and Iggy Azalea, *The New Classic*, Island Records, 2014, compact disc; Iggy Azalea, *Reclassified*, Island Records, 2014, compact disc.

artists, with the exception of Iggy Azalea, only achieved mild commercial success at best. Because these White female rappers comprise the sample for the current investigation, their histories and contributions will be discussed in greater detail in the Methodology portion of this study. While the aforementioned White female Rap acts gained public recognition through support from a major record label, there have been a number of White female rappers who have gained moderate exposure under independent labels.

Bay Area Rap trio Yeastie Girlz surfaced in the late 1980s and resurfaced in the 1990s under the guidance of an independent record label. Drawing on the name of iconic Hip Hop group The Beastie Boys, the short-lived feminist Rap trio, comprised of members Jane, Cammie, and Kate, hailed from the fertile punk scene of Gilman Street in Berkeley, San Francisco. Yeastie Girlz pushed forward a third-wave feminist message, as they spoke out against the FCC and rapped about not shaving their armpits.[43] While the trio released their debut album in 1988, it was not until they hopped on "Consolidated," a 1992 industrial track by fellow Bay Area radicals, that the Yeastie Girlz captured the attention of a mass public, turning a diss phrase into a celebration of going down and moving your tongue around.[44] Aside from a brief reintroduction in 1992, the trio did not release any more material and failed to remain in the spotlight.

The political consciousness sparked by Yeastie Girlz resurfaced in the 2000s with the debuts of White female rappers Dessa and Invincible. Minneapolis rapper Dessa debuted as a member of the indie Hip Hop collective Doomtree. As a member of the collective, Dessa appeared on numerous albums before releasing her own solo EP, *False Hopes*. Dessa went on to release three solo albums through Doomtree's independent record label. Similar to Dessa, Invincible gained a reputation as "one of Hip Hop and Rap's sharpest political storytellers" with the release of her debut album, *ShapeShifters,* in 2008.[45] The album was released on Emergence, an independent record label she cofounded. Since the release of her debut album, Invincible has been compared to Eminem and positively reviewed by *Washington Post*.[46]

While Dessa and Invincible rose to fame through politically conscious Rap messages, there have also been White female rappers who have capitalized on the nation's fascination with the merger of Pop and Rap music. Some noteworthy examples are Princess Superstar, Kitty (formerly Kitty Pryde), and, most recently, Chanel West Coast. It bears noting that the most successful White female performers have primarily been R&B and Pop singers who delved into the Rap genre temporarily and did not release full Rap albums. Examples of these early White female rappers include Teena

[43] Greg Prato, "Artist Biography: Yeastie Girlz," AllMusic, accessed November 1, 2014, http://www.allmusic.com/artist/yeastie-girlz-mn0001218992/biography

[44] "The 50 Biggest White Girl Rap Moments of All Time."

[45] "Invincible: Shapeshifters," *Spin*, August 2008, http://books.google.com/books?id=Ul7jcf4HvN4C&pg=PA100&dq=Invincible+Shapeshifters&hl=en&sa=X&ei=zwVKUZK1ForKqQGupYCQBw&ved=0CEMQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=Invincible%20Shapeshifters&f=false 1990.

[46] Ibid.

Marie (also known as Lady Tee), a protégé of Black funk artist Rick James, who rapped on the record "Square Biz," and Deborah Harry of the group Blondie.[47] Specifically, Deborah Harry was the first White rapper of any gender to top the *Billboard* charts in 1981, catapulting the still-nascent sound of Rap into the consciousness of a mass public.

Deborah Harry's rap on "Rapture" undoubtedly served as a precedent to a host of White female Pop acts who rapped on widely successful musical hits. These women include but are certainly not limited to Dev ("Like a G6"), Fergie ("London Bridge," "All of the Lights," "L.A. Love," "You Already Know"), Ke$ha ("Tik Tok"), Madonna ("American Life"), and Miley Cyrus ("Ain't Worried Bout' Nothin'" and "24"). Though these women have been pivotal in discussions about White female participation in Rap and Hip Hop, the artists did not primarily identify as rappers and subsequently did not release a commercial album solely centered on the Rap genre. Such factors disqualified these artists from consideration in the current research. Despite the presence of White women in Rap since the 1980s, the White female rapper remains largely uninvestigated in Rap research. White female rappers have all strived to create a discursive space for White women in Rap culture, but have only achieved limited, if any, commercial success. However, the lack of commercial success gained by White female rappers does not negate the necessity of an investigation centered on their histories.

Research Questions

In considering the goal of the study and the lack of scholarship exploring this phenomenon, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Which strategies emerge in the lyrical content of the seven rappers under investigation that illustrate their attempts to establish Hip Hop authenticity using Armstrong and Hess's White Hip Hop authenticating strategies?
RQ2: Which, if any, of these strategies complicate Armstrong and Hess's White Hip Hop authenticating strategies?
RQ3: Which strategies, if any, emerge that articulate additional Hip Hop authenticating strategies for White rappers?

Methodology

The current research investigated the Hip Hop authenticating strategies of seven White female rappers through an analysis of lyrical content. The researcher focused on White female rappers who were signed to major labels and released full albums and electronic plays (EPs) over a twenty-seven-year period. With the goal of interpreting Rap lyrics for meaning, the researcher employed textual analysis, a systematic qualitative research method for this study. In academic research, textual analysis is a

[47] Layli Phillips, Kerri Reddick-Morgan, and Dionne Patricia Stephens, "Oppositional Consciousness within an Oppositional Realm: The Case of Feminism and Womanism in Rap and Hip Hop, 1976–2004," *Journal of African-American History* 90, no. 3 (2005): 256.

research methodology used in a variety of ways to provide criticism of media culture and seeks to determine the meaning in language—individual words, idiomatic expressions, and other phrases.[48]

When using textual analysis, researchers focus on meaning in texts by interpreting narrative elements and evaluating how these meanings act as examples of larger stories or existing broader social systems.[49] Rappers "situate themselves on the margin of society aligning their voices with other oppressed people."[50] According to Lincoln, their voices are interpreted as "resistance against silence, resistance to disengagement, and resistance to marginalization."[51] Language is discursive and its discourse involves "the production of knowledge through language."[52] Recognizing the role of Rap lyrics as texts that serve as "storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic beats," and its ability to share insight into the personal experiences of rappers, the researcher's use of textual analysis provided a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation that is culturally, contextually, and historically appropriate.[53]

Sampling

The current research employed a criterion sampling technique to address the research questions. Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance.[54] The logic of criterion sampling is to review and analyze all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance for quality assurance purposes.[55] The purpose of utilizing a criterion sampling technique in this study was two-fold. First, the sampling technique was used to capture the perspectives of White female Rap artists, who all qualified for inclusion in the study based on very specific criteria. Secondly, the sampling technique enabled the researcher to select Rap

[48] Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture," In *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Critical Reader*, edited by Gale Dines and Jean McMahon Humez, 7-18 (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011); Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (Oxford: Routledge, 2003).

[49] W. James Potter, *An Analysis of Thinking and Research about Qualitative Methods* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996).

[50] Aisha S. Durham, "Let's Get Free, A Soundtrack for Revolution: A Textual Analysis of Black Power and Counterhegemony in Dead Prez Debut Rap Album" (Master's thesis, University of Georgia, 2002), 49.

[51] Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 1, no. 3 (1995): 282.

[52] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," In *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1997), 44.

[53] Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop and Why It Matters* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2008).

[54] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation* Methods, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001), 238.

[55] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1990).

artists over an extensive period of time. The categories were as follows: 1) rapper, 2) Rap album, 3) signed to a major label, and 4) released the Rap album between 1990 and 2017.

Approaching this investigation required the researcher to determine the difference between a "rapper" who released a full commercial album and "someone who has simply rapped on a song." In *Homegirls and Divas: A Thematic Analysis of Black Female Rap Videos from 2005–2011*, Natasha Howard defined a rapper as "a person who performs Rap music."[56] However, this broad definition left many gray areas that needed to be addressed when determining the sample for the current investigation. The performers examined were White female rappers who appeared as the primarily featured artist and released full Rap albums and/or extended plays (EPs) through major record labels between January 1, 1990 and June 1, 2017. This twenty-seven-year time period was particularly significant for the current research because it captured the onset of White female rappers signing to major labels and releasing full-length albums in the Rap genre under examination.

Only White female artists who released albums that met The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences' standards for the categorization of a "Rap album" were considered for inclusion in the current research. According to the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, an album must contain at least 51% playing time of rapped performances to be considered a "Rap album."[57] This criterion was utilized for EPs as well. According to Howard, in addition to "rapper" and "Rap album," a "major record label" was defined as any record label or affiliate that was covered under the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). The RIAA covers the intellectual property of artists, who are affiliated with a record label distributed through one of the following major distribution companies: Warner Music Group, Universal Music Group, Sony/BMG, and Capitol/EMI.[58] Based on the aforementioned criteria and the nature of the criterion sampling technique, lyrics come from a total of 109 Rap songs from nine studio albums and three EPs produced by seven artists served as the sample for the current research.

Rappers under Investigation

The current section strived to provide brief biographical information about the seven artists under investigation. Artists are listed in chronological order based on their Rap debuts and studio album or EP release dates.

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[56] Natasha Howard, "Homegirls and Divas: A Thematic Analysis of Black Female Rap Videos from 2005–2011" (PhD diss., Howard University, 2012), 43.

[57] "52nd OEP Category Description Guide," National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, accessed October 15, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20091027172820/http://www.grammy.com/PDFs/Recording_Academy/52guide.pdf.

[58] "About RIAA," Recording Industry Association of America, accessed October 15, 2014, http://www.riaa.com/aboutus.php?content_selector=about-who-we-are-riaa.

Tairrie B. Tairrie B (born Theresa Beth on January 18, 1965) is a rapper from Anaheim, California, who began her career as a part of a female dance group entitled Bardeux.[59] Tairrie B recorded *The Power of a Woman* on June 12, 1990, an album that served as the first full-length Rap album released by a White female rapper in the United States.[60] The album failed to make much of an impact, and Tairrie B disappeared from the Rap industry, later becoming an alternative metal vocalist.[61] In August 2015, Tairrie B returned to her Rap roots and released a studio album entitled *Vintage Curses* independently.

Icy Blu. Hailing from Austin, Texas, Icy Blu (born Laurel Urchik on June 1, 1974) encountered moderate success on the *Billboard Hot 100* with her two released singles "Pump It" and "I Wanna Be Your Girl," peaking at #78 and #46, respectively.[62] However, despite this moderate success, Icy Blu's self-titled Rap album, released on July 9, 1991 through Giant Records, failed to achieve commercial success.[63]

Sarai. As a native of upstate New York, Sarai (born Sarai Marie Howard on January 23, 1981) did not imagine herself as a rapper, but was introduced to the musical genre by her older brother.[64] In 2000, Sarai signed a record deal with Epic Records, making her the first White female rapper to be represented by a major American label.[65] Sarai released her debut album, *The Original*, on July 29, 2003.[66] Lacking promotion by Epic Records, the album failed to gain public interest and subsequently did not generate sales.[67]

Lady Sovereign. London rapper Lady Sovereign (born Louise Amanda Harman on December 19, 1985) used social media to promote her music to a mass public. The media attention created by Lady Sovereign's online posts landed the rapper in the office of Rap mogul Jay-Z, who was so impressed by her rap ability that he signed her to Def Jam Records, making Lady Sovereign the first female British artist to sign with the label.[68] Aside from the success of her popular, first single, "Love Me or Hate Me," Lady Sovereign's debut album, *Public Warning* (released on October 31, 2006), did not

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[59] Kyleigh, "Rare and Obscure Music: Tairrie B," June 6, 2009, http://musicrareobscure.blogspot.com/2009/06/tairrie-b.html.

[60] Tairrie B, *The Power of a Woman,* Ruthless Records, 1990, compact disc; "Icy Blu CD," CD Universe, accessed April 8, 2014, http://www.cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?pid=4169892&style=music.

[61] Kyleigh, "Rare and Obscure Music: Tairrie B."

[62] Kyleigh, "Rare and Obscure Music: Icy Blu," June 3, 2009, http://musicrareobscure.blogspot.com/2009/06/icy-blu.html.

[63] "Icy Blu CD."

[64] Sarai Marie Howard, "About," Facebook, accessed April 8, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/SaraiMarieHoward/info.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Tom Breihan, "Lady Sovereign: I Needed To Stop," *Pitchfork*, January 12, 2009, http://pitchfork.com/news/34335-lady-sovereign-i-needed-to-stop/

perform well, only selling 300,000 copies.[69] After being released from Def Jam, Lady Sovereign released a second album entitled *Jigsaw* independently. *Jigsaw* did not chart on the *Billboard* 200.

Kreayshawn. Born Natassia Gail Zolot on September 24, 1989 in San Francisco, California, Kreayshawn's fascination with Rap began at the age of seventeen when she began recording songs and exploring her interest in cinematography, shooting music videos for local artists, such as Lil B.[70] Capitalizing on the power of YouTube, Kreayshawn released a video for the single "Gucci Gucci" in 2011, and the song quickly became an Internet hit and landed the female rapper a million-dollar record deal with Columbia Records.[71] Her debut album, *Somethin' Bout Kreay*, was released in September 2012 under Columbia Records and was met with negative reviews and poor album sales.[72] *Somethin' Bout Kreay* currently stands as the all-time lowest first week sales by an artist signed to a major record label, according to HitsDailyDouble.[73] After a five-year, musical hiatus, Kreayshawn announced, via Twitter on August 15, 2017, plans to leave her rapping career behind to combat White privilege and make room for more women of color in Rap.[74]

K.Flay. With dual degrees in psychology and sociology from Stanford University, K.Flay (born Kristine Flaherty on June 30, 1985) grew up outside of Chicago, Illinois.[75] During K.Flay's freshman year at Stanford University, she started rapping one night after deciding that Rap was "rife with misogyny and materialism," and by her junior year, Flay was making mixtapes and gaining acclaim at the university.[76] After signing with RCA in 2012, K.Flay released two EPs entitled *Eyes Shut* and *What If It Is* through the major record label. K.Flay parted ways with RCA in 2014, citing frustrations from "recording a shit ton of songs" and released her debut album *Life as a Dog* independently in 2014.[77] The album peaked at number two on the *Billboard Heatseekers*

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[69] Hattie Collins, "Lady Sovereign: 'I Lost the Plot a Few Times,'" *Guardian*, April 7, 2009, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/apr/08/lady-sovereign

[70] Rebecca Nicholson, "Kreayshawn: Haters Are 'Old and Don't Know What Swag Is,'" *Guardian*, September 30, 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/oct/01/kreayshawn-gucci-white-girl-mob

[71] "The 50 Biggest White Girl Rap Moments."

[72] X. Alexander, "Kreayshawn Album: 'Somethin Bout Kreay' Deemed 'Fairly Empty,'" *Huff Post San Francisco*, accessed September 18, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/19/kreayshawn-album-somethin_n_1898119.html

[73] Marjua Estevez, "Kreayshawn Earned One Cent from Her Album Sales," *XXL*, January 17, 2014, http://www.xxlmag.com/news/2014/01/kreayshawn-earned-one-cent-from-her-albums-sales/.

[74] Kyle Eustice, "Kreayshawn Quit Rapping Because She Was 'Too Privileged' and needed to Make Room for POC," *HipHop DX*, August 16, 2017, http://hiphopdx.com/news/id.44395/title.kreayshawn-quit-rapping-because-she-was-too-privileged-needed-to-make-room-for-poc#.

[75] "K.Flay," JamBase, accessed April 8, 2014, http://www.jambase.com/Artists/86708/K.Flay/Bio.

[76] "The 50 Biggest White Girl Rap Moments."

[77] "K.Flay: New Album: Life as a Dog on PledgeMusic," PledgeMusic, accessed April 30, 2014, http://www.pledgemusic.com/projects/kflay.

chart.[78] The success of *Life as a Dog* led to K.Flay's most recent record deal with Interscope Records under Dan Reynold's Night Sheet Records Imprint.[79] On April 4, 2017, she released her major label debut studio album, *Every Where is Some Where*, which debuted at 118 on the *Billboard 200*.[80]

Iggy Azalea. Referred to by Rap critic Charlamagne Tha God as the "next Macklemore," Iggy Azalea (born Amethyst Amelia Kelly on June 7, 1990) gained praises from *XXL Magazine* after the release of her first full-length project, *Ignorant Art*.[81] Following *Ignorant Art*, Iggy Azalea signed with Mercury Records and later Island Def Jam.[82] After being named the first female and non-American rapper on *XXL's Top 10 Freshmen* cover issue in 2012, Iggy Azalea released *Glory*, her debut EP, which was executive produced by her longtime collaborator and mentor T.I. under Grand Hustle Records.[83] Iggy Azalea's debut album, *The New Classic*, was released on April 22, 2014 under Island Def Jam Records and debuted at number three on the *Billboard 200* and number two on the *Billboard* Top R&B/Hip Hop Albums and Rap Albums chart, making her album the highest debut by a White female rapper on both charts.[84] The album earned the rapper four nominations at the 2015 Grammy Awards, including Best New Artist, Best Rap Album, and Record of the Year.[85] In the same year, Iggy Azalea announced plans to release her sophomore studio album, *Digital Distortion*, and has since then released five singles ("A-Zillion," "Team," "Can't Lose," "Mo' Bounce," and "Switch") in support of the project.[86] The singles achieved lackluster commercial

[78] "K.Flay Chart History," *Billboard*, accessed April 12, 2017, http://www.billboard.com/artist/6143419/k-flay/chart?f=335

[79] Roman Gokhman, "K.Flay Releases Video for First Single with Interscope Records," *Riff Magazine*, September 13, 2016, http://www.riffmagazine.com/news/k-flay-blood-inthe-cut-video/

[80] "K.Flay Chart History."

[81] Crystal Bell, "Charlamagne Tha God Talks 2014 Woodie Awards and Why Iggy Azalea Is the Next Macklemore," *Wet Paint*, March 14, 2014, http://www.wetpaint.com/charlamagne-tha-god-woodie-awards-iggy-azalea-video-1-515989/.

[82] Erika Ramirez, "Iggy Azalea Signs to Island Def Jam," *Billboard*, April 23, 2013, http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/the-juice/1559163/iggy-azalea-signs-to-island-def-jam.

[83] Latifah Muhammad, "Iggy Azalea—*Glory* EP," *Hip Hop Wired*, July 30, 2012, http://hiphopwired.com/2012/07/30/iggy-azalea-glory-ep-listendownload/.

[84] Paula Meara, "Rap Release Dates: Redman, Iggy Azalea, Wu Block, Swollen Members," *Hip Hop DX*, March 25, 2014, http://www.hiphopdx.com/index/news/id.28046/title.rap-release-dates-redman-iggy-azalea-wu-block-swollen-members.

[85] "Sia, Iggy Azalea Each Score Four Grammy Nominations Including Record of the Year," *ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) News*, December 7, 2014, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-12-07/sia-iggy-azalea-score-grammy-nominations/5949378.

[86] Iggy Azalea, *Digital Distortion*, Island Records, 2017, compact disc; Elias Leight, "Billboard Winterfest: Iggy Azalea Talks about Grammy Awards, Her 2015 Tour, and Her Next Album," *Billboard*, January 26, 2015, http://www.billboard.com/articles/events/sundance-2015/6450936/iggy-azalea-winterfest-interview.

success at best, a factor that forced Iggy Azalea and Def Jam to push back her album's release date on multiple occasions.[87]

Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

In the current study, the lyrics from each Rap song were examined separately and then organized into a collective group based on the Rap artist who authored them. The researcher then analyzed the lyrical content of Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, Iggy Azalea, and K.Flay separately. The researcher noted whether the rappers' lyrical content presented discourse that aligned with Armstrong and Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies. The researcher also noted whether the lyrical content of the seven rappers offered any discourses that complicated Armstrong and Hess's strategies. A Hip Hop authenticating strategy was considered to be "complicated" by an artist under investigation if they remained true to key aspects of the strategy, but altered components of it to articulate a unique standpoint.

Once data were collected, the researcher conducted a qualitative deductive thematic analysis to discover themes within the texts. In a deductive approach to thematic analysis, the researcher "approaches the coding process of his or her data with pre-existing themes linked to past research on the phenomenon in question;" thus allowing the researcher to "extend or refute the works of previous researchers on a specific subject."[88] A deductive approach to thematic analysis was used in the present study because the data collected were analyzed for themes found in alignment with Armstrong and Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies.

After a systematic analysis was completed, the researcher considered findings within the context of each individual rapper under investigation. This task was achieved through close investigations of the texts as a means to determine how dominant themes manifested within the context of the seven rappers and the 109 Rap songs under investigation.

Findings and Discussion

Brief Overview of Findings

An analysis of the 109 Rap songs from the seven White female rappers under investigation revealed a number of findings that supported and complicated Armstrong and Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies. Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Sarai, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, and Iggy Azalea incorporated familiar strategies associated with Armstrong and Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies in their attempts to validate

[87] C. Vernon Coleman, "Iggy Azalea Doesn't Know When Her Album Is Coming Out," *XXL Mag*, June 3, 2017, http://www.xxlmag.com/news/2017/06/iggy-azalea-doesnt-know-when-album-coming-out/.

[88] Howard, "Homegirls and Divas: A Thematic Analysis of Black Female Rap Videos from 2005–2011" 41.

themselves as credible artists in a musical genre dominated by Black men. Rappers Tairrie B and Iggy Azalea employed the most of Armstrong and Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies, each presenting themes in their lyrics that corresponded with five and six of the strategies, respectively. This finding was particularly significant because both rappers, unlike the five other rappers under investigation, were signed under and affiliated with established Black Rap groups.

However, the seven rappers did not all place the same emphasis on establishing and sustaining authenticity, with many artists either complicating the already existing Hip Hop authenticating strategies or not pursuing legitimacy at all. Lady Sovereign and K.Flay presented discourses in their Rap lyrics that suggested an indifference towards legitimizing themselves in the musical genre. Interestingly, K.Flay did not enact any of the Hip Hop authenticating strategies and served as the only artist in the sample whose song lyrics did not correspond with any of the strategies advanced by Armstrong and Hess. K.Flay made noticeable attempts to "Other" herself from Black male rappers and communicate apathy towards skeptics of her music. For example, K.Flay stated in her song "Sunburn," "Not worried about my taxes, not giving a flying fuck. Not worried about my ashes that one day will turn to dust." K.Flay also rejected comparisons to established Black Rap acts stating in the song, "10th Avenue," "I am no Kanye, Barry Bonds only hits I am making are ones on a bong." Overall, K.Flay's lyrics suggested a rejection of the Hip Hop authenticating strategies commonly employed by White rappers in Rap and Hip Hop's larger commodified culture. The theme of rejecting Hip Hop authentication was not as popular among the other five White female rappers and thus failed to be considered a major finding for the study.

Similarly, two artists presented discourses in their lyrical content that suggested attempts to imitate explicit models of the Black aesthetic. Both Icy Blu and Iggy Azalea demonstrated imitation in their attempts to remake successful songs originally performed by Black male and female Rap artists. While Icy Blu's "Pump It" stands as her most successful song to date, it was a remake of Rap group Salt-N-Pepa's classic hit "Push It" released in 1987. Using the song to discuss her search for a man to party with on the dance floor, the White rapper did not acknowledge the originators of the song and mimicked Black oral culture. While Iggy Azalea did acknowledge Jamaican dancehall legend Patra in her Reggae-inspired song "Lady Patra," the Australian rapper imitated Jamaican speech by altering her voice to mimic its oral culture. The pattern continued with her *Digital Distortion* single "Team." In this song, the Australian rapper remixed the flow from New Orleans rapper Juvenile's classic hit "Back That Azz Up," failed to acknowledge the song's originators, and claimed the obvious song similarities were unrelated. A complete list of the Hip Hop authenticating strategies employed by the six rappers is outlined in Table 1.

Hip Hop Authenticating Strategy	Artist(s)
The White Rap artist claims to be true to oneself and claims to be "natural" or "real" without "artifice"	Iggy Azalea, Lady Sovereign, Sarai, Tairrie B
The White Rap artist claims local allegiances and territorial identities.	Iggy Azalea, Kreayshawn, Lady Sovereign, Sarai, Tairrie B
The White Rap artist attempts to establish a connection to an original source of Rap through locale, style, or links to an established artist.	Iggy Azalea, Kreayshawn, Lady Sovereign, Tairrie B
Cultural Immersion	Iggy Azalea, Kreayshawn, Lady Sovereign, Sarai, Tairrie B
Imitation	Icy Blu, Iggy Azalea
The inversion of the rags-to-riches success stories of Black Rap stars	Iggy Azalea, Sarai, Tairrie B

Table 1 – Hip Hop Authenticating Strategies Presented in White Female Rappers' Lyrics

White Chicks Keeping It Real in Rap Culture

Iggy Azalea, Lady Sovereign, Sarai, and Tairrie B claimed to be "real," "keep it 100," and "natural rhymers" whose access to a Rap audience reportedly came from years of hard work and dedication to perfecting their crafts. These rappers used Armstrong's strategy of "being true to oneself," "natural," or "real without artifice" to authenticate themselves as emcees and communicated a strong dedication to Rap culture. More importantly, the four rappers adopted aliases such as "The Gangster's Moll," "The Original," "The New Classic," and "The Realest" to signify the originality of their Rap identities. Comparable to Armstrong's research on Eminem's Rap authenticating strategies, the women used aliases and declarations of "keeping it real" to communicate a sense of "first-person authenticity" and convey that their utterances were ones of integrity and originality."[89] For these four rappers, it was very important to emphasize self-creation and authorship in their lyrical content to combat accusations of imitation.

For Tairrie B, her realness was evidenced through trademark Rap skills that allowed her to stand alongside NWA, Comptown, and the Syndicate Mob. She

[89] Armstrong, 337.

continually used aliases, such as "The Gangster's Moll," "Female Mob Boss," and "Crazed Bitch with a Gangsta' Profanity Pitch," to emphasize her appreciation for Rap culture, express her identity, and reveal personal truths about her Rap affiliations. In fact, Tairrie B employed a similar strategy as Eminem, as she combated critics (i.e., media and other rappers) who doubted the authenticity of her lyrics. For example, in "Step 2 This," Tairrie B challenged all of her naysayers and made a point to highlight that when it came to her dedication to Rap and rhyming, there was "no imitating, debating or mocking, second guessing, half stepping, or stopping." This finding was particularly significant considering Hess's discussion on Eminem, who he argued used lyrical content to directly address any accusations regarding his Rap authenticity.

Similar to Tairrie B, Sarai claimed to "keep it real" and stressed her dedication to quality lyrical content and the larger Rap culture. Coining herself "The Original," Sarai claimed to be the missing piece in Rap culture. In the interlude to her debut album, *The Original,* Sarai stated, "I got what you need to survive. Make no mistake, I'm the original." Similarly, in "It's Official," Sarai asserted her Hip Hop realness as she proclaimed, "I keep it real with everything I do. I don't have time to pull a front for you." As a White female rapper, Sarai's affirmation of "being real" was supported by her longtime participation in Rap culture as both a lyricist and battle rapper. Lady Sovereign presented comparable themes in her song "A Little Bit of Shh," claiming to be an original Rap star who developed her skills without the support of anyone. In this song, the rapper declared, "Spit it on a track and leave it so horny. And who taught me? Nobody. I did it all by myself."

While the three aforementioned artists presented substantial discourse in their lyrics that attempted to convey the impression that their identities were authentic, no artist investigated in the current research dedicated more content in her Rap lyrics to achieve this feat than Iggy Azalea. From her collaborative song with T.I. "Murda Business" to the first line of her hit song "Fancy" ("First things first, I'm the realest"), Iggy Azalea made noticeable attempts to communicate the integrity of her utterances. For Iggy Azalea, "keeping it real" was not just a strategy but a major topic of discussion in her music. In fact, she dedicated numerous songs from her *Glory* EP and three studio albums (*The New Classic*, *Reclassified*, and *Digital Distortion*) to detail her commitment to "keeping it 100," a euphemism used in Rap culture to describe someone who "keeps it real" all the time. For example in "Walk the Line," a track that detailed the rapper's journey to fame, Iggy Azalea made it clear that she only rapped about incidents that were true to her life experiences. In the song, she declared, "If I didn't live it, I won't ink about it." Recognizing the many critics who doubted the authenticity of her music, Iggy Azalea dedicated a significant number of songs in her musical catalogue to clarify confusions about her artistic honesty.

White Chicks Claim Local Allegiances and Territorial Identities

Armstrong's Rap authenticating strategy of White Rap artists "claiming local allegiances and territorial identities" was also common in the lyrical content of the

seven White female rappers under investigation. Iggy Azalea, Kreayshawn, Lady Sovereign, Sarai, and Tairrie B located themselves geographically in areas that were both local and international in scope. Although a majority of the five artists did attempt to establish legitimacy in Rap by claiming geographic locations in the United States, there were two artists who complicated Armstrong's Rap authenticating strategy by emphasizing their international territorial identities. Both Iggy Azalea and Lady Sovereign foregrounded their statuses as migrants into the United States and its Rap culture, creating a rich discourse that spoke to the musical genre's global prominence.

On the other hand, Tairrie B, Sarai, Kreayshawn, and Iggy Azalea attempted to establish geographic authenticity by claiming residence in locations considered to be in close proximity to Black culture, such as Compton, California; Lithonia, Georgia; Miami, Florida; and Oakland, California. The four rappers cited these areas and, more importantly, their experiences as residents to place themselves in greater proximity to the urban Black "street" culture synonymous with Rap. They also emphasized the role of these geographic locations in the formation of their Rap identities. The rappers spoke candidly about the role of these locations in providing them with a unique standpoint in Rap; informed by comparable experiences and marginalization faced by Black rappers. However, it is important to note that both Sarai and Iggy Azalea attempted to gain geographic authenticity by claiming allegiances to areas they were not originally born.

Sarai chronicled her relocation from New York to Lithonia, Georgia, and detailed how the move forced her to use Rap music as a coping mechanism to deal with the challenges of being a minority in a predominately Black community. In the song, Sarai stated, "Out of New York moved to Lithonia, Georgia, me and my roommate stand out in the complex. Ain't no thing, I relate through rhyme contests. I earned my respect through rhymes." Similarly, Iggy Azalea claimed local allegiances in Miami, Florida, as she spoke candidly about her decision to relocate from Australia to the United States and the perils of being an immigrant in the United States. Iggy Azalea portrayed Miami as being integral to the establishment of her Rap identity and indicative of the humble beginnings that ultimately led to her success as a rapper. In Iggy Azalea's "Work," the rapper detailed the perils of scrubbing floors in Miami to achieve upward mobility, as she stated throughout the song's bridge, "No money no family, 16 in the middle of Miami."

Tairrie B and Kreayshawn claimed cities in close proximity to their actual hometowns of Anaheim and San Francisco, California. Both artists represented areas largely populated by Blacks and claimed to be royalty in these areas. For example, in "Anything You Want," Tairrie B made local allegiances to Compton, California, and claimed to always wear a cap that "reads Compton on it." Tairrie B detailed her experience as a "Female Mob Boss" in the city, where she engaged in fights with men and women to prove she was down with Compton. When analyzing Tairrie B's lyrics, it became clear that her mission was to place herself in close geographic proximity to her fellow Compton artists (i.e., Eazy E, Ice T., and Dr. Dre), who mostly originated from the Compton, California, area.

However, it bears noting that Tairrie B's Compton identity did not go without criticism. In "Anything You Want," a man questioned the validity of Tairrie B's territorial identity and stated, "Bitch you ain't from Compton." The man was then combated by Rap legend Eazy E, who declared Tairrie B as the "Queen of Compton." Eazy E's validation of Tairrie B's territorial identity supported her push to appear more authentic than a White female rapper claiming residence in a similar area without the backing of an established Black Rap artist. While Tairrie B stressed her street lifestyle in Compton, California, in her lyrics, Kreayshawn only spoke briefly about her geographic location in "Gucci Gucci," stating, "Oakland city representer, address me as your majesty." Kreayshawn's brief statement of her geographic location suggested an attempt to achieve Hip Hop authenticity by acknowledging an area of residence with a considerable African American population.

White Chicks Connect to Established Rap Artists

Kreayshawn, Lady Sovereign, Iggy Azalea, and Tairrie B established connections with commercially successful Rap artists who corroborated their claims to territorial identities, combated critics of their music, served as featured guests on their albums, and signed them to affiliated record labels and Rap groups. Additionally, these White female rappers made references to established Black male and female Rap artists in their songs, citing them as major influencers in their Rap careers and boasting about engaging in affiliative activities with the artists.

For Tairrie B and Iggy Azalea, their affiliations with established Rap artists were vital in combating accusations of cultural appropriation and acculturating into Rap culture. Tairrie B and Iggy Azalea both affiliated themselves with gangster rappers who attempted to add dimensions of street credibility to their Rap identities by granting them access to their larger Rap crews or groups. This finding supported Armstrong and Hess's research on Hip Hop authenticity that highlighted the role of Dr. Dre in integrating Eminem into Rap culture and "maintaining some level of control over representations" of the White rapper. Like Eminem, Tairrie B and Iggy Azalea received support from Black Rap acts and their larger Rap groups that "established their right to perform Hip Hop despite their Whiteness."[90]

However, these Black male collaborators and mentors also benefited from the White female performers, serving as executive producers of their albums and maintaining a high level of control and financial ownership over their brands. Like Dr. Dre, rappers Eazy E and T.I. presented Tairrie B and Iggy Azalea to Rap audiences as their protégés, who were credible and, more importantly, affiliated with their record labels. When coupled with Rap's commercial appeal and its history of White performers (such as Eminem) outselling Black Rap artists, it becomes clear that their collaborations with Tairrie B and Iggy Azalea could be interpreted as feeble attempts to cash in on Rap's fascination with White female performers during both time periods.

[90] Hess, 383.

Kreayshawn and Lady Sovereign also associated themselves with established Rap artists. However, instead of using them to gain credibility in the same manner as Eminem, Iggy Azalea, and Tairrie B, these two rappers followed an approach comparable to the Beastie Boys to collaborate and connect with Black Rap artists. According to Hess, the Beastie Boys did not attempt to be a part of a Rap group, but rather gained acceptance from Black Rap artists through collaborative records that supported their Rap messages. Connecting this approach to Kreayshawn and Lady Sovereign, both rappers featured Rap artists on their albums who served as collaborators and supporters of their messages.

In her remix to "Love Me or Hate Me," Lady Sovereign featured Rap veteran Missy Elliott, who rapped about her originality as an artist before telling Lady Sovereign to "tell 'em how it is." Missy Elliott's feature on the song worked to spark a sense of solidarity between two artists whose messages of self-expression and individuality were similar and compatible. Comparably, Kreayshawn's connections with established Rap acts were indicative of the content discussed on her album. Throughout *There's Something Bout' Kreay,* Kreayshawn placed a heavy emphasis on drug use and partying, featuring rappers 2Chainz and Kid Cudi. As a result, her connection with these rappers focused little on validating Kreayshawn as an authentic Rap artist and more on engaging in heavy drug use.

The Cultural Immersion of White Chicks into Rap Culture

Tairrie B, Sarai, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, and Iggy Azalea openly acknowledged their Whiteness while employing a variety of tactics to immerse into Rap's Black masculine culture. These tactics included drug use, claiming of international territorial identities, and capitalizing on affiliations with established Rap acts. For Tairrie B, reminding listeners of her Whiteness and affiliation with Compton was integral to her immersion into Rap. However, it is important to highlight that Tairrie B made a noticeable effort to emphasize the ethnicity of her Whiteness, referring to herself as a "platinum blonde with Italian roots" in "Anything You Want." This trend is not a new one historically for White artists in Rap, as White Rap group House of Pain emphasized their Irish heritage, avoiding all accusations of attempting a performance of Blackness.

Iggy Azalea leveraged her affiliation with gangster rapper T.I. to immerse herself into Rap culture, while embracing her status as both a White woman and a migrant to the United States. As mentioned in the previous section, gangster rapper T.I. was critical to the validation of Iggy Azalea's street credibility. T.I. championed Iggy Azalea as "Grand Hustle Record's First Lady" and promoted his acceptance of her in several collaborative records. However, Iggy Azalea did not solely speak about established Rap artists affiliated with her record label or group. Iggy Azalea also discussed successful artists such as 2Pac, Beyoncé, Chance the Rapper, Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, and Nicki Minaj, boasting about relationships with them, citing their influences on her career, and making metaphorical connections to them in songs such as "Goddess," "Team," and

"Work." With regard to racial identification, Iggy Azalea signified her own immersion into Rap through explicit discussions of her status as a White female rapper. Throughout the sample, the Australian rapper referred to herself as a "White bitch" and "White girl" and rapped about material gains, "mobster connections," and Pop success in Rap culture.

While Tairrie B and Iggy Azalea achieved cultural immersion primarily through the support of established Rap acts; Sarai, Kreayshawn, and Lady Sovereign employed a variety of tactics. In the case of Sarai, the rapper did not attempt to imitate a model of Blackness and constantly referred to herself as "Mrs. Strawberry Blonde" and a "minority" in Rap. Acknowledging her status as an outsider, the rapper made it no secret that she was a White woman trying to achieve success in a musical genre that did not cater to her demographic. However, it can be argued that her immersion into Rap culture was somewhat stifled due to limited acceptance and support from established Rap acts. On the contrary, Kreayshawn asserted her immersion into Rap culture by capitalizing on the genre's fascination with money, women, and drugs. The California rapper foregrounded her drug use as a strategy to gain cultural immersion and the support of established Rap acts who shared common interests.

Both of her collaborative efforts with rappers, 2 Chainz and Kid Cudi, discussed the topics of drug use and sexual encounters with women. In these songs, Kreayshawn presented discourse that mirrored the misogynistic actions of Black men in Rap, who utilized what Neal referred to as "neo-pimpin" discourse to name, dominate, and exploit female sexuality and sexual behavior.[91] However, it is important to note that Kreayshawn did not attempt to imitate a Black vocal style or model of Blackness in her lyrics. Rather, Kreayshawn's heavy drug use and personification of a comparable hypermasculinity associated with Black male rappers served as key strategies in her cultural immersion into Rap. Kreayshawn repeatedly rapped about "smoking a million Swisher blunts," referred to women as "bitches," and detailed pursuits of women on "college campuses with a baggie full of Adderall."

Aiming to differentiate herself from American acts, Lady Sovereign, foregrounded her status as an international artist as a tactic to immerse herself into Rap culture. The London rapper made no attempts to imitate a model of Blackness, rapping in her native British accent and proudly proclaiming her status as an "English misfit" in the song "My England." For Lady Sovereign, her Rap influences came from a British upbringing that gave her a distinct sound. Like Iggy Azalea, Lady Sovereign suggested that her international identity granted a level of sophistication that differed from prior Black and White female Rap acts.

[91] Mark Anthony Neal, *Songs in the Key of Black Life: A Rhythm and Blues Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 59–60.

A Shift to Intersectionality: White Chicks Complicate Hess's Inversion of the Rags-to-Riches Success Stories

While all seven artists presented discourses that complicated Armstrong and Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies, the most common complication among this sample was a shift from a narrow focus on race in the commonly used "inversion of the rags-to-riches success story" Hip Hop authenticating strategy advanced by Mickey Hess to a discussion of intersecting systems of inequality (i.e., race, class, gender, nation, etc.) facing White women in Rap. For Tairrie B, Sarai, and Iggy Azalea, race was just one of the many systems of inequality that positioned them as outsiders in Rap culture. Collectively, these women foregrounded a discussion on the multiple and intersecting forms of oppression that created challenges in their pursuit of Rap careers. Their narratives undoubtedly opened up a discussion on intersectionality and the prejudices faced by White women in Rap. For these women, the success of their Rap careers served as prosperous finales to their challenging journeys marked by relegations based on class, gender, race, and nationality.

In her lyrics, Tairrie B noted that being White and a woman embodied dual forms of oppression in Rap that created major obstacles in her journey to achieving commercial success. As a result, she spoke candidly about critics who doubted the quality of her talent due to race and gender and offered stern rebuttals. The White female rapper discussed gender discrimination in the song "Murder She Wrote" when she warned skeptics against judging her on the basis of gender. The rapped declared, "So don't underestimate or be assumed. That my Rap is weak or my music ain't booming because I'm a woman." Throughout *The Power of a Woman*, Tairrie B placed a heavy emphasis on discussing the perils of being a woman in a male-dominated Rap industry.

For Sarai, her long journeys to success and perception by Rap fans as an outsider in Rap culture were key narratives in her rags-to-riches story. Sarai's lyrics reflected on her actual biography, discussing prior criminal offenses, her relocation to an urban location, and prior encounters with racial prejudice in the Rap community. No song captured this component of her rags-to-riches narrative more than "Black and White." The autobiographical track addressed issues of institutional racism and sexism, criticized prejudice in Rap, and linked those issues to the problematic socialization of children in the United States. Ultimately, Sarai framed her gender and Whiteness as structural disadvantages that made it more difficult for her to achieve commercial success in Rap.

Of the three rappers, Iggy Azalea most frequently discussed her rags-to-riches success story in Rap lyrics. The Australian rapper continually detailed how class, gender, nation, and race served as intersecting forms of oppression that impacted her pursuit of Rap superstardom. Beginning in her *Glory* EP, Iggy Azalea spoke about the desire to run away from her status as a misfit in both American and Rap culture. In this same EP, Iggy Azalea detailed the challenges of being signed to her former record label,

Interscope Records, and the mass public's reluctance to deem her credible due to race and nationality.

In "Work," Iggy Azalea highlighted how being a migrant to the United States positioned her as an oppressed woman in a global society where migration stands as one of the defining global issues of the 21st century.[92] "Work" served as Iggy Azalea's most biographical track to date, as the Australian rapper discussed her move to the United States and detailed how humble beginnings of "scrubbing floors just to make it past where she was from" taught her the importance of perseverance. When situated within context of global migration patterns, the rags-to-riches success story shared by Iggy Azalea in "Work" was indicative of contemporary migration patterns in which women constitute half the world's migrants and largely work as domestic workers and home health care workers, as part of what Kirk and Okazawa-Rey described as a global care chain.[93] The Australian rapper's migration to the United States placed her in subservient roles comparable to those occupied by women, who assume jobs in the global care chain due to a high demand for women as domestic workers.

New Hip Hop Authenticating Strategy

Icy Blu, Iggy Azalea, Lady Sovereign, Sarai, and Tairrie B presented lyrical content that articulated a new Hip Hop authenticating strategy based on their standpoints as White female rappers. The five rappers commonly presented themes that advanced one new Hip Hop authenticating strategy. While none of these themes are relatively new features in Rap, their appearances in the lyrical content of the White female rappers signify unique strategies employed by White women to establish legitimacy in the musical genre. The strategy was "Look but don't touch," which signified the rejection of sexual objectification. The five rappers rejected the hypersexual stereotypes commonly associated with Black female rappers, as they combated sexual objectification and claimed to be above using sex as a tool to achieve success in the Rap industry. In particular, they rapped about resisting the misleading tactics used by men to solicit sex from women and pushed forward an agenda of self-empowerment and virtue. This new Hip Hop authenticating strategy is particularly significant considering the historic representation of Black and White women in popular culture and Rap, a topic that will be discussed in the latter portion of this section.

The five rappers communicated an unwillingness to be played by men and presented their reluctance to engage in sexual activity as an admirable quality that made them different from other women in Rap. They often referred to these promiscuous women as "after show hoes" who "divided their legs" for career advancement and were in "videos with their asses hanging out." Such discourse

[92] "About IOM," International Organization for Migration, accessed November 22, 2014, https://www.iom.int/about-iom.

[93] Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey, *Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013).

illustrated a strong effort by the rappers to "Other" themselves from Black female rappers who used their sexuality to reinforce sexist ideals in Rap culture. Instead of attempting to embody the typical representations of Black women in Rap music that reduced them to "cunts, bitches and all-purpose hoes," Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Sarai, Lady Sovereign, and Iggy Azalea distanced themselves from promiscuity and claimed to be above those who were.[94]

Throughout her songs, Tairrie B claimed to be "dope emcee not on her knees" for a career in Rap, threatening to dismantle men who approached her in an inappropriate way. Emphasizing her virtue, Icy Blu heavily discussed her decision to abstain from sex despite its unpopularity in society. Throughout her self-titled album, the rapper chronicled the many men who attempted to charm her for sexual favors. Icy Blu's lyrics suggested a strong annoyance with the hypersexual nature of young men. Similarly, Sarai's lyrics indicated a resistance to sexual objectification, as she too distanced herself from promiscuity. However, the rapper focused heavily on the hypersexual representation of women in Rap and vowed to never use those tactics to achieve commercial success in the genre.

Iggy Azalea enacted the "Look but don't touch" strategy in comparable ways, separating herself from women who she claimed "divided their legs" to achieve success in the industry. However, Iggy Azalea differed from Tairrie B and Sarai by also discussing her sexuality as a fantasy that everyone wanted, but few would actually experience. For Iggy Azalea, "Look but don't touch" was a consistent theme in her music, as she claimed that everybody wanted to put their hands on her body and used the term to communicate her reluctance to engage in sexual activity. For example, in "Fancy," Iggy Azalea rapped, "Hot girls hand up, don't touch. Look at it, but you wish you could clutch that." Comparatively, in "Can't Lose," she described herself as a "Leprechaun with that pot of gold" that "everyone wanted to taste," but never would.

While Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Sarai, and Iggy Azalea exhibited the "Look but don't touch" Hip Hop authenticating strategy in Rap lyrics when discussing relationships with men, Lady Sovereign portrayed herself as someone who was not sexy and unwilling to change her image to fit the Rap industry's beauty standards for female artists. Lady Sovereign rejected sexual objectification by positioning herself as a maverick in a Rap industry dominated by hypersexual images of women. For these rappers, the Rap industry was a place of work, and their lyrics illustrated a bold attempt to reject sexual exploitation and correct any allegations of using sex for career advancement.

As a result, the rappers' decisions to not be sexualized by their Rap peers served as a strategy to foreground their talent and virtue in an industry dominated by women who are presented in a misogynistic way. Moreover, the strategy worked to challenge the hypermasculine script in Hip Hop by providing a clear rebuttal to Rap's history of

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[94] Kimberlé Williams-Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," In *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment*, ed. Mari Matsuda (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 122.

sexually humiliating women for commercial gain.[95] Collectively, all five rappers presented an intriguing counter-narrative to the longstanding, misogynistic gender relations in Rap and Hip Hop, where women of color (specifically Black and Latina women) have been devalued and denigrated to "bitches, hoes and hoochies" and are typically "shown as exchanging money or status for sex."[96]

When applied to the history of Black and White female representation in Rap and popular culture, there are a number of connections that can be made. Since the days of slavery, American society has allowed Whites to sexualize their world by projecting onto Black women a narrative of impurity and sexualization disassociated from White women.[97] The Black female body has historically given both White men and women access to forbidden or taboo forms of sexual expression.[98] Similarly, in Rap, according to Howard, Black women have historically been linked to the stereotype of being morally loose and hypersexual in both the musical genre and the larger public sphere. On the contrary, White women have been portrayed in popular culture as fantasies that were demure, deferential, and delicate.[99] Connecting White female representation to Rap culture, Neal argued that White women could subject themselves to the misogynist excesses of Rap and Hip Hop's affinity for hypersexual displays and walk away unharmed. While Black women face male sexist discourses in Rap based on the aforementioned behaviors, White women are shielded by their Whiteness from the assumption of sexual availability faced by Black women.[100] Therefore, these rappers' overt rejection of sexual objectification aligned with a longstanding history of White women positioning themselves as superior to Black women solely on the basis of virtue.[101]

Conclusion

The study revealed that despite its focus on White female rappers, the overall findings remained consistent with earlier research on White participation in Rap culture

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[95] Melvin L. Williams, "My Job Is to Be a Bad Bitch: Locating Women of Color in Postfeminist Media Culture on *Love and Hip Hop: Atlanta*," *Race, Gender, and Class Journal 23*, nos. 3–4 (2016): 68–88; Melvin L. Williams and Tia C. M. Tyree., "The Unquiet Queen: An Analysis of Rapper Nicki Minaj in the *Fame* Comic Book," In *Feminist Theory and Pop Culture*, ed. Adrienne Trier-Bieniek (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015), 49–64.

[96] Beretta E. Smith-Shormade, *Shaded Lives: African-American Women and Television* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 93; Margaret Hunter and Kathleen Soto, "Women of Color in Hip Hop: The Pornographic Gaze," *Race, Gender, & Class* 16, nos. 1–2 (2009): 172.

[97] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 62.

[98] Melissa Campbell, "'Go White Girl': Hip Hop Booty Dancing and the White Female Body," *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4 (2004): 501.

[99] Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[100] Neal, 59–60; Rose, 45–46.

[101] Melvin L. Williams, "Miley's Wrecking Ball Takes a Whack out of Hip Hop," *HuffPost*, May 29, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/mileys-wrecking-ball-takes-a-whack-out-of-Hip Hop_us_592c4e9fe4b0a7b7b469cc56.

and the strategies employed by this population to establish and sustain authenticity. Overall, the lyrical content of Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Sarai, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, and Iggy Azalea demonstrated most of Armstrong and Hess's Hip Hop authenticating strategies. As noted earlier in the Findings and Discussion section, K.Flay did not enact any of the Hip Hop authenticating strategies and served as the only artist in the sample whose song lyrics did not correspond with any of the strategies advanced by Armstrong and Hess. These rappers emphasized authenticity and credibility in lyrical content, claimed local and international territorial allegiances, and discussed the multiple systems of oppressions facing White women in a musical genre dominated by Black men. The rappers also made strong attempts to situate themselves within Rap's social milieu by highlighting past experiences, neighborhoods, and allegiances in their lyrics.

Undoubtedly, Tairrie B, Sarai, Icy Blu, Lady Sovereign, Kreayshawn, and Iggy Azalea aimed to showcase to listeners that their lyrics and personas were ones of integrity. For these rappers, it was important to counter allegations that they were not the authors of their lyrics. This strong emphasis on authorship prompted the researcher to review the song credits for the albums and EPs of all seven rappers under investigation to gain additional information on the songs' writers. After reviewing the song credits, it was very evident that all seven of the rappers penned their own song lyrics. As a result, the songs performed by these White female rappers helped to challenge existing stereotypes about White womanhood in Rap that positioned them as inauthentic, and bring their unique standpoints as White women from margin to center in Rap's Black masculine culture.

After reviewing the findings of this research, it was clear that all seven rappers presented a number of themes that supported its theoretical framework. When situated within the contexts of Critical Whiteness Studies and Gendered Whiteness, the findings demonstrated the privilege of Whiteness and its role as a social construction situated within a particular place, time, and relations of power. The two most prominent themes were 1) a push to emphasize the ethnicity of Whiteness and 2) an allegiance to maintaining an image of virtue that countered the hypersexual lyrics and imagery of Black female rappers. As noted by McIntosh, one of the key privileges experienced by Whites and not by other racial groups is the ability to pick and choose one's ethnic identification.[102]

Connecting this form of White privilege to the artists under investigation, Tairrie B, Iggy Azalea, and Lady Sovereign heavily emphasized their ethnic heritage in Rap lyrics. To avoid all accusations of attempting a performance of Blackness, they focused on other ethnic identities, portraying themselves as Irish, Australian, and British, respectively. For these women, the discursive shift signified the ethnic character of their Whiteness, as they positioned their ethnic identification as distinct from a generic "White" identity. By turning to different constructions of White identities, the rappers

[102] Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," In *Race Class and Gender: An Anthology*, ed. Margaret Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins, 6th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, 2007), 74–78.

aligned with prior research on Critical Whiteness Studies and White participation in Rap, mirroring the authenticating strategy used by the White male Rap group House of Pain to immerse into Rap culture.

Perhaps, the most prevalent theme among the seven rappers was their strong effort to maintain an image of virtue. Advanced as a new Hip Hop authenticating strategy coined by the researcher as "Look but don't touch," the artists under investigation rejected the hypersexual stereotypes commonly associated with Black and Latina women in Rap. Icy Blu, Iggy Azalea, Lady Sovereign, Sarai, and Tairrie B employed this new Hip Hop authenticating strategy in ways that correlated with the gender order of Whiteness in American society and its role in the social construction of White femininity. While the practice of White women participating in Rap's Black masculine culture might suggest an act of resistance against the typical social construction of White femininity in America, Tairrie B, Icy Blu, Sarai, Lady Sovereign, and Iggy Azalea ultimately maintained a strong level of allegiance to White supremacist gender roles that upheld virtue and morality as core values.

The current study revealed the complicated nature of White female participation in Rap culture, symbolizing both a simultaneous allegiance and resistance to White supremacist gender roles. Additionally, this research foregrounded the history of the White female rappers to showcase the presence and more importantly, Hip Hop authenticating strategies of a unique sample of White female Rap artists. Through an analysis of lyrical content and their unique Hip Hop authenticating strategies, this study showcased how White female rappers brought what Gwendolyn Pough described as "wreck" to the public sphere of Rap culture as they "disrupted themselves into," "made themselves visible," and claimed both a voice and living for themselves in a subculture "bereft of opportunity for them."[103]

Contributions to the Field of Hip Hop Studies

Authenticity has been a heavily discussed topic in popular music and Hip Hop research when examining White male rappers who achieved commercial success in the musical genre. A number of scholars, including Edward Armstrong, Mickey Hess, Bakari Kitwana, Kembrew McLeod, and Ian Verstegen, have examined the contributions of White male rappers to the musical genre and issued progressive commentary detailing the strategies used by them to establish authenticity.[104] However, these scholars did not capture the experiences of White female rappers, despite their debuts and studio album releases before and during the publication dates of their research. For example, Tairrie B, Icy Blu, and Sarai released studio albums before

[103] Gwendolyn D. Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture and the Public Sphere* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 27.

[104] Bakari Kitwana, *Why White Kids Love Hip Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabees, and the New Reality of Race in America* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2005); Ian Verstegen, "Eminem and the Tragedy of the White Rapper," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 44:4 (2011): 872–89.

Mickey Hess's study on Hip Hop authenticity and the three eras of White participation in Hip Hop, but were not included.

Recognizing such voids in Rap research, the current study served as a much-needed contribution to the field of Hip Hop Studies. It provided a solid historical account of White female rappers in the United States, incorporating artists who were signed to independent and major labels. This historical account of White female participation in American Rap enabled the researcher to situate the seven White female rappers under investigation within Hess's three-era chronicle of White participation in Hip Hop.

The history of White female rappers revealed a continual process of renaming in relation to their successful White male counterparts. For example, since the debut of Yeastie Girlz in the late 1980s, White female rappers have been given aliases that placed them in positions of comparison and proximity to established White male Rap acts (i.e., The Beastie Boys). For example, Icy Blu was often referred to as the "female Vanilla Ice" in the 1990s, while Sarai and Iggy Azalea were coined as the female equivalents to Eminem and Macklemore. Giannino and Campbell note, "A name is a unique personal signifier for an individual."[105] A name often represents a cultural identity that "can have symbolic and linguistic (connotative and/or denotative) meaning."[106]

Though each White female rapper adopted a stage name distinct from their birth name, Icy Blu, Sarai, and Iggy Azalea were given aliases or alternative names by a larger Rap audience, who attempted to locate them in relation to previously successful White male rappers. In many ways, the aliases given to these White female rappers showcased how White female Rap artists were positioned in the sociopolitical climate of each era of White male participation in Hip Hop despite their presumed invisibility in American Rap culture.

The current study also detailed the unique enunciations of authenticity provided by White female rappers. Specifically, 109 Rap songs from nine studio albums and three extended plays (EPs) were analyzed for the greater purpose of understanding how White female rappers internalize, negotiate, and challenge Rap's hypermasculine, misogynistic culture. Additionally, the study explored the topic of cultural appropriation in a more comprehensive nature, revealing the complicated nature of White female participation in Black popular culture. As noted by Walsh, the "gendered nature of Whiteness is an important but under-researched dynamic of power."[107] More importantly, Gendered Whiteness is a dynamic of power that becomes very complicated when situated in the context of Rap's Black masculine counterculture.

White femininity is marked as marginal and subordinate in Rap, a factor that primarily led to the "presumed invisibility" of White female rappers before Iggy Azalea. While Iggy Azalea stands as the most commercially successful White female rapper in

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[105] Steven S. Giannino and Shannon B. Campbell, "The Reality of the Gaze: A Critical Discourse Analysis of *Flavor of Love*," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2012): 63.

[106] Giannino and Campbell, 63.

[107] Eileen T. Walsh, "Representations of Race and Gender in Mainstream Media Coverage of the 2008 Democratic Party," *Journal of African American Studies* 13 (2008): 123.

America to date, she was not the first, nor the only White female rapper in United States Rap history. She was also not the first White female international rapper to release an album through a major record label. For such reasons, this research foregrounded the history of White female rappers to showcase the presence and more importantly, Hip Hop authenticating strategies of a unique sample of White female Rap artists.

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APPENDIX A

List of Rap Songs Examined (1990-2017)

Artist	Song Title	Album or EP Title	Year of Release
Icy Blu	"Pump It"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"He's Got It Going On"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"I Wanna Be Your Girl"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"My Guitar's Funky"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"Girls Just Wanna Have Fun"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"All Nite Thang"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"My Love is Real"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"It's Your Birthday"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"He Loves Me [Not]"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Icy Blu	"Pump It [Presence Dub]"	*Icy Blu*	1990
Iggy Azalea	"Millionaire Misfits feat. B.O.B"	*Glory*	2012
Iggy Azalea	"Murda Business feat. T.I."	*Glory*	2012
Iggy Azalea	"Runway feat. Pusha T"	*Glory*	2012
Iggy Azalea	"Flash feat. Mike Posner"	*Glory*	2012
Iggy Azalea	"Glory"	*Glory*	2012
Iggy Azalea	"Walk the Line"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Don't Need Y'all"	*The New Classic*	2014

Iggy Azalea	"100 feat. Watch the Duck"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Change Your Life feat. T.I."	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Fancy feat. Charli XCX"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"New Bitch"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Work"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Impossible is Nothing"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Goddess"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Black Widow feat. Rita Ora"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Lady Patra feat. Mavado"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Fuck Love"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Bounce"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Rolex"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Just Askin'"	*The New Classic*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"We in This Bitch"	*Reclassified*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Beg for It feat. MO"	*Reclassified*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Trouble feat. Jennifer Hudson"	*Reclassified*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Iggy SZN"	*Reclassified*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Heavy Crown feat. Ellie Goulding"	*Reclassified*	2014
Iggy Azalea	"Azillion"	*Digital Distortion*	2016
Iggy Azalea	"Team"	*Digital Distortion*	2016
Iggy Azalea	"Can't Stop"	*Digital Distortion*	2017

Iggy Azalea	"Mo'Bounce"	*Digital Distortion*	2017
Iggy Azalea	"Switch"	*Digital Distortion*	2017
K.Flay	"10th Avenue"	*Eyes Shut*	2012
K.Flay	"Stop, Focus"	*Eyes Shut*	2012
K.Flay	"Sunburn"	*Eyes Shut*	2012
K.Flay	"We Hate Everyone"	*Eyes Shut*	2012
K.Flay	"Easy Fix"	*Eyes Shut*	2012
K.Flay	"Rawks"	*What If It Is*	2013
K.Flay	"Hail Mary feat. Danny Brown"	*What If It Is*	2013
K.Flay	"Starf***Er"	*What If It Is*	2013
K.Flay	"So What"	*What If It Is*	2013
K.Flay	"The Cops"	*What If It Is*	2013
K.Flay	"Dreamers"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"Giver"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"Blood in the Cut"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"Champagne"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"High Enough"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"Black Wave"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"Mean It"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"Hollywood Forever"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"The President Has A Sex Tape"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"It's Just A Lot"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017

K.Flay	"You Felt Right"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
K.Flay	"Slow March"	*Every Where Is Some Where*	2017
Kreayshawn	"Blasé Blasé"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Ch00k Ch00k Tare feat. Chippy Nonstop"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Gucci Gucci"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Summertime feat. V-Nasty"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Left Ey3"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Like it or Love it feat. Kid Cudi"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"K234ys0nixz"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"BFF (Bestfriend)"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Twerkin!!! Feat. Diplo & Sissy Nobby"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Breakfast (Syrup) feat. 2Chainz	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Go Hard (La.La.La)"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"The Ruler"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Kreayshawn	"Luv Haus"	*Somethin' Bout Kreay*	2012
Lady Sovereign	"9-5"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Gatheration"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Random"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Public Warning"	*Public Warning*	2006

Lady Sovereign	"Love Me or Hate Me"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"My England"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Tango"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"A Little Bit of Shh"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Hoodie"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Those Were the Days"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Blah Blah"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Fiddle with the Middle"	*Public Warning*	2006
Lady Sovereign	"Love Me or Hate Me Remix feat. Missy Elliott"	*Public Warning*	2006
Sarai	"Intro"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"I Know"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"Mind Ya Business"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"Ladies"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"What Mama Told Me"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"It's Not a Fairytale"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"Pack Ya Bags"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"Swear feat. Beau Dozier"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"You Could Never"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"L.I.F.E. feat. Jaguar"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"It's Official"	*The Original*	2003
Sarai	"Mary Anne feat. Black Coffey"	*The Original*	2003

Sarai	"Black & White"	*The Original*	2003
Tairrie B	"Swingin' with T"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Anything You Want"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Vinnie The Moocha"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Step 2 This"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Murder She Wrote"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Packin' a Punch"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Let the Beat Rock"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Player"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Schooll's In"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990
Tairrie B	"Ruthless Bitch"	*The Power of a Woman*	1990