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American Studies

17 March 2023

### Thesis and Outline

Kendrick Lamar's musical style is akin to artists of an earlier age such as Public Enemy and Bob Dylan whose music was designed to initiate conversation, to hold a mirror up to society, to engender controversy.

- I. Lamar Biography
  - A. Influence of geography
  - B. Rise to fame
  - C. Current perception
- II. Lamar lists classic artists who were unafraid of controversy as being influential on his style
  - A. One such influence is Tupac Shakur
    1. On the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, Lamar posted a tribute that reads, in part, "The people that you touched on that small intersection changed lives forever. I told myself I wanted to be a voice for man one day. Whoever knew I was speaking out loud for u to listen. Thank you."
    2. Son of Black Panther activists, Shakur attended the Baltimore School for the Performing Arts

3. Mostly known for promoting gangster violence, his lyrics often dealt with police brutality, poverty, politics and racism

B. Recognition of the “powerful truth” of Eazy-E and N.W.A.

1. In a recent tribute, Lamar praises Eazy-E with “the birth of a whole legacy of being able to say what you want to say on a record and not being in fear of what others may think and not offending your own art and your own reflection.”
2. This influence extends to the recognition that an artist must maintain a “connection to home.”

III. Lamar’s influences in greater context of rap and hip-hop music

A. Early history of rap music – New York Jamaicans

1. Evolution of griots
2. The music of “the subjugated African-American working class”

B. Rising popularity – N.W.A. and Run D.M.C.

1. Movement from primarily black audiences to larger white audience
2. Entering the mainstream

IV. Lamar as the voice for a disenfranchised generation

A. Current state of frustration and issues of racism

1. Black Lives Matter arose in the wake of police shootings of unarmed African Americans
2. Lamar has reawakened rap’s “combative energy”
3. Music (and lyrics) reflect what it means to be young and black in America

today.

#### B. Personal narrative of rap music

1. “In 2012's *good kid, m.A.A.d City*, Lamar made his name by chronicling this neighborhood, vividly evoking a specific place (this same stretch of Rosecrans) and a specific time (in the summer of 2004, between 10th and 11th grade).”
2. Criticism of Lamar: “Lamar was ignoring the real problem: the systemic racism that created the conditions for black-on-black crime in the first place. Coupled with a recent *Billboard* interview in which Lamar seemed to suggest that some of the responsibility for preventing killings like that of Michael Brown lay with black people themselves, some fans thought he sounded like a right-wing apologist.”

#### C. Winning the Pulitzer

1. From Pulitzer.org: “Recording released on April 14, 2017, a virtuosic song collection unified by its vernacular authenticity and rhythmic dynamism that offers affecting vignettes capturing the complexity of modern African-American life.”
2. Recognized for his ability to make us understand the emotions and situations that are unique to him, but apply to all of us as human beings.

#### V. Conclusion and analysis