BRIDGING AND BOUNDING ASIAN-NESS IN HIP-HOP:

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ASIAN HIP-HOP LYRICS AND MEDIA DISCOURSE

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ZIYE TANG

Dr. Shuhua Zhou, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

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presented by Ziye Tang,

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Shuhua Zhou

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Professor Andrea Heiss

_____

Professor Ronald Kelley

_____

Professor Stephanie Shonekan

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ABSTRACT

Asian and Asian American rap artists have been marginalized in mainstream American music industry and media for a long time. Searching for a public recognition of their works in a Black music genre, Asian artists during different time periods had to apply different strategies on describing their race in lyrics. Therefore, Asian-ness was also framed differently by journalists during different time period since they receive different messages from Asian rap artists. To find out how Asian rappers mark their racial identities, how media receive and present Asian artists' lyrical messages, as well as a correlation between them, the researcher applied framing theory and racial-aesthetic boundary model (Roy, 2004). This research started with examining three generations of rap artists who debuted in 1990s, 2000s and 2010s on how they applied four racial-aesthetic boundary frames and the non-race frame. The results indicated significant differences when Asian rappers of different generations applied identity, appropriation and non-race frames. The researcher also analyzed the usage of the five frames applied by media about Asian-ness when the media refers to the three artists.   The researcher then examined the correlation between artists' self-marked frames and media-marked frames. The results indicated a linear-like correlation for identity framing, which means messages under identity frames in lyrics were well perceived and presented by

journalists, as well as possible exponential correlations for two negative racial-aesthetic frames, appropriation and segregation, which means messages under the two frames in lyrics were exaggeratedly perceived and presented by journalists. The results also showed that media would mention Asian-ness when cover and review Asian artists even they never mentioned their race in lyrics.

Introduction

An Asian American rapper had never signed with a major record label until MC Jin, a Chinese American rapper, signed with Ruff Ryders Entertainment (a subsidiary of Universal Music Group) in 2002. Sixteen years later, Brian Imanuel, known by his stage name Rich Chigga or now Rich Brian, became the first Asian rapper active in the U.S. who topped the iTunes hip-hop chart. Rich Brian is signed under 88rising, an American company founded by Sean Miyashiroin in 2015, aiming to bridge Asian and Western cultures through music.

Rap, or hip-hop music, is a form of hip-hop culture – deejaying, MCing, breakdancing and graffiti – in popular music. Hip-hop music originated from Black music but is also seen as a melting pot, where white musicians (e.g. Eminem) and Latino musicians (e.g. Big Pun, Cardi B) have succeeded. Coco Fusco states in his book *English is broken here: Notes on cultural fusion in the Americas* (1995) that hip-hop music "is perhaps today's most resonant cross-cultural American language for defiant self-affirmation" (p.32).

However, Asian rappers still keep "racial distance" in the hip-hop industry, where Black masculinity – with stereotypes of "hypermasculinity and sexuality, physical aggression, and the underclasses" – is seen as the opposite of stereotypes of Asian masculinity, which is "effete or asexual, passive, and middle class" (Wang, 2007, p. 41).

Several scholars describe rap music as "a communicative tool" (Durham, 2002; Nielson, 2009, 2012; Ball, 2011), and rappers express themselves in terms of race and identity in their lyrics. One of the leading scholars of Asian American hip-hop's racial identity expression is Oliver Wang (2004), who charts the following trend:

"Asian American rappers in the early 1990s made race a central part of their image

production and songwriting. In the mid 1990s, race and ethnicity became more

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muted and were replaced with a rhetoric of universalism. In the early 2000s, race

was deployed publicly again but as a strategic, 'preemptive strike' against potential

critics rather than an explicit, politicized embrace of racial identity" (p. 38).

However, there is little research about the new trend of Asian rap music's racial expression, which this research considers as a pivotal development after MC Jin's success.

Hip-hop music is one of the most popular genres of music in the U.S. (Recording Industry Association of America, 2019); it reflects American popular culture. Therefore, it's time to reconsider Asian identity in the American hip-hop and popular music scene with hip-hop's surging popularity, which can be a mirror of Asians' racial and social status in mainstream American society.

Research Problem

This study seeks to examine how Asian rappers mark their racial boundaries. To do so, this study analyzes how three prominent Asian rappers, namely the members of the Mountain Brothers, along with MC Jin and Rich Brian, represent three generations who debuted in the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s.

This study defines Asian American hip-hop music as hip-hop music targeted to the American market and created by artists who have Asian descent. As a result, the scope is not limited to Asian-American rappers, who have Asian ancestry and American nationality, like the three members of Mountain Brothers and MC Jin, but also includes an Asian rapper who lives in the United States and publishes music under an American record label, but does not reside in the U.S., Rich Brian.

In addition, the study examines mass media coverage and reviews related to these rappers to determine if a correlation exists between artists' self-identifying racial boundaries and others'

perceptions. By examining the correlation, this research can benefit both artists and journalists. For the sake of journalists, the study can show if journalists overemphasize an Asian rapper's racial identity without paying close attention to their music or overlook the racial expression of their music. For rappers, this research can provide them with a research basis for further branding and marketing strategies that involve their racial expression.

Framing theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993) serves as the theoretical foundation for this study, along with frames defined through the aesthetic-racial boundary effect model by William G. Roy. Roy (2002, 2004, 2010) created a model of analyzing relationships between aesthetic and social boundaries when contrasting relationships, including race, interact. Roy argues that the mechanisms of bounding and bridging contrasting relationships shape the alignment of conceptual and social distinctions. Music, like other aspects of social life, can be a bridge connecting different races.

The application of boundaries between racial and aesthetic identities in popular music was first introduced by Roy (2002) who applied them to folk music; later Roy (2004, 2010) applied it to the whole of popular music, including rock music, hip-hop and so on. Roy (2004) summarized the aesthetic and social boundaries involving race and American music into a model (see Table 1), which listed four different possible effects when two contrasting kinds of relationships – referring to race in this case – meet. ~~As Roy states, "Perhaps more than any other aspect of social life, music has been a bridge between races" (p. 268).~~ Bridging refers to interaction between different races in music, while bounding means people with different identities separate one race from others. The fusion of aesthetic and social boundaries is the positive mode of bridging, while appropriation is the negative mode; identity is the positive mode, while segregation is the negative mode (Roy, 2004).

Table 1

Modes of Relationships between aesthetic and social boundaries (Roy, 2004, p.268)

		Effect upon esthetic and social boundaries	
Hierarchical consequences of aesthetic boundaries		Bridging	Bounding
	More equal	**Fusion**	**Identity**
	Less equal	**Appropriation**	**Segregation**

Roy (2004) gave more macroscopical examples to each category. Fusion can be reflected in how smoothly African and European music developed new genres in popular music, such as rock and roll, blues, gospel, etc., and how white people have commercially profited from adapting Black music, such as rap, which can be regarded as appropriation. Roy mentioned how Black music genres such as jazz, soul and hip-hop have been treasured as an example for his concept of identity, and the exclusion of Black participation in white forms of music, such as classical music serves as an example of segregation. However, this study applies this model in a more microscopical angle, which is taking a close look at how Asian rappers describe racial elements in their lyrics in a Black music form. An example of fusion is that rappers write content about the combination of Asian culture and the culture of other races (mainly Black) in their lyrics, while an example of appropriation is that Asian rappers express a sense of pretending to be Black people as they try to make their music successful in the U.S. Identity refers to the way that rappers identify their racial identities in lyrics without separating themselves from other races, and segregation refers to any expression about segregating Asians from other races in the U.S. As for mass media coverage and critics, journalists express their perception of what racial boundaries artists are

presenting, whether through fusion, appropriation, identity, or segregation. For example, if journalists express their perception of artists' showing a sense of bridging Asian-ness and Blackness positively in their articles, that is an example of fusion. An example of segregation would be if journalists present their perception of an artist showing Asian-ness as separate from other ethnicities or races negatively.

This research uses quantitative content analysis to measure the extent to which Asian American rappers apply fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation frames as racial boundaries, as well as a non-race frame in their works, and how these frames have been seen in mass media coverage of Asian rappers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to examine how Asian American hip-hop artists during different time periods address their racial identities in their lyrics by setting up boundaries via the effects of fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation. The research also aims to look for a relationship between the way Asian American rappers build their racial identities in lyrics and their perceptions by journalists.

Although scholars such as Oliver Wang (1998, 2001, 2007) and Nitasha Sharma (2010) have done some qualitative research in this field, there is little research applying quantitative methods to statistically measure musicians' racial boundaries and how these boundaries might have changed over time.

This research also aims to reveal how Asian American hip-hop music is received when it comes to race. As Wang (2001) argues, "Asian American music is so designated based on the context of production (who makes the music and why?) as well as reception (how is the music used, how is it understood?)" (p.442). Therefore, understanding the music itself is not enough to

understand Asian American hip-hop music; analyzing related coverage and reviews can be a way

to understand how the music is received.

Literature Review

This literature review aims to explain the background of rap music and the development of Asian American rap music, to show the validity of combining frame analysis and the aesthetic-racial boundary model to this research, and to demonstrate the lack of quantitative research in music communication and Asian American hip-hop music.

Rap: A Communicative Tool and a Medium with Messages

Rap music came onto the American culture stage in the mid-1970s as a form of hip-hop culture (Rose, 1994). Hip-hop culture emerged in the South Bronx – one of the poorest areas in New York. "Social isolation, economic fragility, truncated communications media, and shrinking social service organizations" in this area gave birth to hip-hop culture (Rose, 1994, p. 33-34). Hip-hop artists who grew up in these circumstances usually depicted the life of those who live in "the 'hood,' that is, the slum neighborhood" (Martinez, 1997, p. 275). Therefore, rap was born as a communicative tool conveying messages that depict artists' lower-class lives.

Although lyrics are not everything for a piece of rap music (other components include beat, tone, etc.), lyrics, with their rhyme, flow, and punchline, are the most straightforward way to express artists' experiences. Lyrics can also be intended to educate audiences. The fact that "hip-hop music artists often proclaim in their songs and their interviews that their music has a message, that they simply want someone to listen" (Martinez, 1997, p.275) offers validation for analyzing lyrics as messages that can reflect the message senders' viewpoints, as well as message receivers' perception. One of the most popular Black rap groups in America, the multiple-award-winning duo Public Enemy, active from 1985 to the present, regards rap music as "black America's TV station" (Leland, 1988, p. 84). Public Enemy has been vocal about Black consciousness and social issues in the Black community; in their lyrics, the artists condemn drug dealers, soap operas, and

military recruitment statistics while drawing attention to the Black Panthers, Black Muslims, and the famous Black saxophonist John Coltrane (Powell, 1991).

Asian-ness and Hip-hop Music

Hip-hop music became popular among Asian Americans in the early 1990s (Han, 1992; as cited in O. Wang, 2007). The first rap song recorded by an Asian American rapper was "Rap-O, Clap-O" in 1979 by the Latin soul singer Joe Bataan, whose father was Filipino and mother was African American (O. Wang, 2007). Although few Asian-American rappers have been recognized between 1979 and late 1980s, anecdotes exist of "Asian Americans, both men and women, rapping at parties and in battles (i.e. competitions) dating back to the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s" (O. Wang, 2007, p. 41).

Similar with the function of early-stage hip-hop music produced and performed by Black artists, Asian American hip-hop also plays a role in evaluating social consciousness for its communities. Asian American rappers Yee and Francisco said making Asian Americans visible was one of their responsibilities, since rap was becoming popular among Asians and could serve as a medium to build consciousness (Han, 1992, as cited in O. Wang, 2007, p. 42).

However, rappers with Asian descent are marginalized in hip-hop culture while whiteness and Latino-ness are assimilated in blackness and hip-hop culture (O. Wang, 2007). Many white rappers and Hispanic/Latino rappers are active in both the mainstream American music scene and mainstream media.

Wang (2007) explained Asian marginalization in the hip-hop industry by stating that opposing masculinity stereotypes exist in the Asian context and the Black context. As a result, "Asian American rappers walk into hip hop with an authenticity crisis on their hands before they even open their mouths to rhyme" (p. 41).

In the book *Is Yellow Black Or White?* Okihiro (1994) argues that the concept of Asian American is located between the bipolar race constructions of white and Black. Similarly, Wu (2002) writes, "People speak of 'American' as if it means 'white' and 'minority' as if it means 'black.' In that semantic formula, Asian Americans, neither black nor white consequently are neither American nor minority" (p. 20). To avoid erasing their racial identity, Tseng (1998) argued, Asian American rappers "resisted the racialized placing of Asian Americans as part of the buffer zone between whites and blacks, and … attacked the stereotypes of being passive and weak" (Challenging the Model Minority Myth section, para. 5) by joining hip-hop culture and expressing Asian-ness in rap lyrics, "instead of tolerating prejudice, distancing themselves from African American culture, and entertaining hopes of assimilation" (Challenging the Model Minority Myth section, para. 5). In this way, Asian American rappers try to show both racial authenticity and the authenticity of Asian American hip-hop music (Tseng, 1998).

Leading Asian-American hip-hop researcher and music critic, Oliver Wang, who often applies a sociological perspective and qualitative methodology, found (2004) that Asian American musicians utilized popular music, including but not limited to rap, to express their racial identity from the 1950s to 1990s. The research was based on the panethnicity theory, which Le Espirutu (1992) explained as "ethnicization – the process of boundary construction is not only reactive, a response to pressures from the external environment, but also creative, a product of internally generated dynamic" (p. 176). Le Espirutu (1992) described ethnicization as a process of bridging different cultures into one form, an idea that can be applied to Asian Americans and rap music in which they had to consider heterogeneities between their races, social classes and culture and that of Blacks.

In his 2007 study, Wang narrowed his focus to rap music created by Asian American artists and examined how their identities were presented among different generations of Asian American rappers from the 1990s to the early 2000s. Represented by artists such as The Asiatic Apostles, Fists of Fury, Seoul Brothers, Art Hirahara, and Yellow Peril, the first generation of Asian American rappers in the early 1990s used rap as a way to express political and social issues faced by Asian Americans, but did not treat it like music, an aesthetic form of culture, Wang argued. Through interviews with artists, Wang concluded that the first generation of Asian American rap artists in the early 1990s was mostly influenced and inspired by Public Enemy and they wanted their music to function as a medium to express racial identity and prompt Asian Americans' racial consciousness.

The second stage, from the mid-1990s to the late-1990s, was defined as a time when Asian American rappers focused on skills, talent, and hip-hop as an aesthetic form while downplaying their Asian identity, and it is also the time that Asian American rap was prominent commercially (O. Wang, 2007). The representative rap group of this stage is the Mountain Brothers, who recorded music ads for Sprite in 1996 that ran on radio and ads for Nike sneakers that ran on television in 1999. Their first music video, "Galaxies," was a hot debut on MTV in 1999 and made them the most famous Asian American rap group at that time. The Mountain Brothers and other rap groups in the mid- and late- 1990s wanted to make their music universal rather than target a specific ethnic audience. Asian American rappers in this stage also mention their belief that rap music should not be about race but personal expression, skills, and talent (O. Wang, 2007). As Wang (2007) pointed out, "the idea of the universal does not stand for the inclusion of all colors but instead is meant to represent the absence of color altogether" (p. 50).

Wang (2007) argues that Asian American rappers started to strategically draw attention to their race while simultaneously minimizing it at the millennium. The representative Asian American rapper in the 2000s is Jin Au-Yeung, known as Jin or MC Jin, who marked his identity in lyrics while forging cross-cultural recognition. Compared to the second generation's "universal" concept, the third generation strategically expressed the inclusion of all colors in lyrics while pointing out the differences between races and the idiosyncracies of Asian-ness. As Jin wrote in his lyrics: "We may look different/But we see the same sky/We may see different/But we cry the same cry" (Jin, 2004, 0:02-0:12).

Previous studies on Asian-ness in hip-hop basically only give a brief look at the history of Asian American hip-hop. While previous studies show how Asian American rappers mark their racial identity in some of their songs, the extent to which they showed their racial identity in their works over different time periods has not been examined.

The latest trend in Asian hip-hop music in the American music market is also understudied. Asian American rappers are not the only ones who can be researched in terms of Asian-ness and hip-hop. Asian rappers, who grew up experiencing American culture, but without American nationality or permanent residence in the U.S., should not be neglected. These rappers, such as Rich Brian, are influenced by American culture even online, currently live in the U.S., publish their music in English under American record labels, and target the mainstream American music industry.

Applying Frame Analysis to Rap Music

Although scholars recognize hip-hop is a kind of communication, there appears to be little published research applying mass communication theory or models to explain the communication process of hip-hop music. This research applies frame theory in order to find out how Asian-ness

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has been depicted differently by different generations of Asian/Asian American rappers during different time periods, which could have an impact on listeners' perceptions of Asian-ness and the artists' racial identity construction.

Frame theory took shape in the 1960s in the U.S. and was first developed by Erving Goffman to explain how people use expectations to make sense of everyday life. Goffman (1974) states that people understand daily events through different "primary frameworks"; for example, a coroner wants an answer for a cause of death within the frame of physiology, while for the manner and intent of death he wants an answer within the frame of sociology (p. 24). Goffman's theory provides a conceptual base for this research.

One of the most important evolutions of framing theory is Entman's (1993) introduction of selection and salience as terms. Entman (1993) claims that framing "is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (p. 52). Selection and salience explain the way rap music artists create content and share it with the audience.

Entman (1993) came up with four functions of framing: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies (p. 52). These four framing functions may be simultaneously presented in one sentence, although many sentences of a text might not function as any of the four (Entman, 1993). How rappers include social problems, critiques, their resistant attitude, and potential solutions in their lyrics has been studied by several scholars (Martinez, 1997; Miller, 2009; Nielson, 2012), but these scholars have not mentioned framing.

Combining Framing Theory with Content Analyses in Popular Music and Music Journalism

Generally, content analyses of lyrics in popular music are rare, and these studies often examine the portrayal of gender (Croyle, 1987; Hyden & McCandless, 1983; Freudiger &

Almquist, 1978) or violence or rebellious messages (Knobloch-Westerwick, Musto and Shaw, 2008). Lyrical analyses that apply framing theory are much less common.

An exception is Binder (1993), whose research was one of the first to apply framing analysis to media discourse about music. Although the main focus of his study was examining the media discourse about the perceived harmfulness of lyrics by analyzing mainstream publications and African-American magazines' framing of heavy metal and rap lyrics, Binder also analyzed the lyrics of 20 controversial songs, 10 heavy metal songs and 10 rap songs, to examine the correlation between media images and lyrical image. Media images of these lyrics were analyzed by "social framing," which Binder described as "the construction and selection processes that explain why media writers appropriate some frames but not others, and why some frames 'resonate' with broad cultural beliefs" (p. 753). Binder set up four frames under the "music is harmful" category, namely corruption, protection, danger to society, and not censorship, and six frames under the "music is not harmful" category, namely freedom of speech, no harm, threat to authorities, generation gap, and important message/art.

Binder determined that although both heavy metal and rap music include rebellious and explicit messages, the lyrics in rap music were more explicit than those in heavy metal music, which supported the way writers from the mainstream publications framed these two genres of music. To depict the harmfulness of music, the frame "danger to society" was used markedly more for rap music than for heavy metal music, while the dominant frames for heavy metal music, "corruption" and "protection," were less frequently or barely used for rap music; to depict "music is not harmful," the frame "no harm" was used for heavy metal music nearly twice as much as it was for rap music (p. 764).

However, recording the frequencies of frames by examining whether there is a related content instead of looking into how the content is emphasized cannot show the degree to which each frame applies to each song. As Entman (1993) pointed out, "Texts can make bits of information more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols" (p. 53). In Binder's content analysis of lyrics, he only recorded whether particular content, namely hard swear words, violence, or depiction of murder of police, etc., was mentioned in a song but did not examine the salience of the particular content.

While Binder examined heavy metal and rap music, Skopal (2005) focused on reggae. Interestingly, hip-hop culture has been rooted in reggae music since the 1970s, which is seen as reggae's golden age, when a Jamaican immigrant, Kool Herc, adapted the reggae sound system for his African-American, West Indian, and Latin Caribbean peers in the Bronx (Marshall, 2007). Skopal (2005) applied framing theory with social movement frames, which were introduced by Snow and Benford (2002) and used quantitative content analysis to analyze reggae music lyrics, treating reggae music expression as a political movement. Skopal then applied three core frames in social movement framing, namely diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames, to analyze reggae music lyrics. Skopal writes, "The diagnostic frame involves problem identification, the prognostic frame involves problem resolution, and the motivational frame invites sympathizers to participate" (p. 34). The three functions of social movement match with Entman's (1993) statement about the four functions of framing.

Skopal (2005) relied on hermeneutic and rhetorical analysis to determine a dominant frame in each song, then allocated lyrics to other nondominant frames. However, the extent of the frames' dominance in each song was not examined. In other words, the salience was examined with a binary standard – dominant or nondominant – but the salience of each frame was not examined.

Other scholars have examined rap songs for content related to drugs and religion. Diamond (2006) examined references to the drug ecstasy in 69 rap songs from 1996 and 2003, along with its correlation with shifting drug use in American youth. Diamond conducted a quantitative content analysis to count negative, neutral or ambiguous, and positive descriptions about ecstasy in each song, and then used textual analysis to give examples of ecstasy references in several songs.

Similarly, Abello (2012) selected 20 albums of the top 20 rap artists as declared by MTV, totaling 330 rap songs, and sampled 105 of the songs to examine the portrayal and frequency of religion in secular rap music. Abello also counted the frequency of religious references in each song, which could be considered an indicator of salience. (the relationship between religious references and salience.)

These studies all regard popular music lyrics as media messages, but they have not statistically examined the salience of the lyrics' frames; also, there is no research statistically examining the correlation between media framing and artists' lyrical framing.

Racial Boundaries in American Music and Music Journalism

Binder (1993) not only compared how media frames heavy metal music and rap music differently, but also the differences between how American mainstream publications' and African-American publications' frames the two genres of music. Binder found the major difference is that the "music is harmful" frames are largely applied in mainstream framing but not seen in African-American publications. Another possible differentiation could be based on the aesthetic-racial boundary model, which is developed by Roy based on his argument that musical genres, as a kind of aesthetic category, are related to social genres, such as race. In other words, the aesthetic boundary is related to the racial boundary.

The application of boundaries between racial and aesthetic identities in popular music was first introduced by Roy (2002) about folk music; later Roy (2004, 2010) applied it to popular music including hip-hop. The two effects, bridging and bounding, upon aesthetic and social boundaries occur when different races encounter each other in certain forms of music. Music has been seen as a bridge between races in social life – people with different races communicate through music. However, the effect of bridging does not necessarily turn out satisfying results. The positive mode of bridging is fusion, which is an egalitarian blend of heritages from different races or ethnicities that creates a fully synthetic form that would not likely have developed in isolation (Roy, 2004). The negative mode is appropriation; Roy took hip-hop music as an example because white rappers in the early stage profited by borrowing and adapting African heritage.

In turn, bounding means people with different ethno-racial identities exclude each other from their own identities. Roy's bounding explanation is based on Bryson's argument (1996) on the musical exclusion. Musical bounding means people with different social identities, including race, have distinctive music preferences; the process of bounding then helps people foster or solidify racial identities (Bryson, 1996). Identity is the more equal, positive mode of bounding. For example, although hip-hop is regarded as having African heritage, it is still appreciated and celebrated by different races and ethnicities in America. Segregation, however, is the less equal, negative mode of bounding, which will create a hierarchy for both musical and social classes, such as the stereotype that classical music is for whites (Roy, 2004).

Roy's racial boundary analysis on music provides a conceptual basis for a study by Schaap (2015) that examined whiteness in rock music reviews by semi-professional reviewers and online consumers from 2003 to 2013. Although Schaap (2015) applied a mix of quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the quantitative aspect only counted the demographics of critics and

mentions of race, ethnicity, and gender in reviews. Schaap's qualitative analysis revealed five mechanisms to classify the boundaries perceived by media and music consumers: ethno-racial comparisons, for example, associate nonwhite rock guitarists with well-known 1960s Black rock star Jimi Hendrix; inter-genre comparisons, for example, compare nonwhite rock musicians with other nonwhite musicians in other music genres where nonwhite musicians are more popular, such as soul, rap, and world music; positive ethno-racial marking, which means a mention of color-consciousness with positive descriptions; negative ethno-racial marking, such as saying someone lacks rock talent due to their skin color; and minimization, which means avoiding mentioning race (Schaap, 2015, p. 272). Although giving examples and brief explanations, Schaap (2015) doesn't analyze the salience of the five ethno-racial boundary mechanisms; the quantitative process was only applied for counting race, gender breakdown of artists, and reviewers' ranking of certain music work in Schaap's study.

Although Roy's model has been applied to research about whiteness and Blackness, there is little research that applies the model to study Asian-ness. The current study assumes that when Asian rappers inevitably bring Asian identity and Asian-ness to the Black-legitimated rap music, they will bridge or bound Asian-ness with other cultures. Journalists who listen to the music also will perceive the messages about racial boundaries and express their perceptions in news coverage, reviews, and public comments.

Research Questions

The literature review suggests the feasibility and societal importance of answering the following research questions:

RQ1: How, if at all, do different generations of rappers of Asian descent active in the American hip-hop music industry mark racial boundaries using fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation frames in their lyrics?

RQ2: How does the mass media frame Asian-ness – using frames of fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation – in coverage, including in reviews of Asian American hip-hop?

RQ3: Is there a correlation between artists' self-marked racial boundary frames and the mass media's racial boundary frames?

Methodology

The purpose of this quantitative study is to find out how different generations of Asian rappers present Asian-ness in their music. The study also aims to find out how the American mass media presents Asian-ness while covering and reviewing these rappers and their work, as well as to determine if there is a correlation between Asian rappers' self-image and that presented by the media.

Operationalization of Concepts

Although Roy (2004) compiled the four dimensions – fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation – to come up with the aesthetic-racial boundary model, the four dimensions of effects are not new concepts.

Fusion: Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Conceptually, fusion means "newcomers to a culture continually build upon their knowledge base/repertoire and fuse/integrate their previous cultural knowledge with newly acquired cultural knowledge" (Kramer, 2000; as cited from Croucher and Kramer, 2017, p. 2). Cultural fusion may happen when newcomers are under three conditions, as Croucher and Kramer came up with:

(1) Newcomers are primarily socialized in one culture and then move to a new culture;

(2) Newcomers are to some extent dependent on the dominant culture/environment;

(3) Newcomers and members of the dominant culture communicate with one another (p. 3).

For this study, "newcomers" are Asian rappers who expose and integrate themselves into a Black heritage culture, hip-hop. The dominant culture in the context of hip-hop is Black culture.

For the purpose of this study, fusion was operationally defined as any words in lyrics or media texts that can reflect Asian rappers' intentions of combining their Asian identity with Black culture.

Appropriation: Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Appropriation has broad and narrow definitions. Cultural appropriation is defined broadly as "the use of one culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture—regardless of intent, ethics, function, or outcome" (Rogers, 2016, p. 476). The narrow definition of cultural appropriation adds the premise of applying other cultures to further their own ends without authority (Ziff & Rao, 1997).

This research, however, didn't aim to study how Asian rappers appropriate the form of hip-hop, but to study if the contents Asian rappers express in hip-hop lyrics appropriate Black culture. This research used the narrow definition to operationally define "appropriation" as any words coders regard as Black symbols, rituals, heritages, etc. that are used by an Asian rapper in their lyrics to show they are acting like someone who has grown up in a Black collective. For coding mass media articles, this study defined appropriation framing as any expression by journalists that Asian rappers are appropriating Black culture.

Identity: Conceptual and Operational Definitions

In terms of music and identity construction, there are generally two aspects of identity: self-identity (DeNora, 2000) and collective identity (Roy, 2002). DeNora indicates that musicians' self-identity construction refers to a construction of "me" by marking and documenting important aspects of one's life in music, at the same time separating oneself from others. The construction of a collective identity refers to using music as a tool to positively mark a group of people, or "us," who share the same self-identity to some extent (Roy, 2002, 2004, 2010).

The current research uses Roy's collective identity definition because racial identity has a collective sense. Operationally, any words that reflect Asian culture in lyrics with an intention to show their Asian identity were considered. For coding articles, any words in media texts that can reflect Asian rappers' intentions to positively mark Asian identity were regarded as identity framing.

Segregation: Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Segregation refers to "separation of groups of people with differing characteristics (for example, race and sex) and often taken to connote a condition of inequality" (Bevir, 2007, p. 861). The "inequality" becomes the difference between identity and segregation, where both concepts involve separation in their meanings. Segregation means one culture is excluded from any participation in forms of another culture (Roy, 20014).

Operationally, for the purpose of this study, segregation was defined as any expression by Asian rappers to separate Asian-ness from other cultures and to deny the possibilities of interactions between different cultures. The segregation frame applied for mass media article coding was operationally regarded as any texts that connect racial segregation with Asian rappers.

Population and Sampling

Rappers and Song Sample

As introduced in the previous chapters, four generations of Asian rappers target their music to the American music industry. This study didn't include the first generation in the early 1990s, which was led by a group of rappers who were inspired by Public Enemy and utilized hip-hop music as a tool for political expression instead of regarding rap as an aesthetic form (O. Wang, 2007). That generation clearly drew racial boundaries to fight for political expression for the Asian American minority population, and this study doesn't need to repeat the conclusion. Furthermore,

the hip-hop music produced by the first generation of Asian rappers was only intended for Asian Americans; Asian hip-hop music at this stage is explained by O. Wang (2007) as "music made for, by, and about Asian Americans" (p. 44). Since Asian rappers at that time didn't target the mainstream audience and did not attract mainstream media attention, it is not necessary for the sake of this study to research the mass media responses to that generation and its work.

Instead, this study chose three representative artists/groups who debuted in the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, who are the Mountain Brothers, MC Jin, and Rich Brian, respectively. Songs being sampled in this study meet the following requirements:

1. Songs with lyrics whose language is English.

2. The song is published under an American label.

3. The album version of repeatedly released songs is the only one the study considers.

4. Considering remix culture is popular in hip-hop music and the focus of this study is lyrics, this study only includes the original versions of songs. In addition, this research takes into account songs featuring an artist but excludes collaborative songs that include more than three artists/groups.

5. Songs are accessible to the researcher either in digital or physical format.

6. Lyrics of songs are available online.

The rap group chosen for the first stage of the study is the Mountain Brothers, who started to tackle racial presentation to a mainstream audience more than any other Asian hip-hop music artists before them (H.Y.H. Wang, 2002). The Mountain Brothers were formed around 1992, earned media attention in 1996, when they won a commercial advertisement opportunity, and released their first album in 1998. They released their second album in 2003 and announced their breakup in 2004. Two full-length albums, totaling 40 songs, by the Mountain Brothers are *Self,*

Volume 1 (1998) and *Triple Crown* (2004); 16 songs with lyrics available were sampled for the study.

The artist chosen to represent the mid-2000s to 2010s was MC Jin, who is still active and gets attention in both America and his home country of China. Although Jin also released songs in Mandarin and Cantonese after success in Hong Kong and mainland China, only English songs are included in this study. MC Jin got mainstream attention after he won the competition program 106 & Park by BET in 2002 and signed with the Ruff Ryders label for his debut album. Jin released his first single under Ruff Ryders in 2003 and made his debut album in 2004. In total, 46 songs in his English albums, *The Rest is History (2004), The Emcee's Properganda (2005), I Promise (2006), 100 Grand Jin (2006)* and *XIV:LIX (2014)*, which have lyrics available online, were studied.

The third artist who was chosen to represent Asian-American rappers who debuted in the 2010s is Rich Brian. He made his debut in 2016 and received massive attention after his first digital single Dat $tick was released. The sample of Rich Brian's works is 28 songs from two albums and five EPs/singles.

The sampling of 100 songs from the three artists/groups is shown in Table 2 with their album names.

Table 2

Sample of Rappers and Albums, EPs and Singles in Study

Artist	Album/EP/Single	Publish Year	Number of Sampled Songs
Mountain Brothers	Self, Volume 1	1998	11
Mountain Brothers	Triple Crown	2003	5

			Total	16
MC Jin	The Rest is History	2004		15
MC Jin	The Emcee's Properganda	2005		10
MC Jin	I Promise	2006		5
MC Jin	100 Grand Jin	2006		1
MC JIn	VIX:LIX	2014		15
			Total	46
Rich Brian	Dat $tick (Single)	2016		1
Rich Brian	Seventeen (Single)	2016		1
Rich Brian	Back at it (Single)	2016		1
Rich Brian	watch out! (Single)	2017		1
Rich Brian	Amen	2018		14
Rich Brian	The Sailor	2019		12
Rich Brian	1999 (EP)	2020		7
Rich Brian	BALI (Single)	2020		1
			Total	38
	Total			**100**

Lyrics were collected through The Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive (OHHLA.com), Genius.com, and NetEase Music. The sampled 100 songs include 5788 lines in total.

Mass Media Coverage and Review Sample

The current study only focuses on mass media coverage and reviews in text format, including newspapers, magazines, and online articles. The articles were collected from the Factiva database and limited to those in English. The researcher manually excluded articles published by non-U.S. news outlets. Articles that are advertisements, not related to the artists, or that only mention the artist for simple references, such as song attribution, concert lineup, rankings, ticket information, etc., were also excluded. After filtering the works, the number of articles for the Mountain Brothers, MC Jin, and Rich Brian were respectively 31, 30, and 72.

Due to the limited numbers of articles about the Mountain Brothers and MC Jin, the whole population of articles were sampled. For Rich Brian, among 72 articles collected, 30 articles were randomly sampled.

Coding

Use of Content Analysis

The current study used content analysis because it is a method to evaluate "trends and patterns within documents" (Stemler, 2001, para. 4). For RQ 1, the current research aimed to find out the trends of Asian-ness presented by different artists in different time periods, and how they present their Asian-ness becomes what Stemler defined as a "pattern." For RQ 2, the patterns of how mass media frame Asian-ness were examined. By applying quantitative content analysis to RQ 1 and RQ 2, RQ 3 then was answered based on analyzing the results from RQ 1 and RQ 2.

Coders and Coder Training

Two coders coded for this study, including the researcher. Coder training started with an introduction of the history of hip-hop culture, and went through a list of words, slang terms, and symbols often used in hip-hop songs related to certain races and cultures. To eliminate bias,

examples used did not come from samples in the actual study and pretests. The training also familiarized coders with framing theory and the aesthetic-racial boundary model and went through the protocol that was sent to coders three days before the training and required a thorough read. The training then addressed all questions that coders came up with. A series of pretests was conducted during the training to adjust and finalize the protocol.

Process of Coding Lyrics

To answer RQ 1 – how, if at all, do different generations of rappers of Asian descent who are active in the American hip-hop music industry mark racial boundaries using fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation in their lyrics – quantitative content analysis was applied. This research regarded every "line" as a coding unit in its quantitative content analysis.

Hip-hop music has its own poetics. The majority of rap music is in 4/4 time, which means one quarter note is one beat and that there are four beats in one measure. The content of lyrics in one measure is one line – "what an MC can deliver in a single musical measure – one poetic line equals a musical bar" (Bradley, 2017, p. xx). In other words, content in one line or one bar is a unit of an MC's meaning. Coders will mark if fusion (F), appropriation (A), identity (I), or segregation (S) are mentioned in one line; if none is mentioned, coders will mark "N" as none. Coders could only mark one letter because information is very limitedly conveyed in one short line; when coders believed there were multiple aesthetical-racial boundary effects presented, they were required to mark the dominant one.

When coders found words and symbols from other cultures that were appropriated in the lyrics, coders marked "A" in the line. For example, in Rich Brian's "Dat $tick," coders regarded the following line as appropriation since Rich Brian used the word "nigga," which is widely accepted as a word only okay to be used by Black people:

26

Rogue wave on you niggas, no fail when I hit 'em (F/**A**/I/S/N)

For four lines in Jin's song "Chinese New Year," coders marked "identity" as below as wonton is a traditional Chinese food and mahjong is a traditional Chinese game, which Jin mentioned as a sign of identifying his race.

In the back of the kitchen (F/A/I/S/**N**)

Makin' wontons (F/A/**I**/S/N)

Late nights out with my moms (F/A/I/S/**N**)

Playin' mahjong (F/A/**I**/S/N)

When there are messages that mentioned at least two kinds of culture combined, such as what Jin conveyed in "Chinese New Year," in which he mentioned how Asian American have two identities together, coders marked the lyrics as below:

Until they immigrated to the US of A, Chasin' the American Dream (**F**/A/I/S/N)

When coders find artists not only identify their racial identity, but also want to differentiate their identity from other races, coders would mark segregation. For example, for two lines in Jin's "Learn Chinese,"

I ain't ya 50 Cent, I ain't ya Eminem (F/A/I/**S**/N)

I ain't ya Jigga Man, I'm a chinaman (F/A/I/**S**/N)

By making the unit of analysis one line, the salience of particular codes can be determined by counting how often they appear. Take two rap songs published under 88rising's record label as an example, Rich Brian's song "BALI" and Higher Brother's song "Made in China," which both mention their ancestry in their titles. Although they both included Asian-ness in their songs, Higher Brother mentioned "made in China" 39 times in the lyrics, while Rich Brian only mentioned "Bali" and "Indonesia" 4 times in his lyrics. If each song was treated as the unit of analysis, the two songs

would be coded identically. However, the salience of Asian-ness would not be recorded, and that salience could evoke different reactions from listeners and critics.

Process of Coding Articles

To answer RQ 2, which is how does the mass media frame Asian-ness – using frames of fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation – in coverage, including in reviews of Asian American hip-hop, two coders coded every sampled article according to a preset codebook (see Table 4 in Appendix), which set up criteria to examine the salience of each frame: fusion frame, appropriation frame, identity frame, segregation frame, and non-race frame. The preset codebook is in questionnaire form, which required coders to record 1 or 0 while checking if a premise is true or false. There are four criteria under each aesthetical-racial boundary effect frame for coders to examine (three criteria under non-race frame); when the coding process was finished, indices/indexes were calculated to show the salience of each frame for each group of artists.

Reliability pretest

Reliability has three levels of meaning: stability, reproducibility, and accuracy (Krippendorff, 2013). Stability means the consistency of applying coding protocol by a coder; reproducibility means agreement among two or more coders applying the protocol to the same content; accuracy refers to the consistency of the coding process with external standards for the content.

Reliability tests launched during the pretest can examine the reliability of protocol before the actual coding (Riffe et al., 2019). After the reliability was achieved for the pretests, each coder coded separately a half of the samples for the actual test.

The current study set the assumed level of population agreement at 90% and the minimum required agreement for the pretest at 85%. The current study reported the reliability coefficient for

both precoding processes for lyrics and articles, by using Krippendorff's Alpha, whose formula is as follows (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 278):

$$Alpha = 1 - \frac{D_0}{D_e}$$

in which

D_0 = observed disagreement

D_e = expected disagreement

Krippendorff (2013) suggests that an Alpha of .8 adequately shows the reliability of a study, and an Alpha of .667 is acceptable for giving tentative conclusions.

Lyric coding reliability pretest

Samples for reliability presets should not be what were used for the actual study, because repetition of coding the same contents will decrease the reliability and give a false confidence to the study (Riffe et al., 2019). To do so, pretest samples were selected from three other Asian-American artists who debuted in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s to match the timeline that the three artists/groups of the current study debuted, as well as to familiarize coders with what might be similar with the formal coding. Three artists for the pretests were Dumbfoundead, who debuted in the 1990s; Snacky Chan, who debuted in the 2000s; and $tupid Young, who debuted in the 2010s.

A total of 43 songs, including 2264 lines, 39% of the sample (5788 lines), were sampled for the pretest.

Article coding reliability pretest

Samples for the article coding reliability pretest came from the population of articles about Rich Brian. As mentioned above, from 72 articles, 30 articles were randomly sampled for the actual coding; the 42 articles (46% of the sample for the actual test) which were not sampled for the actual study were used for the pretest.

Intercoder Reliability Results

The calculated Krippendorff's Alpha is .8436 for the part of coding lyrics and .5997 for the part of coding media articles, achieved by completing two rounds of coder training.

Data Analysis

After two coders finished coding lyrics for RQ1, the researcher calculated the percentage of lines for each frame category for each group of artists, which can reflect how each group of artists branded their racial identities in their lyrics. After the RQ2 coding process was completed, the researcher calculated an index for each frame on each group of artists to statistically show how the media frames different groups of artists.

With indexes of each frame for both artists' lyrics and their mass media coverage, the researcher tested whether a correlation exists between the salience of each racial boundary in a rap artist/group's works and the salience of each racial boundary frame used in related mass media coverage and reviews for RQ3. The researcher computerized results by drawing scatter diagrams to find out the existence of correlation and the type of correlation.

Results

RQ1: How, if at all, do different generations of rappers of Asian descent active in the American hip-hop music industry mark racial boundaries by using fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation frames in their lyrics?

The data analysis for this research question started with calculating frequencies of race-related frames – fusion, appropriation, identity, segregation – and a non-race frame applied to each line for three artists respectively (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Distribution of aesthetic-racial frames in Songs by three Asian rap artists/groups

Lines apply the following frames	Aesthetic-racial boundary frames				Non-race frame	*(Total lines)*
	Fusion	Appropriation	Identity	Segregation		
Mountain Brothers (debuted in 1990s)	3	2	13	4	1011	*1033*
	0.3%	0.2%	1.3%	0.4%	97.9%	
MC Jin (debuted in 2000s)	15	2	156	6	2796	*2975*
	0.5%	0.1%	5.2%	0.2%	94.0%	
Rich Brian (debuted in 2010s)	4	7	56	9	1704	*1780*
	0.2%	0.4%	3.1%	0.5%	95.7%	

Chi-square	.277	.044	.001	.194	.001

Chi-square tests for the lyric samples of a total of 5788 lines revealed significant differences between three artists or groups applying appropriation, identity, and non-race frames, whose p-values were .044, .001, and .001 respectively.

The p-value of .05 signifies that the results are statistically different. About 98% of Mountain Brothers' lyrics are not about race, which means only 2.1% of lines of their lyrics applies one of the four aesthetic-racial frames, while that for MC Jin is 6% and for Rich Brian is 4.3%. For identity framing, 5.2% of MC Jin's lyrics are about identity, while the Mountain Brothers applies identity frames to only 1.3% of their lyrics. Rich Brian is again in the middle at 3.1%.

Although none of the three groups of artists applies appropriation frames to more than 0.4% of their lyrics, there was a significant difference between how they apply the frame, indicated by the p-value of .044. For both Mountain Brothers and MC Jin, the appropriation frame was the frame they used least among the five frames, respectively 0.2% and 0.1%. However, Rich Brian applied the frame to 0.4% of his lyrics, which doubled his least used frame, fusion, and is close to his third most used frame, segregation, 0.5%.

There was no statistically significant difference between the three groups of artists applying fusion and segregation frames, and the fusion framing becomes the less different way for them to frame their own racial identities in their works.

RQ2: How does the mass media frame Asian-ness – using frames of fusion, appropriation, identity, segregation, and non-race – in coverage, including reviews of Asian American hip-hop?

The data analysis for this research question was based on the dichotomous results collected by two coders who looked at mass media coverage and examined whether frames of fusion, appropriation, identity, segregation, and non-race are used, shown as Table 5.2. The following table shows the percentage of articles about each group of artists for which the premise on the left column was answered as true by coders.

Chi-square tests were conducted to examine whether there was any difference between how media apply those five frames on the three groups of artists.

Table 5.2

Distribution of frames of fusion, appropriation, identity, segregation, and non-race related used in three groups of Asian rap artists' media coverage

	Mountain Brothers	MC Jin	Rich Brian	*Chi-square*
… is the main frame of the artist.				
Fusion	0%	0%	3.3%	.358
Appropriation	0%	0%	13.3%	.014
Identity	19.4%	63.3%	10.0%	.001
Segregation	0%	0%	3.3%	.358
… is not the main frame but it is mentioned (serve as a sidebar frame).				
Fusion	6.5%	10.0%	10.0%	.852
Appropriation	0.0%	3.3%	10.0%	.154
Identity	25.8%	13.3%	50.0%	.007
Segregation	3.2%	3.3%	3.3%	1.000
… frame is used for other artists who share the same racial identity with the artists in the article.				
Fusion	6.5%	6.7%	13.3%	.845
Appropriation	6.5%	10.0%	13.3%	.667
Identity	25.8%	26.7%	40.0%	.407
Segregation	6.5%	6.7%	3.3%	.817

The whole article applies … frame as the main focus.				
Fusion	6.5%	0.0%	6.7%	.357
Appropriation	0.0%	3.3%	3.3%	.590
Identity	22.6%	56.7%	30.0%	.015
Segregation	0	0	0	
Race is NEVER mentioned to frame the artist	51.6%	23.3%	30.0%	.053
Race is NEVER mentioned to frame other artists who share same racial identity with the artist	29.0%	0.0%	16.7%	.007
The whole article applies non-race frame	71.0%	40.0%	66.7%	.029

The first generation as represented by the Mountain Brothers had the most media coverage that had nothing related to their race – 51.6% of the media articles never mentioned their racial identities, and 71.0% of the articles didn't make race the focus of the whole article, even though in some articles their race was mentioned. Media are most likely to mention Jin's race compared with the other two groups of artists – only 23.3% of the articles didn't mention Jin's race.

The chi-square tests also indicated that the biggest difference how the media frames each group is with respect to the identity frame. There are 63.3% of the articles that use the identity

frame as the main frame for covering and reviewing MC Jin, while for Rich Brian and the Mountain Brothers the number is 19.4% and 10%, respectively. Although media applied the identity frame as the main frame the least on covering and reviewing Rich Brian, there are 50% more articles that frame his identity as a sidebar rather than a main frame. There are 76.6% of the samples that used an identity frame on MC Jin, either as the main frame or a sidebar frame, and the number for Rich Brian is 63.3%, while only 45.2% of the articles applied identity frames on the Mountain Brothers. Similarly, MC Jin's article samples mostly applied the identity frame (56.7%) as the focus of the whole article, followed by Rich Brian's (30.0%), and then the Mountain Brothers' (22.6%).

The chi-square tests also showed a significant difference between how media frame the three groups of artists by using appropriation frames. The appropriation frame was never used as the main frame when framing the Mountain Brothers and MC Jin, while 13.3% of the sampled articles about Rich Brian used the appropriation frame as the main frame. There are also 10% more articles that mentioned appropriation about Rich Brian as a sidebar rather than a main frame.

This research defined the artists who share the same racial identity with the three artists, which is Asian, and were mentioned in an article along with the three focused artists as their "peer artists." For the section of "… frame is used for other artists who share the same racial identity with the artists in the article" in Table 5.2, the chi-test showed that there is no significant difference when media applied each aesthetic-racial boundary frame on the peer artists. Also, percentages of each frame applied to the peer artists also showed that the way media frames each group of artists' peer artists was similar to the way that media frames each focused group of artists.

The following charts (Figure 1.1, 1.2, 1.3) show how media applied four aesthetic-racial boundary frames for each artist.

Figure 1.1

Distribution of fusion, appropriation, identity and segregation frames used by media on covering

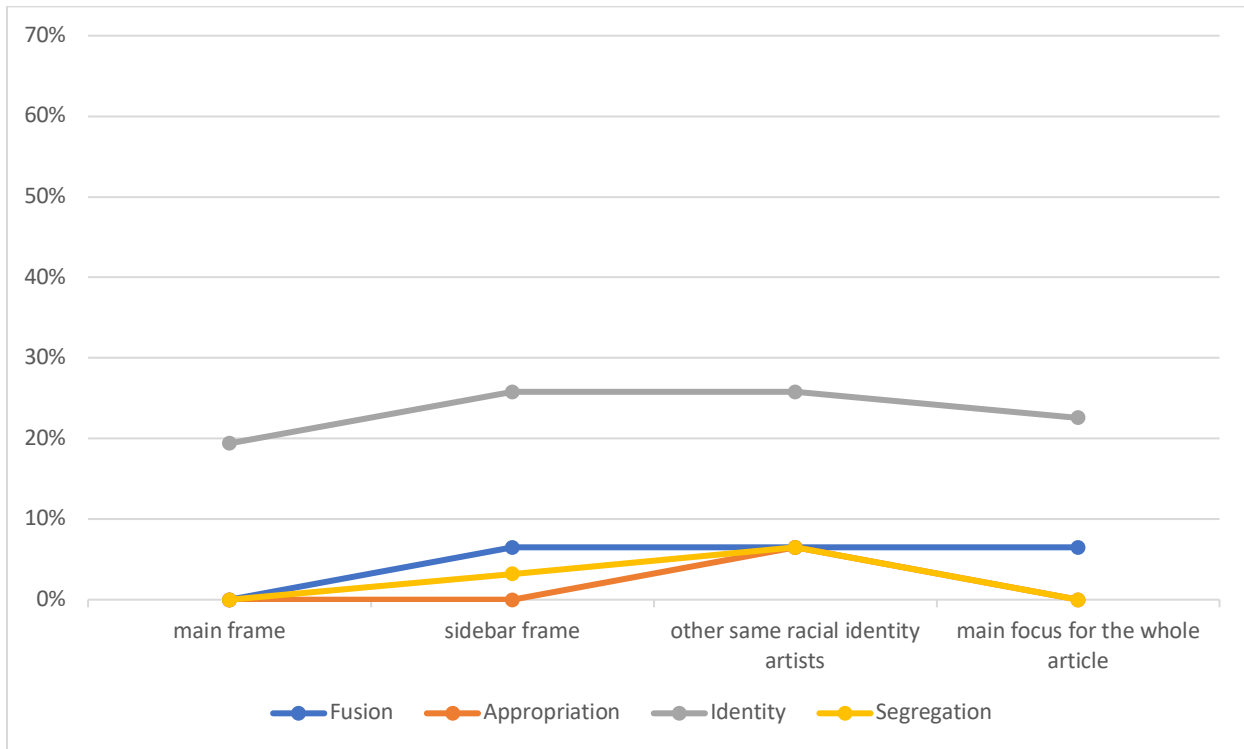and reviewing Mountain Brothers

Figure 1.2

Distribution of fusion, appropriation, identity and segregation frames used by media on covering

and reviewing MC Jin
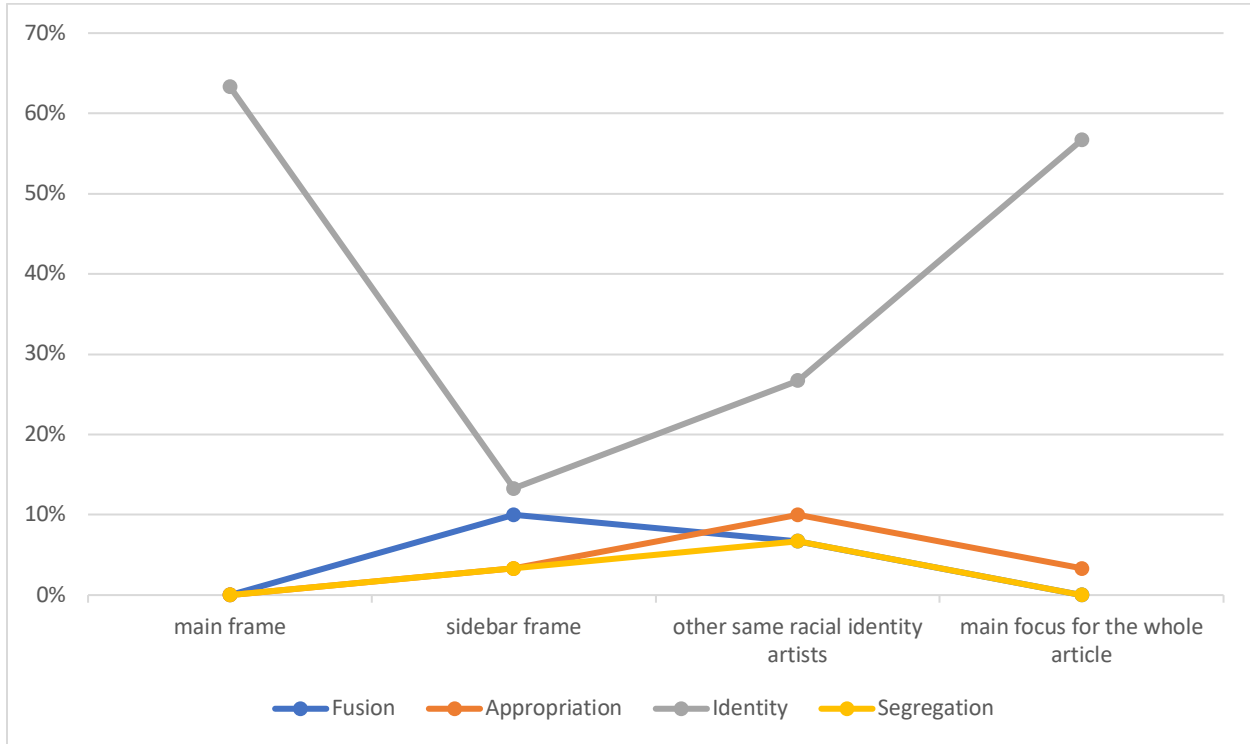
Figure 1.3

Distribution of fusion, appropriation, identity and segregation frames used by media on covering and reviewing Rich Brian
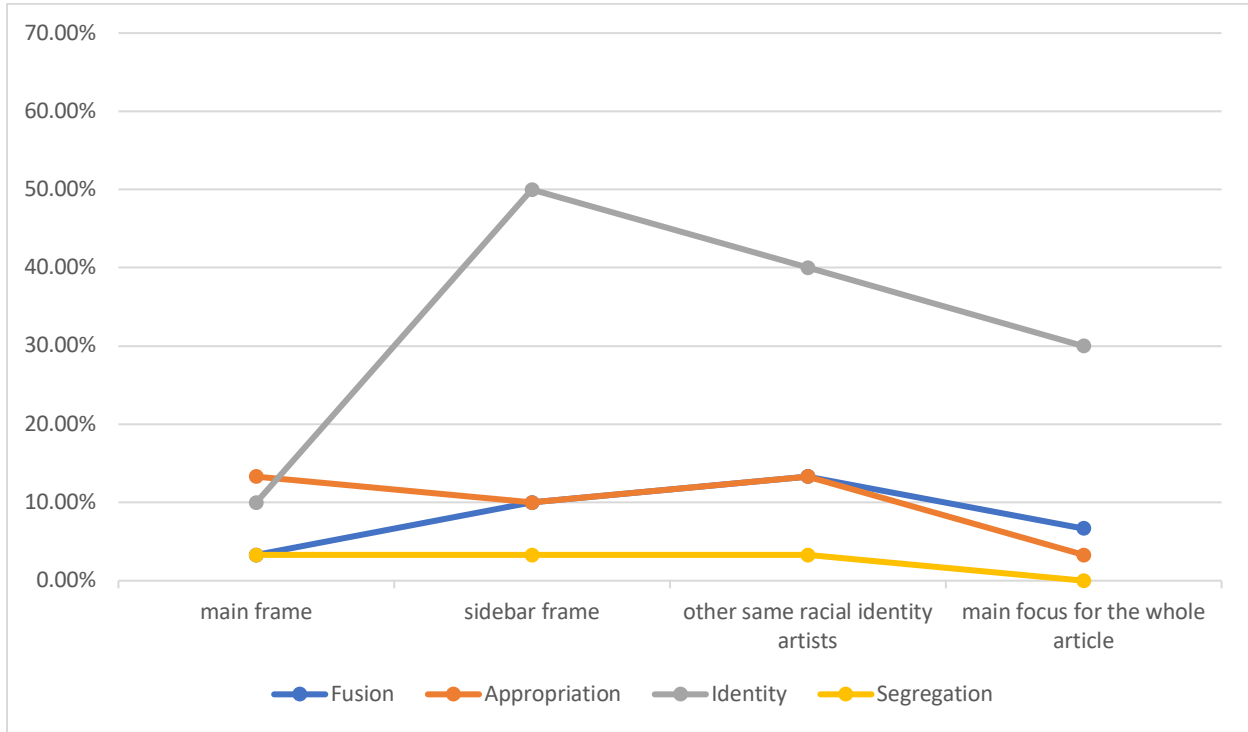
In general, identity is the most common frame of media framing for all three groups of artists, but for Rich Brian, the appropriation frame as the main frame surpasses identity as the main frame. Both the Mountain Brothers and MC Jin were framed via the lens of fusion as the second common frame by media. Segregation is the least used frame except for the Mountain Brothers.

In order to analyze RQ 3, this researcher came up with two indexes presenting how media used each frame on the three groups of artists.

The researcher named the first index as primary index (PI), which applies a stricter definition for media framing the artists – only results that indicated that each frame was the main focus were taken into account, while the secondary index (SI) additionally took into account the results in which a frame serves as a sidebar frame. The primary index shows how media strictly

applied each frame to different artists, and the secondary index shows to what extent media at least mention each aesthetic-racial boundary effect on different artists. Calculations of PI and SI for each frame are below:

For four aesthetic-racial boundary frames,

PI = (percentage of "x" frame as the main frame on the artist) + (percentage of "x" frame as the main focus for the article) * $\overline{V8}$ (x=fusion, appropriation, identity, segregation)

SI = (percentage of "x" frame as the main frame on the artist) + (percentage of "x" frame as a sidebar frame) + (percentage of "x" frame as the main focus for each whole article) * $\overline{V8}$ (x=fusion, appropriation, identity, segregation)

V8 is the relevance coefficient (see Table 4 in appendix), which is calculated as paragraphs mentioning the focused artist divided by total paragraphs of each article. Elements in the two calculations including – percentage of "x" frame as the main frame on the artists, percentage of "x" frame as the main focus for the article, and percentage of "x" frame as a sidebar frame – come from the results in Table 5.2.

For the non-race frame, which means the frame in which race is never mentioned, there is no difference between its PI and SI. PI or SI = (percentage of articles where race is never mentioned on the artists) + (percentage of non-race frame applied to the whole article) * $\overline{V8}$

Table 5.3

Index of media framing artists by fusion, appropriation, identity, segregation and non-race frames

		Mountain Brothers	MC Jin	Rich Brian
PI (primary index)	Fusion	1.12%	0.00%	10.00%
	Appropriation	1.12%	0.00%	20.00%
	Identity	23.83%	63.30%	30.16%
	Segregation	1.12%	0.00%	4.96%
	Non-race	63.78%	41.08%	63.62%
SI (secondary index)	Fusion	7.62%	12.98%	20.00%
	Appropriation	1.12%	7.75%	30.00%
	Identity	49.63%	88.47%	80.16%
	Segregation	4.32%	6.28%	8.26%
	Non-race	63.78%	41.08%	63.62%

The researcher transformed the form into two radar charts to visualize the results. The researcher intentionally put the two negative modes, which are appropriation and segregation, on the left, while the positive modes, which are fusion and identity, on the right. The two charts show that Rich Brian received more negative framing than the other two artists, which is consistent with the framing of their own lyrics.

Figure 1.4

Primary index of media framing on the three groups of artists

PI

Mountain Brothers — MC Jin — Rich Brian

Non-race

70.00%
60.00%
50.00%
40.00%
30.00%
20.00%
10.00%
0.00%

Segregation

Fusion

Appropriation

Identity
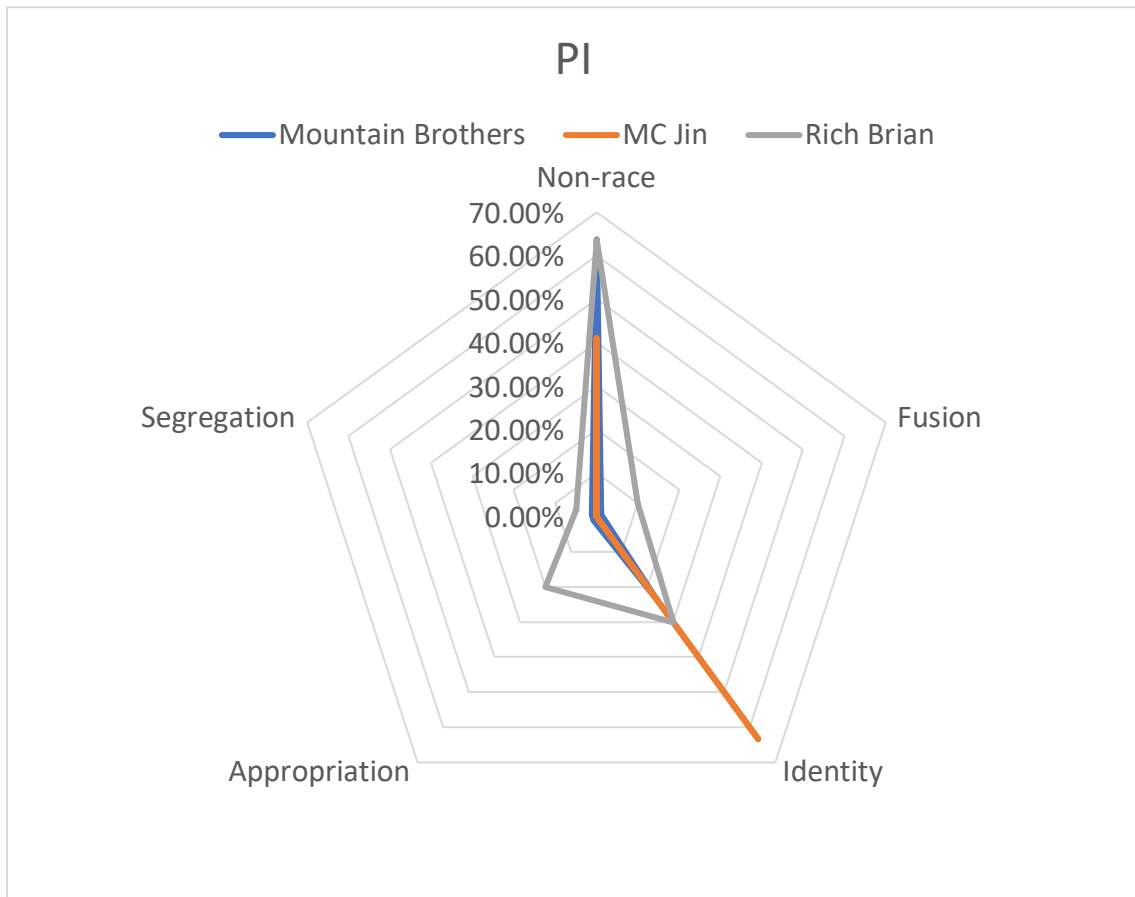
Figure 1.5

Secondary index of media framing on the three groups of artists
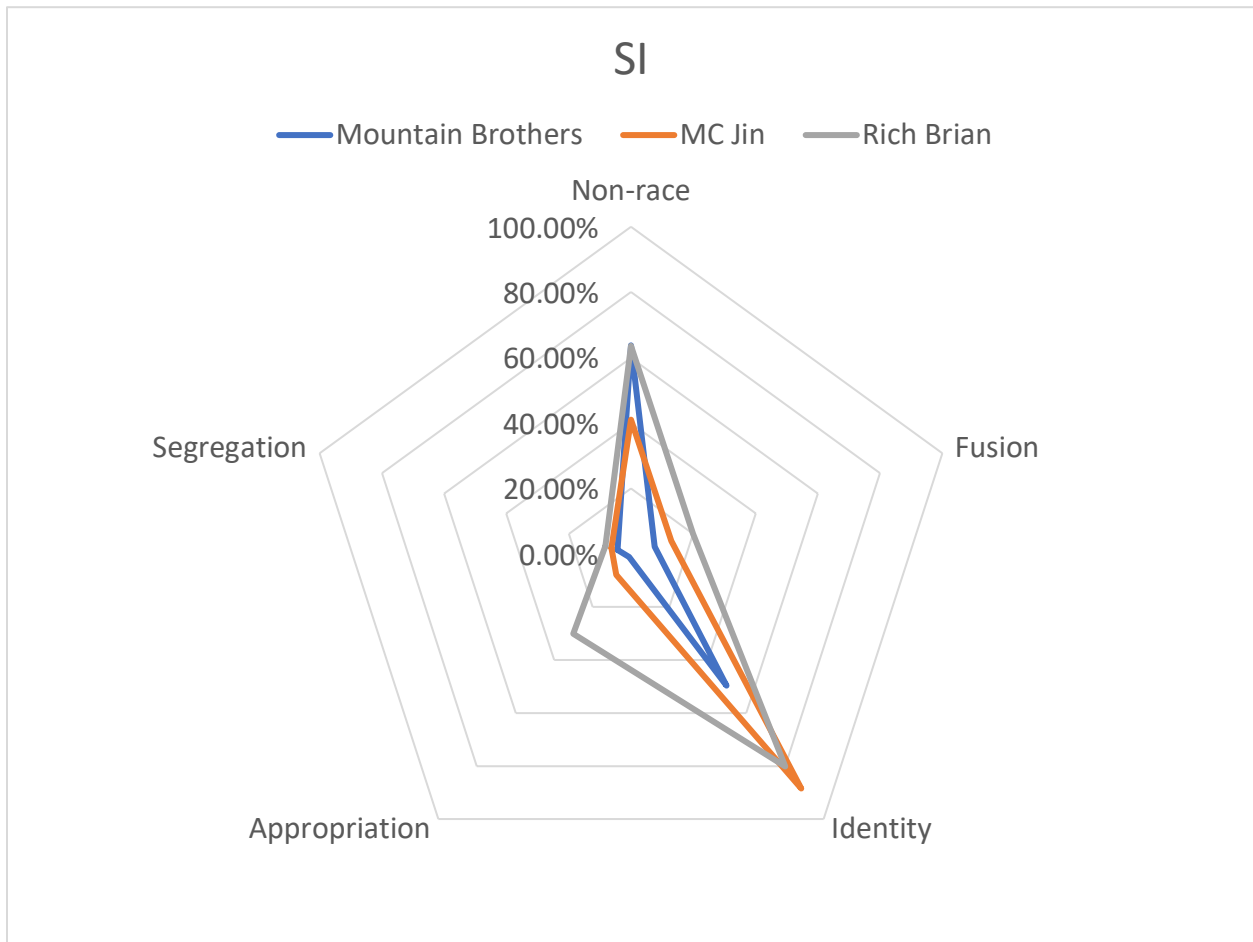
RQ3: Is there a correlation between artists' self-marked racial boundary frames and the mass media's racial boundary frames?

To examine if a correlation exists, the researcher drew five scatter charts (figures 2.1 – 2.5) for each frame, which includes two datasets. Dataset I is in blue, where x-value is the percentage of lyrics that are marked by an artist as one of the five frames, as shown in Table 5.1, and the y-value is PI. X-value for Dataset II (dots in orange) is the same as Dataset I, while the y-value is SI. The five scatter charts examined the correlation between artists' self-marked frames in their lyrics,

shown as x-value, and how media applied five frames when they covered and reviewed the three

artists, shown as y-value.

Figure 2.1 distribution of fusion frames in lyrics and media articles
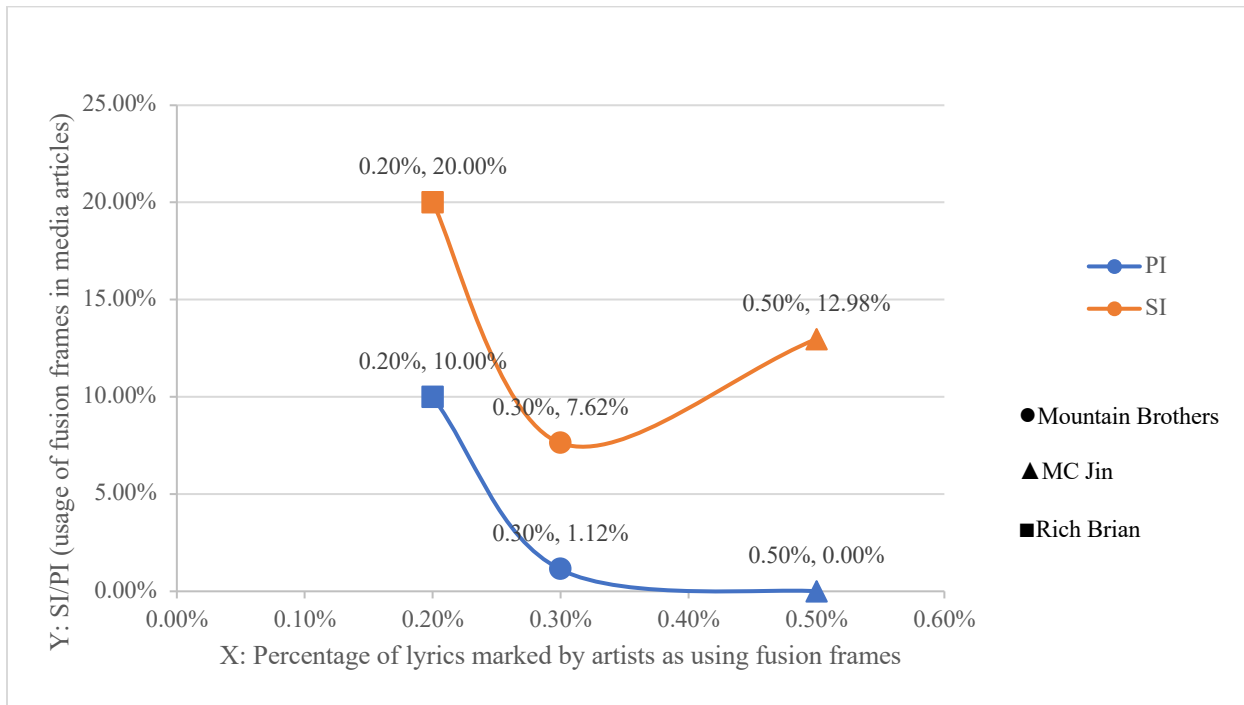
Figure 2.1 shows that when there were more mentions by artists of fusion, media instead

focused less on the fusion when they frame the artists. Rich Brian, who has the least mentions of

fusion in his lyrics, which is 0.2%, received the most fusion framing from media, either when the

fusion frame serves as the main frame or the sidebar frame. MC Jin, who applied fusion frames

most in his lyrics among the three groups of artists, was perceived via the focus of fusion framing

the least by media. However, media tended to mention more about fusion regarding MC Jin rather

than setting fusion framing as the main focus on MC Jin.

The researcher also found out that when media applied the fusion frame, media usually tied

it with the artists' music marketing instead of the content of their works, specifically the lyrics for

this study. For Rich Brian, media tended to mention his exclusively-Asian-focused company, 88 rising, by using phrases such as "bridges the gap between Western and Eastern pop cultures" (Diep, 2019) and "bridging the cultures where East meets West" (Guzman, 2018). He is also the only one artist among the three groups who signed with an Asian focused label.

Figure 2.2 distribution of appropriation frames in lyrics and media articles
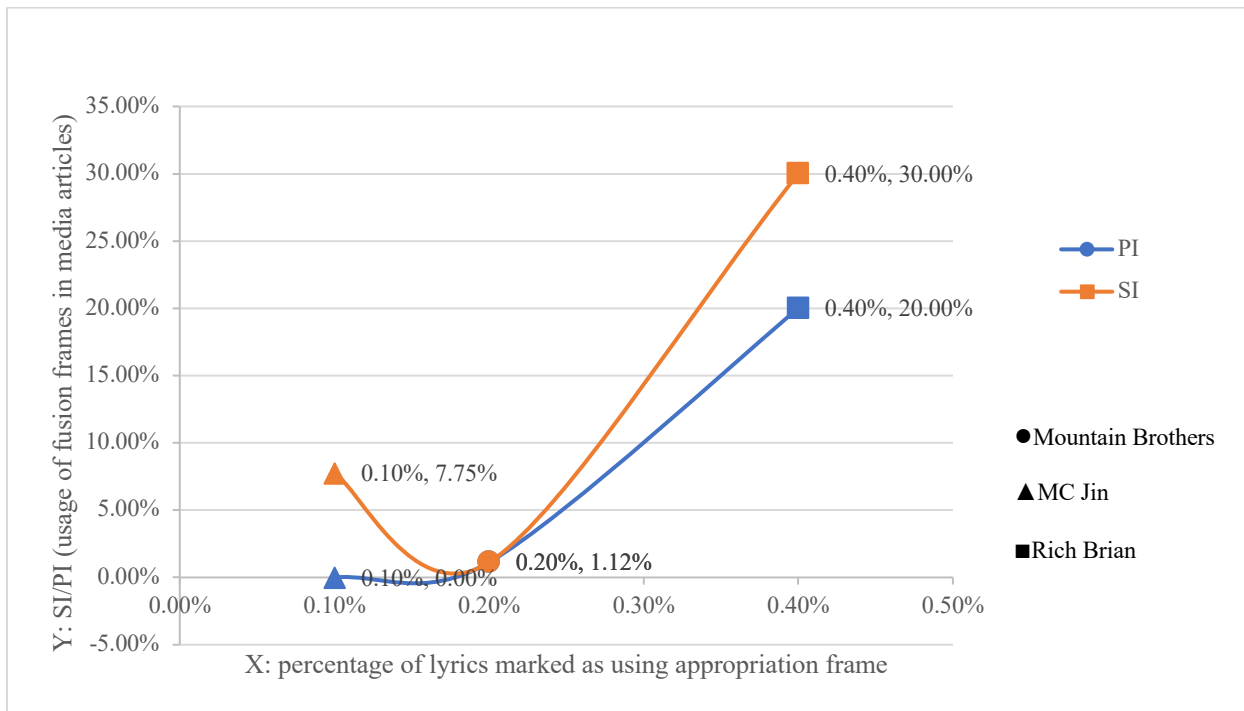
For the appropriation frame (shown as figure 2.2), the more artists used appropriation on racial identities in their lyrics, the more the media would make their articles focus on appropriation. The correlation seems exponential instead of linear. When artists applied the appropriation frame to 0.1% or 0.2% of their lyrics, the primary index is zero, but when the artist, Rich Brian, applied the appropriation frame to 0.4% of his lyrics, which is a little higher than the other two artists, PI went to 20%. Compared with the exponential trend between artists' self-marked appropriation frame with the media used appropriation frame as the main frame for the artist, a little surge

appeared on the mentioning appropriation of Jin, which is 7.75% of MC Jin's secondary index. The researcher found that articles applied the appropriation frame as a sidebar frame when media covered Jin, who has been publicly expressing his concerns about balancing cultural appropriation and exploiting Asian-ness.

Figure 2.3 distribution of identity frames in lyrics and media articles
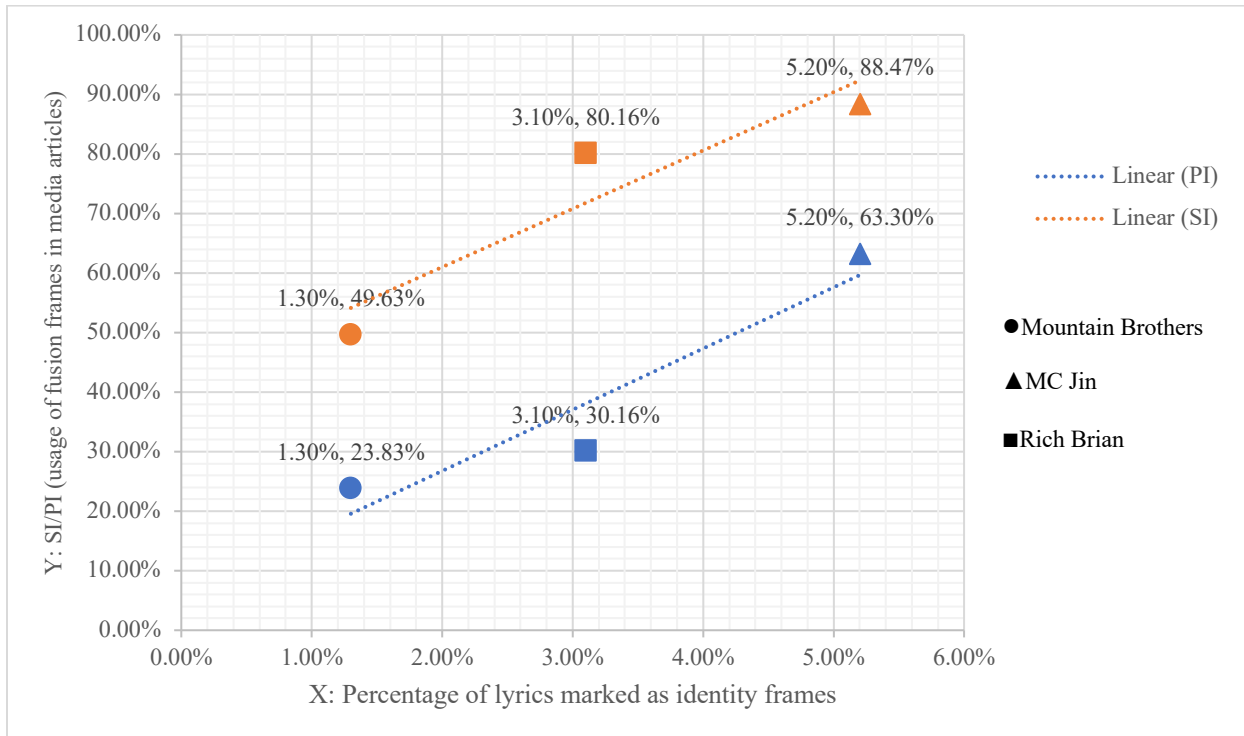
Figure 2.3 shows a positive correlation between artists' self-marked identity frame and the media-marked identity frame, whether it comes to PI or SI. The positive and linear-like correlation indicates that artists' intentions on marking their Asian identity in their lyrics were well perceived and presented by journalists.

Figure 2.4 distribution of segregation frames in lyrics and media articles
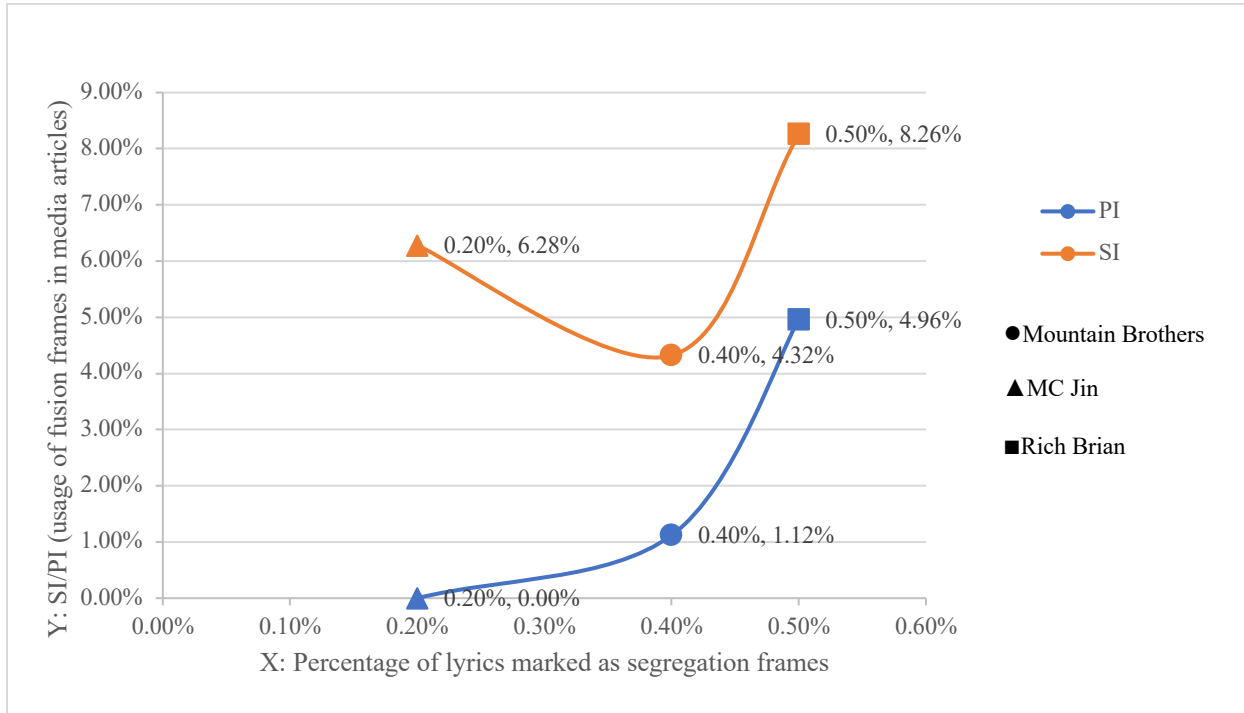
Figure 2.4 shows a similar trend of the correlation between self-marked and media-marked segregation frames and that of appropriation frames (Figure 2.2). The exponential-like correlation between how much artists use segregation frames in their lyrics and how much media apply the segregation frame as the main frame indicates that there is a tolerance for small amount of segregation mentions in artists' lyrics, but when it exceeds the tolerance, there will be a surge of segregation focused articles about the artist – in other words, information about segregation in the lyrics is exaggeratively perceived and presented by journalists.

Figure 2.5 distribution of non-race frames in lyrics and media articles
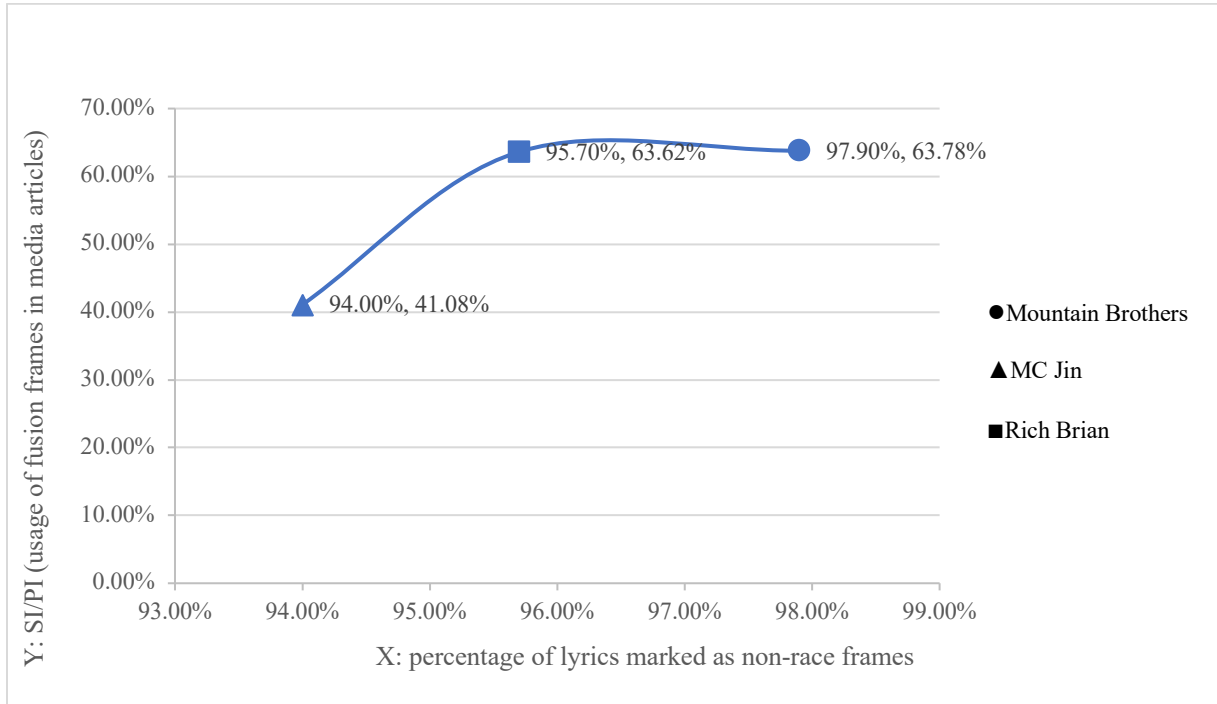
Figure 2.5 shows a probable logarithmic correlation between self-marked non-race framing and media-marked non-race framing where the maximum for the logarithmic y-value is at about 64%, which means even when Asian artists do not mention their race at all in their lyrics, media would still discuss their race.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The research found out that race is not the main topic for all three generations of Asian rappers – more than 90% of their lyrics are not about race. However, there are differences between how the three generations frame race in their lyrics.

The first generation, represented by the Mountain Brothers in this study, mentions race in their lyrics the least and applies the identity frame least among the three generations. This can be reflected by what Chops, one of the Mountain Brothers' members, said in an NPR profile story – they didn't want to play their racial identity as a gimmick, instead, their main focus "is really about the beats and the rhymes" (NPR, 1999). MC Jin, as the representation of the second generation, applies fusion and identity frames most among the three groups of the artists.

The results for the Mountain Brothers and MC Jin are in accordance with Oliver Wang's arguments that "in the mid-1990s, race and ethnicity became more muted and were replaced with a rhetoric of universalism. In the early 2000s, race was deployed publicly again but as a strategic" (Wang, 2004, p.38). The current study shows that the strategy that Wang referred to is framing racial identity in lyrics by using the positive frames of both bridging and bounding effects, which are fusion and identity frames.

This research showed that Rich Brian's generation did not actively present race compared with the previous generation, represented by MC Jin, but was more active than the oldest generation in this study, represented by the Mountain Brothers. Unlike Jin, Rich Brian applied more negative frames of bridging and bounding effects, which are appropriation and segregation, among the three groups of artists. However, the amount of appropriation and segregation frames

being applied is still small (0.4% and 0.5% respectively), compared with the number of identity frames he used (3.1%).

How they frame their race in their lyrics is partially reflected in how the media frame them. In general, the more one artist uses one of the four aesthetic-racial and non-race frames, the more the media would use that frame on the artist, except for the fusion frame. The results also show that even though artists didn't use any racial frames in their lyrics, the media would still frame them in a way of discussing their race, which is Asian.

News selection is based on whether the information meets news values, and one of the news values is unusualness (Brighton and Foy, 2007). Asian-ness has been seen as an unusualness in hip-hop culture and the mainstream American entertainment market. As Wang (2007) stated, Asian rappers have been marginalized in hip-hop culture, where Asian-ness doesn't have the same legitimacy resulting from stereotypes of Asians, which are opposite to those of Black people. The Mountain Brothers also mentioned that Asian people are not encouraged to be in the entertainment business by their families (NPR, 1999). A recent study (Noriega, 2020) analyzed race and ethnicity demographics of artists who signed to three major companies from the beginning of 2018 to the end of 2019. Noriega's study showed that 53.02% of the artists were white, 31.88% were Black/African American, and 2.35% were Foreign-Born Asian and 0.67% were Asian-American.

Another major finding of this research was that when the artists apply more negative-effect frames, which are appropriation and segregation frames, the more media coverage would use those frames, and the correlation was not linear but likely exponential. The likely-exponential correlation can possibly result from a strong focus on Black legitimacy in hip-hop, where people are more sensitive about whether there is appropriation, and this correlation might arise when Asian rappers try to legitimate themselves by segregating themselves from Black rappers. For appropriation,

another reason can be the degree of usage of words that can be regarded as cultural appropriation. Lines marked by the coders as appropriation for Rich Brian, including the n-word and "chigga" – meaning "Chinese nigga" – could be regarded as much more offensive appropriation than other usages such as "pigs" and citations of African American culture.

Limitation and Future Directions

Although this researcher believes that the three most popular, leading Asian groups of artists during each time period can represent Asian rappers from different generations, the fact that there are limited and different demographics will attribute to possible errors. The Mountain Brothers and MC Jin are Chinese-American, and Rich Brian is Indonesian and ethnically Chinese-Indonesian. However, Asia is diverse, and the limited demographics of artists who were sampled for the study can't show the full picture of the Asian hip-hop collective as a whole. In addition, different demographics of different groups of artists might also become the interreference condition that they frame their racial identity differently in their lyrics and media frame them differently, not necessarily due to the time period, which this research set as a variable.

Further research can include more artists from diverse Asian demographics for each generation, which can also show a more accurate correlation between how artists use aesthetical-racial frames in their lyrics and how media frame them, with more datasets collected.

Also, Rich Brian received mainstream media attention much more than the Mountain Brothers and MC Jin, and media coverage/critic samples for the Mountain Brothers were mostly from smaller publications, such as local newspapers, while Rich Brian gained more music and entertainment specialized outlets' attention. The different media outlets' makeup for each artist/group would cause some errors. However, examining differences of framing among different media toward Asian-ness and hip-hop music can be one area for future research.

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Another limitation of this study is that only examining lyrics cannot show the full picture of how artists mark the racial boundaries in their works. Although lyrics are a vital element in hip-hip music, lyrics are still not the only element in a piece of hip-hop music that will have effects on how the public de-codes the music. Artists' philosophy for making or choosing beats, singing tone and flow, emphasis on certain words, etc., also have an impact on the emotions they convey through their works, which will influence the perceptions listeners will have and how journalists will write about them.

Not only can various ways of making music cause some errors, different ways of receiving music can also add inaccuracy. From 1990s to 2010s, music consumers have changed their ways of listening to music. Earlier, people consumed music by watching the artists' music videos, but nowadays as music streaming services have become popular and convenient, people might not consume artists' music videos as well. These changes to music consumption will cause journalists in different time periods to receive music messages differently, which might lead to errors when analyzing how media frame the three artists.

Overall, applying a quantitative method to music analysis is limited because elements in music are generally hard to quantify, but looking for ways to improve the quantitative application in this field, as well as intersections between music and communication is important. The current research combined quantitative method, sociology, and frame analysis to provide a small facet of quantified meanings in lyrics and media messages. However, the method can also be applied to future research about any race and any race-related music – not just limited to Asian-ness or hip-hop.

Appendix

Table 3.1

Coding protocol for rap lyrics

Introduction

This protocol serves as guidelines for the first segment coding for this study, which is coding

rap lyrics. This protocol is divided into two parts. The first part addresses the

procedure; the second addresses variables and their operational definitions. Coders

should read – and reread – this protocol every time before coding, and make sure to

apply this protocol precisely and consistently during the whole coding process.

Procedure and Sample Eligibility for Study

This coding segment deals with rap lyrics written by three artists/groups – Mountain Brothers,

MC Jin and Rich Brian – who debuted in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s respectively.

Coders are required to mark which aesthetic-racial boundary effect exists, or neither of

them exists, in each LINE, which is the smallest coding unit of this study. "One line, in

other words, is what an MC can deliver in a single musical measure – one poetic line

equals one musical bar" (Bradley, 2017, p. xx).

A song may NOT be eligible for coding for the following reasons:

1 No lyrics in the song or the language of lyrics is not English.

2 The song is published under a non-American label.

3 A song in a single or EP was repeatedly released in an album.

4 The song deals with a collaboration that includes more than three artists/groups.

Read the lyrics, but NOT listen to the music before coding, because elements other than lyrics itself in a piece of music might influence the judgment. If you believe a song is NOT eligible for the research due to one of the reasons above, go on to the next article. If you think the story is ambiguous in its study eligibility, consult with the researcher.

If you find some lyrics don't make sense to you or believe they're wrongly transcribed, or believe some lyrics aren't distributed correctly into lines, consult with the researcher.

Variable Operational Definitions

V1: **Item Number** (assigned)

V2: **Track Title** (provided)

V3: **Artist** (provided)

1= Mountain Brothers

2 = MC Jin

3 = Rich Brian

V4: **Publisher**

V5: **Total Lines**

V6(n): **Aesthetic-Racial Boundary Effects**

Lyrics distributed by lines will be provided. Following each line, there will be a box (F/A/I/S/N) for coders to BOLD AND UNDERLINE the aesthetic-racial boundary

effects that presented in each line.

F = Fusion (code line as F if there are words showing fusion)

Conceptually, fusion means "newcomers to a culture continually build upon their knowledge base/repertoire and fuse/integrate their previous cultural knowledge with newly acquired cultural knowledge" (Kramer, 2000; as cited from Croucher and Kramer, 2017, p. 2). Cultural fusion may happen when newcomers are under three conditions as Croucher and Kramer came up with:

(1) Newcomers are primarily socialized in one culture and then move to a new culture;

(2) Newcomers are to some extent dependent on the dominant culture/environment;

(3) Newcomers and members of the dominant culture communicate with one another

(p. 3).

For this study, "newcomers" are Asian rappers who expose and integrate themselves into a Black heritage culture, hip-hop. The dominant culture in the context of hip-hop will be Black culture. For the purpose of this study, fusion will be operationally defined as any words in lyrics that can reflect Asian rappers' intentions combining their Asian identity with Black culture.

A = Appropriation (code line as A if there are words showing appropriation)

Appropriation has broad and narrow definitions. Cultural appropriation, defined broadly as "the use of one culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture—regardless of intent, ethics, function, or outcome" (Rogers, 2016, p. 476). The narrow definition of cultural appropriation adds the

premise that applying other cultures to further their own ends without authority (Ziff & Rao, 1997).

This research, however, doesn't aim to study how Asian rappers appropriate the form of hip-hop, but if the contents Asian rappers express in hip-hop music lyrics appropriate Black symbols. This research will use the narrow definition to operationally define "appropriation" as any words coders regard as Black symbols, rituals, heritages, etc. that are used by an Asian rapper in their lyrics to show they are acting like someone who grows in a Black collective.

I = Identity (code line as I if there are words showing identity)

Talking about music and identity construction, there are generally two aspects of identity: self-identity (DeNora, 2000) and collective identity (Roy, 2002). DeNora indicates that musicians' self-identity construction refers to a construction of "me" by marking and documenting important aspects of lives in music, at the same time separating oneself from others. The construction of a collective identity refers to using music as a tool to positively mark a group of people, or "us," who share the same self-identity to some extent (Roy, 2002, 2004, 2010).

The current research uses Roy's collective identity definition because racial identity has a collective sense. Operationally, any words reflect Asian culture in lyrics with an intention to show their Asian identity will be considered.

S = Segregation (code line as S if there are words showing segregation)

Segregation refers to "separation of groups of people with differing characteristics (for

example, race and sex) and often taken connote a condition of inequality" (Bevir, 2007, p. 861). The "inequality" becomes the difference between identity and segregation where both concepts involve separation in their meanings. Segregation means one culture is excluded from any participation in forms of another culture (Roy, 20014).

Operationally, for the purpose of this study, segregation is defined as any expression by Asian rappers to separate Asian-ness with other cultures and deny the possibilities of interactions between different cultures.

N = None (code line as N if none of aesthetic-racial boundary effects are mentioned in the line, which means the line is race unrelated)

Mark ONLY ONE aesthetic-racial boundary effect – fusion (F), or appropriation (A), or identity (I), or segregation (S) – for each line on the provided coding sheet for each song if you think that line has an aesthetic-racial boundary effect; if you think neither of the four effects is mentioned, please mark none (N). There is little possibility that one line mentions two or more boundary effects, because it'll be hard to convey multiple racial boundary effects that are contradictory with each other in one very short line. But if you really feel there are multiple, please mark the one you think dominant.

V7: **Total "fusion" lines**: count the number of lines that you mark as "fusion"

V8: **Total "appropriation" lines**: count the number of lines that you mark as "appropriation"

V9: **Total "identity" lines**: count the number of lines that you mark as "identity"

V10: **Total "segregation" lines**: count the number of lines that you mark as "segregation"

V11: **Total "none" lines**: count the number of lines that you mark as "none"

Table 3.2

Coding protocol for mass media texts

Introduction

This protocol serves as guidelines for the second segment of coding for this study, which is

      coding mass media texts, including coverage and critics. This protocol is divided into

      two parts. The first part addresses the procedure and story/review eligibility; the second

      addresses variables and their operational definitions. Coders should read – and reread –

      this protocol every time before coding, and make sure to apply this protocol precisely

      and consistently during the whole coding process.

Procedure and Story/Review Eligibility for Study

      This coding segment deals with mass media coverage and reviews toward three

      artists/groups – Mountain Brothers, MC Jin and Rich Brian – who debuted in the

      1990s, 2000s, and 2010s respectively.

      A story may NOT be eligible for coding for the following reasons:

      1 The story is not published in a U.S. media outlet.

      2 The story language is not English.

      3 The story only mentions the artist for simple reference, providing limited information

      which is basically only names, such as rankings, ticket information, concert lineup,

      song attribution.

      4 The article is an advertisement.

A review may NOT be eligible for coding for the following reasons:

1 The review is not in publication, but in informal format, such as blog.

2 The review deals with another artist's work, which mentions the artists studied in this research for comparison, analogy, etc.

Read the article before coding. If you believe an article is NOT eligible for the research due to one of the reasons above, go on to the next article. If you think the story is ambiguous in its study eligibility, consult with the researcher.

Variable Operational Definitions

V1: **Item Number** (assigned)

V2: Focused Artist (provided)

1= Mountain Brothers

2 = MC Jin

There will be articles that mention more than one artist/group above. Coders should be clear about the focused artist assigned before coding.

V3: **Item Date: MMDDYYYY** (e.g. 11042020)

V4: **Media Outlet Name** (capitalize all letters)

V5: **Type of article**

1 = Coverage (Story/Transcript)

2 = Review/Critics

V6: **Total Paragraphs**

V7: **Number of paragraphs directly about the artist** (in V2)

V8: **Relevance Coefficient** = V8/V7 (two decimals)

V9(n): **Fusion Frame**

V10(n): **Appropriation Frame**

V11(n): **Identity Frame**

V12(n): **Segregation Frame**

V13(n): **Non-race Frame**

Please refer to Table 3.1 for the conceptual definitions of fusion, appropriation, identity, and segregation. Fusion framing means the author mentions the artist tends to combine Asian-ness and Blackness in their works, and/or personal life. Appropriation framing means the author mentions the artists tends to culturally appropriate Black culture in their works, and/or personal life. Identity framing means the author mentions the artists' racial identity and shows the "difference" of this identity from other races in America. Segregation framing means the author not only mentions and separates the artists' racial identity from other races in America, but connects it with a sense of isolation.

Coders MUST record "0" or "1" for EVERY criteria. For four aesthetic-racial boundary effect frames, there are four criteria to examine under each frame variable (see Table 4). The first and second criteria should be regarded as a pair. If coders record "0" for Vα(1), where α=10, 11, 12, 13, please read and answer Vα(2); if you

record "1" for Vα(1), please directly record Vα(2) as a "0" and jump to Vα(3). For the

non-race frame, there are three criteria required for coders to go through and record

numbers.

Table 4

Coding sheet for mass media texts

V1: Item Number _____

V2: Focused Artist _____

V3: Item Date _____

V4: Media Outlet Name _____

V5: Type of article _____

V6: Total Paragraphs _____

V7: Number of paragraphs directly about the artist _____

V8: Relevance Coefficient _____

For V9(n) ~ V12(n), except for (*), please record 1 if you think a premise is true, record 0 if you think a premise is false. The calculation of Vα(*) (α=9, 10, 11, 12) is as follows:

V9(n): **Fusion Frame**

V9(1): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, cultural fusion is the focus for framing this artist or their works.

If you record "0" for V10(1), please read and answer V10(2); if you record "1" for V10(1), please directly record V10(2) as a "0" and jump to V10(3).

V9(2): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, cultural fusion is not the dominant topic for framing this artist or their works, but it is mentioned.

V9(3): _____ For other parts of the article, there is a mention of other artists and/or groups of artists (which can be affiliated companies, collective, etc.) who share the same racial identity with the artist, and the author frames them in a way of fusion.

V9(4): _____ The main focus for this article is cultural fusion and hip-hop music.

V10(n): **Appropriation Frame**

V10(1): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, cultural appropriation is the focus for framing this artist or their works.

If you record "0" for V10(1), please read and answer V10(2); if you record "1" for V10(1), please directly record V10(2) as a "0" and jump to V10(3).

V10(2): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, cultural appropriation is not the dominant topic for framing this artist or their works, but it is mentioned.

V10(3): _____ For other parts of the article, there is a mention of other artists and/or groups of artists (which can be affiliated companies, collective, etc.) who share the same racial identity with the artist, and the author frames them in a way of appropriation.

V10(4): _____ The main focus for this article is cultural appropriation and hip-hop music.

V11(n): **Identity Frame**

V11(1): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, racial Identity is the focus for framing this artist or their works.

If you record "0" for V10(1), please read and answer V10(2); if you record "1" for V10(1), please directly record V10(2) as a "0" and jump to V10(3).

V11(2): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, racial identity is not the dominant topic for framing this artist or their works, but it is mentioned.

V11(3): _____ For other parts of the article, there is a mention of other artists and/or groups of artists (which can be affiliated companies, collective, etc.) who share the same racial identity with the artist, and the author frames them in a way of identifying.

V11(4): _____ The main focus for this article is identity and hip-hop music.

V12(n): **Segregation Frame**

V12(1): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, racial segregation is the focus for framing this artist or their works.

If you record "0" for V10(1), please read and answer V10(2); if you record "1" for V10(1), please directly record V10(2) as a "0" and jump to V10(3).

V12(2): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, racial segregation is not the dominant topic for framing this artist or their works, but it is mentioned.

V12(3): _____ For other parts of the article, there is a mention of other artists and/or groups of artists (which can be affiliated companies, collective, etc.) who share the same racial identity with the artist, and the author frames them in a way of segregation.

V12(4): _____ The main focus for this article is about segregation and hip-hop music.

For V14(n), except for (*), please record 1 if you think a premise is true, record 0 if you think a premise is false. The calculation of V14(*) is as follows:

V13(n): **Non-race Frame**

V13(1): _____ For paragraphs that directly mention the artist, the artist's racial identity are never mentioned.

V13(2): _____ For other parts of the article, there is a mention of other artists and/or groups of artists (which can be affiliated companies, collective, etc.) who actually share the same racial identity with the artist, but there is no race-related mention about them.

V13(3): _____ The main focus for this article is not about the relationship between race and hip-hop music.

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