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Scholarship 2016
Physical Education

Total marks: 24

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	Mark
Application of knowledge	
Critical thinking	
Communication	
TOTAL	/24

ASSESSOR'S USE ONLY

Has the culture surrounding basketball become more important than the game itself?

I have memories rushing home after school as a 12 year old boy in to watch the NBA All Star weekend events. At the time I had been around the game of basketball for five years, and spent my weekends at the local school shooting hoops. My school books were plastered with pictures of my heroes LeBron James, Kobe Bryant and Paul Pierce, their jerseys on display in my room. My fresh new pair of kicks in the box waiting to be unleashed. I wanted to be them as I watched highlight after highlight in awe.

1.

What once was a naïve love limited to highlights, dunks, flashy passes, and long shots, is now an addiction to the culture, searching to equal the image portrayed by my heroes. Currently, as an 18 year old, simply playing on the court is no longer enough. As a 12 year old rushing home to watch the All Star Weekend, I didn't understand the platform that athletes have and their ability to impact all aspects of our modern world through the image which they portray themselves. I have spent countless hours watching iconic moments on the court that have moulded how the game is played. From Magic's no look passes, Jordan's air time, Kobe's mentality and LeBron's freakish athleticism, I believe that basketball has become one of the most dynamic on court professional sports. These moments and subsequent actions by league stars, solidified a culture in society and embedded an image of what it means to be a basketballer in my mind. Had my innocent love for basketball already become subconsciously branded by the culture surrounding the game?

2.

This report looks to explore the various images portrayed by commodified basketball culture through comparison of generations. In turn, I will unpack the effect such culture has on shifting the popularity of the sport away from traditional trends creating the conditions for basketball to become bigger than just the game. I seek to address the significance and validity of the role of the influences that popular culture has, indulging basketball into a world of its own. This will allow me to question whether we are changing the lineage of sports through popular culture?

3.

'There's a ball. There's a hoop. You put the ball through the hoop. That's success.' (Kareem Abdul Jabbar)¹ As Captain of my school's top team this year, I often found myself regurgitating this particular phrase also used by my predecessor "basketball is just putting a ball in a hoop". Today's society leans towards a sporting atmosphere that has been constructed by views and images portrayed by the media, athletes and personal desires. Is basketball just putting a ball through a hoop? Or does associating culture create an image that is much larger than the game itself? Social media expansion and availability created the conditions for the actions, styles and nature of players to ripple through society shaping popular culture and creating an image that can be directly associated with basketball. I identify this image through a number of key features. The visual appearance of tattoos, clothes, shoes and hair, along with the physical prowess of size, and build are elements that players portray in their own image. The 'bad boy' image of the 80s and 90s allowed for a relationship between these players and society to develop. As the game has evolved, so has the relationship with sports and society. Today, the image of a 'basketballer' is reflected throughout social media and celebrity platforms and a growing relationship between sports and music. These different work dynamics can now be considered synonymous.

4.

5.

In order to gain understanding of the culture and subsequent image portrayed by basketball, it is paramount to understand the growth of the game itself and the platform created for the worldwide expansion and impact of its image.

Looking at the growth of basketball through a historical lens, I am able to determine that the actions taken by the leagues stars in the late 1900s helped solidify basketball as a one of the most rapidly growing sports in the world. The first league stars; Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain and Jerry West – now the logo of the NBA - took actions on the court that solidified them as the founding members of the modern game. The era of the 80's saw superstars Magic Johnson and Larry Bird develop one of the most engaging rivalries. This was the first time that a rivalry, or actions, extended further than just on the court, as increasing media coverage took their

¹ Wednesday's With Wooden (Kareem's coach) By Dr. Michael Levi, Larry Stewart

image to the four corners of the globe. This globalised their personal images, but also the sport.

The most famous face in the game of basketball belongs to Michael Jordan. Often deemed the “Greatest of All Time”², he established a presence on the court that was both dominant and successful. To regular people he was seen as *“a true champion who spearheaded the globalization of the NBA with his dynamic on-court abilities and personal sense of style that was marketed to the masses.”*³ What made Jordan’s impact so significant was his accessibility as a star off the court. He managed to *“maintain an air of mystique. He was visible as ‘Air Jordan,’ as part of a sneaker advertising campaign and endorsing other products as well as the star of the movie, ‘Space Jam’.”*⁴ Jordan pathed the way for superstars such as Kobe, Iverson and LeBron to carry on the torch that consolidated basketball as one of the major growing sports in the world. The power that these stars developed off the court, allowed the image that they carried to be marketed to the masses and mirrored throughout society as a whole.

6.

In order for the impact of league stars and basketball culture to grow creating the conditions for culture to become bigger than the game, the platform that is presented to society needs to expand on a global scale which has been increasingly seen over the last few years. Leading basketball expansion at a rapid pace, the NBA now has 30 teams in the league from all over the United States, and a team from Toronto, Canada. The start of the 2014/2015 season saw 101 international players coming from 37 different territories. Just over a year later in the 2016 NBA draft a record number of international players were drafted in the top 30 picks with 15⁵. This is considerably more than any other major North American Sports league. The NBA increasingly not only has superstars that are born outside of the US, but also foreign born owners, coaches, and general managers from around the world. As more nations have players from their own country playing in the NBA, they find a sense of connection to that particular player or team. This is relevant to us here in New Zealand with Steven Adams and the

7.

² <http://basketball.yoexpert.com/history-13620/is-michael-jordan-the-greatest-basketball-player-w-3818.html>

³ <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2014/11/25/basketball/nba/jordans-global-impact-transcended-racial-economic-boundaries/#.V8v7Vo9OJet>

⁴ <http://www.nba.com/history/legends/michael-jordan/>

⁵ <http://www.sportal.co.nz/nba?gr=www>

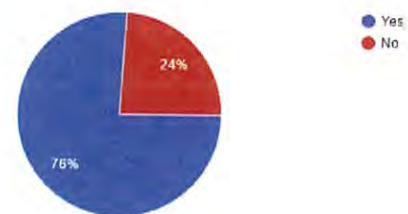
Oklahoma City Thunder. Adams, the most successful 'Kiwi' basketball player ever, has the support of our nation behind him, regardless of which team you support in the league.

I conducted a survey amongst 50 of my peers from my cohort at school searching to find the extent of Steven Adam's influence. My results concluded that although 75.5% of the peoples interviewed considered themselves basketball fans, 76% of the same group of people who participated knew who Steven Adams is. This result was surprising as few identified themselves as basketball fans. Whilst this was conducted on a relatively small scale, it provides a sort of indication as to the impact Steven

Do you consider yourself a basketball fan? (49 responses)



Do you know who Steven Adams is? (50 responses)



Adams has had on the country simply by being a New Zealander playing in such a popular sporting league.

8.

As New Zealanders we are more likely to follow Steven Adams, because we like to see our fellow countrymen excelling on global sport scale. This means that both his image and actions are likely to have a more significant impact on New Zealand society, because more New Zealanders are following him as he is a kiwi. This is apparent with other international stars such as Manu Ginobili, Tony Parker and Giannis Antetokounmpo. As dominant basketballers in their own countries, their images are idealised, and they are therefore given the means to have a greater impact that extends further than just their actions on the court. *"They act as unifying forces and strong factors of socialization, improving the social acceptance of athletes and their fans"*. (Daniel Beck and Louis Bosshart, *Sports and Media*, Volume 22 (2003) No. 4)⁶ Without global expansion, there would be lack of unified connection between the league's players and society, as small nations such as NZ would not have the opportunity to back one of their own.

9.

⁶ (Daniel Beck and Louis Bosshart, *Sports and Media*, Volume 22 (2003) No. 4)

To unpack the impact of the media on basketball culture and image I will break it down into 3 core sections; advertising, traditional news and social media.

10.

According to McChesney (1989 p.49) *"Sports and the mass media enjoy a very symbiotic relationship in American society."*⁷ The media has a strong foothold on sports, thus increasing the accessibility and availability of the images that define the culture lying parallel with basketball. This impact also extends to other progressive nations, as their media tools are developing in today's society which has become heavily reliant on technology advancements. Sports attract such a wide variety of audiences, *"providing reliable mirrors of societies. They reflect social values that can extend from individual values like discipline, asceticism, and self control to collective values like sportsmanship and fairness, and generally accepted values like the belief in effort and productivity."* (Daniel Beck and Louis Bosshart, *Sports and Media*, Volume 22 (2003) No. 4)

The dominant marketing scheme utilised by the NBA has hegemony-like qualities. This technique can be found all over the media. They have attached themselves to many multi-million dollar markets which allow their reach to extend to an entirely different audience. Major partnerships with Kia, Samsung, and Sprint combined with basketball players for example, to paint socially desirable images of basketball, and the stars that endorse it. Countless

times have I been watching NBA games, and commercials of LeBron James in a Kia have been showcased on screen. I can interpret this as an attempt to persuade groups of people to own a Kia as LeBron's image paints to society that he does too. Dependant on the commodity advertised, these commercials can have techocentricity qualities. For example, when Kobe Bryant claims his performances are significantly better when he drinks Gatorade due to its scientifically proven sports enhancement qualities⁸. These partnerships with various markets both connected and disconnected from basketball allows for star endorsement to

Image 1

11.



Lebron James Kia Commercial

⁷ (McChesney, 1989, p. 49)

⁸ <https://ronnelljhunt.wordpress.com/2013/04/25/advertising-gatorade-commercial-script/>

communicate messages that idealise the culture of basketball, placing their personal image alongside this. This is a further tool that allows for basketball to be marketed, allowing its culture to become bigger than the game.

New Zealand media have shown an exponential increase in their interest in broadcasting NBA related news since Steven Adams 2012 drafting into the league. Each night under the sporting section various News Channels there are updates on Steven Adams and his team's performance that day. This increased during the 2016 playoffs as Adams cemented his status as one of the more dominant centres in the league. As Adams is a Kiwi, he instantly becomes more relatable for youth with NBA aspirations as they idealise him in NZ. This gives his image the stage to be extremely successful as essentially a whole nation looks up to him. Messages ripple throughout NZ media and news platforms that optimise his successes in the league, *"He could definitely be a regular All-Star. He's got a chance to be one of the great players that have played the game "* (McFadden (his mentor) told NZME)⁹ The possible image of Adams not only being in the NBA, but an All Star, creates further conditions for him to be looked up to further. His numerous youth camps throughout NZ allow young fans of the game to draw genderless connections to him as an idol. His impact has become obvious. Sporting a now NBA famous moustache, he has created a trend that has even found its way into New Zealand youth. Arguably, rather than promoting Steven Adams game in the NBA, New Zealand media is using his success in the game, to promote his image.

Image 2 & 3



Kiwi Kids sporting the Steven Adams moustache shown above

12.

"There's been a steady increase in the interest in basketball - the New Zealand Breakers have been a fantastic contributor to that over the past decade - but the Adams factor has lit a fuse under it, really" – Iain Potter (Chief of Basketball NZ)

⁹ <http://ssl-www.stuff.co.nz/sport/basketball/80063840/Steven-Adams-could-be-a-regular-NBA-All-Star-says-mentor-Kenny-McFadden>

I argue that without Steven Adams playing in the NBA, popular culture trends would still create optimal images of basketballers in NZ. However I strongly believe that the impact would be of less significant as young, naïve youth such as myself six years ago would struggle to draw any real connection to the league, thus allowing us in NZ to buy into the culture that is becoming bigger than the game.

Social media in my opinion, has the biggest impact presenting the images associated with basketball to the masses. This is because of the accessibility, and ease of which messages, photos and images can be presented to a large group of people at any one time. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the main three tools used by league stars to communicate with fans all over the world. LeBron James, one of the most dominant players ever, listed as “kingjames” on Instagram has 25.7million followers. With each picture he posts, with or without knowing it he is creating, solidifying or altering a trend in popular culture. This allows his off court actions to potentially be more significant than his on court actions. When I see him posting pictures of various shoes, styles and support of various world trends and events, I automatically think that they are “cooler” as he is endorsing it. This is essentially how social media works. This impact isn’t just limited to me as through being “an interactive medium...sports fans can also act as web publishers. Some of them collect information about their idols and publish it on the web.” Social media is the bridge between athletes and fans as we are all able to follow the trend that are attractive to us with simple clicks of a button.

As there is massive participation on social media networks, it is only natural to “*target ones messages to highly connected people who will propagate them further in the social network.*”¹⁰ I too find myself submissive to this trend as I follow “*certain topics that manage to get an inordinate amount of attention*” through a fear of missing out. These trends “*bubble to the top in terms of popularity...contributing to new trends and to the public agenda of the community.*” As sports stars are such accessible forms of celebrities, their messages are often hot topics in the realms of social media. The NBA players who first set fire to social media

13.

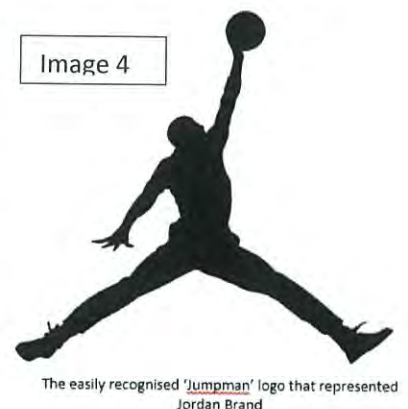
¹⁰ Influence and Passivity in Social Media, Daniel M.Romero, Wojciech Galuba, Sitaram Asur, and Bernardo A.Huberman

were Michael Jordan and Allen Iverson. Jordan presented a more traditional athlete celebrity image whereas the way Iverson carried himself was extremely unorthodox at the time.

The media has provided key tools to project the image associated with basketball throughout society, however without accessibility and relatable stars this would not be possible.

What started off with Michael Jordan as a dominant figure on court became a sneaker brand and an unparalleled image. *"There are many examples of personal sports brands on a global scale, e.g. US basketball star Michael Jordan, who 'made clear how closely athletic success is associated with the sales of sports products, especially the brand of Nike. So saying, Michael Jordan became a brand himself' (Adjouri and Stastny, 2006, p. 48)."*¹¹ The success of his brand

name came from his on court abilities, *"Part of the 'brand association' with Michael Jordan became names like 'Air Jordan' and 'His Airness' due to his jumping abilities and rare ability to 'soar in the air'."*¹² Modern day society has seen Jordan's brand become synonymous with high earning potential due to the success of the brand and Jordan as a player. Just last year he made \$115million, and is set to make \$30million more than any other athlete this year.¹³ He has become a cultural icon and a



'mass-consumer product' of our culture. This process of commodification has led to his success post playing being just as lucrative. Currently *"the Jordan brand has a 10.8 percent share of the overall US shoe market, which makes it the second biggest brand in the country and more than twice the size of Adidas' share."*¹⁴ The Jordan brand created the conditions for the success of other athletes to be branded, and marked the beginning of a polarising culture shift the NBA currently has on society. The timeless impact of Jordan is what makes his commodification significant as it allows him to be portrayed as a people's hero.

¹¹ (Adjouri and Stastny, 2006, p. 48)."

¹² By Kenneth Cortsen on June 11, 2013 in **Sport & Media Relations, Sport Economy, Sport Management, Sport Marketing**

¹³ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2016/03/30/how-michael-jordan-will-make-more-than-any-other-athlete-in-the-world-this-year/#70a137155044>

¹⁴ Cortsen, K. (2013). Annika Sörenstam—a hybrid personal sports brand. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 3(1), 37-62

When I unpack the image of Jordan for myself, I find that it is his culture that has a greater influence on me as opposed to the game. Yes I look at his highlights in absolute awe. Yet they appear to be unrealistic as I am simply not as gifted physically as him. It is through his 'Jordan' Brand that I am able to personally identify with as I am able to physically purchase his goods thus drawing connections to him. In this sense, Jordan the brand has come to mean more to me than Jordan the player. This is a traditionally uncommon and overlooked perception however it is incredibly influenced by the era in which you grew up. Those who grew up with Jordan as their hero, would have been more subjected to his actions as a player and athletic idealisms. Growing up following this time period, I am more exposed to the commodification of his name and brand. To me Jordan is more of a product. I cannot own Michael Jordan the player, or any of his moves, yet I am able to, and do own, multiple pairs of shoes, and clothes that fall under the branches of his brand. As a basketball player, common lines of thinking would assume that is where his greatest impact lies.

14.

In an interview with an ex High School basketball player, I posed him with the question 'Does Michael Jordan mean more to him as a player or as a brand?' His initial response *"I feel as if he has uplifted the game of basketball and taken it to new depths introducing many new skills to the game that are still being shown and perfected in today's game. His on and off the court personality - he is just someone you want to be like when you play the game."* The points he make are valid, backed most notably by Kobe Bryant as he is notorious for looking to recreate Jordan's moves. However, when I then asked this ex player to challenge his initial argument by thinking which aspect of Jordan he buys into more on a daily basis, he was able to re-evaluate the daily impact that Jordan Brand has on him as a player. This follows the common thought patterns in society, as people tend to overlook the longevity of the impact of Jordan's brand. This is simply because as a player he was so great. Despite his highlight reels being accessible, allowing memories to be replanted in the minds of fans. The brand associated with his name continues to develop as society does, this allows him to keep up with current trends, and even create new ones. On the contrary, without Michael Jordan's success as a player, he would never have had the platform of which he launched his brand, therefore the Jordan brand would mean nothing.

15

The impact Allen Iverson had on the image of basketball is incomparable. He presented himself in a unique way, challenging what the traditional athlete should be as he strived to present himself in a comfortable way to himself. He didn't buy into what is known as 'body as a project' as he never tried to become someone who was sculpted by society, becoming someone unreachable. He never found himself subscribing to popular trends, and this is what gave him such an impact to the masses as he was relatable. I argue that it is his actions off the court that acted as the nail in the coffin cementing basketball as a game that was about more than just a game. As I have watched Iverson highlights, tapes and documentaries, I have found that it is the way he carries himself off the court to be the most influential. He carries a sort of swagger that was new to the game bringing a culture found in the streets, to a highly marketed league.

Earlier this year I competed in the Basketball Secondary School Nationals and I was able to see this. As I walked on court with the other Captains from all over the country, they each had their own swagger, their own sense of confidence and pride. Having confidence is paramount when being in the public eye, this is an area where Iverson was never lacking.

16.

Standing at 6'2, Iverson was the first ever 'little man' that was able to dominate the league. On the court he played with the most passion and heart ever seen. He broke the assumption that to be a successful basketballer you had to be tall. His actions were seen as proof that heart can dominate height on the court, acting as an idol to youth all over the world. Although the NBA has an average height of 6'7¹⁵ over the last few years, the 'point guard' position which is traditionally the shortest, has become the deepest in the league. Arguably, 7 of the top 20 players in the league are point guards that range between 6'0 and 6'3. Whilst by national averages, these men are still tall, Iverson gave them hope of success in such a big man dominated league. This image reflects throughout popular culture in society. One nation where this is especially apparent is the Philippines. Basketball is the national sport in the Philippines, yet they have an average height of 5'3¹⁶. They look at stars such as Iverson and are given belief that they can play basketball despite being physically limited through height. In this way Iverson broke the social constructions of society placed on height in the NBA.

17.

18.

¹⁵ <http://www.sportsmanagementdegreehub.com/>

¹⁶ <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/102688/filipinos-second-shortest-in-southeast-asia>

Basketball is a game that is often played on the streets. Found on the corner of many roads are basketball hoops which act as the local hangout for youth. This is particularly relevant to the lower socio-economic areas in the US, where Iverson came from. In a search to entertain themselves all day, these youth play basketball. Iverson was one of these kids. A street-baller. In a society where the majority of people fall into the lower socio-economic patterns that Iverson escaped from, he became an instance hope for them. He was proof that you can make it off the streets through basketball, this meant that he drew street culture – often defined as Hip Hop Culture – to the NBA. This is an image that Iverson portrayed as he entered the NBA, yet continued to live by during his time in the league allowing for a strong correlation between these two worlds. Hip Hop artist Snoop Dogg raps ‘you can take your boy out the hood, but you can’t take the hood out the homie’¹⁷. Iverson proves this as despite being removed from the streets, the street culture he lived by remained a fundamental aspect of his image. To the people playing on the streets, basketball was more than just a game. The culture that Iverson brought to the game shows that it was to him as well.

Image 5
& 6



Allen Iverson presents himself as the ‘bad boy’ of basketball.

Off the court, Iverson remained true to his street fashion and style that was popular in the hood at the time. His status as an image player mirrored this culture making it increasingly popular in both basketball culture and popular culture as a whole. Prior to the arrival of Iverson in the league, hip-hop culture was placed on the periphery of basketball.

Dennis Rodman sported tattoos and piercings, however it was Iverson who became the embodiment of hip-hop in the NBA. He made braids, baggy ripped clothes, chains and tattoos “cool”. Coincidentally his actions came at a time period where social media was first gaining momentum. This allowed for his characterisation to have major impacts on people around the world. He brought the ‘bad boy’ street ball attitude, style and image to the professional game, which is his greatest impact. Although modified, there



Lebron James, a modern superstar sports tattoos on his arms and chest.

¹⁷ <http://genius.com/5047140> “Institutionalized By Kendrick Lamar and Snoop Dogg”

are continuity patterns that surround Iverson's image as now over 53% of the league's players sport at least 1 tattoo.

Steven Adams follows this trend as he sports tattoos on his left arm. These tattoos are of traditional Maori patterns and designs that pay homage to his Tongan and Maori roots. Without Iverson's actions early making tattoos mainstream, would Adams still be able to recognise his cultural heritage with ink on his skin?

20.

The initial response to Iverson's characterisation was negative as David Stern the league commissioner looked to implement a dress code system. This was an attempt to create a more polished, and ideal view of players in the NBA. *"I knew the reason it changed was because of me...anybody with [half a brain] would know that. It wasn't just because I was dressing like that, it was because everybody started doing it. Guys wanted to do it. Guys wanted to wear tattoos and dress the way they wanted to dress and wear jewellery, but they didn't know the effects of it."* (Interview with Sean Evans) This didn't stop Iverson from finding a way to create a unique image on the court. In 2001, he started wearing what is known as a 'shooting sleeve' on his right arm. His success that season has seen it become a regular game day attire for 65% of the NBA just five years later¹⁸.



Allen Iverson sporting the largely popular shooting sleeve

"For me looking the way I look and me dressing the way I dress. It was just being me. Now, look around, now all of the guys in the NBA have tattoos. You used to think the suspect was the guy with the cornrows. Now you see the police officers with the cornrows. I took a beating for those type of things and I'm proud to say I changed a lot with this culture and this game."

– Retirement Press Conference 2013

As stated by Chris Paul, of the NBA, *"Allen Iverson had the biggest effect on the culture of the NBA out of any player. He started a culture. He started the arm sleeve, the tattoos, all that stuff. He's the biggest influence in the NBA out of anybody. I wanted braids because A.I. had them."* – Chris Paul (NBA Iverson's fusion of basketball culture and hip hop culture both on and off the court, has been most influential on making basketball more than just a game. Without Iverson's influence, modern-day basketball stars might not have had the courage to

¹⁸ <http://bballbreakdown.com/2016/09/06/allen-iversons-lasting-cultural-impact-nba/>

express themselves in the way they had wanted to do. And, more significantly, the connection between hip-hop and basketball would have been of small significance. Allen Iverson didn't break the social construction of basketball, he simply revolutionised it. This challenged traditional thinking of how an athlete 'should' look and present themselves, breaking down the 'body as a project' theory as the Iverson impact was a very real one for the masses.

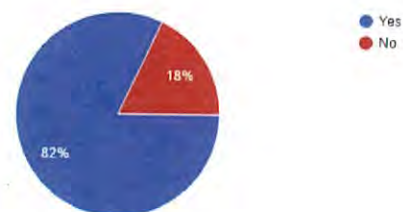
21.

At first glance, basketball and hip-hop appear to be two completely different industries. Yet under closer examination, these worlds are becoming more and more synonymous with each other, in fact interchangeable. For decades, hip hop artists have expressed their support for basketballers in their songs, and players have responded by listening and promoting their music. This relationship between basketball and hip hop has increased without a doubt, over the last five years. Artists such as Jay Z, Kanye West, Drake, J Cole and Kendrick Lamar all reference NBA players, and aspects of it's culture on a regular basis. Why is this important? Well, for example, these musicians followers, (on both social media and through their music) may not necessarily be basketball fans., Yet they are exposed to certain aspects of basketball culture, by following and listening to these artists, because they promote it within their work.

22.

In the same survey I referenced earlier, I asked who listened to the hip-hop genre of music. The results show that 82% that answered listened to this style of music, suggesting that you don't need to be a basketball fan, to subscribe to elements of

Do you listen to hip hop artists such as Drake, Kanye, Kendrick, Jay Z etc...
(50 responses)

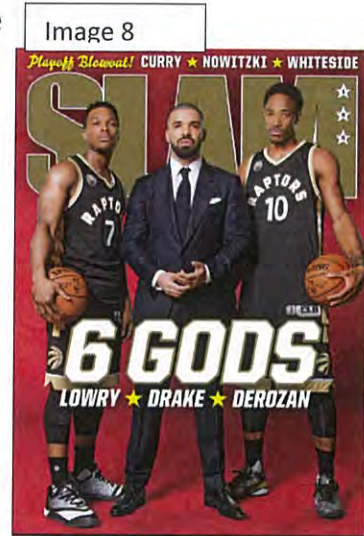


its culture. In hip hop artist Drake's song 'Thank Me Now' he sings:

*"your idols become your rivals,
you make friends with Mike,
but you got to A.I him for your survival.
Damn, I swear sports and music are so synonymous,
cause we want to be them, and they want to be us."*¹⁹

¹⁹ <http://genius.com/17992>

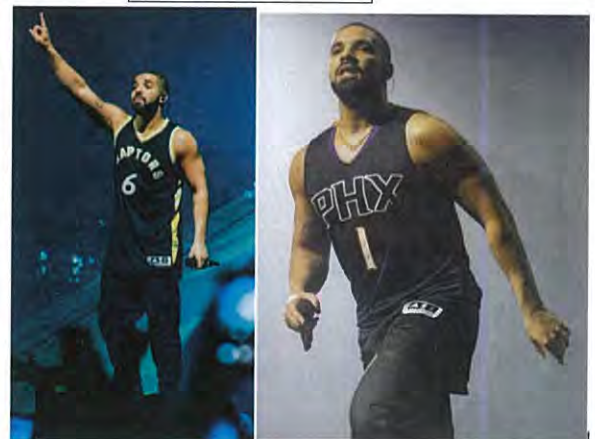
As a widely known basketball fan, Drake is comparing the competitive natures that lie with both music and basketball and uses it to enhance his own image. Mentions of both Jordan (Mike) and Iverson (A.I) act as an expression of their influence on Hip Hop. The same way Iverson infamously crossed up Jordan, elevating his own status, Drake must dis other artists to elevate his. Named as the 'Global Ambassador for the Toronto Raptors – the Canadian team in the NBA²⁰, he has a connection to the league and uses his own image developed through music to encourage and provide support for the NBA.



Drake poses with Toronto Raptors All Stars Demar Derozen and Kyle Lowry on the front cover of Slam Magazine

His music lyrics are a powerful tool which he uses to elevate his support for basketball, through references to players in his songs. As the most listened to artist on Spotify with 36,306,413 monthly listeners²¹, Drake is a powerhouse in the music industry. With 29.5million followers on Instagram²², and 34.1million on Twitter²³, not only is his voice heard by millions, but his image is seen by millions too.

Image 9 and 10



The image that Drake presents of himself is one that public view consider to be very similar to that of NBA players. This stems from his fashion, the pictures he posts and the messages he creates on these social media platforms. He is often seen wearing various NBA player jerseys during his concerts, Jordan shoes, and posts images of himself 'recovering' using similar techniques that NBA players use. His support for the

game has reached a point where some fans have become to believe that "he really thinks he's an NBA player."²⁴ His streetwear style has origins that link to Iverson, wearing baggy clothes, ripped jeans and fancy shoes, yet is has developed into his own. Drake isnt alone however, as

²⁰ http://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/9750332/rapper-drake-assumes-role-toronto-raptors-team-ambassador

²¹ Spotify/Drake

²² <https://www.instagram.com/champagnepapi/?hl=en>

²³ <https://twitter.com/drake?lang=en>

²⁴ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/ftw/2016/10/07/people-are-pointing-out-how-drake-acts-like-hes-an-nba-player-and-its-hilarious/91758346/>

hip hop artists all identify with similar styles that are 'cool' in modern society. I find that most of my friends and I tend to buy into aspects of this style as it has become socially mainstream in today's society. This results in my friend group, all dressing and wearing similar clothes to Hip Hop artists, along with NBA players, despite only 1/8 of them actually playing the game. Because they listen to Hip Hop, they see their idols wearing basketball jerseys and other gear that identifies with basketball, they think it is 'cool' to follow the trend. This relationship allows the culture and image that associates with basketball to impact groups of people that do not follow the game as it has a bigger platform and a wider reach.

24.

The commodification of the Jordan Brand discussed earlier, has found its way to Hip Hop artists as they too, look to consume these goods. Drake is widely known for having bought in to the commodification of Michael Jordan, and his Jordan brand. This is apparent through his numerous collaborations with Jordan, to create what are known as 'OVO Sneakers'. These collaborations are widely popular, and sought after amongst the sneaker and music communities as it allows consumers to buy into images created by both Jordan, and Drake with a single purchase. People will buy OVO Jordan's as a Drake fan, if they are a Jordan fan, or both. This sneaker line is a physical relationship that further cements the place that Hip Hop has in creating an image that lies parallel with basketball.

This is not a one sided relationship however, as NBA players have become involved in the Music Industry in a number of ways.. The often fast, and up-tempo beat that comes with hip hop songs provide energy and hype both before games and at training. In a list of NBA player's pre game playlists, Drake, J Cole and Kendrick Lamar unsurprisingly all feature numerous times. This is because of the mood their music creates a focus, and mentality for these players prior to games. Whenever I train, or warm up before games I also have my headphones in and listen to music, often from these same artists. This is because it allows me to block out other distractions and get into the mind-set needed to play an intense game. On the way to our games in the school van at Nationals, either everyone had their headphones in, or we were playing music on the speaker.

25.

The most significant connections NBA players have to music, comes from NBA players who have released their own rap tracks and songs. Such actions have been taken by a number of the most dominant figures in the league from Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O'Neal, Tony Parker and Damian Lillard have all attempted to start a rap career. They use their image as an athlete, to gain a following when they release their tracks. All of them, bar one, have been relatively unsuccessful as they simply did not have the lyrical talent to get into the rap game. Damian Lillard however, has his own alter ego known as 'Dame Dolla' under which he recently dropped an album. This album is packed with references to the NBA, and his own experiences and because he has the voice, and talent to rap, the album has been a major success. Using social media, and his status on Instagram, Lillard created a challenge known as 'Four bar Friday'. This included regular fans sending in clips of themselves rapping 4 lines, he would then weekly choose winners and post it on his account. Lillard has allowed for his image as a NBA star, to kick-start his own Hip Hop Career along with giving others

the chance to be in the spotlight. This is a way that the traditional social dislocation between these two industries is slowly being dismantled by actions of powerhouses belonging to each market.

The first ever pair of basketball

shoes to be worn professionally on court are known as Chuck Taylors, or 'Chucks'²⁵. Developed in 1917 by converse, Chuck Taylor is the biggest name in sports than nobody knows anything about. As they became the official shoe for US Olympic Basketball Teams in 1936, their popularity began to grow along with the team successes. Chucks were brought to light by the music industry, as musicians from the 80s and 90s wore this largely popular shoe on stage. They became the most popular rocker shoe 'spurred from



Damian Lillard, NBA Star shown on the court and on the cover of his recent album 'The Letter O'

Do you own any basketball apparel? (50 responses)



The Converse All Star 'Chuck Taylor' shoe.

²⁵ <http://chucktaylorbiography.blogspot.co.nz/>

unofficial endorsements from bands such as Guns n Roses.’²⁶

The same survey that I conducted earlier provided telling information about the influence Chucks have had on popular culture among everyone. I asked “who owns basketball apparel” this could range from jerseys, socks, to shoes. 62% of the peoples who took part identified as not owning any basketball apparel. Yet when I asked how many owned a pair of the famous ‘Chucks’ the results were the complete opposite. 80% claimed to own a pair of Chucks. Although they are not considered basketball shoes in todays society due to more adcanved technologies, they were initially intended to be worn as basketball shoes by Chuck Taylor. In the past they have been worn by multiple NBA stars on and off the court, and are the staple of modern lifestyle sneakers. The shoe is genderless allowing the social constructions of society to have no limit on who can wear them. This makes them incredibly popular. Whilst I do not own a pair of Chucks, many people who do not identify themselves as basketball fans amongst my cohort do, making them a generic element of mainstream commodities owned by any regular person. Chucks are a piece of basketball culture, that has found its way into most people’s wardrobes without them realising where they came from. The simplistic style of them, will result in them remaining one of the most known, and owned pair of shoes ever.

Conclusion

27

Early growth of basketball due to entertaining and engaging stars in the 80s and 90s along with media and technology advancements, created the conditions for the image associated with basketball to spread like wildfire. The global expansion of the league has allowed for international players to develop their own connections to their home country. This is relevant to New Zealand through Steven Adams as he acts as the official bridge connecting NZ to the NBA. Increasing accessibility of media, notably social media, creates a platform that allows NBA stars to be accessed by people all over the world at the click of a button. Two of the biggest icons of the NBA ever, Michael Jordan, and Allen Iverson, impacted the league in their own unique way, each with unparalleled effects. Jordan is not only just a name, but a brand. This brand lies on the same spectrum as basketball due to the nature of which Jordan was

²⁶ <https://www.bustle.com/articles/19882-how-did-converse-become-popular-a-brief-history-of-the-iconic-sneaker>

able to establish it through his status as an NBA player. Iverson on the other hand, challenged assumptions everywhere simply by being a dominant figure in a big mans league despite only being 6'0. His ability to stay true to his beliefs, and not give in to commodification and body as a project trends made him incredibly relatable to the common fan. Without this, his impact would not have been as significant, and as a result, the change in basketball culture that he created would not have occurred.

As I have grown up, I see basketball as more than just a game. I see it as the players, and their highlights. But also the branding of Jordan, and the imagery created by Iverson. Six years ago I did not realise this as I was simply too naïve and immature to understand how basketball is bigger than just basketball. I see this in my younger brother everyday who is currently 12 and is following the very same patterns I did. Growing up as I became more exposed to the music industry that lies parallel with basketball, and became more active and open to the culture that associated with basketball, my own image adapted. Commodity endorsement by league stars, and musicians has had a hegemony impact on me over the last six years. The off court image that lies with these stars becomes more attractive, resulting in me not just wanting to be them on the court like in year 8, but off it as well.

The extent of which basketball culture ripples through society is incredibly hard to evaluate, as arguably it is everywhere. In the music we listen to, the clothes we wear, the physical build of people and the shoes on our feet, these elements identified as parts of basketball culture are to be seen at every turn. Popular culture fails to recognise in situations that commodities such as Chucks, were once part of the game. So is basketball culture and image bigger than the game itself? Yes it is. Basketball is a lifestyle. Although I do not play basketball every day, I find myself embracing elements of it in everything I do. When I say "ball is life," I am not referring to just really enjoying basketball, to me the game, the image and the culture is life. However, without the past growth, current impact basketball culture would never of had a platform to be launched into society. The reconstruction of what is deemed socially normal will continue as long as the popularity of the game remains, as without the game, the culture is meaningless.

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Outstanding Scholarship exemplar for Physical Education 93501 2016

Overall Judgement

This report has been graded at an Outstanding Scholarship level.

This report was constructed with a logical development of the candidate's argument / ideas. The candidate coherently and convincingly interconnects knowledge, ideas, and concepts through a clever lens of basketball culture. The focus of the report is explicitly kept at the forefront of all discussion, analysis, and evaluation. The candidate shows a sophisticated level of critical thinking, which is sustained across the report. Ideas / theory / arguments were well-substantiated and well-referenced. The candidate demonstrates a strong understanding of their topic, through a sophisticated and refined use of terminology and examples from a wide range of sources. A clear balance of theory and practice is evident that had drawn on the candidate's own experience.

Annotations

The candidate:

1. Opens with an interesting introduction that captures the readers' attention, and makes a strong connection between their own experience and the topic of the report.
2. Makes an explicit and sophisticated connection between the sport of basketball and HPE-related high level themes (commodification of sport, culture, economics).
3. Articulates clear critical focus of the report.
4. Uses a quote to provide an initial viewpoint that then challenges through the use of critical questions.
5. Makes interconnections between concepts to demonstrate higher order thinking.
6. Uses sophisticated integration of the big picture concept of globalisation.
7. Brings the relevance of the discussion back to a New Zealand example.
8. Uses empirical evidence sourced through a personally conducted survey supports evaluation (minor error).
9. Extrapolates points and makes insightful judgements.
10. Identifies the structure of their report with good clarity.
11. Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding through the application of the high level concept of hegemony.
12. Examines role models and their impact on individuals to demonstrate their understanding of the HPE underlying concept "socioecological perspective".
13. Provides an insightful interpretation of issue with logical justifications.
14. Expresses and articulates their own personal opinion to provide an effective lens to critique the issue.

15. Conducts clever critical examination through the context of a interview.
16. Draws upon their own experience to support the discussion, and in doing so, makes an authentic personal connection to the report.
17. Brings back seemingly divergent discussion to key focus of the report.
18. Demonstrates in-depth understanding of the high level concept of social construction, and integrates it with sophistication, with examples and discussion.
19. Extrapolates meaning from diverse examples, demonstrating insight and perception.
20. Links a New Zealand example to the discussion to highlight sociocultural influences and impacts on individuals.
21. Makes logical judgements around the impacts of the issue serve to summarise and bring together ideas and concepts.
22. Enables the examination of the related concepts in more depth, by questioning the importance of the discussion, and examining the issue.
23. Brings together concepts and draws parallels, and as a result, demonstrates sophisticated insight.
24. Links trends back to authentic examples and their own experience.
25. Provides a balanced examination, including an alternative view that is again connected to a personal example.
26. Demonstrates high level understanding, with sophisticated judgements that synthesise concepts and ideas.
27. Concludes by making cohesive judgements that synthesise key ideas, knowledge, and concepts.