CHAPTER III
DISCUSSION

3.1. Summary of the Story

Set in 1995 Detroit, *8 Mile* is the story of Jimmy “Rabbit” Smith (played by and based on Eminem a.k.a. Marshall Matthews) and his struggle to become recognized as a rapper on the Detroit hip-hop scene. His first problem, rap music is predominantly “black music”. A young white rapper, Jimmy "Rabbit" Smith summons strength within himself to cross over these arbitrary boundaries to fulfill his dream of success in hip hop.

Eight Mile Road (*8 Mile*) in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A. is Highway 102 and traverses Detroit from East to West marking an imaginary border between the ghettos of downtown Detroit and the more affluent suburbs to the north. Jimmy’s group of friends identify themselves as the Three One-Third, 313 being the area code for where they live.

After having broken up with his pregnant girlfriend Janeane, Jimmy with his gang friends at The Shelter for a rap battle. His opponent, Lil Tic is black and his opening rap belittles Jimmy for being white. This enrages Jimmy but when it is his turn with the microphone he feels intimidated by the sea of black faces of the audience and cannot get his words out. He freezes, hands the microphone back to the MC and walks off stage to jeers and abuse from the crowd.

He collects his meager belongings in the bin bag from behind a dumpster in the alley outside and walks off into the night, angry and embarrassed. Seeking a bed for the night, he arrives at his Mother’s trailer park home and lets himself in.
He has a low paid blue collar job as a press operator in a car factory. During a break from work he meets Alex. She is at the factory looking for her brother but there is a spark between them, one that will ignite later in the movie.

Jimmy’s hopes to become a famous rapper are encouraged by his friends, Future, the MC at The Shelter and Wink who works at WJLB radio and is trying to get Jimmy some studio time to record his demo. The rest of The Three One-Third gang are Cheddar Bob, Sol George and DJ Iz, Sol’s brother. Future is also a member of the Three One-Third.

The next day Jimmy is late again for work. At lunch break that day a crowd is gathered around a chuck wagon when a rap breaks out. One worker is performing a derogatory rap about some fellow worker. Jimmy watches intently and starts to rap in defense of his co-worker. Alex and Jimmy head back into the factory, engaging in raw sex between the machinery. Whilst he has dreams of becoming a successful rapper, she dreams of modeling in New York.

Wink has been trying to get Jimmy some studio time to record his rapping to further his career as well as helping Alex with photographs to make up a modeling portfolio for her. Jimmy arrives at the radio station WJLB. He cannot find Wink when he arrives. He finds Wink in one of the studios having sex with Alex. Jimmy attacks Wink, beating him before walking out and leaving Alex behind.

Jimmy returns to the trailer park before the arrival of The Leaders of the Free World gang at the trailer. A fight breaks out and Jimmy is being punched and kicked mercilessly by several members of the gang. He is helpless to retaliate and is hopelessly outnumbered. Papa Doc takes out a gun and holds it to Jimmy’s
head. Jimmy surrenders but Wink tells Papa Doc to put the gun away. Beaten and broken, Jimmy is left lying on the ground as The Leaders of the Free World leave.

Jimmy is persuaded by Future to take his revenge at the rap battle. Jimmy is first paired against Chin Tiki. Jimmy wins this round before his second opponent, Lil’ Tic. He wins this round too and is into the final against his nemesis Papa Doc. Jimmy draws first rap and knowing that Papa Doc is not from a “white trailer trash”, he launches into a rap that ridicules Papa Doc’s upbringing, education and social standing. The crowd loves it. The music starts for Papa Doc to respond, but he chokes and walks off stage. Jimmy has won the battle.

The movie closes with Jimmy walking back to work to complete his shift, concentrating on making a better life for himself, his Mother and his sister Lily.

3.2. Characteristic of Jimmy’s Self-Improvement in 8 Mile

In analyzing the characteristic of Jimmy’s self-improvement in 8 Mile movie directed by Curtis Hanson, the writer uses the theory of Handel (2013), there are five acts of self-improvement, which are being responsible, determined, persistent, optimist and realistic. In this sub-chapter, the analysis focuses on those five acts, and how they develop with Jimmy’s self-improvement in 8 Mile. To clarify this, the analysis takes some dialogue from selected scenes in the movie as described in the following paragraphs.

3.2.1. Responsible

This sub-chapter shows the characteristic of Jimmy’s self-improvement in 8 Mile movie. This is based on the references in the chapter 2, theoretical reviews.
In the second chapter the writer has explained Jimmy’s self-improvement, as the main character in the movie, and how the character brings to life the ideas of the screenplay’s writer. In order to get an understanding about Jimmy’s self-improvement, several scenes from this movie are taken to be analyzed. Looking from Jimmy’s perspective, he describes his struggle during the rough times before he was accepted and respected by the black hip-hop community. This is the scene where Jimmy shows his first act of self-improvement in *8 Mile*.

![Figure III.1 Jimmy is talking with his friends](image)

### Figure III.1 Jimmy is talking with his friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jimmy</th>
<th>“Me and Janeane just broke up.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>“What, again?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>“I left her the car.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>“Come on, Rabbit.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>“She said she's pregnant.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheddar</td>
<td>“She's gonna need the car if she's pregnant.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>“I'll need a place to crash.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheddar</td>
<td>“You going to stay at your mum's?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>“Can I get some f*** privacy here?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>“All right, come on. My bad, man.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>“If something's gonna happen with this shit, it needs to happen now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>“I feel you. I know exactly what you're talking about. All right, come on, man. How you feeling?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The dialogue above involves Jimmy and his friends, Future and Cheddar, and it is the first incidence of Jimmy showing his character, he has acted responsibly by giving away his car to his ex-girlfriend who is pregnant and trying to compete in a rap battle at The Shelter. Although his friends are making fun of him for giving his car to his ex, he does not let that bother him, he has his sights set on higher things.

3.2.2. Determined

A scene in this movie that shows the characteristic of determination from Jimmy is seen in this conversation where he argues with his Mother and tries to get her to see that she is taking the wrong path in her life and needs to do a reality check and do something about it:
Figure III.2 Jimmy is talking to his mother Stephanie

Stephanie : “Shit!”
Jimmy : “What's wrong?”
Stephanie : “We're being evicted. God damn it!”
Stephanie : “I can't let Greg find out.”
Jimmy : “F*** Greg.”
Stephanie : “I'm three months late. We've 30 days to get the money.”
Jimmy : “We?”
Stephanie : “If you want to live here, you got to start chipping in.”
Stephanie : “I can't, he's going to ask me and Lily to move away with him.”. Some place nice real soon. I can't freak him out.”

Jimmy : “Mum, stop living your life like this! If you cared about Lily, you'd get a job and quit f**** around. I got to go. I'll be late for work.”

Stephanie : “What are you doing with your life that's so great, Rabbit?”
Jimmy : “Wink's working on a deal...where I can get free studio time...to record my demo.”

Stephanie : “Yeah. Right.”

(00:42:34-00:44:01)

This dialogue is between Stephanie, Jimmy’s mother and Jimmy. Stephanie and Jimmy have an argument because they are being evicted unless they can come up with the money in 30 days. Stephanie is desperate to raise the cash and asking Jimmy to contribute for the rent since he currently lives there. Jimmy is trying to tell his mother that Greg should help her with the rent, but his mother is afraid of what Greg would think about it. This conversation is happening in front of Lily, who is too young to witness such rage and anger.

From the dialogue, the characteristic of self-improvement and determination is shown when Jimmy tries to calm his mother in front of Lily (Jimmy’s little sister) and telling her that her partner (Greg) should be involved with helping her to come up with some money to pay the rent, even though his
mother is very determined to let her boyfriend finds out about them getting evicted.

3.2.3. Persistent

The scene below shows that Jimmy is showing his persistent. He will not be told by anyone and wants to go on his own way, although his friend Future wants the best for him.

![Figure III.3 Jimmy is angry with his friend Future](image)

**Figure III.3 Jimmy is angry with his friend Future**

**Jimmy**

“Did you sign me up to battle tomorrow night? You heard me. Don't play f***** stupid. Did you?”

**Future**

“You know Papa Doc won last week, so he'll be defending his title. You got to take it from him! You win battles, you get respect.”

**Jimmy**

“I don't give a f***! I'm sick of you thinking you know what's best! You ain't my fucking father! I'm a grown man.”

**Future**

“Look, Jimmy—“

**Jimmy**

"Look" nothing! F*** you! I told you not to sign me up!”

**Future**

“So you want to fight me now?”

**Jimmy**

“You ain't the future of shit. You're just David f***** Porter.”

**Sol**

“Hey, come on, fellas.”

**Future**

“You know what? Do what the f*** you want to do. I don’t give a shit anymore. I really f***** don’t!”
In this dialogue Jimmy gets annoyed because his friend Future has signed him up for a rap battle again without his knowledge. He was surprised and still terrified after what happened to him in the last rap battle. Jimmy tells Future not to act on his behalf any more, and wants to do it his own way.

### 3.2.4. Realistic

The next scene shows Jimmy’s thoughts about the reality he is currently facing:

**Figure III.4 Jimmy is fed up with his friends that keep fantasizing**

- **Dj Iz**: “Ain't nobody here.”
- **Sol**: “I can't believe he got sent home already.”
- **Dj Iz**: “No insurance, the medical establishment will end bad to you.”
- **Jimmy**: “Where else would he be?”
- **Future**: “Just thank God he's alive.”
- **Sol**: “No, thank God he didn't shoot his thing off.”
- **Dj Iz**: “That's why brothers need to get a deal. Record labels supply niggas with benefits.”
- **Sol**: “Dawg, we get a deal, you can take the benefits. We'll have Bentleys and Benjamins, not Blue Cross.”
- **Future**: “I don't give a f*** about that. I just want to hear Three One
Third on the box. One of them songs on JLB.”

Dj Iz : “We need to save, put it into savings bonds and build our own studio”

Future : “Savings bonds?”

Sol : “Let me ask you something. How are we brothers? We need fine bitches and phat rides, not savings bonds.”

Jimmy : “All we ever do is talk shit!” We need fine bitches and phat rides.” ”We need to invest in savings bonds.” ”We need to get our songs on JLB.” Shut the f*** up! And we never do shit. We’re still broke and live at home with our mums. I’m out of here. Catch you later.”

Future : “Get your mad, rambling ass in the car.”

(00:59:14-01:00:21)

The conversation above involves Jimmy’s friends, Future, Sol and Dj Iz. Jimmy’s friend CheddarBob has just had an accident with a firearm. He, CheddarBob accidentally shot himself with his own gun in his leg when they were fighting with PapaDoc’s gang. They want to visit Cheddar to see how he is doing. Dj Iz, Sol and Future are talking and dreaming about things that is still uncertain about their future and that just waste of time. However they do not take what just happened to Cheddar seriously. Jimmy is fed up and speaks out about it, he does not like having a rubbish conversations like his friends do, he states that all of them, including himself, are still broke and live with their mothers. Jimmy prefers to be realistic about his current circumstances.

A further example of Jimmy’s self-improvement in being realistic in 8 Mile can be seen in this dialogue:
Figure III.5 Jimmy is carrying his mother to bed

Jimmy : “Mum. Mum, come on, get up. Come on.”
Stephanie : “Greg left me. Greg left me.”
Stephanie : “His settlement cheque came. His settlement cheque came in.
And now that he's got money, he can't be with somebody like me anymore.”
Stephanie : “It's Thursday. I got to go to bingo. Maybe he'll be there.”
Jimmy : “You ain't going nowhere. You're better off without him”.
Stephanie : “Stop it! It's your fault he left me! You ruined it! You f***ed it all up for me! Who's gonna want me now? Where are we gonna live? We don't have any money! We don't have anything! What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do?”
Jimmy : “What are you gonna do? Lily's out there by herself! Why do you have to be like this? What'd we ever do to you?”
Stephanie : “Get the f*** out of here! Get the f*** out of my house! Get the f*** out of my house!”
Jimmy : “Come on, baby. Put your coat on. We're going next door, okay? We're getting out of here.”

(01:12:03-01:13:43)

The scene above takes place when Jimmy gets home and finds his mother laying outside the trailer. Stephanie has been out drinking to deal with the problems she is having, she cannot control herself. Jimmy picks her up and walks her inside. Lily is inside and sees her mother drunk. Stephanie keeps complaining that her boyfriend has just left her and yet she still wants to go back to Bingo (casino)
even though she is extremely drunk and has no self-control. Jimmy makes her stay inside and tells her that she needs to stop gambling and take care of Lily. Jimmy takes Lily to a neighbor’s trailer for safety while Stephanie sobers up.

3.2.5. Optimist

A further characteristic of Jimmy’s self-improvement in *8 Mile* is presented in the following scene:

![Figure III.6 Jimmy dominates his opponent in a rap battle](image)

**Future**: “Let's do the coin toss, as Papa Doc is defending champion, you get to choose. What do you want, heads or tails?”

**Papa Doc**: “Heads.”

**Future**: “Okay. Who goes first?”

**Papa Doc**: “Let that bitch go first.”

**Future**: “I can’t believe my ears. A lot of hostility. Papa's got a lot of anger. All right, check this out. We got new rules. Being it's the championship round, each of these cats...gets a minute and a half apiece. I don't know what'll happen! B-Rabbit...you know what to do. DJ, kick that shit.”

**Jimmy**: [Rapping]

“Put your mother***** hands up and follow me Everybody from the 313 Put your motherf*****’ hands up Look, look Now while he stands tough Notice this man did not have his
hands up. This Free World's got you gassed up Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? One, two, three and to the four One Pac, two Pac, three Pac, four Four Pac, three Pac, two Pac, one You're Pac, he's Pac, you're Pac none. This guy's no mother****' MC. I know everything he's got to say against me I am white I am a f*****' bum I do live in a trailer with my mom My boy Future is an Uncle Tom I do got a dumb friend named Cheddar Bob Who shoots himself in his leg with his own gun. I did get jumped by all six of you chumps And Wink did f*** my girl I'm still standing here screaming "F**** Tha Free World" Don't ever try to judge me, dude You don't know what the f*** I've been through.

Future : Papa Doc, what are you gonna do? DJ! A minute and a half! Spin that shit!

[Background music starts]
Audience : [Chanting] Crook!
Papa Doc : Yo.
[Audience hooting]
Future : We got a new champion! B-Rabbit!

(01:39:02-01:42:56)

This is where the final act of Jimmy’s self-improvement shows. He has finally rid himself of his fears to compete with the current champion of the rap battles in Detroit at this time. Before he got his confidence back and the guts to set foot on stage at The Shelter, he was beaten up by Papa Doc’s gang. They had beaten him up because Jimmy hit Wink, who is friends with Papa Doc as well, had sex with Jimmy’s new girlfriend. That had made Jimmy lose control.

Nevertheless, Jimmy got back on his feet and challenged himself to join the rap battle, won the competition and got respect that he desired. That was the start of his career as a rap god in real life, facts that were brought in and written into this movie.

Another example of Jimmy’s optimism and self-improvement in 8 Mile can be seen from the dialogue in this scene:
This is the second time that Jimmy goes to The Shelter, where the rap battles take place. When it is his turn on stage, Cheddar tells him that his opponent is Lyckety-Splyt, who is a member of The Free World gang and Papa Doc’s friend, but Jimmy does not care who his opponent is, he is ready to face anybody.

### 3.3. Factors Trigger the Main Character to do a Self-Improvement

Based on the theories in the second chapter, there are three factors that trigger self-improvement. They are childhood, society and environment. In this sub-chapter, the analysis focuses on these three factors and the influence that they have on Jimmy’s self-improvement in the *8 Mile* movie. This analysis takes some dialogue from scenes in this movie as it is described in the following paragraphs.
3.3.1. Childhood

The way you grow up has an important impact on a person’s desire to change. In this sub-chapter, the writer will show some factors that cause Jimmy to follow a course of self-improvement in the movie. The first factor can be seen in the following scene:

Figure III.6 Jimmy is arguing with his mother’s boyfriend Greg.

Greg : “Rabbit, what are you doing here? How about knocking?”
Jimmy : “Me and Janeane just broke up”
Stephanie : “I'm sorry, honey. I thought you had a good thing going with her.”
Greg : “Sleeping with someone else?”
Stephanie : “No.”
Jimmy : “I got work in the morning, so...”
Stephanie : “You and Future still at that Little Caesars in Warren?”
Jimmy : “No. I'm at New Detroit Stamping now.”
Stephanie : “That's good. What?”
Greg : “He got fired from a pizza place.”
Jimmy : “At least I got a f****** job.”
Stephanie : “Okay, stop it.”
Greg : “Only ex-cons and welfare mums work at that plant.”
Stephanie : “Baby...are you staying here for a while or what?”
Jimmy : “Just for a couple weeks, till I can save enough to get my own place.”

Greg : “Just like Bob Zurowsky. All your friends still living at home, aren't they? What a bunch of f****** losers.”
Jimmy : “F*** you!”
Greg : “What's your problem?”
Jimmy: “What’s your problem, bitch? Don’t kick my clothes! Don’t F***** judge me!”
Greg: “Why don’t you grow up!”
Stephanie: “Stop it!”
Jimmy: “It’s him, not me! I’ve fought guys bigger than you.”

(00:11:21-00:12-42)

This situation involves Greg, who is the boyfriend of Jimmy’s Mother. Jimmy has just broken up with his girlfriend and has had an embarrassing moment in the rap battle at The Shelter. He has had a very bad day and wants to stay with his Mother for a while. Greg puts fuel into Jimmy’s emotions and it makes him angrier. Greg insults Jimmy over what has just happened to him instead of showing support or sympathy. They had almost got into a fight, but his Mother managed to stop them fighting and it ended up with an argument instead.

3.3.2. Society

Society affects Jimmy’s mental health, he is surrounded by a black neighborhood. Moreover, he is involved in the hip-hop scene, a genre meant for black people and developed by them. It is not easy for Jimmy to gain acceptance from some of them. This is a factor in Jimmy’s desire to improve himself and is shown in this scene:
Future: “All right, enough of the fanfare. Heads or tails?”
Lil Tic: “Heads.”
Future: “Tails. Choose
Jimmy: “(pointing his finger into Lil Tic to let him raps first)”
Future: ‘Lil’ Tic, set it off. DJ, 45 seconds. Spin that shit.”
Lil Tic: "[Rapping] I'ma murder this man! He's the type to lose a fight with a dyke. They don't laugh 'cause you wack It's 'cause you white with a mic. You're a laughingstock. When will this laughter stop? When you and Everlast bitch-ass get popped You a wigga that invented rhyme for money Watch Lil' Tic spit kick the Energizer Bunny Rip the Rabbit head off Toss it to Hugh Hefner 'Cause I don't play, boy Tell me who's fresher LT, that's right. Cock the heat and shoot ya I'll punish Rabbit or obsolete Future, my paws love to maul an MC cause he's faker than a psychic with caller ID so that bullshit, save it for storage cause this is hip-hop you don't belong, you're a tourist. Put your hockey sticks and baseball bat away This here's Detroit”
Future: “Whoa, whoa, okay, You did a good job, Lil' Bitch. I mean, Lil' Tic. My bad. All right, next up is my boy Bunny Rabbit. Hey, talk that shit if you want, but I vouch for this mother****. He's a motherf**** genius. Hit that shit. Forty-five seconds. DJ, kick it.”

[Background music begins]
Jimmy: “Hey, yo.”
Audience: “Boo! Where'd y'all find this nigga at?”
Cheddar: “Come on, Rabbit!”
Dj Iz: “Come on, Rabbit! Come on!”
Audience: “Chanting Choke! Choke! Audience roars
Future: “Yo, Jimmy. Hold up. Don't worry about it, dawg. I'll call you tomorrow. I got to go back inside.”
Dj Iz: “Stay strong, my brother.”
Sol: “You'll rip 'em next time.”
Jimmy: “Yep.”
Cheddar: “Yeah. Next time.”

(00:06:26-00:09-25)

This scene involves Lil Tic, Jimmy’s opponent in the rap battle. It was Jimmy’s first appearance at The Shelter. Rap music, also known as hip-hop, was for the African American community at that time. It was unusual for other races to get involved in this genre. In the lyrics of Jimmy’s opponent, highlighted in the dialogue above, a direct insult is made towards Jimmy. It leaves him speechless and he could not talk when it came to his turn. The audience booed and jeered him and he froze on stage.

3.3.3. Environment

Environment plays the biggest role in Jimmy’s struggles in his life. In this scene, Jimmy gets beaten up by Papa Doc and his gang. They gang up on Jimmy in defense of Wink after Jimmy had caught him with Alex. Jimmy had to unleash his anger and disappointment in beating up Wink, because he had betrayed him. The following scene happens as Jimmy arrives back at his Mother’s trailer with Lily in his arms, he has just collected her from the child minder after dropping her there earlier because his Mother was drunk.
Figure III.8 Jimmy was threatened by Papa Doc’s gang.

Jimmy: “I want you to go inside and lock the door, okay? Listen to me. go in, lock the door and I’ll be in in a minute.”

Lily: “Okay.”

Jimmy: “Okay, go.Go!”

Papa Doc: “What up, bitch? Ready to get knocked out, dawg?”

LC: “Wink said you lived in a trailer with your mum. But we didn’t believe him.”

LC: “Come on, Elvis. Get up. Get up, bitch.”

Omar: “Get your faggot ass up and fight!”

LC: “What? What the f*** you looking at?”

Lily: “Jimmy!”

Moochie: “Get the f*** up.”

Lily: “Stop it!”

Loto: “Fight me, you punk-ass bitch!”

Papa Doc: “I could end your shit right now and nobody would even miss you”

Wink: “No, no. Don’t do this. Come on. He's done.”

LC: “Don't forget to come to the shelter tomorrow night.”

Papa Doc: “You little faggot. I mean, little Rabbit.”

(01:17:04-01:19:29)

Jimmy had a gun pointed at his head by Papa Dog, who threatened to end his life.

It was only Wink who saved Jimmy from an almost certain death. Gang warfare and guns are all a part of the environment that grew up in.
3.4. Moral Message

The writer states that moral value that can be taken from this 8 Mile movie is basically about motivation and inspiration. This movie is obviously showing the main character; Jimmy Rabbit overcomes all the obstacles that tries to drag him down or even to discourage him to continue his life. The main character comes from an imperfect family background which is divorced parents, has a racial issue for him because he is a white guy surrounded by black neighborhood. It can be relatable for those who is in similar situation in real life. Jimmy teaches us not to give up on our dreams and work hard pays off.

Another message can be taken is that to stand up for what you believe in, it does not matter with the outcome, but the progress and faithfulness are what matters. There is always an obstacle in this life; it is not always a good time. Jimmy also shows that dealing with those tough road is the right option to take. Overall, stand your ground speaks loudest in this movie, it is either to give a positive message or entertainment.