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Making the Bronx Move: Hip-Hop Culture and History from the Bronx River Houses to the Parisian Suburbs, 1951-1984.

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College of William and Mary

Making the Bronx Move: Hip-Hop Culture and History from the Bronx River Houses to
the Parisian Suburbs, 1951-1984

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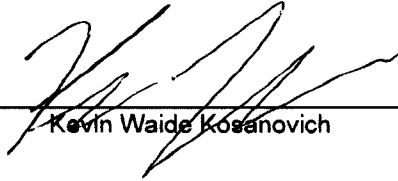of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
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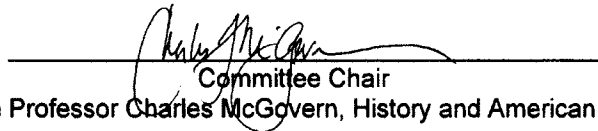
This Dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Kevin Waide Kosanovich

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates Bronx individuals and their communities tracing the tensions between the built environment, cultural creations, and how local iterations of these dynam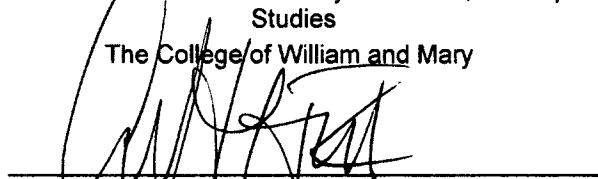ics provided the basis for hip-hop's emergence and subsequent global expansion. I focus on the ways that Bronx residents created a vibrantly interconnected, and mobile, youth popular culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to the built environment, consumer culture, and discourses conflating race and urban America. More than just an investigation of the relationship between space, place, and culture, I argue that hip-hop's material and cultural history most be understood, first and foremost, as a specifically Bronx cultural creation in response to the material and ideological processes of neoliberalization.

My project is divided into three thematic sections. Part One is organized by "Locations" grounding the cultural history of hip-hop in the built environment of the Bronx, the Bronx River Houses, and the emergence of the Zulu Nation. Part Two, "Communications," considers how hip-hop was communicated through flyers to audiences throughout the metropolitan New York area and beyond. Exploring the theme of "Migrations," Part Three views the rapid national and international expansion of hip-hop culture by the mid-1980s through the relationship between hip-hop cultural performance and national and international sites including the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and Parisian banlieues. I explain how hip-hop culture was located and articulated through the relationship between creators and the built environment, ultimately traveling due to an increased similarity between transnational communities impacted by the effects of neoliberalism.

COMPLIANCE PAGE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is dedicated to my wife, Krystal, for everything.

Introduction: Born in the Bronx

I begin with two anecdotes told to me during my work with the Bronx River Oral History Project, illustrating the relationship between the Bronx's material and cultural history and how that dynamic relationship was experienced at the Bronx River Houses. The first anecdote comes from the 2011-2013 Vice President of the Bronx River Tenant Association, Edward Felder. Before becoming a fulltime resident of Bronx River in the 1990s, Felder would frequently travel from Manhattan to visit his sister, who has lived in Bronx River since the early 1970s. Discussing the reputation of Bronx River Houses and his initial trepidation in visiting, Edward Felder stated:

> Gangs was out: the Black Spades, the Zulu Nation. What I heard was that if you didn't live in the projects, you couldn't come in the projects. You got to have permission to live in the projects. If you ain't have permission they will walk you up to the door where you have to go at. It they wasn't sure, they would kick your behind out of the projects. That's what we call, 'family caring about family.[1]

The second testimonial comes from the Mighty Zulu Kingz President Alien Ness. Beginning in the early 1980s, the then middle school aged Alien Ness would travel from Harlem to Bronx River to soak up the history and culture of hip-hop and the Zulu Nation. Alien Ness became a fixture in Bronx River, and he felt part of the community. Alien Ness said, "I started coming to Bronx River, religiously, in the mid-1990s. I made pilgrimages to Bronx River, cause I had to as a young Zulu Nation member in the 80s. Once I got to Bronx River, I loved it here." When Alien Ness' mother's application to New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) apartments was approved in the 1980s, Bronx River was one of her options. Helping her to decide, Alien Ness counseled his

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[1] Edward Felder, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Oral History Project, 6/15/12.

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mother, saying "I looked at the list and I told her, 'momma, if you go to Bronx River you will be ok the rest of your life."[2] Alien Ness' comments echoed Edward Felder's words: Bronx River was a family affair.

Embedded in both accounts of life in the Bronx and Bronx River was a sense of material, cultural, and experiential community. Furthermore, both men provided a nuanced account of life in the Bronx during the decades that hip-hop emerged that is lacking from histories of the Bronx, as well as hip-hop. Edward Felder's recounting registered the very real existence of youth gangs and the fears of gang violence throughout the Bronx in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Black Spades were the largest and most feared youth gang, and the Zulu Nation, led by Afrika Bambaataa, evolved from the Black Spades' social and cultural structure. However, Felder also spoke about the degree to which gangs and youth culture attempted to protect and preserve some semblance of community during the severe political, economic, and material neglect experienced in the Bronx since the 1960s. Alien Ness picked up Felder's narrative thread almost a decade later, when he described the effect the Bronx River Houses had on his sense of family and community. The sense of community Alien Ness found in Bronx River resulted from a reciprocal relationship between the built environment and the culture that emerged in the places and spaces of the housing development. As Alien Ness related, he was able to close the loop of his various families by advising his mother to move into Bronx River, where she still lives.

I began with both anecdotes to re-center the history of hip-hop's emergence within from what Jeff Chang has documented as emerging hip-

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[2] Alien Ness interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/13.

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hop's "Seven-Mile World," to focus on one particular Bronx location and neighborhood: the Bronx River Houses and the surrounding Soundview neighborhood.[3] My decision to begin this material and cultural history of hip-hop in this manner stemmed from my desire to further understand the history of the Bronx and its impact on hip-hop's emergence. Furthermore, I was fascinated by the legend of Afrika Bambaataa and the history of the Zulu Nation. I wanted to know how Afrika Bambaataa established the Zulu Nation, why the Bronx River Houses seemed so important to his cultural work, and what impact all of this had on bundling the various youth cultural practices that had begun emerging in the late 1960s and 1970s under the banner of hip-hop. Finally, I hoped to reveal the unique late-twentieth century cultural and material alchemy developed in the dynamic between Bronx River, the Zulu Nation, and hip-hop, which made this particular African American and Afrodiasporic youth culture globally mobile, becoming the most important American art form since the end of World War II.

This dissertation argues that Bronx individuals harnessed the racial and spatial tensions inherent in their communities serving as dynamic cultural incubators for hip-hop's emergence and subsequent global expansion. I focus on the ways that Bronx residents created a vibrantly interconnected, and mobile, youth popular culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to

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[3] Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 109. Providing a geographic boundary of hip-hop's emergence, Jeff Chang wrote "Most of the youthful energy that became known as hip-hop could be contained in a tiny seven-mile circle.....Place the point of your compass in the heart of Crotona Park and trace the circumference." Included in this cultural geography was the Zulu Nation in eastern Bronx; Edenwald Projects, the popular park known at the Valley, and the 2 and 5 train yards where pioneering graffit artists liked to paint; to the west was Kool Herc and his domain; along the southern curve you had Spanish Harlem.

the built environment, consumer culture, and discourses conflating race and urban America. More than just an investigation of the relationship between space, place, and culture, I argue that hip-hop's material and cultural history must be understood, first and foremost, as a specifically Bronx cultural creation in response to the material and ideological processes of neoliberalization. Ultimately, it is the increasing similarity of experiences under neoliberalization shared by transnational communities that makes Bronx culture move, and hip-hop take root outside the United States.

Bronx Historiography and the Specter of Decline

Both Edward Felder and Alien Ness's testimonials provide a granular sense of continuing history and culture that is all too often lacking in scholarly works focusing on the Bronx. The majority of histories written about the Bronx have tended to be either popular histories tracing the decline of urban America, or borough specific scholarship. The doyen of Bronx history is Lloyd Ultan, whose work has documented multiple histories of the Bronx's social and cultural history. Ultan's "Life in the Bronx Series" and "History of the Bronx Series" has provided a thorough, chronological accounting of Bronx history in response to the notion that the Bronx only had "burned-out buildings, rubble-strewn empty lots and a feral people ready to pounce on the unwary visitor." Ultan offers a historiographical corrective to the record because "the complete story of the Bronx remains unknown largely because studies of the city of New York focus almost exclusively on the borough Manhattan."[4] In addition to

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[4] Lloyd Ultan's books documenting the history of the Bronx: co-authored with Gary Hermalyn, *The Birth of the Bronx, 1609-1900* (the Bronx: Bronx County Historical Society, 2000); *The*

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providing the key historical texts for a general history of the Bronx, Ultan has

also paid particular attention to the varieties of cultural creations that have

emerged from the Bronx. Most significant, Ultan's *Bronx Accent* traced the

borough's literary heritage. From the colonial period to the twenty-first century,

Ultan and literary scholar Barbara Unger provided a view of the Bronx as an

important center of urban literature. Significantly, *Bronx Accent* connects

cultural creation with the material environment.[5] Without the work of Lloyd

Ultan providing a corpus of Bronx knowledge, further scholarship about the

Bronx would have been far more difficult.

By the 1990s, newer scholarship tracing the history of the Bronx

through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries offered nuanced perspectives

on the social and cultural complexity of the Bronx. Several works connect the

relationship between people, places, and politics in the formation of the Bronx.

Jill Jonnes' *South Bronx Rising* provided an important first look at the history of

the Bronx throughout the twentieth century. Her pioneering work argues that

the experiential history of the literal, geographic South Bronx eventually

influenced the discursive view of the entire Bronx.[6] Echoing Jill Jonnes' work,

Evelyn Gonzales' book *The Bronx*, a history of "neighborhoods," argues that

the Bronx's urban crisis was the result of "economic transactions, political

decisions, and human choices that created the city and its ethnic and racial

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Bronx in the Frontier Era (the Bronx: Bronx County Historical Society, 2009); co-authored
with Gary Hermalyn, *The Bronx in the Innocent Years, 1890-1925* (New York: Harper & Row.
1985); *The Beautiful Bronx, 1920-1950* (New York: Harmony Books, 1979); co-authored with
Gary Hermalyn, *The Bronx: It Was Only Yesterday, 1935-1965* (the Bronx: Bronx County
Historical Society, 1992); *The Northern Borough: A History of the Bronx* (the Bronx: Bronx
County Historical Society, 2009).
[5] Lloyd Ultan and Barabara Unger, *Bronx Accents: A Literary and Pictorial History of the
Borough* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).
[6] Jill Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of an American City* (New
York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

neighborhoods in the first place and then continuously re-created them." A

thorough history of the varieties of federal, state, and local policies, including

the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, Mitchell-Lama housing, and the

Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) of 1977, Gonzales argues that these

policies created a Bronx revival by the end of the twentieth century.[7]

Other works documenting the history of the Bronx's decline focused on

individual neighborhoods or specific sections of the Bronx. Marshall Berman

framed his history of the experience of modernity from the vantage point of the

destruction of his childhood Bronx neighborhood through the machinations of

Robert Moses, urban renewal, and municipal disinvestment.[8] Although

Berman's larger project asserted that modernity shaped the social and material

landscape of everyday life, he viewed his subject through the lens of his Bronx

neighborhood. Constance Rosenblum's *Boulevard of Dreams* traces the

development, abandonment, and attempted recovery of the businesses,

communities, and individuals along the Bronx's Grand Concourse from the

1910s to the present. Importantly, Rosenblum's book examines the

connection between the Bronx's white and white-ethnic communities and the

boulevard between the 1920s and 1970s. Similar to Berman's meditations on

the experience of displacement felt by his neighbors and generational cohort

during the mid-20th century, Rosenblum also detailed the history of white-flight

in the Bronx, arguing that race served as a prime motivator to ignore, and flee,

the boulevard and the Bronx. Rosenblum charged that the era of optimism felt

by predominantly Jewish, Irish, and Italian immigrants who went from

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[7] Evelyn Gonzales, *The Bronx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[8] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988)

"greenhorns into solid middle class Americans" along this Bronx Boulevard

gave way to alienation.[9] Rosenblum argued that the opening of Co-Op City in

1968 was what "killed the Grand Concourse" and an integrated, stable Bronx.

Rosenblum placed her history of the Boulevard and its abandonment vis-à-vis

a broader history of urban decline when she noted that a year after the first

residents moved into Co-Op City in 1968, the Bronx "began to burn."[10] She in

effect argues that racial efforts to help integration were bad for whites and thus

for cities.

In 1976, New York Police Department (NYPD) Captain Tom Walker

published his memoir of working in NYPD's notorious 41st Precinct, known as

Fort Apache, located between the South Bronx neighborhoods of Morrisania

and Hunts Point on Simpson Street.[11] Although Walker's book would be

considered as of a piece with other popular discursive packaging of the

disintegration of the South Bronx as representative of the decline and fall of

urban America, the book was actually a balanced account and a paean of sorts

for the communities surrounding the precinct. By 1981, Walker's account

served as source inspiration for the Paul Newman urban exploitation film *Fort

Apache: The Bronx.* In contrast to the precinct's nickname, Walker viewed his

precinct and the community he served not as the nameless savages implied by

the precinct's nickname, but as individuals. Although Walker narrated the

often shockingly violent crimes that his precinct investigated in the South

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[9] Constance Rosenblum, *Boulevard of Dreams: Heady Times, Heartbreak, and Hope Along the Grand Concourse in the Bronx* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 12.
[10] Rosenblum, 201-202, 205.
[11] Tom Walker, *Fort Apache: Life and Death in New York City's Most Violent Precinct* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976).

Bronx, his book also treated the people and communities he policed with respect.

Although nearly all the literature detailed above attempted to present Bronx history with a careful consideration of the people and communities of the borough, most of the works focus on a history of material decline as experienced by the borough's white and white-ethnic populations. However, this perspective and representation of the Bronx privileges scholarly and popular histories promoting one version of Bronx history from the late 1960s to the present. Tracing the ways in which the "Bronx" experienced urban decline from the perspective of white flight and municipal disinvestment often times erases an extant cultural and material history of African American and Latino urbanity expressed by Edward Felder and Alien Ness' personal testimonies. Illustrating this erasure, by the end of his text, Berman contemplated all that was lost of the material and cultural structures of his childhood neighborhood as he stood considering the significance of "the overpass covered with graffiti."[12] What Berman saw as a sign of cultural and material disintegration was in fact the emergence of new combinations of culture from enduring and emerging communities making meaning on, and through, the Bronx's many landscapes.

A similar narrative of decline connects most of the literature examining the history of public housing and urban America after World War II, viewing material decline as symptomatic of a decline in public housing residents' basic humanity. In *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing,* D. Bradford Hunt hopes to discover how a "well-intentioned New Deal program

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[12] Berman, 344-345.

designed to clear the nation's urban slums . . . [became] a devastating urban policy failure." Hunt downplays the importance of structural racism in real estate and housing policies that helped establish the postwar housing boom. He concludes that housing reform, from the beginning, was a "blueprint for disaster" because the housing policy that emerged in the late 1930s could not survive the postwar housing boom.[13] Hunt's history of the Chicago Housing Authority limns a similar version of inevitable urban decline as the literature on the collapse of the Bronx.

The historiography about American urban decline followed two tracks: the first, like Hunt, ignored structural racism; the second track *highlighted* it. With *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* Thomas Sugrue argues that postwar conflicts in Detroit over urban space were exacerbated due to whites who mobilized to prevent integration at home and in the workplace. Sugrue argues that racism was so prevalent that it influenced all aspects of Detroit's public and private spaces, effectively creating the structure and narrative of urban decline and poverty in Detroit in the 1970s and 1980s.[14] In *Manhattan Projects,* Samuel Zipp investigated New York's use of urban renewal as material and ideological tools to fight the Cold War. Proponents of urban renewal hoped that it would clear urban slums, provide new homes, and signal Manhattan as the capital of the postwar world. Zipp explains how urban renewal perpetuated racial segregation and deindustrialization, while helping to

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[13] D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 15.

[14] Thomas Sugrue *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

establish new slums.[15]   Zipp's examination of Stuyvesant Town, Lincoln

Center, and East Harlem housing projects traces the material and ideological

history entailed in establishing an urban crisis discourse beginning in the

. 1960s influencing the way policy makers, the media, and popular

commentators would view the Bronx in the 1970s.

Providing an important counterpoint to much of the literature decrying

the doom and gloom of urban America and public housing is Nicholas Dagen

Bloom's *Public Housing That Worked: New York in the Twentieth Century.*

According to Bloom, NYCHA avoids devolving into a "second ghetto" through

administrative flexibility and constant vigilance in attempts to maintain both

social and material communities. Instead of condemning public housing out of

hand, Bloom discovers that throughout NYCHA's seventy year history, the

institution has worked hard to deliver "model housing as a municipal service" to

some of New York's most vulnerable citizens.[16]   Edward G. Goetz follows the

dismantling of public housing as part of a larger neoliberal dismantling of New

Deal policies in *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing*

Policy. Goetz's history chronicles housing policy's turn away from, and

demolition of, public housing in favor of subsidized units and tenant vouchers

contained in the HOPE VI housing program. Instead of improving the social

and economic conditions for public housing residents, Goetz discovered that

the HOPE VI program removed more than 250,000 public housing units in

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[15] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[16] Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Public Housing That Worked: New York in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Bloom discusses NYCHA's history in contrast to historian Arnold Hirsch's term "second ghetto." Hirsch's term initially described the experiences of Chicago public housing residents, and was soon applied to public housing nationwide.

Atlanta, Chicago, and New Orleans. Goetz calls for renewed investment and policy interest in public housing.[17] All of these works view public housing through the lens of administrative programming and structural oversight. The failures, and in the case of Bloom's work, the success, of public housing always resided at the administrative and policy level.

The majority of the literature investigating public housing, good or bad, rarely includes the voices from residents and former residents. When these voices do appear, they are largely included to bolster a narrative of cultural, social, and spiritual implosion. However, any cursory glance at urban cultural history since the 1950s proves this viewpoint false. From jazz, the Black Arts Movement, to hip-hop, many vibrant cultural practices continue to enrich urban communities. Several projects and books exist foregrounding residents' experiences in public housing that helped inform my creation of the Bronx River Houses Oral History Project to honor the history and experiences of life in the Bronx and Bronx River. Founded by Mark Naison at Fordham University, the Bronx African American History Project (BAAHP) provided me with a methodology of engaging with Bronx history through oral history. Additionally, I was inspired by oral histories explicitly devoted to public housing such as *High Rise Stories: Voices From Chicago Public Housing*, and Rico "Superbizzee" Washington and Shino Yanagawa's photojournalism project, *We*

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[17] Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

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The People: The Citizens of NYCHA in Pictures + Words to deploy oral history as an important methodological tool in telling, and honoring, this history.[18]

Hip-Hop Studies and a Return to the Bronx

On March 12, 2014, Bronx hip-hop pioneers Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Caz, Grandmaster Melle Mel, and Grandwizard Theodore, among others, gathered at City Hall in New York for a City Council ceremony honoring their cultural achievements. During a press conference staged outside City Hall, the assembled pioneers of hip-hop announced plans for the creation of the Universal Hip Hop Museum at the Kingsbridge Armory in the Bronx. Serving as the proposed museum's chairman, Afrika Bambaataa said that the museum's mission was inspired by the fact that "many people have a misconception about what hip-hop is. When they say hip-hop, they only say it's the rapper, and there's a whole culture and movement behind it." Grandmaster Melle Mel, lead MC of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, viewed the potential of the hip-hop museum as a new boon to Bronx tourism, similar to Yankee Stadium.[19] As hip-hop ventured into its fourth decade, the Bronx pioneers signaled a return to the borough.

The announcement of the Universal Hip Hop Museum comes after almost twenty years of attempts to establish a hip-hop museum in New York. In addition to the Universal Hip Hop Museum, Craig Wilson, co-founder of the

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[18] Mark Naison founded the BAAHP in 2003. *We The People: The Citizens of NYCHA in Pictures + Words* was exhibited at the Gordon Parks Gallery at the College of New Rochelle, School of New Resources, John Cardinal O'Connor Campus, February 23 – May 5, 2013.
[19] Winnie Hu, "Hip-Hop Pioneers Plan a Museum for the Bronx," *The New York Times*, March 13, 2014, A25.

National Museum of Hip-Hop, is attempting to open his museum in Harlem.[20]

Last fall, JT Thompson announced his plans to open the Hip Hop Hall of Fame

and Museum and Entertainment complex in midtown Manhattan in

collaboration with various institutions, archives, and private collectors.[21]

Attempts to establish hip-hop museums also reflect an increasing trend of

colleges and universities creating hip-hop archives and collections. Since

2002, after he Hiphop Archive & Research Institute was officially established at

Harvard University, a variety of institutions have opened archives, collections,

and research institutes dedicated to hip-hop culture and history.[22] Although

most archives have attempted to capture local and regional hip-hop history,

they all signify a return to, and a reckoning with, the history of postwar Bronx.

As demonstrated by the literature on the Bronx and postwar urban

communities, the overall tendency has been a narrative of decline inaugurated

by the raced and spaced policies that have defined America's "neoliberal turn"

since the 1970s. The "neoliberal turn" embraced economic policies built on

greater flexibility of labor markets, deregulation of financial operations, and

privatization of state-owned sectors. The state redefined and diminished its

commitment to social programs, as progress and profits became increasingly

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[20] Winnie Hu, "Hip-Hop Pioneers Plan a Museum for the Bronx," *The New York Times,* March 13, 2014, A25.

[21] JT Thompson was a member of the Schomburg Center's October 19, 2012 symposium, "Documenting History in Your Own Backyard: A Symposium for Archiving & Preserving Hip-Hop Culture," hosted by The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The Hip-Hop Education Center and the Cornell University Hip Hop Collection.

[22] In addition to the Hiphop Archive & Research Institute, these archives, collections, and research centers include: the Cornell Hip Hop Collection, founded in 2007; the Tupac Amaru Shakur Collection at the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library, established in 2009; the Houston University Libraries Hip Hop collection, in 2010; the Hip-Hop Education Center, under the auspices of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University, in 2010; the William & Mary Hip Hop Collection, in 2012; and the NOLA Hip Hop Archive at Tulane University, in 2014.

synonymous in political rhetoric.[23] The literature focusing on hip-hop

understandably followed the same thread. Indeed, Marcyliena Morgan

described the state of hip-hop literature by the mid-1990s thusly:

> [T]he bulk of scholarship at the time not only bordered on cultural
> voyeurism but also treated young black men, and hiphop culture in
> particular, as simultaneously "socially pathological," an "endangered
> species," and "at risk." The need for more scholarship on hiphop culture
> becomes clear exactly at moments like those described above when
> scholars recognize hiphop's existence but treat it as coming from the
> Other and thus as a curiosity or a problem and not as intellectually,
> politically, and artistically important.[24]

These works of hip-hop scholarship were influenced by discourses linking race,

space, and urban youth with, at worst, inherent criminality and, at best,

representatives of disappearing communities.

Critics who denounced hip-hop culture have done so by denying that it

has any type of cultural, historical, or political significance. In the introduction

to his dissertation, Michael Jeffries traced the conservative arguments against

hip-hop from John McWhorter and Martin Kilson from the last decade.[25] John

McWhorter attacked hip-hop for creating a type of black music that is an

"assault on the ears and soul. Anyone who grew up in urban America during

the eighties won't soon forget the young men strolling down streets, blaring this

sonic weapon from their boom boxes, with defiant glares daring anyone to ask

them to turn it down." As a linguist, McWhorter was also dismayed by the

"cocky, confrontational cadence . . . fast becoming . . . a common style among

young black males." McWhorter further critiqued and dismissed the possibility

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[23] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[24] Marcyliena Morgan, *The Real HipHop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 9.

[25] Michael Jeffries, *Thug Life: Race, Gender, and the Meaning of Hip-Hop* (dissertation, Harvard University, 2008), 6-15.

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of hip-hop providing an empowering identity by further claiming, "the black community has gone through too much to sacrifice upward mobility to the passing kick of an adversarial hip-hop 'identity.'"[26]

The lack of historical context and class bias was palpable in McWhorter's critique; however, he was not alone. Martin Kilson explicity frames his critique of hip-hop culture as a destructive force further disadvantaging poor and working-class African American communities, from across the generational divide of the Civil Rights and post-Civil Rights' generations. Although Kilson provides some thoughtful criticism of Michael Eric Dyson, Todd Boyd, and "their hip-hop intellectual colleagues" for reductive criticism of the leadership and objectives of the Civil Rights generation, Kilson ultimately mirrors the critiques he found so repugnant. Kilson categorically dismissed hip-hop saying, "there's *nothing whatever that's seriously radical or progressive about hip-hop ideas and values . . . .* The 'hip-hop worldview' is far from being a viable post-civil rights era message to African-American children and youth. It is seldom a message of self-respect and self-dignity as Black individuals and as American citizens."[27] Steeped in class-based critiques privileging a normative, generational, and middle-class aspirational culture of representation, these negative critiques fail to understand the social, cultural, economic, and political power that hip-hop offers. As George Lipsitz reveals, "popular culture creates

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[26] John H. McWhorter, "How Hip-Hop Holds Blacks Back," *City Journal* Summer 2003. http://www.city-journal.org/html/13_3_how_hip_hop.html. Although McWhorter's views seemed horribly retrograde in 2003, they are even more out of touch a decade later with the massive mainstream cultural cache of figures like Jay Z, Puff Daddy, and Dr. Dre's various partnerships with Apple and USC.

[27] Martin Kilson, "The Pretense of Hip-Hop Black Leadership," *The Black Commentator,* Number 20, July 17, 2003. http://www.blackcommentator.com/50/50_kilson.html

its own micro-politics of organization, location, identity and affiliation."[28] Hip-hop culture and practitioners established an art form to represent their everyday realities.

In contrast to these conservative critiques of hip-hop culture, many scholars have approached hip-hop on its own terms, attempting to contextualize hip-hop within the various material, cultural, and geographical spaces and places of its emergence. Joe Austin's *Taking The Train* serves as a model for this type of critical historical work. Austin documents graffiti art's emergence from the dynamic relationship of New York City's material and cultural history in the 1960s and 1970s, and how this art form was subsequently vilified in official discourse to obfuscate the failure of the city in honoring its public commitments.[29] Joe Schloss provides a close historical and aesthetic analysis of hip-hop DJs and breaking in his two works, *Making Beats* and *Foundation.*[30] Both Schloss's works locate elements of hip-hop culture within networks of imagination created by relationships between material, culture, and community histories. Rounding out the hip-hop scholarship connecting elemental cultural practices and their material contexts, Marcyliena Morgan provides an ethnographic analysis of Project Blowed, a famous Los Angeles workshop renowned for its open-mic workshops. Through *The Real HipHop,* Morgan demonstrates how the language and culture of hip-hop pulls

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[28] George Lipsitz, *Rainbow At Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 152.

[29] Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbian University Press, 2001).

[30] Joseph Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample Based Hip Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004); Joseph Schloss, *Foundation: B-Boys, B-Girls, and Hip-Hop Culture in New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

from broader cultural and ideological antecedents while providing a cultural form to directly comment on specific, material realities.[31]

Surveying the multifarious totality of hip-hop culture, Reiland Rebaka has authored several volumes of hip-hop scholarship tracing the longer history of African American culture and experience from "spirituals, blues, ragtime, jazz, rhythm & blues, rock & roll, soul, and funk, and previous black popular movements, such as the Black Women's Club Movement, New Negro Movement, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, Black Arts Movement, and Black Women's Liberation Movement," to provide a cultural and historical link with hip-hop.[32] In his most recent work, *The Hip Hop Movement,* Rebaka echoes Lipsitz's insight, arguing that within the broad umbrella of hip-hop, there exist "respective *alternative* or *micro-hip hop movments,* such as the Hip Hop Feminist Movement, the Homosexual Hip Hop Movement, and the Hip Hop environmentalist movement" that demonstrate the need for scholarship focusing on hip-hop's contextual dynamic between cultural creation and the material environment.[33]

During the last decade, hip-hop scholarship has greatly expanded in scope and subject. As hip-hop studies increasingly include regional, national, and transnational cultural histories, the basic historical narrative of hip-hop's emergence from the Bronx remains the same. Jeff Chang's history of

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[31] Marcyliena Morgan, *The Real HipHop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
[32] Rebaka's works include: *Hip Hop's Inheritance: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Hip Hop Feminist Movement* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011); *Hip Hop's Amnesia: From Blues and the Black Women's Club Movement to Rap and the Hip Hop Movement* (New York: Lexington Books, 2012); *The Hip Hop Movement: From R&B and the Civil Rights Movement to Rap and the Hip Hop Generation* (New York: Lexington Books, 2013).
[33] Rebaka, *The Hip Hop Movement,* 7.

American hip-hop cultural history, *Can't Stop Won't Stop,* traces hip-hop's

beginnings from the 1960s' slums of Kingston, Jamaica, the South Bronx of the

1970s, a national cultural phenomenon by the 1990s, to a 21st century billion

dollar industry. While Chang provides a readable narrative of hip-hop's forty-

year history, his history always grounds hip-hop in overcoming material and

cultural lack. Other works explore different threads of hip-hop's mosaic history,

while reiterating the standard historical narrative of hip-hop's surprising

emergence from the Bronx. Examining Chicano identity and hip-hop culture

throughout California, the Southwest, and the Midwest, Pancho McFarland

articulates hip-hop's ability to provide a cultural voice for historically

marginalized individuals and communities. Raquel Z. Rivera's pioneering

work, *New York Ricans From the Hip Hop Zone,* documents the integral

presence of Puerto Ricans in the creation of hip-hop culture. While Rivera and

McFarland's work contributes to the corpus of hip-hop history and studies by

providing groundbreaking cultural histories, both of their narratives are

embedded within the archetypical Bronx hip-hop narrative.[34] All see hip-hop as

creativity born of poverty.

Transnational hip-hop over the last decade has emerged as a focus for

scholars. From Ian Condry's work on hip-hop in Japan, Natasha Tamar

Sharma's investigation of South Asian American constructions of identity

through hip-hop culture, to a wealth of scholarship examining hip-hop culture in

Africa, including Eric Charry, Brad Weiss, and Mwenda Ntarangwi, scholars

have placed hip-hop culture within similar cultural and material networks of lack

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[34] Pancho McFarland, *Chicano Rap: Gender and Violence in the Postindustrial Barrio* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008); Raquel Z. Rivera, *New York Ricans From the Hip Hop Zone* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

and desire. As a transnational cultural phenomenon, hip-hop has increasingly

been adapted by individuals and communities lacking social, cultural, and

economic capital to effect social identity.[35] These transnational works of hip-

hop history have broadened knowledge about the practice and use of an

African diasporic form of cultural expression. However, these works continue

to work from a historical perspective that views the history of hip-hop and the

Bronx as a singular, homogenous space of desolation and want.

The two most important works of hip-hop studies that have helped shape

my project are Tricia Rose's *Black Noise*, and Murray Forman's *The 'Hood

Comes First.* Rose focuses on rap music's ability to "articulate the shifting

terms of black marginality in contemporary American culture," and Foreman in

turn examines the racial and spatial economy of rap music's intense emphasis

on space, place and identity.[36] Tricia Rose's chapter, "All Aboard the Night

Train: Flow, Layering, and Rupture in Postindustrial New York," argues that rap

and hip-hop emerged as a result of African American cultural practices

responding to postindustrial New York.[37] Rose provides excellent insight and

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[35] Ian Condry, *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Natasha Tamar Sharma, *Hip Hop Desis: South Asian Americans, Blackness, and a Global Race Consciousness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Eric Charry, editor, *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006); Mwenda Ntarangwi, *East African Hip Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Brad Weiss, *Street Dreams and Hip Hop Barbershops: Global Fantasy in Urban Tanzania* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009)

[36] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 3; Murray Foreman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002) xvii.

[37] Rose, *Black Noise.* Rose argues that flow, layering and rupture provided the cultural cornerstone for hip-hop. She describes flow as continuity, circularity; layering reinforces or embellishes this continuity; rupture manages potential disruptions to flow and layering by highlighting continuity as its being challenged (39). These three stylistic and aesthetic qualities are seen throughout the Afrodiasporic world. See this literature, among others: Robert Farris

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acumen in detailing hip-hop's emergence in New York's urban vistas.

However, she understands hip-hop and rap's culture as only African American

cultural response to the unique challenges of postindustrial New York.

Foreman argues that by the 1970s, the South Bronx and New York witnessed

the emergence of cultural practices that redefined the relationship of race and

space in the ghetto. The emergence of hip-hop represented the 'hood,

demonstrating a shift in the cultural production and representation of space in

a community shrunken to the boundaries of a public housing project, city block,

or an apartment building. The predominantly African American generational

cohort that came of age in the 1970s in the South Bronx that practiced some

form of hip-hop discarded the ghetto for the 'hood as a cultural response to the

postindustrial city. While both works represent important, and necessary,

critical interventions in hip-hop studies and the relationship between urban

communities and cultural creation of late 20th century America, both works still

left unanswered questions about hip-hop's cultural and geographical origins

specific to the Bronx.

Searching for a way to return hip-hop history to the Bronx, I ended up

taking a detour along the post-war histories of America's freeways. Eric Avila's

The Folklore of the Freeway is an engrossing history of vernacular cultural

creation as public history. Avila describes his work as demonstrating the

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Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African & Afro-American Art & Philosophy* (Vintage, 1984);
Houston A. Baker, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*
(University of Chicago Press, 1987); Gena Caponi-Tabery, *Jump For Joy: Jazz, Basketball,
and Black Culture in 1930s America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2008); Joel
Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture
Between the World Wars* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

"striking synthesis of structure and culture where the modernist city meets the

postmodern city, where vigorous expressions of identity clash against the

architecture of technocratic form and function."[38] Probing the neoliberalization

of the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, Avila investigates the political and

cultural strategies individuals and communities of "chocolate cities" deployed to

protest and negotiate with the technocratic visions of urban master planners

and the attendant rise of the freeways. Although Avila did not include hip-hop

in his work, he documented cultural and material history of representational

attempts by marginalized and neglected communities beginning in the 1960s

and 1970s, detailing a broader history of American cultural creation within

which hip-hop fits. This is where my work enters the scholarly conversation. I

look to return hip-hop history to the granular experiences of the Bronx, and

place this urban culture within a larger national history of cultural production

largely ignored or romanticized by hip-hop scholars.

Outline of the Work

The structure of this work attempts to understand hip-hop's emergence

and global growth through David Harvey's understanding of absolute and

relative space. Harvey writes that public space is a site and literal ground for

political activity marked by the relational dynamics between absolute and

relative space. Harvey defines absolute space as physical boundaries and

material objects; relative space constitutes people, commodities, and

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[38] Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), x.

circulations and flows of energies.[39] Divided into three parts, *Making the Bronx*

Move: Hip-Hop Culture and History from the Bronx River Houses to the

Parisian Suburbs, 1951-1984, considers deeply the tensions between the built

environment, cultural creation, and the ways in which local iterations of these

dynamics provided the basis for hip-hop's emergence and subsequent global

expansion.

Part One is organized by the theme "Locations," grounding the cultural

history of hip-hop in the built environment of the Bronx and the Bronx River

Houses. The first chapter, *"Houses and Homes: The Bronx, Bronx River*

Houses, and Hip-Hop's Material and Cultural Communities," examines the

various ways that the Bronx was increasingly effaced in favor of public

discourses identifying the "Bronx" with abandonment, decay, and isolation. By

the 1970s, the geographical diversity of the Bronx was discarded in favor of a

post-apocalyptic vision of a homogenous African-American and Latino urbanity

characterized by arson, gangs, and public housing. Through a closer look at

the Bronx River Houses, its residents, and their community, I argue that the

history and experience of Bronxites from the 1950s-1980s differed

dramatically, based on geography, neighborhood, and type of housing. The

history of Bronx River demonstrates the fact that hip-hop's emergence was

based on stable working and upper-middle class communities, primarily in

public housing.

Chapter Two, *"Home of God: The Bronx River Houses, Afrika*

Bambaataa and the Emergence of the Zulu Nation," continues the first

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[39] David Harvey, "Space as a Keyword" in *David Harvey: A Critical Reader* eds. Noel Castree and Derek Gregory (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).

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chapter's investigation of material and cultural communities through an extended examination of the Bronx River Houses, and the individuals who helped develop and maintained this community. Although this chapter is primarily devoted to the complex history of Afrika Bambaataa, youth cultural practices, and the development of the Universal Zulu Nation, I argue that the Bronx River Houses always had a well-developed community culture that was foundational for Bambaataa's organizing. Because of the relationship between Bronx River residents and the built environment of the Bronx River campus, Bambaataa and his youthful cohorts had a vital community from which to imagine the beginnings of the Zulu Nation and an inclusive hip-hop culture.

Part Two, "Communications," traces how the "locations" examined in part one communicated the emerging cultural practices of hip-hop among various neighborhoods in the Bronx, and beyond. Chapter Three, *"Advertising the Real: Hip-Hop Flyers and the Creation of Hip-Hop Authenticity in the Bronx and Beyond,"* examines the role of early hip-hop party flyers and the flyer artists, most prominently Buddy Esquire, in developing hip-hop's visual grammar while bridging the advertising of early jams to hip-hop's expansion into the culture industry by the 1980s. Not only did Buddy Esquire and his fellow flyer artists create works of advertising art in attempts to create a marketplace for themselves and emerging hip-hop events, they did so through the transformation of hip-hop's visual and cultural geography, revealing a more expansive and interconnected youthful urban culture than previous scholarship has discussed.

Chapter Four, *"All City Bronx: Uptown Goes Downtown (and Back Again),"* looks at the relationship between communities and artists in the Bronx

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and downtown Manhattan that helped move hip-hop culture into downtown galleries and clubs by the early 1980s. I locate the beginnings of this uptown and downtown cultural relationship in the very different histories of SoHo and the Bronx beginning in the early 1970s. Significantly, the formal establishment of SoHo through direct, municipal intervention provided an inverse example of the official neglect experienced in the South Bronx at the same moment. Furthermore, chapter four examines the expansion of hip-hop throughout metropolitan New York and the tri-state area far away from the avant-garde of SoHo, in spaces and places that were resolutely catering to mainstream youth culture.

"Migrations," Part Three, examines the rapid national and international expansion of hip-hop culture by the mid-1980s. In Chapter Five, *"Breaking the Bronx: From Lincoln Center to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics,"* I view the 1981 Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics closing ceremony as major events providing the link between a Bronx, and New York, based culture and an increasing national expansion. I argue that dancing represented the hip-hop element that would propel hip-hop culture nation-wide because it was so visually and commercially appealing. After the Rock Steady Crew's 1981 performance at the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, breaking was increasingly featured in movies, television, and live tours. All of the popular interest and increasing excitement surrounding breaking in the early 1980s culminated with the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics closing ceremony. Lionel Richie's extended performance of "All Night Long" featured a variety of street-based dance styles, including popping, locking,

uprocking, and breaking, all popularly understood as break dancing, and broadcasted across the globe, helping to disseminate hip-hop culture.

Closing this work, and hip-hop's cultural trajectory from the Bronx to an international cultural community, Chapter Six, *"Bombing les Banlieues: Building a Transnational Bronx Nation,"* investigates the popularity of hip-hop in Paris beginning in the early 1980s. The New York City Rap Tour, also known as the Roxy Tour, arrived in Paris in 1982 and quickly galvanized a largely youthful audience to develop a Francophone hip-hop culture because it provided an opportunity of public self-representation for marginalized French communities. By the mid-1980s, hip-hop was firmly entrenched throughout France and increasingly throughout Europe. Most importantly, Bambaataa's vision of a global hip-hop was ultimately spread through direct contact by an early visit in 1981 and the Roxy Tour in 1982. From Bambaataa's vision of a Universal Zulu Nation emerging from Bronx River, to an international popular culture, a Bronx-based culture connected individuals in Paris through a shared experience of space and place. By 1984, cultural practices that emerged from the Bronx had created a global hip-hop culture.

Part One: Locations

Chapter 1

Houses and Homes: The Bronx, Bronx River Houses, and Hip-Hop's Material and Cultural Communities

"The Family Day became huge, humongous!"—Louis Andrus

Beginning in 1979, longtime Bronx River Houses Tenant Association president Louis Andrus and his wife decided that the time was right to formally codify a longstanding Bronx River community practice of celebration through food and fun outside on the housing development's grounds. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Bronx River residents—and communities and neighborhoods throughout the Bronx and New York—would take advantage of the summer season to throw impromptu block parties. Longtime resident Catherine Stokes recalled the culture of celebration predating Mr. and Mrs. Andrus's efforts, as "I can't tell you the years....We used to just bring the food down and enjoy each other, there wasn't no music like there is now."[1] Out of this culture of seasonal celebration, Bronx River Family Day was established.

Family Day, as it has come to be known, emerged from the combination of community celebration and activism that has been a hallmark of Bronx River residents since the early 1970s. Throughout Mr. Andrus's tenure as Tenant Association president, his leadership and advocacy strategy always revolved around getting the community out in numbers to demonstrate to the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) officials the community needs. Mr. Andrus recalled that "the Housing Authority, they at one time, were not concerned with things. . . . However, when the government started giving

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[1] Catherin Stokes, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/25/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

money for things they [NYCHA] realized, 'wow if we get tenant involvement,

the we can get these monies.' So, we had a good relationship [after that]."[2]

By the mid-1970s, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

had tied a variety of government funding packages incumbent upon tenant

participation, making NYCHA increasingly receptive to Mr. Andrus and his

leadership style.

Bronx River Family Day emerged as a way for Mr. Andrus to continue

to place a spotlight on Bronx River Houses. In cooperation with area schools,

such as PS 77, local school boards, and various Bronx and citywide politicians,

Mr. Andrus was able to formally establish "Bronx River Family Day." Mr.

Andrus described the development of Family day: "now, the people who were

tenants here come back and they can see the change." Held at the Bronx

River Houses campus or nearby parks, Bronx River Family Day has continued

to form an important social link between residents and former residents.

Furthermore, the public and social celebration of Bronx River has also linked a

local political activism with the material and social world of Bronx River. The

long running Family Day stands as testament to the important social, material,

and political dynamics at work in Bronx River. By the early 1990s, the

importance of Family Day had been recognized by City Hall. "Mayor Dinkins

[NYC Mayor, 1990-1993] would come out to some of the events, so housing

would clean things up before they came out."[3] Continuing a strategy to

improve the material conditions of Bronx River Houses, Mr. Andrus was able to

conceive of Family Day as a public event to celebrate the community, and at

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[2] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/25/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[3] Ibid.

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the same time advocate for better material conditions. The longstanding

celebration of Bronx River Family Day also demonstrates the fact that the

relationship between the Bronx and the Bronx River Houses residents, and

their built environment, needs to be contrasted with discourses detailing the

Bronx's desolation, isolation, and ruin. Specifically, Family Day pushed back

at the discourse that only viewed the Bronx as a desolate wasteland during the

1970s and 1980s.

History of the Bronx

The material and cultural history of the Bronx contained competing

discourses of space and place. Transforming the social meanings inherent in

urban and suburban place and space was central to the Bronx's development.

The material development of the Bronx always registered this spatial tension

between low-density, residential development connected by curvilinear

parkways and high-density, grid-based planning used to maximize space.

Since at least the late 19th century, the history of the Bronx has always been

marked by negotiations between urbanization, neighborhood renewal, and

suburban idealism.[4]

The modern history of the Bronx began in the 1840s when Manhattan

commuter rail service reached the South Bronx neighborhood of Mott Haven.

Almost immediately, four subdivisions developed around the rail lines. These

settlements in present day Mott Haven, Kingsbridge, and Morrisania

neighborhoods of then Westchester County were promoted as a suburban

retreat in the mid 19th century. Industry developed alongside these settlements

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[4] Evelyn Gonzales, *The Bronx* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2004).

and train lines. In 1841, the New York and Harlem Railroad reached the Bronx and Jordan Mott erected his foundry. Although the availability of land throughout the southern Bronx offered a suburban frontier, 19th century industrial urbanism also moved north across the Harlem River. For most of the 19th century, the settlement of the Bronx reflected a segregated, suburban existence. At the same time, a tension between suburban and urban organization of space was imbricated in the small towns and factories being built with rail access to Manhattan for the new industrial goods.

In 1860, Robert Campbell and Edward Willis purchased 80 acres in South Morrisania—present day South Bronx—for development.[5] After the 1863 New York Draft Riots, this burgeoning South Bronx development became an increasingly attractive suburban retreat. Advertised as "North New York," lot sales jumped responding to exhortations to move "far from the city's ills."[6] Significantly, this advertisement and inducement for suburban Bronx was first conceived of as a retreat for the native born and naturalized. Bronx demographics from 1860 showed that the Bronx was 90 percent native born or naturalized, and protestant with ancestral roots from Northern and Western Europe. By 1875, the compositions of the Bronx contained diverse white ethnics, "old-stock Americans" composed of British, Germans, and some Irish. Only the Melrose area had any African American institutions. Social and community building between Morrisania and Mott Haven featured baseball leagues between the so-called old-stock Americans. Additionally, the Germans and Irish had their own social institutions like beer gardens and

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[5] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)
[6] Gonzales, *The Bronx.*

saloons. These lower Westchester villages contained separate sociocultural and ethnic enclaves served as beacons to downtown compatriots; there were space and extant communities to move to away from the city. As a result, the southern and western portions of Westchester County provided separate and segregated communities removed from the heterogeneity of urban life. Preceding the waves of New Immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe from 1890-1920 that helped solidify the Bronx's urban development, the Bronx represented a suburban retreat from Manhattan, or at the very least represented the potential for a retreat to a cultural and racially homogenous place.

As Bronx communities expanded, politicians saw the potential to create a new voter base, a possibility that shaped Bronx politics into the 1950s. By the late 19th century, New York City politicians were worried about keeping their political base and maintaining the city coffers. At the same moment, residents of growing communities dotting the southwest and western Bronx clamored for annexation by New York City because that meant an extension of municipal services. Although protests against annexation came from some quarters of the Bronx, annexation was a relatively smooth process. Annexation came to the portion of present day Bronx west of the Bronx River—Morrisania, West Farms, and Kingsbridge—in 1874, establishing the 23rd and 24th wards of New York City. Only this section of the Bronx was annexed because the land west of the Bronx River had population and the train lines. The rest of the Bronx—Westchester and parts of Eastchester and Pelham— would not be annexed until 1895, and this portion was added to the 24th ward. Both sections, east and west of the Bronx River, became present day Bronx

after New York City consolidated the five boroughs in 1898.[7] Although the

Bronx was brought under the city's purview through annexation and

consolidation, the organization of the Bronx's space was still in question.

Annexation and consolidation meant that the Bronx's future development

would be governed by municipal planning, dependent on transportation and

roads.

By the turn of the 20th century, the further expansion of train lines

throughout the Bronx sketched its future. Most importantly, the expansion of

elevated trains, and then the subway by 1905, determined the organization of

Bronx space. In addition to connecting individuals in the Bronx and Manhattan,

the increased ease of transportation brought real estate developers and

speculators to the Bronx. Before any type of development could take place,

real estate industry needs would organize the land. Bronx real estate

development took its cues from downtown Manhattan. Between 1879 and

1890, the creation of a comprehensive plan of development for the Bronx

foundered on the issue of neighborhood and road layouts. On one side were

adherents of Frederick L. Olmstead's Bronx plan to develop the Bronx with

irregular and curvilinear roads creating suburban neighborhoods and tracts of

land. Opposed were proponents for continuing Manhattan's gridiron plan,

arguing it was necessary for urban economic and physical growth.[8] In 1890,

Louis J. Heintz, the first Street Commissioner in the Bronx, oversaw the

adoption and expansion of the gridiron plan. Which eventually produced

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[7] Gonzales, *The Bronx.*
[8] Ibid.

population-dense city blocks, and the creation of "superblocks" for public

housing projects in the 1940s through the 1970s.[9]

Although the gridiron plan allowed for maximum and efficient

development of urban spaces, most expansion was commercial; finding

housing for city residents presented problems throughout the first half of the

20th century. Attempting to address this shortage, modern public housing

emerged in the 1930s as low-density, low-rise attempts to maintain the

neighborhood fabric of the city. After Congress passed the 1934 National

Housing Act and New York State established a Municipal Housing Authorities

Law, Mayor LaGuardia began construction of New York's initial, modern public

housing project, the First Houses, on the Lower East Side's Third Street and

Avenue A. The First Houses project attempted a modest remodeling of

existing tenements: the redesign razed every third tenement, while the

remaining apartments were renovated. Deemed a modest success, the First

Houses demonstrated that government intervention into public housing could

be a success. Emboldened by the First Houses, the city quickly undertook

more ambitious projects. The Harlem River Houses and the Williamsburg

Houses were constructed on 25-acre sites. Each project was built by the

WPA and subsequently leased back to New York's Housing Authority,

signaling increased municipal, state and federal involvement in public housing.

By 1937, New York City's attempt to eliminate slums was adopted as a

national policy through the US Housing Act, which provided subsidies to local

authorities to build and operate housing for low-income families. As a result,

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[9] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projetcs: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Zipp discusses the importance of the "superblock" in *Manhattan Projects*. The superblock allowed for large sections of the city grid to be razed and cleared for the construction of housing projects.

the New York state legislature enacted the Public Housing Law of 1939, which established the legislative groundwork for the first state-aided public housing program in the country.[10]

Beginning in the mid-19th century, the buildings and public works of the Bronx illustrated the tensions between suburban and urban. The Bronx's development demonstrated all the hallmarks of Kenneth Jackson's history of suburbanization: transportation revolution; the development of suburbs to escape slums; the fight for affordable homes for working-class families; and the transformation of suburbs into neighborhoods through annexation.[11] The Bronx developed as a suburban retreat, but annexation brought the area under municipal control, introducing expectations of public services and public works. The history of the Bronx's built environment demonstrated that suburban and urban developments shared the same spaces and places. As race increasingly became the way to define and organize the Bronx, the public and private cant of suburban and urban development was revealed as pockets of the borough lost private housing stock and municipal services due, in part, to white flight. Hip-hop's emergence in the Bronx is the cultural record of increasing tension between public and private housing modalities. The commitment to, and retreat from, public responsibilities for housing throughout the Bronx and in particular the Bronx River Houses, is the central story of hip-hop's emergence.

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[10] ill Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of an American City* (NY: Fordham University Press, 2002)
[11] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier.*

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Geographies of the Bronx

In a 1971 series of articles for *The New York Post,* titled, "The Bronx:

Forgotten Borough?" Peter Freiberg fought against the increasing and

pervasive "narrative of decline" broadcast by media images of the increasingly

abandoned South Bronx. Covering housing, education, crime, and racial

tensions, Freiberg explored concerns about urban America that were at the

forefront of American public thought during the 1960s and 1970s.[12] For

example, Pete Hamill, Freiberg's *Post* colleague, devoted his columns to New

York's mounting urban crisis: tours of Bronx and Brooklyn neighborhoods,

exposés on inadequate housing, investigations of New York's poverty levels,

and castigating the city's "welfare hotel" policies.[13] Media coverage on the state

of urban America resulted from serious occurrences, from uprisings in Harlem,

Detroit, and St. Louis to Los Angeles. Not only were people involved in very

real battles in cities over a variety of issues, but also these uprisings were

nationally transmitted through a variety of media. According to outside

observers, the areas of the Bronx south of Fordham Road simply disappeared

by the mid-1970s. Local and national representations, ranging from movies,

sporting events, and journalistic coverage focusing on urban decline, created

the "South Bronx" ultimately erasing the residents who lived there.

Although the erasure of the Bronx occurred in the mid-1970s, the

process began several decades earlier. Prior to 1948, the *Bronx Home News*

was the borough's leading newspaper. When *The New York Post* bought the

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[12] Peter Freiberg, *The New York Post.* Freiberg's series of articles ran the week of December 5-9, 1971.
[13] Pete Hamill, *The New York Post:* March 9, 1970, "Visit to Purgatory I"; March, 10, 1970, "Visit to Purgatory (II)"; March 24, 1970 "The New York Disaster (II)"; Monday, January 25, 1971, "The Welfare Hotels."

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Bronx Home News in 1948 it attempted a hybrid paper with the masthead *The*

New York Post-Bronx Home News, which was replaced in 1949 with a local

Bronx edition of the *Post* containing a few pages of Bronx news.[14] In effect,

the Bronx was being simultaneously reported and ignored, as a vital link to

local news disappeared. Although Bronx native Freiberg's articles were

serious acts of journalism that honored neighborhood life in the Bronx, local

Bronx news increasingly disappeared through media consolidation. The

purchase and subsequent shuttering of the *Bronx Home News* occurred at the

same moment of an influx of African American and Puerto Rican Bronx

migrants. In 1950, the Bronx was almost two-thirds white; by 1960 two thirds

of the Bronx was either African American or Hispanic.[15] By the early 1950s,

white anxiety already anticipated their neighborhoods becoming slums, and the

influx of African Americans and Puerto Ricans exacerbated these tensions. In

addition, between 1960 and 1970 the youth population in the Bronx increased

63%.[16] White youth gangs patrolled the edges of neighborhoods against racial

encroachments. Increasingly, non-white migration further fueled white out-

migration.

By 1970, images of decline and the threat of arson in the Bronx were

understood within an absolute geographical context: the entire Bronx was

perceived as a tinderbox. Beginning in 1969, arson became a way of life

throughout the South Bronx, and the fear of arson gripped the edges of the

neighborhoods along the boundaries of Fordham road and the Bronx River.

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[14] Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising.* Jonnes included this history in Chapter Nine, "There Was no Standing Still."
[15] Gonzales, *The Bronx.*
[16] Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising.* In 1960, the youth population was 314,100; In 1970, the youth population was 512,807.

Between 1969 and 1981, when the fires finally stopped, the Bronx endured an average of 12,000 fires a year, engulfing 5,000 apartment buildings and a total of 100,000 units.[17] Vast tracts of rubble and decay surrounded the few remaining functional neighborhoods and buildings. The arson epidemic provided further visual evidence that the Bronx was becoming the home to isolated and neglected individuals and communities.

The arson epidemic took place amidst New York City's financial crisis of the 1970s. Among the various issues involved in the city's insolvency were the slash-and-burn budget strategies that gutted public services. Chief among these cuts were a reduction in personnel in Fire and Police departments. The authorities charged with investigating suspicious fires, the Fire Marshalls, were understaffed, ignored, and faced both official and unofficial hostility. Officially, arson was ignored and denied. As early as 1970, the statistics documented an impending arson catastrophe in the Bronx, but this was ignored. The arson statistics for the South Bronx in the 1970s are staggering. During the decade, the South Bronx lost ten square blocks (five thousand housing units) to arson each year.[18] False calls to the fire department further stretched the scant manpower resources of the firefighters tasked to save the South Bronx. However, in the wake of the rollback of other public services such as police and paramedics, residents had few options but to call the fire department. One fireman who served during the epidemic noted, "there were twelve hundred false alarms [at the notorious Charlotte Street in the South Bronx] in one year. You know how many arrests we made? Zero." Further implying official

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[17] Jonnes, 7-8.
[18] Jonathan Mahler, *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bronx is Burning: 1977, Baseball, Politics, and the Battle for the Soul of a City* (New York: Picador, 2005),4.

complicity, this same fireman argued, "The fire commissioner, the chiefs of department, they just wished this place would go away, that they could sell it to Westchester County and get rid of it."[19] Not only was the arson ignored, but also a rollback of public services continued in the Bronx and New York throughout the 1970s demonstrating that the space of the South Bronx was deemed a place inhabited by poor and non-white folks—the so-called savages—who should be excluded from the resources of the city.[20]

The official silence was chilling. The combination of omnipresent arson and official neglect worked to destabilize neighborhoods and neuter local critiques. According to many residents at this time, "we have our suitcases packed. This week is the fire." South Bronx elementary school teachers would receive this impending news from their elementary school students, and know that these children would soon stop coming to class.[21] Rita Fecher's documentary, *Flyin' Cut Sleeves*, shows an assignment by some 1970s South Bronx elementary school kids who were told to draw a picture of their families and homes. Every picture included fire or smoke; smoke and flames were as much a part of their home experience as parents, siblings, and relatives.[22]

Inextricable from the arson epidemic was the deterioration of housing. Permanent neglect and financial manipulation became standard business practices for many landlords throughout the South Bronx. One reason for the housing dilapidation was the constant complaint by landlords that New York's rent control—and by extension public, or government regulation—eliminated

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[19] Jonnes, 232.

[20] Mahler, *The Bronx is Burning.* Between 1974 and 1975, there was a substantial layoff of garbage men, police, and fire services; twenty-six of New York's firehouses were closed.

[21] Jonnes, 233.

[22] *Flyin' Cut Sleeves,* directed by Rita Schecter and Henry Chalfant (1993; New York: MVD Visual, 2009) DVD.

any profit from being a landlord. This argument was applied *ad nauseam* by landlords to refuse any and all building maintenance. In the late 1970s, longtime Bronx resident Julia Del Valle refuted the claims of landlords that rent control was the problem: "most of the blame should go to the landlords. They've never made an effort to keep buildings up. The landlords only worry about keeping their own pockets full."[23]

Whether through designed neighborhood decline or delinquent landlords, multiple strategies to fleece the city and building residents were employed. Gelvin Stevenson provides a look at landlords' strategies to destroy a building. At the same time that the Roosevelt Garden owners were flipping the property between family members, they stopped all but basic property upkeep. Once again, the policy of rent control was offered up as the culprit, not landlord neglect. However, after June 30, 1971, the New York State legislature began to phase out rent control by enacting total vacancy decontrol, meaning that a rent-controlled apartment was de-controlled whenever it became vacant, allowing the landlord to immediately raise rents. The statistics concerning rental rates demonstrated the falsity of the claims that rent control was the cause of housing decline. Between 1943 and 1973 rents in Roosevelt Gardens increased by 80 percent. From 1973 to 1975, the rents rose almost 90 percent.[24] Insurance companies were also complicit in the destruction of Bronx housing. Landlords could insure up to the value of their mortgages, so in the case of Roosevelt Gardens, the owners continued to sell the property

[23] Julia Del Valle, interviewed by Martia Goodson with Carmen Rivera as Spanish Interviewer in *Devastation/Reconstruction: The South Bronx* ed Robert Jensen (Bronx, NY: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1979).

[24] Gelvin Stevension, "The Abandonment of Roosevelt Gardens" in *Devastation/Reconstruction: The South Bronx* ed Robert Jensen (Bronx, NY: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1979).

multiple times within the family through umbrella corporations increasingly raising the mortgage value, which increased their insurance coverage—and the value of their arson insurance payment.[25]

Coincident with the manipulation of rents and the rent control, the owners of Roosevelt Gardens also took advantage of New York City's Human Resource Agency (HRA) relocation policy. Because of the of the city's housing crunch in the 1960s and 1970s, the HRA paid a finder's fee to landlords who accepted welfare tenants, as well as relocation fees to landlords that took clients through the Department of Relocation. Landlords could earn close to 100 dollars a room through arrangements with city government. In the wake of dramatic rent-hikes following the 1971 vacancy de-control and the profitable arrangements with the city, landlords were empowered to simultaneously price out working and middle class renters and reap large profits as clients of the city. During this transition of residents in the early 1970s, maintaining the buildings was not a priority. In fact, the experiences of Roosevelt Gardens suggested that property dilapidation was the point. With more money available from city agencies than private renters, there was little motivation to maintain building facilities. Furthermore, the new residents dependent on city aid were the most vulnerable members of the city—most often lacking the resources to advocate for decent housing and visibility to advocate for decent housing.

Although landlords deserved much of the blame for the collapse of large swaths of the Bronx and concomitant arson epidemic, a confederation of misguided and malfeasant programs and people helped with the material decline of the Bronx. The connections between the financial and real estate

[25] Stevenson, "The Abandonment of Roosevelt Gardens"

(FIRE) industries played a pivotal role during this time period. As an occupied

building faced decline, several important interlocking processes took place.

First, demand for apartments in the building lowered for various reasons:

rental prices spiked; the neighborhood deteriorated; building maintenance

lagged. At the same time financial institutions "redlined" the neighborhood,

making loans for maintenance and improvement of property all but impossible

to obtain.[26] Building code violations began to stack up, partially occupied

buildings were vandalized, and screening policies for potential residents

disappeared. As a result, stable households moved, and the building was

either sold to a "finisher" or a "finisher" was employed to wring every last cent

from the building. The finisher aggressively collected rent from the remaining

tenants, willfully stripped salvageable and saleable fixtures and infrastructure

and set the building on fire for the insurance payout. If a building escaped

arson, property taxes were ignored, which served as a "loan" from the city until

city officials took control of the property. At this point, rehabilitation loans were

needed to restore the buildings, but they were, of course, impossible to get.

Finally, if arson failed to claim the building, then pressure from the surrounding

community and the Fire Department lobbied the city to demolish the building.

After demolition, the site remained a rubble-strewn lot, with little prospect of

future development.[27] Based on this process of abandonment and destruction,

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[26]Of important note concerning the tension between suburban and urban material history
and cultural production of the Bronx, FHA mortgage loans were denied to homeowners
and potential homeowners in the South Bronx for one to four-family houses. In fact, the
most notorious portions of the South Bronx, including Charlotte Street, would not begin to
revive until public and private partnerships were created to develop single-family homes
undertaken under Mayor Ed Koch in the 1980s.
[27] Donald G. Sullivan, "The Process of Abandonment" in *Devastation/Resurrection* ed.
Robert Jensen.

it took the efforts, or lack thereof, of many groups and entities to bring down private housing in the Bronx.

Returning to the arson epidemic, it is instructive to investigate the residents' actions during this period. Previously, I examined the impetus for landlords to ignore their responsibilities and either torch their buildings themselves, or create an environment conducive to arson. However, residents also participated in acts of arson. In fact, officials blamed the residents of the South Bronx. Residents often torched their own buildings because it provided an escape from substandard housing and offered the potential to find better housing. For many individuals trapped in substandard housing, arson meant the opportunity to move into public housing. During the late 1950s and 1960s, slum clearance throughout portions of Harlem and East Harlem further limited the availability of de facto segregated housing stock for non-whites in New York.[28] Trapped in dilapidated housing with few options except public housing, arson provided a desperate measure of control over living situations. The city's bureaucratic apparatus reinforced the logic of arson as good housekeeping. Welfare and aid centers were quick to point out that the only way to gain priority status for public housing was through the loss of housing due to arson. A further incentive was created by the welfare department's policy to pay two or three thousand dollars to a family in compensation for destroyed belongings.[29]

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[28] Joel Schwartz, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and the Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 1993); See *Part IV: East Harlem* in Samuel Zipp's *Manhattan Projects* for a good history on slum clearance and urban renewal in East Harlem, tracing the disruption of African American and Puerto Rican communities caused by changes to the built environment.
[29] Jonnes, 232.

Arson and landlord neglect demonstrated the importance of using the

Bronx's built environment to define and re-define a sense of identity and home.

In the wake of the mundane, practical, and imperious public and private

actions that left large swaths of Bronxites with precarious housing options,

public housing would emerge as reliable option. Public housing throughout the

Bronx, and specifically the Bronx River Houses, would provide the generation

that created hip-hop a material and cultural home. The Bronx River Houses

served as an originating site for new acts of re-organizing the spaces of the

Bronx as home.

History of Bronx River Houses

Central to the dynamic of the Bronx's material history and cultural

production is the notion of home. Underlying much of the history of the Bronx

are attempted definitions and productions of literal and figurative homes. From

the outset groups made and remade the built environment to create home.

Public and private notions of home intermixed through people's everyday

actions, and that happened nowhere as frequently, or as urgently, than in the

communities and campuses of public housing.

Most important to my discussion of the Bronx River Houses and the

public and private imaginings of space and place is the work of scholars who

have detailed the effect that race and class has had on creating neighborhoods

and modes of living. These scholars have all argued that "whiteness" creates

structural and systemic inequality for non-white individuals and communities.[30]

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[30] David Roediger's *Working Toward Whitness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2006) follows how America's New Immigrants became "white" through jobs and homeownership. David Fruend, *Colored Property: State Policy and White*

Public interests have been equally invested in defining and discerning the ways in which people live. Documenting this assertion, the Department of Social and Community Services released *Building The New Urban Community—for the XXth Century,* in 1971, describing NYCHA's attempts to render public housing residents knowable. The report argued that something decidedly different from previous urban generations was taking place. It offered an opportunity to show what public housing was doing well through progressive engagement with changing, and challenging, patterns of urban living. However, coincident with this emerging generation was an unexpected growth of social problems such as "educational inadequacies and teen-age school drop-outs, mental tensions and parent discord." Importantly, the Department of Social and Community Services tied these phenomena with "industrialization and the decline of cities and metropolitan areas."[31] Representing the work of NYCHA after the construction of Stuyvesant Town and Lincoln Center, the document acknowledged that public housing is not due to "natural" forces that shaped traditional neighborhoods. Rather, the document argued that urban renewal disrupted and destroyed long-standing neighborhoods creating "enclaves" of the "underprivileged."[32]

Racial Politics in Suburban America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). Fruend details the history of deploying the language of markets, real estate, and citizenship to effect racial hierarchies in America's expanding suburbs. George Lipsitz *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006) demonstrated how "whiteness" relies on structural advantages in public policy for the accumulation of wealth while acting as an obstacle for all those deemed "not white."

[31] NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.

[32] NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.

NYCHA and public housing turned public space into private place along an axis of race. As *Building the New Urban Community—for the XXth Century* concluded "public housing can be envisioned . . . in many directions of individual, family, and community life, an adventure in social engineering."[33] This, then, was the view of New York City's public housing; the residents and the buildings were the same side of the same coin. Public housing and its residents represented each other as predominantly poor and non-white, according to official observers by the 1970s. As NYCHA wondered, "does the management controls inherent in Public Housing differentiate the social responsibilities and attitude of the tenants from persons living in other forms of housing?"[34] Based on the policies and procedures conflating race with space and place, the answer was yes. Public housing officials, knowing this constituency was poor and non-white, believed them to differ from the white public housing residents of previous years.

Throughout city agencies during the 1960s, raced discursive practices impacted public housing services. NYCHA battled with the Board of Education Community Services concerning summer programs for public housing youth. In the summer of 1961, the Edenwald project in the Bronx had 1,200 teenagers, ages 13-18, with 45% white and 2,000 children, ages 7-12, 38% white. This high population of teenagers and children warranted a summer program. However, the Board of Education Community Services labeled such public housing projects with increasing numbers of non-white residents as "problem communities." The label caused staffing issues for these programs. The

[33]NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.
[34] NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.

"problem communities" led to a Board of Education requirement that one licensed teacher must be in every room, thereby limiting the use of volunteers for program activities. Because the guidelines were so stringent, NYCHA concluded that only "normal" neighborhoods could effectively take advantage of the Board of Education's guidelines. In the case of the Edenwald Community center, NYCHA's agent recognized the need for summer teenage programs ignored by the Board of Education. In fact, the Board of Education decided against providing a summer program. Based on the archive, it seems that the Board of Education's decision developed from a combination of a bureaucratic turf war and the reaction to neighborhood in the midst of a demographic change. According to NYCHA's investigation of the Edenwald Community Center and the Board of Education's refusal to provide a summer program, NYCHA recorded that the Edenwald program had a poor reputation due to crime in the area and the ineffectual staff. NYCHA provided demographic statistics that upheld the raced interpretation of the Board of Education's policy, and explicitly faulted the leadership at Edenwald as being the chief culprit in the center's reputation and lack of service to its residents.[35]

The decline in white teenagers and children demonstrated the demographic changes that were sweeping throughout the areas south of Fordham Road, encompassing the neighborhoods of Hunts Point, Melrose, and Morrisania: the South Bronx. Between 1950 and 1960, the Bronx quickly transformed from a 2/3 white population in 1950 to a 2/3 African American and

[35] NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 09. NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.

Hispanic population.[36] Furthermore, these changes, coupled with the Board of Education's denial of services, and the historical decline in public investment in resources and programs in Bronx public housing demonstrated that race drove the public and municipal image of these areas. Although NYCHA recognized and commented on the fact that the Board of Education was at fault concerning its lack of services for residents and the abysmal reputation of summer programming, staff, and resources, NYCHA appraised the situation in terms of race. NYCHA blamed the predominance of African American children in the project and at the community center, and the fact that 3 or the 4 staff members were African American, which represented, to NYCHA, that African Americans were threatening to take over the community center as well as the housing project.[37]

Conversely, *Building the New Urban Community—for the XXth Century* provided an opportunity to consider the things that public housing was doing well. This document presented some interesting insights into NYCHA's view of public housing and its institutional role in the late 1960s. The document found NYCHA wondering "what forms of association can replace the traditional bonds of community which are being increasingly weakened as the new community takes shape and the old and more stable neighborhoods disappear?" The root of this dislocation was deindustrialization forcing those who were mobile to leave, and concentrating "minorities" and the "less-privileged" groups in the city center suffering from "high cost social needs and low income resources." Furthermore, the structural changes wrought by

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[36]Gonzales, *The Bronx.*
[37] NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 09. NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.

deindustrialization had stripped the "indigenous leadership" from traditional

neighborhoods.[38]

While the story of the Bronx, and that of the Bronx River Houses, fit the

archetypical narrative of postwar urban decline, the city and borough also

embodied a unique aspect of the postwar urban crisis based on the level of

government intervention attempting to staunch the crisis, including

disappearing housing stock. The fact that much of the Bronx's crisis was

precipitated by the loss of rental housing meant that the Bronx was a

significant part of the urban crisis.[39] Fundamentally, these issues directly

relate to Lefebvre's formulation of social space. Lefebvre wrote:

> Social space contains—and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to –
> (1) the *social relations of reproduction,* i.e. the bio-physiological relations
> between the sexes and between age groups, along with the specific
> organization of the family; and (2) the *relations of production,* i.e. the
> division of labour and its organization in the form of hierarchical social
> functions.[40]

Following Lefebvre, housing is the junction point for the social relations of

reproduction and the relations of production. Lefebvre argued that social space

"must discriminate between the two—not always successfully, be it said—in

order to 'localize' them."[41] The need to differentiate the two marked social

space as a space fraught with definitional anxiety and tension. The anxious

efforts to differentiate between these relations of production and reproduction

were embedded in the borough's cultural and material history: will the Bronx be

suburban or urban, and who will live there? This anxiety over definitions of

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[38] NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.
[39] Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising.*
[40] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 32.
[41] *Ibid.*

social space in order to localize—to render into place—creates the perfect social and cultural milieu for the creation of hip-hop in the Bronx. By the 1970s, the emergence of hip-hop in the Bronx's social spaces represented youthful attempts to differentiate and localize social space.

The initial conception of the Bronx River Houses corresponds, in many important ways, with Samuel Zipp's "built history" of New York public housing. Zipp's history argues that postwar public housing and urban renewal in New York—including The United Nations, Stuyvesant Town, Lincoln Center, and East Harlem—materially articulated the ideologies of the Cold War bent on modernizing and rationalizing the city through capitalist urban renewal and public housing. As public housing and urban renewal increasingly became popular strategies to house a large number of people throughout the 1950s, housing became though of as another mass-cultural product.

Opened on February 28th, 1951 and sitting a 13.94-acre site, bounded by Bronx River Avenue, E. 174th Street, and Harrod Avenue, The Bronx River Houses consisted of nine, 14-story buildings with 1,247 apartments and approximately 3,025 residents. The financing and constructing the Bronx River Houses spanned the 1940s. The initial loan was contracted in 1940, along with monies for Fort Greene in Brooklyn, known as project NYS-1(39). However, World War II interrupted the Bronx River Houses' construction, which did not begin again until 1948, and which continued through 1951.[42] On March

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[42] NYCHA Archives, Series 08, Box 0085c3, Folder 02. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York. The initial loan in 1940 was contracted for both Fort Greene and the Bronx River Houses, which is why NYCHA notated the project NYS 1(39). NYS-1 represented Fort Green, and NYS-39 represented the Bronx River Houses. The purchasing price for the Bronx River Houses site was $649,156, and the cost of re-location of tenants was $3,248.The total cost of site acquisition was $766,623.

29th, 1962, NYCHA officially adopted a contract of indebtedness, resolution 62-7-534, to build the Bronx River Houses Additions, NYS-133.[43] The Bronx River Houses Additions were senior-only housing, representing the first such site in the Bronx and the fifth in New York. All of these units were located in the Buildings 11 and 12, located south, across East 174th street. Completed February 8th, 1966, The Bronx River Houses Additions are located south across E. 174th at Manor Ave and Morrison Avenue.

By 1973, NYCHA's relatively detailed tenant records demonstrated the authority's increasing concern with documenting and managing demographic change in the community. In November 1973, the resident category "other" was replaced with "Puerto Rican," and the Housing Authority began tracking the use of public assistance by tenants.[44] The Puerto Rican presence in the Bronx River Houses reflected the overall Puerto Rican population growth. Throughout the 20th century, New York experienced a sizable Puerto Rican immigration. After the creation of Puerto Rican citizenship under the Jones Shafroth Act of 1917, immigration furthered increased. As urban renewal and slum clearance effected Spanish and East Harlem after World War II, Puerto Ricans increasingly traveled to the states. By 1950, almost 160,000 African Americans and Puerto Ricans lived in the Bronx.[45] Between 1940 and 1970, New York's Puerto Rican population rose from 61,000, less than one percent of the population, to 817,712, more than ten percent of the total city

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The total cost of all structures, equipment and improvements for the Bronx River Houses was $12,741,585 with a total of 5,968 rental rooms and 1,246 dwelling units.

[43] NYCHA Archives, Series 04, Box 0080C1, Folder 03. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.

[44] NYCHA archives, Series 08, Box 0063CF, Folder 05. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.

[45] Gonzales, *The Bronx*. By 2000, the Bronx was 48% Hispanic, 31.2% African American, and 14.5% White.

population.[46] All of these demographic numbers make NYCHA's delay in

creating a Puerto Rican category difficult to understand, until we place we view

it in context with creation of the "South Bronx." The change in category name

suggested the expansion of the racial geography of the South Bronx; the

change in record keeping appears tied to the community's transforming racial

demographics, and NYCHA's official recognition of population change.

These records documented a recognizable shift in resident

demographics at the Bronx River Houses beginning in the mid-1960s. By 1973,

NYCHA recorded 109 newly occupied units and 116 vacated units, showing a

net loss of white tenants and a net increase of African American, and what was

recorded as "Other," tenants for 1973. This represented a turnover of about

10% of units. Of this 10%, approximately 40% were white; no new white

tenants moved in of the remaining 60%. Of these units, white residents newly

occupied 2 units, and white tenants vacated 39. The two white tenants that

moved into the Bronx River Houses in 1973 were seniors, moving into Bronx

River Houses Additions. Additionally, NYCHA tracked the reasons tenants

gave for moving. The three most common reasons—excluding death—for

white tenants moving out of the Bronx River Houses were moving to private

homes, moving in with relatives, and moving to nursing homes, and admitting

that the secondary-related issue was the Houses' "deterioration."[47] There was

also a number of deaths, almost all of which were age related.[48] For tenants

moving out identified as non-white, the reasons for moving were similar, except

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[46] Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. *The Encyclopedia of New York: Second Edition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 1059.
[47] NYCHA archives, "Untitled Stuff/Press Clippings" Folder. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.
[48] According to Bronx historians such as Marshall Berman, Jill Jonnes, Lloyd Ultan, Evelyn Gonzales, Jonathan Mahler, among others, this is the "death" of the Bronx.

that there was a greater number of Bronx River Houses non-white tenants that either moved to larger apartments within the housing development, or moved to other housing projects operated by NYCHA.

In 1973, the majority of responses explaining the decision to move into the Bronx River Houses were "hardship" and "substandard," indicating that the new residents were predominantly economically disadvantaged and viewed their previous housing as inferior to the Bronx River Houses. Also, NYCHA documented a third category consisting of new tenants evicted from private housing further demonstrating the increasing economic poverty and limited housing options of new tenants. Departing white tenants responded that the Bronx River Houses facilities had "deteriorated," and "services had declined." Furthermore, the majority of the white residents moved out of the NYCHA housing system entirely.[49] However, everyone who lived in the Bronx River Houses shared the same economic profile. Resident eligibility was tied to income, and if a tenant's income exceeded the maximum limit, they no longer qualified to live in the Bronx River Houses.[50]

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s the Bronx suffered through an increase of substandard and vanishing housing stock. For many in the Bronx River Houses represented safe, relatively well-maintained housing in the midst of this housing crisis. The question remains, then, why did three

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[49] NYCHA Archives, "Unitled Stuff/Press Clippings" Folder. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.
[50] NYCHA Archives, Series 04, Box 0080C3, Folder 07. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York. Income Limits for Continued Occupancy for State-Aided Projects opened before 9/1/1959 (Schedule D):1, 1 ½, 2 or 2 ½ Rooms (1 person)---5,292 (maximum limits for cont'd occupancy)2 or 2 ½ rooms (2 persons)—6,2643 or 3 ½ (for 2 persons) --- "4 or 4 ½ rooms   70205 or 5 ½ rooms   7500 6 rooms or more   7800
Schedule D-1: same as above, but for projects opened after 9/1/1959:2 or 2 1/2---5,600; 3 or 3 ½: ----7,000; 4 or 4 ½ -----8,000; 5 or 5 ½ ---- 8,500; 6 or 6 ½ ---- "7 or 7 ½ ---- "

demographics of new and past residents who were economically identical have different views of decent housing during a housing crisis?   Based on the responses from both white and non-white prospective and past tenants, and their relocation plans, racial identification mediated the ways that these individuals viewed and understood the Bronx River Houses.[51]

Locating A Community

The residents of Bronx River represented multiple trajectories of migration: the Second Great Migration; Caribbean and AfroCaribbean migration; and white and white-ethnic out-migration. Locating the Bronx River community in terms of demographic change, then, the Bronx River Community from the 1950s through the 1980s was a locus of the convergence of these multiple migrations, representing a crossroads for these related patterns of migration. Whether viewed as endpoint or gateway to improved housing, Bronx River has always been a unique place within the Bronx.

Throughout the First and Second Great Migration, New York, and more specifically, Harlem received an influx of African American migration from the South.[52] Beginning in the late 1940s, the Bronx and Bronx River Houses offered the possibility for larger and better homes for people tired of the overcrowded and often crumbling conditions of life in Harlem. One of the first residents of Bronx River Houses, Catherine Stokes, provided an important

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[51] NYCHA Archives, "Untitled Stuff/Press Clippings" Folder. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.
[52] This was true of cities throughout the Midwest and the Northeast. There is a substantial body of literature tracing the movement and impact of the Great Migration, including Davarian Baldwin's *Chicago's New Negroes,* Kimberly Phillips' *AlabamaNorth,* James N. Gregory's *Southern Diaspora,* Thomas Sugrue's two works, *Sweet Land of Liberty* and *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* for example, trace the histories and experiences of African Americans travelling from the south to the North.

illustration of place that Bronx River occupied in the Bronx. She moved to

Harlem from Alabama because her sister had already relocated to Harlem.

Mrs. Stokes and her sister soon relocated to private housing on 895 Stafford

Street in the Bronx. However, Mrs. Stokes would soon need more room.

Waiting for the Bronx River Houses to open in 1950, Catherine and her

husband were living in NYCHA's emergency housing Quonset huts for

veterans and their families on Lafayette Avenue. As Catherine said, "the huts

was mostly veterans that was living there. Castle Hill, Canarsie, and Bronx

River had the huts.... What they called emergency housing."[53]

In addition to initially restricting the Bronx River Houses for veterans

and their families, behavior regulations also point to the fact that NYCHA

officials viewed Bronx River as a community to both promote and maintain a

middle-class vision of community, complete with a postwar pursuit of upward

mobility. Indeed, this was also the narrative that Bronx River Houses residents

used to interpret their lives, too. Evelyn McPhatter moved to Bronx River in

1966, and she recalled the various fines and rules NYCHA had in place.

Evelyn described the regulations as "stricter then [in the 1960s]," including

regulations such as not going "in the community center unless you were going

in to see someone." Additionally, there were fines for offenses that included

bike riding on campus grounds and tree climbing.[54]   Adele Hodge, a forty-six

year resident of Bronx River Houses, moved to Bronx River from Harlem in

1968. Prior to moving to Harlem, she migrated to Harlem with her family from

Charleston, South Carolina when she was fourteen. For Adele, moving to

[53] Catherine Stokes, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Community Center, 6/25/12, Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

[54] Evelyn McPhatter, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses, 6/14/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

Bronx River represented an opportunity to improve the living conditions for her

family. Living on 116th Street in 1968, Adele described Harlem as replete with

"vacant buildings, abandoned buildings. The landlords weren't taking care of

the buildings."[55] As a young mother, Adele and her family were eligible to

move into Bronx River because her husband was a veteran. Similar to the

experiences of many of the other residents of the Bronx River Houses in the

1950s and 1960s, the housing development was reserved for two parent

families with a husband that had served in the military. Again, this fact is

important because it demonstrated the ways in which NYCHA regulations

attempted to mold the community of the Bronx River Houses in the fashion of

the numbers and types of residents.

Narratives of Isolation

By the early 1970s, community outsiders viewed the Bronx River

Houses as an isolated, and isolating, location, a site where isolation hurt those

residents most often neglected or unwanted by the institutions of power. In

addition to supposed sociocultural isolation, the geography of the Bronx itself

seemed to isolate the Bronx River Houses. Looking at a map of the Bronx, the

Bronx River Houses are bordered by the Cross Bronx Expressway to the North

and East and the Bronx River to the North West and West. However, this

sense of isolation resulted from a lack of insider knowledge. Travelling to the

Bronx River Houses was (and remains) relatively easy, if you knew the public

transportation routes or used the Cross Bronx Expressway for access to

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[55] Adele Hodge, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses, 1/21/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

locations in the Bronx. Importantly, you had to know how to travel like a Bronxite.

The construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway stands as the most singular demonstration of municipal disregard for the borough. The dislocation and decimation to Bronx neighborhoods and rhythms of life was tremendous. As early as 1929, Robert Moses and the New York Regional Plan Association developed a reconstruction plan in hopes of creating Manhattan as center of wealth circled by highways and expressways leading directly to the suburbs.[56] Officially begun in 1959 and cutting entirely through the Bronx, the Cross-Bronx expressway linked suburban white-flight populations with their city-center jobs. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s an estimated 60,000 Bronx homes were razed. Robert Moses used his Title 1 slum clearance program to designate these predominantly blue-collar housing units 'slums,' which forced the relocation of 170,000 people.[57] The Cross Bronx Expressway marked a turning point in the disruptive fragmentation of neighborhoods initiated in preceding decades by a network of highways designed to facilitate travel through rather than within the borough—importantly, this reinforces the tropes

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[56] Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 11.

[57] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 31. Underscoring the human disruption, Rose writes that "these 'slums' were in fact densely populated, stable neighborhoods, comprised mostly of working- and lower-middle class Jews, but they also contained solid Italian, German, Irish and black neighborhoods." Once these families were relocated to resource-deprived public housing, those families and individuals that could, moved; because of de facto housing segregation, African American families could hardly ever move, keeping the Bronx overcrowded and primarily African American in the 1970s.

of flow, layering, and disruption noted within African American music and culture, and the emergence of hip-hop in the Bronx.[58]

Bronx River and the Built Environment

The built environment of the Bronx River Houses impacted the residents, the community, and the history of hip-hop by facilitating a sense of community within the housing development campus and surrounding neighborhoods. In fact, the Bronx River Houses predated much of the building in the neighborhoods surrounding the campus, suggesting that the Bronx River Houses served as a commercial, cultural, and social anchor in the neighborhood. Throughout their personal stories and testimonials, current and former residents described Bronx River Houses as a community unto itself, but never isolated. The relationship between neighbors and the community was never only discussed in terms of the people but always as the relationship between neighbors and the buildings. For the people who called Bronx River home, the built environment was just as important to facilitating a sense of community and neighborliness as the folks living in the buildings. When asked about travelling around Soundview and the neighborhoods surrounding the Bronx River Houses, Adele Hodges commented, "We go to Westchester, we know everybody. . . . We know everything. . . . We have eleven buildings and we know. It's a blessing."[59] The eleven buildings form part of Adele Hodges'

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[58] The published companion book, *Urban Mythologies: The Bronx Represented Since the 1960s*, edited by John Famer to The Bronx Museum of the Arts 1999 show provides this argument as well. The show, and book, collected various photographers and a few essays that wrestled with mass media and artistic representations of the Bronx: myth versus everyday life.

[59] Adele Hodge, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses, 1/21/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

sense of community stretching from the Bronx River Houses south and east along Westchester Road.

Larry D. Ford argues that it is necessary to take stock of a community not only through the materiality and aesthetics of the buildings in the community, but also through the arrangement and of lawns, yards, access points, sidewalks, and other distinctive features associated with buildings. Ford stresses the fact that "the private-public theme of interaction hinges on the role played by the ordinary spaces between buildings in the quality of city life."[60] Beatrice Davis' Bronx River story demonstrates the everyday impact of imbedded in Ford's vision of community. Beatrice Davis moved from North Carolina to Brooklyn in 1971 with her family, her story illustrates Ford's insights. where she eventually raised eight children. Comparing Bronx River where she eventually raised eight children to Brooklyn, Beatrice remarked, "I had no problem here [Bronx River]. The neighborhood is good. Good transportation. . . . Everything's convenient."[61] Importantly, Ms. Davis's words pointed to the fact that the Bronx River Community was cohesive and enjoyable because the "spaces between the buildings"—the grounds and the roads—as well as the buildings themselves, provided the glue holding the neighborhood todgether. Bronx River and its spaces and places, served as the site where hip-hop culture emerged through the interaction of private and public life.

This theoretical and historical ground examined by scholars including Tricia Rose, Murray Forman, Davarian Baldwin, Keith Negus, Eric K. Watts, S.

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[60] Larry D. Ford, *The Spaces Between Buildings* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) 13.

[61] Beatrice Davis and Maria Lopes, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/21/2014. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

Craig Watkins, and Robin D.G. Kelley, links the emergence of hip-hop culture to postindustrial policies enacted on predominantly African American, Latino, and working-class and poor communities. Rose famously wrote that hip-hop was "situated at the 'crossroads of lack and desire,' hip hop emerges from the deindustrialization meltdown where social alienation, prophetic imagination, and yearning intersect."[62] Murray Forman echoes these insights: "hip-hop did not spring forth from the Bronx magically; it emerged from within an economically limiting context as a new means of negotiating the immediate environment and of motivating individual and collection practices of opportunity on a day-to-day basis."[63] Mark Anthony Neal understood the relationship between hip-hop culture and postindustrial America as such: "culled from the discourse of the postindustrial city, hip-hop reflected the growing visibility of a young, urban, and often angy so-called 'undercalss.'"[64] These works recognize hip-hop's importance in showcasing a post World War II African American cultural creation that publicly articulated a right to the urban environment counter to neoliberal policies of urban disinvestment and infrastructural decay. These scholars have given us broad ways of understanding the space and place-based origins of hip-hop in the Bronx. However, we still need a way to balance the generalized theories of urban cultural creation in the postindustrial age with an understanding of how the same forms of creation and postindustrial neglect created opportunities for difference. In the late 1960s and 1970s Bronx, public and private housing was just as important as

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[62] Rose, 21.
[63] Murray Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 41.
[64] Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 125.

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geography—or rather, public and private housing provided an alternative map to understanding emerging hip-hop cultural geography. In fact, the ways in which similar forms of youth culture were created and enacted had different impacts on the youth that were taking part in these activities based on where they lived.

Emerging hip-hop culture was not the only type of youthful cultural creation and play that developed in the Bronx during the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, the cultural elements that developed into hip-hop were initially part of a wide variety of urban youth practices and games. Paul Hargrove grew up in Bronx River in the 1960s and 1970s. Paul Hargrove recalled the activities and games of his youth that did not include taking part in any of the activities that led to hip-hop culture. Hargrove fondly remembered a list of urban youthful activities shared by city kids throughout all five boroughs that he and his friends participating in, including ring-o-levio, skelly, and stickball, curb ball, stoop ball, and tops. In addition to playing these games, Hargrove also talked about how he and his friends used the neighborhood for their playground: "some kids go down to the railroad tracks over by Bronx River Avenue and play."[65] Hargrove's memories of his youthful activities illustrated the fact that the imagination and play of Bronx youth represented a vital form of re-imagining public space in the Bronx of the 1960s and 1970s. James Goodridge offered his take on the connection between Bronx River Houses public spaces and youthful activities when he recalled the Doo Wop influenced youthful activities of his friends. Goodridge recalled that, "we would get some wine or beer and stand outside the buildings singing." Furthermore, Goodridge

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[65] Paul Hargrove, interview with author, the Bronx. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project, 1/23/14.

recalled the re-emergence of youth gangs such as the Reapers in the Soundview and Bronx River Houses areas as also influenced by Doo Wop: "the Reapers painted their colors on silk jackets first, before switching to patches."[66] Considering these recollections of youthful games and activities in public space, it becomes clear that emerging hip-hop culture represented a particular set of activities within a wider set of publically performed youthful activities.

Understanding the Bronx youth culture of the 1960s and 1970s as playing in, and engaging with, a spatial conversation with both national neoliberal trends trumpeting austerity and disinvestment in economically and socially neglected urban communities, the question that arises is how did hip-hop culture transcend parochial iterations of youth culture? Here we return to the importance of public housing and the Bronx River Houses. Although the cultural practices of hip-hop were being performed throughout the Bronx, it was predominantly public housing that provided structure for hip-hop invested youths to transform a set of overlapping youth practices into a full-fledged concatenation of cultural and artistic practices. As has been duly documented above, throughout hip-hop studies literature, and captured through a variety of visual forms—most notably through graffiti and Joe Conzo's photography—the emergence of hip-hop culture developed into a unified scene because of the relationship between youth practitioners and public housing. Without the relative stability of 1520 Sedgwick's Mitchel-Lama housing, Kool Herc might not have been able host his seminal 1973 party; without the Bronx River Houses, Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation would not have been possible,

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[66] James Goodridge, phone interview with the author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

and the imagination and articulation of the overlapping youth cultural practices that formed the basis of hip-hop culture would not have happened.

All of this leads us back to the importance of Bronx River's community center. Whether it was the old center or, more importantly, the new center that opened in 1967, the Bronx River Community Center provided a sense of permanence to the youthful activities of the Zulu Nation. Although park jams and other outdoor performances had been a hallmark of emerging hip-hop practices, the move indoors was an important milestone for the continued cohesion of hip-hop culture and the Zulu Nation. Of course performances happening at public housing community centers throughout the Bronx.[67] Along with community centers, non-profit boys and girls clubs such as the Kips Bay Boys Club, and other community centers including various Police Athletic League (P.A.L.) clubhouses. Publically funded structures, and those dedicated to providing space for public use were important spaces where hip-hop was imagined and performed.

Such public spaces were the foundation of hip-hop. Tellingly, the Universal Zulu Nation dates the birth of hip-hop as November 12, 1974. According to the Universal Zulu Nation:

> nothing makes more sense than to celebrate Hip Hop culture and it's history during November . . . . November is also significant in the fact that it kicks off the 'indoor jam season.' The Hip Hop community jams, enjoyed outdoors in the parks, throughout the Summer, had to move indoors for about 7 months to community centers, gymnasiums, schools etc. for the Fall and Winter seasons. The Hip Hop World should recognize this month and pay tribute to those who laid the foundation and paved the way as well as to those who continue to preserve the rich tradition of the culture.[68]

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[67] Boston Secors and Edenwald community centers, along with Bronx River, represent the centers most frequently listed on the extant party flyers archived in the Cornell Hip Hop Collection.

[68] This history is found on the Universal Zulu Nation website: https://www.zulunation.com/hip_hop_history_2.htm

In a wonderful move of mytho-historical rhetoric, the Universal Zulu Nation

located the origins of hip-hop in a spatio-temporal dynamic. The Zulu version

of hip-hop history posited that hip-hop as a holistic culture did not cohere until

the park jams had to move inside. Not only was hip-hop's "birth" linked to a

specific year, but also a specific space—indoors. This version of hip-hop

history implies that the "indoor jam season" was more important to hip-hop

history than the park jams. The outdoor park jams provided the perfect spaces

for youthful collective and spontaneous cultural creation. Furthermore, the

outdoor jams were at once deadly serious and extremely casual. Audiences

were able to travel through performative spaces as they moved through the

spaces of the park; performers attempted to excite the crowd as they battled

each other, sometimes for the other crews' equipment, and always for local

celebrity and reputation. An indoor jam, on the other hand, demanded more

attention from audience and performer, alike, and was intended to be more

permanent, more focused. Unlike the outdoor jams, indoor jams charged

admission. So, at the very least, there was a monetary investment made by

the attendees in the jam. Finally, the "indoor jam season" helped transition

early hip-hop jams from the youthful cultural performances to cultural capital,

and finally to cultural commodity. As Afrika Bambaata reflected, "we was

young entrepreneurs, when we didn't even know we was entrepreneurs."[69]

The performers, from the DJs to the MCs, prepared for the indoor jams

in a way that acknowledged the magnified importance of indoor jams, as well

as their distinct nature from the outdoor season. The Original DJ Jimmie Jazz

[69] Charlie Ahearn and Jim Fricke, *Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 45.

the GQ discussed the seasoning process Bambaataa and others made him go

through before they permitted him to perform in the Bronx River Community

Center. Jimmie Jazz recalled that "I had to know every record, every break,

that was handed to me, and I had to practice in my room and outside before I

was allowed to go on [in the Community Center]."[70] MC Sha-Rock described

the importance of performing at Bronx River. "There were no set formats when

it came time for you to get on at a Bam party unless you were down with the

Zulus," MC Sha-Rock recalled. You had to be invited to play in Bronx River

and the Funky Four Plus One More was invited by Bambaataa "because he

was aware of the following we had."[71] Performers had to be good to bring

audiences to the park. However, to move inside and garner celebrity and

status, you had to be considered one of the best. As Jimmie Jazz said, "you

only got one shot at Bronx River [community center]. You either made it or you

were never heard from again."[72]

As hip-hop grew throughout the 1970s, the "indoor season," anchored

by performances in public housing community centers, helped establish hip-

hop as an increasingly cohesive culture. Even more important, the Bronx

River Community Center performances and other indoor jams took place at the

same time that clubs such as the Hevalo, the Black Door, T-Connection,

Ecstasy Disco Garage, Harlem World, C&C Disco, and the Disco Fever were

hosting DJs and MCs. Again, using the indoor jam season as a springboard

into actual clubs suggested the spaces of public housing community centers,

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[70] The Original DJ Jimmie Jazz the GQ, interview with author, Bronx River Community
Center, 1/29/14.
[71] MC Sha-Rock, *Luminary Icon* (Houston: Pearlie Gates Publishing, 2011), *97; 155.*
[72] The Original DJ Jimmie Jazz Jones the GQ, interview with author, Bronx River Houses
Community Center, 1/29/14.

and specifically the Bronx River Houses Community Center, were an important

bridge for audiences and performers to imagine a cohesive cultural movement,

as well as for others to imagine an opportunity to turn local hip-hop celebrity

into a musical career. Throughout the 1970s in the Bronx, public housing and

the Bronx River Houses provided the spaces and places for emerging hip-hop

to grow.

Mobility and Isolation

It was tough for a youth movement to be socially expansive while

participants lived with limited social and material resources. But pockets of

stability and creativity still belied the dominant narrative of individuals and

communities in the Bronx as feral savages, similar to the characters in movies

such as "The Warriors" in 1979, and "Fort Apache: The Bronx" in 1981. Such

media discourse flattened the Bronx into a single, isolated locale: a wasteland

of arson, looting, and fiscal and infrastructural failure, devoid of culture and

self-respect, whose containment was necessary to keep urban blight from

spreading.[73]

By 1980, "The South Bronx" encompassed 20 square miles, practically

everything South of Fordham Road.[74] Popular discourses of the Bronx in

decline took hold in the 1960s. The narrative of pathological African American

urban dwellers had already become the dominant academic view, entrenched

in the 1940s with Gunnar Myrdal's massive sociological study, *An American*

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[73] The Bronx was deployed as a touchstone of urban—and national—decline in cultural products such as *The Warriors* (the 1956 novel and the 1979 movie), *Fort Apache, the Bronx* (1981), and of course Howard Cossell's famous quotation: "Ladies and the Gentleman, the Bronx is burning" during Major League Baseball's 1976 World Series.
[74] Jonnes, 8, 168.

Dilemma.[75] Daniel Patrick Moynihan was a central architect of the discourse of blaming urban decline on the pathology of predominantly African American communities that shaped public though and policy 1960s and 1970s. The Moynihan report argued that poor African-American families headed by single mothers inhibited African American social and economic progress. In 1969, he infamously advised President Nixon that "[t]he time may have come when the issue of race could benefit from a period of 'benign neglect.' The subject has been too much talked about. The forum has been too much taken over to hysterics, paranoids, and boodlers on all sides. We need a period in which Negro progress continues and racial rhetoric fades."[76] Still peddling the urban pathology line, Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote in the forward to Jill Jonnes' *South Bronx Rising* that the downfall of the Bronx was the combination of youth and delinquency. Furthermore, Moynihan tied the rise in delinquency to the increase of immigration and drug use. Never explicitly blaming Puerto Rican and other non-white immigrants and migrants to the Bronx for urban decline, his causal take on urban decline mirrors how the Bronx was viewed for the majority of the second half of the 20th Century.[77]

Marshall Berman's classic work, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air,* analyses modernity's impact on contemporary life through the changing social and material geography of his childhood Bronx in the 1950s and 1960s. As in most works chronicling the demise of the Bronx or the emergence of hip-hop, the effects of urban renewal, slum clearance, and Robert Moses looms large.

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[75] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1944).
[76] Deborah Wallace and Rodrick Wallace, *A Plague on Your Houses: How New York was Burned Down and National Public Health Crumbled* (New York: Verso, 1998), 22.
[77] Daniel Patrick Moynihan forward in Jill Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising* (2002).

Moses' construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway stands as the totem of

urban destruction and material catalyst of hip-hop's creation. In fact, Berman

argues that Moses' highway laid waste to neighborhoods in an attempted

return to the "techno-pastoral," allowing only white consumer-citizens access to

the new garden (suburbs), or the city, through the privileged commodity of the

automobile.[78]

Tricia Rose came to similar conclusions. In line with the work of earlier

urban activists such as Jane Jacobs and Catherine Bauer, Rose charged that

labeling communities as slums caused material and discursive violence. The

truth was that these slums were densely populated, stable neighborhoods,

comprised mostly of working- and lower-middle class residents.[79] The very

official labels were the opening gambit in their destruction, not renewal.

Hip-hop was founded amid social and cultural mobility that mainstream

urban discourse claimed was absent. Standing squarely in the face of urban

discourses of urban isolation and decline was the Bronx River Houses, its

residents, and the emergence of hip-hop. The Bronx neighborhoods always

engaged in the push-pull of migration, relocation, and itinerancy. In contrast to

the charges of decay, public housing throughout the Bronx generally, and the

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[78] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988). Additionally, Moses understood that the automobile was overwhelmingly a white consumer good, and that the inner-city poor depended on public transportation. In order to "protect" the suburban spaces his expressways were connecting with, he built overpasses too low for buses to pass underneath. See Lizabeth Cohen, *Consumers' Republic*, 488, citing Caro. Growing up in a middle-class, black home on Long Island, Chuck D, of Public Enemy, captured the contestation over consumption and access to space and commodities in the song, "You're Gonna Get Yours," as an "ode to his 98 Olds[mobile]," complete with lyrics concerning racial profiling (Public Enemy, *Yo! Bum Rush The Show*, Def Jam, 527357, 1987). Jeff Chang locates this song within the historical context of Moses' "expressway-fueled segregation and Levitttown's racial covenants," Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop* 232.
[79] Rose, *Black Noise*, 31.

Bronx River Houses specifically, offered a uniquely urban, and uniquely expansive experiences of community and culture. They were material and cultural bases of new forms of social, cultural, and material connections.

Longtime Bronx River Houses Residents Catherine Stokes, Mamie Howie, and Olivia Nesmith's recollections of life in Bronx River all challenge the discourses of isolation and pathology. Catherine Stokes has witnessed the complicated history of life in Bronx River and the Bronx for the last sixty years. Ms. Stokes moved first from Alabama to Harlem and then to the Bronx. She recalled, "I thought everybody lived together, white, black, Jew, Italian, everybody. I was disappointed. Where I came from it was one block black, one block white. . . . It was like we were intergrated, there were things we couldn't do, but we lived close. When I came to New York, I was very disappointed."[80] By the late 1940s, Catherine and her sister moved from Harlem to 895 Stafford Street in the Bronx, continuing her experience, shared by many other residents who found their way to the Bronx and Bronx River, of competing practices of mobility in the face of material and discursive isolation. Moving into the Bronx River Houses in October of 1950, Ms. Stokes' tenure as one of the first residents of Bronx River Houses predated the opening of the onsite management office in building 1635 in February 1951. Ms. Stokes and her young family moved into Bronx River, they immediately liked their new home: "living in Bronx River Houses, I like the apartments, the rooms are large, the kitchens are large compared to most projects." Ms. Stokes recalled that businesses started to be built in 1952, eventually including a "drug store, the doctor's office, the dentist, the liquor store, a variety furniture store, a

[80] Catherine Stokes, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/25/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

supermarket, and a candy store." Previous to the mid-1950s' development of stores near Bronx River Houses, residents would have to take the bus to the West Farms neighborhood, located to the Northwest across the Bronx River. Although it would not be until the late 1950s for a variety of services and shops to open up within walking distance of the Bronx River Houses, shopping and other commercial services were available throughout the Bronx River Houses' neighborhood.

The location of shops and services outside the immediate Bronx River Houses neighborhood prior to the mid-to-late 1950s can be interpreted in a number of different ways. The prevalent interpretation was informed by the discourses of Bronx, and urban, isolation. However, the many residents of Bronx River during the 1950s-1980s do not talk about their shopping options as evidence of commercial, cultural or social isolation. In fact, nearly everyone I talked with as a part of the Bronx River Houses Oral History Project reported how easy it was to travel throughout the Bronx and to Manhattan. Public transportation ranked as the most accessible mode of travel. In addition to the 2 and 6 trains that are within several blocks of the Bronx River Houses, several bus lines provided service outside of the Bronx. The 36 bus route to Manhattan and the 44 bus route to Queens had convenient stops along 174th street that serviced the Bronx River Houses community. Evelyn McPhatter echoed the importance of public transportation, saying that it was "about the same as it [public transportation] is now. We would go wherever we wanted to

go."[81] Public transportation has been, and continues to be, a vital part of the Bronx River Community.

The point is not that scholarship and popular media got any of this wrong; the unthinkable history of Bronx urban decline that has been written is absolutely correct. However, by talking about the destruction of Bronx neighborhoods as a uniform experience during the 1960s-1980s, these written histories have also participated in a similar form of generalized erasure by ignoring the fact that the Bronx, like all urban areas, remained a tapestry of neighborhoods and experiences.

Tricia Rose writes that the Cross Bronx Expressway was most important to hip-hop's history. Jeff Chang described the impact that the Cross Bronx Expressway and Robert Moses had on the Bronx: "Moses....the most powerful modern urban builder of all time, led the white exodus out of the Bronx."[82] Moses envisioned and oversaw the construction of the Cross-Bronx expressway that displaced and dispersed most of the population to the housing projects of the South Bronx where rap and hip-hop emerged.[83] However, my closer examination of shopping and travelling throughout the Bronx River and Soundview neighborhoods, suggests the impact of the Cross Bronx Expressway needs reconsideration.

Although the racial and spatial motivations behind Robert Moses' project deserve vilification, the expessway's impact on the residents of the Bronx and Bronx River was not altogether negative. Moses viewed the automobile as an overwhelmingly white, and middle-class consumer good

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[81] Evelyn McPhatter, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/14/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[82] Chang, 11.
[83] Rose, 30-31.

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whereas predominantly lower-income and lower-resource urban residents relied on public transportation. Privileging the automobile, Moses built expressways that included overpasses that were too low for buses to pass underneath in order to "protect" the suburbs.[84] Obviously, Moses and the municipal and federal resources he was able to command were marshaled to continue to exclude urban communities largely comprised of lower-income, non-white residents from public transportation access to the suburbs. However, the Cross Bronx Expressway also provided an opportunity for many folks from these same despised communities to travel. Catherine Stokes noted, "Bronx River [was] so convenient for travelling," and "I never found it hard [travelling in the 1970s]. Some people did. I was raised in the city and I was used to travelling."[85] Additionally, residents with cars, including Ms. Stokes and Adele Hodges, drove everywhere. Thanks to the Cross Bronx Expressway, they were able to travel quickly and easily. Furthermore, the expressway aided travel throughout the Bronx and the other New York boroughs were also used to maintain familial and social connections.

Nearly everyone who participated in the Bronx River Houses Oral History Project not only discussed moving to Bronx River from other neighborhoods in the Bronx, but from other boroughs. However, access to the type of mobility offered by the newly built expressways was limited to those who had access to cars. Overwhelmingly, the Cross-Bronx Expressway disrupted and destroyed vast tracts of the Bronx. But, the experience of this sense of disruption and isolation depended on where someone lived. It is

[84] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 488.
[85] Catherine Stokes, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/25/15.Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

precisely this experience of stability in the midst of discursive, and material, chaos engulfing the Bronx that points to the fact that life within Bronx public housing, and the Bronx River Houses in particular, provided a distinctly public, and Bronx-based, rebuff to a national narrative that viewed all of the Bronx, as well as urban life, in decline. It was exactly this social world fostered by the Bronx River Houses that enabled hip-hop to emerge.

From Houses to Homes: Building Hip Hop in the Bronx

Louis Andrus discussed how he and some other male residents of the Bronx River Houses were recruited into taking community leadership positions. The first President of the Bronx River Tenants association, Ms. Rose, recruited Louis Andrus in 1973. Andrus remembered, "we would go to the meetings and attended the meetings, and the old president, Ms. Rose, saw the leadership potential. Most organizations, the women are in the majority, so she said we need men."[86] Importantly, Ms. Rose saw that the need to include men in community leadership positions had more to do with knitting together an entire community than an attempt at gender parity. Continuing his talk about Ms. Rose and her leadership style, Mr. Andrus remembered that Ms. Rose pitched her call to his assumption of a leadership position in terms of the built environment. According to Mr. Andrus, Ms. Rose said, "If Bronx River wasn't represented it would keep deteriorating. They would tear it down like so many tenements in Detroit and a few other places. I need you guys to commit to me." Importantly, Ms. Rose framed the need for Mr. Andrus and continuity of tenant leadership in material terms. Without competent and committed leadership,

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[86] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/11/2012. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

Ms. Rose feared that Bronx River would suffer the same material and spiritual decay as other housing project communities throughout the 1970s. For Ms. Rose, and Mr. Andrus after her, the Bronx River community was not only grounded in terms of social relations, but also founded on the built environment.

The residents made the connection between community and material place in their belief that they lived in a special community. Evelyn McPhatter described the connection as one where residents and NYCHA management were committed to the community: "the best part about living on Bronx River [parkway]. . . [is that] it is a beautiful place to live." Furthermore, Ms. McPhatter declared, "if you're on the expressway you can look down, and it's beautiful."[87]

Viewing Bronx River as a unique social and material community did not take place in an isolated landscape. In addition to appreciating the dynamic relationship between the built and natural environment, the Bronx River residents compared favorably their living situation with other public and private housing options. In his capacity as Tenant Association President, Mr. Andrus reflected that most of the other housing projects had problems that "were worse than we had at Bronx River"; he continued, "here [Bronx River] there's 106 apartments [in each building] and they all come out together. It was just nice for me to live in this complex because I never had that."[88] Beatrice Davis moved from Brooklyn to Bronx River, raising eight children. Comparing Bronx River to her Brooklyn residence, she said, "I had no problem here. Neighborhood is good. Good transportation . . . Everything's convenient," Ms.

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[87] Evelyn McPhatter, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/14/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[88] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/11/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

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Davis concluded, "I wouldn't want to live no where else. It's a great place."[89]

As Adele Hodges remarked about the importance and uniqueness of Bronx

River, "we got to Westchester, we know everybody. . . . We know

everything. . . . We have eleven buildings and we know. It's a blessing."[90]

Without the Bronx River Houses, a community would not have existed and

Louis Andrus would not have been able to claim that the Bronx River Houses

was "like a little city in the city."[91]

It was exactly this social world fostered by the Bronx River Houses

community that enabled hip-hop to emerge.

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[89] Beatrice Davis, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Community Center, 1/21/2014. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[90] Adele Hodges, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Community Center, 1/21/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project,.
[91] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/11/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

Chapter 2

Home of God: The Bronx River Houses, Afrika Bambaataa and the
Emergence of the Zulu Nation

"Wherever you have culture, you have community."—Alien Ness

During the spring of 1969, Bronx River Houses residents petitioned their

Housing Manager and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

concerning the prohibition of Bingo in the Bronx River Houses Community

Center. Bingo was an enjoyable pastime and social occasion for residents, but

regulations of the lease agreement governing the Community Center

prohibited Bingo as illegal gambling.[1] Responding to these petitions, Paul L.

Crawford, Acting Director, Department of Social and Community Services and

NYCHA Vice-Chairman Ira S. Robbins recognized that the regulation over-

reached and reasoned that "if Bingo is prohibited, then any type of cards would

be illegal too," so he struck Bingo from the list of prohibited activities in the

Community Center.[2] The Bingo episode demonstrated attempts to negotiate

public space and personal leisure within Bronx River Houses. Guidelines

governing the use of the Bronx River Community Center and indoor spaces

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[1] NYCHA archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 09. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York. Rule seven of the "Policies and Regulations of Community Facilities" states: "Gambling (*including bingo*) and the use of intoxicating liquors are prohibited." (emphasized in document).

[2] NYCHA Archives Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. Laguardia and Wagner Archives, Laguardia Community College, New York, New York. The revised regulation reads: "Illegal gambling and the use of intoxicants at public affairs and regular activities and programs in Housing Authority community facilities are prohibited."

linked the physical structures and project residents. The practices of everyday life resulted from the relationship of the housing authorities and the residents.

Just as the Bronx River Houses served as an anchor to the surrounding neighborhood, the community center provided an important place for Bronx River Houses residents to anchor their image of the Houses as a unique community. Over the history of the housing development, the community center underwent several transformations. From 1951 when the Bronx River Houses opened until 1967, the community center was located in the basement of building 1595. After 1967 and the opening of a stand-alone Community Center in the center of the campus, the basement center was forever after called the old center.

A range of programs and activities took place in the centers for everyone from children to seniors: NYCHA and HUD programs such as Head Start, monthly food distribution, cleaning and cooking classes, and a variety of programs and organizations unaffiliated with NYCHA such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and private events and clubs initiated by the community found a home in the community center.

For the majority of the Bronx River Houses' existence, the community center was run by non-NYCHA organizations. During the 1970s, the Bronx River Neighborhood Centers, Inc. was in charge of the Community Center under the direction of James Canalis. After Canalis' tenure ended in 1977, the Police Athletic League (P.A.L.) ran the center for the next five years. Once NYCHA took formal control over the Community Center in 1982, it subcontracted operations to various community organizations that shared the

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center's mandate to service the youth and senior populations of Bronx River and the surrounding neighborhood.

No matter the administration, use of the center remained an integral part of the community's experience. The procedure to rent the community center in the old center and the gymnasium in the new center was relatively straightforward. First, the master calendar was consulted and then the applications had to be signed by the Community Center and NYCHA. In addition to setting up the event, there was also a deposit fee for cleanup and kitchen use, if required. The deposit fee also covered someone to watch the center. There was never a question as to whether or not a private event would be allowed to take place in the Community Center. According to Louis Andrus, the community center and NYCHA, "never said no," it was all, "just procedure."[3] This easy access process was one reason hip-hop culture was able to develop in NYCHA and city public spaces and places, and contributed to the center's use as the space and place for Afrika Bambaataa and Bronx River youth to experiment, create, establish, and articulate hip-hop culture.

Public housing in the Bronx, generally, and the Bronx River Houses specifically, provided the material environment to think across extremely local affiliations defined by neighborhood, by block, and by building, and the Community Center stood in the literal and figurative center of this imagining. For example, Amad Henderson, one of the founding members of the Zulu Kings and the Universal Zulu Nation, described the connection between the Bronx, emerging hip-hop culture, and the Bronx River Houses. When asked

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[3] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/11/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

about the origins of the Zulu Kings and the Bronx Boys Breaking Crew, another pioneering breaking crew, Henderson recalled, "all these things [emerging hip-hop culture] were taking place all over the Bronx. So there wasn't one time when breaking started, or one crew from one area that was first. Depending on where you lived, these cultures and crews were starting up."[4] MC Sha-Rock recalled learning that her friend JJ was a weekend breaker when he would go spend time with his cousins in another part of the Bronx. Sha-Rock said, "JJ introduced me to his cousins, Mike and Pee Wee. Their demeanor was much different than JJ. They were hardcore with an 'I don't give a fuck attitude,' but most of all, they were B-boys."[5] MC Sha-Rock and Mr. Henderson's comments pointed to the fact that the elements of hip-hop culture developed in distinct, yet similar manner throughout the Bronx.

Procedures for use of recreation centers helped to make them convenient locations for events. Applications to use them moved from the particular housing project to the overseeing body. Although the housing agency and housing authority had the power of approval, this was largely pro forma. According to the policies and regulations for community facilities, several conditions applied for the use of the community center. First, 51% of the persons served at the facility must be residents of the facility. In addition the agency provided all administrative and support staff necessary to facilitate all approved programs. Finally, the agency was responsible for monthly reports

[4] Amad Henderson, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/21/14.
[5] MC Sha-Rock, *Luminary Icon: The Story of the Beginning and End of Hip Hop's First Female MC* (Pearlie Gates Publishing, 2010), 59.

of the activities and programs including statistics and descriptions.[6] However, these formal procedures were hardly, if ever, followed. According to former Bronx River Houses Tenant Association President Louis Andrus, renting the community center and holding events remained a decidedly casual affair. Andrus described the process: "applications had to be signed by [the] community center and [the] housing authority. The dates were set. They had a calendar. There was a charge for cleaning up. They would be allowed to use the kitchen. They had to pay a guy to watch the place and clean up after." Although the procedures were in place, Andrus remarked that neither the Senior Center director, the director of after-school programs, nor the housing authority office ever declined a rental request. It was "just procedure," and "collect[ing] the deposit."[7]

The quick resolution concerning the classification of Bingo demonstrated several important truths about New York City public housing, the Housing Authority, and the Bronx River residents that informed the practices of Afrika Bambataa, the Zulu Nation and hip-hop. Implied by the relatively easy resolution to Bingo's prohibition, the tensions and negotiations between official and informal uses of place and space between residents and housing authorities gestured to the fact that the material structures of the Bronx River House were also the sites where definitions, presentations, and identity were at play. What this history showed is that during the time that the Zulu Nation emerged and hip-hop formed, Bronx River was attuned to the recreational and

[6] NYCHA archives, Series 4; Box 0067A3; Folder 9. Laguardia and Wagner Archives, Laguardia Community College, New York, New York.
[7] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/25/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

cultural needs of the residents. Formally, and informally, residents and officials seemed to agree that the houses materially presented, and represented, the residents and community culture.

From Skelly to Gangs: Youth Culture and Bronx River

From the 1960s through the 1980s, youth culture in the Bronx River Houses encompassed many forms of structured and unstructured play. During the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts were popular activities for Bronx River youth.[8] Depending on the weather and the season, basketball and handball were played outside, and basketball leagues used the community center throughout the fall and winter. As Evelyn McPhatter remembered, "kids played a lot of basketball. Certain areas on the grounds [the kids were] allowed to play and some areas they weren't."[9] Catherine Stokes remembered the games her children played in the 1960s and 1970s: "they used to play ring-a-levio, skelly on the sidewalk, stuff like that; they went to the Big Park, stuff like that."[10] Lifelong Bronx River resident, "Doc," recalled, "I was never no Zulu. All my friends, all we did was hang out. We played softball, football, basketball. They were all good."[11] James Goodridge provided a particularly innocent story of youthful transgression and play involving baseball. Behind building 1575 facing west toward Bronx River

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[8] Beatrice Davis, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/21/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

[9] Evelyn McPhatter, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/14/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

[10] Catherine Stokes, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/25/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

[11] "Doc," interview with author, Bronx River Houses, 1/22/14. I was introduced to "Doc" by Amad Henderson, and recorded our interview in his apartment. I do not know his legal name.

Avenue, there used to be a large open space that the kids called "the junkyard" where they played baseball. According to Mr. Goodridge they were not supposed to play baseball back there "because if someone hit a home run it would break somebody's window."[12] Still, there were occasional acts of petty vandalism such as smashing windows with rocks..

Throughout the Bronx River Houses and the Soundview area, youth culture was relatively innocent. Those who came of age in Bronx River in the late 1960s and 1970s saw New York as "fun city" for kids during the summer.[13] MC Sha-Rock echoed this sense of New York as a child's playground: "summertime was always the most exciting part of the year for kids of all ages in New York. There were so many things to look forward to."[14] In neighboring Soundview Houses, Master Ice, a Zulu Nation member and Jazzy 5 MC, Master Ice, described the youth culture of the era: "growing up in the projects [gave you] access to hundreds and hundreds of kids. And just in your building, or in the surrounding buildings. Just going outside and just hanging out with my friends, most of them are still my best friends to this day."[15] NYCHA and other city programs offered summer events such as "Films in the Street," "Jazzmobile," and "Dancemobile." According to James Goodridge, a truck would drive up to the back of the community center—locally known as the "back of the projects"—where a variety of events took place. In addition to the NYCHA organized events, the "back of the projects" was also used by DJs

[12] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[13] Ibid.
[14] MC Sha-Rock, 57.
[15] Bernard "Master Ice" Heyward, oral history phone interview with author, 1/14/13. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

such as Afrika Bambaataa, and for other private events. James Goodridge

recalled a group of young men from the neighboring James Monroe Houses,

described as "Jackson 5 wannabes," who dressed like the Jackson 5 complete

with "the applejacks [caps] and vests" while lip syncing to a Jackson 5 record.[16]

Although most remember youth culture in Bronx River as benignly

raucous, by the mid-1970s, others increasingly viewed these same kids as an

urban menace. Between 1960 and 1970, the borough's youth population

increased 63%, from 314,100 to 512,807.[17] At the same time, the Bronx

experienced white flight, thus socially restructuring the area. Between 1957,

when public schools began keeping records of student ethnicity, and 1965,

schools throughout the South Bronx witnessed a change in the student

population from 27% percent Puerto Rican, 16% African American, and 57%

percent white, to 67% Puerto Rican, 27% African American, and 6% white.

Meanwhile, total student enrollments increased by one-third, severely

stretching classroom resources.[18] In addition to these totals, 1964 saw dismal

statistics on youth unemployment, finding that of the 571,300 youths between

the ages of 14 and 24, many were not attending school and 73,000 were

unemployed, largely due to the disappearance of semi-skilled and unskilled

jobs.[19] Based on the increase in the youth population, changing racial

demographics, and youth unemployment, the Bronx "teenager" increasingly

became an indicator and agent of urban decline.

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[16] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[17] Jill Jonnes, *South Bronx Rising: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of an American City* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 221.
[18] Ibid., 220.
[19] Ibid., 147.

While population demographics were shifting, "teenage life" became an increasingly pressing issue that would continue to haunt city government with the emergence of hip-hop in the 1970s. Reports, letters, and meetings of the Board of Education to NYCHA in 1961 and 1962, reported an expansive "teenage life" taking place outside the orbit of the Community Center in the public spaces of the city. NYCHA, tenant and neighborhood groups, and Center Advisory Councils, all wanted youth culture to be brought under the purview of adults. Most authorities were worried that without functioning community centers, the quality of life in the projects would be destroyed. For example, at the Edenwald Houses, with 3,000 kids under the age of eighteen, the NYCHA agent argued for an increase in summer programming in the community center.[20] These debates took place a decade before hip-hop emerged locating hip-hop's emergence within an established discourse of youth, race, and place located in public housing communities. Thus emerging hip-hop culture was viewed as a part of larger youth culture taking place in the Bronx.[21]

By the late 1960s, Bronx youth culture increasingly involved gangs.[22] Beginning in 1965, The New York Post increasingly reported youth crime and violence. A collection of headlines suggests that youth and crime were becoming a visible and consistent city experience: for example, "Cops Hunting

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[20] NYCHA archives, Series 4; Box 0067A3; Folder 9. Laguardia and Wagner Archives, Laguardia Community College, New York, New York.
[21] NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 09. NYCHA Archives, Series 4, Box 0067A3, Folder 9. LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.
[22] Jeff Chang calls this moment in hip-hop history, the "reemergence of the gangs."

Bronx Gangs in Shooting of 3," and " School Drug Ring Broken in Bronx."[23]

The crime was real, as was the increasing climate of fear. *The New York Post* captured the palpable sense of fear pervading New York, reporting on frantic passengers scrambling out of a subway train after two passengers began fighting.[24]

Historically, gangs were nothing new to New York, and youth gangs would become more visible during periods of racial, spatial, and economic change since the end of the 18th century. During the first half of the 19th century, increased immigration, trenchant poverty, and insufficient housing provided the material environment for gangs to form in such areas as Manhattan neighborhoods Hells Kitchen and the Bowery.[25] By 1900, gang members were often engaged in citywide racketeering, preying on class conflict within ethnic communities.[26] After World War II, immigration, housing, and a changing economy also manifested in the formation of gangs. With the increase of African American and Puerto Rican migration, bitter contests over housing, jobs, and resources increasingly flared in Harlem and spilled north into the Bronx, where even more new gangs formed.[27] By the 1970s, gangs had resurfaced within the twenty square mile area that became known as the South

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[23] *The New York Post.* The first title is from Thursday, April 15, 1965, and the second article is from Thursday, March 31, 1966.

[24] *The New York Post,* "50 Panic When One IND Rider Goes Berserk, Beats Up Another," Monday, March 22, 1965.

[25] Herbert Asbury, *The Gangs of New York: An Informal History of the Underworld* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927). Although Asbury's book remains a cult classic due, in part, to his sensationalist and romantic rendering of 19th century crime, not to mention serving as source material for Borges and Scorsese, Asbury grounded gang history in the experience of immigration and economic change.

[26] Joshua Brown and Lisa Keller, "Gangs," in *The Encyclopedia of New York, 2nd Edition,* ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 490-491.

[27] Eric C. Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 27.

Bronx.[28] However, the gangs of the late 1960s had a pronounced generational

difference.

In the midst of crumbling infrastructure throughout the Bronx, the

increase of drugs, and a broken municipal economic system, the new gangs of

the late 1960s and 1970s enacted terror campaigns against everyone: junkies,

authority of any kind, each other. However, the actions of the Young Lords,

the Ghetto Brothers, Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam, the Five Percenters,

and other Black Nationalist organizations, the structure and rhetoric of the

youth gangs on one hand and street activists on the other transitioned the Civil

Rights and Black Power era to the post-soul era of urban African American life.

Organized under names such as the Turbans, the Royal Javelins, the Golden

Guineas (a white gang patrolling the northern and eastern edges of the Bronx),

the Black Spades, and the Savage Skulls, Bronx gangs created alternative

communities through cultural practices responding to, and creating, the

material facts of life in the Bronx. These gangs claimed they served a broad

agenda of fighting drugs, police brutality, and political neglect, but their actions

were meted out in specific, local ways that laid the groundwork for the Zulu

Nation and hip-hop.

Demographic shifts led to material neglect compounded by white flight. A

white ethnic Bronx expat recalled, "[w]e were going to move to CO-OP City like

all the other Jews in the Bronx, but my wife said why not go for a house? . . .

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[28] Robert Jensen, ed. *Devastation/Resurrection: The South Bronx* (Bronx, NY: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1979). Robert Jensen described the cultural and geographical expansion of the "South Bronx." From the 1960s through the 1980s, the "South Bronx" grew out of the Mott Haven and Longwood neighborhoods, northward. By the 1980s, the New York City Planning Commission referred to everything south of Fordham road as the "South Bronx."

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Once we decided to get a house we didn't even think of looking in the Bronx. We wanted something better. We saw the suburban life and it appealed to us."[29] In Miles Marshall Lewis's memoir of growing up in the Bronx alongside the birth of hip-hop, raced geographies figured into his recounting of CO-OP City, as well. Lewis wrote:

> the story goes that by the time blacks and Latinos became hip to the construction of CO-OP City in the late sixties, apartment units were already assigned to future tenants throughout the area and all the remaining apartments were in Section Five, which is physically isolated from the rest of the complex by a roadway known as the Killer Curve.[30]

These statements demonstrate the importance of race, space and place when understanding Bronx and gang culture in the late 1960s. Implicit in the first family decision to bypass CO-OP City for the suburbs, was the understanding that suburbs were a "white space" and the urban streets of the Bronx were not.

Lewis's account of CO-OP City's impact on the Bronx's racial geography is presented as rumor, conjecture, gossip: "the story goes..." Truth or not, Lewis revealed how non-white Bronxites viewed CO-OP City's housing policies as a racial and spatial calculus used to justify and further neglect of selective areas of the Bronx. Gangs claimed and consolidated portions of the Bronx that were officially abandoned.

In 1972, *New York Magazine* published "An East Bronx Story—Return of the Street Gangs," profiling the state of gang activity in the Bronx. According to the article, at least 70 gangs were active throughout the Bronx in the early 1970s. The main point was to heighten awareness that gang activity was dramatically different and more dangerous than previous iterations, due to

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[29] Jonnes, 243.

[30] Miles Marshall Lewis, *Scars of the Soul are Why Kids Wear Bandages When They Don't Have Bruises* (New York: Akashic Books, 2004), 36.

drugs and the widespread availability of guns. The author cautioned, "some

New Yorkers of a certain age—those able to nod knowingly at the drop of such

names as the Amboy Dukes and the Redwings—will be tempted, as they

ponder the return of street gangs to console themselves with the thought that

the city has seen all this before. They will be kidding themselves."[31] Murray

Forman describes the relationship between space, place, and race that

informed the organization of these new gangs for the emerging hip-hop

generation. Forman argues, "rap music takes the city and its multiple spaces

as the foundation of its cultural production. . . . Since its inception in the mid- to

late 1970s, hip hop culture has always maintained fiercely defended local ties

and an in-built element of competition waged through hip hop's cultural

forms."[32]

Gangs gave structure to life in the ruins of the Bronx. For many kids,

few forms of formal social organization really existed. Only one in four youths

in the Bronx graduated from high school, with many area classrooms and after

school programs losing funding and resources throughout the 1970s. So the

gangs provided structure to youths' increasingly unstructured time; violence

provided the backbone of this gang structure. The violent actions of these

gangs were often framed as attempts to rid their neighborhoods of drug

dealers and criminals. Oftentimes, addicts and dealers faced the wrath of

gangs with deadly results. Occasionally, the gangs tried to leverage the

possibility of street violence to demand for municipal services by giving the

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[31] Gene Weingarten, "East Bronx Story-Return of the Street Gangs," *New York Magazine*, March 27, 1972.
[32] Muray Forman, "'Represent: Race, Space, and Place in Rap Music," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader, 2nd Edition*, Mark Anthony Neal and Murray Forman eds. (New York: Routledge, 2012) 248-269, 250.

local police ultimatums to clean up the streets or the gangs would deal out a kind of vigilante justice.[33] Writing in *The New York Post*, Pete Hamill declared that the Bronx youth gangs were "the best thing to happen to the Bronx" because the gangs supposedly attacked the junkies and drug dealers.[34] As Filipe "Blackie" Mercado of the Savage Skulls said of the junkie attacks, "it was a way of helping the community, but we wasn't thinking that. It was a spur-of-the moment thing because they jumped two of our brothers."[35] Violence structured gang initiation and life; violence was traded for peace and territory. Although commentators lined up to laud or decry the gangs and their violence, casting the gangs as scourges or saviors missed the structure at the core of gang life. This sense of structure provided Afrika Bambaataa with a blueprint to organize what would ultimately become the Universal Zulu Nation.

Most housing projects and neighborhoods throughout the Bronx had some form of gang activity. The density of public housing and gangs in areas of the Bronx sometimes turned the "two-block distance between them into a no-man's land."[36] This dangerous density of gangs and youth was particularly prevalent in the Soundview section of the Bronx. The Bronx River Houses, the Bronxdale Houses, the James Monroe Houses, Soundview Houses, and Castle Hill Houses were all within several blocks of each other, where various

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[33] Jonnes, 237. Vigilante violence included gangs raping and murdering a woman they claimed ran a "shooting-gallery," and stabbing addicts after warning the 41st precinct of their violent intentions if the police did not sweep the streets. After a member of the Seven Immortals was stabbed by a junkie in 1971, a "Junkie Massacre" began. The Savage Skulls declared war on all junkies and all the various gangs of the Bronx travelled to the South Bronx for a "piece of the action."
[34] Pete Hamill, "The Gangs, *New York Post*, circa 1972," quoted in Jeff Changs, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*.
[35] Chang, 50.
[36] Ibid., 89.

gangs proliferated, very often with multiple gangs existing within one neighborhood, housing project, or building.

Residents of the Bronx River Houses recalled the danger that gangs and gang activity brought with them to Bronx River. At the height of Bronx gang activity in 1971, Beatrice Davis moved to Bronx River. Responding to public reporting of gang activity at that time, Beatrice recalled, "when I first came here I was nervous because there was a gang called the Black Spades, I was very nervous." She continued in a more ambivalent tone, "they [the gangs] were sort of good. If you were sitting out in the evening they would tell you to move on if they were going to have a rumble."[37] Louis Andrus had less equivocal memories than Beatrice Davis concerning the activities of gangs in and around Bronx River. Mr. Andrus invoked the film, *The Warriors,* saying "that picture [*The Warriors*] portrayed. . . it was so realistic. . . That's the way it was." Mr. Andrus also remembered that "random shootings were a thing back in those days [early 1970s]. And after dark you had to be careful, nobody would really go out."[38] According to Evelyn McPhatter, "since we lived on Bronx River [Avenue], my kids couldn't go over to [the Harrod Avenue side], because I was hearing things. . . . I would hear things . . . like violent things. This person, these people were doing things. I also wanted them [her children] to stay on [the Bronx River Avenue] side of the center so if I needed them, I could call them out the window." Although other residents experienced or witnessed gang violence directly, Ms. McPhatter described her experience as mediated

[37] Beatrice Davis, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/21/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[38] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 5/25/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

through the reports of others. Perhaps this was to distance herself and her

kids from being directly identified with longstanding representations of urban

youth in the Bronx. She might also have been reticent to acknowledge the

history of gang activity with a community outsider. When I asked Evelyn

McPhatter if the activity she mentioned was, in fact, gang activity, she replied,

"Yeah they said it was gangs, but I don't know because my kids were not

allowed to be a part of it."[39] Whether Evelyn McPhatter ever explicitly

witnessed any gang activity, her memories testify to the fact that fear of youth

gangs, the fear that her kids could be hurt by the gangs, was very real during

the late 1960s and early 1970s.

These recollections came from the Bronx River Houses' adults and

parents of the generation that created hip-hop. Examining some of the

recollections from Bronx River Houses Residents who were children in the late

1960s and early 1970s offers an understanding of the connections between

gangs, youth culture, and the Bronx River Houses that diverged, somewhat,

from the parental version. Though overlaid with a patina of romanticism by

those that survived, the way kids interacted with gangs remains an important

part of the Bronx River Houses, hip hop, and Zulu Nation history.

James Goodridge began his history of street gangs with a transnational

and transgenerational scan.[40] In the Bronx River Houses, many returning

Vietnam veterans organized themselves into a gang called The Sportsmen.

According to Goodridge, the Sportsmen were mainly a "late 1950s, early 1960s,

doo wop type of thing." In addition the Sportsmen, there was also The Nation.

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[39] Evelyn McPhatter, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community
Center, 6/14/12. Bronx River Oral History Project.
[40] James Goodridge is also a site administrator of the website www.classicnystreetgangs.com

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However, these gangs were "Jets and Sharks, West Side Story" types of social clubs. Goodridge said that these same groups were also different from the late 1960s and early 1970s gangs based on sartorial choices. None of the earlier gangs were "flying colors...maybe a basketball jacket."[41] Bronx River experienced a generational shift between the older gangs and the second wave of gangs demonstrated by clothing, age of members, and cultural practices.

Goodridge traced the re-emergence of gangs in Bronx River to one building and one man, "Con Ed" in Building 1455. "Con Ed" and his brother received permission to start the first Reapers' division in the Bronx River Houses, with "Con Ed" assuming the title of Vice President. The Reapers, based in the Bronx, pre-dated the late 1960s re-emergence of youth street gangs, starting in 1963 on 178th Street as a social club. Throughout the 1960s, the Reapers sported a style that would impact the second wave of gangs. Borrowing the basketball jersey and jacket style worn by the Sportsmen, the Reapers painted their logo on their jerseys and jackets based on The Reaper character from Batman comics.[42] The connection between popular culture and gang colors quickly became the new sartorial staple. The new generation of street gangs in the Bronx and throughout New York appropriated a variety of elements from popular culture and popular media to craft new identities.[43] Other popular influences included Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels: The*

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[41] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Oral History Project.

[42] The Reaper debuted in DC Comic's *Batman* #237, December 1971, created by Denny O'Neil.

[43] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang, specifically the 1st

edition cover displaying the Hell's Angels biker vests; the 1967 Jack Nicholson

movie, "Hell's Angels on Wheels"; and Black and Brown nationalist groups

such as the Bronx-based Young Lords, and the Black Panthers.

While the Reapers were organizing in the Bronx River Houses in the

late 1960s, several other gangs and organizations were extant in the Bronx

River and Soundview area: the Black Spades and the Savage Seven were in

the Bronxdale Houses by 1968, with some presence in Bronx River, along with

the other large presence in Bronx River, P.O.W.E.R. An acronym for Peoples

Organization War Energetic Revolutionaries, P.O.W.E.R. was founded by

Baron Goodridge to protect the community from the encroachments of the

Black Spades and other outside gangs. By 1971, different buildings and areas

of Bronx River saw an increase in gangs claiming Bronx River as home. As

Zulu Kings President and hip-hop cultural historian Alien Ness described it,

"going back to pre-1973, every building had a gang."[44] In addition to the

Reapers and the Baby Spades division of the Black Spades, there was the

Savage Nomads, Satan's Angels, and Seven Immortals all claiming sections of

Bronx River. Smaller, homegrown Bronx River crews were also emerging at

this moment, such as the purported existence of Afrika Bambaataa's pre-Black

Spades gang known as the Savage Pirates.[45]

By 1971, Bronx-wide youth gang activity started to escalate

dangerously. In response to this escalation, and largely through the efforts of

Eduardo Vincenty, a member of the "crisis squad" established in 1970 by the

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[44] Alien Ness, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/13.
[45] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River
Houses Oral History Project.

Youth Services Agency within the Human Resources Administration, the

"Family Peace Treaty" was organized and signed by 68 gangs by November

29, 1971. On December 8, 1971, a formal meeting took place at the Bronx

Boys Club to air grievances and make an attempt at a permanent peace.[46]

By the end of 1971, Bronx gangs were beginning to fade, but these were still

dangerous times for many youth in the Bronx. For example, under the guise of

peace talks, the Black Spades and the Reapers met with Baron Goodridge in

1971 and told him that he had 24 hours to disband P.O.W.E.R. *or else.* He

wisely chose to disband P.O.W.E.R., and briefly joined the Reapers.[47] At this

moment, the gangs of the Bronx, including the Black Spades, the Reapers,

The Savage Skulls, the Seven Immortals, and the Warlocks were fragmenting

due to periodic attempts of peace followed by violence, murder, and police

crack downs.[48] Although the "Family Peace Treaty" of 1971 signaled the

beginning of the end of the most extreme gang violence, parts of the Bronx

were still dangerous.

Youth gangs had a tremendous impact on nascent hip-hop culture.

According to Alien Ness, "the b-boying didn't start at the Herc parties. You

could take the b-boys back to the outlaw gangs of the late 60s, 70s. They

were the original b-boys, and it was part of their war dances. That's why the

competitive level is always going to be there with the b-boy." According to

BOM5, important cultural practices of hip-hop, including tapping into

[46] Gene Weingarten, "East Bronx Story—Return of the Street Gangs," *New York Magazine,* March 27, 1972.
[47] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project. Baron eventually quit the Reapers after an attempt on his life.
[48] Chang documents the existence of the NYPD's Bronx Youth Gang Task Force that was established in the fall of 1971. Additionally, rumors of a shadow police gang made from ex-Marines known as the Purple Mothers passed throughout the Bronx.

streetlights and playing foundational b-boy breaks began with the gangs. As

BOM5 remembered, "even when I was in a gang, we played 'Apache' . . .

'Bongo Rock' [hip-hop break beat staples] on a phonograph hooked up to a

lamppost outside."[49] The presenting and re-presenting of popular culture as

gang fashion corresponded to the creative impulses inherent in hip-hop culture,

in a similar manner as dancing and the selection of songs that fueled the

dances would become the foundational aspects of DJing and breaking. Gang

structure provided the emerging Zulu Nation with a workable model of social

organization. Connecting gang life to the Zulu Nation structure, Amad

Henderson said, "everything happened because of the [gang] structure. Here,

and then the chapters, and it just goes on."[50] The implications of gangs and

gang culture were clear: without gang culture and stlye, hip-hop would not

have started.

Bronx geography also impacted gangs and their influence on emerging

hip-hop. Discussing his parties, and gang activity, Kool Herc recalled, "the

gang members asked us to join the gang . . . but we wasn't going for that

because we respected each other . . . so even the gang members loved us

because they didn't want to mess with what was happening."[51] By the time

Herc expanded from the Sedgwick recreation room parties to block parties in

1974, the interest and excitement surrounding Herc parties helped to act as its

own form of security. With the move outside, the crowd became more diverse

in terms of age, home neighborhood, and more difficult to manage. However,

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[49] Charlie Ahearn and Jim Fricke, *Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 9.
[50] Amad Henderson, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/14.
[51] Fricke and Ahearn, 26.

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no one wanted Herc to pull the plug, so crowds remained mostly well behaved. Finally, hip-hop helped put the gang era to rest. James Goodridge recalled, "by 1975, that whole gang situation was basically dead and stinking," because new hip-hop helped establish new youth social structures. As Goodridge concluded, "that's what was positive about hip-hop."[52]

Organizations of the Zulus

According to official Universal Zulu Nation history, the organization was founded November 12, 1973, although it would not take that name until 1976-1977.[53] Prior to 1976, Bambaataa established several precursors, the first being the Bronx River Organization. Bambaataa clearly articulated the succession of his organizations in 1977: "what is the order of the names leading up to the Universal Zulu Nation? The Black Spades, The Organization, The Zulu Nation of New York City, The Almighty Zulu Nation, and finally the Universal Zulu Nation."[54] Bambaataa did not recognize a break in structure or ideology. So, in his account the Universal Zulu Nation did not in fact begin November 12, 1973, according to the name, but these youths who were part of what would later become the Universal Zulu Nation were already engaged in creating a youth cultural movement centered in Bronx River.

The Bronx River Organization and the Organization were centered in the Bronx River Houses because of Bambaataa's personal networks. The

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[52] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project, 10/22/12.
[53] www.zulunation.com
[54] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. Bambaataa Archive #8094, Notebooks.

Bronx River Organization began in 1972 as a "gang" dedicated to partying. Describing its impetus, Afrika Bambaataa said:

> The Bronx River Organization was first started to get Bronx River more organized for any frictions. You know, a lot of our projects had frictions in between a building and a building or this project don't like that project. So when I started the Bronx River Organization, that's when the gangs were starting to slack down and I needed something to keep going. It was really [made up of] the Black Spades, the Savage Skulls, the Savage Nomads. And that's the basis that made up the Zulu Nation.[55]

Bambaataa articulated the importance that youth gangs provided for the organizations he initiated. Alien Ness credited the development of the Bronx River Organization to the extant culture of the Bronx River community saying, "[b]ecause, Bronx River, from what I seen in those days, because Bronx River already had that vibe 'that it doesn't matter who you're down with, or who I'm down with, because at the end of the day this is our projects, this is our fort.' So they already, in those days, had the sense of recognizing our similarities rather than our differences."[56]

By 1973, The Bronx River Organization included youth from the James Monroe Houses, the Soundview Houses, Castle Hill Houses, the Patterson Houses, as well as kids who lived in private housing in the neighborhoods surrounding these public housing developments. As Bambaataa continued to unify youth in Soundview, the Bronx River Organization name no longer fit. Although not an official member of the Zulu Nation, "Doc" was a childhood friend with Amad Henderson and many first generation members of the Organization, the Zulu Kings, and the Zulu Nation. According to Doc, the territory was, "Bronxdale, Monroe, Soundview, Castle Hill, uptown. We went

[55] Lewis, 91.
[56] Alien Ness, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/13.

everywhere. Bronx River has a big name."[57] The issue of the organization's

name came up at a meeting in the old community center at Bronx River.

Bambaataa was asked, "why are we using the name Bronx River? Everybody

ain't from Bronx River." Without missing a beat, the name was changed to the

Organization and it continued for the next two and half years as the Zulu

Nation was beginning to be conceptualized, organized, and articulated.[58] The

name change demonstrated the expansive, inclusive conceptualization that

Bambaataa brought while establishing the Zulu Nation and consolidating the

various youth cultural practices under the banner of hip-hop.

Before the Zulu Nation, but after the Organization and formed by its

members, there was the Zulu Kings. The Zulu Kings were equal parts

breaking and unified hip-hop crew. According to some breaking authorities, the

Zulu Kings were formed in 1969 or 1970 after Bambaataa witnessed

breaking.[59] However, this history does not correspond with official Zulu History.

According to current Mighty Zulu King President, Alien Ness, the Zulu Kings

share the same originating date as the Zulu Nation. As Alien Ness said, "the

founding fathers [of the Zulu Kings] got together in 1973."[60] Along with the

prominent Zulu Kings, several other groups formed under the Zulu Nation

banner, the Zulu Queens, the Shaka Zulus, the Shaka Queens, and the Zulu

Gestapos. Each group had separate roles, such as dancing (Zulu Kings) or

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[57] "Doc," interview with author, Bronx River Houses, 1/22/14.
[58] Lewis, 92-93.
[59] Mr. Fresh, *Breakdancing: Mr. Fresh and the Supreme Rockers Show You How to do it!* (New York: Avon Books, 1984).
[60] Alien Ness, "The History of the Mighty Zulu Kings" www.bboy.org

security (Gestapos). As Amad Henderson remarked, "we [Zulu Nation] had all walks of life, no matter what you did, we had a space for you."[61]

According to Alien Ness, "they [Zulu Kings] were just the Organization and the brothers that helped spot Bambaataa." The original members of the Zulu Kings had helped Bambaataa the Organization: Amad Henderson, Aziz Jackson, "Shaka" Reed, Vincent "Kusa" Stokes, and "Zambu" Laner.[62] Kusa Stokes' sister, Daphne, remembered the initial activities of Bambaataa and her brother: "My brother Vincent and Bam would be together. . . . [T]hey used to be in the back of the [recreation] center when the center was built and they used to be in the back of the center with the music and playing the hip hop and the dances in the back of the center."[63]

Thus, the Zulu Nation connected the various elements of hip-hop culture. According to Afrika Islam, a member of the Zulu Kings and Zulu Nation, the Zulu Nation and the Zulu Kings existed to "bring the culture, the hip-hop culture, together from the break-dancers to graffiti artists to the DJs to the MCs, to all come together as one unit."[64] As the Organization was giving way to the first articulations of the Zulu Nation, the Zulu Kings realized that they were all dancers; they all were breakers. The Zulu Kings wanted a name to signify the dancing wing of hip-hop as well as a unique group under the banner of the Zulu Nation. The Zulu Kings were also the first established b-boy crew. Previous to the Zulu Kings, the gangs might have had one or two dancers, but

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[61] Amad Henderson, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/14.
[62] Bambaataa Archive #8094, Notebooks. Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[63] Daphne Stokes interviewed by Prof. Mark Naison, 3/20/2007. Bronx African American History Project, Bronx County Historical Society.
[64] Fricke and Ahearn, 55.

never a whole crew. Before the Zulu Kings adopted that name, they

christened themselves the Zulu Masters. That name "lasted about a week,"

said Alien Ness, because "Bambaataa felt Zulu Kings was more 'Zulu-

esque.'"[65]

Although there were several different groups organizing around shared

cultural practices in the Bronx from 1972-1975, they were all under the

leadership of Bambaataa. Master Ice enumerated, "[Zulu] Gestapo, those

were like the security. Zulu Kings were guys. Zulu Queens were the females.

Some of them were breakdancers, yada yada yada, but I know Bam was big

into the 'Kings' and 'Queens' thing."[66] According to Alien Ness, "the b-boying

didn't start at the Herc parties. You could take the b-boys back to the outlaw

gangs of the late '60s, '70s. They were the original b-boys, and it was part of

their war dances."[67] The creation and practices of the Zulu Kings, then,

charted a cultural history away from the Black Spades to the Organization and

finally to the Zulu Nation.

By 1975, Jazzy Jay recalled"[b]lock parties was a way to do your

thing, plugging into the lamppost. Sometimes we used to play till two in the

morning. And we had the support of the whole community. It's like, we'd

rather see them [youth] doing that, doing something constructive than to be

down the block beating each other upside the head like they used to do in the

gang days."[68] Without this re-channeling of the city's electrical grid, holding

parties throughout the Bronx would not have been possible. Bronx youth

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[65] Alien Ness, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/13.
[66] Bernard "Master Ice" Heyward, oral history phone interview with author, 1/14/13.
Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[67] Fricke and Ahearn, 9.
[68] Chang, 97.

appropriated the city's resources for the benefit of communities increasingly

lacking access to city resources. "Plugging-in" passed from gangs to jams, and

then to other jams. Once someone saw the lamppost's power directed to the

DJs soundsystem, this knowledge helped fuel upstart DJs throughout the

Bronx.

A culture of DJs and DJing in Bronx River and the Soundview area

grew as Bambaataa became increasingly interested in music in the early

1970s. Doc recalled, "we started playing music, that started '72 and '73."[69]

Bambaataa studied DJing from Kool DJ D at the Bronx River Houses, and

Disco King Mario at the Bronxdale Houses. In fact, Kool DJ D was one of the

first DJs in the Bronx River Houses to use a "coffinbox" that held both

turntables. Bambaataa's apprenticeship with Disco King Mario was very

important. As Grandmaster Caz recalled, "every DJ commandeered their own

area. If you say Bronx River, Bambaataa is the first that come out your mouth.

If you say Soundview, it's Disco King Mario."[70] In 1972, as Bambaataa

immersed himself in the art of DJing, the Bronx River Organization became

official with a statement of purpose: "This is an organization. We are not a

gang. We are a family. Do not start trouble. Let trouble come to you, then

fight like hell."[71] Bambaataa and the Bronx River Organization formed an

alliance with Disco King Mario's Chuck Chuck City Crew at Soundview Houses.

This alliance demonstrated that previous gang affiliations were disappearing in

the wake of the music. African American and Latino youth throughout the

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[69] "Doc," interview with author, Bronx River Houses, 1/22/14.
[70] Soundwalk Tours. *The Bronx: Hip Hop Soundwalk.* 2009.
[71] Chang, 96.

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Eastern Bronx who just a year or two earlier were enemies, joined up with Bambaataa and the Bronx River Organization.

Bambaataa's modeling of the Organization and the Zulu Nation on Bronx gang structure differed from Kool Herc's parties in the west Bronx shows both personal and sociocultural differences in housing options throughout the west and east Bronx manifested in the ways in which hip-hop coalesced where parties were held. Housing also registered class differences. Herc's parties began in 1520 Sedgwick Avenue's recreation room. 1520 Sedgwick was a brand new apartment building when Herc and his family moved into it in the early 1970s.[72] Decent housing in the west Bronx meant that those who attended Herc's parties participated in hip-hop's post-gang future. As James Goodridge remarked, "the West Side where Kool Herc was, was from an upper middle-class place because you had the River Park Towers...that had really upper middle class minorities."[73] Jeff Chang writes that these kids were too young, too "clean," or lived too far west to be tempted by gangs in the twilight of gang influence.[74]

The north Bronx had its own venue where class demarcations were experienced. The Valley, a north Bronx park where jams were held, "felt" different to kids from others sections of the Bronx. James Goodridge explained, "the feel [at the Valley] was different because number one, the kids were more . . . upper middle-class, and maybe dressed a little better. . . . [Y]ou

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[72] Chang, 77. The Campbells lived in East Tremont, centrally located near Crotona Park, when Herc first moved to New York. However, the Campbells were forced to leave their home after a fire, moving to the west Bronx into a brand new apartment building.
[73] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[74] Chang, 77.

were more likely to see white kids up there, then further down." Describing the

"South Bronx," Mr. Goodridge remarked that, "with the South, with Flash and

them, it was more of the lower income. They didn't have the funds like we did

up here [Bronx River]. And that was more in the street. Block parties. On the

corner."[75] Finally, describing the "far East" of Bronx River, Mr. Goodridge said,

"with Bronx River, it was more like, how can I say, we were more middle-class.

We didn't dress as flashy as CO-OP City. We didn't have the money like they

had up there, but we was trying to get something going where we was."[76]

Describing the difference between the South Bronx and the Soundview area in

the east, Master Ice remembered, "you could see a difference in the different

parts of the Bronx. [Seeing Grandmaster Flash DJ] because of where they

were [South Bronx] maybe right around the corner you would have a

demolished building, and I mean the building is gone, but the bricks are still

there."[77]

Comparison between Herc and Bambaataa's DJing reveals much about

the Zulu Nation in codifying hip-hop culture. DJ Kool Herc pioneered hip-hop's

sound by focusing on the break, responding to partygoers and dancers'

enthusiasm. Kool Herc's parties represented a historical convergence of time,

place, and style. With narrowing leisure activities available to Bronx youth,

Herc's events made an exciting outlet for Bronx youth. Herc established his

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[75] James Goodridge oral history phone interview with author, 10/22/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] Bernard "Master Ice" Heyward, oral history phone interview with author, 1/14/13. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

reputation through flyers and word-of-mouth promotion.[78] Herc created a

business structure for his parties by building neighborhood experience of block

parties and neighborhood social gatherings, tapping into extant, informal

networks.[79] Bambaataa also provided excitement, but the organizations he

formed acted as a form of cultural pedagogy, as well. While Herc was

managing party behavior through the threat of cancellation, Bambaataa

threatened through the potential of force. "There was nobody that can come

into a Afrika Bambaataa party and start any trouble, because you had the Zulu

Nation that made sure that there was no trouble whatsoever," MC Sha-Rock

recalled.[80] Bambaataa actively created a way to imagine oneself in

relationship to nascent hip-hop through gang structure, which he further refined

through the creation of the Zulu Nation.

Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation

Tricia Rose famously frames hip-hop's cultural heritage in terms of "flow,

layering, and rupture.[81] Rose reasons that hip-hop represented an African

American and Afordiasporic response to the dislocation and disintegration of

urban communities. These dynamics fit will with Nathan Silver and Charles

Jencks' theory of "adhocism," elaborated in their 1973 text, *Adhocism: The*

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[78]Fricke and Ahearn, Chapter Two. Describing his early days, Herc recounted going to neighborhood clubs and passing out his flyers until club employees forced him to leave.
[79] Ibid., 35. Kool DJ AJ recalled that, "in the South Bronx we really had nothing to do. There wasn't no movie theaters—everything we did was like something just to make a little bit of excitement in the area. . . . And then when people seen Kool DJ Herc, it was like some excitement, and it drew a crowd. I just took notice, and it was interesting."
[80] Ibid., 50.
[81] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994). See Chapter 2, "All Aboard the Night Train: Flow, Layering, and Rupture in Postindustrial New York."

Case for Improvisation, which argued that in the late 1960s and early 1970s art

and architecture "involve[d] using any available system or dealing with an

existing situation in a new way to solve a problem quickly and efficiently."[82]

Jencks and Silver considered adhocism to be a democratic practice that was

responsive to an increasingly consumer driven society located in urban spaces.

They argued that, "to an unprecedented extend we now try to master-plan and

control changing aspects of culture and society. What's wrong with the world

has become not its disorder, but its repressive order."[83] In the face of urban

renewal and urban neglect, Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation can be seen as

pathfinders of "adhocism" in the market and the city. Bambaataa and the Zulu

Nation used consumer products, and urban spaces and places as both

extensions of African American cultural practices and something new. The

cultural practices and pathways created by Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation

translated youthful cultural creations into a full-fledged counterpublic. As

Michael Warner wrote, "public reflexivity and market reflexivity have been

interarticulated in a variety of ways from the beginning;" so defined, a public

resides in the interconnection of texts intended for circulation, and the

commercial infrastructure devoted to maintain circulation as a consumer

enterprise.[84] Not only did the Zulu Nation extend African American cultural

practices, but it also presented entirely new responses in the service of

establishing a cultural and commercial counterpublic.

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[82] Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973).
[83] Jencks and Silver, Chapter 3 "Adhocism in the Market and the City."
[84] Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture*, Volume 14, Number 1, Winter 2002, pp. 49-90, 25.

Bambaataa was inspired by the material environment and cultural practices he experienced in the Bronx River Houses and throughout the Bronx. The man responsible for establishing the Zulu Nation grew up in the Bronx River Houses in building 1595, apartment 1-C. Bambaataa lived on the ground floor. As DJ Jazzy Jay recalls, "Bam used to put his speakers out the window and play music all day."[85] Other Bronx River Houses residents also remember the young Bambaataa and his public music playing. Daphne Stokes recalled, " he [Bambaataa] was the first person that I knew that put a speaker in the window . . . . And he would be in the window and he would be playing all kinds of music."[86]

The location of Bambaataa's apartment and the set-up of the Bronx River Houses also had a profound impact on the Zulu Nation. Building 1595 stands directly southwest of the community center in the center of the development. This location guaranteed that Bambaataa's music would be heard by all the kids hanging out outside or walking to the community center. Bronx River consists of nine main buildings, each fifteen stories tall. If Bambaataa had lived on the eleventh floor, or in an outlying building, for example, the history of the Zulu Nation and hip-hop would be quite different. Because of the centralized layout of the Bronx River Houses, the fortuitous fact that Bambaataa lived in a central location allowed him to use his cultural and spatial genius to extend the idea of the outdoor soundsystem throughout the Bronx River Houses.

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[85] Chang, 89.
[86] Daphne Stokes interviewed by Professor Mark Naison, 3/20/2007. The Bronx African American History Project, The Bronx County Historical Society.

Afrika Bambaataa conceived of the Zulu Nation from a broad range of

sources and inspirations beyond gangs: several other sources rooted in

transnational and international cultural pathways were central including

combining elements of Black Nationalist thought from Nation of Islam leader

Louis Farrakhan, Malcolm X, and the Ansaaru Allah community leader Dr.

Malachi Z. York, Bambaata also incorporated the 1964 film, *Zulu*, and his

personal experiences of a 1975 UNICEF sponsored trip to Africa, to construct

the intellectual scaffolding of the Zulu Nation. Bambaataa said he viewed the

movie in terms of late 1960s Black Nationalism and Black Power. He recalled,

"[j]ust to see these Black people fighting for what was theirs against the British,

that always stuck in my mind. I said when I get of age, I will start this

organization and put all these ideologies together in this group called the Zulu

Nation."[87] Bambaataa's reference to "Zulu Nation in New York, U.S.A." in his

notebooks reveals the fact that Bambaataa saw the Zulu Nation as a

nationalist movement within the United States.[88] All of these elements of

Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation's history placed the intellectual, cultural, and

material foundations of the Zulu Nation within overlapping, transnational, and

sociocultural movements.[89]

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[87] Fricke and Ahearn, 44.

[88] Bambaataa Archive #8094, Notebooks. Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[89] Chang, 93; 100. My research involves a deep look at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and Bronx River Houses archives and informants at the NYCHA archives at LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, the Bronx County Historical Society, and the Bronx African American History Project, among other archival locations and sources. I have yet to find any source or lead that either substantiates or repudiates Bambaataa's essay contest story. I exchanged several emails with archivists at UNICEF, and they had no record of the contest, but quickly averred that that did not mean it did not happen, rather it was a reflection on the state UNICEF's archives. Based on the historical record, it is definitely possible, and plausible, that UNICEF sent the young Bambaataa on an

Using *Zulu* illustrated hip-hop's, and the Zulu Nation's, strategies for mining culture industry products for novel purposes and integrating them into meaningful cultural expressions rooted in lived experiences. For Bambaataa, the inspiration for the Zulu Nation derived from viewing his personal history through a transnational lens aided by international travel and culture industry products. In the quotes above, he acknowledged the importance of preceding African American political and cultural movements, and gestured toward hip-hop's emerging method of creation: making seemingly disparate cultural and material artifacts authentically connect to the post-civil rights' African American generation.

Reiland Rebaka describes hip-hop history and culture in connected social, political, sociological, and musicological movements. As Rebaka wrote:

> hip-hop culture is also *a new, post-Civil Rights Movement and post-Black Power movement form of black popular culture and black popular music-based politics and social movement . . . . hip-hop as a 'movement'* conjure[s] up and consciously conceive[s] of rap music and hip hop culture, as well as the often overlooked cultural, social, and political movement it spawned, as *the accumulated politics and aesthetics of each and every African American movement and musical form that preceded it.*[90]

Movement, quite literally, undergirded the Zulu Nation. In 1974-1975, Afrika Bambaataa claimed to have won two essay contests sponsored by UNICEF. According to Bambaataa, the topic for both essays wanted to know why the author would want to visit India, in 1974, and Africa, in 1975. According to

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international trip in 1975. Regardless of the historical fact of the trip, it's important to register the truth that transnational routes—cultural, personal, and commodities—undergird the Zulu Nation's intellectual roots.

[90] Reiland Rebaka, *The Hip Hop Movement: From R&B and the Civil Rights Movement to Rap and the Hip Hop Generation* (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), ix. (italics included in the original passage)

Bambaataa, he missed his opportunity to claim his 1974 India prize because he was "outside giving out flyers for the next party."[91]

However, the trip to Africa proved pivotal to Afrika Bambaataa's conceptualizing of the Zulu Nation. When asked about the essay contest and trip to Africa, Amad Henderson recalled, "It was a contest, that's what it was. He did a essay and he won. That's how he got to go to Africa."[92] During his trip, Bambaataa witnessed "black people waking up in the early morning, opening their stores, doing the agriculture, doing whatever they have to do to keep the country happening. Compared to what you hear in America about, 'Black people can't do this and that,' that really just changed my mind."[93] Once Bambaataa returned, he was inspired to redefine the Organization and try to organize all the Bronx youth to join. Zulu Nation member and Bronx River Houses resident, Flower Cool recalled "when he [Bambaataa] went to Africa, when he went on his pilgrimage, whatever he did over there—I like to say he went on his pilgrimage," Flower Cool continued, "when he came back he had a whole different mindset. And that's just what he instilled in the Nation. That's our mission statement: peace, love, unity, and having fun."[94]

The history of Afrika Bambaataa's name reinforces the transnational cultural connections that were already animating his thoughts prior to his 1975 trip. Several different stories have circulated about the adoption of the name "Afrika Bambaataa," including former Black Spade members claiming they

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[91] Chang, 100.
[92] Amad Henderson, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/21/14.
[93] Chang, 101.
[94] Flower Cool, oral history phone interview with author, 1/21/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

gave Bambaataa his name, or they were approached by a young Bambaataa about adopting his name. Dispelling these naming notions, Amad Henderson said that, "Bambaataa himself took on the name Bambaataa, from religion-wise: Muslim. Afrika come in from the motherland with the different spelling."[95] DJ Jazzy Jay recalled a friend telling him, "you heard that cat Bambaataa? He's calling himself Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation now. He got some movement called the Zulu Nation."[96]

Afrika Bambaataa also developed the Zulu Nation with substantial influence from the Nation of Islam and the Five Percenters. The Five Percenter, or the Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE), movement derived from Clarence 13X who left the Nation of Islam in 1963 to teach and spread the Supreme Wisdom lessons to Harlem youth, preaching that African American men are God personified. The Five Percenters derive their name from the concept that ten percent of people know the truth of existence, and these elites keep eighty-five percent of the world's population in ignorance. The remaining five percent, The Five Percenters, are those who know this truth and are determined to teach the eighty-five percent. Calling himself Allah and "building and teaching knowledge of self," Clarence 13X spread Five Percenter teachings throughout the late 1960s, finding particularly fertile ground with youths in public housing, detention centers, jails, and prisons.[97]

Bambaataa began developing a question and answer list of basic Zulu History in 1977 modeled after the Supreme Wisdom lessons of the Nation of

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[95] Amad Henderson, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/14.

[96] Chang, 101.

[97] Michael Muhammad Knight, *The Five Percenters: Islam, Hip-Hop, and the Gods of New York* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 2007).

Islam.[98] Echoing Clarence 13X and the Five Percenters, Flower Cool

discussed the importance of the Zulu Nation and Bambaataa's teachings,

saying "knowledge of self. That's going to free up a lot of folks from prison,

from going back to prison, and they [dominant power structures] don't want

that."[99] Zulu member Master Ice remarked that, "the guys in Bronx River and

the surrounding areas that were really in tune with him [Bambaataa] and the

Zulu Nation, and teaching the lessons, and the 360 degrees, and knowledge of

self and this and that . . . I know it made guys take a step back and say 'why

are we doing this to each other' . . . 'We need to focus on bettering the

situation we're in.'"[100]

Zulu Nation and Bronx River

Michael Warner writes, "[t]he idea of *a* public, as distinct from both *the*

public and any bounded audience, has become part of the common repertoire

of modern culture." From this idea of the existence of different and overlapping

publics, Warner further theorized that "a public is a space of discourse

organized by nothing other than discourse itself . . . . It exists *by virtue of being*

addressed."[101] This was certainly the case with both the Organization and the

Zulu Nation. As each organization coalesced through Afrika Bambaataa's

endorsement the idea of each organization was ever more expansive.

Bambaataa and the establishment of the Zulu Nation was a reflection of "a

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[98] Bambaataa Archive #8094, Notebooks. Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[99] Flower Cool, oral history phone interview with author, 1/21/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[100] Bernard "Master Ice" Heyward, oral history phone interview with author, 1/14/13. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[101] Warner, 50.

public [as] a poetic world-making." At each moment leading up to the formal establishment of Zulu Nation, Bambaataa specified "in countless highly condensed ways, the lifeworld of its circulation," by not only proclaiming, "'[l]et a public exist,' but: 'Let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way.'"[102] Bambaataa crafted a worldview from the distinct, yet connected youth cultural practices of Bronx youth in the 1970s. Finally, Bambaataa organized a "public" hip-hop discourse that was a counterpublic because "[t]he cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one. And the conflict extends not just to ideas or policy questions, but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public and to the hierarchy among media."[103]

The cultural and material fact of the Bronx River Houses lay at the center of the history of Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation. In "Zulu Nation Infinity Lesson #1," Afrika Bambaataa wrote in 1977, "the Zulu Nation was founded in 1975 by a young student at Adlai E. Stevenson High School . . . [and] he made the Universal Zulu Nation home base in . . . a housing development called the Bronx River Houses."[104] By the 1970s, the use of the community center stretched the boundaries from a public to a counterpublic, because the place and practices within that space became synonymous with the Zulu Nation itself. If architecture and the built environment were encumbered with notions of race and space like so much steel and glass, and can be read as texts, then applying Warner's insights that "a public is self-organized" holds true for the

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[102] Warner, 82.
[103] Ibid., 86.
[104] Bambaataa Archive #8094, Notebooks. Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

ways in which a relationship develops between people and the built environment.[105]   Popmaster Fabel explained the relationship between the Community Center and the Zulu Nation: "even just getting into the projects and getting into the Community Center [could be dangerous]," but once inside, "that's the safe haven." For the kids that gathered in the Community Center, Fabel said, "once we were in there [the community center] we had a lot of fun with [DJs] Red Alert and Jazzy Jay, all the Zulus. It was a bunch of kids having fun listening to music, dancing, and partying. We were just totally celebrating."[106]

The Zulu Nation represented the material and cultural relationship between the Bronx River Houses and emerging hip-hop culture. Because the construction and the administration of the houses were designed to represent and re-present a community and its residents, the Bronx River Houses served as a site housing a variety of publics. Contemporaries of Bambaataa remember his use of the public spaces of the Bronx River Houses, when he would place his speakers in the windows of his apartment and play his records, creating the sounds of emerging hip-hop and the jams, which were consonant with youth and leisure practices in the Bronx and New York during this time period. Bambaataa, and his organization of Zulu supporters, would set up turntables and play music at the back of the center encouraging the breakers in the back of the center. So, in addition to formal dances, the practice and creation of hip-hop was just a part of everyday youthful practices in the Bronx River Houses.

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[105] Warner, 50.
[106] Jorge "Popmaster" Fabel, interview with author, 4/19/13, College of William & Mary.

In addition to tapping into the relationship between Bronx River and his peers, Bambaataa also registered a Bronx, urban, and generational relationship between the built environment and cultural creation. Bambaataa forged such widespread connections because he understood that the Bronx's built environment provided a similar set of material experiences for his generational cohort—he offered a similar material backdrop for the forging of shared cultural practices.

Like many practicing graffiti artists in the early 1970s, Bambaataa deployed multiple tags: BAMBAATAA, BAM 117 and BOM 117.[107] Through graffiti, artists sprayed statements about their identity in urban space on the material environment. Beyond territorial gains, graffiti's initial work of re-mapping the city was an act of locating the self in urban geography.[108] Graffiti artists were not necessarily attempting to erase or destroy the urban environment: their work was an attempt at inclusion within that environment. Furthermore, graffiti and gang life were coterminous performances of identity. The same concerns animated graffiti artists and gangs: One early artist noted graffiti's emphasis on neighborhood: "when you grow up in a neighborhood that's all gangs, you got to join . . . They used to call me 174 spider. That was my name . . . I wrote 174 Spider [not Spider 174, as most graffiti writers would have]. I felt my block was me, and that came first."[109] Emerging from the same neighborhoods and practiced by the same folks in the gangs, graffiti was

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[107] Chang, 91. "Career" might be stretching the point, but Bambaataa did participate in graffiti writing—even if he only participated though name-tags and basic throw-ups.
[108] Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 47. Quoting the writer credited with popularizing tagging, Taki 183, Austin notes that Taki 183 was most interested in "the way the name looked" in urban space.
[109] Fricke and Ahearn, 5.

directly tied to the Bronx's built environment. Therefore, we can see that Bambaataa imbued this relationship between cultural practices and cultural structures, with the built environment around him.

Performing the Zulu Nation, Performing Hip-Hop

Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation held a battle with Kool Herc and his Herculoids at the Bronx River Houses community center sometime in late 1975 or early 1976. The Original DJ Jimmie Jazz the GQ described the excitement surrounding this event: "I remember it was packed! I couldn't even get in, there was just so many people; the crowds were crazy."[110] This battle marked an important shift in the history of hip-hop. Herc had pioneered the ways that a hip-hop party would look and feel like, but Bambaataa took the next step organizing hip-hop practitioners. The battle also marked a geographic change, from Herc's site in the West to Bambaataa's seat in the East.

According to T-Kid 170, a graffiti artist who was a member of several gangs and graffiti crews during t, battling was a way life, with everything steeped in competition. According to T-Kid 170, he earned a chance to become a member of the Bronx Enchanters gang because he was "king of the swings" by beating rivals through various acrobatic displays on park swing seats.[111] The same spirit of competition and battling held true for Bambaataa and Kool Herc. Kool Herc remembered, "If Bam and I had a battle, we knew it was just a gimmick to attract people. But the Zulus would take it to heart and

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[110] The Original DJ Jimmie Jazz the GQ, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/29/14. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[111] Julius Cavero, *The Nasty Terribel T-Kid 170* (Cologne, Germany: From Here to Fame, 2005) 8.

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start pulling plugs. Bam is not to be blamed for that." Herc added, "He ain't that type of person. Anybody who picks up the wax is a friend in my heart, but Bam is the only DJ I really respect because he always plays music I never heard before."[112] Although Herc was never a gang member and Bambaataa moved away from the gangs, the structure of fighting was inculcated in hip-hop.

The culture of battling and the rise of the hip-hop DJ formed a link between the street youth culture in the Bronx in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the emergence of hip-hop and jams. Throughout New York black radio, DJs provided a template for Bambaataa and aspiring hip-hop DJs. These older, more traditional DJs such as Douglas "Jocko" Henderson, Eddie O-Jay at WLIB, Gary Byrd at WWRL, Cousin Brucie at WABC, and live DJs such as Murray the K at the Brooklyn Fox, and Eddie Cheba and DJ Hollywood at the Apollo Theater all performed in a style of rapping Bambaataa described as "jive-talking rap."[113] These DJs continued a tradition of signifying, playing the dozens, and other forms of African American aural performativity.[114] However, the records receiving airplay reflected a consolidated corporate approach to black music. These records marked the distance between the Civil Rights generation and the economically marginalized black youth isolated from the gains of the previous half-decade. For the emerging DJ's of the hip-hop generation, including Bambaataa, Kool Herc, and Grandmaster Flash, Soul, Funk, R&B, as well as rock became the new musical foundation of hip-hop's counterpublic.

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[112] Steven Hager, "Afrika Bambaataa's Hip Hop," *Village Voice,* September 21, 1982.
[113] Fricke and Ahearn, 45.
[114] David Toop, *Rap Attack #3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000). See Chapter 3, "African Jive."

The music favored by emerging hip-hop DJs was representative of a cultural shift and generational convergence identified as "post-soul." Mark Anthony Neal describes the "post-soul aesthetic" as an "aesthetic center within contemporary black popular culture that at various moments considers issues like deindustrialization, desegregation, the corporate annexation of black popular expression, cybernization in the workforce, the globalization of finance and communication, the general commodification of black life and culture. . . while continuously collapsing on modern concepts of blackness and reanimating 'premodern' (African?) concepts of blackness." Expanding on Nelson George's term, post-soul, Neal used the term to describe "the political, social, and cultural experiences of the African-American community since the end of the civil rights and Black Power movements."[115]

In the post-soul moment and the post-soul aesthetic, new forms of culture were created, older forms of culture were recovered and recombined, and a pronounced generational difference between class and community emerged. The generational and class-based chasm marked by the distinct musical performances of James Brown and the Quiet Storm radio format, brought forth the post-soul hip-hop DJ. As a DJ, Bambaataa focused on the break of the song instead of playing the entire track. Commenting on the difference between established black DJs and what Bambaataa and Herc was doing, Bambaataa said, "[w]e just took the different forms that was happening, what they was doing, but then we started adding new rhymes, and Herc came

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[115] Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2-3.

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in with the beats."[116] What Bambaataa meant by Herc's beats was the heavier

funk and soul breaks on records that were increasingly removed from radio

playlists. Although Herc provided a sonic move forward in terms of the hip-hop

DJing, he was also influenced by DJs working in a black vernacular oral form.

These DJs introduced Herc to music and a way of DJ presentation.[117]

Focusing on the break in the record cemented the link between break-dancers

and the DJ at early hip-hop parties, representing a hip-hop call and response.

Influenced by Kool Herc rather than the established Bronx River and Bronxdale

DJs, Bambaataa's sonic aesthetics represented the generational differences in

African American youth musical and cultural creations. According to

Bambaataa, "on our side of the Bronx we had the disco era still going strong.

But after awhile we got tired of hearing the Hustle and disco records—we

wanted that funk."[118] The records were hip-hop's musical DNA.

From Lil Vietnam to City of Gods

Steven Hager's September 21, 1982 *Village Voice* article, "Afrika

Bambaataa's Hip Hop," profiled the early history of hip-hop, from the first jams

to the culture's move to downtown Manhattan in the early 1980s, all while

profiling Bambaataa's central role in establishing hip-hop culture. Hager deftly

traced the history of Bronx gang violence and detailed the events that led to

the Bronx River Houses earning the sobriquet Lil Vietnam. Over the course of

92 days in 1973, a feud between the Black Spades and the Seven Crowns

escalated to constant shootings, earning the name, "Lil Vietnam." Discussing

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[116] Fricke and Ahearn, 45.
[117] Chang, 73.
[118] Fricke and Ahearn, 45.

the violence in Bronx River in the early 1970s, Bambaataa commented, "I was into the street gang violence. That was all part of growing up in the Southeast Bronx." However, Bambaataa stopped any further reminiscing saying, "I don't really be speaking on that stuff because it's negative. The Black Spades was helping out the community, raising money for sickle cell anemia and gettin' people to register to vote."[119] Through cultural and community work adopted from the Black Spades, Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation transformed "Lil Vietnam" into a "City of Gods."

Eastern Bronx hip-hop geography was different. For Soundview residents, New York City public housing represented the best housing option. As much as 1520 Sedgwick had a safe feeling, the Bronx River Houses did not, to outsiders, although to residents it was a haven. In fact, folks who attended Bambaataa's early parties recalled travelling to the Bronx River Houses with a lot of trepidation. Whipper Whip recalled the prevailing sentiment concerning travelling to the Bronx River Houses: "nobody wanna go to Bronx River. . . 'cause usually after every show Bam would throw, you'd hear gunshots throughout the projects in Bronx River, and it's a mess."[120] DJ Breakout affirmed Whipper Whip's recollections: "Everybody was scared to go to Bronx River; they said 'Don't go to Bronx River or you wind up in a fight.'"[121] Echoing Whipper Whip and DJ Breakout's views of Bronx River, Alien Ness remembered, "being scarred shitless" the first time he visited Bronx River. As

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[119] Hager, "Afrika Bambaataa's Hip Hop."
[120] Fricke and Ahearn, 50.
[121] Ibid., 49.

he recalled his first visits in the early 1980s, "many people called it Little Vietnam. Bronx River was like a little fort."[122]

Within the geography of the Bronx River Houses and the Soundview section of the Bronx, the emergence of hip-hop was a different experience in terms of the built environment. Through the Bronx River Organization, Afrika Bambaataa organized local youth based on their shared history of gang membership. Bambaataa consolidated Soundview youth as a warlord and ex-warlord, of the Black Spades. Although the Black Spades were now a cultural artifact of the Bronx's youth, their structures of affiliation persisted. Bronx River Houses parties needed security. Former gang members were recruited into the Bronx River Organization and many of the recruited former gang members provided security. Flyers, as well as word-of-mouth, would spread for a Bambaataa party, and the invitation always ended with the exhortation, "come in peace." For Bambaataa, the Bronx River Organization, and the stable of ex-Black Spades that comprised the ranks of the Organization's enforcers, it was a request as much as a threat.

The emergence of the Zulu Nation and hip-hop demonstrated several important developments in terms of American culture. The Zulu Nation codified hip-hop--guaranteeing a hip-hop nation—through a direct intervention in the material places and spaces of the Bronx River Houses and the Bronx. Of course, the Zulu Nation emerged from The Bronx River Organization and the influence of gang structure. However, the Zulu Nation's creation aimed to create a new vision of African American urban community connected to

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[122] Alien Ness, interview with the author, Bronx River Community Center, 1/22/13.

popular culture, the material spaces and places of the Bronx, and African American cultural practices. Through the Zulu Nation, Bambaataa framed a disparate set of cultural practices into a worldview meant to unify and empower a youthful, African American and Latino cohort increasingly relegated to the social, economic, and cultural periphery of the United States. Significantly, as hip-hop and rap was increasingly consolidated in the culture industry, the Zulu Nation provided a map to guide its international trajectory.

Importantly, many residents saw the Zulu Nation as a boon to the Bronx River Houses community. Louis Andrus said "[t]he gangs would always be fighting. With Bambaataa, he gave something else for the kids to do and the violence would stop. I saw that it was good, so I went along with it and helped get the police to just come and watch and not always be pushing them back. They worked it out and it was a great thing."[123] Alien Ness echoed Louis Andrus' recollections, "Once the parties started here, and word got around. All of sudden it was the cool thing. You had to go to a Bronx River Jam.... So, in those days, because the party, the social gathering was so important, because back in those days, the Bronx was a wasteland. The only thing you had was that moment of losing yourself at the dance, at the party. So once the parties were becoming larger, there was a lot more traffic coming here [the Bronx; Bronx River], and a lot less fear."[124]

In April 2007 for *National Geographic*, musician and writer James McBride traced hip-hop's global expansion and his own reconciliation with a genre of music he never liked. Arriving in Bronx River, McBride wrote, "some

[123] Louis Andrus, oral history interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 6/25/12. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.
[124] Alien Ness, interview with author, Bronx River Community Center, 1/22/13.

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call the Bronx River Houses the City of Gods," adding, "The Bronx is the

hallowed holy ground of hip-hop. . . . Visitors take tours through this

neighborhood now, care of a handful of fortyish 'old-timers,' who point out the

high and low spots of hip-hop's birthplace."[125] McBride's image of the various

hip-hop history tours that regularly take interested tourists throughout the

Bronx signaled Bambaataa's impact leading a generation of youth from "Lil

Vietnam" to find themselves in a City of Gods.

Conclusion: Foundations Created

Bambaataa's essay contest and subsequent 1975 trip provided the

intellectual impetus to push the Organization into a transnational organization.

In turn, this moment provided a way to connect the Bronx River Houses and

the Zulu Nation—understanding how Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation were

able to turn Little Vietnam into the City of Gods. Although it remains unclear

whether or not Bambaataa travelled to Africa, the fact that Bambaataa was

already imagining this intellectual journey remains the most important part of

this history. Furthermore, it is important that Bambaataa's transnational turn

with the Organization and the Zulu Nation is directly linked with the Bronx River

Houses and NYCHA. This connection demonstrated the importance of the

Bronx River Houses, NYCHA, and public housing in the development of the

Zulu Nation, and hip-hop. Finally, without the material and cultural

convergence of the Bronx River Houses, public housing in New York, and the

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[125] James McBride, "Hip-Hop Planet," *National Geographic*, April 2007.

development of the Zulu Nation, where would hip-hop have emerged from, what would it have looked like?

As Alien Ness described the importance of Bronx River: "[s]o much talent came out of here and some much talent had to come here, just to make a name. Mitchel Project [Mayor John Purroy Mitchel Houses in Mott Haven], in my humble opinion, is just as relevant to hip hop as Bronx River, however, the culture, the subculture, as we know it was birthed here. That's what sets Bronx River apart from everyting else. Everyone in Bronx River knows that this is where it all began, and we stand for something that's global now."[126] Significantly, the Zulu Nation crafted hip-hop out of longstanding experiential tensions between public and private places, spaces, and cultural productions. The Zulu Nation's vision of hip-hop performed and produced in the Bronx River Houses demonstrated that Afrika Bambaataa and his cohort were invested with crafting (trans)national perspectives within the Bronx River Houses.

Because the Zulu Nation was created from the Black Spades and other Soundview area, and Bronx gangs, Bambaataa had a large, ready-made audience—an "army already backing him" as he described it. As Bambaataa was expanding hip-hop's sonics, his "army" responded to, and codified, his version of what hip-hop should sound like while acting as word-of-mouth advertising for the Zulu Nation and bringing in new recruits. Afrika Bambaataa expanded the sound and size of hip-hop through his expansive record collection and the Zulu Nation parties. The initial parties were held in the Bronx River community center and the Bronx River park. These parties were

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[126] Alien Ness, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/13.

organized to include the original four elements of hip-hop: the DJ, the MC, the b-boy, and the graffiti artist.[127] Fundamental to the formation of the Zulu Nation was a synergy between all the emerging cultural practices of Bronx youth in the early 1970s. Throughout the Bronx, the youth that were creating these cultural practices were establishing structures of feeling. However, it would take the Zulu Nation's parties and music to explicitly connect emerging hip-hop's "meanings and values as actively lived and felt," and the Zulu Nation's parties were an active attempt to build a community through hip-hop, honoring the social emergence of hip-hop practices instead of viewing them as "private, idiosyncratic, and isolating" behaviors.[128] Through the intentional bundling of hip-hop's emerging elements, anchored by the records of Bambaataa, the Zulu Nation ushered in an expanded space of hip-hop.

The Zulu Nation represented the first articulation of a unified hip-hop scene. The youths involved in graffiti and break dancing were at all the parties, and these practices were cross-fertilizing, loose and informal, because there was not a participant separation between each cultural practice. The Zulu Nation had to codify and establish the permanent link between break-dancing, DJing, graffiti, and MCing. The history of the Zulu Nation is the story of a counterpublic emerging from within a larger national framework and the parochial connections and commitments of a new generation of working-class, and working poor, African America and Latino lower income folks. Describing the connection between Bronx River as a material and cultural community,

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127 Nelson George, "Hip-Hop's Founding Fathers Speak the Truth," in *That's the Joint: the Hip-Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Mark Anthony Neal and Murray Forman (New York: Routledge, 2004), 46.
128 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 132.

Alien Ness said, "Even before Afrika Bambaataa, you had a lot of artists and a lot of artists and musicians coming out of Bronx River. So, besides the fact that community keeps you spiritually rooted and culture keeps you spiritually rooted, for some reason it was always arts in Bronx River....Bambaataa was able to recognize that there was talent."[129]

[129] Alien Ness, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/22/13.

Part Two: Communications

Chapter 3

Just Be Real: Creating and Communicating Hip-Hop Authenticity in the

Bronx and Beyond

In 2007, *Born in the Bronx: A Visual Record of the Early Days of Hip Hop*

appeared, featuring Joe Conzo's 1970s and early 1980s Bronx photography

and Buddy Esquire's partly flyers.[1] Esquire and his flyer-making cohort

created hip-hop advertising that attracted ever-larger groups of people to

attend jams and parties through a visual vocabulary that was culturally

authentic. This helped communicate hip-hop to thousands of interested New

Yorkers through striking visual displays of advertising.

Flyer advertising focused on jams and block parties. As the number of

DJs and MCs hosting parties in the Bronx and Harlem increased, word-of-

mouth communication proved insufficient prompting other forms of advertising.

Although hip-hop parties still relied on hip-hop's initial recreation rooms and

community centers, private clubs and venues in the Bronx and Harlem

increasingly allowed the newest DJs and MCs to capitalize on the burgeoning

youth culture as its participants grew into young adulthood. Hip-hop flyers

answered questions about how best to advertise hip-hop to now geographically

disparate group of youths.

Early party flyers publicized upcoming jams and enticed more people to

attend. However, flyers, and flyer makers, quickly turned the necessity to

advertise into an opportunity to showcase hip-hop visual culture. Although the

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[1] Johan Kugelberg, editor, *Born in the Bronx: A Visual Record of the Early Days of Hip Hop* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007).

importance of flyers and the art of creating flyers have been mentioned in several works of hip-hop history, an extended analysis linking the flyers to hip-hop's growth in the culture industry has yet to be undertaken.[2] Hip-hop flyers are so important to the growth of hip-hop culture that they have been called the sixt foundational element, marketing. As Dan Charnas asserts, "[t]he flyers promoting hip-hop's earliest parties were integral to the culture."[3] Meant to inform and market hip-hop parties, flyers also served to disseminate emerging hip-hop culture. When DJ Kool Herc passed out crude note cards advertising his "back to school jam," on August 11, 1973, these flyers not only advertised a party, but also announced the birth of hip-hop.[4]

Early flyers focused on jams and parties within the seven-mile world of emerging hip-hop and demonstrated the centrality of the Bronx and Harlem. Although parties, jams, and discos were taking place throughout Queens and Brooklyn in the late 1970s, the events advertised by flyers artists were predominately located at venues throughout the Bronx and Harlem. Flyers for parties and dances held outside the seven-mile world explicitly stated the borough location, such as the Ecstasy Discotheque in Brooklyn. However, if the dance or party was held in the Bronx, a borough location was not included.

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[2] Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: Picador, 2005), Charlie Ahearn and Jim Fricke, *Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002, and Kugelberg's *Born in the Bronx* all discusses early flyers. Amanda Lalonde's article, *Buddy Esquire and the Early Hip Hop Flyer,* published in the January 2014 issue of Popular Music, is the first scholarly article written on Esquire and hip-hop flyers.
[3] Dan Charnas, *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop* (New York: New American Library, 2010) x.
[4] James G. Spady, H. Samy Alim, and Samir Meghelli, *The Global Cipha: Hip Hop Culture and Consciousness* (Philadelphia: Black History Museum Press, 2006). According to Cindy Campbell, Kool Herc's sister, the party would generate some back-to-school money for Delancey Street fashions, establishing the art of hip-hop with the consumer practices from the beginning. Cindy Campbell said that the first party earned a profit of 300 to 400 dollars (256).

Instead, the flyer would include the name of the venue in a large font and the address in a smaller font.[5] In the emerging world of hip-hop the Bronx was the center, and the other boroughs peripheral.

Locations were illustrated in a variety of ways. For the Ecstasy Garage Disco in the Bronx, an address might be provided with the venue's name, as well as basic directions, e.g. "2 [subway train] to 170th/ Walk Four Blocks Uptown."[6] Often only the name of the venue would appear on the flyer. Omitting an address or directions suggested that the flyers, the flyer artists, and the kids hustling the flyers on the street understood their audience as hailing from similar neighborhoods. The Savoy, Harlem World, Brothers Disco, Ecstasy Garage Disco, P.A.L., Bronx River and Edenwald Housing Developments were all local Bronx hip-hop landmarks. The flyers' display of local knowledge demonstrated that the flyer artists and party promoters expected that anyone who saw the flyer would know where these venues were located. Following these advertising precepts, Buddy Esquire and his cohorts helped create, communicate, and elaborate hip-hop authenticity in the Bronx and beyond.

When asked about the renewed interest in his flyers, Buddy Esquire remarked, "I find that to be very strange, because it's twenty years and change, and to be honest with you, I never thought anybody would be interested."[7] Although he was extremely humble and self effacing about his artwork and place in hip-hop history, Buddy Esquire helped create a visual

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[5] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Kugelberg, 203.

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record of hip-hop that established both the location and look of hip-hop as it

expanded beyond the neighborhoods of the Bronx. In this chapter I argue that

flyers and flyer artists helped define hip-hop style by shaping its geography into

a more expansive and interconnected urban youth culture.

Party Flyers and Hip-Hop's Elements in the City

Edward Soja argues that the neoliberal city is best represented by the

dialectical relationship between social and spatial sites. This socio-spatial

dialectic explicates the economic and racial tensions within urban space

expressed through unequal experiences of consumption and production.[8]

Soja's perspective helps to locate hip-hop as a cultural force commenting on,

and producing, spatial meaning because hip-hop developed in urban space

mottled by overlapping projects of selective institutional attention and neglect.

Soja describes these overlapping projects through his terms "flexible

specialization," and "selective abandonment." Flexible specialization facilitates

creation and maintenance of separate suburban and inner-city core areas of

industry, while "selective abandonment" entails the "expansive

metropolitianization" of the urban and suburban areas through expanding

fragmentation of political jurisdictions and further decentralization of civil and

commercial services.[9]

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[8]Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989) 78.
[9] Soja gives an in-depth description of "flexible accumulation" on page 171, with "selective abandonment" following on page 181 of *Postmodern Geographies*.

Flexible specialization contrasts with the Fordist model of a factory surrounded by the neighborhoods of its labor force.[10] Instead neoliberal industry fostered vertically dis-integrated production sites anywhere deemed profitable, obviating any infrastructural maintenance responsibilities for the spaces previously developed for factory workers and their families. Flexible specialization enabled flexible accumulation where uneven economic development devastated formerly prosperous areas of the city-center, while once poor, peripheral areas became new centers of profits.[11] These new economic developments both activated and resulted from selective abandonment. As flexible accumulation and specialization further deflected resources from core urban areas, state and local resources could be deployed to develop any urban and suburban areas that remained vital, and profitable, places of production.[12] David Harvey describes this process as uneven geographical developments precipitated by the increasing neoliberalization of capitalist economies. Since the 1970s, Harvey argues, nations that took a "neoliberal turn" embraced economic policies built on greater flexibility of labor markets, deregulation of financial operations, and privatization of state-owned sectors. Thus the state redefined and diminished its commitment to social programs, as progress and profits became increasingly synonymous in political

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[10] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (New York: Wiley, 1992)

[11] Soja, 172.

[12] Soja, 181. Soja describes the combination of these processes as the "State-Managed Urban System" begun during the Depression, but greatly expanded and accelerated after World War II. For a comprehensive and detailed history of the creation and conflict between urban and suburban spaces see Lizabeth Cohen's *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003) specifically chapters five and six.

rhetoric.[13] The results of these processes and policies resulted in planned

urban pockets of decay; the same pockets of decay that discursively and

literally symbolized the Bronx of the 1970s.

Flyer visual culture was rooted in the developing artistic and

commercial sophistication of graffiti writing. By the early 1970s, graffiti writers

explicitly linked advertising, branding, and visual representations in public

spaces as foundational to graffiti writing.[14] According to early writer, IZ THE

WIZ, "Mr. Mobil; Mr. Amoco; Mr. Exxon. They're rich. They can put their name

on any sign, any place. . . . Ok, now you're on a poorer economic level and

what do you have? . . . *It's all in the name.* When you're poor, that's all you

got."[15] Through the visual and artistic logic of graffiti and hip-hop culture, the

flyer artists were creating works quite literally advertising the product, the

dances and jams, and also advertising themselves, expanding the hip-hop

community while trafficking in neoliberal practices.

As graffiti and hip-hop continued to experiment and develop, so too did

hip-hop advertising. By 1975, graffiti artists had expanded to painting whole

subway train car masterpieces using increasingly complex, "wild style," visual

vocabulary. Similarly, flyer artists developed increasingly sophisticated graphic

content through the inclusion of illustrations and cartoons, the use of Prestype

and Letraset fonts and lettering, and varied spatial composition. Buddy

Esquire's flyers demonstrated an aesthetic and performative connection with

graffiti writing; both graffiti writing and flyer making were designed to advertise

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[13] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005) 87.

[14] Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 38.

[15] IZ The WIZ quoted in Austin, 39-40. (my emphasis).

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personas. Esquire developed his style similar to graffiti writing's prestige economy. Described by Joe Austin as "the cultural rules by which status is allotted among a group of individuals: how status is accumulated and lost; how it is created and promoted; how it circulates."[16]

The 1977 New York City blackout fueled the growth of new DJ and MC crews through looted sound systems. Iz the Wiz recalled: "Before the blackout, you had about maybe five legitimate crews of DJs. After the blackout, you had a DJ on every block. . . . that blackout made a big spark in the hip-hop revolution."[17] Grandmaster Caz remembered playing a jam in the park when the lights went out. While he left the park he saw people looting a local music store, The Sound Room. Caz recalled: "people breakin' in there anyway— might as well run in and see about getting us a new mixer and turntables!"[18] Enterprising, alas law breaking, DJ's deployed theft to augment their equipment before the 1977 blackout. DJ Box Top, from the Bronx River Houses, was locally famous for creating his entire sound system from stolen gear.[19] After the blackout, DJ and MC crews needed a new way to stand out from new competitors. As result, flyer making, and flyer making style, became increasingly important.

The increase in the number of DJs and MCs precipitated an increase of performance venues. In addition to community centers and public school gymnasiums, large and small clubs were hosting DJs and MCs. Many of the

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[16] Austin, 47.

[17] Fricke and Ahearn, 133.

[18] Ibid., 132.

[19] James Goodridge, oral history phone interview with author,s 10/22/12. Bronx River Oral History Project. Thankfully the statute of limitations applied before our conversation or else I would not have heard about DJ Boxhead's alleged activities.

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clubs were short-lived, but new clubs and venues continued to emerge. Clubs

popped up throughout the Bronx, they were not limited to any geographic area.

The increasing number of locations and types of venues reflected increased

DJ and MC crews that all needed increased flyer advertisement. [20]

Flyer makers thrived on competition. From 1978-1983, flyer artists

challenged each other through their work. Eddie Ed, Buddy Esquire's brother

and fellow flyer maker, poked fun at Esquire's use of cartoon mice. On a 1980

flyer, Eddie Ed captioned his flyer with "no more rats Esquire." Fellow artist

flyer, Vega Ray, established some friendly competition via flyer with Buddy

Esquire with the message: "To my man Buddy Esquire are you ready?"[21]

These artists judged each other based on technical and stylistic criteria

including the use of Prestype and Letraset fonts, borders, illustrations, and

overall artistry.[22]

Prompted during a 2010 interview, Esquire ranked his fellow flyer

artists. Describing Straightman's flyers, Esquire gave him a "6 out of 10"

because of his "borders." Danny T. earned an "8 out of 10" because he used

Prestype and Letraset fonts lettering and borders, in addition to being a good

illustrator. Esquire's critiques acknowledged the importance borders,

backgrounds and Prestype and Letraset fonts, lettering in addition to being a

good illustrator. Although the flyers ranged in artistry from simple handwritten

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[20] The list of venues during the 1970s and early 1980s before hip-hop moved to downtown Manhattan clubs is long. The Cornell Hip Hop Collection's archive of flyers provides an excellent resource to track venue locations. Additionally, Dan Charnas' *The Big Payback*, Johan Kugelberg's *Born in the Bronx* and Charlie Ahearn and Jim Fricke's *Yes Yes Y'All* are excellent resources for early hip-hop party venues.

[21] Troy L. Smith Interview with Buddy Esquire, 2010
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm/2

[22] Troy Smith interviewing Buddy Esquire, 2010
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm/2

text to elaborate pictures and designs, a cohort of flyer artists were recognized

and celebrated by hip-hop culture as important cultural practitioners. The

emphasis, or the knowledge being communicated by practitioners of emerging

hip-hop culture was local style, and local celebrity. The flyer artists—like all

emerging hip-hop cultural practitioners—were engaged in a local prestige

economy, and at the same time their style reflected and advertised hip-hop

culture to an ever expanding, increasingly knowledgeable public.

Buddy Esquire and His Flyer Art

Lemoin Thompson began his art career as a graffiti writer. He began

writing graffiti in 1972, and developed relationships with youths involved with

the emerging hip-hop culture throughout the Bronx. Sometime in 1973 or

1974, he was arrested for graffiti. According to Esquire, he was "guilty by

association:" the police rousted a group of writers that Esquire was hanging

out with and a note was sent to his home. After his arrest, his parent grounded

him indefinitely.[23] Although Esquire acquiesced to his parents' punishment, he

still wanted to create public art. Discussing the urge to write graffiti, he said:

"see as far as writing graffiti, you can have it really bad where it becomes like a

disease." Esquire explained how he transformed his artistic urges: "[I] felt like

there was no need [to write] because [he] was making flyers, people will see

my name with that."[24] Esquire linked the fundamental importance for graffiti

[23] Troy L. Smith interviewing Buddy Esquire, 2010.
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm
[24] Troy Smith Interview with Buddy Esquire, 2010,
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm

writers of "getting up" with his activities as a flyer maker. Turning to flyer

making, Esquire practiced a related form of public art.

Buddy Esquire developed a visual culture borrowing the graffiti writer's

desire for publicity and circulation. His desire to be seen coupled with parental

prohibitions helped push his visual art to redefine hip-hop visual culture by

adapting graffiti style as advertising. Esquire's new style grafted hip-hop visual

culture with advertising by adapting graffiti culture and style, not jettisoning it.

Throughout the 1970s as graffiti writers were creating complex and

sophisticated visual compositions and vocabularies, Buddy Esquire was

refining his art toward legibility of design and clarity of composition.

Comparing Buddy Esquire's flyers chronologically demonstrates his

artistic development. His initial flyers in 1977 employed a cluttered use of

lettering, perhaps featuring a drawing of some type of cartoon character or

design. But within three years Esquire's flyers looked completely different,

featuring a streamlined style and using Prestype and Letraset fonts and

Letraset fonts, allowing him the freedom to easily experiment with lettering.

His new approach significantly shortened the amount of time he spent on each

flyer. At peak production, Esquire completed two to three flyers a week.[25]

Esquire's use of Prestype and Letraset fonts allowed him to explore

and design striking examples of visual flyers. As a result, by the early 1980s,

his flyers increasingly evoked art deco.[26] In an interview from 2010, Esquire

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[25] Kugelberg, 203.

[26] At its best, art deco represented elegance, glamour, functionality, and modernity. Art deco's linear symmetry was a distinct departure from the flowing asymmetrical organic curves of its predecessor style, art nouveau; it embraced influences from many different styles of the early twentieth century, including neoclassical, constructivism, cubism, modernism and futurism and drew inspiration from ancient Egyptian and Aztec forms. Although many design

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described his artistic style as "Neo Deco."[27] As he experimented, he began

including photographs of the advertised acts, further creating an increasingly

professional style.[28] Buddy Esquire developed this style through influences that

included Art Deco movie theaters, disco-era fonts, and the work of Vaughn

Bodé.[29]

In addition to graffiti culture, other flyer artists influenced Esquire,

PHASE 2, most significantly. PHASE 2 was equally celebrated for his graffiti

art and his flyers.[30] His flyers had a profound impact on Esquire's work.

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movements have political or philosophical beginnings or intentions, art deco was purely decorative. Wood, Ghislaine. "Traditional Motifs". *Essential Art Deco*. (London: VA&A Publications) 21.

By the 1940s, art deco had declined. By the late 1960s, art historian Bevis Hillier recuperated art deco's reputation with his book *Art Deco of the 20s and 30s* and curated a major art deco exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in 1971. Subsequently, art deco made a resurgence in graphic design throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Buddy Esquire described studying design and art books in the mid to late 1970s to develop a visual style apart from graffiti. On his research trips to the library in the mid 1970s, it's possible he absorbed art deco through graphic design books. The fact that he would later describe his flyer style as "neo deco" points to the connection between art deco design and his flyers. Finally, consider hip-hop's focus on appropriating public space. In terms of New York City architecture and art deco design, Rockefeller Center, the Chrysler Building, and the Empire State Building represent iconic and identifiable architectural works of art deco in New York City. Also, the Bronx has important art deco buildings, including the Bronx County Courthouse and the Bronx General Post Office. Exemplifying "Neo Deco" and art deco, Esquire's flyers demonstrated linear symmetry and an attention to design absent from just about every other flyer artist, except PHASE 2.

Amanda Lalonde discusses Buddy Esquire's "neo deco" design elements in her 2014 article, *Buddy Esquire and the Early Hip Hop Flyer*. Lalonde views Esquire's adaption of art deco elements into "Neo Deco" as Esquire's use and quotation of Jazz Age slang and visual culture (30). Lalonde understands Esquire's "neo deco" as begin based in the musical and fashion cultural milieu of the 1920s and 1930s. In addition to these performative cultural practices, the Bronx's material landscape made of a variety of art deco inspired buildings from the 1920s and 1930s should not be overlooked as influences on Esquire. There is no reason not to include architecture as an influence on Esquire's "neo deco" style in addition to other echoes of the Jazz Age.

[27] Troy Smith interview with Buddy Esquire, 2010
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm/2

[28] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[29] Andrew Boryga, "Remembering a Hip-Hop Harbinger in the Bronx," the *New York Times*, February 9, 2014

[30] PHASE 2 had a different hip-hop visual arts career than Buddy Esquire. PHASE 2 never had a break between his graffiti writing and flyer making. His career as a hip-hop artists seamlessly

Esquire praised PHASE 2 saying: "had a good lay out, as well as his back grounds, He was very imaginative." Esquire continued, "it was very hard but I tried to do stuff that was equal to his work. Sometimes I touched it, sometimes I didn't, what can I say?"[31]

Buddy Esquire perfected the hip-hop flyer by 1980. By 1979, Esquire's work started to get better. Esquire credited the artistic growth of his work to his increased interest in design. As he said, "instead of designing backgrounds, I started using Prestype and Letraset fonts [Prestype and Letraset fonts dry transfer lettering]."[32] Prestype and Letraset fonts, lettering proved to be an invaluable tool in the flyer artist's kit. Prestype and Letraset fonts letters were plastic sheets filled with various fonts and styles of letters. Prestype and Letraset fonts allowed the artists control over scale and design and opened up the flyer for creations of backgrounds and borders. By the end of 1979, Esquire experimented and devised a new method to streamline the construction of flyers. His new style involved using the Prestype and Letraset fonts letters and laying them down on a piece of paper. On a separate piece of paper, Esquire designed the background for his flyers. After finishing the background he would then cut out the paper with all the letters and glue down the text however he wanted to on the paper with the background.[33] Instead of using of Prestype and Letraset fonts as text templates, he was able to quickly put the words together the way he wanted to and then cut the words out and glue

flowed from one visual medium to the other.
[31] Troy L. Smith interview with Buddy Esquire, 2010
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm
[32] Kugelberg, 203.
[33] Troy Smith interviewing Buddy Esquire, 2010.
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm/2

them onto another paper.[34] Not only did this save him labor time, but it also looked cleaner.

Between 1979 and 1980, Buddy Esquire's work underwent a transition from text-heavy, cluttered flyers to increasingly conceptual flyers by early 1980. Two flyers from this time period demonstrated Esquire's transition. Buddy Esquire's flyer for Jazzy Dee Productions and Nubian Productions sponsored jam at the Bronx River Community Center on Friday, September 18, 1979, featured the Brothers Disco and, Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force MCs. The flyer was artful, featuring a variety of Prestype and Letraset fonts lettering shaded or only outlined. Esquire included arrows of various sizes, shapes, and shading pointing at the flyer's pertinent information concerning musical acts and location. Finally, the flyer does not have a designed border of any kind, only a thin line delimiting the edges. The 1979 flyer remains an example of Esquire's artistry.[35]

December 1979 was an important transitional moment. Esquire was creating and circulating flyers for two Bronx River Houses Community Center parties organized by the Zulu Nation's Nubian Productions.[36] These two flyers experimented with Prestype and Letraset fonts, lettering in a variety of color shadings and fill-ins, but they were completely restricted to providing the party's basic information. Shortly after, Esquire ceased producing flyers for Nubian Productions and Bambaataa parties. He explained: "[t]he problem

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[34] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Important note: Bronx River is located in Southeast Bronx, just east of the Bronx River and south of the Cross Bronx Expressway. Edenwald Housing Development is located in the Northeast of the Bronx. Theoretically, you could have attended both parties, but the travel time most likely discouraged people from attending both parties.

with Bambaataa's flyers was he liked to put a lot of information on the flyers. I made a few for him, but after a while I didn't really want to make any more because they took more time than the other flyers."[37] This decision allowed Esquire the freedom, and time, to develop his flyer art.

Soon after, Esquire transformed his graphic design. He demonstrated his transforming aesthetics by streamlining his signature in line with his iconic "Neo Deco" style.[38] Instead of the graffiti inspired "Buddy Esquire" found on his flyers prior to 1980, his new signature employed block, Prestype and Letraset fonts, lettering fonts and his shortened name, "Buddy Esq." As flyers artists increasingly designed flyers showcasing nuanced graphic design, the artist's signature became increasingly legible. The act of signing flyers was shared by all the various flyer artists of the time such as Buddy Esquire, Eddie Ed, Straight Man and Cisco. Even flyer artists with a less of a reputation such as Vega Ray, Danny T, and A Reilly signed their work. Not only were the flyer artists generating artful advertising for jams and events, but also advertising their own talents. Just as flyers helped codify and circulate the reputations of early hip-hop acts, so too did signing flyers. Significant to my work, the flyers were quickly incorporated into hip-hop cultural production.

Between September 1979 and February 1980, Esquire's style and flyer art completely changed. By February 1980, Buddy Esquire designed his first flyer to incorporate a cohesive visual design comprised of Prestype and Letraset fonts, border, and background. By 1980 Buddy Esquire created flyers wholly designed and conceived as works of advertising art. Just as Esquire

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[37] Fricke and Ahearn, 157.

[38] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

and his fellow flyer artists began producing polished, professional flyers, commercially produced and released rap music appeared. However, the increasing visual sophistication of the flyers was not the result of rap records, or vice versa. Buddy Esquire and other artists did not change their art because rap was being recorded. Buddy Esquire recalled the release of "Rappers Delight" thusly, "I didn't really have too much a feeling about it ["Rappers Delight"] because I'd heard one or two things on the radio. Because mostly at the time, everything was just on tape . . . . But when I heard Sugarhill, I'd heard Big Bank Hank's rhyme and I was, like, yeah, he's biting off of [Grandmaster] Caz. Because in fact, I heard Caz do that rhyme at the PAL back in 79."[39] Esquire's memory of the first recorded rap hit demonstrated the fact that flyer artists were creating art that reflected the communities where hip-hop emerged, not the record charts.

However, by the 1980s the impact of the culture industry on flyer art was apparent in Esquire's ManDipLite flyers from 1980-1984. Esquire's ManDipLite flyers were increasingly using photographic images to advertise parties. Esquire's unfinished flyer for a December 19, 1980 party demonstrated the reliance on using photographic images to make a flyer. Esquire still incorporated his iconic geometric shapes framing the entire flyer, with more open space was now available within his frame. Although the flyer is unfinished, it clearly has four sketched boxes labeled with "picture" inside the top two boxes of the flyer and "picture #1" and "picture #2" in the center of the flyer. Above the two large, central pictures Esquire affixed text informing the public whom the pictures represented. The left side of the flyer waited for a

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[39] Kugelberg, 203.

picture of the Cash Crew, and the right, DipLite Inc.[40] Although Esquire

provided titles for each central picture, the text was small. The sketched boxes

were not small; the boxes dominated half the flyer. Based on the size of the

boxes, as well as lack of size of the text, it appears that Esquire assumed that

the audience for his flyers would recognize the Cash Crew and DipLite

Modes of Production: Buddy Esquire's Working File

The approximately 75 items composing Buddy Esquire's "working file"

offers an important look into the process and materials that Buddy Esquire

used to make his flyers. Engaging in a close reading of Buddy Esquire's flyers

and his "working file" demonstrates how a flyer artist worked to authentically

advertise hip-hop culture. Although graffiti, breaking, DJing, and MCing are

explicitly creative, performative cultural elements of hip-hop, flyer making and

flyer artists approached the advertising and marketing of emerging hip-hop

following the same cultural precepts. After a close analysis of the contents of

Buddy Esquire's working file, the connection with contemporary emerging hip-

hop cultural elements becomes apparent.

Buddy Esquire assembled his flyers from a variety of sources, including

photos, newspapers, and portions of previously constructed flyers. Included in

the file are pages from newspapers that include pictures or text that he thought

looked appealing, Joe Conzo photographs that he used to make flyers for the

Cold Crush Brothers, excised newsprint letters or words, and sections from

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[40] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript
Collections, Cornell University Library.

previously designed flyers.[41] Additionally, his archive contains several finished

flyers with portions excised, or with notations indicating the placement of text

or images. Esquire's working files provide a stylistic flow for his oeuvre as he

places styles of texts or images on new flyers.[42] In particular, a series of flyers

Esquire made advertising the promoter Man Dip Lite, and his ManDipLite

promotions, demonstrated the keystone cultural practices of flow and layering.

Beginning in 1980 through 1984, Esquire's collected flyers for promoter

ManDipLite demonstrated the flow, rupture, and layering that represented

signature cultural practices of hip-hop.

ManDipLite Productions promoted parties featuring "The Grandmaster

Flash Show," DJ Breakout, The Funky 4 +1, and Grand Wizard Theodore,

among others.[43] The working file contains two copies of a single ManDipLite

party flyer from July 12, 1980 documenting Esquire's creative process. The

identical flyers have distinct excised segments. In flyer A, "Starring Grand

Master Flash," and "Furious 5 M.C.s" have been removed from the flyer.

Buddy Esquire removed the letters 'O,' 'C,' and 'A' from "Rochdale;" He

excised "The Grand Wizard Theodore," and the comma and "80" from Flyer B.

Esquire transferred pieces of text between his flyers establishing an aesthetic

flow that was recognizable for his ManDipLite flyers. For example, Esquire

used "Theodore" for another ManDipLite flyer for an October 24, 1980 party.

Although the July 12, 1980 flyer advertised "The Grandmaster Flash Show"

and the October flyer featured "The Grand Wizard Theodore" show, Esquire

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[41] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript
Collections, Cornell University Library.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

preferred to use the same "Grand Wizard," and "Theodore" on both. This aesthetic choice demonstrated a signature, Buddy Esquire flow to this series of flyers. Although Esquire used the same text between flyers, he would also just as easily change text styles. By Halloween, 1980, Esquire used a different style for "Theodore." The mobility of useful and interesting fragments of text demonstrated the possibility for Buddy Esquire, and other hip-hop flyer artists, to incorporate hip-hop flow into their flyers.[44]

Buddy Esquire's ManDipLite flyers deployed visual shapes and pictures for his flyers. By 1984, Esquire's ManDipLite flyers relied on photos and images arranged in space to anchor his flyers. The flyer's Esquire produced for ManDipLite were not his only flyers that demonstrated a visual transformation, yet they provide a striking example of flow within a series of flyers for a single promoter. Esquire's ManDipLite flyers demonstrated an increasingly sophisticated visual composition, as he abandoned enclosed text-based groupings for more, and larger, images. These images were still arranged, or layered, like his previous text-based flyers, yet the flyers show that Buddy Esquire embraced the use of negative space to act as the frame, forgoing the need for graphically delineated geometric borders.[45]

Buddy Esquire used a similar visual construction for all of his 1980 through 1984 ManDipLite flyers. Esquire stacked the text vertically on his flyers and framed the text in a series of rectilinear shapes. All of the flyers' graphic and textual images were framed, or bordered, by severely elongated rectangles. What is so striking and groundbreaking about these flyers is the

[44] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[45] Ibid.

displayed sense of stylistic cohesiveness they offered. Although the bulk of

these flyers were fated for the scrap heap, they implied hip-hop culture's

permanence. The names, venues, and location of text and images on the

flyers changed or were re-arranged, but the visually striking, stacked or boxed

construction remained. It is through this visual presentation that Esquire

communicated the flow and continuity of hip-hop culture.

Even as the ManDipLite flyers reflected the increasing expansion of

hip-hop in the culture industries, the visual presentation of the flyers continued

to exhibit the cultural logic of graffiti by circulating the artist's name throughout

the cityscape. Moreover, Esquire's ManDipLite series further demonstrated

the cultural strategies of communicating authentic hip-hop culture as hip-hop

expanded into mainstream American culture. According to Joe Austin,

television show introductory credits exerted a tremendous amount of stylistic

and conceptual influence on modern graffiti writers of the late 1960s. In

particular, Austin documented the importance of *Leave it to Beaver's* opening

credits for the pioneering writers to imagine their names in space. The

construction of graffiti names appropriated the lettering in introducing the

show's characters. The screen credit of "And Jerry Mathers as the Beaver"

helped establish a way for graffiti writers to adopt a persona, "[name] as [other

name]."[46] By 1980 when Buddy Esquire began run of ManDipLite flyers, the

persona and name of the writer had already been well established, and

Esquire continued the link with hip-hop visual images and television.[47]

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[46] Austin, 45.

[47] Ibid., 50. Of course, this is not the only example of hip-hop and television intersecting. The hip-hop generation were avid consumers of the culture industries. Writers PNUT, JESTER, and DIABLO were fans of "Welcome Back Kotter" because the train in the show's opening

The ManDipLite flyers Esquire created between 1980-1984 extended the history of graffiti and the presentation of a hip-hop persona via flyer. Esquire titled each of the ManDipLit flyers as a "show." For example, Esquire's unfinished flyer promoting a December 19, 1980 show at an American Legion Hall was advertised as "The Crash Crew Show!" Although the flyer is unfinished, it is clear from Esquire's sketching and finished text that he planned on including two pictures of the Crash Crew in the center of the flyer.[48] Considering the impact that visual text and television had on graffiti and Buddy Esquire's history in graffiti, we must examine the aesthetic linkages between graffiti and flyer making. Furthermore, the December flyer's is composed with a thick black rectangle around the pictures and "The Crash Crew Show!" title. The visual construction resembles a television, demonstrating the significance of television as a popular medium and viewing habits animating the hip-hop's visual culture from graffiti to flyer making. The television show imagery remained a thematic constant for Esquire's ManDipLite flyers. Esquire also created flyers to advertise "The Grandmaster Flash Show," "The Grandwizard Theodore Show," a "Lincoln's Birthday Show" and a "Christmas Eve Super Show." These flyers advertised that Flash, Theodore, and Crash Crew Show flyers were the stars of their own television shows.

The flyers that advertised a specific artist's show, such as "The Grandmaster Flash Show," resemble the television, or the television show, construction. However, the "Christmas Eve Super Show" and "Lincoln's

montage clearly showed one of their tags. For awhile after the show became popular, the writer's referred to Kotter as "their show."

[48] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Birthday Show" have a more fluid, non-geometric design. The advertised

message derived from these flyers was that of a variety show with multiple,

equal acts on the bill. Although these flyers resembled a variety show, Esquire

still deployed pictures for the main acts. "Lincoln's Birthday Show" featured

Grandwizard Theodore and the Fantastic Five, Master Scott, J. Bloodrock and

the Dynamic 3 MCs, and Diamond T and the Harmonizing 4 MCs. "The

Christmas Eve Super Show" featured the Crash Crew, King Chappel and the

Intensive Three, Rock Master Scott and the Dynamic Three, and the

ventriloquist act Wayne and Charlie.[49]

Not all of Buddy Esquire's ManDipLite flyers deployed the visual style of

television show opening credits. The majority of the flyers found in Esqurie's

working file do not advertise a specific artist's "show" or represent a square, or

rectangular, composition. For the flyers without the title "show," Esquire's

composition was more creative and less bounded by representing a rectilinear

television screen. For a ManDipLite and Subway Productions flyer advertising

a November 14, 1980 party, Esquire divided the flyer with a variety of diagonal

boxes and smaller rectangles with text providing the event's information.

Esquire included a photograph of DJ Breakout and the Funky 4 Plus One—the

event's headliners—but the inclusion of the photograph appeared intended to

break the diagonal layout of the text.[50] Esquire's other ManDipLite flyers

advertising New Edition, an MC Battle, and a Halloween Showdown all employ

a variety of visual styles attempting to eschew a more traditional, rectangular

design. The New Edition flyer from 1984 included pictures of the group's

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[49] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript
Collections, Cornell University Library.
[50] Ibid.

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members looking as if they were going to jump out of the flyer.[51] The Battle of the MCs and the Halloween Showdown flyers included diagonal, slashing visual elements that broke the static, visual composition of arranged text boxes containing the artists' names. These unconventional compositions suggested that Esquire had fully incorporated the use of graffiti techniques and the inclusion of popular visual culture media, most prominently television, and began creating a mature visual flyer form the corresponded with hip-hop's culture industry expansion.

Based on the variety of Esquire flyer designs, the difference between flyer compositions deserves to be interrogated. One possible explanation derives from the nature of the events begin promoted. The "Halloween Showdown" and the "Battle of the MCs" featured a competition between rival MC and DJ crews, such as Crash Crew and Grandwizard Theodore and the Fantastic 5. For these competition events, then, Esquire would not have wanted to create a flyer emphasizing or celebrating one artist or crew over another. Additionally, holiday or variety shows that also resembled a television program credit introduction reflected the fact that everyone was featured on the bill together, not in competition with each other. Significantly, Esquire's use of the television theme depended on the nature of the event, as well as the title. If it was an artists or venues "show," then Esquire appeared to create accordingly. What Esquire's ManDipLite flyers communicate iss the flow of hip-hop culture through graffiti's cultural traditions into the construction of hip-hop flyers. Arranging the names and artwork to advertise "The Grandmaster

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[51] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Flash Show" communicated a sense of hip-hop's past cultural practices by continuing to represent the name in space. At the same time, Buddy Esquire's ManDipLite flyers anticipate hip-hop's expansion into national and international culture, connecting with hip-hop's commercial and cultural expansion in the early 1980s.

As demonstrated by Buddy Esquire's working file, his use of various texts, prints, pictures and advertisements—sampling various textual and visual sources—continued hip-hop's ad hoc and pragmatic cultural practices. Although the 1984 flyer emphatically demonstrated the increased visual presence of hip-hop in the culture industry, Buddy Esquire had been experimenting with pictures in flyers for other parties between 1980 and 1984. Buddy Esquire's flyers primarily contained hand drawn pictures previous to 1980. Occasionally, pictures from the newspaper or magazines would also be included on the flyer.[52] However, the turn to using photographic images demonstrated the increasing cultural ubiquity of hip-hop. Instead of hip-hop being relegated to the margins of culture industry, hip-hop largely marketed, branded, and created music according to the aesthetics and practiced developed since 1973 during this 1980-1984 period.[53]

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[52] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[53] During this period, hip-hop was created, produced, sold, and largely manufactured by African Americans and Latinos, or by whites that were either invested in, or familiar with, hip-hop (Charlie Ahearn, Martha Cooper, Tom Silverman, etc) or were not racist. Of course, the fact that Sylvia Robinson's Sugar Hill Records was black owned did not mean that she wielded her considerable cultural and economic power equitably. It simply meant that a version of black culture—older, more middle class—would be preserved and promoted. What this means for the historical development of hip-hop culture is that it was able to stay rooted in working-class, urban, and youthful African American cultural styles and peer networks that helped grow hip-hop as a culture and industry. By 1984, the emergence of Run-DMC helped propel hip-hop culture into mainstream markets and ushered in a new phase of hip-hop culture.

The Business of Local Modes of Communication

Between 1880 and 1930, American corporations and allies in key institutions began transforming American society along the lines of consumption, spending, and acquisition. With the advent of advertising, branding, and celebrity, the early 20th century shopping landscape began to resemble our own contemporary moment.[54] By the 1960s and 1970s, Bronx youth developed new relationships between advertising and consumer activities. This new relationship was similar to previous relationships. In *Ladies of Labor,* Nan Enstadt documented working-class women's consuming habits of mass produced clothing and pulp writing as a means to fight for job rights and fashion an identity in the first decades of the 20th century in the New York City. Michael Denning's *Mechanic Accents* argues that working-class individuals in late 19th century Philadelphia used popular culture to create identity and a sense of self.[55] Throughout the 20th century, the withholding of consumer spending was deployed by African Americans to protest everything from rent, high consumer good prices, and hiring practices.[56] Davarian Baldwin documents how popular and leisure culture including movies, sports, gambling, and bars in black Chicago in the first several decades of the 20th century providing a foundation for the city's African American social and political identity.

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[54] William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

[55] Nan Enstadt, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working Class Culture in America* (New York: Verso, 1998).

[56] For further reading about the connection between the politics of consumption and African American identity, see Cheryl Keyes, Robin D. G. Kelley, Marcus Reeves, and Kevin Greene.

The history of the hip-hop party flyer documents the transition from the old school party era, 1973-1979, to hip-hop's emergence in mainstream popular culture, 1980-1984. Flyer artists bridged hip-hop visual culture from the obfuscating artistic practices of graffiti writing to advertising legibility. Flyer making was directly tied to the local economic practices of early hip-hop parties. Hip-hop jams and parties operated on marginal budgets. Spaces for hip-hop jams were either freely reserved, or there was a nominal fee for rental. In the early 1970s, schools were open all summer and available for use, and the recreation rooms and centers of most public housing developments were available for residents to rent, as well.[57] Cindy Campbell, Kool Herc's sister, remembered that the first hip-hop party in the recreation room of 1520 Sedgwick had such a relatively low overhead that she only spent half her paycheck for the recreation room and the refreshments.[58] According to Cindy's calculations, as long as they packed the room and charged a quarter for girls and fifty cents for boys, she would turn a profit.[59]

As important as generating excitement and interest for hip-hop clubs and parties, flyers also communicated and codified hip-hop authenticity. The flyers helped establish an index of the artists who constituted emerging hip-hop culture. The flyers not only listed the DJs and MCs that were scheduled to perform, but also those "invited" to perform. Explicitly naming the invited DJs and MCs communicated a range of meanings: sometimes there was an actual invitation from the promoters to the DJs and MCs for the event; sometimes the

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[57] NYCHA archives, LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College, New York, New York.
[58] *The Global Cipha,* 256. Kool Herc reported the cost of the recreation room fee was $25.
[59] Chang, 68.

invite was more wishful thinking, a promotional tool to attract partygoers. However, potential partygoers were by no means passive consumers of the flyers' advertised acts. If the DJs and MCs advertised on the flyers did not represent the communities where flyers circulated, then the promoters, venues, DJs, or MCs earned neither money, nor prestige. Before Run-DMC and the music video era, flyers and live performance fueled the hierarchy of hip-hop style. According to promoter Van Silk, "[w]e could tell if we was gonna have a good show or bad show by how they treated the flyer—a person folds up a flyer and puts it in their pocket, if you don't see no flyers on the floor, you're gonna have a good show."[60] Buddy Esquire and his fellow artists rendered a portrait of the vital acts creating hip-hop culture. In the popular and scholarly histories of hip-hop, these names still resound: Grandwizard Theodore and the Fantastic 5 MCs, The Cold Crush Brothers, Afrika Bambaataa, Jazzy Jay, Red Alert, The L Brothers, DJ Breakout, DJ Baron, and DJ Kool Herc. Just as important as publicizing the performers, the flyers advertised where these early hip-hop celebrities performed. By visually linking venue and performer, flyers further communicated who represented hip-hop culture, and where hip-hop culture lived. The flyer era, 1978-1983, helped create the old school canon, giving hip-hop specific locations and constituting its public. Between August 1973 and 1983, party flyers emerged, representing the nascent advertising and marketing wing of hip-hop culture. During this decade, all aspects of hip-hop culture moved from local cultural eruptions to popular culture visibility. Viewing the development of flyers and their visual

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[60] Fricke and Ahearn, 154.

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style as advertisements helps us understand their importance as cultural communication.

Advertising and promotion remained an intensely local business composed of friends, family and kin connections. Beginning in 1977, as the jams increased in number and variety of venue, and emerging hip-hop developed a division of labor. Promoters increasingly became a job separate from the MCs, DJs and the flyer makers; the job developed its own requirements apart from creative graphic design. Early party promoter Van Silk described the division of labor: "As a promoter you never had a say in how the letters and stuff were done. What we would do is write out what we wanted on the flyer." Van Silk further elaborated his relationship with PHASE 2: "we gave PHASE the pictures. 'This is who is on the show,' and we wrote out what we wanted on the flyer . . . . We would go to his house and take it to him and come back a couple of hours later on [to pick up the master cardboard flyer to take to the printers]."[61] Buddy Esquire echoed the labor arrangement between promoters and flyer artists stating, "artists were given the date, the location and the acts scheduled to appear, the design was totally in the flyer artist's hands.[62]

Esquire described the arrangement as the similar to MCs and DJs: "Well sometimes I would be lucky enough to get the money when I gave them the flyers, but other times people would say, 'I have to pay you after the party.'" Even his close connection with the Brothers Disco failed to ensure upfront payment, with "Breakout use[d] to say wait until the party is over." Esquire

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[61] Fricke and Ahearn, 154.
[62] Troy Smith interviewing Buddy Esqurie, 2010.
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm

further elaborated that it was not fun having to wait to get paid, "I used to hate that sitting around after the party . . . A lot of times the party wouldn't end to 3, 4 in the morning."[63] The business was contingent: promoters worked with small amounts of capital, which meant that they often did not have enough for payment.

The fact that flyer artists were paid in similar fashion as the DJs and MCs reflected the cultural connections between the foundational elements and flyer artists. Although waiting to pay for the flyers after the party reflected the small profit margins associated with mounting the early, neighborhood parties and jams, the payment structure also communicated another truth about flyer artists and flyers' role in emerging hip-hop. Deferred payment registered these artists, MCs, DJs, and flyer artists, as something of equals, or their cultural work as fungible. Secondly, stylistic and cultural cross-feritilization was facilitated by after-party payments. Buddy Esquire acknowledged that he never really wanted to go to any parties, "I wasn't really that type [to go to parties]. I just made the flyers, [and] stayed home."[64] However, having to attend the parties until the end provided an extended opportunity to absorb hip-hop culture: the way it sounded; the way people danced; they way people dressed. Although Buddy Esquire was not necessarily a hip-hop head, he understood the culture because he grew up in the same communities. At the very least, through continuous first-hand exposure, Buddy Esquire was able to glean a sense of what hip-hop was all about and what, exactly his flyers were being used to promote.

[63] Troy L. Smith interview with Buddy Esquire, 2010
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm/2
[64] Kugelberg, 203.

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Although a formalized division of labor was increasingly taking place in hip-hop by the late 1970s, the economic and cultural scale was still locally based. Flyer artist PHASE 2 lived in the Forest Housing Development in the South Bronx and promoter Van Silk lived down the street. In the South Bronx the local connection was just as important as any artistic and business decision. After the flyer artist finished creating the finished flyer master, the promoter or artist went to the printers to make the flyers. This part of the production process usually entailed a trip outside the local neighborhood. Travelling from the South Bronx, Van Silk would take the number 2 train to Larry Schwartz on Gun Hill Road.[65] Buddy Esquire travelled from his home in the Morris Houses in the Southeastern Bronx to Baychester, in the Northeast, to have his flyers printed.[66] Importantly the relationship between where the work was imagined and created and where the flyers were printed documented an important fact about how these flyers acted as modes of communication in addition to what they, in fact, communicated.

The combination of Buddy Esquire's visual cultural style with hip-hop cultural practices practices provides an important mode of communication between Bronx youth and the marketplace. The local branding or naming that Esquire tapped into before he began creating party flyers traced hip-hop youth cultural practices from the Bronx. Hip-hop cultural practices developed from prior African American consumer and cultural practices. By the 1970s, the Bronx experienced an important transformation in terms of racial and economic demographics. Furthermore, although young people and the selling of "cool"

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[65] Fricke and Ahearn, 154.
[66] Troy Smith interviewing Buddy Esquire, 2010.
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm

increasingly occupied an important position in postwar American consumer

culture, not all youth consumers and spending was created equal. According

to Joe Austin:

> The commercial public sphere, with its significant stake in young people
> as consumers, created representational frameworks that distinguished
> its preferred youth customers from delinquents, thereby reassuring the
> buying classes that their children were safe, at least in the marketplace.
> By the early 1960s, young people had been more or less bifurcated in
> most popular representations . . .[67]

It is this commercial public sphere that the youth coming of age in the late

1960s and early 1970s were interrogating through graffiti art. Importantly,

graffiti writers engaged with a public sphere by appropriating and advertising

and consuming. Graffiti writers were asking New Yorkers to reconsider what

celebrity, visibility, and public spheres meant in the 1970s. Importantly, the

graffiti artists did not necessarily question consumer practices rather they were

placing themselves into public space and communicating hip-hop cultural

inflected consumer practices.

Buddy Esquire also customized clothing. In fact, it was Esquire's

legible lettering and painting on jeans and jackets that pushed him to make

flyers. Esquire recalled: "What got it all started [flyer making] was in 1977 I

started to paint stuff on people's clothes. Like names on jeans."[68] Tracing

Buddy Esquire's budding local business is important because his fashions

stem from his graffiti writing, both of which influenced his flyer making. The

customized clothing followed the same cultural logic of graffiti: putting a name

in the public sphere. By 1977, Esquire felt that he had developed his style to

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[67] Austin, 30.
[68] Troy Smith interviewing Buddy Esquire, 2010,
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm

such an extent that he needed further study to expand and refine his art because, "when people would put paint on jeans and stuff it was either graffiti or some kind of sloppy handwriting."[69] Esquire was interested in creating a unique and distinct style through "straight[,] even letters." After Esquire developed his lettering technique, the legibility of his work made his work desirable.[70] Once people saw Buddy Esquire's work, he was in demand. Esquire's attention to clean, professional lettering demonstrated that he was conceiving of this style of hip-hop in terms of broader communication.

By the late 1970s, the creation of early hip-hop flyers demonstrated that the emerging hip-hop generation navigated the spaces and places of the Bronx with relative ease. The manufacture of hip-hop party flyers created an opportunity for these youths to widen the reach of hip-hop. According to promoter Van Silk, he would "sometimes wait for [the printer] to make the flyers right there. 'Cause we were so happy to have a brand new flyer. We'd come with an empty bag and come back with a bag filled with flyers; as we're getting' on the train, we're hittin' people with flyers."[71] Spatial and business arrangement of making flyers presented opportunities as much as potential challenges for promoters travelling throughout the Bronx. Advertising for parties happened both within and outside neighborhoods where the parties and jams were held. Residents of a housing development or neighborhood would know about a forthcoming party, but by the mid 1970s it was important to try and attract as many outsiders as possible to parties and dances. Many

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[69] Troy Smith interviewing Buddy Esquire, 2010.
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/interviews/buddyesquire.htm
[70] Ibid.
[71] Fricke and Ahearn, 154.

outside communities found out about dances and parties because of flyers. Although youth gangs continued to command real estate throughout the Bronx in the late 1960s and early 1970s, by 1976 the appearance of outsiders in neighborhoods passing out flyers.[72] Within the space of the Bronx and the seven0mile world, hip-hop presented opportunities and the need for youths to travel, creating the world of hip-hop.

Conclusion: Selling the Space, and Selling the Time

Buddy Esquire and his fellow flyer artists created a visual vocabulary linking individuals and communities increasingly marginalized by neoliberalism. In *The Urbanization of Capital,* David Harvey describes Marx's understanding of capitalism's attempts to collapse space into time, or in Marx's phrase, the "annihilation of space by time."[73] According to Marx, the "annihilation of space by time" refers to the circulation of capital, making time the "fundamental dimension of human affairs."[74] Marx argues that this spatio-temporal relationship precipitated the creation of the credit market and structured locations of production. Surplus value becomes linked to labor productivity. To exploit this link, capitalists organized production through location and technology, ultimately establishing manufacturing-based urbanization. According to Marx, "all branches of production which by the nature of their product are dependent mainly upon local consumption . . . developed to the greatest extend in the principal centers of population." Harvey's interpretation

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[72] James Goodridge oral history interview conducted by Kevin Kosanovich, 10/22/12.
[73] David Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) 37.
[74] Harvey, 37.

of Marx posits that "powerful cumulative forces making for the production of urbanization under capitalism. And [this relationship] helps us see these forces as part and parcel of the general processes seeking the elimination of spatial barriers and the annihilation of space by time."[75] Historically, this facilitated the "urbanization of capital" and provides a way to understand neoliberalism's impact on the Bronx, and the generation that created hip-hop.

If the process of annihilating space by time through capitalist accumulation of surplus value through human production spurred urbanization under capitalism during the late 19th century, the flight of capital then labor from urban centers in the later half of the 20th century represents the "annihilation of space by time" that continues to expand through markets, locations, and technological advances. This is exactly the political economy that helped structure the Bronx. As economic forces increasingly transformed from manufacturing to finance in the 1960s and 1970s, areas such as the Bronx shrunk and faced severe challenges. If the "annihilation of space by time" placed social relations at the forefront of capitalism in the pursuit of profit, then by the time neoliberal capitalist markets formed, social relations were increasingly being segmented and stratified.

Buddy Esquire's flyers linked the history of declining economic prospects for Bronx youths with the rise of hip-hop during the 1970s. If we consider Herc's first party in 1973 coupled with dismal economic numbers that continued throughout the 1970s, then by the time Buddy Esquire began his flyer and clothes painting business five years later, we can correlate the creation of local economic activity that was developing around hip-hop.

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[75] Harvey, 40.

Equally important, this originating generation created their culture on shifting economic terrain. In a rapidly changing economic climate the creation of hip-hop communicated the shifting terrain of social and economic fortunes of young African American and Latino/a youth. From nothing more than artistic acumen and appreciation of advertising youthful style, Buddy Esquire's flyers and artistic development demonstrated that hip-hop's creation in an economically depressed place corresponded with hip-hop's nascent ascendance in consumer culture and the culture industry. Buddy Esquire created authentic hip-hop art that was commercially minded.

Hip-hop presented predominately non-white youths from the Bronx the opportunity to communicate not only their culture and art, but also their presence in American society and culture. The history of hip-hop party flyers demonstrates this fact. Not only did Buddy Esquire and his fellow flyer artists create works of advertising art in attempts to create a marketplace for themselves and emerging hip-hop events, they did so through the transformation of hip-hop's visual and cultural geography. Hip-hop flyers provided a mode of communication with people outside the Bronx. Esquire's flyers and subsequent codification of "authentic" hip-hop demanded that interested outsiders travel to shows in the Bronx, firmly connecting culture with place. The flyers served as foundational texts demonstrating hip-hop's origins from within consumer culture.

By 1984, Esquire's flyers were marketing hip-hop to increasingly national and international markets, while maintaining and communicating the culture's geographic and aesthetic roots. Not only did the flyers represent and advertise hip-hop parties, this new mode of communication helped define hip-

hop style and shape its geography, revealing a more expansive and interconnected youthful urban culture than previous scholarship discussed. The flyers provided an entry point for interested outsiders to travel to venues throughout the Bronx, firmly connecting hip-hop culture with the seven-mile world. By the early 1980s, the flyers helped market hip-hop to another group of youthful artists interrogating and playing with their place within consumer society—the New York City Downtown Artist scene. The following chapter examines hip-hop's connection to downtown artist and clubs, a media covered battle between the Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic rockers at Lincoln Center, and the international New York City Rap Tour, which all resulted from the circulation of party flyers.

Chapter 4

All City Bronx: Uptown Goes Downtown (And Back Again)

The 1970s were alive and well on Friday, October 15 and Saturday,

October 16, 1982 at the T-Connection Club in the Bronx. Celebrating a

"Tribute to the 70's [sic]" and an "Oldies But Goodies Night," the T-Connection

paid tribute to 1970s' Bronx culture featuring the popular artists and cultural

styles of the previous decade. Over the course of the weekend, partygoers

were invited to "[c]ome [r]elive those moments" and "[r]emember [the] dances"

such as the freak, the spank, the bus-stop, the bboy break, and the robot.[1]

Occurring less than a decade after Kool Herc's seminal back-to-school party,

the T-Connection's October event suggested that hip-hop was no longer an

innovative and vital cultural performance, and was in fact a cultural "fad," or at

best an established genre and commodity.

Over the course of the weekend, the L Brothers, Kool Herc and the

Herculoids, the Cold Crush Brothers, Afrika Bambaataa and the Cosmic Force

MCs and Soulsonic Force MCs (as well as representation from the

misidentified "Zolo Nation"), the Jazzy 5 MCs, and the Funky 4 + 1 were invited

and scheduled to appear. These artists were local celebrities and lionized

throughout hip-hop's youthful seven-mile world, but by 1982 they were growing

older. For example, the Saturday, October 16 party doubled as a "surprise

baby shower" for MC Sha-Rock of the Funky 4 + 1. The T-Connection

weekend represented a liminal moment in hip-hop's cultural existence.

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[1] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript
Collections, Cornell University Library.

Although these acts were being advertised as "oldies," the T-Connection's nostalgia party took place at the same moment that hip-hop was beginning to be lauded as an exciting new form of culture by interested observers from outside the Bronx. In the fall of 1982, hip-hop existed as past, present and future of American popular culture, the question was how this was achieved and communicated?

By the late 1970s, hip-hop culture and performance attracted the attention and curiosity of folks from outside the Bronx. Whether it was an expansion of parties and jams inter-borough, tri-state, or uptown Bronx to downtown Manhattan, hip-hop continued to increase its cultural ambit. Providing a renewal of energy, the uptown/downtown axis was instrumental for hip-hop's national and international expansion and codification as an important new American cultural practice. The cultural cachet derived from the downtown art scene demonstrated hip-hop's expansion through the political economy of race. Based on the geography and demographics of audiences during the period 1977-1984, hip-hop existed simultaneously as a commonplace, youth cultural practice, and as part of a cultural avant-garde.

Musicking, the Bronx and the Late 1970s

Christopher Small's conceptual term, "musicking," describes all the practices involved in the production and consumption of music. Small writes: "if we widen our attention to take in the entire set of relationships that constitutes a performance, we shall see that music's primary meanings are not individual at all but social." Small sees an explicit link between cultural expressions and space: "The way people relate to one another as they *music*

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is linked not only with the sound relationships that are created by the performers, not only with participants' relation to one another, but also with the participants' relationships to the world."[2] Musicking provides a theoretical base to consider hip-hop's cultural and geographical expansion throughout New York City and the tri-state area, representing a connection between individuals and communities who related to each other through social, cultural and spatial ties.

By 1980, hip-hop culture was not only moving into downtown Manhattan, but was also expanding beyond New York City into the tri-state area. A flyer for a February 1, 1980 Disco Masters and Tiny Wood produced party proclaimed: "New York's Most Popular Disco Promoters Come to Mt. Vernon," at Rod Benders. The flyer also advertised the Disco Masters return to Rod Benders on March 29, 1980, graphically displaying the geographical expansion of hip-hop "disco parties."[3] By 1981, Mt. Vernon, just north of the Bronx, was a well-established location for hip-hop jams, featuring performances by established hip-hop stars such as the Crash Crew, Grandmaster Caz, and the Treacherous 3 at Mt. Vernon High School and other local venues.[4]

Not only was hip-hop expanding its territorial reach, but clubs also began booking DJs and promoting dances with a tenuous connection to hip-hop in attempts to capitalize on hip-hop's continued popularity in the early 1980s. On January 17, 1981, Mantil and the New York Pythons promoted a "Super Disco

[2]Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (London: University Press of New England, 1998), 8, 47-48 (emphasis mine).

[3] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

[4] Ibid. The flyer was for January 9, 1981 party.

Dance" at the Bronx venue, Club Roots, hosted by DJ Derrick the "Rock

Doctor." From the scant information available, Mantil and the New York

Pythons were most likely a party promotion crew that could have also featured

DJs and music.[5] In my oral histories with Bronx River Houses and Bronx

residents, neither Club Roots nor Mantil and the New York Pythons triggered

any memories or associations with the emerging hip-hop generation.[6] Whoever

Mantil and the New York Pythons were, their attempts to package and

capitalize on emerging hip-hop culture for Club Roots reveals hip-hop's

growing cultural strength.

Mantil and the New York Pythons demonstrated the considerable

amount of transitory participation in hip-hop culture. Not everyone that

participated in early hip-hop culture created a lasting impact, or was invested in

hip-hop beyond participating in a cultural "fad." Club Roots, promoters and

neighborhood entrepreneurs like Mantil and the New York Pythons are

important because they demonstrated the increasing diffusion of hip-hop

culture throughout the Bronx and New York. By adopting the hip-hop format, at

least for one night, Club Roots and Mantil and the Pythons shared in the

continued growth of hip-hop culture.

Club Roots was also devoted to Reggae music. The Afro-Caribbean

diasporic impact on hip-hop culture is well documented, from hip-hop's

founding fathers' Caribbean provenance, to the importance of Jamaican DJ

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[5] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. The flyer was for a January 17, 1981 party.
[6] I talked with members of the Bronx River Oral History Project if they remembered Club Roots or Mantil and the New York Pythons. I also contacted various social media groups comprised of Bronxites if they had any recollection of the venue or party promoters. No one did.

traditions in establishing the backbone of hip-hop DJing.[7] Jamaican immigrants

have long been present in New York. From 1900 to 1930, half of the 55,000

foreign-born black New Yorkers were Jamaican and mostly concentrated in

Harlem. By the late 1960s many Jamaican immigrants settled in Northeast

Bronx.[8] Throughout the 1970s, Jamaican and Reggae clubs and events took

place in the Bronx. WHBI Radio DJ Gil Bailey hosted a "Reggae Show Down"

at the club Leshontae, and the Kingston Tropical Bakery, James B Kitch and

2M Records sponsored the "Junior Soul 15th Anniversary Showcase."[9] The

Junior Soul Showcase featured Miss Jamaica 1980 and a variety of Jamaican,

Reggae and Afro-Caribbean artists including GT Taylor, DJ Frankie, Gigi

Rumph, Mr. Showman, and Little Junior Soul.[10]

The 15th anniversary "Junior Soul Showcase" poster also announced

that Junior Soul would appear October 18th, 1980 at Club Negril.[11] Club Negril

became a central site linking Bronx and downtown cultural communities. In a

1982 "Notes on Fashion" article in *The New York Times* described an early

downtown breaking performance at Club Negril. According to the article, "a

troupe called the Breakers does a dance called the Cosmic Rap, a

combination of acrobatics and dancing that ends with the performers actually

spinning on their heads."[12] This article established a link between reggae

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[7] This history is well documented in all texts investigating the origins of hip-hop culture. David Toop's *Rap Attact #3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000) first chapter, "On the Corner," provides thoughtful consideration of Afro-Caribbean diasporic cultures.

[8] Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 669-670.

[9] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. This event took place October 17, 1980.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] John Duka, "Notes on Fashion," *New York Times*, January 12, 1982.

clubs, the expansion of hip-hop downtown, and downtown cultural mavens and scenesters increased interest in hip-hop culture in the neighborhoods, galleries and clubs in and around SoHo, where the "vernacular" and "avant-garde" met.

Establishing SoHo

Artists and entrepreneurs forged a spatial connection between downtown Manhattan and uptown Bronx along with performance and cultural relations. Whereas hip-hop took root in the Bronx, at the same time downtown Manhattan artists created a community based on cultural representation and aesthetics that was equally connected to their spaces and places. The connection between downtown and uptown ultimately rested on housing.

Throughout the 20th century, housing options in New York City had long been inadequate for the individuals and communities most economically vulnerable. By the 1930s, the numbers were especially dire. During 1932, a quarter of a million homes had been foreclosed on, and 1933 witnessed a rate of almost one thousand home foreclosures a day.[13] By 1940, New York's City Planning Commission and NYCHA began laying out New York's post-World War II urban renewal by including new housing, in the hopes of identifying areas "suitable for clearance and replanning." By the 1960s, the mechanisms of urban renewal and rebuilding had been reimagined to support slum clearance and "shoring up middle-class life" in Manhattan.[14] Beginning in the

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[13] Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 76.
[14] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18-19.

1970s, housing in New York was discussed as a public good, but administered as a private right.

The debate concerning SoHo zoning represents the dynamics of New York's housing history from the 1930s to the 1970s that focused on privatizing extant housing stock. While official public policy took up the issue of SoHo zoning, a different type of public conversation concerning housing in the Bronx was happening in the pages of *The New York Times* and the *New York Amsterdam News.* Comparing the public debate surrounding the establishing of SoHo with the burgeoning Bronx crisis an uptown borough in crisis provides a material and cultural link between the Bronx and downtown Manhattan that impacted hip-hop's expansion.

The New York Times published bleak reports about the state of New York City housing in the early 1970s. The reporting documented that the city's housing stock was old, dilapidated, and vanishing. Writing in 1970, Charles J. Urstadt, Commissioner of Housing and Community Renewal for the State of New York, enumerated the dismal statistics: a total of 2.7 million housing units existed in New York City, with approximately 60 percent more than 40 years old and an estimated 500,000 considered substandard.[15] Sounding the alarm, Urstadt explained that in 1969 approximately 50,000 units were abandoned while only 16,331 new building permits were authorized. Urstadt concluded his assessment: "Acre upon acre of housing is disappearing faster than it can be replaced. . . . The plaster is falling, the wires are burning, the boilers are cracking, the roofs are leaking and the paint is peeling. Capital is moving to more inviting areas and unless all join together, New York City will never regain

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[15] Charles J. Urstadt, "Housing Prospect Bleak in the City," *New York Times,* March 15, 1970.

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the pre-eminence it once held."[16] As New York City's housing continued to

deteriorate throughout the 1970s, Urstadt's dire predictions proved prescient

for pockets of the city.

The SoHo Loft re-zoning in 1971 demonstrated a private housing

solution for pockets of New York. The re-zoning provided a low-cost "win" for

City Hall through rehabilitation of abandoned or obsolete housing stock by

invested new owners, landlords, and tenants that resulted in the creation of

new housing stock without the need to raise capital. While SoHo lofts were

being legalized and rehabilitated largely through private means, various federal

and state urban renewal projects were attempted in the Bronx. In May 1970,

the Housing and Development Administration approved projects throughout

urban renewal areas in New York including the Melrose Development area in

the Bronx for both elderly, low and moderate-income tenants, and public

housing units.[17] Although the Model Cities Program generated upwards of

$500 million in federal support, these monies were further distributed between

151 different programs nationwide.[18] Further compounding federal, state, and

local interventions, what money the Model Cities Program funneled to the

South Bronx was quickly earmarked by rival political factions. The obstacles to

coordinating various levels of government offices to remedy the rapidly

deteriorating housing situation in the Bronx limited any meaningful help.

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[16] Charles J. Urstadt, "Housing Prospect Bleak in the City," *New York Times,* March 15, 1970.
[17] Edward C. Burks, "3,500 Housing Units Cleared for Renewal Projects in City," *New York Times,* May 24, 1970. The Bronx arm of this project consisted of redeveloping 920 housing units.
[18] John Sasso and Priscilla Foley, *A Little Noticed Revolution: An Oral History of the Model Cities Program and its Transition to the Communitye Development Block Grant Program* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Public Policy Press, 2005), 209.

Conditions were similar, but responses were different downtown. In a

July 1970 article, *The New York Times* examined the costs of illegal loft living

in SoHo. Although rent was relatively cheap—approximately one dollar per

square foot—the article described the pitfalls that existed for illegal loft renters:

several thousand dollars in "fixture" prices for refrigerators, plumbing, gas and

heat, and the incidental maintenance costs that resulted from faulty wiring and

other safety issues.[19] The article framed lofts in a sympathetic and

appreciative tone. The hassles of loft living—lack of convenient shopping, no

garbage disposal, and no schools were detailed by personal testimonials.

Mike Green reported that he spent ten thousand dollars fixing up his loft, with

most of the money spent on a "new and expensive" refrigerator because he

had to leave his neighborhood to shop for food to "freeze enough to sustain

him for a while."[20] Loft living was an expensive and inconvenient housing

choice, but it was a choice. These same obstacles existed for Bronx families

except that housing *choices* were largely absent.

Attempting to circumvent zoning laws, SoHo loft cooperatives emerged.

Instead of the threat of eviction, co-op loft owners had to worry about their

building passing safety inspections. By 1968, a group representing SoHo

artists and loft dwellers began advocating for a zoning change, effecting an

informal moratorium on evictions as New York City commissioners and policy

makers investigated SoHo loft living. By 1970 The New York City Fire

Department routinely helped loft owners retrofit and make their converted

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[19] Leslie Gourse, "Cost for 'SoHo' Lofts are Rising Drastically," *New York Times*, July 26, 1970.
[20] Ibid.

buildings code compliant.[21]   Mayor John Lindsay entered the loft zoning

conversation at a September 23, 1970 City Planning Commission meeting,

where he advocated for the legalization of loft buildings in SoHo's 43-block

area. Via a written statement the mayor said that the "creation of [a] SoHo

artists' district will insure New York's position as the art capital of the nation

and one of the great creative centers of the world."[22] After the September 23,

1970 meeting, the City Planning Commission reserved their decision until

January 20, 1971 when they voted to legalize the residential use of SoHo's

industrial lofts. Following the Planning Commission, the Board of Estimate

approved the zoning change on January 28, 1971 officially legalizing loft living

in SoHo.

SoHo was established two years and seven months before Kool Herc's

seminal party at 1520 Sedgwick. In less than a decade, artists in SoHo's 43-

block area went from squatting in warehouses, to creating an association that

was capable of petitioning City Hall for new zoning laws, to becoming

municipal partners helping to draft new city housing legislation. Between the

1968 informal moratorium and the January 1971 votes to legalize loft living, the

cultural and geographic area known as SoHo was formalized. The irony is that

these same housing issues were happening 90 blocks north with little official

response.

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[21] Leslie Gourse, "Cost for 'SoHo' Lofts are Rising Drastically," *New York Times,* July 26, 1970. The building was located at 16-18 Greene Street.

[22] Edward C. Burks, "Mayor Asks Aid To 'SOHO' Artists," *New York Times,* September 24, 1970.

Placing the Bronx

For all the uncertainty and inconvenience experienced by SoHo tenants during the period between the 1968 eviction moratorium and the 1971 loft legalization, Bronx residents faced a different set of housing issues. On February 16, 1970 *The New York Times* ran an article titled, "City Concedes Many Tenants Have Had No Heat or Water for Most of Winter," cataloguing a host of hardships and dire living conditions. This article is representative of the standard coverage the *New York Times* devoted to housing problems in the Bronx. As opposed to SoHo articles advocating remaking specific zoning laws, the Bronx housing articles documented housing difficulties in a clinically detached tone.

The coverage of Bronx housing problems in the early 1970s by the *New York Times* revealed the impact of New York City's looming financial crisis on Bronx housing. Basic city government oversight offices were shuttered, leaving essential offices such as fire marshals vacant. These civil servant vacancies impacted the quality of Bronx housing. The tenement building at 583 Teasdale Avenue reported being without heat for over a year, while lacking water for most of the 1969-1970 winter. When asked about the dilapidated Bronx housing stock, Edward A. Davis, acting inspector general of the Housing and Development Authority, commented, "The number of buildings without heat and water is almost a bottomless pit. We just don't have the thousands of men we need to make repairs."[23] Davis's remarks and the descriptions of the living conditions of Bronx tenants documented the human

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[23] Nancy Moran, "City Concedes Many Tenants Have Had no Heat or Water for Most of Winter," *New York Times,* February 16, 1970.

cost of municipal disinvestment and selective abandonment on areas throughout metropolitan New York. Although the living conditions were reported, the city failed to address these problems through a lethal cocktail of inertia and fiscal insolvency. They saw no path forward and were not compelled to find one.

The reporting on Bronx housing helped establish the twin narratives of the Bronx as "isolated," and not "salvageable." During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the *New York Amsterdam News* presented a different perspective on the Bronx housing crisis. Instead of pathologizing Bronx housing, the *New York Amsterdam News* proceeded to report and advocate for better, and more housing, in the Bronx. Where the *New York Times* tended to document the impotency or incompetency of local, state, and federal housing agencies, the *New York Amsterdam News* viewed any attempts to redress Bronx housing woes as a positive community development.

Amsterdam News praised public attempts at housing solutions. However, when it came to private housing and landlord neglect, the paper heaped the blame baldly, boldly, and broadly. The residents at 1109 and 1103 Franklin Avenue in the Bronx waged a three months' battle over poor conditions, including a lack of heat. Although the Mayor's Office, the Department of Water Supply, Emergency Division, and the Department of Health and the Housing Complaint Office investigated the residents' complaints. The building agent, Alfred S. Friedman, said: "[the agencies] ha[ve] been giving them [the tenants] the run around, and repeated complaints to the Fire Department have not proven fruitful." The article concluded directly blaming the Franklin Avenue landlord, and landlords generally, culpable for the increasing crisis of housing

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in the Bronx, saying, "[i]ts about time that these *so-called landlords,* most of

whom are responsible for turning buildings and neighborhoods into slums,

either turn these buildings over to the city or sell out to someone who is

interested in the welfare of decent human beings."[24]

Several salient details from the article above deserve closer scrutiny.

Lesly Jones's article included the address of the "'alleged' agent," Alfred S.

Friedman, notifying that he lived on 225 West 34th Street in Manhattan.[25]

Publishing Alfred Friedman's address announced that he did not live in the

apartment buildings' neighborhood. Printing Friedman's address in the

paragraph directly after a list of uncooperative public offices linked city

government offices and landlords—and their agents—as outsiders not invested

or representative of this particular Bronx neighborhood. Jones's message was

clear: "outsiders" have conspired to wreck a community.

Jones expressed her antipathy for non-residential landlords and those

agencies guilty of collusion, yet she also maintained a firm belief that a real

solution for the housing crisis would stem from public action. Jones's call for

city action or "someone who is interested in the welfare of decent human

beings," was a rhetorical strategy that invoked a public sphere comprised of

both the city and the neighborhood. Jones ended her column questioning,

"why make someone else suffer for your inability to handle your

responsibilities?"[26] Jones's rhetorical question challenged the failings of

private housing while demanding greater public responsibility by public offices

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[24] Lesly Jones, "Bronx News," *New York Amsterdam News,* January 9, 1971. The emphasis is mine.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

and private citizens alike. What Jones's column stressed was the need to recognize the fact that neighbors throughout New York were suffering. In this manner, then, Jones asserted Bronx residents' membership in the city by appealing to a broad New York community.

Between 1969 and 1971, Marietta J. Tanner's *Amsterdam News* column, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," invoked "downtown" and "uptown" as geographical descriptors mapping the city's geography of race and power. In a February 1970 column, Tanner detailed the conflation of race and geography while advocating for African American Bronxites to vote for black Bronx leadership. In 1970, city hall was appointing representatives to head local, borough based programs throughout New York. Tanner noted that city hall decided that Bronx program heads should be Puerto Rican because "blacks have received the appointments in Bedford Stuyvesant and Harlem."[27] In the face of a lack of municipal representation, the Bronx African American community hoped that Augustus Davis would be appointed director of Bronx Model Cities. Tanner argued: "its about time Mayor Lindsay did something for the blacks of the Bronx, who worked for his reelection." Tanner noted that "[p]lenty of black poor live in those rotting tenements of Melrose and Mott Haven [Model Cities sites in the Bronx]."[28] According to the editorial, African American advancement in city political life was "just about nil," unless the appointment was in Harlem or Brooklyn.[29] Tanner concluded her editorial with

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[27] Marietta J. Tanner, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," *New York Amsterdam News* February 21, 1970.

[28] Marietta J. Tanner, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," *New York Amsterdam News,* February 14, 1970.

[29] Marietta J. Tanner, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," *New York Amsterdam News* February 21, 1970.

a rallying cry for the Bronx African American community to get-out-the-vote,

writing, "[n]ow is the time for all good men to come to the aid of Augustus

Davis and stop the vicious cycle."[30] For Tanner, city hall and city government,

located "downtown," had the power to *race* "uptown" and the Bronx through

representational appointments.

For Tanner, this "vicious cycle" represented a loss of community

control and recognition. As George Lipsitz asserts in the *Possessive*

Investment in Whiteness, creating and maintaining "whiteness" entails

conflating race with culture, economics, politics, and real estate as instruments

of social and political power designed to maintain racial discrimination. The

coded language and actions include restrictions on private property ownership,

and political ideology such as "states rights" that buttress the expression and

experience of whiteness. It is the continued attack on community

representation that Marietta Tanner wrote against; it is precisely the loss of

community and representation in urban centers engineered through neoliberal

policies; it is precisely this loss of community that is responsible for hip-hop's

emergence and attempted representational intervention in public space.

A March 7, 1970 "Community Conscious" column further exposed a

serious disconnect between Bronx residents and those tasked to represent

Bronx community needs. The issue of drugs typified structural problems with

community representation in the face of money and power superseding

community knowledge. Focusing on increased drug use drug-related violence

throughout the Bronx, Tanner profiled two experts in drug use and drug

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[30] Marietta J. Tanner, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," *New York Amsterdam News* February 21, 1970. However, Victor Marrero was appointed the Model Cities Director instead of Augustus Davis on February 21, 1970.

rehabilitation. Rose Shapiro was the former head of the New York City Board of Education and she was named special assistant for narcotics education programs as a part of Governor Rockefeller's "Total war on narcotics" in large part because the education program carried a $250 million budget. Tanner also profiled Elsie Brown, a Bronx veteran of drug rehabilitation and counseling programs with seventeen years of community experience. Underscoring the disconnect between Bronx residents and Bronx service providers, the exorbitant budget led Elsie Brown to conclude: "'the focus of addiction services these days is on the young, white, middle-class addict, and the way the programs are developed and staffed proves it."[31] Elsie Brown described the Rose Shapiro-led City Addiction Services as hostile to Bronx community groups, practicing encounter-type therapy modeled after the experiences of white, middle-class addicts that would be "destructive of black and Puerto Rican identity," resulting in poorly managed funds and programs throughout the Bronx. Highlighting the mismanagement, Elsie Brown discussed the $4.7 million Phoenix House that included a "staff that doesn't live here [Bronx, Phoenix Houses] and cannot relate."[32] For Elsie Brown and Marietta J. Tanner, the lack of input or leadership roles for drug rehabilitation programs in the Bronx smacked of "white power structure groups and experts."

The 163rd Street Improvement Council attempted to create programs to positively impact the Morrisania community in the south Bronx by inviting "members of the community families to get involved in bettering Morrisania.

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[31] Marietta J. Tanner, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," *New York Amsterdam News* February 21, 1970.

[32] Marietta J. Tanner, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," *New York Amsterdam News,* March 7, 1970.

[The Improvement Council] want[s] everyone to get involved."[33] Projects undertaken by the Improvement Council included building three daycare centers in the neighborhood under the Youth Facilities Improvement Act of 1969. The Improvement Council attempted to negotiate with other day care centers to change purchasing protocols to allow the centers to buy food and other basic necessities from local businesses, so that day care centers would not only provide child-care services but could also serve as economic engines for local businesses. However, due to the fraying finances of New York City, any type of community organization that depended on municipal funds, in any degree, faced dire fiscal challenges throughout the 1970s.

Material Structures of Feeling: Uptown and Downtown

Raymond Williams defined structures of feeling as "social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formulations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available."[34] Williams describes contemporary moments where social relations and experiences could be observed, in hindsight. Contemporary attention and public discussion never linked cultural and material conditions in SoHo and the Bronx. The structures of feeling linking uptown and downtown that sprouted from galleries, clubs, and lofts throughout SoHo emerged from similar responses to the built environment.

Many residents living in illegal lofts in SoHo experienced similar living stressors from substandard housing as their Bronx neighbors, including

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[33] "Improvement Council in South Bronx," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 9, 1971.
[34] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 133-134.

powerlessness, lack of support from landlords or the appropriate city offices in response to their housing complaints. In the Bronx, this sense of isolation and abandonment elicited a broad range of public expressions of creativity and discontent, such as graffiti writing and arson. In February 1970, four Bronxites were charged with arson after setting fire to their apartment in response to the landlord's recalcitrance concerning building maintenance.[35] The would-be arsonists first removed the television and "other valuables" before torching the apartment. Because the arsonists removed all the valuables from their apartment, it is clear that this act of arson was premeditated. This was not senseless destruction but the last resort in the face of perceived landlord inaction and substandard housing.

Arson also represented an investment strategy for some landlords, as well. In a particularly sordid scheme, one Bronx landlord hired one of his tenants to set fire to his apartment building. The arsonist moved his belongings out of his apartment and set fire to his mattress. Unlike the total destruction of other apartment fires in the Bronx, the blaze was contained and the building suffered minor damage with the insurance paying in excess of $5,000 for repairs. However, the other 14 families living in the building were forced to move out and once the repairs were completed, rent was increased.[36] This scheme using arson as an economic tool would most likely have worked if the landlord had chosen a less conspicuous arsonist.[37]

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[35] "Bronx Tenants Faces Arson Complaints," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 14, 1970.
[36] "Scoutmaster, Landlord Face 3 Arson Murders," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 28, 1970.
[37] The landlord, Albert Epstein, hired his tenant and local scoutmaster Benjamin Warren to torch Epstein's five-story building, located at 1132 Kelly Street. Based on newspaper reports, Warren was a pedophile. Warren convinced three teenage boys to help him set the fire and then

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Securing stable housing in the Bronx proved difficult for non-white

Bronxites long before the 1970s' arson epidemic. Tracing almost thirty years

of Bronx housing history through a single excerpted letter and anecdote,

James Egert Allen illustrated the history of institutional racism inherent in the

New York housing market. As the Metropolitan Life Company developed

housing in New York and the Bronx in the 1940s, certain targeted life

insurance policyholders such as Mr. Allen were invited to tour new housing

developments. Mr. Allen was invited to visit Parkchester housing in the Bronx

in 1941. Frank C. Lowe, the Parkchester development resident manager,

contacted Mr. Allen writing, "many [residents] have come from public school

teachers of this city. Feeling that you possess the same interests we are

happy to enclose a folder which contains all the basic facts."[38] Allen thanked

Mr. Lowe for the invitation to visit Parkchester on personal stationary with a

letterhead identifying Allen as the President of the New York State Conference

of NAACP branches. Before Allen could visit Parkchester, Metropolitan Life

president Frederic Ecker requested Allen visit Ecker at his office. Describing

the meeting, Allen wrote that Ecker discussed the, "impossibility of admitting

black applicants into the [Parkchester] housing project. The usual clichés were

invoked buttressed by the fear that the company would be risking an

investment of over one hundred millions of dollars." According to Allen, Ecker

said that, "he did not think of the great numbers of blacks who were policy

holders had an equal right to live in a project built by their hard earned dollars."

Warren burned the boys in the blaze. However, the 3 deaths might have gone unsolved if
Warren had not already kidnapped a 12 year-old boy and imprisoned him at another Bronx
apartment. When police rescued the boy, they were able to piece together the arson scheme.
[38] James Egert Allen, "The Housing Problem: Then and Now," *New York Amsterdam News,*
January 24, 1970.

Ecker promised Allen that MetLife was planning a "smaller community for blacks in Harlem."[39]

This vignette resonates with histories of housing discrimination in New York. Samuel Zipp writes that Metropolitan Life and other public and private institutions and developers attempted to create a "suburban, white enclave" in the city through developments such as Stuyvesant Town, Parkchester, and Bronx River Houses, demonstrating the immediate post-WWII debate over whether or not American life would be urban or suburban.[40] With the triumph of privately owned suburban living, investment in urban housing evaporated, as money and government incentives favored suburban expansion, codifying a two-tiered housing system in the United States.[41]

The United States Congressional redistricting of 1970 demonstrated how the geography of race and class effected New York. In January 1970, the Republican lead efforts at redistricting carved Morrisania, the most densely populated African American Bronx neighborhood, into three separate districts, effectively splitting any representational power a black Bronx voting bloc could muster. The African American constituents of the Morrisania section were parceled to the 21st, 22nd and 24th congressional districts. Marietta J. Tanner commented on the community impact of congressional representation: "we [African Americans] are the minority in each of the districts, and probably will

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[39] James Egert Allen, "The Housing Problem: Then and Now," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 24, 1970.

[40] Zipp, *Manhattan Projects*

[41] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2004); Zipp, *Manhattan Projects*, among others, provide excellent insight into the postwar expansion of the suburbs.

be silent."[42] In the 22nd district, Congressman Jacob Gilbert maintained his

home base and his appointment on the Ways and Means committee. The 22nd

district already comprised a large proportion of African American constituents;

so adding a percentage of the Morrisania district served the ironic purpose of

strengthening the African American numbers in the 22nd while limiting their

voice. Tanner described Gilbert as being "snug in his cocoon of the 22nd . . . .

and that's where the Democrats and Republicans on the bipartisan committee

[House Ways and Means] want him to stay."[43] Tanner's comments implied that

Gilbert wanted to maintain his influential position in Congress and he would not

try and upset his position by advocating for African American concerns in

Southeast Bronx. Gilbert's strategy backfired when he lost his bid for reelection

in the June 1970 primaries when James H. Scheuer successfully campaigned

against Gilbert, painting him as an establishment candidate impeding

substantive, liberal reform.[44]

Remapping the 21st and 24th districts involved a much more direct

splitting of the African American vote. The 24th district stretched from

Morissania in the Bronx to include parts of Westchester, Throggs Neck, and

Yonkers. Outside of the Morrisania section of the Bronx, the rest of the 24th

district was made up of older-stock, white-ethnics Bronxites who fled the Bronx

during the 1950s and 1960s. The 21st district was created at the insistence of

Puerto Rican politicians, and it included sections of East Harlem, Hunts Point

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[42] Marietta J. Tanner, "In the Bronx: Community Conscious," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 31, 1970.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Paul L. Montgomery, "Gilbert is Striving to Repel Invasion of His District by Scheuer," *New York Times*, June, 1970; Richard L. Madden, "Sate Democrats Plan House Move: Seek to Protect Gilbert Seat on Ways and Means Panel," *New York Times*, November, 1970.

in the South Bronx and Astoria, Queens. In addition to the Puerto Rican

contingent, the 21st district was also home to African Americans and various

white ethnic groups. Tanner weighed in on the redistricting plan for the 21st

District saying, "none of the constituents of that hodgepodge district can be

properly served by it."[45] The redistricting plan of 1970 demonstrated how

political re-mapping was used to disregard local concern. The loft law

represented a surgical use of political power to address local concerns;

congressional redistricting was a blunt tool. Unlike the 1971 loft laws,

municipal leadership seemed unwilling to address local issues in the Bronx,

while the redistricting plans attempted to limit federal activity in the Bronx.

On the surface, the *New York Times* coverage and city support for

changing zoning laws corresponded to the "bleak" prospects of housing in New

York during the 1970s. The *New York Times* coverage highlighted thorny

issues of race, class, and geography effecting the places and spaces of hip-

hop's emergence. As a legal solution was being reached establishing SoHo

and loft living in January 1971, city authorities continued ignoring housing

issues uptown in Harlem and the Bronx. The solution for much of the legal and

semi-legal housing that existed because of New York's constant lack of

affordable and safe housing for those marginal families was arbitrary eviction

and resettlement. After almost four years of residency, the McCoy family was

summarily evicted from their Harlem apartment because the landlord, Widamo

Estates Inc., deemed their apartment was 72 square feet too small for a family

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[45] Paul L. Montgomery, "Gilbert is Striving to Repel Invasion of His District by Scheuer," *New York Times*, June, 1970

of nine.[46] The solution, according to the city, involved relocating the McCoys from a six-room $165-a-month apartment in Harlem into a three-room Brooklyn hotel with the Department of Social Services paying $1,400 a month in rent. In addition to the social disruption, the financial costs of relocation were ridiculous. The Citywide Welfare Rights Organization (CWRO) charged that the capricious actions of arresting and evicting "poor people who, through their own initiative, find housing that is still usable," represented discrimination against the city's welfare recipients.[47]

The housing policies aimed at welfare recipients lacked the logic of the loft law settlement. Instead of eviction and relocation, CWRO argued that The Department of Social Services could affect a raise of the rent ceiling—the highest amount of rent per month that the Department of Social Services would pay for individuals and families receiving assistance. CWRO argued that a change in $25 to $50 in the rent ceiling could be the difference between local, livable housing and eviction and relocation to "substandard, more expensive housing" found in the "welfare hotels" that cropped up throughout the outer boroughs in the 1970s. Between 1967-1970, the "welfare hotel" bill soared over 300 %.[48] Further exacerbating the problem, the Department of Social Services failed to bring charges against landlords and hotels that discriminated against welfare recipients. These types of housing actions through official inaction inversely mirrored the housing policies being created for SoHo lofts. Comparing the change to residency laws and loft living with Department of

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[46] Simon Anekwe, "The Welfare Housing Problem," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 2, 1971.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

Social Services stance on welfare recipients and housing, it is obvious that an effort to define the places and spaces of New York based on race and class informed public policy.

The actions, and inactions, of New York City municipal policies in the 1970s revealed a purposeful creation of a raced and classed urban geography. In the *Assassination of New York*, Robert Fitch argued that the FIRE (Financial, Insurance, and Real Estate) industries colluded to establish Manhattan as the financial capital of the world while neglecting New York City's middle and working class inhabitants. Illustrating Fitch's point, Murray Forman describes how the skyscrapers of Midtown and lower Manhattan would empty of white-collar workers at the end of the workday and then fill-up with a largely nonwhite custodial staff in the evenings:

> The buildings that house the contemporary cultural power bloc are shells at the end of the workday and on weekends, empty edifices that continue to articulate the authority of the 'power elite.' They symbolize the elite's presence in an ongoing way even, or perhaps especially, when they are vacant. By night, individuals converge on the buildings as a virtually invisible ethnic labor force, cleaning and maintaining them and then departing before the 'official' workforce returns.[49]

Both Forman and Fitch point to the fact that the space and place of the Manhattan of the 1960s and 1970s was created to differentiate between race and class. Although these skyscrapers served as the same place of employment, and metonym of New York City, they also contained distinct and differentiated spaces, as the city was becoming more segregated.

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[49] Murray Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press), 44.

Geographies of Performance and Identity

In the experiences of uptown and downtown New Yorkers in the 1970s and early 1980s, consumption and production not only referred to cultural productions and products, but also to space. Edward Soja's perspectives locate and reveal hip-hop and downtown artists as both consumers and producers of spatial meaning because their structures of feeling emerged from urban space mottled by overlapping sites of selective institutional attention and neglect. Soja's terms "flexible specialization," and "selective abandonment" aptly characterize this moment. Flexible specialization facilitated the creation and maintenance of separate suburban and inner-city core areas of industry, while "selective abandonment" entails the "expansive metropolitianization" of the urban and suburban areas through expanding fragmentation of political jurisdictions and further decentralization of civil and commercial services.[50] The results of flexible accumulation and selective abandonment resulted in planned urban pockets of decay, such as the South Bronx, the redistricting of Congressional districts in the Bronx, and planned areas of public intervention for private profit, such as the legal codification of SoHo in 1971.

At a national and international remove, the spaces and places of the Bronx and downtown Manhattan represent the success of neoliberal policies in America. The resource-deprived areas of the Bronx embodied the triumph of an economic system steeped in class privilege and power similarly embodied by the codification of SoHo lofts. Documenting the national triumph of neoliberal policies and their effect on housing, Arnold Hirsh tracks the creation

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[50] Edward Soja gives an in-depth description of "flexible accumulation" on page 171, with "selective abandonment" following on page 181 of *Postmodern Geographies*.

of African American ghettoes from the Great Migration through the post-Civil

Rights era. Hirsch argued that the raced, urban ghetto was a modern

phenomenon tied to the "economic and technological advances permit[ing]

urbanization on a scale never before possible," allowing the suburbanization

and segregation of workers, which in turn was supported by federal policies

aiding slum clearance and urban renewal.[51] The selective economic

processes discussed by Harvey and Hirsch worked to maintain and expand

spaces of concentrated accumulation of privilege, power, wealth and property,

all along racial lines.[52]

Comparing the press coverage of housing in SoHo and the Bronx

coupled with the realities of housing in New York City also provides an

important vantage point to see how downtown artists and uptown hip-hoppers

identified and recognized shared cultural creations and experiences. Jacki

Apple's 1981 New Museum exhibition *Alternatives in Retrospect: An Historical

Overview, 1969-1975,* described the works in the exhibition as "a majority of

the works were process oriented and situationally specific, involving a

relationship between materials, concepts, actions, and locations. . . . During

the period in which this exhibition deals, artists out of necessity created and

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[51] Arnold R. Hirsch, "With or Without Jim Crow: Black Residential Segregation in the United States," *Urban Policy in Twentieth-Century America,* eds Arnold R. Hirsch and Raymond A. Mohl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 65-99.

[52] For a detailed discussion of economic practices enacted to maintain and expand spaces of privilege and power, see Naomi Klein's *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador, 1999), and Godfrey Hodgson's *More Equal Than Others: America From Nixon to the New Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). Klein provides a journalistic polemic against the processes of late capitalism by following brands from first world deindustrialization to third world exploitation. Hodgson argues that the last quarter century of American history has witnessed a "gross and growing inequality" infecting American politics, economics, and geography perpetrated by a "small class of owners of wealth and their attendant corporate managers, professionals, publicists, and tame ideologues [which] has steadily accumulated financial, industrial, media, and cultural power" (pp. xvii, xxiii). All take part in the producing and reproducing the space of late capitalism.

took control of their own contexts."[53] These contexts were spaces and places

primarily below 14th street and south of Houston, in lower Manhattan.

Apple's discussion of downtown artists and the discussion by leading

hip-hop scholars about the environment of hip-hop creation is strikingly similar.

Gumpert writes that downtown Manhattan artists created from "workspace and

exhibition space [that] were interchangeable."[54] During the 1970s, then,

downtown artists who were experimenting with novel forms of artistic

representation and alternative spaces of performance were involved in

analogue processes of cultural creation as their youthful counterparts in the

Bronx.

Comparing the cultural geography of the Bronx and downtown Manhattan

through the lens of public performance reveals event greater similarities

between these places. Residents of the Bronx and residents of Soho and

downtown Manhattan shared a similar compulsion to create and enact public

performances rooted in the local cultural geography. Tying the psychological

impact of urban neglect and substandard housing, Michael Holman, hip-hop

impresario and creator of the television show "Graffiti Rock," commented on

the importance of the creation of art and identity throughout New York in the

1970s. Holman describes the creation of hip-hop as "just one of many types of

art that people were creating in New York at the time [1970s]. It's important to

place hip-hop within the context of all the culture and art that was being

created at the time. Hip-hop wasn't the only one, and it wasn't necessarily the

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[53] Lynn Gumpert, "Foreward" in *The Downtown Book: the New York Art Scene 1974-1984*, ed. Marvin J. Taylor (Princeton: Princetown University Press, 2006), 10. Jacki Apple is quoted from her "Introduction" in *Alternatives in Retrospect* (New York: New Museum, 1981), 5.
[54] Gumpert, 10.

one that would last. Creating art and culture at the time was about being in New York; being in New York and being able to create an identity."[55]

Uptown and Downtown

Michael Holman discussed his own affinity with emerging hip-hop culture after moving to New York in 1978: "I was working on Wall Street and hating it. I kept seeing all these amazing trains as I waited for the subway and I thought, wow."[56] Out of this connected, yet often overlooked, history between uptown and downtown, the continued emergence of hip-hop took place. Through important city and cultural connections between hip-hop cultural mavens and downtown artists and scenesters, the youthful street culture remapping and representing 1970s' Bronx youth went "all-city" in the clubs, galleries, and lofts downtown, becoming "hip-hop" in the process. Importantly, what is revealed through this history of linked city geographies is the identification and recognition of culture experience and production between the youthful artists of the 1970s and early 1980s. As Charlie Ahearn said, "it was a high school youth culture. And to me, it was a radical avant-garde culture."[57] Steven Hager echoed Charlie Ahearn's reminiscence, recalling, "hip-hop goes to show what junior high school kids can do. Do not dismiss the culture of junior high kids."[58]

The expansion and subsequent national and international transmission of hip-hop culture resulted from the uptown and downtown connection, and

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[55] Michael Holman, phone interview with the author, 5/17/2013.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Charlie Ahearn quoted in Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 141.
[58] Steven Hager, interview with author, New York, 1/13/2013.

again the Zulu Nation and the Bronx River Houses stand firmly at the center of this history. As Jeff Chang wrote, "[the] first wave of downtowners—white baby boomer outsiders, young white bohemian dropouts, white art rebels, Black post-jazzers—were enthralled. They were the earliest adopters, the ones who placed themselves closest to the fire, and they would be central in bringing hip-hop to the world."[59] Such downtowners followed people like Michael Holman to the Bronx River Houses, establishing a relationship with Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation. It was Michael Holman who introduced Malcolm McLaren to Afrika Bambaataa at a Bronx River jam in 1981. Holman remembers, "Malcolm and his group were dressed like pirates or something, in their New Romantic clothes, and I thought we're going get jumped. . . Once I got them behind the ropes with Bam [at Bronx River] they see what was going on and Malcolm was excited, he loved it."[60] Holman's recollection revealed that not only were initiated and interested cultural travelers like himself important in establishing relationships, but also that Bambaataa, Bronx River and the Zulu Nation were the most important agents transmitting and connecting the culture of hip-hop with the downtown art scene.

Another early advocate of hip-hop was Henry Chalfant. In addition to his developing passion for graffiti and becoming a part of the emerging hip-hop scene, he was also a practicing artist, showing his work at galleries throughout SoHo. In 1978, he began showing his photographs of graffiti writers' subway car masterpieces at his Grand Street Studio.[61] Chalfant was also a member of the Sculptors Guild, acting as curator for more traditional art shows, including

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[59] Chang,, 141.
[60] Michael Holman, phone interview with author 5/17/2013.
[61] Chang, 143.

curating sculptures for the New York Botanical Garden's Enid A. Haupt Conservatory.[62] Chalfant's interest in graffiti art in the Bronx and his professional role as an artist with connections throughout the downtown art scene provided a milieu for uptown and downtown to mix. By 1980, Chalfant's O.K. Harris Gallery exhibition catalogue of his subway graffiti photographs could state, "color photographs of subway graffiti art" without further mention or contextualization.[63]

By 1985, the interest graffiti art had largely subsided. However, Chalfant was still taking part in graffiti art shows, serving as contemporary cultural ambassador and guide, explaining the importance of hip-hop and graffiti to both uptown and downtown audiences. In 1985, Chalfant's graffiti photographs were included in the "Subway Show" at Lehman College. The show included Berenice Abbott's photographs documenting the subways for the Works Progress Administration and concluded with contemporary photography of graffiti art by Henry Chalfant. Additionally, "The Subway Show" included a 1938 Rothko painting depicting a scene inside a subway station, and other paintings and drawings by artists such as John Marin, Lous Lozowick and Fritz Eichenberg. The Lehman show suggested that hip-hop's move downtown had been necessary for the culture to return to the Bronx to be understood and respected by Bronx institutions. Descriptions of the "Subway Show" were suffused with nostalgia: "These days the subway inspires mostly revulsion. But it wasn't always thus: The subway was once an inspiration to a generation of New York artists who drew, painted and

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[62] "Sculpture to Grace a Garden is Shown," *New York Times,* May 7, 1981.
[63] "Art and Leisure Guide: Art Photography Miscellany," *New York Times,* August 31, 1980.

photographed life underground."[64] Organized to celebrate the Transit

Authority's modernization program that included one percent of construction

costs for art in subway stations, "The Subway Show" contextualized the visual

arts in the subway system. According to the show: "essentially there are two

ways in which artists have seized on the subways for subject matter. Many

see a long section of a subway car as a concentrated bit of a melting pot that

New York is famed for being. Other artists are taken by the mechanic and

dynamism of the subway."[65] Although the art intended for the subway system's

modernization program included traditionally recognizable forms of art such as

murals, mosaics, and sculptures, the inclusion of Chalfant's graffiti

photographs positioned hip-hop culture within more conventional spheres of

accepted forms of art. Framed by "The Subway Show," Chalfant described the

graffiti artists: "[t]hese kids see themselves as contributing, as beautifying the

city."[66]

Chalfant attempted to contextualize graffiti art within a longer tradition

of New York modern art in thrall to the subway system. "The Subway Show"

article argued, "secretly and despite all their problems, everyone loves the

subways. They are in the blood of anyone who has had any involvement with

New York City."[67] Notably, the article also made an interesting international

connection mentioning that placing art in the subway stations of Paris and

Mexico City was also a success. Perhaps without intending to, the article's

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[64] Susan Heller Anderson and David W. Dunlap, "New York: Day by Day," *New York Times* March 19, 1985.

[65] William Zimmer, "2 Ways of Looking At the Subways," *New York Times,* April 7, 1985.

[66] Susan Heller Anderson and David W. Dunlap, "New York: Day by Day," *New York Times* March 19, 1985.

[67] William Zimmer, "2 Ways of Looking At the Subways," *New York Times,* April 7, 1985.

author implicated the importance of public transportation as one way in which a city's *publics* are able to make common cause as a *public*. Not only did "The Subway Show" gesture towards the importance of the New York City subway system as an artistic muse and treasure in itself—implying the importance of urban living and the investment of resources in public spaces—but also suggested the international connections between public spaces, public art, and ideas of commonality. Within this subtextual reading of both the newspaper article and "The Subway Show," graffiti and hip-hop naturally made common cause.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and City Hall enacted a costly, misguided, and ridiculous war on graffiti and graffiti artists throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As Mayor Edward Koch continued the attack on graffiti in the 1980s, exhibitions such as "The Subway Show" demonstrated that Koch and City Hall were fighting a losing battle. By 1985, many local, national, and international observers understood graffiti and hip-hop as public art in urban space, representing a youthful performance and presentation of African American urban identity. The MTA did not. Continuing its commitment to the war on graffiti, the MTA officially disassociated itself from "The Subway Show" due to the inclusion of Chalfant's graffiti photography and a Keith Haring mural. By condemning and disassociating itself from "The Subway Show," the MTA connected public space and public art, identifying this link as the shared inspiration for cultural creation between two disparate groups of New Yorkers.

"The Subway Show" presents a useful transition to re-consider material and "sonic" flyers advertising hip-hop performances. Buddy Esquire and his

party flyers were integral aspects of hip-hop, encoding hip-hop cultural

information while also advertising hip-hop to an ever-expanding geography,

including downtown Manhattan. To understand the cultures of performance

between uptown and downtown, we need to look again at flyers, graffiti, b-

boys, and bootleg tapes.

Bootleg tapes of Bronx DJ performances were important in

disseminating hip-hop culture to downtown artists, acting as "sonic" flyers. The

shops and sidewalk peddlers along Delancy Street in the late 1970s and early

1980s sold bootleg tapes of Bronx DJ crews and hip-hop shows. Downtown

art rockers continued to push their own music inspired, in part, by hip-hop.

Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore recounted his first encounters with hip-hop

through the tapes he purchased on Delancey Street: "I would buy the tapes

and bring them with the band in the van. I would play them while we drove to

different shows."[68] The bootleg tape culture of the late 1970s and early 1980s,

and the involvement of downtown artists brings to mind Tricia Rose's assertion

that bootleg tapes masked the listening habits of consumers as recorded by

Soundscan. Rose contended: "the majority of record buyers of rap music were

revealed to be white consumers. However, what the numbers failed to capture

was the importance of passing a tape around the community for African

American youth."[69] Before the expansion and explosion of rap music and hip-

hop culture through the culture industry, bootleg tapes provided an important

way to disseminate hip-hop culture. Along with the importance of disseminating

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[68] Thurston Moore writing in the liner notes to the Ciccone Youth, *Whitey Album,* 1990.
[69] Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 7.

hip-hop culture, these tapes, like flyers, compelled interested listeners to journey uptown to experience the music and culture firsthand.

An anecdote from filmmaker Charlie Ahearn and Fab 5 Freddy from the early 1980s illustrated the concept of "sonic" flyers. According to Ahearn, he and Fab 5 Freddy were in the northeast section of the Bronx at The Valley, near CO-OP City, at a party thrown by Chief Rocker Busy Bee and DJ Breakout of the L Brothers Disco. As Ahearn described it, "It's in a large park and it was dark. I remember there was a dub reggae band playing and the other side was hip-hop music. And we wandered to the hip-hop music."[70] Although Ahearn would wonder what would happen if they drifted towards the dub music, it is important to note that the music of hip-hop, the *sonics*, advertised the cultural experience and knowledge that Ahearn and Freddy were searching for. Condensed in this anecdote were the importance of music, advertising, and geography marking the connections between uptown and downtown.

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, Brooklyn-raised Fab 5 Freddy collected bootleg tapes of the many Bronx rap crews, spurring him to travel throughout the Bronx experiencing hip-hop culture.[71] Fab 5 Freddy followed his love of art and graffiti into a career as an artist, scene-and-tastemaker, bridging the worlds of uptown and downtown in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Fab 5 Freddy was hanging out at the Mudd Club downtown with artists and musicians such as Debbie Harry, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring and Andy Warhol and checking out the developing hip-hop scene in the

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[70] Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 149.
[71] Ibid.

Bronx. Fab 5 Freddy also helped unify the downtown scene through CanalZone parties that he organized with Holman in the late 1970s. The Canalzone parties were important because they provided an opportunity for relationships to be forged among the various downtown artists and provided a template for hip-hop's move downtown several years later. As Michael Holman recalled, "first we partied together and got to know each other on a personal level, and then we recognized each other's style and art."[72]

Beginning in 1982, interested outsiders and journalists published several articles in New York's alternative papers, explicitly linking the four foundational elements of hip-hop together under the banner of a single artistic and cultural movement: hip-hop. Steven Hager has previously been credited with publishing the first comprehensive article detailing hip-hop culture with his article, "The Pied Piper of Hip-Hop," in the September 21, 1982, *Village Voice*. Hager wrote:

> For over five years the b-boys, rappers, DJs and graffiti writers of the Bronx continued to expand and develop their unique artistic vision in almost complete isolation from the rest of the world. Until 1979, little attempt was made to spread the subculture, which didn't really even have a name, at least not a mane widely used inside the culture itself. The words "hip hop" eventually developed out of an improv Cowboy [one the Furious Five MCs] came up with during a going-away party for a relative who'd joined the servie and was being posted overseas. But even that term was ony used by a handful of people in 1979 and it had never appeared in print.[73]

Hager's September 1982 article detailed the world of hip-hop and it's origins from Kool Herc and Coke La Rock to Malcolm McLaren and rap's move into the culture industry.

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[72] Michael Holman, phone interview with the author, 5/17/2013.

[73] Steve Hager, "Afrika Bambaataa's Hip Hop," *Village Voice*, September 21, 1982.

In January of 1982, Michael Holman published the first article explicitly

defining hip-hop in the *East Village Eye*. Holman's interview of Afrika

Bambaataa was packaged with several articles featuring interviews and a

review of *Beat Street*. In the article "New York Chillin' Out," Bambaataa

articulated the notion of "hip-hop," and Michael Holman defined hip-hop

culture.[74] Three weeks after Holman's article, Monica Lynch, former president

of Tommy Boy Music, wrote a column for *Dance Music Report,* entitled "Red

Hot," also using the term hip-hop. In the column, Lynch detailed the January 7,

1981 performances from Bambaataa, DJ Jazzy Jay and the Jazzy 5, and a

breaking performance from the Rock Steady Crew at downtown Manhattan

club, Club Negril. Although Lynch's description of the famous Thursday night

"Wheels of Steel" events at Club Negril, organized by Ruza Blue and Michael

Holman, was great, her use of "hip-hop" in the second paragraph is what was

important about her column. Lynch discussed efforts by Diego Cortez to

organize a "hip-hop convention to take place in Rome. . ."[75] Intriguingly, this

convention would have featured a roster comprised of the old school canon:

the Zulu Nation, Fab 5 Freddy, Kurtis Blow, Grandwizard Theodore, Mr. Magic,

and many more. Lynch concludes: "an audience with the Pope? Let's keep

our fingers crossed."[76] However, it would not be until November 1982 that hip-

hop travelled to Europe on a tour of France and England.

Although some recent controversy over the first appearance of "hip-hop" in

print cropped up, the importance of the year 1982 for connecting the uptown

and downtown cultural scenes is the most important fact to glean from the

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[74] Michael Holman, "New York Chillin' Out," *East Villiage Eye,* January 1˙ 1982.
[75] Monica Lynch, "Red Hot," *Dance Music Report,* January 15, 1982.
[76] Ibid.

published articles.[77] As the connections between downtown and uptown were furthered, Afrika Bambaataa remains central to the naming of hip-hop and transmitting the culture of hip-hop to the interested journalists, artists, musicians, and venues downtown. Just as Bambaataa, the Zulu Nation, and the Bronx River Houses were instrumental in creating a cohesive hip-hop culture, Bambaaataa was just as important in guiding the culture to a broader audience.

Downtown and the Other Boroughs

Increasingly packaged, defined, and presented as a commodity, hip-hop as an institution took on multiple valences. Hip-hop creators not only reacted to a history of racial and economic discrimination practiced in the name of whiteness, but also by the 1970s and 1980s, to an increasing generational conflict, entangled with intra-racial and class antagonism. Tricia Rose writes:

> The process of incorporation and marginalization of black practitioners has also fostered the development of black forms and practices that are less and less accessible, forms that require knowledge of black language and styles in order to participate. . . . In addition to the sheer pleasure black musicians derive from developing a new and exciting style, these black cultural reactions to American culture suggest a reclaiming of the definition of blackness and an attempt to retain aesthetic control over black cultural forms.[78]

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[77] The controversy is overstated. Hip-hop archivist and private collector, Patrick Vogt posted Holman's *East Village Eye* article on Facebook and the comment thread erupted concerning the first published article detailing hip-hop culture. After having several conversations with Steven Hager and Michael Holman, the main point that both men asserted was that it's important to reflect the correct history of early hip-hop journalism.

[78] Rose, 6.

In hip-hop terms, then, not only were newer cultural, linguistic and stylistic codes enacted, but they were also created in a generational response that took its cue from the split between mainstream Civil Rights Organizations, Black Nationalism and consumer culture. As DOZE 1 explained the rational behind his graffiti writing to his mother in the movie *Style Wars*: "I want to go all city, to know I was there. I don't care who knows it." His shocked mother replied in weary disbelief to the camera: "can you believe this? Going all city?"[79] As hip-hop continued to develop and establish a set of cultural practices, and create its own institutions, it did so within, and against, a host of external institutions, and institutionalizing impulses, perhaps none so potent as the cultural, raced, and generational assumptions underpinning not only the uptown and downtown geographic and cultural connection, but also hip-hop performances in places and spaces outside the Bronx.

As hip-hop culture and cultural producers took their art to the galleries and clubs in downtown Manhattan, hip-hop cultural performances were also taking place throughout New York's outer-boroughs and the tri-state area in venues far removed from the downtown avant-garde. By the summer of 1981 hip-hop had expanded beyond the Bronx and the downtown art scene. At this moment, hip-hop could be found in a variety of venues and locales lacking the cultural cache of downtown clubs or Bronx parks and community centers. As hip-hop moved downtown, it simultaneously went beyond downtown; hip-hop expanded in both avant-garde and everyday cultural spheres.

Elements of hip-hop culture migrated outside the seven-mile world from the beginning of hip-hop's emergence. Michael Holman recalled visiting

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[79] *Style Wars*. Directed by Henry Chalfant. 1983.

Central Park in 1974 and witnessing a proto-hip-hop convention. According to

Holman, kids from all over New York would gather with their boom boxes tuned

to WBLS, dressed in their bboy best—peg leg pants, painted jean jackets,

Levis Jeans, Keds—dancing and comparing graffiti sketches from their design

books.[80] As early as 1977, hip-hop DJs were performing as far south as

Midtown and Times Square at Hotel Diplomat on 43rd Street, between 6th and

7th avenue. A young Russell Simmons helped promote a brief run of Kurtis

Blow shows featuring Grandmaster Flash as Blow's DJ in 1977.

On December 9, 1978, The Underground opened in the Hotel Diplomat,

where the Underground catered exclusively to the "high school crowd." The

grand opening featured a clutch of DJs from around New York such as the

Disco Twins from Queens, Reggie Wells, June Bug, and most importantly,

Busy Bee and Kurtis Blow's DJ, Kool DJ AJ. Russell Simmons recalled, "we

had two thousand kids come see them that first night at the Diplomat."

Importantly, Hotel Diplomat's location near Times Square made it readily

accessible for African American teenagers from the outer boroughs to travel

into Manhattan for a show, as well.[81] Not only was the uptown/downtown

connection important, but midtown Manhattan was also an accessible location

for interested outer borough kids to experience hip-hop culture in the late

1970s.

As hip-hop continued to expand beyond the Bronx, DJs and MCs from

outside the borough would perform at landmark Bronx venues. On February

16, 1980, The C.B. Crew from Mount Vernon was advertised as "guest stars"

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[80] Michael Holman, phone interview with the author, 5/17/2013.

[81] Nelson George, *Buppies, B-boys, Baps and Bohos: Notes on Post-Soul Black Culture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001), 51.

for Kool Herc's "Ladies Night at the T-Connection."[82] The C.B. Crew

represented only one of Mount Vernon's relatively robust hip-hop cultural

scene by the late 1970s. In addition to the CB Crew, Mount Vernon also

boasted the Collins Brothers' Squad, DJ Eddie F, The Imperial 3, The Amazing

DJ Bingo Rock, DJ Spike, MC Russy B, Jazzy Tee, and Arthur 4X.[83] These

crews were active between 1975-1980, performing throughout the Bronx.

Although Mount Vernon is directly north of the Bronx, the existence of the C.B.

Crew demonstrated that hip-hop expanded in all directions, not just along an

uptown/downtown axis.

Both the C.B. Crew and the Collins Brother's Squad also performed at

Zulu Nation parties with Afrika Bambaataa. These Mount Vernon hip-hop

cultural performers were teenagers who travelled to the Bronx to visit with

friends and attend jams and parties, not burgeoning art-world stars. Hip-hop

performance and cultural exchange never flowed in only one direction. Bronx

and Harlem acts would also travel to events in Mt. Vernon as early as 1980.[84]

While hip-hop took hold in downtown Manhattan through recognition of cultural

production founded in mutual apprehensions of urban space, Mount Vernon

hip-hop creation represented an extension of the Bronx neighborhood and

youthful culture of the era.

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[82] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[83] Fencewalk from Oldschoolhiphop.com, posted May 14, 2009.
http://board.oldschoolhiphop.com/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=3385
[84] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. The March 29, 1980 Mt Vernon location, Rod Benders, hosted a "Show Down of the Dee Jay's" featuring mainstays of Mt. Vernon hip-hip including the Collins Bros, as well as featuring Kool Kyle the Star Child from the Bronx, who was a mainstay at Disco Fever.

Just as Mt. Vernon crews travelled to the Bronx to cement their place in emerging hip-hop culture, the performance pilgrimage was necessary for all emerging hip-hop practitioners. One such important Bronx location was The Disco Fever club, whose gatekeeper was Sal Abbiatello. The Disco fever proclaimed to the be the "home of" legendary DJs such as Grandmaster Flash, Lovebug Starsky, June Bug, and DJ Hollywood. Testing a new record or crew at the Fever provided an accurate barometer of whether or not a hip-hop act would be a hit.

Russell Simmons knew and worked with Abbiatello, supplying test pressings of new records for the Fever's DJs to break. Simmons created an important business relationship with the Fever crowd. So, it only seemed natural that Simmons would have Run-DMC perform for the Fever's Bronx audience. Run-DMC remembered their first appearance at the Disco Fever: "we walked into the Fever wearing the crazy checkered jackets, everybody just started laughing at us. Then when they found out who we was, there was a big beef: 'These kids from Queens trying to cold crash the rap scene!'"[85] Hailing from Hollis, Queens, Run-DMC needed to perform and receive the Bronx blessing before the release of their first album and any hope of becoming hip-hop royalty. Run-DMC's 1983 performance at Disco Fever occurred after the consolidation and expansion of a tri-state and borough wide expansion of hip-hop culture that occurred between 1981-1983. Although hip-

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[85] Bill Adler, *Tougher Than Leather: The Rise of Run-DMC* (Los Angeles: Consafo Press, 2002), 73-74.

hop performances and culture had permeated NY and the tri-state area, the

Bronx, and Bronxites, still granted the imprimatur of hip-hop authenticity.[86]

Further demonstrating the importance of the Bronx's clubs as

institutions of hip-hop, another landmark Bronx club, the Ecstasy Garage

Disco, began holding "City wide Convention Night" competitions for prize

money, as early as 1980. These events advertised a hip-hop competition

between DJ and MC crews and rap battles between "soloists." The canonized

performers hailing from the Bronx and Harlem included the Funky 4 Plus 1, the

Crash Crew, and Bambaataa, with challengers representing the other

boroughs, in addition to Yonkers and Mt. Vernon crews.[87] These list of crews

hailing from outside the Bronx and Harlem remain relatively obscure in extant

scholarship, but they provide an index of hip-hop's rapid expansion throughout

the New York metropolitan area by 1980.

By late 1980, the vanguard of Bronx hip-hop culture also performed at

venues in Brooklyn. Capitalizing on their Sugar Hill records "Freedom" and

"Super Rappin," Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5 held the "Grand Master

Flash Show" at Brooklyn's Eclipse Disco. In addition to Flash and the Furious

5, the bill also included Grand Wizard Theodore and Woody Wood, who was

featured on the "Sound of New York, USA" early rap compilation record. The

event also included the local Brooklyn act Infinity Machine, suggesting that hip-

hop had become such a local cultural force for young African Americans in

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[86] Adler, *Tougher Than Leather,* Chapter 3, "Here We Go," provides a great account of the importance of Disco Fever for Run-DMC's emergence.

[87] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. A list of the lesser known crews from outside Chang's seven-mile world: from Queens: Parker Bros, Infinity Machine, Disco Twins, San Franciso Spade, and Ciper Sounds; Brooklyn: T.S.O.P, Flowers & Scooby-Doo, Fantasia, and Master-D; Mt. Vernon: Collins Bros, C & Ski; Yonkers: Les Love.

Brooklyn that the inclusion of a local act with top Bronx acts was not only possible, but also a jam was expected to feature performance-ready, Brooklyn hip-hop groups.[88]

Hip-hop was becoming a "local" cultural style outside the Bronx. As early as 1979, Bronx *and Brooklyn-bred* performers appeared throughout Brooklyn. On December 7, 1979, the second round of a "city-wide high school final" competition took place at the Brooklyn Colonial Mansion. In addition to showcasing the "talent, fashion, and dance" skills of Brooklyn high school students, the event was also a "battle of the sexes" featuring DJs Grandmaster Flash and Grandmaster Flowers.[89] Again, this is an important performance because it demonstrated the fact that Bronx and Harlem-bred DJs had established themselves throughout the city by 1979, demonstrated by the fact that canonical hip-hop figures were performing at the Brooklyn event. On Wednesday, November 21, 1979, the New Zoo Discotheque in Brooklyn hosted a Thanksgiving Day Battle of the Sexes between Money Inc. and the S.O.S. Crew for the grand prize of a turkey.[90]

By the early 1980s, the Ecstasy Discotheque in Brooklyn appeared to be the preeminent Brooklyn club featuring hip-hop acts.[91] Based on the historical record and extant flyers, the Ecstasy Discotheque was one of the premier venues for hip-hop in Brooklyn in the early 1980s. This event is

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[88] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
    By 1980, there were many hip-hop crews and performers hailing from Brooklyn. For example, Master-D, Von-K, The Magnificent 6 Disco, MCs Sharin D, Chelly C, and Steven E, Baby Grand and Jeffory D performed at the Miss High Pageant 1980, held at the Ecstasy Discotheque in Brooklyn.
[91] This claim must be tempered by an archival bias of extant hip-hop posters in the Cornell collection.

important because it was so commonplace. In addition to hip-hop jams, the Brooklyn club hosted a borough-wide teenage beauty contest. The Ecstasy Discotheque also held the DiscOscar Awards, recognizing the best Brooklyn DJs from 1980. Although this January 18, 1981 event hosted by WKTU's Johnny Allen was primarily dedicated to recognizing radio DJs, the DJs performing at the event represented emerging Brooklyn hip-hop, such as the Master Blasters and the Cut Master Crew.[92]

At the same moment as Brooklyn's explosion of hip-hop culture, entrepreneurs and artists in Queens held parties, and cultivating local hip-hop talent. On Saturday, March 15, 1980, the B.G. Manor presented "The Showdown!" featuring "5 of Queen's [sic] Best Dee Jays."[93] The party featured the San Francisco Crew, DJs Spade and Mackey, hailing from the Rockaways; Phase 3, DJs Junior and Kenny and MC Davy-Jay, from Southside in Queens; Ultra Sounds, DJs Baby-D, Eddie-Ed and the Crew, from Laurelton in Queens; and Unlimited Party Freaks, DJs Chopper and Ricky-Dee, Spirit B and the Marquis of Rythme, from the Queen's neighborhood Springfield Gardens. Interestingly, the fifth DJ crew came from Brooklyn, known as the Uptown Crew featuring DJs Bo-Bo and Chilly Dee. Several explanations concerning the inclusion of the Brooklyn Uptown crew exist: perhaps the Uptown Crew lived far enough uptown in Brooklyn that they were close to Queens; perhaps Queens lacked five established DJ Crews; it could also have been something as simple as scheduling and availability. Whatever the explanation for the

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[92] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[93] Ibid.

inclusion of the Uptown Crew, the "Showdown!" demonstrated how quickly hip-hop culture spread throughout Brooklyn and Queens.

These events demonstrated that hip-hop culture arrived in Brooklyn and Queens no later than the beginning of commercially recorded rap music in 1979. The Ecstasy Discotheque, The New Zoo Disco, Disco Delight, Tabernacle Center, the Sumner Avenue Armory, Wishco Manor, Club Good Times, and Cornell's flyer archive provides a wonderful record of hip-hop in Brooklyn and the culture's commonplace occurrence within the lives of Brooklyn's African American youth. At least by 1978, Brooklyn's African American community enjoyed, performed, created and presented hip-hop culture—just like in the Bronx.

Breaking Tri-State

The tri-state area—New York, New Jersey and Connecticut—began hosting hip-hop concerts by the early 1980s. Although many of these concerts featured some of the lesser-known, regional DJ and MC crews, many of the concerts featured foundational hip-hop artists. In August 1981, The Cold Crush Brothers, Afrika Bambaataa, Jazzy Jay and DJ Red Alert and the Cosmic Force MCs performed at the Yerwood Center in Stamford, Connecticut.[94] Buddy Esquire made the flyer for the event, illustrating that the Yerwood Center concert featured key cultural producers in almost all aspects of emerging hip-hop, except bboying. The Stamford, Connectincut concert and lineup also revealed hip-hop's cultural diffusion by 1981. Although Cold Crush

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[94] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

and the Cosmic Force never achieved the same level of record sales as the first Sugar Hill acts, the fact that they were all packaged and presented without much need for overwhelming advertising hype demonstrates that knowledge and excitement concerning hip-hop had expanded beyond the Bronx and downtown Manhattan.

Tri-state performances reflected the fact that DJs and MCs were working musicians as much as they were creating a new American popular culture. Five weeks after Tommy Boy Records released Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force's "Planet Rock" in April of 1982, Bambaataa and company performed a 1982 Memorial Day concert at the Upskate New York Roller Disco in New Windsor, New York. In addition to Soulsonic Force, the concert also featured canonical hip-hop figures Kool DJ AJ and Busy Bee Starski. Once again, we find hip-hop's expansion and support could be found with youth throughout the tri-state area, and beyond. By the early 1980s, hip-hop was both the darling of the downtown avant-garde crowd and performers were grinding out performances at roller rinks and convention centers worlds away from the Lower East Side.

After hip-hop became a commercial product in 1979, hip-hop concerts were being held throughout the New York area. On Friday October 17, 1980, the "Grandmaster Flash Show" was held at the Eclipse Disco in Brooklyn, featuring Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, Woody Wood, Infinity Machine, Grand Wizard Theodore, and DJ Lady Love and MC BayBay B.[95] The show's flyer advertised the fact that the October 17 party was in support of

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[95] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

the "Nation's #1 Record Freedom!!"[96] Released by Sugar Hill Records in 1980, this record helped propel Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five to national fame. Although scoring a minor hit on Bobby Robinson's Enjoy Records in late 1979 with "Superrappin'," the money and promotion Sylvia and Joe Robinson offered was too much for the group to resist.[97] The Robinson's flexed their music industry connections by having Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five interviewed by Frankie Crocker on WBLS during Crocker's drive-time show in support of their single.[98] The "Grandmaster Flash Show" at the Eclipse Disco represented the trajectory of the group's ascendance in the early 1980s.

The October 17 show was also a Mandiplite promoted event. Mandiplite promoted multiple events featuring Grandmaster Flash. Three months earlier on July 12, Mandiplite presented "The Grandmaster Flash Show" at the Rochdale Village community center in Queens. The Buddy Esquire designed flyer from July does not mention "Superappin'" or "Freedom." Accounting for the difference in flyers between October and July 1980, was the fact that Buddy Esquire did not design the October 1980 flyer. Between 1980 and 1982, Buddy Esquire created nine different flyers for ManDipLite events featuring the "Show" motif, each of these flyers made no mention of records by Grandmaster Flash or any of the other advertised acts.

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[96] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. .

[97] Charnas, 44; 50. Charnas documents that the promise of money and exposure ultimately tipped the scales for Flash and Furious Five to join Sugar Hill. Flash was extremely reluctant to sign with Sugar Hill because of their notorious reputation for less-than-transparent business practices.

[98] Ibid., 44.

The absence of promotional language provides an opportunity to explore hip-hop's expansion in the early 1980s. Based on my previous examination of Buddy Esquire's flyers, the exclusion of explicit advertising language trumpeting a hit record is not surprising. When Esquire mentioned the recording buzz for a performing artist, he did so with either small typeface or a general description of a performer as a "recording artist."[99] In terms of hip-hop culture, Esquire's flyers were reason enough to attend a party, jam or event: he advertised hip-hop authenticity. The October 17, 1980 Mandiplite flyer for the Eclipse Disco show is not a Buddy Esquire flyer. Aesthetically, this flyer is simply a device to advertise a concert, not an opportunity to display hip-hop culture in the service of promoting hip-hop culture, i.e. Buddy Esquire's work.

Based on the inclusion of promotional language on the October 17, 1980 flyer, it can be concluded that the flyer is not a hip-hop flyer; the flyer only advertises that hip-hop acts will be performing the evening of the concert. By comparing the October 17, 1980 Mandiplite event and the nine Buddy Esquire Mandiplite flyers, we can surmise that the audience for hip-hop culture and music was expanding beyond local geographic and cultural boundaries. Buddy Esquire, and his fellow flyer artists, advertised to a relatively initiated, and local, audience. Even when the flyers advertised shows beyond the Bronx's boundaries, Esquire's flyers retained a hip-hop aesthetic. The Eclipse Disco flyer for the October 17· 1980 event approached advertising from outside hip-hop culture. Although the performers for the October show were all hip-

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[99] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

hop mainstays, the flyer was meant to connect with a general audience interested in dancing on a Friday night at a discotheque, not necessarily devotees of hip-hop. Hip-hop was becoming a large enough draw for entertainment dollars beyond a niche market.

This approach to advertising dances featuring hip-hop acts illustrated a new mode of hip-hop advertising. Just as the earliest party flyers in the Bronx were simple, informative notes and posters for a largely neighborhood audience, eventually adapting graffiti style as a means to attract the notice of folks like Michael Holman, the maturation of hip-hop's early visual style by 1977 embodied hip-hop and advertised the culture beyond the Bronx. Similarly, a return to simple, declarative advertising on the part of the Eclipse Disco flyer betokened hip-hop's expansive, and expanded, popularity. Proclaiming the "Nation's #1 Record" acted as an appeal to the top 40 crowd.[100] This change in flyer advertising was important because it further underscored hip-hop's move from outsider cultural production to culture industry commodity. The flyer from the October 17, 1980 Eclipse Disco event demonstrated that as important as the uptown/downtown connection was for hip-hop's expansion and presentation as a unique and unified new form of culture, hip-hop was being practiced and consumed by individuals outside of New York's downtown cultural cutting edge. As important as the uptown and downtown connection was, hip-hop was a part of African American, and popular culture, generally.

In addition to the expanding geographical reach of hip-hop culture, generational relations shaped hip-hop. Early champion and interested

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[100] Although "Freedom" reached it's highest chart position at #19 on the R&B charts.

journalist Steve Hager believed hip-hop culture's power derived from the fact that hip-hop was largely created by middle-school-aged children. Hager recognized a revolutionary youth culture that resonated with his formative years in the 1960s, except the hip-hop generation was even younger.[101] Although by the early 1980s, much of the first generation were young adults in their early 20s, a large majority of hip-hop's audience was comprised of middle-school aged kids. Reflecting on the Bronx River jam attended by Malcolm McLaren, Michael Holman said that the jam quickly spun out of control. Holman described the jam as "crazy . . . the kids were going crazy, the tenants were throwing bottles and trash at the kids from the buildings . . . it was young kids, junior high kids going nuts."[102] As late as 1981, then, the core audience for hip-hop was still African American and Latino middle-school-aged kids from throughout the city. As Holman further elaborated, "hip-hop wasn't cool for anyone high school age or older. The idea of doing something in the Bronx was ridiculous. You went downtown to clubs to impress a date, not attend jams."[103]

Even as hip-hop increased in national popularity, jams and concerts were still being held at roller rinks and venues catering to an under-eighteen crowd. In early 1983, ManDipLite promoted a "Skate-A-Thon" in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day at the Skatin' Palace in the Bronx. This event was ideally suited to cater to young kids in junior and senior high because it took place during the day on a school holiday. At the same moment when hip-hop

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[101] Steven Hager, interview with author, New York, 1/13/13.
[102] Michael Holman, phone interview with the author, 5/17/13.
[103] Ibid.

was beginning to be estblished as an international cultural phenomenon, the root community and fans of hip-hop culture remained Bronx youth.

Underscoring hip-hop's "uncool" connotations, parents and adult guardians of New York's youth attempted to use hip-hop culture as a form of social intervention. On Saturday November 21, 1981, NYC Willie Gums and The New Rolls Royce Movement opened The New Harlem Rap Theatre, in Harlem,"designed to take our [African American and Latino youth] off the streets and give them a community center of their own with a positive emphasis on entertainment."[104] Envisioned as a "community disco," The New Harlem Rap Theatre also served as a recruiting site funneling talent to the US Rap Team. The opening night featured a citywide talent show and "rapper" convention with cash prizes and the opportunity to tour with the US Rap Team. Compared with the downtown clubs and culture embracing hip-hop, The New Harlem Rap Theatre and the US Rap Team seems quaint. The evening featured Kool DJ AJ, Busy Bee and Kurtis Blow's legendary DJ, explicitly linking hip-hop's emergence with middle-class attempts at social uplift. The opening and intent of The New Harlem Rap Theatre demonstrated that hip-hop culture was still viewed as a youth cultural fad. Again, we find another instance of hip-hop comfortably existing in a variety of spaces and places. At the same moment hip-hop culture was being embraced and experienced as another example of New York's artistic and cultural avant-garde downtown, hip-hop is also being enlisted as a device to buttress mainstream community standards.

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[104] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

In addition to holding events for middle school-aged kids, many of the school and roller rink parties attempted to continue to cultivate interest in hip-hop as audiences aged. For example, a Cold Crush concert "dedicated" to several Manhattan high schools offered a dollar discount for all students with high school ID and flyer.[105] The jam was intended as a battle of DJs with a deep list of invited acts—including Staten Island DJs—to provide music and beats for the crowd and MCs.[106] Organized by the Cold Crush Brothers, this event enlisted the top hip-hop talent from the Bronx and throughout New York. Although invited DJs and MCs such the Funky Four +1, Grandmaster Flash, and Kurtis Blow had achieved some type of recorded fame, it was still very much a hip-hop cultural event for the kids and communities fluent in hip-hop from the early 1970s.

The practice of holding parties and events honoring high school students continued to represent an important practice throughout the early 1980s. The Ecstasy Garage Disco presented an "Old School Battle Royale" on February 29, 1980 honoring a group of Bronx high schools that the majority of the hip-hop founders and fans attended.[107] In the fall of 1980, the Ecstasy Garage held a back to school celebration on Saturday, September 6 honoring the same high schools from the February event with the inclusion of several schools from Harlem and Manhattan, most notably Harlem Prep and the High

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[105] This flyer does not have a date, but it appears to be a PHASE 2 flyer from the early 1980s. The style is similar to the "neo-deco" style popularized by Buddy Esquire, and first demonstrated by PHASE 2. Also, unlike Buddy Esquire who's collected oeuvre always contains a signature, PHASE 2 sometimes did, and did not, sign his flyers. Finally, the list of invited and scheduled performers all point to an early 1980s event.

[106] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. [#361]

[107] Ibid. Bronx high schools: Walton, Dodge, Truman, Taft, Lehman, South Bronx, Clinton, Morris, Roosevelt, Jane Addams, Evander Childs, and Stevenson.

School of Fashion Industries.[108] Hip-hop creators and performers worked hard to create and maintain their audiences throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s. These events demonstrated how age groups and geography animated hip-hop's growth by the early 1980s.

Not only were roller rinks and junior high and high schools holding jams and events, but also by the early 1980s hip-hop was providing the entertainment for Senior class boat rides. The Brother's Disco held a party at La Cortorie Disco on June 23, 1978 was a "salute to all 1978 graduates." The 1983 Norman Thomas High School Senior Boat Ride featured the Cold Crush Brothers and the Treacherous Three as entertainment. Joe Conzo photographed the event, showing the Cold Crush performing for the high school students inside the boat. Conzo's photos captured how close the Cold Crush was from their audience—two or three feet.[109] Essentially, the nature of the event and the intimacy of the photo demonstrated the fact that hip-hop was an important part of the local community and youth experience of kids from the Bronx. Although this senior boat ride took place almost a decade after Kool Herc's first party, hip-hop was still very much a local, community celebration, experienced outside the cultural and social spheres of SoHo galleries and clubs.

Conclusion: Uptown and Downtown Go National

In many significant hip-hop practices and creations, the downtown connection represented an aberration in hip-hop's history. The important,

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[108] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.
[109] Ibid.

enduring connections rooted in the decade from 1973-1983 attempted to maintain and replicate hip-hop culture and practices in the face of encroaching adult condescension and indifference. Looking at hip-hop's move from the Bronx to downtown Manhattan, it is crucial to note that in addition to attracting artists and tastemakers pushing the avant-garde and mainstream cultural sensibilities, hip-hop resonated with communities throughout the tri-state area in a resolutely mainstream, cultural youth arena.

The geographical and historical relationships between uptown Bronx and downtown Manhattan and beyond provide a pivot point to talk about hip-hop cultural migrations across national and international landscapes. Tracing the cultural migrations between uptown and downtown, I will examine similar types of identifications and mis-identifications as they play out in public and national performances on public and national stages: the 1981 Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics closing ceremony. Like the uptown and downtown connection, Lincoln Center, and the Olympics provide an important link between the Bronx and national culture, adumbrating the routes and roots of the Bronx's youth and youth culture as both travel and make connections throughout the world.

Part Three: Migrations

Chapter 5

Breaking the Bronx: Media Coverage, Performance, and Hip-Hop from Lincoln Center to the 1984 Summer Olympics

On Saturday August 15, 1981, the Cold Crush Brothers, Afrika Bambaataa

and the Soulsonic Force, and DJ Jazzy Jay and the Cosmic Force performed

at an Elks Lodge dance in Danbury, Connecticut. The Danbury show featured

legendary performers, but hardly any mention of the show survived except the

flyer.[1] This star-studded concert of hip-hop legends culture performing in such

a quotidian venue as an Elks Lodge reinforced the fact that by 1981 the young

men and women that created hip-hop culture were working musicians. On the

same day approximately 70 miles south, another hip-hop performance took

place that became a seminal moment in the hip-hop's young history: the 1981

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival featuring a b-boy battle between the

Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Rockers. This planned exhibition of

breaking artistry and cultural style was covered by *The National Geographic,*

The Village Voice, The New York Daily News, and local New York City

television stations, generating a tremendous amount of media attention, further

establishing national and international interest and excitement surrounding hip-

hop's Bronx-based cultural practices.

The Danbury show's obscurity coupled with the media spectacle and

subsequent historical reification of the Lincoln Center battle illuminates hip-

hop's cultural and geographic expansion. Although all elements of hip-hop

culture were making inroads throughout the city and metropolitan area, hip-hop

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[1] Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

had yet to capture mainstream interest. By 1981 a variety of media outlets and programs were also beginning to feature hip-hop culture, including an ABC 20/20 segment examining the "rap phenomenon," Kurtis Blow and The Sugar Hill Gang's respective appearances on *Soul Train*, and The Funky 4 + 1 performing on *Saturday Night Live*. Although hip-hop was generating a variety of media exposure, the audience for such exposure was relatively limited, or the reportage narrowly framed hip-hop. Both *Soul Train* and *Saturday Night Live* already attracted a knowledgeable audience, and the *20/20* expose examined hip-hop culture primarily through rap. Although hip-hop culture quickly spread throughout New York and the tri-state area through records and shows, broad public exposure still eluded the culture.

The 1981 Lincoln Center battle provided a moment of broader cultural exposure to a new audience on a very public stage. Prior to the festival, experiencing hip-hop live took place at jams, or seeing graffiti writing on trains and buildings throughout the city. The public park jams and parties were largely neighborhood events throughout the 1970s, and City hall and the NYPD waged war on graffiti writing throughout the 1970s and 1980s; hip-hop largely remained geographically and legally proscribed. The August 15, 1981 Lincoln Center Battle provided a mainstream public platform endorsed by New York's postwar capital of culture, catapulting breaking and hip-hop culture into a variety of high-profile events and as media products. The media and public attention paid to the Lincoln Center event and the almost complete disappearance of the Danbury show from hip-hop history demonstrated the importance of public performance integrating race, place, and space in order to make hip-hop, and by extension Bronx culture, a national phenomenon.

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This chapter investigates the impact and importance of breaking and b-boy performance in places and spaces culturally and geographically distant from the Bronx neighborhoods of hip-hop's emergence. By 1981, the continued national expansion of hip-hop culture was, to a large extent, aided by local and national media. Beginning with the Lincoln Center 1981 battle, television and movie depictions of breaking, hip-hop culture tours featuring breaking, and the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics closing ceremony, the style, artistry, and *novelty* of breaking hip-hop into unexpected places helped further expand hip-hop's cultural expansion, and continued to place Bronx culture at the center of national cultural consciousness.

Breaking History

Breaking and b-boy culture emerged from late 1950s and 1960s Bronx street gangs. Mighty Zulu King President Alien Ness commented that, "b-boying didn't start at the Herc parties. You could take the b-boys back to the outlaw gangs of the late '60s, '70s. They were the original b-boys, and it was part of their war dances." Echoing Alien Ness's assertion of the importance of gangs and gang culture to the foundation of b-boy culture, BOM5 noted that many of the musical staples that provided the sonic DNA of hip-hop were already part of the social and cultural fabric of Bronx youth gangs. BOM5 recalled, "[e]ven when I was in a gang, we played "Apache" . . . "Bongo Rock" on a phonograph hooked up to a lamppost outside. . . . Gangs were already

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doing it, man."[2] Gang dances and accompanying music informed the types of songs and music played at nascent hip-hop jams in the 1970s.

These "battle dances" acted as a way to siphon off aggression between different Bronx gangs. Breaking as a valve to release aggression has been a hip-hop master narrative since the first critical and popular investigations of hip-hop culture beginning in the early 1980s. Like b-boying, the history of hip-hop culture has almost always been framed as an organic, community-based intervention in the lives of disenfranchised youth from the Bronx.[3] However, "battle dancing" often served as a precursor or catalyst to actual violence due to a contested jusdgement of the battle winner or personal animosities spilling over into the cipher.[4] Jorge "Popmaster Fabel" Pabon described the history of breaking as "New York's native dance forms (b-boying/b-girling and uprocking."[5] Fabel elaborated on the connection between breaking and youth gangs. He said, "the first groups I ever saw dance were actually outlaw gangs. . . . The first b-boys I ever saw were the Baby Kings—the youngest members of the Spanish Kings." The Baby Kings captivated Fabel not only because of the King's dancing skill but also because they were around the same age, eleven or twelve.[6] The history of gang dances and gang culture provide an

[2] Alien Ness and BOM5 quoted in Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn, *Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 9.

[3] Early articles included Sally Banes article on breaking and Steven Hager's article on Afrika Bambaataa and hip-hop for the *Village Voice,* Michael Holman's article on hip-hop for the *East Village Eye,* and Nelson George's "look back" with hip-hop's founding fathers in a 1990 edition of the *Source.*

[4] Fricke and Ahearn*l,* 3.

[5] Jorge "Popmaster Fabel" Pabon, "Physical Graffiti: The History of Hip-Hop Dance" in *That's The Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* 2nd edition, ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2012), 57.

[6] Fricke and Ahearn, 9.

important historical and cultural foundation for breaking and hip-hop, and hip-hop and gang culture were both local and youth oriented.

Bronx youth gang activity represented the ethnic and racial diversity of the Bronx. Just about every neighborhood in the Bronx had some youth gang activity in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although the African American and Puerto Rican youth gangs share a history of gang dances, the white and white-ethnic gangs of the north and northeast Bronx do not share a history gang dances. Although breaking and b-boying is rooted in the Bronx, the dance forms associated with hip-hop and popularly identified as "break dancing" had origins outside the Bronx. Popping and locking, two styles of dance that were combined under the hip-hop banner in the early 1980s, developed in California during the 1960s and 1970s as part of the "funk" cultural movement. Rocking, or up-rocking, which was foundational for Bronx breaking, was rooted in Brooklyn culture. Brooklyn-born rocking favored similar break beats as Bronx breakers, and they included a confrontational component was added by two dancers facing off against each other, or through an "Apache Line," where both crews would simultaneously battle. Brooklyn rockers differed from Bronx breakers because they tended to dance to the entire song, not just the break beats favored by their Bronx peers.[7]

Joe Schloss masterfully complicates breaking history in his study of breaking history and culture, *Foundation*. Tracing the history of breaking from "rocking to b-boying," Schloss argues that identifying a linear or cohesive historical narrative for b-boying's origins is impossible. Historical consensus

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[7] Pabon, 59.

only exists based on geographic and demographic affinity by breaking

pioneers. Schloss writes:

> There were three basic stages of development of the dance: the early
> rock dance of the '60s, which was Latino and citywide; Brooklyn rocking or
> uprocking, which was Latino and Brooklyn-based; and b-boying; which is
> black *and* Latino and Bronx-based. Within this basic framework, it is not
> difficult to see how three constituencies—Brooklyn Latinos, Bronx Latinos,
> and African Americans—could have three totally different perspectives on
> the history.[8]

Based on the contemporaneous and disparate locations of various styles of

youth dancing and rocking in the 1960s and 1970s, b-boying, of course, traces

its origins to a variety of constituencies and cultural contexts. What is clear,

however, is that breaking represented an evolution of cultural style developed

out of a New York-based, African American and Latino youth culture, and the

b-boy/b-girl represented the Bronx-based, foundation of hip-hop culture.

Both rocking and uprocking were rooted in street gang culture, but

these cultural practices were also rooted in the popular culture enjoyed by

1960s and 1970s youth, too. Legendary b-boy Mr. Wiggles described how he

learned to dance from his sister in the mid-1970s. Mr. Wiggles older sister,

Wendy, was in the "hustle scene[,] [b]ut more on the Top Scene, Top Rocking

Scene, like Rocking."[9] Additionally, Mr. Wiggles talked about a dance called

"The Latin Rock" derived from the hustle that his sister also taught him.

However, it was not until he "saw some local kids in the street hitting the floor,"

when he saw breaking for the first time. After witnessing the kids in the street,

Mr. Wiggles became a b-boy. Richie "Crazy Legs" Colon, president of the

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[8] Joe Schloss, *Foundation: b-boys, b-girls, and Hip-Hop Culture in New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 153.
[9] Mr. Wiggles quoted in James G. Spady, H. Samy Alim, Samir Mehelli, *The Global Cipha: Hip Hop Culture and Consciousness* (Philadelphia: Black History Museum Press, 2006), 318.

Rock Steady Crew, has a similar story. The first time that Crazy Legs witnessed his brother and his brother's friend, Afrika Islam, dancing in front of his building, Crazy Legs admitted that he "though they both looked like fools." However, by 1977, Crazy Legs was hooked thanks to his brother and cousin.

Both Crazy Legs and Mr. Wiggles' personal histories share generational and material commonalities highlighting several important facts about the history of breaking. First and foremost, the personal testimonials all stressed the importance of familial networks of cultural exchange for introducing the dance style. Whether from family, friends, or the neighborhood affiliated youth gangs—membership in each category overlapped—breaking was introduced through a network bounded by a cultural and geographic neighborhood. Murray Forman examined the entwined issues of race, space and place built into hip-hop culture in his book, *The 'Hood Comes First.* Forman argues that hip-hop culture involves "active attempts to express how individuals or communities in these locales live, how the microworlds they constitute are experienced, or how specifically located social relationships are negotiated."[10] The conceptual and geographic "'hood" represented the sites of hip-hop culture's emergence. For Forman and the hip-hop originators and breakers, culture and place were inextricably linked to Bronx neighborhoods.

Fabel gave further insight to the overlapping spatial and cultural specificity signified by the term and cultural figure of the "b-boy." Fabel described the multiple meanings associated with "breaking" in the 1970s. For example, "breaking" could represent a response to an insult—"why are you

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[10] Murray Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 8.

breakin' on me?"—as well as the enduring meanings of the break section of a song. Kool Herc is credited with coining the terms b-boy and b-girl, meaning "break" boy and girl, for the dancers responding to his use of the break while he DJed.[11] Before Mr. Wiggles met Crazy Legs in the 1980s, he described himself as a, "local—very local—dancer, only known on my block," and the 'b' in b-boy stood for Bronx.[12] Furthering the point that local cultures and subcultures of Bronx youth interrogated the places and spaces of their lives through cultural invention, Schloss argues that, "b-boying evolved out of uprocking in exactly the same way that hip-hop evolved out of funk. And, just as hip-hop's emergence was based on a new way of thinking about funk records, b-boying's emergence was based on a new way of thinking about uprocking. *And that new way of thinking developed in the Bronx.*"[13]

I want to push Schloss's argument further and posit that the conceptual framework developed by hip-hop's Bronx originators was just as much a response to the material and built environment of 1960s and 1970s Bronx, as the re-imagining of funk music and rocking. Breaking represented the synthesis of hip-hop sonics and movement. The expansion of using record breaks developed due to Kool Herc's observation of dancers at his jams beginning in 1973. The b-boys responded to the breaks that Herc played, and Herc responded to the dancers by playing breaks, enacting a reciprocal, call-and-response loop. At the beginning of hip-hop's emergence, then, the culture was based in a mutually constituting, creative community. Returning to the tangled perspectives and personal lineages of b-boying and dancing, the

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[11] Pabon, 58.

[12] Mr. Wiggles in *The Global Cipha*, 326.

[13] Schloss, 152.

various African American and Latino and Puerto Rican influences find a home and cultural confluence in the Bronx. The creation and practice of b-boying took place in the streets, in public, in the Bronx. The neglected and ignored spaces and places throughout the periphery of New York, and most importantly in the Bronx, represented central sites for the emergence of breaking and hip-hop. Most importantly, shared city streets, parks and sidewalks throughout the Bronx were the home of the b-boy and the b-girl. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s as hip-hop was being developed, these neglected public spaces served as the imaginary sites to conceptualize new relationships with the city itself. Breaking helped link the youth of the seven-mile world together. Breaking and its relationship with the break-spinning DJ established a new cultural and critical community founded on generational style practiced and performed in urban spaces.

The histories of some of the prominent and enduring breaking crews illustrate the connections between city streets, neighborhoods, and culture that shaped breaking and helped establish the cultural element as an attractive and important representation of hip-hop for national media dissemination in the early 1980s. Through the histories of these crews, we will be able to locate multiple valences of desire and cultural capital based on the presentation and representation of youthful, non-white bodies in public performance. Furthermore, these histories will help chart hip-hop culture's continued move into the culture industry and transnational circuits of consumption and production, translating cultural capital into global commodities.

The Zulu Kings present a natural, chronological beginning for tracing the histories of prominent b-boy crews. The Zulu Kings represented the first

iteration of what would become the Zulu Nation, locating the crew's emergence

directly between the end of the gang era and the rise of hip-hop. The Zulu

Kings featured the original core membership of what would become the Zulu

Nation, including Afrika Bambaataa, Amad Henderson, Kusa Stokes, Aziz

Jackson, Pow Wow, and Mr. Biggs. The Zulu Kings were the first organized

breaking crew that travelled throughout the Bronx to challenge other crews. In

addition to the Zulu Kings, sister crews made up of young women were also

founded. These all-female crews included the Shaka Zulus and the Zulu

Queens. The history of the Zulu Kings and Queens establishes the fact that

young women were breaking from the beginning of hip-hop's emergence, and

their performance style would also have an impact on breaking and hip-hop

culture. The female crews of the era did not perform floor moves; they crafted

routines that inspired the introduction of complex routines years later.[14] The

Zulu Kings, now known as the Mighty Zulu Kingz, remains an active force in

hip-hop culture and breaking, today. Although the Zulu Kings emerged from

the Bronx River Houses in the heart of Black Spades territory, members were

recruited from gangs throughout the Bronx. Michael "Lucky Strike" Corral was

a former Savage Skull who became a Zulu King and member of the Zulu

Nation's World Council.[15]

The Zulu Kings featured DJs and b-boys and b-girls before adding

MCs. When the Zulu Kings would throw a jam or attend a party, the music and

dancing was already combined. As Whipper Whip recalled, "[w]e had the Zulu

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[14] Michael Holman, "Breaking: The History," pp. 31-49 in *That's the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader* eds. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 37.
[15] Michael "Lucky Strike" Corral's "Universal Zulu Nation World Council" notebook, Cornell University Library hip hop collection, #8021. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Kings. . . . So as far as the b-boys, it was all one package: we'd have the DJs—at that point there were no MCs—and then there would be the b-boys."[16] The Zulu Kingz splintered to form several concurrent dance crews all under the Zulu Nation moniker. For Example, Wade Lewis established the Shaka Zulus, which was exclusively a b-boy crew. In true b-boy fashion, Lewis claimed that the Shaka Zulus were the premier b-boy crew originating from Bronx River, maintaining a tenuous connection to the Zulu Nation and the Zulu Kings. Although Lewis's account does not align with other Zulu Nation and Zulu Kings history, it does demonstrate the vital importance and energy focused on the emergence of b-boy crews circa 1973-1977.

The emergence of the Zulu Kings and the Shaka Zulus illustrates that many members of hip-hop's founding generation began as b-boys. The Disco Brothers, DJ Breakout and DJ Baron, were b-boys before they became influential DJs. The founding members of the Zulu Kings and Queens would go on to form various rap groups such as the Soulsonic Force and the Cosmic Force. Legendary MC Grandmaster Caz of the Cold Crush Brothers began his hip-hop career as a breaker. The evolution of hip-hop culture and personal hip-hop performance most often began with the individual youth breaking and writing graffiti and eventually moving into music creation as a DJ and/or MC. This progression of cultural performance resonates throughout the geographical expansion of hip-hop. Once youth were hooked on the culture of

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[16] Fricke and Ahearn, 13.

breaking, they would begin to experiment with other forms of hip-hop expression—b-boying as a cultural gateway drug.[17]

Grandmixer DXT claims that, "all of us were b-boys. Kool Herc was a b-boy. The dance was just a small part of it. The "b" also stood for breaking, or boogie boy or from the Bronx."[18] The moniker b-boy represented a cultural affinity based not only in performance, but also attitude and geographical origin. The "b" as signifying "Bronx" is significant. The Bronx Boys Breaking Crew (TBB) was founded in 1975, and served as the foundation for the Rock Steady Crew and b-boy crews throughout the Bronx. Initially formed by three friends, Batch, Shark and Cash, TBB was a Bronx-based, Puerto Rican graffiti crew. According to founding member Batch, the two most important cultural forms in the Bronx in the early 1970s were up-rocking and graffiti.[19] Describing why graffiti was the first choice of TBB, Batch said, "tagging up was what motivated us the most since it contained the substance of what fame was to become of the Bronx Boys."[20]

Although tagging provided the possibility to gain fame and stature throughout New York, oftentimes dancing preceded a night's writing. Prior to 1975, TBB would prepare for the night's graffiti writing with dancing and drinking. As Batch described this pre-writing ritual, "it [dancing and drinking]

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[17] William & Mary Hip Hop Colleciton, Special Collections Research Center. For example, the overwhelming majority of hip-hop cultural devotees and performers who came of age in 1980s and early 1990s Virginia all started as b-boys. Most notably, Dynamite J, Virginia's "original b-boy," and the crew, Playboys Express, that launched Timbaland, Pharrell Williams, Larry "Live," and the Clipse.

[18] Fricke and Ahearn, 12.

[19] Email about the history of the TBB written by Batch, the founder of TBB, forwarded to the author from Virginia Beach Chapter president David Anderson, April 11, 2013.

[20] Ibid.

got us warmed up, and ready to go bombing."[21] Dancing and drinking

represented an important component of the TBB ritual because of the serious

danger associated with late-night tagging. The possibility for fatal injury was

ever present once writers entered the train tunnels and yards. Facing potential

death, the adrenaline rush and release of up-rocking and alcohol represented

a performative strategy of courage fortification.

According to Batch, TBB transformed from a graffiti crew to a breaking

crew in 1975 when Te-Te Rock slipped, fell to the ground and was able to link

the movement in a way that flowed from up rocking to breaking. Batch related,

"we jokingly called it breaking your ass on the concrete." All etymological

joking aside, Batch maintained that breaking should in fact be called rocking

because it stems from up rocking.[22] In fact, several breaking crews that

formed in the wake of TBB included "rock" in their names.

Unpacking Batch's account, the aspects of layering, flow, and ruptures

in line are present. All three aspects are present for a performative and textual

read of Batch's anecdote. The rupture in line existed when Te-Te Rock "broke"

the performative and organizational meaning of TBB, establishing the basis for

the graffiti crew to become a breaking crew. This rupture was mainly

performative and the organizational rupture remained mainly semantic.

Although TBB was no longer a formal graffiti crew, of course TBB members still

wrote and participated in graffiti culture. Flowing from graffiti to breaking,

TBB's focus of performance demonstrated the porous boundaries from one

hip-hop cultural form to another. TBB layered of the meaning of their crew as

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[21]Email about the history of the TBB written by Batch, the founder of TBB, forwarded to me from Virginia Beach Chapter president David Anderson, April 11, 2013.
[22] Ibid.

the type of activities and cultural performances attributed to The Bronx Boys

expanded to include breaking. Neatly connecting the Afrodiasporic cultural

elements in TBB's history, Batch concluded, "therefore, I turned our graffiti

crew into TBB Rocking Crew."[23]

By 1977, TBB's history connected with the history of the Rock Steady

Crew as the expansion of TBB and the personal histories and memories of

bboys overlapped. Beginning in 1977, Batch established several TBB

divisions throughout the Bronx. Between 1977 and 1979, four chapters of TBB

were established throughout the Bronx.[24] Membership in these four divisions

featured some of the most legendary b-boys/b-girls in hip-hop history who

would continue to form new crews branching off of TBB.

The membership and geographical reach of TBB was Bronx-wide and in

such numbers that TBB caught the notice of Afrika Bambaataa in 1977. TBB

and the Zulu Nation met at the Daniel Webster Houses in the center of the

South Bronx and brokered a peace treaty between both organizations. As the

two largest youth organizations in the Bronx, one primarily African American

and the other Puerto Rican, tension between both organizations had the

potential to spiral into race-based battles similar to the Black Spades and

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[23] Email about the history of the TBB written by Batch, the founder of TBB, forwarded to me from Virginia Beach Chapter president David Anderson, April 11, 2013.

[24] The 1st division established in 1977 was given to TBB Joe, aka BON2, covering the areas bounded by Bronx Park South, West Farms road and East Tremont. Extending through Davidson Avenue and Fordham Road in the Northwest Bronx area, Batch established TBB's 2nd division in 1978 and gave it to Godfather. TBB's 3rd division was also established in 1978 and headed by Jimmy Lee, extending along Burnside Avenue. In the early winter of 1979, TBB's 4th and final division was established for the eastern Bronx, called TBB Pelham, including the areas along the Pelham Parkway with Green Eyed Spanky as the chapter president

TBB member DJ SOLO138's blog provides firsthand accounts of the history of Bronx and hip-hop culture during the 1970s and early 1980s.
http://www.solo138.com/2011/11/bronx-boys_25.html

Savage Skulls' battles from the beginning of the decade. Trac 2 related some

of the underlining racial tensions that surrounded increased involvement of

Puerto Ricans in breaking during this era: "the jams back then were still close

to 90 percent African-American, as were most of the earliest b-boys. . . . I had

to see the reactions on their faces when we started doing it [breaking]. They

were like, 'Yo, breaking is played out' whenever the Hispanics would do it."[25]

After the Zulu Nation and TBB peace treaty was ratified "for the sake of the

young people who liked to attend those old school parties," TBB and the Zulu

Nation were aligned.[26] The peace treaty marked an important moment in hip-

hop history. With the formal alliance between TBB and the Zulu Nation

brokered, hip-hop could continue to expand and grow in relative safety

throughout the Bronx.

During this period of expansion, the proliferation of breaking chapters

extended the reach and influence of the predominantly Puerto Rican crews.

Except for the Zulu Kings, Starchild LA Rock, and Rockwell Association, TBB

claimed that the rest of the Bronx breaking crews emerged from the various

TBB chapters. In 1979, Batch disbanded TBB. The president and vice

president of TBB's 3rd Division, Jimmy Lee and Jimmy Dee, established the

Rock Steady Crew. Again, the layering of meaning on 'rocking' provided the

linkage between TBB and the Rock Steady Crew. When asked about the

Rock Steady Crew name, Jimmy Lee said it was "because TBB Rocking Crew

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[25] Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: Picador, 2005), 117.

[26] Email about the history of the TBB written by Batch, the founder of TBB, forwarded to me from the Virginia Beach Chapter president David Anderson, April 11, 2013.

was always rocking steady."[27] Furthermore, according to Batch, the first Rock Steady shirts were brown with white lettering and Jimmy Lee added the letters 'TBB' to identify Rock Steady as a part of The Bronx Boys. The duplication and layering of the style and terms "rock" and "rocking" locates TBB and the Rock Steady Crew in the Bronx in the late 1970s.

The history of Rock Steady Crew demonstrates the crew's origins in TBB, and the Rock Steady Crew division. In 1979, Crazy Legs and his cousin Lenny lost a breaking battle to Jimmy Dee and Jimmy Lee. Both TBB leaders were impressed with their dancing and they became TBB members, with Crazy Legs becoming a member of TBB's 3rd Division.[28] It was at this moment that Crazy Legs began his self-described "Times Square kung-fu flick mission" to find, battle and best New York's premier dancers.[29] Travelling throughout New York City, Crazy Legs would find a neighborhood's best dancer and then battle them. Recalling his 'mission,' Crazy Legs said, "When I would come across b-boys, I would start hanging out with them and one person would tell me, 'Yo, I know a b-boy from this area down here.' He might be fifty blocks away or whatever. I'd be like, 'Come on let's go there.' . . . And eventually I recruited them all."[30] Crazy Legs remembered more of his ad hoc battle tactics detailing the lengths he resorted to in his efforts to find breakers by travelling around the city in a U-Haul truck to connect and battle with other dancers.[31] The Rock

[27] Email about the history of the TBB written by Batch, the founder of TBB, forwarded to me from Virginia Beach Chapter president David Anderson, April 11, 2013.

[28] TBB member DJ SOLO138's blog provides firsthand accounts of the history of Bronx and hip-hop culture during the 1970s and early 1980s. http://www.solo138.com/2011/11/bronx-boys_25.html

[29] Chang, 128.

[30] Ibid., 137.

[31] Crazy Legs in *Tha Global Cipha*, 322.

Steady Crew would be responsible for bringing breaking to clubs downtown and appearing in films such as *Style Wars, Flashdance, Breakin', Beat Street* and *WildStlye,* and various other national and international media coverage. At root, Rock Steady Crew represented, and still represents, Bronx youth culture stemming from TBB. From here, then, the story of Rock Steady Crew begins. Crazy Legs's journey into the breaking world represented both a generational and geographical change. His commitment to breaking pushed this form of hip-hop and Bronx culture to wider audiences.

By 1979 hip-hop transitioned from predominately Bronx-based cultural practices to the culture industry. Moving away from breaking was partly due to a generational shift, as well as racial antagonisms. Popmaster Fabel recalled the reactions he and other Puerto Ricans received when they started to dance in the mid-1970s. Fabel recalled, "certain black folks would look at us and say, 'Pssh, why you trying to do our thing?' And then there were times where we would dis ourselves, like 'Why you trying to that *cocolo* thing?' And then we had our parents, the older generation, older sisters and brothers saying, 'Why you dressing like a *cocolo*? Why you want to be like them?' Man, it was hard."[32] Similarly, TRAC 2 of Starchild La Rock remembered, "the jams back then were still close to 90 percent African-American, as were most of the earliest b-boys, but they took breaking more like a phase, a fad. . . . They were like, 'Yo, breaking is played out' whenever the Hispanics would do it."[33] By 1981 so few b-boys and b-girls remained that earlier racial tensions no longer mattered due to a dearth of practitioners. As Crazy Legs recalled, "at

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[32] Chang, 117.
[33] Ibid.

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that point [1980-1981] there were so few b-boys that the only way to get into it was by biting. There was no way to really get the foundation than from the few scattered b-boys in the city."[34] The racial tensions inherent in b-boy claims of cultural authenticity and appropriation evaporated, leaving Crazy Legs, the nascent Rock Steady Crew, and crews to emerge from Rock Steady, to forge an ecumenical coalition of b-boys that would spread breaking nationally and internationally.

By 1981, the Rock Steady Crew and hip-hop culture was poised for national exposure. After recruiting and organizing the best dancers throughout the Bronx and Manhattan, Crazy Legs numbered his crew at somewhere around 500 youths. Describing his crew, Crazy Legs said, "literally, 500. When I got Rock Steady I had my own following. I had started getting in more groups from my neighborhood. Don't get me wrong. We had 500 members, but they were b-boys, MCS. We had all different phases [of hip-hop culture]."[35] Crazy Legs' description of the Rock Steady Crew's membership demonstrated the fact that youths creating and participating in hip-hop culture were not confined to a single element: Rock Steady Crew was a b-boy crew, but also encompassed practiced other forms of hip-hop culture. Building from the foundation of TBB chapters throughout the Bronx, Rock Steady Crew organized breakers throughout New York in the early 1980s further establishing hip-hop's cultural force. Although Rock Steady Crew expanded the geographic beyond the Bronx, Crazy Legs and company did so through Bronx culture and style.

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[34] Crazy Legs in *Tha Global Cipha*, 323.
[35] Ibid., 322.

Rock Steady Crew helped inaugurate the rise of other New York-based breaking "super groups" in the early 1980s. The New York City Breakers followed in Rock Steady Crew's wake after Michael Holman formally established the Breakers in 1983. Explicitly conceived as a super group, Michael Holman wanted the NYC Breakers to be comprised of the top breaking talent in the city. The members of the NYC Breakers were well known in hip-hop circles as breakers from other crews. The core members of the NYC Breakers were all members of an important b-boy crew, The Floormasters. The Floormasters consisted of eight African American and Puerto Rican members with the average age of fifteen. Of the eight members, five would become NYC Breakers, including Noel Mangual, Chino Lopez, Matthew Caban, Corey Montevo, and Tony Lopez.[36] From 1983 to 1985, the NYC Breakers were largely a New York and tri-state crew. However, through Michael Holman's management, the New York City Breakers were able to garner nationwide exposure performing at the 50th Presidential inauguration for President Reagan's second term.[37]

The Dynamic Rockers and the Dynamic Breakers represent the final two breaking crews from the early 1980s that helped to expand breaking and hip-hop culture into mainstream American culture. Founded by Eddie Ed, Osvaldo Luna, and hailing from Queens, the Dynamic Rockers battled the Rock Steady Crew at Lincoln Center and the United Skates of America roller rink filmed by Henry Chalfant and featured in *Style Wars*. The Dynamic Rockers incorporated gymnastics and acrobatics into their style, helping to create

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[36] Author Facebook "message" conversation with Patrick Vogt, 7/14/2013.
[37] Ibid.

tremendous visual appeal for mainstream audiences. The Dynamic Breakers split from the Rockers and formed their crew with the most acrobatic members from the Rockers. the Dynamic Breakers garnered most of the national spotlight through exposure on television shows such as *That's Incredible* and *The New Show,* and appearances in movies such as the *Delivery Boys, The Exterminator* and *The Last Dragon.*[38]

The Dynamic Breakers first established themselves at the Big Break Dance Contest at the Roxy in . Celebrating, and promoting, Charlie Stettler's Tin Pan Apple's album of street noise, the Roxy held the 92KTU Big Break Dance Contest hosted for WABC-TV by Leslie Uggams and Carlos de Jesus featuring performances by Afrika Bambaataa, The Commodores, Love Bug Starski and Shannon, among others.[39] The Dynamic Breakers won the contest, taking home $25 thousand dollars, an appearance on New York Hot Tracks musical variety show and an appearance in *Beat Street.*[40] After the Roxy contest, the Dynamic Breakers would capitalize on their success and become recording artists. In 1983 The Dynamic Breakers recorded two singles for Sunnyview Records, "Dynamic (Total Control)" and "Kim." Finally, the Dynamic Breakers were featured acts on the national, arena-sized hip-hop package tours, Fresh Fest and Fresh Fest 2. By 1985, the original membership of the Dynamic Breakers began changing and the cultural

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[38] During their *The New Show* appearance, Duce and the Breakers were able to get Penny Marshal to perform a head spin.
http://www.oldschoolhiphop.com/artists/bboys/dynamicrockers.htm
Footage exists on youtube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tV9Zoo7YHlw
[39] Information provided by Charlie Stettler's company, ADDiCTiVE webiste,
http://www.addictivenetworks.com/charlie-stettler/
[40] Author Facebook conversation with Patrick Vogt. However, the Dynamic Breakers never appeared in the film due to a financial dispute between the crew's management and the film's producers.

phenomenon of "breakdancing" waned, largely sending the Dynamic Breakers

into obscurity. Although the Dynamic Breakers are no longer extant, the

acrobatic style that they pioneered continues to influence breaking worldwide.

Although a growing body of scholarship exists tracing the b-boy's

Afrodiasporic cultural history from Mardi Gras Indian gangs, the Lindy Hoppers

and the Jolly Fellows changing American dance in the 1920s, Cuban rumba

and forms of Angolan and Brazilian capoeira, the b-boy and breaking emerged

because of the dialectical relationship between the Bronx and its residents.[41]

As Crazy Legs colorfully described this dialectic: "we didn't know what the fuck

no capoeira was, man. We were in the ghetto! There was no dance, school,

nothing." Crazy Legs finished his point: "Our immediate influence in b-boying

was James Brown, point blank."[42] Unpacking the cultural impact and history of

James Brown leads us back to the Afrodiasporic world of creation briefly

sketched at the beginning of this paragraph, as well as directly grounding the

history of hip-hop in the material places of the Bronx. Crazy Legs' words

return our attention to the Bronx River Houses and the Zulu Nation. Just as

the b-boys took their cues from the moves and music of James Brown, so too

did Afrika Bambaata and the Zulu Nation's DJs. Faced with the first death of

the b-boy in 1979, The Rock Steady Crew organized and expanded the reach

of breaking and the b-boy. From the Rock Steady Crew, other crews emerged

continuing to push breaking and hip-hop culture into the American mainstream.

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[41] Joe Schloss, Jeff Chang, Jorge "Popmaster Fabel" Pabon, David Toop, Sally Banes, and Martha Cooper represent the scholars and authors that have directly traced the relationship and lineage of Afrodiasporic dance forms. For a broader look at the cultural history of African Diaspora, Robert Ferris Thompson, Paul Gilroy, and Joseph Roach have produced classic works unpacking the historical circulation, and continuing influence, of Afrodiasporic cultural mode of culture.
[42] Chang, 116.

By 1981, Rock Steady and related b-boy crews established breaking as a very public, very New York, cultural form ready to captivate national audiences.

Breaking Lincoln Center

The Rock Steady Crew and Dynamic Rockers battle on August 15, 1981 at the 1981 Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival represents hip-hop culture's first major performance at a venue dedicated to "high culture." The Lincoln Center battle served as the destination for b-boys and hip-hop loving youths from all over the city, making Lincoln Center an important site of cultural networking as well as performance. For an event that has since become a legendary moment in hip-hop and breaking history, the event received scant attention previous to the battle. In a *New York Times* article previewing the offerings of the 1981 Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Program, breaking was not mentioned. During the festival, coverage in the *New York Times* never mentioned the historic b-boy battle.[43] The *New York Times* largely ignored the battle in favor of discussing and promoting the festival's other cultural events more in keeping with the Lincoln Center's purported cultural mission illustrated by national and international modern dance troupes, American folk or vernacular music such as jazz orchestras and bluegrass, opera, Shakespeare performances, and international fare from South America and Europe. The post-battle excitement and publicity that the August 15 event generated rippled throughout mainstream media and the hip-hop landscape. The August 15, 1981 Lincoln Out-of-Doors Program Rock Steady Crew vs. Dynamic Rockers b-boy battle represented a pivotal moment when Bronx youth culture went

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[43] *NYT*, "Free Festival of the Arts," August 4, 1981, C9.

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national; Bronx culture was able to traverse the cultural and geographical space from hip-hop's seven-mile world to Manhattan's west side because of a shared urban history of culture created with, and against, the built environment.

The development of the Out-of-Doors Festival demonstrated Lincoln Center's history of managing cultural and material creation between the complex and surrounding community. Julia L. Foulkes, describes the tensions between the cultural mission of Lincoln Center, its programming, and the community surrounding the campus with the phrase "streets and stage." After a decade of prickly community relations, Lincoln Center hired Leonard de Paur, an African American, who organized the Fountain Plaza Festival in 1970. This event formed the foundation for what would become the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival in August 1974.[44] The festival was conceived as a platform to feature a broader selection of arts and performances to New York audiences, aimed at the city's youth and providing performance opportunities for lesser-known New York artists in an attempt to integrate the arts plaza into the Lincoln Square neighborhood. The festival featured everything from community and youth groups to international cultural performances. As Foulkes argues: "the Out of Doors Festival brought the street and the neighborhood into the complex, although in spaces that have remained largely outside of the theaters themselves."[45]

Lincoln Center's built environment was the result of a post-World War II and Cold War conception of American race, place, and space. The impetus to

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[44] Julia L. Foulkes, "Streets and Stages: Urban Renewal and the Arts After World War II," *Journal of Social History, Volume 44, Number 2, Winter 2010, pp. 413-434.*
[45] Ibid., 420.

build and remake the urban environment in Manhattan's west side matched the

same forces at work in transforming the Bronx's built environment. Credited,

and excoriated, for remaking New York's 20th century urban landscape, Robert

Moses was the central figure behind the construction of Lincoln Center and the

Cross Bronx Expressway. The Cross-Bronx Expressway linked New Jersey,

Connecticut and New York by razing longstanding neighborhoods home to

predominantly working class African Americans, Latino, and white ethnic

residents. Echoing the urban crises that cropped up throughout postwar

American cities stretching from the Midwest to the Northeast, The Cross-Bronx

Expressway neatly articulated the expansion of the suburbs, white flight, and

the erosion of urban resources and public life. Marshall Berman's *All That is*

Solid Melts into Air represents a consensus response to the Cross-Bronx

Expressway and the destruction of modern urban America in favor of

postmodern urban America. Viewing the effect the expressway had on the

Bronx, Berman remarked, "when the construction was done, the real ruing of

the Bronx had just begun. Miles of streets alongside the road were choked

with dust and fumes and deafening noise. . . . the construction had destroyed

many commercial blocks, cut others off from most of their customers and left

the storekeepers not only close to bankruptcy but, in their enforced isolation,

increasingly vulnerable to crime."[46]

The construction of Lincoln Center performed the public spectacle

underpinning the shared material and cultural forces that animated urban

renewal; Lincoln Center was the public face highlighting the benefits of urban

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[46] Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 293.

renewal. Samuel Zipp describes the impetus to build Lincoln Center as the desire to assemble a liberal, white and white ethnic internationalist outlook at Lincoln Center as a case against urban decentralization. For Moses and the cabal of city leaders, Lincoln Center would "help to keep alive and meaningful our [America] cultural and blood ties to Great Britain and the Continent." To realize this ahistorcial dream of cultural nostalgia and colonialism made manifest in marble, Moses continued to leverage Title I of the 1949 Housing Act that gave localities federal money to offset the costs of clearing overpriced urban land. Moses and the Committee on Slum Clearance (CSC) felt that Lincoln Center harnessed the "power of culture and the arts" inherent in urban renewal.[47] Like urban renewal and slum clearance illustrated by public and private housing developments at midcentury throughout the city, remaking the cityscape was meant to reify a particular cultural message in steel and concrete.

Mid-century urban renewal was always a combination of material and cultural messages. Foulkes describes these messages: "Lincoln Center played both sides of the cultural Cold War: first by claiming 'high' culture for everyone, bringing beauty to a broader, larger audience; and, secondly, by aiming to [the] best European countries, especially the German and Russian traditions of opera, classical music, and dance."[48] Before high culture would take root through at Lincoln Center through urban renewal, the surrounding neighborhoods had to undergo resident removal. Resident removal

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[47] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[48] Foulkes, 416.

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overwhelmingly impacted those with little political or social capital to protest: predominantly non-white and working-class communities and individuals.

Lincoln Center's neighborhood demographics demonstrate the social costs of urban renewal. Between 1950 and 1970, New York's Puerto Rican population almost quadrupled to 847,000, the African American population increased by 50% to a little more than a million and half, and the white population decreased by over a million residents to slightly below 5 million.[49] During this same period, the Lincoln Center neighborhood experienced the reverse demographic trend. In 1950, the Westside neighborhoods between 60th and 65th street had an 18% non-white population; by 1970 this figure dropped to less than 2%. By the 1970 census, almost 45% of the population in the "immediate area" of Lincoln Center moved there between 1965 and 1970.[50] The mid-century history and phenomenon of suburban growth and white flight in New York is well documented, and yet the neighborhoods surrounding Lincoln Center effectively reversed the trend. Based on the demographics and the cultural and social impetus of urban renewal and slum clearance, Moses' desire to "fix the whole of the West Side," appeared to work by 1970.[51] New housing constructed in the Lincoln Center area reinforced the social and cultural impact of urban renewal on the west side. To complete the Lincoln Center campus, approximately 7,000 low-income apartments were razed. In Lincoln Center's wake, 4,400 apartments were planned to replace the housing loss. However, 4,000 of these apartments were targeted for middle-income or

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[49] *The Encyclopedia of New York City,* Second Edition ed. Kenneth Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
[50] Foulkes, 416.
[51] See Zipp, *Manhattan Projects,* Chapter Four, "Culture and Cold War in the Making of Lincoln Center."

luxury apartments, leaving a net loss of 6,600 apartments for the former low-income neighborhood residents.

Coupling the high-minded cultural aspirations for Lincoln Center's materiality with the displacement of Lincoln Square's non-white population demonstrates what Andras Tokaji describes as the "meeting of sacred and profane."[52] Tokaji locates the meeting of the "sacred and profane" in the figure and urban planning of Robert Moses, Lincoln Center, the Cross-Bronx Expressway and the emergence of hip-hop. Tokaji argues that Lincoln Center, the Cross-Bronx Expressway and Moses's other works representative of Moses's slum clear program operated like a "mammoth factory," reproducing "scanty, dreary and bleak flats . . . intended for the poor in such a way that he contributed to the city's further subdivision on racial and economic grounds, that is to its ghettoization."[53]

Throughout Moses's career, he razed 250,000 homes to make way for the city's highways and evicted an equal amount to build his other major developments including Lincoln Center.[54] Because this was a long developing, citywide trend that overwhelming affected low-income African American and Latino communities, the question that needs to be asked is why did hip-hop culture emerge from the Bronx? Following this larger ontological question, what did the 1981 Lincoln Center battle illustrate about the Bronx, late 20th century American, and the spread of hip-hop? Tokaji argued that Moses's

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[52] Andras Tokaji, "The Meeting of Sacred and Profane in New York's Music: Robert Moses, Lincoln Center, and Hip-hop," *Journal of American Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 1 (Apr. 1995), pp. 97-103.

[53] Ibid., 99.

[54] Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 20.

many projects tilted the geography for African Americans and Latinos in New York toward the Bronx. As Harlem increasingly experienced overcrowding throughout the 1950s, African Americans and Latinos moved across the Harlem River into the Bronx. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as white flight and the expansion of the suburbs drained the Bronx's white population, some housing opened up for African American and Latino residents. Although overcrowding and urban renewal acted as a powerful lever propelling African Americans and Latinos into the Bronx, this was a population movement with a much longer history encompassing a multiplicity of causes. Foulkes points out that of the residents displaced by Lincoln Center, 55.8% relocated within Manhattan, and of that 55%, 59.62% moved into areas close to Lincoln Center. Foulkes also notes that a total of 10.8% of all the residents displaced by Lincoln Center moved to the Bronx.[55] Based on the population statistics alone, any narrative of population displacement to the Bronx must be qualified in terms of Lincoln Center's construction. Foulkes highlights the displaced population statistics in order to argue against Tokaji's facile correlation between urban renewal and hip-hop's emergence. Tokaji's misreading and Foulke's subsequent qualified correction of population displacement illuminates the singularity of the Bronx, Bronx culture, and hip-hop. Tokaji's exploration of Moses and the connection between Lincoln Center, hip-hop, and the Cross-Bronx Expressway combined with Foulkes' statistics reinforces the fact that low income, non-white folks throughout the city were losing their homes and communities to slum clearance and urban renewal: the impact of postwar urban renewal was not exclusively experienced in the Bronx.

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[55] Foulkes, 419.

Connecting Foulkes, Tokaji and Zipp shows that the emergence of hip-hop culture and urban renewal were coterminus phenomena. Embedded in this shared narrative, the Bronx stands out as a cultural incubator with its own material cultural history related to, and distinct from, larger local and national trends. Therefore Lincoln Center becomes doubly important because it demonstrated both the novelty of a Bronx "national" culture within a broader national narrative. Although a direct, material correlation between the building of Lincoln Center and the emergence of hip-hop culture does not exist, the forces of urban renewal and slum clearance provided a material and culture template for hip-hop's expansion. Lincoln Center was meant as monument and citadel for highbrow American culture.[56] The initial push for the Out-of-Doors festival in 1970 represented an attempt by the city's cultural mavens to appropriate vernacular cultural modes under the aegis of Lincoln Center. The Out-of-Doors festival and the 1981 breaking battle also demonstrated how the "street punctured the sanctity of . . . the high arts" through hip-hop's cultural imperative of re-connecting private and public space.[57] Bronx culture—hip-hop—expanded and inhabited the cultural and material spaces of Lincoln Center in 1981 connecting local and national cultural performances.

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[56] In *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), cultural historian Lawrence Levine examined expressive culture and the spaces of cultural performance detailing the use and organization of expressive culture and sites of performance to establish class and racial division organized along terms such as "serious," "popular," "highbrow," and "lowbrow." Christopher Small's *Musicking: The Meaning of Performance and Listening* (London: University Press of New England, 1998) views all musical activity as "musicking," his neologism encompassing all aspects of performing and listening to music, including the material sites where music is performed. From Small's vantage point, the places and spaces where music is performed is just as import and laden with cultural information as the music itself.
[57] Foulkes, 420.

Breaking Sacred and Profane: Hip-Hop Goes National

August 15, 1981 represents a seminal moment in hip-hop history. Eight years and four days after Kool Herc's inaugural party, the Rock Steady Crew's battle with the Dynamic Rockers should be viewed as the most important hip-hop moment since the culture's inception. The genesis of the battle, the participants and subsequent cultural impact helped establish hip-hop as a national, and increasingly international, phenomenon by the mid 1980s. The Lincoln Center battle is an important moment in hip-hop history. It represented one of the first organized breaking battles in Manhattan; previous to the 1981 battle, breaking battles mainly took place within the context of jams. Battles between crews were largely ad hoc, unorganized events. The 1981 Lincoln Center Battle represented an attempt to showcase breaking and hip-hop culture to a broader audience by the youths who had created and continued to participate in hip-hop.

The staging and execution of the battle revealed important intersections between presentations of hip-hop culture and Lincoln Center's Out-of-Doors Festival. For the battle, a linoleum-covered stage was raised in the Plaza. "Hundreds of seats" were set around the stage for the audience to sit and watch. In a move of hip-hop authenticity, the increasingly tightening circle of observers, friends, and crewmembers surrounding the dancers ultimately thwarted any use of the seats to see the battle. As the battle progressed, Chalfant reported how those members of the audience sitting in the chairs eventually melted away because they could not see the performance. Considering the arrangement of audience, performers, stage, and seating at the Rock Steady Crew and Dynamic Breakers Lincoln Center battle,

demonstrated hip-hop's cultural frictions between traditional conceptions of audience, stage, and performer relationships.

The Lincoln Center battle highlighted, and transgressed, the Out-of-Doors festival's presentation and performance of the "street and stage." Breaking battles are participatory spaces. Although breakers enter the circle and perform, once finished they return to the edges of the circle and rejoin the audience—demonstrating the creation and importance of cultural continuity within the performance of breaking. In the context of the Out of Doors festival, the Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers, and hip-hop initiated observers disrupted the expectations of audience and institution. Although the design of the stage and seats constructed a clear delineation between audience and performers, the experience and production of hip-hop culture dictated a different approach. Breaking in the context of a jam or party was an intimate affair, not a spectator sport. The hip-hop initiated refused the audience/spectator binary and approached and surrounded the stage creating the more fluid boundary between performers and audience. Although it was reported that many of the seated audience members walked away after being unable to view the battle, it is just as likely that many of the folks crowded closer to the action, being initiated into hip-hop culture.

Claiming geographical space was another important aspect of the battle. Sections of Manhattan and the Bronx, and Queens and Brooklyn converged on Lincoln Center to champion their local b-boy crews. Rock Steady represented the Bronx and Manhattan and the Dynamic Breakers hailed from Brooklyn and Queens. Flooding Lincoln Center's Fountain Plaza, the youth culture created and practiced far from Lincoln Center re-mapped the

cultural geography of Lincoln Center. Returning to Chalfant's admission that he "hadn't banked on was that the crews would bring all their neighborhood," pointed to the fact that the 1981 battle moved beyond mere performance. Chalfant's comment illustrated the fact that the youthful practitioners of hip-hop culture performed their culture literally and figuratively on top of Lincoln Center. Through cultural performance and creation, Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers added the spaces around Lincoln Center to the cultural geography of hip-hop.

Not only did fans, friends, and supporters of the Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers establish a breaking cipher, but the crews and their associates also communicated hip-hop and b-boy style from the boroughs and neighborhoods not normally seen in the spaces of Lincoln Center. Both the Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers attended the battle wearing stylized jumpsuits: the Rock Steady wore light grey; the Dynamic Breakers wore beige and maroon.[58] Joe Schloss argues that, "hip-hop culture gives its participants the power to redefine themselves and their history, not by omission or selective emphasis, but by embracing *all* of their previous experience as material for self-expression in the present moment."[59] Quite literally, and bodily, Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers redefined their relationship to Lincoln Center, and the relationship between audience, performers, and cultural production. In effect, Lincoln Center became the epicenter for an all-city breaking competition celebrating hip-hop culture. The 1981 Lincoln Center battle also represented a fertile moment of hip-hop media

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[58] Chang, 159.
[59] Schloss, 44.

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production and consumption. *The Village Voice, New York Daily News,*

National Geographic, and local news media covered the event. In addition to

print media coverage, the battle was the subject for hip-hop's first short-film,

Michael Holman's "Catch a Beat!"

Advertising breaking battles and performances was a relatively novel

practice in 1981. Prior to the August 1981 battle, Rock Steady Crew

participated in two other performances. Martha Cooper arranged the first

event at the High Bridge Library branch of the New York Public Library in the

Bronx. The flyer for the High Bridge performance advertised a program of

"Breaking, Rapping & Graffiti," promoting three of the original four elements in

one packaged event.[60] Henry Chalfant filmed a battle between Rock Steady

and the Dynamic Rockers at the United Skates of America Roller Rink in

Queens that served as the battle scene in 1983's *Style Wars.*[61] Similar to

Michael Holman's desire to stage b-boy battles in the Roxy and Negril,

Chalfant hoped to present the same energy and excitement inherent in a

breaking battle. The Lincoln Center battle would prove to be a very different

event.

The advertising for the Lincoln Center Out of Doors Festival vis-à-vis

the preceding 1981 breaking performances at the High Bridge Library in the

Bronx and the United Skates of America Roller Rink in Queens demonstrates

that the Lincoln Center performance represented an epochal moment in

breaking and hip hop history. The High Bridge Library performance featured a

very basic advertisement featuring stick figures and the text: "[B]reaking,

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[60] Chang, 159.
[61] Chang 159; *Style Wars*, dir. Henry Chalfant, 1983.

Rapping & Graffiti, an original blend of dancing, acrobatics and martial arts . . .

young adults especially invited."[62] The High Bridge Library librarians organized

the event with the aid of photographer Martha Cooper after reading Sally

Banes and Cooper's April 1981 *Village Voice* article, "To the Beat Y'All:

Breaking is Hard to Do."[63] The advertising for the High Bridge Library

performance did not represent previous modes of hip-hop advertisement and

performance. In fact, the initial contact between Cooper and the library was

also a novelty in terms of breaking battles and performances. Located at West

168th Street and Shakespeare Avenue in the Southwest Bronx, breaking and

hip-hop culture would have been a recognizable, if largely unfamiliar, cultural

form by 1981. According to Martha Cooper, hardly anyone attended the event

and those that did attend did not seem to really understand breaking and hip-

hop culture.[64]

Although High Bridge Library was located in the Bronx, it took the

Village Voice's article to place the social and cultural context of breaking in

way that was of interest for High Bridge Library officials. As far as the historic

record shows, libraries were not common sites of hip-hop performances,

perhaps necessitating the library produced flyer and the plea for "young

people." Not only was the staff of High Bridge Library informed about breaking

by Banes and Cooper's article, but the Zulu Nation also found out about the

Rock Steady Crew through this article. According to Frosty Freeze, Afrika

Bambaataa learned about Rock Steady Crew because Bane's article

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[62] Chang, 159.

[63] Email exchange between Martha Cooper and the author, July 2013. *The Village Voice* published the Cooper and Banes article in the April 22-28, 1981 edition.

[64] Email exchange with Martha Cooper, August 2013.

mentioned the fact that the Zulu Kings were one of Rock Steady Crew's inspirations.[65] Importantly, as breaking garnered media attention in areas outside of the Bronx, the advertising helped to further knit together the hip-hop scene within the Bronx, at the same time as explaining and documenting the burgeoning culture to audiences outside of the Bronx.

Henry Chalfant organized the United Skates of America Roller Skating Rink battle in Queens. He organized this event so that he could film breaking. Chalfant's footage became the basis for the battle scene in 1983's *Style Wars* film. The battle in Queens was different from the High Bridge performance. The main difference was audience. Because Chalfant wanted to capture an "authentic" battle between Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers, the audience watching the performance was made up of partisans of not only both breaking crews, but also of hip-hop culture. The result was that what Chalfant filmed represented the spirit of a breaking battle with an initiated crowd. The battle was also advertised in true hip-hop word-of-mouth spirit. Friends of the crews and neighborhood kids attended because they knew to attend; flyers were not needed to generate a headcount. Although it was relatively uncommon for a roller rink to only host a breaking battle—as opposed to full-fledged jam featuring DJs and MCs—hip-hop flyer archives reveal the common use of roller rinks for events.

Both the roller rink battle and the High Bridge Library performance represented a uniquely mediated presentation of breaking and hip-hop culture different from the Lincoln Center Out of Doors festival event. As described above, the idea for the High Bridge Library performance originated from

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[65] Fricke and Ahearn, 300.

Cooper and Banes' *Village Voice* article. For the programming staff at High Bridge, the decision to program the Rock Steady Crew's performance was mediated by journalists publishing an article on Bronx youth culture in a downtown publication. The advertising of the breaking performance by the librarians did not represent hip-hop and breaking culture. The fact that the performance was sparsely attended and little understood attested to the degree to which the High Bridge Library performance was highly mediated and removed from breaking and hip-hop culture. Chalfant's roller rink battle also represented an interestingly mediated presentation of breaking and hip-hop culture. The United Skates of America Roller Skating Rink in Queens was ostensibly a closed, if porous, set for Chalfant to film a breaking battle. Although the breakers dancing at the rink and those friends and familiars attending the event enjoyed the immediacy and liveness that constituted breaking culture prior to 1981, once the footage appeared in *Style Wars* the experience became accessible to a national and international audiences. The experience and exposure of breaking and hip-hop was ultimately mediated by Chalfant's camera lens. Chalfant's film invited future audiences to witness breaking in a mediated social context; Chalfant's lens presented breaking as an anthropological dispatch. Both the High Bridge Library and Chalfant mediated breaking by removing the performance—literally and figuratively—from the street.

The 1981 Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors festival battle represented the most important moment in propelling breaking into the cultural mainstream. Unlike the performance at the High Bridge Library and the filmed battle at United Skates of America Roller Skating Rink, the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors

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Festival battle revealed breaking in an unvarnished, unplanned, and spontaneous setting. Of course the event was arranged and planned by Chalfant with the festival programmers, but this was no different than two breaking crews deciding on a time and place for a battle. The Lincoln Center battle contained all the performative elements representative of breaking culture. The battles featured partisan contingents of the Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Rockers as well as a crowd schooled in breaking and hip-hop culture.

The advertising and flyer artwork also demonstrated that the Lincoln Center battle was more representative of breaking and hip-hop culture. Unlike the High Bridge flyers made by librarians, graffiti artist DOZE created the Lincoln Center flyer visually representing hip-hop culture. Meant to be merely informative, the High Bridge Flyer included stick figures and an awkward description of three of hip-hop's foundational elements. DOZE's flyer represented hip-hop's visual aesthetic. Using graffiti-style bubble lettering, the "Rock Steady Crew vs. Dynamic Rockers" flyer featured all the hallmarks of early 1980s hip-hop visual culture: including a drawing of a b-boy completing a head-spin dressed in b-boy fashion; a hat turned to the side to facilitate the spin; sweatshirt with "b-boy" across the chest representing the iron-on lettering that b-boy crews used; the b-boy was wearing Nike shoes, complete with oversized, "fat" shoelaces. In addition to the b-boy character, DOZE also included another character complete with ski goggles, a large afro, and a speech bubble defining breaking as "breaking or otherwise known as (B-Boy) is a competitive warlike dance, making the opponent look bad." At the time, ski fashion was a very popular trend for the city's youth, particularly among the

hip-hop set.[66] Unlike the dry description of hip-hop culture from the High
Bridge flyer, DOZE's flyer stressed the importance of style and competition to
breaking and hip-hop culture. Additionally, the flyer also listed the members of
each breaking crew and advertised that Rammellzee would MC with DJ Ruddy
Tee.[67]. Although the focus of Lincoln Center battle was breaking, DOZE's flyer
advertised the event as a jam. DOZE's flyer signaled that the Lincoln Center
battle would be a hip-hop event, organized and attended by those immersed in
the culture.

The Lincoln Center battle took place outside in the Fountain Plaza (now
known as the Josie Roberston Plaza). The plaza encompassed the public
space directly east of the Metropolitan Opera House, flanked on the north by
Avery Fisher Hall, and the south by the David H. Koch Theater, with the plaza
opening onto the street at the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Broadway.
The battle's location in the plaza was representative of the "street" and public
nature of breaking culture. Although a stage and seating were arranged for the
battle, the plaza location also allowed people walking down the street to
casually investigate the battle. It was this feature, the very public-ness, of the
Lincoln Center battle that marked the difference between the High Bridge
Library and the United States of America Roller Skating Rink. It was this
public-ness that confused, excited, and propelled breaking into mainstream
American popular culture. As Martha Cooper mused about the Lincoln Center
event, "[breaking] was mainstream now."[68]

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[66] Michael Holman, "The Crew Look," East Village Eye, January 1982, pg. 29; Michael
Holman, "Yo-Ski," East Village Eye, January 1982, pp. 30-31.
[67] Smithsonian National Museum of American History.
[68] Foulkes, 420.

Although the battle was featured as a part of the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, the battle's location in the Fountain Plaza presented another opportunity to consider the importance of space and place in the creation and transmission of breaking and hip-hop culture. Although the Fountain Plaza is the public face and main walking entrance into the Lincoln Square complex, the main site of the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival was (and continues to be) Damrosch Park, located in the southwest corner of the complex. The location of the breaking battle in the Fountain Plaza sent several important messages about the cultural intersections between Lincoln Center, and breaking and hip-hop. The location of the breaking battle in the Fountain Plaza separated the battle from the festival proper. Walking north along Columbus Avenue towards Broadway, then, pedestrians would have witnessed the breaking battle in the Plaza without necessarily realizing that what they saw was part of the festival programming. This fact proved vital for transmitting breaking culture to the public and connected the Lincoln Center battle with the everyday aspects of breaking culture. Although the August 15, 1981 battle took place under the aegis of the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors festival, the geographic separation from Damrosch Park provided the battle with an air of spontaneity and subversion.

For an event that would propel breaking and hip-hop culture further into the national cultural consciousness, media coverage of breaking at the festival prior to the event was non-existent. In the press coverage leading to the start of the festival on August 11, 1981, *The New York Times* never mentioned the breaking performance. A week before the start of the festival, *The New York Times* ran an article detailing the events of the nineteen day festival, including

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the opening events and a selected schedule.[69] Although the article highlighted

a variety of performances, neither the Rock Steady Crew nor the Dynamic

Breakers were mentioned. The article did list a range of performances, from

"Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope" by the Unity Cultural Workshop of Staten

Island, "Bluegrass Day," and "Hispanic Music Day." Although the article

managed to list the diversity of events for the festival, the listed acts all fit

within Lincoln Center's narrow cultural mission. For example, "Hispanic Music

Day" featured the Ballet Hispanico of New York and Ballet Espanol; the

inclusion of bluegrass was similar to jazz's inclusion in the festival as an

example of American vernacular cultural production.

Running the day after the breaking performance, the article reflected

the *Times'* lack of coverage of early hip-hop cultural events. The article,

"Critics' Choices," by dance critic Jennifer Dunning, highlights the U.S.

Terpsichore chamber ballet company's performance at the Out-of-Doors

festival. The company was scheduled to perform the second act of "Swan

Lake," a Debbie Allen ballet and two works by Daniel Levans, U.S.

Terpsichore's choreographer.[70] Dunning urged New Yorkers to attend this

performance because U.S. Terpsichore presented "dance that isn't seen all

that often around New York."[71] Whether or not New York lacked classical

dance performances was largely beside the point. From Dunning's

perspective, she obviously felt that classical dance and ballet was waning, and

her coverage of dance in the weeks and months surrounding the Rock Steady

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[69] "Free Festival of the Arts," *The New York Times,* August 4, 1981, pg. C9.
[70] John S. Wilson, Jennifer Dunning, "Critics' Choice," *The New York Times,* August 16, 1981, GU3.
[71] Ibid.

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Crew battle at the festival reflected this fact. Dunning wrote a feature-length article on U.S. Terpsichore and the Lincoln Center Out of Doors festival following the company's August 19th performance. Again, Dunning failed to mention the break dancing performance. In the lede paragraph, Dunning announced that the, "Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors festival at Damrosch Park [was] getting to be the place to go for dance," that summer.[72] In addition to U.S. Terpsichore, Dunning mentioned a New Zealand troupe, Limbs, and their performance during the festival's first week. Again, Dunning never mentioned another New York-based dance event at the festival, the Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers.

Most telling of the critical and cultural aporia surrounding breaking and hip-hop culture was again provided by Jennifer Dunning and *The New York Times*. On August 15, 1981, Dunning wrote a feature article about Limbs. Dunning describes Limb's August 13 performance as a "blend of classical ballet, jazz, acrobatics, modern dance and improvisational techniques." Dunning was very enthusiastic about the combination and presentation of dance styles, praising performance pieces "Negation" and "Talking Heads" that were choreographed to the music of Marianne Faithfull and the Talking Heads, respectively. Praising Limbs as "ambitious," "stylish," and a "fine company," Dunning's feature congratulated Limbs for their performance aesthetic of combining, interpreting and re-interpreting various styles of dance and music

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[72] Jennifer Dunning, "Dance: U.S. Terpsichore Performs in Damrosch Park," August 20, 1981, pg. C19.

into a new cultural performance—exactly the cultural aesthetic and modes of

practice of hip-hop and breaking.[73]

Dunning's description of Limbs and the *Times'* lack of coverage of

breaking and the Rock Steady Crew and the Dynamic Breakers performance

re-inscribed the prevailing posture of ignoring non-white, non-elite forms of

cultural production. Lincoln Center's Out of Doors festival was meant to

include "ethnic" performances from a variety of communities usually ignored by

Lincoln Center's indoor performance seasons. Beginning in 1970, the festival

featured performances from under-represented communities: theater

companies from Bedford-Stuyvestant in Brooklyn and East Harlem in 1970;

community theater groups from New York City, Washington, D.C. and Watts in

1971.[74] The construction of Lincoln Center represented shared spaces of

asymmetrical cultural appropriation. Although the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors

Festival demonstrated moments where the "street punctured the stage," it was

not felt as a shared moment of cultural recognition and reciprocity. Growing up

in the Amsterdam Houses behind Lincoln Center, Ademola Olugebelofa

remembered a variety of programs and activities Lincoln Center provided for

the neighborhood: "[w]e had cultural activities where we were involved. There

was never a lack of something."[75] However, Olubebelofa also commented on

the loss of neighborhood cultural institutions such as the bebop club, the

Lincoln Square Center.[76] Although the "street" culture found a tentative place

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[73] Jennifer Dunning, "Dance: Limbs Company Offers Innovative Blend," August 15, 1981, pg. 9.
[74] Julia L. Foulkes, "The Other West Side Story: Urbanization and the Arts Meet at Lincoln Center," *Amerikastudien/ American Studies, Volume 52, Number 2, 2007,* pp. 227-247 243.
[75] Foulkes, "Streets and Stages," pg. 419.
[76]Ibid.

in Lincoln Center, it was usually presented outside and managed by Lincoln

Center. The programming of "non-traditional" Lincoln Center cultural fare in

the summertime and only outside highlighted the concatenation of race, space

and place of Lincoln Center's built and cultural environment and points to the

lack of media coverage of the *NYT* of the breaking performance in 1981.

In addition to the *Times'* lack of initial coverage, the *New York*

Amsterdam News also neglected to mention the event. In fact, the *Amsterdam*

News did not publish an article on breaking until more than two years later in

October 1983.[77] This is not too surprising. Sally Banes described breaking as:

> kids' culture in our cities, self-generated and nearly invisible to outsiders
> especially adults . . . . It was both literally and figuratively an underground
> form, happening in the subways as wella s in parks and city playground,
> bout only among those in the know. Its invisibility and elusivenss had to
> do with the extemporaneous nature of the original form and also with it
> social context. Breaking jams weren't scheduled . . . you had to be part of
> the crew system that provided social order among the kids of the Bronx,
> Manhattan, and Brooklyn ghettos.[78]

Banes highlighted the fact that breaking and hip-hop culture existed and were

practiced as insider cultural production and knowledge within geographic,

spatial and *generational* communities long ignored by media outlets dedicated

to documenting and reproducing middle-class interests. After breaking "broke"

and was featured on various culture industry formats, including commercials,

movies, and morning shows by 1983, solidly middle-class publications such as

the *Amsterdam News* and *The New York Times* frequently began featuring

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[77] Abiola Sinclair, "Breaking Dancing: From the Street to the Ritz," *New York Amsterdam News*, Oct. 8, 1983, pg. 30.
[78] Sally Banes, "Breaking" in *That's The Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* first edition, eds. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, 13-20, 15.

articles on breaking culture. By the mid-1980s, breaking became an instant media darling.

Breaking the Media: Hip-Hop Culture and Popular Media

By 1984, breaking was increasingly a national and international *cause celeb*. The accumulated cultural presentations of breaking in movies, television programs and commercials, and live performances at various festivals and tours placed breaking squarely in the cultural mainstream. Although the 1981 Lincoln Center Battle was largely ignored in the weeks leading up to the August 15 event, the battle helped place the media spotlight on breaking. Beginning in 1981 and continuing through 1984, breaking, and b-boys and b-girls appeared and performed in a variety of media formats and spectacles. From movies, television and live performances including rap and hip-hop tours, and at the Kennedy Center, the period between 1981 and 1984 witnessed the "breaking" of popular culture.

Beginning in 1983, breaking was featured in variety of mainstream movie releases. My definition of mainstream is located in a complex of artistic and economic concerns by both creative and financial players focused in media and advertising. Throughout this period, several independent films focused on or featured, breaking and hip-hop culture. "New York Beat" was filmed between 1980-1981, and featured an eclectic mix of early 1980s downtown Manhattan artists and scenesters, as well as Bronx cultural creators, including Fab 5 Freddy, Lee Quinones and others from the hip-hop world. Although the film represented the downtown art scene of the early 1980s, it is also important to understand hip-hop's expansion based on important cultural connections

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established between uptown and downtown in the early 1980s. Also of importance, the cast of "New York Beat" featured the era's many artists, musicians, and cultural figures. Although the film did not explicitly focus on hip-hop culture, it provided the first filmic representation of hip-hop.

Released in 1983 by First Run Features, Charlie Ahearn and Fab 5 Freddy's film *Wild Style* features the pioneers of hip-hop culture, performing and creating hip-hop in its social and cultural milieu. *Wild Style* followed the adventures of graffiti writer Lee Quinones's character, Raymond Zorro, trying to navigate the downtown and uptown worlds in an attempt to woo graffiti writer Lady Pink's character, Rose. In addition to the love story at the movie's core, *Wild Style* captured hip-hop culture in the early 1980s. The film included the Cold Crush Brothers, Grandmaster Flash, Rock Steady Crew and graffiti writers. *Wild Style* also showed battles and jams, including the Cold Crush Brothers battling the Fantastic Five and Double Trouble performing on a front stoop. Although the quality of *Wild Style* as a motion picture was lacking, the hip-hop community embraced the movie. Cold Crush Brother Charlie Chase remarked, "that movie, *Wild Style,* the script was terrible, but to me, it was the best movie out of all the rap movies ever put . . . because in that movie there were no actors. Whoever was DJ-ing was a DJ. There was a graffiti writing n the movie, and he was a graffiti writer." Lee Quinones shared Charlie Chase's sentiments: "in the end, it became a genius piece because it captured the energy and innocence of all of us. It didn't really have a script, *but we didin't have a script in real life.*"[79]

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[79] Fricke and Ahearn, 295.

Figures from the hip-hop world increasingly populated other, non-hip-hop films, too. The 1983 film, *Flashdance*, told the improbable story of a young Pittsburgh woman working as a welder by day, exotic dancer by night, with aspirations of going to Ballet school. A surprise hit, the movie featured Mr. Freeze, Frosty Freeze, Ken Swift and Crazy Legs of the Rock Steady Crew breaking to the b-boy classic, "It's Just Begun" by the Jimmy Castor Bunch. Crazy Legs served as Jennifer Beals' body double in the film's climactic dance audition. *Flashdance* proved to have a notable impact on the early 1980s hip-hop community. Zulu Kings President Alien Ness recalled the impact of *Flashdance* on the breaking scene: "I knew breakers back in the days, and stuff like that, but I wasn't really attracted to the breakin'; I was more for the DJ-ing and the MC-ing until *Flashdance* came out. . . . [I]t was just like the next level. It was like, 'okay, I see this being done everyday on the block, but now I'm seeing it on a big screen.'"[80] *Flashdance* proved to be an important experience for burgeoning b-boys. Alien Ness described the experience of going to the theater to watch *Flashdance*: "it was like everybody in the neighborhood, you had fifty, sixty, seventy-five kids at a time going to the movie and paying $2.50, which was expensive at that time for us, to watch thirty seconds of film—that one little scene with the Rock Steady Crew [breaking to "It's Just Begun"]. That's really what set it off. Not just for me, but for a lot of b-boys nationwide."[81] Frosty Freeze agreed with Alien Ness's view of *Flashdance*, saying, "to me, that was the exposure that we really needed, because the movie was nationwide, you know? *Wild Style* was more of an

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[80] Fricke and Ahearn, 302.
[81] Ibid.

underground movie; *Style Wars* was more of a documentary thing."[82] Alien

Ness's words not only revealed the impact that breaking had on American

popular culture and the culture industries in the early 1980s, but also the

impact of culture industries' representation of breaking on hip-hop culture.

From a total of perhaps a minute of screen-time, Bronx and hip-hop culture

impacted, and was in turn impacted by, the culture industries. Crazy Legs

argues, "b-boying, it's the thing that blew up the whole hip-hop industry."[83]

In the wake of *Wild Style* and the success of *Flashdance*, hip-hop was

increasingly featured in movies attempting to popularize and represent hip-hop

on the big screen. Beginning in 1984, Hollywood producers sensed the

earning potential of hip-hop culture. Throughout the summers of 1984 and

1985, many hip-hop oriented movies were released including *Breakin'*, *Beat

Street*, *Body Rock*, *Fast Forward*, *Krush Groove*, *Delivery Boys*, *Turk 182*,

Rappin', and *Breakin' 2: Elecrtic Boogaloo*. The story of the 1984 movie, *Beat

Street*, is indicative of hip-hop's increased earning potential in the culture

industry. Penned by pioneering hip-hop journalist Steven Hager and produced

by Harry Belafonte, *Beat Street* attempted to present a story of hip-hop and it's

related, and overlapping, cultural forms of breaking, graffiti, DJs and MCs.

According to Hager, *Beat Street* received the "Hollywood" treatment in more

ways than the backing of Belafonte and a large budget. Hager recalled that

his script forming the basis for the film was discarded and, "not a single word of

anything I actually wrote made it into that unfortunate film."[84]

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[82]Fricke and Ahearn, 302.
[83] Ibid., 307.
[84] Chang, 193.

Breaking was also featured on a variety of television programs beginning in 1980. Kurtis Blow performed his song, "The Breaks," on "Soul Train" episode 336 in October of 1980, and the Sugar Hill Gang followed in 1981. Testifying to the increasing exposure and success of hip-hop culture on television, Kurtis Blow began travelling around the country based on his increasing celebrity. Jesse Jackson invited Blow to accompany him to the 9th Annual Operation PUSH visit to the Cook County Jail in Chicago.[85] Other notable television events included the Funky Four + 1's February 14, 1981 performance on Saturday Night Live performing "That's The Joint." Blondie's Debbie Harry hosted the episode and invited the Funky Four as the musical guest, furthering the downtown and uptown cultural connection. Both Kurtis Blow and Funky Four + 1's appearances represented dual televised cultural incursions by hip-hop culture and rap in two different mediascapes. On the one hand, "Soul Train" represented an important program to broadcast African American music and culture to a predominantly African American audience, and early 1980s' "Saturday Night Live" cultivated a predominantly white audience. In the summer of 1981 the *Tomorrow With Tom Snyder* featured Russ Mason performing his "Prep Rap," delivering such classic lines as, "I live on the upper east side in a townhouse with a staff/ I have a live in maid, a butler, and valet who draws out my bath," to the beat of "Rapper's Delight." [86] Although rap was the first hip-hop cultural element featured on television screens, it would ultimately be breaking and dance that would captivate television audiences.

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[85] Chicago Metro News, Saturday, January 17, 1981, pg. 11.

[86] Russ Mason performed "Prep Rap" on *Tomorrow With Tom Snyder* in 198a. "Prep Rap" would be released on Nemperor Records in 1981.

ABC's "20/20" July 9, 1981 news program featured Steve Fox exploring

the history of rap music and hip-hop. Fox traced the origins of rapping from

southern storytelling, scat talking, Jocko Henderson, and call-and-response

African American oratorical history. The most important aspect of the piece

was the fact that Steve Fox presented the various cultural elements of hip-hcp

as a unified culture and traced hip-hop's expansion into urban classrooms ar.d

the seminal punk band The Clash's unabashed championing of the culture

during their early 1980s downtown Manhattan residency. The "20/20" piece

referred to all aspects of hip-hop culture in terms of rap music because the

term "hip-hop" had yet to be publicly adopted. Fox concluded his ten-minute

segment arguing that rap music would "influence popular music for years to

come. It has tremendous staying power because it lets ordinary people

express ideas they care about in language they relate to with a beat to dance

to. Not everyone can sing, but everyone can rap."[87]

Many historians and breakers claim that the mainstream appearances of

breaking diminished the cultural importance and relevance of the dance by the

mid-1980s. Cutural critic Jason Tanz argues that the increased media

exposure recast the origins of breaking into a working-class cultural narrative

of the American Dream. Tanz views the popularity of breaking and

mainstream exposure as a way to package African American and Latino

culture to Reagan's America.[88] Tanz writes that the televised presentations of

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[87] Steve Fox, "20/20," *ABC*, July 9, 1981.

[88] Jason Tanz. *Other People's Property: A Shadow History of Hip-Hop in White America* (New York: Bloomsburg, 2007). See Chapter Three, "Spin Control: A History of Breakdancing in the Suburbs."

breaking, "len[t] the art form an eager-to-please, look-ma-no-hands quality that undercut the air of aggression that had defined it [breaking]."[89]

Tanz is correct in documenting the culture industry's attempts to sand away breaking's rough edges, yet he discounts how audiences necessarily affected reception and understanding of breaking and hip-hop culture. Tanz interrogates hip-hop's relationship with white culture, and he views breaking's popularity through this lens. As the movies portraying breaking opened throughout the country, these movies oftentimes provided white and nonwhite moviegoers with the first glimpses of hip-hop culture. According to Dynamite J, it was these movies that inspired him to become Virginia's "original b-boy" in the early 1980s.[90] The b-boy crew Playboys Express, hailing from Virginia Beach, featured Larry "Live" and Timbaland before they moved into music.[91] Anthropologist Donna Deyhle investigated breaking as a form of resistance for Utes and Navajos attending a predominantly rural, white public high school bordering a reservation in 1986. According to her study, popular cultural commodities such as *Flashdance* served as instructional texts for performing cultural acts of resistance.[92] Although mainstream presentations of breaking were often sanitized and stripped of social, cultural, and historic context, experiences of race and class impacted audience response. The spirit and style of Bronx youth culture continued to travel.

In the wake of Lincoln Center and the increased cultural connections between uptown and downtown, the New York City Rap Tour, also known as

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[89] Tanz, 53-54.
[90] James "Dynamite J" Allen oral history. William & Mary Hip Hop Collection.
[91] Larry Live Owens oral history. William & Mary Hip Hop Collection.
[92] Donna Deyhle, "Break Dancing and Breaking Out: Anglos, Utes, and Nabojos in a Border Reservation High School," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (June 1986).

the Roxy Tour, took place in November of 1982. The New York City Rap Tour was the first package tour to feature all four of hip-hop's cultural elements. The tour featured 25 acts handpicked by Roxy owner Kool Lady Blue from the stable of artists who performed at the downtown Manhattan nightclub, The Roxy, including Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force, the Rock Steady Crew, the World Champion Fantastic Four Double Dutch Girls, FUTURA, DONDI, Grandmaster D.ST and the Infinity Rappers, RAMMELLZEE, and Fab 5 Freddy. In addition to the historical distinction of being the first packaged hip-hop tour and the first international hip-hop tour, the New York City Rap Tour brought the international spotlight back to New York. In the tour's wake, international journalists and filmmakers descended on the Roxy and the neighborhoods of New York in hopes of capturing "hip-hop's authentic and unique appeal for themselves."[93] Not only did the tour introduce European audiences to hip-hop culture, but it also precipitated European audiences to investigate the social and cultural context of hip-hop.

Before the New York City Rap Tour, performances and concerts were taking place outside of New York. As chapter four documented, considerable touring activity took place throughout the tri-state area and Cosmic Force member Bernard Heyward remembered Afrika Bambaataa touring Montreal in 1981.[94] Breakers were also touring outside New York before the New York Rap Tour. In May and June of 1982, Rock Steady Crew, Fab 5 Freddy, Frosty Freeze and DJ Spy, among others, embarked on the "Kitchen Tour," that included performances in Pittsburgh, Madison, Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Iowa

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[93] Emmett George Price, *Hip Hop Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2006) 86.
[94] Bernard "Master Ice" Heyward, oral history phone interview with author, 1/14/13. Bronx River Houses Oral History Project.

City, Detroit, and Toronto.[95] The Kitchen Tour earned its name because the

tour was sponsored and organized by the avant-garde gallery space, the

Kitchen, in New York City. The Tour featured Fab 5 Freddy rapping while

breakers danced, with the performance billed as "Fab 5 Freddy & the Break

Dancers." In addition to the hip-hop elements, the Kitchen Tour also featured

"a sidewalk percussionist, a ballet-funk dancer, a progressive sax player, an

unpredictable actor/comedian and others from New York's avant-garde."[96]

The 1984 Swatch Watch New York City Fresh Fest Tour was the most

successful of the early hip-hop package tours. The tour sold out ten to twenty

thousand seat arenas throughout the mid-Atlantic and as far west as Hawaii.

The tour's four-month run grossed 3.5 million dollars over 27 performances.[97]

The Run-DMC headlined tour introduced hip-hop to diverse audiences

throughout the United States without incidents that plagued subsequent hip-

hop tours.[98] In terms of cultural capital, then, Fresh Fest helped place hip-hop

culture firmly within the American mainstream.

By 1984, the interest and exposure surrounding hip-hop and breaking

had reached such a point that the Kennedy Center Honors invited the New

York City Breakers to perform in honor of the choreographer Katherine

Dunham. Nationally broadcasted on CBS, the event further cemented

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[95] Crazy Legs in *Tha Global Cipha*, 323; Price, *14*.

[96] Joanne Ostrow, "The Art of Performance," *The Washington Post* June 4, 1982. In addition to the early hip-hop pioneers, the tour also included downtown Manhattan artist royalty such as actor Eric Bogosian, art-rock composer Glenn Branca, Oliver Lake and his "jazz-reggae-funk" band, Jump Up, and percussionist David Van Tiegham.

[97] Dan Charnas, *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop* (New York: New American Library, 2010), 116.

[98] Murray Forman detailed random acts of violence at rap concerts that captivated mainstream press: 1985 Krush Groove concert at Madison Square Garden; 1986 Run-DMC's "Raising Hell Tour" Long Beach, California; the Eric B. and Rakim show at Nassaue Veterans Memorial Coliseum in 1988.

breaking and hip-hop's place in American popular culture. At the event, the New York City Breakers befriended Frank Sinatra and he subsequently invited the crew to perform at the 50th Presidential Inaugural Gala, which Sinatra organized. Representing an important double-shot of cultural visibility and prestige, breaking helped wrap hip-hop culture in the patina of national middle-class cultural respectability garnered from performing at the Kennedy Center, showing the cultural transit of hip-hop culture from Lincoln Center to the Kennedy Center.

All Night Long (All Night): Breaking the 1984 Summer Olympics

By 1984, breaking and hip-hop culture had been successfully integrated into the American cultural consciousness. The next logical step, then, was an international broadcast of breaking and hip-hop culture. The 1984 Summer Olympics provided such an occasion. Members of the New York City Breakers and the legendary Fresno, California based crew, the Electric Boogaloos, performed as backup dancers for Lionel Richie's closing ceremony performance. Although the focus was on Lionel Richie, the inclusion of breaking helped to continue hip-hop's mainstream cultural exposure to international audiences.

Written by Lionel Richie, co-produced with James Carmicheal and backed by Wandering Stranger, Motown released "All Night Long (All Night)" August 31, 1983. Lionel Richie and his upbeat, global music sensibility scored a number one hit in the United States on the *Billboard Hot 100, Adult Contemporary,* and *R&B/Hip-Hop* charts and reached the top ten and several number one spots in a variety of European charts. "All Night Long (All Night)"

was the lead single off of Richie's second solo album, *Can't Slow Down*, which

sold more than 10 million records, the most in Motown history up to 1984.[99]

Ritchie released the song's music video in 1983. After a critical look at the

video, the cultural logic behind the inclusion of breaking in both the video and

the Olympic closing ceremony becomes clear. The video opens with a shot of

two lines of people walking away from the camera toward the background of

an urban streetscape sound stage. In contrast to the twin lines of people

walking away from the camera, Richie walks toward the camera between both

lines. As Richie continues walking around the streetscape, his singing stroll

excites fellow pedestrians to perform dance moves including the robot,

popping and locking. Quickly, the street explodes into a public, multi-genre

dance party: Jazz, ballet, modern, with couples dancing together. While the

video provided footage of a spontaneous, neighborhood dance party, every so

often a jump cut occurred showing youths popping and locking at the outer

edges of the dance party. Eventually, all the dancers converged in the center

of the street scene, forming a dance circle with a couple tangoing, two b-boys

breaking, and four women and two children dressed for Carnival dance. In the

space of three and half minutes, Richie seemingly collapsed the work of

Robert Farris Thompson, Paul Gilroy, Barry Gordy, and the Rock Steady Crew

into a single culture industry confection.

The simulation of public dance and street culture in the video placed a

variety of Afrodiasporic dance styles in conversation through the mechanisms

of the culture industry. Richie's song and video articulated a vision of public

culture steeped in the black Atlantic. The video showcases a variety of

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[99] Robert Hilburn, "He'll Sing to the World," *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 1984, F1.

Afrodiasporic dance styles and also includes breaking, popping and locking as the newest iteration of Afrodiasporic dance traditions. Although all the dancers in the video are youthful, the breakers and popper and lockers look like young teenagers. The video began with kids dancing on the periphery and ends with them fully integrated in the celebration. Through the performance and presentations of dance styles and culture, tradition and history was preserved. "All Night Long (All Night)" presented breaking, by extension hip-hop culture, as an important new iteration of Afrodiasporic culture. By the end of the video a police officer was even overcome with joy and spontaneously danced after encountering the public performance. The message of the video demonstrated the power of public Afrodiasporic culture in celebrating and creating community.

Tracing the song, the video, and the Olympic performance bolsters my reading of the song and subsequent performances, echoing Richie's comments that: "we need to forget our differences and dance together and celebrate our cultures and our dreams. That's the great thing about the Olympics. The Games show how very much we have in common."[100] With three words, Richie links African culture, Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean culture in a party song. Singing "karamu," "fiesta," and "liming," at the song's bridge provided a lyrical message of shared culture and history within the Black Atlantic. "Karamu" translates from the Swahili as 'party,' "liming" is a Caribbean term for 'getting together,' and "fiesta" is Spanish for 'party.' Not only does the bridge link the chorus to the verse, but Richie's lyrics also link African and

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[100] Robert Hilburn, "He'll Sing to the World," *Los Angeles Times,* August 10, 1984, F1.

European culture metissage in the Caribbean, joyfully enacting the Black Atlantic.[101]

Within this history of cultural displacement and mélange, Richie included breaking and hip-hop culture. Not many people outside New York would have read Sally Banes and Martha Cooper's *Village Voice* article locating breaking within the Black Atlantic, but millions heard Richie's song, saw his video, and attended his concerts. Richie's tour included the Electric Boogaloos Pop N Taco, Shabadoo and Boogaloo Shrimp. It was on tour with Richie in 1983 in New York when the California dancers connected with Mr. Wiggles, Popmaster Fabel and the Powerful Pexster. The meeting allowed the dancers to exchange notes on cultural styles and history, helping to further connect the related, yet distinct dancing styles of popping, locking, and breaking. According to Mr. Wiggles, the New York based dancers were able to teach the west coast dancers some of the history of hip-hop culture, while learning how to pop and lock. The previous year, Sugar Pop of the Electric Boogaloo's visited New York and meet with Mr. Freeze, Mr. Wiggles, Fabel, Powerful Pexster and a few others, establishing the funk/breaking connection. In addition to a bi-coastal exchange of youth culture, all five dancers performed at Lionel Richie's after-party following the Madison Square Garden show.[102]

At this same moment, the New York City Breakers were trying to turn breaking into an Olympic sport. Michael Holman, NYC Breakers' manager, articulated their position and goal: "NYC Breakers goal is to create a sports category for breaking as a Dance sport. . . . And really see the future . . . Of

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[101] "All Night Long (All Night)." 1983 Motown Records. Directed by Bob Rafelson. Access the official video on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqAvFx3NxUM
[102] http://www.mrwiggles.biz/hip_hop_timeline.htm [

this dance becoming a Dance Sport. In the Olympics and farther."[103] In 1983,

in an attempt to establish breaking as an Olympic "dance sport," the NYC

Breakers performed on NBC's "Salute to the Olympics," featuring Ben Vereen

dancing with the crew. By 1984, then, breaking was such a popular cultural

phenomenon that the inclusion of breaking at the Los Angeles Olympics and

made perfect sense from a culture industry perspective.

The August 12, 1984 closing ceremony performance featured a 12-

minute version of "All Night Long (All Night)," that included "more than 200

break dancers," and "every special effect known to man."[104] The performance

began with Richie standing alone on a stage with the Olympic rings illuminated

in the center of the Los Angeles Coliseum. At the beginning of the first chorus,

the area around the stage was illuminated in green lights, smoke, and six

pyrotechnic fountains erupted from the stage. At that moment, breakers

dressed in white and red jumpsuits with stars on their chests began streaming

onto the stage. As the performance continued, the dancers performed

breaking, popping, and locking moves. Although these are distinct forms of

youth dance, within the space of Richie's closing ceremony performance, the

street dance became "breakdancing" in the cultural space of broadcast

television. Previous to the 1984 Olympics, the commercialization of breaking

had effectively turned breaking into "breakdancing." Sally Banes explained:

> so to talk about break dancing you have to divide it into two stages: before
> and after the media. Before the media turned breaking into a dazzling
> entertainment, it was a kind of serious game, a form of urban vernacular
> dance, a fusion of sports, dancing and fighting whose performance had

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[103] http://powerfulpexster.net/NEWYORKCITYBREAKERSHISTORY.html
[104] Robert Hilburn, "He'll Sing to the World," *Los Angeles Times,* August 10, 1984, F1.

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urgent social significance for the dancers. After the media, participation in break dancing was stratified into two levels: professional and amateur.[105]

The closing ceremony performance enabled the codification of breaking into a national cultural commodity.

Most articles that described the closing performances were careful to mention the technical effects, and the "hundreds" or "200 hundred break dancers" that performed with Richie. Frank Litsky's ended his *New York Times'* review of the closing ceremony detailing the fact that "200 break-dancers from Los Angeles dances and spun and spun some more."[106]   Richard Hoffer wrote that the "party" accompanying Richie's performance featured "200 breakdancers off the streets of Los Angeles . . . poppin' on the Coliseum floor." "Hollywood" was constantly deployed as a modifying adjective for the closing ceremony. Not only had breaking become a contemporary culture industry darling, but also the press continued to mention Richie's performance and "break dancing," linking the national enterprise of the Olympics with popular music, popular culture and breaking. According to media accounts, anticipation for the closing ceremony was extremely high with tickets being scalped for as much as $650, roughly three times their face value.[107]   The closing ceremony media coverage helped place the closing ceremony, Richie, and the "breakdancers" as a national cultural performance and cultural commodity to an estimated 2.5 billion global viewers.[108]

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[105] Banes, 14.

[106] Frank Litsky, "A Striking Closing Ceremony: A Show Closes with Hollywood Style," *The New York Times,* August 13, 1984, C1.

[107] Richard Hoffer, "Closing Celebration," *The Los Angeles Times,* August 12, 1984, H25.

[108] Jay Sharbutt, "Olympic Watch: Cold Winter Becomes Gold Summer for ABC," *Los Angeles Times,* August 15, 1984, H1.

Conclusion

Schloss argues that hip-hop's cultural element of dance, breaking, performs a physical vernacular form of communication of place and experience. Understanding the elements of breaking and b-boying/b-girling provides insight into elements of contemporary hip-hop culture, but also offers the opportunity to understand the cultural history of the neighborhoods, parks, and schools of hip-hop's emergence. Even as breaking became "breakdancing," and sold as an American popular cultural commodity, the cultural form retained its gestural and musical vocabulary. Even with the development of new moves, the basic structure of the dance cipher and the musical legacies of the "break" continued to inform and propel hip-hop and breaking culture. As breaking travelled from the Bronx to Lincoln Center and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics closing ceremony, breaking remained a Bronx performance.

By 1984, bboying and breaking was an international phenomenon. Reflecting on the spectacle of breaking by the mid-1980s, Sally Banes writes: "only a hermit could *not* have know about breaking. It had arrived, not only in the United States, but also in Canada, Europe, and Japan."[109] Not only was breaking being performed internationally, but breaking was also being broadcasted across a variety of media between 1981 and 1984. Between 1981 and 1984, breaking quickly became the hip-hop cultural element most represented in the media. Throughout 1981 and culminating with the 1981 Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, media interest and commentary on breaking and hip-hop developed. Coverage mostly began in print, but soon

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[109] Banes, 14.

television programs began exploring the culture, as well. In conjunction with expanded media coverage, the sites of breaking performances were also responsible for breaking and hip-hop culture's move from Bronx neighborhoods to the nation's imagination. Whether appropriating the spaces around Lincoln Center, breaking onto movie screens, or touring the country, breaking helped turn Bronx culture into national culture.

Through media investigation and representation, breaking quickly became subject and object for movies, television, and live performances. Although the first popular cultural artifacts to feature elements of hip-hop culture appeared on record in 1979, breaking sustained and communicated hip-hop culture until national and international audiences consumed hip-hop records. In 1984 rap music rose to prominence in the media marketplace due, in part, to Run-DMC and Def Jam record's stripped-down, rocker-friendly presentation of hip-hop culture. However, by 1984, breaking and elements of hip-hop culture had travelled throughout the United States, parts of Europe and Japan both on tours and through the culture industry, communicating a national, American cultural form pioneered in the Bronx. By the end of the 1980s, breaking and hip-hop turned a Bronx youth culture into a national and increasingly transnational community. In the concluding chapter, I will examine how Bronx youth culture travelled to France, helping to establish a hip-hop nation.

Chapter 6

Bombing les Banlieues: Establishing the Transnational Bronx Movement

In the forward to the edited volume, *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World,* Adam Krims argues that Francophone hip-hop should be understood as presenting and representing a colonial urban geography, related to, yet distinct from Anglophone counterparts. Krims writes: "the power of a social movement that, like so much vernacular art in France and its sometimes former colonies, is felt intensely throughout the society, opposed as vigorously as it is loved."[1] Krims' understanding of Francophone hip-hop helps to draw our attention to the fact that hip-hop culture resonated with communities historically marginalized by colonial economic, political and cultural systems. Hip-hop culture's transnational mobility points to a shared set of experiences by practitioners and marketers alike: negotiating a place within economic and political structures of domination from colonialism to neoliberalism.

Since the 1970s, neoliberalism has led to the implementation of economic policies built on greater flexibility of labor markets, deregulation of financial operations, and privatization of state-owned sectors.[2] As a global system privileging predatory economic policies designed to produce spaces of superabundance and neglect, "uneven neoliberalizaiton has [created] the universal tendency to increase social inequality and to expose the least

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[1] Adam Krims, "Foreword: Francophone Hip-Hop as a Colonial Urban Geography," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002) pp. vii-x, vii.

[2] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005) 87.

fortunate elements in any society . . . to the chill winds of austerity and the dull

fate of increasing marginalization."[3] The erection of the banlieues in France,

beginning in the 1960s, mirrored the disintegration of Bronx and demonstrated

the *designed* spaces of transnational, urban ghettoization—spaces designed

as places of neglect, but never imagined as vital communities.

This chapter bridges the cultural and material worlds of hip-hop and *le*

hip-hop, bringing hip-hop's rise in the 1970s to a transnational conclusion with

the beginning of a global hip-hop culture by the 1980s. Tracing the creation of

transnational hip-hop practices from the Bronx to les banlieues underlines hip-

hop's cultural strategies of self-representation throughout the Black Atlantic,

regardless of Anglophone or Francophone divisions. The hip-hop scholarly

literature has primarily focused on the history and impact of American hip-hop

culture, and increasingly, tracing the creation of indigenous forms of hip-hop

emerging throughout the world. Scholarship on French hip-hop began

appearing in the mid 1990s, at the same time as important, foundational works

appeared on English-speaking hip-hop.[4] In both these literatures, a disconnect

exists. Global and French hip-hop studies largely took the opposite position:

global hip-hop developed in spite of, and in resistance to, the development of

American hip-hop. Hip-hop's first international foray, the New York City Rap

Tour, demonstrated just the opposite: what has become recognized as hip-

hop, globally, developed through a transnational relationship between media

and artists of both countries that helped codify the meaning and main

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[3] Harvey, 87, 118.

[4] Foundational French hip-hop scholars and authors include Hugues Bazin, Olivier Cachin, Anne-Marie Green, Manuel Boucher, Alian Milon, and Mederic Gasquet-Cyrus, among others. The first wave of American hip-hop scholars and writers include Tricia Rose, Russell Potter, William Eric Perkins, Nelson George, Houston Baker, and Michael Eric Dyson, among others.

practitioners of hip-hop. Through similar master narratives and performances, hip-hop became a recognizable, and repeatable, art form on both sides of the Atlantic. Mass media and the marginalized and "outer edge" individuals living in the banlieues in Paris, and throughout France, readily adopted and adapted hip-hop culture, similarly to the cultural articulations made by their Bronx compatriots a decade earlier.

Early History of Hip-Hop in France

Felicia McCarren argues that "le hip hop" (b-boy inspired French hip-hop dance) was cultivated and championed by France's Socialist cultural policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s into "la danse urbaine," a blend of hip-hop and state-sanctioned French multiculturalism deployed as a form of national identity to contain much of the cultural self-representation and identity politics initially expressed through Francophone hip-hop.[5] The collisions of hip-hop culture during the 1982 New York City Rap Tour with the reification of *le hip hop* by French nationalist cultural forces draws attention to the fact that youth culture created and crafted in the Bronx established a practice of creating and imagining identities and national affiliation.

The November 1982 New York City Rap Tour provides the epochal event to discuss the expansion and experience of hip-hop culture in France. The formal, and informal, transnational connections began in the early 1980s in downtown Manhattan. Bernard Zekri and Jean Karakos, both French

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[5] Felicia McCarren, *French Moves: The Cultural Politics of le hip hop* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), xiii. McCarren argues that political embrace of "le hip hop" was a conservative move to deny cultural difference through complete identification of French youth as French.

nationals, had an important impact on early hip-hop history in New York.

Bernard Zekri arrived in New York in 1980, working in a French restaurant and

frequenting clubs that featured breaking. Zekri befriended Afrika Bambaataa

and earned the apocryphal distinction as the only white person who could walk

around the Bronx unmolested.[6] In September1980, Jean Karakos, head of

Celluloid Records, based in New York and Paris, had decamped to New York

where he met Zekri. From this relationship, a transnational hip-hop connection

would flourish. Celluloid Records, in a partnership between Zekri and Karakos,

would go on to record and release rap records by Rammellzee, FUTURA 2000,

Grandmixer D.ST., and Fab 5 Freddy, among others.[7] The relationships

established between Zekri, Karakos, and a roster of Bronx-based hip-hop

pioneers helped lead to the New York City Rap Tour.

Beginning in 1980, French periodicals published stories about hip-hop

culture. Based on articles and reviews in the French Newspaper *Liberation,*

early rap releases by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five and Kurtis Blow

had found a Parisian audience in 1980 and 1981. Prior to the 1982 New York

City Rap Tour, hip-hop culture circulated throughout Paris via record releases

and the French Media. Beginning in 1981 and reaching total saturation with "A

Week in Rap" series of articles in October 1982, the Paris daily, *Liberation,*

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[6] Andre J. M. Prevos, "Two Decades of Rap in France: Emergence, Developments, Prospects," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002) pp. 1-21, 3.

Of course, the personal histories and work of Bronx outsiders like Steven Hagar and Charlie Ahearn argue against the Zekri myth. The creation and promulgation of the Zekri rumor demonstrated the important place he occupied in translating hip-hop culture from the Bronx to France.

[7] Vivienne Goldman, liner notes in *Change the Beat: The Celluloid Records Story, 1979-1987,* Strut LP.

provided some of the first media exposure of hip-hop in France.[8] Throughout

1981 and 1982, *Liberation* provided important cultural coverage delineating

what constituted hip-hop. Ultimately surpassing, the initial U.S. media

coverage from the *Village Voice, East Village Eye,* and the *New York Post,* the

Liberation hip-hop articles helped establish the definition of hip-hop culture

indebted to the Bronx and Bronx cultural pioneers.

In a double page article that ran September 7, 1981 titled, "Everything

you wanted to know about Funk, but were too afraid to ask," writer Philippe C.

introduced French readers to "James Brown's children."[9] The article provided

several paragraphs of introduction to a variety of artists including James

Chance, George Clinton, Chic, Earth Wind and Fire, and Debbie Harry.

Philippe C. introduced the word "rap" in Debbie Harry's section, discussing the

development of Blondie's sound from the Giorgio Moroder influenced "Call Me"

to Debbie Harry's rapping experimentation in "Rapture." According to the

article, the fundamental influence in American popular music in the early 1980s

was funk's influence on rock and roll that ultimately created "funky punk."

"Funky punk" was identified as the sound of African American culture and

"black bass." What separated "funky punk" from rock's cultural appropriation

was the fact that artists such as Debbie Harry were not trying to hide or efface

the African American roots of their cultural production. Philippe C.

commended Debbie Harry and her "Rapture" rapping, arguing that she

attempted to use her voice in homage not appropriation, as opposed to the

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[8] "Une Semaine en Rap" ran in *Liberation* from October 25-31, 1982.
[9] Philippe C., "Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur le funk sans jamais oser le demander," *Liberation,* September 7, 1981, pp. 24-25. (My translation)

older vocalizations of Mick Jagger's "hellish marshmallow, white negro" act.[10]

Although Philippe C. framed his discussion of Debbie Harry in essentialist renderings of blackness and American popular culture, he intuited the uptown and downtown connection between various classed and raced groups informing Debbie Harry's performance. Through Blondie and "funky punk" Philippe C. indentified the increasing expansion of rap and hip-hop during the fall of 1981.

Between 1978 and 1981, a journalistic consensus was coalesced on the significance of hip-hop culture located on an uptown/downtown axis between the Bronx and Manhattan. Reporting and promoting an understanding of rap and hip-hop now relied on a transnational media network, illustrated by the French press. In addition to Philippe C.'s investigation of "funky punk," he devoted his attention to "Rap," identifying the three kings of rap as Grandmaster Flash, Kurtis Blow, and the Sugarhill Gang. Their crowns were earned because of the success of their records, Flash's "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" (1981), Blow's "The Breaks" (1980) and "Rappin'" (1980), and Sugarhill Gang's "Rappers Delight" (1979).[11] In addition to defining "Rap" in terms of the marketplace, Philippe C. also provided a sociocultural definition of rap: "the privileged territory of the urban

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[10] Philippe C., "Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur le funk sans jamais oser le demander," *Liberation,* September 7, 1981, pg. 25. The sentence reads: "Ne venez pas me dire qu'elle a tort, que sa voix blanche ne lui permet pas d'approcher ces rivages noirs: au moins, elle essaye, alors que ce negre blanc de Jagger s'enfonce dans une guimauve infernale." Translated: "Don't tell me that the white voice is not allowed to approach the black shores: at least she tried, unlike Jagger sinking into a white negro marshmallow hell." (My translation.)
[11] Philippe C., "Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur le funk sans jamais oser le demander," *Liberation,* September 7, 1981, pp. 24-26.

poor, where youth born with a transistor radio glued to their ear learn to quickly

trade raw and vulgar insults on cracked, graffiti covered basketball courts."[12]

When the Clash played Paris's Theatre Mogador in late September

1981, they brought along graffiti artist FUTURA 2000. According to the article,

"during a lull in the performance, the crowd began chanting for FUTURA 2000

as he painted on a giant canvas standing high up on a ladder."[13] Although the

Clash's performance was the putative subject of the article, the focus on

FUTURA 2000 further demonstrated hip-hop's increased cultural visibility. The

Liberation also included an interview with FUTURA 2000 that ran underneath

the Clash article, describing his New York and Bronx bona fides, including his

Harlem upbringing and late-night visits to the Bronx to write graffiti write. The

article defined what constituted graffiti art, by introducing the importance of the

masterpiece—the whole subway car graffiti painting. Just like various media

outlets in the United States, the articles in the *Liberation* helped communicate

what constituted hip-hop.

In preparation for the 1982 New York City Rap Tour, the *Liberation*

devoted its music and culture sections from October 24-31, 1982, to "A Week

in Rap." This series of articles were extremely important because they

delimited hip-hop culture while providing a context for the newspaper's

audience to understand the upcoming tour. While the "Week in Rap"

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[12] Philippe C., "Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir sur le funk sans jamais oser le demander," *Liberation,* September 7, 1981, pp. 24-26. "Le Rap est le territoire privilegie des desherites urbains, des gamins de bagout cru et vulgaire, frangins nes un transistor colle a l'oreille et qui bien vite apprennnant a se renvoyer les insultes les plus hips et les mieux sentis sur les terrains de baskets lezardes et couverts de graffitis." (My translation)

[13] Serge Loupien, "Clash: quatre garcons dans le flan," *Liberation,* September 25, 1981, pg. 25. My translation: "On a constate un moment d'accalmie lorsque Futura 2000 qui graffitissait scrupuleusement l'immense toile tendue a commence de psalmodier sa vie passionnante du haut de l'echelle."

established what hip-hop was for a French audience, the series of articles also furthered the description of hip-hop previously codified in the New York press. *Liberation*'s "Week in Rap" provided a French audience with a primer on hip-hop culture, while also establishing the limits of what constituted hip-hop culture.

The *Liberation* introduced its readers to "A Week in Rap" thusly: "It lives in the Bronx and Brooklyn, in subway stations, and on the street. There are breakers, DJs, MCS, graffiti painters, blacks, Puerto Ricans." The introduction to "A Week in Rap" attempted to justify why rap was becoming so important, describing rap and hip-hop as, "a game. A feeling. A style of living. Today, rappers are the Kings of the Roxy . . . they have gallery openings in SoHo and Grandmaster Flash sells a million records." [14] Although rap may have emerged from the "Bronx and Brooklyn," it could be found throughout New York at a variety of places including downtown clubs and SoHo art galleries. *Liberation*'s "A Week in Rap" attempted to excite readers to purchase tickets for the New York City Rap tour, and while doing so, helped to provide the conceptual framework to imagine a transnational hip-hop culture, stretching from urban streets to the canvases of the art gallery.

The first two articles in "A Week in Rap" were "The First Steps on Planet Rap" and "Hip + Hop = Rap." The "Planet Rap" article begins with an obvious, and important question: "what is rap?" [15] This article continued to pose a series of questions including: "who spins the discs?"; "is rap only about

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[14] "Une Semaine En Rap: 1," *Liberation,* October 25, 1982, pg. 24. My translation of: "hip hop tous vivent a l'heure du rap."

[15] Phillippe Conrath, "Premiers Pas sur la Planete Rap," *Liberation,* October, 25, 1982, pg. 24. Author translation.

rhyming into a microphone?"; "what about everyone wiggling together on the dance floor?"; "and the graffiti writers?" The answer to each of the these rhetorical questions was "rappers!" Although the introduction of the term hip-hop had yet to circulate throughout the French press, rap was identified as encompassing all of hip-hop. This first article introduced an expansive and inclusive understanding of hip-hop culture that was different from the year-end lists and reviews of rap records previously published in *Liberation*.

The "Planet Rap" article described rap music as "much more than fashion, rap is a movement. Explosive and elusive, rap lives dangerously and precariously in the Bronx and Brooklyn, performing in Manhattan to confront and shock."[16] To understand rap, the article argued that you needed to spend a Friday night at the Roxy, watching the graffiti writers draw on the wall in the middle of the roller-rink, listening to Grandmixer D.ST, and checking out the dancers. The article presented the various elements of hip-hop culture as discrete performances that were connected by the Roxy. Presenting each hip-hop cultural element as taking place at a specific moment throughout the course of a Friday night provided a linear unfolding of hip-hop culture through a causal, performative frame. Philippe C's article sketched the way in which his readers, and potential concertgoers, should apprehend the cultural significance of hip-hop, by presenting rap as a holistic cultural movement. The tentative "first steps" on planet rap by French audiences were being prepared by *Liberation*.

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[16] Phillippe Conrath, "Premiers Pas sur la Planete Rap," *Liberation*, October, 25, 1982, pg. 24. Author translation. My translation: ("beaucoup plus qu'on mode, le rap est un mouvement. Eclate et insaisissable, it vit sa vie precaire et dangerous du Bronx et Brooklyn, s'arretant a Manhattan pour se montrer, s'exposer, se confronter.")

Bernard Zekri's article "Hip + Hop = Rap," presented hip-hop as a trickster culture, and rap as a prankster figure. He wrote: "rap is twitchy, it's a mixture. A burst of laughter and a thumb of the nose. Rappers are pranksters."[17] Zekri continued to stress the elements of bricolage and play throughout his short article from the perspective of a pair of sneakers. Before the emergence of Bronx youth culture, Zekri argued that sneaker sales—particularly Addidas, Converse and Pumas—were non-existant. Through hip-hop, however, sneakers "reigned over two hundred stores as the emperor of 'kicks,' the friend to graffiti artists writing in the subway, keeping the DJs' feet comfortable, the spring in the soles of breakers, [and] the palace of rappers."[18] Zekri located rap and hip-hop as a youth culture inextricable from a shifting Bronx consumer economy.

As a pair of sneakers, Zekri continued to walk his readers through hip-hop's most important spaces and places, all the while commenting on historically significant personages. Zekri had the sneakers travel on the feet of a fictionalized Bronx character, Big Ray, to a Saturday park jam. At the park, the sneakers witnessed the totality of 1970s' Bronx youth culture through: "dancing feet, the feet of video-game players, rockers' feet, Zulus' feet, breakers, and rappers." For Zekri and his sneakers, the variety of feet represented the "incredible world of Wild Style." Zekri's sneaker persona

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[17] Bernard Zekri, "Hip + Hop = Rap," *Liberation*, October 25, 1982, pg. 25. My translation: "Le Rap demange, c'est un mélange. Un éclat de rire et un pied de nez, Le Rappers sont des farceurs."

[18] nard Zekri, "Hip + Hop = Rap," *Liberation*, October 25, 1982, pg. 25. My translation: "Quand tout a commence, j'etais dans la pantoufle. Les affaires marchaient mal, j'avais toutes les peines du monde a payer le loyer de ma pauvre boutique de la Seconde avenue. Aujourd'hui, rien qu'a New York, je regne sur plus de deux cents magasins. Je suis l'empereur de la godasse, l'ami des pannards de l'outlaw du metro, la coquetterie des petons du dee-jay, le ressort de la plante des pieds des breakers, le palace des rappers!"

illustrated a central truth of hip-hop culture: the potential of building community through consumer goods.

Attending the park jam provided the opportunity to introduce French readers to Grandmaster Flash and DJ Kool Herc. Zekri provided the history of the hip-hop DJ, crediting DJ Kool Herc with teaching Grandmaster Flash the "strange knowledge" of combining two records to extend a six second break. Zekri also credited Herc with pioneering rapping, writing that Herce, "invented rap's first rhyme routine: 'Rock in the House,' and 'hip hip hip hop."[19] After introducing readers to park jams and the seminal DJs Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash, Zekri's sneakers travelled to Sal Abbatiello's Disco Fever nightclub, to witness the birth of the MC. According to Zekri's sneakers, hip-hop legends emerged from the confines of the Fever, including graffiti artist Lee Quinones, Melle Mel, PHASE II, and Fab 5 Freddy. From the Fever, the sneakers headed south, finding a place in the social and cultural mix of downtown Manhattan clubs and galleries, such as the Roxy. Zekri concluded the article with his footwear narrator revealing that, "My name is Addidas [sic]."[20]

Several aspects of Zekri's article deserve to be unpacked. The use of personification in hip-hop to comment on everyday life has an established tradition in hip-hop culture and MCing. Throughout the African Diaspora the art

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[19] Bernard Zekri, "Hip + Hop = Rap," *Liberation*, October 25, 1982, pg. 25. My translation: "Il est le premier Dee Jay a avoir achete des disques pour n'en passer que dix secondes. C'est lui aussi qui a invente la premiere rime retenue par le rap. 'Rock in the House,' 'hip hip hip hop.' A cette époque, les Maitres de ceremonie, les MC, n'existaient pas encore."

[20] Bernard Zekri, "Hip + Hop = Rap," *Liberation*, October 25, 1982, pg. 25. My Translation: "J m'appelle Addidas." Zekri's tour through the spaces and places of hip-hop from the vantage point of a pair of Adidas sneakers *predated* the classic Run-DMC song, "My Adidas," by four years.

of storytelling, the personification and narration of stories and incidents has an analogue with the longer tradition of African American and African diaspora trickster tales. Lawrence Levine discussed the multiple valences of meaning inherent in trickster tales. According to Levine, the range of meaning and communications from trickster tales offered everything from "wish-fulfillment," to "painfully realistic stories that taught the art of surviving and even triumphing in the face of a hostile environment."[21] In the context of hip-hop culture and rapping, MCs deployed these same strategies to document their lives.

Zekri recognized hip-hop's updated use of trickster tales through consumer culture. In the wake of the successes of the Civil Rights movement, the rise of a younger movement of Black Nationalism, and an increasing social and cultural move of African American into ranks of the middle-class cultural, African American life faced new conditions shaping the definition of community, from Civil Rights to post-soul. Through the practices of hip-hop culture, the same consumer goods used to signify private consumption and distinction, were now subverted to signify community. The emergence of a post-soul generation intelligentsia was predicated on the explosion of mass consumer culture and the significant commodification of black popular culture since the blaxploitation era of the 1970s.[22]

Daniel Miller provides a way to connect hip-hop consumer practices and African diasporic expressive cultures. Miller observes that instead of the

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[21] Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). See Chapter 2, "The Meaning of Slave Tales."

[22] Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Chapter four, "Mass Media, Popular Culture, and Social Praxis," provides Neal's insights into the importance of consumer culture and the emergence of a post-soul intelligentsia.

supposed fragmentation of postmodern society, "homespun cosmologies" were enacted through consumer society and established relationships to other people and things. For Miller, late 20th century consumer society becomes centrally focused on relationships, and material culture and commodities, are central to creating relationships.[23] Miller's broad look at the importance of consumer activity resonates with hip-hop's post-soul generation because of their ability to reconstitute community, and communities, through the marketplace. Zekri's imaginative article exploring hip-hop culture through the eyes of a pair of Adidas sneakers recognized the central importance of consumer goods and material objects of culture that helped knit hip-hop culture together.[24]

Zekri's hip-hop textual performance provided an opportunity for French audiences to imagine itself as a community. Toward the end of the article, Zekri included a rap from the perspective of the sneakers mapping the cultural geography of a typical Saturday night of early 1980s' hip-hop:

> Fun Gallery for the parties, SoHo for the beauties.
> The journalists write the words, the photographers take the pictures.
> The rap twitch, it's a mix
> A burst of laughter and a quick retort
> There's nothing much to explain
> Zulu-computers, Sly Stone
> Techno Rock and James Brown
> Rappers are pranksters
> The do it all for a laugh
> Last poets or publicity
> How many making that cash money
> Loaded with laughter

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[23] Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008).

[24] Throughout Zekri's article, and his other articles for rap week, he deploys the French verb, "eclater," meaning "to burst, blow up, explode; to break out; to make noise; to shine." In context of Neal's documenting that the post-soul intelligentsia emerged from the "explosion" of mass consumer culture is particularly apt.

The beautiful ladies to love
The show, the reason, the dancing don't stop
The world changed, Hip Hop
New York, planet rock
Planet Rap.[25]

Zekri's rap presented rap and hip-hop in two very important contexts for the emergence of a French hip-hop culture. Zekri provided a list of locations and cultural touchstones that helped canonize hip-hop culture, by locating hip-hop culture in the downtown Manhattan clubs and art galleries of the early 1980s. This structured the historical narrative of hip-hop history by providing a history that both maintained and canonized elements of hip-hop history, including art galleries, clubs, and the socializing of artists and media members within these cultural spaces.

Zekri's rap focuses on hip-hop and rap culture found in Manhattan. Presenting "Planet Rap" as a downtown Manhattan cultural phenomenon suited Zekri's professional interests. Zekri was co-founder of Celluloid Records that released rap records from hip-hop pioneers and downtown Manhattan fixtures, as well as being involved with the organization and promotion of the New York City Rap Tour. The tour featured artists who performed at the Roxy, a club located in downtown Manhattan. Zekri's article attempted to render a portrait of hip-hop culture honoring the pioneers while still being aligned with his professional and financial prospects.

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[25] Bernard Zekri, "Hip + Hop = Rap," *Liberation,* October 25, 1982, pg. 25. My translation: "La Fun-gallery pour les parties, le tout Soho pour faire les beaux. Les journalists pour les histories, les photographes pour les images. Le rap demange, c'est un mélange un éclat de rire et un pied de nez y-a-pas grand-chose a expliquer Zoulous-computers, Sly Stone Techno Rock et James Brown Les Rappers sont des farceurs Ils font tout pour se marrer Last Poets ou publicite Combien ca fait en cash-monnaie Avoir du ble pour se marrer De belles Ladies pour les aimer Ca frime, ca cause, ca danse sans stop Le monde qui change, Hip Hop New York, planete rock Planete Rap."

Day two of "A Week in Rap" followed the journalistic script developed

by Michael Holman and Steve Hager in 1982. The established protocol to write

about hip-hop began with an extended feature on Afrika Bambaataa. In

January 1982, Michael Holman published the first article to use the term "hip-

hop," while identifying the *important* figure in hip-hop history, as Afrika

Bambaataa.[26] In September that same year, Steven Hager followed with a

profile of Bambaataa in the *Village Voice*.[27] Jean-Pierre "Bustelo" Thibaudat's

October 26, 1982 article, "Africa [sic] Bambaataa, Bronx King of the Zulus,"

framed this new movement in a similar manner as the New York media.[28]

Bustelo introduces Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation through the

heterogeneous social spaces of the Roxy. The article's opening paragraph

locates hip-hop culture in a spatial and racial mix, establishing Bambaataa and

hip-hop's "otherness," highlighting his "gentle, massive and giant . . . gorilla

paws caressing the records . . . wiping away sweat from his Mohawk." Roxy

promoter Ruza "Kool Lady" Blue is then presented as "the pale priestess of

Roxy Fridays."[29]

In the evocatively titled section, "A Beast Bled White," Bustelo

introduces his readers to the Bronx. The section begins with Bustelo musing

that he "want[s] to see the streets where Bambaataa had grown up, where he

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[26] Michael Holman, "New York Chillin' Out," *East Village Eye*, January 1982.

[27] Steven Hager, "Afrika Bambaataa's Hip Hop," *Village Voice*, September 21, 1982.

[28] Jean-Pierre "Bustelo" Thibaudat, "Africa Bambaataa, Roi Zoulou Du Bronx," *Liberation*, October 26, 1982, pp. 20-21.

[29] Jean-Pierre "Bustelo" Thibaudat, "Africa Bambaataa, Roi Zoulou Du Bronx," *Liberation*, October 26, 1982, pp. 20-21. My translation: "Lady Blue, la pale pretresse des vendredis du Roxy me sourit."

still lives, as a rap millionaire."[30] In his search for Bambaataa and Bronx

authenticity, Bustelo offers a tour relying more on popular representations of

the Bronx than actually walking the streets. Detailing his route uptown, Bustelo

claims that he rode the number 5 subway train and exited at the Pelham

Parkway stop, and continued to walk north along Boston Road. Along the way,

Bustelo considers the "desolate landscape" and "all the burnt-out buildings"

past the Bronx River Houses. However, if Bustelo was walking north along

Boston Road, he would not have crossed the Bronx River or have walked by

the Bronx River Houses. The "tour" conflated the South Bronx's severe urban

neglect with the East Bronx of Soundview and Afrika Bambaataa's home in the

Northeast section of the Bronx in CO-OP City. The article assembled a history

of Afrika Bambaataa and his Zulu Nation through a narrative frame that

privileged the perspective of downtown Manhattan over those situated in the

Bronx, evoking the flat, facile media representations of the Bronx from the

1970s.

Further articles analyzed the individual cultural modes that constituted

hip-hop. Wednesday's pair of articles introduced the hip-hop DJ, with articles

on Grandmaster Flash and Grandmixer D.ST. Bernard Zekri's article, "Flash:

The Master of the Wheels of Steel," traces the importance of Grandmaster

Flash and Sugar Hill Records. Zekri framed Flash's history as a DJ by

explaining his success in the context of the music industry. Pleading with

Flash, Zekri writes, "Yo, Mr. Flash, let us see what it's like up there? Not too

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[30] Jean-Pierre "Bustelo" Thibaudat, "Africa Bambaataa, Roi Zoulou Du Bronx," *Liberation,*
October 26, 1982, pp. 20-21. My translation: "J'ai eu envie de revoir ces rue ou Bambaataa
avait zone enfant, ou il vit encore, millionaire du rap."

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hard? Not too lonely? While you climbed, it was not easy and once you made

it, sir, remember the hardest part is staying up there."[31]

Zekri places just as much emphasis on the importance of Sylvia

Robinson and Sugar Hill Records as Grandmaster Flash for the success of

Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five's massive single, "The Message." The

entire song was created and conceived by Jiggs Chase and Ed Fletcher,

except for Melle Mel's verse. Furious Five member Kid Creole remarked that

Sylvia Robinson pushed the song on the group, relating she "had a concept of

us doing that song, and she felt that we would be perfect for it because we

came form the inner city." Kid Creole continued, saying "we were like, 'What in

the hell is ths? What are we doin' with this?' It's slow, it's plodding . . . we was

used to all of the break records."[32] Zekri points out the fact that success of the

song and Melle Mel's verse, did not depend on Flash. Zekri comments that,

"the world is incredibly funny, it is almost like it has a moral," based on the fact

that Flash was the most prominent and important DJ in the world without

having played a prominent part in the creation of his biggest hit song.[33]

Although Zekri credited the skill and work of Flash, the article was ultimately

about the DJ as a historical figure in hip-hop, even as the DJ's historical role

was then being minimized within the culture industry.

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[31] Bernard Zekri, "Flash: le maitre des roués d'acier," *Liberation*, Wednesday, October 27, pg. 24. My translation: "Yo, Monsieur Flash. Dites-nous voir un peu comment c'est la-haut? Pas trop dur? Pas trop seul? Pendant que vous grimpiez, ce n'etait pas facile et une fois que vous avez ete le premier, Monsieur, vous vous etes apercu que le plus difficile serait de le rester."

[32] Charlie Ahearn and Jim Fricke, *Yes Yes Y'All: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 210.

[33] Bernard Zekri, "Flash: le maitre des roués d'acier," *Liberation*, Wednesday, October 27, pg. 24. My translation: "Or 'Superrapin' de Grand Master Flash et des Furious Lovers n'a jamais depasse les frontiers d'Harlem. Le monde est vraiment drole, c'est Presque comme une morale."

The presentation of the DJ as a historical personality and economic force within hip-hop was continued in Zekri's second DJ article focusing on Grandmixer D.ST. Zekri introduces Grandmixer D.ST through a description of his clothing, massive headphones, and his work DJing a party, where he was musically "walking between the Clash, Jackson 5, James Brown, and the Fearless 4."[34] Zekri contextualizes hip-hop DJs and their cultural practices within a combination of popular culture reinvention and consumerism; Zekri includes D.ST's DJ rate: one hundred dollars an hour. Zekri establishes D.ST as an innovator in both business practices and fashion accoutrements. The article also made sure to point out the fact that Grandmixer D.ST adopted his name from Delancey Street, "the street where he buys all his gadgets."[35] Zekri made sure to describe the importance of D.ST within the DJ and hip-hop world and also understandable within the realm of popular culture. In the article's final paragraph, Zekri framed D.ST and rap as the newest iteration of popular music. According to the article, you have to go the Roxy on Fridays to understand the significant, and significantly familiar, aspects of hip-hop. Grandmixer D.ST and rap were important because "rap is something fresh, that has nothing to do with moribund New Wave." Zekri continued, saying, "it is no coincidence that every Friday at the Roxy, you will see PIL, the Clash and Material. These musicians were fresh in previous years." Zekri ends the

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[34] Bernard Zekri, "DST, le Dee Jay le plus rapide," *Liberation,* Wednesday, October 27, pg. 27.
[35] Bernard Zekri, "DST, le Dee Jay le plus rapide," *Liberation,* Wednesday, October 27, pg. 27. My translation: "On dit que son style est unique, personne ne mixe comme lui, DST, son nom vient de Delancey Street, la rue ou il achete tous ses gadgets."

article with an image of DST, embodying hip-hop culture, "walking down the street with his giant radio bellowing his own music. All is right on the street."[36]

The article, "Mister Freeze et Misses Blue" explored breaking and the iconic hip-hop figure, the b-boy. Focusing on b-boy Mister Freeze, the article explores the breaking's transnational cultural connections. Mister Freeze's father was German and his mother was French. The family immigrated to New York from France and settled in the Bronx. After Mister Freeze became a member of the Rock Steady Crew, he met Ruza "Kool Lady" Blue when she and Malcolm McLaren went to the Bronx to Bambaataa's parties. Mister Freeze recalled how Kool Lady Blue stood out at Bambaataa's parties: "with her lipstick and English accent, her hoop earrings and the way she carried herself, she surprised us. . . . everyone fell in love with her."[37] After meeting the Rocky Steady Crew, Blue advised that they charge people for their performances, establishing the beginning of the relationship between the Rock Steady Crew and Kool Lady Blue resulting in a standing appointment to dance at the Roxy on Friday nights. By the fall of 1982, the Rock Steady Crew consulted Kool Lady Blue on all matters involving interview requests from print and television journalists, movie appearances and club bookings. Whenever a

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[36] Bernard Zekri, "DST, le Dee Jay le plus rapide," *Liberation,* Wednesday, October 27, pg. 27. My translation of the final paragraph: "Ce ne'st pas un hasard si tous les vendredis au Roxy, on croise PIL, Clash et Material. Ces musiciens ont eu des choses a dire, toutes ces dernieres annees. Et aujourd'hui, ils ont besoin du Rap. Parce que le Rap, c'est quelque chose de frais qui n'a rien a voir avec cette pauvre New Wave moribonde. Le Rap, c'est DST, ce type qui marche sure le trottoir avec sa grosse radio beuglant sa proper musique. Et toute la rue se balance."

[37] Bernard Zekri, "Mister Freeze et Misses Blue," *Liberation,* October 28, 1982, pg. 21. My translation: "Avec son rouge a levres et son accent anglais, ses boucles d'oreilles et sa maniere de se deplacer, Lady Blue nous etonnait."

request of the Rock Steady Crew was made, they said: "talk to Lady Blue, she decides everything."[38]

Mister Freeze stressed that breaking and battling derived, in part, from miming and Marcel Marceau, saying that "it is obvious that [Marcel Marceau] influenced breaking." When Mister Freeze would try and explain the transnational connections involved in breaking, "the b-boys never listen to me when I tell them [about Marcel Marceau] and they don't want to believe me."[39] Kool Lady Blue also recognized a connection with miming when she first encountered breaking. She said: "I moved to London and studied mime for three years and got very wrapped up in that whole thing. I loved it and my absorption with mime made it very easy for me to appreciate what these kids— The Rock Steady Crew—and some of the other dancers are about." Kool Lady Blue saw Marcel Marceau's influence in Mister Freeze, saying, "Mr. Freeze . . . he has been to Paris and understands Marcel Marceau."[40] Besides Marcel Marceau and the influence of miming, Mister Freeze described a 1981 family summer vacation in France. While he was in Orly, France Mister Freeze decided to dance outside a string of cafes. Mister Freeze said that although his mom thought he was crazy, "beautiful ladies" loved his look and dancing. According to Mr. Freeze, "I only wear my watch with two dials. I may be in New York, but I know what time it is in Paris."[41]

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[38] Bernard Zekri, "Mister Freeze et Misses Blue," *Liberation,* October 28, 1982, pg. 21. My translation: "Des tones de journalists, des gens de la tele. Des managers de club, des gars du cinema. Nous, toujours on repond, Parlez a Lady Blue, c'est elle qui decide tout."

[39] Bernard Zekri, "Mister Freeze et Misses Blue," *Liberation,* October 28, 1982, pg. 21. My translation: "Moi, je leur parle de Marceau, c'est evident qu'il a fait plen de choses qui ont influence la danse electronique, la marche contre le vent, la grimpette du mur etc. . . Mai les Boogies Boys n'ont jamais entendu parler de lui et bien-sur, ils ne veulent pas me croire."

[40] Tom Heiberg, "True Blue," *East Village Eye,* February, 1983, pp. 10-11, 10.

[41] Bernard Zekri, "Mister Freeze et Misses Blue," *Liberation,* October 28, 1982, pg. 21.

The b-boy bravado in Mister Freeze's story is great, but what is most important was the fact that he sketched a history of hip-hop culture based on recognizing, establishing, and maintaining transnational relationships. Whether it was French culture transported to the Bronx, or an English take on the transgressive, and remunerative, possibilities of popular cultural creation, hip-hop was on the move. Whether it was Kool Lady Blue offering business guidance and dash of English panache to the teenagers of the Rock Steady Crew or Mister Freeze exhibiting and connecting breaking through his family's vacation to France, the roots of hip-hop were always already transnational.

The fifth day of "A Week in Rap" focused on the interconnected cultural geography between hip-hop, graffiti and SoHo. The *Liberation* article begins in the voice of New York graffiti pioneer Taki 183, with Taki linking his name and his street in his tag: "My name is Taki, I live on 183rd street and I exist."[42] Similar to the famous 1971 *New York Times* profile on TAKI 183 and graffiti, the *Liberation* article credited TAKI 183 as the first graffiti writer to adopt a tag and write it all over New York. The article introduced graffiti techniques and aesthetics such as whole subway car masterpieces and the use of black sketchbooks, and discussed important pioneers of graffiti including Lee Quinones, CRO MAGNON, SUPER HOG, ZEPHYR, and LADY PINK. The article also acknowledged traced the importance of popular cultural influences such as comic books, movies, rock music, and incipient rap music. The *Liberation* article presented the impulses and influences of graffiti writing and the world of writers squarely within the shared world of the Bronx and the youth

[42] "'Taki 183' Spawns Pen Pals," *New York Times*, July 21, 1971, pg. 37. TAKI 183 was profiled in a *New York Times* article attempting to decipher the graffiti "Taki 183," that had appeared throughout New York City in the early 1970s.

cultural practices that formed in the early 1970s, becoming hip-hop. This article serves as a primary source underscoring the solidification of an international discourse about what constituted hip-hop culture in the early 1980s.[43]

The article highlighted the influence public policy and the urban environment had on graffiti and hip-hop. The *Liberation* article credited New York's war on graffiti, lasting from the 1970s to the early 1980s, with increasing the growth and sophistication of graffiti art and the establishment of formal and informal social networks of graffiti writers.[44] Formal crews such as United Artists in the Bronx, CIA (Crazy Inside Artists) in Brooklyn, and the Manhattan based RTW (Rolling Thunder Writers) developed their art to such a point that the New York art world began to take notice. Finally, this article connected the late 1960s and early 1970s emergence of graffiti writing to the important galleries and shows that celebrated graffiti writing in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, mentioning the south Bronx gallery, the 1980 Times Square Show, and the New York/New Wave exhibition in 1981 that introduced and connected the art worlds of SoHo and the Bronx.

For the final installment of "A Week in Rap," the *Liberation* examined hip-hop fashion. Cleverly titled "Fashion Moda," the article detailed "the clothes needed for rap fashion," presenting hip-hop as a total form of cultural expression that also included fashion. Bustello's article focused on the sneakers and hats favored by the males of the hip-hop community. The style

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[43] Jean-Pierre "Bustelo" Thibaudat, "Hip, Hop, Les Graffiti Sont Entres Dans SOHO," *Liberation,* October 29, 1982, pp. 24-25.

[44] Joe Austin's *Taking the Train* provides the most important, in-depth history of graffiti writing and New York's war on graffiti.

of cap worn depended on the hip-hop practitioners primary hip-hop element:
DJs and MCs generally wore baseball caps; breakers preferred berets or
mariner's captain hats. Graffiti writers wore whatever covered their head the
best, with the practical advice that just about any type of sports cap worked,
except for tennis or cycling hats because they provided little scalp coverage.
Choice of footwear was described in greater detail than the hats. Not only did
the fashion conscious hip-hopper have to choose between various sneakers,
there was also the need to factor in whether tennis or basketball style sneakers
represented the correct fashion.[45] Sneaker brand was not enough, as the
article introduced readers to the fact that the "decisive detail" of early 1980s'
sneaker fashion was the laces. Whether or not laces were intricately tied or
completely removed, depended on the brand and model of the sneaker.
Regardless of the varied calculations involved in sneaker fashion, the article
made sure to point out that, "all the shoes were meant for dancing."[46]

Pants represented an important concern for hip-hop practitioners.
Styles of pants ranged from shorts and kung fu pants for breakers, to cotton or
nylon sweatpants for DJs and graffiti writers. The next fashion choice made by
hip-hoppers was whether or not to wear a Lacoste Polo shirt with a sweatshirt
or a tracksuit. Although the choice of sweatshirt or tracksuit could be a
daunting decision, the article informed readers that, "sport stores along

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[45] Additionally, the sneakers also had to be the latest sneaker introduced. Importantly, this aspect of hip-hop culture survives to this day as self-described "sneaker heads" have helped fuel a multimillion dollar industry devoted to sneakers. Without hip-hop culture, it would be difficult to imagine the growth of branded sneakers from athletes and musicians including Run-DMC, Michael Jordan, and most recently, Kanye West.

[46] Jean-Pierre "Bustelo" Thibaudat (credited as Grand mixer Bustelo), "Fashion Moda," *Liberation,* October 30-31, 1982, pg. 22. My translation: "Pas de doute: ces pieds sont faites pour danser."

Broadway and elsewhere offer a range of brands—with or without hoods and zippers—in multiple colors."[47] Not only were readers being instructed about appropriate clothing for hip-hop practices, but also which clothes would look cool.

The *Liberation* series, "A Week in Rap," attempted to create a transnational canon of hip-hop culture through pioneer profiles and defining the four elements that would resonate with audiences of the upcoming New York City Rap Tour. The articles were largely meant to promote records and advertise the upcoming New York City Rap tour, and the *Liberation* did this through profiles of tour members. The figures that were responsible for the global spread of hip-hop culture through the New York City Rap Tour and international media attention were also the same folks largely responsible for creating hip-hop. The *Liberation* ended up highlighting the figures that were fundamental to hip-hop culture and its global expansion, maintaining the "Bronx-ness" of hip-hop in international advertising and press.

New York City Rap Tour/The Roxy Tour

David Hershkovits chronicled the two-week New York City Rap Tour for the *Sunday News* in 1982. Hershkovits described the tour through episodes of cultural confusions, moments of commonality, and instances of youthful joy experienced by performers and audiences alike. The tour was a success, with Hershkovits concluding that the "audience starts to dance and in a few minutes

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[47] Jean-Pierre "Bustelo" Thibaudat (credited as Grand mixer Bustelo), "Fashion Moda," *Liberation,* October 30-31, 1982, pg. 22. My translation: "Les boutiques sportives ou pas de Broadway et d'ailleurs offrent une gamme respectable de modeles—avec ou sans capuche et fermeture éclair—assortir de multiples et delicieux coloris."

borders melt in the hear of the soul-sonic blast."[48] For all the tour's fraught

moments, including eruptions of violence, the lure of hip-hop culture initiated

communities across the Atlantic into the culture of the Bronx.

The collision of different modes of cultural creation and style was

evidenced from the beginning of the tour. After landing in Paris at Orly Airport,

Fab 5 Freddy, FUTURA 2000 and Dondi White took turns customizing their

tour bus's Europe 1 logo. By tagging the tour bus, the artists extended the logic

and culture of graffiti writing and hip-hop to Paris. Fab 5 Freddy and company

announced their arrival in Paris by tagging the bus to circulate their names

throughout Paris and the other cities on the tour. The graffiti also remade a

corporate logo. Although Europe 1 cosponsored the New York City Rap Tour,

changing the bus's logo provided a public message about the relationship

between Europe 1 and the tour members. Spending the majority of the

previous decade creating a new culture outside, and ignored by, corporate

concerns, these pioneers of hip-hop added their name to the bus and

advertising behind the tour. As graffiti scholars have long noted, billboards,

advertising and public signs inspired many of the graffiti artists and informed

cultural and spatial practices of graffiti and hip-hop culture.[49] For Fab 5

Freddy, FUTURA 2000, and Dondi White, tagging the tour bus represented the

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[48] David Hershkovits, "London Rocks, Paris Burns, and B-Boys Break a Leg," *Sunday News Magazine,* April 3, 1983.

[49] In addition to Joe Austin's masterful, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Craig Castleman's *Getting Up: Subway Graffiti in New York* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), Martha Cooper's *Subway Art* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1984), and Roger Gastman's *The History of American Graffiti* (New York: Harper Design, 2010) all provide excellent analysis and history of graffiti writing.

logic of hip-hop culture and the public circulation of their name against, and as complement to, advertising.

Kool Lady Blue said, "the whole idea [of the tour] is to get everyone dancing. It's not a band we're bringing over. We don't want people to stand and watch. We want people to participate. It's a party thing, not a gig."[50] The line between audience and performers was never fixed and was easily transgressed throughout the tour. The porousness between the line separating performer and audience witnessed on the tour provided a template to turn hip-hop practices and presentations witnessed on tour into local acts of culture. Crazy Legs described, "this dude comes up to me and says he wants to go to New York to learn to do breaking in school. And I tell him we make it up and he don't believe me."[51] Located in this interaction between a breaking fan and b-boy legend, was Crazy Legs' implied direction to the breaking enthusiast that the secret to participating in breaking and hip-hop culture was self-creation. Crazy Legs communicated hip-hop's cultural program of self-representation. Although the interaction may not have moved the interested fan to pursue the b-boy lifestyle, it turned breaking and hip-hop culture into modes of cultural production that were personally meaningful and transportable. Crazy Legs gave the interested fan the license to shape hip-hop culture in any way that was personally meaningful.

The boundary between audience and performer was dramatically ruptured during a performance in Strasbourg, France. While Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmixer D.ST DJed, a group of young men threw beer bottles on the

[50] David Hershkovits, "London Rocks, Paris Burns, and B-Boys Break a Leg," *Sunday News Magazine,* April 3, 1983.
[51] Ibid.

stage. Immediately, the music stopped and the tour members were ready to fight. Grandmixer D.ST jumped into the crowd brandishing a broken beer bottle and various other tour members joined him. After the bottle throwing incident, and the beating of the culprits, the party continued. FUTURA commented on the fight: "unfortunately, we had to get rough in Strasbourg. This is what people expect. They have an impression that the boys from New York, they're ignorant and all they can do is fight."[52]

Travelling without security, or having your own crew as security, was part of hip-hop's roots; this provided an opportunity for an incident to take place. Crazy Legs provided a different interpretation of the fight at the Strasbourg performance. According to Crazy Legs, "we did a show and there was these drunk people, and the Double Dutch girls were onstage doing their thing. They threw bottles at them." From there, Crazy Legs' account matches Hershkovits' reporting. Crazy Legs' finished the story: "After they got beat down, everybody stepped back onstage, and then the people in the audience started clapping! It went from a show to a brawl to getting applause."[53] In his alternate recounting of the tour and the fight, Crazy Legs' provided the same story, except he said that the incident occurred in Paris.[54] Although some of the details have been remembered differently, the fact of the incident and the act of *remembering* the incident helped locate the meaning of hip-hop culture and the Bronx for European audiences.

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[52] David Hershkovits, "London Rocks, Paris Burns, and B-Boys Break a Leg," *Sunday News Magazine*, April 3, 1983.

[53] Chang, 184. Crazy Legs' personal account of the Strasbourg fight is also contained in

[54] Miles Marshall Lewis, *Scars of the Soul are Why Kids Wear Bandages When They Don't Have Bruises* (New York: Akashic Books, 2004), 97.

The discrepancy between Hershkovits and Crazy Legs' account of the fight deserves to be unpacked. Hershkovits' article represented a dispatch from the event and Crazy Legs' account was quoted in Jeff Chang's book from either an author interview or materials after the tour. Furthermore, Crazy Legs could have been offstage or backstage prior to the bottle throwing and only rushed into the audience after the fact. Additionally, the question as to whether the World Champion Fantastic Four Double Dutch girls were on stage during the bottle throwing represents an important wrinkle to this history. Between the reactions of FUTURA and Crazy Legs, a different note was struck about the Strasbourg fight. FUTURA's reaction sounded a note of frustration about having to fight. Crazy Legs' account communicated a sense of a job well done. The difference between both FUTURA and Crazy Legs' recollections of the events in Strasbourg could have also been the result of the difference in ages, too. At the time of the tour FUTURA was twenty-six and Crazy Legs' was sixteen. Making sure to mention the crowd applause after the fight further underscored the triumphal tone in Crazy Legs' recounting.

Comparing Crazy Legs' memory of the Strasbourg event with FUTURA's reaction demonstrated negotiations of cultural identification and representation between the tour members and what the audiences expected of them. David Hershkovits described the size of audiences: "not too many people showed up to these shows. Especially some of these little towns where they didn't have a critical mass audience anyway."[55] Many European audiences further refracted the same discursive space about the Bronx, with audience and media members alike asking questions such as, "are there trees

[55] Chang, 183.

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in the Bronx?"[56] Embedded in the discourse used to describe the Bronx and urban America is the issue of class and race forming the substrate of FUTURA's frustrated tone in his comments after the Strasbourg fracas. The incident only increased the exposure for the tour and a capacity crowd at Le Palace, in Paris, greeted the final performance. It was as if the French media and crowds were waiting for "authentic" hip-hop culture to emerge from the tour—the brawling antics tied to the discursive representations of the Bronx and urban America. Within this response, then, it was quite possible that the creation of multiple memories occurred along various strands of performance, representation, and identity. The Strasbourg fight was also an important moment in illustrating hip-hop's potential for opening up cultural and political space for marginalized individuals and communities based on classifications of race and class in France. After the Strasbourg fight, a bystander reported, "The fight was in the air. There were many racist people there. And I heard many racist comments about Negroes."[57] The New York City Rap Tour provided an important cultural moment for many people marginalized within mainstream French society to witness.

Throughout the tour the performers maintained their personal identities through intentional acts of consumption. After arriving in Paris and checking into their hotel, the hip-hop group was immediately transported to Europe 1 in the center of Paris for rehearsal and lunch. However, lunch consisted of, "an array of unfamiliar appetizers, as well as the unwelcome news that they [were] expected to pay," for the meal. Instead of paying for an unwanted meal, the

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[56] Chang, 183.
[57] Herskovitz, 33.

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group immediately left for "the world's largest Burger King" located on the

Champs-Elysees. Bernard Zekri, the *Liberation* journalist, and Celluloid

Records co-founder who helped assemble and travel with the New Yorkers

had to suffer "Americans [who] don't know how to travel."[58]

Both Robin Kelley and James C. Scott provide important theoretical

tools to unpack the importance of the hip-hoppers decision to search out the

"world's largest" Burger King. Choosing fast food instead of paying for

unfamiliar fare on the first afternoon in Europe was not an example of

American boorishness. Rather, the decision to find a lunch more to the New

Yorkers' liking and experience should be viewed through the lens of

infrapolitics and the public transcript. For Scott, infrapolitics represents the

"circumspect struggle waged daily by the subordinate groups [which] is, like

infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum."[59] Infrapolitics

constitutes the "hidden transcript" of political struggle that is ignored,

misidentified, or obfuscated by dominant forces dedicated to maintaining

power through the "public transcript," the official record of an event or action.

Kelley adapted and expanded Scott's concept of infrapolitics. Kelley argues

that the hidden transcript at work in the infrapolitics of working-class African

Americans also includes youth culture because youth culture is often

marginalized and used as a foil to buttress middle-class constructions of

acceptable behavior. Kelley is explicitly concerned with the cultural politics of

the black working class and those groups and individuals who have either not

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[58] David Hershkovits, "London Rocks, Paris Burns, and B-Boys Break a Leg," *Sunday News Magazine*, April 3, 1983.

[59] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) 183.

joined, or have been excluded, or do not wish to join mainstream labor groups.[60] In the context of the New York City Rap Tour, and hip-hop generally, youth culture and African American labor significantly overlap. So, the first experience with Europe 1 and the hip-hoppers refusal to pay for food that they did not want placed the experiences of these youth squarely on the contested terrain of infrapolitics and labor relationships. Throughout the tour the New Yorkers took advantage of the fifty dollar per diem and one hundred dollar performance fee to shop. The exchange rate provided additional purchasing power for the performers in Europe for Nikes, sheepskins, and sweaters.[61] Clothes, consumption and "dressing up" provided another way for the New Yorkers to engage in infrapolitics.[62]

The New York City Rap tour demanded that the New Yorkers perform for the European media. These performers responded by enacting performances of self-presentation and representation. Throughout the tour, the combination of youth culture and labor provided the opportunity to understand the tour in terms of infrapolitics. The tour and the media exposure it generated, in addition to the fight in Strasbourg and the experience of young African Americans and Latinos being celebrated for creating a new form of youth culture, provided new models for marginalized residents in France—and increasingly throughout Europe—to act. Instead of acts of outright resistance, the infrapolitics at play and on display during the New York City Rap tour helped link the Bronx and les banlieues.

[60] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1996).
[61] David Hershkovits, "London Rocks, Paris Burns, and B-Boys Break a Leg," *Sunday News Magazine*, April 3, 1983.
[62] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels*.

Sidney Duteil and H.I.P.H.O.P

By the late 1980s, hip-hop was well established throughout France as a vital form of culture and social movement. In addition to music industry records, the New York City Rap Tour, and press articles, Sidney Duteil played an important role in establishing hip-hop culture in France. As a DJ and television personality, Duteil helped articulate and perform hip-hop culture, ultimately bombing les banlieues.

Sidney Duteil's biography highlights the importance of les banlieues as a transnational space for connecting and articulating hip-hop culture. Unlike Bernard Zekri and the circle of media professionals connected with Celluloid Records, the *Liberation,* and the New York City Rap Tour, Duteil hailed from a banlieue, Argenteuil.[63] Located in the Northwest suburban expanse of Paris, Argenteuil was constructed as a ZUP, Zone a Urbaniser en Priorite (Urban Development Zone), as part of the state's initiative to build new housing through private and public financing model. The ZUP was designed for private companies to purchase apartments for workers and provide residents of the banlieues with transportation to and from home and work.

In addition to the similarities between the built environments of Duteil's childhood with Bronx public housing, Dutiel also participated in the African Diaspora's longer history of transnational social, culture, and material exchange that included connections between African American artists, musicians, and intellectuals. By the 1970s this was a particularly post-soul and

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[63] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha: Hip Hop Culture and Consciousness* eds. James G. Spady, H. Samy Alim and Samir Meghelli (Philadelphia: Black History Museum Press, 2006) pp. 272-317.

Black national cultural connection that helped form the cultural foundation of hip-hop in France. Duteil discussed the formative experience of participating in Black Panther meetings held at the Gare Du Nord train station in Paris. Duteil recalled: "We changed the name to 'Gare des Negres' [Niggaz Station] because it was the get-together spot for all the black people in Paris."[64] Importantly, Duteil's memory of Black Panther meetings in the late 1960s and early 1970s places these social events within the same forms of cultural and social meetings as emerging hip-hop youth cultures such as the 145th Street Subway Station writers table in the Bronx. Just as the writers table served as site of socializing and opportunity for likeminded youth to not only develop graffiti writing, but also forge relationships central to knitting together hip-hop's cultural world. Dutiel's meetings served as an initial meeting point every Friday night to "find out the best nightclub to go to that night."[65] The social function of the Black Panther meetings aided black Parisians to develop a social foundation and community from which hip-hop could take root.

Duteil's description of naming practices used to create communities tied to youthful play and consumption was a standard hip-hop practice most explicitly seen by graffiti writers. Importantly, Joe Austin linked graffiti arts' practices of cultural production and practices of consumption. Austin argued, "it is by way of the commercial public sphere—the mass media business—that most New Yorkers grasp the city as a whole. . . . In a competitive information marketplae. the 'important' events and 'real' meanings of our shared public lives are sold as

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[64] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha*, 274.
[65] Ibid.

commodities to consumers."[66] In the same way that Austin connected graffiti's production of identity directly to mass media and consumer spheres, Duteil described the most important significance of the Gare du Nord Black Panther meetings. As Duteil further elaborated on the importance of these Black Panther meetings: "But we didn't have a direct connection to the Black Panthers of the United States . . . . But we stayed abreast of it all. Angela Davis was very popular in France. . . . At the end of the [19]60s and beginning of the [19]70s, we all had Angela Davis t-shirts—with her Afro hair-do—and Black Panther t-shirts. For us, before hip-hop ever existed, the whole Black Power movement was a point of identification, it was an identity thing."[67] What Duteil described, then was a series of performances predicated on consuming mass-mediated images of "Blackness" emanating primarily from the United States, but used and understood in the context of transnational meaning-making in the African Diaspora.

Duteil's history as DJ in clubs and discos in 1970s' Paris demonstrates that the emergence of hip-hop was connected to a black Atlantic cultural dialogue concerning raced public and private raced space. Duteil began his DJing career at the Rocco Club in Paris. Initially a bar, the Rocco Club was owned and operated by an African immigrant. After Duteil approached the owner about the possibility of turning the bar into a nightclub, Duteil said the owner told him, "If you have the records, then come." Duteil began by spinning

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[66] Austin, 11.
[67] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha.*

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a variety of music from throughout the black Atlantic, including "West Indian music, African music, a little bit of Salsa."[68]

Duteil's family history also reflected the broader cultural and social movements throughout the Black Atlantic in the 1950s. Jazz figured prominently in the Duteil family history. Sidney's father and mother hailed from Guadeloupe in the French Caribbean. Sidney's father was a jazz musician who decamped for Paris in 1952. According to Duteil, his father made the journey to the metropole: "it's because of music that I'm here in France: Miles Davis, artists like Mavounzy, John Coltrane Charlie Parker. All those people were coming to Paris to play. . . . So, for Miles Davis, Coltrane, Charlie Parker, and all those American jazz musicians, Paris had become the jazz capital."[69]

The influx of immigrants to France mirrored the increased immigration of Afro Caribbean folks into New York City throughout the 20th century.[70] At the same moment that Duteil is spinning Caribbean, African, and Salsa music, Bambaataa, Kool Herc, and Grandmaster Flash were experimenting with the same genres of music. According to Afrika Bambaataa, he was acquainted with West African and Afro-Caribbean music through his mother. Bambaataa said, "she [his mother] put us down with Miriam Makeba. My family is from Barbados and Jamaica. We knew all about Miriam Makeba, Calypso Rose,

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[68] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha*.

[69] Ibid., 276.

[70] Between 1900 and 1930, approximately 75,000 migrants from the Caribbean settled in New York. By the 1920s, a quarter of Harlem's population hailed from the Caribbean. By the 1950s, 430,000 Puerto Ricans lived in New York. In addition to Cuban migration following Castro's rise in 1959, Dominican migration began in the 1960s . By 1980, Dominicans would be the largest Caribbean group living in New York. David M. Reimers, "Immigration, 1900-present," in *The Encyclopedia of New York, 2nd Edition* ed. Kenneth Jackson, (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 2010) pp. 639-643.

Sparrow, Kitchener, Lord Nelson and all of them."[71] Cultural creation in the early 1970s represented a moment when the Black Atlantic was experimenting and creating similar styles of cultural production. Duteil remarked that in 1973 and 1974, he repeatedly asked the owner of the Rocco Club for an additional turntable to be able to DJ with two, but he was denied.[72] However, the lack of having two turntables and any kind of mixer helped Duteil develop his DJing style and business practices in a way that resembled emerging hip-hop culture from across the Atlantic. Duteil developed an early routine on the microphone to keep the crowd interested and involved while he changed records. He said, "I would talk so I could have the time to switch records, saying things like, 'How's everybody doing!?!?' I would take off the records and that's how I began my job as a DJ, as a host. I would talk so I could have the time to switch records."[73] After being denied the second turntable, Duteil began hosting parties away from the Rocco Club. From the beginning, Duteil's forays into music and hip-hop traced similar experiential and aesthetic form as the youth from the Bronx.

At the same time that hip-hop pioneers were beginning to develop hip-hop's musical DNA through break beats discovered on funk, soul, R&B and rock and roll records, Duteil began frequenting a Montparnesse Franco-American club, La Boheme, that specialized in playing soul 45s for the largely American GI patrons in 1972 and 1973.[74] Although Duteil had yet to be exposed to hip-hop and Bronx youth culture, through his DJing and socializing,

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[71] Afrika Bambaataa quoted in *The Global Cipha*, 268.
[72] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha*.
[73] Ibid., 278.
[74] Ibid.

Duteil was being exposed to some of the foundational cultural elements of hip-hop by the circulation of African American culture by the culture industry. It would not be until a decade later that Duteil would experience hip-hop through the culture industry.

Duteil spent the 1970s DJing and consuming American presentations and representations of African American music. Duteil continued to expand his record collection as an investment in his DJing career by traveling to London in search of new and obscure records. His first experience with hip-hop came during these international record searches when he heard Bambaataa. Duteil recalled: "the first hip hop thing I heard . . . Hip Hop didn't really arrive like that. It came through Bambaataa, with Electro, with the records. For me, it was through the music. There were some short American raps that I knew, before the arrival of Electro. Because, sometimes Funk records began with a little rap or something. There were groups like Lakside on S.O.L.A.R. Records. . . . So I was rapping all those things before the beginning of the 1980s."[75] Throughout the 1970s, Duteil was participating in the same cultural bricolage that was happening in the Bronx. By the early 1980s when "official" hip-hop culture arrived in Paris, Duteil inherently understood hip-hop's rootedness in the African Diaspora.

Duteil's cultural education and investigation of African American and African diasporic music resonates Mark Katz's idea of portability. Portability— the ability to teach and inspire through a portable medium—suffuse Duteil's experience of first African American culture, and then hip-hop, through records. Katz argues that portability signifies reproductions "no longer bound to the

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[75] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha*, 279.

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circumstances of their creation, [which] may encourage new experiences and

generate new traditions wherever they happen to be."[76] Duteil's history

demonstrated that, "portability" and the codification and creation of a hip-hop

origin was not unidirectional, that the notion of hip-hop developing in the Bronx

was also an origin story dependent on a transatlantic notion of blackness and

youth culture that French mass media and audiences participated in creating.[77]

Portability enabled hip-hop to constitute a community of practitioners, as well

as act as a pedagogical tool instantiating cultural knowledge and practices

through records, through commodities. It was this portable and pedagogical

foundation as a DJ that prepared Duteil for his hip-hop epiphany. The Original

DJ Jimmie Jazz the GQ described the process of learning to DJ in Bronx River

from DJ Jazzy Jay and Afrika Bambaataa, Jimmie Jazz recalled, "Bambaataa

just handed me records and I had to know not only what the record was, but

where the breaks were, and what we should play next. Bambaataa never said

anything; he just passed me the records. I had to know already."[78] As a Bronx

River resident, Jimmie Jazz was directly involved with hip-hop cultural creation

in the 1970s, however through the cultural affinities throughout the African

Diaspora, Duteil derived the same pedagogical training from predominantly

African American musical recordings.

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[76] Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Changed Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010). 15.

[77] Katz, 13. Katz notes that technology is never a unidirectional force or influence, providing the example of the introduction of the cassette into Indian and Java. For Indians, the cassette broke the monopoly of the Gramophone Company of India (CGI), by providing a tangible means to record various types of music, whereas the gamelan music of Java became increasingly homogenized due to the circulation of gamelan cassettes to isolated villages.

[78] The Original DJ Jimmie Jazz the GQ, interview with author, Bronx River Houses Community Center, 1/29/2014.

Duteil begain DJing at L'Emaraude Club in Paris in 1980. At this time

the community of DJs practicing a Bronx-based, Afrodiasporic style of DJing

was limited to two or three other DJs in Paris. As one of the chief practitioners

of French hip-hop DJing, Duteil's sets attracted a wide swath of French music

industry figures and French celebrities. In a different fashion from hip-hop's

American origins, French hip-hop developed and was championed from a

central location in the French culture industry. Of the audience members that

made it a point to listen to Dutiel's sets, the most important was DJ Dee Nasty,

who would become one of the important pioneers of French hip-hop culture.

Dutiel remembered Dee Nasty: "he was a DJ and a record collector, so he

would come listen like everyone else. He would come to the club, like, 'Yeah,

I'm feelin the music.' He would come and pick up on the newest stuff."[79]

Identical to the history of the pioneering Bronx DJs of the early 1970s, the

relationship between Dee Nasty and Duteil sparked a competition based on

finding the newest music. Dee Nasty's visits and the popularity of the Duteil's

sets at L'Emaraude prompted Duteil to make trips to London's Black Market DJ

shop in search of new records.

Duteil's trips to London provided the final piece of Afrodiasporic cultural

practices that would inform his, and other Parisian DJs, adoption of hip-hop by

1982. It was on his Black Market record shopping trips that Duteil began

attending Roots reggae parties. Near Soho, Duteil discovered Roots Reggae,

as well as the first Dancehall records. According to Duteil, "They had me

buggin'. I discovered the English DJs and MCs who would be—not rapping—

but toasting over the music. They had a whole different vibe, and I was feelin

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[79] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha*, 281.

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it. And when I came back to Paris, I adapted their style, in my own way."[80]

Duteil's memory resonates with the recollections and early performances of DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash concerning the importance of AfroCaribbean and Jamaican style DJing and its impact on hip-hop culture. Duteil's trip also provided an important bridge between AfroCaribbean, Afrodiasporic, and predominantly English language foundation of hip-hop culture to the Francophone adaptation of le hip-hop. From the friendly record competition that developed between Dee Nasty and Duteil, Duteil's introduction of toasting-style DJing, to the interest of the French cultural and media elite, Duteil helped establish French hip-hop culture.

As much as Duteil and other French hip-hop promulgators shared cultural and social affinities with hip-hop's Bronx pioneers, the access point for French audiences was through the established infrastructure of the mass media and culture industries.[81] In the case of Duteil, his journey from teenage devotee of Black Panther branding and African American popular culture to DJ, radio personality, and television host positioned him within elite, state media circuits to broadcast and shape what hip-hop would mean in France.

Duteil: From DJ to H.I.P.H.O.P:

Sidney Duteil hosted the first French television show devoted to hip-hop culture. *H.I.P.H.O.P.* premiered on the Government run station TF1 in 1984, and ran for a year. The influence of this show on French hip-hop has been

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[80] Sidney Duteil in *The Global Cipha*, 281.
[81] Eric S. Charry, "A Capsule History of African Rap," in *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012) ed. Eric S. Charry, 1-28, 5.

acknowledged, though largely unexamined. While Duteil's program featured a variety of French and American musical artists, breaking, and hip-hop influenced dancing, remained the most prominent aspect of the show and French hip-hop. When it ended, Duteil's program had provided a template for youth from les banlieues to transition from breaking to rapping as their primary mode of hip-hop cultural expression.[82]

Each *H.I.P.H.O.P* episode was approximately fifteen minutes long, usually consisting of three distinct segments. The first segment usually featured a series of filmed segments providing a quick introduction to the episode followed by a performance from a musician or artist. After the introduction and the artist performance, the second segment called "la lecon" followed. This format for the series was established from the first episode. In the first episode, Sidney Duteil introduced himself, the show, and the show's breaking crew, The Paris City Breakers. The first episode's opening scene took place in a set designed to look like a French nightclub. This initial setting was important for Sidney because he sought to place hip-hop within a French spatial context. Duteil presented hip-hop in a space that he, as well as others in his French audience, would have first interacted with hip-hop culture.

Although the nightclub was used as the primary location, the first segment also featured a variety of authentic spaces, Paris city streets, alleyways, les banlieues, an amusement park, and a set designed to serve as

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[82] Olivier Cachin and Jerome Dupuis, "Le rap sort de la zone rouge," in *La Nouvel Observateur*, August 9-15, 1990, pg. 15. According to pioneering French rapper Lionel D., he was one of a small group of French rappers to appear on Duteil's Radio 7 show rapping in French, instead of English.

Sidney's apartment, among others.[83] Each location served to integrate the performances into each episode. The second episode of the series was shot in a in an alleyway. This location then provided the backdrop for the performance of "Street Dance," by Break Machine.[84] Other notable performances and locations included graffiti artist FUTURA 2000 painting canvases for the French breaking crew, The Street Kids, at Duteil's childhood banlieue home, Afrika Bambaataa being driven to a community center to demonstrate his DJing prowess, and Herbie Hancock and Grandmixer D.ST talking with Sidney in the apartment set about their collaboration on Herbie Hancock's album, "Future Shock." Each location in the first segment located hip-hop in "authentic" environments, by depicting hip-hop culture in settings similar to the culture's Bronx emergence.

Establishing French hip-hop authenticity through location and performances led directly into the show's second segment, "La Lecon." This segment featured Sidney and one of the Paris City Breakers providing a lesson in hip-hop culture. The majority of these segments were dedicated to teaching the audience how to dance. Each segment featured a different dance style or step, including the moonwalk, basic breaking footwork, and uprocking and popping. In addition to dance lessons, this segment also offered tutorials on how to rap, DJ, and dress appropriately. The lessons were usually paired in some way with the performances from the first segment. The fourth episode featured the graffiti artist FUTURA 2000 discussing his art and travels. The

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[83] Sidney Duteil, *H.I.P.H.O.P.*, television, TF1, 1984-1985.

[84] Break Machine was a New York rap group produced by the French producers Jacques Morali and Henri Belolo—the producers behind the Village People. Although Break Machine was a minor act in New York, Break Machine's 1983 single, "Street Dance," sold over a million copies in France.

following lesson segment had Sidney instructing viewers on the proper way to

tie shoelaces and dress in "wildstyle" fashion.[85] The pairing of the fashion

lesson with FUTURA 2000's painting had it's own internal logic because the

episode focused on hip-hop's visual presentation. Sidney's interview with

FUTURA focused on visual culture and FUTURA talked about painting to

"match" the Street Kids' dancing. Similarly, episodes five and seven featured

lessons on DJing and rapping, respectively. Again, the move away from

dancing lessons had to do with the guests in the first segment. Episode five

featured Afrika Bambaataa as the guest and he DJed during the first segment.

Episode seven featured several French rappers, providing the transition to

Sidney's lesson on the correct way to rap.

The third segment of each episode took place on a soundstage

designed to resemble an outdoor New York City playground, complete with

graffiti covered panels representing the urban landscape, a basketball hoop,

and a central circular area. The title of the segment, "Le Defi," meaning the

challenge, attempted to showcase the history of competition and battling in hip-

hop culture. Each challenge featured two young contestants hailing from a

cross section of Paris neighborhoods and suburbs. The young contestants

were also racially and ethnically diverse, representing everything from the il-

de-France to Val d'Argentuil. Importantly, each contestant dressed like b-boys.

Finally, the main prize awarded for the winning dancer was an outfit consisting

of a hat, Adidas sneakers, and a tracksuit or sweat suit from a range of popular

brands including Reebok and Champion. Once again, the message was clear:

hip-hop participants should look a certain way based on American fashion

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[85] Sidney Duteil, *H.I.P.H.O.P.*, television, TF1, 1984-1985.

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styles. Based on the availability and variety of participants for "Le Defi," hip-hop was already being practiced throughout Paris and France. Duteil's show was a hip-hop tutorial: introduction to a hip-hop artist and performance in the first segment; a lesson providing some fundamental insight into some aspect of hip-hop culture; and finally hip-hop culture in practice and competition that ends with a celebration of hip-hop culture and community.

To understand how this program broadcast the *hip-hop community* from the foundation of *Bronx culture,* we need to examine Duteil's program as both a cultural and consumer pedagogical tool. From the very first episode of the series, Duteil attempted to educate his audience on what hip-hop looked like, sounded like, and where hip-hop took place. The opening of the program provided the initial point of reference to understand just how mobile and deeply rooted in the African Diaspora hip-hop culture was, and how it could make immediate sense to French audiences. The structure of the show, as discussed above, was organized to provide a knowledge base of what hip-hop was, to practicing and performing hip-hop, and making it an authentic French cultural practice.

The program also served as an outlet to advertise the commercial and personal relationships forged between record producers and artists in New York and Paris. Just about every performer and guest of the show had a triangulated relationship that connected the Bronx, downtown Manhattan, and Paris. Many of the guests had a formal relationship with Celluloid Records, and the label's French and American brain trust: Bernard Zekri, Jean Karakos, and Bill Laswell. The roster of Celluloid Records featured a collection of some of the most important hip-hop artists and cultural pioneers, including Afrika

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Bambaataa recording as Timezone, FUTURA 2000, Grandmixer D.ST, and Fab 5 Freddy, among others. Not surprisingly, most of these artists were featured on *H.I.P.H.O.P.* In addition to the 1982 New York City Rap Tour and Celluloid Records affiliated acts, other New York and French connected hip-hop acts, such as Break Machine, were also guests of the show. Duteil's show served as a means to further American and French hip-hop, while at the same time selling the popular cultural products that informed hip-hop culture.

Like the development of hip-hop beginning in New York, the use of popular culture represented something beyond consumerism. To understand how *H.I.P.H.O.P.* and Duteil were able to negotiate a space of representation through the emergence of hip-hop culture, we must look again at the show's segments and the ways in which Duteil "taught" his audience the appropriate ways to consume. As I have previously described, the performance segment of the show was followed by "la lecon." Whether Duteil was instructing his audience how to dance, rap, DJ, or tie shoelaces, he was performing hip-hop. Most importantly, you did not have to dress like Duteil to practice his lessons, but it helped.

The third segment, "Le Defi," demonstrated the emergence of Francophone hip-hop since 1982. Although the set was designed in the style of a New York playground, the space of the challenge was French. The fact that Duteil was able to include the challenge segment of each show from the beginning of the series spoke volumes about the mobility of hip-hop culture. Two years after the New York City Rap Tour popularized hip-hop culture throughout France, a group of excited, exciting breakers were prepared to battle each other on French television. The challenge segment also signaled

the inclusive, expansive appeal of Francophone hip-hop: Duteil was able to model the cultural practices that emerged from the Bronx and make them applicable to the lives of French youth through participation. By the third episode, Duteil was showing drawings sent in by excited viewers that featured renderings of breaking and hip-hop culture, demonstrating hip-hop's inclusiveness. Duteil would continue showing his favorite drawings before each challenge in the third segment of the each episode, placing his favorite drawings on the graffiti panels ringing the studio set. Although hip-hop initially came to France as a packaged tour to sell records, *H.I.P.H.O.P.* demonstrated its cultural appeal for communities and youth throughout France.

Representing Les Banlieues

Although Duteil's series featured youths from a variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, the main locale of hip-hop's spatial connection was the French suburbs, les banlieues. The importance of using French hip-hop culture to represent les banlieues was introduced very early in the series. *H.I.P.H.O.P.*'s fourth and fifth episodes, respectively, illustrated that although hip-hop was a product of a transnational culture industry, it was also a form of expression that provided marginalized communities the opportunity for self-presentation and representation. Duteil's fourth episode featured FUTURA 2000 painting on top of one of the Val d'Argentueil's buildings, while the breaking crew, The Street Kids, danced on the street level below. According to Duteil, he wanted to showcase, "the places where hip-hop culture comes from,"

meaning the public housing developments, les banlieues.[86] The fifth episode

featuring Afrika Bambaataa furthered the connection between urban culture

and urban places and spaces of les banlieues. This episode opened with

Bambaataa being driven to a banlieue, meeting Duteil and a group of kids, and

then they all headed inside to a commons room where Bambaataa DJed. Hip-

hop culture went from being *Bronx* culture to a *global* culture, in part, because

as these examples demonstrated, public housing and the experiences of

communities marginalized through neoliberal policies found representational

possibilities within hip-hop culture. Significant to the creation of a hip-hop

nation, the history of les banlieues resonated with the history of the Bronx,

providing a spatial and material connection for the transnational importance of

hip-hop.

Alain-Phillipe Durand explained the meaning of the title of his edited

volume, *Black, Blanc, Beur* as a French antiracist slogan from the early 1990s.

"La France Black, Blanc, Beur," meant that France was a unified country of

black, white, and the children of North African immigrants (the Beur).[87] This

view of national French unity and diversity was reproduced through hip-hop

culture, and represented the population of les banlieues, where "banlieue

culture, rap. . . belongs to all the inhabitants, of the housing estate populated

by as many whites as blacks and Beurs."[88] Returning to hip-hop culture's

central concerns of creating and materially manifesting identity and self-

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[86] Sidney Dutiel in the *Global Cipha.*.

[87] Alain-Phillipe Durand, "Introduction" in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002) pp. xiii-xvii, xiv. Durand provided the etymology of "Beur" as first appearing in Paris in the 1970s as slang created by inverting the syllables of *Arabe*.

[88] Mireille Rostello, *Declining The Stereotype: Ethnicity and Representation in French Culture* (Hanover, CT: University Press of New England, 1998), pg. 69.

representation in marginalized built environments, hip-hop's growth in les

banlieues formed the "localized economic peripheries and hip-hop cores for all

of France."[89] Just as in the Bronx, hip-hop provided the cultural style to give

voice to the voiceless. Of course a longer history of French admiration and

championing of African American culture existed, from Josephine Baker's

celebrated exile in Paris as one of the great performers of the French Music

Hall, African American Jazz musicians residency and celebrity throughout the

1950s, to the continued interest and popularity of jazz, blues, soul, funk and

hip-hop. However, the growth of an indigenous Francophone hip-hop scene

beginning with Sidney Duteil and *H.I.P.H.O.P.* transcends superficial

interpretations concerning the homogenizing effects of the culture industry.

Hip-hop's growth throughout the Francophone world illuminated shared

experiences based in similar sociopolitical and material circumstances.

Public housing developed in France in response to the economic demands

of French companies and the increase of immigration. Beginning in the 1960s,

the government created les banlieues to house workers. In fact, the

construction of les banlieues were largely financed by selling apartments to

manufacturing companies such as Renault and Talbot to house their workers,

providing an example of turn-key housing. Regular busing schedules were

developed that would travel back-and-forth from the suburbs to the city,

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[89] Adam Krims, "Foreword: Francophone Hip-Hop as a Colonial Urban Geography," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002) pp. vii-x, ix. Krims understands Francophone hip-hop production and the easy dissemination of hip-hop practices and poetics through the culture industries from the urban metropole to "far-flung cities" already traced a history of colonial contact and interchanges (ix).

delivering workers.[90] Many of the first residents of les banlieues built and financed, in part, by French companies were immigrants. However, les banlieues quickly became multiethnic and multiracial, with non-French residents rarely making up a majority of the local population. Immigrant or otherwise, the population of les banlieues overwhelming featured "racial and ethnic minorities."[91]

By the early 1980s, the structural history of les banlieues would play a vital role in the transnational emergence of hip-hop. As the French economy increasingly adopted neoliberal policies, many of the factories that initially contracted to help build les banlieues in the 1960s closed, relocated, or cut their work force. The impact on les banlieues was dramatic. Local businesses fled the suburbs, the material neighborhoods slid into disrepair, and unemployment soared. In the absence of a local and national economy and employments, a gray economy consisting of drugs and illegal goods developed. The social and economic developments in les banlieues reinforce concomitant French cultural stigmatization that viewed les banlieues and their inhabitants in increasingly generalized, and negative, terms. Similar to American discourse about urban environments and their largely black and brown residents, les banlieues increasingly represented a stigmatized cultural and social geography combining crime, poverty, race, and place. As French scholars have commented, "[the effects] of such dilapidation and impovershiment have made residence in certain sites [banlieues] an

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[90] Paul A. Silverstein, "Why are we Waiting to Start the Fire?; French Gangsta Rap and the Critique of State Capitalism," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Phillippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002) pp. 45-67, 50.

[91] See Veronique De Rudder, Guy Desplanques and Nicole Tabard, and Alec Hargreaves.

impediment to being hired for a job, thus reproducing the very conditions of unemployment."[92]

Just as the French cultural and historical structural history of les banlieues was similar to the history of the Bronx and Bronx public housing, national political actions also produced similar local conditions conducive to hip-hop's emergence. Similar to the Model Cities Plan attempted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the French government developed a " complex network of national commissions, urbanization laws, educational priority zones (ZEPs) and funding programs," designed to "re-integrate" banlieue residents into the national and global economy, in the hopes of creating "productive citizens" to heal the "fracture sociale."[93] Beginning in the mid-1990s, a series of plans and programs were unveiled following President Jacques Chirac's April 1995 campaign promise of a "Marshall Plan for les banlieues." Through programs instituted by Prime Minister Alain Juppe such as the National Urban Integration Plan and the Urban Revival Pact, 546 "sensitive urban zones" and 20 "enterprise zones" in particularly "hot zones" were identified with the goal of moving the young residents of les banlieues from the grey economy to the formal economy. This was attempted through partnerships with local trade associations receiving state subsidies in exchange for paid internships and tax incentives for the return of manufacturing and businesses in the areas experiencing the greatest amount of crime and unrest.[94] Although these

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[92] Paul A. Silverstein, "Why are we Waiting to Start the Fire?; French Gangsta Rap and the Critique of State Capitalism," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Phillippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002) pp. 45-67, 50.
[93] Paul A. Silverstein, 51.
[94] Ibid., 51.

economic initiatives came from the national government, Chirac and Juppe's plans were wholly dependent on local and multinational corporations to act as investors and catalysts for change within les banlieues and the surrounding suburbs. The "Marshall Plan for les banlieues" touted by the French government was, in effect, a program for private business.

The social, cultural and political response fostered by neoliberal policies evident in the various French policies and "Marshall Plan for les banlieues" mirrored the local and national responses in the United States to the same issues. The through-line between the Bronx and les banlieues was the disruption of economic, cultural, and material experience of place and space due to the implementation of neoliberal programs and policies. Although the content and discourse surrounding these neoliberal policies took place in a very specific French context, hip-hop gained a purchased in les banlieues and helped create spaces of representation for the marginalized communities of les banlieues based on similar experiences endgendered through neoliberalism.

French hip-hop was not a carbon copy affair of American experiences. The initial fate of the Paris chapter of the Zulu Nation demonstrated the fact that hip-hop's expansion in France had to do with the France's particular political, economic, and social context. According to Andre Prevos, residents throughtout les banlieues were initially unresponsive to the teachings of the Universal Zulu Nation because the Universal Zulu Nation did not directly represent mid-1980s French hip-hop culture. The "Zulu style" of clothing, including medallions and vests, were the favored style of youths who were assaulting and robbing metro riders through Paris in the mid to late 1980s, not

hip-hop advocates working to create community.[95] In fact, the term "Zulu"

became synonymous for youth gang member from les banlieues.[96] In many

ways, the adoption of the term Zulu in reference to criminals mirrored

mainstream American media portrayals of urban and African American youth

culture. Although more racially and ethnically diverse, les banlieues ringing

Paris functioned culturally and spatially in a similar manner to public housing in

New York and urban America. The population of les banlieues represented a

mix of ethnicities including North African, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean, as

well as white and black French individuals, too.[97] Through hip-hop culture and

its location in the French banlieues, the Afrodiasporic cultural strategies that

informed hip-hop's emergence in the resource deprived and disparaged Bronx

provided a similar form of cultural creativity to demand a public presence within

French culture.

French hip-hop quickly adapted the relevant aspects of the culture for a

French context, the influence of the Zulu Nation emerged after 1984. The

groups Les Little and Assassin released music in the early 1990s whose

content was thematically similarly to the core teachings and values of the Zulu

Nation. Les Little identified themselves and their music with the electro-funk of

Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force's "Planet Rock." Assassin followed

Bambaataa's dictum of "knowledge" as an important element in the Universal

Zulu Nation creed through songs such as "Respecte l'ancienne ecole," "A qui

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[95] Andre J. M. Prevos, "Two Decades of Rap in France: Emergence, Developments, Prospects," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002) pp. 1-21, 3.
[96] Patrick Louis and Laurent Prinaz, *Skinheads, Taggers, Zulus & Co.* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1990) 170-196.
[97] Ibid., 5.

l'historire," and "L'ecologie: Sauvons la planete," calling for their listeners to remember and respect old school traditions, while criticizing the French school system's lack of critique of 19th century French colonialism, and the negative environmental impact of government policies, too. The artist, Solo, who has worked with a variety of French hip-hop groups since the early 1980s, was named a "Zulu King" by Bambaataa in 1984.[98] Each of these groups and artists understood and represented themselves through hip-hop culture, as well as representating life in les banlieues. Although the first wave of hip-hop culture and rappers emerged from the Paris banlieues, very quickly other large French cities witnessed hip-hop culture emerging from their banlieues, including Marseilles, Toulouse, and Strasbourg.[99] French hip-hop proved to be just as nationally and culturally mobile as American hip-hop. As a cultural form of representation for marginalized communities that emerged at the intersection of neoliberal contestations over public and private forms of housing and life, French youth molded hip-hop to publicly articulate and represent their own identity.

Conclusion: From the Bronx to les Banlieues

The cultural exchanges and resonances experienced in France in the wake of hip-hop's transatlantic expansion would not have been possible

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[98] Andre J. M. Prevos, "Two Decades of Rap in France: Emergence, Developments, Prospects," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002) pp. 1-21, 8.

[99] Jean-Marie Jacono's chapter, "Musical Dimensions and Ways of Expressing Identity in French Rap: The Groups from Marseilles," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002) pp. 22-32, discusses the importance of the Marseilles rap group IAM. Although hip-hop has emerged from other large French cities, Paris and Marseilles remain the two most important sites of French hip-hop.

without a similar material, cultural, and spatial foundation. Ringing the outer

edges of Paris, the public housing developments—les banlieues—functioned

similarly to public housing throughout the Bronx and New York. During the

New York City Rap Tour in 1982, Mr. Freeze, the Bronx-raised, France born b-

boy advised the other tour members, "Police here, they can shoot at you if you

don't stop when they call."[100] The underlying message of Mr. Freeze's warning

connected the experiences of the predominantly non-white New York youth

growing up in the shadow of state surveillance and the experiences of

predominately non-white and immigrant populations living in les Banlieues.

Although hip-hop emerged as a specific response to the local effects of

neoliberal policies in the Bronx during the late 1960s and 1970s, by the late

1980s, France was also undergoing a period of neoliberal policies of austerity

consisting of market deregulation, increase in urban poverty, and the influx of

multinational corporations. In the French context, the development of the

European Union brought about the loss of jobs and capital, answered by

governmental policies reducing state expenditures and the incremental

dismantling of the public sector work force. As a result, France has seen a

transition to a postindustrial economy with a 13% national unemployment level,

with the traditional manufacturing working class sectors experiencing almost

40% unemployment.[101] In the midst of these economic, social and cultural

changes, hip-hop culture provided an opportunity for self-representation and

an entry point into national consciousness through the culture industry.

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[100] David Hershkovits, "London Rocks, Paris Burns, and B-Boys Break a Leg," *Sunday News Magazine*, April 3, 1983.

[101] Paul A. Silverstein, "Why Are We Waiting to Start the Fire?" in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Philippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002) pp. 45-67, 49.

Finally, the 1982 New York City Rap Tour, Sidney Duteil, and

H.I.P.H.O.P. provide a vantage point to look at the social and political

importance of hip-hop culture in the United States. Scholars of Francophone

hip-hop have made the argument that if "French rap has removed itself from

the formal political arena, it has nonetheless outlined a sphere of local

engagement and representational citizenship."[102] As we can see, based on the

ways in which Francophone hip-hop culture has thrown the notion of

representational and cultural citizenship in the Bronx and urban American into

relief, hip-hop culture gained a purchase in Paris and throughout the

Francophone world, because it provided a way for marginalized communities

to publically represent themselves as French citizens through hip-hop.

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[102] Paul A. Silverstein, "Why are we Waiting to Start the Fire?; French Gangsta Rap and the Critique of State Capitalism," in *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop in the Francophone World* ed. Alain-Phillippe Durand (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2002) pp. 45-67, 57.

Conclusion: The Cosmopolitan Hip-Hop Nation

In "'My Passport Says Shawn': Toward a Hip-Hop Cosmopolitanism,"

Mark Anthony Neal writes, "the popularity and influence of hip-hop demand

that we develop the language to better address the seeming contradiction

between the pursuit of the 'good life' and all of its material accoutrements."[1]

Pushing the consumerist focus of his essay, Neal deploys the theorist R.A.T.

Judy to further articulate his vision of the hidden, the cosmopolitan, and the

progressive possibilities of contemporary rap music and hip-hop: "'adaptation

to the force of commodification.' Notions of 'adaptability,' and 'fungibility' are

economically expressed in hip-hop discourse via a term like 'flow,' which

references not only technical proficiency at reciting lyrics but also the global

circulation of hip-hop culture."[2] Using Jay Z as his exemplar of the hip-hop

consumer/commodity trickster, Neal argues that Jay Z's practice and creation

of a consumerist "flow" indexes hip-hop's 21st century cosmopolitanism,

implying that the material basis of a transnational hip-hop nation is consumer

products.

Neal defines hip-hop cosmopolitanism as being "marked in part by a

symbolic homelessness from notions of mainstream American morality,

political relevancy, and cultural gravitas." Movement, circulation, and transit

undergird his deployment of cosmopolitanism, writing that a "hip-hop

cosmopolitanism is undergirded by desires for physical, social, and economic

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[1] Mark Anthony Neal, *Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 85.
[2] Ibid., 41.

mobility."[3] Neal's engagement with hip-hop, and a hip-hop cosmopolitanism, is confined to contemporary rap. He limits his investigation of a "hip-hop cosmopolitanism" to the last twenty years of American hip-hop history. In fact, Neal's essay oftentimes reads as if the first twenty years of hip-hop were merely prelude to Shawn Carter's decision to brand himself as Jay Z. Neal provides an important vantage point, and definitional term, from which to consider the establishment of global hip-hop culture. From the reemergence of Bronx street gangs in the late 1960s, Kool Herc's August 11, 1973 party, the emergence of the Universal Zulu Nation in the mid 1970s, hip-hop's expansion to downtown Manhattan in the early 1980s, to hip-hop's national and international mobility over the last thirty years, hip-hop has always existed as a global cultural phenomenon. If, as Neal argues, Jay Z represents a cultural exemplar of hip-hop cosmopolitanism as an example of a queered performance of commodified and commodifying tropes of black male masculinity within hip-hop, Jay Z has done so only because of the accumulation of the history of a Bronx nation transforming into a global hip-hop culture.

Transnational Hip-Hop

The cultural and historical roots of hip-hop culture have always been transnational, as scholars, writers, and artists from Paul Gilroy, Jeff Chang, and Popmaster Fabel have all detailed.[4] A growing body of scholarship

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[3] Neal, 36-37.
[4] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). In chapter 3, "'Jewels Brought From Bondage': Black

locates hip-hop and American popular culture as tools for marginalized groups

to assert culturally specific identities by adapting and appropriating American

popular culture. Tony Mitchell's edited text, *Global Noise*, presents a collection

of essays examining global hip-hop culture. These essays investigate Islamic

rap in England and France, attempts to establish a white Australian nationalist

hip-hop culture, and Basque embrace of African American popular culture to

redefine local identity.[5] Focusing on African practices of hip-hop, *Hip Hop*

Africa identifies how youth cultural practices from across the continent

participate in global, popular culture as consumers and producers of hip-hop

and related Afrodiasporic musical genres, including reggae and gospel.[6] Ian

Condry examines the use of American hip-hop by Japanese youth as a cultural

strategy of critique. Condry contends that the growth of Japanese hip-hop

culture responded to the strategies and practices of reimagining community in

the face of economic and political disenfranchisement.[7] In *French Moves*,

Felicia McCarren examines how French minority groups adopted and adapted

hip-hop culture as a way to expose the erasure of difference and

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Music and the Politics of Authenticity," Gilroy viewed hip-hop within a longer history of the circulation black music throughout the African Diaspora.

In Chapter Two, "Sipple Out Deh: Jamaica's Roots Generation and the Cultural Turn," of *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), Jeff Chang details the deep cultural and historical connections between Jamaica's Roots Generation, the Kingston soundsystem culture with hip-hop DJs, and the cultural and material connections between the JLP political party and public housing.

Jorge "Popmaster" Fabel traces the transnational roots of hip-hop dance throughout the African Diaspora in his essay, "Physical Graffiti: The History of Hip-Hop Dance," collected in *That's The Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader, 2nd Edition,* eds. Mark Anthony Neal and Murray Forman (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[5] Tony Mitchell, ed. *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside The USA* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

[6] Eric Charry, ed. *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012).

[7] Ian Condry, *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

multiculturalism inherent in French universalist discourse. McCarren argues that the adoption of hip-hop as a French cultural policy attempted to limit hip-hop's potential for critiquing the state from a marginalized location, causing French hip-hop culture to develop from state-sanctioned platforms.[8]

Nitasha Tamar Sharma examines the construction of a South Asian and Asian American identity through hip-hop. Sharma argues that South Asian Americans were able to challenge assumptions based on their identities as Asians, immigrants, and Americans through hip-hop. By sampling and appropriating hip-hop, South Asian Americans enacted a multiracial form of black popular culture that extended beyond consumer culture to fight racism and advocate for social change in the United States.[9] Antonio Tiongson similarly details the practices of Filipino American DJs as they interrogate issues of immigration, cultural authenticity, and post-civil rights era discourses concerning US racial formations.[10] Sharma and Tiongson's respective works represent a vital contribution to the literature on hip-hop studies and popular culture because they problematize the progressive notion of a transnational hip-hop culture through comparative experiences and representations of race in the United States.

The quick scan of transnational hip-hop studies literature points to the fact that once hip-hop traveled to France and Europe in the early 1980s, thanks in part to the 1982 New York City Rap Tour, the culture quickly spread beyond

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[8] Felicia McCarren, *French Moves: The Cultural Politics of le hip hop* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[9] Nitasha Tamar Sharma, *Hip Hop Desis: South Asian Americans, Blackness, and a Global Race Consciousness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

[10] Antonio T. Tiongson, Jr., *Filipinos Represent: DJs, Racial Authenticity and the Hip-Hop Nation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

European borders. Each of hip-hop's transnational iterations corresponded to

Mark Anthony Neal's cosmopolitan prescriptions above. Although the issues of

class and access to resources are largely eschewed by Neal, and deserve

closer critical attention in terms of transnational hip-hop culture, placing Neal's

essay in conversation with the growing literature on transnational hip-hop

culture demonstrates how the cultural and material history of African American

youth culture in the Bronx has informed cultural practices the world over:

making the Bronx a transnational cultural touchstone.

Afrika Bambaataa and Selling the Bronx

Marcyliena Morgan explores underground hip-hop culture in her quest

to understand how "hiphop lyrics and activities are concerned with the major

questions of philosophy, identity, ideology, art, and existence." She finds her

answers in Los Angeles' hip-hop underground. The underground scene

serves "as a physical and expressive location where black youths and

progressive youths develop lyrical skills, identities, social relationships, and

theories about society and culture."[11] Murray Forman provides a similar

interpretation about the social and cultural power of hip-hop's ability to provide

"physical and expressive" locations for African-American youth, yet he is

interested in investigating the spatial and racial underpinnings of diverse

locations including local, underground venues, to crossover corporate media

spaces such as concert venues. Forman writes, "rap's roots were undeniable:

it was perceived by fans and foes alike as a black-identified cultural form

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[11] Marcyliena Morgan, *The Real HipHop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respet in the LA Underground* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 13,187.

signifying youth sensibility," wherever rap and hip-hop cultural practices are performed.[12] Morgan and Forman articulate the same understanding of hip-hop as youthful African American cultural practices; however their respective focus and views of the marketplace are different. Both Morgan and Forman's work demonstrate the spectrum of hip-hop modes of production from local practices to management by global corporate entities and the culture industry. Placing Morgan and Forman in conversation illuminates the fact that hip-hop exists, and emerged, from this contradiction of space, place, and race mediated by market forces.

As I have explored throughout this project, these cultural, social, and material dynamics undergirded the Bronx and Bronx youth culture in the 1960s and 1970s. I return to Afrika Bambaataa to explore hip-hop strategies balancing issues of the market and authenticity. By the early 1980s, Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation continued to create commodities designed to intervene in the marketplace by presenting a transnational, and transhistorical, point of view. Bambaataa performed an expansive vision of hip-hop through the Zulu Nation and his musical group, the Soulsonic Force, establishing and interrogating an expansive visual discourse of race transmitted through the culture industry via hip-hop.

In 1982, Tommy Boy Records released Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force's "Planet Rock." The song's video reinforced the global meaning of "Planet Rock." Consisting of Mr. Biggs, M.C. GLOBE, Pow Wow, DJ Jazzy Jay, and Bambaataa, the Soulsonic Force sported a variety of

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12 Murray Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 145.

costumes, including a "Battlestar Viking," a 17th century aristocrat, a Mardi

Gras Indian, and a character resembling the Roman messenger god Mercury,

complete with winged helmet. As Jeff Chang describes the look:

"[Bambaataa's] crew dressed like a wild cross between a band of New Orleans

Mardi Gras Indians and interstellar Afrofuturist prophets."[13] In the context of

the music video and the song, Bambaataa and Soulsonic Force make sonic

and visual claims that hip-hop is transnational and *transhistorical*. The video's

editing furthers this point. In the video, the Soulsonic Force's performance is

superimposed over images of planets, reinforcing the idea of hip-hop as a

'planetery' cultural phenomenon. Layering images and meanings, the "Planet

Rock" video then superimposes a breaking b-boy over the group providing a

visual cue that the elaborate, costumed stage presence of Soulsonic Force still

encompassed the founding practices and aesthetics of hip-hop culture.

Following "Planet Rock", the 1983 music video "Looking for the Perfect

Beat" and the 1984 music video "Renegades of Funk" continued to showcase

Bambaataa's transnational and transhistorical vision of hip-hop. "Looking for

the Perfect Beat" begins with a shot of the Unisphere from the 1964 World's

Fair in Flushing Meadows' Corona Park, surrounded by a superimposed

Soulsonic Force. "Looking for the Perfect Beat" also contextualizes the

Soulsonic Force's performance within hip-hop by featuring Mr. Freeze of the

Rock Steady Crew. The video and song hinge on the most important activity of

the hip-hop DJ: looking for the perfect beat. In addition to connecting the song

with hip-hop's foundational cultural elements, "Looking for the Perfect Beat"

establishing the connection between cultural creation and location. The video

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[13] Chang, 171.

includes a horizontal split screen with the Soulsonic Force above a green saturated shot of the Bronx River Houses linking the emergence of hip-hop, the Zulu Nation and the Soulsonic Force with the Bronx River Houses. As "Planet Rock" represents hip-hop's global reach, "Looking for the Perfect Beat" presents hip-hop's cultural and geographic roots.

The 1984 music video, "Renegades of Funk," combines the transnational reach of hip-hop with the culture's rootedness in a history of protest. Marcus Reeves writes: "'Planet Rock' invited the world into hip-hop's solar system, 'Renegades of Funk' connected listeners and their embrace of this revolutionary sound and culture to the mavericks of world history."[14] The song and video claim that Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force belong in the ranks of historical mavericks. "Renegades" opens with shots of urban decay and Bambaataa on a roof overlooking this cityscape. This is followed by a jump cut to a wide shot of a large rectangular section of a wall standing in the middle of an open lot with the word "Renegade" sprayed on it in graffiti. Resembling the monolith scene in "2001: A Space Odyssey," African American and Latino youth flock to the wall with spray paint cans to add to the paint. Next, the video jump cuts to Bambaataa in a cavernous room filled with smoke and multicolored lights wearing flowing robes and a headdress resembling a keffiyeh. Through these jump cuts, the video presents Bambaataa, and hip-hop, as both rooted in a contemporary urban milieu and existing in some future realm. Through the visual vocabulary of the music video, Bambaataa and the

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[14] Marcus Reeves, *Somebody Scream!: Rap Music's Rise to Prominence in the Aftershock of Black Power* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2008), 35.

Soulsonic Force showed that they represent hip-hop's past, as well as its future.

Bambaataa's vision of the Soulsonic Force representing hip-hop's past and future coalesces three minutes into the video. At this point, a drummer and a dancer meant representing African tribesmen or Zulus dance in front of a museum display-case holding African tribal masks. Bambaataa approaches the dancer and is given his staff. By receiving the staff, Bambaataaa dramatizes the transnational cultural history undergirding the international cultural emergence of hip-hop. As these music videos demonstrates, Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force present and perform an international and transhistorical vision of hip-hop while honoring its transnational cultural origins.

Although representations of race and hip-hop have varied since Soulsonic Force's heyday in the early 1980s, the expansive and inclusive vision of hip-hop modeled by the Zulu Nation has guided hip-hop in the marketplace—at the very least serving as an important cultural and ideological backstop. In 1997, Sprite created a series of five commercials for a campaign that included the enduring importance of Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation's vision of hip-hop. In the campaign, MCs representing national regions were counseled by Bambaataa, "What you need is unity. You can't save hip-hop if you don't band together."[15] Premiering in the wake of the murders of Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G., the campaign was well received within the hip-hop community. Bambaataa's counsel reaffirmed the Zulu Nation's inclusive vision of hip-hop, providing a bridge to historical and cultural authenticity within the

[15] Dan Charnas, *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop* (New York: New American Library, 2010), 504.

marketplace founded in Bambaataa's fifth foundational hip-hop element; knowledge.

Conclusions: Building a Bronx Movement

Channeling Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja wrote, "What distinguished capitalism's gratuitous spatial veil from the spatialities of other modes of production was its peculiar production and reproduction of geographically uneven development via simultaneous tendencies toward homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchization."[16] Soja concludes: "One can describe this brake-and-shift as a time-space *restructuration* of social practices from the mundane to the *mondiale*." Soja argues that the spaces of the postmodern city are no longer responding to local internal dynamics; the global nature of late capitalism determines the structures of the city and their internal dynamics are now global concerns. As neoliberal market forces transformed the expectations and experiences of urban life, musical culture was also transformed.[17] As neoliberal policies impacted America's cities in the 1960s and 1970s, the Bronx was the most visible and identifiable example of these economic and policy processes that impacted a generation's cultural creation. The built environment reflected the neoliberal policy decisions, re-structuring the material and cultural geography of American cities in an attempt to erase public space of any kind. Hip-hop would step into this material and cultural breech, helping to create a counterpublic rooted in African American cultural creation and life in an increasingly resource-deprived built environment.

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[16] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 50.
[17] Ibid., 159.

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Balancing the joy of cultural creation and the dictates of the culture industry, culture born in the Bronx could only result in a transnational hip-hop culture.

Part One of this project explored and ground the history of hip-hop's creation in the dynamic relationship between the built environment and the culture of Bronx and the generation that created hip-hop in the late 1960s and 1970s through an investigation of Bronx "locations." Chapter One examined how the experience of identity and community was fashioned in the Bronx and how this impacted hip-hop's emergence. This chapter explored the Bronx in material and geographical detail, intervening in a broader discourse that overwhelmingly views the Bronx of this era as a barren, uninhabited wasteland. Through an extended investigation of the Bronx River Houses, the relationships between the built environment and community was detailed by residents and former residents. Chapter Two continued to examine the relationship between the Bronx's built environment and cultural creation through the history of the Zulu Nation. By investigating the myriad youth cultural practices that emerged during the late 1960s and 1970s, I traced the Zulu Nation's ability to codify the various practices of hip-hop culture under one cohesive cultural movement through the use of the Bronx River Houses' campus, and the community's sense of itself. Because of the relationship between Bronx River's community, and the built environment, hip-hop was able to form through the leadership of Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation. Without Bronx River, Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation, hip-hop, as we know it, would not exist.

Part Two investigated hip-hop's ability to expand its geographical audience while maintaining an authentic Bronx voice. Chapter Three looked at

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the work of Buddy Esquire and his fellow flyer makers. Between 1977 and 1984, hip-hop flyers, and the artists who created them, crafted a form of hip-hop culture that applied the aesthetics of graffiti and hip-hop culture to advertising. Through the use of Prestype, Inc. typographic lettering, and an eye to adapting "wildstyle" lettering into clean, legible lines, Buddy Esquire created a form of advertising that excited the hip-hop initiated and outsiders, about hip-hop jams. The flyers demonstrated that hip-hop was comfortable with consumer culture, becoming foundational texts illustrating hip-hop's origins from within consumer culture. Buddy Esquire's flyer art provided a bridge between hip-hop's Bronx emergence and subsequent expansion within the culture industry consolidation by 1983.

Chapter Four explored the material and social connections between the Bronx and Downtown Manhattan. Through analysis of public discussions surrounding the official establishment of SoHo and the simultaneous disregard for the South Bronx in the early 1970s, this chapter examined close cultural ties between hip-hop pioneers and SoHo artists in the early 1980s finding that this relationship was rooted in an appreciation of similar modes of cultural production developed in conjunction with the build environment. At the same moment when social and cultural relationships between the Zulu Nation, Bronx public housing, SoHo artists, and SoHo lofts and art galleries and discotheques were producing an eclectic mix of the New York avant-garde art world in the 1970s and 1980s, hip-hop was also expanding to neighborhoods and communities throughout the New York metropolitan region. Hip-hop simultaneously emerged as an avant-garde American art form, and an

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everyday youth cultural practice enjoyed by African American and Latino communities throughout greater New York.

Part Three followed hip-hop's national and international expansion, from the New York metropolitan area, to Los Angeles, and finally Paris and Europe by the mid-1980s. Through a culture industry blitz that featured national and international tours, increased record sales in international markets, a series of movies and television appearances, and a successful Paris-based television program, hip-hop was firmly established as a transnational cultural force. Chapter Five considered the importance of visual representations of breaking that helped hip-hop culture become and national and international phenomenon. Throughout 1981 and culminating with the August Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival, media interest and commentary on breaking and hip-hop was featured in mainstream media. Through media investigation and representation, breaking quickly became subject and object for movies, television, and performances. As breaking traveled from the Bronx to Lincoln Center, and the 1984 Olympics' closing ceremony, the culture that emerged from the Bronx in the 1970s became a national and international force. By 1984, breaking and other elements of hip-hop culture had traveled throughout the United States, parts of Europe and Japan, on package tours, and through the culture industry, all the while communicating a national, American cultural form that represented the Bronx.

The final chapter looked at hip-hop's first international tour, the 1982 New York City Rap Tour, French media coverage of hip-hop, and the shared material and cultural sensibilities of marginalized communities in the Bronx and les banlieues in France. Although hip-hop emerged as a specific response to

the local effects of neoliberal policies in the Bronx during the late 1960s and 1970s, France also endured a period of neoliberal austerity policies consisting of market deregulation, increasing urban poverty, and the influx of multinational corporations. By 1984, the culture of Bronx youth had been refashioned into a transnational hip-hop movement based on the vibrancy and marketability of youthful cultural creations. Between 1951 and 1984, the multifarious acts of translating Bronx culture into a global phenomenon hinged on the creativity of youth armed with Afrodiasporic modes of cultural production. The result was expansive communities founded in the experiential gaps between material neglect and consumer plenty, a transnational hip-hop nation.

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