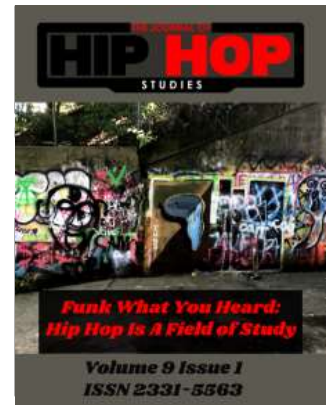


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“Funk What You Heard” is a beaconing call to all scholars who engage with Hip Hop studies. This article lays out the ways in which Hip Hop studies should properly respond to the wave of oppressions currently pounding the world. With several key date markers in place for Hip Hop studies, Tricia Rose’s *Black Noise* in 1994 and Murray Foreman and Mark Anthony Neal’s *That’s the Joint* in 2004, “Funk What You Heard” charts the path forward for the future of Hip Hop studies. *Black Noise* provided the original blueprint for studying Hip Hop and *That’s the Joint!* stamped “hip-hop studies” into history. Although we are close to thirty years since *Black Noise*, lyrical analysis is a dominant method for Hip Hop studies. Also, although we have a clearly identifiable field, academics still treat Hip Hop as an interesting topic they can write about without speaking to the field. “Funk What You Heard” calls for something more. We can no longer continue down this path of weak analysis and rewriting Hip Hop theories that have been discussed time and time again. Our contemporary waves of oppression have raised the stakes. With the path charted out, we ultimately call on Hip Hop scholars to answer their ancestral call. Answering this call pragmatically looks like building on the field, developing new and innovative research methods, and engaging with all the elements of Hip Hop. As far as the unseen, we will leave that up to your reflection with Hip Hop’s collective consciousness that is not bound by space and time.

“Can we just get one world-changing, lifetime and historical event to happen at a time,” one of my students remarked during class. While these are not their exact words, this 20-year-old’s view of the world reflects the tragedy after tragedy and trauma after trauma that has recently rocked the world. Within a global pandemic, mass shootings everywhere from elementary schools to stores, to the next breaking news story about another once in a lifetime event, for young people, this has been their norm. How are we going to respond to these waves of oppression?

The waves of oppression challenge the way we as academics, and even activists for that matter, do things. In the past, we have primarily focused on rap music. Inside academia and in popular culture, when it came to talking about Hip Hop, defining Hip Hop, determining where it originated, saying who Hip Hop belonged to and so on, the conversation always reverted to rappers, song lyrics or something to do with the music. The editorial team arrived at this conclusion by reviewing more than one thousand scholarly Hip Hop sources, hundreds of submissions to the journal, publishing numerous scholarly Hip Hop texts, attending Hip Hop studies conferences and sessions at conferences, peer reviewing for several presses and other scholarly journals and staying engaged with popular culture through various media outlets including social media.¹ Throughout this examination and engagement with thousands of Hip Hop texts, rap

¹ There are several additional scholarly works that provide evidence and make claims about the central focus of Hip Hop studies being rap music such as Jeff Chang’s edited collection *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-hop* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2006).

music is front and center. Based on these waves of oppression, “we need something more.”²

Focusing on rap music will not offer enough to address what we are facing if we want real change in the future. We are calling for academia and those outside of academia who are listening to go beyond rap music. Transformational and revolutionary change that responds to a decrease in the life expectancy of Black life, COVID, mass killings, police brutality, women not having control of their bodies and oppression after oppression after oppression requires a change in direction. Primarily thinking about Hip Hop as rap music limits our understanding and potential of what Hip Hop is and can be and do. It narrows our perspective to thinking about Hip Hop within certain spaces, mainly the US, or not recognizing the connections between Hip Hop in the US and around the world. Hip Hop is an African diasporic phenomenon, not bound by space and time, made up of a collective consciousness, and a culture with global cultures.

In addition to improperly preparing us to respond correctly to the waves of oppression we are enduring, the overwhelming focus on rap music has been the primary factor limiting academia’s understanding, conception, analysis, discussion and presentation of Hip Hop. Whenever scholars talk about sexism, misogyny, a Hip Hop generation, and all the other fields/disciplines that it intersects with such as religion, education, politics, literature, gender, activism, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, communication, rhetoric, culture, critical race theory, missiology, law and psychology, they all look to rappers and rap music. It is precisely this emphasis on rap music that has determined the theories, methods, and overall fabric of Hip Hop studies. The predominant method of Hip Hop studies is lyrical analysis. Rappers are the main ones from the culture that guide the theories of Hip Hop studies. Even more problematic, a lot of Hip Hop studies focuses on industry rap music. There is a considerable amount of scholarship that deals with rappers outside of the industry but the same way in which mainstream rappers dominate popular culture discussions, they also dominate academic discourse and overshadow the work of scholars that are not limited by the mainstream. There are multiple problems and repercussions produced by the scholarly (and popular culture) overemphasis on rappers and rap music.

As already mentioned, the biggest casualty is Hip Hop because, even though numerous Hip Hop scholars and Hip Hop heads have said Hip Hop is not just rap music, Hip Hop continues to be synonyms with rap music. Another major consequence is the lack of attention to every other element of Hip Hop. Hip Hop studies has not fully considered the ways that breakin, graffiti and deejaying and all the other elements and components can inform Hip Hop theories, methods and history. For example, Kymberly Pinder, in *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago* (2016), reveals how including graffiti challenges Hip Hop scholars to revisit the religious and artistic

² Lecrae Moore, “Nuthin,” *Anomaly*, Reach Records, 2016.

traditions that have contributed to Hip Hop.³ Instead of just focusing on spirituals and the blues, Hip Hop scholars must now account for graffiti forbearers such as the artist William Scott, who painted multiracial interpretations of the Bible in churches. Pinder also draws out a lineage that includes William Walker, Bernard Williams, and the Chicago Public Art Group-trained rapper and graffiti artist Damon Lamar Reed. Other than Pinder's work, there are very few histories of Hip Hop that take note of Scott, Walker, Williams, and others who contributed to graffiti. With this in mind, it can become abundantly clear how bringing in all the elements and components of Hip Hop will completely transform how we talk about, study, and even understand Hip Hop. Even further, recognize the potential revolutionary role Hip Hop can play in our world today.

Laying Out the Field of Hip Hop Studies

Hip Hop studies is constantly under attack. The most recent attack came from some scholars who claimed that there is no field of Hip Hop studies and that it is as interdisciplinary as it is.⁴ In other words, they can discuss Hip Hop from their own disciplines and do not have to speak to any key texts within the field of Hip Hop studies. Of course, this does not only happen to Hip Hop, this same type of approach also happens to Africana studies, race and a variety of other fields. Scholars think they could just mention Black people or Hip Hop and now they are doing "race" or "Hip Hop studies." This is highly problematic. It shows the very ways in which White Supremacy manifests in higher education. There are particular groups of people and theoretical approaches that are considered lesser in higher education and Hip Hop studies is one of them. Also, what is considered acceptable for these "lesser" fields such as Hip Hop studies is not acceptable for other traditional disciplines. Whenever someone speaks to history, sociology, religion, etc., scholars are required to cite the canon of these disciplines. They must know and, at times, show the key historiographical shifts throughout that discipline. While at times, gatekeeping within these disciplines have been used to reinforce academic boundaries that perpetuate White Supremacy and ensure that other voices are silenced, this does not mean that the pendulum should swing completely in the opposite direction and that when it comes to Hip Hop, anyone can say anything and claim to be Hip Hop or do Hip Hop studies.

For the field of Hip Hop studies, there is a clearly recognizable bibliography of more than thirty years of texts that goes back to the early 1980s. *That's the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader* (2004) traces these texts from the 1980s, and with the third edition coming out, to present day.⁵ This means that there are some Hip Hop scholars that have

³ Kymberly N. Pinder, *Painting the Gospel: Black Public Art and Religion in Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

⁴ The particular scholars we are referring to have a series of emails exchanged with the Editor in Chief of the journal. They made these claims in the email exchange. We do not want to invite any of their drama back to the journal, so we decided to keep their names anonymous.

⁵ Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, eds., *That's the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, eds., *That's the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader* (2nd edition, New York: Routledge, 2012).

been working in the field of Hip Hop studies for decades. In many ways, “title of this piece” is a return to the first issue and article published by *JHHS*, “The Hip in Hip Hop: Toward a Discipline of Hip Hop Studies.” The initial article laid out the landscape of Hip Hop studies by highlighting both Hip Hop as a global phenomenon and the depth of Hip Hop studies throughout academia, from the classes being taught to the minor at the University of Arizona.⁶ Building on these works, we aim to explicitly lay out the field of Hip Hop studies.

In the first edition of *That’s the Joint!* (2004), Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal introduced the term “hip-hop studies,” thereby providing a marking point of identifying the field. Unfortunately, while they presented this term, many scholars have, in good faith, written about Hip Hop studies without properly acknowledging their work and the field. For example, Julia Chang, in her review essay “Keeping It Real: Interpreting Hip-Hop,” calls Hip Hop studies a subfield.⁷ More recently, Jeffrey Ogbar, in “The Mark of Criminality: Rhetoric, Race, and Gangsta Rap in the War-on-Crime,” stated: “Over the last decade and a half, there has emerged a veritable subfield known as Hip-Hop Studies, of which rap music is a central component.”⁸ While there are numerous additional examples, Ogbar’s is most telling because he explicitly states that rap music is central. Not to throw stones at anyone, well maybe those who think they do not have to engage with Hip Hop studies but still want to write about Hip Hop, this is a call for unity and to bring all Hip Hop scholars on the same page moving forward.

Spelling Hip Hop and Hip Hop Studies

When *JHHS* started, we decided to go with the spelling of Hip Hop. We will maintain that spelling because it linguistically identifies Hip Hop as a proper noun. We are aware of KRS One’s spellings of Hiphop, Hip Hop, and hip hop. We are heavily influenced by KRS One but decided to go with Hip Hop to recognize its singular identity while holding in tension the many engagements and manifestations of Hip Hop. Additionally, we would like to report the work of our Editor in Chief, Travis Harris along with Hip Hop scholar and educator, Tasha Iglesias. They both reached out to the APA to get the hyphen removed from hip-hop and be officially spelled Hip Hop. They wrote an official state⁹ and provided primary sources from Cornell’s Hip Hop archive.

⁶ Monica Miller, Daniel White Hodge, Jeffrey Coleman, and Cassandra D. Chaney, “The Hip in Hip Hop: Toward a Discipline of Hip Hop Studies,” *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 6–12, <https://doi.org/10.34718/71Z9-7Z58>

⁷ Juliana Chang, Review of *Keeping It Real: Interpreting Hip-Hop*, by Murray Forman, Mark Anthony Neal, Imani Perry, Eithne Quinn, and Jeff Chang, *College English* 68, no. 5 (2006): 545–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25472170>

⁸ Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, Review of Bryan J. McCann, “The Mark of Criminality: Rhetoric, Race, and Gangsta Rap in the War-on-Crime Era,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 43, no. 3 (2019): 339–341, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859918785179>

⁹ See “It’s ‘Hip Hop,’ Not ‘hip-hop,’” included in this issue.



“Your Spot,” flyer, Johan Kugelberg¹⁰

Subfields

Starting in 2004, we have a clearly identifiable field of Hip Hop studies that can point to at least five subfields within Hip Hop studies. These subfields are Hip Hop based education (HHBE), global Hip Hop studies, religion and Hip Hop studies, Hip Hop feminism, Hip Hop dance studies and Hip Hop linguistics. There are also overlaps between each subfield, for example scholars of HHBE are also working in global Hip Hop studies. To be a subfield, all these fields, within Hip Hop studies, must contain a traceable historiography and key scholars. For example, Emery Pletcher is a key scholar in HHBE. There is a journal of Global Hip Hop Studies with Hip Hop scholars from all over the world working together. *JHHS* recently published a special issue on Hip Hop feminism in 2021. Daniel White Hodge is a leading scholar in religion and Hip Hop studies. An important text to Hip Hop linguistics is *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*, edited by H. Samy Alim, Awad Ibrahim, and Alastair Pennycook.

Hip Hop Theories and Methods

Due to the over infatuation with rappers and rap music we have yet to reach our fullest potential as Hip Hop studies scholars in creating new, cutting edge and fresh research methods and theories. In Tricia Rose’s classic text, *Black Noise* (1994), she states this about her methodology:

I have listened attentively to a large majority of rap albums available, transcribed over five dozen songs, taped and viewed hundreds of rap music videos, researched rap samples, attended over

¹⁰ “Your Spot,” flyer, Johan Kugelberg Hip Hop Collection, #8021, Box 33, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library,
<https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:1334330>

thirty rap concerts and conferences, and carefully followed the coverage of rap music in popular music magazines, newspapers, and scholarly publications.¹¹

Unfortunately, it is more than thirty years later, and we still have not moved beyond Rose's methodology. Arguably, her attendance at rap concerts may now be little more than the usual method of lyrical analysis. The prevalent theories and methods throughout Hip Hop studies are static and stale. Not only does lyrical analysis limit our growth as a field but it also leads to misunderstandings and inaccurate theories about Hip Hop. Our biggest question for scholars conducting lyrical analysis is this: "How do you know what is real and how do you know if you have an accurate interpretation of the lyrics?" The only way to be one hundred percent accurate about the intention of the rapper is to talk to the rapper.

A major understudied field in conjunction with Hip Hop studies is performance studies. Performance studies is influenced by Kemetic thought.¹² Performance studies seeks to understand what is real and raises the question as to whether Hip Hoppas are just performing in their songs. It leads us to ask, are the performances ones in which we know that they are just playing a role or are the performances an opportunity to fully express themselves. This is extremely important because lyrical analysis does not make this distinction clear. It is quite possible for the listener/researcher to think the performance is an expression of the rapper's reality and the rapper's intention could be to show how well they rap and just perform a role. To say it another way, some rappers have no intention to do drugs, kill, disrespect women or men, or hurt anyone. Their goal is to show off their rhyming skills with metaphors, similes and wordplay.

Methodological approaches that demonstrate an inaccurate or unverified analysis of "Hip Hop" are rampant throughout Hip Hop studies. Though they claim to offer insights into the culture, these approaches are narrowly focused and are usually really a critique of industry rap music. Readings from small sample sizes prove problematic. We need to be critical of our Hip Hop methodologies relying on analyzing popular culture, considering the White Supremacist and capitalistic infrastructures that use popular music as a means of control. White Supremacy functions in the music industry in such a way that it rewards emcees who perform their role in a manner that conforms to rather than challenges the infrastructures of White Supremacy. Therefore, within the larger music industry rappers have little agency. They are forced to choose between their personal

¹¹ Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

¹² Performance studies traces its thinking back to ancient Greek philosophy. Several scholars have explained how Greek philosophers learned from Kemites; see George G. M. James, *Stolen Legacy: The Egyptian Origins of Western Philosophy* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992). See Samuel T. Livingston, "Speech is My Hammer, It's Time to Build: Hip Hop, Cultural Semiosis and the Africana Intellectual Heritage," *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 38–61, <https://doi.org/10.34718/9YSN-ZT35>, for an explanation of Afro-Kemetic oral artistry, semeiotic systems and their presence in Hip Hop.

convictions and what the industry requires for them to make money. Also, scholars must take note of their positionality in relation to Hip Hop.

Some examples of these methodological shortcomings are seen in Ronald Weitzer and Charis E. Kubrin's representation of misogyny in rap music,¹³ and Kellie D. Hay and Rebekah Farrugia's analysis of Black masculinity, Hip Hop, and inner life.¹⁴ Weitzer and Kubrin constructed their study solely on an examination of four hundred and three songs. They chose these songs based on Hip Hop albums they could find that went platinum between 1992 and 2000. They found one hundred and thirty albums that contained a total of one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two songs. Next, "using SPSS, a simple random sample of 403 songs was drawn and then analyzed."¹⁵ This is the most blatant example of using industry rap music to make claims about Hip Hop in general. They are two White academics whose method is an analysis of four hundred and three songs. Their analysis becomes even more problematic when they state: "We document five themes related to the portrayal of women in rap music and link them to larger cultural and music industry norms and the local, neighborhood conditions that inspired this music."¹⁶ They make claims about Hip Hop artists based solely on their interpretation of the music and write about Hip Hop as situated in local neighborhoods that they have no investment in nor knowledge of.¹⁷

While Weitzer and Kubrin's method is problematic, two white women scholars, Hay and Farrugia,¹⁸ cite Weitzer and Kubrin in putting forward their theory of Black fatherhood. They state: "Weitzer and Kubrin summarize that 'it is not only the material cost of fathering a child that is feared in these [rap]songs but also fatherhood in general.'"¹⁹ Their referencing of Weitzer and Kubrin reveals just how distant they are from Hip Hop because they are using two academic's interpretation of not only industry rap music, but rap songs that went platinum. Plainly, they are using an interpretation (their understanding of Weitzer and Kubrin's work) of an interpretation (Weitzer and

¹³ Ronald Weitzer and Charis E. Kubrin, "Misogyny in Rap Music: A Content Analysis of Prevalence and Meanings." *Men and Masculinities* 12, no. 1 (2009): 3-29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X08327696>

¹⁴ Kellie D. Hay and Rebekah Farrugia. "Black Fatherhood, Hip Hop, and Inner Life: Reading Rapsody's 'The Man' and Mama Sol and the N.U.T.S.'s 'Manhood.'" *Popular Music and Society* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (2022): 1-15, published as <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2022.2132064>

¹⁵ Weitzer and Kubrin, "Misogyny in Rap Music," 10.

¹⁶ Weitzer and Kubrin, "Misogyny in Rap Music," 4.

¹⁷ Even if they do claim to have visited one local neighborhood, one or several visits is not enough to equip them with the necessary lens to understand more than four hundred songs.

¹⁸ Some readers may question why we decided to point out their identity granted that the authors are aware of their identity and addressed this in the article. We highlight their identity because our focus is on the methodological approach they took to understand the inner life of Black men. As White women, they are quite distanced from the inner lives of Black men; they are the opposite gender and race. As we explain later in this section, this distance is increased when considering that they examined music videos and do not elevate the voices of Black men.

¹⁹ Hay and Farrugia, "Black Fatherhood, Hip Hop, and Inner Life," 18.

Kubrin's examination of platinum songs) of a performance by a rapper who created songs in such a way they would go platinum. Furthermore, this selection of rap music epitomizes the control of White Supremacy and capitalism on the music industry since they are specifically the songs that went platinum. Hay and Farrugia essentially argue that "it is public life that pressures the possibilities of private, inner life," further pathologizing Black fatherhood. They build on the work of scholars that use rap music to make their arguments and claims about Black inner life, an argument which they base on two music videos of song lyrics written by women artists. According to Hay and Farrugia, they aim to use the two videos, Mama Sol and The N.U.T.S.'s "Manhood" and Rapsody's "The Man," to "form a tidalectic of their own; one contains the conditions that lead to oppression and untimely death (The Man), while the other holds the promise of hope (Manhood)."²⁰ The most obvious problem with this method is the erasure and silencing of Black men in these claims about "the inner and social lives of Black youth, men, and fatherhood." It is astounding that this article was even published. Without reflecting on their own relationship to whiteness and the power of authority it bestows, they claim to "offer insight into the construction of Black masculinity, affect, and hip hop aesthetics," conveying to us their understanding of the inner lives of Black males. In their discussion of "The Man," they make the following statements about a young Black male:

- His dreams are shadows, captured in images of Puff Daddy and Mohammad Ali, but even they are juxtaposed to images of gang figures and fallen "homies."
- The layering of gangster life and iconic rappers illustrates the public constructions of manhood that shape his desired identity.
- Hustling and the drug-dealing life provide him with a fast track to the kind of money that makes him feel like "the man."
- As we note above, the young man's inner life was arrested before he reached puberty. Dreams were left behind, as were joy, pleasure, touch, and emotions outside of pain. Only crosses and icons, left as relics on a dresser, give us a glimpse of his childhood innocence.
- What is more, the only men who affect him are deadbeat dads, dead rappers, Hollywood gangsters, and police officers.²¹

If there is any doubt about what they mean by these statements, in the conclusion they state: "'The Man' casts inner life as pressure where even in the youth's bedroom – the sanctuary that holds his most precious symbols – there is no supply of solace, only a place to drop and pray while police cars flash outside."²² While their goal to make a tidalectic synthesizing "the promise of hope" of the other video is laudable, these egregious statements contain a major pitfall. They present Black men as stereotypical caricatures that fall in line with the same framing of the Black male beast, the rapist, and the hyper masculine thug portrayed by racist propaganda disseminated throughout American

²⁰ Hay and Farrugia, "Black Fatherhood, Hip Hop, and Inner Life," 13.

²¹ Hay and Farrugia, "Black Fatherhood, Hip Hop, and Inner Life," 7-8.

²² Hay and Farrugia, "Black Fatherhood, Hip Hop, and Inner Life," 13.

history. Hay and Farrugia are conscious of this being a potential interpretation of their work and aim to both push back against Moynihan's representation of Black men as well as challenge the notion of a "crisis of Black fatherhood."²³ Their awareness of these two perspectives is precisely the problem in the work. Hay and Farrugia write as if they have lived experience of and are in a position to analyze the intersections of Blackness, class, and manhood under anti-Blackness. The danger in this work is their perceived awareness will grant them access to some Black spaces they should not have access to. In addition, there is a great danger their work will be uncritically cited and used as evidence for similar readings. Our hope is that if Hip Hop methodologies are applied, scholars encountering mischaracterizations of Black masculinity will check their sources and develop holistic readings.

Hip Hop scholars do not have to completely stop doing lyrical analysis; there is a way to analyze rap music and rap music videos that brings the researcher closer to understanding the Hip Hoppa and Hip Hop. The most effective method to examine rap music and videos entails an in-depth analysis of the emcee, the emcee's life, those who write the lyrics, the emcee's intentions and the reception of the song or music video. This can be achieved in a variety of ways: reviewing documentaries, acting as participant observer during the creation of music videos, interviewing the team (producers, directors, writers, and emcees), and holding focus study groups with a population of listeners. Several shows such as MTV's *Behind the Scenes* and *Making the Video*, VH 1's *Behind the Scenes* and Sean "Puff Daddy" Combs' show *Making the Band*, point to what goes into making music and videos. Emcee Mark "Bizzle" Felder's music video for "Regular People" (2011) allows the viewer to witness the production of rap music videos. Providing a documentary style perspective on the making of the video for "Regular People," Bizzle comments:

*And truth be told
A lot of this is make believe
It's time to let the truth be told
They give you what you pay to see
But, when the camera's off, they're
just...
Regular people mayne²⁴*



Still image from Bizzle's music video for "Regular People."

²³ Hay and Farrugia, "Black Fatherhood, Hip Hop, and Inner Life,"

²⁴ Mark Felder, "Regular People," *Tough Love and Parables*, God Over Money Records, 2011, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/KrxmF595km4>

Bizzle and the creative directors provide an illustration of how rap videos are constructed: a set with actors performing roles and presenting a reality that, oftentimes, is distant from that of the emcees. We are not arguing that every rap music video is set up this way. Rather, we challenge Hip Hop scholars to conduct research that digs deeper. We encourage scholars to contact the artists and others on the team when developing close contextual readings of music videos to discover the artist's intents and purposes. This also applies to rap music. There are Hip Hop scholars such as Cheryl Keyes, who conducted ethnographic studies and interviews with emcees to develop her canonical study.²⁵ We advocate for this to be the norm when using lyrical analysis; seeking first-person accounts to assist with close readings of the art and getting as close to what is real as possible.

Shout out to Hip Hop scholars of graffiti, dance, and deejaying, simply by studying the other elements move beyond lyrical analysis. There are some Hip Hop methods that we would like to present for Hip Hop scholars to build off. We are not presenting an exhaustive list of all the methods used in Hip Hop studies. We are highlighting a few beyond lyrical analyses and calling for Hip Hop scholars to research, write, and create Hip Hop methods. Hip Hop studies need methods that do not approach Hip Hop from a deficit lens. Hip Hop methods must engage with all the elements of Hip Hop, from performances to albums, to compact discs, to clothes, flyers, posters and so on. Most importantly, in response to these waves of oppression, it is imperative that we develop methods that do the work by elevating the culture and not just the researcher.²⁶

There are three methods we would like to present: Hiphopography, archival research and geographical research. Archival research and geographical research are self-explanatory. There are several Hip Hop archives including but not limited to Cornell University's, the College of William and Mary, Hip-Hop Radio Archive, Hip-Hop and Rap Across the Smithsonian, Northside Hip Hop Archive, Universal Hip-Hop Museum, and Rice University. An example of geography research is the work of geographer Joshua Jelly-Schapiro's who traced all of the location of the fires in the South Bronx in relation to Hip Hop pioneers.²⁷ For a detailed explanation of Hiphopography, see, James Spady's "Mapping and Re-Membering Hip Hop History, Hiphopography and African Diasporic History."²⁸ Spady developed Hiphopography that brings together Hip Hop and ethnography and consists of in depth interviews where everyone is "mutually present,"

²⁵ Cheryl Lynette Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

²⁶ I (Harris) must show some love to Hip Hop scholar Dr. Tasha Iglesias. I was talking with her while working on this manuscript. She brought up the need for action-based research, examining Hip Hop materials, and not studying Hip Hop from a deficit lens. She is currently drafting a more detailed piece on research methods in Hip Hop studies.

²⁷ His work is in books and documentaries such as *Nonstop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas and Decade of Fire*, ed. Rebecca Solnit and Joshua Jelly-Schapiro (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

²⁸ James Spady, "Mapping and Re-Membering Hip Hop History, Hiphopography and African Diasporic History," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 2 (2013): 126-57.

the researchers recognizes the Hip Hoppa's self-expression, comprehension of how Hip Hoppa's "understand who they are, how they became who they are, and what they make of the process of becoming who they are," and an "identification of the complex tropes, mythologies, subtle paralinguistic gestures, imaginings, and narrative strategies that are deployed to frame who they have been or will be."²⁹

The interdisciplinary nature of Hip Hop studies has led to a variety of fields developing Hip Hop theories, yet they all utilize lyrical analysis. Essentially, they take whatever theories that are popular in their own discipline and then mix it with lyrical analysis to develop "Hip Hop theories." Since we identify Hip Hop as an African diasporic phenomenon, Africana studies provides the ideal theoretical framework to build upon. While numerous scholars have fought back against the stereotypical perspectives of Hip Hop, many of them still place responsibility on the Hip Hoppas. We are not arguing that Hip Hoppas do not play any role at all in their actions, whether they are good or bad, what we are saying is that we need to have a proper perspective of what is really going on. Instead of falling into the Black on Black crime that is usually used to characterize Hip Hop, an apt understanding can come from Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1961).³⁰ In his chapter "Concerning Violence," Fanon exquisitely explains the role of colonization in intra-communal violence against other Black people. The colonizer introduced violence into the society and the colonizer's violence shapes the colonized world. This violence of colonization is not only physical in nature but also affects living conditions, health, beliefs and traditions. Fanon goes on to explain how the overwhelming force of colonization that aims to control every aspect of the colonizer's life will eventually manifest in internal tensions within the oppressed. They cannot let this rage out on the colonizers, they do let it out on each other.

Kwame Ture, formerly known as Stokely Carmichael, drives this point home. He stated: "Anytime you make an analysis of an oppressed people, in any aspect of their life, and you leave out the enemy, you will never come to a correct analysis. On the contrary, you will blame the oppressed for all their problems."³¹ This is very important because much of the commentary on Hip Hop, even by Hip Hop scholars, ends up blaming Hip Hop for all its problems, while not adequately addressing White supremacy and colonization. Hip Hoppas have been dispossessed, lost family and friends at young ages, battled with drugs and addictions, have been cheated financially, dispossessed again, dealt with poor air quality from the highways that were built through their hoods, had their communal living areas not properly maintained by the city, buried teenagers, constantly faced death, are poor, homeless, mocked, abused, unemployed, and

²⁹ Spady, "Mapping and Re-Membering Hip Hop History," 126.

³⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 60th anniversary ed., trans. Richard Philcox, foreword by Homi K. Bhabha, introd. Cornel West, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (1961; New York: Black Cat, 2021).

³¹ "Dr Kwame Ture: No Revolution Without Organization," *YouTube*, uploaded by the Pasma Sobukwe Branch, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROew63_7sg4&t=0s

miseducated among other things and scholars will still blame it on the male rapper. It is almost as if White supremacy does not exist and Hip Hoppas colonized themselves.

We lay out this Africana-informed theory of Hip Hop to accurately make sense of Hip Hop's world and provide something for Hip Hop scholars to utilize. Our hope is that new Hip Hop theories come forth that build on Africana studies and prior Hip Hop scholarship. We need Hip Hop theories that are created by Hip Hop for Hip Hop, not someone outside of Hip Hop defining what Hip Hop is for us. In *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution*, Michael West puts forth this idea of Black internationals and black internationalism. Black internationalism "has a single defining characteristic: struggle."³² West traces the Black freedom struggle from the 18th century to the 21st century and on both sides of the Atlantic. He describes how struggles locally "intersected with one another across diverse boundaries" and formed "a black international that was greater than the sum total of its constituent parts."³³ His work is important because it creates space for us to think about Black people fighting for Black people and being identified with Black people all around the world (space) and since the beginning of colonization and enslavement (time).³⁴ In fact, West states: "From the outset, black internationalism envisioned a circle of universal emancipation, unbroken in space and time."³⁵ To drive home how this relates to Hip Hop, he posits that this vision of universal emancipation is personified by Toussaint Louverture and Tupac Shakur, thereby connecting two Black people from two different countries and several centuries in one freedom struggle. This is a skeletal framework we would like to put forth in order to build new theories of Hip Hop studies. Let us now look at how we should look at Hip Hop beyond space and time in detail.

Hip Hop Beyond Space and Time

A prevailing theme in Hip Hop studies (and academia as a whole) is to look at 20th century Black history around the Civil Rights Movement. While there have been some arguments towards a "long" Civil Rights Movement that question when the movement started, it is still pretty much universally accepted in Hip Hop studies to think of Hip Hop as a post-soul aesthetic³⁶ or within a post-Civil Rights Movement era. Bakari Kitwana, who coined the term Hip Hop generation states: "The question has been a

³² Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins, eds., *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

³³ Michael O. West and William G. Martin, "Contours of the Black International: From Toussaint to Tupac," introduction, in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution*, ed. by Michael O. West, William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

³⁴ While Michael O. West defines the beginning of Black internationalism with Toussaint, I (Harris) would contend that we should start with the first enslaved Africans being taken across the water in the early 1500s.

³⁵ West and Martin, "Contours of the Black International: From Toussaint to Tupac," 1.

³⁶ See Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

defining one for those of us who grew up in post-civil rights Black America, especially for our generation's intellectuals."³⁷ With over one thousand citations, Kitwana's book *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (2003), has been solidified as a key idea in Hip Hop studies (and academia).³⁸ In *It's Bigger than Hip Hop: The Rise of the Post-Hip-Hop Generation* (2008), M. K. Asante argued for a post-Hip-Hop generation that is "now" 2008, and consists of those who are Hip Hop but have problems with the commercialization of Hip Hop.³⁹

The term the "Civil Rights Movement" does not best describe the Black freedom struggle but due to our focus, we will not get into the details of this perspective.⁴⁰ What is important is recognizing, as elaborated by West, that the Black freedom struggle did not start in the 1950s and in the US south. Rather, Black people have been fighting for their freedom against Europeans in Africa from the beginning of colonization and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This is how West can go from Touissant to Tupac. By placing Hip Hop within this context of the Black freedom struggle then, we can also go beyond New York 1973 as the starting place of Hip Hop. KRS One contends that Hip Hop started in 3114 BCE, based on the Mayan calendar. While we are not arguing that Hip Hop started then, we need to take KRS's perspective seriously.

What KRS is getting at is thinking about the elements and essence that make up Hip Hop. We can all agree that the first person to deejay, rap, or spray did not start in 1973. Therefore, we must account for these elements pre-1973. We contend that the essence of these elements is African. That which makes up the composition of all the elements that goes into Hip Hop comes out of the soul, soil, and spirit of Africa. Therefore, Hip Hop is an African diasporic phenomenon. It does not have roots in Africa but is composed of ciphaz and flows that flow out of Africa and manifests in New York.⁴¹

³⁷ Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), xi.

³⁸ According to Google Scholar, it has 1280 citations. *Google Scholar*, https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=4117987214521518870&as_sdt=5,47&sciodt=0,47&hl=en

³⁹ M. K. Asante, Jr, *It's Bigger than Hip Hop: The Rise of the Post-Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St Martin's Griffin, 2008).

⁴⁰ Quickly, there are several problems with the term. First, rest in peace to Baba Dhati, a freedom fighter from St. Louis who was active in the freedom struggle from the later 1960s all the way up to this year (2022) when he recently died. I (Harris) researched the naming of the "Civil Rights Movement" and spoke with him in depth about this and we concluded that the White media named it the Civil Rights Movement and not the actual Black people on the ground. Additionally, Vincent Harding posited that naming was far too limited in describing what truly happened in the 1960s in an interview, Vincent Harding, "Vincent Harding -- Beyond Civil Rights: Building Spiritual Democracy, Pt 1," *YouTube*, uploaded by the Ikeda Center, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFgzPIGOumI>. Lastly, Malcolm X spoke out against the framing of a Civil Rights movement because of its US-centric focus and argued for human rights in order to account for Black people all over the world.

⁴¹ For a detailed explanation of migrations and the multiple cultures and ethnicities that contributed to Hip Hop, see *Beyond Christian Hip Hop: A Move Towards Christians and Hip Hop* (Routledge Studies in Hip Hop and Religion), ed. Erika Gault and Travis Harris (New York: Routledge, 2019). For a

We are aware of the ongoing debates inside and outside of academia on when Hip Hop started. Some point to dancing and rapping pre-1973 in what they identify as an African American culture and thereby conclude that it is an African American culture phenomenon. There are several major problems with this perspective. One is that the elements that influence Hip Hop are not strictly African American. For example, capoeira has a clear influence on b-boyin/girlin while mambo has a clear influence on the music. One may argue back against the Latino/a influence but there was clearly an Afro-Latino/a presence in New York that is undeniable. Secondly, the dancing and “rapping” that would be considered African American are African diasporic. There is no way these cultural aesthetics would exist without the ciphaz and flows coming out of Africa. Lastly, the major contribution we are hoping to make is to elevate the importance of Hip Hop as collective consciousness. That is, a shared idea that “does not appear in any physical reality” and “is outside of space and time.” KRS One talks about it in “40 Years of Hip Hop.”⁴² This shared idea is not bound by space and time and cannot easily be nailed down to America. This collective consciousness is a part of that same revolutionary spirit that fought back against European slave raiders in Africa, that fought Europeans on the shores of Africa and the ships during saltwater slavery. This collective consciousness is connected to the enslaved songs and spirituals that they used to keep the work rhythm to ensure no African would be punished for not producing the correct amount of work. They also entailed hidden messages on planning their escape because going to heaven also meant going up North to be freed. This collective consciousness is a part of the creative energies in Haiti and Brazil that led to a revolution and the creation of new dance forms. This collective consciousness is a part of those people in the Bronx in the late 1960s and early 1970s where all these elements came together in the middle of dispossession and destruction. The city was on fire, Hip Hoppas were kicked out of their homes by slumlords, the government did not do its part to maintain the city, and unemployment was skyrocketing. Out of all this, the creative energies coalesced, and Hip Hop manifested. Hip Hoppas in the South Bronx took scraps and chaos and created, scratched, breathed, partied and formed a culture based off this collective consciousness.

If we think about Hip Hop from this perspective, then we really need to reconsider existing scholarship and consider room for growth in Hip Hop Studies. A lot of Hip Hop written in the US is too US centric and does not account for Hip Hop around the world or the subfield of global Hip Hop studies. The many events that contributed to the ciphaz and flows (cultural interactions throughout the continent, transatlantic slave trade, multiple dispossessions, disenfranchisement, benign neglect and so on) makes it more receptive to those who have similar situations and influences its true identity. Therefore, immigrants who were dispossessed and forced to move to certain parts of

detailed description of ciphaz and flows, see Travis T. Harris, “Can It Be Bigger than Hip Hop? From Global Hip Hop Studies to Hip Hop,” *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 17–70, <https://doi.org/10.34718/27nk-bx98>

⁴² Lawrence “Kris” Parker (KRS-One), “40 Years of Hip Hop” - KRS 1 Lecture, YouTube, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYEgYnGVOwo>.

Europe clung to and found their identity in Hip Hop because their story was present and a part of the collective consciousness of Hip Hop. When we talk about “real Hip Hop” we need to get as close to this idea of a collective consciousness, not underground or conscious rappers.

Discussion of Hip Hop Elements

The shift in focus from rap music to collective consciousness opens the conversation to engaging with all the elements of Hip Hop, not just emceeing. On one hand, the proliferation of rap music has even hindered our understanding of the element of emceeing. On the other hand, we have yet, as a field, to give a thorough analysis of all the elements of Hip Hop. How many elements are there in Hip Hop? This is an interesting conversation because in the 1970s, Hip Hoppers did not call them “elements.” Also, one “element” that is usually left out of the conversation is “double dutching.”⁴³ All of Hip Hop agrees on the four foundational elements: breakin, emceeing, graffiti and deejaying. If they called them elements in the 1970s, then double dutching would have been the fifth element.

After these four foundational elements, this is where the various perspectives come in. The Zulu Nation says there are five elements with the fifth one being knowledge.⁴⁴ The Temple of Hip Hop, started by KRS One, claims that there are nine and are symbolized as B.E.G.D.B.F.L.K.E. They are: breakin, emceeing, graffiti art, deejaying, beat boxin, street fashion, street language, street knowledge and street entrepreneurialism. In Daniel White Hodge’s classic text, *The Soul of Hip Hop* (2010) he combines the Zulu Nation and Temple of Hip Hop and lays out ten. He also expands on the element of knowledge to be knowledge of God and self. Here are the ten Hodge puts forth: breakin, emceeing, graffiti art, deejaying, knowledge of God and self, beat boxin, street fashion, street language, street knowledge and street entrepreneurialism.

The Hip Hop elements are a key and critical part of organizing that which is without limit. Together, these interwoven tools have weaved a world-wide web that elevates marginalized voices and articulates intimate personal expressions. These expressions as we know are so powerful to the point where individual people have actualized and realized their personal political power, for once a person exists, engages in critical thinking and can independently decipher the world in which they live (the youth call this being “woke”), they de facto become political beings in that they stand for something.

Of course, with all things human, there are numerous ways to organize, frame and name these organizing principles, or elements, of Hip Hop. For our purposes here, the

⁴³ Thank you to Tasha Iglesias for reminding us of this element. Also check out Kyra D. Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* (New York: New York University Press, 2006) for a detailed analysis of double dutch.

⁴⁴ “The 5 Elements of Hip Hop: Graffiti, Emcee, DJing, B-Boy/B-Girl and Knowledge,” *Elements*, Universal Zulu Nation website, <https://www.zulunation.com/elements/>

five elements are: deejaying, emceeing, b-boyin/b-girlin, street arts and knowledge of self.

Emceeing represents the talented vocalist who has mastered the art of the rhyme. MC is short for “emcee” or “Master of Ceremonies.” Rather than subject the audience to a vulgar and base display of unimaginative lyrics, the clever and intellectually agile artist can regale the crowd with clever wordplay, creative constructs, marvelous metaphors -- all in the name of celebrating their life via Hip Hop. This element has allowed us collectively to recognize local and culturally relevant performers and support the organic growth of talent already within our midst.

Deejaying involves manipulating time and space to find the best rhythm that many people can share communally. This is a powerful responsibility, for just as a careful chemist must mix certain formulas for certain effects, the DJ also must discern the proper musical vibration that corresponds with the appropriate time and space of the gathering. Hip Hop DJs mix and blend songs from various genres together. They scratch records to repeat phrases or create percussive sounds and rhythms. Musical loops are created on the turntables and bodies move. The original Hip Hop DJs focused on sections of music that highlighted the drums and accompanying bass lines of the songs. These sections are called the breakdowns or breaks of the records. When the breaks come on then it's time for the B-boys and B-girls to shine.

B-boying/b-girling describes when individuals, stimulated and motivated by the breaks that the DJ has carefully selected, are literally moved to contort and twist their body as a reflection of the vibrations in public resonance. “Breakdancing” was a term created by the media, early on to describe B-boyin/girlin.

Graffiti incorporates the unbridled artistic expression manifested by those creative souls with Hip Hop pumping well within their bloodstream. Whether it be through stylistic and innovative or inventive forms of dress, new linguistic conventions or colorful graf or graffiti renderings, Hip Hop demands that people stay original and true to what they know to be real. For those who listen and heed this advice, we benefit from witnessing some truly powerfully artistic displays. “Graf” is short for graffiti. In addition to graffiti, there is “street art.” Basically, street art is a legal form of graffiti and offers opportunities for artists to get paid. The legalization of graffiti and the ability to get paid has raised some major ethical questions for Hip Hop and graffiti artists. This element of graffiti is one in which we need to do a better job of bridging academia and the culture. There are some who want to be referred to as graffiti writers, not graffiti artists and definitely not street artists.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Dominic Wass, “A Graffiti Writer,” *Urban Gypset*, March 30, 2020, <https://urbangypset.com/uncategorized/a-graffiti-writer/>; and Olivia Monahan, “We’re Not Street Artists, We’re Graffiti Writers: Chester Wallnut,” *The Dirt on Jersey City*, April 6, 2016, <https://thedirtonjerseycity.com/2016/04/03/were-not-street-artists-were-graffiti-writers-chester-wallnuts/>

Finally, with knowledge of self, under the premise of “learning by doing,” many Hip Hop practitioners in the spirit of community, freely share what works for them as they navigate the daily vicissitudes and vagaries of life. The concept of knowledge of self was brought to the culture via the influence of the 5% Nation of Gods and Earths as well as teaching from the Nation of Islam. These groups, among others, concern themselves with black consciousness, self-awareness and the pursuit of freedom, justice and equality. This element is arguably the most precious of all since it comprises the very processes that help create Hip Hop. The very process of coming together and filtering ideas and translating social thoughts and concepts and personal experiences into a visual and audio form proves both challenging and enlightening. Terms like “dropping gems” and “building” and “cipher” were also brought to the culture by Hip Hoppers who were members of or influenced by the 5% Nation of Gods and Earths. This exercise of “dropping gems” or “building within a cipher” will certainly heighten appreciation of Hip Hop as a technical craft outside of its entertainment-based focus within the mainstream. This wisdom-sharing principle is unique to real Hip Hop and is often overlooked when critics rightfully cast aspersions on the more commercialized and commodified forms of rap music. However, for those who make time to listen, many remain appreciative -- if not indebted -- for the higher intellectual fruits that Hip Hop has to offer.

In sum, together these elements demonstrate that Hip Hop in its purest form is a very valuable, creative and inspirational art form that is deceptively complex, philosophical and undoubtedly higher order in origin and execution. Ultimately, we must reconcile with the idea that Hip Hop is a powerful, poignant and poetic expression of the human quest for dignity and respect.

We need more Hip Hop scholarship that looks at all these elements. Any scholarly piece submitted to *JHHS* that does not focus on the rapper will automatically be accepted.⁴⁶ When it comes to emceeing, we do not need an increase in quantity, rather, an increase in quality of scholarship. We have noticed that there are either some unspoken ideas about what rappers are doing when they rap, or scholars just do not know. While there are some scholarly works that engage with some of the very specific aspects of emceeing, there is still room for detailed explanation.

Additionally, we need more scholarship on Hip Hop theaters, Hip Hop churches,⁴⁷ Hip Hop photography, Hip Hop documentaries, and Hip Hop and technology. In Chude-

⁴⁶ We do not want to confuse anyone with the statement. During our peer review process, we have three options for all submissions: reject, accept with significant changes, or accept with minor changes. All pieces that do not focus on the rapper will not be rejected, they will be accepted and published after the appropriate changes are made.

⁴⁷ There are three first-hand accounts of Hip Hop churches that have been published by the pastors of those churches: Eric Gutierrez, *Disciples of the Street: The Promise of a Hip Hop Church* (New York: Seabury Books, 2008); Efreem Smith and Phil Jackson, *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Tommy Kyllonen, *Un.Orthodox: Church. Hip-Hop. Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

Sokei's book, *The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics* (2016), he does not primarily focus on Hip Hop, but he does bring awareness to the conversation surrounding Black people and technology. He explains how the two are usually placed in opposition to one another, Black people being primitive while technology represents the future. In great detail, he shows not only how this assertion is wrong, but that Black people have been at the forefront of technological innovations. When focusing on Hip Hop, it should be evidently clear how Hip Hoppas used what they had and developed some of the most innovative technologies amid dispossession and destruction. Now we as a field must vigorously investigate all the elements of Hip Hop.

What Now?

In Gail Hilson Woldu's review of Hip Hop studies, "The Kaleidoscope of Writing on Hip-Hop Culture" in 2010, she concluded: "If past trends in writing about hip-hop culture predict future trends accurately, we will continue to be flush in both quality and quantity of published material."⁴⁸ Woldu was spot on in predicting the exponential growth of articles on Hip Hop since 2010. Thousands of Hip Hop articles have been published since then, but the quality of articles have not been up to par. Our goal with this issue is to encourage Hip Hop scholars to move the field forward. To do this, we suggest: have a clear identity as a Hip Hop scholar that is separate from journalists, develop Hip Hop scholarship that is Hip Hop scholarship through and through, be accountable to the culture and produce work that has that Hip Hop feel.

The heavy focus on rap music by Hip Hop scholars raises the question, what is the difference between a Hip Hop scholar and a journalist? Hip Hop journalists and Hip Hop scholars both speak to popular culture and critique/examine/interrogate mainstream rap music. This has been the case so much throughout the history of Hip Hop studies that Woldu included Hip Hop journalists in her review of Hip Hop scholarship. In addition to what we laid out in the methods section above, many of these popular culture pieces are one-sided. Hip Hop journalists and scholars are analyzing rappers from afar and presenting their opinions to the masses. All the while leaving all the other elements of Hip Hop.

We are calling for Hip Hop scholars to provide more than journalists. To fully capture the element of emceeing, Hip Hop scholars must go beyond sound bites, clips, interviews, and songs. We must research all of Hip Hop beyond space and time. We can also set ourselves apart from journalists by having a clearer sense of who our audience is. We have written as if rappers and those in the culture are reading our work. Is it possible that they may come across our three hundred plus page Hip Hop book? Yes, it is but it is unlikely for our books to crossover out of academia and into the culture. If we want those outside of academia to read our work, we need to present it in a way and use language that is accessible for them, not academic jargon. Even when it comes to other

⁴⁸ Gail Hilson Woldu, "The Kaleidoscope of Writing on Hip-Hop Culture" *Notes* 67, no. 1 (2010): 9-38, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40858201>.

academics, if we are publishing for undergraduates, then we also need to present our work in an accessible manner. In conversations between editors, several comments have been made about assigning scholarly works, but they do not work because undergraduates have difficulty understanding them.

In addition to setting ourselves apart from journalists, now we must build the field of Hip Hop studies in a Hip Hop way. What we mean by that is having our work be Hip Hop through and through. We need Hip Hop scholars. Scholars who are trained and thoroughly researched the field. Scholars who live Hip Hop, teach Hip Hop, read Hip Hop, attend Hip Hop conferences and are a part of the Hip Hop culture. We need scholars who are Hip Hop.

We need Hip Hop scholars who cite other Hip Hop scholars. Much of the existing Hip Hop literature does not build on previous Hip Hop works. We can address this. The bibliography for this article includes a list of texts that shape the field in addition to ones used to inform this article. This bibliography provides a well-rounded perspective of the field. Also, we published a “(Global) Hip Hop Studies Bibliography” which provides a list of Hip Hop sources that are not confined solely to the United States. Our hope is that this will be helpful in recognizing Hip Hop is not bound by space and the connections between Hip Hop scholars’ projects around the world.

We are not arguing against the interdisciplinary nature of Hip Hop, rather that Hip Hop studies should be Hip Hop first. In fact, a Hip Hop perspective changes how we see the world and how we understand other disciplines and fields. For example, look at religion. The work of the subfield of religion and Hip Hop studies reveals that Hip Hop challenges religionists’ methodologies due to religionists bringing their preconceived notions about Hip Hoppas to their study subjects. When looking at politics through a Hip Hop lens, it strengthens the existing arguments about the politics of everyday life and shines a light on how those who are usually left out of the political discourse not only have fully informed political views but also have played key roles in mass mediating these political views. During the George Floyd uprising in 2020, the on the ground freedom fighters were exclaiming “It’s bigger than George Floyd” while also playing/shouting Nipsey Hussle’s “Fuck Donald Trump.” Recognizing Hip Hop as a collective consciousness not bound by space and time makes understanding the actions of freedom fighters in 2020 in Minneapolis explicitly clear. As Hip Hoppas, they connected to “the Spirit that permeates everything that is,” because “everything in the universe is interconnected,”⁴⁹ and this empowered them to fight for their freedom in the same way our ancestors did from previous generations.

A significant issue we deal with and must address is the absence of accountability in Hip Hop studies that is not missing in Hip Hop. In Hip Hop, one must prove

⁴⁹ Nathaniel Norment, Jr., *African American Studies: The Discipline and Its Dimensions* (Bern, CH: Peter Lang US, 2016), 253.

themselves. If they fall off and are not right, then they could fall off. In an interview, b-boy Alien Ness said: "If I don't win, I don't eat."⁵⁰ Outkast also rapped:

*And he kept asking me, "What kinda car you drive? I know you paid
I know y'all got beaucoup of hoes from all them songs that y'all done made"
And I replied that I had been going through the same things that he had
True, I've got more fans than the average man, but not enough loot to last me
To the end of the week, I live by the beat, like you live check-to-check
If you don't move yo' foot then I don't eat, so we like neck to neck*

While some may immediately object to looking at these lyrics while we are arguing against lyrical analysis, we know that Outkast is correct because artists' actual compensation of funds comes from concerts and people buying their products. In addition to b-boys/b-girls and emcees, deejays often talk about the need to keep the party going. If people leave the floor and the crowd is not feeling the deejay, then they will not get called back again. This is common throughout Hip Hop, but not Hip Hop studies. Academics can write and say things about Hip Hop without any accountability. I (Harris) attended the Hip Hop *Show and Prove* academic conference in 2018 with Hip Hop pioneer and legendary b-boy Clemente "Kid Freeze" Moreno. He is famous for being one of the first to do the continuous head spin. We were on a panel together, but we also attended other sessions and plenaries at the conference. Routinely he would point out inaccurate statements made by presenters. I am not referring to graduate students who were still working out their arguments, rather tenured professors who are supposedly knowledgeable and well established in the field. His insight provided the necessary critique that is present throughout Hip Hop that we truly need in Hip Hop studies. We need real Hip Hoppas in the culture to hold Hip Hop studies accountable. Academics have written and can continue to publish and teach without any consequences while numerous Hip Hoppas struggle just to make it. No longer shall academics continue to eat off subpar work while b-boys/b-girls, deejays, graffiti artists and rappers put in blood, sweat, and tears just to eat. Hip Hop studies must be held accountable and to the right standard.

Our last suggestion for moving the field forward is to produce work that is connected to the culture. We are calling this "that Hip Hop feel." If you quickly read Marcus Smalls' review "Clan in Da Front - Wu-Tang: An American Saga Review," you will see what we mean.⁵¹ We hope that Hip Hop scholars publish dope work and *JHHS* aims to put out dynamic, vibing, and hitting Hip Hop scholarship that Hip Hop can rock with. We recognize our primary audience is academia, but we also want to reach the culture. If a b-girl/b-boy, deejay, or Hip Hop head pick up one of our essays, we want

⁵⁰ Chang, *Total Chaos*, 31.

⁵¹ Marcus Smalls, "Clan in Da Front-Wu-Tang: An American Saga Review," *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 8, no. 1, article 3 (2021): 7-13, <https://doi.org/10.34718/99g0-1h28>

them to respond by saying “That’s fire.” If they cannot rock with it, then we need to do better.

All the articles contained in this issue push the boundaries of Hip Hop studies in directions hitherto uncharted and, perhaps most importantly, create new lanes for further study that will ultimately transform the field in ways that only true lovers of hip hop can generate. While they each respect and cite the seminal texts and research that has marked the field, they are also unafraid to chart new territory. Anwar Uhuru’s “ ‘Imbedded’ Belonging and Black Being: A Critical Analysis of Hip Hop Beingness in Kendrick Lamar’s 2016 Grammy Awards Performance” invites readers to consider “performance” as a means by which rappers convey meaning. Not only is this useful in helping us get past the predominance of lyrical analysis, but it also opens the doors for scholars of hip hop to consider performance in other hip hop arenas (e.g. battle rap, freestyle ciphers, etc). In the specific case of Kendrick Lamar, Uhuru details how Kendrick’s performance in 2016 is a commentary on the perception of the black body in the United States.

Leah Tonnelle Gaines’s article on 2pac, entitled “This Ain’t Just a Rap Song: 2Pac, Sociopolitical Realities, and Hip Hop Nation Language,” pushes past the exhausted method of lyrical analysis by incorporating Hip Hop Nation Language as a framework. In doing so, Gaines can get us closer to how 2Pac intended his music to be received as opposed to offering a lyrical analysis that is based on aesthetic concepts unconnected to hip hop culture. Gaines’s article opens the doors for further research into rap music that centralizes the rapper’s agency in determining the message of their music.

Pyar Seth’s, Carlton Keith Harrison’s, and Jasmyn Mackell’s article entitled “Grinding All My Life: Nipsey Hussle, Community Health, and Care Ethics” as well as Brittany Lee Long’s “Hustle in H-Town: Hip Hop Entrepreneurialism in Houston” are similar in that they arguably break entirely new ground in their treatment of rappers as community health organizers and as entrepreneurs respectively. This is incredibly valuable work because it allows us to move past rap music as the central focus of Hip Hop studies. In particular, it allows us to view Hip Hop not only as a noun that references an African diasporic phenomenon, but also as an adjective that describes, among other things, the nature of one’s relationship to their own community. In other words, there is something very “Hip Hop” about serving one’s community and this is an idea that warrants deeper investigation.

Following the publication of this volume nine, our goal is to do it big for volume ten. Our hope is that volume 10 will unlock the full potential of Hip Hop studies and move the entire field forward. This volume will consist of an innovative and interactive publication. All the “articles” will bring Hip Hop to life and include live videos, songs, deejay mixes and potentially curated graffiti pieces. Hip Hop scholarship is hindered by the text based medium. To fully understand Hip Hop, we need to both see the b-girl and listen to or read the explanation of their dance. When it comes to emcees, we can get a fuller understanding of their songs by going through the whole recording process, discovering why they chose that beat, finding out what did they mean by their lyrics,

discovering who they want to reach with that song, and learning how their music fit in with the overall work. The successful implementation of a completely digital, interactive and 4D publication will transform how we publish and understand Hip Hop.

Answering Ancestral Call

The question that lies before us, amid these waves of oppression, is how are we going to respond? Since Hip Hop is more than music, how will we incorporate all the elements and characteristics that make up Hip Hop in our responses? “Hip Hop Future” envisions a new direction for Hip Hop Studies and challenges scholars to take a faith filled and sacrificial step onto their path of ancestral voices that have carried us this far. We do not need another lyrical analysis of DMX’s “Slippin” or surface level examination of Megan Thee Stallion’s role in Hip Hop.

Hip Hop Studies must step up and fulfill its role in the academy to fight systemic oppression and empower the most vulnerable within the academy. The goal then should be as the most vulnerable are emboldened, whether they are students, or Black and Brown faculty, they can then “fight the power” in their scholarly and local communities. The last step also entails a new way of doing Hip Hop scholarship. Let us decolonize our text, remix our scholarly works and create innovative and interactive scholarly pieces that entail audio, video, and dope aesthetics.

Surrounded by these great clouds of witnesses, we feel both an urgency and weightiness to ensure that we do justice to our Hip Hop ancestors and step into our ancestral path. Toni Morrison dedicated *Beloved* to “Sixty million and more.” This represents black people who lost their lives during the Transatlantic slave trade. They are not forgotten and live on in the African Diaspora today. As discussed in this introduction, Hip Hop is an African diasporic phenomenon that represents knowledge of self, community, and justice. Hip hop culture, as well as the scholarship it produces, must connect to our ancestors and give a voice to the sixty million and more. The *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* produces scholarship that celebrates and memorializes our ancestors.

If academics want to study Hip Hop, then they should care about the conditions of black people, and by extension, our ancestors, as Hip Hop cannot be divorced from its African essence. Utilizing a Hip Hop methodological framework is one that recognizes black people's crucial contributions to the culture. It is important that academics interrogate their own subject positions when studying Hip Hop. Ask yourself what your relationship is to the lyrics you quote, the people you interview, and the scholars you cite. Knowledge of self includes knowledge of one's scholarly self, communal self, and spiritual self. Acknowledge one's privileges and oppressions and interrogate who you are in relation to your scholarship.

Since community is a foundational tenet of Hip Hop culture, Hip Hop scholarship does not only take place in the Ivory Tower, and Hip Hoppers must find each other,

regardless of where they are located. Academia does not have a monopoly on Hip Hop scholarship, and connections should be made inside and outside of the Ivory Tower. Hip Hop scholars, no matter where they are, must always remember that this is a community built on trust, knowledge, and democracy. Please do not be the person who writes about black rappers and then implicitly discriminates against black people. As the African proverb says, "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together."

JHHS cares about producing strong, innovative Hip Hop scholarship, and we welcome submissions that incorporate all elements of Hip Hop. We welcome graffiti, paintings, digital humanities, audio pieces, and innovative pieces that academia has never seen before. While we also welcome traditional scholarly journal articles, don't be afraid to work within and across different interactive and multimodal genres. A.D. Carson and many other academics have submitted their dissertations as rap albums, and this is the type of scholarship we will showcase. If you see a breakin battle and you want to respond with a graffiti inspired painting, that is fine. If you experience excellent deejaying at a party and you want to respond with rap lyrics, please do so. We recognize that sometimes, the traditional scholarly journal article genre does not capture the feelings, intensity, and creativity that a song, picture, or dance might. Our ancestors might guide you towards another genre, and it is important to listen to, and follow, their guidance.

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