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GEMS is a peer-reviewed, online journal that explores the myriad intersections between gender, education, music and society. Emphasis is on the ways in which music teaching and learning can be used to re-dress and eliminate inequalities brought about through ideologies of domination by creating an open-ness to the musical experience that promotes access to all (and thus by extension, also the ways in which music teaching and learning have not been transformative in the past). Gender will be approached, not as male or female, but as a continuum of possibilities sustained by socially and historically constructed notions of masculinity and femininity that interact in complex, often competing and contradictory ways. A wide variety of methodological (historical, ethnographic, philosophical, sociological, etc.) and inter-disciplinary orientations will be featured, with contributors encouraged to make use of the variety of creative options presented by the electronic medium.

Materials submitted to GEMS must conform to the current edition of one of the following writing style manuals: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, The Chicago Manual of Style*, or *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Articles and Book Reviews may not mix styles within a single manuscript. To allow for the identity of the author(s) to be transparent, it is requested that both first and last names be used when citing and when listed in the references.

For Text:
Roberta Lamb and Julia Koza brought feminist critiques of music education.

For References:

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Editorial

I would like to welcome readers to the April 2014 issue of GEMS.

Call for Submissions: Gender Research in Music Education (GRIME)

Are you looking for a place to share any important news that intersects with Gender Research in Music Education? The GRIME co-chairs are accepting submissions for their June 2014 Newsletter. Please feel free to share any scholarly events that are taking place in your community, such as a conference or workshop event of potential interest.

Do you have a call for papers to advertise? Do you have a new CD to promote, or a new publication? Please consider showcasing your scholarly work with GRIME. All accepted submissions will be curated and posted to our facebook page, website, and newsletter to be circulated among our members.

Please include your name, title, contact information, institutional address—including all relevant details and approved images in .jpeg or .pdf format about your submission—in an email to Jennifer Blackwell and Dr. Miroslav Pavle Manovski at chair@genderresearchinmusiceducation.org.

We hope to hear from you soon! Submission deadline: May 15, 2014

Due to the concern that the older GEMS website may not always be accessible to readers, in March 2014 I reprinted the first issue of GEMS (2002). It has been well received and at this time, it has been downloaded 155 times. I plan on publishing additional earlier issues of GEMS in the near future.

I am pleased to announce that the September 2013 issue of GEMS will soon reach the 1000 download. Congratulations to all of the authors who contributed to this issue.

In the April 2014 issue of GEMS, Dr. Colleen Sears in their article titled, “The Persona Problem: How Expectations Of Masculinity Shape Female Band Director Identity” examined four female high school band directors’ perceptions of the “conductor persona” and to understand how these perceptions influence their teaching identities. Participants shaped her teaching identity by accepting, blending, or rejecting behaviors that signify traditional masculinity or femininity. Sears asserts that it may be time to challenge the masculine/feminine dichotomy as it relates to the band director persona.

Lauren M. Gardner provides a literature review titled “‘We Either Move Or Petrify’: Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms Amongst Hip Hop Dancers and Graffitieras – A Critical Literature Review”. The article presents initial analysis of the discourse of ‘self’ and ‘other’ vis-à-vis the individual and the collective to explore the possibility of employing a tenet of Hip Hop culture, the ‘me:we’ value in order to complicate the ‘self:other’ dichotomy present in much Transnational Hip Hop Feminist research. Three case studies are presented to elucidate the revolutionary and transformative potential of THHF across the rap, dance and graffiti genre of Hip Hop expressive art and cultural production. Gardner explains just as Transnational Hip Hop Feminists utilize cultural tools, discourse, practices, and praxis, Transnational Hip Hop Feminists express dialectic complexities, celebrate histories, preserve and develop Hip Hop culture in order to build transformative theoretical frameworks to influence social policy and articulate their stance and vision of the good life through creative protest.

Dr. Rick Parker provides a book review of Vicious: True Stories By Teens About Bullying by Hope Vanderber (Ed.). This book records 20 different accounts of adolescent teens who have experienced forms of verbal and physical bullying firsthand. Each victim recollects their memories of names, physical assaults, and emotional traumas which they encountered on a continual basis. The victims’ stories range from elementary school to high school incidents.

I would like readers to support the authors whose articles and book reviews are included in the GEMS. You can post your comments pertaining to individual articles published in GEMS on GEMS blog page at http://gendereducationmusicandsociety.blogspot.com/

GEMS is actively seeking articles and book reviews submissions. Please contact the editor at gems_editor@yahoo.com

Dr. Colleen Pinar, Editor
The Persona Problem: How Expectations Of Masculinity Shape Female Band Director Identity

Dr. Colleen Sears

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Abstract: The conductor is synonymous with a persona, an inherently masculine identity that is consistently represented as powerful and authoritative in popular culture. The culture of masculinity in band directing restricts access for women seeking secondary instrumental music positions and influences the way female conductors construct professional identities. The purpose of this study is to examine four female high school band directors’ perceptions of the “conductor persona” and to understand how these perceptions influence their teaching identities. Participants agreed that school administrators and colleagues expect high school band directors to perform traditionally masculine behaviors in their jobs. Each participant shaped her teaching identity by accepting, blending, or rejecting behaviors that signify traditional masculinity or femininity in the classroom and on the podium. The expectation of masculinity in secondary instrumental music education leaves little room for the creation of non-masculine teaching identities and is a likely reason for the continued rarity of women in the profession.
Introduction

I sink into the eggplant purple couch and snuggle with my two-year-old daughter to watch this morning’s episode of Sesame Street. “M…Music” the narrator says as a short animated piece begins. We hear the din of the orchestra as they warm up. After a few seconds, the conductor grandly takes his place at the front of the stage. His statuesque figure towers above the musicians. Black tuxedo tails fall behind him; his grey hair is artistically disheveled. He raises his hands and inspects the performers, discerning their readiness to play. He enjoys the suspense for a moment and Beethoven’s Fifth begins. M, music; M, Maestro; M, man.

Purpose

The conductor is synonymous with a persona, a character type, an inherently masculine identity that is consistently represented as powerful and authoritative in popular culture. Females are effectively nonexistent as major orchestra conductors and are severely underrepresented as high school and college band directors (“Gender Trends among MENC Music Educators,” 2001; Sheldon & Hartley, 2010; Woolfe, 2013). The culture of masculinity in band directing restricts access for women seeking secondary instrumental music positions and influences the way female conductors construct their professional identities. The purpose of this study is to examine four female high school band directors’ perceptions of the “conductor persona” and to understand how these perceptions influence the construction of their teaching identities.

Theoretical Framework

Anti-femininity, assertiveness, and toughness have been constructed as traditionally masculine traits (Dodson and Borders, 2006) while expression of emotions and caring for others are traditionally interpreted as feminine behaviors (Gilligan, 1982; Efthim, Kenny, & Mahalik, 2001). The role of the band director is consistently characterized by masculine traits of power, assertiveness, and toughness (Green, 1997; Gould, 2005). Female band directors operate in a world where traditional masculinity is expected and traditional femininity is criticized or rejected (Fuller, 1996).

As Roberta Lamb states, “Foucault has suggested, the problem is not to discover who we are, but to refuse who we are… dominant discourses make available forms of identity which are tightly circumscribed and which exclude many people” (1996, p. 125). The dominant discourses, or institutionalized practices in instrumental music education leave little room for women to create spaces and identities within the traditionally masculine field (Walshaw, 2001). While developments such as blind auditions have created more equitable opportunities for women in instrumental performance (Green, 1997), professional opportunities for female conductors are still extremely limited (Woolfe, 2013). Female conductors are expected to replicate the stylized, traditionally masculine acts of toughness and assertiveness while on the podium. Perceived displays of femininity in choice of attire and conducting style are openly criticized (Fuller, 1996). These gendered expectations make it difficult, if not impossible for females to enter the world of professional conducting.

Judith Butler states, “…gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences…those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished” (2003, p. 417). Female band directors negotiate a perilous situation. They cannot perform masculinity “right,” as physical displays of femininity disrupt the traditional notion of the male conductor and are pointed out and criticized as points of weakness and distraction (Fuller, 1996). Nor can they perform femininity “right,” as the cultural, social, and historical development of instrumental music requires women conductors to be tough, assertive, powerful, and impersonal. Females in secondary instrumental music education ultimately shape their identities by negotiating the competing roles of authoritative conductor and caring teacher through a careful balancing act of gender performance that allows them to operate within the socially constructed norms of the profession. Female band director identity will therefore be defined as the “categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). The paucity of women in secondary instrumental music could indicate that the cultural expectation of female band directors to perform the masculine conductor role

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is too great a price to pay if the feminine identity is criticized, silenced, or destroyed in the process.

**Methods And Data Sources**

Participants for the study were selected via purposeful sampling techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To identify possible participants, I contacted four individuals responsible for coordinating student teaching in music education departments at nearby colleges and universities. I contacted student teaching coordinators because they are usually familiar with the music teachers who are employed by local school districts. I asked the music education student teaching coordinators to suggest female high school band directors that they thought might be interested in participating in the study. While eleven female high school band directors participated in the study, this paper will focus on four participants who spoke extensively about the band director persona and the process of crafting a teaching identity.

The data were collected via two in-person, semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted for approximately two hours. I developed a semi-structured interview outline that began with broad, “grand tour” questions (Spradley, 1979) about the participant’s initial motivation to teach music. While these broad questions yielded little information that was directly relevant to the purpose of the study, they did assist in developing researcher/participant rapport. Once the participants seemed comfortable with the pace of the interview, I asked questions that focused specifically on gender in relation to issues such as isolation, discrimination, stereotyping, and teacher identity. Subjects were encouraged to speak freely about their experiences with gender in secondary instrumental music education. The final protocol also incorporated questions used by Cheryl Jackson (1996) in an effort to gather more specific information about the role of gender in the participants’ career experiences. Additional questions were added in an effort to better understand how perceived gender roles in secondary instrumental music education influence teacher identity.

I transcribed each interview verbatim. Each transcript was reviewed three times and coded using Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen’s codes as they related to situation, perspectives held by subjects, subjects’ way of thinking about people and objects, and social structure (2007). I also screened the data for similarities and differences that I found from story to story. While the participants discussed an array of gender issues that exist in secondary instrumental music education, I was particularly interested in understanding how the participants’ perceptions of the band director persona influenced their identity as music teachers. In an effort to preserve the individuality of each participant’s perspective, results are presented as individual portraits.

**Results**

**Michelle**

Fifth year teacher Michelle described her initial perceptions of the field. “It’s just like this natural thing for men to be in CHARGE of older kids. And it seems so much more natural for women to be in charge of younger, little kids.” It wasn’t until Michelle’s student teaching experience that she encountered a female band director. Becca, Michelle’s cooperating teacher “was like, pedal to the metal. Because she never backed down. It was never like she was the submissive band director. She was always ready to go – on fire and she was like no nonsense. And I think that was “rule with an iron fist” kind of thing.” Michelle described how Becca’s teaching style shaped her own teaching persona. “Seeing Becca do that day in and day out made me be like, I don’t have to be a softie, I can always be on the ball and always be tough...Seeing a really strong female high school band director made me be like, okay, I can do this too. This isn’t out of the norm. It’s few and far between, but it is possible to be as strong and determined as males.” The projection of a tough teaching persona felt natural to Michelle. “I was always the aggressive person. Some of my friends that are quieter- they wouldn’t want to do this job.”

Michelle regulated personal attributes that could be perceived as feminine or weak. “My first year, I didn’t wear a skirt until April. Like I wore pants. The first day of school all the way through. I just felt like the kids would take me less seriously if I dressed up like a little girly and wore a pretty skirt one day.” Michelle regulated displays of femininity because she wanted to be taken seriously by her students, colleagues, and administrators. She explained, “I definitely think that people like administration or supervisors or whoever’s interviewing for those jobs
definitely take women less seriously. I think there’s this preconceived notion, that, being a band director is a highly public job. You are on display all the time. And I think that there’s this preconceived notion that men are much more capable of that. It’s a big gig to manage. I think that having a man’s face on that role is more accepted than putting a young female face on that role.”

Michelle believes that women can combat those preconceived notions with the projection of a tough, confident, and powerful persona. “I think women can be cutthroat in this day and age – not only in corporate America but also in teaching, education. I think females can be as aggressive and headstrong, and cutthroat. I definitely think people are capable of it. I don’t think that other people think that women are necessarily going to be their first pick to pick a high school band director. You know? But women can do it too.”

Beth

Beth is a high school band director with over twenty years of experience in the field. She spoke about the lack of females in the profession. “Growing up, I’ve never, ever encountered woman band director. Ever. All of my conductors have always been men–always throughout my entire college and the whole bit. I didn’t really encounter a woman band director or a strong female figure until I was probably halfway through college. And I was like, alright, wow- she can really do this and do I have to be that tough?” The woman band director that Beth spoke about was a composer who guest conducted a performance of her pieces with Beth’s college wind ensemble. She described the experience: “At that point I had never had a woman conductor before- ever. And I was like, alright, you know, being a woman- who cares? Bravo for you. And she got in front of the ensemble and was brutal about what she wanted. She didn’t let those kids do anything that she didn’t want. And that’s when I was like, wow- she really knows her stuff.” Beth continued: “And that was very interesting because she was tough and then she’d turn around and be “hahaha…” and I was like wow- turn it on and turn it off. But maybe she had to do that in order to make it in a man’s world. She was tough. Brutal. Brutal.”

Beth talked about the hiring process for high school band positions. “I think it all stems back to it’s a male dominated field. Band director is male. Boom.” Beth feels she may not have been hired for her current position, had the position been for the Director of Bands. “I guess even the board of eds are probably leery about hiring a woman band director, solely a woman band director. I don’t think I had a problem being hired because I was not in charge. I was not THE band director, so it’s okay. They probably perceive you not to be tough on the football field. You don’t want to be cold, you don’t want to be wet- that typical female type thing.”

Beth identified festivals and marching band competitions as events where she needed to project a tough and confident persona. She described the judges meetings: “That’s where you have to develop a tough skin and stand your ground.” Beth continued, speaking about the judges at these meetings: “Some of them will just talk to you like, “What do you know? You should be an elementary teacher.” It’s almost like you have to be (in a deep voice) strong, and big, and talk like this in order to get the respect you deserve.” Beth talked about times when she needed to assert herself in front of the judges to defend her band and her program. “I have jumped down their throats many a time- many a time. And if they start the whole patronizing type thing, then I will stand up and say, “You know what? This is not right. This is not right.” And you have to get in their face. Unfortunately sometimes, that’s the only way you can get their respect- is if you jump down their throat and then they’ll be like, “alright, fine…let’s talk.” But you do have to fight a little bit.” Beth’s willingness to fight for her programs and produce excellent ensembles has earned her respect and recognition within the field. “I didn’t really get the respect of being a band director, a good old boy, until we beat every other band director who I had associated with. And I smacked them. And then all of a sudden, everybody knew my name.”

Cathy

Cathy, a band director with twenty-three years of experience believes that one must possess certain personal characteristics to effectively manage a large high school band program. “You need to have an extraordinary amount of confidence. You have to have a- a much bigger personality.” Cathy explained that this big personality is something that she has developed over time. “I’m a very, very shy person, but
my students wouldn’t know that.” The persona that Cathy projects is one that helps her to manage a large group, achieve success, and earn the respect of her colleagues. Of this she said: “I had to really develop a person who’s really not me.” To a certain extent, Cathy developed and practiced what she refers to as a masculine persona in the classroom and in the professional world. “I’m a hybrid. I think of myself as a hybrid. I mastered that masculine persona. I have a certain amount of masculinity in my personality that I have learned to develop to be an effective teacher, all the while nurturing, hanging on to dear life with my femininity because I’m so connected to that.”

Cathy shared how she blends different personal characteristics to project her band director persona in the classroom. “The mastery of this confident persona doesn’t come necessarily with a loud voice. The idea of anything that I can do to be effective and work with a large group, a large voice, or aggressive behavior…sometimes to that end, I’ll go down to a whisper or I’ll conduct without any verbal communication at all.” In addition to these techniques, Cathy finds that wearing a certain style of clothing to work has also helped her to project the confident persona. “So for me the confidence part and the preparation- to always think everyday about…..I even dress that way at school. I’m not a scarf, hairspray, makeup… You can see how I dress. I’m not…unisex clothing for me always helped. A man tailored shirt, and a pair of Dockers, and a brown belt and flat shoes. Never heels. It always helped me feel who I needed to be.”

Cathy admitted that she has felt hindered by the femininity that she so consciously tries to protect. “I feel that being a woman has held me back. Well, I shouldn’t say that it’s held me back. I feel that it’s taken me longer to get to the point where I am today.” Cathy believes that male band directors do not have to think about developing the confident and assertive persona that she has so carefully crafted. “I would bet a gazillion dollars that men never worry about any of those issues- because I know a lot of men. Including my husband who’s a high school band director. I will say that I don’t think he’s given a second’s thought to how much confidence he needs to grow and how much work he needs to do to be able to articulate.” Cathy speculated on why this difference appears to exist.

“Women are constantly in our own minds and we’re also in everyone else’s head. We’re always judging- this person is in a rush, I have to speak faster. This person is stressed out and I’m feeling that they’re stressed out. There are times that I wish I didn’t have that- just for that one minute. Oh, I just wish I didn’t get so choked up when the superintendent looked at me funny- because I didn’t finish what I wanted to say.” While there are times that she wishes to be free of these qualities, Cathy also finds value in them. “Women are so perceptive and so intuitive. And I love the fact that I’m that way. I wouldn’t want to ever, ever be a guy- ever. I love being a woman. I think women are empowering and it’s helped me to be a sensitive musician and to have very, very musical performances.”

**Liz**

Third year teacher Liz attributes the lack of females in the field to inequitable hiring practices. “I think a lot of it has to do with the person who is interviewing and what their issues are. I think a lot of people probably would still see the male as the perfect candidate. They want a certain kind of guy to walk in and have the high school band director personality. I still don’t think they expect that from women. I think even though you may be a good candidate for it- not everybody will see it, just because of what their previous thoughts were.”

Liz does not possess the expected high school band director personality. “I know I’m not an intimidating person, I’ve had to rely more on forming relationships and being able to use them to my advantage. Like making sure the kids didn’t want to disappoint me, knowing that I believed in them and wanted to encourage them, because I knew I couldn’t scare the kids. Other people can scare them and make them do what they want, maybe it’s not necessarily a better thing- but it immediately gets you that result.” Liz is careful to regulate her tone of voice while teaching. “I think the one thing that I struggle with more than anything else is that I think there are a lot of things that a male band director can say and a woman will say it the same way and it sounds kind of bitchy. I try not to get too emotional when I say things, without sounding whiny or cranky.”

Liz believes that men sometimes have an easier time as high school band directors because of their
ability to project an intimidating, powerful persona. “I think they can get by better than women can. I think men can be more intimidating, they can grab control of things. When it comes down to classroom management, you can even not be teaching music so well, but as long as you have their attention, you could be successful.” The positive relationship that Liz and her students share forms the core of her teaching persona. “If I didn’t have that, I don’t think I would be able to do the job. If I had that personality- if I was a man, or just a more intimidating woman, maybe I wouldn’t have to form some of those relationships. I kind of have to make that extra effort- and I think if I wasn’t willing to do that, then I wouldn’t be able to do this because they would just walk all over me.”

Significance

Each participant shaped her teaching identity by accepting, blending, or rejecting behaviors that signify traditional masculinity or femininity. Despite being separated by over fifteen years of experience, Michelle and Beth both replicated the teaching personas of their female mentors and performed the traditionally masculine traits of toughness and assertiveness while on the podium. Cathy carefully and intentionally blended femininity and masculinity in her teaching persona, but endured personal and professional struggles and conflict as she attempted to navigate her own path. Liz recognized that she was both unable and unwilling to include traditionally masculine characteristics in her teaching persona. She used her ability to form positive relationships with her students to craft a band director identity of a different kind.

Each participant carefully considered the extent to which she successfully performed the expected masculine band director identity. Michelle, for example, expressed pride and a sense of progress when she stated that females “can be just as aggressive and headstrong and cutthroat” as males; indicating that these qualities are necessary, admired, and desired. Beth indicated that aligning with the gendered identity of the field is the way that females can earn professional respect. Cathy consciously worked to form a masculine teaching identity, one that is contrary to what she perceives as her natural personality. While Cathy was the only participant who referred to being female in the profession as “empowering,” she, like Michelle, made conscious efforts to conceal the physical signs femininity in her choice of attire. While Liz has arguably forged a non-masculine identity within the profession, she spoke about it apologetically by stating that she had to (rather than chose to) rely on forming relationships with her students to achieve her musical goals.

With the exception of Liz, all of the participants idealized, valued, and strived to incorporate the qualities of toughness, assertiveness, competitiveness, and confidence in their teaching personas. Characteristics traditionally associated with femininity (such as building relationships, caring, sensitivity) were often referred to as a hindrance, something needed to be dealt with, or overcome. Has Liz then captured the essence of a feminine band director persona? Are Beth and Michelle inauthentic; acting like men in exchange for professional respect? Dawn Wallin asks, “Is it not feminist to allow a woman to define herself, even if her alignment is sometimes more masculine in its orientation?” (2008, p. 808). Perhaps the persona problem in secondary instrumental music lies not in the feminine performance of masculinity, but rather in the underlying message that one must perform the qualities of toughness, assertiveness, and aggression in order to succeed and earn respect within the field.

While Judith Butler asserts, “gender is in no way a stable identity of locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – and identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (2003, p. 415), repeatedly stylized masculine performances both on the podium and in the classroom have resulted in the construction of a stable masculine identity for the secondary instrumental music profession.

It has long been suggested that increased visibility of female role models in the profession may encourage more women to seek positions in secondary instrumental music education (Greaves-Spurgeon, 1998; Grant, 2000; Gould, 2001). This goal is unlikely to come to fruition if the majority of potential female role models replicate the traditionally masculine behaviors that have left little space for the development of alternate identities within the profession. As Cynthia Johnston Turner states, the development of a new kind of teaching persona comes with a specific set of challenges. “Let’s face it: I’m a control freak— I’m a conductor. But control is largely
an illusion and usually about fear... fear that I will not be as "respected"; fear that by not perpetuating the traditional dictatorial rehearsal techniques that exist in most college and university band rooms, I'll be ostracized by my colleagues; fear that this is perceived as a typical “feminine” approach to teaching...” (2013, p. 69-72).

It may be time to challenge the masculine/feminine dichotomy as it relates to the band director persona. Just as women like Michelle and Beth replicate what Cynthia Johnston Turner (2013) described as “traditional dictatorial rehearsal techniques,” surely there are men who have crafted teaching personas (similar to that of Liz) that are characterized by a more democratic approach. It is also possible, however, that men may be granted more freedom in crafting unique identities because it is unlikely that a male band director’s non-masculine teaching persona will be criticized as being feminine or weak. Females are not likely afforded the freedom to explore non-masculine identities without intense scrutiny and criticism. In challenging the masculine/feminine dichotomy, we cannot mitigate or discount that nearly three centuries of masculine musical traditions have significantly shaped the personality of the profession.

While diversity training for administrators and increasingly transparent hiring practices could challenge the expectation of masculinity in the field, the perception that the performance of traditionally masculine behavior is the key to quality teaching and professional respect must be challenged from within. Who could we become as individual teachers, as a collective profession, if women and men band directors could truly define themselves and form organic, authentic, and original teaching identities? What might our students take away from our rehearsals and our teaching styles if compassion, human connection, and democratic teaching practices were the major components of the band director persona? I recently sat next to an elementary school band teacher at a conference. When I told her about this research, she responded, “Ha! High school band director. I knew that wasn’t in the cards for me, so I didn’t even try.” We must diversify the personality of this profession by challenging expectations of traditional masculinity and by honoring and respecting educators who take the professional risk to forge a different kind of teaching identity. In their fear and vulnerability, they push the profession forward and create space for something and someone else.

References


“We Either Move Or Petrify”: Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms Amongst Hip Hop Dancers And Graffiteras –
A Critical Literature Review

Lauren M. Gardner, LMSW

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Abstract: The article critically reviews literature on Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms (THHF) and the relevant discourses from artists and activists around the world with the hope of recognizing similarities across various diverse global contexts. Three case studies are presented to elucidate the revolutionary and transformative potential of THHF across the rap, dance and graffiti genre of Hip Hop expressive art and cultural production. The article presents initial analysis of the discourse of ‘self’ and ‘other’ vis-à-vis the individual and the collective to explore the possibility of employing a tenet of Hip Hop culture, the ‘me:we” value in order to complicate the ‘self:other’ dichotomy present in much Transnational Hip Hop Feminist research.
Women have a strong presence in all aspects of Hip Hop culture from music production to graffiti, rapping, break dancing, and activism; women also use Hip Hop culture to promote social justice and educational reform (Fernandes, 2011; Fitts, 2012; Osumare, 2002; Phillips, Reddick-Morgan & Stephens, 2005; Perry, 2008; Rabaka, 2011). Similar to Hip Hop’s inheritance, Hip Hop performers took their cues from the blues and jazz women who preceded them with Blues women, such as Ma Rainey, Dinah Washington and Bessie Smith exemplifying living proof that “bad luck and trouble” could be survived (Morgan, 2005).

Angela Davis describes that [the Blues women’s] “aesthetic representations of the politics of gender and sexuality are informed by and interwoven with their representations of race and class mak[ing] their work all the more provocative” (Morgan, 2005). Similar to standpoints of many blues women, many Hip Hop artist-feminists rap about female sexual and social empowerment, agency, respect, and celebration of the female body through a loving and healthy sexual relationship (Morgan, 2005). Hip Hop also inherits transnational, cultural aesthetic practices and traditions from reggae, toasting, Jamaican dance hall, West African griots, salsa, kung fu and East Asian karate films, Brazilian capoiera, Bollywood film, Tahitian dance to name a few (Fernandes, 2011; Perry, 2008).

Hip Hop as a transnational cultural art form and practice is not self-limiting in creativity, politics, genres, multimodality, or cultural hybridity. For example, a new global politics of solidarity connecting racism against African Americans to anti-Arab profiling in urban areas with issues linked to occupation in Palestine is developing (Fernandes, 2011; Porfilio & Viola, 2013). Hip hop arts are historically diasporic (Fernandes, 2011; Perry, 2008) and are currently recontextualizing transnationally and horizontally.

As the sociologically dubbed “Hip Hop Generation” (Chang, 2006) matures and develops both vertically in terms of age and horizontally in terms of its global span, the impact of Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms in cultural production should be conceptualized from the standpoint of a burgeoning Hip Hop feminist epistemology taking into account the constitutive forces and social structures giving rise to both reproductive and emancipatory iterations of this culture. Many current iterations of Hip Hop Feminist academic expositions provide a limited lens towards the dynamic, global, fluid and multimodal nature of Hip Hop culture; instead characterizing Hip Hop culture as series of predominantly American, self ‘expressions,’ not accounting for how the social world is linked to identity development and the cultural manifestations of transnational Hip Hop culture and artistic production.

**Methods**

This article will 1) examine Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms and present a critical literature review analyzing the discourse of ‘self’ and ‘other’ vis-à-vis the individual and the collective, 2) explore the possibility of employing a tenet of Hip Hop culture, the ‘me:we’ value in order to complicate the ‘self:other’ dichotomy in much Transnational Hip Hop Feminist research, 3) provide a critical literature review of Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms (THHF) that presents current Transnational Hip Hop Feminist discourses and elucidates the transformational potential of Transnational Hip Hop Feminist arts and activism across various Hip Hop artistic genres, 4) illustrate a more dynamic and complex iteration of Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms with a concentrated focus on three case studies, and 5) analyze across genres of Hip Hop artistic cultural production (rap, dance and graffiti) wherein THHF will be discussed not only in connection with rap or spoken word as traditionally done in American scholarship, but also in connection with Hip Hop dance/b-girling and the international phenomenon of all-female Hip Hop graffiti crews.

Case studies will be presented to exemplify personal understandings, and artistic renderings of multimodal, transnational Hip Hop feminisms and feminist communities across the Hip Hop genres of rap, dance and graffiti. The potential hope of this composition is for it to contribute to a greater understanding of the complexity of Hip Hop Feminist traditions by decentering the Western predominance in order to illustrate how the visual language of graffiti and bodily expressions of b-girling (Armstead, 2007; Fernandes, 2011; Osumare, 2002; Pabón, 2013) transcends cultural differences to reveal similarities, shared discourses, understandings and to establish a common ground.
A Critical Review of Transnational Hip Hop: A Powerful Discourse

“Hip Hop did not invent anything; Hip Hop reinvented everything” (Grandmaster Caz, 2012). Building upon their inheritance, Hip Hoppers have created a system of Hip Hop praxis, which artists actively contribute to in order to express themselves, negotiate their identities, preserve Hip Hop culture and develop themselves and Hip Hop cultural practice.

Hip Hop is considered a powerful medium with which to resist, critique and produce discourses that counter mainstream discourses, and to negotiate individual values and macro value-systems (Daiute, 2010; Porfilio & Viola, 2013). Hip Hop is an expressive tool supportive of and congruent with intersectional social identities, in addition to Hip Hop’s unique positioning as a counterforce to mainstream discourse (Andersen & Hill Collins, 2010; Porfilio & Viola, 2013). Intersectional social identities are understood from intersectional theory produced by critical legal scholars to refer to the specific conditions that exist when one holds two or more social statuses; often discusses at the cross-section between race and gender to understand what it means to be a Black female as opposed to being a Black male or a White female (Deaux, 2001).

The Beginnings of Transnational Hip Hop: Growing Tensions and Potentials

As early as the 1980s Afrikan Bambaataa and the Universal Zulu Nation from the Bronx began the global circulation of Hip Hop as ambassadors to spread the message of black brotherhood and unity from Sarajevo to Sydney, Amsterdam to Zanzibar. By the mid-1990s, global hip hop music was being recognized by the music industry and globally by Japan, China, Kenya, Australia, Israel, France, Palestine, Britain, and Cuba (Chang, 2005; Fernandes, 2011).

The Black August Hip Hop Project emerged as part of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement’s project in Brooklyn, New York to educate rappers and hip hop audiences on the plight of Black political prisoners (Chang, 2005). The Black August project brought rappers Common, Mos Def and Tony Touch to Cuba and was followed up with the rappers announcing a tour starting with a concert at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban followed by additional concert dates in other cities in South Africa (Fernandes, 2011). Out of these global unions the Black August Tour sought to share with the world the “conscious rap” of prominent artists including Talib Kweli, Black Thought, Boots Riley of the Coup, Jeru The Damaja, and Dead Prez (Chang, 2005; Fernandes, 2011, 2-5).

South African Hip Hop emerged during the apartheid era in Cape Town and Johannesburg during the 1980s wherein Hip Hop was being utilized as a tool of political and cultural protest (Chang, 2005). During that time, South African rappers received death threats from government officials and graffiti artists tagged at the risk of being shot by police (Chang, 2005). While solidarity was the mission of the Black August tour, the American rappers and the South African hip hoppers were not on the same page (Chang, 2005). South Africans hoped to exchange ideas and share stories of struggle whereas the Americans had their own agenda to “dispense vague pieties about loving the motherland”, all the while snubbing their South African hosts by treating them like “hired drivers,” while ironically lecturing the crowd about “racism and reparations in the United States” (Chang, 2005; Fernandes, 2011). Tensions surmounted and finally exploded with many South Africans “decrying this [Black August] performance as a new form of American cultural imperialism to conquer Africa with their rhymes or to save Africans” (Chang, 2005; Fernandes, 2011).

Unfortunately, this event left many wondering what the mission of transnational Hip Hop exactly was, and whether or not Hip Hop arts could be utilized as a mechanism for transnational discourse and diplomacy. However in April of 2010, the United States and Hillary Clinton took a unique stance by publicly voicing that "Hip hop is America," making a governmental attempt to use “every tool at their disposal” with the hope that sending Hip Hop group, Chen Lo and the Liberation Family, to Damascus, Syria as Hip Hop diplomats and envoys would improve Syrian policy or at least the image of America (Aidi, 2011). While American Hip Hop authentically represents American culture today and where America is going, outcomes of such large-scale interventions are unknown. But, what if America wasn’t the only focus of Transnational Hip Hop initiatives and what if these efforts were spurred by women around the world.
using various Hip Hop artistic genres? What would the transnational women perhaps illustrate differently than all of the males who were a part of the Black August tour and the Zulu Nation era ambassadors? What would be the basis upon which women would seek transnational communion with their sisters across borders and contexts?

**Intersectionality Influences Hip Hop Fems: Uncovering & Appreciating Complexities**

Heather Humann (2007) asserts that “although women’s rights are undoubtably important, a point of view that only considers gender can become problematic, because it mistakenly pits women against men instead of realizing that the system itself is flawed and therefore encourages the exploitation and oppression of large numbers of people” (Rabaka, 2011). Growing out of Black Feminist epistemology and influencing Hip Hop Feminisms, Patricia Hill-Collins expanded Kimberle Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality: a systematic methodology for studying the relationships between multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations, including combinations of race, gender, class, sexual identity, ability, which interact simultaneously and contribute to social inequalities (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality, therefore, understands that racism, sexism and homophobia do not act independently of one another, but instead represent intersections of multiple forms of discrimination (Collins, 2000). Patricia Hill Collins indicates that “group self-awareness and multifaceted identification of self preserves self-esteem and serves as a protective tool from dehumanizing outside influences; therefore, it is through self-definition and self-evaluation that we may resist” (Collins, 1986) For instance, when individuals and communities are labeled as different from the mythical norm — societal schema of an average white male—they gain a status of “other” (Collins, 1986; Lorde, 1980).

It is with this comprehensive, multifaceted and diverse approach that transnational Hip Hop Feminist artists and activists take a stand through collective pursuits towards justice, seeking to bring to light similarities instead of differences towards collective liberation. Humann (2007) believes that without intersectionality Hip Hop Feminism would be very difficult to understand (Rabaka, 2011). Furthermore, Humann (2007) reminds us that in order for feminism to speak to women of the transnational Hip Hop generation it will have to open itself to “new theories and praxes: womanist theory, mestiza theory, consciousness theory, critical race theory, critical race feminist theory, Africana critical theory, postcolonial theory, subaltern theory, queer theory, transnationalism, black Marxism and hip hop aesthetics” (Rabaka, 2011).

**Case Studies**

This paper employs case study methodology in order to present transnational narratives. Case study methodology has been chosen as the methodology of scientific analysis in this study due to the situated nature of the social phenomenon of Hip Hop cultural production and practice by Transnational Hip Hop Feminists and the contexts that produce such phenomena. Case study methodology is generally used to represent an aspect of social and cultural life that speaks to something larger than the case itself. Herein the cases illustrate various ways in which THHF employ Hip Hop for political and social engagement transnationally across geographical regions.

**Methodology**

Cases (N=3) have been chosen to represent a typical iteration of the social phenomena with respect to three genres of Hip Hop artistic production (emceeing/rapping, graffiti and dance). Cases have been chosen to differ on one particular independent axis – genre in order to elucidate how regionally disparate social phenomena utilize Hip Hop as a means of connecting transnationally across cultural borders. The cases represent social phenomenon of THHF rap from Havana, Cuba, THHF scholarship on Hip Hop dance/b-girling and the intercultural body amongst mixed Hawaiians’ with Polynesian and Asian diasporic roots, and all-female Chilean and Brazilian graffiti crews (Armstead, 2007; Fernandes, 2011; Osumare, 2002; Pabón, 2013). The case studies represent an analysis of primary sources written about the Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms and Transnational Hip Hop cultural production, including ethnographic interviews and field experiences with several artists, from conducting years of scholarly
research in the field (Armstead, 2007; Fernandes, 2011; Osumare, 2002; Pabón, 2013).

**Feminist Rappers in Havana, Cuba: Narratives from Magia & Las Krudas**

More than you, we [women] know discrimination we are [a] humble class/ we are [of] color but what's more, we are women/ we need love we know sweat/ we discuss our error[s] close your legs/ son of a [b**h] if you protest, you’re [a] she-devil brain of a mosquito/ secretary, low salary/ from the higher [salaried positions there is] little pride/ where does it lead/ back against the wall/ we are people always the same drama/ the man for the street/ and the woman for the bed [...] woman, you rule yourself/ your destiny you are the one who determines/ how to follow your path choose who to love/ choose how to think/ choose with whom to dream the ruler of the earth and the sea/ powerful woman beautiful woman/ goddess woman/ sacred feminine creature, divine you rule yourself/ of your [own] head

*Pa’ketenteres* by Las Krudas

Hip Hop made its way to Cuba in the late 1970s by way of Cuban residents pirating Miami radio stations (Armstead, 2007; Fernandes, 2011). Cuban Hip Hop, like much American Hip Hop, speaks to social issues of racism and revolution, wherein Black Cubans are exercising their self-esteem and pride in being part of the Black diaspora (Armstead, 2007). Within poor and working-class Black Cuban families, women maintain their roles within the house and on the street working, “always working” (Armstead, 2007). Sujatha Fernandes (2011) writes about her time in Havana in 2001 where she stayed with friends who were married and formed their own rap duo. The husband, Alexey, was previously in an all-male rap trio but the other men stopped performing; at which point Alexey asked his wife, Magia to join him to rap and speak to women’s issues.

Magia situates herself in a unique way where she can maintain her role as wife with her work in her home, but can also accompany her husband and speak out about her identity as a Black Cuban woman. Magia raps about the social position of Black women in Cuba and also in capitalist countries (Fernandes, 2011).

Magia may not call herself a feminist but positions herself as a Black Cuban female rapper, like many American female rappers, with politics that are incredibly important to the development of transnational feminisms.

Magia has had affiliations with the Communist Youth League and identifies strongly with the revolution, yet Fernandes (2011) indicates that at the same time Magia defends the Cuban government when speaking with peers. Fernandes (2011) wonders if there would be a point in time where Magia would have to choose sides, but the interesting question (a presumably Un-American concept) is that Magia’s political position does not exist at the poles, but is more dialectical. Magia can understand and resonate with aspects of the revolution and at the same time support the government, perhaps with the hope of a better Cuba.

Fernandes (2011) chanted the chorus on one of Magia’s songs “La llaman puta (They call her whore)” which spurred conversation comparing Cuban women to women in the United States. A particular point about education is brought up comparing the two contexts: Cuba is a place where “education [i]s no longer a ticket to social mobility” and America is a place where education is needed to get a good job with education being more of “[a] privilege of an elite man than a right.” Magia goes on to rap:

“They call her whore, society rejects her
Prostitute: she who sells herself for money is not discussed
Every day the same thing, with the fear gathered between her legs
Every man is a test of her love for her family
Every man distances her more from men
Men, two points of sh*t!
This is the conclusion of her life... Imagine that everyone turns against you, woman
There’s no money
It’s not that the little you have doesn’t stretch
It’s that you’re broke
You’re outta luck, but this time more than usual
Your head is splitting, looking for solutions
The father of your child, don’t even mention him
You’re scrambling around for any work you can find,
Desperate, but the game is tight
You go one and a million times, but nothing
Even in your dreams you hear the sound of doors
slamming in your face.

*Magia* (Fernandes, 2011)

Magia had prepared an eloquent and fascinating
terot about how she wasn’t talking about Cuba in the
song. When asked if she thought conditions were bad
for women in Cuba (Fernandes, 2011). Magia
explained instead that she was referring to capitalist
societies instead, where women are forced into
prostitution, in comparison to the *jineteras* here who
just “want pretty things, makeup, a new television”
(Fernandes, 2011). The apparent social critique and
positionings here reveal that Magia’s understanding
and stance on women’s conditions was rather complex.
While the lyrical content of “La llaman puta” is
synonymous with the themes of many American rap
songs about female prostitutes, there are transnational
parallels Magia and Sujatha quietly discuss through
undertones challenging the status quo. By utilizing rap
as an art form and discourse Magia can position
herself to say she is talking about another context far
away, where she has never been while at the same time
recognizing the similarities of women working and
laboring “for the love of [their] family” (Fernandes,
2011).

An alternative example is, Armstead (2007) who
interviewed 23 females of African descent who were
feminist artist activists in Havana, Cuba. Among the
23 were three women who call themselves *Las
Krudas*, an all-female rap and theater crew who take
their position as feminists very seriously and actively
call themselves feminists (Armstead, 2007). *Las
Krudas* is a group comprised of three females (Pelisa,
Wanda and Olivia) who all understand their identity
intersectionally and explicate their experiences in
terms of a cross-section between gender, race and/or
class. *Las Krudas* understands intersectionality and
describes it clearly in plain language to describe their
lived realities. The ladies relay the social realities of
females as being made to preoccupy themselves with
“cleaning the house and keeping their kitchens
correctly” whereas Cuban young men have time and
the opportunity in their lives to dedicate to “listen to
music, learn how to dance, go to parties, and rap on the
corner” (Armstead, 2007).

Las Krudas utilize public street performance that
incorporates rap into traditional theater and also have
an act that they perform on stilts. Las Krudas perform
street theater to tell stories of female protagonists,
since mainstream Cuban theater only features female
protagonists in roles Las Krudas describe as “classic,
long-suffering women” playing parts as slaves,
 servants, domestics and housewives (Armstead, 2007).
While Las Krudas “recogniz[es] that men have opened
paths, that they have been the warriors, the chief
warriors of this tribe . . . we [Las Krudas and other
female rappers] are a tribe within a tribe, and we are
fighting to prove we are just as strong and that we are
going to demonstrate that we are capable of continuing
the struggle with as much force as they [the male
rappers] are” (Armstead, 2007). The women have
respect for the work and art that the men create, but
see it as their responsibility to take a stand and produce
feminist Hip Hop that speaks a liberatory female
message. The young female artists see themselves as
taking a more extreme stance in comparison to
American female rappers (Armstead, 2007). Las
Krudas believe they must stand in solidarity with male
Black Cuban Hip Hop artists since Black Cubans are
discriminated against, denied access and largely
comprise Havana’s “growing under class” (Armstead,
2007).

We think that for us it is absolutely necessary to
be feminists. Here, in this context at least.
Because to be feminists, for us—is the balance
that we need to live in this society *tan machista*
that is so sexist. If society were a little more open
and more balanced, maybe we’d be a little more
balanced and less extremist; but we are in an
extremist society, and we have to balance our
lives, and so we are also extremists. We are
absolutely feminists… we know that women in
the world need a lot of support today from other
women. We give much solidarity so that our self-
esteeem becomes higher and higher. Because
historically, it has been lower every day, I do not
know, at least here in Cuba. It is said that, for
example, during the revolutionary process,
Cuban women have made some social advances
and have gone on to, shall we say, to claim their
position in society. But we absolutely know that
women in Cuba have the double responsibility to
work in the street, whatever work she obtains and soon to arrive home and perhaps work even harder in the house. Because here the domestic customs are [such] that the woman is the one who works in house... the woman is working all the time. All the time.

Las Krudas

The common discourse between Magia (Fernandes, 2011) and Las Krudas (Armstead, 2007) is the narrative of women toiling and working hard in domestic and street spheres in Cuba with less opportunities to be artists then their Black Cuban male counterparts. Their experiences as street artists provides the women with the opportunity to challenge hegemonic discourses of what it means to be a woman, which not only provides them the ability to speak their mind in a radical, transformative, safe and socially accepted medium. For instance, Magia can take a political stance acknowledging transnational similarities between female oppressions across contexts and yet not be held responsible for her social critique because she is telling a story. A story about another place. Las Krudas are able to be revolutionary in their theater and story-telling due to the affordance of the rap genre where they may critique from within and at the same time from without.

Judith Butler and Osumare’s Account of ‘Intercultural Body’ in Hawaiian Hip Hop Dance

When I was last in Japan, there were two kids battling. One kid came in and cut the other off before he was finished, and so they walked around in a circle looking at each other. And all of a sudden they jumped like this, boom, together, at the same time, knowing exactly what they were doing. It was the "Brooklyn rock." Do you know what a "Brooklyn rock" is? No, I can barely do it. These two kids, one from Japan, one from Hawai‘i, never met each other before, got to the park not even an hour before, just started dancing, and cannot communicate [verbally] with each other. They walked in the circle, jumped at the right time together and landed at the same time together, and started Brooklyn rocking together. That is international communication. That is people of the same culture.

Justin Alladin AKA TeN

The Hip Hop dance cipher is a “communal and competitive discourse…the height of community and competition…where all (or some combination) of the Hip-hop cultural modes of discourse and discursive practices—call and response…signifying…narrative sequencing” and much more “converge into a fluid matrix of linguistic-cultural activity,” with Hip Hop dance serving as an embodiment of Hip Hop culture (Alim, 2006) and Hip Hop dance as a unique multimodal discourse (Gardner, 2013). This case study focuses on The Waikiki hip hop event Urban Movement, a grassroots-organized, narrated, five-group performance that situated hip hop as a vivid example of danced text (Osumare, 2002). Hawai‘i, with 85% of its population being multiethnic, is an important “crossroads between the East and West” and a significant site of transnationalism (Osumare, 2002).

Osumare (2002) believes that Hip Hop break-dancing as performed by dancers in the Urban movement “offers poignant answers to Butler's question about the relationship between habitus and the field in the age of postmodernism.” Signifying cultural expression through dance is able to speak a common language through common culture that breaks down barriers of race, class, gender, sexuality and nationality. Hip Hop dance culture, in particular—as initiated by The Original Rock Steady Crew from the South Bronx and their developing international chapters, across various multiethnic, multiracial transnational spaces—provides a counter culture that stands in opposition to the corporatized industry and capitalist structures of imperial capitalism.

These B-boy and B-girl crews create an alternative space for expression that dynamically celebrates individuality and the collective (Osumre, 2002), while also creating a socially appropriate alternative way of being, culture and philosophy for young women and men. The cipher is a space where a person can speak the same language and communicate their ideas regardless of their identity category or social position. With major international competitions held in Germany, Japan and New York, Osumare (2002) believes transnational Hip Hop dance has been
successful in not only answering Butler’s questions of intercultural body but has been able to establish “a counter-hegemonic international language as different bodily dialects of the same b-boy/b-girl language” (Osumare, 2002).

We Either Move or Petrify: Chilean and Transnational Graffiteras

Gloria Anzaldúa asserts, “We either move or petrify. Change requires great heat. We must turn the heat on our own selves, the first site of working toward social justice and transformation” (Pabón, 2013). Among Chilean Hip Hop Feminists there is a feeling that feminism is stuck; and “the petrification of what feminism is can only be resisted and altered by paying close attention to what feminism is doing” (Pabón, 2013). Feminist communities exist, for most graffiteras, through actions performed without or against a named feminist identity, therefore Pabón (2013) believes that feminism is “what they [transnational graffiteras] do, not how they identify”. This is a stark comparison to how the female rappers, Las Krudas from Havana, Cuba identify, which will be further unpacked later in the discussion.

In her 2000 article, Feminism is for Everybody, bell hooks insists that feminism is something “we do to dismantle White supremacy”, cultural imperialisms and oppressive structures. Pabón (2013) conducted extensive field work in Chile and then later in Brazil amongst all-female graffiti crews, Crazis Crew and Turronas Crew (from Chile) and Rede Nami (from Rio de Janiero). The female graffiteras suggested that feminism is something that should be done, having less to do with personal identity and more with action. The Latin American graffiti scene is different from an American scene, where graffiti is seen as vandalism and synonymous with criminal behavior (Pabón, 2013). Instead, Latin American graffiti art is conceptualized as something that beautifies the urban cityscape (Pabón, 2013).

All-female graffiti crews never fully-formed in the United States, but female crews as a social phenomena is a growing reality across the world (Pabón, 2013). All-female graffiti crews are now assembling in order to be visible and to break out of male-dominated graffiti crews within which they previously felt marginalized (Pabón, 2013).

The women “write their voices on the walls of the city” in order to express collective points and political stances (Pabón, 2013). The aesthetics of works from the Crazis Crew are described as “marked by very feminine characteristics” to convey attitudes of “personal and collective expression, to both integrate and distinguish the different styles of each graffitera” (Pabón, 2013). Their particular aesthetic is unique artistically but also politically amongst transnational graffiteras. Crazis Crew members draw soft and feminine muñecas (doll-like figures) on public spaces offering up an alternative Transnational Hip Hop Feminist discourses that we do not see in American Hip Hop feminisms; where graffiti representations of women are often over-sexualized and made to appear tough, where being soft and feminine is viewed conversely as being weakness (Pabón, 2013).

Discussion

Through the use of an alternative Hip Hop genre (dance or graffiti art, as opposed to rap) transnational Hip Hop feminists are able to situate themselves in communion with each other celebrating individuality and collectivity at the same time. This strategic affordance and function of dance and graffiti Hip Hop genres allows individuals to speak, be heard, and feel supported by other members of their artist community. Some scholars have termed this exchange between the self and other or a “me:we” value of dynamic interplay (Roychoudhury & Gardner, 2014).

Sujatha Fernandes (2011) asked if Hip Hop could create a fellowship of marginalized people around the globe and if the Hip Hop generation could act politically; perhaps the question of Transnational Hip Hop Feminisms would center around questions of how women around the world articulate their views of how women should be and act today through sharing experiences and stories with one another through various genres of Hip Hop artistic expression. Perhaps instead of solidarity, THHF would hope to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for each other by recognizing similarities despite our differences.

Future Directions

It is through recognition and celebration of intersectional identities, as artist-activists, that Transnational Hip Hop Feminists may upend and resist
the notion that complexity can only lead to social inequality. Perhaps developing Transnational Hip Hop Feminists can bolster their artist-activist agendas through interactions with critical theories, ethnographic research, artistic performance, activism and new methodologies.

Transnational Hip Hop Feminists dance, tag and rap to protest as cultural participants and innovators; using skills and constantly embodying and reframing feminist identity (Morgan, 2005). Just as Transnational Hip Hop Feminists utilize cultural tools, discourse, practices, and praxis, Transnational Hip Hop Feminists express dialectic complexities, celebrate histories, preserve and develop Hip Hop culture in order to build transformative theoretical frameworks to influence social policy and articulate their stance and vision of the good life through creative protest. It is only as we prophetize our collective liberation through a cultural-historical artistic account of Hip Hop’s past, present and future that we may together develop a shared culture.

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Vicious: True Stories by Teens About Bullying
By Hope Vanderberg, Editor

176 pp. Paperback $10.25; Kindle $9.59

Dr. Rick Parker
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Vicious: True Stories by Teens About Bullying records 20 accounts of various teens who have experienced forms of verbal and physical bullying firsthand. The book compiles 20 different adolescent victims who elaborate on their personal stories as victims of harsh bullying. Each victim recollects their memories of names, physical assaults, and emotional traumas which they encountered on a continual basis. The victims’ stories range from elementary school to high school incidents. The accounts even portray instances of cyber-bullying.

However, the adolescent victims are not without hope. Each victim describes steps that he or she took to not only cope but also learn from their personal clashes with school bullies. These experiences, in essence, often proved beneficial as the victims began to learn tactics of self-defense and even empathy over time. Such coping mechanisms include learning to
self-defend with appropriate verbal feedback as well as learning to approach other students as a means to establish friendships among similar victims as well as other students who were potential targets for harassment. As mentioned, the victims reconstructed their memories of being bullied, and many victims commented on their compulsions to bully other students, likewise. As a result, after being the culprit as well as the perpetrator of verbal and physical assault, these victims learned the importance of defending oneself appropriately in addition to feeling the pain of being both bullied and bullying or harming another pupil.

The strength of this collection is the firsthand experiences described by various boys and girls from elementary to high school; vivid details of one-on-one and group encounters of verbal as well as physical abuse are described. In addition, victims portray their feelings openly as many of them also convey a sense of maturity from their harsh experiences. Such maturity is gained from empathizing with other victims. In the end, many of the victims attempt to avoid any possible encounters with other bullies, especially if the victims actually were perpetrators themselves. The final chapter concludes with a few personal steps from a therapist in New York City. He lists and describes three useful steps that a victim, a perpetrator, and even school administrators can use in order to curtail the “vicious” acts among teens.

Regarding limitations, these personal stories do not elaborate on domestic and/or family problems which can contribute to bullying behaviors. In addition, these stories rarely mention attention seeking behaviors that bullies portray, for the stories focus on power and dominance among bullies. Finally, parental opinions of perpetrators and victims are not discussed, and school administrators’ opinions are not mentioned either.