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

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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, breakdancing, 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 womens’] “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 capoeira, 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 Potentialities

As early as the 1980s Afrika 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-girlling 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*!
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
Las Krudas utilize public street performance that incorporates rap into traditional theater and also have an act that they perform on stilts. Las Krudas performs 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 “recognizes 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-esteem 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

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 retort 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).
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 than 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 (Osumare, 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, La 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 propheticize 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.

References

