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## **Flipping the Misogynist Script: Gender, Agency, Hip Hop and Music Education**

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## Flipping the Misogynist Script: Gender, Agency, Hip Hop and Music Education

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### Abstract

*Excluding Hip Hop culture and rap music from music education misses opportunities for addressing key aspects of popular culture, society, and students' lives. This article addresses intersections of Hip Hop, gender, and music education to forward potential Hip Hop praxis. After tracing related scholarship, I discuss and problematize representations of women in Hip Hop, including patriarchal, hetero-normative, and essentialized notions of Hip Hop that objectify and marginalize women. Through musicking, critical media literacy, and critical pedagogy young people might analyze and engage critically with Hip Hop and issues of identity, meaning making, representation, and agency in music education.*  
Keywords: critical media literacy, critical pedagogy, gender, Hip Hop, music education, popular music

Over a decade ago Julia Koza (1994) argued that:

Rap music has been in existence for at least twenty years and has been called 'the most significant popular invention' of the past two decades, but American music educators have rarely welcomed this diverse and potentially powerful genre into official knowledge. (171)

Koza's assessment of music education's response to rap music remains accurate in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The pervasiveness of misogynist, sexist, and graphic rap videos and lyrics on television, radio, and the Internet has led many adults and young people to assume that what they see and hear is indicative of all rap music. Whether due to this perception, personal taste, or lack of information, there is little evidence that Hip Hop culture and specifically rap music are present in music programs across the United States.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to denying students an official place in school for addressing this aspect of popular culture, contemporary society, and their lives; the lack of Hip Hop from music curricula is a missed opportunity for analyzing complex social issues such as identity, representation, and agency. Allowing a place for Hip Hop provides students opportunities to untangle these complex issues and develop their ability to discuss and make meaning through this culture and musical genre (Lashua 2006a, Lashua and Fox 2007). Classrooms closed to Hip Hop risk marginalizing or silencing students' voices by limiting the ways they might create and present alternative representations of identity or express their perspectives of society and their lived experience within the music program.

This article serves as an entry point to engage with issues regarding the intersection of Hip Hop, gender, and school music students. Furthermore, the article contextualizes strands of Hip Hop scholarship focusing on Hip Hop based education; Hip Hop, meaning, and identities; and Hip Hop aesthetic forms (Petchauer 2009) in the context of music teaching and learning. After briefly outlining several ways in which Hip Hop is situated in scholarly work, I describe and problematize representations of women in Hip Hop, including a critique of patriarchal, hetero-normative, and essentialized notions of Hip Hop that objectify women while simultaneously making them invisible. I highlight voices of women emcees by drawing upon statements in public interviews and suggest potential implications for music teaching and learning.

### **Recognizing Hip Hop**

While MCs<sup>2</sup> such as Rick Ross and Lil Wayne who objectify women in their music and videos are omnipresent on television, radio, internet, or mobile device playlists, women MCs such as FM Supreme from Chicago, Snow tha Product from Texas, Nitty Scott MC from New York, or the all-female Hip Hop collective Gotal from Senegal, lack a mainstream media presence though they might be known locally. Music educators who do not actively seek out the diversity of musicians involved in Hip Hop may only be aware of a narrow commercial-focused spectrum of Hip Hop and therefore overlook numerous skilled musicians. This is particularly the case in terms of women emcees or DJs, who are often marginalized. Given that music education is

only beginning to grapple with the complexities of addressing Hip Hop culture and rap music, music educators might leverage a growing body of scholarly work in Hip Hop to provide the nuanced perspective needed for balancing critique with facilitating students' engagement with the music and culture in the context of music programs. Related research and education both in and out of schools of music and K–12 music programs might inform related praxis.

Writing on Hip Hop within music education exists but is sparse and largely missing from curricular and pedagogical discourse. Given a dominant focus on Western classical music throughout schools of music and pre-service music educators' curriculum, music teacher education can play a role in strengthening how Hip Hop culture and rap music are addressed in classrooms. Clements and Campbell (2006) urge music teacher educators to include rap music in pre-service music educators' classes, citing the sonic, social, cultural, and expressive potential of the genre. While they acknowledge the problematic nature of some rap music, Clements and Campbell make a case for music teacher educators to identify examples of rap music appropriate for the classroom. Thibeault (2010) argues that incorporating Hip Hop culture and music in classrooms provides students with opportunities to explore contemporary musical practices such as recording, computer synthesis, sampling and remixing that are indicative of what he terms a postperformance age.<sup>3</sup>

While calls for integrating Hip Hop in music education have emerged, research and suggestions pertaining to related pedagogy and curricula are largely missing. Developing appropriate pedagogy and curricula for Hip Hop in music education is further complicated by 1) nuanced disagreements over what constitutes Hip Hop pedagogy in other disciplines such as education, sociology, and musicology (Söderman 2013); 2) varied goals of music educators and Hip Hop practitioners; and 3) the complexity of balancing differing approaches when Hip Hop is contextualized in school music programs. Dhokai (2012) draws on ethnomusicological and popular music writing along with her experience teaching the history of Hip Hop in an Introduction to Popular Music course to suggest a pedagogy for such contexts. Dhokai's proposed pedagogy consists of addressing:

- (1) The mediation of the different vantage points present in a musical performance;
- (2) the consideration of insider and outsider

perspectives; (3) notions of cultural specificity and acoustemology that can de-mystify the unfamiliarity of a new music culture; (4) issues of origin and authenticity that could potentially cause misunderstanding for a student. (112–13)

Söderman (2013) addresses the complexities and tensions involved in Hip Hop studies and Hip Hop pedagogy in the context of higher education and scholarship. Drawing on interviews with scholars who address Hip Hop culture and are either identified or self-identify as Hip Hop scholars, he highlights a differentiation between a focus on Hip Hop culture and pedagogy labeled as Hip Hop. In teasing out issues of cultural validity, politics of applying the Hip Hop label to scholarship or pedagogy, and what constitutes Hip Hop pedagogy, Söderman provides music educators a range of issues to consider when addressing Hip Hop culture in research and practice. As Söderman (2013) demonstrates, Hip Hop studies and pedagogy are established areas outside of music education. Academic work focusing on Hip Hop takes place primarily in the fields of sociology, education, and cultural studies and has recently moved beyond a focus on textual or content analysis in relation to the meaning making or identity construction of those engaging with Hip Hop music and culture. The majority of these studies focus on mainstream Hip Hop. Localized ethnographic studies are thus needed to provide a clearer picture of how young people make meaning and construct their identities through varied engagement with Hip Hop music and culture (Bennett 2000, Dimitriadis 1996, Söderman and Folkestad 2004).

Several studies making use of textual or content analysis focus on images and problematic lyrical content with several arguing that the reproduction of negative stereotypes has compromised Hip Hop's potential for agency (Ogbar 1999, Queeley 2003). Others focus on the cultural form's potential for disrupting these negative narratives (Emerson 2002). While textual analysis is helpful in identifying problematic content, it is also limited in scope. Reception studies and ethnographic research, including the perspectives of those actually listening to Hip Hop music and watching videos, is needed to expand our understanding of Hip Hop music and culture (Emerson 2002). In a turn from textual analysis to consider youth reception of Hip Hop, Hall (1998) questioned what effect listening to rap music had on young

children. She found that older children were more capable of understanding the lyrics than younger children with the exception of commercial rap. This study, while taking into account children's perceptions, still does not deal with the meaning they make from the music or the role it plays in their lives. Research addressing how young people make meaning from Hip Hop is emerging (Dimitriadis 2001, Love 2008, Newman 2007) and can provide students' voices to related discourse in education. Evidence also demonstrates that some young people pay less attention to lyrics of rap music than they do its sound (Love 2008, Stovall 2006).

More recent studies have begun to address ways in which Hip Hop is engaged in public spaces. These studies range from how young men and women negotiate their gender identities at dance clubs (Munoz-Laboy, Weinstein and Parker 2007) to how young people use Hip Hop music to take on stereotypical roles and construct their own identities (Clay 2003). A notable commonality in many of these studies is the importance of local context in the ways young people engage with, interpret, and make meaning of Hip Hop music.

Given that a number of educators and researchers focus on the potential of Hip Hop to propel learning through literacy, math, science, or history (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008, Emdin 2010, Stovall 2006), music educators ought to consider focusing on Hip Hop music and culture in and of itself as a social and cultural practice and aspect of music. Furthermore, music educators might provide opportunities for students to engage with Hip Hop musically, expressively, and critically on an equal plane as other musics more commonly addressed in K–12 curricula. Doing so responsibly necessitates that music educators consider issues of representation, identity, agency, and knowledge of the genre and related musical, social, cultural and historical practices.

### **Representation & Identity**

*This is Hip Hop sir. I am Hip Hop her. – Nitty Scott MC (2012)*

While creating spaces and places for Hip Hop in school music programs is a starting point, music educators also ought to consider how young people enact identities in relation to such spaces, places, and musicking. Abramo (2011a, 2011b) demonstrates how young people enact varied gendered and sexual identities through music and

musicking in the context of popular music groups in a high school. Abramo explains how students' musicking is intertwined with gendered discourses. Given explicit gendered discourses in Hip Hop music and culture such as misogynistic narratives explicit in much of mainstream Hip Hop; the marginalization of women Hip Hop emcees, producers, and DJs; and a mainstream focus on women emcees who enact hypersexualized identities through their music and videos; music educators must acknowledge and account for the ways that young people might express, perform, or do their genders through or in connection with Hip Hop (Abramo 2011a).

Butler (1988) makes the point that "gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (520).<sup>4</sup> As Butler states, "one does one's body" (521). The notion of performativity is important in considering how students make sense of, discuss, and negotiate representations of identities. Knowing full well that "those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (522), students might make sure that they "perform correctly" for their peers. As Abramo (2011b) demonstrates, music educators' perceptions of performing correctly may focus on particular sonic expectations, though students may factor gendered discourses that inform or influence how they perform both music and their selves. The world of mainstream commercial Hip Hop provides countless lessons for students learning how to perform in various ways. Students' desire to emulate or draw upon particular emcees' style or swagger may be a part of this process. Whether identifying with a particular musician or trying on multiple identities through varied music and musicians, young people can use Hip Hop as a site for exploring who they are and who or how they wish to be. The complexities of students' ongoing identity formation and expression through Hip Hop can be further compounded by social and cultural expectations in the varied places of school and a school music program.

References in mainstream or commercial rap music to places such as violent streets, dance clubs, strip clubs (Miller 2004, Sharpley-Whiting 2007) or actions such as inflicting violence, sex acts, consuming alcohol, and indulging in drugs complicate the process of addressing identity and meaning making through Hip Hop in the context of K–12 schools. Furthermore, women in mainstream Hip Hop have been overwhelmingly portrayed as sexual objects in lyrics and videos. Sharpley-Whiting (2007) explains how women in Hip Hop culture play such roles often

referred to as video-vixens or groupies. Young women who identify with or choose to emulate the video-vixens or groupies they observe in mainstream commercial Hip Hop risk performing what Muhammad (2007) refers to as “twenty first century Venus Hottentots.”<sup>5</sup>

Love’s (2008) study of how youth at a community center made meaning from rap music demonstrates how essentialized biological notions of what constitutes a Black woman promoted in rap music can be internalized by young people even when such representations are problematized. Love found that young people disassociated themselves with the women they saw in rap videos but still drew upon such imagery to characterize Black women in general and at times emulated the look in the ways they dressed. While young women in Love’s study critiqued video vixens and recognized that rap musicians performed music that was sexually explicit and misogynistic for commercial gain, they still enjoyed listening and dancing to this music. Furthermore, both the boys and girls in Love’s study celebrated such lyrics when performed by male rappers as they considered this typical Black male behavior. Love also found that boys at the community center drew upon tropes familiar in mainstream rap music and viewed woman as sexual objects.

Addressing Hip Hop in school music programs means contending with issues of identity and how women and men are represented through music and related imagery. In diverse school contexts, music educators will also need to contend with intersections of race and ethnicity with Hip Hop and gender. Discourses surrounding a growing number of White women emcees (Touré 2011, Upton 2013) and the historical marginalization of Latina emcees (Rivera 2003) are just two examples of issues enmeshed in broader discourses regarding Hip Hop and gender. Though beyond the scope of this article, such complexities must be acknowledged by music educators and addressed in future related work. Thinking through such issues is critical given the potential impact of engaging with Hip Hop and alternative discourses to those present in mainstream rap music on students’ ongoing negotiations of identity. At a minimum, music educators who take Hip Hop seriously must expand from limited narratives of women’s objectification and exploitation to acknowledging their history, presence, and agency as emcees, b-girls, DJs, producers, and managers, among other aspects of Hip Hop.



### **Recognizing Women in Hip Hop**

Women in Hip Hop, particularly those who do not conform to expected normative roles, face marginalization by a patriarchal male-dominated system within Hip Hop culture and the music industry (Neal 2004). In some cases Hip Hop and the music industry participate in a process of erasure of women. Rapper Remy Ma asserts how “the industry makes it seem there are 1,000 dudes. When it comes to the females they make it seem like there can be one and they try to put us against each other” (StreetHeat 2010). Snow tha Product (2011) makes a similar case explaining:

You get two female rappers in the same room and the comparisons start and it's team this or team that and they start attacking each other and they can't co-exist and it's ridiculous. I already have enough going against me in this game. I don't need other females also hating.

Remy Ma and Snow tha Product highlight how a patriarchal system attempts to position women emcees in particular ways. This is not to say that women emcees would not otherwise assert an aggressive style. Boasting and battling for respect and attention are core aspects of Hip Hop culture and related musical practice. However, students ought to be aware of larger contexts that may impact or factor how women emcees are represented or assert themselves through Hip Hop, particularly when working to be noticed.

Given the erasure of many women in Hip Hop, music educators might consider expanding students' understanding of related music and culture by including women who participate in alternative constructions of identity and rap music. However, merely drawing attention to women emcees does not entirely solve this situation. Keyes (2002) argues that the majority of research on female voices in Hip Hop lacks a nuanced representation of their roles by focusing exclusively on issues related to sexual objectification. She explains how female rappers perform in ways that “refute, deconstruct, and reconstruct alternative visions of their identity” (209). Keyes suggests that though women in Hip Hop are often made to seem as if they are performing in response to men, this perspective does not account for issues related to empowerment, choice, and how they create space for themselves and in solidarity with others.

Looking at women rappers through a historical lens, Irving (1993) demonstrates how at first women rappers responded to their male counterparts through rapping in “self defense” or “mere refusals of male constructions” (116). They then shifted to a stance of “working within the male genres to subvert them,” resulting in “an aggressive self-assertion complete with preposterous boasts” (116). Women rappers such as M.C. Lyte and Roxanne Shante, both popular in the 1980s, were representative of this shift. In refusing to limit their MCing to responding to men in defense, they avoided being trapped in a binary relationship and moved beyond a discourse of opposition. Rapper Ranking Ann highlights this point asserting that she is “critical of the women who just ‘step into the men’s shoes’: all they’re doing is getting into the mic and chatting the typical male lyrics in a woman’s voice” (Irving 117 as cited in Lipman). This view indicates a need to move beyond gender norms or expectations within the Hip Hop world.

While women emcees are gaining prominence within Hip Hop and throughout the public, they still face challenges due to societal and industry expectations or normative associations of women in the context of Hip Hop. Nitty Scott, MC explains that early in her career she positioned herself as a skilled emcee who could hold her own by reflecting aesthetic and lyrical conventions of Hip Hop culture and concentrating on displaying her skill. As she describes:

I do think I have to go the extra mile for people to not just miss me as just another pretty face, just another chick who’s going to get on this record and talk about shopping and handbags and lip gloss. I had to make that point before they would listen to me so it is what it is. (Meara 2012)

Nitty Scott discusses how since proving herself she is now focusing on exploring and expressing topics that she did not address earlier in her career.

However women emcees choose to interact with the social, cultural, aesthetic, and economic systems at play in Hip Hop and the music industry, their agency ought to be acknowledged in related discourse. This is particularly important since music educators and others can be guilty of perpetuating a homogenized notion of Hip Hop that does not account for the many women who contribute to its richness and diversity. While women who do gain notice within Hip Hop and in the larger context of popular music and culture may not address their gender explicitly in their lyrics or

performance, they may still find themselves addressing gendered norms and expectations in relation to or through their musicking. Performing Hip Hop is a discursive act that provides women emcees with opportunities to destabilize gender discourse and normative expectations (Butler 1988, 1990, Smith 1997). What might these new discourses be and what role could music educators and their students play in these initiatives?

In discussing the beauty industry Davis (1991) demonstrates a shift in feminist thinking from “an oppression model to a discourse model.” She explains:

In the first model, femininity is defined in terms of women’s shared experiences, of which the most central is oppression. Power is primarily a matter of male domination and female subordination. In the second model, the unified category “woman” is abandoned in favor of a diversity of femininities. Femininity becomes a (discursive) construction with power implicated in its construction. As such, power is not simply a matter of repression, but is productive and constitutive as well. (26)

Taking into account Davis’ model, women involved in Hip Hop and music students may negotiate their own identities as a form of discursive construction. The label “Women in Hip Hop” is inadequate as it can be construed as a universalizing or totalizing idea. Within Hip Hop many women construct varied identities regardless of or in reaction to misogyny in much commercial rap created by men in the industry. Take for example Keyes’s (2002) notion of the following distinct categories of women rappers: “Queen Mother,” “Fly Girl,” “Sista with Attitude” and “The Lesbian” (189).

Keyes (2002) identifies the “Queen Mother” as “female rappers who view themselves as African-centered icons, which is often evoked by their dress.” She also explains “their rhymes embrace black female empowerment and spirituality, making clear their self-identification as African, woman, warrior, priestess and queen. Queen Mothers demand respect not only for their people but for black women by men” (189–90). She includes Queen Latifah, Sister Souljah, and MC Yo-Yo in this category.

The “Fly Girl” draws attention to her body while speaking what is on her mind. Keyes identifies the female rap trio “Salt N Pepa” as the group that “canonized the ultimate fly girl posture of rap” (194). She also makes the point that “Rap’s fly girl image is political because it calls attention to aspects of Black women’s bodies that

are considered undesirable by mainstream American standards of beauty” (Roberts as cited in Keyes, 195). As role models and “public pedagogues,” a term Mahiri (2000/2001) uses to describe the power of Hip Hop artists to reach young people with their messages, TLC practiced counter hegemonic discourse not as a binary opposition but in providing alternatives to mainstream constructs of women. Rather than attacking the traditional image of beauty or those that strive to attain it, these women created a space in a very public way for something different to take place.

Keyes (2002) identifies “Sistas with an attitude” as MCs “who value attitude as a means of empowerment and present themselves accordingly.” “Sistas with an attitude” such as Roxane Shante and MC Lyte tend to use the word “B-tch” in order to reclaim it (200). The issue is a contentious one within Hip Hop as not all women rappers are comfortable with its use. She claims however that the “Sista with an Attitude” revises the standard definition of “B-tch” to mean an aggressive or assertive female who subverts patriarchal rule. Some women MCs such as Lyndah of BWP have also used the word “Bytch” with positive connotations (200). More contemporary “Sistas with an attitude” have embraced images of drugs, money, partying, and other areas that have given them a “bad girl” image. While some in Hip Hop react negatively towards the ways these women MCs carry themselves, Keyes makes the point that they are nevertheless respected for their skill.

Keyes uses the category “The Lesbian,” to characterize women emcees who embrace this sexual identity. Keyes discusses the difficulty for Black lesbians to negotiate “White patriarchal culture on the one side and White lesbian culture, racism and general homophobia on the other” (Omosupe as cited in Keyes, 2007). This is compounded by their marginalization from mainstream media and even academic discourse (Clay 2007, 2008). Clay (2007) problematizes Hip Hop feminism as hetero-normative in its erasure of queer Black desire and identity. Addressing the importance of space she continues that, “the decoding of masculinity and race that happens in queer women’s spaces indicates that each identity is indeed performative” (159).

The categories proposed by Keyes (2002) should be seen as permeable and as examples of heuristics that may assist educators in thinking beyond totalizing or essentializing language when discussing “women in Hip Hop.” Keyes’s framework

can also serve as a heuristic for helping students negotiate their identities, and broaden their conceptions of Hip Hop music. However, while categories can be helpful for bringing aspects of a culture to light, they are problematic if used in ways that reify or essentialize particular ways of being. MC Lady Luck makes her distaste for being labeled explicit, asserting:

I don't like being put in a box. I don't like being called a rapper. I don't like being called a battle rapper. I don't like being called Black. I don't like being called a lesbian. I just want to be Luck... I don't like a title"  
(djvlad 2012)

In acknowledging the diversity of women's engagement and in Hip Hop, music educators ought to be cautious of how students make meaning of any descriptive labels or categories used in related discourse. Rather than attempting to identify which categories describe particular women Hip Hop artists, music educators might instead think broadly about the spectrum of Hip Hop artists and make space in their classrooms for a more nuanced understanding of such diversity. Lady Luck speaks to the importance of this diversity explaining, "you have your female Barack Obamas...Michelle Obamas...Paris Hiltons. You have your female rap versions of everybody, there's someone for everyone. We all can't be painting one color" (Stars 2013).

Along with recognizing the diversity of Hip Hop artists, music educators must also recognize the fluid and multifaceted nature of identity. Emcees can reflect the nature of human experience in their expression of multifaceted identities. Many women emcees resist being pigeonholed or reduced to caricatures by others including the music industry. Nitty Scott MC (n.d.) stresses this in the following blog post excerpt:

When it comes to me, I don't have the perks of being perfectly packaged, but I am also free to NOT have to be one way, all of the time. I don't have a fixed identity that makes me more marketable, but I am authentic. My art might even contradict itself one day and be highly criticized for it—but as I learn and grow, my perceptions change, and isn't that just human as fuck?

Music educators might also develop an understanding of how Hip Hop musicians can perform in ways that are counterhegemonic by addressing, critiquing, or complicating normalized notions of gender. Those unfamiliar with Hip Hop

culture and how emcees play with language and varied signs to communicate multiple possible meanings such as in ways that are coded, indexical, or intertextual in nature (M. Morgan 2009) may have difficulty in identifying whether an emcee is embracing, embodying, or critiquing cultural or social tropes. Such performance of identities and meanings can be purposefully ambiguous.

The commercially successful musician Nicki Minaj might serve as an example of such performance. Nicki Minaj enacts a sexually explicit persona in her dress, moves, and lyrics while appropriating aspects of popular culture such as imagery reminiscent of Barbie Dolls and Japanese Harajuku girls, what Minaj has referred to as Harajuku Barbie (Whitney 2012). Minaj's music combines aspects of rap music and electronic dance music. Drawing on Keyes's aforementioned female Hip Hop archetypes, Whitney (2012) suggests that Minaj is able to move fluidly between and across identities such as the Fly Girl, Sista with Attitude, and The Lesbian. Whitney highlights how Minaj shifts between multiple personas in interviews and while rapping. One might observe Minaj as engaging in a process of becoming (Gould 2007).

Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Gould (2007) explains how the process of becoming defies categorizations and opens possibilities of being in the world. In this context women rap artists such as Nicki Minaj are becoming with and through music in ways that defy the static labels or identities that others attempt to construct and apply. The hyperbolic and caricature-like persona that Minaj adopts could make it easier for young people to develop understanding of how one can resist or ignore how others might position them.

While critics frame Minaj's performances as perpetuating Orientalism, the excess and superficiality of commercial rap, feminism-lite, among other critical frameworks (Whitney 2012), Minaj can also be seen as becoming, asserting herself, and working the system. Hip Hop artists such as Minaj call for educators and the public to develop more nuanced ways of reconciling whether women MCs engage in empowerment or self-objectification (White 2013). Critics, fans, and those who are ambivalent ought to acknowledge that Minaj has agency to perform as she does. It is this agency that may make some music educators uncomfortable with women emcees who choose to make their sexuality explicit and a key aspect of their musicking or

ways of being in the public sphere (White 2013).

For instance, rapper Precious Paris embraces a “hardcore” identity aiming to shock people and push the boundaries of what is mainstream in Hip Hop. Musician Rah Digga makes the case that women in Hip Hop should have the freedom to be artists or “sex kittens,” (Stars 2013). These issues are further complicated by the social and economic systems in which Hip Hop exists. Filmmaker Ava DuVernay stresses how artists such as Trina make economic and entrepreneurial decisions such as to enact explicitly sexual identities as a strategy to sell records to a predominantly male fan base and are successful in doing so (A. Keyes 2010).

In a blog post titled *keeping it real...or not* Nitty Scott MC (n.d.) suggests that enacting characters or alternate stage persona can be a mechanism for creating divisions between an entertainer and “normal people” while protecting one’s identity. She explains that she takes a different approach similar with those “who go for a more natural, personal, ‘heart on my sleeve’ route and connect with people through their relatability” (para. 3). Nitty Scott discusses how the entertainment field has room for both approaches. Jessica Disu (2010) AKA FM Supreme similarly positions herself as communicating realness exclaiming in the song *Crazy Mama*, “they want to sell sex appeal I want to sell how I feel. I spit what’s real.” Disu, embeds socially conscious messages in her music and is upfront about how she sees herself as an activist and educator as well as an MC (MsJaneThang 2013).

Snow tha product emphasizes the double standard in Hip Hop in which female emcees are critiqued for “going hard” or asserting themselves in a manner that rejects normative notions of femininity. She also problematizes women emcees who rely on being sexually explicit, which sets an expectation that all female rappers fit this model. She asserts:

Sometimes girls that do or that don’t have those same values or morals sometimes mess it up for girls like me. It makes it a lot harder, sometimes they judge me a little harder because ‘oh well she’s willing to do this why are you not’ and it’s like because I’m not like that. I represent a different type of female. I feel I represent girls who want to make it because of their merits and their hard work and not necessarily because of the easy route, which is the sex thing. (Vibe 2012)

Decisions regarding whether to keep it real or take on particular characters

and identities involve contemporary artists' nuanced considerations and may factor in students' engagement with Hip Hop. These choices can be connected to issues of agency and larger systems or contexts in which Hip Hop is situated. Regardless of what particular rap music students might engage with in class, it is critical that they understand how women and themselves can, potentially, rap to assert their sense of self. As Nitty Scott explains, in relation to her track *Is this thing on?*:

The record itself was born feeling like I declare who I am. What I am about. What I am not about. All the time. But, sometimes I feel that people just don't hear me. Or when I just scream at the top of my lungs and what I am not willing to do and people will still approach me with bullshit. It was kind of like this feeling, 'Is this thing on? Is anybody listening? Did I not just say what I am about?' (Diep 2012, para. 2)

Providing students with opportunities to be heard and proclaim what they are about is critical to addressing Hip Hop, gender, and agency in the context of music education. Engaging with musicians such as Nicki Minaj can make a poststructuralist paradigm tangible for both music educators and their students, particularly if students are given the space to discuss and try out multiple identities through their own and other's musicking. However, such engagement is rife with challenges. Music educators and their students may find it difficult to unpack the layers involved in emcees' varied persona and may be perplexed when trying to determine whether performances are counter-hegemonic or embrace aspects of society that some might find problematic.

Opening music classrooms for students to express and assert themselves necessitates that educators negotiate boundaries and spheres of appropriateness. This includes making informed decisions regarding which emcees and what content to allow in the classroom. While students and educators understand differences between outside and inside of school contexts, the complexity of addressing issues of identity, self-expression, and meaning making can obfuscate clear cut lines and boundaries regarding what is or is not appropriate. This can be difficult when emcees and students seek to assert their own sense of self and sexuality or other aspects of human experience ranging from violence to drug use that are taboo or inappropriate in school contexts. Discussing the possibility of allowing space for desire to be addressed through students' musical experiences, Gould (2009) observes that



“school music education has no space for celebratory pleasure or sexuality” (67). What would taking up Gould’s challenge to address desire look and sound like in music classrooms and what are the ramifications if a young person’s music expresses topics that are typically taboo? Music education is in need of dialogue to help educators make informed decisions regarding issues of appropriateness, censorship, and related ethical issues for the classroom.

While the complexity of issues such as sexuality, gender, race, and notions of hegemonic or counterhegemonic performance should not be reasons for music educators to exclude Hip Hop from classrooms, music educators must be realistic about what is involved in such engagement. Broadening beyond awareness of male and mainstream emcees is only a beginning step toward addressing issues of gender in relation to Hip Hop. Given that young people construct, enact, and develop understanding of gendered identities with music and through musicking in schools (Abramo 2009, 2011b, Björck 2011), it is problematic to treat Hip Hop culture and rap music as content that can simply be inserted into a classroom or ensemble without unpacking and thinking through the aforementioned issues. Developing appropriate pedagogies for integrating Hip Hop in music classrooms necessitates an appreciation of the depth and complexity involved in disrupting homogenized narratives while fostering an environment where students can challenge misogynistic and other problematic aspects of rap music while expressing their lived realities and worldviews.

### **Music and Meaning**

An understanding of how young people make meaning from Hip Hop is crucial for this development to take place in music education. Dibben (1999), in discussing Adorno and his critique of the culture industry, makes the point that “people. . . may use the products of the culture industry to produce their own meanings” (342). This is an important point for music educators. First, it demonstrates the necessity for music educators to find out how students are actually making meaning from the music they listen to rather than assuming that students read texts in the same way as adults. Second, music educators might enable students to produce their own cultural products, thus ascribing meaning to them and third, music educators can provide

students opportunities to rework or appropriate music with objectionable content to create new meaning. Such approaches are consistent with aspects of media literacy (Morrell 2008, Share 2009).

Green's (2005, 2008) concepts of delineated and intersonic meanings are useful in making sense of the way students inscribe meaning to the music with which they are engaging. Delineated meaning refers to "musical meanings, which point outwards from the musical text towards concepts, relationships or things that exist independently of it" as well as "meanings which are loosely suggested or metaphorically sketched by the music in relation to its social context" (2005, 78). Inter-sonic meanings on the other hand are those "contained within the musical object in relation to the historically-constituted logical properties of the meaning-making processes" (77). She further explains,

Both signs and referents are incorporated, embodied, or they inhere and are thus inherent within the raw materials that constitute the music in question. However they are of course entirely socially constituted, and recognition of them, as I have already suggested, is dependent on listeners' acquired familiarity with the stylistic norms of the music in question. (77)

Differentiating between the two types of musical meaning, Green (2005) states, "with [inter-sonic] meaning the process of signification occurs from sound to sound, whereas with delineation it occurs from sound to non-sound" (80). Green's notions of inter-sonic and delineated meaning might be useful in understanding how different places, contexts, and systems play a role in young peoples' musical meaning making. One can imagine countless scenarios in which students' engagement with Hip Hop changes in terms of its delineated and inter-sonic meanings based on physical, social, and cultural contexts. Students' engagement in Hip Hop may take varied forms outside school, in public, and in the privacy of their homes. These places provide their own lessons. While some programs in community centers and schools provide safe spaces for conscious, artistic, and positive engagement with Hip Hop (Dimitriadis 2001, Lashua and Fox 2007, Love 2008; Southwest Youth Collaborative 2008), not all young people are lucky enough to engage with Hip Hop in these types of environments. Music classrooms may serve as physical and

dialogical places for unpacking and addressing identity and meaning making through the study and engagement with Hip Hop music and culture.

### **Placing Hip Hop in Music Education**

What is the place of Hip Hop in music education? As discussed thus far, simply adding Hip Hop to classrooms without considering how it might be situated can at best limit its potential and at worst be problematic for students and teachers. An awareness and consideration of place and its role in learning and musicking can be instructive in this regard. Stauffer (2008) makes a strong case for considering place-based philosophy in music education, explaining that:

In whatever ways we may come to understand place, our places, or ourselves in place, we do so in the context of the narrative of our lives through time, in location, and in relation to self and others. We relate our understanding through social transmission of our own histories, including the stories we tell ourselves and stories we tell to others.  
(177)

Music educators ought to provide a place for students to share their stories of lived experience of and through Hip Hop.

The ways in which young people experience, speak about, and engage in Hip Hop are likely to shift according to the place in which they are located and the groups of people with whom they interact. In other words, young people might place Hip Hop culture and music in varied ways, according to social, cultural, historical, and musical contexts, in relation to their lived experience. Rose (1994) makes this point discussing the importance of groups such as crews or posses acting as local sources of identity in Hip Hop culture. "Identity in Hip Hop," she writes, "is deeply rooted in the specific, the local experience and one's attachment to and status in a local group or alternative family" (34). Forman (2000) notes how space can serve as an analytical framework in terms of production styles, crews, lyrics and allegiances and rivalries.

Stalhammar's (2000) notions of individual and internal space are helpful in considering how young people engage in Hip Hop in terms of their perception and construction of identity. Individual space is when the listener is cut off from the external world, for example by "listening to music through an earpiece or

headphones or by shutting oneself up in a room” (67). This phenomenon is often visible while taking public transportation or walking down the street. Internal space consists of a group involved in listening together apart from other people. In this situation “there is a ‘shutting off’ which marks off a distance in relation to others” (67). Students listening with friends to music in their bedroom may be one example of this particular space. They are simultaneously connected with one another and separate from others not included in their space.

Finally, the Internet provides a virtual or “cyber” space allowing the singing and dancing taking place in the privacy of one’s bedroom to be made public on YouTube or other related sites. Young people listening to music on a website can partake in related dialogue with peers miles away by posting comments or chatting in real-time. These forms of technology trouble notions of the physical, social, and discursive spaces where students may engage with music.

While young people move fluidly throughout these and other social spaces and places, it is important to consider how students’ locations factor in their engagement with and meaning making of Hip Hop. We might ask, for example, how identities come into play depending on a given space and where in that space young people locate themselves. The way someone listens, interprets, and thinks about music in the privacy of her or his own home may differ from situations when friends, peers or adults are present. For instance, Love (2008) discusses how Lisa, a young African American woman, would not listen to rap music with sexually explicit lyrics in the presence of males even though she enjoyed listening to the music in other contexts. If facilitated well by the music educator, the classroom may act as a physical, social and dialogical space and place for students to negotiate issues of identity and meaning in terms of their multifaceted engagement with Hip Hop.

### **Implications for Music Teaching and Learning**

#### *Fusing Critical Media Literacy and Critical Pedagogy*

This article forwards a perspective that Hip Hop ought to be included in music programs in a culturally valid manner (Abril 2006) that provides students with opportunities to explore both delineated and intersonic meanings and aspects of the music and culture. Given the formative stage of related pedagogy and curricula in

music education, music educators can forefront issues of gender, identity, meaning, and agency as they develop appropriate praxis. In this regard music educators might combine relevant pedagogies in the context of Hip Hop with aspects of critical media literacy and critical pedagogy.

Kellner (2002) explains that media literacy “helps people to use media intelligently, to discriminate and evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms, and to investigate media effects and uses” (159). Critical media literacy more explicitly addresses:

Ideology critique and analyzing the politics of representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality; incorporating alternative media production; and expanding textual analysis to include issues of social context, control, resistance, and pleasure. (Share 2009, 12)

At its core, critical media literacy helps students unpack taken-for-granted assumptions and critique normative representations of the human experience through a combination of analyzing and creating media (Morrell 2008, Share 2009). Integrating critical media literacy in music classrooms acknowledges students’ agency to construct multiple possible meanings from media while taking into account issues of power, ideology, representation, and voice.

Music educators might apply critical media literacy to help students broaden their focus beyond specific Hip Hop texts and better understand the systems in which Hip Hop exists and how varied contexts contribute to meaning making. bell hooks (1994) promotes a perspective for addressing Hip Hop and its representation of women by equally distributing the blame between the rappers and the businesspeople behind them at the record labels. Critics such as hooks warn how Hip Hop reflects the sexism and misogyny in society, which is then replicated by young people. Music educators, however, should avoid reducing young people to “cultural dopes.” While some young people do mimic what they see and hear, music educators ought to acknowledge students’ ability to filter, critique, and make meaning of the representations present in the Hip Hop music with which they engage (Mahiri and Conner 2003, Newman 2005). Drawing students’ attention to systems such as the music industry, capitalism, and mass media can inform how they make meaning from and through their engagement with Hip Hop.

Critical pedagogy embraces the critique of dominant structures and possibilities for alternatives through a cycle of identifying and analyzing problems, creating and acting on plans to address the problems, and analyzing and evaluating one's action (Freire 1970). Abrahams (2005) explains that critical pedagogy in the context of music education "seeks to identify possibilities in the classroom by offering schema to connect word to world and by its unyielding urgency of transformation" (7). Abrahams suggests that critical pedagogues ask questions such as "Who am I," "Who are my students?" "What might they become?" and "What might we become together?" Martignetti, Talbot, Clauhs, Hawkins, and Niknafs (2013) mobilize critical pedagogy to reflect on their experiences teaching in urban settings by answering these questions.<sup>6</sup>

A similar process might be enacted in the context of students' and music educators' engagement with Hip Hop in classrooms. By enacting critical pedagogy in classrooms, music educators can provide opportunities for students to consider themselves and their community, in terms of who they are and who they might become as individuals and collectively. Hip Hop can serve as an expressive medium for articulating and potentially realizing these visions. By enacting critical media literacy and critical pedagogy, music educators can situate Hip Hop as a site for problem posing, investigation, musical engagement, and praxis in connection with students' lives. Such an approach is forwarded by Love (2008).

Drawing on Freire's (1970) notion of conscientization, Love (2008) suggests that the young people in her study, while able to examine and critique aspects of Hip Hop and articulate their perspectives, lacked the ability to unpack more complex issues within and connected to Hip Hop or take action in relation to their critiques. The young people in Love's study expressed an inability to make a difference in the larger context of Hip Hop along with the negative social ramifications of acting on their critiques. Love argues that critical pedagogy and critical media literacy can play positive roles in assisting students develop a critical consciousness from which to engage Hip Hop. While such an approach exists in general education (Kellner and Share 2007, Leard and Lashua 2006, Stovall 2006) it is lacking in much of music education. Music educators can mobilize approaches to critical media literacy and pedagogy that help students develop a critical awareness of Hip Hop texts, contexts,

related systems and the ability to apply this developed understanding in their own praxis.

Music education has the unique potential to fuse aspects of Hip Hop studies and pedagogy while serving as an interface between Hip Hop based education; Hip Hop, meaning, and identities; and Hip Hop aesthetic forms (Petchauer 2009) as they relate to general education, music, and music education. Music educators could draw from Hip Hop culture and academic disciplines to further develop Hip Hop studies and pedagogy in the context of music teaching and learning in formal and informal contexts. This in turn may broaden and deepen existing discourse and praxis related to popular music pedagogies throughout music education. Developing an appropriate and productive approach for integrating Hip Hop in music programs will require music educators to expand their understanding of the culture, musical genre, related artistic practices, and pedagogies most conducive for helping students develop agency, musical and cultural understanding, and skill.

*Musicking and Hip Hop: Analyzing, Responding, Discussing, and Connecting*

While Hip Hop pedagogy in general education draws from the music and culture, the sonic aspects of the music and intersonic meanings are largely missing from such academic discourse. Music classrooms can provide a place for students to interact with Hip Hop through musical engagement. By providing additional social, cultural, and historical context, music educators can provide students with opportunities to connect intersonic and delineated meanings in relation to Hip Hop and their own lived experience. Applying a critical lens to Hip Hop and addressing issues of gender can play a role in the delineated meanings that students construct from their engagement. For instance, Gaunt (2004) traces the presence of women in Hip Hop to their participation in double dutch as young girls. She contends that the role of double dutch in Hip Hop has been erased due to the masculinization of rap. Shifting our perspective as Gaunt would have us, we could see women in Hip Hop not as attempting to have a voice in a man's musical genre, but as reasserting their own place in a culture of which they could be said to have played an integral role in developing.

In a different vein, MC Lyte discusses how producers such as Timbaland

introduced a sound indicative of dance music to Hip Hop with artists such as Missy Elliot that brought rap music closer to pop (A. Keyes 2010). The ability to differentiate between varied aesthetics of rap music, in this case noticing how the produced pop and dance aesthetic fused with someone rapping can be extended to having students identify the social and cultural contexts surrounding these aesthetics. MC Lyte points to how the fusion between pop and rap put women emcees in competition with their peers who were more rooted in pop music. She differentiates this type of mainstream aesthetic from the sounds and aesthetic closer to grassroots contexts, which may not be as focused on Hip Hop as a business or commodity and in turn less focused on projecting sexual imagery. Music educators who cannot make distinctions between the historical boom bap sound of rap music and commercial rap that is produced with a pop or dance feel may have difficulty in making connections among related delineated and intersonic meanings.

This highlights how past experiences can frame how one hears and experiences music. What are the implications of shifting students' listening from a focus on a rapper's latest insult of another,<sup>7</sup> to one on the rhythms of double dutch they might know from their own participation or observations of others playing it? In enabling our students to hear and listen differently, we can open new imaginative spaces that lead to alternative ways of thinking about representation, an often-overlooked form of agency. This could also lead to entirely new ways of analyzing and describing popular music.

Drawing on queer theory, Abramo (2011b) demonstrates interrelations of intersonic and delineated meanings in students' engagement with popular music. Through engaging with Hip Hop in the music classroom, music educators might assist students in teasing apart and developing understanding of the relationships between these meanings. For instance, engaging with the music of emcees such as Nicki Minaj, M.I.A. Nitty Scott, and Snow tha product could provide students opportunities to engage with varied musical styles and multifaceted identities in the context of Hip Hop culture and rap music. Through exploring the connection between intersonic and delineated meanings students might identify a relationship between the highly produced, dance-centric and pop-tinged music of Nicki Minaj, the appropriation and recontextualization of music from around the world in the



music of M.I.A. or the aesthetics of flow and beats in the music of Nitty Scott and Snow tha product and what they might be communicating as musicians.

In this way students' engagement with music and meaning fuse intersonic and delineated meanings in a holistic sense. This might be contrasted with an approach that isolates a particular aspect of the music such as a rhythmic or tonal pattern, chord progression, or structure for the sake of studying musical elements devoid of context or an approach that focuses exclusively on the social aspect of these emcees in relation to Hip Hop culture and society devoid of musical context or the aesthetic aspects of their music. Given Campbell's (1995) concern regarding the analysis of rock music through using techniques based on Western Art music in classroom contexts, music educators ought to consider musical analysis appropriate for Hip Hop. This may be more of an issue of pedagogy and how one approaches analysis, discussion, and the ability for students to make connections than it is analysis in and of itself.

How might analysis through musicking related to Hip Hop impact students' construction of intersonic and delineated meanings? What for example are the *Feminine Endings* (McClary 1991) or beginnings of Hip Hop?<sup>8</sup> What would an embodied analytical pedagogy look and sound like? How might engaging in mashups, remixes, spittin' bars, beat construction, or DJing provide new ways of hearing Hip Hop music and allow for alternative readings?<sup>9</sup> Music educators ought to envision possibilities while collaborating with musicologists and theorists who work with Hip Hop along with the practitioners of this culture and music.

More broadly, treating rap music as worthy of in-depth study may help students develop knowledge, understanding, and skill that can in turn support their ability to express and assert themselves. This is particularly the case for young women interested in engaging with a culture and social system that is inequitable and holds them to a higher standard in terms of skill, knowledge, and understanding. Thus, music classrooms have potential to serve as places where students might deepen and broaden their knowledge and understanding of Hip Hop and related musical practices through focusing on both intersonic and delineated meanings of rap music. Analyzing, discussing, and making connections between aspects of Hip Hop can contribute to this effort. Music education is in need of related research and

practice to develop such an approach.

### **Musicking and Hip Hop: Creating and Performing**

Given the importance of sound and intersonic meanings to young people's enjoyment of rap music (Love 2008, Stovall 2006) music educators ought to take seriously the inclusion of creating and performing rap in music classrooms as a critical entry point for students to develop their own narratives in Hip Hop and negotiate their own and each other's meaning making. It is ironic that the overwhelming focus on performing in school music programs is rarely considered in the context of rap music. Music educators who make Hip Hop the focus of analytical and historical study without opportunities for students to create and perform, miss a critical aspect of engaging with rap music. Including the creation and performance of rap music, however, calls for broadening the aesthetic frameworks from which music educators typically operate. This may require a shift in music educators' foci from concepts based on Western classical music to those more specific to Hip Hop. For instance, Muhammad (2007) and Rose (1994) articulate stylistic practices of Hip Hop such as "flow (sustained motion and energy), layering (of sounds, ideas and images), and rupture (breaks in movement and music)" (116) that might be framed differently in other musical traditions.

The stylistic practices of flow, layering, and rupture may act both as aesthetic guides in students' analysis and creation of Hip Hop and as pedagogical tools. Morgan's (2004) analogy in considering polyvocal feminism is particularly instructive. She states: "We need a voice like our music—one that samples and layers many voices, injects its sensibilities into the old and flips it into something new, provocative, and powerful" (281). Students need not be professional MCs in order to create new meanings out of the music they create or "consume." In providing students opportunities to develop skills and techniques of sampling, remixing, constructing beats, and rapping we can allow them additional layers of meaning making from their music and opportunities to re-present. Through these forms of engagement with Hip Hop in the music classroom, modes of thinking may be embedded in processes and products as music is created, listened to, discussed, and

re-mixed. In this way students can re-work or flip Hip Hop in terms of their lived realities, constructing new music and new ways of thinking about their identities as young adults (Bennett 2000, Lashua 2006b, Morrell 2008). Such an approach is aligned with an ethic of critical pedagogy by helping students “view music as something to be constantly questioned, changed, and transformed” (Schmidt 2005, p. 8). Students flipping misogynist scripts and other aspects of Hip Hop that they find problematic might be seen as an embodiment of conscientization (Abrahams 2005, Freire 1970, Schmidt 2005).

While the realities of the classroom, school, and community contexts may necessitate compromises in Hip Hop content and performance due to issues of appropriateness, educators might consider sharing the decision making process with their students to arrive at these compromises democratically and so that students are aware of and can speak to existing constraints. Educators might also consider how changes in the music’s delineated meanings play a role in these discussions and decisions. Issues of censorship, compromise, and where the line of appropriateness is demarcated deserve larger attention across music education.

### **Towards Hip Hop Praxis in Music Education**

*Ladies hear the battle cry! Where my ladies at? – Medusa (2012)*

Regardless of music education’s inclusion or exclusion of Hip Hop, students are negotiating issues of identity, representation, and agency in and out of the music classroom. Mohanty (2003) makes this point clear in her discussion of classrooms as “political and cultural sites that represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies” (194). She further states, “teachers and students produce, reinforce, recreate, resist and transform ideas about race, gender and difference in the classroom” (194). Abramo’s (2009, 2011b) research of students’ musicking with and through popular music and intersections with issues of gender is instructive in this regard. An understanding of how students enact particular gendered identities and make meaning through their interactions with popular music, peers, and music teachers can inform the development of pedagogies appropriate for Hip Hop in music classrooms. Engaging with Hip Hop in the music classroom may address music curricular objectives while providing

students opportunities to engage, question, and challenge normative discourses in their lives. Whether through rapping, moving to, DJing, producing, listening, analyzing, or discussing Hip Hop, students might explore varied alternative forms of performance. Furthermore, the combination of providing young women and men with opportunities to create and perform rap music along with listening to and discussing the music of female and male emcees may serve to normalize the notion that both men and women do, and are, Hip Hop.

In describing her developing sound, Nitty Scott MC explains,

The sound is developing, the subject matter is developing even more. I'm just really growing in front of people's eyes and I just wanted to reveal to them the many things I am capable of beyond, 'Yo, yo check me out, I'm a hard rapper.' (Meara 2012)

School music programs might be places for young women and men to do the same. In adapting music education to acknowledge and account for Hip Hop as a critical element of contemporary culture, we might imagine how music classrooms can be transformed to assist young people flip misogynist scripts as they rewrite and create their own musical and life narratives, perhaps becoming future MCs or DJs whose music we can play loudly and proudly for their own or next generation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hip Hop culture consists of rapping, DJing, dancing, and graffiti “piecing.” Some recognize “knowledge” as an additional element. Throughout this paper when speaking specifically about music I will refer to rap music and when speaking more broadly about related culture I will refer to Hip Hop culture. I will use the term Hip Hop to encompass both culture and music.

<sup>2</sup> An MC or emcee is a person who raps.

<sup>3</sup> See Thibeault (2012) for an expanded discussion on his notion of a postperformance world.

<sup>4</sup> While this paper explores intersections of performance and performativity, a distinction exists between the concept of a performance of identity, that is a conscious and deliberate act and performativity that is more discursive, and consists of repeated performances over the long-term. See, Butler (1988, 1993).

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<sup>5</sup> The “Venus Hottentot” was Sarah Baartman, an African woman put on display for Europeans to view and remark on her naked body particularly her buttocks thus reducing her, in the public’s eye, to her sexual parts. See, Gilman (1986).

<sup>6</sup> Martignetti et al. adapt Abrahams’s question “what might they become?” to “who might we become as individuals?” to account for the shared reflection and transformation among educators and students.

<sup>7</sup> Many MCs insult other MCs in their albums, which is indicative of a battling aesthetic in Hip Hop culture.

<sup>8</sup> See, McClary (1991), for semiotic analyses of music that provide expanded ways of perceiving and understanding music.

<sup>9</sup> Mashups juxtapose two or more different selections of music. Remixes change, add, or manipulate pre-existing selections of music while maintaining their essence so that they are still recognizable. Spittin’ bars is an expression that means to rap. Beat production consists of creating beats, which are the instrumental tracks over which an MC raps.

### About the Author

Evan Tobias is an assistant professor of music education at Arizona State University where his research interests and teaching include creative integration of digital media and technology, curricular inquiry, issues of social justice and equity, and integrating popular culture and music in music classrooms. He is recently published in *Arts Education Policy Review*, *Music Education Research*, *Research Studies in Music Education*, *Music Educators Journal*, and *International Journal of Music Education*. He also has several book chapters published or in press on topics ranging from addressing video games to situating multimedia, intermedia, and transmedia in music programs. Along with teaching varied courses in contemporary curricular and pedagogical approaches at ASU, Tobias heads the Consortium for Digital, Popular, and Participatory Culture in Music Education <http://cdppcme.asu.edu> and serves on the advisory board of the *Music Educators Journal*. He also maintains a professional blog at <http://evantobias.net>.