

Closing the Gap: An Analysis of the Musical Elements Contributing to Hip-Hop's Emergence

into Popular Culture

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Abstract

This paper explores the musical evolution of hip-hop and the techniques that have influenced such growth. Hip-hop music's pioneers established a genre that would not only prove to be self-sustaining, but allow for a diverse array of influences to contribute to its growth. An art form that was once preserved for minorities and often considered a lower form of intellectual art is growing closer to mainstream music. Topics such as the orchestration and production of music, influence of other genres, harmonic analysis, and the diversity within the genre itself are discussed with an emphasis on hip-hop artists of the previous two decades. While the concept of musical analysis in hip-hop is relatively young, current progress reflected in this analysis shows the increased popularity of hip-hop music and that there is room for scholarly study in the near future.

Keywords: hip-hop, music, jazz, rock, gospel, orchestration, harmonic analysis, diversity, popular culture

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Hip-hop music is deeply rooted in African-American culture. Evolving from the musical realms of negro spirituals, hymns, jazz, and blues, among others, hip-hop takes its place as the primary source of musical expression for African-American culture in the twenty-first century. Similar to African-American music in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its messages may be vulgar or uneducated to many, but, hip-hop acts as a loud cry against social institutions built to oppress the people from whose culture it is derived. This and problems with its construction cause hip-hop's failure of recognition as a canonical genre of music worthy of academic study. African-American music is studied as an integral part to the evolution of music not only in America but Western music as a whole. Despite inconsistencies in formal construction through notation and lack of standard harmonic techniques, African-American music found its place in academia during the beginning of the twentieth-century. During this time, many composers recognized the rich content of African-American music, however when hip-hop music originated, most people thought it lacked substance. Musicologists should challenge this stigma and recognize hip-hop music as a growing, intricate art form worthy of musical analysis. Scholars have concluded that is nearly impossible to analyze twenty first century hip-hop music in the same way we analyze Western art music, however, one can observe that the use of advanced musical techniques accompanied by the foundation laid by the pioneers of hip-hop has led to the evolution of unique sub-genres, resulting in the emergence of hip-hop as

a mainstream form of entertainment and art. Recent developments in also reveal similar compositional techniques to jazz, rock, and other genres generally accepted in academia.

Origins of Hip-Hop music and its Cultural Contest

Hip-Hop music evolved from music, literature, and cultural forms used to express cultural contest of institutions built for the oppression of minorities among other social and personal issues. New York City receives credit as the first home of hip-hop. In the same city that produced the beginnings of jazz, soul, funk, and R&B, as well as the live disco culture of the city in the sixties, people of these neighborhoods placed beats under collected tracks and other samples of popular melodies (Calhoun 2009). This task of music production was placed in the hands of the disk jockey (DJ). What started out as small jam sessions in the streets of the Bronx became a statement of unity and a voice for people oppressed by the redlining of New York boroughs. It wasn't all music however, as the crime-ridden streets of the Bronx accompanied by construction of "whites only" suburbs led to the mass exodus of middle class whites from the South Bronx, leaving a diverse pool of poverty¹ (Chang 12 & 13). The slums of the Bronx were overshadowed by the New York Yankees 1977 World Series championship and the Civil Rights Movement which ended with the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Music became a symbol of unity and cultural tradition for African-American and Afro-Caribbean people in the Bronx.

DJ Kool Herc (Kool Herc) is credited as the pioneer DJ for hip-hop in the early seventies as well as the release of Sugar Hill Gang's album "Rappers Delight" in 1979 as one of the first

¹ By the mid-seventies, average per capita income dropped to \$2,430 (40 percent of the nationwide average) (Chang 13).

true “rap” records. The role of the DJ and his turntables in hip-hop was very intricate; Kjetil Falkenberg Hanson discusses the origins of the DJ and the turntable in the *Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop*. Hanson describes the performance of DJing through the following analysis:

At the one end of a continuum is the practice of mixing tracks together either to create a seamless set of songs or to combine two tracks to form a new piece of music. In the middle is the practice of backing up a rapper by creating beats and laying a musical foundation. At the other end lies turntablism with improvisational playing styles - solo or with other musicians (Hanson 45).

Although sampling is not exclusive to hip-hop, the artistry of the DJ takes ambient sounds, textures, and rhythms from unthinkable sources. Kool Herc took the instrumental tracks of these songs and stripping them down to the beat, soon becoming the foundation for hip-hop. Building from the foundation pioneers like Kool Herc established in the seventies and discovering new influences, hip-hop is undergoing a new era driven by idiosyncratic sub-genres and closing the gap previously set forth by cultural contest.

Orchestration of Hip-Hop Music

Jazz and Hip-Hop

Today, hip-hop artists find inspiration from an array of genres. With a heavy African-American cultural influence in many of the boroughs of New York City, jazz, soul, and funk emerged as major influencers in their music. Hip-hop producer J-Dilla (Dilla) is celebrated for “breaking down the rules and the boundaries of hip-hop” through his connection to jazz (Russonello 2013). Dilla’s technique for creating beats juxtaposes what came before him as he chose to play his beats in “real time” allowing him to “color his creations with a signature

rhythmic sway” (Russonello 2013). Russonello cites this as “a new paradigm for the swing rhythm that had been born in West Africa and grew up with jazz” (Russonello 2013). Similarly, A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul found their success incorporating jazz samples with hip-hop music in large part due to the samples they extracted. Samples from Art Blakey’s “A Chant for Bu” appear in A Tribe Called Quest’s song “Excursions.” De La Soul’s song “Stakes Is High” contains samples of jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal’s “Swahililand.”

Performing under the name “Jaspects,” a group of Atlanta musicians work to preserve the aging art form of Jazz while also appealing to the younger masses. Pianist and musical director, Terrance Brown says: “I guess when jazz [and] the Harlem Renaissance began to give birth people really felt the need to express themselves and that is similar to how hip-hop was created” (Daniels 2009). Hip-hop artists and producers are now exploring the use of live studio instruments and synthetic horns typically found in jazz big bands. Accompanied by samples, the orchestration of these records play a large part in identifying the styles that have influenced it. “Fallin” uses the synthesizer to produce many of the sonorities, but as the song progresses, trumpet, saxophone, bass, and other live non-pitched percussion instruments are included.

Artists are using these same instruments to incorporate the jazz style into their hip-hop music, such as Grammy winning artist Kendrick Lamar. His Grammy winning 2015 album *To Pimp a Butterfly* uses these big band instruments on multiple tracks which give the album a jazz-funk fusion feel. In the song “Alright,” Kendrick Lamar opens with voices singing an Eb major chord over Ab (add4). This chord is articulated four times before the rap verse with saxophone improvisation in the background. Vocals continue with staggered saxophone interjections throughout the verse and chorus. “King Kunta” also uses jazz influences through an ostinato

walking bass line tonicizing E and providing harmonic texture under Kendrick Lamar's verses. This progresses to a modulation at the :57 mark to F. The song returns to E at the 1:14 mark as the harmonic texture increases through synthetic voices and sounds. While this song doesn't use the same instruments as the aforementioned examples and more closely identifies with funk, the sounds created by electronics entering at the 1:14 mark thicken the texture to create a jazz/funk feel.

In 2016, Lamar released a compilation of demos from the recording sessions of *To Pimp A Butterfly* which also followed this experimental jazz hip-hop style. He breaks the norm of typical hip-hop beats in his track "untitled 06 | 06.30.2014" with a 2:3 Bossa Nova drum set rhythm accompanying other instruments usually found in a jazz rhythm section such as bass and guitar while the flute and vibraphone carry the melody and countermelody. Experienced in fusing jazz and hip-hop, Ali Shaheed Muhammad from A Tribe Called Quest assisted Lamar in the production of this song. Providing more contrast, the drum pattern consistently goes into a half-time feel each time the chorus is played. The jazz heavy, funk charged concept of these two albums are paving a way for jazz into hip-hop in a way that extends past those who laid the foundation. While jazz and hip-hop hail from similar African roots, the evolution of this sub-genre attracts a larger following, defeating cultural contestations preceding it.

Gospel and Hip-Hop

Over the last decade, Gospel has had an influence on hip-hop in a similar way as jazz. Like jazz, gospel has African-American origins and artists are reaching back into their cultural roots to modernize this genre of music. "For millennials raised in the church and weaned on rap, it feels natural to use the language of hip-hop to grapple with thorny personal and spiritual

issues” wrote Allison Stewart discussing the merge of gospel and faith with rap (Stewart 2016). Orchestration and compositional techniques that follow the structure of modern gospel music contribute to hip-hop music. Gospel uses a harmonic language consisting of seventh chords, walking bass lines, and secondary chords which create passing tones to move between chords on strong beats. Its orchestration consists of a strong presence of vocals accompanied by piano, organ, and drum set (or in the case of hip-hop, an electronic beat). Artists occasionally include a big band style horn section. Vocalists often move in contrary motion, parallel thirds, creating simple harmonies accompany piano or organ. The timbre of vocalists in a gospel choir is also an important characteristic to creating an authentic gospel sound. Gospel choirs typically possess a bright, yet powerful tone created by strong forward placement through the nasal cavity and use a lot of vibrato.

Two artists who have flourished in the use of gospel influences are Jermaine Cole, known by his stage name “J.Cole” and Chance the Rapper. Cole released his second studio album *Born Sinner* in 2013 in which the title serves as an allusion to gospel influences and multiple tracks include a gospel choir. J. Cole’s hit single “Crooked Smile” features the R&B group TLC and a gospel choir. The piano accompaniment, borrowed from Jennifer Hudson’s “No One Gonna Love You” uses closed chords around the third and fourth octaves and a polyphonic texture to emulate a typical gospel piano part. Each time the chorus is sung, TLC harmonizes in parallel thirds - a common characteristic of Gospel music. This same harmony returns with a full mixed choir in the coda following the final TLC chorus at 3:34. The beat drops out at the 4:09 mark and the song concludes with the choir harmonizing using parallel thirds, similar to TLC’s chorus. J. Cole uses this same orchestration in “Trouble” and “Born Sinner.” In “Born Sinner” he uses his

featured artist, Fauntleroy to sing each chorus then brings in the mixed choir on the same lyrics at 3:01. The rhythmic support reduces to hand claps on beats two and four for a church-like feel. The reference is so strong, artists frequently state “take ‘em to church” to signify a mixed choir entrance with the rhythmic texture reducing to accents on beats two and four. Kanye West utilizes this in his song with Jay-Z “Never Let Me Down” at 4:11. The choir enters singing the melody while the tambourine accents beats two and four.

Chance the Rapper has recently come into the spotlight for the heavy gospel influences in his music. His latest release *Coloring Book* (2016) contains Christian allusions in his lyrics and uses a gospel choir on a few tracks. “How Great” is a direct arrangement of Chris Tomlin’s “How Great is our God.” The song opens with a female choir singing the tune with slightly altered harmonies.² The solo descant line that enters at (0:23) and continues through this opening statement uses the prisimizer effect, in which each note is built upon stacking the third, fifth, and seventh of the chord on the original note with a semi-distorted sound effect.³ The beat enters at 2:44 and Chance begins his verse. There is no doubt that this album carries a religious undertone however the fusing of hip-hop’s percussive elements with the vocal and harmonic elements of gospel on this record show a unique level of artistry than others who dabble in gospel/hip-hop fusion. “Finish Line/Drown” is a two part song which features gospel artist Kirk Franklin, rapper Noname, and R&B artists T-Pain and Eryn Allen Kane. The song opens with polyphonic “hums” and “doo’s” sung by T-Pain, a mixed choir, and Eryn Allen Kane. Similar to many of the Social Experiment songs, Chance uses drum set instead of an electronic drum pad to to emulate the

² C7 on the word “God” (0:10) and a chromatically ascending bassline starting on G (0:13)

³ An effect commonly used in the music of Bon Iver and Francis and the Lights

church-like sound. Chance concludes the first half of the song with a horn section carrying out the theme along with saxophone improv seamlessly fusing jazz, gospel, and hip-hop (3:16-3:35). The second half of the song, “Drown” is pure gospel consisting of soloists including Eryn Allen Kane, a mixed choir, trumpet, drum set, piano, organ, and synthesizer. Kirk Franklin leads away from the hip-hop feel of “Finish Line” and can ultimately be identified as a stand alone gospel song. While continuing to create a genuine hip-hop sound, J. Cole and Chance the Rapper

Rock/Metal and Hip-Hop

Hip-hop artists have also explored rock music as an influence, with collaborations as early as the mid 1980’s with Run-D.M.C’s rendition of Aerosmith’s “Walk this Way.” Infamous record producer Rick Rubin was credited with the idea as a twenty-two year old student at New York University when he reached out to Steven Tyler and Joe Perry (Edgers 2016). This collaboration seemed like a long shot because White America did not want to hear rap, and Black America preferred the R&B stylings of Whitney Houston, Marvin Gaye, and others. Rubin was sparked by his current work with Run-D.M.C and wanted to bridge the gap between hip-hop music and everything else (Edgers 2016). Others have found similar success like British alternative rock group Gorillaz. In 2001, the group released the single “Clint Eastwood” in collaboration with underground hip-hop MC, Del the Funky Homosapien (Sir DZL). The song alternates between rock choruses and rap verses by Sir DZL. Similar to “Walk This Way,” the emphasis on beats two and four in the drum beat help the rap verses fit the rock groove to create a seamless fusion.

Three years later, the fusion of hip-hop and rock entered the mainstream with the collaboration between Jay-Z and Linkin Park. Their 2004 extended play (EP) *Collision Course*

merged hits from each artist into a hip-hop/rock fusion. *Rolling Stone* reviewed the collaboration, writing “The mix of brassy rhymes and heavy electro-rock on "Big Pimpin'/Papercut" and "Dirt Off Your Shoulder/Lying From You" — featuring new verses and music from the band and Jay — is way more interesting than most rap metal” (Hoard 2004). The single “Numb/Encore” won a Grammy for Best Rap/Sung Collaboration in 2006.

One of the most recent breakthroughs was hip-hop artist Kanye West collaborating with former Beatles singer/songwriter Paul McCartney in 2015. “Only One,” “All Day,” and “FourFive Seconds” had featured McCartney on guitar and voice but in the style of Kanye West’s previous works. McCartney later argued “hip-hop music is...the music of now” and spoke of the “innovative stuff” in West’s 2010 album *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* (Runtagh 2016).

Orchestration Techniques

Alongside the merging of genres, artists are using live and synthetic instruments to create a dense texture. Artists are also experimenting with different sounds to create beats, harmonies, and melodies, resulting in the evolution of “experimental” hip-hop; a style which enables listeners who typically prefer other genres. Mike D’Errico discusses the evolution of this sub-genre in the *Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop* through the performance of DJs and turntablists as solo entities. In the analysis of this early practice, these artists “developed a specific set of values and aesthetics that were shaped by the capabilities and limitations of turntable and sampling technologies” (D’Errico 281). D’Errico explains that this aesthetic has been challenged recently with the emergence of advanced technology for digital audio production (D’Errico 288).

Fusing live trumpet sounds over hip-hop beats, hip-hop duo Brasstracks and Nico Segal from the Social Experiment⁴ meld together jazz, hip-hop, R&B into one sound. String instruments are similarly becoming a trend in hip-hop. Classically trained violinist Miri Ben-Ari (also known as the “Hip-Hop Violinist”) collaborates with hip-hop, R&B, jazz, and pop artists. Her original music has also proven to be influential as her single “Symphony of Brotherhood” was the first instrumental single on *Billboard’s* R&B/Hip-Hop charts⁵. Many hip-hop artists have taken interest in the string texture to create a dense backtrack to accompany beats and rhymes. Perhaps inspired by his previous collaborations with Miri Ben-Ari, Kanye West performed songs from his first two albums in an exclusive concert at Abbey Road Studios in London with a seventeen piece all female string orchestra. The live album was titled *Late Orchestration* as an allusion to his second studio album *Late Registration*.

Evolution of Harmonic Language Within Hip-Hop Music

Kyle Adams’ publications on hip-hop analysis provide insight to the academic side to hip-hop music as he argues that hip-hop music for the most part is “cyclical”, or repetitive in nature (Adams 119). Sampling has always been a large part of hip-hop music and when analyzing like Western art music, the music tends to repeat a one, two, or four bar rhythmic or harmonic pattern. The function of sonorities in hip-hop music are also capable of constructing harmonic progressions similar to those found in Western art music (Adams 119). There are many problems with analyzing hip-hop music with traditional music analysis techniques, and artists

⁴ Formerly identified by the stage name “Donnie Trumpet”

⁵ <http://miribenari.com/about-miri/>

now include more advanced harmonic techniques that can be compared to those found in some works of Western art music.

“The Social Experiment,” is a musical group out of Chicago featuring Chance the Rapper that incorporates live brass instruments, drum sets, and other unique instruments. Their song “Sunday Candy” follows the Pachelbel progression from his “Canon in D major.” The song begins with solo piano following the C major progression using first inversion for every other chord to create a scalar descending bass line as follows:

[CM: I - V6 - vi - V7/IV - IV - I6 - ii - V - I]

While this progression repeats every four bars, the progressive function of each chord are enough to classify these harmonies as a “progression.” Furthermore, before the final statement of the chorus, the contrary motion of the brass ascending chromatically from G (3:01) creates intensity and variation in the progression. Finally, this song deviates from the Pachelbel progression only slightly. Instead of a III chord following the vi, this song uses a V7/IV in which the secondary dominant function in second inversion combined with the use of a seventh chord gives the song more of that “gospel” sound.⁶

Chance the Rapper is one of many using advanced harmonic techniques in hip-hop music. Kanye West is at the forefront of the hip-hop industry, continuously evolving his musical style. Kanye’s 2008 album titled *808’s and Heartbreak* was identified as one of the forty most groundbreaking albums by a 2014 *Rolling Stone* article. Leading off the album is a six minute soliloquy by West in which his voice is auto-tuned over a synthetic choir, piano, and repetitive

⁶ V7/IV uses G (scale degree 5) as its bass note to keep the descending motion of the Pachelbel progression going

beat entitled “Say You Will.” The choir and piano echo a progression beginning in C minor and follows this main structure:

[Cm - Fm/C - Cm :| Bb - Eb - |: Ab - Fm - Ddim - G - :| Cm]

The Bb major to Eb major sonorities act as a secondary dominant of scale degree three moving to a major triad on scale degree three (Eb). In addition to this, the repeat after the G major chord serves as a deceptive cadence (DC) as it returns to the VI chord (Ab major). While such sonorities may imitate harmonic progressions, they do not expand on these ideas enough to be identified as progressions (Adams 119). However, at the 4:33 mark, the progression is repeated in a capella voices but evolved with the use of passing tones and different voicing in the synthetic choir. Using standard harmonic analysis techniques, there is a connection in the standard pre-dominant - dominant - tonic cadence structure. In two of West’s later hits “Power” (2010) and “Ultralight Beam” (2016), there are similar harmonies again in C minor used in slightly altered ways. In “Power,” West’s interlude at the 3:19 mark has synthesizer following this progression:

[Cm: i - VI - iv - V/III - III - vi - iv - V6 - i]

The Bb major to Eb major chord relationship functions as a secondary dominant resulting in a progression similar to West’s “Say You Will.” “Power” spent sixteen weeks on *Billboard’s Top 100*, peaking at twenty nine.⁷ “Ultralight Beam” uses the same chords (Cm, Eb, Ab, G) but it varies by moving in root position when the synthesizer plays and inverting the Eb and G major chords when the choir sings a capella for voice leading purposes⁸.

⁷ <http://www.billboard.com/artist/276709/kanye-west/chart?page=1&f=379>

⁸ Eb becomes Eb/Bb and G becomes G/B

Not all hip-hop music advances in this way; with this trend, harmonic techniques differentiate many artists of the hip-hop genre and lead to the creation of sub-genres within hip-hop music. Artists are perhaps influenced musicians from other genres which continues to close the gap between hip-hop's original purpose and mainstream music today. Whatever the means may be, knowledge of music theory is becoming an invaluable skill for hip-hop producers who are trying to find that new, innovative sound.

Audience and Performer Demographics

Hip-hop music and subsequent culture was patronized by minorities of lower socioeconomic New York boroughs. Despite the rejection of hip-hop in popular culture from many Caucasians, artists and producers like the Beastie Boys and Rick Rubin are crucial to its growing popularity. Over the past decade, hip-hop has embraced its multicultural identity as different messages and agendas are spoken through the lyrics. While the culture is rich in diverse history, artists are no longer just 'self-proclaiming womanizers' but social justice warriors, history tellers, and visionaries wanting to make a difference in the world and pay homage to the communities that raised them. Statistics show the growing popularity of hip-hop music across the world: according to a report from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), hip-hop music represented half of the top ten global digital songs 2009. (Morgan & Bennett 176). In addition, rapper Drake headlined the top ten global recording artists list for 2015 and 2016 (IFPI).

Composer, playwright, and rapper Lin-Manuel Miranda has challenged the boundaries of high culture by bringing hip-hop to Broadway. His musicals *In the Heights* and *Hamilton: An*

American Musical fuse hip-hop with other styles into innovative productions worthy of multiple Tony awards and full audiences. Hailing from Washington Heights, a Latino neighborhood in upper Manhattan, Manuel was engaged in hip-hop from an early age. The story of a US Founding Father is told through hip-hop in a largely minority cast, and *Hamilton* has been a Broadway and pop culture sensation since its debut in 2015. In an NPR review of the cast soundtrack recording, author Frannie Kelley stated “Broadway, like most media, needs hip-hop more than hip-hop needs it” (Kelley 2015). She describes the musical as “a work of historical fiction that honors the sentiments of rap, a play off collective memory that feels overwhelming personal” (Kelley 2015). Typical Broadway audiences are Caucasian and of a higher socioeconomic class, bringing hip-hop music to new demographics.

The orchestration of the musical consists of a string quartet with a rhythm section consisting of bass, drums, guitar, percussion, and two keyboards. While Miranda and music director/co-arranger Alex Lacamoire collaborated on many elements, Miranda was credited for “dropping references to everything from The Notorious B.I.G. to Jason Robert Brown in the lyrics” while Lacamoire crafted the melodies with “odes to everyone from the Beatles to the Beastie Boys to D’Angelo” (Evans 2015). References to hip-hop such as these are subtle but consistent throughout the musical. The “aggressive and steady” hi-hat from many of Jay-Z’s songs is used in “Ten Duel Commandments” (Evans 2015) and the “relaxed and very delayed” drum groove of D’Angelo’s “One Mo’Gin” is imitated in “Washington On Your Side” (Evans 2015). Lacamoire and Miranda even step outside of hip-hop with multiple Beatles references in “You’ll Be Back” (Evans 2015).

Questlove and Black Thought from The Roots helped Lacamoire find the precise hip-hop style they were looking for in *Hamilton*. The Roots are one of the most prolific and progressive hip-hop artists for their sustainability and unique sound, creating live sounds that many hip-hop artists used as samples. Consisting of guitar, bass, drums (Questlove), keyboard, horns, and rap vocals (Black Thought), The Roots fuse jazz and hip-hop. As the house band for the Tonight Show since 2009, critics note “For the first time, a hip-hop group is the house band for the most influential TV show in late night” (Deggans 2014). Executives had reservations about the versatility of the band as Questlove described: “The feelings at NBC were sorta like, Well, we know they're a good rap group but, what if we have [country artist] Tom T. Hall on the show? Do they have range?” (Deggans 2014). The Roots released two studio albums in 2010 including a collaborative album with R&B star John Legend and in 2013, collaborated with singer-songwriter Elvis Costello (Locker 2014). The wide range of genres this rap group covers shapes the future of hip-hop from the inside and outside. As with *Hamilton*, people are interacting with the hip-hop culture who would not typically do so. Artists like The Roots and the *Hamilton*'s writers are breaking down the racial and cultural barriers of hip-hop music.

While the genre is more diverse than its inception, some argue that Caucasians have polluted hip-hop music through cultural appropriation. Hip-hop duo Macklemore and Ryan Lewis earned Grammys for best rap album, rap song, and rap performance in 2014. Defeating fellow hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar, the issue was raised about who “claims its [hip-hop] legacy and shapes its future” (Graham 2015). Hip-hop began and continues to be a cultural and musical form of expression for African-Americans and other minorities. While “being white” shouldn't hinder one's ability to produce hip-hop music, the authenticity of the music is often

questioned due to the lack of Grammy nominated rapper Iggy Azalea is an example of “an attractive, blonde white woman” from Australia who rose to the forefront of hip-hop (Graham, 2015). Rapper J.Cole commented on the growing popularity of Caucasian hip-hop artists saying “I fast forward twenty, thirty years from now, and I see hip-hop being completely white” (Graham, 2015). Azalea is the first woman in hip-hop to have two simultaneous hits in the top five of the Billboard Hot 100; an achievement that hip-hop greats Lauryn Hill and Queen Latifah could not match (McIntyre, 2014). With ethnicity casting her as an outsider, among other rappers like Nicki Minaj and Azelia Banks are growing the popularity of female rappers in what has been a male dominated genre.

Conclusions and Future Study

Musical analysis of hip-hop is still a fairly new concept. New production and orchestration techniques are creating a diverse palette of sounds in a once homologous genre. Rock, jazz, soul, and gospel highlight a variety of genres that influence today’s hip-hop artists and producers. The jazz style of Kendrick Lamar’s *To Pimp A Butterfly* and the soul/funk influenced *Awaken, My Love!* by Childish Gambino seem to reach out to a different demographic than NWA’s *Straight Outta Compton*. Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa and Grandmaster Flash are identified as hip-hop’s main pioneers but parallel to this are rappers from the west coast such as NWA and Ice T, succeeded by many artists such as Snoop Dogg and Tupac Shakur. It is important to seek out the origins and cultural centers in which hip-hop was born and raised, ranging from east to west coast. In addition to studying the culture, one must analyze the music

and lyrics to find trends, innovation, and experimentalism from mainstream artists as well as underground artists.

While this study is a musical analysis of the current landscape of hip-hop music, lyrical and cultural analysis are equally as important. Progress made by current hip-hop artists and producers already show the potential for the genre to grow in the future. This study tracks that progress and how such techniques continue to pay homage to hip-hop's pioneers but also close the gap between popular, art, and hip-hop music. Although statistics that track the demographics of hip-hop listeners are sparse, a Media and Behavior Influences Study by the Radio and Television Business Report found that approximately twenty five percent of adults over the age of eighteen listen to hip-hop on the radio, nearly matching country and trailing only country, rock, pop, and oldies (RTBR 2012).

Hip-hop music as a topic of discourse within musicology is an afterthought, usually discussed in the realm of African-American music. Modern hip-hop artists are becoming more creative in their production strategies introducing sounds and recording techniques other genres have made popular. Hip-hop draws from many genres and soon it will be given the same academic value as those genres. There is potential for future research on hip-hop subjects to take place in fields of musicology, sociology, art history, anthropology, and literature. Scholars and professionals in both music and African-American studies have laid a strong foundation for research and progression of this developing genre.

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