Contemporary Journal of African Studies Vol. 10 No. 2 (2023), pp. 27–46

Hip-Hop Studies as a Model for Anti-imperialist Research in Africa

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Abstract

This paper argues that Hip–Hop studies provides a model for the decolonising agenda in African studies. This argument is based on a look at the research methodologies established in the field of Hip–Hop studies, with an important examination of the field's epistemological approaches, methodologies, and anti–imperialist frameworks. The study found that there are enough parallels between Hip–Hop studies and African studies to make this exercise compelling. The paper looks at the methodological practices employed in Hip–Hop studies research, especially in Africa, with specific examples of Hip–Hop studies methodologies employed in the research of African Hip–Hop communities and cultures. The paper asserts that decolonising African studies can be aided by following a model provided by Hip–Hop studies. The paper argues that, for African studies, there are lessons that can be learned from Hip–Hop studies, a field that is succeeding in its anti–colonial position.

Keywords: Regional economic Integration, Gender Equality, Neoliberalism, Pan–Africanism

Résumé

Cet article soutient que les études Hip–Hop constituent un modèle pour le programme de décolonisation dans les études africaines. Cet argument est fondé sur un examen des méthodologies de recherche établies dans le

https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/contjas.v10i2.2

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domaine des études Hip-Hop, avec un examen important des approches épistémologiques, des méthodologies et des cadres anti-impérialistes dudit domaine. L'étude révèle qu'il existe suffisamment de parallèles entre les études Hip-Hop et les études africaines pour que cet exercice soit convaincant. L'article examine les pratiques méthodologiques employées dans la recherche sur le Hip-Hop, en particulier en Afrique, avec des exemples spécifiques de méthodologies d'études Hip-Hop employées dans la recherche sur les communautés et les cultures Hip-Hop africaines. L'article soutient que la décolonisation des études africaines peut être facilitée en suivant un modèle fourni par les études Hip-Hop. Par ailleurs, l'article soutient que les études africaines peuvent tirer des leçons des études Hip-Hop, un domaine qui réussit dans sa position anticolonialiste.

Mots clés: études Hip-Hop, hiphopographie, études africaines, décolonisation, méthodologie.

Introduction

This paper presents a discussion on the convergence of two interdisciplinary fields that are primarily concerned with the study of peoples of African descent: African studies and Hip-Hop studies. African studies has always grappled with imperialist elements and ties to Western agendas, spurring calls to decolonise the field. Hip-Hop studies emerged in the early twenty-first century with a decidedly anti-racist stance, and with ties to Black feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theories. Hip-Hop studies is not unique in its anti-imperialist approach. We find similar approaches utilised in other interdisciplinary fields, including African studies, and calls for similar approaches across major disciplines.

Imperialist methods utilised in research of communities of colour have led to conversations on the real-life impacts of scholarship on communities of colour. It has also led to considerations of what decolonising the academy would look like. Scholars in social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, and the interdisciplinary fields, like African studies, have sought to address imperialist research practices in their respective fields. Decolonising work involves an attempt to shift outdated or problematic paradigms. There are examples across disciplines of important scholarship that contributes to the conversation around decolonisation either directly or in practice through the use of anti-imperialist methods.

As a disciplinary field, Hip–Hop studies is relatively young and has absorbed many lessons from the disciplines from which it emerged. Hip–Hop studies' origins are also tied to the culture of Hip–Hop and its practitioners, with many of the early Hip–Hop scholars coming from their respective Hip–Hop communities. Because Hip–Hop studies scholarship has, in many ways, been many of the early Hip–Hop scholars coming from their respective Hip–Hop communities. Because Hip–Hop studies scholarship has, in many ways, been accountable to Hip–Hop culture and communities, the approaches utilised by Hip–Hop studies scholars have largely been shaped by Hip–Hop culture itself. My own research is located primarily in African studies, but I have found the approaches and methodologies in Hip–Hop studies useful in my research, not only in my studies of Hip–Hop in Africa.

While Hip–Hop studies has been influenced by Hip–Hop culture, Hip–Hop culture has been heavily influenced by the struggles for independence and Civil Rights in Africa and the diaspora. Additionally, Hip–Hop culture has often been in a position of having to defend itself against government censorship and public attack. Hip–Hop studies was in many ways charged with, among other things, accurately representing Hip–Hop culture in academic spaces. When we look at the relationship between African studies and African peoples, is this level accountability possible in African studies?

Hip–Hop studies has not eliminated imperialist methodological approaches to studies of Hip–Hop culture. However, the standardisation of anti–imperialist epistemologies and research practices in Hip–Hop studies has helped to delegitimise research based on imperialist research methodologies. But is this what decolonising African studies would look like? While individual African studies scholars may use anti–imperialist methods, would the anti–imperialist structure of Hip–Hop studies be a possible transformation for African studies as a discipline? This study will explore the development of Hip–Hop studies epistemologies and anti–imperialist frameworks. The study also imagines a decolonised African studies based on Hip–Hop studies epistemologies. Lastly, the study includes a look at specific Hip–Hop studies approaches, specifically the recognition and involvement of practitioners in knowledge production, and the ways in which the field engages citational politics.

Hip-Hop Studies

Forman and Neal (2011), Miller et al. (2014), and Harris (2019) trace the emergence of Hip–Hop studies as a field to the early and mid–2000s with an increase in scholarly activity on Hip–Hop from scholars of diverse disciplinary

backgrounds, the convening of conferences on Hip-Hop, the development of Hip-Hop archives, the use of Hip-Hop pedagogies in the classroom, and the and the increase in Hip-Hop courses and academic programs in institutions of higher education. Hip-Hop studies, Hip-Hop studies scholars, and Hip-Hop studies scholarship are all part of Hip-Hop culture (Forman & Neal, 2004; Kitwana, 2004; Harris, 2019). In the U.S., the early Hip-Hop studies scholars who contributed important text to the canon included Murray Forman, James Spady, Bakari Kitwana, Mark Anthony Neal, Imani Perry, and Tricia Rose. In South Africa, it included Hip-Hop studies scholars Adam Haupt and Quentin Williams. With his 2010 text *Stealing empire: P2P, intellectual property and hip-hop subversion*, Adam Haupt was the first academic to publish a book on Hip-Hop in Africa. All of these scholars were part of Hip-Hop communities that had developed a protectionist stance vis-à-vis social institutions, including academia. This would have a fundamental impact on the development and structure of Hip-Hop studies as a field.

Hip-Hop studies sought to legitimise the study of street culture in the academy. There was resistance to the content in Hip-Hop and to its social and political relevance (Kitwana, 2004). There has also been resistance to the frameworks and methodologies Hip-Hop studies employs, which may run counter to norms employed in the major disciplines. Prior to the development of Hip-Hop studies as a field, the first generation of scholars to begin writing on Hip-Hop helped establish the field's methodological practices. Harris' (2019) survey of 150 books, book chapters, and academic articles written on Hip-Hop between 1984 and 2000 found common characteristics among this early scholarship. These early scholars primarily conducted "ethnographies that involved interviews, participant observation, living in a particular area for a specified amount of time, taking notes, and building relationships with those in that specific community" (Harris, 2019, p. 11).

In the literature review for this study, an analysis of the seminal text in Hip-Hop studies found several similarities in epistemological approaches. These seminal texts helped establish the recognition of practitioners as scholars. Hip-Hop practitioners would play a central role in informing and shaping the scholarship coming out of the field. Eurie & Spady (1991) include the voices of over 20 Hip-Hop practitioners in their study to help provide historical content. In explaining the value in finding knowledge conveyed orally through Hip-Hop, Eurie & Spady (1991) reference the role of West African oral history and storytellers in

providing content to certain historical accounts. Eurie & Spady (1991) call their methodology "hiphopography". We also see this active engagement with Hip–Hop communities in the scholarship of Kitwana (1994 & 2002), Rose (1994), Kitwana (2002), Forman & Neal (2004 & 2011), Perry (2004), and Chang (2005), who rely on interviews with practitioners and the inclusion of knowledge contributed by Hip–Hop practitioners.

Involving community members in the design and implementation of the research agenda necessitates valuing knowledge that exists outside of the academy. It also requires researchers to see community members as collaborators and not just "key informants." The difference may not seem significant, but the results in the output of research can be. A key informant may not have a say in the research design or output. A collaborator can help to ensure the appropriateness of the research questions and research design and contribute to the accuracy of the interpretations. Redefining the dynamic between the researcher and the communities they seek to research also requires an analysis of the consent form. Acquiring consent is often complicated, and there needs to be more effective ways for community members to articulate their consent to participate. Bhattacharya (2021) talks about the impact consent forms can have on the relationship between the researcher and the community. Bhattacharya (2021) calls the consent form "colonial" because of the history of violence tied to similar forms in the very communities within which scholars seek access. Therefore, acquiring consent should be done in a manner that does not require participants to sign a form written in an alienating language, and should be sought in more inclusive ways.

A Hip-Hop Studies Approach in African Studies

Decolonising social sciences has been a primary concern for scholars representing communities of colour for a long time. The major disciplines have frameworks and approaches invested in imperialist research methodologies. These methodologies are framed by Global North ideologies and can sometimes be inappropriate in understanding Global South contexts. From the scholarship resulting from this type of research has come distorted realities. It is sometimes difficult for scholars of colour, especially those based in the Global South, to challenge the existing narratives. Additionally, academic gatekeepers have maintained these methodologies, which centre knowledge production in Europe and North America, systematically marginalising knowledge produced in the Global South.

It is, therefore, not surprising that calls to decolonise African studies (and other social sciences) have primarily come from scholars representing the

Global South and communities of colour. Decolonising African studies includes addressing the discipline's imperialist roots, which have dominated research practices in the field. Scholars in African studies, as well as scholars focusing on other regions in the Global South, have contributed important scholarship identifying problematic theoretical and methodological frameworks employed in research on the Global South. They have also introduced frameworks and approaches that are more appropriate.

Interdisciplinary fields such as Hip-Hop studies and African studies are centred on communities that the academy has historically misrepresented, and this misrepresentation has had political and economic impacts. With Hip-Hop studies, the theoretical and methodological approaches may be helpful to research in African studies, which continues to grapple with decolonising. Hip-Hop studies is a newer field that is primarily focused on peoples of African descent, but its history differs from African studies. It is this historical difference that has impacted the current state of each field.

We have mentioned that Hip-Hop studies has early connections to postcolonialism and Black feminism, both of which are also relevant to African studies. Global Hip-Hop studies scholarship has shown some of the more obvious connections between Hip-Hop and postcolonialism. For example, Rollefson's (2017) text on European Hip-Hop and postcolonialism argues that Hip-Hop has always been a postcolonial culture. Rollefson (2017) asserts that Hip-Hop has always displayed the "postcolonial realities of asymmetry, hybridity, and paradox" (p. 3). Black/African feminism has been widely discussed in Hip-Hop studies. The development of Hip-Hop feminism, and later Ratchet feminism/respectability, are the contributions of female Hip-Hop artists to Black and African feminist thought.

Hip-Hop studies has also often been African-centred. While there were clearly Hip-Hop Scholars who took a Pan African approach to Hip-Hop, I hesitate to declare Hip-Hop studies Pan African. Hip-Hop has always been unapologetically Black- and African-centred in the sense that it prioritised peoples of African descent. There was also a clear line of descent that was drawn from West African music to Hip-Hop culture. As early as the mid-1990s, scholars like Cheryl Keyes (1996 & 2008) and Robert Walser (1995) were writing about Hip-Hop within a broader African cultural context. Hip-Hop studies centres Africa and its Diaspora; it has never privileged Euro-American frameworks, and it is rooted in anti-colonial and anti-racist research.

African studies, which has a different origin story, has had a history of struggle between a Eurocentric and an African–centred approach to Africanstudies is rooted in Cold War struggles, ideas of European studies (Arowosegbe, 2014; De Ycaza, 2015; Zeleza, 2019). African studies is rooted in Cold War struggles, ideas of European (intellectual) exceptionalism, and racist perceptions of people of African descent (Arowosegbe, 2014; De Ycaza, 2015; Zeleza, 2019). The conversation around decolonising African studies is a reoccurring one. When scholars like Arowosegbe (2014), Ampofo (2016), Zeleza (2019), Kessi et al. (2020), and Mohammed (2021) speak of decolonising African studies, they discuss the decentering of Eurocentric knowledge, Africanising curricula, and understanding connections to racism and neo–imperialism. Hip–Hop studies may offer some lessons in these areas.

It has been important in my work on Hip–Hop as social commentary to approach Hip–Hop as a form of cultural representation. In Africa, we are thus able to use Hip–Hop lyrics to help elucidate important social and political realities. My research utilises the constructivist view of cultural representation, in which cultural representations, whether they be books, music, or films, construct certain realities for us. Cultural representations provide narratives that can be as legitimate a secondary source as a scholarly article. In the research, Hip–Hop music was analysed for its ability to provide information on the impact of neoliberalism, as well as its views concerning gender and sexuality among youth.

It is thus important to work with practitioners as collaborators. African artists presented important challenges to my own ideas around African feminist thought. South African artists Kanyi Mavi and Dope Saint Jude have challenged African feminism and offered alternative ways to think about gender and gender–based violence. In her music, Dope Saint Jude has directly challenged (African) feminism, saying that it has not made enough room for queer voices. In a conversation about her song "Real Talk," in which she states that feminism needs to be more inclusive, Dope Saint Jude states:

> It's easy for us as critical thinkers or people in the academic world to want to have a blanket kind of feminism for one group of people, like Black African feminism. [But] you know it's different, the experience of Black South African women and then within that group, Coloured women. It's different to Black women in a different part of the continent... I am still

> navigating what it (feminism) means to me and that's what I was trying to explain in the song, this frustration of feminism not accounting for the single mothers or for people who come from different kinds of struggles. For trans women. (Kibona Clark, 2021a, pp. 119-120).

Kanyi Mavi has also challenged (African) feminism for not being in touch with the realities of women's lives in the townships. Through songs like "Umsindo," she offers alternative approaches to what she calls a war against women happening in South Africa, and presents ideas that challenge conventional feminist ideas on gender-based violence. When asked to translate the song, which is performed in Xhosa, she says:

> That song was literally to stand and speak about that (gender-based violence). And in the song, I say to women, you need to learn and arm up. You need to learn how to protect yourself in a very practical way. And I'm not talking about little groups where you can meet and talk to other women about the fact that you've been hit, or you've been abused. I'm talking about learning how to use a gun, how to use a weapon, protect yourself, learn how to defend yourself. And I know this at this time is not the thing to be preaching. It's a very sensitive time in the world, but it's a very crucial time in South Africa in that it is a war against women. And there is no way to win this war if you cannot protect yourself physically (Kibona Clark, 2021b).

Dope Saint Jude performed "Real Talk" using Gayle, a queer slang popular in Cape Town, and Kanyi Mavi performed "Umsindo" in Xhosa. Both artists were in conversation with women in their communities, and the rest of us were simply listening in. These two Hip-Hop practitioners/activists offer secondary source material that analyses gender dynamics that contribute to other scholarship on the topic. The structure of Hip-Hop studies as a field provides space for the knowledge and contributions from both Dope Saint Jude and Kanyi Mavi to help inform and shape conversations around African feminisms and gender in ways that are as significant as texts by any African feminist scholar in the academy.

The irony in proposing that Hip-Hop studies offers epistemological practices that may be used to decolonise African studies is not lost on this study. There has traditionally been scepticism in African studies when it comes to recognising Hip-Hop's intellectual significance. In the US, much of the early scepticism in Hip-Hop's relevance came from Black scholars themselves. US Hip-Hop studies scholars found themselves having to defend Hip-Hop's place in academia and its political impact to their colleagues in the academy (Kitwana, 2004). Kitwana (2004) credits early Hip-studies scholars with engaging that fight, along with the emergence of projects like the Hip-Hop Archive at Harvard University, and the persistence of undergraduate students to have Hip-Hop programs and courses introduced in their universities.

Three events were turning points on the status of Hip-Hop in African studies: The Arab Spring in Tunisia in Egypt (2010), Y'en A Marre in Senegal (2011), and Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso (2013). The participation of Hip-Hoppers in movements that brought important political change in the region resulted in a lot of research resources being directed to the topic. Senegal would become one of the most written about Hip-Hop scenes in Africa. After Y'en a Marre, several scholars published their research on the relationship between Hip-Hop and the Y'en a Marre movement. Many scholars flew into Senegal to interview Hip-Hop artists and analyse the lyrics of groups like Keur Gui. Between 2012 and 2016, there were over a dozen articles or books and a half-dozen pieces of student research (thesis & dissertations) published on Hip-Hop and the Y'en a Marre movement by scholars in the U.S. and France.

This recognition of Hip-Hop as a relevant topic in African studies did not necessarily impact the approaches or frameworks to research on Hip-Hop in Africa. Much of the scholarship utilised the same frameworks found in other African studies scholarship on Africa. African studies scholarship on Hip-Hop in Africa has often been disconnected from Hip-Hop studies. Many African studies scholars writing on Hip-Hop in Africa do not engage Hip-Hop studies in meaningful ways. While African studies scholars have published important studies on Hip-Hop in Africa, some of that research has problems with legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, standardising anti-imperialist research practices helps to delegitimise research based on imperialist research methodologies, but it does not eliminate it. African studies scholars who publish on Hip-Hop in Africa are subject to critique by the Hip-Hop communities they work in. When the legitimacy of their research is challenged, it impacts future access to that community for the scholar, and sometimes for other scholars. African studies scholarship that

earns its legitimacy from both the academy and African communities creates an African studies discipline that holds scholars accountable and produces scholarship that is more accurate and benefits communities on the ground.

Communities and Hierarchies

Among the relationships that scholars must navigate in the field are those between themselves and members of the community in which they are conducting their research. There is often a hierarchical structure in which the researcher and community members interact, and in which the researcher often enters with a perceived superiority of knowledge, especially when that knowledge was obtained in Western institutions. Researchers often employ research practices that "reflect the perspective of the powerful and serve to reproduce forms of domination" (Adams, 2014, p. 468). According to Adams, Western researchers tend to form "superficial" relationships with communities they are researching, tending to follow a resource extraction model" (2014). Western researchers go through institutional review boards (IRB) to get clearance to conduct their research. Rather than being trained to understand that once they land in country, and prior to beginning their research, securing permissions from local leaders is part of their duty to the community, they are often taught that seeking permissions is a way to ease their research process. It would be much more effective if scholars were trained to see that securing permissions and support from the local community may also be important for legitimising their scholarly output.

African studies scholarship often imposes Western frameworks and cultural norms on their research of non-Western peoples. Often, Western frameworks or cultural norms are seen as "normal," while non-Western peoples and cultures are "othered" when their cultures and practices differ from Western practices and cultures. Researchers may approach their research with their own biases and preconceived notions of the peoples they are researching. According to Adams (2014), scholars take data and information out of Africa, analyse that data using a Western lens, and produce scholarship that often positions Western culture as normal vis-à-vis non-Western cultures. Adams (2014) criticises the types of interactions Western scholars have in Africa, calling them "superficial interactions" that are only as important as the data scholars are there to "extract." Other than offering the needed permissions, the community has little input in the research being done on them. The role of

the community is to provide data. Many scholars have invested in the idea that "it is simply impossible, ridiculous even, to suggest that the object of research can contribute to anything" (Smith, 2012, p. 123).

On the other hand, in the field of Hip–Hop studies, there is a broader recognition of the need for community involvement. In Hip–Hop studies approaches, such as hiphopographies, there is an emphasis on ensuring that the research is relevant to the community, and not just academia. According to Alim (2006a), "the researcher does not determine what's relevant; rather, the researcher must rely on the participants of the culture. This ensures that the analysis will be relevant to the community under study" (p. 970). Consciously dismantling "hierarchical divisions between researcher and researched" is a core approach in Hip–Hop studies research (Alim, 2006a).

One way that scholars have recognised the importance of Hip–Hop communities is through the titling of text. Hip–Hop studies has a long history of using Hip–Hop song titles, lyrics, or language in the titles of books, articles, sections, and chapters. *That's the Joint!* (Forman & Neal, 2004 & 2011) is both the title of a 1980 song by Funky Four Plus One and a popular Hip–Hop phrase signaling a song's high quality; *Rock the Mic Right* (H. Samy Alim, 2006b) was a line from the 1985 song "La Di Da Di" by Slick Rick and Dougie Fresh; *Native Tongues: An African Hip–hop Reader* (Saucier, 2011) is the name of the 1980s Hip–Hop collective that was made up of socially conscious artists; the subtitle for *Hip–Hop and Social Change in Africa: Ni Wakati* (Kibona Clark & Mwanzia Koster, 2014) is the name of a song by pioneering Kenyan Hip–Hop group Kalamashaka, and the subtitle for *Hip–Hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and dustyfoot philosophers* (Kibona Clark, 2018) was the name of the pioneering South African Hip–Hop group Prophets of Da City and the 2005 album *Dustyfoot Philosopher* by Somali Hip–Hop artist K'naan.

Community involvement also happens at a more extensive level when practitioners become contributors. Jeff Chang's 2005 book *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip–Hop Generation* features an introduction written by DJ Kool Herc, who is credited with starting Hip–Hop. My 2014 text H*ip–Hop and Social Change in Africa: Ni Wakati* included chapters by Hip–Hop practitioners who presented their own expert analysis on Hip–Hop and social change in Kenya, Mali, Tanzania, and Uganda. The 2019 text *Neva Again: Hip–Hop Art, Activism and Education in Post–Apartheid South Africa* was edited by three institutionally–affiliated academics (Quentin Williams, Adam Haupt, and H. Samy Alim) and one practitioner (Emile Jansen) and included chapters by both

academics and practitioners. *Neva Again* is one of the very few academic texts in African studies to include so many chapters by practitioners. Of the book's 30 chapters, 12 are authored entirely by Hip-Hop practitioners, who present histories of Hip-Hop music and breakdance culture in Cape Town, discussions of gender and Hip-Hop, and overviews of Hip-Hop activism in Cape Town. Another important collaboration includes the 2020 article "Sounding Tanzania in the studios of Dar es Salaam" co-authored by Postdoctoral Research Fellow David Kerr and Hip-Hop artist and activist Hashim Rubanza. The collaboration between Kerr and Rubanza is important because, unlike Quentin Williams and Adam Haupt in South Africa, Kerr is a British scholar who did not grow up in Tanzania's Hip-Hop scene. Kerr's collaboration with Rubanza emerged after years of establishing a relationship and collaborations on other projects. The collaborative relationship between Kerr and Rubanza proves that the Hip-Hop studies approach is not necessarily predicated in the scholar being a member of the same community. It is less about the ethnic or racial backgrounds of the scholars and practitioners, and more about the nature of the collaborative relationships between scholars and practitioners.

The approaches Hip-Hop studies takes are not new or unique. Dialogues around decolonising social sciences have been happening for years. In the current #BlackLivesMatter climate, the dialogues are simply getting more attention. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's seminal text *Decolonising Methodologies* (2012) speaks to many of the concerns of scholars in African studies. Smith offers recommendations for approaches to research in Indigenous communities that are familiar in Hip-Hop studies. Smith (2012) presents the following series of common and unique questions that Indigenous communities may pose to the researcher:

> Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?... Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything? (pp. 52-53)

We can find similar questions posed to Hip-Hop studies scholars in Africa. In my own research, I have experiences with artists who find interesting ways to test my knowledge of Hip-Hop music and history. Questions frequently concern

money and whether I am being paid to carry out the study, or my willingness to pay artists for their time. In some experiences, artists are suspicious of academics based on what has been published about them in the past. Hip-Hop artists read and, more than once, I have found myself on the receiving end of an artist's ire because of their experience with a previous scholar. The relationships a researcher develops with communities and individuals during their research should be taken seriously. Scholars Smith (2012), Adams (2014), and Bhattacharya (2021) speak about the importance of forming long term relationships. Often those relationships impact community perceptions of the published research, as well as the experiences of future scholars coming into the community. "… [R]esearch is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 46).

Citation Politics

Citational politics involves the practice of centring Western knowledge, and marginalising women and scholars of colour, especially those based outside of the West in academic scholarship. Non-academic voices or sources (such as non-scholarly publications and non-written text) are often omitted from academic scholarship completely, or the work is used without proper attribution, as when a scholar uses an excerpt or quote to introduce or punctuate an argument. In a 2017 study, Mott and Cockayne found that, in Geography, there is a tendency towards citing White men or forming what they referred to as "citation cartels," where scholars agree to cite each other's work. Mott and Cockayne (2017), Zeleza (2019), and Kessi et al. (2020) discuss the dominance of White male scholars in academia as gatekeepers. Scholars of colour needing to publish in the so-called top- or mid-tier journals in their field may find difficulty doing so, which impacts their ability to receive tenure or promotion. These structures in academia also effectively silence scholars of colour through citational politics, which centres White scholars and perpetuates the idea of a (White) Western supremacy of knowledge production. According to Mott and Cockayne (2017), at least in Geography, being cited is seen as an indication of relevance and impact. The lack of access to top journals and the lack of presence among reference lists further speaks to the necessity of the decolonisation project.

Citational politics has spurred calls for inclusive citation practices. Mott and Cockayne (2017) call for citation counting, which asks scholars to scrutinise their own references, so they are conscious of who they are citing, and who they

are not. Cite Black Women is a movement that emerged in 2017 with a mission to "decolonise the practice of citation by redressing the epistemic erasure of Black women from the literal and figurative bibliographies of the world" (Smith et al., 2021, p. 3). Cite Black Women resonated with Black women scholars and spread as a movement. In 2018 Cite Black Women released "Cite Black Women Resolutions." The resolutions state:

> 1) Read Black Women's work; 2) Integrate Black women into the CORE of your syllabus; 3) Acknowledge Black women's intellectual production; 4) Make space for Black women to speak; and 5) Give Black women the space and time to breathe (Smith et al., 2021, pp 4-5).

There are institutions within both African studies and Hip-Hop studies that actively challenge citational politics. Early on, Hip-Hop studies recognised the need to be strategic in how they positioned their scholarship. Hip-Hop studies had to navigate producing scholarship that maintained academic and "scholarly rigor" but did not impose or reinforce elitist or imperialist academic frameworks (Forman and Neal, 2011). Many scholars also recognised that there was a certain amount of accountability to the Hip-Hop community to accurately represent the culture of Hip-Hop. As a result of all of this, Hip-Hop studies texts are often published with diverse presses, and not always in the traditional university presses. Some of the foundational texts in Hip-Hop studies were not published with university presses. For example, Basic Civitas Books has published several important Hip-Hop studies texts, including Bakari Kitwana's *The Hip-Hop Generation* (2002), Tricia Rose's (2008) *The Hip-Hop Wars*, and Adam Bradley's *Book of Rhymes* (2009). In addition, the *Journal of Hip-Hop Studies*, the *Global Hip Hop Studies Journal*, and *Words Beats & Life: The Global Journal of Hip-Hop Culture*, are the three Hip-Hop studies journals, with the first two being the top two journals in the field. All of the journals accept and publish contributions from scholars and practitioners in each of their issues.

Hip-Hop studies scholars often publish with diverse publishers and utilise Hip-Hop artists and their music in their scholarship. In Hip-Hop studies, the artist and their music are used as both primary and secondary sources. The music that artists produce is often used as a primary source that provides data for scholars to interpret. A scholar may perform a textual analysis of song lyrics and music videos in order to explain the significance of an artist's music –

for example, Veronique Helenon's 2006 study examining the content of French Hip-Hop to reveal the connections to Africa and to Blackness found in the lyricsthe lyrics. Helenon's (2006) research sought to understand how these artists "claim their origins, redefine their identity and challenge traditional French conceptions of race and citizenship" (pp. 233). Using the music as the primary source, Helenon (2006) used that data to measure and analyze expressions of "Africanness" in the music of French artists of African descent. My 2014 study of gender representations in Tanzanian Hip-Hop used the music and lyrics of female MCs in Tanzania as primary source data to analyse how these artists challenged gender norms and identities through their music. I conducted a textual analysis of the primary source data, the lyrics and music videos of female MCs.

In H. Samy Alim's (2006b) text *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip-Hop Culture*, he used Hip-Hop lyrics as the primary source in his argument about the existence of a global Hip-Hop Nation Language (HHNL) separate from African American Vernacular English (AAVE). In the text, Alim used the approach in his work by centring the voices of the artists, allowing their music and interviews with artists themselves to provide the narrative. In constructing his argument, he centres the artists, "viewing them as interpreters of their own culture (backflap)."

Also serving as primary sources are participant observation and interviews with Hip-Hop artists. Many Hip-Hop studies scholars include interviews and participant observation as a method for securing primary data. Hiphopographies are commonly used research methods in Hip-Hop studies. They involve researchers working with practitioners in the research design and agenda. There is an emphasis on ensuring that the research is relevant to the community, and not just academia. In their 1991 book *Nation Conscious Rap*, Eurie and Spady help establish important approaches to research in Hip-Hop studies. Interviews are not done at a distance, physical or social, and interviews are seen as more of a shared discourse (Eurie & Spady, 1991). The goal, according to Eurie and Spady, is to represent the community's "cultural realities as accurately as possible" (vii).

Quentin Williams' (2017) study on multilingualism in Cape Town Hip-Hop included both interviews and participant observation. Williams' approach did not erect a hierarchy between himself and the artists that were involved in his study. Both Williams and the artists were participants in the study, Williams in the role of participant observer and the artists in the role of practitioner. Each

brought their own expertise, and that expertise was equally essential in the final publication. Hip hop music and artists are more often primary sources than secondary sources. Secondary sources are sources that are cited because they provide expert analysis or historical background that help support or contextualise the main arguments. One of the common methods of using artists as secondary sources is by including essays authored by practitioners, which as discussed earlier, was done in my 2013 book project as well as the 2019 book project edited by Quentin Williams, Adam Haupt, H. Samy Alim, and Emile Jansen.

The lessons for African studies are significant. The acknowledgement and inclusion of knowledge from outside of the academy is a component of the decolonisation process. It also helps to ensure the research is truly representative and accurate. In my own research, I have relied on knowledge outside of academia, especially from Hip-Hop practitioners, to challenge the appropriateness of my research questions, to improve my arguments, to correct my definitions and uses of terminology, and to help shape my research agenda. Kanyi Mavi, for example, has been a key collaborator in my research, challenging my views on feminism as understood in the academy of African feminist thought. The significance of this cannot be overstated. It not only makes for stronger scholarship, but it also makes the research more relevant and beneficial to the communities themselves.

Conclusion

> "… [H]ip hop sits at the confluence of dehumanizing neoliberal globalization and the gritty human realities of postcoloniality" (Rollefson, 2017, p. 3).

The conversations around decolonising African studies have been in motion for several years. The goal of this paper was to contribute the voice of Hip-Hop studies to the conversation in an effort to offer additional approaches to decolonisation. Hip-Hop studies' theoretical and methodological frameworks have challenged the imperialist research methodologies that are foundational in many disciplines, including those disciplines that service African studies. What Hip-Hop studies offers is an approach in which the relationship between the discipline and the communities it speaks to and for informs the scholarship thatis produced. In Hip-Hop studies, there is no separation between Hip-Hop and the study of Hip-Hop (Harris, 2019).

Hip–Hop studies removes hierarchies between researchers and the community, challenging assumptions that the scholar is imbued with superior knowledge. When this happens, it can allow for more productive and relevant research. The involvement of community members and practitioners is not a threat to scholarly research, and Hip–Hop studies shows us that the research often benefits from that involvement. Harris (2019) says that the "methodological approach to studying Hip Hop (studies) and global Hip Hop (studies) entails working with local Hip Hoppas in my community" (p. 22) and that this resulted in a more "thorough portrayal of Hip–Hop" (p. 23).

The benefits of community involvement and investment in a scholar's research are significant and go a long way in serving to decolonise the discipline. The structures in Hip–Hop studies tend to encourage scholars to approach their research in more collaborative ways and to value the knowledge in the community, and of the practitioners. Hip–Hop studies is a young field, and it owes its existence to Hip–Hop communities and cultures. As such, Hip–Hop communities understand the significance of Hip–Hop studies, but also recognise their power within the field. The researcher is not given unquestioned privilege. This dynamic has benefitted scholarship in Hip–Hop studies. African studies may be a long way from having these types of relationships between researchers and the community be a common feature of the field. However, when we look at scholarship on decolonising disciplines, these are the types of relationships that characterise a discipline that has largely created a culture of decolonising practices.

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