

CUE POINT AESTHETICS: THE PERFORMING DISC JOCKEY IN  
POSTMODERN DJ CULTURE

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## ABSTRACT

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This qualitative research explores how social relations and intersections of popular culture, technology, and gender present in performance DJing. The methods used were interviews with performing disc jockeys, observations at various bars, and live music venues. Interviews include both women and men from varying ages and racial/ethnic groups. Cultural studies/popular culture approaches are utilized as the theoretical framework, with the aid of concepts including resistance, hegemony, power, and subcultures. Results show difference of DJ preference between analog and digital formats. Gender differences are evident in performing DJ's experiences on and off the field due to patriarchy in the DJ scene.

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Rest in peace to my friends and family laid to rest during the duration of this study.

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## INTRODUCTION

Technology improves the efficiency of everyday life, changing the landscape of communication, education and interpersonal relationships. The arts are no stranger to technology and societal patterns of behavior. In this study I am interested in uncovering societal patterns involving technology and the arts –more specifically, DJing. The elements of Hip-hop culture rooted in African American and Puerto Rican youth culture birthed an art form out of outdated technology and created a global ripple effect. Hip-hop has altered popular culture through areas such as commerce, education, and politics all around the world.

In the 21st century Hip Hop culture continues to be a voice for America's urban youth. Sociologists may find this study beneficial as it attempts to uncover the attitudes about technology that are shaping contemporary DJ culture, which may be reflective of the larger society. This study could lay the foundation for future examination of how technology has been pivotal in changing multiple musical genres or a stepping-stone for developing theoretical insights into the relationship between art and technology. DJing, as an art form and culture, was (and still is) technologically dependent and the growth of DJ software further impacts popular culture.

For almost twenty years I've been involved in Sacramento's nightlife culture as a performing disc jockey, record shop owner, radio show host, beat maker and promoter. I've also worked as a tour DJ for rap groups gigging along the west coast. Throughout these years I've been fortunate to perform art in various cities in North America and for

the first time in 2016 I played my first international gig in London, UK. My relationship with this art form is a compass guiding me through life's journey. Hip-hop culture has been accredited for saving lives of those following and participating in its cultural practices, I know this has been true for me.

The literature review is the first section of this study. The focus of this literature review deals with Hip-Hop culture and technology and demonstrates a brief history of the DJ's role in Hip-Hop culture. Technology and its role in Hip-Hop culture are also mentioned. The second section, included in the literature review, is the theoretical framing guiding this study. Taken from cultural studies and popular culture, the concepts, and themes from this section incorporate power, resistance, and sub-cultures. The interplay with these concepts and themes demonstrate how sub-cultures resist mainstream culture. Following this section is the methods section. This section discusses the methods used to conduct this study. Snowball and convenience sampling methods were used to employ participants for this study. The participants come from various ethnic and racial backgrounds and range in ages 25-45. This section is followed by data analysis demonstrating attitudes toward DJ software or DVS. The data shows the DJing culture fragmenting in to three different facets; those who resist DJ software, those who integrate both vinyl and DJ software and those who only use DJ software. Also presented in this section also deals with DJ culture losing uniqueness due to accessibility and convenience to technology. The discussion section is the final chapter in this study, and connects literature review, theoretical grounding and data analysis and the relation between the three sections.

## LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT BEAT: DJINGS HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS AND CULTURAL INSIGHTS

This literature review draws on concepts and themes from journals and literature in hip-hop culture, DJing and DJ technology. This chapter presents a brief history of hip-hop culture and the development of the four pillars (also known as "the elements") that emerged from the South Bronx in the 1970's. The role of the DJ is examined in addition to technology and how it relates to DJ culture. Lastly, this literature uncovers gender inequalities in the DJ realm. Themes and concepts from cultural studies and popular culture are used for theoretical grounding. Power is exercised as a binary between two groups "the power-bloc and "the people" seeking control over environments and thought. Subcultures are argued to be synonymous with the people who demonstrate resistance through semiotics.

The 1960s brought renovation to the Bronx. Unfortunately, through this public policy Latinos were displaced from Harlem or Spanish Harlem (125th St.) to the South Bronx. In addition, the Cross-Bronx expressway displaced approximately 5,000 families – most of them African American and Latino. Existing poor economic conditions in the south Bronx, along with the in migration of those who were displaced by “renovation,” gang activity, art and urban renewal plans were all catalysts in producing the cultural phenomena of Hip Hop. Hip-hop culture came from the economic, political and social conditions in the South Bronx. The two note worthy events changed the Bronx and its people according to Orejuela (2015).

First, poor Manhattan families from the upper west side experienced displacement due to the city's slum-clearance projects. Most of these families were of Puerto Rican descent. Although the city promised to relocate these families to subsidized housing, they ended up seeking shelter with friends and family often livening in substandard-sized apartments located in the southern neighborhood of the Bronx, which had small sections of African American, West Indian and Hispanics living poor.

Second, the Cross Bronx Expressway construction cut through the middle point of the Bronx with its completion in 1963. Flocks of urbanites that had been living there for generations began to leave the Bronx and those who could not afford to leave remained. Those who remained in the southernmost neighborhoods were predominantly working class and poor African Americans, West Indians and Latinos.

The exodus out of the Bronx left an alarming amount of vacancies; Rent control, which was enforced by the city, controlled what landlords could charge for rent. This minimized the profit margin that landlords received from rent income to the point where little to no profits were made. In light of this, landlords quickly sold their properties to slumlords who hired arsonists to burn down abandon buildings to collect funds on insurance claims.

The lack of opportunities in the job market and the loss of housing created a backdrop the creation of hip-hop culture's pillar art forms or elements. Outdated technology was taught to South Bronx youth in vocational schools. The youth then transformed their obsolete skills into the four pillars art forms or "elements" of hip-hop culture. These elements are Rapping, graffiti, djing and b-boying/b-girling or

breakdancing. In *Gamers, Goths and Grrrls: Deviants and Youth Subcultures*, Ross Haenfler defines each of these elements (2010:45) in the following ways.

First the hip-hop DJ does much more than simply play one song after another instead the DJ is working to create the beat and dynamic hip-hop sound. DJs used one turntable to play music, but wanted to keep a continuous flow of music, and another turntable was added to perform various styles and methods of DJing. The DJ used a mixer to switch the audio signal from the mixer to the amplifier. Once amplified, the signal or sound is broadcasted through a speaker system. DJs gained notoriety for their sound systems, but were also known for their style of playing music. As I'll discuss below, Bronx DJs Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grand Master Flash are known as pioneers who set the standards of how DJs would use different styles. An MC, popularly called a rapper, writes and performs rhymes over the beat provided by the DJ. (Say another sentence about the MC). Having emerged alongside djing, and MC-ing, b-boying/girling (also called breakdancing) is the dance form most associated with hip-hop culture. B-boying requires exceptional balance, strength and skill as dancers regularly assume difficult poses ("freezes") such as holding their entire bodies up on one hand. Graffiti while typically viewed as deviant vandalism or associated with gangs, plays an important part within the hip-hop world, which considers graffiti a true art form. Given my focus on DJs and technology, I turn to a close look at DJing.

DJing is one of the four pillars of hip-hop culture to emerge from poor economic, social and political of the South Bronx in the early 1970's (Orejuela 2015). In order to develop the multiple elements of hip hop culture, neighborhood kids and former gang

members created social clubs based around the arts of hip-hop culture. These clubs allowed youth to express themselves and avoid gang activity, while also drawing on gang culture. For instance, the three R's (Reputation, Respect, Retaliation) found in gang culture, not only take place in the street but also on the walls, on the turntables, on the microphone and on the dance floor. It could be argued gang culture provided an ethical foundation for Hip Hop culture as well as the elements

The respect gang members gained from fighting and criminal activity made its way into competition between social clubs. The elements of hip-hop provided tools needed for social groups to gain and maintain community respect. Jamaican immigrant Clive Campbell aka DJ Kool Herc provided some of the first social gatherings streamlining the creation of Hip-Hop culture as inner city youth and social groups gathered as spectators and performers displayed their skills. Herc's events were the first of their kind where gang members would gain and uphold respect from community members through the arts.

Jamaican DJs of the 1960's were the predecessors of the hip hop DJ and were very influential. DJs built elaborate high-powered mobile sound systems drawing substantial crowds when driven to an event. These high-powered sound systems created a sizable draw for their events. Jamaican immigrant, DJ Kool Herc, gained notoriety influencing early DJs in the Bronx by introducing the Jamaican sound system to parties in the area. He modeled his sound system after the gear sets used in Jamaican dancehalls. His gear list included two matching turntables, a McIntosh amplifier and Shure speaker towers. His influences stemmed from his cultural experiences in Jamaica along with his father's

memoirs (4). According to Orejuela (2015), the DJ was a jack of many trades accompanied by a small crew. The DJ acted as one-man show organizer of neighborhood parties and creator of a musical soundtrack through selecting music, which was accompanied by vocal expression (3). The DJ played a role as we know of today as "hype man" but in the early days of DJing the DJ was his own hype man. The hype man shouts or chants phrases to create a positive feeling resonating through the music.

Gatherings curated by Kool Herc wrote the blue prints of a DJ's role in Hip Hop culture. Talking over the music in a Jamaican toasting style at parties was one method of crowd control Herc used to maintain a collective effervescence with partygoers, dancers, and performing acts. The announcements were simple. At times they served as a way to tell a partygoer their mother is waiting for them or to give praise to dancers and audience members. African American friends of Herc would join him at his performances and chant rhymes, which were both uses as boasting and toasting. In addition to being known for an elaborate sound system, Herc developed a method of DJing called the "Merry-go-round." According to Orejuela (2015), Herc noticed dancers at his event responded best when the break of the record came on. Herc took heed to their response and decided to use two turntables and play two copies of the same record. By using two copies of the same record Herc extended the break of the record by playing the same break beat back to back. The break of the record usually is a section of a record where the instruments are stripped down featuring a drum solo. This method allowed Herc, and other DJs used this method, to jump directly to the record break and extend it for a longer period of time. DJs were then able to extend and mix breaks from the same or in combination with other

records. This led to the creation of the b-beat and the dance steps partygoers were performing would be dubbed breaking or b-boying.

While Herc's extension of the break beat led to the creation of a new dance form, former gang leader Afrika Bambaataa built a nation of inner city Zulu warriors.

Bambaataa served as a representative of the Black Spades and later formed the Universal Zulu Nation, a social club whose motto is "Peace, Love Unity and Having Fun" (Chang 2005: 96-105). Bambaataa's skills as a peacekeeper for the Black Spades carried on into hip-hop culture in the form of a community leader. Leadership was encouraged among African American and Latino youth as a practice with hip hop art forms instead of gang activity. The Universal Zulu Nation was conceived by Bambaataa as an alternative to gang culture; the first chapters were started in the South Bronx in the 1970's, but have since spread across the globe. Along with his uncanny selection of music Bambaataa is known for uniting African American and Latino South Bronx youths and placing cultural significance to his parties and compositions.

As a DJ, Bambaataa was known to have an obscure music selection style. Bambaataa's Planet Rock utilized a mixture of synthesizers; drum machines, and samples creating the electro funk sound. The most notable sample used in this track was called "Numbers" and was taken from Kraftwerk's "Computer World" album. Sampling was recognized by record executives and would become a popular method of producing rap music. "Punk rock rap" was a fuse of "New Wave" and Rap music.

As Bambaataa led the Zulu Nation to Planet Rock in search of the perfect beat, disc jockey Joseph Saddler, aka Grandmaster Flash, was developing techniques pushing

the art form of DJing further. Knowing his sound system didn't fully hold weight in a battle with other well-known disc jockeys in the area like Herc, or that he didn't have the excellent programming skills of Bambaataa, Flash relied on showmanship and artistry to win crowds over. One of his first innovations was the "quick mix theory," which meant he stopped the record and reversed its direction to replay that portion of the record. DJs would come to call this technique back spinning (Orejuela 2015). This was an important invention as, at the time, manual manipulation of the revolutions on the record, either forward or backward, was unheard of. This technique advanced Herc's "Merry Go Round," which is method of keeping a continuous loop of sound with two records with the same break. The merry go round set the foundation for "scratch art." It is possible to argue Flash was one of DJ culture's first turntablists along side with Grand Wizard Theodore, who invented "scratching." Flash's main contribution to DJ culture was making DJing into a scientific art form by integrating scratch techniques to his DJ sets (61).

Flash's style of playing music was not his first innovation to the art form of DJing. Being poor but savvy, Flash modified cheap audio gear comparable to that of Kool Herc's sound system. Having studied electronics at Samuel Gompers Vocational High School, he used this knowledge to modify cheap turntables and combine them with gear he owned previously to make a system comparable to DJ Kool Herc's.

The social gatherings Herc, Bambaataa, and Flash promoted became bigger than they themselves could handle, leading to the emergence of the M.C., which stand for "Master of Ceremony." As the parties gained popularity, the DJ passed on duties to other

members of their crew. M.C.s took on the duty of making announcements, controlling the crowd and acted as a hype man for the DJ. According to Orejuela, DJs integrated MCs into their acts around 1975 (2015:64). These crews, headed by a DJ, were accompanied by MCs who would shout simple sentences or chants to build a heightened experience for the crowd. When given permission from the DJ, these chants often were performed in a call and response method and were not treated as songs. The job of the MC was to praise the DJ and the crew while integrating their own verbal workmanship. This workmanship was not only used to build excitement, but it was also used to take other MCs into competition.

By the late 70's, the MC became a staple at every hip-hop gathering and competition began to heighten as more MCs came on the scene. An MC's job was not limited to toasting and boasting. Their duties, along with toasting, consisted of being a roadie and loading and unloading gear. To be given the microphone to speak at a party was a right of passage. For whatever reason the MC wanted to be in a crew, whether it was to learn the tradition or to get the attention of girls, many had to earn their position keep to maintain and gain status with a crew (Orejuela 2015).

As the parties grew, word of them spread through the city and they gained a wider audience; this brought in outsiders who had different motives for attending the events and which led to the transformation of South Bronx party culture. For instance, some looked at the cultural phenomena as a source of income waiting to be tapped, while others treated it as an event hosting the DJ, MCs and B-boying while dismissing the cultural significance of hip hop.

Orejua (2015) argues two factors lead to the demise of the DJ as a lead figure in early Hip-Hop culture. The first factor deals with the public accessing DJ's sources. By giving an account from DJ Grand Master DXT, first, DJs made a mistake by demystifying themselves by revealing their music sources. "Sometimes DJs needed new copies of some of their rare beats, especially after repeated use, and these patrons/club owners would purchase new copies and thus learn the identity of the DJ's secret sources." (2015:66). Outsiders gathered sources and sold them to who ever wanted to DJ either in the form of a group series of select rare music or creating volumes of compilations, such as Super Disco Breaks. The DJs who would normally cover their record labels (to not reveal the name of the artist) would see these compilations do the opposite and expose their sources. DJs who had previously built their repertoires through mystique and the uniqueness of their sources were demystified by compilations revealing the names of the artists and the songs that were once kept secret

The second factor contributing to the transformation of the role of the DJ is the rap music industry downplaying DJs. By the late 1970's record executives began signing MC crews and filtered out DJs and b-boys to the background. Orejuela states "this collaborative artistic {between MC crew and DJs and B-boys} aesthetic was not important to record executives and not necessary for the production of a rap song" (66). Their idea was to highlight the MC or rap group instead of focusing on the DJ because record executives didn't see the relationship between the two entities as important to selling records. Eventually, the DJ became a sidekick to the rapper, left out of the spotlight and/or excluded from the production process.

The lack of funding in social programs took affected school systems in the South Bronx. Vocational schools taught class sessions to South Bronx's youth with outdated technology. This left many youth with obsolete job skills upon graduating. Although the job skills and training from the vocational programs were obsolete, hip-hop artists were able to appropriate those skills artistically. Rose (1994) mentions how "Puerto Rican, Afro-Cuban and black American hip hop artists transformed vocational skills from marginal occupations into raw materials for creativity and resistance" and adds many youths were "trained" in job fields, which were shrinking or no longer in existence. The outdated job skills learned from these vocational schools would eventually be put to use but not for their intended purposes.

Rose continues to give an account of hip hop artist who utilized the skills such as Puerto Rican graffiti writer Futura 2000 who finished trade school with training in the printing industry but his skills had been computerized and there was no work. Instead, Futura found work at McDonald's after graduation. Grand Master Flash studied electronics at Samuel Gompers Vocational High School. DJ Red Alert examined drafting blueprints until computer automation made his job useless. These artists were positioned with limited resources in a marginal economic sphere, but found ways to be successful entertainers by appropriating advanced technologies and surfacing cultural forms. Rose concludes, "Hip-hop artists used of obsolete industrial technology to traverse contemporary crossroads of lack and desire in urban Afrodiasporic communities" (35).

According to Jeff Chang's book "Can't Stop Won't Stop" Hip-Hop culture is an American sub-culture originating in the south Bronx in the mid 1970's. Jamaican

immigrant DJ Kool Herc began promoting park gatherings or park jams where locals congregated to hear DJs play music, and dance. These park jams provided a space where artists congregated to perform and exchange ideas. Graffiti writers, b-boys and b-girls, DJ, and MC were known to gather at park jams. The gathering of these artists created a sub-culture and their art forms would be known as the "elements" of Hip-Hop culture. These art forms provided Black and Puerto Rican youth and outlet for expression and mobilization. The arts of hip-hop are created global social change creating safe spaces for intercity youth. (Chang 2005).

Although Hip-Hop encompasses four art forms, this literature review will focus on the DJ. The hip-hop DJ's does more than just select and play recordings, to some degree, she or he uses two turntables simultaneously performing live sound editing with vinyl or digital recordings (Haenfler 2010:45, Ferrugia 2005, Kendal 1999, Miyakawa 2007). This editing process deals with shortening and extending parts of a song, such as the break of the record, as the DJ sees fit. The Hip-Hop DJ is also known for using the art form of Turntablism to perform original pieces of music by performing live remixing techniques with names like "punch-phrasing," "scratching", "mixing and blending," and "beat juggling" (Bakker, J. I. and Bakker, T.R.A. 2006, Snapper 2004:11).

Turntablist name remixing and scratching techniques applied to vinyl recordings. In the article "Groove Music: The Art and Culture of the Hip-Hop DJ," Katz (2013) examines the role of the Hip-Hop DJ from past to present. A theme shaping the persona of the Hip-Hop DJ stems from their loyalty to turntables and vinyl records. Technology

and DJ software have been seen as a variable in reshaping the imagery and identity of the Hip-Hop DJ (Katz:2013).

Vinyl recordings can skip at performances, but this has since changed with the integration of "Skip proof" DJ software. The application "Skip proof" emulates the typical DJ set up which allows its user to perform a style known as scratching. This application allows its user to study scratch techniques to be used in performances. DJ control interfaces, such as midi controllers have emerged as a new alternative to turntables and vinyl recordings. These devices carry similar functions to turntable DJing. Skip proofing has been integrated in vinyl emulation programs allowing precise scratching in DJ performances (Hansen and Bresin 2010).

EDM [Electronic Dance Music] music culture vinyl recording has seen ups and downs in terms of popularity and preference for performing DJs. Devices such as Compact Disc turntables, midi controllers and digital vinyl systems introduced to the consumer DJ market have played a role in diminishing the popularity of vinyl. Although vinyl recordings have taken a back seat in EDM culture, sales of vinyl continue to increase due to popularity with hipster culture and vinyl enthusiasts. The Scratch DJ Academy is a school with five locations; New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago and Atlanta. The school curriculum teaches the principles and practices of performance DJing along with promoting the use of vinyl and Serato's DVS system by teaching their students both mediums for DJing. Some DJs bring vinyl to their gigs as a backup in case their DVS fails. Some DJs, internally, feel shame to use DVS because of their preference of vinyl. DVS has caused a crisis with technology and identity challenging the

discourses of authenticity and virtuosity rooted in the vinyl format. Surprisingly, hip-hop DJs have taken DVS to new heights by using them in their performances (Attias 2011).

Technology has enhanced performing DJ skills with DVS [DJ software], but does not change the fact discrimination of women exist in DJ culture. Herman's article (2006), *Scratching out Authorship: Representations of the Electronic Music DJ at the Turn of the 21st Century* examines the DJ as creative author of their music. Herman argues that the DJ's authorship can be or is seen through how capitalist can take advantage of performance DJing aesthetics, instead of their merits as a creative artist and states that "The rare female DJ is represented using sexual tropes" (29). Second, the DJ's authorship is composed along traditional and patriarchal lines. It is possible Herman would add to the conversation that female DJ do not competing in DJ battles is because they will be subjected to being sexualized by their male counterparts.

In the book *Black Feminist Thought* Collins (2000) explores the idea of safe spaces. Collins argues safe spaces are a social space where Black women can speak freely and continues to argue these spaces are not only safe-but they also provide the background for resisting objectification as the other (111). These spaces provide empowerment for Black women to redefine themselves and help black women resist ideologies promoted in and outside the Black community (111). Collins may argue female DJs who create women centered record labels or DJ collective are creating safe space for other female DJs underrepresented in the DJ community. These safe spaces provide female DJs an outlet to express themselves without adhering to the confines of a male dominated culture.

The element of DJing has a history of being dominated by males. Taking this into consideration female DJs have had to find their place in the DJ community. Farrugia argues "Women continue to be marginalized in all popular music genres in large part because they often have little control over important parts of the industry such as music production, management, and journalism, which are all male dominated" (337). Farrugia writes about San Francisco female DJ collective called "Sister SF" and their relationship with the male dominated DJ scene in San Francisco (2009). She claims one of the main reasons Sister SF was formed was out of the lack of support from their male counterparts. Farrugia adds "Women continue to be underrepresented in DJ culture and interviewees claim when they are included it is not uncommon for them to experience a lack of support from male DJs" (339). The collective creation facilitated by Sister SF "created an environment of open communication and support-where experience and information was freely circulated-that member had not experienced previously in the local DJ scene" (339). It has also been noted that to build and sustain their identity, Sister SF has adopted do-it-yourself and grassroots methods. These methods take place through workshops, show promotions, and use of the Internet as a way to build relations with other female DJs (2009). Werner (2009) would add to this conversation claiming Internet has provided an outlet for female DJs to collaborate and exchange ideas. *Females wit' Funk* is a virtual community created from female DJs from different countries (591). In the article "*Let's Have At It!:*" *Conversations with EDM Producers Kate Simko and DJ Denise*, Farrugia (2010) writes about the gender divisions within with the dance music culture that copies other genres of popular music such as Punk and Hip-Hop. In relation to DJs in the Sister

SF crew, both Kate Simko and DJ Denise started their own record labels in order to create positions in power for themselves and other female recording artists who have been marginalized by a male dominated music industry (90).

Although males in the DJ competition scene encourage women to participate, women still face lewd comments and tokenism, which can be a deterrent for women's participation in the DJ battle circuit (Katz: 2006:582). In the article *"Men, Women, and Turntables: Gender and the DJ Battle"* author Mark Katz writes about the DJ battle scene and why women are alienated. Although DJ battles have provided a "safe space" grounding for young men to venture a scene of masculine identity; these DJ battle scene have done the opposite for women (583). Katz argues young men have greater access to informal networks that provides a supportive learning environment who include relatives, friends or neighbors who act as teachers or mentors. This may not be discriminatory, but may alienate female DJs as practice sessions take place in the privacy of the homes of male DJ mentors (585).

Ann Werner (2009) would contribute to this conversation by arguing female DJs are reluctant to purchase records because of male patriarchy in the record store. In the article *"Girls consuming music at home: Gender and the exchange of music at home: Gender and the exchange of music through new media,"* Werner argues females are more likely to accumulate mp3 files than purchasing vinyl recordings (273). Werner comes to this conclusion by pointing out "Often, Collecting and ordering records as an identity-forming practice is connected to (white middle-class) men. Straw (1997) sees masculine

record collecting as a performance of power or knowledge through collections, a refuge from the social world and a source of enjoyment" (4).

While examining the themes in this literature review it is possible to argue that while the arts of Hip Hop culture have created a safe space for Black and Puerto Rican men, they but have not embraced women. Like other women's involvement in the "elements," female DJs experience alienation and marginalization from their male counterparts in the DJ scene. Because of this, female DJs have created their own spaces utilizing DIY means via the Internet where female DJs can build relationships with other female DJs from around the globe. The literature also notes that women draw on digitalization and bring that into the art form of DJing. Female DJs may be more inclined to use an mp3 format instead of vinyl while performing because they experience male patriarchal attitudes from record shop patrons and staff. By utilizing safe spaces, female DJs can bypass these male dominated networks and domains.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS GUIDING MY WORK

This section draws on theoretical concepts from the discipline of cultural studies and popular culture. Storey's *Culture Theory and Popular Culture* provided the theoretical umbrella for this study. Fiske's draws on Williams (1977) theory on power describes a constant struggle between the "power-bloc" and "the people." Power is used by the power-bloc to maintain hegemonic power over the people. The argument is made that the people are not powerless and have their own form of power, which is localized, as opposed to their power-bloc counterparts which seeks to control everyone within its borders.

Williams' (Storey 2009: 2) argues for three definitions for culture. First, culture can be referred to as "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. A second use of culture might advise a part unique way of life, either by a group, a period, or a people (ibid). This example is not limited to cultural development of Western Europe, keeping in mind not just intellectual and aesthetic factor but also includes the development of literacy, holidays, sport, or religious festivals. Lastly, Williams (Storey 2009: 2) purposes that culture can refer to 'the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.' In this case, culture refers to texts and practices whose function signifies, produces or provide occasions for the production of meaning. With this definition in mind, Storey list examples such as poetry, the novel, ballet, opera and fine art.

It is possible to argue that while examining hip-hop culture; Williams would argue the pillar arts of hip-hop exemplify culture. We can make the argument that Williams would categorize hip-hop as a culture based on his definitions provided and would use the first definition to describe an aesthetic development. DJing as a developing art form is mirrored in this definition, because of the constant change in technology contributing to changes. Williams's next definition describes culture as a unique way of life and would examine DJ culture as unique as many DJ base their lifestyles upon.

Story argues popular culture usually means to mobilize the second and third meanings of culture. The second, culture as a way of living, allow us to examine practices such as holidays, festivals and youth subcultures usually referred to as lived cultures or practices. The last definition, culture as a signifying practice, permits us to argue for sit-coms, pop music and comics, as examples of culture referred to as text. Story also adds when thinking about popular culture, few people would think of William's first definition (2009:2).

Before defining popular culture it is necessary to define "popular." Williams (1983) offers four contemporary meanings: well-liked by many people', inferior kinds of work', work intentionally set out to win favor with people', culture made by the people for themselves' (237). Popular culture interplays complex combinations of the different meanings between "culture" and "popular."

What will help us move forward with this study is to examine the differences of what Fiske calls "the power-bloc" and "the people." Fiske argues the power-bloc and the

people are social alliance interests composed, and strategically or tactical advancing the interests of those who form them. When mentioning the power-bloc, Gramsci theorized a "bloc" composed of different components for specific purposes. Fiske makes the claim his use of the term "power-bloc" is more poststructural than Gramsci and Hall's placing greater emphasis and multi-axiality of alliances constituting them. The opposition between the "power-bloc" and "the people" is in perpetual motion, and non-structurally fixed. This process between power-bloc strategies and tactics of the people are in constant change in order to adapt to the immediate climate. These struggles invariably incorporate power.

Fiske's provides Gramsci's argument for power that is demonstrated between two groups. "The power-bloc" and "the people" are two social categories explaining, in binary terms, the constant exchange of power and their use of it. "The power-bloc" has access to elite resources in politics and economics and systematically used to govern people to protect the maintenance of social order. "The people" are not without their own power, which is "localized" and only concerned with their immediate surrounding. On the other hand, the power-bloc direction of imperializing power extends as far as possible in all aspects of social life. It is possible to use Fiske's binary social categories of "the power-bloc" and "the people" to describe hegemony's relationship to subcultures. Hegemony is used to maintain social control while subculture resist power placed upon them by hegemonic society.

Fiske's theoretical grounding of power is derived from three sources: A Foucauldian theory of power and structural Marxist arguments of ideology,

consciousness and class, Gramsci's explanation of struggle between the power-bloc and the people, and a Bakhtinian explanation of the constriction of the power-block and resilience of the people. His book continues to add, "The book's heart i.e. the numerous modes of opposition between the power-bloc and the people" and makes point of Stewart Hall to include:

The people versus the power-block, rather than class-against-class, is the central line of contradictions around the contradictions: the popular forces versus the power-block.

The "power-bloc" is characterized through exercises of power, which social groups delineated by class, race, gender and ethnicity, have privileged access they can turn to suit their own political and economic interests. In other words, the power bloc uses resources serving their interest in the political and economic realms. Drawing on Foucault, Fisk continues to say that the power that is dispersed throughout society manifested through technology and mechanisms as opposed to imposition of social class. Power is used systematically in order to maintain social order and the power-bloc, as a social force, better known for not what it is but for what it does. In other words, the power-bloc uses hegemony to maintain social order. Hebdige refers to hegemony social groups direct 'total social authority over subordinate groups by gaining and shaping societal attitudes so the power of the dominant classes are legitimate and natural (20).

On the receiving end of hegemonic power is "the people" who benefit the least and are acclimatized to discipline by this power system, and must be seen as a set of

social forces. Allegiants are built off common varying and changing interests shared by lack of access and deprivation to both political and economic resources. "The people" arises social forces that continually keep the people systematically subjected to discipline and disfranchised from resources in contingency with shared interests. Although the people do not have the same access to change the system in as seen fit, they are not powerless. For "the people" domination over other social formations and territorial expansion is not a concern. Social identities and relationships materialize in the spaces, consciousness and daily life routines. Fiske continues stating "The function of this power is to produce and hold onto a space that can, as a far as possible be controlled by the subordinate who live within it" (12).

It is possible to make the connection between Fiske's use of "the people" and Hebdige's subculture. Both the people and subcultures utilize power to control their immediate surroundings. For subcultures, the use of power comes in the form of resistance. Hebdige described youth culture in the form of subcultures using semiotics differentiating themselves from popular culture. Music, art, fashion and politics are signs of resistance carried out through the use of style. Subcultures are known for rebelling in some way against mainstream society. Subcultures studies centralize resistance as a central concept (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). Resistance is expressed through music, fashion, and art sub-cultures use to differentiate themselves from mainstream culture. Punks resisted mainstream lifestyles in order to live lifestyles they feel more comfortable with and is expressed through various methods. Scholars claimed working class youth joined subcultures to resist the capitalist/consumerist society (Haenflur 2010:8).

Subcultures challenge contradictions in society rather than being deviants or delinquents (8).

Subculture studies emerged of urban ethnography in the Britain in the early 1800's, however scientific methods were not taken until the 1920's. Hebdige, in his seminal work, *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style* (1979) examines subculture's expressive forms and the rituals used to differentiate themselves from mainstream culture. Scholars have struggled to define what a subculture is, [and have come up with different definitions, including] one definition of a subculture has been described as "any aspect of social life in which young people's style and music intersect" (A. Bennett 1999, 599). Subculture is a social subgroup distinguishable from mainstream culture by its values, beliefs, symbols, and activities are often in the case of youth, styles and music (see A. Bennett 2001; Bennett 1989). Hebdige describes different elements defining subcultures based on groups of people disenfranchised and/or stigmatized by hegemonic mainstream culture.

Subcultures express themselves by assigning new meaning to symbols such as language and objects that Symbols share dual meaning and cultural value significant to its user or users and adapted through "style." Semiotic value subcultures place on symbols gives new meaning where objects mean and mean again (8). Hawks (1977) describes semiotics as a way of reading signs. Performing disc Jockeys, Punks, Skinheads, and Rastafarians have demonstrated separation from mainstream hegemonic culture through resistance through style. Sub-cultures differentiate themselves through the use of symbols taking on new meaning for the user(s) and those involved in the dialog

with those symbols. For instance, the turntable's sole function was to play records until DJs have reclaimed the turntable as an instrument. Carried out through style, ordinary objects take meaning to collective groups rebelling against mainstream culture. Subcultures express themselves through various mediums taking symbolic meaning and casting those who use them into being mainstream's societies "other." Symbolic meaning is also an identifier for likeminded sub-culture enthusiasts.

Subcultures assign new meaning to objects in the form of semiotics changing reality as seen fit. It is possible Julie Perini would argue hip-hop culture expresses through semiotics in the form of "art intervention." From the book, *Uses of a Whirlwind: Movement, Movements, and Contemporary Radical Currents in the United States*, Julie Perini (2010) contributes a chapter titled "*Art as Intervention: A Guide to Today's Radical Art Practices*" and introduces us to art as a form of intervention. Perini uses the word interventionist to describe artist work for its ability to alter the normal perception of information, capital and the function of totalizing systems. Her argument continues by demonstrating how the arts play a function in imaging and creating societal shared traits, which connect to collective action. Artist use their talents to change social realities and create meaningful experiences anywhere art can be seen (186). Art is not only express through visuals, but audio as well; therefore it is possible to argue she would include anywhere art can be heard and may include argue the arts of Hip-Hop culture could be used for intervention. While looking at the history of Hip-hop culture it is evident these art forms are based in community mobilization. Park jams or parties in the Bronx during the 1970's to 1980's were promoted to bring people together to entertain party goes in

addition to providing a space where Hip-Hop artists can gather, exchange ideas, and perform. The arts of hip-hop culture can be used to mobilize community members and also carry out resistance through art toward the state, elites, and other entities that continue to keep community members struggling.

Cultural studies and popular culture are central to this study. Subcultures, power, and resistance is also applied to this study. Culture is a process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, whereas popular culture is argued to be the interplay of popular and culture. It is argued that hip-hop culture could be looked at as an example of culture. This section laid out power working in the binary of two groups: the people and the power-bloc. Both groups use power to control their environment; the people localize power to control their immediate environment. The people, while the power bloc uses power in the form of hegemony to keep social order. The binary of Fiske's power-bloc and people are synonymous to hegemony and Hebdige's concept subcultures. Resistance is key to subcultures that place new meanings to objects; carried out through style. Subcultures distinguish themselves from hegemonic mainstream culture by its values, beliefs, symbols and activities. Hip Hop culture was argued to qualify as a subculture because of its relationship to the culture and popular culture.

## METHODS

This study's purpose was to explore performing DJ's attitudes toward DJ software. This study used semi-standardized qualitative interviews through face-to-face conversation and one email questionnaire. All participants were provided and signed consent from, *see appendix A*. All but one participant chose to disclose their identity. These interviews were conducted via sixteen open-ended questions that probed participant's experiences with performance DJing and technology. Before the start of the interview a consent form was presented to participants in person and consent to participate in the study was received. This research project guaranteed confidentiality for participants if they did not want to reveal their true identity. Given this option, one out of the eleven participants chose not to be identified. The interview schedule consisted of sixteen questions probing participants' experiences with performance DJing and attitude toward DJ software. All interviews followed a script provided with an IRB supplemental form (See appendix A). The interview process allowed for questions to be added developing themes and concepts. The subjects were encouraged to include concluding comments leading to a contingency of alternative questions.

### *Interview Process*

Eleven disc jockeys participated in this study about disc jockeys and their attitudes toward DJ computer software. I conducted face-to-face interviews with 9 participants, 1 interview was by email, and my autoethnographic accounts as a

performing DJ. The interviews lasted from thirty minutes to one hour and twenty minutes. Interviewees were selected from a pool of the researcher's previous established network of performing disc jockeys. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods were used in combination as a recruitment method to gain participants. The interviews took place June 8, 2015 to September 18, 2015. Nine interviews were conducted in Sacramento California. Another interview was conducted in Arcata, California. Contacting interviewees took place via telephone calls, text messaging, emailing, and Facebook messaging. The last interview was conducted via email out of convenience for the interviewee. The interviewees chose the locations for interviews. Interviews were conducted in the privacy of the interviewees' homes, bars and music venues, and a public park. Autoethnographic accounts of the researcher was included with the data set.

### *Sampling*

A nonprobability sampling method was utilized for this study and relied on available subjects and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was used starting with a network of DJs known to the researcher. Other participant names were gathered from recommendations by DJs whom participated in this study, as well as DJs from outside of this study. At the end of the interview subjects were asked if they knew other DJs who might be willing to participate in this study.

### *Transferring to Coding*

The interviews were recorded using an iPhone 4 and HTC M8. Interviews were then transferred to mp3 format and transcribed with *InqScribe* transcription software. This data was then transferred to Microsoft Word. Interviews were then printed and coded line by line and used a series of color highlighters indicating themes and concepts that arose out of the data itself, theory, and hip-hop culture. This coding method allowed me to "identify implicit concerns as well as explicit statements (Charmaz 2012:50). Themes, concepts and quotes were extracted from interviews; peer reviewed articles and books to explain the attitudes toward DJ software. DJ, Technology, sub-cultures, and performing arts were just a few key word searches chosen to triangulate literary sources on the topic of performing arts. These sources have been found through the Humboldt State University library search engine and Google scholar.

### *Participants*

Participant ages ranged from 25 to 45 and were selected on "the basis of knowledge of a population and its elements" through purposive or judgmental sampling. (Babbie 2007: 193) Eleven males and one female participated; all from various education backgrounds from high school, community college, vocational school, and graduate school. All Participating subjects have more than ten years in the field of DJing and are active disc jockeys at the time of the interview. Nine of twelve participants were born in California. Of these 9 participants, six were born in the Sacramento area and four were born in the Los Angeles area. All of the participants except for two were living in the Sacramento area during the time of the interviews. The participants' racial background is

as follows: 2 Latino Americans, 1 African American, 3 Filipino/as, 1 Native American, and 4 White. The occupational status varies. Only 2 of the participants DJ as a full time occupation while the rest work part or full time jobs outside of DJing. All participants have extensive experience using vinyl as a medium to perform their art and have knowledge of DJ software.

## DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I explore the themes and patterns I found in the data. These themes and patterns were coded and placed into families, or groupings of codes. Most of the participants in this study mention their early DJ influences to one of hip-hop pillar art forms. DJ software has provided convenience for DJs to carry less to gigs. All of the DJs in this study started DJing with vinyl recordings, but only two have not used DJ software. All participants use vinyl when seen fit, but two of the participants refuse to use DJ software due to cultural ties to turntables and vinyl. Digital midi controllers were also mentioned in this study as an alternative to turntables, but no DJs who use midi controllers participated in this study. Access to free music is another theme drawn out from the data and is argued to contribute to the performing DJ's uniqueness. Authenticity is placed into question when DJ's were asked about what performing DJ is. Those who use them exclusively look at turntables and vinyl recordings as cultural artifacts. The data shows that technology is breaking performance DJs into three different categories: culturists, hybridized DJs and midi DJs.

Hip-Hop culture was the main introduction to DJing for ten of the eleven participants. Family members, underground radio shows and peers involved in hip-hop culture incorporate the four different interrelated art forms of. MC-ing, DJ-ing, Graffiti and B-boying/B-girling. Many participants attribute their early DJing influences to one of four of these art forms. For instance, I were introduced to hip hop culture through Graffiti and participant Billy Lane often entered b-boy competitions in the 1990's.

Drasar Monumental's father was a DJ who collected and played funk, soul and hip-hop records. Participants took to relative hip-hop elements leading them to performance DJing.

In the last 10 years DJ software has made its way into DJ vocabulary synonymous with turntables, and mixers. Almost all participants noted the DJ Software, "Serato" as the choice software for their performances. All but two of the participants have fully integrated analog turntables with DJ software such as Serato, Traktor and Ableton. All of the participants noted using different versions of the Technics 1200 MK models as the centerpiece for performing. All of the participants mentioned using mixers with two channels such as Vestax, Rane, and Health and Allen are also preferred pieces of gear to accompany DJ "decks" Two channel mixers allow DJ to create continuous mixes between two turntables. DJ software has been highly accepted within DJ culture is because of its applications. Daniel Osterhoff aka DJ Dan O notes, "All that I know is right now there's a lot you can do with bookmarking different points in songs. Using cue points."

Most DJ software allows the user to assign "cue points" that acts as a marker and allow DJs for easier access parts of the song such as, the break. Cue points have allowed DJs to create their own remixes by mixing certain parts of songs together. He continues to add, "You can completely rewrite a song using different drum parts and different melodies, and different loop and stuff like that with more ease than you were 2 years ago." Selekt recordings artist, DJ Cantos also comments on these applications by mentioning the versatility of DJ software in conjunction with midi controllers. Midi

controllers are electronic devices that simulate DJing on turntables and are DJ software dependent. Midi controllers have no function on their own, other than working with DJ software. Turntables, on the other hand, have a dual function, which allows DJs to use DJ software in addition to playing vinyl. "I could make a cue point. I got that many loops of any measure I want. I could then take another piece of a song and mix it in. On the fly. Then I can record the mix and loop it. I mean that's pretty crazy." Cue points allow for DJs to perform to live remixes of a song instantaneously. It appears DJ software has introduced functions that cannot be performed with vinyl recordings such as using cue points.

DJ software is popular with DJs because it allows artists to present vast amount of music depending on the crowd's expectation. DJ software is favored by DJs because it allows for versatility. For DJs playing multiple genres in one night it is essential to have a diverse music library at one's disposal. As Billy Lane notes "If it's going to be a four hour set where I don't know what I'm walking into and I know they want me to present it creatively and still have some kind of mojo behind it. It's going to be two Technics 1200 MKII turntables, a Rane 57, and my laptop." It is possible to argue the "mojo" Lane speaks of is having the advantages of digital applications while keeping hip-hop's cultural roots intact through the use of turntables.

Along with having the ability to work with several different sounds at any moment, DJ software also created a luxury of not having to carry flight cases of records weighting anywhere from 60-80 pounds, depending on how many records are in the case.

DJ El Conductor, an innovator of cue point remixing, was adamant about carrying “hella” records and advocated the use of DJ software by noting:

It's the same reason why I need to opt out of a phone book delivery. Because it's what it is now. I'm going to sit and try and fight it and be a purist and lug in 12 crates. Like I used to have to though. That was kind of a point of pride back in the day where you would have 7 crates with you and hella homies carrying in your crates and then hella homies guarding all your gear.

For disc jockeys traveling with records, the integration of DJ software has been a blessing. A traveling performing DJ can simply show up to the airport with a laptop or USB, which may contain hundreds or thousand of songs and replacing flight cases of records. Frank Del Gato, of the Grammy award-winning band “The Deftones,” explains the convenience of replacing records with his laptop. When asked why he integrated DJ software into his performances he replied, “I have yea, I have, because it is fun, it makes things easier, which sounds horrible but it’s true. I used to have to carry a lot of records around and when I started traveling a lot, like its expensive carrying a lot of records around.” For a traveling DJ, flying with records can be costly for the frequent flyer, but for DJs on the road, DJ software has saved record collections. For instance, DJ Mike Colossal, tour DJ for rapper Mr. P Chill integrates DJ software for stage shows not only as a space saver but also for maintenance purposes. He adds:

Well I've used Serato software because on my first one month long tour. That was in July of 2011. I went on the road with P Chill and I brought out records and scratch records to do his sets with. I'd play the beat on Serato because there was no vinyl version and I would do the cuts live and switch up the

record and everything. By the end of that tour all of my records were warped. If I do a Sacramento gig I'll bring out records but hitting the road with them, you're just not able to maintain those records. Twelve hours in a car in Arizona. Your records are done. The next time I went on tour. I had all the beats and scratches sounds [via digital music file] ready on Serato. The car dropped one crate, so we could add food or extra clothing in there.

Del Gato, El Conductor and Colossal attribute convenience for switching to DJ software programs. Computer technology has made it easier for DJs to have massive music collections in the palm of their hand and the capability to perform live remixes. DJs choosing to incorporate DJ software into their sets claim accessibility to a wider selection of music has been their main motive for making this move. The Internet is considered to be a powerful tool for all to use and disc jockeys have taken advantage of this by "digging" on blogs, YouTube, and other internet sources to gain access to music. DJ El Conductor adds:

Obviously the reason why is because you have a lot more access to all the same tunes that you would normally play or new shit. The Internet is huge. The world is huge. Everything is also getting smaller at the same time so you have better access to it. So I can scan my collection and feel out the crowd and the crowd watches. And feel off of their vibe quicker. And get the tracks quicker than I would be able to with 7 crates behind me. I can access all my effects. Everything I need.

Access to a digital library of music can create limitless avenues to compose a DJ set. Accessibility is present in the preproduction phase of DJing through collecting mp3s for later use. Mike Colossal gives his input by stating "I don't know what the real change was but...music was so abundant on YouTube and stuff like Bandcamp, Soundcloud, and

even on Myspace you could hear some music. My music collection wasn't stopped by what vinyl I could purchase.” DJ Stepdaddy is a DJ who used to carry records to gigs, but explains why he chose to integrate computer programs as his main medium of playing music.

Mainly the reason I did that was selection. Easy access of selection in an instant. For years that I've lugged around tons of cases of records but it was all hip-hop and some dancehall. Not that much soul, some funk. Now that I have this digital format, I feel that no matter where I go, no matter what kind of gig I play. Even if I'm booked to play all hip-hop. I know that if the crowd is not there and not vibing off of that. I could switch to some Dancehall or some Funk or even some electro and be able to switch over to that quickly and grab that crowd. And keep them on the dancefloor. I've incorporated it as well because the ability to get in and out of a song so fast.

Access to more music is another reason DJs are making the switch from vinyl to DJ software. The Internet provides an unlimited access to digital music, which gives the DJ more music and a wider selection of genres. DJs do not have to purchase vinyl recordings that can be easily found on the Internet for free. In the literature review Katz (2013) argued that technology and vinyl emulation programs [DJ software] have been a variable in reshaping the imagery and identity of the hip-hop DJ. It is possible Katz would argue DJs are experiencing an identity shift by choosing DJ software over their vinyl collections. Because anyone can readily have access to free music (via the Internet), it is also possible to argue that DJs using these programs are diminishing their own uniqueness. Orejuela would add to this conversation and support Katz's argument by mentioning that since a DJ's notoriety is partially based of the rarity of the music he or

she is playing. Since music is easily accessible and free it is possible to argue then, that the Internet has a role in the diminishing the DJ's uniqueness.

The introduction of DJ software used with analog turntables pushed boundaries of where a DJ can go musically in a single night. Participant's credit DJ software with enhancing their skill set and giving them the ability to do more with ease. Although the participants using DJ software swear by it, they identify the availability of this software has allowed for an influx of mediocre DJs relying on theatrics to perform. One feature brought out by DJ software is auto sync. This function mixes the music automatically at the touch of a button. What was once done by ear and took countless hours to learn is simply done at the touch of a single button.

According to DJ Stepdaddy, Cantos, and Billy Lane the auto sync button auto sync function on DJ software programs created disc jockeys overnight. This causes dismay for disc jockeys that studied the art of performance DJing as many feel auto sync is cutting corners. DJ Stepdaddy commented on this issue by noting:

The other thing I don't like is that these programs have made it real easy for a novice to look very good as a DJ with the auto sync button. Like they don't even know how to fuckin' mix records. They just have that auto sync on. And all the idiots in the crowd are like "Aye. Wow. He's killing it." No, the computer killed it.

According to DJ Stepdaddy technology is altering the public's perception of what it means to be a performing DJ. The skills and techniques that used to be applied to

turntables has been replaced by midi controllers with auto sync. DJ Stepdaddy is challenging the authenticity of auto sync.

DJ Cantos, on the other hand, comments on the affordability of DJ software. He continues to explain the simplicity of DJ software and its relation to digital music.

The whole dedication to your craft is gone. Insta DJ instantly. The only insta DJ I know is the one who jacked my get up. But everybody is now because for 500 dollars you could be a DJ with a dope collection. That only took 2 days to download and now you've got everything. Now all you have to do is figure out how to mix it, scratch it, whatever. When you got a sync button it makes that a lot easier.

My viewpoint on this matter states:

I would not mind learning how to use a midi controller in conjunction with DJ software. As a DJ, I feel that it is important to master different types of DJ mediums because you may not know what type of gear a venue has for you to play on. For instance, I played my first international gig in the United Kingdom in early 2016 and was faced with having to play on CD turntables. Its good to know all types of gear but I would not use auto sync.

Since the talent aspect of being a crafty mixologist or turntablist has been replaced by an automated process, disc jockeys found other ways of entertaining their audience through theatrics. Criticism from hybrid DJs using both analog and digital formats in combination note the grief of theatrics high earning DJs partake in. DJ Cantos comments on theatrics by stating:

I use a laptop or I don't have to if I don't want to cause I'm a DJ. I've learned from records. So I have all those options, but I know that performance DJing is not making hand hearts and your hands are up in the more than they are on the decks or any type of media. I know that should be true with any other type of DJing as well. It should be true that...and it's unfortunate that DJ digitals or controller DJs. It shouldn't be about hand hearts and pies and jumping up and down with your hands up and worship me...playing someone else's shit. Then I'm really not playing. It's unfortunate that the electronic DJs got that because of the few that are making the gazillion dollars for doing nothing.

DJ Billy Lane reinforces the previous statement by adding, "You don't have to be a game show host up there or cheerleader. You don't have to walk around and do the Tiesto point and act a fool. You don't have to do any of that crap. You immediately think of someone who is doing jumping jacks or some bullshit and think that guy is an idiot."

I have seen midi controllers used in conjunction with DJ software and I don't care as so much the format, but what comes out of the speakers. One thing about the auto sync is that it doesn't have human error and auto sync does not allow for improvisational mixing techniques because the mixing is performed automatically. I am more interested in hearing a DJ make slight errors in the mix just to see how they get out of it. I'm not entertained by circus acts behind turntables.

Automation via auto sync buttons has made DJs over night. The convenience and accessibility to the midi controllers and DJ software have created DJ who may or may not have references to earlier forms of DJing. Accessibility to free music and cost effective midi controllers have created convenience for overnight DJs. Given the data it is possible to argue that the turntable used in conjunction with vinyl recordings has been devalued in

postmodern DJ culture and that theatrics is becoming a popular aesthetic among popular culture.

Lastly I that technology is moving farther from its hip-hop beginnings with the introduction of DJ software in DJ culture. Technology is separating DJ culture into different sects of DJs. I have designated 3 typologies of groups that demonstrate separation in DJ culture. The first are culturists who prefer not to use DJ software because they feel these programs do not fit in their social circles. Drasar Monumental and DJ Sky Pager fall under the culturist category. The second category is the hybridized DJs, who perform with the turntable and DJ software. These DJs prefer the cultural ties to hip-hop culture through the use of turntables but also incorporate DJ software for its applications. Nine out of the 11 DJs in this study claim to integrate these two mediums in their performances. Midi DJs represent the last group of performance DJs who reject all hip-hop cultural ties by using midi controller with DJ software. Two of the participants in this study claim to use this medium in their performances. Billy Lane and DJ Cantos both claim to use midi controllers depending on the gig they are playing. However none of the DJs in this study claim to solely performing on midi controllers.

There are culturist that resist further incorporating technology their performances. DJ Sky Pager, known for her merits in the northern soul DJ scene, models her style of DJing from the sound system selectors of Jamaica in the early mid-60's. Coming from a culture of record collectors, she sees no need in using DJ software. When asked if she uses DJ software she replied, "I don't rely on iPods, laptops, or anything else beside the tables and my records. In my circle, the less technology, the better. Since Jamaican and

60's soul is centered around collecting records, we like to keep it legit.” For the culturist, there are legitimacy issues concerning the incorporation of DJ software. The culturist gauge a DJ repertoire not by the technical turntablist or hip hop DJ skills, but by the rarity of the records they are playing in addition to how they treat others. She further states “In our scene, the audience doesn’t know what we are playing anyway because our records are so rare, so to have a series of upbeat, obscure 60’s soul records can be a difficult task.” DJ and music producer Drasar Monumental is known in the international hip hop scene as a record label owner, blogger, hip hop enthusiast and beat maker and has a similar reason for not making the move to DJ software. Keeping cultural ties to the past is seen as important to culturists. He notes:

When it comes to DJing I want to keep it as close as I can to the vibration to when I first started. Some people say that tradition is a bad thing. Tradition is meant to be broken, but I think tradition needs to be respected because there is a certain reason why set up the way they are. There’s certain rules that were set up and established. There’s certain ethics that went into what people were doing, so I don’t want to use the word pure, but I will go ahead and say it. I’m trying to keep it as close and as pure to my youth as when it was handed down to me. That way that feeling never dissipates. Some people say that there’s nothing sacred, but I think that there are some things that are sacred.

Cultural traditions are the main driving force for the culturist to resist computer software. For them, to use DJ software goes against the ideals they consider sacred. For the cases of DJ Sky Pager and Drasar Monumental vinyl DJing represents a certain era of origin in their specific culture. Culturist DJs feel it is important to represent culturally

identifying nuances as a part of their identity. Their DJ sets are a direct reflection of their own DJ cultural roots.

Previously mentioned earlier in the data are hybridized DJs. Although there are DJs who keep cultural ties through the use of vinyl and turntables, there are DJs who move slightly away from hip-hop cultural roots. This move is manifested through the use of DJ software programs in conjunction with turntables. For hybridized DJs, the turntable is a cultural artifact and their uses in performances represent the skill and cultural ties to hip-hop DJing. Nine DJs in this study have claimed to hybridized turntables and DJ software. All of the participants in this study started as culturist performing on vinyl, but some has accepted DJ software along with traditional means of DJ performing. Since programs like Serato and Traktor have been available to consumers, these programs been integrated into the hybrid DJ's performances. These programs have expanded the DJ vocabulary by enabling performing disc jockeys to have access to a wide range of music and at the same time have enhanced avenues DJs can explore through different effects modules such as looping, cue pointing and various sound manipulation effects. Reggae Dancehall DJ ESEF explains, "I think that the DJ programs are sick. I think it's amazing that they can flip things and do certain things that you couldn't do on turntables or emulate things that you can do on the turntables." The reason why hybrid DJs have not gotten rid of their turntables is because of the control they have of music while they are playing. DJ ESEF notes "I just use the turntables as a controller because I feel the turntables are way more reactive for what I'm dealing with."

Turntables are known for providing the best control for what a DJ needs to perform, but what is also significant to the hybrid DJ is cultural value. All of the participants in this study use some form of the Technics 1200 MK turntable to perform and it is considered a favorite among hybridized and culturist DJs. Although this turntable has been in existence for more than 40 years, it continues to be a staple piece of DJ gear. The new generation of DJs may see the 1200 as passé and outdated. DJs new to DJ culture may not have a cultural reference to why this piece of gear hold so much weight in the DJ scene. For turntablists and mixologist, the 1200 holds cultural significance because it has allowed them to express artistic freedoms without limitations as DJ ESEF explains: “You'll always have people DJing on turntables. I think that will be around forever. For the people that scratch, that scratch culture is the true culture of DJing as far as scratching and beat juggling. To me that will always be on the Technics 1200's.”

Although culturist and hybridized DJs use turntables in performances, there is a new generation of performing DJs who do not use turntables as a device to control and manipulate sound. Midi controllers along with DJ software programs such as Scratch Live, Traktor and Ableton live, are the preferred mediums for Midi DJs. Two of the twelve participants in this study use midi controllers along with DJ software but do not confine themselves to these mediums. DJ Cantos and Billy Lane are two participants swap between culturist, hybridized DJ and midi set-ups. DJ Cantos mention his current performing media set up has grown out of experimentation: “My current set up is kind of crazy cause I'm like in this experimental thing right now. I like digital. I like records. I

like them both. I love them both. Right now I use a controller. I use an S4.” Billy Lane is a DJ who chooses his performing medium based on the types of gigs at which he is playing. He noted: “I have 2 set ups. One of them is a pair of 1200's and at TTM57 mixer and the other one is a pioneer DJ controller. For me a set up depends on the gig I'm doing. It depends on the crowd I'm with, how long is my set, what kind of music am I going to play. What kind of crowd I'm catering to. Anywhere on the scale of performance vs. mobile guy.”

Hybridized DJs have the capability to weave in and out of different types of medium to perform with. This could be attributed to cultural references they have grown up and evolved with over time or there the lack of. This could be different for the Midi DJ who may have been accustomed to grooming in a different era of DJing. The influx of DJ software may be pushing turntables out of the popular culture of DJing as DJ ESEF explains:

What's happening now is that there are so many people using digital programs that when you bring out a pair of turntables they look at you like you're wasting your time. Like "Why did you bring all that shit?" They don't understand the foundation. They don't understand why you do it because I bring out turntables to every jam every time and I've been looked at probably one out of every four times like "Whoa, you brought those? It's 2015.

Midi controllers represent the next wave in the evolution of DJ performances. Technology is known to wither and phase out old technologies, DJ culture included. Billy Lane gives his outlook on the future of performance DJing by saying;

“It will age with them, but I think the idea of the performance DJ that we grew to love has completely evolved into something else. I think that the idea of working the hell out a controller, like crazy effects, and button pushing and auto beat matching software and doing all kinds of weird flippin' stuff. You know controllerism...is the new pushing boundaries. Even that in itself is going to get off on its stop and the train is going to keep moving.”

Cultural ties to Jamaican and Hip-Hop culture have been the foundation for the participants. The introduction of DJ software has pushed forward the boundaries of performance DJing. The application used in the software has enhanced the hybrid DJ's need to seek perfection with their performances. The software has also provided conveniences making performances new and limitless. Accessibility provides a wide range of music to choose from giving the performance DJ opportunities to cater to a wider audience while creating divisions within the DJ realm. The culturist, model themselves by cultural ties and foundations they hold sacred. Hybridized DJs keep cultural ties close but also push forward the boundaries of DJing through the use of analog turntables with digital software. Midi DJs move with the evolution of technology with no cultural ties to the past. DJ software has created a rift among a subculture breaking it up in to pieces.

## DISCUSSION

Performing DJs come from all walks of life and have used their art for personal fulfillment. Some DJs have made careers of this art form and some remain hobbyists in who perform in their bedrooms. Whatever the case may be, DJs are left with the option whether to keep the traditional means of performing through vinyl, to crossover to digital formats.

This study found that Postmodern DJ culture is currently expressed as hegemonic tool in the form of technology. The literature tells us that although hip hop culture's art forms created safe spaces for males to collaborate and exchange ideas, this has not been the same for female DJ who face patriarchy in male dominated DJ scenes, competition and record stores. Female DJs have been alienated and have had to use DIY tactic to create their own safe spaces. The literature review gave a brief history on hip-hop culture, its relationship to technology and gender issues in DJ culture. Hip-hop culture is a subculture that originated in the South Bronx. Poor economic, social, and political hardship created the backdrop for the pillars of hip-hop culture to develop. DJing as an art form is technologically dependent and continues to be to this day. Given this, it is possible that female DJs are more likely to use DJ software as a performing medium. DJ Sky Pager, the only female to take part in this study, prefers vinyl for cultural reasons and also mentions racism in the northern soul DJ scene by adding:

When I was DJing heavily, I did DJ in the Northern Soul community because I thought it was a huge challenge to be a minority woman in a white, British, male dominated culture. Recently, within the last 5 years, I realized how racist the Northern Soul community/culture can be, and I have separated myself from it. I rarely DJ now and concentrate on collecting rare 60s soul 45s. There is a small community of DJs/collectors that love 60s soul music without the “scene” attached to it. We’re building a strong base and are open to anyone who would love to take part.”

This study also finds that DJ software is creating different sects of performing DJs. It is possible to state that technology, in the form of DJ software, is post-modernizing performance DJing away from its hip-hop roots. Orejuela and Katz argued that the persona of the hip-hop DJ is created from the use of rare vinyl recordings with turntables. Access to free music is readily available via Internet downloads with no limit to how many times a download can occur Performance DJing has separated from its hip-hop roots which once valued rare music.

The skill of a performing DJ Performance DJing is built off of mentorship as mention in the data. It is possible Katz would examine this data and argue, that although males have benefited from mentorship, females on the other hand, are alienated from this process and hip-hop cultural practices of DJing. Fiske would also argue there is a binary use of power occurring between male and female DJs. The DJ battle is not only a battle to see who the better DJ is, but also a battle for space, which males DJ have greater access to resources similar to how the power-bloc uses power of the people.

Record shops have not only served a purpose of selling music and goods, but have also served a purpose to network with other DJs. In the last fifteen years digital music has emerged as a choice medium for DJs has been a contributor in the drop in vinyl

record sales and has led to the closure of record shops. As a former record storeowner, I have experienced this and seen it happen to others.

Chang, Rose, and Orejuela wrote about DJing along with the other elements of hip-hop culture emerging from the South Bronx as an alternative gang activity and crime alternative. This art form served and serves a purpose for people who have been disenfranchised by government institution. Performance DJing has moved on from the parks of the South Bronx into large venues and high-end disco techs. DJs now face the pressure of playing popular music in order to sell booths at the VIP section and bottles of alcohol, otherwise their job will be at the mercy of the venue owner. That is, DJs are now a commodity used to sell commodities.

The progression of DJ software technology could lead to the end of the performing DJ. In our interview, DJ El Conductor raises the point that the art form of DJing could possibly be seen as obsolete. In the past we have seen the elimination of occupations due to technology. For example, people can make their own travel arrangements online without an agent. This could possibly happen to performing DJs as technology progresses.

I don't expect performing DJing, as I know it, to be an art form that will last forever in popular culture, but instead it will continue to thrive in underground music culture. Technology has a way of washing out the old and bringing in the new. I hope what people gain from reading this study is the cultural significance of performance DJing. It is possible to argue that technology has a way of filtering out cultural nuances, which eventually get lost over time. I don't expect the general public to understand the

cultural importance of DJing as an art form. However, I would like those who read this study to understand the cultural importance and traditions of hip-hop DJing, and how it can be preserved in the face of technology.

## LIMITATIONS

This study is not reflective of the population of performing DJs because of its small sample size. Performing DJs strictly using midi controllers were not interviewed in this study, this is possibly due to the researcher's cultural network of DJs. This study is also limited by the amount of females interviewed, as gender issues were an important theme in this study. Only one female DJ was interviewed in this study. Although DJs were selected from various races and ethnicities, there was only one African American that participated in this study. This also may be due to the researcher's cultural network.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

1. How do African American DJs view their craft in relation to DJ software?
2. How do women in the northern soul music scene view their craft in relation to vinyl recording?
3. How might DJs view their iconic status in relation to social media?
4. How might Filipina DJs view their role in the DJ scene?

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## APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENT

**Supplemental Document****Name:** Benjamin Andres**Phone:** 916-215-7433**Email:** bda124@humboldt.edu**Title:** Cue Point Aesthetics: The Performing DJ in Postmodern DJ Culture**Recruitment Scripts:**

Hello, my name is Ben Andres. Currently I am working on my master's thesis in Sociology at Humboldt State University. The aim of my research is focused on the identity of disc jockeys.

Your participation would be beneficial to the exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of the...

All information you provide will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be used in any published documents.

Would you be willing schedule a time to talk with me on the phone or in person in the next week or two? The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour.

Please contact me at [bda124@humboldt.edu](mailto:bda124@humboldt.edu) if you would like to participate. Thank you for you time and I hope to hear from you soon.

[If yes]

Superb. I will email you a consent form that I will need you to read and sign.

Then if you could take a digital photo, or scan it and email it back to me. You could also

send it through the U.S. postal service. Once that process is done with we will be set to do the interview.

Let me know what works best for you as far as time and place.

[If no]

Thanks for your reply. Do you know anyone else who might be interest in talking to me?

The dialog could be potentially informal depending on the report I have with the potential subject. An oral invitation will follow this dialog, but may also have a more informal approach.

### **Script for Interview Introduction**

Greetings... this is Ben Andres. We scheduled this time to talk about disc jockeys and their identity... is this still a good time?

Splendid... do you have any questions about the consent form you sent to me?

Great.

I have a series of questions that I'd like to ask you. I'll be recording this conversation as it will make it easier for me to focus on what you're saying. If there is anything that you don't want to talk about... just let me know and we can move forward.

### **Demographics**

Participants from this study will have come from different socio economic, ethnic, educational, and sex and gender backgrounds. The age range of this study will be from 18-45 years of age.

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

### **Consent Form**

#### **Cue Point Aesthetics: The Performing Disc Jockey in Postmodern DJ Culture**

You are asked to participate in a phone, Skype or face to face interview about your experiences as a disc jockey. This research is part of my master's thesis work at Humboldt State University. I anticipate that our interview will take about 30 minutes to an hour.

In the interview, I will ask you questions about your involvement and experiences with being a performing disc jockey.

Your participation is voluntary and without risk. You may discontinue participation at any time. However, you may find benefits in talking and reflecting on your experiences.

Although there will not be any compensation. You may find benefits from the opportunity to talk about and reflect on your own experiences. Your answers to all questions are completely confidential. I will transcribe our interviews and destroy the original digital audio recording within 30 days. In all transcriptions I will remove any identifying information: any real names mentioned will be changed. My records linking your transcription with your contact information will be kept in a secure location separate from the transcripts. By May 30, 2016, I will transfer electronic transcript files and this consent form to the Department of Sociology for secure 3-year storage and destroy all paper and electronic files in my possession related to this project. In the analysis and reporting of any information linked to this research, all identifying information will be removed. If I use any quotations from your interview, I may change some information so

that your identity will not be revealed. If using a quotation could compromise your privacy, I will not use that quotation.

However, if you wish to be identified in this study and would not like to have identifying information removed please initial below.

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me: Ben Andres, at (916) 215-7433 or [bda124@humboldt.edu](mailto:bda124@humboldt.edu) or my instructor, Jennifer Eichstedt, Professor of Sociology, at (707) 826-3139 or [Jennifer.Eichstedt@humboldt.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Eichstedt@humboldt.edu).

You may also share any concerns about this evaluation with the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Dr. Ethan Gahtan, at [eg51@humboldt.edu](mailto:eg51@humboldt.edu) or (707) 826-4545.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, report them to the Humboldt State University Dean of Research, Dr. Rhea Williamson, at [Rhea.Williamson@humboldt.edu](mailto:Rhea.Williamson@humboldt.edu) or (707) 826-5169.

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your experiences.

I am at least 18 years old. I understand the above and consent to participate in this research.

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX C: DISC JOCKEY INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Disc Jockey Interview Guide****1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.**

Probe: upbringing, neighborhood environment, education

**2. How long have you been DJing?****3. What were the steps you took to learn performance DJing?****4. Why did you become a DJ? What motivated or attracted you?****5. Describe your first DJ set up. How did you get it?****6. What is your current set up? What is your favorite set up?****7. How would you define performance DJing, and what skills are involved? How is performance DJing different than someone who is up there using a midi controller with sync buttons or an iPod?****9. What skills must a DJ have to get and maintain their credibility with their audience and with other performing DJs?****8. Have you integrated new DJ software into your performances? Why or why not?****10. What are your attitudes toward DJ programs and the DJs using them?**

Probe: Serato, Traktor, Ableton

**11. Do you feel these DJ programs affected the respect, legitimacy and style of performing DJs and DJ culture? Why or Why not? Is grief given to those who use computer DJ programs?****12. What makes a respected DJ?****13. What was one of the memorable or worst moments you had while performing?**

- 14. What is the future going to look like for performance DJs?**
- 15. Do you have any thoughts you would like to add before we conclude this interview?**
- 16. Do you know other DJs you think would be suitable for me to speak to about these questions?**