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Title

Student Dancers: An Inside Look at Southern California's Collegiate Hip Hop Dance Scene

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4ps334qs>

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Publication Date

2017-12-08

Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are within the manuscript.

STUDENT DANCERS: AN INSIDE LOOK AT SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S
COLLEGIATE HIP HOP DANCE SCENE

By

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A capstone project submitted for
Graduation with University Honors

May 22, 2017

University Honors
University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT

For my University of California Riverside Honors capstone project, I wanted to do something more directly related to my passion instead of my major. I am absolutely, positively, 100% in love with hip hop dance so I brought Professor Imani Johnson, the only professor on campus with an extensive focus on hip hop dance, on as my mentor. The goal of this project was to investigate how hip hop has been appropriated and capitalized on, and the role of Southern California's collegiate scene in this process. My project includes both a short video and an analysis covering what I have found. Upon completion of this project, I have developed a much greater appreciation for hip hop as a written text with its own history. I posit that hip hop dance has much to be theorized on, because it is relatively new and few scholars have investigated it, and I believe it is incredibly important to preserve hip hop's rich, nuanced history for future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Prof. Johnson, for your insight, Mario and Ejay for dancing with me, Andrew for shooting and editing, and to the choreographers that I interviewed for sharing your experiences of this fascinating community of people.

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INTRODUCTION

A concept video is a 21st century innovation entering the mainstream (via YouTube) showcasing original dance choreography and videography tied together by an aesthetic theme and/or storyline. Through this medium, I will introduce viewers to the community of competitive, collegiate hip hop dancers in Southern California to address how commodification and appropriation has impacted the dance community and propose ways in which we can effectively connect with our roots so that hip hop's history and significance to humanity is not forgotten. My mentor, Dr. Imani Johnson, an interdisciplinary scholar specializing in global popular culture and hip hop, will be facilitating my vision. This paper will elaborate on concepts introduced in Carla Stalling Huntington's *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages*, Kimerer LaMothe's *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming*, and materials provided by my mentor. I interviewed ten well-known choreographers about the dance community and their answers can be heard in the video. I also drew from my own experiences from the past three years to better illustrate how this looks at the college level. This video is significant to the fields of both dance and anthropology because it will provide insight about a modern group of dancers, each with their own personal experiences and reasons to dance.

Carla Stalling Huntington's *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages*

Reading Carla Stalling Huntington's *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages* provides a foundational understanding of hip hop dance as a written text and also shines some light on the packaging and commodification of hip hop dance to audiences that are at least partly unable to read and decode these meanings and messages. Huntington explains that "the language of hip hop dance...comments, teaches, warns, and transforms messages and meanings into readable commentaries. Such commentaries can be social ruptures, but they can also be historical, theoretical, strategic, and tactical texts" (29). This text, Huntington adds, is one written in Ebonics, as it was used to signify the social histories of the Middle Passage and African Diaspora. When taken out of context through capitalism, the emic messages written on African American bodies are lost, and only the etic remains. In this chapter, I will focus on how hip hop dancers in the collegiate setting have appropriated the dance form but are also signifying new messages and pushing hip hop's competitive boundaries. I will also address why capitalism has introduced hip hop dance to a new audience and assess the positives and negatives that this implies.

Huntington opens her book with an obvious reminder: hip hop dance is intangible. It can be seen and learned and experienced but not touched. What Huntington focuses on throughout her work though, is that hip hop dance, although intangible, can be used and sold as a product for profit. What was once a written text on black bodies to signify struggle, overcome obstacles, and communicate with each other is now being packaged on the internet, on television, in movies, at music festivals, and in private dance studios. Hip hop dance was not invented by the people of the African Diaspora for capital gain but that is

what it has become today. Hip hop is no longer only learned on inner city streets but now in Euro-American-owned dance studios and online from YouTube and STEEZY Studio. What is it that draws Americans to be so deeply fascinated with this African cultural phenomenon? Perhaps it is hip hop's cool, sexy nature, or maybe it is because hip hop holds so much meaning. Although much of hip hop's meaning goes overlooked by the masses, anyone can see that it has a significant relationship with social history and globalization. Hip hop dance holds value at the complex, nuanced junction where market and culture intersect. Part one of *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages* provides a theoretical background and abbreviated history of hip hop as a bodily text while part two illustrates how the dance has been appropriated and commodified. Huntington uses her writing to examine the bodies and texts to further theorize, postulate, and interpret hip hop's meanings and messages.

Hip hop is a glue that keeps identity, language, politics, and practices of a social group together. In the first chapter, Huntington discusses dance theory and hip hop as a social identity and African American language. Supported by theorist Susan Foster, Huntington explains that it is important not to essentialize black people by assuming that they dance simply because of their skin color or because they particularly enjoy it or are good at it (23). My team, 909 Hip Hop Dance Troupe, only has one person of African American descent on our roster. The majority of the dance community in Southern California is dominated by Asian/Pacific Islanders, with a great percentage of those being Filipino Americans. How Filipinos and other Asian groups were introduced to hip hop dance is due to commoditization, among other factors, and is complicated enough to require its own body of research. Dance is a reflection of socioeconomics, politics, and lived

histories. Like linguistics, hip hop dance is written in an *emic* framework, specifically written in Ebonics and it wasn't until later on when dance was being capitalized on that an *etic*, copied version emerged for entertainment value only (25). Hip hop's *etic* has become further and further removed from its original context by multinational corporations that sell a thrill of multiculturalism to oppressed ethnic groups (37). Hip hop dance requires an analysis as a text that has migrated from black to white, from African Diaspora and Middle Passage all the way through freedom from slavery, Jim Crow segregation, affirmative action, to global phenomenon.

Many dancers today are unaware of hip hop's origins so it is important that this history is shared or it may easily be forgotten. Following her discussion of multiculturalism, Huntington breaks hip hop dance down through the lenses of Ebonics. According to Huntington, the language of hip hop dance is not written in English but in Ebonics. As my friend, Eileen Kim, explains in my video, when a person dances, he or she is actually "speaking". This speech communicates a story to those who have the experience of decoding such messages. Hip hop teaches the history of black lives that are left out of English American history textbooks. This is a key reason why it is so important to keep educating the masses about hip hop's history. Many beginners who just start taking studio classes do not realize that hip hop even has a history, and it is the responsibility of those who possess this knowledge to share it with the world. I personally cannot understand Ebonics because I grew up around the commercialized form of hip hop but I believe it is important for dancers like myself to study the roots of hip hop so we can give it the appreciation it deserves. Hip hop dance was used to communicate a kind of struggle unique to those who could understand Ebonics. A major downfall that commoditization has

created is a massive amount of “hip hop” dancers that neither understand hip hop’s coded language, nor have the ability to signify anything of meaning because they do not have a command over the language of Ebonics.

For the rest of part one, Huntington explores feminist theory and its relationship with hip hop dance. Hip hop dance as a written text has been utilized by women for decades to catalogue experiences of oppression and to plot resistance. Hip hop offers a platform for one’s voice to be heard and helps build self-confidence that is too often torn down by society. Huntington reminds her readers that not only should we account for the conflicts between black and white Americans but for conflicts that arise between African American men and women (106). The African American male’s income is higher at every age group, education level, and occupation, than that of the African American female. However, both men and women write hip hop with their bodies. The tradition of categorizing one or the other comes only from the Western patriarchy that is sold to black people for money and security (107). This ties in nicely with a video Professor Johnson recommended I watch by In Living Color's Fly Girls (1990-94). The original lineup was Cari French, Carrie Ann Inaba, Deidre Lang, Lisa Marie Todd, and Michelle Whitney-Morrison. This video is so uplifting because the women are smiling, appropriately clothed, and not performing anything that resembles a sexual act for a man. The movements are full out with extended arms, big jumping motions, and empowered femininity. I especially enjoyed watching Carrie Ann Inaba because I recognized her as one of the judges on Dancing with the Stars.

There are certainly gendered expectations in the dance community today and this can be largely attributed to commoditization. Women are expected to dance with femininity and men are expected to dance with masculinity, however, these roles are often challenged.

Two examples that come to mind from my own experience are Sorah Yang, a female dancer on a team called GRV who choreographs very hard-hitting pieces and David Slaney, a homosexual African American dancer who choreographs pieces for ladies to dance in heels. Both of these people challenge the way the community views gender normativity and especially in recent years, the community has embraced individual styles and preferences among dancers regardless of perceived gender or ethnicity. Nonetheless, the industry still sexualizes female dancers (i.e. twerking, lap dances, etc.). Huntington summarizes this nicely when she writes, “Sexual exploitation reinforces patriarchal notions embedded in capitalism” (91). This type of capitalist society reinforcing patriarchy thus “constructs sexism as a constraint of access to certain choices, economic gains and personal development that define selfhood and chosen sexuality” (p 95).

In part two of Huntington’s work, the appropriation of hip hop is theorized at great length. Chapter four discusses the idea of a new transracial American dream for sale. This is a dream in which white folks can “try on black for a day” and embrace whatever commodified style or culture they want without any regard for race politics. Huntington reminds her readers here that this is a fake sense of unity created by advertisers who capitalize on African American culture (121). The advertisements produced for the white majority use minority hip hop dancers to foster consumption because it is seen as exotic and cool (124). By tying hip hop to products, consumers can resist that they are even caught up in a paternal corporate machine in the first place. I will be the first to admit that this is a big reason I fell in love with hip hop dance. Ever since I saw the film “You Got Served” starring R&B icon, Omarion, I was enticed by the ghetto-fabulous lifestyle the movie portrayed. If you could go back to 2004, you would find me, an eight-year-old white boy,

fascinated by African American culture, especially hip hop dance. It is quite interesting to note though, that today's hip hop dancers are not stereotyped as trying to "act black" and there is no pressure within the community to be someone you are not. Hip hop dance brings out an individual's true, intrinsic self.

The next chapter dives deeper into globalization and capitalism as it explores how commodities are fetishized and a multicultural agenda pushes global labor to further produce and consume. Commodities are fetishized when one cultural group can choose to buy certain cultural pieces for their glamour and disregard any unfavorable social or historical events that have come along with it. These people are, essentially, given the opportunity to purchase aspects of blackness for a temporary period of time (134). Comprehending the centuries of mental and physical racial challenges that these styles have come from, due to capitalism, is no longer required. Today's dancers, whatever ethnicity they may associate with, are not concerned with hip hop's appropriation from black culture. Although what's done is done and it is not worth dwelling on, I believe it is important to at least acknowledge where this passion of ours came from. As many of the choreographers I interviewed mentioned, this acknowledgement is the responsibility of those of us who are more familiar with hip hop's roots. The brand-new generations don't know a lot and we cannot blame them for their ignorance because it is essentially our responsibility to educate our youth on this very important history.

In the final chapter, Huntington concludes with an investigation of how hip hop dance is codified and commoditized. Huntington describes to her audience how hip hop as a written, codified text, loses its value and interpretability in exchange for profit from a wider audience in studios and online. Codification is defined here as "the systematic

arrangement of rules of teaching, dancing, and displaying it, and the making of it into an article of commerce” (158). Supported with writings by dance theorist, Sally Banes, Huntington explains the difference between “prefame” and “postfame” hip hop dancing. “Prefame” is the interpreted text that writes political and social history, whereas “postfame” is what gets packaged and sold for mainstream television, movies, instructional videos, concerts, recitals, etc. (158). A video assigned by my mentor, Lalah Hathaway's "Baby Don't Cry" (1990) featuring the Mop Top Crew, is an example of codification in a music video. The video focuses primarily on The Mop Top Crew, who have since danced behind big names like Michael Jackson and Mariah Carey. This set a precedent for more music videos to feature dancers at the forefront rather than overshadowed by a pop singer.

In the dance community, competitions like Maxt Out, Bridge, Vibe, Fusion, and Ultimate Brawl have focused attention directly on dancers and have provided a way for dancers to get recognized by the media, especially on YouTube. These competitions are events in which people pay around twenty dollars to see collegiate dance “sets”, without a pop artist or rapper ever setting foot on stage. A set is a composition of choreography to usually five or six songs mixed together by a music technician. Teams do not battle at the same time on stage but perform separately and are scored by a judges panel. Each routine is glued together by transitions and the choreography is different for each dancer on stage depending on where they are blocked in the formations. This results in a highly entertaining spectacle once teams have put weeks of effort into putting it all together. Dance teams require a board of directors to pull this off. This board typically includes an artistic director, an executive director, a couple dance captains, public/internal relations, a music technician, and a manager. These competitions are recorded by media crews and each team’s

performance is uploaded to YouTube individually, usually on the media crew's channel all together on one playlist. Big events like these are slowly getting recognized in the mainstream. Although the mainstream rarely does justice to hip hop as a written text, it is truly amazing how fast dancers are getting recognized today and getting respect as dancers in our own environment, not simply as a back-up dancer or a contestant on SYTYCD or America's Got Talent. One of STEEZY's co-founders, Clay Doh Boonthanakit told me in his interview that he believes the explosion of hip hop dance on mainstream social media in past years is actually a good thing. Clay suggests in the video that we "do our best to not be bad teachers" and then mentions the importance of teaching "the right things". With future generations being exposed to new forms of mass media, good teachers are more necessary than ever.

The codification of hip hop dance has changed due to commoditization and greater public attention, taking on new meanings over time. Huntington uses her own ethnographies from suburban dance studios and an elementary school, as well as a comparison with ballet, to discuss codification and commodification at greater detail. In the process of codification, instructors construct a costume signifying youthful, black bodies on their students. To be more specific, students are told to wear clothes reflecting impromptu dance sessions on city streets and strong, lean bodies are favored (160). Codification in clothing may be witnessed in my community as well. You can spot a dancer from a distance if they are wearing a shirt from a competition or a choreographer's merchandise, most often paired with some Adidas soccer pants. Hip hop fashion changes dramatically over time. Baggy clothing was once considered "hip hop" but now layering is more in style, with a loose-fitting shirt and skinny pants.

Codification is also focused on how students learn. Teaching style is, of course, dependent on the instructor, and varies by modes of call and response, observation, and vocabulary. Something particularly interesting that Huntington notes is that Euro-American studios are heavily focused on rigid routines with counts and reminders to show “attitude” whereas African American owned studios like *Bre Dance Studio* focuses on observation and interpretation of dance texts without the use of counts (162-163). Huntington also compares Euro-American studios with instructional videos because they are both appropriations of hip hop that are so watered down that they really have no value as a written text, only as a product for sale. The choreographers at Snowglobe Perspective, the studio where I train, use a combination of counts, rhythms, and dancer lingo, such as “ball change”, “milking”, “pocket”, and “texture”, to explain their piece to the class. This is because the choreography is usually quite advanced so instructors use every method available at their disposal because they only have an hour and a half to teach their material for the day. One thing I can say from experience is that learning hip hop at Snowglobe doesn’t feel corny like it did at the European-owned studios I used to go to and this is all due to a major difference in codification. The ways in which hip hop dance is codified constantly changes over time and may often be a determinant that attracts new audiences to try out the art form as a medium of expression for themselves.

In an excerpt from *House of Tre*, the young Marjory Smarth says "I don't know exactly what this is called but I used to call it the California because people in California did it a lot". This is an example of how dance is carried by social movement. She didn't have to be taught step by step. She saw others doing it so she observed, interpreted, and joined the movement. Today choreographers are greatly influenced by who they grew up

around and trained under. In the collegiate dance community, teams have distinct styles, for example 909 uses a lot of older/underground music, ACA uses very modern isolation/popping styles, and Common Ground takes inspiration from interpretive/contemporary dance. Each team is different because each choreographer is different and has learned what they know from different people with varying backgrounds.

In her work, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance* (also assigned by Prof. Johnson), Brenda Dixon Gottschild asserts that the structuralist-poststructuralist principle of intertextuality is reductionist and that separate strands between black and white culture in America can indeed be identified (2-3). Everything is re-assimilated and reconfigured for the present. Attempts to eradicate the memory of suffering "act as a roadblock to empowerment, perpetuate a language of silence, enforce a politic of denial, and reinforce past suffering into the present" (6). Culture can be teased apart into component strands because they represent opposing perspectives. Africanist aesthetics value repetition and flexibility in movement while Europeanist aesthetics are often more interested in rigidity and nuance. Styles change over time because people change over time. To be more specific, people are always growing and evolving.

In the case of dance teams, the team outlasts the dancers because new, hungry dancers join each year and fill the places of those who leave the team to pursue other career goals. 909 Hip Hop Dance Troupe just celebrated our 20th anniversary last Saturday with an elegant formal banquet and we invited all past alumni going back to 1996 to attend. The founders Christopher Ayson and Jennifer Fontinilla were even there! They told us that back then it was difficult to put together a hip hop crew because it wasn't such a mainstream hobby so people were hesitant to make a commitment. At this time, the other SoCal teams

were KM, CADC, Pac Modern, and Samahang Modern. This banquet provided us with an opportunity to pay our proper respects to those that have paved the path before us and to connect with them in person. Many of them can still bust a move! There is so much inspiration and wisdom that newer dancers can take from founders. As I discussed with Professor Johnson, an integral part of keeping hip hop's history alive for future generations is connecting with the OG's who came before us and to make them feel admired and appreciated.

Hip Hop: Meanings and Messages by Carla Stalling Huntington is a masterpiece in its own right, for it paves the way for future analyses of hip hop dance and its role in the global economy. Huntington theorizes hip hop's role in slavery through globalization, in feminism, in capitalism, in cyphers on busy city streets to Euro-American studio dance recitals. In theorizing, she leaves open so much space for others to contribute and consider important questions surrounding this topic. For example: Why does the dominant culture exploit other subordinate cultures? How has hip hop been commodified, whitened, and codified? Hip hop is a language that can only be interpreted when the readers are familiar with what is being spoken. Of course, Huntington can only speak from her own personal experiences and I can only speak from mine so there is certainly space for more scholars to investigate, analyze, and theorize about hip hop dance's meanings and messages.

Kimerer LaMothe's *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming*

Although so much of the original text has been lost in translation, let us not condemn hip hop's forward movement as solely appropriation, but observe how hip hop dance has become the passion of so many college students today, using Kimerer LaMothe's *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming*, and explore ways in which hip hop's original texts may be preserved for future generations. In the introduction, LaMothe sets up a theory of dance as bodily fulfillment that is alluded to for the rest of her work. According to LaMothe, because we are a part of nature, we exhibit movement because nature is constantly in motion. Dancing cultivates sensory awareness of our participation in it and also helps construct our sense of self. To dance, LaMothe writes, is to create and become patterns of sensory response. Although it may be difficult to give ourselves permission to dance when society and our own drives for "success" drive us to search for something more worthwhile, dancing is actually very important. Practice is necessary in dancing in order to discover our true potential for movement. Dance is not just for fun or entertainment but, in fact, has the potential to create mutual relationships between man and earth, therefore prolonging our survival as a species.

To dance is to matter. The case for dance as a vital art stands in opposition to the materialist worldview of postmodern Western culture. According to this materialist perspective, matter is only tangible mass and constitutes everything that is real. However, LaMothe asserts that movement is the defining characteristic of matter across all disciplines. Matter is always in motion! Movement is why matter exists. Movement is what matter exists to do. Movement matters. Movement is the medium of life and in this way,

the phrase “dance is life” actually rings true. As choreographer Homero Flores-Wong says in the video, “That’s what I would like to see is for dance to become a lifestyle, not a hobby, in the community, because it is a lifestyle.” We are not inhabitants of material bodies but instead we can be recognized as patterns of movement. Our movement is supported and enabled by the movements of others moving around us, within us, passing through us, and pre-existing us. With every movement, at every level, in a constant unending rhythm, we create and become ourselves. Dance opens us up to recognize our real feelings and awakens our joy to be alive.

To dance is to evolve. The materialist view asserts that it is matter, not movement, that evolves. According to this view, matter evolves to reproduce itself. Genetic development may, in fact, be movement to a degree not yet fully explored or appreciated. LaMothe asserts here that there is no purpose outside of ongoing participation in the eternal rhythms of bodily becoming. All people, cross-culturally, even toddlers, exhibit some shape or form of dancing. In the video, Markus Pe Benito said in his interview that on a deeper level, our movement is “inherent to our beings”. The ability to perceive, practice, and remember movement patterns and recreate them spontaneously in novel but similar situations is instrumental for survival.

To dance is to know. Critics have been lifting up alternatives such as faith and intuition and emotional, social, embodied, practical aesthetic, and spiritual knowledges to insist upon their ability to represent dimensions of human experience that writing cannot. However, even this claim must be written to be recognized as serious scholarship. Everything we know through reading and writing is a result of movement; the eye that spies, the fingers that grasp the pen, and the body that remains calm. Reading brings ideas

into consciousness; writing and dancing takes ideas from consciousness and brings them into reality. Dancing is the means to a biologically, ethically, spiritually, and ecologically necessary knowledge; the knowledge of the conscious participation of rhythms of bodily becoming. Personally, I think I have learned just as much if not more being on a collegiate dance team than sitting in a college classroom.

To dance is to be born. Dance is the activity by which humans emerge capable of being born and giving birth (82). It is a biological fact of life. The development of upright walking, early births, and big brains have together created the possibilities necessary to separate us as dancers (85). The movements we have made and will make in the future create our sense of “self” (92). Personally, I believe that the “self” is really an illusion so in this case, the movements I make are inspired by motion around me and help me connect to the totality of motion in the universe. We need to cultivate our sensory and self-conscious awareness in order to be fit for whatever we face in life (93).

To dance is to connect. Humans cannot exist as the individuals they are without other humans (99). Dance connects individuals by teaching how to cooperate and learn from each other (103). Dance also provides an effective forum for finding a mate (103). Dances are culturally specific and unite people who belong to a closely linked heritage (105). This is especially the case for KASA’s, VSA’s, and CSA’s modern dance teams on university campuses. Each of these teams are branches of a larger cultural organization. As part of our neurological network, mirror neurons support that movement is a biological necessity for us as humans (114). Dancing is an ethical necessity for humans because it balances us from becoming too self-absorbed or too self-sacrificing (118). Dancing is how I met 90% of my friends. Dance is at the center of our social fibers.

To dance is to heal. Western ideology is quick to prescribe materialist solutions to “fix” pain. However, pain is not necessarily an issue because it helps us to grow and evolve. Pain is a fundamental part of life and it is meant to be experienced. By performing bodily movements, a transformation of insight, empowerment, and spiritual healing can take place. Dancing is my escape for when life gets tough or confusing. I can retreat to a private space and get whatever I am feeling out through moving to a song I connect with. For collegiate dancers in general, being on a dance team is a responsibility but it is also a stress reliever and it is something to look forward to when the days drag on. College is the biggest struggle I have ever contended with in my life. Ritual practices like dance have a unique ability to transform pain.

To dance is to love. Dancing aligns us with the power situated within ourselves (170). Dancing teaches us to love the nature that courses through our veins. When we dance, we are free. With this freedom, we recognize why we love ourselves and the movement that courses so freely through us. Dancing empowers us to love ourselves and to love each other. I love hip hop dance and so many of the things associated with it. I love the people I have met through dancing together, the places that I dance, and the unforgettable memories I have made because of dance. I don't love that hip hop has been appropriated in such a way that little credit is given to the originators or that people in the community sometimes lack respect for one another. However, I hope that as hip hop dance spreads, new bodies will realize the communicative power that dance has and write new, beautiful, awe-inspiring texts of love that will build a positive future for the community of dancers I know and love so much.

Brennen Brixey Choreography | "All I Need" Blunted RnB Instrumental

The main component of my research was the concept video that I directed and choreographed. My intentions for creating this video were to invite people to learn about Southern California's hip hop dance community and also to address the issues that currently surround the community as well as the community's future according to experienced choreographers.

I asked ten leading figures in the dance community to answer three questions any way they would like and then I trimmed down their answers to fit into a short video. The dancers I interviewed were Laura Mizuno, Amy Chang, Gina Hong, Clay Doh Boonthanakit, Jucel Andrin, Kevin Garcia, Gabriel Padilla, Eileen Kim, Markus Pe Benito, and Homero Flores. The questions I asked were: "How can the dance community most effectively connect with our roots so that hip hop's history is not forgotten?", "How has commodification and appropriation impacted the dance community?", and "What would you like to see for the future of the dance community?". These questions invoked a lot from each person, however there was also a lot of stuttering because the dynamics of our community can often be difficult to articulate and no one had rehearsed before giving their responses. In editing their answers, I chose the sound bite that I thought carried the most substance and had the least bit of stammering to dub over the instrumental track. There is no real significance behind the instrumental track. I just happened to choose this song because I thought it sounded nice and had a vibe that wouldn't distract too much from the voiceovers.

We shot the video at Rivera Library. I thought this would be a great location because I discuss hip hop at the collegiate level. Hence, the backpacks we are carrying. In

the opening scene, I greet Mario Rosales and Ejay Tumulak, my 909 teammates and supporting actors/dancers. Just to add some humor, we picked out enormous books to pretend like we were reading in the next scene. I decided to include a clip from 909's performance at Bridge after that as a place-holder because the choreography starts at a specific time in the music. In the next shot, we can be seen leaving the library and this flows into the start of the choreography.

I approached the choreography with the idea that I did not want to do anything too foundational or "old school" because I wanted to show how hip hop dance has been changing over the years and a lot of it is no longer even referred to as hip hop but as "urban dance". I also wanted to make a piece that was not too difficult, because it's a real challenge getting busy college students together to work on an extra project. However, I did not want to sacrifice the aesthetic value of this piece because, as my one and only Honors Capstone, this video matters a lot to me. I am happy with the final product, especially with the dynamics (mirrored imaging or other changes in original choreography for select dancers) that I added last-minute. Following the choreography, I followed the traditional method of a credit sequence with freestyles from each dancer.

All in all, I want my video to take the audience right to Southern California's collegiate dance scene. This concept video should serve as an illustration to the research that I've done with Huntington and LaMothe's works, and my choreography is meant only to complement, not overshadow, the wisdom that the choreographers offer through their words. For the future of the dance community, I would like to see more people working on projects like this one and lifting their voices so that we can come closer together as a dance community and as a family that shares the same passion.

CONCLUSION

It is my sincerest hope that through this project, dancers would deepen their knowledge of our community's roots, scholars would gain insight about a group of people they were previously unfamiliar with, and that creatives would be inspired to continue pushing the envelope. Using Carla Stalling Huntington's *Hip Hop Dance: Meanings and Messages*, I set out to illustrate how the commodification of hip hop dance has affected the community both negatively and positively and to remind dancers of the importance of keeping our history alive. Never before have I actually read anything about dance so it was interesting to learn about my favorite activity in a different light. My reading expanded my understanding of hip hop dance as a written text with its own history. With the help of Kimerer LaMothe's *Why We Dance: A Philosophy of Bodily Becoming*, I illustrated how dance matters against a materialist worldview and why movement has become the passion and livelihood of dancers everywhere. Something that dancers have always done is push the envelope to move the culture forward. Movement has become more often intricate and music is always changing so dancers look for new ways to illustrate the sounds they are hearing with their bodies.

Hip hop culture is also progressed by sharing with others via workshops, competitions, videos, and special outreach events such as Culture Shock's Hip Hop Has History. I was also able to make some additional points using Prof. Johnson's supplementary materials. However, it was really the interviews that I conducted of well-known choreographers that opened my eyes the most to how we can preserve hip hop's rich history for future generations. By reading my essay and watching my concept video,

it is clear to see how hip hop dance has changed over time and its potential for impacting people all over the world.

I'd like to close this all up with a quote from STEEZY, a blog written specifically about the hip hop dance community I know and love: "The best way that we can pay tribute to Hip Hop's rich cultural heritage is by educating ourselves, as dancers, on the real 'why's and 'how's behind our movement. When we learn, it's important to keep in mind that it's not just steps and counts. Moves were born from struggle, with a purpose, as an extension of the mover's identity. Hip hop and social dance are not moves to be mimicked; they are stories to be echoed" (Jessie Ma, 2017).

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