Theatre as Method in Surveillance Research

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Abstract

The goal of method design is a process where people are persuaded by surprising results. Theatrical events can be contrived to meet these criteria in seemimgly exhausted fields and in cultures other than the academy. The field of surveillance is in the midst of a crisis of theory at the same time that it is of compelling importance across society. We report on the design and performance of a theatrical event addressing the broad question "What are the traps, contradictions, conflicts, inevitabilities, and possibilities when life is organized around surveillance?" A team of collaborators has been assembled, including a surveillance scholar, a dramaturg, two actors, a dancer, a visual/projection artist, a data wrangler, a statistician, and an audience. We will isolate and articulate interesting moments in surveillance infrastructure, then design a set of theatrical constraints, imperatives, and desires that will facilitate an embodied articulation and exploration of the moment.

Keywords

theatre as research, surveillance, practice as research

What is research? What is method?

Luker says that "the twin goals of 'method' are to create a research design where (1) you can be surprised by your findings and (2) others can be persuaded by them." (Luker 2010, p 6)   This persuasion, this justification of the research process, always occurs within a certain ideologies, ontologies, epistemologies. Effective persuasion depends on our understanding, implicit or explicit, of what matters, what exists, and the relation of our consciousness to those things. Research questions, politics, theory, and method are always entwined.

The political economy of academic research constrains research in particular ways. It makes certain questions difficult to ask, certain phenomena difficult to notice, for three reasons. First, they may be unsayable within a politically structured discourse. As Hunter puts it, "powerful political structures train us to listen, speak, see, and feel in specific ways, ways that often exclude the possibility of recognizing people and actions, animals and environments, that do not fit the parameters of those structures." Second, relations, entities, and perceptions may be emergent and slippery, not yet fixed or fixable or namable. Thirdly, understandings may be tacit, embodied, understood in a way beneath or beyond language (Hunter 2009, p 231).

Performance offers a way of "foregrounding difficult-to-articulate theoretical engagements and materializing them in an embodied way" – a way of engaging the unsayable while maintaining credibility (Hunter 2009, p 231).

Theatre as method

Theatre can be devised in ways that engage randomness, embodiment, and theory to produce, extend, and critique theory. It can activate an alternative discursive structure, freeing the researchers to name, gesture toward, and create entities and relations outside of expert frameworks. It provides a release from rational argument and instead calls on the different disciplines of honesty and truth. The discipline of the actor, performance artist, or improvisor includes the embrace of and skill in:

- collaboration, communication, and collective modes of knowing; a focus on ever shifting relationships rather than static entities

- finding and elaborating conflict and tension

- embodiment and the embrace of the tacit

- the holding in abeyance of logic and abstraction

- reevaluating assumptions and reframing worlds to encompass phenomenon – playing it as it lays.

By engaging the practical consciousness and critical reflection of the performers (including the audience), by articulating through engagement rather than abstraction, focused, devised theatre can generate unpredicted insight. In this sense it is like a survey, like an experiment – explicitly contrived with a focus and purpose, a theoretical framework, and a set of mechanisms for creation of the as-yet-unknown.

The credibility of theatrical method is often dismissed or treated with suspicion within academic discourse. To the extent that it is dismissed, academic discourse is the poorer. Performance is a form of formal experimentation, resulting not in factual certainty, but in useful fiction, in workable paradigms of engagement. It is part of a systematic, iterative process of observation, analysis, embodiment, and intervention. Performance is simultaneously an act of imagination, a pragmatics of inquiry, and a tactic of intervention (Conquergood 2002, p 152).

Intractable problems in Surveillance Studies

Certain recurrent problems, contradictions, and lacunae have long been evident in theoretical frameworks scholars have used to understand surveillance. Among these are

- the different experiences of the possibilities and constraints of surveillance practice by those in different gendered, raced, and classed social positions
- the possibilities of surveillance practice, not as a mechanism of care or control, but as a pervasive mode of knowledge-making, sense-making, and world-making
- a theoretical conflation of many practices, from webcams to data-mining, under the single rubric of "surveillance"
- a reliance on privacy and data protection as the framework for policy responses to surveillance practice.

Surveillance research is at a state where relations, practices, and entities are emergent, impelled by tacit rather than explicit knowledge; a dominant discursive framework cannot articulate or make sense of apparently contradictory phenomena.

Hence, surveillance research is ripe for performance based research. Moreover, issues of performance, theatricality, dramaturgy, and spatiality are recurrent metaphors, organizing principles, and nagging problems in surveillance theory. The medium of theatre aligns and resonates with these questions.

Designing theatrical research method

"[T]o be defined as research, practice-based investigation [must] locate and address in advance a question … before identifying appropriate practice-based means of addressing them" (Freeman 2010, p 61). The author of this paper is currently engaged in performance based research investigating the infrastructure of surveillance as the medium and outcome of power. The project addresses the broad question "What are the traps, the contradictions, the conflicts, the inevitabilities, the possibilities when

life is organized around surveillance?" We are dealing with particular form of surveillance, often referred to as dataveillance – a process in which individuals are tracked and monitored, the data they produce is collated and analyzed to produce statistical knowledge about the population, and that knowledge is applied back to individuals, as they are put into certain categories.

A team of collaborators has been assembled, including a surveillance scholar (the present author), a dramaturg, two actors, a dancer, a visual/projection artist, a data wrangler, a statistician, and a small audience. Through April 2013 we will have four or six meetings for table work. During these meetings, we will, in collaboration but calling on the scholar's expertise, isolate and articulate interesting moments in surveillance infrastructure. That is, we will analytically break down the surveillance process into activitities of individuation, identification, monitoring, data collation, data analysis, and response. We will recognize the institutionalization of the practices, and explore those processes of institutionalization as moments of conflict and power.

As an example, we might decide to explore the ways that data is made to have meaning. Suppose we have a devise, a metal band, that acts as a flexometer. When it is straight, it emits a "0". When it's bent a little, it emits a "1". When it's bent a lot, it emits a "2". Suppose we embed these in a seat cushion. Suppose we embed them in every seat cushion in the theatre. What can we make of the data they produce? Maybe a steady stream of 0's means an empty seat. Or maybe somebody with a bad back removed the cushion and put it on the floor. Maybe a stream of alternating 1's and 2's means someone is in the seat jiggling their leg. Or jerking off. Does it matter which? Why? Even if we decide that it probably, in this context, means jiggling, what do we do with that? Does jiggling connote rapt attention or distraction? Are there ways we can insist that it mean one thing and not another?

Similar moments of conflict and decision occur throughout the surveillance process.

Again in collaboration, and with attention to our skills, desires, and resources, we will design a set of theatrical constraints, imperatives, and desires that will facilitate an creative, imaginative, embodied articulation and exploration of the moment.

Having developed this design, we will have ten days of rehearsal in early May, rearticulating the conditions and implications of those moments of conflict. These will culminate in two workshop performances engaging the audience as collaborator.

This is a method of theory building. Through it, we hope to produce unexpected, credible insight. Ideas are thrown into conflict in unanticipated ways, and those conflicts are thought out, and played out, in a community of performers - researchers trained in a kind of authenticity, creativity, and truth foreign to much scholarship.

What will come?

This is a work in progress, but with a firm schedule of performance in May. I have no findings. I can promise no findings. I am certain, though, that at worst I will have an extremely interesting failure to report at IR14 in October.

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Disturbed Data: Hacking, Encrypting, and Designing Methods that Agitate Proprietary Knowledge Production

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Abstract

Large data sets are increasingly processed into disembodied knowledges about communities and neighborhoods that often misrepresent the people and places from which this 'big data' is generated. Central to such misrepresentation is the exclusion of everyday people from the research process through modes of privatization. Counter to this large scale quantification of lived experience, communities are collaborating with media activists and social researchers to challenge such knowledge production by going straight to the source and engaging the public in acts of methodological resistance and appropriation. This paper considers a series of NYC-based hackathons and cryptoparties as participatory methods for agitating dominant forms of proprietary knowledge production. Such agitation provides openings for more creative and egalitarian knowledge production as well as fosters mutual subjectivities, challenges stereotypes, and affords more just outcomes.

Keywords

cryptoparty; data; hackathon; participation; privatization

The explosive growth of data generation, consumption, and circulation in advanced capitalist nations has given way to the popularization of a new term often cited in IT circles without the slightest connection to its 'big brother' and 'big government' surveillant connotations: 'big data.' This term evokes massive and complex data sets generated about seemingly everything and everyone at all times through the ubiquity of information communication technologies (ICTs) in daily environments. The aim of corporations and governments alike is to figure out how to meaningfully aggregate and mine this big data to produce actionable intelligence and thus socioeconomic value. This entails the development of new markets, presupposed by capitalist regimes of property ownership, that enclose data and monetize access to the information and knowledge produced from it. Further, the exclusionary method of production entailed in such knowledges frequently misrepresent the lived experiences that first generated such data.

As societies learn to txt, email, browse, and search, their mediated identity configurations link up with informational modes of capitalist production. The resulting privatization of personal data is presupposed by and intertwined with privatization happening elsewhere in cities, schools, and homes. Meanwhile, communities are collaborating with activists and scholars to challenge this phenomenon by going straight to the source of data and engaging everyday people in more equitable modes of knowledge production. In this paper I consider methodological approaches that agitate proprietary knowledge through open platforms and participatory practices. I specifically look at a series of NYC-based hackathons and cryptoparties to unpack the ways they foster mutual subjectivities, challenge stereotypes, and afford more just outcomes for certain communities.

Proprietary Ecologies of Production

McLuhan (1964) declares that "the medium is the message" (p. 9) to draw attention to the mutual shaping of media, defined as "any extension of ourselves" (p. 10) and messages, defined as "the change of scale or pace or pattern that [a medium] introduces into human affairs." In making the medium the message, McLuhan argues that human experience and media are locked in a state of reciprocity thus producing an environment of relationships where people and extensions of people shape each other. The medium remains the message under informational capitalism, but also emerges

as method. Regardless of whether research is for profit, governance, or social justice, the methods used to rationalize and mine human experience mediate the knowledge produced. Whether this mediation is privatized or participatory influences whether the research product is proprietary or public, thus shaping both the aims of the research and the ends to which it can be applied.

I theorize 'proprietary ecologies' to bring into focus the ecosystems of privatized data with/in which everyday life increasingly takes place. The "everyday" that Lefebvre (1987) describes as constituting "the platform upon which the bureaucratic society of controlled consumerism is erected" (p. 9) is thus mediated by any number of proprietors. Through the material social constitution of proprietary ecologies, corporations such as Facebook and Google and governments such as China and the US develop platforms and practices that enclose and control access to phenomena such as personalities, reputations, communications, and social networks. I theorize 'ecology' because the concept bridges an IT discourse of information systems that interact at various scales (i.e., information ecology) with a spatial understanding of the relations of production and reproduction at various scales (i.e., political ecology). I thus consider privatization ecologically to explore the platforms and practices that produce and sustain digital enclosure (c.f. Boyle, 2008; Andrejevic, 2007), accumulation by dispossession (c.f. Harvey, 2010), policing, and socioeconomic inequality.

Participation as Agitation

Daily interactions are research relationships in proprietary ecologies. I thus analyze a series of hackathons and cryptoparties organized in NYC that drew from participatory action research (PAR), participatory design (PD), and participatory action design research (PADR) methodologies to raise public consciousness around common research relationships. These public events resisted and appropriated proprietary ecologies by engaging participants in reflexive analysis of their mediated relationships through collaborative data analysis and visualization as well as practical cryptography. PAR aims to simultaneously involve communities in the collective investigating and improving of problematic situations in their environment. PAR represents an epistemological stance within academic inquiry that "assumes knowledge is rooted in social relations and most powerful when produced collaboratively through action" (Fine et al., 2003, p. 173). In a digital context, PD "shares some theories and methods with user-centered design and interaction design, but the main thrust is on democratic and emancipatory practice" (Greenbaum & Loi, 2012, p. 81). With information systems now a critical component of post-industrial cities, PADR has also been drawn on increasingly in the field of urban informatics to understand and engage urban development according to situated interests and concerns (cf., Bilandzic and Venable, 2011; Foth and Adkins, 2006).

Instead of producing new knowledges through proprietary means that are mystified to all but their proprietors, these hackathons and cryptoparties combined aspects of PAR, PD, and PADR to open up dominant regimes of ownership and governance in research relationships. In establishing a time and space for people to come together for research and action, these events took seriously the knowledge gained from lived experiences while also developing media and methods through a collaborative process that addressed their situated interests and concerns. In the case of hackathons, this meant compiling, cleaning, visualizing, and analyzing data from a needs assessment conducted in NYC neighborhoods that were devastated by Hurricane Sandy. In the case of cryptoparties, this meant engaging journalists, researchers, and activists in visualizing routine dataveillance and then participating in skill-sharing activities to learn how to use open source encryption tools such as Tor and GPG Tools to renegotiate this dataveillance.

Conclusion

Proprietary ecologies do not imply infallible domination but they speak to the ways class power is consolidated by the structuring of data flows within a fragmented geography unevenly connected through ICTs. Such ecologies are thus the medium and the method of accumulation by dispossession in an age of big data. Although empowerment is possible, even within such proprietary ecologies, it

remains a material social process and thus calls for a dissolving of dualisms and a playful building of new understandings to realize its potential. This means considering how proprietary media such as Google or Facebook can afford empowerment, domination, or both and neither depending on the situated practices that create and make use of them.

As consciousness raising acts that agitate proprietary knowledge, the considered hackathons and cryptoparties present a methodological approach more interested in the production process than the production of products. That routine forms of personal and collective knowledge are increasingly privatized and oriented toward capital accumulation through the enclosure of information ecologies is problematic, and presented here as a form of dispossession. Yet, more critical participation in such production, not less, is necessary to reorient accumulation and resist such dispossession. If people only generate and process data in ways they are socially or academically expected to, then they will never imagine or realize alternative applications for such data nor will they come to see their own situated knowledges as something worth building upon rather than suppressing with/in everyday research relationships.

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Resisting Methods & Newness: Juxtaposition, Play, & Interactivity

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Abstract

This paper is a methodological reflection on a broad study of social media practices and historical precedents. First, I explore the key research insights from the project comparing Twitter to 18th century diaries and identify the discursive strengths and weaknesses of research talks. Next, I reflect on the preference of one particular style for the presentation of research in this vein due to its juxtaposition, playfullness, and interactivity. Finally, I argue that alternative, non-linear writing and presentation techniques, hold possbilities for engaging issues of authority, evidence, and play.

Keywords

Juxtaposition, methodological reflexivity, Twitter

Resisting New

Communication technologies and services are typically characterized by their "newness". "New" communication technologies such as microblogs are often compared with their immediate predecessors (e.g. blogs and social network sites). It can be revealing, however, to make comparisons with media practices from even earlier historical periods. Resisting the newness of new media and placing social media into a longer historical context helps to reveal broader insights into media, culture and the human condition.

This paper is part of a larger project that argue that many of the ways we use social media today have longstanding precedents in historical media like diaries, journals, and scrapbooks. What we think of as the 'social media revolution' is part of a much longer story about the use of media for connecting people through the documenting and sharing of the everyday. In particular, I draw on Couldry's (2012) concept of 'media practice' to explore the activities, uses, structures, and conceptualizations of and surrounding media.

The first part of this project sought to historicize Twitter within a longer historical framework of diaries to better understand Twitter and broader communication practices and patterns. Based on a review of historical literature regarding 18th and 19th century diaries, we created a content analysis coding scheme to analyze a random sample of publicly available Twitter messages according to themes in the diaries (Author et al, in press). Findings suggest commentary and accounting styles are the most popular narrative styles on Twitter. Despite important differences between the historical diaries and Twitter, this analysis reveals long-standing social needs to account, reflect, communicate, and share with others using media of the times.

The methods we employed to draw these comparison felt less effective than other forms of communication about the research. Indeed when I presented the content analysis at an academic conference, the presentation felt flat, devoid of voice or character, and overly scientific. By focusing on the standardization and systematicity necessary for a robust content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), I squished out all of the life of this story.

In contrast, my presentations on the research before we had finished the content analysis were much more lively and interesting. I think this is because I gave people a quiz. I provided four examples of short messages and asked the audience to raise their hands to vote for whether they believed it was a tweet or a diary entry:

1. I must say I find this weather to be very disagreeable.

2. Cold disagreeable day. Felt very badly all day long and lay on the sofa all day. Nothing took place worth noting.

3. Had an early morning today. Went for breakfast at Mr. Teh Tarik, passed invitation card to my youngest aunt and visited my grandma.

4. Fidelia Mirick here visiting to-day.[1]

Some people got one or two right, but most got one or two wrong. Most often people did get the last one correct because no one on Twitter would ever add a dash to the word "today". I then go on to show pictures of old diaries on the screen as I dispel common assumptions that diaries have always been a private place to bare our souls and reveal our inner most secrets. Rather, prior to the end of the 19th century most diaries and journals were considered public or semi-public documents to be shared with other family members and visitors.

Juxtaposition, Play, & Interactivity

Reflecting on what makes the quiz as a form of research presentation so much better than my presentation of the content analysis reveals three important insights. Methodologically speaking, this kind of discussion around old and new media practices is particularly illuminating because of the juxtaposition of old and new. Within qualitative and interpretive methods, juxtaposition can be a particularly evocative interpretive lens through which to highlight the differences or in this case the similarities between two disparate objects or texts (Becker, 1998).

The second methodological insight into this juxtapositional form of inquiry is its playful quality. Most people laugh when they get the quiz right and laugh when they are wrong. They also realize that they are supposed to get it wrong. That's the point. Methodologically speaking, the playfulness of the juxtaposition draws the audience into story I want to tell about the fetishization of newness, the importance of looking back to understand the contemporary human condition, and a celebratory focus on the mundaneness of everyday life. As scholars, it can be enjoyable to surprise people with our research and I enjoyed tricking people with my quiz. To some audiences the playfulness of the quiz diminished the seriousness of my analysis, but for others it seemed to act as both evidence and analysis of my research.

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[1] Answers reveals: Numbers one and three are tweets from 2010, while number two is a diary entry from 1892, and number four is a diary entry from 1796.

The third important insight into my "tweet or diary quiz" is its interactivity. As a scholar who often utilizes symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986) as a platform for much of my research, I embrace on the co-creation of knowledge between researcher and research participant. But I had never let myself move into an arena where my audience or reader could also be a co-creator of knowledge. The interactivity of the quiz, while somewhat superficial, has led me to reflect on the ways that we as scholars are engaging with multiple audiences for our work- our participants, our colleagues, our students, our neighbors. To think about co-creating knowledge with all of them encourages us to engage not just in peer review and member checks, but in meaningful interactions and feedback with those whom I had previously thought to be passive receivers of my work. What would it mean to co-create knowledge with those who may be assigned my work? What would that presume about scientific authority and expertness?

Most importantly, the quiz, the juxtaposition, the playfulness, and the interactivity are a methodological means of engaging in the same media practices that I seek to reveal in my analyses. That is, more than just showing that new isn't new, I want to reveal the ways that people use media, including monographs, journal articles, and Powerpoint presentations to apprehend, document, and reflect on the world we encounter, just like I argue that people do with Twitter or with diaries. Perhaps this suggests that rather then resisting methodological prescriptions, I am embodying them.

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Everything (Smart) I Know about Social Media Methods, I Learned from Hip Hop Culture

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Abstract

Many of the challenges facing today's social media researchers are ones that researchers of hip hop culture have been facing for decades. This paper begins by surveying a range of aesthetic, social and political issues hip-hop researchers have had to address as they work in their field, focusing especially on how they balance desires for specificity and clarity with increasing demands that they distill complex cultural practices into quick sound bytes that easily explain what hip hop "means" for culture at large. I then turn to the ways in which social media and hip hop culture are already culturally cross-pollinating in the form of memes, viral videos, and through social media projects like RapGenius.com. I end by articulating elements of what I term "hip hop methodology," discussing its value for social media researchers.

Keywords

Methodology; social media; race; hip hop; globalization

Studying Hip Hop, Studying Social Media: Common Research Challenges

Many of the challenges facing today's social media researchers are ones that researchers of hip hop culture have been facing for decades. This paper begins by surveying a range of aesthetic, social and political issues hip hop researchers have had to address as they work in their field. My interest is in demonstrating overlaps between the challenges faced by hip hop culture and those presented to social media researchers. These include, but are not limited to:

- Struggles over the ephemeral nature of musical, dance, and graffiti as performance, and the ossifying nature of all archiving practices, even ones that involve audio, images and video (Neal, 2004).

- A perception of conversational exchanges in hop as technologically inspired remixes of sorts—a perception that challenges existing notions of intellectual property and ownership (Schur, 2009).

    At the same time:

- A desire on the part of hip hop producers and consumers to be treated as authors of and authorities on their own speech acts (Harrison, 2009). This desire corresponds to a rise in hop communities of what Antonio Gramsci called "organic intellectualism."

- Battles over the significance of history: although most hip hop researchers are old enough to recall a time before hip hop (Rebakka, 2011) most consumers and producers increasingly see it as "the way things have always been" (Emory, 2011).

- The culture industries' propensity for absorbing hip hop's subcultural practices into mass culture (Spence, 2011). For example, currently, roughly 70-75% of hip hop consumers in America are white (Jeffries, 2012).

- The globalization of hip hop as a cultural form, and hip hop's "glocalization" into specific regional variants, requiring specific sorts of knowledge to completely understand (Terkourafi, 2010).

- Hip hop researchers' struggles with the racism, sexism and homophobia in the material they study (Rose, 2008); users' demands that hip hop researchers "check their privilege" before issuing judgments on the audiences they study (Harisson, 2009).

Hip Hop and/as Social Media: Thinking Through Case Studies

To help ground this discussion of what might social media researchers might learn from the experiences of hip hop researchers, I turn to a series of case studies where hip hop and social media culture can be seen to directly overlap one another.

The first case study concerns the creation and circulation of an older meme on the Internet called "Yo Dawg", featuring Xzibit, a Rap star and host of MTV show *Pimp My Ride*. [2] Against the near universal appeal of "Yo Dawg," I consider a recent meme-wannabe: an image passing through social media that featured the face of Jesus and the following tagline: "Pray the Gay Away? Bitch, my inbox is overflowing with starving babies and cancer. I aint be havin' time to fix your kid who isn't broken."[3]

Further investigation revealed that image was created by FCKH8.com, a private t-shirt company with a "directly charitable mission." Their web site argues "we believe the world would be a better place if good causes had the same savvy marketing as products like iPods, soft drinks and designer jeans, and we hope you agree."

FCKH8.com's mission statement begs the question: Does Black "street" vernacular now constitute social media marketing savvy? In the "Street Jesus" meme, who exactly is doing the speaking, here? Does the right to "technologically tinker" include cultural appropriation in this vein? Would this meme feel the same if conservatives used racially coded "street talk" to protest, say, government-issued food stamps?

My third case study concerns the rise of the social media start up RapGenius.com, an annotated rap lyrics site begun by three Iranian Americans. The site was recently awarded 15 million dollars in venture capital money, and the founders have plans to expand into poetry and law (they already have annotated the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.) Recently the press gossip site Gawker suggested that although the site has an enthusiastic user and contributor base, "Rap Genius nurtures a young, white-leaning user base that desperately wishes to do things like say the N-word." What happens when investors who claim to "own" hip hop sensibility and have social media savvy engage in projects like annotated Supreme Court decisions?

The fourth case is one that combines the topics of hip hop, globalization, and social media as constitutive of new public/subcultural/counter-cultural spheres. It involves conversations among YouTube users watching the video "Fatty Boom Boom," made by the South African hip hop group Die Antwoord.[4] Although the video would have gained circulation simply due to its high production values and the fact that it featured White South African performers rapping wearing blackface, it went viral once viewers realized it featured a cameo from Lady Gaga, who played a sheltered American tourist being subjected to a range of African stereotypes, such as men walking pet panthers on the street. In this project, I discuss viewers' responses to the video, particularly noting their original point of entry, as, for instance, a Lady Gaga fan who wandered in from another video; as a hip hop fan forwarded the link; as someone identifying as South African, etc.

Towards a Hip Hop Methodology

In both hip hop and social media, researchers must balance a desire for thick description and cultural sensitivity with the pressure to distill complex cultural practices into quick sound bytes that easily explain what hip-hop or social media "means" for culture at large. To help, I offer elements of what I see as an emergent "hip hop methodology." These include, but are not limited to, notions common in hip hop and African American studies today:

- **You feel me?** To better honor the ephemeral and body-centered nature of our research, social media researchers might consider turning away from ideas about distance and impartiality in their writing, and toward notions of affect, phenomenology and flow.

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[2] See: http://memegenerator.net/Yo-Dawg

[3] See: http://www.terrisenft.net/images/pray-gay-away.jpg

[4] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIXUgtNC4Kc

- **You better recognize.** Social media researchers—particularly those old enough to recall a time before social media—should strive to transmit the cultural history in a way that makes it clear to newer members what and who matters from the past, and why the past is worth knowing.

- **Nothing but a G thing.** If the industry success RapGenius.com shows anything, it is that internet speech works as labor that can be monetized in the form of advertising dollars, venture funding, IPO launches and so forth. Researchers need to keep these realities in mind, and resist characterizations of users as difficult, troubled, or narcissistic because they demand creative control over their words, images, and sounds released online.

- **It's a double consciousness thing**. Social media researchers have an obligation to subcultural and splinter groups to represent their experiences in social media spaces as both part of "everyone's experience" and as something unique and significant in its own right. The term "double consciousness" comes from the writer W.E.B. Du Bois, who argued that Black Americans have always been responsible for two modalities of consciousness: their own, and that of dominant (white) culture (Dickson, 1992.)

- **It's a signifyin' thing.** Increasingly, individuals in super-public realms such as Twitter and Facebook have turned to coded speech, inside jokes, and other tactics that allow groups to converse while "hiding in plain sight" from those who don't understand their particular social conventions. Henry Louis Gates calls this practice "signifyin', and recent scholars have applied Gates's work to theorize performances on "Black Twitter" (Florini, 2013; Brock, 2012.) I would like to extend their observations further.

- **Check yourself (before you wreck yourself.)** If necessary, this will be explained during the conference.

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