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# AUDIENCE RECEPTION AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF HYBRID AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC: A SCOPING REVIEW

**Chinenye Okoro Modesta[1], Esther Shardey[2]**
[1]*Washington University in St. Louis*
[2]*University of Education, Winneba*

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**ABSTRACT**

*Hybrid African American music holds significant cultural influence, yet the connections between its musical forms, audience reception, and social impact remain underexamined. This review examines how audiences engage with hybrid African American music and the social outcomes it produces. A systematic search across multiple interdisciplinary databases yielded 106 records, of which 35 met the inclusion criteria. Most studies were qualitative, focused on North America and Europe, and increasingly examined the role of digital platforms.*

*Thematic analysis identified five interconnected themes: hybridization and musical form, audience reception and meaning-making, identity and diaspora, social impact and community, and digital mediation. Findings suggest that audiences actively interact with hybrid music to shape identity, strengthen community ties, and navigate cultural expression. However, research is constrained by the lack of longitudinal, comparative, and cross-regional studies. Future research should incorporate mixed methods, longitudinal designs, and cross-regional analyses to better link musical structure, audience reception, and social outcomes, addressing these gaps.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Hybrid music, Audience reception, Social impact, African American music, Digital mediation*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 2021 global success of "Essence" by Wizkid featuring Tems exemplifies the transnational circulation of hybrid African diasporic popular music, a process shaped by mediated meaning-making and audience interpretation (Onwuegbuna, 2025). By blending Afrobeats with R&B and dancehall, the track achieved crossover success across African, European, and North American markets, amplified by streaming algorithms and participatory social media. Similar trajectories, such as Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road," illustrate that hybrid African American and Afro-diasporic music operates not merely as aesthetic production but also as a site of cultural negotiation, identity articulation, and digitally mediated social engagement (Maasø & Spilker, 2022; Muchitsch & Werner, 2024).

For this review, hybrid African American music refers to musical forms that merge African diasporic rhythmic, melodic, or performative elements with other stylistic, cultural, or technological practices, producing innovative, cross-genre expressions with transnational circulation. Hybridity is a dynamic, socially negotiated process, historically rooted in forms such as spirituals, blues, and jazz, which blended African diasporic musical logics, including complex rhythms, call-and-response, and improvisation, with European harmonic systems under conditions of displacement, racialization, and cultural adaptation (Evans, 2010; Nielsen, 2013). Contemporary genres, including hip-hop and Afrobeats, extend this legacy into transnational and platformized contexts, where remixing, circulation, and algorithmic curation shape access and interpretation (Appert, 2016; Putiatytska et al., 2024).

Audience reception mediates the social significance of hybrid music. For instance, listeners actively interpret and mobilize music for identity construction, emotional regulation, and social positioning (van Erp et al., 2024; Myrie et al., 2022; Kemp & White, 2013). Engagement with hybrid African American and Afro-diasporic music facilitates negotiation of racial and diasporic belonging, community identification, and critical reflection on social hierarchies (Myrie et al., 2022; van Erp et al., 2024). Through playlists, live events, and digital interactions, audiences transform musical texts into socially situated experiences.

These engagements carry multidimensional social implications. Hybrid music fosters community cohesion, collective memory, intercultural dialogue, and psychosocial well-being. Yet circulation through digital platforms

also introduces structural tensions, including algorithmic gatekeeping, commodification, and the re-articulation of racial and genre boundaries (Lidskog, 2017; Stratton, 2015; Maasø & Spilker, 2022). Music thus functions simultaneously as cultural heritage, identity resources, and market commodities.

Despite substantial scholarships, integrative mapping across musical form, audience practice, and social impact remains limited. Most studies examine these domains in isolation, rarely tracing pathways from musical structure to audience interpretation and observable social outcomes in digital contexts.

This scoping review addresses this gap by systematically mapping and synthesizing interdisciplinary literature on hybrid African American and Afro-diasporic music, audience reception, and social impact. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Identify dominant theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and key concepts.
2. Examine the extent to which studies connect musical hybridity, audience engagement, and social outcomes.
3. Clarify the nature, scope, and distribution of existing evidence.

## 2. REVIEW METHOD

This study used a scoping review design to map the existing literature on audience reception and the social impact of hybrid African American music. A scoping review was selected because the literature spans multiple disciplines, including musicology, cultural studies, media studies, and sociology, and encompasses a wide range of study designs, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches.

The review was guided by the central research question: how does existing literature conceptualize and examine audience reception and the social impact of hybrid African American music forms? To define the scope, the Population–Concept–Context (PCC) framework was applied. The population included audiences, listeners, fans, and communities engaging with hybrid African American music. The concept focused on audience reception and social impact, including identity formation, race and Blackness, social cohesion, mental health and well-being, economic influence, and digital mediation. The context encompassed cultural, social, and digital settings globally. The time frame was set between 2010 and 2025 to reflect contemporary discussions of hybridity and digital mediation in music.

Literature searches were conducted across JSTOR, Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Elsevier to capture interdisciplinary scholarships in music studies, social sciences, and media and cultural studies. Search strategies combined keywords related to hybrid music, audience reception, and social impact, using Boolean operators to link terms. These strategies were adapted to the requirements of each database to ensure comprehensive coverage. Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed journal articles or scholarly book chapters published between 2010 and 2025 and addressed hybrid African American music, audience reception, or social impact. Excluded sources included theses, dissertations, conference papers, blogs, non-peer-reviewed publications, duplicates, and studies published prior to 2010.

The search yielded many records, from which 106 articles were downloaded for detailed screening. Titles and abstracts were evaluated against the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and full texts of relevant articles were assessed for conceptual and thematic alignment with the review objectives. This process resulted in 35 studies being retained for inclusion in the final scoping review.

Data were extracted manually using a structured framework designed for this review. Extracted information included bibliographic details, study characteristics, music genres and forms of hybridity, audience types and reception focus, social impact dimensions, key findings, and relevance to the review objectives.

Synthesis and analysis of the data were conducted using thematic analysis at the study level. Extracted information was examined to identify recurring patterns and conceptual overlaps. Themes were developed inductively and refined through repeated comparison of studies, resulting in a set of dominant categories that capture how audience reception and social impact are addressed in the literature.

Following Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework for scoping reviews, this study prioritized breadth and mapping of the literature rather than formal quality appraisal. Screening and data extraction were conducted by a single reviewer using a structured protocol to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

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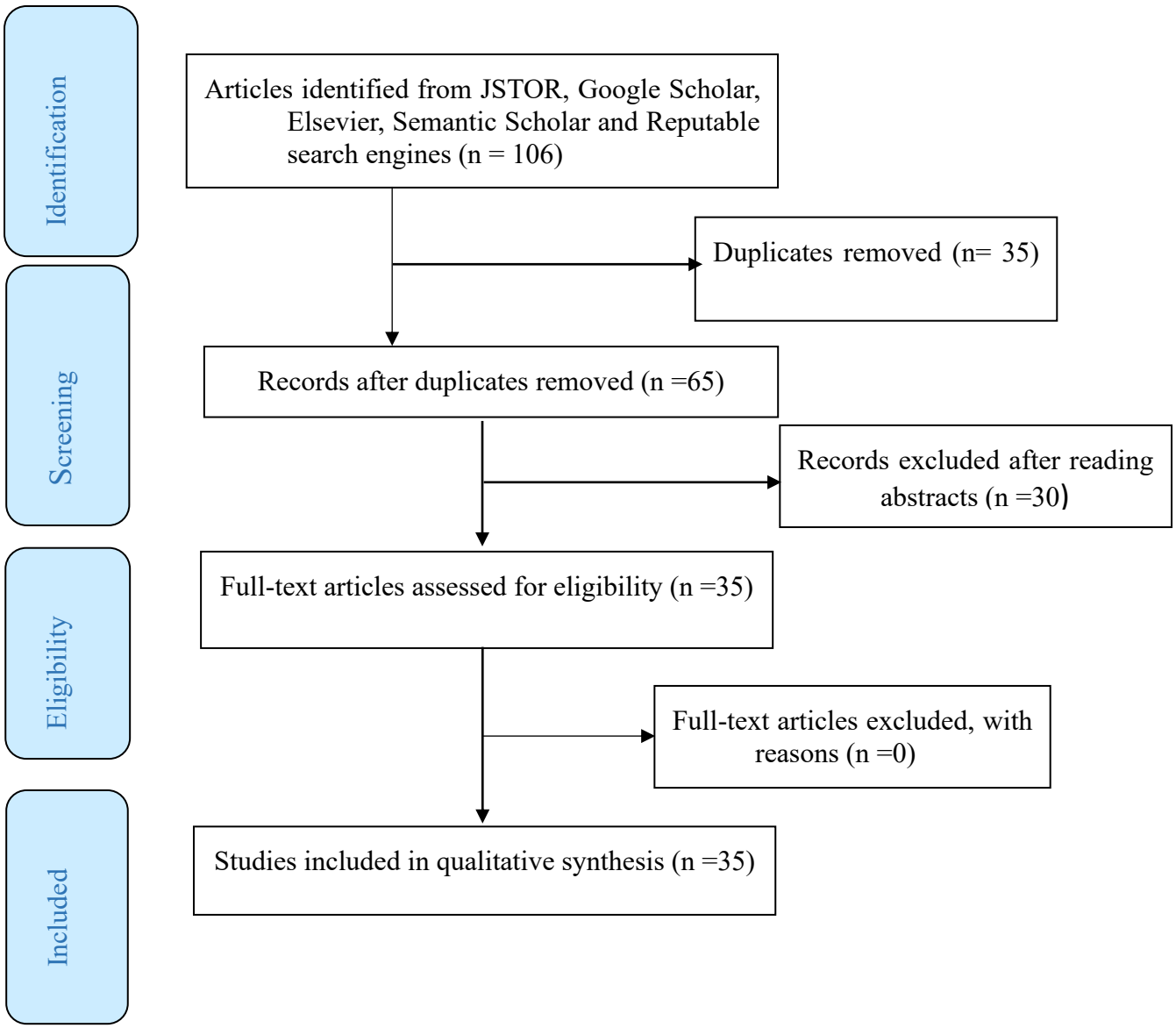
## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Screening Results

Following database searching, 106 records were retrieved for screening. After removing duplicates and non-scholarly sources such as blogs and non-peer-reviewed materials, 65 unique records remained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 30 records were excluded because they did not sufficiently address music, hybridity, audience reception, or social and identity-related outcomes.

The remaining 35 articles met all inclusion criteria following full-text review and were retained for synthesis. These studies constitute the evidence base for the thematic mapping presented in the following sections.

**Figure 1: PRISMA-ScR Flow diagram showing the article selection process in the study.**




Sources; Author's Construct 2026.

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## 3.2 Characteristics of Included Studies

**Table 1**

| Primary Theme | Author(s) & Year | Music Genre / Focus | Audience Type | Social Impact Dimension | Methodology |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | van Erp et al. (2024) | Hip-hop (Dutch context) | Hip-hop listeners (Netherlands, diverse) | Identity, Social Cohesion, Wellbeing, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (interviews, thematic analysis) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Decker & Kirkland-Ives (2022) | Early Modern music/arts | Pluriform audiences | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Conceptual/Theoretical (historical analysis) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Worsley (2010) | Hip-hop, Rap | Fans, museum viewers, readers, critics | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being, Economic | Qualitative (case studies, audience analysis) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Moody-Ramirez & Scott (2015) | Rap, Hip-hop | Millennial college students (US) | Identity, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (focus groups, textual analysis) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Kemp & White (2013) | Jazz (New Orleans) | Local residents, cultural tourists | Identity, Social Cohesion, Wellbeing, Economic | Qualitative (interviews, ZMET) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Ademolu (2023) | Pop/Rock (humanitarian singles) | UK public, African diaspora | Identity, Economic, Digital | Conceptual/Theoretical (critical review) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Reagin & Năstase (2024) | Hip-hop (Mongolian, transnational) | Transnational audiences, fans | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Conceptual/Theoretical (editorial, synthesis) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Banjo & Umunna (2022) | Afrobeats, American Pop/Hip-hop | Nigerian residents | Identity, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (focus groups) |
| Audience Reception & Meaning-Making | Warner (2010) | Jazz | Jazz attendees, broadcast listeners | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Review (literature synthesis, survey data) |
| Audience reception & meaning making | Onwuegbuna, (2025) | African Popular Music | Audiences, artists, producers, critics | Identity formation, industry impact | Mixed methods: content analysis & discourse analysis |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Golemo (2020) | Fado, Semba, Kizomba, Hip-hop | Migrant communities, diasporic listeners | Identity, Social Cohesion, Wellbeing, Economic, Digital | Conceptual/Theoretical (essay, literature synthesis) |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Myrie et al. (2022) | Hip-hop, Reggae, Afrobeat, Gospel, Soca | ACB emerging adult immigrants (Canada) | Identity, Social Cohesion, Wellbeing, Digital | Qualitative (interviews, thematic analysis) |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Ojuola (2024) | Spirituals, Jazz, Calypso, West African music | Readers/viewers of contemporary narratives | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (textual analysis) |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Lidskog (2017) | General music | Immigrants, ethnic minorities, diasporic communities | Identity, Social Cohesion | Review (research synthesis) |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Nielsen (2013) | Jazz (Bebop), Blues | Not specified | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic | Conceptual/Theoretical (interdisciplinary analysis) |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Stratton (2015) | “Black” vs. “White” music categories | National populations, ethnic groups | Identity, Social Cohesion | Conceptual/Theoretical (historical analysis) |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Abraham (2025) | Hybrid music (general) | Bicultural individuals | Identity, Well-being, Digital | Conceptual/Theoretical (literature synthesis) |
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Evans (2010) | Spirituals, Blues, Jazz, Hip-hop | Black youth, White critics, general public | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic | Conceptual/Theoretical (historical analysis) |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Identity, Race & Diaspora | Sa'adah (2024) | Rap/Hip-hop, Death Metal, Traditional music | Youth, students, marginalized groups | Identity, Social Cohesion, Wellbeing, Economic, Digital | Narrative Review (systematic search) |
| Social Impact & Community | Nguyen Van & Nguyen Trang Nhat (2025) | Traditional Vietnamese music, K-pop, EDM, Hip-hop | General Vietnamese audiences | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Mixed Methods (case studies, surveys, interviews) |
| Social Impact & Community | Salgado-Vasco & Cardozo-Ruiz (2025) | Traditional Colombian peasant music | Displaced community members | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being, Economic | Qualitative (action-research, grounded theory) |
| Social Impact & Community | Ascenso (2016) | Classical music | Professional musicians, community participants | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being, Economic | Qualitative (interviews, thematic analysis) |
| Social Impact & Community | Bartleet (2023) | Community music (general) | Community participants, marginalized groups | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being, Economic | Conceptual/Theoretical (framework development) |
| Social Impact & Community | Crooke et al. (2023) | Intercultural music (general) | Listeners, active participants | Identity, Social Cohesion | Conceptual/Theoretical (framework development) |
| Social Impact & Community | Hallam & Himonides (2022) | General (active music-making) | Local residents, marginalized groups | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being, Economic | Review (evidence synthesis) |
| Social Impact & Community | Rickard et al. (2025) | Various (classical, rock, pop) | Live event audiences | Identity, Social Cohesion, Wellbeing, Digital | Systematic Review (PRISMA) |
| Social Impact & Community | Asztalos (2025) | Community music (general) | Community participants, marginalized groups | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being | Review (literature synthesis) |
| Digital Mediation & Streaming | Pope (2016) | Hip-hop, Rap (Drake) | Global audience, fans, critics | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (multimodal discourse analysis) |
| Digital Mediation & Streaming | Fraser et al. (2021) | Classical, Pop, Fusion | Online audiences (YouTube viewers) | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (online ethnography, comment analysis) |
| Digital Mediation & Streaming | Maasø & Spilker (2022) | General (streaming platforms) | Music streaming users | Economic, Digital | Mixed Methods (interface analysis, interviews, data) |
| Digital Mediation & Streaming | Muchitsch & Werner (2024) | Rap français, Bubblegrunge | Streaming users, algorithmic culture audiences | Identity, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (multimodal discourse analysis) |
| Digital Mediation & Streaming | Yuliantari et al. (2024) | Contemporary Manggarai folk songs | Online audiences (YouTube/TikTok users) | Identity, Social Cohesion, Well-being, Economic, Digital | Qualitative (critical discourse analysis) |
| Hybridization & Musical Form | Uluç & Süslü (2017) | General hybrid music | Not specified | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Conceptual/Theoretical (comparative analysis) |
| Hybridization & Musical Form | Appert (2016) | Senegalese Hip Hop (Rap Galsen) | Senegalese youth, global hip-hop communities | Identity, Social Cohesion, Digital | Qualitative (ethnography, intertextual analysis) |
| Hybridization & Musical Form | Putiatytska et al. (2024) | Jazz, Rock, Salsa, Ethno-techno | Global audience, streaming users | Identity, Social Cohesion, Economic, Digital | Conceptual/Theoretical (comparative analysis) |

### 3.3 Overview of Study Findings and Thematic Distribution

The included studies collectively examine how hybrid musical forms are produced, circulated, interpreted, and experienced, and how these processes relate to identity, social relations, and community outcomes. Rather than treating musical hybridity as a purely formal or aesthetic phenomenon, most studies emphasize audience-centered processes, highlighting interpretation, meaning-making, and social positioning. The literature reflects an interconnected analytical landscape in which musical forms, listening practices, and sociocultural contexts are

mutually constitutive, with hybridization, identity, social impact, and digital mediation rarely examined in isolation.

### 3.4.1 Hybridization and Musical Form

A small subset of studies focused on defining and theorizing musical hybridity. These studies examined hybridity as a conceptual and aesthetic phenomenon rather than an outcome of audience engagement.

Two studies adopted critical or postcolonial perspectives, framing hybridity as a process shaped by historical power relations and cultural exchange (Appert, 2016; Uluç & Süslü, 2017). These works challenged binary understandings of musical influence and questioned Western-centric applications of the hybridity concept.

One study examined structural drivers of hybridization, identifying migration, digital circulation, and intentional stylistic fusion as key mechanisms shaping hybrid musical production (Putiatytska et al., 2024). Collectively, studies in this theme conceptualized hybridity as a dynamic and contested process rather than a fixed musical category.

### 3.4.2 Audience Reception and Meaning-Making

Audience reception and meaning making were the most frequently examined theme. Research focused on how listeners interpret, evaluate, and engage with hybrid musical forms. Several studies highlighted the emotional and psychological functions of music listening, reporting that audiences use hybrid music for emotional regulation, stress relief, and personal reflection (Kemp & White, 2013; van Erp et al., 2024). Other studies emphasized cognitive and interpretive processes, documenting how audiences critically engage with lyrical content, representations of race and gender, and broader social messages embedded in music (Moody-Ramirez & Scott, 2015; Worsley, 2010).

Onwuegbuna (2025) contributes to this theme by framing audience reception as a negotiated and socially mediated process. The study demonstrates that meaning is co-constructed by listeners, artists, producers, and critics, linking audience engagement to broader cultural and industry practices. This emphasizes that reception is not limited to individual interpretation but occurs within a network of social, economic, and digital mediators.

Social dimensions of reception were also prominent. Shared musical engagement supports social bonding, collective identification, and place-based belonging (Kemp & White, 2013). In transnational contexts, audience reception was shaped by local cultural histories, resulting in selective appropriation of global musical forms (Banjo & Umunna, 2022; Reagin & Năstase, 2024). Onwuegbuna's study further highlights that mediation processes, including dissemination and digital platforms, shape how audiences interpret music, linking audience meaning making to both industry and digital infrastructures.

### 3.4.3 Identity, Race, and Diaspora

A substantial body of literature examined hybrid music in relation to identity construction, especially concerning race, migration, and diaspora.

Studies documented how individuals and communities use music to negotiate racialized and diasporic identities in contexts of migration and transnational mobility (Golemo, 2020; Myrie et al., 2022). Hybrid musical engagement was reported to support continuity between past and present identities and to facilitate navigation of multiple cultural affiliations.

Several studies situated music within broader histories of racial resistance and cultural expression, emphasizing its role in challenging dominant representations and affirming marginalized identities (Lidskog, 2017; Nielsen, 2013). Overall, identity-focused studies positioned music as both a symbolic and practical resource for identity work.

### 3.4.4 Social Impact and Community

Studies in this theme examined collective and community-level outcomes associated with musical engagement. Research documented the use of participatory music practices in community development, social cohesion, and post-conflict or displacement contexts (Ascenso, 2016; Salgado-Vasco & Cardozo-Ruiz, 2025). Other studies explored how music facilitates intercultural interaction and social bonding through shared emotional experiences, particularly in live performance settings (Rickard et al., 2025).

However, some studies noted that musical engagement can reinforce social boundaries and exclusions, highlighting the context-dependent nature of music's social impact (Hallam & Himonides, 2022).

### 3.4.5 Digital Mediation and Streaming

A smaller group of studies examined the role of digital platforms in shaping musical production, circulation, and reception.

These studies focused on algorithmic curation, genre classification, and platform infrastructures, showing that digital systems influence visibility, audience access, and the categorization of hybrid musical forms (Maasø & Spilker, 2022; Muchitsch & Werner, 2024). Additional research highlighted how online music spaces supported social connection and collective participation during periods of physical restriction, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Fraser et al., 2021).

## 4. DISCUSSION

This review shows that hybrid African American and Afro-diasporic music is far more than an artistic style. It is a social practice that actively shapes identity, community, and cultural circulation. Across regions and disciplines, the evidence demonstrates that hybridity is a space where tradition meets innovation; local meets global, and marginal voices gain visibility. Listeners are not passive. They use music to regulate emotions, negotiate identity, and build social connections. In doing so, hybrid music becomes a practical tool for navigating complex cultural affiliations and diasporic belonging in a world shaped by migration and digital mediation.

The research also highlights the tangible social effects of hybrid music. It can foster community cohesion, encourage intercultural dialogue, and support collective well-being. At the same time, its impact depends on context. Music can bridge or reinforce them. Digital platforms amplify this complexity by simultaneously widening access and concentrating visibility. This shapes whose hybrid forms are seen and heard.

These findings matter because they show that hybrid music is not only a lens for understanding contemporary cultural life but also a lever for shaping it. It reveals how communities negotiate race, diaspora, and identity; how audiences engage with art as a resource for meaning and connection; and how technological infrastructures mediate cultural inclusion and exclusion. In short, hybrid music is both reflective and generative. It tells us how society works and has the power to influence how it functions.

### 4.1 Research Gaps and Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

The study revealed that most research is concentrated in English-speaking regions. As a result, little is known about how hybrid Afro-diasporic music is understood and practiced in areas such as Francophone Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. This highlights the need for comparative studies across different regions to examine how hybridity functions in diverse cultural contexts, rather than assuming it carries the same meaning everywhere.

It was also found that research tends to focus primarily on hip-hop and jazz. This narrow emphasis produces a limited view of hybridity and excludes other significant styles such as neo-soul, gospel-influenced music, funk, and electronic blends. The findings suggest that future scholarships should expand beyond the most popular genres to better capture the full spectrum of hybrid music being created.

Another gap emerged in audience studies. Most existing work examines young people and first-generation diasporic groups, leaving out older generations and majority audiences. This underscores the importance of understanding how hybrid music resonates with broader populations and how it may foster shared understanding across communities.

The study further noted that most research relies on small-scale qualitative approaches. While these provide rich detail, they make it difficult to assess whether music has lasting social effects. This points to the need for longer-term and mixed-method research designs that can track changes over time and test claims related to identity, well-being, and social connection.

In addition, the study observed that the relationship between musical elements and audience responses remains unclear. Without connecting sound to impact, it is challenging to explain how hybridity contributes to social change. This emphasizes the need for closer collaboration between music scholars and social scientists.

These gaps together suggest that future research should encompass more regions, more genres, more audience types, and stronger methodological approaches. For practitioners, the findings support the use of participatory music projects to build connections and well-being. For policymakers, they demonstrate the importance of supporting diverse hybrid music through funding, improved access to platforms, and educational initiatives that encourage critical engagement with music and media.

### 4.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Review

This review's strengths include its systematic mapping of a diverse, interdisciplinary literature spanning theoretical, empirical, and review studies, providing a comprehensive overview of hybrid African American music, audience reception, and social impact. Limitations include the restriction to English-language sources, the potential omission of specialist databases, and the absence of formal quality appraisal, which is consistent with scoping review methodology. Variability in the direct relevance of included studies may also influence the interpretation of mapped themes.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This review mapped scholarship on hybrid African American music, highlighting audience reception, identity, community, and digital mediation. Findings show that audiences mobilize hybrid music to construct identity, foster community, and navigate diverse sociocultural contexts, with digital platforms shaping circulation and visibility. Hybrid music emerges as both aesthetic and social practice, though gaps remain in geography, genre, and method. Future work should expand comparative and longitudinal designs, include underrepresented regions and forms, and link musical structures more directly to social outcomes. For practitioners and policymakers, these insights support participatory initiatives and culturally informed policies that advance cohesion, well-being, and equity.

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