

A PEDAGOGY OF FREEDOM: USING HIP HOP IN THE CLASSROOM TO  
ENGAGE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

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A PEDAGOGY OF FREEDOM: USING HIP HOP IN THE CLASSROOM TO  
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# A PEDAGOGY OF FREEDOM: USING HIP HOP IN THE CLASSROOM TO ENGAGE AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to add to the knowledge base an understanding of the impact of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, on African American student engagement. The researcher viewed the study through the lens of Critical Race Theory which challenges traditional educational beliefs and practices. The overarching question guiding this investigation centered on whether elements of hip hop can indeed be used as tools to educate African American students.

The study population consisted of one African American faculty member and two African American students at a historically black university located in the south. The researcher chose a case study approach because of its qualitative and hypothesis-generating, rather than quantitative and hypothesis-testing nature (Merriam, 1988). Furthermore, a qualitative approach emphasizes a holistic description of the situation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Data collection methods included on-site classroom and campus observations, interviews and analysis of course and classroom documents. Informal interviews were also conducted with faculty, students and administrators at the university and assisted in supporting and triangulation of the data. The study findings articulated the importance of climate, faculty and “hip hop” pedagogy to African American student engagement. What was particularly striking to the researcher was that predominantly white institutions could learn a lot from historically black colleges and universities as it relates to building inclusive climates for African American students. The

implications of this inquiry for practice in education could impact both K-12 institutions and higher education institutions as they address the issue of engaging African American students, creating inclusive climates, and hiring African-American faculty.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Introduction to the Study*

U.S. Bureau of Census (1996) data project that the proportional representation of traditional-age African American students is expected to grow from 28 percent in 2000 to more than 35 percent by 2020. To prepare for the increase, Opp (2002) asserted that colleges and universities will need to design and implement “policies and practices to enhance program completion [retention] rates for their students of color” (p. 148). He further discussed, however, the structural and attitudinal barriers that have a negative influence on the retention of students of color in postsecondary education. One example of a structural institutional barrier is the lack of minority faculty and staff. According to a United States Department of Education report (2006) approximately 15% of U.S. college and university faculty were minorities in 2003, 6% of whom were African American. Furthermore, the proportion of minority staff at public 4-year colleges (22%) was similar to the proportion at private 4-year colleges (21%). Additionally, only 17% of college administrators were minority. Other structural barriers included a lack of appropriate social and cultural activities, and the academic community’s ignorance of the cultures and contributions of people of color (Opp, 2002).

Opp also cited examples of attitudinal institutional barriers that contribute to minority student attrition. Those barriers included negative campus racial climates, faculty resistance to advising students, and faculty unwillingness to deal with unprepared students. Anderson, Harbour, Lewis, and Middleton (2003) discussed how these barriers, specifically a lack of faculty of color and failure to provide culturally-relevant pedagogy,

negatively impact students of color while giving special privileges to white students. “At community colleges” they wrote, “the privilege may provide dominant culture students the benefit of seeing themselves or their culture prominently represented in the institutional environment and the curriculum” (p. 831). Anderson, et al. (2003) continued by asserting the following:

The culturally privileged also see numerous faculty and staff who look like them, understand their language, recognize their presence, seek to offer assistance and support, and share similar cultural values and nuances. On the other hand, individuals who are underrepresented or marginalized in these settings see few, if any others who “look” like them in either the curriculum or their surroundings. Persons in marginalized populations are also less likely to see persons who share their language, cultural values, or cultural nuances (p. 832).

To address the systemic barriers that impede the success of students of color on college campuses, scholars have used Critical Race Theory (CRT) which challenges traditional educational beliefs and practices. A key element of CRT is its focus on allowing research participants to tell their own story in their own “voice.” This researcher found this aspect of CRT particularly important because oftentimes research about people of color involves non-minority researchers examining and drawing conclusions about people of color. CRT allows the research subjects to tell their own stories in their own words. The underpinnings of CRT, the history of CRT, its use in education, and its use of storytelling in giving people of color “voice” in academia are discussed in this chapter. In addition, the problem, purpose, research questions, limitations and assumptions, design controls, and key terms relevant to this study will be addressed.

### *Conceptual Underpinnings of the Study*

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the conceptual framework guiding this study. Developed in the 1970s, CRT is a response to the race-based structures of oppression in

the law and society that had not been adequately addressed in existing scholarship (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). The six unifying themes that define the CRT movement are as follows: 1) CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life; 2) CRT expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy; 3) CRT challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law...Critical race theorists...adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage; 4) CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and communities of origin in analyzing law and society; 5) CRT is interdisciplinary; and 6) CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression (Crenshaw, Delgado, Lawrence, and Matsuda, 1993, p. 6).

### *History of CRT*

Critical Race Theory emerged because of discontent with the slow pace of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) in critiquing and changing societal and legal structures that focused on race and racism. Scholars (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998) have posited that CLS could not offer strategies for social transformation because it did not incorporate race and racism into the analysis. Because of these limitations, CRT scholars initially detached from CLS and began focusing on the unrealized promises of Civil Rights legislation (Yosso, 2005). This led to many of the early CRT critiques being framed in black vs. white terms. Later, women, whites, and other people of color were included in the CRT movement (Brayboy, 2001, 2002; Caldwell, 1995; Chang, 1993, 1998; Chon,

1996; Delgado, 1997; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Ikemoto, 1992; Williams, 1997; Wing, 1997, 2000).

### *CRT in Education*

CRT is applied to education as a way of confronting and challenging traditional views of education in regard to issues of meritocracy, claims of color-blind objectivity, and equal opportunity (Crenshaw, 1993; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Yosso, 2005; Villalpando, 2003). The five tenets of CRT that inform education theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy include the following: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches (Solorzano, 1997, 1998). Yosso (2005) wrote:

CRT in education [is] a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses. CRT is conceived as a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling. This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower. Indeed, CRT in education refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and centering the experiences of People of Color. CRT utilizes transdisciplinary approaches to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. (p. 74)

### *Storytelling*

A major component of CRT is storytelling. Delgado (1989) and Tate (2005) posited that storytelling (or counterstorytelling) allows out groups to reject the corporate or institutional story in favor of their own versions which can counter the stories of the oppressor. Through counterstorytelling, people of color challenge the status quo by constructing their own reality. One example of the use of storytelling can be found in rap and hip hop music. Dagbovie (2005) discussed how “Hip hop artists... routinely account

their own personal histories of resilience, which mirror the overall theme of perseverance against the oppression that dominates the African American experience” (p. 301). This form of rap is sometimes classified as liberatory or black power rap. Haugen (2003) and Riley (2005) discussed the use of storytelling in another type of rap referred to as gangsta rap. This form of rap is characterized by the artists telling their life stories in the form of narratives that often include violent images of drugs, murders, robberies, and sex.

Whether Black Power or Post Black Power, rappers are telling their own story in their own terms. Because of rap’s popularity and influence on students, an overarching question is “How” can educators use this artistic form to engage “a population that is not defined in terms of academic credential?” (Phillips, Reddick-Morgan, & Stephens, 2005, p. 259).

#### *Statement of the Problem*

The issue of engagement is particularly important considering the growth of the African American student population. According to a 2006 National Center for Education Statistics *Participation in Education* report, the percentage of racial and ethnic minority students enrolled in public schools increased from 22% in 1972, to 43% in 2004 while white student enrollment decreased from 78% to 57%. Moreover, the 2006 United States Census reported that the median black household income was \$33,713. By contrast, a separate National Center for Education Statistics report (2000-2001, 2005) revealed that 79% of elementary and secondary teachers were white and 84% are female with an average income of more than \$47,000. According to a 2003 NCES report, colleges and universities also face similar disparities with a faculty that is 15% minority and a student population that is 30% minority. A 2005 National Center for Education Statistics report

revealed that full-time instructional college faculty had an average salary of \$63,300. The racial and economic disparities between students and faculty, may be contributing to the low retention rates of minority students. In fact, Crooks, Collado and Ray (2006) cited, among other reasons, weak ties to faculty as a reason for the lack of minority student persistence. In addition, Swail (2006) mentioned that the campus climate and lack of social and academic integration are also reasons students of color fail to persist. Despite the myriad of studies that address, from the researcher's point of view, the question of "why" the fact remains that students of color fail to persist toward graduation at the same rates as white students. The question then, for this researcher, becomes, "Are African American students who feel engaged in the classroom, more likely to persist?"

Engagement is defined as the amount of interest and effort students expend in school (Marks, 2000). Research shows that students who were more engaged in high school were more likely to undertake further education and to persist and complete the post-secondary program of study. By contrast, Marks found that those who were least engaged were least likely to enter post-secondary programs—even short-term career preparation programs and 2-year colleges.

Ogbu (2003) posited that student performance and engagement are influenced by two factors. The first is system factors which include the historical and current treatment of minorities by the larger society and schools. The second factor is related to the minority group members' interpretations and responses to their treatment. Ogbu (2003) detailed his ethnographic study of the barriers that contributed to black student disengagement. In their own words, the students cited feelings of not belonging, mistrust of teachers, and peer influences as reasons for becoming disengaged in the academic



process. A 2005 survey of high school engagement by the Center for Evaluation and Education cited how engaged students get more from school than disengaged students. Other researchers such as Bridges, Cambridge, Kuh and Leegwater (2005); McMillian, (2004); and Sirin and Rogers-Sirin (2005) focused specifically on minority student engagement as well as student engagement at minority serving institutions. In recent years, faculty, in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities have found ways to engage students through the use of hip hop in the classroom (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002).

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increased African American student engagement. The researcher used a single case study approach by examining the classroom of an African American faculty member who had designed several courses that incorporated elements of hip hop. The researcher chose this faculty member because of the number of English courses he had designed, as well as his knowledge of hip hop, and his regular written contributions to an on-line hip hop magazine. The researcher chose a case study approach because of its qualitative and hypothesis-generating, rather than quantitative and hypothesis-testing nature (Merriam, 1988). Furthermore, a qualitative approach emphasizes a holistic description of the situation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Gillham (2000) asserted that “the case study researcher, working inductively from what’s there in the research setting develops grounded theory: theory that is grounded in the evidence that is turned up” (p. 12). The researcher viewed the problem of student engagement through the lens of Critical Race Theory. This theory focuses on the intercentricity of race and racism, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social justice,

the centrality of experiential knowledge and the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches (Solorzano, 1997, 1998). The questions guiding this research focused on the structural and attitudinal factors that may contribute to African American student disengagement. The study also focused on students' response to those factors and ways educators can use culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, to engage African-American students.

### *Research Questions*

Merriam (1988) wrote that “qualitative case study research usually begins with a problem identified from practice” (p. 44). After the problem is identified, broad questions of process and understanding generally guide the case study. The study began with asking the question, “Are African American students who feel engaged in the classroom, more likely to persist?” The literature review considered how system factors such as the historical and current treatment of minorities by the larger society and schools impact student engagement. The second factor considered was how minority group members interpret and respond to their treatment. The synthesis of related literature focused on the role faculty play in engaging minority students through incorporating elements of hip hop in their curriculum. With the collection and analysis of interviews, focus groups, document and artifact analysis, and field notes, several questions emerged that informed this study.

1. How is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom?
2. Are the societal (racism, sexism/misogyny, feminism, materialism) and community (crime, drugs) themes mentioned in hip hop discussed in the classroom? If so, how and why?

3. What impact does hip hop pedagogy have on African American student engagement?
4. What impact does the African-American faculty member have on African-American student engagement?

#### *Limitations and Assumptions*

One limitation of a case study design was the issue of internal validity and reliability (Creswell, 1994). Creswell posited that the researcher, then, must be sure to address plans to triangulate the data. The researcher used multiple forms of data collection and, when possible, received feedback from the research subjects through a process called “member checks” (Creswell, 1994, p. 158). The researcher assumed the forthrightness of the research subjects who were interviewed.

A second limitation was the external validity or generalizability of the study as it focused on only one faculty member at a historically black university. Merriam (1988) wrote that qualitative research is not intended to generalize the findings, but to interpret the events. The researcher did, however, discuss categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis. The data collected, while limited, could be useful to colleges and universities in their efforts to recruit and retain faculty of color and increase African American student persistence. Moreover, K-12 institutions could also benefit from the information in this study as it relates to engaging students of color. Schools of Education may also find the information useful as they both train non-minority faculty to teach the growing minority student populations and review their efforts to recruit minority students into the field of education. Other factors that limited generalizability may be the faculty

and student characteristics, such as age and socioeconomic status, and instructor familiarity with the origin of hip hop.

Another limitation of the study included that the population was limited to students and faculty at a historically black university. In addition, the faculty participant is heavily immersed in the hip hop culture, both personally and professionally, and may possess experiences and knowledge that other faculty may not have. Lastly, while hip hop transcends race, the researcher limited the study to include only African American students.

### *Design Controls*

To address the issue of internal validity, the researcher used different kinds of evidence (Gillham, 2000). To triangulate the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), the researcher used thick, rich information from multiple sources such as interviews with the faculty members and students. In addition, the researcher analyzed documents and field logs and collected artifacts such as class assignments.

To verify the transcription, the researcher received feedback from the research subjects through a process called “member checks” (Creswell, 1994, p. 158). The generalizability of this case study may be determined if future researchers choose to replicate the study. This researcher’s assumptions and information on selection of research subjects and biases will be clearly discussed. Therefore, the chances of replication of the study may be enhanced in another setting (Creswell, 1994).

### *Definitions of Key Terms*

The following terms were identified by the researcher as important to the understanding of the investigation.

*Black Power/Freedom Movement* was a political movement that arose in the middle 1960s, that strove to express a new racial consciousness among Blacks in the United States (Albert & Albert, 1984).

*Civil Rights Movement* is generally classified as the period of time between 1955 to 1965 when African Americans fought for equal rights and to overcome racial and social injustice.

*Disengagement* is the extent to which students refrain from participating in activities offered as part of the school program, tasks of scholarship and citizenship, and extracurricular activities (Natriello, 1982).

*Engagement* is the amount of interest and effort students expend in school (Marks, 2000).

*Gangsta Rap* is a form of rap that includes usually profane language, violent images and sometimes misogynistic lyrics.

*Hip hop/Hip hop Culture* includes the music, fashion, dance, language, worldview of primarily African Americans and Latinos born between 1965 and 1984 (Kitwana, 2002).

*Hip Hop Head* is defined as someone that embodies the hip hop culture usually consisting of an avid interest or participation in the music, emceeing, breakdancing and graffiti art. A Hip Hop Head is usually more into underground/independent hip hop rather than the more commercial/mainstream rap heard on the radio. A Hip Hop Head also has a

great knowledge of the history of hip hop stemming from the roots in the South Bronx up until the modern day. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Hip+Hop+Head>

*Minority students/Students of Color* are non-white students of African, Latin, Asian or American Indian descent.

*Rap music* is characterized as rhythmic, repetitive speech over well known (mostly R&B) black music hits (Cook, 1984).

*Social justice* is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997).

*Third Wave feminism* includes new hip hop feminists who eschew the feminist label as they “share their life stories in the public forum as a way of asserting a contemporary Black female identity” (Springer, 2002, p. 1060).

### *Summary*

Research shows that structural and attitudinal barriers on college campuses impact the retention rates of students of color. In an effort to engage these students, some faculty has incorporated elements of hip hop in their curriculum. This study, developed through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), addressed the role faculty play in engaging students of color.

In Chapter One an overview of the structural and attitudinal barriers that may interfere with African American student persistence was discussed. A review of the current literature related to the study is included in Chapter Two. The subjects and the research design implemented in the study will be addressed in Chapter Three. Discussed

in Chapter Four are the results of the investigation. Finally, included in Chapter Five is a discussion section that addresses limitations, generalizability, conclusions, and suggestions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Review of Related Literature*

Marks (2000) defined engagement as the amount of interest and effort students expend in school. A *National Center of Education Statistics Report* (NCES, 2006) noted:

Students who participate actively in school and the classroom, and who identify with school, increase the likelihood of successful academic outcomes. Those who do not, have been referred to as disengaged; this pattern is found disproportionately among minority students and those from low-income homes. (p. 8)

The NCES report cited a longitudinal study that followed at-risk students from 8<sup>th</sup> grade until age 26. The purpose of this study was to examine whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increased African American student engagement. The study found that students, who were more engaged in high school, were more likely to undertake further education and to persist and complete the post-secondary program of study. By contrast, the study found that those who were least engaged were least likely to enter post-secondary programs—even short-term career preparation programs and 2-year colleges.

Ogbu's (2003) cultural-ecological theory also addressed the issue of minority student engagement, particularly African-American. He posited that student performance and engagement are influenced by two factors. The first is system factors which include the historical and current treatment of minorities by the larger society and schools. The second factor is related to the minority group members' interpretations and responses to their treatment. Ogbu (2003) detailed his ethnographic study of the barriers that



contributed to black student disengagement. In their own words, the students cited feelings of not belonging, mistrust of teachers, and peer influences as reasons for becoming disengaged in the academic process.

Research focusing primarily on engaging minority students in general, and African American boys in particular, (Bridges, Cambridge, Kuh & Leegwater, 2005; McMillian, 2004; and Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2005) is significant considering the changing demographics of American classrooms and the racial, class, and gender disparities between students and teachers. According to a 2006 NCES *Participation in Education* report, the percentage of racial and ethnic minority students enrolled in public schools increased from 22% in 1972, to 43% in 2004 while white student enrollment decreased from 78% to 57%. Moreover, the 2005 United States Census reported that the median black household income was \$33,713. By contrast, a separate NCES report (2000-2001, 2005) revealed that 79% of elementary and secondary teachers were white and 84% were female with an average income of more than \$47,000. According to a 2003 NCES report, colleges and universities also face similar disparities with a faculty who are 15% minority and 47% male; this, compared to a student population that is 30% minority with female enrollment increasing at a faster rate than that of males—a trend expected to continue through 2015. The student/teacher racial, gender, and socio-economic differences underscore the need for educators to find innovative ways to engage an ever-changing student demographic.

In recent years, faculties in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities, have found a way to connect with students through hip hop. By crafting ways to use this 30-year-old phenomenon to teach traditional subject matter (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002),

educators have acknowledged the influence of hip hop on their students. This researcher intended to investigate the impact of hip hop pedagogy on African American student engagement.

Thus included in the literature review is an examination of the role of hip hop on society. First a review of the origins of hip hop, the role of technology, and rap's international appeal are examined. Secondly, the hip hop community is defined with a distinction made between older and younger members. Issues such as the tension between the hip hop and Civil Rights generations, rap's connection to the African oral tradition, and hip hop as a voice for social justice will be discussed. Thirdly, the literature review addresses how, in addition to serving as a voice for the voiceless, hip hop includes themes of commercialism, gangsta rap, feminism, and misogyny. With the aspects and characteristics addressed, the literature then views hip hop through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and discusses how elements of CRT can be used by educators to address systemic institutional barriers that impede African American student engagement.

### *Origins of Hip Hop*

Despite its appeal to black youth and urban culture, there is no single hip hop community (Aldridge, 2005; Kitwana, 2002; Riley, 2005). Originated in New York by black and Latino youth, (George, 1998; Kitwana, 2005; Phillips, Morgan, & Laity, 2005; Rose, 1994), hip hop's influence is both national and international (Crossley, 2005). Osumare (2001) and Mahiri and Conner (2003) also noted the national and global appeal of hip hop in countries such as New Zealand, Senegal, South Africa, Mexico, Germany, Russia, France, England, India, and Japan. George (1998) claimed that from Canada to

Havana, hip hop has made an impression and has led to what Osumare (2001) calls “connective marginalities” (p. 172).

### *Role of Technology and Hip Hop*

Rose (1994) and George (1998) credit technology as being instrumental in connecting cultures through hip hop. George claimed that because of a machine called a “mixer” club disc jockeys (DJs) were able to shift the sound from one turntable to another so that the party continued seamlessly. Perkins (1996) explained how the turntables and vinyl allowed the DJ to rhyme and mix and scratch spontaneously about various topics. This mixing and scratching catapulted DJs to cult status. Perkins pointed out how one of the first hip hop DJs, Jamaican Kool Herc, can be credited with bringing the reggae toast and boast tradition to the USA in 1967. This, Perkin’s asserted, led to an explosion of DJs armed with huge speakers and turntables giving parties in backyards all over inner-city America. Aldridge (2005) declared that rap pioneer Afrika Bambaataa, along with Kool DJ Herc, used technological advancements to create a language of the streets. Because of their new-found fame, DJs began to boast of their skills either on the microphone or as lovers, thus leading towards the birth of the national and international phenomenon known as hip hop (George, 1998).

George (1998) posited that technology continued to play a role in the history of rap with the 1979 release of “Rapper’s Delight” by the rap pioneering group, The Sugarhill Gang. George wrote that “Rapper’s Delight” introduced a technique called sampling which is characterized by rappers placing rhythmic, repetitive speech over well known (mostly R&B) black music hits. The hip hop community continues to use sampling in its rap music today.

### *Hip Hop Community Defined*

Phillips, Morgan, and Stephens (2005) wrote that today's hip hop community encompasses not only rap music and videos, but also dress, dance, language and attitude. Furthermore, Aldridge and Stewart (2005) wrote, whether national or international, the hip hop community shares the same four elements--disc jockeying, break dancing, rapping, and graffiti art. Smitherman (1997) and Powers (1996) emphasized the role of graffiti in the New York City hip hop subculture. "Of all the elements..." Powers proclaimed, "graffiti received the most media attention...and portrayed the constant battle between the New York City Transit Authority and minority adolescents" (p. 139). Another commonality shared by hip hoppers across the globe is their view of the world (Kitwana, 2002). This view includes a similar belief in "family, relationships, child rearing, career, racial identity, race relations, and politics" (p. 4).

### *Categories of Hip Hoppers*

Despite the shared worldview, the hip hop community, born between 1965 and 1984 (Kitwana, 2002), has distinct differences. Dagbovie (2005) claimed there is a disparity in the ideologies of those born between 1965 and 1975 and those born during the late 1970s to 1984. He referred to the former group as Black Power hip hoppers (BP) and the latter as Post Black Power hip hoppers. He argued that the primary distinction is that the BP hip hopper came of age during the "golden age" of hip hop when the art form was socially conscious. By contrast, Dagbovie asserted the Post Black Powers grew up during a time when hip hop had become more commercial and materialistic. Aldridge (2005) also made a distinction between the two types of hip hoppers in his discussion of socially and politically conscious hip hoppers. The socially and politically conscious

group, he posited, share a similar ideology with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. He defined rappers such as Public Enemy, KRS-One, and Sister Souljah as socially and politically-conscious artists.

In addition to the Black Power and Post Black Power hip hoppers, a third hip hop subpopulation exists. The category includes those too young to remember the Civil Rights Movement but too old to relate to the current youth-driven hip hop culture (Phillips et al, 2005). George (1998) described himself, born in 1965, and other “soul babies” (Neal, 2002) as being in this group, caught between recording labels Motown (Rhythm and Blues) and Def Jam (Rap). The disconnect between the hip hop and Civil Rights communities has resulted in generational conflict (Aldridge, 2005).

#### *Hip Hop Generation vs. the Civil Rights Generation*

Several Civil Rights scholars have acknowledged the tensions between the Civil Rights and Hip hop generations and have criticized the hip hoppers for their lack of vision (Aldridge, 2005). Aldridge also noted the failure of his generation to reach out to the Hip hop generation. “We did not assure [them] of their ability to learn from the struggle of our generation. We left the teaching of that process and that methodology to others” (p. 248).

Boyd (2002) also criticized the Civil Rights generation for being disconnected from the hip hop generation and making Civil Rights seem irrelevant. He stated that hip hop has rejected and now replaced the sanctimonious nature of Civil Rights as the defining moment of blackness. Evelyn (2000) agreed that some of the immorality demonstrated in hip hop is due in part to the Civil Rights Movement’s failure to fulfill its promise to black America. In fact, Powell (2002) theorized that it is the glorification of

these failures by rappers that causes the Civil Rights community to dislike elements of the hip hop community.

### *Generational Conflict*

The negative relationship between hip hoppers and the Civil Rights Movement leaders played out on a national scale when older black leaders such as C. Delores Tucker, Dionne Warwick, Jesse Jackson, and Rev. Calvin Butts publicly condemned rap and its misogynistic lyrics (Morgan, 2005). Ogbar (1999) reported that Rappers such as Tupac Shakur, and KRS-One chastised the “integrationist leaders” for being worse than white critics for acting as though rappers invented misogyny and other ills facing black America. Dyson (2001) elaborated on Shakur’s role in intensifying the discord between the hip hop generation and the Civil Rights generation. He wrote,

For many blacks over the age of forty, Tupac represents the repudiation of ancient black values of hope and positive uplift that tied together black folk across geography and generation. His studied hopelessness—and he affirmed his depressive status by repeatedly declaring ‘I’m hopeless’—and his downward-looking social glance only aggravated the generational warfare that looms large in black America. (p. 123)

Shakur and other rappers’ hard-core street essence (Perkins, 1996) and insistence on “noncensorship and representation of frank honesty and realism” (Morgan, 2005, p. 436) may hamper a true hip hop/Civil Rights Movement partnership. Phillips et al. (2005) and Kitwana (2005) asserted that, even though those born in 1965 are considered part of the hip hop generation, the culture is primarily driven by teens and young adults and their themes, values and viewpoints. These views include an overarching theme of keeping it “real” (Cole & Sheftall, 2003; Taylor & Taylor, 2004). It is in ‘being real’ that the culture “finds its willingness to be arrogant and unapologetic in its brazen disregard for anyone who does not appreciate what hip hop is” (Cole et al., 2005, p. 253). Both Krims (2000)

and Riley (2005) discussed the importance of “realness” and authenticity in hip hop. Hess (2005) claimed that “hip hop’s concepts of realness form a discursive spectrum founded upon standards of authenticity to narratives of hip hop’s cultural origins within poor urban neighborhoods with predominantly black and Latino population[s]” (p. 299). Frank imagery, profane language, and keeping it real may further alienate the hip hop generation from the “important influences of previous generations... older relatives, black educational institutions, churches, and protest organizations” (Dagbovie, 2005, p. 302).

### *Hip Hop’s African Connection*

The modern-day intergenerational conflict is ironic considering hip hop’s African roots. Aldridge (2005) and Perkins (1996) noted the connection of early hip hop pioneers Afrika Bambaataa, Kool DJ Herc, Grandmaster Caz and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five to the Civil Rights Movement and Africa. In Perkins (1996), Bambaata elaborated upon rap’s connection to Africa and its role in the evolution of black music. He noted:

Rap in general dates all the way back to the motherland, where tribes would use call and response chants. In the 1930’s and 1940’s, you had Cab Calloway pioneering his style of jazz rhyming. The sixties you had the love style of rapping, with Isaac Hayes, Barry White, and the poetry style of rapping with the Last Poets, the Watts poets and the militant style of rapping with brothers like Malcolm X and Minister Louis Farrakhan. In the 60’s you also had “The Name Game” a funny rap by Shirley Ellis, and radio djs would rhyme and rap before a song came on. (p. 2)

### *Oral Tradition*

Hip hop’s connection to the African oral tradition is echoed by other scholars. Taylor and Taylor (2004) and Smitherman (1997) discussed rap’s rhythmic, aggressive nature. This, according to Smitherman (1997), illustrated rap’s roots in the “Black oral

traditions of tonal semantics, narrativizing, signification/signifying, the dozens/playing the dozens, Africanized syntax , and other communicative practices” (p. 4). Jones (1994) agreed that rap can trace its lineage to the coded slave messages, the call and response in the black church, blues, jazz, and jive. George (1988) theorized that rap “goes back to the African heritage of welding together the two elements in the form of storytellers, or griots.

Stephens (1991), however, disagreed with the parallels between rap and the African oral tradition. He argued,

the commercialization of rap lyrics...undermines the importance of the African oral tradition. According to Anthony Palmer, the majority of commercialized rap lyrics are concerned with humor and mockery, a lighter version of rap that reduces it to another faddish new musical form whose newness...allows it a hearing from white culture while denying African Americans their cultural roots. (p. 38)

Hip hop’s connection to Africa may be arguable. What does not seem to be debatable is the culture’s ability to give voice to the voiceless in the form of rap.

#### *Hip Hop: Voices from the Streets*

Rap has been called the CNN for black people (Brennan, 1994; Gladney, 1995) to inform mainstream America of urban American news. Viewed as an expression of the social frustration of the times (Baraka, 1969) George (1988) asserted that rap and hip hop has inspired a generation to “take to verse to say what was too long unspoken about this nation” ( p.xiii). Brennan (1994) stated that rap is a “mode of commentary in which African-American achievement and struggle are recorded” (p. 682). Dagbovie (2005) noted that hip hop culture and rap involve artists telling the story of the African American experience. Ogbar (1999) posited that rappers offer listeners fresh analyses and observations through some of America’s marginalized voices. Rose (1994) argued that



“rap music is a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins....From the outset, rap music has articulated the pleasures and problems of black urban life in contemporary America” (p. 2). Allen (1996) wrote that rap music has been the fundamental force in creating and shaping the hip hop culture; it is the principle medium for the expression of the worldviews of African American youth. Shusterman (1991) posited that rap challenges aesthetic conventions, while Smitherman (1997) stated rap is a resistance against white America’s racism and cultural dominance. Phillips, Morgan and Stephens (2005) called the hip hop generation an “oppositional culture” rooted in the experiences of economically disadvantaged youth. The generation, they proclaimed, represents the voices of the culturally, economically and politically disenfranchised. Rap, then, Pough (2004) declared, can serve as a “platform” and a “space” to be heard.

### *Role of Space*

Wilkins (2000) and others continued the discussion of space in relation to rap and hip hop. Hip hop, he asserted “creates and deploys new spaces that speak to the Africentric diasporian project of identity in the built environment” (p. 10). He continued by writing that the hip hop identity creates a space where it can use a language that speaks truth to its condition. Forman (2002) posited that hip hop provides cultural space for African American youth to question and interpret social and economic conditions. Rose (1994) and Baker (1993) asserted that the violent content contained in some rap is a response to mainstream America’s attempt to close the disenfranchised out of public space.

Finally, regarding space, Kelley (1994) wrote:

[Rap] music and expressive styles have literally become weapons in a battle over the right to occupy public space. Frequently employing high decibel car stereos...black youth not only 'pump up' the volume for their listening pleasure, but also as a part of an indirect...war of position. (p. 305)

Though the “war” often contains violent and misogynistic content, rap is an art form that reports the language of the streets. Therefore, in spite of the generational conflict, both rappers and Civil Rights Movement leaders serve as a voice for the voiceless.

### *Hip Hop Generation and Social Justice*

Kitwana (2002) asserted that what may appear to be a generational divide, may be more of a new political activism that acknowledges the past while charting the future [of African Americans]. Stewart (2005) also argued a connection between the two generations. He stated that since the 1980s, [both] R & B and hip hop political commentators, “ have been forced to address worsening social problems, including high unemployment, police brutality, incarceration, inadequate public schools, political apathy, and dysfunctional behaviors that perpetuate oppression” (p. 218).

Stewart continued by citing a parallel between political Rhythm and Blues artists such as Marvin Gaye and Curtis Mayfield and hip hop political artists such as Nas and Mos Def. Kitwana (2002) added that another parallel between the two generations is hip hop’s embracing of symbols of black consciousness such as hairstyles –braids, dreadlocks and afros (p. 8). Phillips et al. (2005) echoed these sentiments by stating that the focus on race and the economically disadvantaged Post Black Power aged helped hip

hop transcend the age gap between the BP and hip hoppers and the Civil Rights Movement leaders.

Khudjo, a rapper with the group Goodie Mob, concurred with Phillips et al. (2005). In a telephone interview with Aldridge (2005), he stated,

We [the Civil Rights and Hip hop generations] are on the same page. Those guys [Civil Rights activists] just got a little more gray hair than what we got... The only difference is that we just doing it to music. It was a lot of struggle going on in Marvin Gaye's times, Smokey's...times, it's the same struggle though. We all living in the same struggle. It's just different times and it's almost time for our deliverance right now. (p. 233)

### *Commercialism, Gangsta Rap and Moguls*

Unlike the Black Power and socially and politically conscious hip hoppers Stewart (2005), along with George (1998), however, admitted that they are seeing more of a trend toward Dagbovie's (2005) Post Black Power artists who tend to focus on materialism and profit.

### *Commercialism*

De Genova (1995) and Powell (2002) asserted that hip hop has become almost synonymous with materialism. Pough (2004) declared that hip hop had at times been co-opted and exploited by the mainstream (p. 4). Dyson (1999) and Shusterman (1991) asserted that materialism is a recurrent theme in rap.

Shusterman declared,

One very prominent theme of hip hop is how the advertised ideal of conspicuous consumption—luxury cars, clothes, and high-tech appliances—lures many ghetto youth to a life of crime, a life which promises the quick attainment of such commodities but typically ends in death, jail, or destruction, thus reinforcing the ghetto cycle of poverty and despair. (pp. 622-623)

Because, as Kitwana (2002) stated, they are disconnected from the African American “tradition of protest” Post Black Power hip hoppers seem self-consumed. For Post Black Power hip hoppers, he asserted “achieving wealth, by any means necessary, is more important than most anything else, hence our obsession with the materialistic and consumer trappings of financial success” (p. 6). George (1998) asserted that hip hop artists are promoting the “rebirth of dysfunctional and denigrating imagery propagated through blaxploitation in both films and music videos,” (p. 220).

Crossley (2005) wrote that some critics believe the hip hop generation lacks spirituality and thus hides behind masks such as materialism (p. 508). George (1998) claimed that in the 1980s, materialism replaced spirituality as “the definer of life’s worth” (p. 41). This, he wrote, was due in part to the fact that “the go-go capitalism of Reagan’s America (and corporate greed) flowed down to the streets” (p. 41). Taylor and Taylor (2004) asserted that hip hop is a multi-billion dollar industry influencing everything from TV programming, collegiate and professional sports, to Madison Avenue advertising. Smith (2003) also discussed the mainstreaming of hip hop vernacular and the “No Brow Culture” into the business world.

### *Gangsta Rap*

George (1998) postulated that capitalism and the explosion of the drug crack on the street scene gave birth to gangsta rap. Grant (2002) wrote that music industry executives coined the term ‘gangsta’ for the music’s glorification of gang life. Perkins (1996) argued, however, that much of gangsta rap is pure “Hollywood hype” performed by rappers with no past gang affiliations. Nevertheless, gangsta rap, Perkins stated, and the adoration of a counterculture, appeals to both urban and suburban kids. Riley (2005)

asserted that rap has been labeled by some media personalities and scholars as contributing to the “disintegration of American civilization” (p. 299). Unlike its socially conscious counterpart, Perkins wrote that gangsta rap promotes “hustling, street crime, women abuse, and the gun as social equalizer” (p. 18).

Bernard-Donals (1994) cited record labels as promoting gangsta rap materialism and using racist stereotypes as marketing devices. They further asserted that gangsta rapper Ice Cube’s lyric “lend a certain authenticity to the stereotypical white picture of angry blacks. The only people really taking the lyrics seriously are people completely ignorant of marketing techniques” (p. 133). De Genova (1995) posited that gangsta rap portrays white America’s “most cherished gun-slinging mythologies...in the form of its worst and blackest nightmares” (p. 107). A *Journal of African American History* editorial (2005) asserted that once major corporations became involved with gangsta rap, it became more of a dehumanizing portrayal of black men rather than a critique of issues facing black America. The so-called gangsta rappers, wrote Cole and Sheftall (2003), believe they are agents of change or the voice of the people. However, they posited, gangsta rappers are “controlled by commercial interests and pose no real threat to the white power structure” (p. 193).

### *Moguls*

Tate (2003) pointed out that though hip hop has produced many wealthy African Americans moguls who own record labels, the music still perpetuates racial stereotypes. In addition, he argued, the moguls have done little to improve the social conditions of marginalized African Americans. He continued by stating that the moguls have:

Not been able to transform...the social reality of substandard housing, medical care, and education that afflicts over half of all African-American

children and accounts for as many as one out of three... African-American males being under the control of the criminal justice system...Nor have the gains made in the corporate suite fully dismantled the prevalent, delimiting mythologies about Black intelligence, morality, and hierarchical place in America. (p. 12)

Smith (2003) described the hip hop mogul as usually male, under 50, African American and closely connected to the disenfranchised inner cities. He added that hip hop moguls tend to identify and link their images to gangsters such as Al Capone, John Gotti, and the Gambino Crime Family. Smith elaborated that moguls use “gangsterism” as a way to escape the “limited place afforded minority men of color in American society” (p. 82). Sean “P. Diddy” Combs, Russell Simmons, and Percy “Master P” Miller, are some of the more visible examples. These wealthy individuals with their promotion of lavish lifestyles are appealing to their young audiences. In fact, Smith (2003) argued that the mogul “inspires his more downtrodden constituents to ‘buy-in’ to the emerging paradigm of accessible luxury and social status” (p. 71).

Smith (2003) and Tate (2003) questioned, though, whether the ‘living large’ lifestyle and messages have enhanced or developed the inner-city communities. In fact, the mogul, Smith theorized, may contribute to the disconnect between the hip hop generation and the Civil Rights generation by emphasizing “a social uplift mentality as opposed to the Civil Rights Movement ‘support-led communal view’” (p. 71). Smith mentioned, however, that Russell Simmons with his Hip hop Summit Action Network is attempting to connect the hip hop generation to the activist methods popularized during the Civil Rights Movement.

### *Street Feminism, Misogyny, and Sexism*

Like the Civil Rights Movement, hip hop is primarily male-dominated. Despite the number of female rappers, “the public face of both Hip hop and rap is masculine and the mainstream discourse of rap as Hip hop’s mouthpiece is masculine” (Phillips, et al. 2005, p. 254). Most rappers are male and most rap music is representative of black male norms (Neal, 2002). Pough (2004) criticized researchers that have chosen to “collapse the Hip hop generation with young Black manhood and pay little attention to the unique circumstances of young women (p. 105).

#### *Street Feminism*

Also similar to the Civil Rights Movement, however, are hip hop women, like Rosa Parks and Angela Davis before them, who have managed to espouse their own brand of “Street Feminism” (Phillips, et al., 2005), or Third Wave Feminism (Springer, 2002). Pough (2004), Springer (2002), and Morgan (2005) discussed how female hip hop artists have played a role in uplifting and giving voice to black females. Morgan asserted that female mistresses of ceremonies (MC’s) have used their rhymes to challenge the notion of what it means to be young, black, and female in the U.S. and the world.

The voice of the Third Wave Feminist of hip hop is significant in that some black women believe the first and second feminist waves excluded the voices of feminists of color (Springer, 2002). Giddings (1984) discussed the distrust that black females had toward white feminists during the first and second waves. She also detailed the conflict that black females felt trying to decide between race and gender issues. Because of the past struggles of their black foremothers, these new hip hop feminists eschew the feminist

label as they “share their life stories in the public forum as a way of asserting a contemporary Black female identity” (Springer, 2002, p. 1060).

Rejecting the traditional feminist label does not mean female rappers are disconnected from their foremothers. As Morgan (2005) stated, “African American musical traditions often connect younger generations to mothers, women...who have struggled to place the lives and values of black working-class women within general American and African-American culture” (p. 427). Additionally, female rappers often cite the influence of black historical women such as Angela Davis, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Nina Simone, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, and others on their music (Morgan, 2005).

By telling their stories from their own perspectives, female rappers have expanded the “discursive territory covered by feminism and womanism” (Phillips et al., 2005, p. 272). Moreover, they have co-constructed the meaning of feminism and womanism for both women and men in the hip hop universe and the entire culture including academic feminists and womanists (Phillips et al., 2005). Mary J. Blige, Lauryn Hill, Queen Latifah, and Sister Souljah are cited as examples of artists who have managed to tell their life stories through song (Pough, 2004). Rose (1994) claimed that these and other young female hip hop artist “articulate the fears, pleasures, and promises of young black women whose voices have been relegated to the margins” (p. 146). In her book, *Ladies First: Revelations of a Strong Woman*, rapper Queen Latifah (1999) wrote,

I am writing this book to let every woman know that she, too—no matter what her status or her place in life—is royalty. This is particularly important for African American women to know inside out, upside down, and right side up. For so long in this society, we have been given—and we allowed ourselves to take—the role of slave, concubine, mammy, second-class citizen, b\*\*\*\*, ho. (p. 113)



### *Misogyny*

The last two labels referenced by Latifah are particularly commonplace in gangsta rap lyrics. Haugen (2003) asserted that gangsta rap tends to impose “upon certain women categories of status that are taken to be lower than...men” (p. 429). Gangsta rap, George (1998) claimed, has a major theme of being suspicious of women. Kitwana (2002) believed, though, that misogynistic lyrics are a symptom of the growing tensions between black men and women.

The tensions, Kitwana asserted, began in the 1980s on college campuses during discussions about black male/female relations and were exacerbated by The Million Man March, and the Mike Tyson rape scandal. Dyson (2001) agreed that misogyny is symptomatic of deeper issues. He wrote:

Hip hop reflects the intent of the entire culture: to reduce black female sexuality to its crudest, most stereotypical common denominator...If hip hop has any virtue in this regard, it is that it uncovers what the larger culture attempts to mask. The bitch-ho nexus in hip hop is but the visible extension of mainstream society’s complicated, and often troubling, gender beliefs. (p. 176)

### *Sexism*

hooks (1994), Powell (2000) and Cole and Sheftall (2003) concurred that the sexism in rap mirrors patriarchal ways of thinking. Cole and Sheftall wrote that “at the core of the gender politics of hip hop is a pervasive and profound ambivalence toward Black women and the portrayal of relations between the sexes as primarily conflictual” (p. 195). The antagonistic male/female dynamic is perpetuated prominently in gangsta rap which glamorizes the pimp lifestyle. Coleman (2003) noted, “the pimp is the one who shines up some dark thing and takes her to market. He maintains control of his stable by circumscribing all behavior, shuttering her down to size” (p. 73). Oftentimes the message

hip hop activists or raptivists (Pough, 2004) send is a glorification of the “pimp” and “hustler” culture (Haugen, 2003; Stewart, 2005), and sex, relationships, drugs, partying and opposition to the establishment mentality (Phillips, et al., 2005). It should be noted, however, that rap music is not the only promoter of pimp life. Coleman (2003) discussed how movies, a National Public Radio (NPR) show, a magazine and other forms of pop culture have devoted time to discussing Pimpology.

Incongruously, a few male rappers that lyrically promote the pimp image such as Ice Cube, Jay-Z and DMX have introduced female acts such as Yo-Yo, Foxy Brown, and Eve, respectively, to dispense their own brand of “street feminism” (Ogbar, 1999; Phillips, et al., 2005). Phillips et al. pointed out, however, these female rappers, in some cases, perpetuate the same sexist stereotypes or femiphobia (Dyson, 2001) as their male counterparts. Cole and Sheftall (2003) discussed how women rappers are even willing participants in embracing the vulgar names and images directed toward females. Some women, Cole and Sheftall wrote, consider their use of the derogatory terms in the same ways as blacks who use the “N” word—as a form of empowerment. One female gangsta rap group *Bytches With Problems* (BWP) said they embrace the term out of anger and a desire to “make fun of the double standards” (Cole & Sheftall, 2003, p. 205). Morgan (2005) explained that some women do not refrain from the hip hop game just because of misogyny. Instead, they choose to “play and critique it [hip hop] as members while constantly raising the stakes on race and gender” (p. 433). In fact, BWP insisted that they were formed as a direct response to the misogyny of 1990s hip hop.

They stated,

You finally reach a point when you say, “It’s not working. Let me just come down to your level for a minute.” I know how to go back up when I

want to...the music women have been doing is, “Oh, my man cheated on me, and he left me. But I’ll be strong. I’ll love him, and he’ll come back.” We Want to hear, “F\*\*\* you, muthaf\*\*\*\*\*! I don’t need you!” That’s why we came up with this concept. It’s time for raw music like that.” (Morgan, 2005, pp. 51-53)

Morgan mentioned how “the power of women to discursively claim a space and challenge both patriarchy and feminism was born during the discursive struggles of the black power movement” (p. 430). Therefore, whether male or female, rappers and the listeners they represent are demanding that their voices be heard and their stories told. The need to “name their reality” (Ladson-Billings, 1998) has implications in the classroom.

### *Critical Race Theory, Hip Hop and the Classroom*

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the use of “voice.” Developed in the 1970s, CRT is a response to the race-based structures of oppression in the law and society that had not been adequately addressed in existing scholarship (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995). According to Crenshaw, Delgado, Lawrence, and Matsuda (1993) there are six unifying themes that define the CRT movement:

1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy.
3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law...Critical race theorists...adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.

4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

### *CRT Evolution*

CRT evolved from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) that exposes contradictions in the law and illustrates the ways that laws create and maintain the hierarchical structure of society. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained that CRT emerged because of discontent with the slow pace of CLS in critiquing and changing societal and legal structures that focused on race and racism. Scholars have posited that CLS could not offer strategies for social transformation because it did not incorporate race and racism into the analysis (Delgado, 1995a; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In fact, Yosso (2005) declared that not listening to the lived experiences and histories of those oppressed by institutionalized racism restricted CLS scholarship.

Because of these limitations, CRT scholars initially detached from CLS and began focusing on the unrealized promises of Civil Rights legislation (Yosso, 2005). This led to many of the early CRT critiques being framed in black vs. white terms. Later, Yosso claimed, “women and people of color who felt their gendered, classed, sexual, immigrant and language experiences and histories were being silenced” were included in the CRT movement (p. 72). For example, LatCrit, TribalCrit and AsianCrit are elements of CRT that represent racism and oppression in Latino/a, Native American and Asian American communities respectively (Brayboy, 2001, 2002; Chang, 1993, 1998; Chon, 1995;

Delgado, 1997; Ikemoto, 1992; Williams, 1997). In addition, FemCrit theory was developed to address feminist critiques of racism and classism experienced by women of color (Caldwell, 1995; Wing, 1997, 2000). Lastly, CRT was expanded by white scholars to include Whitecrit, which exposes white privilege and challenges racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997).

### *CRT in Education*

CRT extended further as it was applied to research in education as a way of examining the difficulties people of color face in educational institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT confronts and challenges traditional views of education in regard to issues of meritocracy, claims of color-blind objectivity, and equal opportunity (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2003). According to Solorzano (1997, 1998), there are five tenets of CRT that inform education theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches. In sum, Yosso (2005) wrote,

CRT in education [is] a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses. CRT is conceived as a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling. This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower. Indeed, CRT in education refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and centering the experiences of People of Color. CRT utilizes transdisciplinary approaches to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. (p. 74)

In short, CRT shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of people of color as disadvantaged and impoverished. Instead, it focuses on and learns

from cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (Yosso, 2005).

### *Storytelling*

A major component of CRT which recognizes and acknowledges the lived experiences of people of color is storytelling. Delgado (1989) and Tate (2005) posited that storytelling (or counterstorytelling) allows out groups to reject the corporate or institutional story in favor of their own versions which can counter the stories of the oppressor. Through counterstorytelling, people of color challenge the status quo by constructing their own reality. Ladson-Billings (1998) referred to this as a use of voice. Chavez and Haynes (2001) asserted that the use of voice is fundamental and “authenticates” who we are as human beings.

Dagbovie (2005) discussed the use of storytelling in rap and hip hop. He stated, “Hip hop artists... routinely account their own personal histories of resilience, which mirror the overall theme of perseverance against the oppression that dominates the African American experience” (p. 301). Haugen (2003) and Riley (2005) discussed storytelling in gangsta rap. They claimed that this form of rap is characterized by the artists telling their life stories in the form of narratives that often include images of drugs, murders, robberies, and sex.

Because of hip hop’s impact on young people, according to Daisey and Jose-Kampfner (2002) using storytelling in the classroom can allow students of color to change and challenge current social constructs. They further stated that educators must be willing to have a new view of instruction particularly because of changing demographics.

Caruthers, Eubanks and Thompson (2004) detailed how storytelling can be used in the classroom to discuss “undiscussables.” They define undiscussables as those topics considered taboo to address in educational settings. Caruthers, et al. (2004) cited race, ethnicity, class and gender as examples of taboo subject matter. They further stated that by dealing with “undiscussables” educators can address attitudes, beliefs and values which assist in the student reacculturating process.

Understanding hip hop’s wholistic influence on students’ value systems may be beneficial to educators. Brown (2006) cited how adolescents’ attitudes about school, material success, and appreciation of themselves and others seem to be shaped to a large extent by the music they listen to. She continued by stating that young people’s behavior as reflected in their clothing and jewelry styles, language, and automobile preferences, is attributable to what they see in hip hop videos and hear in the lyrics. Dimitriadis (2001) asserted that youth are increasingly relying upon hip hop music to create their identities. The images tend to have more influence than do teachers because, according to Phillips et al. (2005), rap and hip hop artists “speak to a population that is not defined in terms of academic credentials” (p. 259). With this population, they posited, street knowledge and street smarts are valued over formal education.

Rose (1991) further pointed out that young hip hoppers often find themselves in an antagonistic relationship with social institutions such as school systems. Therefore, the job of educators is then to bridge the gap between the academy and the street (Phillips et al. 2005). Ginwright (2004) suggested that, as it relates to education, hip hop has the potential to be transformative, and by gaining an understanding of hip hop culture, educators can attempt to reach all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Crossley (2005), Kitwana (2005), and Taylor and Taylor (2004) also discussed rap's multicultural appeal.

### *White Teens and Hip Hop*

Various authors, however, focused on white teens and hip hop. De Genova (1995) claimed that white teenagers (especially males) attraction to rap may be due in part to rebellion from their parents by embracing a part of black culture in which their parents both fear and find offensive. Kitwana (2005) also discussed the white parents' fear of hip hop and black youth culture. African American cultural critic and intellectual, West (1993), stated,

The Afro-Americanization of white youth has been more a male than female affair given the prominence of male athletes and the cultural weight of male pop artists. This process results in white youth—male and female—imitating and emulating black male styles of walking, talking, dressing and gesticulating in relations to others....[T]heir styles have become disproportionately influential in shaping popular culture. (p. 15)

Gibbs (2003) postulated that white America's nihilism drives its youth toward hip hop and thug culture. Stallybrass and White (1986) explained the attraction to socially marginalized cultures by writing,

Disgust always bears the imprint of desire. These low domains, apparently expelled as "Other" return as the object of nostalgia, longing, and fascination...the slum...the "savage": all these, placed at the outer limit of civil life, become symbolic contents of bourgeois desire. (p. 191)

### *Engaged Pedagogy*

Whatever the reason, the fact is hip hop has crossover appeal. Therefore, as educators, the question is not just how to engage African American students, but how to engage students who are products of the hip hop culture. Baker (1993) posited that rap needs more serious scholarly study as efforts are made to engage the hip hop generation



in the classroom. Mahiri (2000) postulated that elements of hip hop culture and rap music constituted “pop culture pedagogy” (p. 382) that could challenge current pedagogical frameworks. In a 1996 study, Mahiri analyzed how curriculum infused with rap and hip hop texts could be used to develop students’ writing skills. In a more recent study, Mahiri and Conner (2003) probed students’ reflections on violence to elicit their engagements with and perceptions about hip hop and rap and the potential influences of its images and messages of violence. Through a form of Critical Race Theory (journaling) the researchers allowed the students to tell their stories. One of the units provided significant data that uniquely revealed the students’ perspectives on violence through the lens of rap music and hip hop culture.

#### *Use in K-12 Classrooms*

Brown (2006) conducted research on 300 urban, suburban, and rural middle school students to determine the influence of hip hop on their feelings, thinking, and behaving. Brown allowed the students to tell their stories in their own words through the use of questionnaires and focus groups. She concluded that the children wanted adults to take more interest in learning about and understanding the importance of hip hop and rap in their lives. Additionally, Brown found that adults could learn from MTV’s use of sympathetic marketing to reach and connect with the hip hop generation. This marketing strategy promotes the following idea:

Immersion is a must—care about the things they care about, share their passions and pains, be sensitive to the issues related to them—if it’s a real concern or problem for young people, it should be taken just as seriously by you. (MTV Music Television, 2002, p. 32)

Aldridge (2005) also discussed how educators can use rap and hip hop contexts to engage students in the classroom by using lyrics from socially and politically conscious

rappers. Artists such as Public Enemy, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, the Dungeon Family, and dead prez promote an ideology of self-determination that could be useful to students, Aldridge posited. Several scholars and socially and politically conscious artists are advocating liberatory education and pedagogy to educate a new generation of hip hoppers. Liberatory education has its roots in the teachings of Carter G. Woodson, Anna Julia Cooper and W.E. B. Dubois. Aldridge wrote that Woodson, the father of African American history month, believed that education for African Americans should be realistic, rigorous, and firmly rooted in the culture and historical experiences of African people. This sentiment is shared by socially and politically conscious rappers such as Ishues and KRS-One who believe that ‘education and schooling as practiced in the United States denies students access to the truth and provides them with illusions rather than an understanding of reality’ (Aldridge, 2005, p. 240). On his album, Reality Flow, rapper Ishues included the following lyrics:

The only lesson teachers taught me in school  
Was propaganda and pictures of Jesus on the cross  
So, I despise what you teach me  
I despise you completely “Game Time” (Ishues, 2003, track 3).  
Rap group dead prez, included the following lyrics on their album Let’s Get Free:  
They schools can’t teach us s\*\*\*  
My people need freedom  
We trying to get all we can get  
Telling’ me white man lies straight bulls\*\*\*  
They schools ain’t teach’ us what we need to survive  
The schools don’t educate,  
All they teach the people is lies “They Schools” (dead prez, 2000, track 3).

The accompanying video for the song shows images of nooses in the background to equate U.S. education with slow death for students who are subjected to it. In addition to critiquing U.S. education, Aldridge (2005) discussed how dead prez encourages African

Americans to take control of their own education and urges students to think long term about their future.

Rapper Nas is another artist who espouses liberatory education on his album. On his album, *God's Son*, he raps:

Be, be 'fore we came to his country  
We were kings and queens, never porch monkeys  
There [were] empires in Africa called Kush, Timbuktu, where every race came to  
get books, To learn from black teachers who taught Greeks and Romans  
Read more learn more, change the globe  
Ghetto children, do your thing  
Hold your head up, little man, you're a king  
Young Princess when you get your wedding ring  
Your man is saying "She's my queen." "I Can" (Nas, 2002, track 7)

Franklin (2005) commented that "creative educators [can] employ various aspects [such as the above lyrics] of Hip hop culture to teach young people history, language, and writing skills. He cited the "Tommy Johnson Hip hop Clown Academy" in Los Angeles as one way to connect with urban kids. The Academy, the subject of the movie "Rize", teaches kids, through dance, to "channel pain, anger, and even aggression into a positive release and alternative to violence" (pp. 188-189). The movie also employs elements of CRT as it allows the parents and students of the Academy to tell their stories in their own words. Franklin (2005) wrote,

In the film the only voices we hear are those of Tommy, the parents, and the children who describe the positive things that surround the dance academy—the sense of family, the discipline, the sharing, the competition, the spirituality. Over and over the children declare, "if it was not for clowning and krumping [a form of hip hop dancing], I would have been a victim of the deadly streets of LA. (p. 188).

#### *Use in Higher Education*

Brown (2006) Mahiri and Conner (2003), Franklin (2005), Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) all focused on hip hop and rap in K-12 educational institutions.

However, hip hop has also been taught on college and university campuses. A number of hip hop scholars, such as Michael Eric Dyson, Todd Boyd and Tricia Rose, dubbed the “Ph.D Diva of Hip hop by the New York Times, currently teach hip hop courses on university campuses. In addition, Schuh (2005) and Schweitzer (2006) cited campuses such as The University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign and Northeastern University teach hip hop. Moreover, Stanford University maintains a hip hop archives which includes the names of colleges and universities that offer courses on hip hop ([www.hiphoparchives.edu](http://www.hiphoparchives.edu)).

The archives also listed a variety of academic disciplines in which hip hop is taught, such as film and cinema studies, communication, history, English and political science. Additionally, Pough (2004) discussed how she used rap and Third-Wave Feminism in her Introduction to Women’s Studies course. She argued that the class offered an “ideal space to observe the ways in which rap influences diverse groups of people” (p. 194). She further posited that the use of rap in the classroom gives students an example of a cultural space where they can participate in a dialogue that is also occurring outside of the classroom (p. 195). She continued by stating,

Rap provoked a discussion that went beyond the dismissive “this is sexist, therefore this is bad” response. It complicated the discussion and disrupted dismissive attitudes. And rap, more than any rock song, MTV alternative video, cartoon, or real-sex talk show, offered the perfect way into discussions on intriguing intersections of race, class, and gender that I felt would spark the passionate and lively debates I desired. It was also a form of music I believed all my students had strong feelings about. (p. 199)

hooks (1994) referred to this form of instruction that draws students into the

discussion as engaged pedagogy. hook’s view of this form of pedagogy was derived from her disdain for teaching that reinforced “existing systems of domination” (p. 18).

Primarily used in feminist classrooms, engaged pedagogy challenges the “power relations

associated with masculinist knowledge structures” (Browne, 2005). Browne further explained that this form of pedagogy is characterized by incorporating students’ personal lives into the classrooms and creates learning environments based on faculty/student interactions.

Classrooms taught using this philosophy acknowledge a connection between the university setting and everyday life practices. Berry (2005) discussed her use of engaged pedagogy to teach African-American pre-service teachers to improve the quality of their experiences. Berry allows the students to tell their own stories through the use of autobiographies or memoirs. “Telling the story is important,” she wrote, “however, equally important is what is remembered and what is selected to be told from that memory” (p. 36). Marx and Pennington (2003) also used CRT strategies in an experiment with white pre-service teachers in an effort to improve their understanding of children of color and to address White Racism.

Faculty also benefit from engaged pedagogy and storytelling. hooks (1994) wrote,

Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into the classroom discussion it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing silent interrogators (p. 21).

Peterson (1999) discussed an example of how sharing her own experiences allowed for greater dialogue and connection to her class:

One young woman was very resistant and did not respect me as her teacher. One day in class she blurted out that what I was teaching her was not useful. She had real problems: she was in an abusive relationship, her children needed school clothes, she had no money and everyone she went to for a job turned her away....[H]er question to me was “How can you tell me anything?....with your good education and nice job?....her anguish

opened up an opportunity for true dialogue. I was able to explain...that I had been denied opportunities and faced rejection. I shared some of my story, my willingness to do so gave others courage to share theirs as well. Trust developed out of that one incident, and we were able to learn from one another. (p. 89)

### *Engaged Pedagogy Criticism*

Browne (2005) discussed how engaged pedagogy is not without criticism. She wrote, “engaged teaching can be time consuming and often contradicts the need to compartmentalize one’s life to maintain a distance between work and personal life” (p. 348). Guy (2004) wrote, however, that it is important for adult educators to become educated about their students because, usually “white knowledge about black culture and identity is not the result of direct personal interaction or even of indirect contact through vicariously lived experiences with African Americans” (p. 53).

### *Urban Pedagogy*

An awareness of the other is particularly important as the student/faculty relationship is cultivated. Guy continued by stating that urban adult education is imprinted with and shaped by the cultural and ideological representations of blackness in the development and delivery of programs and services. Therefore, he posited, adult educators oftentimes subscribe to an assimilationist and color-blind approach to working with students. Brown (1993) argued that traditional education programs, regardless of their approach, incorporate an Anglo-American cultural bias. He continued by stating that many African American scholars assert that black children are systematically miseducated in traditional educational programs. Because of this, Guy (2004) advocated the formation of an effective urban pedagogy. Haymes (1995) agreed. He stated, “A pedagogy of black urban struggle linked to a representational pedagogy would recognize

that black self contempt is the result of blacks essentializing or biologizing their bodies, using white supremacist definitions of race and blackness” (p. 145).

Whether the creation of an urban pedagogy is the answer to reaching the hip hop generation is debatable; however, Amstutz (2001) argued that something must be done to bridge the “cultural gap” that exists between adult educators and adult learners. In order to bridge the gap, educators will have to address the pedagogical barriers to African American student engagement. In order to address the barriers, educators must first admit that there may be barriers that interfere with African American student success.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

#### *Critical Race Theory and Educators*

Larson and Ovando (2001) asserted that “educators are often not aware of the biased constructions that frame their perceptions and interactions with others [because of a] pervasive acceptance of difference blindness” (p. 64). This failure to recognize differences, oftentimes, as Young (2003) wrote, leads to “attempts to understand and solve problems using objective and value-free methods” (p. 281). Mendez-Morse (2003) further wrote that “acknowledgment of the influence of color is an aspect of the interwoven oppressions characteristic of Chicana feminism” (p. 168). Critical race theorists would argue that biases, difference blindness and lack of acknowledgment are all aspects that lead to the disengagement of students of color in the classroom. With this in mind, educators must utilize culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, to engage the hip hop generation, in general, and African American students, in particular. Researchers such as Gay (2000), Howard (2001), and Ladson-Billings (1994) described culturally relevant pedagogy as a way to meet the academic and social needs of diverse

student populations. Gay (2000) asserted that a culturally relevant pedagogy uses "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant...It teaches to and through strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming" (p. 29). Howard argued that perhaps the most important goal of a culturally relevant pedagogy is to increase the academic achievement of students of color.

### *Summary*

Based on the research, the literature review revealed the role of hip hop and the impact it has on society. Whether politically conscious or materialistic, feminists or misogynists, hip hop impacts the way students view the world. Because of the racial, gender, and class disparities among K-12, college and university faculty and their students, several researchers discussed the importance of educators using culturally-relevant pedagogy to engage African American students.

The research showed the significance of student engagement on the performance of all students, particularly students of color. Studies showed how students who were more engaged in the classroom were more likely to pursue post-secondary education and persist to graduation. Several researchers focused specifically on the importance of engaging African American boys in the classroom. Along these lines, historical and current treatment of students of color was mentioned by researchers as playing a role in minority student engagement or lack thereof.

In an effort to engage African American students, researchers noted how some educators have turned to incorporating hip hop into their curriculum. Evidence showed how K-12 teachers used hip hop themes from social and political rappers to connect



students to their African roots. Research also showed how colleges and universities across the country are using hip hop in the classroom and across disciplines. The use of hip hop engages students by allowing them the opportunity to “name their own reality” by telling their own story.

The use of storytelling is a primary tenet of Critical Race Theory and a common element of hip hop music. This research study focused on whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increased African American student engagement. In Chapter Three, the research design and methodology will be presented along with the research questions, population sample, data collection methods, and data analysis. In Chapter Four, the analysis and results of the data collected are presented. The findings, conclusions, recommendations and implications for future research are discussed in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Research and Methodology*

Students who had both strong educational goals and institutional commitment are more likely to persist to graduation (Tinto, 1993). Perna, Redd, and Swail (2003) discussed how students who were more socially integrated in the campus and obtained role models and mentors were more likely to persist. However, attitudinal and structural barriers (Opp, 2002) negatively impacted the degree to which African American students could become integrated, and thus committed to the educational institution. Perna et al. (2003) wrote that efforts to increase the college-going rate for students of color had been successful with post-secondary enrollment rates for students of color similar to white and Asian students. However, they asserted, though access rates had improved, students of color had still not attained the same completion rate as their white and Asian counterparts. In 1996, 46% of African Americans enrolling in a four-year institution had received a degree compared to 67% for whites and 72% for Asians (Perna et al., 2003). Opp (2002) stated that African-Americans were also underrepresented in the Associate degree completion rates in comparison to their enrollment in two-year colleges. The purpose of this case study, then, was to discover whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increased African American student engagement at a college located in the South.

Culturally-relevant pedagogy was defined as the use of elements of hip hop such as lyrics and themes. Engagement was defined as the amount of interest and effort students expended in school (Marks, 2000). The study was viewed through the lens of

Critical Race Theory (CRT). A key element of CRT was the use of storytelling that allowed research subjects the use of their own “voice.” Because of this, a qualitative approach which “views social phenomena holistically...[is] broad...[and] encompasses the narrative” was used (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). Included in Chapter Three was a statement of the research questions, the rationale for use of a case study approach, and a description of the population and sample. Also included was a discussion of the data collection and instrumentation, and methods of data analysis. Finally, the researcher’s own biases and assumptions were articulated followed by a summary.

### *Research Questions*

The overarching question guiding this study was “Is hip hop educational?” The first concept examined was how culturally-relevant pedagogy was used in the classroom. The researcher sought to determine whether the societal and community themes mentioned in hip hop were emphasized. The second concept examined was whether the use of hip hop themes impacted African American student engagement. Of particular interest was how the students expressed their engagement (i.e. through journaling, poetry, political/social activism, etc.). A third concept examined was the impact of African American faculty on African American students. The resulting research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom?
2. Are the societal (racism, sexism/misogyny, feminism, materialism) and community (crime, drugs) themes mentioned in hip hop discussed in the classroom? If so, how and why?

3. What impact does hip hop pedagogy have on African American student engagement?
4. What impact does the African-American faculty member have on African-American student engagement?

#### *Rationale for Use of a Case Study*

Qualitative case study research seeks to answer the “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 1993). The researcher chose a case study approach to answer the question of “why” is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom, and “how” does hip hop pedagogy impact African American students. Secondary questions focused on “how” African American faculty impact African American student engagement? There are benefits to case study research. Merriam (1988) argued,

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meaning that expand its readers’ experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base. Because of its strengths, case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study. (p. 32)

Another benefit of case study research is that it allows the researcher to obtain the language, or voice, of the participants (Creswell, 2003). The emphasis on the participant’s personal voice was important since the empirical goal was to understand the actual experiences and beliefs of the participants. Because this study was viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which has as a key element the use of storytelling, the use of a case study was most appropriate. Case study research is also beneficial when the purpose of the research is to improve and generate new practice, in

this case, the incorporation of elements of hip hop into the college curriculum. Another benefit is that case study research is ideal if a goal of the study is to effect change, as case studies are more receptive to change than survey or experimental research (Collins & Noblit, 1978).

Creswell (2003) discussed the role of change and empowerment in critical research and that critical theory perspectives focus on empowering people to overcome the constraints placed on them because of their race, gender, or class. Creswell (2003) posited that,

[Critical] researchers believe that inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda. Thus the research should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life. Moreover, specific issues needed to be addressed that speak to important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation...[T]he "voice" for the participants becomes a united voice for reform and change...[which may] mean providing a voice for these participants, raising their consciousness, or advancing an agenda for change to improve the lives of the participants. (p. 10)

Using a case study approach, then, was necessary since one of the research goals was to effect change in the classroom, particularly as it related to the empowerment of the hip hop generation. There were, however, limitations of case study methodology (Merriam, 1988).

Because of the emphasis on rich, thick data, a considerable amount of time was required in the data collection and analysis phases. Another time-related limitation was that the case study was bound by time-frames of both the participants and the researcher. (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1993). Another limitation was that documents needed for analysis are hard to find, or are protected information that is not available to the public. The

researcher was able to overcome this limitation because of the public availability of many of the documents, and due to the faculty members' willingness to provide the necessary information. Another limitation is that because the research occurs in the natural setting, the researcher may be seen as intrusive. Additionally, participants who are being observed may behave differently than they would normally when they are not being observed. Researcher bias may also negatively impact the study. Therefore, to address the limitations, the researcher used multiple methods of data collection such as observations, interviews, and document analysis in order to assure the validity and reliability of the data (Creswell, 2003) and to triangulate the data. In addition, the researcher used member-checking (taking the final report or descriptions back to the participants for feedback) to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings (Creswell, 2003). Subsequent sections in this Chapter discussed ways the researcher addressed other limitations of the case study approach.

### *Population and Sample*

A single case study approach was used to examine the classrooms of one African-American faculty member at a historically black university who incorporated elements of hip hop in his classes. The researcher purposefully selected (Creswell, 2003) the faculty member because of the number of English courses he had designed that infused hip hop elements, as well as his knowledge of hip hop, and his regular written contributions to an on-line hip hop magazine. In addition, the faculty participant was chosen because of his knowledge of the interrelationship between hip hop and African American history. The researcher learned of the faculty participant from the Stanford University Hip hop Archives which lists the hip hop-themed classes that are taught across the country. In

addition, the researcher read articles written by and about the faculty participant that focused on his experiences with and knowledge of hip hop. The articles also detailed the faculty participant's experiences designing the classes and the processes he went through with the various curriculum committees in order to get the classes approved. Furthermore, one article discussed the faculty participant's goal of developing future courses on hip hop that are, like his current courses, interdisciplinary.

Lastly, the faculty participant was chosen because not only does he teach courses on hip hop, but he is also actively involved in the hip hop community and fully immersed in the culture. The researcher believed that his past and current experiences would greatly benefit the study by providing greater insight into hip hop's impact on African American students. The researcher believed, therefore, that based on the background of the faculty member and his commitment to diversity in the curriculum, the faculty member was the most appropriate choice.

Two African American students who were enrolled in the faculty participant's classroom were purposefully selected as participants based on their responses on the short-answer questionnaire. The criteria for students selected for interviews included those over 18 years-old, who indicated a strong interest in and knowledge of hip hop, and who were willing to participate in an interview. Because the focus of the study was on the impact of hip hop on African American student engagement, a final criteria was that only United States born black students were included in the study. The short answer questionnaire asked the students to identify their racial/ethnic background, age, and level of interest in the course subject. The students were also asked to indicate on the questionnaire if they were interested in participating in an interview.

The case study was conducted at a historically black university located in the South. The researcher referred to the university by a pseudonym, Greenvalley University. The University was one of more than 15 institutions in a multicampus university system. GreenValley was a public, comprehensive institution granting undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees in business and economics, education, nursing, technology, and engineering. In 2005, the university enrolled over 11,000 students, 93% of whom were African American. Fifty one percent of the Greenvalley faculty was African American, as were 64% of the staff and 90% of the administrators.

The researcher chose this campus for several reasons. First, the university vision statement focused on its commitment to a learner-centered environment that used interdisciplinary approaches to engage students. Secondly, because the researcher's focus was on African American faculty who used hip hop to engage African American students, Greenvalley was one of few campuses that the target research participants were each available in large numbers. The abundance of African American students as well as the faculty participant's knowledge and experience with hip hop greatly benefited the study. Lastly, the classes taught by the faculty participant had hip hop as a core component of the course as opposed to just a few hip hop elements.

#### *Data Collection and Instrumentation*

The researcher was obligated to "respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the [participants] (Creswell, 2003). The first ethical guideline that drove this study was the inclusion of the informed consent (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Elements of the consent form included the following: the right to participate voluntarily, the purpose of the study, the procedures of the study, the right to ask questions and obtain the results of the study



and have their privacy respected, the benefits of the study for the individual, and the signatures of the participants and the researcher (Creswell, 2002). The researcher also included other ethical considerations such as securing permission from the Greenvalley University administration to conduct research on the site. Additionally, the researcher was cognizant to minimize intrusion at the research site, and actively sought the inclusion of research participants throughout the research process. (Creswell, 2003)

To ensure that the participant's rights were not violated, the researcher first contacted the faculty member, via email, to find out if he would be interested in participating in the study. The faculty member was provided a basic description of the research project which included the purpose of the study and a description of how he and his students would be involved. After the faculty member expressed an interest, the researcher contacted the Greenvalley University Office of Research to find out the institution's research policies and procedures. The researcher learned that prior to conducting research, a Greenvalley University Institutional Review Board application had to be completed. Additionally, the researcher had to secure a GreenValley University faculty sponsor to oversee the research project. Furthermore, the researcher had to submit research materials that included the faculty and student informed consents, student questionnaire, and interview protocol. Additionally, the researcher had to show proof of successful completion of the University of Missouri-Columbia's Institutional Review Board training. Upon approval by the University of Missouri, the researcher was issued a letter granting permission to conduct research at Greenvalley University.

After permission was granted, the researcher conducted two semi-structured face-to-face one hour audiotaped interviews with the faculty participant at an on-campus

location. The faculty member was given a pseudonym. His actual name was kept confidential, with only the researcher and dissertation supervisor knowing his true identity. The faculty participant was given an informed consent form which explained the purpose of the study and that his role was voluntary. The faculty member was not compensated for his participation in the study. In addition, he was asked to provide course documents such as class assignments and course syllabi for review and analysis.

In addition, a short-answer questionnaire was administered to the students in the faculty participant's classes. The faculty member taught a maximum of four classes each semester with a total enrollment of 120 students. Based on the information gleaned from the short answer instrument, two students were invited to participate in one semi-structured face-to-face one-hour audiotaped interview. The criteria for students selected for interview included those over 18 years-old, who indicated a strong interest in and knowledge of hip hop, and who were willing to participate in an interview. Because the focus of the study was on the impact of hip hop on African American student engagement, a final criterion was that only United States born black students were included in the study. The short answer questionnaire asked the students to identify their racial/ethnic background, age, and level of interest in the course subject. The students were also asked to indicate on the questionnaire if they were interested in participating in an interview. To protect the identity of the student participants, the instructor was asked to leave the classroom while the researcher administered the short-answer questionnaire. Instead of putting their actual name on the questionnaire, the researcher asked the students to select their own fictitious name. The researcher then reviewed the

questionnaires and selected the students, based on the aforementioned criteria, for interview.

The researcher provided no compensation to the student participants. However, the faculty participant offered extra credit to those students who volunteered to participate. The faculty participant also offered extra credit to students unwilling to participate. The extra credit offered to these students was of equal effort to the extra credit offered the student interview participants.

Interviews were useful in that they allowed the participants to use their own voice. A limitation of the interviews was, however, that they occurred in a designated place other than the natural classroom setting. Some attention was needed to locate a neutral place on campus for the participants to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and views. Another limitation of the interviews was that the presence of the researcher may have biased the participant's responses. (Creswell, 2003) Therefore, the researcher reviewed the interview transcripts, observation field logs, diary and field notes, and documents and artifacts, to look for patterns that emerged in order to triangulate the data. (Fowler, 2004) The researcher also provided the participants with the transcriptions for their review to ensure accuracy.

### *Data Analysis*

Qualitative data collection and analysis must be a simultaneous process (Merriam, 1988). Stake (1995) asserted that data analysis begins at no particular moment. Therefore, the researcher gathered and analyzed data concurrently, pausing periodically to fill in the gaps in order to get the most holistic picture possible. The researcher ended the official data collection process upon noticing duplications and repeats of data.

The researcher then began to develop codes based on those suggested by Bogdan & Biklen (1998). The first category was the setting/context codes which provided a general description of the research site and of the participants. Next were the situation codes which included a description of the participants' worldview and definition of the setting. Next were the activity codes which identified the behavior and activities that occurred on a routine basis. Event codes were also used to describe infrequent occurrences. Included also were strategy codes that referred to the methods the faculty and students used to accomplish things. Lastly, relationship codes were included that indicated formal and informal relationship structures and patterns of behavior.

After the codes were determined, the researcher began the process of document analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Each interview transcript was reviewed separately and assigned the appropriate code. As patterns emerged, the researcher developed categories and placed information from the transcripts into the appropriate category. Next, the observation field logs, notes and diary were reviewed and assigned codes. The information gleaned was then placed into the previously created categories. Next, the researcher examined the documents and artifacts and assigned the appropriate codes. The information was then placed in the appropriate category. Lastly, the researcher reviewed the student questionnaires and followed the same process of code assignment and placement in the most appropriate category. The individual review of the transcripts, observation logs, and documents allowed the researcher to look for consistency and triangulation (Fowler, 2004). Through triangulation, the researcher was able to support or contradict the data (Bogdan & Biklan, 1998).

### *The Researcher's Biases and Assumptions*

The researcher recognized and discussed her personal biases, thus bringing a degree of honesty and acknowledgement that all inquiry is value laden (Mertens, 2004). Because the researcher was responsible for interpreting and drawing conclusions about the data and filters the information through her own personal lens, the issue of reliability and validity were of concern. Unlike quantitative research methods, qualitative research is not quantifiable. Therefore, rather than traditional validity and reliability measures, quantitative researchers seek believability based on coherence, insight and instrumental utility (Eisner, 1991) and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Moreover, because with qualitative research the researcher was the primary data collection instrument it was necessary that the researcher identify personal assumptions and biases at the beginning of the study (Creswell, 2003). This was particularly important in this case since the researcher assumed that Greenvalley may be more tolerant of hip hop pedagogy than predominantly white institutions. The researcher also assumed, based on a brief experience teaching at a historically black college and university, that the Greenvalley climate would be particularly sensitive to the needs of African American students and therefore would have greater success with retention. Every effort was taken by the researcher to remain objective. In addition, the researcher made deliberate attempts to disconfirm the researcher's own interpretations (Stake, 1995). The bias may, however, have shaped the way the researcher interpreted the data that was collected. The researcher ensured, however, that all conclusions were based on data that have been triangulated.

### *Summary*

Provided in this chapter was the rationale for a description of a case study to investigate the impact of culturally relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, on African American student engagement. A discussion of the persistence and graduation rates of African American students in comparison to their white counterparts began the chapter. To follow was a brief review of the theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory, and one of its key elements, storytelling. The next section included a discussion of the research questions, followed by a rationale for the use of a case study. The researcher then discussed the population and sample, data collection and instrumentation, data analysis, and researcher biases and assumptions.

Contained in Chapter Four is a description and analysis of the data. A summary of the findings, the limitations of the study, the implications of the study and the need for future research are included in Chapter five.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Presentation and Analysis of Data*

Marks (2000) defined engagement as the amount of interest and effort students expend in school. Therefore, the purpose of this investigation was to add to the knowledge base an understanding of the role of culturally relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, in the classroom and its impact on African American student engagement. Presented in this chapter is a review of the study design, data collection methods, conceptual underpinning, research questions and process of data analysis. In addition, a description of the campus setting and an introduction of the faculty and student participants will also be discussed.

The study was viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory which has as a key element the use of storytelling that allows research subjects the use of their own "voice." Therefore, in keeping with that concept, the researcher will present the data, when possible, using the participant's own words.

### *Study Design*

The single case qualitative study, conducted at a historically black college, examined how one professor incorporated hip hop themes into his English courses. The faculty participant was purposefully selected (Creswell, 2003) because of the number of English courses he had designed that infused hip hop elements, as well as his knowledge of hip hop, and his regular written contributions to an on-line hip hop magazine. In addition, the faculty participant was chosen because of his knowledge of the interrelationship between hip hop and African American history and desire to bridge the

gap between the hip hop and Civil Rights generations. Lastly, the faculty participant was chosen because not only does he teach courses on hip hop, but he is also actively involved in the hip hop community and fully immersed in the culture.

Two African American students who were enrolled in the faculty participant's classroom were purposefully selected as participants based on their responses on a short-answer questionnaire. The students were selected for interviews if they were over 18 years-old, United States born black students, indicated a strong interest in and knowledge of hip hop culture, and were willing to participate in an interview.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

Before beginning the onsite interviews, the researcher secured permission from the faculty participant to conduct research in his classrooms and to have access to his students and course documents. The researcher then completed the formal Greenvalley University institutional review board application which included providing information about the purpose and extent of the study. Greenvalley University assigned a faculty sponsor, Dr. Gwendolyn Locke [pseudonym], and then granted conditional approval pending full institutional review board approval by The University of Missouri-Columbia. Following permission by the University of Missouri-Columbia, the researcher traveled to Greenvalley University to begin collecting data. Informed consents were signed by the faculty participant (Appendix A) prior to classroom observations and interviews. In addition, informed consents were signed by all students (Appendix A) in the classrooms prior to completing the short-answer questionnaire (Appendix D). Moreover, the two students selected for one-on-one interviews also signed informed consents. Following the interview, participants received a verbatim transcript of their



interview and were provided the opportunity to modify and/or clarify their recorded responses.

The data were triangulated through on site recorded interviews which were member checked, field observations, which were recorded in a field log and research journal (Appendix B), and examination of documents such as course syllabi and assignments (Appendix E) and new course development forms (Appendix F). The short-answer questionnaires were handed out in two of the four classes for a total of 63 students; thirty-seven were returned and from that, two students were purposefully selected to participate in a one-on-one interview that was conducted in a conference room in the English Department. The faculty interview was conducted in the faculty participant's office. In addition, informal interviews were conducted with the faculty member's area coordinator; the vice chancellor of academic affairs; and several students, employees and community members.

### *Conceptual Underpinnings*

During the study, themes and categories emerged through the conceptual framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education. According to Solorzano (1997, 1998), five tenets of CRT inform education theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches. In sum, Yosso (2005) wrote,

CRT in education [is] a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses. CRT is conceived as a social justice project that works toward the liberatory potential of schooling. This acknowledges the contradictory nature of education, wherein schools most often oppress and marginalize while they maintain the potential to emancipate and empower.

Indeed, CRT in education refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and centering the experiences of People of Color. CRT utilizes transdisciplinary approaches to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community. (p. 74)

### *Research Questions*

Based on the conceptual underpinning, the following research questions were formulated:

1. How is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom?
2. Are the societal (racism, sexism/misogyny, feminism, materialism) and community (crime, drugs) themes mentioned in hip hop discussed in the classroom? If so, how and why?
3. What impact does hip hop pedagogy have on African American student engagement?
4. What impact does the African-American faculty member have on African-American student engagement?

After the participant interviews, document analysis and field observations, the data were analyzed to determine themes and categories.

### *Process of Data Analysis*

All data were examined and assigned the following codes (Appendix C): Faculty (F), student participant 1 (S1), student participant 2 (S2), classroom document (classdoc), university document (campdoc), general document (gendoc), interview (I), field observation 1 (FO1), field observation 2 (FO2), field observation 3 (FO3), field observation 4 (FO4), field observation 5 (FO5), field observation 6 (FO6), field observation 7 (FO7), field observation 8 (FO8), field observation 9 (FO9), field observation 10 (FO10), and field observation 11 (FO11). Further codes included the

following: setting/context (setco), situation (sitcom), event (eventco), strategy (stratco), and relationship (relateco).

*Setting: Greenvalley University Campus Climate*

Greenvalley University (pseudonym) is a historically black college and university (HBCU) with a strong history of pride and protest. Symbols of pride can be found throughout the campus in the form of pictures of alumni, faculty and staff, current students and members of the board of trustees on walls in various academic buildings. The student union is a virtual museum filled with pictures of former athletes and a glass enclosed case filled with historical sports artifacts. One wall of the student union is covered in a mural that pays homage to the historically black fraternal and sorority organizations on campus. The walls of the student union cafeteria are covered with pictures of famous alumni who were instrumental in historic civil rights protest events and activities. Included in the student union is a convenience store and commuter student center along with an arcade area.

In the administration building near the office of the Provost, the walls are covered with pictures of current administrators as well as members of the board of trustees and famous alumni. Pictures of students are also displayed on the walls and in the hallways of the admissions building.

African American students with various afrocentric hairstyles such as braids, dreadlocks, kinky twists and afros, (in addition to weaves and relaxers), mingle throughout the campus. Students dressed in the typical student uniform of jeans, sweatpants and t-shirts, walked among fellow students dressed in professional attire such as dress pants, shirts and ties, and skirts and heels. As the researcher viewed the students,

whose skin tones ranged from, as some blacks call them, shades of 'high yellow,' to midnight black, it became clear that this, too, is a very diverse environment despite the fact that practically all of the students are of African descent.

In the quad area and in the student union where students lounge on the sofas in the lobby area and hold conversations in the cafeteria area, the atmosphere seemed more family reunion than college campus. On one occasion, a group of approximately 40 students stood in a circle outside of another campus cafeteria holding hands and praying. After which, a young African American male stood atop a concrete wall with a Bible in his hands holding a sort of impromptu sermon.

The campus ticket office and bookstore area also seemed like popular student gathering spots. On one occasion, the line was practically out the door as students waited to purchase tickets for the upcoming homecoming hip hop concert.

The campus is fairly large, so to accommodate students, the university has an on-campus shuttle service that makes stops at designated locations throughout the day. Shuttle routes and schedules, along with visitor's parking passes, can be retrieved from the campus safety office located in the parking garage.

Value and unity seemed to be widespread themes across the campus. During a discussion of the upcoming homecoming festivities, the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Locke, commented that everyone participated in the floats, including the custodial staff. Dr. Locke also said that at Greenvalley University, "we value everyone. We may not value everyone everyday, but we do value everyone." She went on to comment that though the campus is not perfect, there is a feeling that everyone is working toward the same goal of educating African American students.

The spirit of unity is also illustrated in the annual campus wide “Text in Community” series. Each year, the campus selects a book that each incoming freshman class is required to read and each campus department is strongly encouraged to incorporate either into faculty classes or through educational programming. Past book selections have included, *The Souls of Black Folks*, by W.E.B. Dubois, *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest Gaines, *Invisible Man*, by Richard Wright, and *The World is Flat*, by Thomas Friedman. In addition, when possible, the author is invited to campus to speak about his or her work.

Signs of progress abound on the Greenvalley campus. Construction sites dot the campus as new buildings are being erected. The University also boasts a newly-constructed Alumni Center. The faculty participant is also housed in a new edifice complete with a skywalk linking it to an older structure. This new classroom building also includes an approximately 40 person lounge area with a plasma screen television set that hangs from the wall, a student library area, a coffee area, and classrooms equipped with smart boards. In addition, the glass-enclosed building has elevators equipped with an electronic voice that announced arrival to a particular floor.

The English department, located on the fourth floor, is part of the College of Arts and Sciences. According to the faculty participant and his area supervisor, who is African American, there are 14 tenured faculty members in the department, 10 of whom are white and six are either African or African American. The English department chairperson is African and the Dean of the College is African American, as are most of the lecturers and support personnel.

The doors and windows of the faculty members' individual offices are covered with flyers and posters of upcoming and past events. Bulletin boards in the department hallways display articles of faculty accomplishments, media coverage, and upcoming lectures series. The department also included a small conference room, and a work/break room where faculty mailboxes, copy machines and coffee makers are located. During the observations, faculty gathered in the workroom to discuss various topics including the recent protest rally in Jena, Louisiana. Despite the department's welcoming and open climate, Professor Hart (pseudonym) said that he still encountered obstacles as he navigated the curriculum development process.

#### *Campus climate and Hip Hop Pedagogy*

According to Professor Hart, the reaction ran the gamut. He detailed his experiences:

I got everything from “are you really going to let him do that here?” to “sounds really good and interesting,” to a lot of professors, especially the tenured faculty members, didn't have an understanding of what was currently being done at other universities as it pertained to hip hop. And for them this was almost like finding...the Hope Diamond or something, [because] they've never seen this thing before and they didn't even know that other universities had hip hop-related courses.... But then there were a group of faculty who – a good amount of faculty – who saw the courses as an easy ‘A.’ So I had to spend some time kind of dissuading those opinions [that] the courses would either lack academic rigor or that they would be the kind of listener appreciation courses that you might see in a music appreciation class. Because we're in the English department we had to make sure that they had academic rigor, had to make sure that they had a strong writing component and that there was serious critical thinking and reasoning. A lot of [my task] was... trying to educate, especially the tenured faculty members and the faculty senate who would actually end up giving approval for the course. [I had to make] sure that they were aware that this is going to be a standard course at a four-year university that is trying to become a research one university. They had some real questions about how exactly was I going to be able to infuse some academic rigor in a course that talked about hip hop. I even had some professors that suggested that students wouldn't take the course. There was one professor

specifically that said something to the effect that “don’t they already know hip hop?” and so his thing was because they, some of these students, were born in ’84 and ’85, that they’d listened to this music almost solely for all their lives that they... wouldn’t want to take the class. And so trying to [help] that [particular] professor and those like him, to understand that there’s a whole gulf of information about the [hip hop] culture in terms of it’s development, in terms of how it has been affected by and effected contemporary society, that there was enough meat there that I could actually feed the students on it and that it would maintain an interest through a semester. And I think I was able to do that.

Professor Hart discussed that some of the faculty reservations about his hip hop courses might have been due to the university’s conservative nature. He theorized that the conservative views may be due in part to its Civil Rights roots, and to its desire to become a research I institution. Professor Hart also discussed his fear that hip hop would “go the way of” jazz in which it is embraced by predominately white institutions, but virtually ignored by historically black colleges and universities. He commented on the irony of an African American creation being embraced by whites, but unappreciated by the people and institutions that invented it.

Assisting Professor Hart as he worked to get his classes approved was his area supervisor, Dr. Mary Helen Patrick [pseudonym].

He added:

My hip hop courses had to fit into the African American concentration so they could be delivered by the English department. And she was my liaison with the Faculty Senate in terms of making sure that I understood the type of commentary that they were going to need in terms of when I spoke to them and in my packet. Number one, what should be in the packet – she pretty much just gave me step by step do this do that. Dr. Patrick really did kind of take me by the hand and walk me through this process, which ended up being not an arduous task at all. A lot of the stuff I’d already done in terms of trying to sell the class to the department so it was just a matter of going back through and maybe changing a sentence here or adding some commentary there in order to, as best I could, kind of head off any negative commentary or negative criticism that would have been made that would have prevented the course from making it.

During an informal interview with Dr. Patrick, she confirmed that it was necessary for her to assist Professor Hart through the curriculum process due in part to internal opposition in the English department. Some of the white faculty, who hold the majority of the tenured positions in the department, were adamantly against Professor Hart's classes. Though Dr. Patrick stated that she is not necessarily a fan of the music, she attended a conference in Chicago where a session focused on hip hop as worthy of study because of the connection to the African oral tradition. She also said that she considered the classes to be a perfect vehicle to discuss various literary themes. The Associate Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Dr. Mark Thomas [pseudonym] provided the researcher with the paperwork needed to introduce a new course into the curriculum [Appendix F].

### *Participants*

#### *Faculty: Professor Shawn Hart*

For the purposes of this study, the faculty participant will be referred to as Professor Shawn Hart. A self-avowed "Hip hop Head," Professor Hart is solidly and proudly entrenched in the hip hop culture. With a penchant for wearing jeans, t-shirts and tennis shoes, the tall, slightly built professor with high cheek bones, piercing eyes, and dread-locks that reach midway his back, is oftentimes mistaken for a student, which he feels is a compliment.

Professor Hart is an intense, deep thinker who is politically astute displaying his strong black consciousness with his wristbands with the colors of the African flag. Despite his youthful appearance, Professor Hart is a 1960s throwback, with an old soul



and anti-establishment attitude who peppered his conversations with anecdotes. For example, in describing his first experiences with hip hop, he recounted,

My mom used to send me to [Washington] D.C. and other people used to go somewhere for the summer, somewhere to keep us out of trouble and stuff. And in July one of my friends had been in New York and he – this is when we were all carrying the jam boxes – and he came down the street and he was playing My Melody by Eric B and Rakim. And this had to be 1982 or 1983. And I remember going good God, what is that? I mean I knew it was rap, but I was like this dude is...doing some different stuff. He's doing all kinds of lyrical stuff in here and that hooked me. I remember that being the moment that I was like, man, I've got to find out some more about this. But I remember going up to the dude, it was an older fellow in my neighborhood and at the time young Cats like me ain't really talk to older Cats. I remember saying like what is that? He was like, 'that's Eric B and Rakim, that's a WBLS mixed tape.' And I was like, what? I sat there following him around the whole neighborhood just listening to the songs and there were some other songs on it as well, but I kept wanting to hear that. And for me, that became the moment. And I said man, this hip hop stuff is something else. This rap is something that I really like. And that was the moment for me.

Fortunately for Professor Hart, he was able to parlay his love for hip hop into his chosen profession. After graduating with a Bachelor's of Art in English and a Master's of Art in English and African American Literature from Greenvalley University, Professor Hart, 38, returned to his beloved alma mater to teach Freshman Composition and Humanities courses. After seeing a campus-wide call to develop new courses, Professor Hart decided to develop English courses that infused hip hop themes as a way to “provide for the students an opportunity to read, write,[and] think critically about hip hop culture and music.”

Professor Hart feels personally connected not only to the subject matter, but also to his students. He recounted his story of coming from the housing projects and to becoming a college professor to explain his affinity for English and hip hop:

I grew up in [a] housing project, [with a] single parent, [the] second of three kids. [My] mother... was part intellectual and all disciplinarian who understood the benefit of education. [In the] third or fourth grade I took a battery of tests... did well, [was labeled] gifted and talented [and was sent] to go to school with white people. I would be the only black guy in my class and then I would get back on the bus and go back to the projects, and that happened from fourth grade until I graduated high school. And it really did help shape who I am. I was lucky enough that I saw kind of both worlds. [In] the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they took the gifted and talented classes from [my hometown] to New York, and I saw *Cats* with the original cast of [theater production] 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, I [saw] the boroughs of New York City, and it just really did kind of indoctrinate me about the city, about art, theatre, and I don't think I would have had the same I guess propensity to study art and to ... critically look at art if it hadn't been for my experiences in those – as I used to call them – white people classes. In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade,... I was the only black guy in the class and I remember we were doing our 11<sup>th</sup> grade research papers. I was looking at [English] poets and my [white] teacher said 'why don't you do something about people in your own community?' And at the time I didn't know anything she was talking about because she was the first person, educator, to ever talk to me about black literature. And so she talked to me about Langston Hughes and said, well look up some stuff about Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston.. And so I did. I read *Native Son* and *Invisible Man* and *Go Tell it On the Mountain*, and I just got to where I was just voracious about black literature. And so I can really thank her for that because without somebody in the school making it okay I doubt if I would have been able to do it on my own. And so reading that stuff and then simultaneously being in a hip hop [breakdancing] crew... I think I've been locked... into the culture from that moment forward.

Due in part to his experience having a teacher who cared enough to connect him to his African American roots, Professor Hart wanted to do the same thing for his students. He stated,

One of the things that I would like to close [is] the generation gap. I think the civil rights generation doesn't understand how... the hip hop generation is beholden to them, and that we understand that we're beholden to them. I think that for a lot of the civil rights Cats, they honestly believe that we don't give an 'f' about them. That we don't understand their struggle, that we don't understand how their struggle allowed us to do some of the things that we're able to do today. But we do. I don't think they understand our struggle. And our struggle now in terms of understanding institutional racism, in terms of understanding the limitations of the civil rights movement. That's one of the things that I

think civil rights Cats [generation] don't deal with openly, and that is the failures of the civil rights movement. Clearly there are a lot of triumphs of the civil rights movement, but there are also failures as well. And I think that one of the failures that they can't see is how their inability to maintain black institutions led us to where we are today. And for hip hop Cats, we see that pretty clearly. For those of us that went to integrated schools all our lives, we saw what happened when we're in a classroom and now this openly racist teacher always calls on the white kids and never calls on us. And seeing the sting of the kind of...institutional racism and [the] educational environment that [that creates] can really disrupt one's ability to learn. I don't think that Civil Rights Cats really saw that coming. They really did want it [integration] to work, and so they didn't see the underbelly. They didn't want to, they couldn't. I would imagine if you had been through the water hoses and you've been through the marches, you don't want to think that that was for naught. I mean so I think that they just couldn't see it and so they raised us, our generation, to not worry about that stuff. As a result... there's a disconnect between my experience and my mom's experience. But it's the same experience, except my mom's not talking about it.

*Student 1: Pearl*

A senior at Greenvalley University, Pearl (pseudonym), 23, is a theater major from Atlanta. Unlike Professor Hart, the short, thin-framed, studious young woman is not a hip hop head. While she is very interested in hip music and culture, she does not watch much of hip hop music on television or listen to it on the radio. She stated,

I'm not, in terms of hip hop culture, whatever you want to call that, I'm not a person who is like just living in it day to day. I have an interest in hip hop and I feel like it was kind of born in me in a certain way. But I did not grow up listening to hip hop all the time. My first rap CD was, I think it was Kris Kross. So we didn't listen to it that much in my house so there's a lot that I don't know and I don't listen to a lot. I don't listen to the radio that much. I don't watch MTV that much. There's a lot that I don't know.

Pearl's attraction to hip hop, she says, stems from a personal connection to what it stands for. She stated,

I did not grow up rich. I would not say I was poor, but I grew up in the city in Atlanta, like in the inner city. And my family didn't have a whole lot of money. I took what I had and created my own style out of it. If I didn't have that many clothes, stuff was getting old, then I would cut it up

and make it fly [look nice] regardless. What I had I was going to make something hot out of. And I feel like that's what hip hop is. People took what they had and didn't just say, well, I'm left with the leftovers. They made something that other people envied and they created a style out of it. So that's ultimately my interest in the culture. I feel like it's kind of an attraction of like spirits I guess.

Pearl enrolled in Professor Hart's Hip hop Discourse class as an elective. She stated,

No, it's not required at all actually. I took it, one, [because] I like English. I like the subject of hip hop. I like the professor as a teacher and because I'm interested in how to use hip hop and mix it with other art forms. So I want to know more about it.

Pearl is planning to attend graduate school to major in drama therapy in either New York or California after graduation from Greenvalley University, and was excited about learning more about hip hop. She asserted,

[I want to gain] a better understanding of the origins of hip hop, how it's developed throughout time, where it's likely to go in the future, the different aspects that are shaping what hip hop is today. And then for myself, I want to be able to take all that information and synthesize it into something that I can apply to my major and my field of study.

Pearl was also concerned about bridging the hip hop versus America gap. She stated,

Hip hop is blamed for everything. Anything that has to do with youth, they put hip hop in it some kind of way. So I think you need to talk about it in an academic setting and do like some real analysis of it if you're going to blame it for everything.

Pearl asserted that because hip hop was created from poor people and black and Latino populations, it is, she said "an easy target." That's not to say, " she added, " that there aren't some things kind of...negative [about hip hop culture]. She continued,

I think that it's going to have to be on our part [hip hop generation] to really let [our] defenses down and be open and honest, even when they [older generations] are not ready, because somebody has to do it first. I think...both sides are too ready to jump down the other one's throat...but somebody has to be open and ready to have honest communication and I

don't think it's going to happen from their side[the civil rights generation.] I guess you have to kind of get rid of talking about it from sides [though].

Though Pearl does not describe herself as a devout 'hip hop head,' she is, nonetheless, fascinated with the culture. She stated,

For some reason people are attracted to it [hip hop culture]. For some, there's something about it that makes people passionate and I think that's something that's lacking in society. And I want to kind of figure out how to take the elements of hip hop that are attracting people and making people want to learn. What is it about hip hop where people can recite all these lines of these songs? What is it about hip hop that makes people want to read articles? What is it about hip hop that makes people care that this artist, like, writes their own rhymes [lyrics]? Like that's [writing one's own rhymes] an important thing in hip hop and to me that shows that people are engaged in it intellectually and not just are interested in the beat. What are the elements of it that can be applied to making people a better person?

*Student #2: Frank*

For the purposes of this study, the second student participant will be referred to as Frank. An English major, and Army reservist with a stocky, football player build who hails from the south, Frank, 23, is heavily into hip hop and poetry. "I consider myself a poet first and foremost. I'm into poetry very heavy," he stated. Though he aspires to make it big as a hip hop artist, Frank is troubled by some aspects of hip hop. He stated,

A lot of people are consuming stuff that they hear on the radio and then people such as [socially-conscious] rappers from the past such as Talib Kweli and Common, people of that nature, they are overlooked or considered whack by the masses of young people because that's not what you're hearing on the radio. And so it's like you only feed into what you hear on the radio and it's so, like these days people don't go all out of their way to listen to different things because they just go by what they hear on the radio. If it's not on the radio they are not going to listen to it. And so I'm against that fully. And so I feel like if I ever do become known as far as being an emcee is concerned I probably won't get that much exposure on the radio because I am not going to consume the radio. I'm not going to "sell my soul" to sell records.

Like Pearl, Frank enrolled in Professor Hart's Hip hop Discourse class as an elective. "I just wanted to really take it [the class], because I'm very into hip hop," he stated. Also, like Pearl, Frank was attracted to not only the subject matter, but the instructor as well. He asserted:

[Professor] Hart, for the most part...I mean, I'm just so into what he's talking about because his knowledge is like so broad on the subjects [and] the aspects of hip hop that you can't help but to learn from listening to him.

Like Pearl and Professor Hart, Frank, too, is concerned about the divide between the hip hop and Civil Rights generations. He stated:

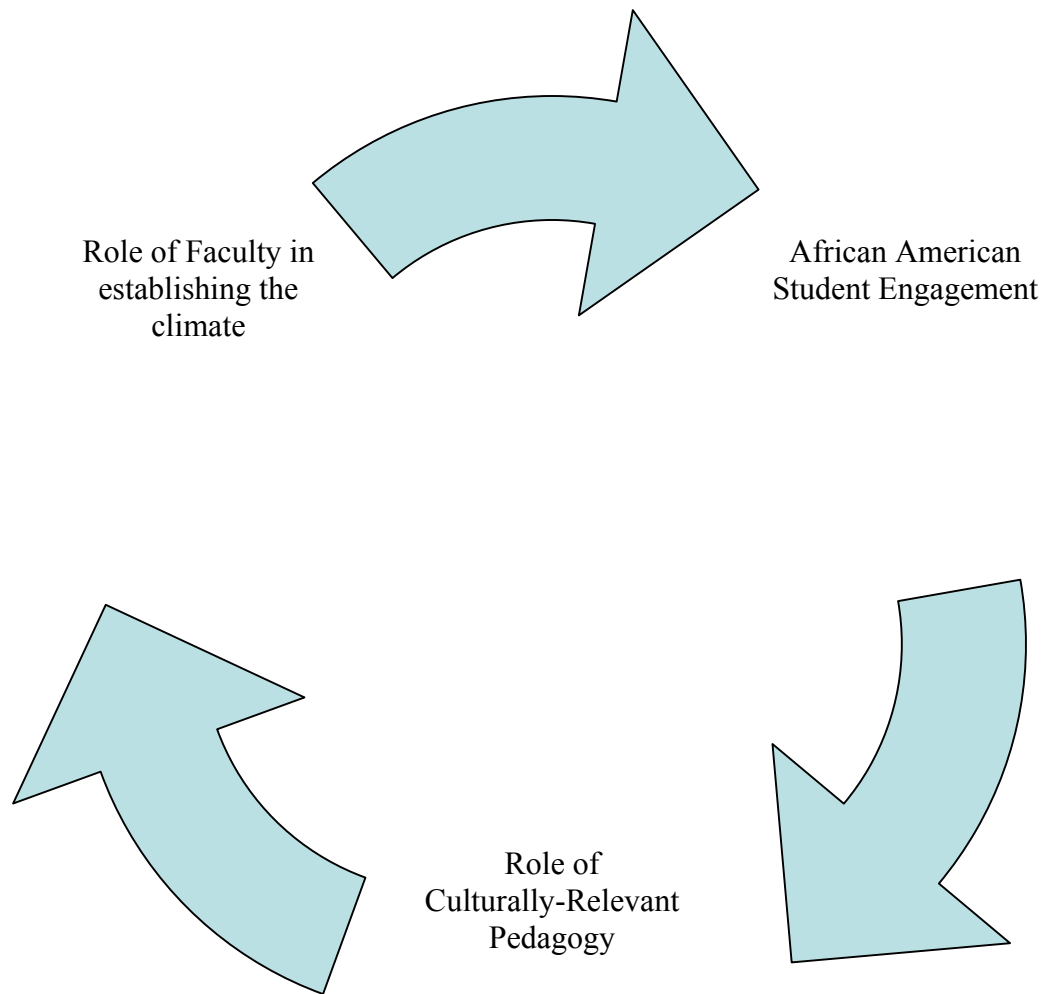
I know where the problem first started. It's like, okay, you fight so hard to get to a certain point, okay? Then after you fight and it's accomplished, what's next? So you are at a standstill. You know what I'm saying? And I think after the civil rights was over, it was at a standstill. Okay, we got voting rights. We're not segregated anymore. We're equal now. So now what? And it was just at a major standstill. That's where the disconnect comes into play. And let's say [if] the civil rights movement went on from [there] to now. It would be more of a connection. It would be more of an embodiment of all people embracing one another as far as the generations are concerned. It wouldn't be a major generation gap as it is. But due to the fact that the [Civil Rights] mission was accomplished, now what's next?

Frank continued by discussing how the disconnect has contributed to problems between the two generations.

I think too many people are stuck on tradition. Like, I live with my grandma. Me and her used to clash all the time because you can't raise me as you did your children. It's a different timeframe. The same things don't apply. You see what I'm saying? And so initially you have grandma saying you...kids ain't nothing like we were...and so for them to say that, they already like push us in the category as if we can't be helped. Or we're more difficult than ever. I've heard a lot of older people say, 'you all got all these opportunities now and you all don't use them,' which is true. But we don't understand the significance of...the opportunities. I mean, we hear about the history. We read the books, we see the documentaries on what has taken place beforehand, but I mean we still don't really know the

significance of where we have come from...I mean, I understand it was a harder struggle for them and I commend them for enduring that struggle for us because without them there would never be us.

Using the data set and the predetermined codes, the following themes emerged: 1). Role of culturally-relevant pedagogy; and 2) Role of the faculty. These two themes related to the level of African American student engagement are depicted in Figure 1.



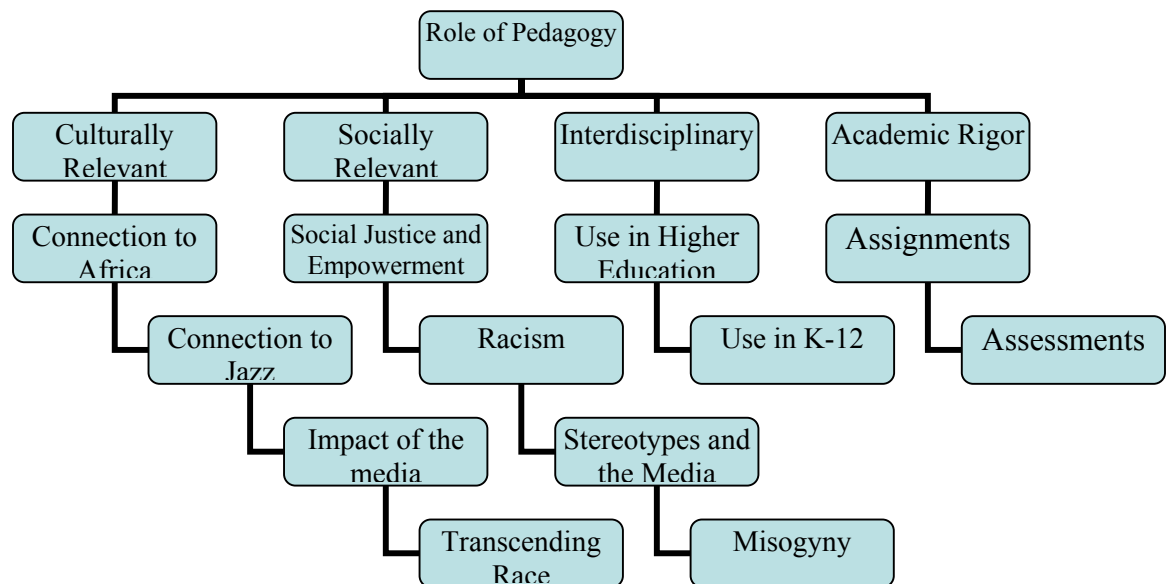
*Figure 1.* Factors contributing to African American Student Engagement.

*“Intellectuals who memorize everything, reading for hours on end, slaves to the text, fearful of taking a risk, speaking as if they were reciting from memory, fail to make any concrete connections between what they have read and what is happening in the world, the country, or the local community. They repeat what has been read with precision but rarely teach anything of personal value. They speak correctly about dialectical thought but think mechanistically. Such teachers inhabit an idealized world, a world of mere data, disconnected from the one most people inhabit.”*

*Paulo Freire*

### *Role of Pedagogy*

The first theme to emerge from the data was the role of pedagogy to engage African American students. The student participants were engaged through pedagogy that was 1) culturally relevant; 2) socially relevant; 3) interdisciplinary; and 4) academically rigorous. In Figure 2 these themes are illustrated.



*Figure 2. Theme 1: Role of Pedagogy.*



*Culturally Relevant: Africa, Jazz, Media, and Race*

*Connection to Africa*

Professor Hart stated that faculty with students of color can benefit from using hip hop in their classes. He asserted,

I think that hip hop is a pedagogy that [can be used] to better serve your students, especially if they meet some of the criteria – if they're urban, if they're black and brown, if they're interested themselves, even they could be white and just interested. I think that it's almost inherent upon you to try to infuse that pedagogy into your classroom to better serve them.

Furthermore, he stated, in order to accurately talk about hip hop culture, faculty must be cognizant of the people who created it, and the people who maintain the culture. To this end, Professor Hart infused throughout his classes a discussion of hip hop's connection to Africa. In several class sessions, Pearl recounted how the students discussed an essay by ethnomusicologist, Cheryl Keyes that detailed the connection between hip hop emcees and West African griots and bards. She stated,

The [essay] was talking about how bards were said to have to release Nyama [which means] malevolent force whenever they spoke. But another way to translate it was Nyama Be Kuma La which means energy of action in speech. And they were talking about how the energy of action can either be a positive or a negative thing depending on how it's used and how it's shaped. I thought that was really relevant to hip hop.

The use of essays such as this, assisted Professor Hart in showing students how the history of hip hop reached further than the boroughs of New York City. Professor Hart also infused elements of the African tradition of *call and response* into his class lectures. Like a black preacher on Sunday morning, Professor Hart used statements such as “talk to me,” and “c'mon now” to encourage students to respond and voice their opinions in class. In fact, during portions of the classes, the student-teacher spirited interactions resembled church services in African American communities across

America. A large percentage of the students raised their hands to ask questions or make comments. Oftentimes, students seemed so enraptured by the discussion, classmate's comments, and animated delivery style of the instructor, that they had difficulty holding their comments until their hands were acknowledged.

### *Connection to Jazz*

In addition to the connection to Africa, Professor Hart infused discussions of the history of jazz and how it relates to hip hop's rise in American society. Both student participants discussed an article by Amira Baraka, "Jazz and the White Critic," (Appendix E) and how it allowed them to understand how hip hop connects with other music genres that originated in the African-American community. Frank stated,

I've learned from being in Dr. Hart's class [that] jazz emerged... from the concrete and rose up. It was considered something bad because [it] emerged from the juke joints where the prostitutes were...and a lot of smoking and drinking and things were going on. They [whites] considered jazz bad because everything that it emerged from was of a negative nature. But they [jazz musicians] spun it around to make it a positive thing. That's the same thing with hip hop.

### *Impact of the Media*

The discussion of the perceptions of hip hop was, according to the participants, directly related to race relations in America. According to Professor Hart, most actors and artists, are allowed the benefit of the doubt; the characters they portray are just that, characters, and not who they are. That is not the case, however, when it comes to hip hop artists, who are predominately African American. He explained,

You can go watch Arnold Schwarzenegger and he can act like the Terminator but he can be Governor. [People] have to be able to distinguish between the two. I think that because of maybe racism or racist attitudes that hip hop artists aren't given that same second look.

Professor Hart blamed the media for the perceptions that many people have of hip hop. The media, he said, “see hip hop through this particular lens and it’s not the same lens that they’re viewing other things.” Frank agreed that the media are to blame for negative perceptions of hip hop. He stated,

Society and the media try to pinpoint everything or blame everything on hip hop. A black athlete or a black musician or anybody black that’s in a significant position goes to jail or gets in any type of legal trouble, they try to like spin off hip hop as being the reason for it when that’s not the case at all. You can’t blame a whole culture for the mistakes of what one person did.

The negative media portrayals along with racism may, according to Professor Hart, interfere with faculty seeing the educational benefits of hip hop culture. He argued,

I think that some teachers are scared of using hip hop in their classroom because they just don’t see how they have blinders on. And it’s the same thing I think with Black studies early on that, you know, the idea that we’re teaching them about what really went on in slavery, ‘Oh they’re going to kill all the white people.’ That’s totally inane to think. Just crazy to think.

Professor Hart stated that racist views of hip hop culture also negatively impact the way some faculty interact with black males. He stated that faculty may perceive the guy with the chain around his neck and baggy pants as a thug, but not know that this same person is an engineering student with a 4.0 grade point average. Or, as Frank pointed out, the “collegiate thug” just may be white, which may be, according to Frank, the reason for hip hop’s negative attention. He asserted,

[Professor] Hart has really, like, opened my eyes to see that it’s, like, to a certain degree they [whites] don’t want hip hop to succeed...especially when you have suburban white kids now consuming hip hop music. That’s where the problem comes into play. At first it wasn’t really a problem because they [whites] said, ‘Oh, it’s just a fad. It’s not going to last long.’ But then all of a sudden when they [whites] realized, ‘Oh, no, my white kid is listening to [rap group] NWA now. My white kid is listening to Tupac now. Oh, my goodness, we’ve got to stop this.’ So that’s when

they [whites] started protesting. I remember vividly when I was, like, eight or nine years old watching, like, CNN or NBC...when [rapper] Snoop Dogg's first album first came out. They [whites] had, like, this major protest against it and they collected a bunch of Snoop Dogg CD's and crushed them and burnt them. I guess they felt as if it was an abomination.

Despite the negative image, according to Frank, hip hop is just a reflection of America. He stated,

Whether it be through dance [rap], through [socially] conscious [rap], or party [rap]...these songs and these lyrics are just a reflection of what many of us [African Americans] feel every day. That's why we are so in tune with some of these rappers that come out. That's why we like the rappers that come out because we can relate to them and they can relate to us.

### *Transcends Race*

Though rap can trace its roots to Africa, Professor Hart emphasized in his class lectures that hip hop transcends race. In one class discussion, the students discussed the various cultures that have influenced the elements of hip hop. From the soul and Caribbean flavor that inspired the music, to the Brazilian, martial-arts influenced Capoeira dance that inspired the break dancers, hip hop has many cultural influences that make it possible to connect with people of all backgrounds. Professor Hart posited,

One of the things that I try to get across to my students in hip hop is that although it might have been a black and brown creation, we can't disrespect white involvement, clearly Latino involvement, nowadays Asian involvement...and British involvement, and Canadian involvement. And that when we talk about that [hip hop] community that we're not just talking about hip hop Cats [guys], that a lot of the stuff that is affected by and does effect hip hop culture comes from the greater community. And so to understand the culture...you've got to understand the macro society.

Professor Hart said that he also had feminist and openly gay students who enjoy the culture despite the sometimes misogynistic and homophobic lyrics because they, too, consider themselves part of the hip hop culture.

He stated,

I think with one of the things that hip hop does provide is a sense of community. I've been to situations where I'm the only black person in the room and I'm talking hip hop. And these people that are talking hip hop with me are hip hop. I mean, I used to feel like, 'Ah, what's a white guy doing talking about hip hop, he don't really feel it.' But now I personally know a lot of white Cats that can run down lyrics to you, that...know the culture, they [know] what's up, what's good, they got the language together, they got their style on.

Professor Hart stated that hip hop is art and once art is created, it is for everyone.

He also discussed how the sense of community that hip hop provides could positively impact race relations. He stated,

Author Bikari Kitwana talks about hip hop as doing more work for civil rights in our country than anything else in terms of really connecting people born [after] 1984 or 1985. They don't have the same racial constructs that I have, that my parents had, that my older brother has, that even my younger sister, [who is] 32, [has]. They don't have the same racial construct that we have because they've seen white Cats and black Cats and Asian Cats and Latino Cats [together].

Professor Hart also discussed hip hop's global impact. He recounted,

I was in Ghana, West Africa, and we're driving. And in Ghana, West Africa, they still have the remnants of colonialization wherein a lot of the houses still have this like 12-foot high white wall. Just a straight stucco wall and then on top of the wall there are shards of glass and this is when the British colonizers were trying to separate themselves from the native Africans. Well now, like the gate is knocked down but the wall is still there. And on one of those white stucco walls, in 1999, I saw spray painted [the late rapper] '2 Pac [Tupac] lives.'

Professor Hart's West African experience, combined with the U.S. impact of hip hop, have all inspired him to use hip hop to connect with and engage his students. He stated:

[My] goals are to provide them with an opportunity to think, write, and read critically about hip hop culture...[and] to actually understand the history, literary connections and social relevance of hip hop, not only in our country but worldwide. So one of the goals is I want to make sure that

they see the macrocosm that is hip hop culture. That yes, [there is]misogyny, but look at the big picture. So my hope is that through looking at things from a macrocosmic standpoint, that they're better able to critically talk about the culture.

*Socially Relevant: Social Justice and Empowerment, Racism, Stereotypes and the Media, and Misogyny*

### *Social Justice and Empowerment*

In addition to making his classes culturally relevant, Professor Hart infused issues of social relevance into his classes through class discussions and assignments that focus on the various hip hop themes such as social justice and empowerment, racism, stereotypes, the media, and misogyny.

During a class discussion of the recent Jena 6 protest in Jena, Louisiana, Professor Hart remarked that participating in the march may not change a system of oppression, but it will show America that African Americans understand the law and the power of mobilization against injustices. He discussed his experiences at previous empowerment rallies such as the 1995 *Million Man March* and the 2005 *Million More March* in which he took a group of students. Professor Hart also compared the Jena 6 rally to marches in the Civil Rights movement. He discussed how modern day marches differed from those in the past where marchers were subjected to racist police and sprayed with water hoses. He discussed how in his experiences, the marchers displayed a sense of confidence and no fear of retaliation by whites. In fact, he noted, the Jena 6 marchers, many of whom, he said, were college students between 18-24 years old, almost had a defiant "I wish they [racists] would" attitude about the possibility of racial retaliation by the Jena residents. Professor Hart asserted that this "don't mess with me" attitude may be attributed, in part, to hip hop culture.

The classes also discussed institutional racism and the need for focusing on empowerment and social awareness. In connecting this to hip hop, Professor Hart, again, commented that “it (hip hop) has given young people a don’t [mess] with me mentality.” He continued by saying that young people, through hip hop and rallies, can see that they have worth and can stand up for themselves. These types of class discussions resonated with Frank. He stated,

I think this class, it’s like an opportunity. It gives you a breath of fresh air from the regular vigorous assignments that you may have in a regular class. . . . I think, like, for the most part with this class it’s more laid back and it gives you opportunities to really voice your opinion on what’s going on around you. Because everything that you are talking about in other classes are things that happened way before you were even born. You know what I’m saying? So the opportunity to actually be able to speak of current events that affect you and I every day, I think that gives people more of a breeding ground to express themselves in ways that they probably would never have been able to express themselves in other classes.

#### *Racism, Stereotypes and the Media*

The recent Jena 6 situation in Jena, Louisiana, was a topic of discussion during this researcher’s observations. Professor Hart, along with two busloads of Greenvalley University students, traveled to Louisiana to protest the prosecutor’s decision to charge six black males with attempted murder for beating a white youth. The marchers were upset that while the black boys were charged, three white youths who had hung nooses around a tree in the weeks preceding the beating, were not charged with hate crimes. The University not only provided the use of the football team’s chartered busses, but also provided the students, many of whom lived in the resident halls, with money to spend for food during their trip. During the class observations, Professor Hart recounted his

experiences in Louisiana. Students participated in the discussion by providing commentary about their feelings of the perceived racism experienced by the Jena 6.

In addition to the Jena 6 march and rally, Pearl discussed how her class has discussed the [football player] Michael Vick animal abuse case and how hip hop was targeted as being responsible for making pit bull breeding popular. Professor Hart stated:

I read a column by Jason Whitlock, who happens to be a black guy, that was titled *Vick Must Reject Hip hop Culture*. I think it was in [the] *Kansas City Star*. I made copies and gave it to my students. There was a line that says Michael Vick got into breeding vicious pit bulls because hip hop made it the cool thing to do. That's a really inane statement. That just suggested dog fighting hadn't been around for eons.

During a class discussion, however, Professor Hart took Vick to task for his “inappropriate behavior,” and discussed the unruly behavior of African Americans on a recent ESPN show to discuss the Vick situation. Many in the audience were mugging for the camera and behaving loudly and unruly. This, Professor Hart stated, gave a “real ugly look” for blacks that perpetuated stereotypes. Like a parent, he admonished the students to, in reference to Vick and the ESPN audience, “be sure you don't act like that.”

### *Misogyny*

While topics such as commercialism and monopolies, and violence and gangsta rap lyrics are popular topics with students, according to Professor Hart, nothing ignited conversation better than a discussion of misogynistic rap lyrics and female images in hip hop videos. He asserted,

Any discussions about sexuality, and I'm not talking about having sex, but sexuality in terms of gender roles, and gender roles in music – specifically images of women in the music and images of male/female interaction in the music. Those are always really rambunctious discussions in the class.



In fact, students have incorporated this theme into their class projects. Professor Hart stated,

In my...class they have to do presentations. They'll take one of the elements...and they'll give a 15 minute presentation either individually or in a group. Most of them use Power Point. Often times they attack issues like drug culture in hip hop. One guy did misogyny in hip hop and he split-screened the [hip hop artist] Nelly Tip Drill music video with some images of African's during slavery. And his premise was that Nelly is perpetuating the same negative stereotypes of the black male through this Tip Drill video with [Nelly] swiping the credit card down the posterior of the sister [black woman].

Overall, Professor Hart's classes are evenly split between males and females.

However, in some classes, the males outnumber the females. This researcher observed that often the women remained silent while the males actively participated in the conversations. Pearl stated that though she is engaged in the class, sometimes she does not become actively involved in class discussion. She stated:

Sometimes I sit back and listen and don't get verbally involved in the discussion because, I'm not, in terms of hip hop culture...I'm not a person who is like just living in it day to day.

Frank agreed that most females are not as intimately connected to hip hop as males, and therefore, that may explain why they are not as actively engaged in the class discussions. He asserted:

Hip hop...I think like...throughout history, the history of the world in general, it's like as far as anything goes the foundation was based upon males, period, you know. And hip hop was founded and based upon males. And I'm not saying that women weren't involved, but they weren't as on the forefront as the male figures are. A lot of women are instrumental to the way things go in the hip hop culture. I mean you've got women in class that may listen to hip hop, but I doubt truly that they are deep into it as I am.

When asked how she would become involved in the class during the upcoming sections on hip hop and misogyny, Pearl stated that she would probably remain quiet

because she did not want to be seen as “the angry female in the class.” Frank said he also was apprehensive about voicing his opinions on misogyny in class for fear of what others may think. He stated:

Now see, this dates back to my poetry class. There were plenty of times that the subject of women came up and I really didn't like to voice my opinion on it because I didn't want to sound, I don't know, I just didn't want to sound like, 'Oh, what, I can't believe he said that.' I feel like this at the end of the day. If you put yourself out there a certain way, that's how people are going to perceive you. Like, I mean, if you act like a woman, they'll treat you like a woman. If you act like a ho, they will treat you like a ho. And so I feel as if women are going to go and be in these videos, expose themselves, shake their booties or whatever, then that's what they are going to be perceived as. You cannot get mad at a male for feeling the way he does if that's what you're doing in the videos, if that's what you're portraying in the songs. I mean I've seen this from just like being at different concerts and things of that nature. Groupies will do anything to get close to a superstar. And when I say anything that means anything. So, I mean, I know that doesn't speak for all women out there, but I mean you can't get mad for the male to feel the way he does. And then these songs are reflections of what males know and go through, you know what I'm saying? I don't think it's in terms of just trying to degrade women. You know what I'm saying? It's just how you feel and that's what you know. I mean, and I feel like if it offends you, you don't have to listen to it. You don't have to listen to it at all.

Frank's views and past discussions with Professor Hart concern Pearl as it relates to the issue of misogyny. She stated:

I would say that is probably the subject that [Professor] Hart and I have had problems with the most. I remember last year they had a forum with a couple of people [on the panel], Rosa Clemente [hip hop activist] was there and that's who he [Professor Hart] was talking about. I was just trying to get him to see that it wasn't her being overly sensitive. I think that that's something that men don't get sometimes is that they don't understand it's not us just being emotional and it's not just us being picky, but this is something that we live with day to day. We are not only black, we are women and black. We have to deal with that every day. Even the most non-sexist, non-misogynistic [man], they still--sometimes it's very easy to get frustrated with them, just like with a white person who is surely not a racist. They sometimes do things that because they grew up with their privilege, they don't even realize that it is a privilege and men don't realize that the things that they have are privileges.

Pearl's pro-female views were shaped by her early experiences. She recounted:

That's one of the things that I think frustrates me the most is I went to--my other college was an all-girls school. And after being there--of course before there, but after being there you see things kind of in a completely different light. And just my experiences here, people have very kind of strict gender roles in their mind. And they can be like Professor Hart. He hears what you say, but I just feel like with most people, not just him, most men, it's kind of not patronizing, but they hear you, they understand up here [gesturing to her head], but it's not really going to change all that much. I could be wrong. I could be wrong.

Professor Hart though, agreed that some hip hop music is misogynistic, but believes that the issue should focus on society as a whole, and not just rap music. He stated:

Yes, it's misogynistic. But then you've got to talk about...why do women make pennies on the dollar to men?...Why do women only get to vote in 1921 or whatever it was? Why are women still...seen as inferior in our country? Not just through hip hop Cats, but this is the case at IBM and any other multi-national corporation. And so of course hip hop is going to have some aspects of that. And why is hip hop so sexual? Well, why do you use sex to sell toothpaste or automobiles or anything else? Our country, for whatever reason, is a hypersexual country. And so of course this art form that comes out of this [country] is going to talk about it. Does it mean that all of this is justified or that you shouldn't be critical of those artists that are hypersexual in that manner? No. But it means that you've got to look deeper. And I think that when people talk about hip hop, and I honestly believe it has something to do with the way people look, that this is a black and brown business...that it's seen through... that negative lens. [That's] how [radio personality] Don Imus can make a really debased statement and use hip hop as the reason why.

In addition to making his classes culturally and socially relevant, Professor Hart's classes are also interdisciplinary and he works hard to make the classes academically rigorous.

*Interdisciplinary: Use in Higher Education, and use in K-12 Classrooms*

*Use in Higher Education*

Both Frank and Pearl agreed that Professor Hart's classes feel like more of a hip hop class with English infused in it as opposed to an English class with hip hop. They also agreed that the class incorporates a wide range of disciplines that can be useful when students are in other classes. According to Pearl:

I see it more as a hip hop class with an emphasis on English. I [also] see it almost as a history class honestly. More of a recent history class because it's not focused a lot on music and it's not a music appreciation type class. It's not like that at all. We haven't listened to anything this semester. So I think of it almost as like a history class.

She added that in addition to history, other disciplines are included in Professor Hart's class as well. She stated that "English... sociology definitely, psychology and the arts in general [are also infused in the class]. [We] kind of talk about aesthetics. So you talk about graffiti... different artists, dance, [and] other forms of performance." Like Pearl, Frank also thinks that history is woven throughout Professor Hart's class. He asserted:

History [is] definitely [in the class]. Because I mean if you don't know where you've been you don't know where you're going and you don't know what you're going to do in the process of trying to get there. You've got to have... a blueprint. And I think that's why it's very vital for him to actually give us all this information about the initial African drums and jazz and things of that nature [that made] hip hop what it is today.

Professor Hart designed the class to include other disciplines in order to teach students how hip hop is connected to all aspects of society. He stated:

I have [what I call a] hip hop matrix (Appendix E). For me, hip hop is a hybrid culture that [blends] African cultural patterns [with] African-American cultural patterns, and [also] Western European cultural patterns, and where all these [cultures] meet you get hip hop. You can't discuss hip hop in a vacuum. You have to talk about politics, you have to talk about

government, you have to talk about laws, you have to talk about social systems, you have to talk about economics, you have to talk about math, you have to talk about science and technology because all of these things have affected and have been effected by hip hop.

Pearl agreed with Professor Hart that hip hop impacts all walks of life. She stated:

I think...if you just read some rap lyrics, some of it is really good and I really think that you can use that in your English classes. You can [find] that hip hop is a part of history. You can take the context that the music was [developed] in and you can use it in your social studies classes, [which] I guess that's like middle school, [you can use it in] sociology classes, [too]. I know in my theater history class, I don't even remember how we got into the subject, but we had like a whole class period where we were just talking about hip hop.

Pearl recounted an example of how the interdisciplinary nature of hip hop was displayed on the campus.

[Hip hop ] is a powerful medium to use to introduce other subjects. For example, [the University had a] hip hop summit [that talked about finances]. The gym was packed. They had to turn people away. You could not have gotten that many students out if you had just said some businessmen are coming to talk to you about your finances. [The summit was part of ] the Hip hop Action Network [created by hip hop mogul Russell Simmons]. It was talking about getting your money right. That was the phrase that they used. They talked a lot about saving, how to deal with credit cards and credit card debt...and...how to manage your finances. And there's no way that that many students would have come out for that otherwise. It was at least 12 people on the panel. [There were] a couple [hip hop] artists...but it wasn't all artists. They had someone from Chrysler Financial [and] they had someone...[to discuss] identity theft.

### *Use in K-12 Classrooms*

All three participants, including a few questionnaire respondents, discussed how hip hop can be used to educate students in elementary and middle school as well as on college and university campuses. According to Pearl:

I think that hip hop should definitely be...in a collegiate setting. But I think honestly it would do more good if it was introduced in...elementary schools and middle schools. It might keep kids more interested in English

and reading and writing because they are involved in the culture anyway. They are learning about it so why not use it? You've got rhyme. Elementary kids love rhyme. You've got metaphor. You've got all of this stuff in it and there are lyrics that you can use that are kind of clean. I think that it needs to be taken more in that direction and not just [studied] in colleges because I think it could be more useful if you do it at a younger level.

Frank agreed and recounted how he tried to teach his younger cousin about the positive aspects of hip hop instead of having him hear only negative lyrics.

I have a cousin that's like around 12, 13 years old, and of course he's into what you're hearing on the radio now and what-not. But I made it my objective to give him CD's of people that I really like, and there's no other way that he can get these CD's except he gets them through me. So I've given him CD's of [socially conscious hip hop artists such as] Lupe Fiasco, Common, A Tribe Called Quest or De La Soul. And due to the fact [that] he has a limited amount of CD's, that's all he's listening to. And so at least if he's hearing this stuff on the radio, he still knows about these other people that are doing the other hip hop besides the commercial stuff that you hear on the radio all the time. It's like I'm trying to give him a balance that he probably won't get unless I make an effort to give it to him because of what he's seeing on the TV and hearing on the radio.

Professor Hart discussed that he first learned of the power of hip hop to educate through his work teaching high school students at an alternative school. He stated:

I was teaching high school language arts at a Charter school for at-risk kids and these kids were some 95% black. Most of them had ultimatums: go to school or go to jail. Some of them were even coming to school on a juvenile detention bus and they were going right back to Juvenile Detention [after school] and so I'm trying to teach them *Beowulf*. It's senior English and they're not really feeling [liking] *Beowulf*. And just one day, just kind of on a lark, I got...frustrated that they weren't reading. *Beowulf* is written in this Old English [style] and I just got so frustrated, nobody had done the reading that I just started extemporaneously talking about the epic. I concentrated on the blood and gore, concentrated on the fighting scenes and then [I started saying] '*Beowulf* showed up with a sword, I'm telling you son, he stabbed this cat one time and the criminal backed up' and so I told the whole story in that manner. And the next period was lunch, and I was in the cafeteria doing my cafeteria monitoring and I heard two students that were in my class. [They were] in just a little... like not necessarily an argument, it wasn't heated, but they were having some conflict and one of the students said to his friend "I'm going

to *Beowulf* your ass.” And that got me to thinking like what do these kids need to learn? Because if the mission is to teach them, then we have to [do just that]. And so I found that...almost being animated and almost telling the story and just engaging them in the way that they [are] used to...you have to really engage them and you have to make them look at you and you have to make them listen. And what started happening was that even something like the discipline in my class [improved]. Like when I’m telling [them] stories, one of the students will say ‘hey be quiet,’ because they want to hear the story. And what they don’t know is I’m teaching [them] the literature.

Professor Hart added that storytelling, however, should not be used as a substitute for the students’ actual reading of the work. He added:

[Critics may say] ‘well, if you do that, they’re not going to read. But what I found was that I could tell them parts of [the story and say] ‘I’m not going to tell you that part, you’ve got to read that. And they would be so interested in finding out what happens next that they would actually go and read it.

Professor Hart also added that he also found it useful to tell stories using language with which students could identify in order to further engage them in the lessons:

I would say stuff like, ‘you know what I’m saying,’ and, ‘come on dude,’ and just use language that was from the black vernacular and things that they’ve heard before, but use it in an academic setting. And for them it kind of validated their own critical commentary, wherein students that grew up in a single parent home or grew up with parents that barely made it out of high school, they might not have the communicative skills to actually do the kind of academic critical commentary that may [be] required. So I think that through my persona... I gave them the ability to just go ahead and say it. And if you got to say it and say, ‘well you know dude,’ [or] ‘I don’t know the dudes name,’... from that I found that these students would actually learn with you.

### *Academic Rigor*

Professor Hart acknowledged that the use of black vernacular, along with the infusion of hip hop themes, was counter to traditional academic instruction. In fact, that was his main obstacle as he attempted to create his hip hop English courses.

For Professor Hart, the phrase “academic rigor” was constantly mentioned. He stated:

Yeah, they wanted to make sure that we wouldn't be in the classroom engaging in debates about who the greatest emcee of all time was every week. It's one of the reasons that... I gave [the English 209 class] the three-pronged title of The History, Literary Connections, and Social Relevance of Hip hop. And I was able to demonstrate to them [administrators] that we're going to touch on these three ideas. And so I think that once that happened they had a better sense of the academic rigor that was going to be infused in there and why students would maintain an interest through the course of a semester.

For Pearl, however, the English 209 class was not challenging. “We didn't do reading [that was] in-depth, [and] we did...listen to some music and we analyzed the music and things. However, she stated, the situation is different in the Hip hop Discourse Class. She stated:

In this class we're using the [book] *The Hip Hop Reader*... and some of the articles in there I really have to read a couple of times before I can really answer the questions that are asked because you can tell that they are really trying to make a point, that this is an academic thing. It's not just somebody writing about a subject as a hobby. And so I really have to kind of read things over and over.

Frank, also in the Hip hop Discourse class agreed:

The questions that are asked are very detailed and... it's not something that if I wasn't in the class I can just sit here and just answer. You've got to do the reading in order to get the correct answer to fulfill the question.

### *Assignments*

Both Frank and Pearl stated that most of the class had consisted of readings and book assignments, but anticipate that soon they will begin writing papers. Frank stated,

I think it's going to get more intense on what we have to do as far as assignments go because as of right now we're doing a lot of just straight out of the book assignments. But I think it's going to get to a point where



you have to actually listen to certain things [music] and come back and give feedback on it.

To increase the academic rigor, Professor Hart incorporated works by African American scholars and assigned additional scholarly and contemporary readings. In addition, he made sure his classes had strong writing components. For example, English 209 has regulated writing where students create their own rubric to create hip hop lyrics (Appendix E). During a class observation, the students enthusiastically determined the criteria that would be included on the rubric (lyrical content, production, creativity, word play, originality, flow, purpose, and clarity) and assigned each criterion a point value ranging from 5-20 points on a 100-point scale. There was vigorous discussion and debate among the students about the rubric criteria, with extensive disagreement about the definition of clarity, originality, and purpose. One African American male student discussed his struggle outside of class to define the criteria and how his views would compare to those of his classmates. Professor Hart reminded him and the other students that they had to be as objective as possible when critiquing the lyrics.

The contents were eventually determined by a majority vote. The students were also provided with a handout of literary terminology [Appendix E] that they used when critiquing the hip hop lyrics.

### *Assessments*

Professor Hart used various ways to assess students and their progress in the class:

In terms of the course content, in the 209 class they develop [the] rubric, write critiques, and take unit tests. The critiques are graded much like any other composition, in any other composition class in terms of mechanics, structure, grammar, in terms of use of language. [I] grade the papers as stringently as I would grade any composition class that I've taught. So I

think that infuses academic rigor. In the Hip Hop Discourse class, academic rigor comes in through [the students ability] to make [their] commentary critical, to be able to support their commentary with some factual evidence, then to be able to deliver their commentary in some written form. So we have the critical thinking [and] writing component there. There's also formative and summative assessments... through tests[and] personal reflection. [I] also allow the students to peer review so there's several academic spokes on the wheel in terms of how we created this entity that is the hip hop class.

Professor Hart is currently writing a textbook since he has yet to find one that meets all of his needs. He said that his current book, *The Hip Hop Reader*, comes close, though, although he had to create additional questions to supplement those asked in the text. In addition, because some questions on assignments are difficult for students to grasp on their own, Professor Hart usually reviews the questions in class before he collects the students' work. He stated,

There's this constant kind of re-hashing of ideas, and I'm leading them as best I can through the working out of their own opinions and ideas...in order to properly answer the question. And so doing that, it takes a little bit more time. It's one of the reasons that the syllabus has to be organic.

Professor Hart explained that though he occasionally failed students, they rarely dropped his classes. He stated,

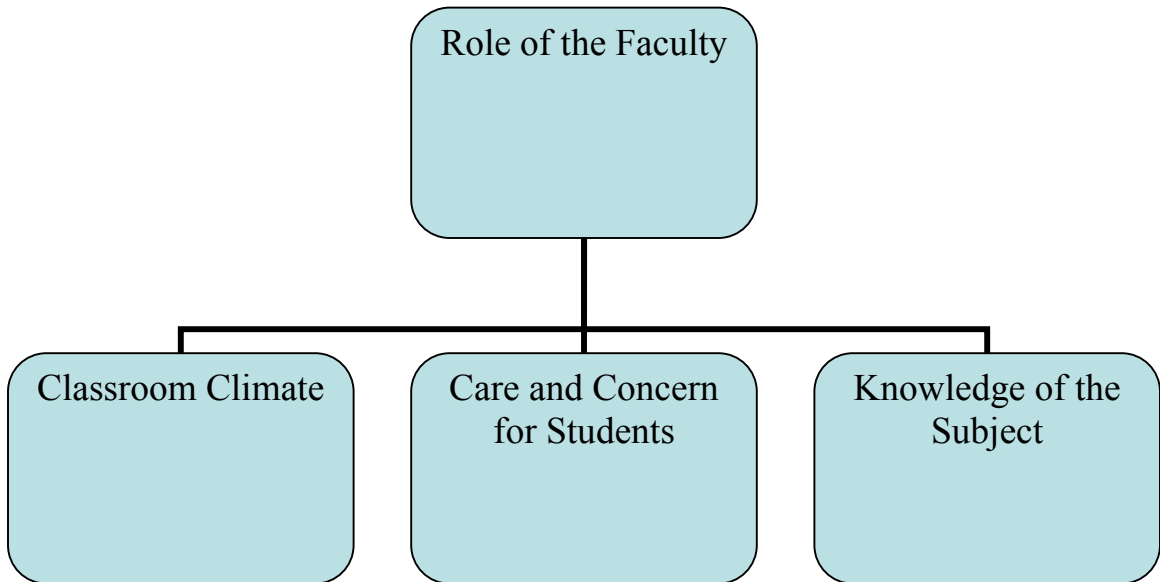
I have students that fail primarily because they don't attend class. Two of my sections are at 8 o'clock [a.m.] which is early for some students. Every now and again I have a student that just doesn't do the work, but that's so far and [few] between.

Based on their responses to Professor Hart, students may remain in his class not only because of the pedagogy but also because of their connections to him.

*Sometimes a simple, almost insignificant gesture on the part of a teacher can have a profound formative effect on the life of a student.*  
*Paulo Freire*

*Role of Faculty: Classroom Climate, Care and Concern, and Knowledge of the Subject*

The second theme to emerge from the data was the role of the faculty in African American student engagement. Frank and Pearl, in addition to the questionnaire respondents, cited 1) classroom climate; 2) care and concern for students; and 3) knowledge of the subject, as ways faculty contribute to their engagement in the class.



*Figure 3. Theme 2: Role of the faculty*

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*Classroom Climate*

The general feeling of Professor Hart’s classroom is relaxed. Students freely interacted both with the instructor and with each other. Students often arrived to class early to either finish homework, choose their favorite seat at one of the long, rectangular tables instead of at a smaller desk, or to socialize with fellow classmates. The laid back atmosphere continued even when the instructor entered the classroom. On one occasion,

instead of the proverbial apple, a student placed an energy drink on the instructor's desk. Not long after the classes began, the students went from the relaxed mode to a highly participatory group with a mixture of organized discussions and raucous, good-natured conversations about the day's topics. The instructor was very interactive and animated, much to the seeming delight and enjoyment of the students. The instructor switched effortlessly between using words and phrases such as "hegemony," and "post-industrial landscape," to sprinkling in slang phrases. For example, during a discussion about Civil Rights leaders at a recent protest demonstration, the faculty member commented how some of the leaders were trying to "get their own shine" (recognition/face time before the cameras). In addition, there was free use of the "N" word by both the faculty member and students, with one class session focusing on the acceptable and unacceptable use of the word.

Professor Hart regularly referred to female students as "sistah," or "mama," and male students as "brother." When addressing the class as a whole, he often referred to them as "friends." The faculty member's overall interactions with the students seemed in some cases like a parent and child. After classes, students often flocked to his desk to discuss upcoming community events, assignments, or to have miscellaneous conversations.

Despite what sometimes became a conversation free-for-all, the instructor maintained control of the conversations by making sure that hands were called upon and students exhibited turn-taking behavior. At times he snapped his fingers to get students to calm down, or said "just hands, not mouths" reminding them to raise their hands instead of blurting out their responses.

Pearl discussed how, though the class climate is relaxed, Professor Hart still maintains control of the class.

I really enjoy his classes. I had him for freshman comp [too]. We differ on opinions and stuff, but I like the way he teaches his classes. When I saw that he did finally get this [hip hop] class, I was like, Oh, I have to take that. I still enjoyed the way he is relaxed, but not to the level of, 'yeah, I'm just one of the boys in the class.' Like, he still maintains a level of authority. I'm not sure if that's the word, but he still, he's not too familiar where it would kind of make you uncomfortable. But he's able to relate to you on a level that makes you want to dialogue with him. You still know that he's the instructor and when he wants something to get done, it needs to get done. He will fail you. You know, you understand that there is a dividing line [between faculty and students].

Frank discussed how the classroom climate allowed for discussion of issues that other classes failed to address. He asserted,

He was asking about how people felt about [Jena 6]. He [also] asked people how they felt about the whole Michael Vick case and things of that nature. And people were able to voice their opinions about issues that... I know you would never talk about in class because a lot of classes feel that's irrelevant to whatever the course is [about].

During observations, the class discussed issues such as patriarchy in the black church, a discussion of women and foot binding in China, and sexism in Victorian England. Cornel West's book, *Race Matters*, was mentioned along with a discussion of the double-consciousness of being both black and American. Additionally, students seemed well-versed on African American history as they discussed topics such as Jim Crow, the history of real estate redlining of African Americans, and neighborhood gentrification. The students also discussed the pros and cons of hip hop being considered a "black" art form instead of just an art form. The class debated how the works of writers such as Zora Neal Hurston and Langston Hughes are labeled "black" classics instead of American classics. It was clear to this researcher that the students were very comfortable

discussing and dealing with topics that some instructors would consider “undiscussables” (Caruthers, Eubanks, & Thompson, 2004). According to Professor Hart,

Everybody has the option of giving some input, or infusing some dialogue in the class, and then critically dealing with whatever they say, good, bad, or indifferent. And [I] just really inspire my students to openly discuss whatever opinions and ideas they have about whatever subject matter we’re dealing with...I can probably make critical commentary about particular things at a level that most undergraduate students in the class can’t. But in terms of me being the above-all be-all in terms of hip hop knowledge, I try to not allow myself to do that so that I understand that their commentary is just as valuable as mine. And through establishing that rapport in the class, students seem to be okay with voicing their own opinions with the understanding that they don’t have to agree with me. And so that’s how I try to give them some kind of voice in the class.

As a testament to his teaching style and class climate, according to Professor Hart, his classes always are over capacity. He stated:

Since I’ve been here I’ve taught Freshman Composition, Humanities I and II, African American Literature I and II, [and] I taught a family and culture class. I’m pretty engaging with the students and so it seems to be the case that sometimes I put my name on it [course schedule], [and it] will cause students to come. They [administrators] raised the capacity to 30 and three or four days after that I was at capacity in each of my classes. So now I’m at I think 31, 32 or 33 in each of the four sections. So I’m at least one person over capacity even with raising it to 30 in each section. And the first semester that I piloted the course...I wanted to get as many students in as I can, [since] I was only teaching the two sections. I had 42 people in each section. I know it had something to do with, once again, my own persona here on campus, but I think it had more to do with them [students] just having a thirst for dealing with the culture in an academic setting.

Frank and Pearl, in addition to some of the questionnaire respondents, stated that a classroom climate that included supportive and caring faculty is also important to African American student engagement.

### *Care and Concern for Students*

Professor Hart's care and concern for his current and former students was evident during field observations. On several occasions, the researcher and faculty participant held conversations at various places on the campus. Students repeatedly approached Professor Hart to update him on their lives, careers, or to just hold friendly conversations. In addition, Professor Hart also provided his students with his personal cell phone number and makes himself available to students both in and outside of the classroom.

Professor Hart prides himself on being 100% student centered. He stated,

I call myself a hip hop scholar, but I'm a teacher. I think a lot of Ph.D.'s, to their credit, are researchers. And they're more apt to spend time in the library, some paper, some book, some closed off environment just with themselves in their own thoughts and their material. I'm more concerned with actually delivering that to the students. So when I'm trying to find [teaching materials], I'm trying to find stuff that would actually provide teaching moments for me.... I'm somebody who wants my students to be vested in me, because I'm vested in them. I want them to really think that I have their best interest at heart, and if that best interest means I'll fail you, then understand I'm going to fail you because that's what's best for you because right now you're trying to get your stuff together. And if your best interest is I need to stay out here until 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock in the afternoon because you got something you need me to help you do, then that's what I'm going to do. But it's a two-way street. I need you to do what's in my best interest, too. And so I need you to come to class. I need you to do the work. I need you to be a willing participant in the education process because, trust me, I'm going to do my job. And I like to think that by maintaining and being steadfast in that approach, that it works for the students. That they actually kind of buy into who I am as a person, and then they learn from me as a result of that. And I've seen that to be the case, I think, with especially black and brown kids.

Frank was grateful for Professor Hart's care and concern for his success, not only in the classroom, but in his quest for a rap career. He stated,

I appreciate him for that. I've talked to him quite a few times and I've told him about what I want to do as far as music endeavors are concerned. He's told me to give him a demo [and] he'll pass it on to some people that he

knows. He told me that he'll do a piece on me for this web site that he works with...I appreciate him for that.

In addition to the class climate, both Frank and Pearl, as well as the questionnaire respondents, said that they enrolled and became engaged in Professor Hart's hip hop classes because of his knowledge of the subject.

### *Knowledge of Subject*

Pearl firmly believed that one draw for Professor Hart's classes is his deep knowledge of the subjects of hip hop and English. She stated,

It [his knowledge] does matter. And I've seen the way, having taken different classes with him, I've seen him grow and his knowledge grow. He seems like...he still has a personal connection to it [hip hop], but this isn't just out of personal passion for the subject that he can teach the class. There's information that he has to impart. And he could probably go on and on and on [about] how it's shaped the culture, [and] how it [hip hop] was shaped from slavery and he can talk about it intellectually.

Frank is equally impressed by Professor Hart's knowledge of the subject matter. He asserted,

[Professor Hart is] a phenomenon first and foremost. [He's a] very intellectual individual, very knowledgeable on what's going on. He could be like a chameleon. He could blend in wherever, you know, corporate America, black America. He's able to do it. I mean, and a person of that caliber is very dangerous to America. And I strive to be that same way. You know what I'm saying? And so little does he know he's, like, really inspired me in more ways than one just from the timeframe that I've been in his class.

An overwhelming majority of the questionnaire respondents wrote that Professor Hart was a role model and his presence helped to defy negative stereotypes about African Americans, in general, and black males, in particular.

Frank discussed how Professor Hart's race and gender added to his credibility as an instructor. He stated,



For one, he's a black man. I mean, that right there says a lot. I don't believe that if a white person, not trying to down the white man or nothing, but if a white person tried to do the same thing, I mean I don't see his knowledge being as broad as [Professor] Hart's is because I mean how would [they] know? Because you can't relate to us. At the end of the day I don't care how "black" you think you are, you will never see the struggles that I go through on a regular [basis]. You'll never endure what I go through. And so I think his viewpoints and his knowledge comes from the academic standpoint and a personal standpoint being that he's a very vivid listener of hip hop as well and very into the hip hop culture.

Pearl discussed, however, one negative aspect of having an instructor who is as ingrained in the hip hop culture as Professor Hart. She stated,

I think they [hip hop heads] are so ingrained in the culture [that] it's not that they don't see the negative, but I feel like they make excuses. And not even excuses, but they talk about how this is just reflecting what society is. These things that you see in hip hop are reflecting what is in greater society. And that's true and I can understand that, but now that we're talking about it, it's time to take that to another point. Okay? Either you're art and you need to do some analysis with your reflection or you're just a commercial product. There has to be a point where you can look at it [hip hop] and really kind of be objective, which is impossible, but you've got to try.

Pearl's views were similar to criticisms Professor Hart heard from others. He stated,

Well, I think that one of the things, when you say that you're a hip hop scholar, first off it seems to me that a lot of people think that you're saying that you're going to defend hip hop at all cost...that you're not going to talk about... any of those negative aspects of hip hop. Well, for me, as a scholar, what [I'm] saying is that [I'm] going to investigate these things through the light of objectivity.

Though Professor Hart is an African American deeply ingrained in the hip hop culture, he stated that non-blacks and those unfamiliar with the culture can still successfully infuse hip hop into their classes. He stated,

I think your first discussion when you're [wanting to use] hip hop in your classroom, you have to let the students know you don't know what the hell you're talking about. And I think teachers have been conditioned to be

constantly we're the wizard behind the curtain, ...the experts. If you do that with hip hop and you don't know what you're doing, the students are going to dismantle you. And then it's going to disrupt your ability to teach them. So I think the first thing that you have to do is be open and honest about your lack of understanding about the culture and about what you're doing, that hey I'm bringing this in to class to serve you. Then secondly, you have to do some reading. And you have to be aware of who you are and that, unfortunately, we're all on some level molded by the media, ...and you've got to make sure that you do some reading to kind of as best you can, understand why you think the way you do about hip hop. Because if you don't then you stand a risk of losing your students, because you'll perpetuate what media outlets have said about the culture, about this artist or that artist...[or ] about this song. I would, [thirdly] recommend [researching websites] like Allhiphop.com or Hip hop DX, it doesn't mean that you've got to be playing the music in your car, or going to the club, or dressing all sort of Hip hop business because if you do that then it's going to be disingenuous.... And then I guess if there's a fourth thing, find local outlets. If you're not the person...to talk about things,...bring somebody in to your class,...call a radio station, trust me these folk [will] be more than happy to come in and talk,... then ask questions of this person when they come. Let the students see you in a student position so that they know, 'Yeah, Ms. Johnson is all right. No she don't listen to [hip hop artist] Little Wayne, but she knows who Little Wayne is.' It doesn't mean that you've got to have gold chains and [tennis shoes] Air Force One's, [on], but it means that you have to be somebody who's comfortable with yourself. A lot of what hip hop teaches us is that you have to be comfortable with who you are.

In an interview with an online hip hop magazine, however, Professor Hart voiced concerns about non-hip hop heads using hip hop in the classroom. When asked by this researcher, he clarified his position by stating,

I think that...you...have a lot of older black PhD's that have began talking about jazz with their Black studies people, or talking about hip hop with their Black studies people. It seems that now because Black studies is not the soup de jour anymore that they've started to talk about hip hop. And these are people that know Black studies, not necessarily...[hip hop]. I think that there's also a situation within a university, this publish or perish business, and oftentimes your ability to publish has a lot to do with dealing with unique and innovative ideas, and hip hop in the academy is still a unique and innovative idea. So I think that some professors get into the study of hip hop because it's going to be an easy way for them to make tenure.. So I'm not necessarily mad at them, [it's] just... that for me, hip hop scholars should at least have some affinity for the culture.

While the majority of the questionnaire respondents wrote that it was important for them to have an African American faculty member, a few stated that knowledge, not race, mattered most. Pearl agreed,

I have not had that many classes taught by non-African Americans. I was home schooled until ninth grade. Now in high school I had a fair amount, but since I've been in college, and at my first college that [was] primarily a white school, I had a fair amount of white teachers there. But since I've been here, most of them have been black. But even having said that, when I have had white professors, I don't really have a problem with it...unless they are not open minded and not knowledgeable about their subject.

She continued by stating that if faculty are unfamiliar with a subject, but willing to learn, she would not have a problem with them being her instructor. She stated,

If there is a subject that I feel like you don't really have any firsthand experience...if you're open minded then you're willing to learn from your students, and allow yourself to be influenced by them instead of just feeling like I am the teacher and I know everything. And I've had some black teachers that I don't like their classes because they are not open minded and willing to really accept that they might not know everything on the subject. So I would much rather have a white teacher in a hip hop course who felt like there were still things that they could learn than a black teacher who is like, ' I'm going to stand here and lecture to you and I already know all there is to know, and it's just me handing out information to you.'

She offered advice to faculty who are not knowledgeable about hip hop, but wanting to infuse elements into their classes. She posited,

I think that they do need to be knowledgeable on the history of it [hip hop]...and they also have got to watch BET...[and] MTV...[and] listen to the radio if you are going to teach hip hop. [The also] have to read [hip hop magazines] *The Source* and *XXL* and...be involved in the underground scene also. So it really... takes a whole lot to be able to qualify yourself as someone who is going to teach a hip hop course.

For Frank, however, not only does race matter, but the gender of the instructor was important to him as well. He stated,

I think it would be the same thing [having a female instructor], but I don't think it would be as deep as it is [now] due to the fact that he's a male. You know what I'm saying? I mean, of course, even if he was a sister [black woman], I would still be inspired by her, but I wouldn't be as deeply inspired as I am with him because we are brothers. We are on the same, like, road, you know what I'm saying? He's probably been through some of the same trials and tribulations that I have to go through as far as being a black man in America.

Through an analysis of the interviews, field observations, and documents, the role of pedagogy, and the role of the faculty member, emerged as themes of this qualitative inquiry. Professor Hart, Pearl, and Frank, through their stories and in their own voices, assisted the researcher in presenting the data.

### *Conclusion*

The study design, data collection methods, conceptual underpinning, research questions, and process of data analysis were discussed in Chapter Four. In addition, a description of the campus setting and an introduction of the participants were also discussed. In Chapter Four the use of the CRT element of storytelling and the use of the participant's voice were presented. Discussed in Chapter Five are the findings and conclusions based on the data analysis. In addition, presented in Chapter Five are the implications for practice and recommendations for future study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations*

This single case study examined the impact of hip hop in the classroom on African American student engagement. The data were triangulated by comparing the participant interviews, field observations and documents. From the data, two themes emerged which showed that pedagogy and the faculty are key to engaging African American students. A summary of the findings of the inquiry and conclusions based on the data analysis will be discussed in Chapter Five. Additionally, the implications for practice and recommendations for future study will also be discussed.

A key element of this study was the use of storytelling and voice as the author allowed participants' to tell their own story. Delgado (1989) and Tate (1995) posited that storytelling (or counterstorytelling), a key component of Critical Race Theory, allows out groups to reject the corporate or institutional story in favor of their own versions which can counter the stories of the oppressor. Through counterstorytelling, people of color challenge the status quo by constructing their own reality. Therefore, using a case study approach, allowed the researcher to obtain and use the language, or voice, of the participants (Creswell, 2003). Thus, since the empirical goal was to understand the actual experiences and beliefs of the participants, through this inquiry, the researcher placed emphasis on the participant's personal voice to present the data.

### *Summary of Findings*

The overarching question guiding this qualitative inquiry was “Is hip hop educational?” The study was viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). According to Solorzano (1997, 1998), five tenets of CRT inform education theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches. The following two themes related to the impact of African American student engagement emerged as data were analyzed: the role of pedagogy and the role of the faculty. The research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom?
2. Are the societal (racism, sexism/misogyny, feminism, materialism) and community (crime, drugs) themes mentioned in hip hop discussed in the classroom? If so, how and why?
3. What impact does hip hop pedagogy have on African American student engagement?
4. What impact does the African-American faculty member have on African-American student engagement?

The researcher summarized the data that was presented in Chapter Four that addressed each research question. In addition, interpretations of the data were guided by the literature review.

*How is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom?*

Though an English instructor, Professor Hart's classrooms resemble history and current events courses. Through observations, which were supported by participant interviews and course documents (Appendix E), it is clear that Professor Hart's class is designed to be interdisciplinary. In fact, the title of his English 209 class is *The History, Literary Connections, and Social Relevance of Hip Hop*. The course description read, in part:

This course investigates the social, cultural and political history of hip hop. It focuses on the study of hip hop as an artistic literary phenomenon which reflects the black experience and voices the concerns of African-Americans and Latinos in contemporary society. It is designed to give students an understanding as to the development of hip hop from the oral tradition to the commercial industry that dominates contemporary American popular culture.

In this class, Professor Hart included units on hip hop as a black expression, the Birth of Hip Hop, Hip Hop as Social Commentary, Hip Hop in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and the Future of Hip Hop. Subtopics included the elements of hip hop, hip hop and the African/African-American oral tradition, The Harlem Renaissance and The Black Arts movement and its connection to hip hop, hip hop and the post-industrial landscape, afrocentrism and hip hop, and globalization and hip hop.

Professor Hart's course objective is for students to "gain the tools necessary to discuss hip hop as art by using the terminology employed by art scholars and other students of creative production," (Appendix E). To that end, student assignments included the development of a hip hop rubric (Appendix E). The rubric is designed for students to use when critiquing the works of various artists. When critiquing the artists, students are required to use the appropriate literary terminology (Appendix E).

According to participant interviews, class observations, and course documents, Professor Hart stressed critical thinking and writing skills. For example, in the English 209 class, students are required to compose and submit four critical writing samples. In addition, the students take four unit tests and a final exam and are required to participate in a public speaking presentation. Furthermore, several quizzes and in and out-of-class projects are assigned.

In his English 316 Hip Hop Discourse class, Professor Hart's course description (Appendix E) stated,

This course affords students the opportunity to engage in academic discourse as it pertains to hip hop music/culture. It is designed to critically investigate the "Big Box Issues" within hip hop music/culture. That is, students read articles and essays that discuss misogyny, violence, drug culture, politics, socio-economic conditions, beef [conflicts], commercialism and globalization as they pertain to the development of hip hop music and culture.

Units discussed in the course included "Hip Hop as a Fad," "All Hail tha Queen," "Violence in Hip Hop," "Hip Hop and Commercialism," and "The Future of Hip Hop Music/Culture." Subtopics included similarities between jazz and hip hop, misogyny in hip hop, the prison industrial complex and hip hop, the recording industry and hip hop, and hip hop in the academy.

Professor Hart's course objective is for students in this class to "gain the tools necessary to perform academic discourse through dialogue and critical writing samples," (Appendix E). To that end, students are required to compose and submit six critical writing samples and complete four unit tests and a final exam. In addition, students must participate in a class presentation, take several quizzes, and complete additional in-and out-of-class assignments.



Based on observations, course documents, and participant interviews, Professor Hart's classes are designed to be interdisciplinary in nature, which adheres to one of the tenets of critical race theory which focuses on the use of interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches.

*Are the societal (racism, sexism/misogyny, feminism, materialism) and community (crime, drugs) themes mentioned in hip hop discussed in the classroom? If so, how and why?*

In both the English 209 and 316 courses, the themes of race, sexism, materialism and the drug culture are discussed. In the English 209 class observations, students discussed the Jena 6 and Michael Vick cases that, for them, illustrated racism elements in America. Also in this class is a unit on commercialism in hip hop including a subtopic on gangsta rap, African-American violence, and MTV and BET music videos.

The English 316 class had a unit on Misogyny in Hip Hop, Violence in Popular American Culture, and Hip Hop and Commercialism. During field observations of both classes, the discussions focused on racism as it related to the Jena 6 and Michael Vick cases. In addition, students discussed the role of commercialism and its impact on the quality of music that is heard by the public. In interviews, all participants discussed issues related to sexism and commercialism in hip hop and how it is discussed in the class.

Professor Hart seemed to discuss these issues in order to provide students an opportunity to think of hip hop as more than music. In fact, during the observations, the students had not yet listened to any music. Professor Hart stated that he first wanted the students to understand all of the issues that are a part of hip hop before allowing them to listen to music. Because one of his goals is to increase their critical thinking and listening

skills, Professor Hart first provides them with the information which will allow them to provide thought-provoking critical commentary in their papers.

Another reason Professor Hart included the socially-relevant themes in his class is to enable the students to view hip hop as a microcosm of the American society. For example, Professor Hart included units on misogyny, violence, and commercialism as they relate to both hip hop and the larger society. Often expressed and implied in Professor Hart's class is the undercurrent of racism and how it is the reason for hip hop being blamed for issues that did not originate in the culture.

*What impact does hip hop pedagogy have on African American student engagement?*

Both Pearl and Frank explained that they were engaged in the class because the subject matter was both culturally and socially relevant. Also during observations the students were very active in the discussions about hip hop themes and the various artists. The students seemed to know the artists' songs by name and also knew the lyrics to the songs that were discussed in class. Interestingly enough, though, the students had not listened to any music. Therefore, it is possible that the students were engaged in the current event nature of the class as much or more than the actual hip hop music. This may be particularly true for the female student. During her interview, Pearl stated that she sometimes did not participate in discussions because she was not a "hip hop head."

Several of the questionnaire respondents also indicated that they did not actively contribute to the conversations, but were still very engaged in the subject matter. As noted in Chapter Four, during the class observations, the researcher noticed that the males seemed more vocal at times, than the females. This may be because, as Frank stated in his interview, that males feel more of a connection to hip hop than females.

Another aspect that students cited as contributing to their engagement was the instructor. With his animated style of delivery, storytelling, and use of the black vernacular, students seemed almost enraptured by his lectures. Therefore, it is possible that Professor Hart's persona contributed as much or more to African American student engagement than the actual hip hop nature of the class.

Therefore, based on the data collected, the researcher could not determine whether hip hop music alone impacted African American student engagement. What may be more likely is that the instructor's teaching style and knowledge of hip hop, along with his ability to connect the music to the themes, has a greater impact on African American student engagement.

Professor Hart used a style of teaching that draws students into the discussions. hooks (1994) referred to this form of instruction as engaged pedagogy. Regarding engaged pedagogy, hooks wrote,

Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into the classroom discussion it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing silent interrogators. (p. 21)

Browne (2005) further explained that this form of pedagogy is characterized by incorporating students' personal lives into the classrooms and creates learning environments based on faculty and student interactions. Therefore, instructors who use pedagogy that acknowledges a connection between the university setting and everyday life may increase student engagement.

*What impact does the African-American faculty have on African-American student engagement?*

Frank stated during his interviews that having an African American male instructor greatly contributed to his engagement in the class. In addition, the majority of the questionnaire respondents indicated a preference for African American instructors. Many of them cited reasons such as having a positive role model for African American students as the reason they preferred black instructors. Other students wrote that because of negative racial stereotypes about blacks, they were happy to see instructors who were positive and influential. Other respondents wrote that, as it related to hip hop, an African American instructor would have more credibility than a non-black instructor.

Like Pearl, though, some respondents wrote that the knowledge of the instructor was more important than race. Pearl stated that she primarily was interested in instructors who were open-minded in learning about other cultures. Additionally, Pearl and a few questionnaire respondents stated that caring faculty were more important to them than ethnicity.

### *Conclusions*

Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) stated that a qualitative approach emphasizes a holistic description of the situation. Gillham (2000) asserted that “the case study researcher, working inductively from what’s there in the research setting, develops grounded theory: theory that is grounded in the evidence that is turned up” (p. 12). Merriam (1998) stated that with qualitative research, it “is not whether findings will be found again, but whether the results are consistent with the data collected,” (p. 206). As a result, the following conclusions are based on the study findings of the impact of hip hop pedagogy on African American student engagement.

The first conclusion is that, as it relates to African American student engagement, climate matters. The entire Greenvalley University campus had a warm and open climate that enveloped not only the students and faculty, but this researcher as well. Even prior to the researcher's arrival on campus, the southern hospitality was evident. From the Institutional Research Board officer to the faculty sponsor, to the faculty participant, everyone was eager to help and to make the researcher's visit comfortable.

This inviting climate was also evident once the researcher arrived on campus. In addition, as discussed in Chapter Four, through pictures, the campus openly displayed its pride in current students and alumni as well as in its faculty and board of trustees. Also, the sense of pride in its civil rights heritage was evident through statues, monuments and pictures located in campus buildings. Moreover, expressions of pride in the university and a sense of unity emerged during informal interviews with students and employees. In fact, like Professor Hart, many of the faculty members and employees were former students and were personally committed to the success of the institution.

The positive, open climate was also evident in Professor Hart's classroom. Professor Hart created a virtual safe space wherein students felt free to discuss controversial issues such as racism, sexism, and the "N" word with ease. Professor Hart's animated teaching style successfully drew the students into the conversations and created an atmosphere similar, in some cases, to African American churches.

Another conclusion drawn from the data is that, in general, "faculty matter" and in particular, African American faculty matter and impact African American student engagement. Based on the data, classroom climate, care and concern for students, and knowledge of the subject matter impacted African American student engagements.

Professor Hart's use of storytelling and ability to mix academic language with black vernacular greatly contributed to his popularity as a instructor. In addition, his care and concern for his students was evident. This researcher witnessed countless students approaching Professor Hart both in and out of class to discuss various subjects with him. Professor Hart also indicated in his interview that he was personally invested in his students.

In addition, the fact that he was African American and male was also appealing to the students and his experiences as a "hip hop head" contributed to his knowledge of the subject matter. This researcher concluded that Professor Hart was a breath of fresh air for students who regularly see black males portrayed in an overwhelmingly negative light in the media. Professor Hart's race and gender also were factors in the high number of black male students enrolled in his classes. As shown in the research, black male students were very vocal in the classes and were engaged in the class discussions.

African American female students also connected with Professor Hart as well. Moreover, Professor Hart was equally attentive to his female students as he was to the males. However, as Pearl indicated, sometimes men are unaware of privileges they have by virtue of their gender. Therefore, during discussions of sexism and misogyny, Professor Hart will benefit from bringing in experts and additional readings by women to assist in the discussions. Like white faculty who want to teach hip hop but are unfamiliar with the subject and the culture, Professor Hart needs to recognize that there may be gender blinders that he has on that prevent him from totally understanding the female experience in America. Not recognizing his limitations in dealing with issues that impact females could result in female students disengaging from class discussions.

In addition, the researcher concluded that Professor Hart's knowledge of the subject matter is impressive and allowed him to easily connect with those students who are also "hip hop heads." This, however, may also impact the engagement of the female students who may not be as knowledgeable of the artists and lyrics as the male students. Furthermore, though Professor Hart was knowledgeable of the subject of hip hop, his students could benefit even more if he also infused conceptual underpinnings such as Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theories, and Social Justice Theories in his curriculum. Not only would the students benefit, but it may also enable his classes to be seen as being more scholarly and not just popular culture pedagogy. In addition, the inclusion of theoretical constructs may assist him in writing his textbook and in the possible development of a minor in hip hop at Greenvalley University.

Lastly, faculty who infuse hip hop elements into their classes must be mindful of the overall objective of the course. For example, is the class a hip hop class infused with English or an English class infused with hip hop? In the English 209 class, it was clear to the researcher that it was an English class infused with hip hop. During those classes, students developed a rubric that they would use to critique hip hop lyrics. The assignment also called for students to include literary terminology such as metaphors and similes when writing their critiques.

In the English 316 class, at times it was not clear to the researcher that the class was an English class. Professor Hart acknowledged that this class is more hip hop infused with English. Pearl and Frank agreed. Both students said that they had not been given any written assignments yet, although they knew that the assignments were forthcoming. The

course, however, is called Hip Hop Discourse, which, by definition, means that emphasis will be placed on discussions.

Not only do the climate and faculty matter, but, lastly, hip hop pedagogy matters and impacts African American student engagement. Based on the research, students were engaged in the pedagogy because it was culturally and socially relevant, interdisciplinary, and had academic rigor. Students cared about the subject matter because it directly related to their cultural and social experiences. Professor Hart's discussion of Africa and his ability to trace the trajectory of jazz was appealing to the students. In addition, his comfort with infusing controversial themes such as race, misogyny and the "N" word, "undiscussables," added to student engagement.

In addition, Professor Hart's incorporation of societal and community issues into the pedagogy mattered to the students. The discussion of his involvement in social justice marches such as *The Million Man March* and the recent *Jena 6 March*, and his ability to infuse the culturally-relevant pedagogy into the classroom also increased student engagement.

Professor Hart, during his interview, fervently discussed his commitment to bringing in articles and assignments that resonated with the students. He discussed how, even when he earns his doctoral degree, he did not want to become a reclusive researcher. He stated that he wanted to continue to find research that he could apply in his classroom. This was evident by the various readings that he assigned to his students and his dissatisfaction with inadequate hip hop textbooks.

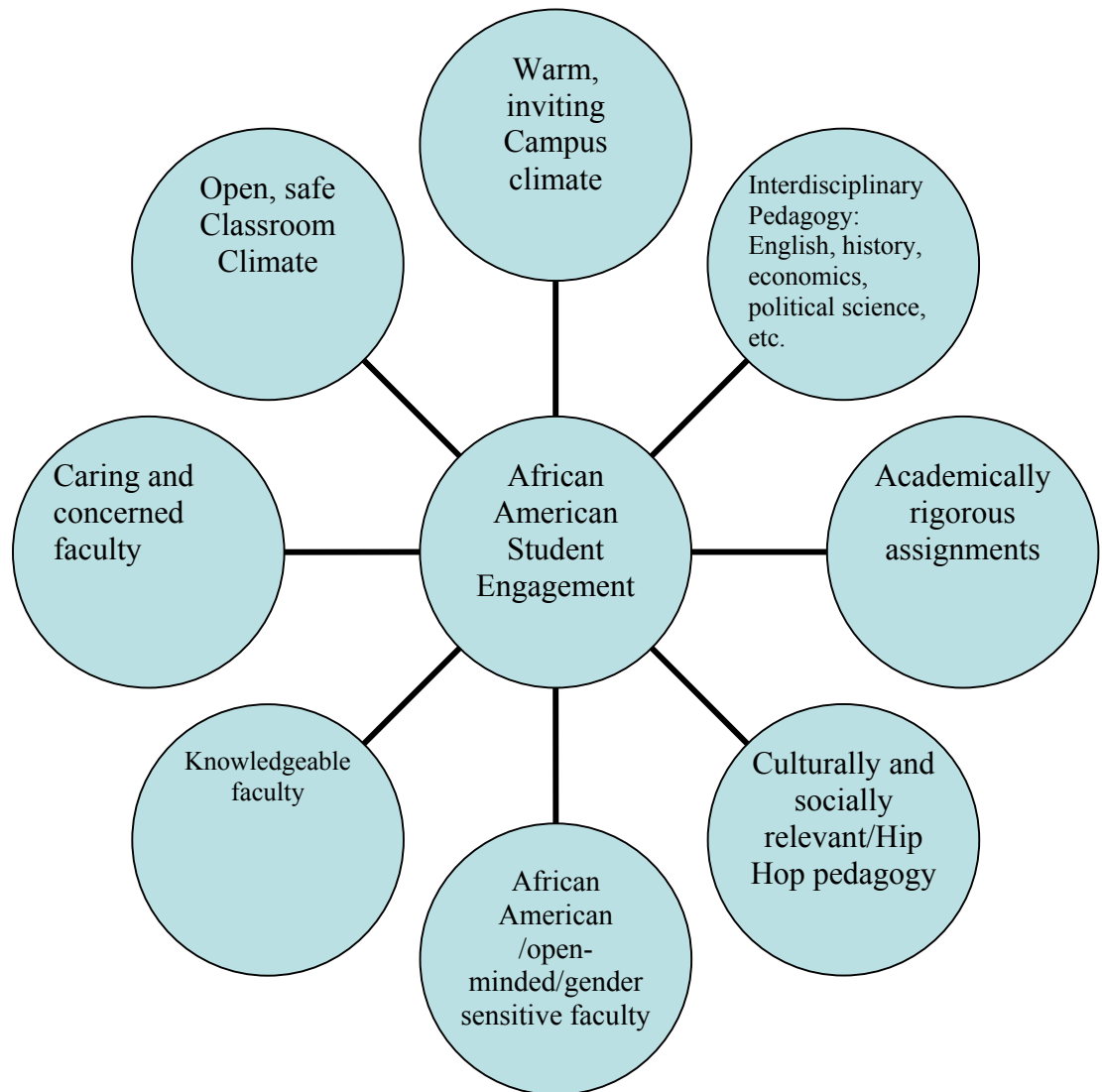
Professor Hart's interdisciplinary approach was also beneficial, particularly his use of connecting hip hop to the African oral tradition and his desire to bridge the gap



between the Civil Rights and hip hop generations. As Frank stated in his interview, younger students appreciated the accomplishments of the older generations, but felt disconnected from their experiences. Professor Hart's ability to infuse both critical and complimentary commentary about the Civil Rights generation can assist in providing the hip hop generation with a greater understanding of their parents and grandparents.

Based on the findings, the researcher also concluded that hip hop should be taught at both the K-12 and collegiate levels. According to all participants, younger students could benefit from having culturally relevant pedagogy infused in their classes.

The researcher also concluded that academically rigorous assignments such as the English 209 rubric assignment greatly increased student engagement in the class. By having the students determine the criteria and point value, students were encouraged to voice their opinions and to debate the necessity for and definitions of various criteria. In addition, the English 316 Hip Hop Discourse class contained rigorous units on topics such as Patriarchy in American Popular Culture and The Prison Industrial Complex that forced the students to think critically. The conclusions based on the study findings are represented in Figure 4.



*Figure 4.* Conclusions based on study findings.

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### *Limitations*

One limitation of a case study design was the issue of internal validity and reliability (Creswell, 1994). Creswell posited that the researcher, then, must be sure to address plans to triangulate the data. The researcher used multiple forms of data collection and, when possible, received feedback from the research subjects through a

process called “member checks” (Creswell, 1994, p. 158). The researcher assumed the forthrightness of the research subjects who were interviewed.

A second limitation was the external validity or generalizability of the study as it focused on only one faculty member at a historically black university. Merriam (1988) wrote that qualitative research is not intended to generalize the findings, but to interpret the events. The researcher did, however, discuss categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis. The data collected, while limited, could be useful to colleges and universities in their efforts to recruit and retain faculty of color and increase African American student persistence. Moreover, K-12 institutions could also benefit from the information in this study as it relates to engaging students of color. Schools of Education may also find the information useful as they both train non-minority faculty to teach the growing minority student populations and review their efforts to recruit minority students into the field of education. Other factors that limited generalizability may be the faculty and student characteristics, such as age and socioeconomic status, and instructor familiarity with the origins of hip hop.

Another limitation of the study included that the population was limited to students and faculty at a historically black university. In addition, the faculty participant is heavily immersed in the hip hop culture, both personally and professionally, and possessed experiences and knowledge that other faculty may not have. Lastly, while hip hop transcends race, the researcher limited the study to include only African American students.

Because the researcher is responsible for interpreting and drawing conclusions about the data and filters the information through her own personal lens, the issue of

reliability and validity are of concern. Unlike quantitative research methods, qualitative research is not quantifiable. Therefore, rather than traditional validity and reliability measures, qualitative researchers seek believability based on coherence, insight, and instrumental utility (Eisner, 1991) and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Moreover, because with qualitative research the researcher is the primary data collection instrument, it is necessary that the researcher identify personal assumptions and biases at the beginning of the study (Creswell, 2003). This was particularly important in this case since the researcher assumed that Greenvalley University may be more tolerant of hip hop pedagogy than predominantly white institutions. The researcher also assumed, based on a brief experience teaching at a historically black college and university that the Greenvalley climate would be particularly sensitive to the needs of African American students and, therefore, have greater success with retention. Every effort was taken by the researcher to remain as objective as possible. Additional safeguards designed to lessen personal biases included coding of the data, identified protocols for the study, and triangulation of data.

#### *Implications for Practice*

The implications of this inquiry for practice in education could impact both K-12 institutions and higher education institutions as they address the issue of engaging African American students. The study findings articulated the importance of climate to African American student engagement. What was particularly striking to the researcher was that predominantly white institutions could learn a lot from historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as it related to building inclusive climates for African American students. For example, many non-HBCUs have minority student retention

offices and offices of diversity. The establishment of these offices implied that the job of recruiting and retaining students of color is relegated to one, often understaffed, under budgeted office. In addition, predominantly white institutions tend to pride themselves on special diversity programs where the food, music, dance, and clothing of cultures is put on display. At Greenvalley University, however, it was apparent that the students felt valued everyday, not just in February. This is not to suggest that predominantly white campuses have to display afrocentric pictures year-round. However, if colleges and university administrations are serious about diversity, it must assess the entire campus climate and make systemic changes, from reviewing hiring and promotion practices to assessing curriculum development processes to insure that diversity is practiced and not just preached at the institution.

The study findings also revealed the importance of faculty as it relates to African American student engagement. While it is no surprise that caring and concerned faculty positively impact students, this may be even more critical for African American students who may, in some cases, be dealing outside pressures that interfere with learning. Therefore, the care and concern shown may need to extend beyond the classroom. In the case of Professor Hart and his students, the role that he played at times was more like parent-child than student-teacher. Again, this is not to suggest that all faculty should treat adult students like children. It is to stress, however, that if faculty begin to treat African American students with the same care and concern that they would want their own children treated, African American students may become more engaged in the educational process.

Another implication as it relates to faculty is that race matters. The majority of the questionnaire respondents as well as the student participant, Frank, indicated the importance of having an instructor with whom they could relate. In fact, a few respondents wrote that they chose to attend an HBCU because of their desires to be taught by African American faculty.

In addition to race, gender matters to students. This is especially important if the instructor plans to discuss issues such as sexism and misogyny. While male instructors can cover these subjects, it is important that female students feel comfortable discussing issues that directly affect them with an instructor with whom they can relate. In addition, like African American students who want and need role models that look like them, so, too, do female students, in general, and African American female students, in particular.

A third finding that the study pointed out was the impact of culturally and socially-relevant pedagogy on African American student engagement. Simply put, African American students were engaged in Professor Hart's classes because the topics related to them, and he discussed people with whom they were familiar and could relate. For example, in a discussion of literary classics, Professor Hart discussed Shakespeare, but focused heavily on Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and other African American writer's of the Harlem Renaissance. Placing African American literary giants at the forefront, as opposed to discussing them as an aside, is appealing to black students wanting to connect with the curriculum. Based on the study findings, the need to connect to the curriculum may be even more critical for K-12 students, especially those who attend at-risk schools similar to the one in which Professor Hart taught.

The study findings indicated that climate, faculty and pedagogy are key to African American student engagement. Other questions, however, were raised that suggested the need for future study.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

The first question that still needs to be investigated is, “What impact do climate, faculty and pedagogy have on African American student retention and graduation rates?” Future studies could, perhaps, track a cohort of African American students in hip hop themed classes to determine whether a relationship exists between African American student engagement and African American student retention and graduation rates.

Additionally, questions concerning the role of faculty gender on female student engagement were raised based on the study findings that showed the female student participant’s concerns about class discussions of misogyny. Future studies could compare the level of African American female student engagement in classes taught by African American females with the level of African American female student engagement in classes taught by African American male. This same study could also be conducted with all African American males.

An additional question was raised that focused on the overall student engagement at historically black colleges and universities. Moreover, how do the retention rates at historically black colleges and universities compare to those at predominantly white institutions. The above questions were beyond the scope of this inquiry, but merit further study.

### *Concluding Overview*

This single case study examined the impact of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, on African American student engagement. The findings of this inquiry suggested that the campus climate, faculty, and pedagogy were key factors that impacted the level of engagement of the African American students. Through observations and interviews, the researcher found that the overall organizational climate is important to African American student engagement.

Additionally, caring and concerned faculty who establish open and safe classroom climates also contributed positively to African American student engagement. Furthermore, faculty who are knowledgeable of the subject of hip hop are also important. The data revealed, however, that the inclusion of theoretical constructs could add to the faculty's knowledge base and increase the credibility of hip hop themed courses on college and university campuses.

The findings also determined that race and gender matter to students. The majority of the student respondents and one of the student participants stressed the need for African American role models in the classroom. A few respondents and one student participant stated, however, that what mattered most to them were faculty who were open-minded and caring. In addition, because any class on hip hop will undoubtedly include a discussion of sexism, the findings showed that the gender of the faculty member may impact the level of female student engagement in the classroom.

Finally, the investigation found that pedagogy impacted African American student engagement. Pedagogy that was culturally and socially-relevant, interdisciplinary, and academically rigorous were found to be key to African American student engagement.



Therefore, based on the findings, the answer to the question of “Is hip hop educational,” is a resounding “yes.” By using culturally and socially-conscious lyrics and themes, faculty can infuse hip hop into various disciplines to increase African American student engagement. For some educators, however, the creation of hip hop pedagogy may be seen as unorthodox. Nevertheless, if the mission is to teach and reach all students, faculty must be open to incorporating innovative pedagogical constructs that speak truth to students’ experiences and bridge the gap between the academy and the streets (Phillips, Reddick, & Stephens, 2005).

*This is the road I have tried to follow as a teacher: living my convictions; being open to the process of knowing and sensitive to the experience of teaching as an art; being pushed forward by the challenges that prevent me from bureaucratizing my practice; accepting my limitations, yet always conscious of the necessary effort to overcome them and aware that I cannot hide them because to do so would be a failure to respect both my students and myself as a teacher.*  
*Paolo Freire, Pedagogy of Freedom*

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## Appendix A

### *Informed Consent*

1. Informed Consent Form Faculty Participant
2. Letter of Informed Consent Faculty Participant
3. Informed Consent Form Student Participant
4. Letter of Informed Consent Student Participant

## **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **Dear Faculty Participant:**

Thank you for considering participating in a research study titled, *A Pedagogy of Freedom: Using Hip hop in the Classroom to Engage African American Students*. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The information gathered should be beneficial to K-12 and college and university officials responsible for devising and improving curriculum and instruction and/or increasing minority student retention. Your participation has been approved by your university's Institutional Review Board.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is to examine whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increases African American student engagement. Marks (2000) defined engagement as the amount of interest and effort students expend in school. The researcher will use a case study approach to examine the studies constructs.

### **PROCEDURES**

If you choose to participate in the project, you will be invited to take part in two (2) one (1) hour audiotaped interviews. In addition, the researcher will ask to observe at least two (2) sections of your English 209 and/or English 316 classes. Also, the researcher is asking to review your course documents such as syllabi and classroom assignments. In addition, the researcher is requesting your permission to distribute short answer questionnaires to the students in your classroom. Based on the questionnaire responses, up to 10 students will be invited to participate in an individual, one hour audiotaped interview. All interviews will be conducted on your campus in a preapproved, designated classroom or office. In the event that significant new findings develop during the course of the study, the researcher may ask you to participate in additional audiotaped interviews either in person or via telephone. In addition to being recorded, all interviews will be transcribed verbatim for use by the researcher. The researcher may also ask additional questions of you via electronic mail. All interview participants must either be current students/faculty of your college and 18 years of age or older to participate. Also, because of the nature of the study, the researcher will only include African American participants. In addition, all participants will be allowed to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time you wish without penalty, including in the middle of the interviews or after they have been completed. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect your employment in any way. You may also decline to answer any questions that you feel are too uncomfortable to answer. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about your participation. You can call me at 816-759-4620. In

addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Barbara Martin, who can be reached at 660-543-8823. If you have a question about your rights as a research participant, you should contact your Compliance Office and/or the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board office at (573) 882-9585.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE**

Tapes and transcripts will remain confidential and separate from any identifying information. A pseudonym will be assigned to responses for use by the researcher. You will have the opportunity to verify the transcribed interview for accuracy of what was stated and what you intended. Edits, deletions, and clarifications will be made immediately to the transcript to comply with your right to voluntarily release data. Only the researcher and the dissertation supervisor will have access to identifiable data. Collected data will be kept locked and destroyed three years after the completion of this study.

Your identity and your university's identity will be confidential in the reporting of results. I will not list any names of participants, or their corresponding institutions, in my dissertation or any future publications of this study.

This research has been preauthorized by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri-Columbia. If you have further questions regarding research participants' rights, please contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585, or visit <http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm> or <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>.

### **INJURY OR ILLNESS**

The University of Missouri does not compensate human subjects if discomfort eventually results from the research. Nonetheless, the university holds medical, professional, and general liability insurance coverage, and provides its own medical attention and facilities if participants suffer as a direct result of negligence or fault from faculty or staff associated with the research. In such unlikely event, the Risk Management Officer should be contacted immediately at (573) 882-3735 to obtain a review of the matter and receive specific information. Related ethical guidelines about Protection of Human Subjects set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations "45 CFR 46" will be upheld. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.



**RISKS AND BENEFITS**

The risk of your participation is minimal. As stated above, the information gathered should be beneficial to K-12, college, and university officials responsible for devising and improving curriculum and instruction and/or increasing minority student retention.

**COSTS TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

There will be no cost to participate in the study other than your time.

**COMPENSATION**

There will be no compensation for participating in the study. If you choose to participate in this study, please complete the information below. The researcher will provide no compensation to the student participants. However, if you choose to offer extra credit to those students volunteering to participate, the researcher asks that you also offer extra credit to students unwilling to participate. The extra credit offered to these students should be of equal effort to the extra credit offered the student interview participants.

A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy D. Hall  
Doctoral Candidate

**SIGNATURES**

A signed statement of informed consent is required of all participants in this project. Your signature indicates that you understand and voluntarily agree to the conditions of participation described above, and that you have received a copy of this Form.

I agree to take part in this study. I have had a chance to ask questions about being in this study and have those questions answered.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items above with the subject and/or authorized representatives.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Letter of Informed Faculty Participant

[Date]

Dear Faculty Participant:

You have been invited to participate in a research study titled “*A Pedagogy of Freedom: Using Hip hop in the Classroom to Engage African American Students*.” This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The information gathered should be beneficial to K-12, college, and university officials responsible for devising and improving curriculum and instruction and/or increasing minority student retention. Your participation has been approved by your university’s Institutional Review Board.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is to examine whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increases African American student engagement. Marks (2000) defined engagement as the amount of interest and effort students expend in school. The researcher will use a case study approach to examine the studies constructs.

The following questions guide this qualitative study:

1. How is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom?
2. Are the societal (racism, sexism/misogyny, feminism, materialism) and community (crime, drugs) themes mentioned in hip hop discussed in the classroom? If so, how and why?
3. What impact does hip hop pedagogy have on African American student engagement?
4. What impact does the African-American faculty have on African-American student engagement?

Before you make a final decision about participation, you must know how your rights will be protected:

**- INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT FOR PARTICIPATING FACULTY**

- Participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. If later you do not wish the data you provided to be used, inform me; your wish will be honored before culmination of the study. Your refusal to participate will have no adverse consequences. For any questions about your participation in this research, please contact me at home 816) 965-9610 or cell (816) 759-4620, or by email at Tracy.Hall@mccck.edu. You may also contact my dissertation supervisor Dr. Barbara Martin, at (660) 543-8823 or by email at bmartin@ucmo.edu.

- As interview participant your name and answers will remain confidential; only my dissertation supervisor and I would have access to identifiable data. Your identity and university affiliation will not be published. Any materials identifying specific faculty, students or universities will be kept locked and destroyed three years after the completion of this project. Data collected from faculty will be coded for qualitative analysis, and summarized for reporting. Results may be published in *Dissertation Abstracts* and in professional journals at any time, protecting your anonymity.

- Your control as to which interview items you choose to answer insures that there will be no identifiable risk for you greater than that encountered in your everyday life. The University of Missouri does not compensate human subjects if injury or discomfort results from the research. Nonetheless, the university holds medical, professional, and general liability insurance coverage, and provides its own medical attention and facilities in the unlikely event that participants suffer as a direct result of negligence or fault from faculty or staff associated with this research. In such eventuality, the Risk Management Officer should be contacted immediately at (573) 882-3735 to obtain a review of the matter and receive further information. Ethical guidelines about Protection of Human Subjects set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations “45 CFR 46” will be upheld. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.

- This research has been preauthorized by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri-Columbia. If you have further questions regarding research participants’ rights, please contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585, or visit <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>.

If you elect to participate and make your professional opinion count as part of this study, please review the “Informed Consent Form” at your earliest convenience and return it to me, signed and dated. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided, unless this letter was faxed. A second copy of the “informed Consent and Permission Form” has been provided for you to retain. Please mail or fax your signed Consent Form to me at 816-759- Your participation is very valuable. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Tracy D. Hall  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Missouri-Columbia

## INFORMED CONSENT FROM FACULTY PARTICIPANT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the study “A Pedagogy of freedom: Using hip hop in the classroom to engage African American students” conducted by Tracy D. Hall, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I understand the following:

- My participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point before culmination of the study.
- My responses will be used for dissertation research and for potential future journal publications.
- My identity and affiliation will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- The two (2) interviews will take approximately one (1) hour to complete

I have read the statement above, which answered my questions to my satisfaction.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

University: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to Tracy D. Hall, 12521 Askew Grandview, MO. 64030  
Home Phone: (816) 965-; Cell Phone (816) 590-  
FAX: 816-759-4604 . Email: Tracy.Hall@mccckc.edu**

## **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **Dear Student Participant:**

Thank you for considering participating in a research study titled, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Using Hip hop in the Classroom to Engage African American Students*. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The information gathered should be beneficial to K-12, college, and university officials responsible for devising and improving curriculum and instruction and/or increasing minority student retention. Your participation has been approved by your university's Institutional Review Board.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is to examine whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increases African American student engagement. Marks (2000) defined engagement as the amount of interest and effort students expend in school. The researcher will use a case study approach to examine the studies constructs.

### **PROCEDURES**

If you choose to participate in the project, you will be invited to take part in one (1) one (1) hour audiotaped interview. The interview will be conducted on your campus in a preapproved, designated classroom or office. In the event that significant new findings develop during the course of the study, the researcher may ask you to participate in additional audiotaped interviews either in person or via telephone. In addition to being recorded, all interviews will be transcribed verbatim for use by the researcher. The researcher may also ask additional questions of you via electronic mail. All interview participants must at least 18-years-old and indicate a strong interest in the course subject. In addition, because of the nature of the dissertation subject, on U.S. born African American students are included. In addition, all participants will be allowed to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time you wish without penalty, including in the middle of the interviews or after they have been completed. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect your grade in this or any other class in any way. You may also decline to answer any questions that you feel are too uncomfortable to answer. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about your participation. You can call me at 816-759-4620. In addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Barbara Martin, who can be reached at 660-543-8823. If you have a question about your rights as a research participant, you should contact your campus Compliance Office and/or the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board office at (573) 882-9585.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE**

Tapes and transcripts will remain confidential and separate from any identifying information. You will choose a fictitious name that will be used during the interview process and during the data analysis and reporting. You will have the opportunity to verify the transcribed interview for accuracy of what was stated and what you intended. Edits, deletions, and clarifications will be made immediately to the transcript to comply with your right to voluntarily release data. Only the researcher and the dissertation supervisor will have access to identifiable data. Collected data will be kept locked and destroyed three years after the completion of this study.

Your identity and your university's identity will be confidential in the reporting of results. I will not list any names of participants, or their corresponding institutions, in my dissertation or any future publications of this study. In addition, I will not reveal your name or any identifying information to your instructor and/or any university official.

This research has been preauthorized by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri-Columbia. If you have further questions regarding research participants' rights, please contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585, or visit <http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm> or <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>.

## **INJURY OR ILLNESS**

The University of Missouri does not compensate human subjects if discomfort eventually results from the research. Nonetheless, the university holds medical, professional, and general liability insurance coverage, and provides its own medical attention and facilities if participants suffer as a direct result of negligence or fault from faculty or staff associated with the research. In such unlikely event, the Risk Management Officer should be contacted immediately at (573) 882-3735 to obtain a review of the matter and receive specific information. Related ethical guidelines about Protection of Human Subjects set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations "45 CFR 46" will be upheld. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.

## **RISKS AND BENEFITS**

The risk of your participation is minimal. As stated above, the information gathered should be beneficial to K-12, college, and university officials responsible for devising and improving curriculum and instruction and/or increasing minority student retention.

**COSTS TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

There will be no cost to participate in the study other than your time.

**COMPENSATION**

The researcher will provide no compensation for participating in the study. If you choose to participate in this study, please complete the information below. A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy D. Hall  
Doctoral Candidate

**SIGNATURES**

A signed statement of informed consent is required of all participants in this project. Your signature indicates that you understand and voluntarily agree to the conditions of participation described above, and that you have received a copy of this Form.

I agree to take part in this study. I have had a chance to ask questions about being in this study and have those questions answered.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items above with the subject and/or authorized representatives.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Letter of Informed Student Participant

[Date]

Dear Student:

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled “A Pedagogy of freedom: Using hip hop in the classroom to engage African American students. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The information gathered should be beneficial to K-12, college, and university officials responsible for devising and improving curriculum and instruction and/or increasing minority student retention. Your participation has been approved by your university’s Institutional Review Board.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is to examine whether the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, increases African American student engagement. Marks (2000) defined engagement as the amount of interest and effort students expend in school. The researcher will use a case study approach to examine the studies constructs.

The following questions guide this qualitative study:

1. How is culturally-relevant pedagogy, such as hip hop, used in the classroom?
2. Are the societal (racism, sexism/misogyny, feminism, materialism) and community (crime, drugs) themes mentioned in hip hop discussed in the classroom? If so, how and why?
3. What impact does hip hop pedagogy have on African American student engagement?
4. What impact does the African-American faculty have on African-American student engagement?

Before you make a final decision about participation, you must know how your rights will be protected:

**- INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS**

● Participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. If later you do not wish the data you provided to be used, inform me; your wish will be honored before culmination of the study. Your refusal to participate will have no adverse consequences. For any questions about your participation in this research, please contact me at home (816) 965-9610 or cell (816) 590-8551, or by email at Tracy.Hall@mccckc.edu. You may also contact my dissertation supervisor Dr. Barbara Martin, at (660) 543-8823 or by email at bmartin@ucmo.edu

● As an interview participant your name and answers will remain confidential; only my dissertation supervisor and I would have access to identifiable data. Your identity and district or school affiliation will not be published. Any materials identifying specific teachers, schools, or school systems will be kept locked and destroyed three years after the completion of this project. Data collected from teachers will be coded for qualitative analysis, and summarized for reporting. Results may be published in *Dissertation Abstracts* and in professional journals at any time, protecting your anonymity and confidentiality.

● Your control as to which interview items you choose to answer insures that there will be no identifiable risk for you greater than that encountered in your everyday life. The University of Missouri does not compensate human subjects if injury or discomfort results from the research. Nonetheless, the university holds medical, professional, and general liability insurance coverage, and provides its own medical attention and facilities in the unlikely event that participants suffer as a direct result of negligence or fault from faculty or staff associated with this research. In such eventuality, the Risk Management Officer should be contacted immediately at (573) 882-3735 to obtain a review of the matter and receive further information. Ethical guidelines about Protection of Human Subjects set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations “45 CFR 46” will be upheld. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.

● This research has been preauthorized by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri-Columbia. If you have further questions regarding research participants’ rights, please contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585, or visit <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>.

If you elect to participate and make your professional opinion count as part of this study, please review the “Informed Consent Form” at your earliest convenience and return it to me, signed and dated. Keep this letter for future reference, if you wish. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided or you may fax your signed Consent Form to me at 816-759-4604. Your participation is very valuable. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Tracy D. Hall  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Missouri-Columbia

## INFORMED CONSENT FROM STUDENT PARTICIPANT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the study “A Pedagogy of freedom: Using hip hop in the classroom to engage African American students.” conducted by Tracy D. Hall, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I understand the following:

- My participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point before culmination of the study.
- My responses will be used for dissertation research and for potential future journal publications.
- My identity and affiliation will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- The interview will take approximately one (1)hour to complete.

I have read the statement above, which answered my questions to my satisfaction.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

University: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Please return to Tracy D. Hall, 12521 Askew Grandview, MO. 64030**  
**Home Phone: (816) 965-; Cell Phone (816) 590-.**  
**FAX: (816) 759-4604**  
**Email: Tracy.Hall@mccckc.edu**

## Appendix B

### *Forms*

1. Interview Protocol Form
2. On-Site Observation Form
3. Document Review Form

Interview Protocol Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Time \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Time \_\_\_\_\_

Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Field Notes:

On-Site Observation Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Time \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Time \_\_\_\_\_

Setting \_\_\_\_\_

Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Observations:

Document Review Form

Name of Document \_\_\_\_\_

Document # \_\_\_\_\_

Date Procured \_\_\_\_\_

Document Received From \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

## Appendix C

### *Data Codes*



## Data Codes

F	Faculty
S1	Student Participant 1
S2	Student Participant 2
S3	Student Participant 3
S4	Student Participant 4
S5	Student Participant 5
S6	Student Participant 6
S7	Student Participant 7
S8	Student Participant 8
S9	Student Participant 9
S10	Student Participant 10
Classdoc	Classroom document (syllabus, assignment)
Campdoc	University document (policies, procedures)
I	Interview
FO1	Field observation 1
FO2	Field observation 2
FO3	Field observation 3
FO4	Field observation 4
Setco	Setting/Context
Sitco	Situation
Eventco	Event
Stratco	Strategy

Relateco      Relationship

Research Questions

1. Faculty Participant questions
2. Student Questionnaire
3. Student Participant questions

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FACULTY PARTICIPANT

### *Section 1: How did you begin teaching hip hop at GreenValley University?*

1. What courses do you teach?
2. How long have you been teaching the course(s)?
3. Why did you decide to teach the courses?
4. Do you see the courses as first and foremost English classes with an emphasis on hip hop, or hip hop classes with an emphasis on English?

### *Section 2: How did you navigate the University system?*

5. What was the reaction by other faculty and administrators when you proposed these new courses?
6. What were the main obstacles you faced?
7. Describe your experience as you went through the curriculum process?
8. What support systems do you have at the University that have assisted you in navigating the system?
9. Are you a tenure-track faculty member? Did your faculty status impact the curriculum process?
10. One would assume that an HBCU would be very welcoming to a course that focuses on an aspect of black culture. Was this your experience?
11. What are your thoughts on the relevance of hip hop as an intellectual study?

### *Section 3: How has hip hop's image impacted the course?*

12. How did hip hop's negative media image impact you as you were making your case for your courses?
13. Did you run into problems with older faculty members or administrators whose only knowledge of hip hop is through TV?
14. What would you say to those who think the wave of hip hop scholars and study of hip hop is a fad?
15. What impact has the corporate radio monopoly/MTV/BET had on hip hop?

### *Section 4: Describe your course content?*

16. How do you maintain academic rigor?
17. Describe the scholarly content in your class. What textbooks or scholars do you use in the classes?
18. How did you decide upon texts and class assignments?
19. How does this class fit into the English or Black studies department?
20. Are the courses required, or are they electives?
21. Have your classes "made" every semester? If so, how did you get students interested?
22. What are your main goals for your students?

Section 5: How are hip hop themes infused in the courses?

23. Hip hop deals with society and community issues such as poverty, sexism, homophobia, materialism, crime, drugs; how do you infuse these issues into your classes? Give some examples of assignments or activities that focus on these issues?
24. How do students respond to discussions about these themes?
25. What role does hip hop play in bridging the sometimes disconnect between the campus and the community? Theory and practice?
26. How do students respond to your classes? Are there particular discussions that garner more reactions than others?
27. For some, hip hop gives the voiceless a voice. How do you, as an instructor, allow students to use their voices in class? How do you use hip hop to empower students?
28. How do you relate these themes to English?
29. How are your courses interdisciplinary?
30. How important is hip hop for youth today?

Section 6: What impact do you as an African American male faculty member have on your students?

31. Who is Professor Shawn Hart?
32. What is your experience with hip hop and rap and how does that impact your teaching?
33. Kitwana refers to the hip hop generation as those born between 1965-1984. Neal refers to this group as “Soul Babies.” Are you a soul baby? If so, how does your perspective on hip hop differ from some of those in the Civil Rights Movement?
34. Do you feel that your students are more engaged in your classes than they would be in classes taught by a non-African American? If so, why?
35. How do students respond to you as a young African American man? In a recent interview, you said that in order to know hip hop, you have to be in the clubs listening to music. Should there be certain prerequisites for faculty wanting to teach hip hop themed courses? Should it only be taught by “Hip hop Heads?” who go clubbing and dress in “hip hop” fashion?
36. God willing, we all get older. How will you maintain your connection to students as you age? How will you stay relevant?
37. How do you, a male, address the misogynistic lyrics in rap? And what is the response, from male students? female students?

Section 7: What is the future of hip hop in the academy?

38. Davey D says that it looks like everybody is dealing in hip hop, but they have nothing to do with the culture at all and may simply be driven by a “publish or perish” mentality. What are your thoughts on that?
39. How can educators bridge the gap between the hip hop and Civil Rights generation?
40. Howard University was the first HBCU to teach hip hop in 1991 and now has developed a minor in hip hop studies. What role can other HBCU’s play in offering these courses? Majors or minors?
41. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Student Questionnaire

1. Why did you enroll in this course?
2. What are the most important issues facing your generation? (crime, drugs, poverty, sexism, etc.).
3. Should hip hop be taught on college campuses? If so, why?
4. Compared to other classes, how engaged (participating in class discussions, completing assignments, attending) are you? Why?
5. How important is it to you to have an African American faculty member? Why?
6. Would you be interested in participating in a one (1) hour, on-campus interview to further discuss your views of this class, the instructor and hip hop? If so, please provide your name and the best number to reach you.

### Demographic Information:

7. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How would you describe yourself racially/ethnically? African American, Latino, Caucasian, other?). \_\_\_\_\_

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

### *Section 1: Why did you take this course?*

1. Is this course required for your major/minor? If not, why did you take it?
2. Do you see this class as first and foremost an English class with an emphasis on hip hop, or hip hop class with an emphasis on English?
3. Do you think there is a place for hip hop courses such as this on college campuses?

### *Section 2: How has hip hop's image impacted the course?*

4. When you tell people you are in this class, what is the response?
5. What do you think is the reason for hip hop's negative image by some?
6. What impact has radio/MTV/BET had on hip hop?

### *Section 3: Is the class academically challenging?*

7. Does this class challenge you? If so, how?
8. What kinds of books, articles, etc. are you assigned?
9. What types of assignments do you have?
10. What do you want to take away from this course?
11. Compared to other classes, how involved/engaged are you in this class?

### *Section 4: How are hip hop themes infused in the courses?*

12. Hip hop deals with society and community issues such as poverty, sexism, homophobia, materialism, crime, drugs; how are these issues discussed in class? Give some examples of assignments or activities that focus on these issues?
13. What is your response to discussions about these themes?
14. What role do you see hip hop playing in bringing issues from the community onto college campuses?
15. Are there particular class discussions that have really gotten your attention? If so, what?
16. For some, hip hop gives those without a voice a way to express themselves. What do you think about that?
17. Does this class have any assignments that allow students to express themselves? What are they?
18. Has anything you have discussed in class empowered you to feel differently, think differently, do something differently for yourself, family, community, etc.?
19. In addition to English, what other academic subjects are discussed in the class?
20. In addition to English courses, how can hip hop be infused in other disciplines?



*Section 5: What impact does the instructor/class have on you?*

21. What is your opinion of the instructor?
22. Is he knowledgeable of the subject matter? If so, is it from an academic and/or personal perspective? Does it matter to you?
23. Do you feel that you are more engaged in this class than you are or have been in classes taught by a non-African American? If so, why?
24. How do you respond to the instructor, a young African American man?
25. How important is hip hop for youth today?
26. How does he, a male, address the misogynistic lyrics in rap? What are your thoughts on the way he addresses this topic?

*Section 6: What is the future of hip hop in the academy?*

27. How does your perspective on hip hop differ from some of those in the Civil Rights Movement?
28. How can instructors bridge the gap between the hip hop and Civil Rights generation?
29. Howard University was the first HBCU to teach hip hop in 1991 and now has developed a minor in hip hop studies. What role can other HBCU's play in offering these courses? Majors or minors?
30. Should there be certain prerequisites for faculty wanting to teach hip hop themed courses? Should it only be taught by "Hip hop Heads?" who go clubbing and dress in "hip hop" fashion?
31. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Appendix E

### Course Documents

1. English 209 Syllabus
2. English 316 Syllabus
3. Hip Hop Matrix
4. Rubric
5. Literary Terminology
6. Jazz and the White Critic

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**English 209—The History, Literary Connections, and Social Relevance of Hip Hop  
Fall 2007**

Office Office Ph#:  
Office Hours: M-W-F 9-11a; T-Th 11a-12:30 p & by appt.

**E-mail:**

**Required Text(s):**

Light, Alan ed. *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*.

**Suggested Readings:**

Baker, Houston. *Black Studies, Rap and the Academy*.

George, Nelson. *Hip Hop America*.

Jones, Lerol. *Black Music*.

Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise*.

Hine, Darlene Clark. *The African-American Odyssey*.

Gates, Henry and Nellie McKay. *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*.

\*\*Additional readings will also be assigned

**Course Description**

This course investigates the social, cultural, and political history of hip hop. It focuses on the study of hip hop as an artistic literary phenomenon which reflects the Black experience and voices the concerns of African-Americans and Latinos in contemporary society. It is designed to give students an understanding as to the development of hip hop from the oral tradition to the commercial industry that dominates contemporary American popular culture. The course examines how contemporary themes within hip hop parallel past expressions of African-American creativity. The following themes are covered: the origins of hip hop, the literary elements of hip hop as well as hip hop's connections to literary movements, such as, the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement; the ability of hip hop to articulate social ills as well as the concerns of urban and poor Black and Latino communities, and significant hip hop artists, their performances and impact. In short, hip hop is an extension of the Black Experience. Texts, literature, videos and other media will be used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics as well as ex/intensive class discussions.

**Course Objective**

Hip hop is a fluid and dynamic entity. In order for students to grasp the themes, ideas, and concepts, an open dialogue must be established and maintained. A student-centered approach is utilized in order to meet this goal. Students will heighten their understanding of the literal and figurative elements employed within this contemporary mode of expression. Students will construct critical writing samples that investigate, identify and analyze the ways in which the principle elements of the Black aesthetic and past/current themes of African American creative production are expressed by hip hop. Students will also gain the tools necessary to discuss hip hop as art by using the terminology employed by art scholars and other students of creative production.

**Course Requirements**

Attendance follows the university guidelines as prescribed in **The University Bulletin**. Students are required to compose and submit **Four Critical Writing Samples**; satisfactorily complete **4 Unit Tests** plus the **Final Exam**; an **In-Class Presentation** along with several quizzes, and additional in/out of class assignments.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance follows university policy. However, you are allowed 3 unexcused absences (an unexcused absence is one in which you do not present an official, verifiable written excuse on the day you return to class).

Excused absences fall under the following criteria:

**Note: All excused absences require written verification on the day that you return to class.**

Sickness

Death in immediate family

University related activities

Extenuating circumstances—court appearances, family emergency, etc.

Excessive tardiness will not be tolerated. It is rude and disruptive.

Exceptional attendance—not missing more than 3 days for any reason—is rewarded with 10 bonus points on the final assessment.

**\*\*\*SET ALL COMMUNICATIVE DEVICES TO SILENT UPON ENTERING THE CLASSROOM\*\*\***

**Grading Scale—10 Pt.**

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59-Below	F

**Course Outline**

**Unit ONE—Black Expression—Oral Tradition to Post-Slavery**

**Week One**

Introduction to Hip Hop

Hip Hop History

Elements of Hip Hop

**Week Two**

African/African American Oral Tradition

Af-Am Creativity prior to 1877

Work songs, spirituals, sermons

**Week Three**

Art Study Terminology

Hip Hop as Art

The Black Aesthetic

Test I

**Unit TWO—The Black Aesthetic and the Birth of Hip Hop**

**Week Four**

Patronage in Af-Am Creativity

The Harlem Renaissance

**Paper #1**

**Week Five**

The Black Arts Movement

The Streets Come Alive—1970's: Birthplace of Hip Hop

**Week Six**

Hip Hop as Political Discourse

Hip Hop as Resistance

Test II

**Unit THREE—The Big Bang—Hip Hop as Social Commentary**

**Week Seven**

Hip Hop and the Postindustrial Landscape

The Hip Hop Matrix

**Week Eight**

Hear Me Yell—1980's: Bronze Age of Hip Hop

The New Renaissance

Afrocentricism and Hip Hop

Hip Hop Film

**Paper #2**

**Week Nine**

Make that Money—1990's: Commercial Interest in Hip Hop

Gangsta Rap

Af-Am Violence

MTV/BET and Music Videos

**Test III**

**Unit FOUR—Hip Hop in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Week Ten**

Technology and Hip Hop

The New Patronage

Whose Culture is it?

**Week Eleven**

East Coast, West Coast, Worldwide

Globalization and Hip Hop

**Paper #3**

**Week Twelve**

The New Millennium—2k: From Here to Eternity

Hip Hop Criticism

Women in Hip Hop

**Test IV**

**Unit FIVE—Hip Hop Discourse—Readings about the Culture**

**Week Thirteen**

Hip Hop in the Academy

Gates, West, Dyson, Baker

**Week Fourteen**

Hip Hop in the Mainstream

The Future of Hip Hop: Where do we go from here?

Class Presentations

**Paper #4**

**Week Fifteen**

Class Presentations

**Final Exam**

**English 316.01—Hip Hop Discourse  
Fall 2007**

Office Office Ph#  
Office Hours: M-T-W-Th-F 9-11a; T-Th 11a-12:30p & by appt.

**E-mail:**

**Required Text(s):**

*Strade, Tim and Tim Wood. The Hip Hop ~~Studies~~ Reader. (2007)*

*Neal, Mark Anthony. That's the Joint. Hip Hop Studies Reader.*

**Additional Readings:**

Hine, Darlene Clark. *The African-American Odyssey.*

Gates, Henry and Nellie McKay. *The Norton Anthology of African-American Literature.*

\*\*Additional readings will also be assigned

**Course Description**

This course affords students the opportunity to engage in academic discourse as it pertains to hip hop music/culture. It is designed to critically investigate the "Big Box Issues" within hip hop music/culture. That is, students read articles and essays that discuss Misogyny, Violence, Drug Culture, Politics, Socio-Economic Conditions, Beef, Commercialism and Globalization as they pertain to the development of hip hop music and culture.

**Course Objective**

Hip hop is a fluid and dynamic entity. In order for students to grasp the themes, ideas, and concepts, an open dialogue must be established and maintained. A student-centered approach is utilized in order to meet this goal. Students will heighten their understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic systems that dictate the creation, development and spread of hip hop music/culture. Students will construct critical writing samples that investigate, identify and analyze the ways in which these elements are expressed by hip hop. Students will also gain the tools necessary to perform academic discourse through dialogue and critical writing samples.

**Course Requirements**

Attendance follows the university guidelines as prescribed in **The University Bulletin**. Students are required to compose and submit **Six Critical Writing Samples**; satisfactorily complete **4 Unit Tests** plus the **Final Exam**; an **In-Class Presentation** along with several quizzes, and additional in/out of class assignments.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance follows university policy. However, you are allowed 3 unexcused absences (an unexcused absence is one in which you do not present an official, verifiable written excuse on the day you return to class).

Excused absences fall under the following criteria:

**Note: All excused absences require written verification on the day that you return to class.**

Sickness

Death in immediate family

University related activities

Extenuating circumstances—court appearances, family emergency, etc.

Excessive tardiness will not be tolerated. It is rude and disruptive.

Exceptional attendance—not missing more than 3 days for any reason—is rewarded with 10 bonus points on the final assessment.

**\*\*\*SET ALL COMMUNICATIVE DEVICES TO SILENT UPON ENTERING THE CLASSROOM\*\*\***

**Grading Scale—10 Pt.**

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59-Below	F

**Course Outline**

**Unit ONE—Hip Hop as a Fad**

**Week One**

Introduction to Hip Hop Discourse  
Similarities between Jazz and Hip Hop

**Week Two**

"I Thought I Told You that We Won't Stop"—Hip Hop as a Fad  
Disco Nights

**Week Three**

Paper #1—Why did hip hop survive?  
Test I

**Unit TWO—All Hail tha Queen**

**Week Four**

Misogyny and Patriarchy in American Popular Culture  
Misogyny in Hip Hop

**Week Five**

From Video Vixen to Video Ho—Transformation of Female Images in Music Videos  
The Politics of Male Dominance within Hip Hop Music/Culture

**Week Six**

Paper #2—Where tha Ladies At?  
Test II

**Unit THREE—"You Bust, I Bust"—Violence in Hip Hop Music/Culture**

**Week Seven**

Violence in Popular American Culture  
Hip Hop and the Postindustrial Landscape

**Week Eight**

Hip Hop Beef: Then and Now  
The Prison Industrial Complex and Hip Hop

**Week Nine**

Drug Culture in Hip Hop Music/Culture  
Biggie, Tupac and the New Reality of Violence in Hip Hop

Paper #3—Hip Hop Beef: Why?

Test III

**Unit FOUR—"Make that Money"—Hip Hop and Commercialism**

**Week Ten**

Recording Industry and Hip Hop Music/Culture  
Early Entrepreneurship in Hip Hop

**Week Eleven**

The New Patronage  
Whose Culture is it?

**Week Twelve**

From Nothing to Something—The Rise of Hip Hop Commercialization\  
Golden Era of Independent Record Labels

**Paper #4—How Did We Get Here?**

**Test IV**

**Unit FIVE—What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go from Here?—The Future of Hip Hop Music/Culture**

**Week Thirteen**

Hip Hop in the Academy  
Gates, West, Dyson, Baker

**Week Fourteen**

Hip Hop in the Mainstream  
The Future of Hip Hop: Where do we go from here?  
Class Presentations

**Paper #5—What's Next?**

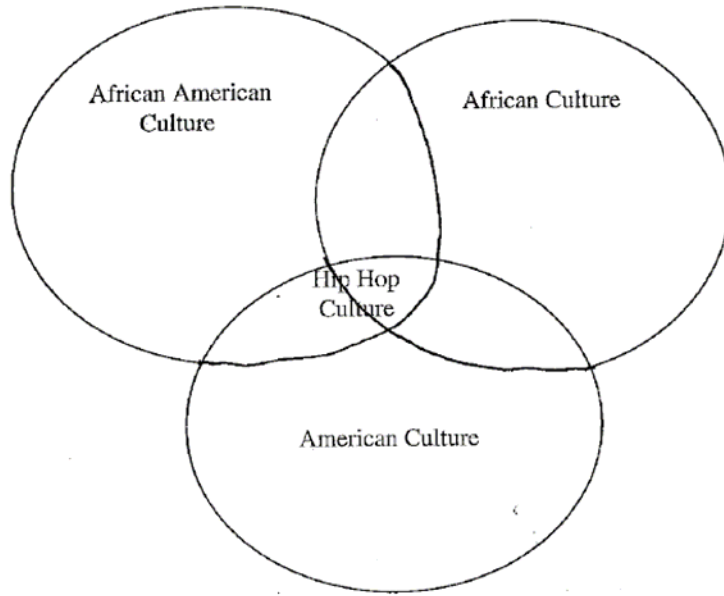
**Week Fifteen**

Class Presentations

**Final Exam**



## Hip Hop Matrix



Created by [unclear] [unclear]

### *What is a rubric?*

A rubric is a set of criteria used to discriminate between different degrees of quality or levels of proficiency as one judges samples of student work. Rubrics are generic, that is, they provide general criteria for evaluating a student's performance in a given area. A single rubric is designed for many related assessment tasks. A holistic rubric is intended to provide an overall impression of the elements of quality and levels of performance evident in a student's work. An analytic rubric measures student work quantitatively using points assigned to various elements desired in a student's response for scoring.

### *Why do we use rubrics?*

Rubrics are used because:

- current instructional practices are process-oriented and stress higher order thinking skills, which traditional paper/pencil tests don't measure adequately,
- rubrics help bridge instruction and assessment,
- rubrics encourage student ownership of the learning process,
- rubrics reflect long-standing practice with the added step of articulating specific expectations to students before and after an assignment,
- clear expectations promote higher achievement along with the more productive and focused use of time,
- students feel the freedom to be creative while staying within teacher expectations,
- rubrics provide diagnostic information about a student's instructional needs,
- rubrics provide motivation for students to strive to increasingly higher levels of performance

### *How do we use rubrics?*

A rubric is a tool or standard by which a teacher judges samples of student work. Criteria are established to help distinguish between exemplary efforts and those that are not acceptable with several gradient levels of accomplishment in between. A rubric becomes a teaching tool when it presents a road map or series of directions for students to follow. Sometimes, teachers and students work together to generate a list of criteria or expectations for students' projects. Application of the rubric to specific examples helps students identify personal strengths and weaknesses.

Analytic rubrics are rarely used alone in connection with newer assessments. Holistic rubrics are used both for assessment and for instruction.

### PROTOTYPE HIP HOP LISTENING RUBRIC

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance Element	Level 5 HIP HOP CLASSIC	Level 4 HEAD BANGA	Level 3 AIGHT	Level 2 Whack	Level 1 Garbage	Possible	Actual
LYRICAL CONTENT						20	
PRODUCTION						10	
CREATIVITY						10	
HEAT FACTOR						5	
WORD PLAY						10	
HOOK						5	
ORIGINALITY						10	
FLOW						15	
PURPOSE						10	
CLARITY						5	

**Feedback Statements**

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Hip-hop is more than words that rhyme. A lot of rap music features as much figurative language as any Shakespearean sonnet or William Blake poem. Rap music is often full of examples of poetry terms. Rhyming words is just the beginning.

Rap Music and poetry are full of Figurative Language. Here is a guide for identifying and using figurative language in hip-hop and poetry. Each figurative language term has a pronunciation guide, a definition, and an example. Rap is poetry, and a lot of poetry is rap.

### **Literary Terminology used in Hip Hop**

**Simile**, (SIH-muh-lee): a comparison between two or more things using the words like or as.

Example: "I move fast like a cheetah on the Serengeti."

**Metaphor**, (MET-uh-for): a comparison between two or more things that doesn't use the words like or as.

Example: "You are an ant, while I'm the lion."

**Alliteration**, (ah-LIT-er-AY-shon): a phrase with a string of words all beginning with the same sound.

Example: "Five freaky females finding sales at retail."

**Hyperbole**, (hie-PER-buh-lee): an exaggeration.

Example: "I fought a million rappers in an afternoon in June."

**Personification**, (per-son-if-ih-KAY-shon): giving an animal or object human-like characteristics.

Example: "Alright, the sky misses the sun at night."

**Paradox**, (PARE-uh-docks): a statement that seems untrue, that seems to contradict itself.

Example: "The poorest man is the richest, and the rich are poor."

**Symbol**, (SIM-bull): something that stands for something else (often something more abstract).

Example: In Tupac Shakur's song *Me and My Girlfriend*, the "girlfriend" referenced is actually his gun.

**Apostrophe**, (uh-POS-troe-fee): a figure of speech that addresses (talks to) a dead or nonpresent person, or an object.

Example: "O, King Vitamin cereal, you blow my mind!"

**Amiri Baraka**  
**Excerpt from "Jazz and the White Critic", 1960**

Most jazz critics have been white Americans, but most important jazz musicians have not been. This might seem a simple enough reality to most people, or at least a reality which can be readily explained in terms of the social and cultural history of American society. And it is obvious why there are only two or three fingers' worth of Negro critics or writers on jazz, say, if one understands that until relatively recently those Negroes who could become critics, who would largely have to come from the black middle class, have simply not been interested in the music. Or at least jazz, for the black middle class, has only comparatively recently lost some of its stigma (though by no means is it yet as popular among them as any vapid musical product that comes sanctioned by the taste of the white majority). Jazz was collected among the numerous skeletons the middle-class black man kept locked in the closet of his psyche, along with watermelons and gin, and whose rat ding caused him no end of misery and self-hatred. As one Howard University philosophy professor said to me when I was an undergraduate, "It's fantastic how much bad taste the blues contain!" But it is just this "bad taste" that this Uncle spoke of that has been the one factor that has kept the best of Negro music from slipping sterilely into the echo chambers of middle-brow American culture. And to a great extent such "bad taste" was kept extant in the music, blues or jazz, because the Negroes who were responsible for the best of the music were always aware of their identities as black Americans and really did not, themselves, desire to become vague, featureless, Americans as is usually the case with the Negro middle class.

...The major flaw in this approach to Negro music is that it strips the music too ingenuously of its social and cultural intent. It seeks to define jazz as an art (or a folk art) that has come out of no intelligent body of sociocultural philosophy.

We take for granted the social and cultural milieu and philosophy that produced Mozart. As Western people, the socio-cultural thinking of eighteenth-century Europe comes to us as a legacy that is a continuous and organic part of the twentieth-century West. The socio-cultural philosophy of the Negro in America (as a continuous historical phenomenon) is no less specific and no less important for any intelligent critical speculation about the music that came out of it. And again, this is not a plea for narrow sociological analysis of jazz, but rather that this music cannot be completely understood (in critical terms) without some attention to the attitudes which produced it. It is the philosophy of Negro music that is most important, and this philosophy is only partially the result of the sociological disposition of Negroes in America. There is, of course, much more to it than that.

Another hopeless flaw in a great deal of the writing about jazz that has been done over the years is that in most cases the writers, the jazz critics, have been anything but intellectuals (in the most complete sense of that word). Most jazz critics began as hobbyists or boyishly brash members of the American petite bourgeoisie, whose only claim to any understanding about the music was that they knew it was *different*; or else they had once been brave enough to make a trip into a Negro slum to hear their favorite instrumentalist defame Western musical tradition. Most jazz critics were (and are) not only white middle-class Americans, but middle-brows as well. The irony here is that because the majority of jazz critics are white middlebrows, most jazz criticism tends to enforce white middle-brow standards of excellence as criteria for performance of a music that in its most profound manifestations is completely antithetical to such

standards; in fact, quite often is in direct reaction against them. (As an analogy, suppose the great majority of the critics of Western formal music were poor, "uneducated" Negroes?) A man can speak of the "heresy of bebop" for instance, only if he is completely unaware of the psychological catalysts that made that music the exact registration of the social and cultural, thinking of a whole generation of black Americans. The blues and jazz aesthetic, to be fully understood, must be seen in as nearly its complete human context as possible. People made bebop. The question the critic must ask is: why? But it is just this why of Negro music that has been consistently ignored or misunderstood; and it is a question that cannot be adequately answered without first understanding the necessity of asking it. Contemporary jazz during the last few years has begun to take on again some of the anarchy and excitement of the bebop years. The cool and hard bop/funk movements since the '40s seem pitifully tame, even decadent, when compared to the music men like Ornette Coleman, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and some others have been making recently. And of the bop pioneers, only Thelonious Monk has managed to maintain without question the vicious creativity with which he first entered the jazz scene back in the '40s. The music has changed again, for many of the same basic reasons it changed twenty years ago. Bop was, at a certain level of consideration, a reaction by young musicians against the sterility and formality of Swing as it moved to become a formal part of the mainstream American culture. The New Thing, as recent jazz has been called, is, to a large degree, a reaction to the hard bop, funk-groove-soul camp, which itself seemed to come into being in protest against the squelching of most of the blues elements in cool and progressive jazz. Funk (groove, soul) has become as formal and cliched as cool or swing, and opportunities for imaginative expression within that form have dwindled almost to nothing.

...There have been so far only two American playwrights, Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams, who are as profound or as important to the history of ideas as Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker or Ornette Coleman, yet there is a more valid and consistent body of dramatic criticism written in America than there is a body of criticism about Negro music. And this is simply because there is an intelligent tradition and body of dramatic criticism though it has largely come from Europe, that any intelligent American drama critic can draw on. In jazz criticism, no reliance on European tradition or theory will help at all. Negro music, like the Negro itself, is strictly an American phenomenon, and we have got to set up standards of judgment and aesthetic excellence that depend on our native knowledge of the underlying philosophies and local cultural references that produced blues and jazz in order to produce valid critical writing or commentary about it. It might be that there is still time to start.

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Excerpted from *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, O'Meally, Robert, ed. New York: Columbia Press, 1998. 137.

Baraka, Amiri. "Jazz and the White Critic." *Black Music*. New York: Morrow, 1960.

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## Appendix F

### Campus Documents

#### 1. Course Development Forms

PROPOSED NEW COURSE

To be completed for number, title, prerequisite, credit hours, and description

1. Number \_\_\_\_\_
2. Title \_\_\_\_\_
3. Prerequisites \_\_\_\_\_
4. Credits 3(3-0)  
(Lecture-Laboratory) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Description \_\_\_\_\_
6. Semester(s)  
to offered:  
Fall, Spring, Summer \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach **current** and **proposed** curricula to show implementation of new course.



<b>PROPOSED COURSE CHANGE(S)</b>
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To be completed for number, title, prerequisite, credit hours, and description changes.

	OLD COURSE	REVISED COURSE
1. Number	_____	_____
2. Title	_____	_____
3. Prerequisites	_____	_____
4. Credits 3(3-0) (Lecture-Laboratory)	_____	_____
5. Description	_____	_____
6. Semester(s) to be offered: Fall, Spring, Summer	_____	_____

Revised: 10/11/02

**COURSE CHANGES AS RELATED TO OTHER PROGRAMS**

To be completed **only** for changes which affect other curricula/programs of study.

COURSE NUMBER(S): OLD \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_

1. List those programs, other than your own, which have this course as a required part of their curriculum.

\_\_\_\_\_

If an entire school, so indicate. \_\_\_\_\_

Has this proposed change been discussed with respective department(s) to be affected by this change?

Check: Yes  No

2. If there are course offerings in the total curriculum of A&T related to the proposed course, show the catalog data for such courses.
3. Is this proposal directed toward meeting the requirements of an accrediting agency and/or professional organization? If so, give details.

Revised: 10/11/02

**COURSE CHANGES AS RELATED TO RESOURCES**

To be completed for all **new** courses/programs of study.

COURSE NUMBER(S): NEW \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe any additional equipment, library, and/or media resources necessary for the implementation of this course and indicate the fiscal arrangements for gaining such resources.
  
2. Indicate the additional staff which would be needed for the implementation of this proposal and describe the fiscal arrangements for such staff. That is:
  - a. Show for each semester of the past academic year the total teaching load for the department in contact hours, the number of full-time equivalent faculty positions, and the average teaching load per FTE.
  
  - b. Repeat (a.) showing the effect of the implementation of this proposal.
  
3. Describe how this proposal is consistent with goals and objectives of the department, the school and the University.
  
4. Other comments:

Revised: 10/11/02

**PROPOSED COURSE DELETION(S)**

To be completed for number, title, prerequisite, credit hours.

1. Number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Title \_\_\_\_\_

3. Prerequisites \_\_\_\_\_

4. Credits 3(3-0)  
(Lecture-Laboratory) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Title \_\_\_\_\_

3. Prerequisites \_\_\_\_\_

4. Credits 3(3-0)  
(Lecture-Laboratory) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Title \_\_\_\_\_

3. Prerequisites \_\_\_\_\_

4. Credits 3(3-0)  
(Lecture-Laboratory) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Title \_\_\_\_\_

3. Prerequisites \_\_\_\_\_

4. Credits 3(3-0)  
(Lecture-Laboratory) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please attach current and proposed curricula to show implementation of course deletion(s).**

Revised: 10/11/2002

## VITA

Tracy Denise Hall was born on August 14, 1967, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Gloria J. Lee and Samuel E. Turner. She graduated from MCCLuer Senior High School in 1985. In 1989, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from The University of Missouri-St. Louis. She earned a Master of Arts degree from The Wichita (KS) State University in 1992, and a Doctorate in Education from The University of Missouri-Columbia in 2007.

Tracy Hall's work experiences include serving as a faculty member on various college and university campuses where she taught courses in speech, mass, interpersonal and intercultural communication. In addition, she has served as a minority student retention coordinator at Kennesaw (GA) State University and as an associate dean at The Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley in Kansas City, Missouri. Her research interests include Critical Race, Black Feminist, and Social Justice Theories and culturally-relevant pedagogical constructs.

Hall currently resides in Kansas City, Missouri, with her husband, Anthony Hall, Sr., and their three children, Taylor, Anthony, Jr. and Trevor.