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Critical Hip-hop Graffiti Pedagogy in a Primary School

by

Wade E. Brown

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my daughter, Legacy Brown who is my inspiration and reason for being, as well as the entire Brown family; thank you for your understanding and support, my Morehouse brothers and Spelman sisters for helping me to understand what social justice meant twenty years ago, all the students with disabilities (all of whom were students of color) I have ever taught and have impressed upon me to advocate for their cultural presence and dire need for equity in education, and lastly my sociocultural foundation and hometown, Detroit, Michigan.

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## ABSTRACT

### Critical Hip-hop Graffiti Pedagogy in a Primary School

by

Wade Ellis Brown

Educational reform movements are constantly in the process of trying to improve a fractured educational system. Many scholars contend there is a discrepancy between educational outcomes for White students and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Some educators in working class communities of color have begun to infuse elements of students' social and cultural backgrounds, including popular culture, to create instructional methods that can better engage and pique student interest. Hip-hop Pedagogy is one of the methods, rooted in popular culture, which is being used in classroom settings to increase students' awareness about the societal constructs and issues in their communities that may affect them. Student access to Hip-hop based instructional methods, however, have been limited and virtually absent from elementary education settings. However the consumption of Hip-hop culture persists in urban communities worldwide. This qualitative study implemented a Hip-hop emergent-based curriculum in an elementary school setting, closely documenting the perceptions and responses to the curriculum by four young males students of color. The study consisted of five consecutive classroom sessions, in which the curriculum and dialogue focused on different



expressions of Hip-hop culture. Student viewpoints were logged daily in focus groups and the data that emerged from the sessions and focus groups informed the emergent curriculum.

Graffiti became the Hip-hop element of focus chosen for deeper exploration by the participants in this study. The study revealed a number of findings that point to the potential value of an emergent Hip-hop curriculum with elementary male students of color.

## CHAPTER ONE

### “SO AMBITIOUS: THE QUEST FOR LITERACY”

#### Introduction

I felt so inspired by what my teacher said

He said I'd be in jail or a reefer head

Not sure if that's how adults should talk to kids

Especially when the only thing I did was speak in class

I'll teach his ass!

Jay-Z as cited in “So Ambitious” (Carter, 2009, track 14)

American education has historically engaged in exclusionary transgressions against students with ethnic backgrounds considered undesirable by the mainstream (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Woodson, 2013). This academic system seems to demand a profound understanding and acceptance of the dominant culture, in order for most students to succeed. Racially exclusionary practices have had negative results for students of color unable to adapt to cultural norms established (Au, 2009; Kunjufu, 2012). Many of these working class students of color attend learning institutions for at least 10 years or more yet too few are able to develop the very few skill sets considered viable in the American market place. Many states and local municipalities spend anywhere from \$70,000 to \$150,000 per student, to under-educate and disenfranchise generations urban youths of color; and thus, the so-called “achievement gap” results (Hilliard, Perry, & Steele, 2003). Consequently, students from some urban communities have developed a distaste for learning as enacted by local public education institutions. Moreover, racialized

communities in extreme poverty have been subjected to generations of miseducation and poor services from those institutions. In response, many have left neighborhood public schools altogether for other options like charter schools (Kunjufu, 2012).

There are several reform movements within education; such as the charter school explosion, which was spawned to supposedly address the failure of public schools in lower socioeconomic urban communities. Charter proponents see certain facets of school systems as unfixable and believe people deserve an educational choice (Kunjufu, 2012). *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (2001) initiated the move towards data and accountability, through demanding consistent levels of standardized testing. The current iteration is the government-led reform of the reform movement, in which the government is revisiting the demand and stipulations, adjusting the requirements of NCLB (2001) as well as providing relief from penalties for not meeting expectations; the Obama administration's reformulation of the initiative is now called Race to the Top (RTTT) (2010). Although this study had no direct connection to these reforms initiatives, it is a product of urban curricular alternatives that have emerged during this same period.

This research used elements of students' surroundings and their opinions to develop meaningful conversations that furthered their own personal interests and self-evolution (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011). Inspiring learning about their interests, as opposed to imposing convoluted expectations, encouraged a scientific and experimental process in teaching and learning that involved student contribution toward breaking new ground, academically and socio-culturally (Freire, 2011). This research hoped to initiate a shift in paradigms that focuses on the needs of the individual learner, their human needs and

wants, and a service delivery model that is student-centered. If education is purposeful and effective, then it adjusts to the individual learner; as a deejay would adjust his music selection based upon the socioeconomics and demographics of a given audience (Darder, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

One of the underlying intentions of this research was to challenge dominant pedagogical practices and so-called reform movements, by creating and implementing a Hip-hop based curriculum that exposed urban students of color to the foundational elements of Hip-hop culture, as well as the sociocultural theories driving the creation and development of Hip-hop sociocultural themed contributions. The researcher implemented curriculum and teaching methods that were not common; the challenge was facilitating the effective rollout of theory in a small classroom setting. The critical emergent facet of the study and daily focus groups established student voice and perceptions, which determined the direction of this five-day study (Dalke, Cassidy, Grobstein, & Blank, 2007). The classroom became the setting for Hip-hop based dialogue that broadened their overall understanding of Hip-hop and spurred forward their developing levels of critical consciousness as primary-aged students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Male students of color in working class public schools are consistently underperforming academically. Often this is associated today with the negative impact of conservative practices such as those linked to NCLB educational agenda established in 2001, which mandated standardized testing in conjunction with the receipt of federal dollars (Darder, 2012). There were similarly systematic institutional structures in place

that adversely affect the educational experience of urban students of color. While the educational playing field was not level, all schools, teachers, and students were being held responsible for meeting the federal academic mandates. Currently, the RTTT (2010) initiated by President Obama, as mention above, also attached federal funding benefits to test scores and measurable units of academic progress. According to RTTT, state winners of federal educational grants should adhere to testing and evaluative measures, based on performance high-stakes tests used to determine if states were achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

In 2009, the overall national dropout rate was 8% and 5% for Whites, 9% for Blacks, and 17% for Latinos (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005). In urban area high schools, the dropout rate has been as high as 50%, and the college-going rates are below 10% (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005) in these communities. Sixteen percent of African Americans are unemployed, while the overall national average is 9.7%.

While the American cultural landscape continues to expand with the growing Latino population and the first African-American president, the educational system remains intractable. No matter the educational reform, it is usually interpreted and executed from a dominant class and cultural perspective (Darder, 2012). Not surprising given that White teachers make up 83% of the public school teacher work force (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). While many reforms have been initiated, the core of educational process of schooling remains consistent. Systemic racism, cultural invasion, and language domination by teachers from the dominant culture have estranged students of color from the public education process (Darder, Baltodano, &

Torres, 2009a). The omission of the learning community's culture continues to be ignored by school district and learning agencies' master plans, and yet the issue persists in preventing true learning in the midst of changing demographics. Unattainable norms and culturally irrelevant teachers and curricula have contributed to this crisis in the systematic marginalization of bicultural students, which is quantitatively represented by data the points to an achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

In reaction to the annual academic demands of RTTT (2010), a forceful and well-funded charter school movement has ensued, which has rocked the core of public education. The inability of traditional public schools to show consistent academic progress in the Black male population has significantly contributed to the rise of the charter school option. So high is the pressure to perform on these tests, for which many students will never be adequately prepared, that massive numbers of teachers have been forced to resort to cheating to attain good test scores, with some even so frustrated that they are abandoning their craft (Johnson, 2011).

### **Purpose of This Study**

The purpose of this critical ethnographic study was to investigate primary student reactions to Hip-hop culture in a classroom setting. Jim Thomas (1993) referred to critical theory as "intellectual rebellion," while Joe L. Kinchloe and Peter McLaren (2000) asserted that critical theory finds its method in critical ethnography. In this lens, critical ethnography became the implementation and practice of critical theory (Kinchloe & McLaren, 2000). This study was a critical ethnography in the positioning of Hip-hop within an elementary educational context to challenge hegemonic norms of learning.

A major part of critical ethnographic research was the focus on culture and the accounting of a cultural phenomenon (Wolcott, 1999). In this study Hip-hop was the culture being observed in an unlikely primary classroom setting. Thomas Schwandt (2007) felt that critical ethnographies were "critical" in two senses: (a) they were framed and carried out with a social-ethical sense of responsibility to critique and, if necessary, change the status quo of specific contexts they investigate; and (b) they were grounded in "a self-referential form of reflexivity that aimed to criticize the ethnographer's own production of an account" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 51).

The researcher proposed teaching lessons that were not traditional but actually used cultural knowledge to inspire dialogue, in order to stimulate interest in a field which could drive one's academic direction and potential life outcome (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The researcher intended to challenge accepted standards of teaching and learning. Through audio and video media excerpts, students were exposed to the historical beginning of Hip-hop, the elements of Hip-hop and how to actually partake in the culture; hence developing a preference for further investigation. The study also sought to deepen the participants' understandings of the effects and reasons behind Hip-hop messages relayed to the urban youths in their communities, and to compare messages from the early days of Hip-hop to the current messages in rap music.

Two cultures were observed: that of the primary charter school in an urban community and that of the Hip-hop culture as observed by the participants and their subsequent perceptions. Because the researcher was familiar with Hip-hop culture, he employed an emic perspective in teaching Hip-hop to the participants. However, the

researcher was not a faculty member at Charter School X, where the study took place. Therefore, the researcher used an etic perspective in observing students' reactions to the substance within each lesson and the effect of his presence on the participants and the school community.

This study sought to engage with the current understanding about the achievement gap among working class male students of color and to consider the effectiveness of culturally relevant classroom strategies associated with ameliorating the problem. In particular, this study examined Hip-hop based education and Hip-hop pedagogical strategies that aim to remedy the urban educational achievement problem. This study focused on elementary school males from working class communities of color, many of whom have daily exposure to the Hip-hop popular culture and the subculture associated with this practice (Prier, 2012). Additionally, this study intended to establish the relevance and need for a Hip-hop Pedagogy in an elementary public school setting.

On a national level, approximately three out of four students identified with reading problems in the third grade were still reading-disabled in the ninth grade (Shaywitz, Morris, & Shaywitz, 1992). These findings suggested that early intervention was critical for young readers. Those who fell behind in the first three years of their schooling may face a greater struggle to become fluent readers. Academic achievement and literacy have historically represented a conduit from cyclical poverty to untold levels of human discovery (Hilliard et al., 2003; Noguera, 2008). Yet since the spawning of NCLB (2001), statistics have indicated that students of color, specifically males, who



partook in the public education system were not fully benefitting from this process (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005; Hilliard et al., 2003).

Scholars have posited several different causes for the negative outcomes of working class students of color, yet each year, more marginalized students of color who are ill-prepared by local public schools are sent into the work force with inadequate skill sets (Kunjufu, 2012; Noguera, 2008). Somewhere in the delivering of public educational services to students of color, there were several shortcomings and inadequacies in the curriculum or instruction, or combination of both. Yet more importantly there was a lack of cultural understanding of the changing needs that students of color face and the result of this cultural impasse was the academic and subsequent societal failure of urban institutions to education working class students (Gay & Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

A growing number of college and secondary educators who implement Hip-hop music and aspects of the culture in the classroom, have figured how to more effectively engage urban students. These educators believed that the music and culture of Hip-hop were viable tools to be used in teaching academic subjects, as well in developing knowledge about oneself and one's environment (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Hill, 2009; Pardue, 2007; Prier, 2012). Although Hip-hop based education has found relevance in secondary education, its importance has not been felt in primary education. This study considered perceptions of working class students of color when teaching from a Hip-hop based perspective in an elementary level classroom.

Clearly there existed a need to strengthen the cultural foundations in educating students of color. So, although there were several studies that examined the use of Hip-hop to educate secondary and college student students, this study proposed to fill an academic void in the actual execution and implementation of a Hip-hop education curriculum at a primary grade level. Given the difficulties that some students of color face in making academic progress, this study proposed to employ Hip-hop Pedagogy within a Hip-hop based curriculum in an elementary education setting, with an aim toward improving the literacy skills of students of color.

When students of color were put in equitable and meaningful learning situations they excel (Kunjufu, 2012). Nevertheless, many working class children of color often learned how to be inadequate students, rejecting the education process because they could not find genuine cultural acceptance and anonymity based on fairness in the classroom (Freire, 2011; Ogbu, 1978). Students also experienced problems related to the traditional classroom curriculum and their understanding of how certain academic skills apply to their daily lives.

This study attempted to provide access to a culturally relevant curriculum and, thus, inspire student achievement by finding common social norms, while also establishing cultural identity and fostering empowerment based on elements of Hip-hop culture, as a praxis of critical literacy. More importantly, this study engaged a Hip-hop curriculum to deliver a rigorous academic message, anchored upon a much-needed culturally aware perspective (Akom, 2009).

## **Background of This Study**

In the time of slavery, literacy and formal education were denied to African-Americans slaves, who lived in captivity. Slaves faced grave consequences if they were caught reading, often being hung or dismembered. It was believed that education, or, moreover, the ability to read would spoil the slave, by instilling dissatisfaction with their condition (Hilliard et al., 2003). Hence, the quest for literacy became synonymous with freedom and social mobility in the African-American community.

While public school failure and inequality seemed to be a current phenomenon, historically, the issues of race within public schools have been a determining factor in the quality of education students received (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) asserted that the funding practices have been unequal for public schools that service working class students of color; and Pedro Noguera (2008) added that the quality of teachers in working class school communities varies greatly from that of those in mainstream school communities of wealth.

*Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 instituted the concept of “separate but equal” in all facets of American life, in which White American culture was the norm and gold standard by law (Runell, 2011). It was not until *Brown v. The Board of Education* in 1954 that racial inequalities engrained in the framework of the American public education system were exposed and aggressively addressed, as the concept of “separate but equal” was deemed unconstitutional (Runell, 2011). Yet almost 60 years after this landmark case, there was still a drastic difference in educational quality and service delivery models based on race and class. The lack of instruction in critical reading and thinking skills were major

impediments to advancements in literacy for students of color (Darder, 2012; Hilliard et al., 2003).

Robert G. Owens and Thomas C. Valesky (2011) asserted that the current educational reform movement began with the publication of the pamphlet *Nation at Risk* during the Reagan Administration in 1984. The pamphlet focused on the achievement gap between White students and students of color, as well as the failure of public school systems. More than a decade after the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) (2001), the American public educational landscape was rife with standardized testing measures, constant budget cuts, and loss of resources. Yet there was much data indicating that many working class students of color are not fully benefitting from the instruction they were receiving (Darder, 2012; Noguera, 2008).

Furthermore catch phrases like “accountability” and “intervention” have placed the burden primarily on teachers to take responsibility for the glaring failures of instruction and leadership, represented by poor student performance on high-stakes standardized test scores. The accountability movement has forced educational administrators and leaders to adopt a corporate approach in preparing the next generation socially, mentally, physically, and academically. In the process, the larger structural dimensions of schooling in the US were virtually left unaddressed.

The achievement gap was displayed by the test-score gap that existed between White children and Black and Latino children who came from similar economic backgrounds (Hilliard et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Many economically disenfranchised Black and Latino students, unfortunately, were unable to meet testing

measures and, thus, were unfairly labeled and tracked into remediation classes for “intervention” (Noguera, 2008). The current testing age and accountability demands have revealed that students of color in poor urban communities were not making annual academic progress, as measured by standardized test scores (Au, 2009). This academic failure has become synonymous with generational poverty for millions of students color in urban communities (Extreme Poverty in the United States, 1996 to 2011, 2012; Owens & Valesky, 2011).

U.S. Census Bureau (2010) data showed that lifetime earning potential increases exponentially with each level of education attained. The data empirically demonstrated a strong correlation between literacy levels, educational attainment, and potential lifestyle (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As a consequence, there were many subsequent social injustices resulting from students of color’s lack of opportunities to develop the literacy and critical thinking skills necessary to becoming viable in the world labor market place (See Table 1). The United States, “home of the free,” earned the title of the world’s leading jailer. In 2007 the United States had less than 5% of the world's population but 23.4% of the world's prison and jail population, with the rates of incarceration of people of color significantly higher than those of White Americans (Walmsley, 2009). In November 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) indicated that more that 16% of the population in the United States, the wealthiest country in world, lived in poverty, including almost 20% of American children. Conversely, California, which has an economy ranked top 10 in the world, based upon Silicon Valley and Hollywood, has a poverty rate of 23.5%, the highest of any state in the country (Walmsley, 2009).

Table 1

*Impact of Educational Inequality by Race/Ethnicity*

Category/Race	White	Black	Latino	National
Poverty rate	13%	35%	33%	
High school graduation rates (national average)	78%	57%	58%	72%
High school dropout rate (national average)	5.2%	9.6%	17.6%	8.1%
Incarceration rates per 100,000	0.4%	2.3%	0.7%	

*Note.* From "World Prison Population List" (9th ed.). by R. Walmsley, 2009. International Centre for Prison Studies Victoria Charity Centre. & "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009" by U.S. Census Bureau. (2010).

Based on a legacy of exclusion and inequity, public schools in poor urban communities in the United States are racially oppressive and have exhibited systematic failure. Working class schools have reproduced deficit notions of racial inequality and systematic marginalization for Black and Latino students. Despite attempts by many, no reform movement has yet to solve this long-term failure, as organizational structures of public education that produce social inequalities remain intractable (Owens & Valesky, 2011).

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stated that 7.3 million children were living in deep poverty, of which 37% were Black children and 34% were Latino children. Their White counterparts represented only 12% (Extreme Poverty in the United States, 1996 to 2011, 2012). The data continued to reveal profound depths of social inequality that permeated throughout American culture and were blatantly

manifested in education, economics, and political agendas (Hilliard et al., 2003). In response, Ladson-Billings (2006) concluded that there was a cultural gap between students and teachers, related to the achievement gap, which had accumulated over time, through both overt and covert practices of systemic racism—racism that marginalizes students of color and denied them economic and educational opportunities. There existed similarly a test-score gap between Black and White children from similar economic backgrounds; however, the gap remained largest between middle-class Whites and lower socioeconomic bicultural students (Hilliard et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

According to Wayne Au (2009), the American education system has racist and exclusionary practices of relying upon standardized test data and, thus, year after year, Black and Latinos students, most of who are enrolled in economically disenfranchised schools, are deemed to become educational failures. Jawanza Kunjufu (2012) and Asa Hilliard, Theresa Perry, and Claude Steele, (2003) asserted that standardized testing is an unnecessary process that assessed exposure to material, not actual thought processing abilities; nonetheless these were the measures used to determine which students were eligible for advanced or remedial placement. The modern-day classroom may not appear segregated, yet testing has become a method of enacting racialized attitudes and practices within a normalized or hegemonic environment. Instead of providing a pathway to social mobility, the public educational system reinforced societal prejudices and reproduced a caste formation (Darder, 2012).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2012), in 2008 White teachers comprised 83% of the public school teaching force, and 76% of that

population was female; while Black teachers made up only 7% of the entire teaching population. Kunjufu (2012) claimed that since 1954 there has been a 66% decline in the number of African-American teachers. Hiring trends, pedagogical practices, and curricula have not changed, in spite of the growing problem of inadequate academic access for marginalized students of color (Darder, 2012; Noguera, 2008).

In response to years of not meeting the NCLB (2001) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements, California's Department of Education was reconstituting several schools in working class communities. When a school was reconstituted by the state it was either run by the state or given to a private education entity. Many tenured teachers of color who have worked at inner-city schools for years are currently being displaced and replaced with lower priced and less-experienced teachers from the dominant culture (Kunjufu, 2012). The cultural disconnect in the United States between middle-class teachers and urban working class students of color persists, perpetuating the lack of academic opportunity and furthering trends of poverty and wealth, all of which varied in direct proportion to race and class.

The cultural background of public school teachers remained in stark contrast to the students they served, considering that the public school student population was comprised of 41% Black and Latino children (Runell-Hall, 2011; NCES, 2012). In 2005, only 55% of all Black students graduated from high school on time with a regular diploma, compared to 78% of White students (Orfield & Lee, 2006). In 2005, the on-time graduation rate nationally for Black males was 48%; for White males it was 74% (Orfield & Lee, 2006). For certain members of society, public schools have perpetuated a



subjective type of inequality and authoritative oppression, in creating a system of elitist privilege and power for the few (Au, 2009; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Noguera, 2008).

While the societal and cultural norms were changing in direct proportion to the darkened complexion of American society, teaching was still done primarily from the perspective of the dominant culture (NCES, 2012). This was important to note because the current national educational focus was on the achievement gap, especially the disparity between the academic achievement of White and Black students. In this current age of testing and accountability, data moreover revealed that African Americans, or, more specifically, male students of color in poor urban areas, were not making yearly academic progress as measured by standardized tests (Au, 2009). In 2002, only 23% of all Black students who started public high school graduated prepared for college, compared to 40% of Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Accordingly, African-American and Latino twelfth grade students read on average at approximately the same level as White eighth graders (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The problems with this emphasis on testing were displayed in 2011, when the Atlanta Public School District unearthed a cheating scandal that involved over 178 teachers and administrators; 82 of the alleged cheating culprits confessed to authorities (Jonsson, 2011). Pressures to perform on high-stakes standardized tests compelled several educators to collaborate with a system in which they adjusted student test responses for better outcomes (Jonsson, 2011). Atlanta public school students received award-winning academic gains by using a teacher-led systematic answer-fixing scheme (Jonsson, 2011).

As a result of these invalid gains, many working class Atlanta public schools received additional funding to continue the ‘good’ educational work from the Broad Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Jonsson, 2011). Likely the largest cheating scandal to date, the Atlanta public schools debacle well reflects the pressure to succeed academically that is being experienced by public educators. It resulted in a defamed superintendent who had to resign, several administrators who will lose their livelihood and credentials, and thousands of children who were slighted out of a formative educational process.

Over the past decade, there has been a feverish push to improve Black and Latino student academic performance on standardized tests. As education has conformed to national mandates and taken an assessment-based structure, certain students remain unable to achieve, based on increasing high-stakes testing expectations. Students need an education that prepares them for life, rather than one in which they are taught to master a culturally biased test. The remedy, however, has been skill-based curricula and constant progress monitoring, through classroom and district assessments and special education referrals.

The current education process continues to perpetuate social inequality and its far-reaching societal effects, whether students of color attend charter schools or traditional public schools. As a consequence of the charter school movement, traditional public education classrooms have become dumping grounds for unwanted students, as teachers have to account for the quality of their own pedagogy (Hilliard et al., 2003; Noguera, 2008). Responding to blog comments, Noguera (2012) shared, “There’s no doubt that

charter schools are being used to undermine public education in many communities. But ... public schools are in need of change and renewal” (Noguera, 2012).

Didactic and culturally relevant teaching methods are underutilized methods that create areas of commonality and self-discovery for educators and students (Darder, 2012; Darder et al., 2009a; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009). While these qualitative gains are effective, they are not practiced consistently nor measured on a national level. Public education agencies have had the tendency of tracking students of color who are failing academically, creating even lower student expectations as a remedy (Hilliard et al., 2003; Noguera, 2008). Based on test scores, the dominant educational assumption has been that generations of students of color do not have the cognitive abilities or cultural prowess to achieve academically (Darder, 2012). According to Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell (2008), “Perpetual urban school failure is tolerated because deep down our nation subscribes to the belief that someone has to fail” (p. 2). School systems designed to fail continue to fail, while the blame game ensues among parents, teachers, administrators, and politicians. Consequently, the opportunities for sustained social advancement for generations of students of color have been compromised.

Historically, education has been thought to be a remedy for poverty, ignorance, and racism. Nevertheless, several teachers have used special education placement, tracking, and suspension to eliminate outliers in an effort to improve overall general education scores and ignore the varying needs of working class urban learners (Hilliard et al., 2003; Noguera, 2008). Meanwhile, teaching to the test and forcing all students to conform to one norm neglects the needs of students and has resulted in a passive student

rebellion, with record low test scores and record high dropout rates (Au, 2009; Darder, 2012; Prier, 2012). There is an academic language and middle-class socialization that must be acquired by working class students of color, in order to access the American education system and partake of higher socioeconomic opportunities. Just as there is a working class language in urban America that is eloquently expressed in rap music. While academic instruction and the environment are important factors, the language and culture of instruction also play a significant role in the successful academic performance of working class students of color, or their subsequent failure (Freire, 2011; Durán, 2012).

Many scholars have critiqued theories of education that partition academic performance from other facets of student life (Darder, 2012; Hilliard et al., 2003; Kunjufu, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Noguera, 2008). All have come to the consensus that invalidating the culture of subordinate students in their educational process is dehumanizing, restricting student perspectives of education and their social agency within the larger society (Freire, 2011). Ladson-Billings (2006) argued that the racist infrastructure of the United States creates not only an achievement gap between Blacks and Whites, but also funding gaps between their respective schools. Unequal suspension rates and referrals to special education are disproportionately high among urban youths of color (Hilliard et al, 2003; Noguera, 2008). The United States has had a long history of keeping Black students and other people of color from achieving academic progress, thereby devaluing multicultural intelligence and adversely affecting these cultural communities (Hilliard et al., 2003, Noguera, 2008).

Gender bias, race, and class oppression of working class students exemplify a type of subjugation that may also come from educators who have a common subordinate cultural background as the population they teach; however, their frame of reference remains that of the dominant society (Darder, 2012; Woodson, 2013). American society has created a culture in which social inequality is accepted; thus many educators unwittingly reproduce the oppression and marginalization by recreating the culture of inequality that silences student voice in the classroom (Freire, 2011). Educators of all races bear witness to the drastic levels of unequal wealth and resource distribution and many are content to maintain their own lot; hence they ignore the focused and forced plight of the urban working class. Teaching techniques are inconsistent with student needs and interests and thus have produced academic failure.

The complicit acceptance of racism creates the space for demeaning students' of color dire request for knowledge and humanization; when the social capital and the intelligence established from black culture are omitted and denied from use in the classroom (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011). American history and African Americans are inherently intertwined, yet the blatant omission of African American's contributions towards the country's development consistently fuels attitudes of entitlement and disdain among the dominant society. Resistance to the dominant culture, meanwhile, has been passed down through generations of marginalized urban communities.

There is the institutional assumption that the dominant culture or middle-class "American" way of life and its methods of child rearing are superior to those of subordinate cultures. Thus, there is the expectancy for students to forsake the customs of

their subordinate culture to fully partake in the dominant culture. There are several examples of children who have reacted negatively to years of being nurtured in the perfect example of dominant culture; take into account the mass killings in the suburban communities of Columbine and Sandy Hook. Nonetheless, assimilative methods of child development and pedagogy that mirror the values of the dominant society are still prescribed and seen as “best practices.” Even the new Common Core State Standards, while rigorous in outcomes and expectations, neglect aspects of cultural relevance and the inclusion of students’ home culture into the curricula.

Classrooms today continue to be settings for reprehensible crimes of injustice, as opposed to places that exemplify democracy and humanity. The fundamental commitment to protect and nurture students based on their needs has been lost in the quest to lower educational costs and meet state and federal standards. The scaled-down version of education requires that one size must fit all (Darder, 2012; Freire 2011). Many working class students of color live in economically depressed communities, but rather than use their lived knowledge as fodder for learning and motivation to evolve past difficult life conditions, educators totally ignore the strength and beauty that lie in the process of their daily survival (Woodson, 2013). Education attempts diligently to transform urban working students into middle class or “normalize” them, while ignoring their present economic conditions and the challenges they face. Ultimately, students would benefit from the development of skills and knowledge than can help them to participate in the American workplace and marketplace, as well as become effective citizens within their communities.

Paulo Freire (2011) contended that education could and should be a liberating process that humanized all involved. Drawing on Freire, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) have asserted that researchers and educators should refer to critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and subsequently Hip-hop Pedagogy as they consider ways to motivate students and meet their evolving academic needs. Educators are making cultural connections to the home culture of working class students of color, in order to pique student interests and improve the learning experiences for all students (Darder, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In her work, Geneva Gay (2000) noted that the more variance there is between students' cultural, racial, ethnic, and intellectual characteristics and the normative standards of schools, the greater the chances are that their school achievement will be compromised by low or negative teacher expectations. Consequently, working class students of color are most vulnerable, as they are routinely subjected to unfair teacher attitudes, expectations, and actions (Gay, 2000; Noguera, 2008). Kunjufu (2012) argued that schools "hold children responsible for outcomes without giving them the same level of funding" (p. 20).

Nevertheless, the urban public education problem persists, as it consistently marginalizes and alienates working class students of color. Educational movements have come in the form of curricula, interventions, and holistic teaching strategies. Hip-hop Pedagogy is one of the few culturally relevant strategies implemented in some classroom environments that considers students' home cultures and social class and which makes an

effort to empower bicultural students, provide curriculum access, and inspire student achievement (Darder et al., 2009a; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Prier, 2012).

### **Hip-hop Culture**

Hip-hop is a music-based subculture that began in the United States during the late sixties and early seventies. It was derived from a culture of dancing, graffiti art, and rapping that has broken through racial and social barriers worldwide (Prier, 2012).

Historically, Hip-hop and jazz have been musical forms of artistic expression that have threatened caste systems by providing a medium and space by which societal lines were crossed in the pursuit of artistic evolution. Born from urban innovation, Hip-hop was created out of obscurity from artistic renderings of various subcultures. Hip-hop has traditionally been an outlet for urban youth to defuse and solve gang problems through fellowship in activities such as block parties, as well as competitions in dance, deejaying, emceeing, and graffiti.

Artistic expression and expertise within the Hip-hop genre has become the goal of many urban youths who are motivated not by money, but by mastery. Far beyond the party aspect of Hip-hop, it has also had a message of communal identity, cultural understanding, and acceptance, as well as self-expression and social justice. It produced the soundtrack for two generations, while creatively reporting the ills and wrongs of American society, especially as they affected working class youth and their communities. Hip-hop has been created by youth in resistance to public education's banking system and its inability to tap into the cultural resources of working class students of color.



Several successful artists have reflected negatively upon the American public education experience. Hip-hop lyrical pioneer Melle Mel depicted urban inequality from a young adult Black-male perspective, fully grasping the depths of poverty in which he lived as well as the unfairness of the distribution of economic resources.

Broken glass everywhere  
People pissing on the stairs  
You know they just don't care  
I can't take the smell  
I can't take the noise  
Got no money to move out  
I guess I got no choice  
Rats in the front room  
Roaches in the back  
Junkies in the alley with the baseball bat/  
I tried to get away  
But I couldn't get far  
Cause a man with a tow-truck repossessed my car  
Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five as cited  
in the "The Message" (Glover et al., 1982, track 7).

In these ways, Hip-hop music has held the mirror up to American society for almost 30 years, as it has consistently represented resistance to the societal and educational status quo. With great defiance, the Hip-hop movement has vehemently rejected the banking

system of education and the social inequality it produces. It has historically used the dialogical method to teach listeners about an artist's varying positionality (Akorn, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Hip-hop remains revolutionary because of its messages of persistence, struggle, and success, despite obvious racism. As mentioned earlier, Hip-hop began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the midst of a culture of dance, graffiti art, and rap that broke through racial and social barriers worldwide. Today the most prominent form of Hip-hop is rap, and while the rap music business has grown into a billion dollar industry, the objective of much of the music has devolved from political and social commentary to odes of gang banging, drug dealing, and misogyny that derail education and work ethics, which operate secondarily to promote the prison industrial complex. Because mainstream Hip-hop music's current representation is laden with violence, misogyny, and commercialism, it is hard for many educators to fully grasp and implement this valuable cultural tool within a pedagogical context (McWhorter, 2003).

Hip-hop matured and its appeal became universal, after which corporate America stepped forward as an oppressive and demanding suitor. Hip-hop culture and music, like many other industries, has been influenced by corporate America's bombardment of messages of consumerism. The music created has had a new message that reflected urban America's post-Reagan era mood of self-centrism. But corporate America has found a way to whittle the Hip-hop music culture down to its most simplified and profitable form, gangster rap music, and focus on the negative images that attract attention from popular culture.

The messages of the Hip-hop music industry were no longer balanced, reflecting genuine artistic expression, but instead espoused repetitious profit and unit based themes. Further, the prevalent messages in rap music glorified gang banging, drugs, gun violence, and misogyny. Negative themes became reproduced artistically and creatively in various ways that were constantly delivered to consumers. These negative values, such as instant gratification, disdain for planning, expectations of constant success, rugged individualism, and the have-or-have-not mentality, have become social pillars of a sector of poor urban communities. This music provides listeners hope of attaining a “first-class” or wealthy American lifestyle, without assimilating to the constraints of mainstream American society. From 1984 until 1992, *The Cosby Show* provided positive images of a traditional urban working class family of color. From 1990 until 1996, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* made its own current interpretation of the customary middle-class Black family. Now, VH1 and other cable stations provide several reality shows that purport to combine elements of Hip-hop with very raw and skewed depictions of black upper, middle, and lower class life to create a new modern incarnation of the black family.

Some critics of Hip-hop Pedagogy have derided the validity of Hip-hop scholars and view the movement as a fad that will not endure over time (McWhorter, 2003). Cornell University linguist John McWhorter (2003) maintained that rap music held no artistic value and created nothing. As a scholar, McWhorter (2003) positioned himself opposite Hip-hop culture, blaming people of color for their artistic and instinctive responses to generational oppression.

In contrast, Au (2005) examined 37 rap songs released between 1989 and 2004 by

analyzing the lyrics for references to key words relating to education including the following: “school,” “education,” “teachers,” “diplomas,” “classrooms,” “lunchrooms,” “hallways,” “books,” or “playground.” The study revealed one common critique and/or theme from the lyrical content analysis: schools do not provide students with content deemed worthwhile. More importantly, schools do not pedagogically engage or interest students or teach the skills necessary for economic survival. The school curriculum is full of racist lies and a process of miseducation persists that enforces teaching Whiteness .

Some of Hip-hop’s own artists are its harshest critics; controversial rapper Killer Mike posited:

The ballot or the bullet

Some freedom or some bullshit

Will we ever do it big

Or keep just settling for little shit

We brag on having bread

But none of us are bakers

We all talk having greens

But none of us own acres

If none of us own acres

And none of us grow wheat

Then who will feed our people

when our people need to eat

So it seems our people starve from lack of understanding

Cause all we seem to give them is some balling and some dancing  
And some talking about our car and imaginary mansions  
We should be indicted for bullshit we inciting  
Hella children dead and pretending it's exciting  
We are advertisements for agony and pain  
We exploit the youth  
we tell them to join a gang  
We tell them dope stories  
introduce them to the game  
Killer Mike (as cited in Render, 2012, track 6)

Killer Mike reflected on the importance of the rapper in the poor urban community, as well as the current waste of that social capital. However, countless artists misuse that influence for capitalistic gains, hence perpetuating misleading and, in concert with capitalism, materialistic messages of power to urban youth. The “Get Money” motto has become Hip-hop’s most prevalent theme, yet the plan to attain wealth usually entails shortsighted plans combined with criminal activity possible time in the school of hard knocks or jail. Furthermore, Hip-hop music and its contributors are positioned on the side of the oppressors, as it promotes participation in the capitalist industrial complex, at all costs. Consequently, the new or mainstream Hip-hopper has become profit preacher who uses words to inspire many legal and illegal quests for wealth and thus who amasses consumer goods at any cost; instead of being a messenger of true artistic Hip-hop based experiences that critically examine the human condition.

## **Hip-hop Based Education**

Darius Prier (2012) asserted, “In the postmodern era Hip-hop wields significant influence in shaping the identity and lived experiences of young people, and urban youth of color in particular” (p. 3). The Hip-hop music industry spawned by this urban American subculture has provided career options for many youth deemed unpalatable or incorrigible by popular society. The Hip-hop industry, despite its ills, still unveils artistic geniuses that have been forced to circumvent conventional education and society in order to survive. For 30 years, rap music has served as a medium by which marginalized urban youths have expressed the voice of rebellion. Legendary rap artists like Jay-Z, Biggie, and Tupac are held in high esteem in all working class communities, given their apparent rise to the highest level of the American caste system through hip-hop culture, while appearing not to surrender or submit to the cultural demands or standards of mainstream society; in fact, the more “ghetto” or ethnic, the more culturally relevant an artist is and thus more street credibility.

Hence, despite academic difficulties students might face, there is a consistent population of urban youths who continue to manipulate language into music and extrapolate the art form without any formal training or educational assistance, thereby transcending some of the economic barriers of society. This formidable ability to overcome difficulties, while staying fresh and current, has inspired the work of secondary and collegiate educators like Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) and Marc Lamont Hill (2009), all of whom use facets of Hip-hop to educate students from poor and working class communities of color.

Despite the controversy surrounding the music, some educators are using positive and negative elements within Hip-hop and life to generate genuine dialogue among working class students of color (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Prier, 2012). Hip-hop education scholars are in the process of creating an artistic bridge between students' home cultures and the classroom. There is evidence that supports validating the whole student in the context of their educational experience (Gay, 2000; Delpit, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teaching students in a language that is comprehensible and native to them about subjects that are of their interest and compelling to them further enables the student access to academia (Darder, 2012; Delpit, 2009; Freire, 2011; Nieto, 1994). Hip-hop music has constructed and continues to co-construct new meaning from the survival of marginal life creating musical dialogue, which inherently teaches critical insights about students' environments or life situations (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Prier, 2012). First person Hip-hop narratives offer vivid ethnographic perspectives about the struggles of working class bicultural Americans, who must live with the consequences of the constant social inequalities they have in common, as lived experiences.

Hip-hop may have been spawned in urban America; however, Hip-hop Pedagogy first became institutionalized in Brazil as local artists started to use their craft and culture to educate working class youth in the favelas (Pardue, 2007). Derek Pardue (2007) posited that Hip-hop's Afrocentrism, inspired by artists like Afrika Bambaataa and KRS ONE, has influenced a movement of positive reflection on negritude and blackness that were not presented in the Brazil school system. Hip-hop artists in Brazil used *periferia*, or

marginal living, to construct new meaning with students, by creating a scaffold between students' home culture and classic learning material (Pardue, 2007).

In the United States, Hill (2009) implemented Hip-hop Pedagogy in his urban area high school English class as a scaffolding tool to expose students to academic skills, while validating their home culture. Hip-hop based education is a formalized approach that uses Hip-hop music lyrics to expand the knowledge of marginalized students. Scholars have used Hip-hop lyrics to inspire critical analysis of students' environments and through this process support the establishment of critical consciousness (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Hill, 2009). Further, Hip-hop Pedagogy empowers participants by developing critical thinking skills through meaningful dialogue that allow for genuine exchanges and construction of ideas. Hip-hop education also uses varied texts and media forms to educate, including videos, printed lyrics, etc. Lastly, Hip-hop Pedagogy is meant to be an emancipatory process that allows for critical intellectual formation and academic success (Gosa & Fields, 2012).

### **History of Graffiti**

Graffiti is one of the main features of Hip-hop culture. Graffiti-like expressions date back millions of years to its first incarnations as prehistoric primitive wall markings; graffiti applied in education is a relatively new endeavor. Graffiti has been found on the walls of the highly civilized ancient societies of Egypt, the Roman Empire, and ancient Greece.

Jake Jacobs (2008) alleged that “[like] the Hip-hop music which emerged from the same NYC neighborhoods over the same time period, Graffiti Art literally spread all over



the world in both legal and illegal forms.” (p. 10). Graffiti began in the mid-1970s, in the form of letters drawn with unique fonts, outlines and elaborations to display the name or alias of the graffiti writer. Simple “tags” were the original form of graffiti that appeared in New York, which grew to elaborate name tags or *throw ups* that consisted of bubble patterns, unique fonts, and coloring gradation. These “tags” started small and began to grow in size and also in the number of places they were seen; from the sides of the walls of apartments and dilapidated buildings to the sides of subway system train cars.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s the graffiti art of New York continued to evolve and grow with the other three elements of Hip-hop culture. Buildings were used to advertise the professional skill of a graffiti writer; later on subway trains became the preferred output to display the artwork of artists throughout the city of New York. In 1984, Chalfant and Cooper compiled *Subway Art*, which focused on mural-sized works that illustrated people, material items, situations, and city backdrops, which writers called “pieces,” short for *masterpieces*; the book was based upon Chalfant’s earlier movie work entitled *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1982), a graffiti based documentary film.

### **Positionality**

As an African-American male educator who works in an urban public education school teaching students of color, I have observed in my classroom practice that students are still greatly affected and influenced by Hip-hop pop culture, judging from their clothes and language, as well as how they interact with others. As a public educator, I have also witnessed, firsthand, the widespread, systemic academic failure of Black and Latino children and how it adversely affects my community. There seems to be a plethora of

young males of color who do not possess the critical and academic skills they need to be strong and viable members of their communities in the twenty-first century. There exists a crisis in the education of Black and Latino working class students that speaks to a greater crisis among the people who are educating these students. There is also a huge disconnect between students of color, the curriculum, and the overall learning process (Akom, 2009; Darder, 2012).

I have actively participated in Hip-hop since its inception; first as a dancer, then as a deejay, fan, and lifetime consumer. I have evolved along with the art form. Hence, I feel entitled and obligated to use the music for the educational betterment of those who are marginalized. The music traditionally has roots of resistance, and there are pro-democratic and pro-education elements in Hip-hop culture. Thus, the decision to access Hip-hop Pedagogy is based upon my love and respect for an art form, which represents an influential social aspect of urban working class children's lives.

Although there is clearly a void and untapped cultural resource, Hip-hop education, until now, has not been accessed at the elementary level. Hip-hop's core is perseverance in spite of society and solace in the artistic communication and understanding of common experiences shared. For numerous poor urban youth, Hip-hop represents an honest positive expression of their cultural generation. It symbolizes success a conduit out of poverty that circumvents educational and economic constructs that exclude people of color.

The marginalization and discrimination against working class students of color is a systemic, ongoing process in which teachers unknowingly enact classism and racism

based upon grades, test scores, and other forms of social exclusions and stratifications. This, unfortunately, blinds teachers to their participation in a system that has caused the academic alienation of students of color (Hilliard et al., 2003; Noguera, 2008). Using Hip-hop to validate the student's home culture and foster academic respect is a counter-hegemonic response to the forceful thrust that pushes vulnerable Black and Latino working class youth out of education and, thus, out of opportunities for social empowerment (Darder, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Hill, 2009).

On a macro level, the exclusion of certain races from an academic process negatively affects generations of working class communities of color. Within the public education system, the results are currently dilapidated school buildings and inexperienced, unvested teachers and administrators, combined with inadequate and culturally inappropriate curricula, all of which are factors that propel working class students of color away from education (Noguera, 2008). The evidence of systemic racism, as discussed earlier, can be seen in the achievement gap, as well as in the disproportionate graduation and suspension rates of students from the dominant culture and those of students of color.

Furthermore, systemic educational racism stems from what Freire (2011) called the banking education model that deposits fragmented and abstracted knowledge as opposed to an organic approach to constructing knowledge. Also, American public education supports practices of cultural invasion that remove students of color from their home culture for the purpose of imposing upon them culturally assimilative academic perspectives (Freire, 2011; Darder, 2012; Noguera, 2008). Hence, more restrictive educational settings, such as special day classes or alternative schooling, have come to be

seen as desirable for students of color who are not socialized into and are resistant to middle-class American standards. This isolation foreshadows even more forthcoming societal ills among working class communities (Hilliard et al., 2003).

If this is to change, culturally aware and prepared educators must take pedagogical steps to support the self-esteem and social agency of their students, as they provide curriculum that speaks to the strengths that students possess. Providing disenfranchised students with genuine hope, while learning about relevant and meaningful topics, is a starting point to correcting a dysfunctional part of society and supporting bicultural students in their struggle against their societal marginalization (Akom, 2009). As an advocate for the humanitarian and democratic rights of working class children, I want to utilize my passion for this art form to inspire long-term learning among those whom educators view as incorrigible or unreachable students from subordinate poor and working class cultural populations. Furthermore, I aspire to equip teachers of students of color with a practicable skill sets.

Over the past 40 years, there has been an effort by educators and teachers to effectively use various forms of media to promote the positive educational development of students. David Serlin (1998) noted that children's television shows of the seventies, such as *Sesame Street*, *Electric Company*, *Schoolhouse Rock*, and *Bill Cosby's Fat Albert and The Gang*, all used music and strong visual images to teach academic basics and utopian social messages. Young urban scholars have learned from Brazilian educators to not only use life experiences but also the music that provides the soundtrack to students' daily lives.

This culturally relevant strategy provides access to higher level learning skills, as students lower their affective filters and become open to learning from a teacher who understands them (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2011; Pardue, 2007; Prier, 2012). Utilizing significant elements of the students' cultures is at the heart of this approach, which seeks to intervene and provide opportunities for self and community empowerment, as well as educational access to marginalized students (Darder, 2012). Hence, this study seeks to employ Hip-hop Pedagogy as a tool to support working class students of color with critical self-discovery and self-empowerment.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching question in this research focused on how elementary school students responded to a Hip-hop Pedagogy. As such, the primary research question asked was: What were bicultural students' perceptions of the overall effectiveness of an emergent Hip-hop curriculum (created by the researcher in conjunction with the participants), when it was implemented in a working class elementary public school in Los Angeles? The secondary question of the study was: How effective was the emergent curriculum in the development of critical consciousness among working class urban elementary students? The tertiary question of the study was: What effect did a critically emergent Hip-hop curriculum have on the development of literacy skills among working class elementary school students?

### **Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to implement a Hip-hop Pedagogy curriculum in a working class elementary setting in order to learn about students' perceptions and to

observe the effects of the pedagogy on their classroom responses. This study attempted to effectively use Freire's (2011) problem-posing methods within a Hip-hop context in a working class public elementary school setting, in order to create critical dialogue about social topics analyzed from a Hip-hop perspective. The researcher created the Hip-hop based curriculum with the participants of the study, in an effort to maximize their voices and participation in the process of this investigation.

As such, I contend that a Hip-hop curriculum can provide educational access to marginalized students, while improving engagement and achievement, by creating the conditions for empowerment that utilize the knowledge and social resources from students' own popular cultures. Although the critical pedagogical approach is constantly lauded, it is scarcely used in traditional elementary education settings. Hip-hop Pedagogy is directly linked to social justice because Hip-hop is a voice of equality and resistance, which supports a democratic process within a critical classroom culture that allows students across cultural and racial communities to come together to construct new realities (Akom, 2009; Prier, 2012).

This study contended that the use of Hip-hop Pedagogy in a working class elementary public school can potentially increase student engagement, achievement, critical consciousness, and empowered responses in the classroom. Further, many scholars believe that using aspects of a student's life about which he or she is passionate will allow the student to become invested in what he or she is learning, thereby leading to critical self-discovery. Establishing such a viable classroom tool with bicultural students could potentially support closing the achievement gap, by focusing on cultural education

and critical literacy. This would have a positive impact on how students engage in their lives, their education, and society at large.

To reiterate, although Hip-hop Pedagogy has been used in college and high school classrooms (i.e., Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Prier, 2012), there has been no data on the use of Hip-hop Pedagogy in an urban elementary classroom. Hence, this study establishes an academic and cultural link between an educator and elementary students of color who have been systematically marginalized within this popular subculture (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011). There is a federal legal emphasis on academically engaging working class students of color and closing the achievement gap through interventions, testing measures, and systems of accountability NCLB (2001). This approach has generationally garnered very little trust in the public educational system or the outcomes of the overall process, by communities of color.

One of the unintended consequences of a standardized testing based education movement is that a large number of students are educationally underserved, due to poor academic performance or behavior, or both (Noguera, 2008). In discussing the effects of testing age in education upon marginalized students, Kunjufu (2012) noted, “If you want elephants to grow you don’t weigh the elephants. You *feed* the elephants!” (p. 20). Through constant assessment, educators have learned that many working class urban youths are not learning and are not equipped for life after graduating from public education institutions.

However, sadly, year after year, the same educational tactics and strategies continue to produce failure, repackaged and reintroduced (Kunjufu, 2012). Many schools

and systems are simply not adequately structured or prepared to remedy the persistent failure. More importantly many districts, administrators and teachers are not willing to take the steps necessary to transform education into something meaningful for those who need it most. The lasting effect of years of poor education is that gatekeepers, through the use of special education, tracking, and testing, have created an educational system that is founded upon irrelevant curricula that deters those considered intellectually or socially deficient (Darder, 2012). Consequently, well-meaning teachers, administrators, and policy makers are thwarting students' opportunities to overcome impoverishment by failing to engage genuinely with students' cultural and academic needs (Darder, 2012).

### **Resistance Theory**

The American caste system has made academic literacy a prerequisite skill for average working class youth to partake in the American marketplace. However, instead of acquiring this skill, many working class youths go through the educational system accumulating distrust, disdain, and disgust for what the system of education represents. In a study of the British socioeconomic structure during the 1970s, Paul Willis (1977) argued that labor or one's level of employment was important process in constructing identity on cultural and symbolic level. Furthermore, Willis (1977) recognized that rebel students gravitated towards a counter school culture because they were urged to only prepare for working class blue collar jobs; because of their blatant inability or unwillingness to conform to societal structural norms established by educational institutions. The working class culture rejects the traits that lead to white-collar outcomes, so academic failure and blue-collar jobs become, by default, part of being socially accepted in a working class



community (Willis, 1977). Much like Willis, Kunjufu (2012) maintained that “uneducated/irresponsible parents in all likelihood are going to reproduce uneducated and or irresponsible children” (p. 13). Generations of failure from inferior school systems represents just one of several hegemonic systems that move poor working class people to accept their inferior place and occupations in society. This, combined with not having the academic and cultural socialization skills necessary to be accepted within academic settings, results in many working class males of color rejecting the entire educational process and, indeed, the very concept of education as a viable life choice.

In *Schooling America's Capitalist* Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) wrote that schools prepare people to be socialized for adult work. Thus, good workers labor without complaint; socialization is implied by the structure. Bowles and Gintis (1976) examined the relationship between parental wealth and status (or lack thereof) and that of their children's academic performance; after an examination of the quantitative data they concluded that intergenerational inequality and poverty are passed on from generation to generation. Still today, many urban working class Black and Latino boys have developed such a resistance to education in its present form that many would rather break the law and take their chances with the risk of going to the penitentiary, than to partake in a biased and inequitable educational process that is stacked against them. This fact is made even clearer by national college attendance statistics and incarceration statistics (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005).

In John Ogbu's (1978) seminal study, *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, he suggested that some Black students do

not aspire or strive to get good grades because their peers perceive that achieving academically is “acting white.” Ogbu’s theory of disengagement asserts that the existing caste system has created negative view of labor and education. However, Ogbu further claimed that street culture and Hip-hop are unproductive entities that negatively impact culture. Moreover, Ogbu deduced that Black culture was a hybrid of street and high culture, like much of America. Ogbu’s (1978) narrow and limiting analysis of race, class, and gender has been found to categorically ignore the positive effects of embracing one’s indigenous culture. Ogbu’s failure to recognize the strength and depth of survival skills within working class urban communities greatly detracts from his interpretation of resistance theory. Unfortunately, Ogbu (1988) later deduced that the inherent skills and culture of working class communities are worthless in a European capitalist society.

In contrast, Antonia Darder’s (2012) theory of critical bicultural pedagogy incorporates resistance theory as a means to better understand the responses of marginalized students in the classroom. From this perspective, many forms of student resistance to oppression are understood as liberatory acts (Darder, 2012; Freire & Macedo, 1987). As such, it is important that educators working with students from segregated communities come to better understand the profound reasons behind their resistance to the banking educational model and its consequences. Darder (2012) argued, “People will use whatever means at hand or whatever power they employ to meet their needs and assert their humanity” (p. 92). And so it must be seen that refusal to learn and fully assimilate dominant classroom knowledge may potentially also represent a drive for personal

empowerment (albeit, sadly, not always in their best interest) for many students of color who resist adherence to a culturally irrelevant pedagogy.

Moreover, resistance expressed by working class students of color to formal educational processes can also be understood as an acceptance of and justification for their own class, culture, and lifestyle (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011). This to say that resistance implies an inherent push back to a student's culture and class being presented as wrong, undesirable, or inferior (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Willis, 1977). Hence, this helps to illuminate why a Hip-hop Pedagogy, anchored in cultural community's history and life experience, could potentially provide the avenue by which the power of student resistance can be harnessed in the interest of their academic achievement and social empowerment (Akom, 2009; Freire, 2011).

### **Theoretical Framework: Social Justice and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

The study has been grounded in a social justice theoretical framework based upon an effort to create conditions that can support the enfranchisement of public school students from poor urban communities. This study confronted the the contradiction that has plagued America for generations; the supposition that leaders and free thinkers could be created through a dictatorial and restrictive education system; which blights student opinion and student voice. A social justice approach calls for students to have equitable access to educational skills and opportunities that have been absent within poor urban school communities. Furthermore, the educational process should be fair and democratic. Toward this end, critical bicultural pedagogy was employed as a salient theoretical framework to undergird this study. According to Darder (2012), the guiding principles of

a bicultural critical pedagogy are cultural politics, political economy, hegemony and counter hegemony, praxis, dialogue, and conscientization. Critical pedagogy, framing this approach, represents not only a pedagogical approach to education, but also as a way of theoretically engaging the world and critiquing social relations of power. Finally, Afrocentrism adds the needed historical perspective of the participants and the creators of Hip-hop music.

Peter McLaren (1989) interpreted the dialectical facet of critical pedagogy as a means of allowing students to analyze their world from their unique cultural perspective, determining that men and women of subordinate cultures were unfree as they are beholden to the mandates of the dominant society. Critical pedagogues attempt to effectively identify those policies and practices that inhibit freedom and assist students and teachers constructively to circumvent the obstacles they face (Darder, 2012). As such, critical pedagogy provides the foundation for educational practices that will counteract the hegemonic intentions and impact of neo-liberal policies and practices that stifle the intellectual formation of students of color (Darder, 2012; Darder et al., 2009).

Critical bicultural pedagogy is employed as a dialogically humanizing practice for both teachers and students in these communities. Paulo Freire (2011) asserted that a critical pedagogical approach can not only close achievement and opportunity gaps, but can also empower students by creating classroom strategies and curricular materials that are meaningful to oppressed students. Darder (2012) argued that critical bicultural pedagogy can be used to counter the negative impact of traditional classroom practices

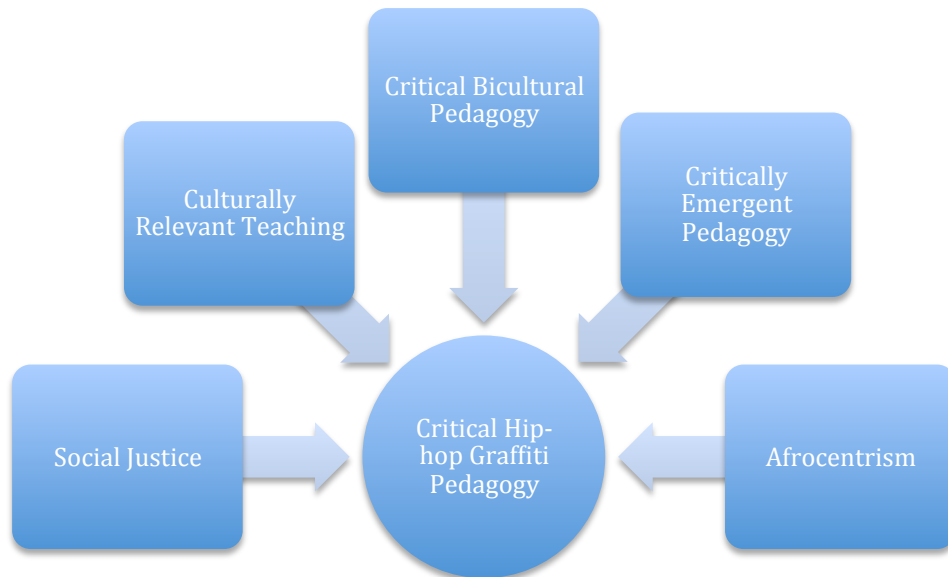
that silence the voices of students of color and disrupt their opportunities for critical inquiry.

Concerning praxis, Freire argued that “Cut off from practice, theory becomes simple verbalism. Separated from theory, practice is nothing but blind activism” (quoted in Darder, 2012, p. 88). A prime function of this research was to implement culturally beneficial strategies that establish rigor and engagement through a dialogical process, thereby creating a true Hip-hop based educational praxis that supports the empowerment of the marginalized with positive self-knowledge.

Culturally relevant pedagogy has established the perspective of a student-centered class that finds avenues for empowerment through the validation of their home culture (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally relevant pedagogy is necessary to develop a new frame of reference that transcends the limits of existing concepts, theories, and ideologies (Land & Stovall, 2009). Hill (2009) stated, “While critical pedagogy strongly influenced Hip-hop based education theory; the field of culturally relevant pedagogy has largely informed its classroom application” (p. 8).

Ladson-Billings (2009) initiated culturally relevant teaching in response to public education’s ineffective methods for working class students of color. She contended that successful teachers validate their students’ home cultures and make cultural connections between the students and the curriculum. Geneva Gay (2000) asserted that culturally relevant teaching “is culturally validating and affirming” (p. 29). Culturally relevant teaching places the onus on the educator to understand the whole student and to adapt the teaching methods and curricula strategies necessary to meet these specific needs.

The synthesis of critical pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy with a recent urban perspective is the core of the foundation of critical Hip-hop graffiti pedagogy (See Figure 1), in that it can be used to access the curriculum, while relating to students through familiar cultural practices (Akorn, 2009). According to Antwi Akorn (2009), critical Hip-hop Pedagogy (CHHP) is an important socio-political lens that functions in a counter-hegemonic manner by creating explanations of social inequality. Furthermore, critical Hip-hop Pedagogy (CHHP) can be used to establish democratic relations through social discourse about relevant topics in the lives of students (Land & Stovall, 2009).



*Figure 1.* Theoretical Framework Diagram for Hip-hop Pedagogy Study. This figure illustrates the researcher’s theoretical framework for this study.

Scholars have advocated for the use of Hip-hop as part of the classroom curriculum because of its prevalence throughout American society (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Prier, 2012). Hip-hop music has been the voice of the oppressed, pointing out the constant failures of education, which connote the ills of society, including high unemployment and incarceration rates (Akom, 2009). But Hip-hop music has also provided a means for those who have been marginalized and rendered social outcasts to survive, partake in economic success, and be viewed as geniuses due to their gritty depictions of urban life, as evidenced by rap songs beloved throughout the world. As such, critical Hip-hop Pedagogy (CHHP) seeks to operationalize the term “conscientização” by establishing the platform for the expression of student perspectives of social justice within the classroom (Akom, 2009).

Within the Hip-hop is the element of graffiti, which is the visual artistic expression of Hip-hop culture. Since its inception in New York in the mid-seventies, graffiti culture has represented a counterculture grounded in racial inclusion. Graffiti education has usually meant possessing awareness about graffiti as neighborhood blights, or a program for graffiti removal and graffiti prevention in working class urban areas. However, some instructors have begun to use this form of expression to engage urban students (Jacobs, 2008). Some universities and after school programs are even beginning to accept graffiti art, at least in theory, as an example of resistant art and also as a way of teaching expression among English learners.

Afrocentrism was necessary in establishing that the problem in the education of urban students of color lies with systems of inequality that are culturally exclusionary (Woodson, 2013). The Afrocentric scholar accounts for the skewed public education schooling system that is an unfair, inoperative system for most working class communities. Additionally, there are functional models of education for working class students, homeschooling, magnet schools and private schools; however, there is limited access to these for many urban students of color (Kunjufu, 2012). Finally, Afrocentrism established the demand for students to build a cultural database and perspective from one's home culture that enables analysis of practices tied to the dominant culture and the effects of those actions upon pertinent social phenomena and students' own communities.

### **Critical Ethnographic Methodology and Research Design**

The study was grounded in a qualitative critical ethnography, which documented the observations of a multimedia Hip-hop curriculum created by the researcher, used with



bicultural students in a working class public school environment. The participants received a curriculum that employed current Hip-hop topics and artists in a Freirean dialogical approach. The researcher intended to establish student voice concerning the effects of the participatory Hip-hop curriculum upon participants' development of critical consciousness and Hip-hop knowledge.

Focus groups were conducted with all the participants, as a means of listening to student voices concerning their perceptions of the curriculum and opinions about the Hip-hop learning experience; four focus groups were held after each of the first four sessions. Classroom observations and focus group data were transcribed, then the data was coded according to repetition, significance, and prevailing themes. Lastly, completion of student work or the creation of the nametag or throw up was collected in order to assess the impact of the curriculum upon the progress of students in the study.

Students started the one week, five session study with a seven question survey posing questions such as: "What is Hip-hop?", "What does Hip-hop mean to you?", "What have you learned from Hip-hop?" The goal was to assess the participants' Hip-hop acumen and their areas of interest.

During the first two sessions of the study the researcher implemented a Hip-hop based curriculum created by the researcher. The researcher intended to introduce the historical background of Hip-hop and a Hip-hop conceptual lens. The researcher used audio and video media forms and hands-on experience to allow students to gain more in-depth Hip-hop knowledge. To provide opportunities for students to have primary Hip-hop experiences, the researcher and student groups used media and music to establish the

history and principles that define and drive Hip-hop culture. Students determined the overall effects of Hip-hop on the society at large and drew comparisons to the era in which they live. The students and researcher had exchanges about:

- Music: top styles, artists, top songs, and prevailing messages,
- Fashion: hairstyles, footwear, clothes,
- Language: popular sayings, trends in music messages,
- Hip-hop/graffiti history,
- The four pillars of Hip-hop,
- Graffiti styles, and
- Current graffiti trends.

The outcome was intense dialogue; that challenged all participants' frame of reference.

For lessons three and four, students chose the topics of Hip-hop based instruction. The participants chose to delve into the realm of graffiti. On day three, students were taught the origin and history of Hip-hop graffiti; they also were taught the theory and beliefs behind the graffiti movement. On day four, the participants learned the difference between various types of graffiti; from tagging to throw ups and masterpieces; they also learned what was upcoming as far as graffiti and technology. On each of the last three days the participants were given opportunities to work collaboratively in groups, practice graffiti drawings on paper, and improve their writing skills. Students assessed and pursued their own interest and values, based on their contributions to the focus groups and what they saw as important and relevant. Akom (2009) reasoned that critical Hip-hop

Pedagogy (CHHP) is an edifying process that “demonstrates co-learning co-facilitating and multi-directionality” (p. 55).

### **Limitations**

The data for the study could have been affected by the student’s emotional connection to the curriculum, in both positive and negative ways. Not all students embrace or identify with Hip-hop, and the topic may have alienated some perspective participants in the study. Furthermore, District X’s Internal Review Board’s tedious process and delays in the university IRB approval might have prevented the researcher from gathering data in the expected manner and timeframe. Furthermore, there is no certainty that the curriculum achieved its goals, because the researcher had no prior experience with it. The limited time frame in which the curriculum was implemented may not have been long enough to provide sufficient data related to student progress.

The limited sample size made the participant selection posed a possible threat to validity; because there were only a small number of participants. Also limited time span of the study presented another possible threat to validity. Other possible threats were the instrumentation and the curriculum’s effectiveness, as the researcher and participants were actively creating learning material. Thus, rigor and effectiveness have not been proven. Finally, the depth or breadth of the researcher’s curriculum may have posed problems and affected the quality of the researcher’s outcomes due to time constraints.

### **Delimitations**

The study was further limited by its narrow scope. Hip-hop is a small subculture, and for it to be implemented as curriculum, the teacher must have some background

knowledge, skill, and fondness for the art. The teacher must also have some understanding and respect for the working class urban cultures that created Hip-hop. The assumption also existed that participants enjoyed learning from a Hip-hop perspective and did not resist the process of being involved in something different, although it was still academic and school-based. Further, generalizability may have become an issue for this study, as it required prerequisite expertise of the teacher and a mutual cultural respect. The curriculum required consistent participation of students in order to get valid results; hence, it was necessary to incentivize attendance with a point-reward system. The researcher granted students an opportunity to gain a point for each day of full participation in class; the points were accumulated and used for classroom privileges such as line leader, pencil monitor, board monitor, or technology helper.

### **Definitions**

*Achievement Gap.* A gap in academic achievement that persists between minority and disadvantaged students and their white counterparts (National Governors' Association, 2005).

*Bicultural Student.* A Dardarian phrase describing students of color who must navigate a different home culture and/or home language than the dominant culture and class within a society (Darder, 2012).

*Critical Hip-hop Pedagogy (CHHP).* An important socio-political lens that is counter-hegemonic in that it creates explanations of social inequality. CHHP seeks to operationalize the term conscientizacao by infusing student perspectives and social justice into classroom curricula (Akom, 2009).

*Culturally Relevant Pedagogy/Teaching.* A teaching method that draws upon the cultural and linguistic practices of given students (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

*Critical Consciousness* or (*Conscientizacao*). The ability to perceive systemic socio-political and economic oppression and exclusionary practices, combined with the will and force to act against the oppression by whatever means (Freire, 2011).

*Critical Pedagogy.* A teaching method that uses students' lives and cultures to gain access to learning skills and higher levels of academia (Freire, 2011).

*Hegemony.* Refers to a form of ideological control in which dominant beliefs, values, and social practices are produced and distributed throughout a whole range of institutions such as schools, family, mass media, and trade unions (Giroux, 1981, p. 94).

*Hip-hop-Based Education.* This term “[refers] to the use of Hip-hop elements as curricular and pedagogical resources” (Gosa & Fields, 2011, p. 4).

*Hip-hop Pedagogy.* A teaching method that uses students' lives and Hip-hop culture to gain access to learning skills and higher levels of academia (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

*Hip-hop.* An urban youth culture defined as way of life for youth and young adults. It encompasses rap music (the act of rhyming over instrumental beats), deejaying, graffiti, and fashion, all of which are urban-influenced elements of the subculture (Prier, 2012).

*Masterpiece.* A "piece" (masterpiece) is a far more elaborate "tag," with greater intricacy and a wider range of colors. Although these "pieces" are often highly impressive

as works of visual art, they can be obliterated in a matter of minutes by a rival graffiti artist with a simple throw up (<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/painting/graffiti-art.htm>).

*Tagging.* This term refers to the simple act of applying a "tag" or signature to a surface, although these tags can be highly complex in content and calligraphic in appearance. Jean-Michel Basquiat used the tag SAMO (same old shit) (<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/painting/graffiti-art.htm>).

*Throw up.* A throw up is larger than a "tag" and is usually painted very rapidly in no more than two or three colors (<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/painting/graffiti-art.htm>).

### **Summary**

The study was a critical ethnographic study that examined student perceptions of the Hip-hop based curriculum. The purpose of the study was to academically enable students by using elements of a familiar and embraced form of cultural expression. Current hegemonic curricula and educational systems have marginalized many bicultural students from disenfranchised populations. This study attempted to bridge the gap and create cultural connections, while academically engaging the participants within their typical classroom context.

Chapter One established that an achievement gap still exists between dominant cultural student and bicultural students; hence, the need for culturally relevant curriculum and teaching strategies in the classroom is ever-present. Hip-hop based pedagogy was discussed, given its potential to academically support and critically empower bicultural students. Chapter Two will review more the literature that establishes the theoretical

framework for the study. Chapter Three details the methodology, as well as the investigative process and methods for responding to the study's primary research question. Chapter Four describes the classroom sessions with the students and the data collection. Chapter Five discusses the findings. Chapter Six summarizes and concludes the study, with a brief look at implications and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Afrocentricism/Ethnocentrism**

Afrocentric scholar Juwanza Kunjufu has long been an advocate for black students and has held that systematic racism has skewed their educational outcome. Hence he has become an outspoken advocate for fair and equitable education. Kunjufu (2012) referred to a Jesse Jackson quote: “When the rules are clear, when the rules are public, and when the rules are enforced black children fly” (p. 10). He demonstrated several examples of Black male students who have done well academically in public schools, magnet schools, private schools, and home school students. Nonetheless Kunjufu strongly asserted that, within the American public education system, there exists a racist power structure that causes the continuous unfair and unequal circumstances that result in the academic failure of working class urban students.

Kunjufu (2012) listed administrator and teacher quality, parental education and support levels, and IQ or academic tests as elements of the racist power structure that obstructs urban youths of color from fully accessing the public education system. Further he posited that something was inherently wrong with trying to fix schools that have been historic failures when there are schooling systems and examples that are effective; however, he posited, the majority of working class bicultural students do not have access to these institutions. Still there is the thrust to fix a broken system with dysfunctional and defective parts; however, testing has become virtually the only remedy for pushing all students towards proficiency or, at the least, average academic performance (Au, 2009).



Media messages slanted toward the dominant culture cause students of color to frequently confront the drastic differences between their culture and the dominant culture of America. Nonetheless, within the classroom setting, it is still assumed that all students are or should be the same and that all students process content in the same manner. However, Woodson (2013) argued that the education of the African-American or Negro student must be different, as they bring a different set of lived circumstances, historical experiences, social knowledge, and academic needs to a classroom. Woodson (2013) added: “Teaching arithmetic in the fifth grade in a backward county in Mississippi should mean one thing in a Negro school and a decidedly different thing in the White school” (p. 8).

Freire (2011) contended that education should be a liberating process that humanizes all involved. According to Freire, ignoring anyone’s voice or opinion, especially a child’s, constitutes a dehumanizing act not to be tolerated. The effective, humanizing classroom will create meaningful and critically conscious dialogue and shift established power relations towards positive cultural connections between the teacher and students. Thus, educators need to make cultural connections with all students that pique interest and improve the learning experiences available to them. Duncan and Morrell (2008), as noted earlier, held that researchers and educators should look to critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and subsequently Hip-hop Pedagogy as they consider ways to motivate students.

In a similar vein, teachers who show an interest in their students’ cultures, histories, and life experiences can better build rapport and enact high expectations in

effective ways. This is important given the more variance there exists between students' cultural, racial, ethnic, and intellectual characteristics and the normative standards of schools, the greater the chances are that their school achievement will be compromised by low or negative teacher expectations (Gay 2000). Therefore, Gay (2000) argued that children of color, who must grapple with poverty and learning disabilities, highly vary with respect to the mainstream criteria of normalcy and, thus, are more apt to be subjected to greater unfair treatment by their teachers.

### **Standardized Testing and the Achievement Gap**

Over the past decade, NCLB (2001) has created an academic environment that focuses on standardized tests. Thus, academic success has been largely reduced to finite test scores. Several scholars consider this methodology as flawed because it partitions academic performance from the other factors of life (Darder, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Hilliard et al., 2003; Noguera, 2008). Ladson-Billings (2006) asserted that the infrastructure of the United States is inherently unequal in distribution of educational funding and services. This has created not only an achievement gap between Blacks and Whites, but also a funding gap and a health gap between the children that attend predominantly white affluent schools and those children from racialized communities who attend poor, segregated schools (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This is evidenced by the disproportionate number of bicultural students who received suspensions and special education referrals, thereby continuing the long history of keeping these students from equitable academic opportunities and devaluing bicultural intelligence (Darder, 2012; Hilliard et al., 2003).

As explained earlier, the achievement gap refers to the academic disparity between Black and White students, as measured by standardized tests. The seminal work of Asa Hilliard and his associates (2003) vividly described the manner in which bicultural students trailed behind White students on standardized measures of achievement. Hilliard et al. (2003) argued that it would be very difficult to separate education from society. Hence, they contended that the education gap is created by the tests themselves, which are incapable of measuring the academic performance of all races. Thus, they are invalid.

Further, Hilliard et al. (2003) found it problematic that middle-class White students from the Midwest are used as the comparative norm for standardized tests, despite racial and cultural differences. This is not a new trend. The 1966 Coleman Report documented that there was indeed an achievement gap between Black and White students (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, & Weinfeld, 1966). Furthermore, several mitigating factors have contributed to the gap, including insufficient school resources, teacher quality, and societal inequalities faced by families and communities of color. Lack of resources can be confirmed in more recent studies. James Anderson's (1988) study revealed that the overwhelming majority of Black students in the American south did not receive secondary education until 1968; thus a learning gap between students from dominant cultures and those from subordinate cultures was established, one that still largely prevails.

The achievement gap persists over time and, most importantly, across socioeconomic groups. Blacks and Latinos with similar incomes and family backgrounds as Whites still tend to score below their White counterparts on standardized tests (Ladson-

Billings, 2006). Noguera (2008) found that affluent children have always received a better education than their poorer counterparts. This is especially true for minority children whose experiences with public schools, public housing, and public hospitals have resulted in inequitable service. Black students, moreover, have been historically overrepresented in special education classes and had higher suspension rates. In response to this phenomenon, Ladson-Billings (2006) described the achievement gap as an educational debt constructed over many years of contending with social inequalities tied to economic disparities and racism.

There is a common theme among achievement gap theorists who emphasize the need to modify and accommodate teaching styles in ways that actually benefit a given learning community (Ladson-Billings, 2006). There cannot be a corporate American cookie cutter approach to education; it must be racially, culturally, and socially appropriate, and responsive specifically to the actual learning needs of students. Underachievement in education is but one of the symptoms of social inequality (Kunjufu, 2012). Social justice is the overarching concept underlying this study, as it attempts to use Hip-hop to infuse social justice principles into the elementary classroom setting by creating a student-centered environment that allows for student voices to be integrated into the process of teaching and learning (Land & Stovall, 2009).

Noguera (2008) discovered that Black students in Oakland, California actually valued education and wanted to succeed in school; however 80% of Black boys and 72% of Black girls felt that teachers did not support or care about their success. The approach to culturally diverse students, particularly Black boys, is grounded in methodology and

practice, but it seems to still need an ideology based in emancipatory ethics and morals that can better direct a teacher's approach and decisions with respect to the curriculum (Darder, 2012; Freire, 1998). This pedagogical strategy, however, does capitalize well on drawing cultural connections between the teacher and the student.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Carter G. Woodson (2013) stated, "Only by careful study of the Negro himself and life which he is forced to lead can we arrive at the proper procedure in this crisis" (p. 4). He contended that education of the African American must be malleable and relevant to the student's needs by equipping them with skills that will help them be effective in both dominant and subordinate societies. In 1933, Woodson (2013) considered the education system "antiquated," and claimed that it underserved both White and Black student participants. He suggested that Black students "carry out a program of his own" (p. 4). Woodson surmised that the same educational process that edified and supported the dominant society; destroyed and crippled the African American and other subordinate cultures as they can never meet the standards of the dominant culture. He further contended that the education system effectively functions to control the mind and possible outcomes of subordinate cultural participants.

As discussed earlier, culturally relevant pedagogy is a theory, initiated by Ladson-Billings (2009), which is a current interpretation of an Afrocentric pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy addresses the fact that people from different cultures learn in different ways. According to Ladson-Billings (2009), culturally relevant pedagogy is composed of the following three criteria: (a) students must have academic success, (b) students must

develop cultural competence, and (c) students must develop critical consciousness.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a proposed solution to bridging the communication gap between dominant and subordinate cultures (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Culturally relevant pedagogy attempts to build success through scaffolding and by creating small, attainable goals that help establish student efficacy (Gay, 2000). As an integral component, culturally relevant pedagogy uses popular media and the implementation of student voices in the co-construction of lessons and classroom life. Lastly, critical thinking is explicitly taught in an effort to support the development of critical consciousness developed. Culturally relevant educators learn to foster a strong understanding of students' cultures and traditions into their teaching practice, in order to scaffold and ensure students access to the curriculum.

By making social and cultural connections, educators create rapport and allow students the latitude to successfully navigate between home and dominant cultures. The culturally centered ideals of this pedagogical approach create a scaffold from which to critique and transform subordinate and dominant relations in the classroom (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Gay (2000) suggested that culturally relevant teaching acknowledges the strength of student diversity, empowers and liberates students, and employs teaching methods adapted to students' learning styles, incorporating elements from the students' home cultures into the academic language context. Gay asserted that this "empowerment translates into academic competence and personal confidence, courage and will to act" (p. 34).

Tyrone Howard (2001) has done several case studies on the effectiveness and student perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy. Howard (2001) interviewed and observed students and teachers involved in culturally relevant pedagogy. Howard asserted that one of the most important characteristics of culturally relevant teaching is the presence of a caring teacher. Howard concluded that the other salient characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy are positive interaction with students, a student-centered classroom, and a community-centered classroom.

### **Critical Bicultural Pedagogy**

The emphasis in this study was to assist bicultural students to better understand the manner in which inequalities are at work in their everyday lives, as well as the means by which they can interrogate these conditions collectively, in order to change them (Darder, 2012). Critical bicultural pedagogy involves using the classroom as a place for the evolution of social justice and cultural empowerment, through critical reflection and validation of cultural subordinate students' cultural knowledge and history (Darder, 2012). Critical bicultural pedagogy, upon which this approach is anchored, intends to create classrooms where diverse voices are shared and expressed through conversations that both promote cross-cultural respect and critical engagement with the world. Critical bicultural pedagogy scholars construct a classroom based on building critical academic skills through impassioned curricula. The goal is to create the conditions for students to liberate themselves, while providing true educational access to the knowledge base required for their academic success and the tools with which to critically transform their world. In concert with this view, critical bicultural pedagogy creates an avenue of infinite

possibilities for those who have been marginalized by traditional education; in the process, critical bicultural pedagogy asks teachers to provide bicultural students with access to the tools for academic efficacy and greater self-empowerment.

Freire (2011) considered problem-posing pedagogy as an “education for freedom” (p. 24). According to Freire (2011), *praxis* is a “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 36). Darder (2012) posited that in the Freirean revolutionary tradition, “praxis is conceived as self-creating and self-generating free human action” (p. 87). More specifically, Freire’s (2011) problem-posing pedagogy (See Figure 2) is based on five elements or steps: identifying a problem, analyzing the cause of the problem, developing a plan to address the problem, implementing a plan that addresses the problem, evaluating whether or the plan was successful in addressing the problem.

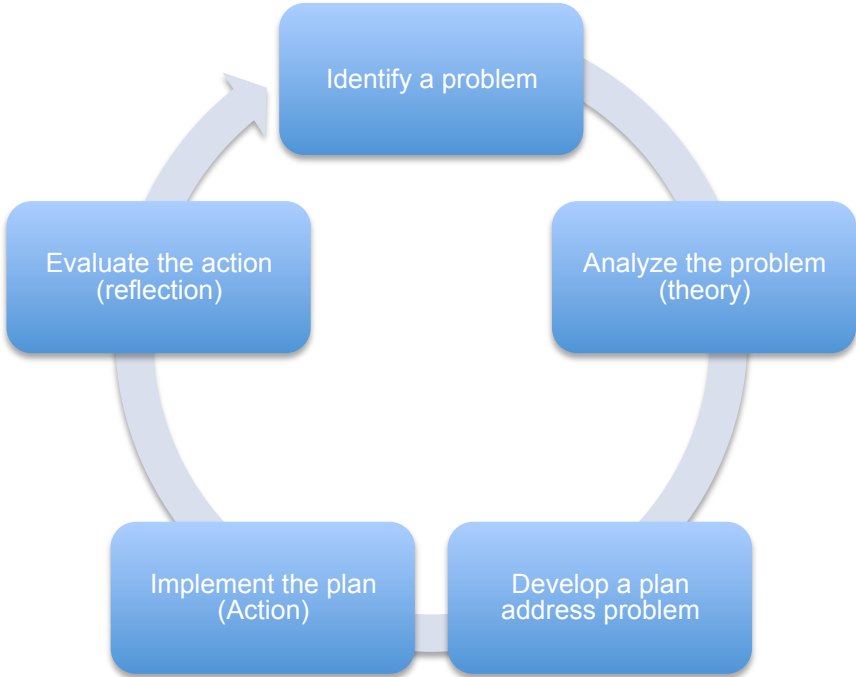


Figure 2. Freire’s Praxis Model. This figure illustrates the Freirean problem solving process that will be used in this study.



Institutionalized racism persists in the American educational system; as this ideology of inequity contends, there are students who are socialized culturally in ways that make them ready for the hegemonic values of U.S. schooling and there are other students who, given their economic circumstances and the cultural subordination of their communities will not be able to meet the expected standard. While the educational focus has shifted to the teacher, Henry Giroux (2009a) contended that one of the emancipatory pedagogue's primary concerns was the student experience. In response to Antonio Gramsci's (1971) conclusion that politics, culture, and pedagogy are interconnected within the context of education, Giroux (2009a) further posited that working class students of color express an inherent resistance to the perpetual conditions of oppression produced within the classroom context. Giroux, like other critical educators, labeled these covert assimilative dynamics as "the hidden curriculum." Giroux (2009b) questioned whether teachers know what kind of knowledge students genuinely need to be academically successful, particularly with respect to their home cultures. Giroux (2009b) further contended that knowledge is linked to power within the context of classroom life. Almost interchangeably, knowledge and power critically enlighten students, enabling them to use the knowledge of their life circumstances in the process of their learning of new material within the classroom.

Critical theorists, according to Au (2009) speak to the manner in which traditional pedagogical approaches normalize academic practices and define educational achievement through the hegemonic process of unequal standardized tests. Hip-hop Pedagogy, as it is conceived in this study, uses elements of critical pedagogy to resist hegemony and to

unveil the hidden curriculum at work in the lives of working class students of color. Darder (2012), similar to other bicultural theorists who espouse a culturally relevant pedagogy, suggested that a critical bicultural education for students of color should include the views and cultural perspectives that edify children, especially by validating their home cultures. Darder (2012) argued that the classroom must be a place where open intercultural dialogue is initiated between educators and their students from disenfranchised communities. A true organic exchange of cultural understanding between all vested parties must happen for the educational process to be meaningful and longstanding.

However, the curriculum-centered education mandated by the state generally leaves little room for creative critical pedagogy. Hence, there is a clear relationship between critical pedagogy and Hip-hop Pedagogy, in that they are both dialogical practices that use life experiences to build on students' social capital, self-understanding, and educational interest. Moreover, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) effectively utilized a critical pedagogical problem solving approach in Hip-hop contexts, which support the use of this approach in the study here.

### **Critical Emergent Pedagogy**

Critically emergent theory was inspired by the strength of teacher-student relationships of educators in Britain (Gallagher & Wessels, 2011). The teacher had created an organic environment for learning and entrusted in the decision-making process, understanding that they would care enough about themselves that they would maintain rigor. Students are part of lesson construction and there is intense collaboration between

the teacher and students (Gallagher & Wessels, 2011). Critical emergent pedagogy invites the unknown and predictable within a classroom and challenges the idea of normative assessments; as the direction of class is constantly shifting direction; criterion reference assessments can adjust to a dynamic class structure (Dalke et al., 2007).

Cultural democracy, at the heart of a critical bicultural pedagogy (Darder, 2012), calls for the engagement of student culture, while critically emergent pedagogy more directly addresses the need to shift power paradigms from teacher to student and to mutually share in the co-construction of knowledge study (Dalke et al., 2007). The dominant culture of the American classroom often works to silence the voices of minority students. According to Darder (2012), the consistent silencing of bicultural student voices in the classrooms has resulted in social isolation and alienation, which interferes with student academic development. Further, Darder suggested that, in order to ensure a student voice is heard, teachers must emphasize participation, common interests, and dialogue in their classroom practice.

As an example of the effectiveness of such a practice, Nancy Wilson, Stefan Dasho, Anna C. Martin, Nina Wallerstein, Caroline Wang, and Meredith Minkler (2007) used a unique strategy called photovoice that allowed students an opportunity to photograph their communities; then teacher and students reflected and constructed literacy lessons based upon the pictures the students took. Wilson et al. (2007) utilized the Youth Empowered Solutions (or YES) strategies for implementing an effective system of engagement that focused on skill development, critical awareness, and opportunities to partake in decision-making in a classroom setting. In order to use Hip-hop education as a

means to similarly bridge cultural learning gaps between dominant cultures and marginalized students, the conditions must be created for students to take ownership of the educational process, by becoming involved in its enactment. The end result involves some level of self-discovery, in terms of self-protectiveness and socially positive actions that empower students in their everyday lives.

This type of pedagogy facilitates the engagement of students in dialogue in ways that will allow both students and teacher to critically analyze and reflect upon their societal position and life conditions (Darder, 2011; Freire, 2011). A critically emergent pedagogy is maintained best by constructive adults, whose teaching practices are enacted with emancipatory intentions (Dalke et al., 2007). Social justice is the overarching dimension that informs this research, as it attempts to use democratic and socially just Hip-hop education strategies in an elementary classroom, in order to create a liberatory space for the expression of bicultural student voices (Darder, 2012; Land & Stovall, 2009).

### **Hip-hop Pedagogy**

Louis Rodriguez (2009) asserted that Hip-hop should be welcomed into the classroom setting because it is the most dominant form of social capital among today's urban youth. While Hip-hop is prevalent among urban communities, as represented by styles of music, dress, language, and human interaction, it is virtually absent from public education (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Hip-hop and social justice are both integral functions; one artistically expressing societies' shortcomings and social inequalities, the other attempting to critically define and solve these problems, in this case,

as they present themselves in the educational context. Duncan and Morrell's (2008) study thoughtfully implemented Hip-hop through a critical pedagogical frame that applies a dialogical model in the secondary classroom.

In the effort to better engage African-American students, Hip-hop music as pedagogy has become a viable facet of culturally relevant teaching. Hip-hop Pedagogy, or Hip-hop based education, can be placed in two categories: theory and praxis. Innovative teachers have started to focus on the linguistic and poetic aspects of Hip-hop and to use those elements to inspire critical analysis of language social themes. The seminal praxis study of David Stovall (2006) used Hip-hop lyrics to draw meaningful connections between curriculum readings and students' personal lives.

Specifically, Stovall (2006) used a Freirean-based critical pedagogy and Ladson-Billings' (2009) culturally relevant approach to infuse Hip-hop into a secondary classroom setting. By analyzing Hip-hop lyrics to create dialogue and construct perspectives. Both ethnographic studies ethnographies concluded that students could critically analyze high levels of literature with proper scaffolding. Other educators have also used Hip-hop to develop critical consciousness from a Freirean perspective. In his ethnography, Hill (2009) used critical cultural ciphers in a secondary classroom to discuss world issues, society, and personal questions from a Freirean perspective. Music and lyrics were used to help students develop views about themselves and their place in the world. In these examples, Hip-hop education has created socio-emotional links with students of color and educators, by primarily using lyrics to help students create their own positionality (Hill, 2009). However, it is worth repeating here that these Hip-hop based education studies

have been implemented in secondary educational settings, employing a curriculum constructed by the researcher (Hill, 2009).

According to Gregory Dimitradis' (2001) ethnography, Black students have used Hip-hop music and media to bridge gaps of understanding and make sense of the harsh conditions in their lives. Dimitradis (2001) also recognized the challenges of trying to utilize Hip-hop in education because of the genre's constant graphic, explicit, and disturbing elements. From this standpoint, Andreanna Clay's (2003) ethnography determined that the language, dress, and music of Hip-hop were types of cultural capital that validated working class students of color. Bronwen Low's (2009) case study detailed how a Hip-hop poetry curriculum in a high-school setting received resistance from White teachers, in spite of the positive response from his students. Sadly, the curriculum was judged prematurely based upon societal views of the controversial culture, rather than upon the actual academic effects and students' positive responses to a Hip-hop based curriculum.

Hip-hop educational theorist Emery Petchauer (2011) stated that Hip-hop in education becomes relevant in three distinct ways:

1. Teachers are utilizing Hip-hop music text in the curricula;
2. Hip-hop is more than a musical genre it greatly influences self-perception and the conceptions of bicultural youth and young adults; and
3. Higher institutions of education, colleges, and universities are incorporating Hip-hop course work into the curriculum.

Many Hip-hop artists and scholars are theorists who believe that teachers attempting to implement Hip-hop based education should learn from proven and reputable Hip-hop practitioners (Runell-Hall, 2011). Hip-hop artist and theorist Stic-man, from the group *dead prez*, stated, “If we gonna put Hip-hop in the schools, it shouldn’t be taught just by teachers and scholars, it should be taught by people who actually do Hip-hop” (Runell-Hall, 2011, p. 3). Social critic and Hip-hop theorist Michael Eric Dyson (2001) stated, “Given its universal popularity and troubling effects, Hip-hop is a vital cultural language that we all had better learn” (p. 138). Hip-hop based education has then the potential to serve as a culturally relevant critical pedagogy and, therefore, can be a considered a viable pedagogical approach to challenging the achievement gap.

Hip-hop educator Tony Muhammad (cited in Runell-Hall, 2011) has called for Hip-hop savvy educators to take Hip-hop culture out of the closet and use it to build a bridge of commonality with students. Some educators use Hip-hop to achieve commonality, but also to delve deeper into students’ lives. Hip-hop now permeates many cultures around the world, but especially that of poor, racialized, working class communities. Several scholars have used the art to initiate access by comparing classic art to Hip-hop art or by simply analyzing the songs and statements of controversial artists (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

### **Graffiti Education Theory**

Jacobs (2008) alleged that the skills needed to create graffiti are actually a type of social capital, because youths and adults revere the art form and use it to make sense of the world. Additionally, the successful development of this talent could have historic and

economic implications. Graffiti art has produced artists who are respected worldwide for their innovations. Most notable is the British street artist Banksy, who has received critical acclaim and monetary success because of the quality of his abstract slant on the street art phenomenon. Jean Michelle Basquiat, one the more famous contemporary artists, who began as a graffiti writer and made the transition from concrete to canvas before his untimely death (Christen, 2003). Many artists like these, some famous and others anonymous, have assisted in the validation of graffiti as an art form by propelling the movement forward with works that synthesize technical artistic skill with the mood and feel of Hip-hop culture.

Upon doing a study that analyzed graffiti longitudinally, Sristi Seghal (2012) supposed that graffiti can be a means to express our deepest desires, or feelings of fear; but more importantly it can be used as a window into one's psyche as it is a result of instinctual actions. This reflexive and historic practice has become counterhegemonic due to its creation of opportunities of pure expression through symbols. Seghal further contended that students express their boredom, frustration and angst with graffiti symbols like hearts, crossing out names, and the scribbling found on school campuses, and can serve as psychographs. With this in mind, Seghal (2012) posited that graffiti can be used to teach critical thinking as well as serve as an informal assessment of students' psychological and emotional well-being.

### **Critique**

The current educational use of Hip-hop in classrooms is still seeking validation. Much like the actual subculture, its use is revered and hailed by some and ignored or



reviled by others. Nonetheless, there is a movement comprised of educators and entertainers that support the use of the Hip-hop art form for the educational betterment of youth. Hip-hop educators are thoroughly committed to empowering secondary and college students of color with knowledge of self-learning opportunities. Unfortunately, elementary students have often been left out of the Hip-hop Pedagogy equation. In the unfortunate tradition of corporate America and neo-liberalism, education is working its way towards privatization, creating a cost efficient commercialized product as contrasted with quality artwork. The goal of mainstream education moreover, has been reduced here to an excellence based on standardized tests, while the arts and physical education are deeply marginalized areas of study. Unfortunately, with the demise of these areas of study also went important educational opportunities that supported the strengths, engagement, expression, and educational interests of many students of color.

Literacy programs designed to bridge the achievement gap have become curricula that are skill-based and teacher-centered and that do an inadequate job of addressing the needs of the individual learner. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, after a decade of Open Court Reading, a scripted phonic-based program that was a failure for urban students of color was replaced with Treasures, another scripted program. The verdict is still out on what difference the Common Core Standards will have on student literacy. While the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has, wittingly or unwittingly, reproduced practices of failure, Hip-hop Pedagogy, although deemed as a viable intervention option in the development of literacy, remains a scant practice. Urban students of color are approached as scientific problems to be solved inside a vacuum, as

opposed to being people who need to be enriched and provided safe environments in order to achieve academically, while expected to become assimilated or normalized by exposure to the dominant curriculums (Darder, 2012; Gay & Howard, 2000).

Similarly Hip-hop education is often used as a measure of desperation with students who pose extreme resistance to formal education. Other studies focus on the theory of Hip-hop Pedagogy pedagogy and advocate for its widespread use. However, few studies engage Hip-hop at the primary school level or evaluate Hip-hop curriculum as a proactive learning tools at the elementary level. In response, this study is centered on the belief that Hip-hop music and its cultural components can be used in the elementary education classroom to create and co-construct knowledge, as well as support the social agency and critical consciousness of primary grade males of color. At the heart of this study is recognition that many elementary students find greater cultural resonance in the expressions of hip hop than they do in the mainstream classroom, which often negates or ignores their lived histories or expressed interests in the process of their education.

With all this in mind, Hill (2009) surmises that three types of Hip-hop Pedagogy exist:

1. *Pedagogies of Hip-hop*: This consists of the critical intellectuals, and public pedagogues, and the practice and production of theory.
2. *Pedagogies about Hip-hop*: These are educational studies of the Hip-hop subculture from a historical standpoint that use Hip-hop as the subject or means of learning.

3. *Pedagogies with Hip-hop*: This uses Hip-hop themes to teach classic academic skills (pp. 120-123).

This study will incorporate portions of all forms of Hip-hop Pedagogy, but a pedagogy *with* Hip-hop will be most prevalent to this research.

### **Critical Hip-hop Curricula**

Runell (2008) listed several resources for constructing a Hip-hop curriculum, comparing the curriculum of Gabriel Benn, the developer of the Hip-hop Education Literacy Program (H.E.L.P) (Benn & Henning, 2008) (See Appendix A), and the Flipping the Script Just Think Hip-hop curriculum from justthink.org (Flipping the Script, 2010) (See Appendix B). All three seek to make education more accessible through each author's interpretation of Hip-hop, pedagogical rigor, and social justice.

Benn's H.E.L.P. curriculum uses songs and video from artists like Will.i.am, Common, and Mos-Def to teach basic literacy skills (Benn & Henning, 2008). It includes the watching of a music video, the study of the main song's lyrics, and worksheets that teach skills from vocabulary to reading comprehension but also relate to the song's theme. This is a supplemental curriculum, used in conjunction with other substantial instructional materials to teach literacy skills to students who are not achieving at grade level.

Unfortunately, while the H.E.L.P. curriculum purports to liberate learners through Hip-hop and education, the program utilizes the "banking method" to transfer knowledge and reinforce skills with many types of worksheet-based lessons. Ultimately the H.E.L.P. curriculum is a betrayal of Freirean pedagogy and Hip-hop based education in that it reproduces the methods of an oppressive marginalizing system, while using Hip-hop

characters and rap music as themes. Moreover, although inadvertently, the very use of H.E.L.P. as the title of the curriculum functions to reinforce the deficit notion with which not only hip hop is perceived, but the students that this curriculum purports to assist.

The “Flipping the Script” (See Appendix B) curriculum approaches Hip-hop Pedagogy from historical and economic perspectives. It outlines lessons that use media to create connections from Hip-hop’s past to the students’ present. Creating interactive timelines is one step established in in-depth lessons that delve into Hip-hop’s illustrious history. Rigorous lessons are created from a Hip-hop perspective with creative outcomes, creation of a mural with Hip-hop elements, videos, and spoken word final projects.

Lastly, there is hip-hop scholar, Decoteau Irby’s (2006), first foray into hip-hop based education “Do The Knowledge Curriculum” retrieved from the artsancuary.org site, which provides standards-based Hip-hop driven instruction that organizes several lessons in a Hip-hop lessons plan. The lessons are based on debate and dialogue with students that focus on constructing new knowledge and understanding. This curriculum provides a vivid timeline and review of Hip-hop and lessons that are constructed around the timeline and history of Hip-hop and makes strong connections between academic learning standards and hip-hop topics. One lesson asks students to explain if Hip-hop is indeed a culture and to give evidence supporting that position. Lessons approach critical thinking and academic skill building from a historical and cultural Hip-hop perspective.

### **Summary**

When looking at the body of literature pertaining to the achievement gap and its remedy, there is a huge void concerning the facilitation of the education of marginalized

students of color toward positive outcomes. In tandem, there is a growing Hip-hop education movement in secondary and collegiate levels. Yet the field seems limited in its scope of participation at the elementary education level. There is a need for more empirical data that shows the validity of Hip-hop pedagogies and the effects that culturally relevant teaching methods can have on students. Moreover, Hip-hop Pedagogy, if implemented properly, becomes an educational act of love that has the potential to address some of the failures of the banking system of education (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011) and its negative impact on the lives of poor and working class students from racially and economically disenfranchised communities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Critical ethnography originates from a combination of anthropological qualitative methods that originated at the Chicago school of sociology. According to critical theorist Phil Carspecken (1996), pure critical ethnography is critical theory in practice. The critical ethnographer represents a pro-democratic or counter-hegemonic position and uses the research to understand behavior and other characteristics of a given phenomenon. Thus, critical ethnographic researchers are not neutral in that they seek to challenge social inequalities, established power structures, and the systemic pillars of traditional society (Carspecken, 1996).

Stephen Gilbert Brown and Sidney Dobrin (2004) made the assertion that critical ethnography was a polyphonic discourse that is situated at the intersection of radical pedagogy and post-modern theory. Furthermore, Brown and Dobrin (2004) contended that critical ethnography “adopted a praxis informed by the theoretical imperatives of postmodern critique which gestures toward a synthesis of the social political and the personal in which logos was infused with ethos” (p. 299). Critical ethnography serves as an instrument of inquiry into the processes and methods of mass cultural reproduction by confronting societal wrongs and documenting the voices of participants within different situations. As such, this critical methodology, informed by critical pedagogical principles, was in concert with the objective and design of this proposed study and its theoretical underpinnings. There has long been the hegemonic assumption in mainstream American life that middle-class life and the education of all children to prepare them for this lifestyle

is the correct and only right way for all Americans; and, as such, this approach must be imposed upon willing and unwilling students from subordinate cultures. This prevailing attitude constitutes the discrimination of cultural voices and exclusion of human expressions in the classroom. Freire (1998) described such a phenomenon of *cultural invasion* as immoral and contended that it was an educators' duty to confront systems that negatively impact and negate the cultural identity and linguistic development of students from oppressed communities.

Hip-hop based education, as practiced by the researchers discussed earlier, is Freirean in that there is the assumption that students already possess legitimate intellectual schemas, based upon their home culture, histories of survival, and lived experiences; furthermore, it assumes that students are curious and will become genuinely engaged with the topics of instruction in which they are personally, meaningfully, and thus culturally vested. Freire (1998) asserted that this natural curiosity about a topic led to a student-centered expression and further development of schemas of knowing the world and restless questioning, which he termed "epistemological curiosity" (p. 37). Working class students of color have a thrill and excitement for the art that enables them to remember the lyrics of artists and emulate the styles of talking, walking, and dressing found in current Hip-hop trends. Moreover, to begin the process of teaching and learning with students through this knowledge that is meaningful for them and to which they can contribute is considered to enhance their intellectual capacity to scaffold their learning more effectively with respect to that knowledge that is unfamiliar (Darder, 2012).

Today's society involves technology and media at every point of a child's life. They have iPods and gaming devices at home and touch-screens at every commercial center. Yet the classroom still is a place in which learning looks essentially the same as it did 50 years ago. Teachers who genuine care about the intellectual development of their students will attempt to engage urban youth through their current medium, using either video and/or music to spark interest and enhance students' cognitive and affective participation, while inspiring meaningful learning experiences. Showing concern for students' interests changes the learning paradigm from books to media and attempts to communicate in their familiar language within an academic setting. Culturally responsive instructional strategies have proven to be advantageous to both students and their teachers (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The task of establishing rigorous outcomes that inspire critical thinking skills and developing critical media literacy requires educators on all levels to move beyond ineffective traditional approaches.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher observed and analyzed the effects that an emergent Hip-hop based curriculum had upon students' academic performance, participation, behavior, and perceptions about their school environment and community. The researcher intended, through the use of a critically ethnographic emergent Hip-hop curriculum, to answer the study's primary question: What were bicultural students' perceptions of the overall effectiveness of researcher created curriculum, when it was implemented in a working class elementary public school setting in Los Angeles? The secondary question of the study was: How effective was the researcher's and student-created curriculum in assisting



in the development of critical consciousness among working class urban elementary students? The tertiary question of the study was: What effect did the curriculum have on the development of literacy skills among working class elementary students?

## **Research Design**

### **Site or Setting**

The researcher performed this critical ethnography at a traditional charter public elementary school in a working class community in a major urban school district (See Appendix C). Charter School X is an independent organization unaligned to any major school districts. It has a reputation in the community for getting academic results from working class students of color, unlike the neighborhood public schools. Critical ethnographic data was collected from four male students in the cohort chosen through random sampling (Merriam, 2009). The researcher used the established criteria to select the students who participated in the study.

This study used data compiled from teacher observations, student interviews, and culminating curriculum assessment to determine participants and the effect of the researcher's created curriculum upon the participants' levels of perceptions of the curriculum, academic engagement, and self-awareness. The researcher's curriculum was implemented consistently for 60 minutes over five days during a six-week period. The study was conducted to better assist the ongoing intervention endeavors of schools districts, administrators, and teachers in working class urban areas.

## **Media**

Media use was a crucial part of the study. As many of today's students are media capable, this study used various forms of media video and audio in establishing the historical Hip-hop context. Then computer-generated media was used to create assessment options in the form of social media pages and PowerPoint presentations (See Appendix D). Also, video was used to present performances and presentations of Hip-hop. Following the completion of this study, the researcher returned to participants any items acquired and destroyed any media created from the study.

This study employed a critical media literacy perspective of hip hop and urban youth topics that were culturally relevant. Critical media literacy expands the concept of literacy or reading and writing to include images, sounds, hands-on examples, and opportunities to participate and create media-based of popular culture (Darder, 2012). Hip-hop media was the focus of profound critical dialogue exchanges and culminating activities. The researcher hoped that if students learned to analyze power structures effectively, this class would enable and empower them to question the prevailing messages of inequality in the mainstream and the significances within Hip-hop culture, thus, lending to the group's social and academic benefit.

Media forms were interwoven with hands-on experiences in order to impart the Hip-hop frame of reference. Audio and video clips were used to exemplify the pillars of Hip-hop. The songs: "Project Window" by Nas (Jones & Isley, 1999, track 5) and "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (Glover et al., 1982, track 7), were used to teach the importance of lyricism and inspire critical consciousness and an overall

awareness of urban plight. Gangstarr's "DJ Premier's in Deep Concentration" (Elam & Martin, 1989, track 6) was used to teach *turntablism*, and KRS ONE's "Out for Fame" (Parker, 1995, track 12) assisted in the teaching of the Hip-hop graffiti culture (See Appendix E). The lyrics to these songs can be found in Appendix F. Additionally, video clips from *Scratch* (Blondheim, Meza, & Pray, 2001) and *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1983) were both incorporated in teaching the overall history and effects of the art form upon the participant communities and ways of being (See Appendix E).

### **Curriculum**

In an attempt to enact a pedagogy that was participatory and emergent, the researcher engaged in a Hip-hop discourse with four students aged nine through 11 for five consecutive hour-long sessions. The use of the created Hip-hop curriculum implies an understanding that urban working class students of color have a natural curiosity about Hip-hop culture that usually goes unaddressed in a traditional classroom context. The curriculum objectives were that this class would be structured around student input. The students participated in pre and post-test surveys to determine their skill levels and interests. It was imperative to teach Hip-hop historically in order to establish the historical relevance and effects on students' lives today, but the participants ultimately dictated the final direction and outcome of the class. Students had opportunities to observe live demonstrations of the art from dancers, deejays and rappers; video media filled this need. Students were given an opportunity to create their own performance-based interpretations of the music and culture. Students were assessed based on their completion of the culminating task.

The teacher/researcher engaged Hip-hop from a historical and practical context. Students developed an in-depth understanding of Hip-hop culture through interacting with several forms of video and audio media. Lessons were constructed about student concerns and issues they voiced. Participants had opportunities, as mentioned earlier, to observe live or video demonstrations of the art form; dancers, deejays, and rappers actually doing or teaching their craft.

The researcher used the first two sessions to establish a Hip-hop frame of reference, thereby providing a Hip-hop historical context in the creation of an interactive timeline for the group. In sessions three and four, the researcher showed Hip-hop documentary videos and examples of the Hip-hop pillars, in order to stimulate student engagement and direction of the lessons and enhance their participation. In the fifth session, students were given the chance to share and create their own interpretation of the culture and complete their graffiti nametag. The students were assessed based on completion of a culminating activity. Further, students engaged in daily critical discourse that reflected upon their community and the world and that helped them to begin developing more critical oral language skills in their engagement with their lives.

As part of the curriculum, students reflected in focus groups in order to establish a running record of the development of student opinions and the documentation of their critical growth during the process. They had opportunities to experience Hip-hop through hands-on learning by learning to actually create graffiti and critical discourse. Students' opinions about the process were logged in daily focus groups.

From participating in this curriculum, the four students were provided opportunities to develop learning skills required to become more effective students. These included collaborative learning, technology skills, media literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and communicative skills. As opposed to using Common Core State Standards, the progress towards developing these individual skill sets provided an effective guide and measure for the purpose and overall effectiveness of this study. Figure 3 outlines the basic structure of the class, and the direction of the lessons for each session.

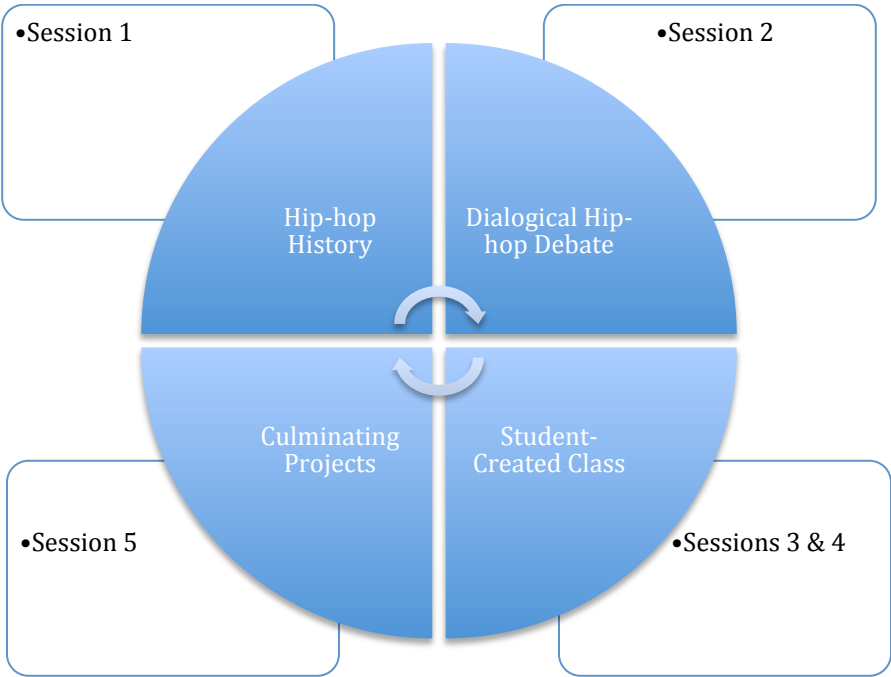


Figure 3. Emergent Hip-hop Curriculum Map. This Curriculum map illustrates the general lesson plan for this study.

**Participants**

Working-class children of color often have contentious relations with public education institutions, as most of the skills and knowledge brought from their home culture are considered to have little value in the common classroom. While the classroom

can be the setting for the construction of schema that initiates self-discovery, this is not necessarily the experience of students of color from disenfranchised communities.

Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, public education has often reproduced racialized social structures that result in blatant unequal distribution of access to opportunities associated with both wealth and knowledge. The testing system and traditional curriculum result in a banking style education (Freire, 2011), which many urban youth reject. Moreover, boys of color have experienced more academic difficulty and, thus, participants for this study were young male students from a working class community.

As an educator at a working class public school in a major urban area, I utilized my relationships with educators to gain access to a site and originally indentified 10 male participants. I then informed participants of their selection to the study and also maintained communication between both parents and participants. The participants were selected through a simple random sampling process (Merriam, 2009). In the selection process for participation, the following student criteria were established for participation: (a) the student must be a male student of color, (b) the student must be in at least the third grade, (c) the student must be at least eight years old, and (d) the student must attend an urban lower socioeconomic public school in the researcher's local community.

After all the members in the cohort were identified, they were notified of their acceptance as participants in the study. The participants and their parents were given documents of informed consent and assent to ensure their safety while partaking in this study (See Appendices G and H). The researcher informed the entire cohort of the nature of the literacy instruction they were to receive in a debriefing session, informing them of

the nature and purpose for the study. After undergoing all the steps necessary, according to the criteria outlined, only four participants met all the criteria and prerequisites for full participation. Although the sample size proved to be much smaller than originally anticipated, the small number permitted the researcher to conduct closer observation and provide more focused individualized attention to each participant, given the short duration of the study. In this respect, the small sample size became an unexpected asset to accomplishing the intent of this critical ethnographic study.

### **Data Collection**

Multiple sources of data were used to conduct this critical ethnography. It must be clear that the researcher delivered direct instruction of the curriculum to all participants in this study. Classroom observation data included audio recordings of class sessions made with an iPod audio recording application. The audio recordings were transcribed to gain accurate depictions of student interactions and responses to the created curriculum, as reflected in the dialogue between the researcher and participants. The researcher also wrote daily reflections in a field journal regarding each day's experiences and observations with participants, and consistently revisited the following focal points: student's levels engagement, students' interaction with the teaching and curriculum and students level of lesson completion (See Appendix I).

The researcher used document analysis of curriculum work and culminating assessments completed by participants to provide data triangulation. Copies of students' culminating assignments were kept in the researcher's files. The researcher conducted daily focus interviews and individual interviews with participants at the session's end.

Focus group and individual student interviews provided insight to students' perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness and their levels of engagement.

This class was structured around student interests and input. Students participated in pre- and post-test surveys, which were handed out and collected after the participants completed them. Students developed an in-depth understanding of Hip-hop culture through interacting with several different forms of video and audio media. Lessons were constructed around student concerns and issues, as reflected in the photos and music choices they provided from the onset. I constantly assessed and checked for understanding by using reflective questioning methods inherent in critical pedagogy's dialogical approach. Next, students had opportunities to observe demonstrations of the art form, dancers, deejays, and rappers on video. Students were given an opportunity to create their own performance-based interpretation of the music and culture. Student impact and understanding was assessed with a culminating assignment.

There was a ratio of one instructor to four students, and there was only one teacher and four participants for the duration of the study. Although there was no formal training (beyond the researchers lived experience and knowledge of Hip hop) for administering the Hip-hop emergent curriculum, the study required planning for the researcher to become better aware of the most current materials and media needed to successfully execute an emergent Hip-hop curriculum for students today.

### **Classroom Observations**

The researcher attempted to deliver the components of the created curriculum to the participants through direct group instruction. Following the sessions, teaching topics



as well as student and teacher comments were transcribed and coded for significance, based on methods warranted by ethnographic analysis. The researcher also logged his own responses and perceptions of class sessions in field notes, which were transcribed and coded. In this critical ethnography, the researcher examined data for categories and subcategories and assessed carefully for relationships and connections, using descriptive analysis from an emic perspective, (Lofland, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

### **Student Focus Groups/Surveys**

Focus groups followed every class session. The researcher interviewed participants daily in order to determine student levels of engagement and opinions about instruction. The open approach used for the focus groups, held immediately following the lesson, helped to further build rapport between the researcher and participants, as well as to lower their affective filter and encourage greater participation. This also permitted for constant opportunities to gauge student responses, insights and perspectives about the course. The researcher utilized questions one through four from the student interview in conducting the focus groups, in order to better assess consistency of responses (See Appendix J).

Interview questions, as the actual teaching, were grounded in knowledge derived from my professional experience as an elementary school educator and my theoretical understanding of social justice, critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, critical youth empowerment, and Hip-hop Pedagogy. Focus group questions considered the students' voices and opinions concerning lessons taught, as well as the direction of future

instruction. Focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. The data was coded based on accepted methods of ethnographic analysis (Lofland, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

The researcher generated the survey questions based on Merriam's (2009) qualitative interview model and Carspecken's (1996) critical ethnographic theory. The following 10 survey questions were employed to gather data concerning student perceptions about the curriculum and to track development of skills and examples that might reflect evolving critical consciousness. The pretest survey consisted of seven items, two closed-ended and five open-ended questions. The post-test consisted of ten questions total, of which three items on the survey were closed-ended questions and seven items were open-ended (See Appendix K). The ten post-test questions included the following:

1. What did you like about the Hip-hop class?
2. What did you not like about the Hip-hop class?
3. What things should we change? Add? Get rid of?
4. What did you learn from the Hip-hop class today?
5. Which class lessons or activities did you enjoy most? Why?
6. Which class lessons or activities did you enjoy least? Why?
7. How is this class different from your regular classes?
8. What things do you like about your living in this community? Why?
9. Did the Hip-hop class help you to think differently about your community?? If yes, why? If no, why not?
10. Did the program help you understand Hip-hop culture? How so?

## **Data Analysis**

Student work created through the five-day study and focus group and the teacher's observations in field notes were used to assess the student work and progress over the week. Field note documents were compared to students' graffiti artwork and then coded based on ethnographic analysis (Lofland, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

Freire (1998) argued that the critical educator's role is linked to problematizing education, by utilizing issues that are pertinent and relevant to the students' personal lives, in order to spark critical thinking that resonates throughout the student's life. Darder (2012) asserted that educators commit tragic failures by not assisting students in developing critical skills with which to "question prevailing social attitudes, values and social practices of the dominant society" (p. 91). Her construction of a critical theory of bicultural pedagogy hinges upon an educator who has a strong cultural connection with their students and their community; and, thus, can create and implement a curriculum that is culturally relevant. Through this process, student participants in this study were involvement in the creation of the curriculum and instruction. Moreover, Darder (2012) ascribed to six tenets of bicultural pedagogy theory in her work:

1. Theory of cultural democracy
2. Dialectical contextual view of the world.
3. Recognizes forms of cultural invasion and their negative effects.
4. Dialogical model of communication that will establish student voice.
5. Confronts issues of power in society and the classroom.
6. Liberation of all living beings on the planet. (Darder, 2012, p. 102)

These critical tenets of a bicultural pedagogy were used as a useful frame of analysis for coding and making sense of the data gathered.

Further, the ethnographic data analysis employed four primary categories: (a) the student perceptions of the curriculum, (b) critical consciousness development, (c) levels of literacy development, (d) effects of Hip-hop culture on students (Lofland, 2006; Merriam, 2009). The data analysis began by analyzing student scores on the Language Arts portions of the California Standards Test and California English Language Development Test to determine the literacy levels of the four participants, according to traditional measures. The analysis determined the percentage of students who were academically considered “at-risk”, based upon long-time underperformance in English and Language Arts scores.

Following the cohort focus groups in accordance with the criteria, data was collected and analyzed from classroom observations. The data, as noted earlier, was coded based upon ethnographic analysis, through a lens that encompassed social justice, critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, critical emergent pedagogy, and Hip-hop Pedagogy (Lofland, 2006; Merriam, 2009).

Table 2 maps out how the researcher sought to achieve data triangulation, the types of artifacts the researcher collected, and the frequency of data collection associated with the completion of the study.

Table 2

*Curriculum Data Triangulation Table*

<b>Key Questions, Concepts, and Observation</b>	<b>Is the researcher's curriculum assisting my students in improving their reading skills and attitudes towards learning?</b>	<b>Does the structure of the researcher's curriculum positively affect learning of self-awareness skills?</b>	<b>Do the skills transfer from one subject or curriculum to the next or relate to positive assessment and test results?</b>
Type of Data Collected	Students' perception of researcher's curriculum to reading and level skills learned	Ideas, opinions, and attitudes about researcher's curriculum	Student interest in Hip-hop based upon exposure to the researcher's curriculum
Timing	Project took place over a 1-week period	One hour-long researcher's curriculum sessions-At least five times in a week	Focus groups are held everyday with the whole sample
Data Gathering Methods	Teacher Observation-recording and transcription of classroom sessions and field notes	Student Surveys; pre and posttest and Focus groups	Document Analysis-Students artwork and achievement documentation
Data Sources	Transcribe teacher notes from cohort sessions Teacher's daily reflection journal	Students/ classroom observations/student reflection journal	Performance on researcher's curriculum work and culminating assessments

**Summary**

In Chapter Three the researcher outlined the methodology for this critical ethnography and the research plan for analyzing the perceptions and effects of the researcher's created curriculum. It was determined that the participants in the critical ethnography would be students at a public school where the researcher was employed as a teacher. The researcher intended to maintain and establish high academic standards in implementing the emergent curriculum. The study achieved data triangulation by using assessment data, teacher observations, and student interviews to gather diversified forms

of data. In Chapter Four the researcher will present the findings from the Hip-hop themed research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CLASSROOM SESSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

As has been discussed, this small study sought to consider the potential impact of a Hip-hop curriculum with young males of color within an elementary school setting. The following chapter, the background profiles for the four participants and describes the daily curriculum and data that emerged from this process. The emergent themes from the data are then categorized in preparation for a discussion of the analysis in the following chapter.

#### **Participants**

The study began with seven participants who returned consent and assent forms; five of these were Latino males and the other two were African-American males. All of the participants in the sample were elementary school students who were at least eight years of age. Through written correspondence, the primary investigator had assured the school's site administrator and the guardians of the safety of the children that the students would be protected from explicit adult content as well as the protection of their children's identities in the reporting of the data collected (See Appendix H). All of the participants in this study were fifth- or sixth-grade male students of color (African-American or Latino) attending an urban working class community charter School, and also partaking in the after-school program. The researcher compiled a relatively homogenous random sample of male students of color, partially due to the demographics of the neighborhood in which the Charter School is situated.

All seven participants showed up on the first day of the study; however within the first 10 minutes of the class one of the African-American students, Participant D, left for basketball practice and then realized he had scheduling conflicts with basketball practice and would not be able to participate in the study. While lining up to walk to the classroom, Participant E decided that he had football practice and that he could not attend the class either. Thus, the class started with five participants; but student F also had to leave 15 minutes into the class because his parents came to pick him up and would continue to pick him up at the same time. The chart below (See Table 3) lists the demographics and academic achievement measured by high-stakes tests of the original participant sample.

Table 3

*Original Participant Demographic Chart*

Participant	Age	Race	Home-Language
Participant A	10	Latino	Spanish
Participant B	10	Latino	Spanish
Participant C	11	AA**	Spanish
Participant D	11	Latino	Spanish
Participant E	11	Latino	Spanish
Participant F	10	Latino	Spanish
Participant G	10	AA	English

*Note. \*\*AA-African American*



Surprisingly, by the second session the five participants gathered rather routinely in the designated area outside the bungalow used for instruction. Yet within the first three minutes of starting instruction, Participant F was again picked up early by his parents and would not return. It was definitely a setback to have another student in the sample not able to participate because of schedule conflicts. The researcher realized maintaining a consistent and credible sample size could become a prevalent issue for this study. However, as explained earlier, the small sample size for this critical ethnography actually provided the researcher an opportunity to work more closely with the four students who remained in the study throughout the five sessions of instruction and focus groups.

Nevertheless, the four participants that remained, three Latino and one African American, eagerly participated in the week-long five-hour intensive study of their own free will and would continue to assemble themselves outside the classroom for instruction in anticipation of the researcher's arrival. The remaining four participants attended every day faithfully and participated genuinely and wholeheartedly. Below are brief profiles for the four participants who are at the center of this study.

**Allen:** An 11-year-old Latino sixth grader who spoke Spanish at home. He was the first of a set of twin brothers in the study sample; he was also the most dominant personality in the class. He possessed a strong amount of practical and cultural knowledge, from which he recognized the inadequacies of traditional education; and developed a means to filter through content he deemed as irrelevant for his purposes. Allen by his own admission was an academic underachiever; his concentration levels would vary in a traditional class setting based upon inner motivation to learn content

(Classroom Observation, Day Three). He seemed inspired to learn new important knowledge but uninspired by current academic curriculums that consistently teach regurgitation as opposed to applicable skills. Allen is obviously intelligent and when properly focused, helped to influence the rest of the participants to fully engage with the researcher and the content, especially his twin brother. Allen was driven by the curriculum to learn more of Hip-hop culture and find his voice. Allen exhibited a high level of talent, displaying devotion and practice. Because of the unique risks he took with his art; Allen was never satisfied. He did an elaborate throw up of the word graffiti; in which he utilized a jagged font and shading (See Appendix L).

**Benny:** A 12-year-old African-American sixth grader. He is of Nigerian-American descent and an only child. Benny confessed that he was a good student and enjoyed school. Because of his acceptance in the school community Benny had positive perceptions of the traditional school experience. On two occasions staff members at Charter School X requested the assistance of Benny; the first to run an errand for the director of the afterschool program and the second time when a teacher requested help from Benny in correcting papers. This displayed his trustworthiness and respect for authority. Benny used the Hip-hop based classroom to challenge the norms of poverty and attempt to better understand the people in those communities. Benny admitted to being a member of the middle-class, as such he felt encumbered to question and not generalize the behavior of certain working class members. Furthermore he felt the rules of society should be adhered to in spite of socioeconomic standing. Benny questioned the legality of graffiti, its aesthetic effect on his urban community, and its pertinence in the classroom.

Throughout the five sessions Benny displayed extreme growth and technical skill. He often raised questions regarding societal structures; and he believed in hard work and self-improvement. His final project showed an impressive inner reflection; he continued to improve upon the same tag (See Appendix L). He created a nametag throw up, with skinny letters pressed close together, overlapping each other and utilized arrows as accents.

**Gary:** An 11-year-old Latino fifth grader whose home language was Spanish. Gary was the twin brother of Benny. Gary brought a wealth of social capital and a priori knowledge that remained unrecognized. Gary did not feel compelled to conform to class rules and school norms of behavior imposed upon him. He expressed his opinion freely right or wrong, and sometimes made off-color remarks or he would swear in class; as he explained one day that “Shit is just poop” (Gary, Classroom Observation-Day 4) trying to explain that this expletive was really not that offensive. He searched for a place within education for genuine understanding and expression, and assistance interpreting the complex messages of society in comparison with educational institutions. Students witnessed the discrepancy in media messages in which children and people are lauded for their witty quips and timely banter, while traditional school structures stifled that expressive humor.

Gary often gave unfiltered opinions of video and music and would quickly say if something “sucks,” was boring, or, in his words, had “awesomeness.” Gary was drawn to graffiti because of the free expression, and admired its rebellious intent. Gary seems to crave educational space where he could be honest. On Thursday we gathered for our

fourth session; Gary was missing. I asked his brother Allen where he was. The brother indicated he was in afterschool detention, not for the first time, and would be 15 minutes late. Gary struggled to find his genuine place of expressive comfort in that charter school community, as he remained resistant to assimilation and becoming the “good student”. His final project was an imaginative nametag throw up that represented his unique graffiti voice; he utilized curved lettering and arrows, with light shading. However, he would not save his work from the previous day and throw his work away after he compared it to other students’ work (See Appendix L). He displayed an interest in learning Hip-hop subjects, and desired to learn the skills of breakdancing and deejaying; unfortunately many learning institutions omit students’ cultural background and neglect their opinion in determining instructional practices and policy.

**Paul:** a 12-year-old Latino sixth grader, whose home language was Spanish. Paul was the most ambiguous personality as he was quite reserved with his statements and opinions. Paul seemed to like flying beneath the radar and did not want to be seen as either a leader or troublemaker. On the first day, we had to locate Paul because he forgot about our sessions; however, once he was alerted he gladly set aside what he was doing to attend. Paul seemed to learn the educational survival tactic many Latino boys apply in oppressive educative situations, which was silence in the classroom.

Early on he seemed unconcerned with establishing meaningful interactions and relationships with the researcher and valued the comfort and camaraderie of peer interaction. By the second session Paul consistently talked to peers and eventually began to exchange dialogue with the researcher. By the third session, the respect and interest he

had for Hip-hop and graffiti content earned his attention and subsequent dialogical contribution. Paul began to make poignant racial insights regarding Hip-hop and race that greatly influenced the direction of the session's discourse. Paul worked carefully and slowly on completing his final project; he started on the nametag on Wednesday and each session he added outlining and shading that could not be fully reflected in the copy he submitted. Nonetheless Paul was extremely proud of his work and eager to display his personal graffiti style to other people; also he appeared to be somewhat inspired artistically by his new knowledge as began tagging his name frequently, including his Post Survey (See Appendix L).

### **Daily Data Collection**

The study was conducted the second week in December 2013 at an urban charter school, located in a working-class community in Los Angeles, California. The session started on that Monday at 4:30 p.m. and ended at 5:30 p.m., and continued on each day of the week, until Friday. The group data was collected over a total of five hours of instruction. The study began with a survey/pretest assessing student's prior knowledge of Hip-hop and areas of interest, and ended with the same survey/posttest, evaluating what students were able to ascertain after the week of participation in the study (See Appendix).

The majority of the data was gathered from the daily sessions of direct instruction with the four students, as they contended with a variety of Hip-hop subjects. The five sessions were recorded and then transcribed. Additionally, at the end of each session a focus group was held with the participants, in order to determine perceptions of lessons, levels of engagement, and to determine, with them, the direction of the upcoming lesson;

these focus groups were also recorded and transcribed. Lastly, the researcher compiled fieldnotes in his reflection journal (See Appendix I) which was used daily to document the researcher's personal feelings about the instructional content and students response to the material of each class.

### **Day One: Introduction to Hip-hop**

The seven participants were assembled on Monday and gathered in an out-of-the-way bungalow to begin their cultural exploration of Hip-hop. That day the researcher had to go to several different classrooms that were holding after-school study halls, in order to locate each of the initial seven participants. The instruction portion of the study began with a seven-question survey distributed to all participants. The survey entailed three open-ended questions and four closed-ended questions that the participants completed during the first 15 minutes of class. It was important to make a survey instrument that was not too challenging and verbose and in a language that students understood as three out of four participants were English Language learners. Question four on the survey presented challenges for participants; so the researcher needed to expound on the concept of musical messages to assist them in comprehending better the intent of the question.

### **Pretest**

The researcher administered a pretest to measure the participants' initial Hip-hop knowledge and a post-test to measure the expansion of that knowledge. The researcher had to adjust the original survey to ensure that students could answer all of the questions independently. The pretest survey consisted of seven items, two closed-ended and five open-ended questions. The researcher distributed a paper copy of the survey to all

participants. The participants then completed the survey in a 10-15 minute time span; they were allowed to talk and ask assistance from the primary investigator.

The participants responded to a variety of simple questions on a paper-based survey instrument regarding their knowledge of Hip-hop prior to taking the hip-hop class. These items included:

**1. What do you know about Hip-hop?**

Allen responded, “I know it’s like music and it’s like art.” Benny added, “Most people are improving it.” Gary stated, “I know that it includes Hip-hop songs and art.” Paul succinctly posited, “Dance, beats, music.” (Pretest Survey, Day One)

**2. Have you ever learned anything from Hip-hop music?**

Allen, Benny, and Gary all responded negatively, agreeing that Hip-hop music had never taught them anything. Rho added, “they rap they have beats.” (Pretest Survey, Day One)

**3. What is the message in your favorite artist’s music?**

Allen, Gary, and Paul all concurred that they could not identify the message in the favorite artists’ music, while Benny felt that he did not hear a message in his favorite artist’s music. (Pretest Survey, Day One)

**4. How does the music to affect your actions and thoughts?**

Allen and Paul felt that the music did not affect their actions at all, Gary stated he did not if know, and Benny thought, “It makes me think how it is to be them”. (Pretest Survey, Day One)

##### **5. What do you want to learn about?**

Allen and Benny were the two most dominant personalities and greatly influenced the class with their actions and opinions. Both stated they wanted to learn more about graffiti. Paul wrote that he wanted to learn “everything about it”; the research made the assumption that ‘it’ was Hip-hop culture. Gary replied that he wanted to learn “how to dance.” (Pretest Survey, Day One)

In the aforementioned methodology discussion, the researcher indicated that this study would establish a Hip-hop historical background. Toward that end, the researcher prepared an 11-slide PowerPoint presentation illustrating the inception of Hip-hop culture in the South Bronx borough of New York City during the seventies, outlining the primary early contributors like Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa (See Appendix D). The presentation detailed and depicted the four elements of Hip-hop culture (i.e., emceeing, deejaying, graffiti, breakdancing), as well as the evolution of Hip-hop over the past 30 years.

Following this historical presentation, the participants and the researcher engaged in an open dialogue about their views and feelings about the presentation and any newly constructed impressions about Hip-hop culture.



The class session was also highlighted by listening to Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five's "The Message" (Glover et al., 1982, track 7), which reflects the fundamental sociopolitical lyrical rap song. When the participants first heard the drumbeat, they were compelled to laugh, and then Allen began to bob his head and Gary started to dance, during the long introduction.

Allen quipped, "How come it's no words?" (Classroom Observation, Day One)

Paul added with a laugh, "This sounds like Michael Jackson". (Classroom Observation, Day One)

Then the Duke Bootee a member of the Furious Five melodically chimed in, "It's like jungle/ Sometimes it makes me wonder/ How I keep from going under" (Glover et al., 1982, track 7). This song is famous for its audiological presentation of the urban American neighborhood's of poverty. Suddenly, Melle Mel wrested their eardrums and attention spans for seven minutes and twelve seconds as he boomed the observation:

Broken glass everywhere!

People pissing on the stairs you know they just don't care

I can't take the smell! I can't take noise!

Got no money to move out.

I guess I got no choice! (Glover et al., 1982, track 7)

As Melle Mel went on to tell the story of the inequality and hopelessness in many working class urban communities, the participants' laughter turned into silence. The participants wrestled with the images of societal neglect and poverty Melle Mel portrayed, and then they began to make connections to their own lived experiences.

The listening resulted in a dialogue about lyrical content and their perceptions about the underlying messages in the working class male of color perspective, as presented in the music. Furthermore, the participants were able to comment on those messages and begin considering the possible effect of the music on their actions, in ways they could not at the onset of the study.

Instructor: Yeah, what's he saying?

Benny: He talks about how he looks ... how bad his community is.

Instructor: That's what I get from this song. Very great point! He comments about the community and what does it look like to him? Yes?

Allen: He also talks about where he lives and how he doesn't like it.

Instructor: He says, "don't push me cause I'm close to the edge"

Gary: I think cause there's lots of gang members that like don't wanna like do stuff.

Allen: He's down, really cause he's already dealing with a lot. He doesn't want to ... (Classroom Observation, Day One)

Students drew parallels regarding the practicality of the content of rap music lyrics in relation to their own lived experiences. Some of the introspections seemed to be reflections of the trials they faced in their own lives. Participants began to develop oral comprehension skills and attuned their ears to the Hip-hop vernacular, as well as made inferences about the motivations and inner thoughts of the rapper. Oral comprehension

development inspired students to create visuals; which in turn could be transferred into a process of critical literacy skill development (Letisya & Alper, 2009).

The curriculum was deliberate in its intention to create dialogue addressing the meanings in examples of tagging, graffiti masterpieces, and rap music. When listening to “The Message” (Glover et al., 1982, track 7), the main rapper Melle Mel graphically described the conditions of his poor working class community, through his accurate rendition of the song’s lyrics.

The secondary rapper Duke Bootee added “ *Bill collectors ring my phone. Scare my wife when I’m not home. I got bunk education. Double Digit inflation ...*” (as cited in “The Message,” Glover et al., 1982, track 7). Allen made a poignant observation about the lyrics in which he referenced the reference to a wife in the lyrics:

Allen:            Can I ask you like why he ... why he has a wife if he can  
                         hardly afford money to stay in his house? (Classroom  
                         Observation, Day One)

At the time I thought this observation was hilarious; but in retrospect Allen’s notion became one of the more profound interjections during this brief study. Although very young, Allen could delve into the rapper’s lyrics and evaluate that the artist’s turbulent lifestyle of poverty and hard times was incongruent with Allen’s young perception of marriage. Furthermore, Allen had the conception of rappers as people of wealth, so he expressed his notions about this particular rapper’s inability to properly support his family. This response led to deeper inquiry among the group into societal systems and the unequal distribution of wealth and goods. In the following exchange

about social inequality and the unfairness of the current distribution of resources, all the students expressed varied opinions about the depression of the urban working class infrastructure and the responsibility of the inhabitants.

Instructor: Yeah, I mean that happens, right? Sometimes you have kids and you can't afford them. Sometimes you have a wife and you can't afford them. And that's life. Is that fair that you don't, that you can't find a job? Well, is it fair that you live in a ghetto and your ghetto looks like a certain way and other peoples' neighborhood looks a certain way? Right? Right? So you go to Beverly Hills and does Beverly Hills look like our neighborhood?

Allen: No.

Gary: No.

Instructor: No. Does it look better?

Paul: Uh huh.

Benny: Yes.

Instructor: Of course. Right. Is that fair?

Gary: Because they're all rich people.

Instructor: Is that fair? Is that fair?!

Allen: No.

Instructor: That's what you have to ask yourself. What's fair about it?

Benny: It kind of is cause we make our neighborhood that way.

Instructor: That's true too.

Benny: No, they make it that way. They make theirs nice and they live in a nice place cause they earned it. (Classroom Observation, Day One)

Benny was adamant in his belief about the responsibility of wealthy white people unto his community, while Allen felt that that there was unfairness in the drastic differences between rich and poor. The resulting foray into class structures provided a glance inside students' perceptions about their varied caste systems. The participants responses here seem to point to an initial, consciousness about the differences and the effect a culture and a community may have upon the development of one's self-concept. The researcher was tasked with presenting information and social topics critically but objectively, in order to allow students to voice their current position without fear of reprisal or condemnation.

Instructor: They earned and worked for it, but is it fair that you didn't have any control of where you were born and how you were born. All of a sudden you ended up here.

Allen: Well no, that's not fair.

Instructor: Right? Just because somebody's born somewhere else, they end up there? Is that fair?

Allen: No

Instructor: You don't think so? Well does everybody deserve, well you get a little bit more than him? He gets a lot more than everybody else and I get the most.

Gary: Well we kind of get like the same kind of stuff. (Classroom Observation, Day One)

The participants were compelled to examine their environment and make comparisons to other areas of affluence. They also had to weigh the fairness of socially inequality and the conditions in which a person is born. While some participants seem to accept the conditions or station of their life as commonsense, others saw the inequity and spoke out. Our dialogues about social class were a sobering experience steeped in honesty.

Instructor: Right? Do they deserve to go to better schools and have so much better stuff just because where you're born? Don't we all deserve to have the same?

Allen: No.

Gary: We almost have the same.

Instructor: How?

Allen: No

Gary: Yes. (Classroom Observation, Day One)

The twin brothers Allen and Gary got into an animated exchange about the others

opinions of their lifestyle. One brother, Allen, seemed as if he were fully aware of the significance of their socioeconomic standing in relation to more affluent people; yet his twin brother Gary felt the difference in communities and lifestyles was not that drastic.

Instructor: You don't think so? Well does everybody deserve, well you get a little bit more than him? He gets a lot more than everybody else and I get the most.

Gary: Well, we kind of get like the same kind of stuff.

(Classroom Observation, Day One)

Thus, the students began to form an initial foundation for considering some of their own political and societal views, as well as formulating ideas of equitable distribution of resources.

### **Race and Class: "I'm Poor Class"**

Students began to explore the boundaries of what they had been taught about race, class, and economics, and determined how Hip-hop and other forms of media further informed them of their current place in society. In a side bar about current topics of rap songs, I posed what would students potentially rap about, if presented the opportunity.

Instructor: What would your rap song sound like? What would your rap name be? Would yours sound like "I got green grass, I gotta big house, and a pretty dog?"

Benny: No, I'm middle class but I'm not like that. (Classroom Observation, Day One)

Benny's statement about his social standing, whether actual or not, pierced the air like a ballistic missile. Students subsequently began to explore the depths of relationships with fellow participants in terms of economics and classism. The other students began to react to Benny's declaration of social standing.

Allen: I'm poor class.

Benny: Ha ha ha

Gary: You're more rich because you get more stuff than me.

(Classroom Observation, Day One)

After Gary made that semi-humorous statement, we were able to laugh off the tense exchange that had ensued between Allen and Benny. From the discourse, participants better understood each other's home life and perceptions of class.

In our quest for understanding how Hip-hop could influence students in the classroom, the participants began to investigate why rappers and graffiti writers created musical messages with a particular social commentary that blatantly attacked the status quo and the inequality entrenched in American urban life. Participants began to define what messages from the culture were pertinent to them, in creation of their own schema.

For this lesson, a critical perspective of Hip-hop culture was presented, which embraces the underlying belief that everyone has a right to participate in and make their own analysis of the culture, in relation to their own lived experiences. In the lesson, I presented that the institution of Hip-hop has been created by an array of working brown, black, and white people; and continues to evolve because of contributions from a plethora of races, united in the solidarity of hip hop culture (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).



Lastly, the researcher held a focus group with all of the participants, requesting student views about the class and the future direction of upcoming session. At the end of each class, the researcher documented field notes about new insights and his perceptions of the class. Those perceptions were used to inform instructional redirection, as deemed necessary with the participants.

Video and visual representation of Hip-hop became the preferred mediums; however, it is interesting to note that few topics in this study seem to fully engage the students, who always seem to have one foot in and one foot out of the dialogue.

Instructor: You liked everything? Yeah? Is there anything you want me to add or change? You? You said add, what?

Paul: Drawing.

Instructor: More drawing. Alright. Alright. Alright. (Focus Group, Day One)

In an ideal Hip-hop based education class, students would combine hands-on experiences with the instruction to further expound upon lessons taught. Graffiti may be considered the most tactile and accessible element of Hip-hop for primary-aged children, since it requires only pencils, marker, paper and inspiration to participate. Perhaps this explains why, in the context of emergent curriculum, the participants chose to focus on graffiti, more than the other aspects of hip hop culture.

During the first day of the study, I had to talk more to deliver information about Hip-hop history; nonetheless I noted the students' suggestion that I be more critically

conscious about my participation during class discussion. I must confess that I was shocked and embarrassed by the boys' honesty.

Instructor: I'm taking it. Like I'm listening. So what didn't you like about class today? Yes?

Paul: You kept on talking a lot.

Instructor: I kept talking to you? About?

Allen: We didn't do that much.

Paul: We didn't draw.

Instructor: I kept talking? (Classroom Observation, Day One)

They participants, as can be noted here, were forthright in their evaluations of my instruction and feelings about the class. I had to take all the students' contributions from classroom comments and the focus groups' suggestions to improve the quality of my instruction and consider how students experiencing it are reacting to my teaching.

At the end of the session, I reflected in my field notes (See Appendix N) positively about the days events, from the spirited exchange and discovery inspired by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's seminal declaration of humanity and disgust with status quo. I felt we made great strides this day, in learning about Hip-hop culture and about one another. It was definitely a bittersweet day; I felt proud of the work we had accomplished in the classroom, but had to consider the boys' suggestions to improve the structure and flow of the following session. This task was a departure from my educational training and more hierarchical sense of authority, thus, a very new teaching and learning experience.

## Day Two: Deejaying or Turntablism

The second session started with a quick review of previous lesson, recalling the four elements and birthplace of Hip-hop. Traditional methods of measurement, tests, essays, and the like were purposefully omitted to lower participants' affective filters and to inspire the acquisition of knowledge on their own accord, through verbal exchange of ideas. Students' conceptions of fun experiences should be considered in lesson construction, if engagement and interest are desired outcomes.

Instructor: When you talk about the elements of Hip Hop you talk about what?

Benny: Deejaying.

Instructor: Deejay, what else?

Allen: B-Boying.

Instructor: And?

Paul: Um ... um ...

Gary: Rapping ... M.C.ing.

Instructor: M.C.ing, alright, what else?

Benny: And graffiti.

Gary: Wait.

Instructor: Dance.

Allen: Break Dancing. I said B-Boying! (Classroom Observation, Day Two)

Then the researcher facilitated a conversation about the role of the deejay in Hip-hop's development, playing the music that inspired the beginnings of Hip-hop, through New York block parties. The researcher described the historical role of deejaying and its progression over time, from a focal point of Hip-hop providing the musical landscape and the platform for new artists to a secondary role as an assistant to rappers.

Then the researcher showed portions of the Hip-hop deejaying documentary entitled *Scratch* (Blondheim et al., 2001), which illustrated the history of the Hip-hop deejay and the many facets of Hip-hop deejay culture. Throughout the video there was dialogue about the participants' perceptions of the video and their understandings of a Hip-hop deejay.

Instructor: See that scratching thing? That's cool. Watch, he's going to take a record and start scratching.

Gary: I'm going to ask for some of those for Christmas.

Allen: Turntables?

Instructor: You gotta ask for turntables.

Gary: Turntables ...

Paul: I'm gonna ask for two turntables and a mixer. (Classroom Observation, Day Two)

### **Student Perceptions of Race and Class that Recognize Forms of Cultural Invasion**

The researcher had to tactfully confront the immaturity of the young students, concerning the weight and effect of their words, attitudes, and actions. On day two, prior to starting the session on deejaying and after learning about Hip-hop history and seeing

several pictures of African-American rap pioneers, Paul, a Latino student, made an insightful statement concerning rappers and race.

Paul: I said how come only like mostly black people ... ?

Instructor: Are most rappers black right? But when you saw the D.J.'s was that the same thing?

Allen: No.

Gary: Uh ... no.

Instructor: No ... right? And so that's the one thing I want you all to learn about. Like when we look at Hip-hop right, it's one of those places where race really doesn't matter. Okay? Alright, you can be any color and can come and contribute. You can come and contribute. A good D.J. is a good D.J., right?

Benny: He could be like Pink.

Instructor: Right! (Classroom Observation, Day Two)

This class served as a forum for the discussion of racial presence in Hip-hop culture; but also it was place for students to pose the perplexing questions about race and Hip-hop. There is a common misperception that Hip-hop is simply a function of Black people, if the rapping element of Hip-hop is separated from deejaying, graffiti, and dance. The participants desired to see their race positively identified in Hip-hop culture. The issue of race representation appeared to serve as an important reference point for deeper endeavors. Fortunately, all portions of Hip-hop were discussed historically and it was

determined from the actual contributors that Hip-hop today does not belong to solely one race.

### **Hip-hop's Diaspora**

Hip-hop legend KRS ONE, labeled “the teacher,” created a Hip-hop academic framework. As an acclaimed Hip-hop scholar he has spoken of the transformative effect of Hip-hop culture believing that consistent contact with any of the factions of Hip-hop potentially influences a person’s cultural perspective, regardless of race, class or social standing (www.templeofHip-hop.com ) After viewing a segment of the *Scratch* (Blondheim et al., 2001) documentary, we were introduced to DJ Q-Bert, one of the foremost Filipino turntablists and a discussion followed regarding race and Hip-hop, and what races they felt were represented in the *Scratch* (Blondheim et al., 2001) documentary.

Instructor: He’s probably one of the most important D.J.’s. Now tell me something that you notice.

Benny: I see different types of people.

Instructor: What colors did you see today?

Paul: Mexican.

Gary: I see um ... like ... White. (Classroom Observation, Day Two)

In this study, cultural representatives who were drawn to Hip-hop and possessed the desire to produce excellence were beheld and analyzed. Notably, we also viewed a white deejay named Mixmaster Mike, who expressed his love and respect for Hip-hop

culture, through his devotion to improving the art of turntablism. Often the researcher was as excited and enthralled by these exhibitions and that energy was shared with the participants.

Instructor: Watch this. Watch how he flips it. Watch ... cause that's we got Hip Hop, taking something that's not Hip Hop and making it Hip Hop.

Instructor: Is that the coolest thing ever?

Benny: Ohhhh!!! Oh that's awesome!!

Gary: He didn't know how to do it?

Instructor: Of course he did.

Allen: He did know how, he just used the record that ...

Instructor: Right!

Benny: He had the skill and he could do it. (Classroom Observation, Day Two)

Throughout the week we saw many different shades of people manifest their love for Hip-hop through their particular contributions. The researcher intended for the curriculum to intrigue participants and impart the inclusive nature of Hip-hop, while demonstrating the acumen and devotion necessary to develop the talent. Whether or not one harbored racially biased views, Hip-hop can serve as an instrument for becoming more aware and respectful of other cultures. In this Hip-hop culture class, participants were challenged to express their voices, both orally and visually as well, as they become

more receptive to the cultural backgrounds of the many different contributors to Hip-hop culture.

Racial issues in the classroom are continuously avoided due to the difficult and contentious nature of such discussions, yet this study utilized Hip-hop and graffiti to drive more directly several exchanges about race and class. All of the participants seem to gain some deeper knowledge about the graffiti facet of Hip-hop culture, an urban art form to which they are continuously exposed to in their community. This study also provided historical and technical background knowledge of Hip-hop, in general.

Instructor: It's the best part of the album, so why'd they do it? To let people do what?

Paul: Records.

Gary: To let people hear two records at once

Allen: Break dance.

Instructor: To Dance!!! Break dance, that's where break dancing came from, right? Dancing to the what?

Benny: Beat.

Allen: The breaks.

Instructor: Yesss! (Focus Group, Day Two)

In the focus group after this session, students expressed a unified opinion that they wanted to start focusing on and doing graffiti. Since we had learned about Hip-hop's historical foundation, it was time to share more directional control with participants.



In my reflection journal following the session (See Appendix N), I realized the session did not go as well as yesterday and I felt disappointed with my level of instruction. I noticed that students' were not fully engaged, as I measured with the depth of questioning. I made two shortsighted assumptions in attempting to teach primary aged male students of color about the technical side of deejaying: (a) I thought students would be interested in learning about of the musical foundation Hip-hop because I was very enthused about the subject, and (b) I believed that media and conversation would be sufficient to teach and inspire interest in the element of deejaying; it was not. Students engaged in dialogue that was on topic, however, there were several sidebar exchanges from which I had to redirect the participants.

Realizing that I had to relinquish control of the curriculum, I also noticed that I had developed a fear of entrusting the students with partial control of the class. Yet, listening to the participants' suggestions was necessary, if I was to regain confidence and remain genuine to a critical pedagogical engagement. Which meant I had learn about graffiti with them and be prepared to let the students attempt to create graffiti, despite my lack of knowledge in this aspect of Hip-hop. Unfortunately, I was prepared to instruct lessons on rap and deejaying; it's what I knew. The students' request for graffiti knowledge forced me into an unexpected area of instruction, which I did not feel as confident. However, I realized, in the process, that expressing my trust and faith in the students was also an important aspect of this work.

### **Day Three: Graffiti**

The third session began with a brief review of the previous day's lesson on turntablism. Then the researcher started instruction with participants, by together reviewing graffiti pictures from the website Graffitidiplomacy (<http://graffitidiplomacy.com>) (See Appendix M). Participants were encouraged to voice their opinion about the pictures of graffiti art they saw, which made things more fluid because this was an area of study that they had chosen for themselves

Instructor: Look at that graffiti! Look at how cool that graffiti is!

Gary: Some of it looks good, some of its lame.

Instructor: I don't know about that.

Gary: Hahahahaha ... I know. (Classroom Observation, Day Three)

The classroom became an even more open forum for exchange of dialogue and the development of ideas inspired by Hip-hop culture. But the classroom also was a place where the participants realized Hip-hop aspirations and understood that even as adolescents they could partake in the culture and make meaningful contributions. Even within the realm of observing and analyzing graffiti, participants expressed strong opinions about what appealed to them and what they were not drawn to. In the process, participants were encouraged to express themselves openly. This moved us to consider graffiti as an art form.

## Is Graffiti Art?

One of the initial exchanges we had after looking at pictures of graffiti was focused on whether it was considered an art form, by the participants. Upon surveying the participants views, we came to the consensus that, for them, graffiti was considered art.

Instructor: A quick question you all? Do we think that's art?

Allen: Yes.

Gary: No.

Benny: No.

Instructor: That's something you got to ask yourself. Do you think tagging is art?

Benny: No.

Instructor: Or do ... or is graffiti art? Which ...

Paul: Graffiti.

Allen: Graffiti is art.

Benny: Graffiti is art. (Classroom Observation, Day Three)

In an exchange about the movie *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1983) the participants wanted to know when it was made, which turned into a brief mental math session.

Instructor: 1982?

Gary: Oh.

Instructor: How many years ago?

Paul: One hundred.

Instructor: It's 2013, how many years ago was that?

Benny: 31 years.

Instructor: Thank you. Right, 31 years ago. So this is 31 years ago, right. Back when I was your age, alright. (Classroom Observation, Day Three)

Through such dialogues together, the participants became privy to Hip-hop and graffiti culture in its rawest forms; and they had a chance to compare the early culture to the present day.

### **“Bomb the System”**

The researcher hypothesized that by engaging students in a unique subject matter, with a media-based format, and in addition soliciting student opinions to guide the direction of student learning, student interest would pique and result in student-driven learning about the culture of Hip-hop. The establishment of critical media literacy skills became one of the desired academic outcomes from the instruction and dialogues. There was an informal dialogical process at the beginning of each session to debrief and reaffirm lessons learned and to evaluate student's levels of comprehension.

Allen: In the video, it shows the name Bronx.

Instructor: Mmm.

Allen: ... where Hip Hop started from.

Instructor: Right.

Allen: ... and it was in graffiti letters, I think.

Instructor: Right.

Allen: Does graffiti also originate from there?

Instructor: Does ... does graffiti come from the Bronx? Pretty much most Hip-hop elements are from the Bronx. (Classroom Observation, Day Three)

The researcher, in this way, facilitated intense sessions of interpersonal dialogue about Hip-hop subject matters. Participants were curious about the birthplace of Hip-hop and graffiti and wondered why New York was responsible for all original elements of Hip-hop. The student made connections to the times they had heard about the Bronx, either in music and video games. When they saw videos of buildings and train systems in New York, they realized that New York was a big city like Los Angeles that had many different qualities.

The researcher played 20 minutes of portions of the critically acclaimed Hip-hop graffiti documentary *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1983). The film was used to help convey to participants that, again, all races created graffiti and that these people took a vigilant stance against the authority systems that criminalized this art form. Graffiti, students came to understand, attacks the power systems that support the status quo. The researcher and participants focused on the scene where a writer names his reasons for writing and his opposition to all systems that reinforce the human oppression. The participants and the researcher viewed more graffiti and had a exchanges delving into the various messages behind many different forms of graffiti art.

“Bombing the system” was a term used in the documentary *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1983) that encapsulates the motivation behind the Hip-hop graffiti movement,

which is meant to be seen everywhere and recognized by all people, because the consistent presence of an illustrious writer's tag. One young man in the film, whose writer name was Skeme, explained the main reason why he became a writer; he stated he intended to "Bomb the System". He went on to explain that writers sought to challenge the oppressive society with the omnipresence of this art form; and if a person did not have the depth to comprehend the graffiti movement, then it was not an exploit worth that person's participation. Other young writers in the documentary stressed the need to be recognized and acknowledged as beings that matter, in spite of their socioeconomic standing, somewhat like the graffiti from World War II when soldiers left the phrase "Kilroy was here." Yet, in the case of graffiti, artist did so by directly confronting traditional systems of power (Christen, 2003). After viewing the video clip, there was an exchange about the motivation and aspirations of early graffiti writers.

Instructor: Not graffiti, but just bombing the system. Right and when they bomb, why ... why do graffiti artists do it? Why do you think graffiti artists are doing what they are? That's important and I want you all to think about that.

Benny: I know.

Instructor: Benny why do you think?

Benny: To spread some kind of message like you said there are meanings in their art.

Instructor: They are trying to spread a message. And more often than not, they are trying to spread a certain message. Yes?

Gary: A message but not like actually saying it to someone.

Instructor: Huh?

Gary: A message, but like in a picture.

Instructor: Well why are they doing it? So ... so think about like this  
... making a message ...

Allen: To express their feelings. (Classroom Observation, Day  
Three)

The remarks, about the meaning behind a graffiti writer's renderings as tied into a larger movement, forced the youthful participants to contemplate and comment on the types of street art privy to them, as part of their artistic community surroundings. The Hip-hop classes seem to have helped students process some aspects of their environments, by providing an historical and sociopolitical framework for understanding graffiti art.

There was another scene in the film where two young writers talked about the economic advantages of having graffiti skills and how they were able to transfer their talents into acclaim and financial comeuppance. Several participants were reflective about the capitalist society in which they live and what this meant with respect to the attainment of money, which they saw as a priority in order to improve the condition of their families. Learning that some deejays and graffiti writers made good livings from doing something they love captivated all of the participants, who began to see it as a potential life choice. The idea that a regular guy could support himself and be important enough to be on video doing something that resembled none of the professions in their community could have been a possible draw. The following conversation centered on whether if one mastered a

Hip-hop skill, those talents could be exchanged for money. But to develop professional talent in any field, we came to the understanding, necessarily required continuous practice.

Allen: Do you really get paid?

Instructor: Can you really get paid? I'm ... if you're good. That's like if you're good.

Gary: Can I get paid?

Instructor: Yeah! Of course.

Benny: Two thousand dollars??!!

Instructor: They made like two thousand in a month cause they sold some paintings, right, but yeah.

Paul: How many ... how much money???

Gary: How much money can ...

Instructor: How much money?

Allen: Yeah?

Gary: How much money can you get for twenty paintings?

Instructor: I don't know, like I wouldn't know. My ... my thing is that if you like it and bought one good enough people are going to pay you for it. Especially with graffiti, right. Graffiti if you look it, if you're good at it people are going to pay you to do it. If you're a good D.J. and you like it and do good at it, people are going to pay you to play music. Come to



this party. So it's the same concept, okay? Same concept, but my thing is that you actually have to bother to practice and get good.

Instructor: Alright, now. Now you all ready to practice?

Students: Yes

Instructor: Alright ... [laughter] ... That's what I wanted to hear. Now first thing I'm going to give you is your alphabets and we're going to write our name. Practice writing your name. Name. Name. Name. Name. (Classroom Observation, Day Three)

The educational system in capitalistic America fails miserably in not only supportive creative thought among students of color, but in offering most viable alternatives for livelihood, despite all the "college readiness" rhetoric. Yet, even young students are concerned about their future possibilities. Learning that some deejays and graffiti writers made good livings from doing something they love captivated all of the participants, who began to respect it as a potential life choice amidst the lack of meaningful options.

### **Graffiti Creation Process**

As a recreational deejay and life-long supporter of the subculture, the researcher has been an avid Hip-hop participant; nevertheless, the researcher had absolutely no experience in the actual production and process involved in producing graffiti art. The researcher used the website [www.graffiti.org](http://www.graffiti.org) to expand his own background knowledge

about the culture, because this was the major topic that peaked participants interest and active involvement in their own learning. Hence the researcher had to develop in himself and with the participants a knowledge base and acumen concerning graffiti culture, as well as the process for graffiti illustration.

The researcher critically engaged knowledge of Hip-hop history in an attempt to foster interest in the culture, by guiding student through the process of creating a graffiti tag. This began by moving students along the graffiti creation process first teaching them to create a nametag in simple graffiti letters. The researcher provided the participants with graffiti letter alphabet list (See Appendix M) and examples of beginner tags (See Appendix M) downloaded from the Graffiti Diplomacy website (<http://graffitidiplomacy.com/website>). The students were tasked with using the alphabet list to create their own nametag, which would be their culminating project. Students were provided drawing materials and white paper, as well as line paper to begin their personal journey into this facet of Hip-hop culture.

An exchange arose among the participants that forecasted greater dialogue among the students.

Benny: But are we tagging or doing graffiti?

Instructor: Today you're making your name, your tag. Alright, a big part of graffiti is your name, right? So what people do is they start with their tag. Then they make it bigger. Then they add arrows. Then they make it block letters. So first you got to do is start with your name.

Allen:            So just start off tagging? (Classroom Observation, Day  
                         Three)

The researcher explained that creation of the nametag was not considered the same as the criminal act of tagging, which essentially involves causing damage to the property of others. The participants pressed upon the researcher to access spray cans, so they could create their version of graffiti. Yet, prior to this process, it was necessary to teach the process of creating graffiti, which begins with learning the alphabet and various fonts and developing confidence in skills, before one can recreate more elaborate styles. Finally, ideas must be plotted out and sketched on paper; then after time and experience, those ideas may be transferred to a wall. The participants took an initial step by practicing the creation of their nametag on paper.

The class ended with the daily focus group during which the researcher solicited the students' perceptions of the day's class. Students were very excited and receptive to the graffiti lesson and the opportunity to partake in the facet of Hip-hop culture of their choice. The participants asked for more opportunities to learn about graffiti.

Instructor:    I'm listening fellas. It was good today? Better?

Benny:            Yeah. It was a lot.

Instructor:    Yes? Alright. Well some things ... is there anything we  
                         should add or get rid of?

Gary:            Nah.

Allen:            I love watching old school videos and watching movies.

(Focus Group, Day Three)

I appreciated the daily evaluation, which humbled me. I listened to student input and constructed a lesson based on that input in which they learned about graffiti and they actually practiced creating it, consequently student engagement was high, questions were more probing, and there were much less sidebar conversations. The power of their participation in the process of knowledge construction in the classroom also seemed to help break some of the alienation they may have felt in the past; and, thus, heighten their willingness to be actively involved.

I documented in my field notes (See Attachment N) that the class was improving, as I began to fully realize the extent to which students' engagement and interest mattered in the outcome of classroom learning. Mediocre efforts were purposeful resistance when student voices were not fully recognized; the blame lay in my stewardship of the curriculum and instruction. The positive comments validated the importance of student voice and gave me some comfort that my instruction was affecting the participants in positive ways and further pushed me to learn more about graffiti with them.

#### **Day Four: What's Next in Graffiti**

The fourth session in this research began with the students and researcher reviewing the major points of the previous day's graffiti lesson: the birthplace of graffiti, the difference between bombing and tagging, and also the artistic merits of graffiti and tagging. The lesson for day four continued with the graffiti theme, further exploring the various types of graffiti; the terms *masterpiece* and *throw ups* were defined.

### **“What does graffiti mean ... ”**

The term graffiti has the Latin root of “graffito,” and simply means to write. In learning this definition, there was an understanding that entry into the graffiti process and this realm of Hip-hop began with the creation of a Hip-hop name and a basic tag (Christen, 2003). It was learned that graffiti writers attempted to master calligraphy type fonts. Writers used these skills to create elaborate drawings of their nametags called throw ups. A throw up, as explained earlier, usually entails varied font styles and bold colors, with artistic enhancements like arrows, outlines, and three-D outlines to elaborate upon the writer’s nametag. Once a writer can create a throw up, they move towards creating a “piece,” (short for masterpiece). A masterpiece entails more than just a name; there may be pictures of famous people, movie figures, and people prominent in the Hip-hop world. A masterpiece usually has a counterhegemonic or culturally relevant message, one that is displayed with pictures, symbols, and words.

The researcher first displayed examples of throw ups and then of more complex graffiti art considered masterpieces from the Graffiticreator website ([www.graffiticreator.net](http://www.graffiticreator.net)) on the whiteboard using a projector. The participants and the researcher engaged in dialogue about the content and quality of the examples of graffiti displayed by the researcher. The participants made judgments and decisions about those pieces of artwork, including whether they liked it and why, as well as about the intentions behind some the masterpieces that were viewed.

### **Student's Critically Conscious Voice: "Why do you like it?"**

This study delved into the participants' quest to understand their place in society and what effect Hip-hop had upon them and their communities. More importantly, this study sought to document what participants could potentially glean from Hip-hop and contribute to this constantly evolving art form. Christen (2003) asserted that "Most graffiti messages are not overtly political, but the act of writing is" (p. 63). Graffiti thus becomes a means of resisting societal norms and expectations and, more importantly, of showing displeasure with the status quo, supported by laws and a system that supports the existing state of affairs.

There were reflections on an argument that a young writer, Skeme from the documentary *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1983) had with his mother about the practice of graffiti and tagging's intrusive presence on the subway system.

Instructor: His mother hates it, right. All the adults hate it. Right, they don't really understand why you writing on that thing?  
Why you tagging everywhere?

Allen: You're an adult. Why do you like it? (Classroom Observation, Day Four)

The researcher had to justify his predilection towards Hip-hop culture and also defend his position concerning the use this cultural form to teach students; especially advocating for graffiti as a responsible adult in a school community. Students, unexpectedly, began to question the graffiti cause and the researcher had to explain his rationale for using this seemingly criminal practice to teach children. The researcher

wanted to explicitly establish clear lines of separation between tagging and graffiti. From their own experience, the participants observed that there was a criminal element present in the art form that they considered the researcher was praising, and so participants repeatedly questioned the difference.

Allen: My brother once asked me um ... wait can I tell him? He once asked me “What’s the difference between graffiti and tagging?”

Benny: Yeah, what is the difference?

Instructor: That is a great question. (Classroom Observation, Day Four)

### **Evidence of Praxis: Tagging versus Graffiti**

Within the classroom setting, power relations exist through pre-established societal roles, but power can also be constructed through several different methods. This study chose to establish and share power, by entrusting students with the opportunity to create a curriculum that matched some their Hip-hop interests (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Not only did participants of this research discover interest in innovative Hip-hop artists and new artistic talents, they also saw the useful application of the background knowledge gained about the practice of tagging and graffiti. Both graffiti and tagging were prevalent in the surrounding school community and both elements played significant roles in the blight or beautification of that environment. One of the primary intentions of this study was to facilitate discussions that empowered and informed students of their culture.

As the students began to understand the multiethnic make-up of Hip-hop community, in comparison to the school and home communities, participants' circle of knowledge expanded, based upon a deeper grasp of a culture in which they were immersed. Working class communities in which the participants live are exposed to several forms of graffiti, as the markings left by taggers and gang bangers dominate countless urban areas. Through the process of dialogues, the participants began to think more critically about their surroundings and the meaning these images had for them.

Within our dialogues arose the question of the legality of graffiti. This became an intense conversation and a teaching opportunity to implement Freire's (2011) problem-posing method in the exchange that ensued between the primary-aged schoolboys and the investigator:

Instructor: Today you're making your name, your tag. Alright, a big part of graffiti is your name, right? So what people do is they start with their tag. Then they make it bigger. Then they add arrows. Then they make it block letters. So first you got to do is start with your name.

Instructor: Even though he made his name and it's like a big tag but he made it beautiful where you couldn't even tell. It looks three-D and it comes out at you.

Allen: It does do that.

Benny: But ...



Instructor: Right? We can't tell that that's his name right? That's somebody's name.

Benny: But even if it's pretty and it's not improper, is it still illegal?

Instructor: It ... it all depends on how he goes about it. A lot of times people will let you paint on their walls. You say "Hey, I want to do this art." So like let's say if you all came up with a good idea and you were like we want to make a graffiti spot. We want to ... we want to do a wall and you sketched it out. You came up with a good idea, right?

Gary: They won't let us kids do that.

Instructor: How would you know that?

Gary: They wouldn't. (Classroom Observation, Day Four)

Gary's resistance to institutions helped him construct the belief that something as socially respected and "awesome" as graffiti could not exist within the context of a school community. Students wanted to understand the difference, because in various instances urban communities have graffiti art and intentional tagging produced by gangbangers situated side by side. Therefore, prior to this study it was more difficult for the participants to distinguish tagging from street art and graffiti and actually ascertain the differences in the messages these various images projected. The researcher used specific examples of artistic pieces to define them and to engage the students in thinking more about the differences.

Benny: What if you make a ... what if somebody makes a piece, but you sign your name on it?

Instructor: If somebody else does it and you sign your name?

Benny: Yeah it's kind of ...

Instructor: That's called stealing.

Gary: That's it. That's what it's called.

Instructor: Yeah, it's just stealing.

Benny: It's like that guy he painted over that new graffiti.

Benny: No, I'm talking about not messing it up, but just writing your name.

Instructor: Oh ... that's just tagging. That's tagging. Yeah ... like if you put your name ... like let's say like sometimes if even the picture is right here, let me give you an example, you'll see guys do it. Right here, so look at this one.

Allen: Oh yeah, I see it everywhere. (Classroom Observation, Day Four)

This debate about graffiti and tagging revealed the difference between the two, and it was determined that at least half of the participants admitted to being exposed to tagging. We discovered deeper meaning in the term tagging and how it affected the participants' lives. Students wondered how, if graffiti was illegal, could they partake in it without repercussions? This dialogue led to greater critical awareness, which allowed participants to reflect on some signs and symbols present in their surroundings; and

through exchanges in the classroom, the participants were better able to categorize them, according to meaning. Through dialogue and pictures of graffiti, the researcher and participants were able to reconstruct perplexing parts of Benny's neighborhood that were resonant and discussed these issues as a group to determine commonalities and better respond to Benny's wonderment. The researcher assisted the participants in comparing the elaborate graffiti drawings and masterpieces to the remedial scribbling of neighborhood gangbangers and noted that the overall intention were very different. A graffiti artist seeks to beautify the neighborhood with their work, while a gang member who tags is posting a public notice of neighborhood events or current sentiments, without concern for the beauty of the tag or its consequences on the community.

### **What's New in Graffiti?**

Then the students watched a video from the Graffiti analysis website ([graffitianalysis.com/gml](http://graffitianalysis.com/gml)) illustrating the recent technological trends happening in graffiti Hip-hop culture. The video described how graffiti writers could use pen-like devices that connect to a computer wirelessly, in order to create drawings and transfer them to a computer using a computer language called graffiti markup language (or gml). Some of the manifestations made with the graffiti pen could become a sculpture or video presentation. Following the video, the participants had a brief discussion that reflected on their feelings about this piece of technology and how they could obtain the program on their computers and phones as an application. As the participants watched the video, we again began to make observations together about racial identity within graffiti.

## Race and Graffiti

Instructor: Cause we said that most rappers are or Pedro said that most rappers black; but most graffiti writers are ...

Benny: I think there are more white.

Gary: Red?

Allen: I think more Latino people.

Instructor: You think more Latinos are ... are doing it?

Benny: No, everybody's doing it.

Paul: I think ... I don't know.

Allen: Even in Germany

Instructor: Exactly, so when you think about ... and that's the point I wanted you to make, when you see that everywhere ... everywhere all over the world, it's no limits for it. Okay Paul? There are no limits on race as far as graffiti and Hip-hop are concerned. It spans all over the universe.

(Classroom Observation, Day Four)

Graffiti was an art form established in America, and has spread throughout the globe. From the video about graffiti technology, we eventually concluded that most graffiti writers were middle-class white men who participated in graffiti legally and as a hobby. Thus students began to understand the multicultural make-up of the international Hip-hop community, in comparison to their school and home communities; their knowledge expanded based upon a better grasp of the culture in which they were

immersed. Furthermore, these writers did this art in a legal manner. Working class communities in which the participants live have several forms of graffiti, from the markings left by taggers and gang bangers to the legal street art and murals commissioned by third parties. Participants were acquiring the skills to begin to categorize forms of street art and critically understand the differences.

Real social topics assisted in the construction of dialogue that led to new conclusions and useful facts about an ambiguous art form that was revered and also reviled simultaneously. According to famed graffiti writer, Prime, "Graffiti is most comfortable and appropriate slapped where it shouldn't be" (Christen, 2003, p. 58). Since a sense of defiance or resistance and a certain amount of transgression are inherent in graffiti culture, this generally makes the art form more difficult to apply in mainstream education, even by a responsible adult educator.

The students listened to KRS ONE's "Out for Fame" (Parker, 1995, track 12), as they continued to work on their name-tags from the previous session and used the examples from the day's lesson to begin improving the drawings into throw up, by adding gradation, outlining, and color. The class ended with the daily focus group reflecting about the day's class, during which students expressed their level of interest in the deeper graffiti topics and their thoughts regarding access to the culture and the topic of instruction for the last session. Also a participant stressed an interest in learning more about the dance element of Hip-hop.

The researcher developed an instructional structure that was driven by media and by subsequent dialogue that involved developing critical media literacy skills. Student

input was vital to the development of the Hip-hop based instructional program and based, which was most evident by fully integrating participants requests to learn more about graffiti and to practice drawing graffiti as part of the curriculum:

Instructor: Alright ... quick question, what did you like about the class today? Anybody?

Allen: Oh ... oh ... oh ...

Instructor: Yes Allen.

Allen: The graffiti.

Instructor: You liked the graffiti. What about it?

Gary: Like ... like

Gary: My hands are all tired from drawing.

Instructor: Hang on, let him talk first.

Benny: The drawing.

Instructor: The fact that you actually got to draw?

Benny: Yeah. (Focus Group, Day Four)

Upon reacting to student requests, the researcher exposed students to graffiti and the know-how necessary to create it. The researcher investigated graffiti history and trends through the internet and came to understand that the technical knowledge of true graffiti is usually passed on through apprenticeship (Christen, 2003). There was an entry level that all writers confirmed as the starting point; creating a nametag was foremost. There was a historical process for creating graffiti, where every apprentice and aspiring writer must participate, in order to craft and produce throw ups and finally a masterpiece.

I noted in my field notes (See Attachment N) that students continued to be enthralled with learning about graffiti and practicing it. The more we probed into the graffiti subculture the more facts and different styles were learned and, subsequently, the more participants were inspired to create and participate. Also, the more I elicited and critically listened to student voices, the more constructive student comments in the focus group seem to be about their perceptions of the class. This session was the climax of the study; as the students began to understand the dynamics of critical dialogue and the importance of their input and participation to the process of their own learning.

#### **Day Five: Culminating Class**

The last day of the study fell on the Friday before Christmas break; the timing made a bit harder to locate the four participants, as their after-school program was celebrating the holidays. Once in our assigned classroom, the participants were feeling excitable about the upcoming holiday and found it more difficult to focus on our work together.

The instruction began, nevertheless, with students partaking in an eight-question survey post-test that was intended to measure student-ending perceptions of the study's content and effectiveness of their experience. Because the post-test measured the growth of participants' critical consciousness or awareness level and understanding of Hip-hop culture, there was an extra item on this survey. The participants completed the survey during the first 15 minutes of the session.

## **Post-test**

The researcher's post-test consisted of 10 questions, of which three items on the survey were closed-ended questions and seven items were open-ended. This post-test was reflective of the questions and responses from the pretest and attempted to have participants consider their feelings about the class, in terms of their initial expectations and their growth by being involved in the study.

The researcher asked again:

### **What is the message in your favorite artist's music?**

Allen responded, "Where he lives, it crappy." Benny and Paul still felt that the music they listened to had no apparent message. Gary said the message of his favorite artist was "awesomeness." Throughout the week we conversed about rapper's messages and what their lyrics meant. (Post Test, Day Five)

### **How does the music you to affect your actions and thoughts?**

While Allen was able to determine musical messages; he and Paul both felt that these artist musings did not affect how they thought or acted. Gary stated that his favorite artist's music affected "how I think" (Post Test, Day Five). Benny felt that listening to his favorite artist "gives perspective on their lives." By the end of week many of the participants' growth was evident in their understanding Hip-hop's historically and the overall effect of the culture on them. (Post Test, Day Five)

### **What did you want to learn about?**



This question was reflective of question five in the pretest. Paul stated he wanted to learn about his favorite artist's life; not a total diversion from his original request to learn about everything, but definitely not consistent. Gary stated he wanted to learn how to deejay, whereas in the earlier test he said he wanted to dance; possibly learning about the history of deejaying helped influence that decision. Allen stated he wanted to learn about where Hip-hop and graffiti originated; earlier he simply wanted to know about graffiti. Benny stated he wanted to learn about graffiti in both tests. (Post Test, Day Five)

**What did you learn?**

Paul, the most introverted participant, answered the question by saying "everything." Gary stated that he learned that "by practicing" one could become adept in any of the Hip-hop elements; which was our main mantra throughout the week. Benny specified that the acquired knowledge "about the four parts of rap." Allen wrote that he gained knowledge concerning "where Hip-hop and graffiti originated." The historical instructional portion, which happened in the first two sessions, resonated with the students as it provided context to a culture they were partaking in subconsciously. (Post Test, Day Five)

**Did this class let you do that?**

When the participants were asked if the class assisted them in learning about the Hip-hop topics they were most interested in, three out of four said yes and one replied no. (Post Test, Day Five).

**How do you feel about the class?**

All of the participants responded positively about their perceptions about the class and topics of instruction. Allen and Benny both state that the class was “cool.” Gary, who might be considered the most unruly and disruptive of the group, felt the class was “good.” Paul simply stated that he felt “fine” about the class. (Post Test, Day Five)

**Would you participate in a class like this for a longer period of time?**

The researcher had sincere concerns about lowering the students’ affective filter, about being an outsider of the school community, as well as the brevity of the study. However, three out of four participants, Allen, Benny, and Paul, articulated that they would like to participate in a class with Hip-hop as a subject matter for longer periods of time. Gary said he would not want to continue in a Hip-hop class for an extended period of time.

Possibly because of his early interactions with school structures, including punishment from authority figures in the form of afterschool detention, Gary seems to harbor negative perceptions toward most educational activities. However, despite this tendency, he participated with the others and offered key insights. (Post Test, Day Five)

Based upon the raw data from the pretest and post-test surveys, all of the participants expressed having developed an interest in graffiti that had not already existed. When given an opportunity to determine the direction and subject of the class, the participants were active contributors; and most of the young participants became interested in the graffiti aspect of Hip-hop culture. All of the participants gained some new knowledge about the historical aspects of Hip-hop and the graffiti facet of Hip-hop culture, which, although they had been exposed to in their communities, they had yet to better understand.

Overall, the participants felt they learned about the topics they had initially intended. Additionally, participants did not believe that Hip-hop or any other type of music affected their actions. Half of the students also failed to recognize the prevailing messages contained in the music lyrics of their favorite artist.

What also became apparent is that the Hip-hop perceptions held by these primary age children were profoundly affected by the tactile and visual modalities of learning. The participants appreciated the examples of Hip-hop music; however, most of them found it difficult to be fully focus on lyrics or maintain concentration for the duration of a song; it was as if they had yet to develop their own love and appreciation for music. Therefore, video and visual representations of Hip-hop, primarily graffiti, became the preferred medium and topic in this study.

### **Student Engagement: the Message in “The Message” (1982)**

The researcher played “The Message” by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five (Glover et al.,1982, track 7) while students completed the surveys; participants expressed

their general liking for this song. The participants were receptive to examples of Hip-hop culture through video and audio media. By watching portions of Hip-hop documentaries, as well as listening to subject specific rap songs, participants began to visualize the various interpretations and subsequent representations of Hip-hop culture. Students made a strong connection with the political lyricism of “The Message” (Glover et al., 1982, track 7) and realized that after 30 years there was not much difference between the community Melle Mel and Duke Bootee described in that song and their own.

Allen: Who sings “The Message”?

Instructor: Who sings “The Message”? Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five. I’ll play it for you ....

Gary: We listened to this last time. (Classroom Observation, Day Five)

The researcher strongly encouraged conversation about Hip-hop topics, the class, and students learned to how to listen and analyze Hip-hop. They discussed what they as fourth and fifth graders considered Hip-hop and thus made efforts to better delineate the function of mainstream Hip-hop artists.

Gary: Excuse me, is Macklemore considered a DJ?

Benny: No.

Instructor: He’s not a D.J., he’s a rapper. (Classroom Observation, Day Five)

The participants viewed a video Hip-hop dance battle from the *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1983) documentary. The researcher emphasized the contentious and

competitive nature of all elements of Hip-hop, which compel artists in the culture to push the current expressive limits in the construction of new styles and to display those new found skills in public arenas. There was dialogue about the participants' perceptions of Hip-hop dance culture and the early pioneers, throughout the viewing of video.

The researcher attempted to address Gary's request for knowledge concerning dancing. As we watched a video clip of the world famous Rock Steady Crew explain break dancing and show some dance moves, Paul once again made a comment about race and appearance.

Paul: I don't really like their hair is puffed up.

Instructor: It's called an Afro.

Gary: An Afro?

Paul: It looks like the clowns hair

Instructor: Listen, that's culturally irrelevant. Don't do that. Alright?  
I'm...I'm serious though.

Paul: Wait, what is that?

Instructor: It's wrong for you to say that. Alright, and he's got an afro  
but please believe that he's Latino. He speaks Spanish at  
home. Like you. (Classroom Observation, Day Five)

Paul believed that the boys who were dancing were African American because they were darker-hued than him and had Afro hairstyles; thus, not fully understanding the fullness of his own Latino culture, he believed it was permissible to disrespect their appearance. But the majority of the boys from the video clip were Puerto Rican or

Dominican and more than likely had much in common with him, as a Latino boy with Mexican heritage. Hopefully this correction was a salient moment for all participants in realizing the effects of these acts of innocent prejudice.

The researcher used his laptop to play an mp3 recording of Nas' "Project Window" (Jones & Isley, 1999, track 5) in the background, while students put finishing touches on their throw ups. When the students finished their culminating task, the researcher made copies of each of the students' final version of their throw ups. The study concluded with an exchange about possibly creating a masterpiece with the school name as theme, if there were more time and the possibility of the researcher working with them in the future.

### **Final Project**

The participants had three days to work on their nametags. On day three, participants used a graffiti alphabet list. Students created basic nametags and kept those tags to further develop them into more defined pieces. These tags were practiced on paper; students were not encouraged to do graffiti anywhere other than on paper. The participants were encouraged to create portfolios of the works created and never to throw artwork away.

All of the participants added finishing touches to their culminating projects like coloring and shading; all of the participants turned in a final nametag throw up. The researcher guided participants artistically in creating and improving upon their work each day, remaining positive and constructive about their work.

Instructor: Alright, we're still working though. Like keep in mind like those are like ... those aren't really like puffy letters. I want you to work on different letters.

Gary: Okay.

Instructor: Alright? So let's say you have ... you have a head start and you like doing puffy letters. Think about different types to make graffiti letters.

Benny: Can I do like skinny jammed letters? (Classroom Observation, Day Three)

Apparent here is the difficulty teachers might experience if they had to give a letter grade to artwork. There is not a pre-established rubric for the participants' final graffiti product, just that they complete the task by the end of the week and that the primary investigator receives a copy of the work. In an interview by Marcella Runell-Hall (2011) with acclaimed Hip-hop scholar Tyrone Hill, he suggested that Hip-hop Pedagogy does not have a rigid set of standards and criteria or prefigured strategies to be regurgitated. Rather, "hip hop pedagogy reflects an alternate more expansive vision of pedagogy that reconsiders the relationship among students, teachers, texts, schools, and the broader social worlds" (p. 176).

Students were driven by self-motivation to complete assignments; at the end, the drawing portion of class became a catharsis. Much like the dialogue generated, the participants' final art product was a glimpse into the life and psyche of each child (Seghal, 2012). Everyday students built respect and trust amongst each other based upon their

common hip-hop interests, and by the week's end the participants chose to collaborate on graffiti throw ups together.

Allen: Yeah do it together.

Benny: Fine

Allen: We need a big piece of paper

Benny: Cause one ... I don't have paper so I guess we're going to have to do this together. (Classroom Observation, Day Five)

In my final reflection (See Attachment N) of our culminating day, I felt extremely excited and proud of the evidence of growth in the critical hip-hop skills of the four boys. Today however, was the day in which loose ends were tied and students had thoughts of Christmas and presents precluding their thoughts. Thankfully the boys managed to stay focused. The session went extremely fast, after attempting to speak to Gary's interest in break dancing, the boys made finishing touches on their nametags; the class had finally seemed to settle into routine. Regrettably it was our last day. I realized how much instruction and the interaction impressed upon me to reflect; when I started this study I was a primary special education teacher; over the course of three years I have moved from the classroom, to two different administrative positions. This study refocused my intent as an instructor of marginalized youth; as opposed to educational bureaucrat. It made me realized that I missed that interaction and yearly development I experienced with my students.



## **Summary**

In this study, the primary investigator set out to teach Hip-hop history and its relevance to elementary school aged male students in an academic setting. Students played a pivotal role in determining the direction and topics to be explored based upon the views they expressed, in the daily focus group. Through the direct instruction of the researcher, participants developed a beginner's level of understanding into a Hip-hop historical perspective. With that initial background knowledge, participants learned about the four Hip-hop elements, yet the graffiti facet of Hip-hop was the one that most appealed to all participants and, thus, they chose to explore the subject of graffiti more in depth. This chapter provided a description of the sessions, participant responses, and the researcher's insights during the process, The chapter that follows will discuss more specifically what was learned from the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

Chapter Five will discuss the major findings from this critical ethnographic research. The study points to seven important research findings that can be made related to employing Hip-hop Pedagogy in the investigation. All are relevant and consistent with the data and the literature on critical bicultural pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and Hip-hop Pedagogy, presented in the earlier discussion. These findings on the use of a Hip-hop Pedagogy show that: (a) Hip-hop Pedagogy enhances collaboration; (b) Hip-hop Pedagogy creates space for cultural expression; (c) Hip-hop Pedagogy supports social agency; (d) Hip-hop Pedagogy provides connection to lived histories; (e) the bicultural

teacher serves as bicultural mirror; (f) the potential of Hip-hop Pedagogy in elementary school setting, and lastly, (g) Hip-hop Pedagogy reveals the insufficiency of high-stakes measures. The following offers an analysis and discussion of each of these points.

### **Hip-hop Pedagogy Enhances Collaboration**

In a documentary film entitled *You Have to Watch to Learn* (2010) Dr. Janice Rahn made assertions about Hip-hop graffiti writers and pedagogy, from which she surmised that graffiti culture had a collaborative quality she did not see present in schools. This common interest in graffiti art provided the basis for new bonds of camaraderie to form amongst the participants. Students would begin to look at each other's styles writing and interpretations of the art. Similarly, they became more entrenched in the essence of Hip-hop collaboration as they sampled ideas from other artists they witnessed, their classmates, and the primary investigator to form their own personal vision of their position on graffiti.

Allen: Are we going to spell Cold Park?

Benny: No ... [laughter] ... Let's just do C ... P ... A

Allen: Then we're going to do a background and stuff?

Benny: No let's make ... Let's make something right here ...

Allen: Well basically we just have to write very large letters.

Benny: Over here. (Classroom Observation, Day Five).

It was unexpected that participants in this study would develop an interest in graffiti, as the researcher hypothesized that rap music would be students' choice of focus. However, given the graphic nature of video games and the Internet, graffiti becomes a

logical link to the visually-oriented primary student. When given an opportunity to determine the direction and subject of the class, the participants were active contributors, selecting the graffiti aspect of Hip-hop culture. Many of the participants, however, had no interest or knowledge of how to participate in the art form, until the opportunity was provided through this study. Learning factual history about graffiti, combined with viewing the creation process, and then providing the opportunity to create Hip-hop art, further inspired the boys and drove their dialogue and collaborative efforts.

Allen: I know, I'm just grabbing my marker

Benny: How about we start like a tiny sketch of it

Allen: Not over there.

Benny: Write Cold Park. Here?

Allen: *Aqui esta.* [Pointing at the piece of paper]. On this piece of paper we can use the back or the front of this.

Benny: Okay.

Allen: I don't really have an idea for this.

Benny: I have an idea. (Classroom Observation, Day Five)

The participants very deliberately embraced the collaborative spirit of graffiti writing and Hip-hop. As they toiled to co-create art works, students became enmeshed in graffiti and also valued the contributions of peers. Benny was African American and Allen was Latino, however they were able to work so closely that Allen actually gave some directions in Spanish to Benny and he was able to comprehend. The graffiti education process, in this study, demonstrated how Hip-hop Pedagogy engages students

experientially and relationally in ways that enhance their opportunities to develop technical knowledge and mastery of a skill, citizenship, productive habits of mind, and collaboration (Christen 2003), within a culturally responsive context that enhances student participation and collaboration.

### **Hip-hop Pedagogy Creates Space for Expression of Cultural Being**

As Hip-hop culture persisted, generations of urban and non-urban children grew up developing an appreciation for Hip-hop, due to its media omnipresence and strong influence in urban communities (Rodriguez, 2009). This constant exposure to Hip-hop culture was apparent in several forms: the music that permeated through neighborhoods, cars and homes; the visual art presence; and the graffiti art found on the walls of businesses, home, and abandoned buildings. Also the shoes and the clothes that may be worn and how they were worn are all a direct result of Hip-hop's influence (Prier, 2012).

Hip-hop culture has represented areas of commonality between participants from various ethnic backgrounds and social standings (Christen, 2003; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Hip-hop participants had no established criteria; yet, once part of the culture as a contributor or a recipient, there was a necessary mind state and language developed that allowed them to communicate with other members. Within teaching and learning Hip-hop theory comes an inherent understanding of the theory of social justice and resistance to social inequality, as represented through the music and visual artistic expressions (Christen, 2003; Darder et al., 2009b). This supports youth in expressing themselves more openly and freely through their participation in the art form. Since the

emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of creation, youth find a cultural space where their true expression is an asset to their participation,

Many scholars consider the emancipatory practices of Hip-hop culture as applicable tools for teaching students of color from urban communities (Darder, 2012, Darder et al., 2009b; Freire, 2011; Kunjufu, 2012). Over the past five to 10 years, Hip-hop Pedagogy and rap pedagogy have initiated an instructional movement based on the frameworks of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical pedagogy (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Gay, 2000). Hip-hop pedagogues have been advocates for implementing Hip-hop based teaching methods for secondary students and collegiate students' (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Hill, 2009; Rodriguez, 2009).

These scholars maintain that teaching children about their culture inspires engagement and participation (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teaching in this matter strongly considers student's cultural voice and language of expression in the construction of curricula. This study attempted to support Juwanza Kunjufu's (2012) deduction that if education for males of color was fair and considerate of their culture, then most of them would succeed. Further this research initiated dialogue and activities for the participants' cultural voice to be heard and expressed artistically (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011). Darder (2012) asserted that in spite of race, class, culture, ethnic identity, gender, and age, students of color have emancipatory needs that should be addressed in classroom setting.

This study, true to these principles, sought to create a safe creative academic space for marginalized young males of color, which allowed participants to express themselves as culturally beings, honestly and without fear of repercussions. The researcher had the

task of trying to present an unbiased and multi-culturally collaborative view of Hip-hop history, while addressing the participants' own preconceptions of race. As such, each participant brought his own way of thinking, speaking and being to the table. Through the activities associated with a Hip-hop Pedagogy, the participants found a safe place from which to critically engage their own lives and their communities, which did not expect them to negate the expression of cultural being. As a consequence, the participants exhibited, for the most part, an openness and ease.

### **Hip-hop Pedagogy Supports Social Agency**

According to Rodriguez (2009), dialoguing with urban youth is a “natural extension of Hip-hop culture” (p. 20) that allowed educators from varying backgrounds to respond to the academic, societal, cultural, political needs of the historically marginalized youth. No matter the age group, “Hip-hop culture encourages its constituents to reflect upon and act upon their realities through one of the four elements of Hip-hop: emceeing, deejaying, break dancing, or graffiti” (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 20).

Henry Giroux (2009b) argued that schools should strive to become places devoted to self-discovery and social empowerment. Giroux (2009b) added that the ultimate outcome of schooling should be “critical democracy,” in which the priorities of the institution lie in the pursuit of freedom and a socially just vision of society. If truly democratic, that pursuit represents fruition place when students can develop their social agency, in ways that allow them to feel empowered and subjects of destinies. This is much like the Finnish education system, rated the number one education system in world, where students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning process and career

development (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Giroux (2009b) cogently posited “knowledge is always an ideological construction linked to particular interests and social relations” (p. 449). A culturally democratic curriculum would be a co-production of students and teacher, in which students see the value from daily application of the knowledge generated (Giroux, 2009, p. 449). Several critical pedagogy scholars and culturally relevant scholars have agreed that there are strong correlations between acknowledging student culture and the formation of a sense of social agency in students from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Giroux, 2009b; Hill, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

This research sought to counter traditional education in the establishment of a space where “authentic voices of students” (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2009, p. 174) and the exercise of their social agency could be realized. Through the use of Hip-hop and its various components in this study, participants with the researcher were able to successfully develop an instructional framework grounded in critical dialogue. We admired together artistic productions and critically considered improvements to their own work, which resulted in meaningful and affirming feedback. Through feedback that affirmed their abilities as intelligent students, rather than deficit beings, this educative approach supported the participants’ efforts to create original works that expressed who they were (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011). The boys most noticeably enacted their collective social agency through expressing their common preference and then advocating for the opportunity to learn more about Hip-hop through graffiti. The emancipatory expression of Hip-hop and graffiti was communicated best through the participants’ artwork and dialogue with one another. In the process, their peers confirmed their personal level of

excellence, while the researcher's affirmation enhanced the value of their individual and collective actions.

Instructor: I like it. I like it though. I like ... it looks like real Hip Hop. I like that dude. Your R is awesome. Like that's actually very good.

Allen: Aw well it didn't fit so ...

Instructor: Try it again. Keep trying. It's not about getting done. Today it's about doing a good job. I want you to think about, does it look dope? Is it really a good job? Alright?

Allen: Maybe I should use red. (Classroom Observation, Day Five)

The participants became introspective and critical of their own efforts; the mission to create a final product considered "dope" drove them to edit and reedit their renderings. Here again, the open expression of their social agency was visible in their individual and collaborative efforts. The exchange between the students and teacher evolved into a mentorship because of their shared respect for graffiti; but also a quest for improvement in their execution of the skill. Hip-hop Pedagogy through its emancipatory ethos suggests that the participants to also share in responsibility of instructional topics and, as such, they embraced the rigor required to complete their piece.

### **Hip-hop Pedagogy Provides a Connection to Lived Histories**

Knowledge of Hip-hop culture is considered important, as it is a living entity that is pertinent to students' lived histories. when students' attain knowledge about subjects



that have meaning in their lives this empowers students and edifies their educational process (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Gay, 2000). The researcher and student-created Hip-hop curriculum attempted to help participants discover interests and to relate these to the culture of their lived realities. The students considered learning about Hip-hop as something they all wanted to do. They later realized that partaking in any of the four elements of Hip-hop culture required extensive practice. From watching deejay masters and graffiti artists talk about how they developed skills, participants witnessed some the results of the hard work that was manifested as music recordings or graffiti masterpieces.

Rodriguez (2009) maintained that as potential teachers become professionally engaged, they grow further apart from the marginalized populations they are suppose to serve. He contends that this is so given to the hidden curriculum of an assimilation process of schooling. Because of the cultural divide between teachers and students, some teachers failed to acknowledge or understand the importance of Hip-hop in students' lives, and much less as a practical instructional application. Cultural ignorance silences an important burgeoning student voice. Land and Stovall (2009) asserted that this culture of silence strangles diverse cultural voices and pretends that there is a common culture that could be referred to as an educational norm.

This study suggested that primary aged children were drawn to Hip-hop based instruction, and once taught through the lens of history, participants could make meaningful insights into their own cultural interpretations of the subculture as it pertained to their lived histories. Rodriguez (2009), moreover, insisted that Hip-hop's mere

presence in the classroom was “to redefine what knowledge is and who has the power to create, own and exchange it” (p. 26).

Instructor: Tell me what you learned today. You walked away, when I say you walked away I mean you like “oh man that was cool, I learned this from Hip Hop today”.

Paul: Hmm ...

Instructor: Something from Hip Hop Class?

Paul: Interesting.

Allen: We saw more graffiti.

Instructor: You saw more graffiti, but how so? So there’s ...

Benny: Oh, I know. I know what we learned today.

Instructor: Yes?

Benny: Um ... like white people do graffiti. (Focus Group, Day Four)

The participants believed Hip-hop was an entity of urban culture, dominated by African-American men. The complete picture of Hip-hop culture also shifted both participants’ and the researcher’s view of racial identity within the culture. Participants made a major realization when they came to realize that Hip-hop was comprised of more than rap music. Furthermore, it was equally shocking that the artistic field of graffiti was dominated by middle-class White male professionals (Christen, 2003). The researcher entered this study with a limited ethnocentric view of Hip-hop, which started with rap and

ended with deejaying, which was subsequently broadened by the new knowledge uncovered in the Hip-hop sessions.

Learning Hip-hop historically had several benefits for young people who take part in culture:

- A geographical understanding of Hip-hop's beginnings,
- Knowledge of the four separate yet intermeshed elements of Hip-hop,
- Theoretical knowledge behind all of four Hip-hop movements, and
- The multicultural picture of Hip-hop throughout the four elements will attract youths of all backgrounds to participate and contribute towards the evolution of the artistic culture.

It is quite possible that a Hip-hop Pedagogy that employs emergent curriculum can equip also the ill-prepared educator to effectively enrich and engage the modern working class young people of color (Darder, 2012; Rodriguez, 2009). More to the point here, the exercise of a Hip-hop Pedagogy opened the door for participants to critical engage the culture of Hip-hop, as they also considered the manner in which what they learned of the artist and art forms connected to their lived histories, within a racialized working class community.

### **The Bicultural Male Teacher as Bicultural Mirror**

Darder (2012) asserted that bicultural educators who have become conscious of their biculturalism and bicultural voice and have made a conscious decision to integrate their cultural knowledge within their instructional practice also have the ability to serve as a *bicultural mirror* for bicultural students. In that role the bicultural educator can assist

students in discovering voice and a sense of empowerment, through discovering the humanity that lies in the truth of their cultural knowledge and lived histories (Darder, 2012).

In this study, the researcher was an African American who shared a common Hip-hop cultural interest with the participants, who were all students of color from a working class community. As such, the researcher was able to consciously and deliberately code-switch or change language patterns between mainstream English and a Hip-hop vernacular, as an appropriate model of pedagogical communication. Students were permitted to use Hip-hop language or whatever language that came most naturally to them, in an effort to create a space where they did not have to silence nor censure their contribution for fear of reprisal.

The researcher's educational background and experiences teaching was significant, in that he had taught predominately male youths of color. After more than ten years of interacting with marginalized students of color, I realized we had several things in common: an interest in hip-hop, sports, animation or cartoons, and experiences of marginalization. From those points of mutual interest, I have been able to consistently forge meaningful relationships from discussion with students that would subsequently transfer into the area of academics. The researcher drew from the points of interest to enrich the curriculum and establish genuine engagement. This study implies that possibly learning from an educator who had common recreational interest and some important aspects of cultural understanding, students academic aspirations could be realized.

Much of public education's shortcomings lie within the inherent cultural xenophobia that marginalizes and shows preference to specific cultural members. Currently, the demographics of the working population within public education do not reflect student cultural population (NCES, 2012). The lack of systemic urgency counteracts the need for effective education of working class students. There exist pockets of adequacy and rigor. However neighborhood schools of working class communities usually suffer from long term failure due in part to an oversimplification of the depth of the learning and teaching gap. This profound misunderstanding of the modern student and appropriate academia adversely affects the students of poor communities because of the lack of wealth resources and opportunities for social advancement. A viable education then becomes more crucial for certain socioeconomic communities (Hilliard et al., 2003).

Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to offer personal interpretations of graffiti and Hip-hop language and to add on their individual touches. Darder (2012) added, "Language constitutes one of the most powerful media for transmitting our personal histories and social realities (p. 105). As a bicultural mirror in this context, I was able to mirror for students their distinct process of biculturalism, as these young boys of color sought to make sense between aspects of Hip-hop culture and their own cultural understanding of their communities, In this way, I could better affirm their understanding of subordination and inequalities, as well as affirm their cultural expressions.

Instructor: Yo' I'm bugged out Gary. I didn't think you could do that good. Like that's much better than I can graph, like I love

it. Like I'm not joking. Where's your brother? You all are actually pretty good ... look at this.

Instructor: Look at his.

Allen: Dang!

Benny: That does not look like Andrew. That's an upside down A.

Instructor: But it's still dope.

Paul: That's not an upside down A.

Instructor: It looks like this. [Pointing to graffiti displayed on the projector]

Gary: Ohhhhhh!!!

Instructor: I love it though.

Gary: I messed up on the E (Classroom Observation, Day Four).

Many education institutions neither recognized the cultural knowledge of students of color nor consider adjusting curricula to integrate student histories or interests.

However, in some cases, educators have pushed for the inclusion of Hip-hop cultural expressions in the schools, convinced that through approaches more grounded in the culture of students, they can tap into the knowledge and rich lived experiences that students bring to school (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Rodriguez, 2009).

In her work, bell hooks (2009) alleged that "silence and obedience" were characteristics of bourgeois culture that prohibited genuine discourse and dialogue; yet positively reinforced conformity and adherence. She posited that addressing real issues of cultural gravity and pertinence to the student population in the classroom was impossible

because of sterile and micromanaged settings of traditional schooling that frown upon meaningful exchanges in which cultural voices are raised, feathers ruffled, and people made uncomfortable (hooks, 2009). These type of exchanges are considered to be representative of “lower class” or deficit communities. The language that urban working class students of color were most comfortable with and probably learned best from has been muted as an assimilatory act (Darder; 2012; hooks, 2009; Kunjufu; 2012). Furthermore, dialogue about class continues to be absent from most classrooms, given the complicity of teachers who embrace a value system that aligns with the hegemonic culture (either consciously or unconsciously). Thus, many who say they believe in social justice try to manage their classroom setting, wanting to avoid feelings of guilt for executing an ethical contradiction that leaves working class students of color marginalized and unattended (hooks, 2009).

Language in the classroom is considered pivotal then in relaying effective instruction and it a significant aspect of what bicultural teachers offer their bicultural students. However, when communication discrepancies arise, students who are not adept in mainstream English, became voiceless (hooks, 2009), in the absence of bicultural educators who can mirror for them the way across this chasm. This is particularly importance in education settings where the language of instruction varies greatly from the home language of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. For this reason (and in concert with this study), some educational settings have begun to use graffiti to build bridges to communication. At San Diego University, for example, a graffiti wall is used as a medium for synthesizing dialogue and personal feelings expressed as brilliant and

elaborate graphic displays of the participants' view of graffiti symbols that have reverberated throughout their culture (Franco, 2010).

The researcher, as a bicultural mirror, communicated with the participants in linguistic dialect that was both familiar and heightened the receptiveness of participants. In fact, it seems that the deeper I ventured into Hip-hop linguistically, the more organic the communication with the participants became and the more impactful my instruction. My use of Hip-hop language (or urban language as a bicultural linguistic style) was instrumental in providing a space when a Hip-hop understanding could critically flourish in this study. Students were very cognizant of language use around them, when we started to watch *Style Wars* (Silver & Chalfant, 1983), there was an older white male narrating about Hip-hop and graffiti topics in a very bland and monotone voice; Allen instantly reacted.

Allen:                    How come there's like this old guy saying like everything?

Instructor:        Why is it a old guy talking?

Allen:                Yeah, he's like it about rap music ...

Instructor:        The reason why is it's like a documentary. Right. And then they're like what's wrong with these kids. So they're like thinking that, like this guy is doing like a news expose on them. And actually it's really a good thing. (Classroom Observation, Day Three)



Laughter ensued, as the narrator impartially detailed both sides of the graffiti argument in New York, in the early 80s. Through the common language shared with participants, I became welcomed into their learning and as an insider into their school community. In the process of my educational instruction, I would take suggestions for improvement by the participants and instantly apply them to creations. In this way, students engaged the process of learning not as threatening, but constructive, while they worked to develop a better artistic product. Similarly, the researcher's learning process also underwent monumental growth, in the brief time period I spent with the four participants..

Instructor: Now that looks way better dude!

Allen: I think I did it too big,

Instructor: What?!! No!! I like it though ... It looks almost three-D.  
See ... look at that!

Allen: I outlined it.

Instructor: You outlined it though but the outline makes it look totally different, right? Alright, so you got to think about, it's not a lot that's going to make it, you add an arrow ... you got to keep practicing. Keep practicing. (Classroom Observation, Day Four)

As a consequence of the bicultural connection shared, the researcher and participants bonded through our mutual linguistic competencies and cultural respect for various aspects of both Hip-hop and the cultural histories of all in the room. The dialogical facet

Critical Pedagogy is a useful instructional method that requires true verbal intercourse between teacher and student; when implemented correctly students and teachers become culturally empowered and academically enriched (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011). As an outsider of the school community, talking in a mutual language was important for me to establish rapport and trust among the participants. Hip-hop language was our mutual ground. The students and researcher discoursed about, hip-hop history, race and class and everyone involved took away some new knowledge. This study availed students with crucial historical and theoretical about an ever present yet perplexing subculture. Hip-hop as topics of interest were approached academically and became formative in the discoveries and new knowledge that formed. While this method of teaching was neither measurable nor quantified by Common Core or government standards, this study suggested it may be needed to inspire self-learning, true love of knowledge, and problem solving by establishing the student's critical voice.

### **Potential for Hip-hop Pedagogy in an Elementary Setting**

The implementation of an emergent Hip-hop Pedagogy with elementary school children in this study implies a revolutionary possibility for establishing an emancipatory place for student voice and cultural knowledge in the classroom. Hip-hop Pedagogy required that participants understand about different levels of poverty and the inequalities this entail, mindful of all levels of humanity. It's useful to note that many students from the dominant culture have also grown up with Hip-hop and may or may not relate to it; but they are aware of its existence and influence on their daily lives (Christen, 2003). Hip-hop culture then could be instrumental in helping young students from the dominant culture

to become more critical aware of injustice and to develop greater empathy for experiences and voices of oppressed communities, from diverse urban backgrounds. Separating and explaining the culture by focusing on the different elements could be a useful way to help establish respect and appreciation for the raw artistic ability that comes out of poor communities, often without the benefit of resources or formal training. Facets of Hip-hop to created cultural awareness and interest could help to establish much needed cultural compassion for people of color who exist in the impoverished margins of capitalism.

Like many intervention methods that seek to address issues, earliest is best. That to say, that this study indicates that utilizing Hip-hop Pedagogy with younger children can have important benefits from both a Hip-hop and educational stance. When primary school aged children have an opportunity to learn the initial history of nonviolence and multiculturalism of Hip-hop culture, this can equip them with the critical awareness to filter through the corporate clutter and determine what Hip-hop means in terms of their own lives. As a consequence of their experience in the study, the four young male participants could already comparatively determine their perceptions of music and visual art and what these meant in terms of their own lives and communities, which clearly evidenced some advance in their level of critical consciousness.

Critical Hip-hop Graffiti Pedagogy is an anti-banking methodology that synthesizes art based instructional methods with Frierean critical pedagogy and and culturally relevant teaching strategies (Darder, 2012; Friere, 2011; Gay, 2000; Runell-Hall, 2011). “Perhaps graffiti's most significant educational contribution is that, unlike most schools, it introduces writers to a critical understanding of power structures and

involves them in the construction of alternatives” (Christen, 2003, p. 59). Inherent in a Hip-hop Pedagogy is the contention that students are more than test scores and that working class students of color are not students with deficits or merely a source of daily attendance funds. On the contrary, the four students in this study showed growth, perspective, and potential genius. Educators teaching students similar to the participants here must present curricula that foster growth and confidence, through providing cultural affirmation and intellectual opportunities for the development of talent and confidence in their own social agency. The earlier this process begins, the more powerful will be the advancement of students. Moreover, the affirmative responses of the young males of color, a population that is most disenfranchised within elementary schools, points to the promise of integrating a Hip-hop Pedagogy in the schooling of young male students of color.

Robin Rooney (2004), who conducted a study on art-based education reform almost 10 years ago, discerned that schools that instituted an art-based curricula in ethnically diverse communities had an improved school climate. Rooney (2004) also discovered that students who were involved in art-based programs were able to develop higher-order thinking skills and develop learning abilities that improved creativity, in comparison to students who had not participated in an art-based instructional program. In observing the critical engagement of participants as they grapple with producing their Graffiti projects, the results of this study very much confirm Rooney’s conclusion.

Similarly the results of this study are also in concern with Bennett and Rolheiser (2010), who delineated four reasons that graffiti art is beneficial in the classroom:

- Graffiti is an inclusive activity that can involve all students in the class (including ESL students). Students can choose to draw pictures instead of writing.
- Graffiti is an independent activity in which students can freely think and write their responses. Nervousness over presenting their information is eliminated.
- The end product is the collective thoughts/ideas of all the class members on a given topic.
- When students have appropriate “think time,” the quality of their responses improves.

Christen (2003) asserted that student-writers have been found more likely to attend school and be promoted to the next grade because, as one high school counselor observed, "The sort of kid who can be motivated to work for hours each day tagging to become famous can also accept the grind of school to get a degree" (p. 60). Graffiti is "a smart investment," since it gives writers the confidence to resist bad influences and to "get on with graduating high school" (Christen, 2003, p. 60).

Darder (2012) poignantly stated, “No educational theory is worthy if it cannot function to critically inform the daily lived practices of educators out in the field” (p. 131). If effective, Hip-hop Pedagogy must be shared and utilized with other primary educators in working class communities, who are struggling to adequately connect with their student population. Hip-hop could have many benefits when utilized at primary grade levels,

building a foundation of Hip-hop knowledge and respect for culturally inspired academics that are taught ethically and responsively to young student population. Often Hip-hop has been used as an educational intervention for secondary students. However, implementing this instructional method for primary aged children could represent a symbolic olive branch from educators to students of color, which can effectively engage cultural knowledge, when navigating between urban working class communities and hegemonic institutions of schooling.

### **Standardized Measurements are Insufficient**

Overall modern America has a shifting racial dynamic, represented throughout many media representations, from television shows and television commercials to video games, there is a multiracial picture of society that validates the cultural presence of many marginalized subgroups from homosexuals to members of African-American and Latino races. Furthermore there are new empowering cultural references developed through generational struggle. The dilution of education and the overarching presence of accountability measures over the last three decades have enabled a system that assigns blame for any problems to the participants. Students were restricted to remediated settings and to a curriculum for low performance, and teachers and administrators are reprimanded and penalized for not meeting arbitrary standards. Many students have fallen through the cracks or simply disengaged, with little regard for numeric results. In an exchange with Benny and Allen, we conversed about efforts exerted in class during the school day; Benny confronted Allen about his lack of effort.

Benny:           You don't even try hard in class. I heard about you.

Allen: I know. But I try in Math. I like Math (Classroom Observation, Day Four).

Illustrating distaste and conscious resistance for the banking system in education, Allen is likely to remain an unrecognized academic force, because of language and cultural invasion practiced in the teaching of English and language arts within the educational systems (Freire, 2012). Without disenfranchised and racialized communities, the constant thrust to assess reading of Standard English through a instrumental process of fragmented and decontextualized assessment support an English taught implicitly through reading, rather than a formal language to be studied in-depth. Testing young people from diverse cultural backgrounds on language mastery in a foreign language is unfair and immoral, if not correctly instructed. High-stakes test and subsequent data remain invalid, as it fails to be representative of students' of color true academic aptitude. Darder (2012) asserted that the test driven curricula implemented in many educational agencies is constructed through the use of culturally bias material. She further contends that culturally irrelevant school environment is "directly tied" to the academic failure of students of color (p. 69). Many urban students continue to be culturally misrepresented by the results of high-stakes standardized assessments and culturally irrelevant curricula.

The American public education system has adopted a myopic perspective of learning and a subsequent homogeneous view of race in America as represented through dated pedagogy that requires the student conform to the cultural norms and instructional measures of standardized assessment (Darder, 2012; Hilliard et al., 2004; Kunjufu, 2012). The problematic nature of testing and accountability measures of assessment was best

illustrated by the institutional information provided to me about the four participants in this study. Some of the students were considered to be underachieving, according to the institutional measures, In contrast, as I began to engage the participants, I came to note the discrepancy between what test scores for these children and the talents and intellectual force they displayed in their engagement with the subject matter and the production of their art work. This obvious discrepancy, which kept wondering if these were the same students, caused me to question more deeply the validity of standardized testing measures, which appear to be tremendously limited in assessing the true abilities and potential of young male students of color. However, it is worth noting here that the participation and engagement of the participants in this study occurred in an environment where I endeavored to refrain from categorizing students' efforts in a narrow subjective basis of measurement. Instead, the research was founded on the culture and interest that students brought to the classroom. The students excelled in the process because the expectations of outcomes were the direct result of student participation and the process engaged their lived histories in very concrete ways.

Today's students are growing with the constant presence of multiracial hip-hop societies, and modern technology driven through the constant emergence of the internet and video games. Unfortunately, most of today's classrooms are devoid of these engaging elements and empowering images. Most importantly schools and teachers have failed to devise systemic methods of delivering meaningful lessons cultural heritage and technology that capture not just working class students but all students' academic interest. Kunjufu (2012) suggested that is possible for success to be created at regular public school



if there is a positive school environment that contends all children can learn and there is congruence between pedagogy and learning styles. Again teacher and school systems must take development and growth of their students personal and do what is necessary to create successful learning situations (Darder, 2012, Freire, 2011).

### **Summary**

Education has been the institution that allowed upward social mobility from a lower social status to a higher socioeconomic one. Yet, it requires a just and fair distribution of these documented rights that maintain true democracy but also empower disenfranchised groups by providing access to resources and knowledge. Aronowitz (2009) claimed that schools were “failing to fulfill the promise of equal opportunity” and provide the skills that would allow access to good jobs for all students, whether Black, White, and Latino. This notion is predicated upon receiving a viable education that can be exchanged for a meaningful career that will elevate students’ socioeconomic position. As many schools continue to utilize standardized curriculums and normalized standards for learning, there is an intrinsic ignorance of the social and cultural knowledge and strengths that racialized communities possesses (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Kunjufu, 2012).

The exclusionary practices of public education enacted in the classroom with students of color are also at work in hiring practices and the subsequent marginalization of educators color. In light of the achievement gap often attributed to working class students of color and the struggles that black male students face in mainstream classroom, this study sought to bring a Hip-hop Pedagogy into an elementary setting to assess the impact of this approach with four young males of color. This chapter discussed the seven major

finding gleaned from the data and literature incorporated for this study. The findings proposed that a Hip-hop Pedagogy enhances student collaboration; creates space for students' cultural expression; supports social agency; and provides a connection to students' lived histories. Also key here was the manner in which the bicultural teacher serves as bicultural mirror and the potential of a Hip-hop Pedagogy in an elementary school setting. Lastly, the study revealed the insufficiency of high-stakes measures in assessing the potential of the boys in the study, who proved to be far more capable, insightful, and talented than their official scores would indicate.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Forty years ago Dr. William (Bill) Cosby (1976) hypothesized that literacies of elementary school students could be expanded and significant life lessons could be learned from culture specific cartoons like *Fat Albert and the Gang* and *Sesame Street*. He asserted that minority children could benefit from media based instructional methods which could spark academic engagement and could ultimately be viable in combatting institutional racism. Any reform movement, therefore, is flawed in its conception if the student population has no voice or hand in the creation process (Darder, 2012). Many master educators and master curriculum specialists are pivotal to new educational theories that spawn national movements. These individuals are not children and lack the thought processes and insights of this population. The reciprocal exchange of apathy between working class students of color and their teachers has been a result of the limited scope of scripted education curricula, generally driven by the assimilative dictates of racialized class formation. Yet, according to Freire (2011), education like any institution is a partial enterprise and it is in its “unfinishedness” that we can find the enormous power to realize an emancipatory vision that remains yet to be unrealized.

Educational institutions responsible for the academic formation of American youth continue to fail in meeting the educational needs of working class students of color. Seldom do these institutions work seriously to integrate cultural knowledge that is more in sync with the lived histories and home lives of racialized students (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Gay, 2000; Hilliard et al., 2003). Educational reform movements have failed to

generate conversations that are reflective of the academic needs of various ethnic communities. Certainly all working-class communities are not homogenous and each has its own set of nuances that should be understood in educating the youth in these communities (Darder, 2012). Certainly “all students can achieve”; however what must also be clearly understood is that all students do not learn in the same way nor do they have the same life circumstances or concerns (Gay, 2000).

The dilution of education and overarching presence of accountability measures has enabled a system that assigns blame for any problems to the participants; students are restricted to remedial settings and to a curriculum for low performance, while teachers and administrators are reprimanded and penalized for not meeting arbitrary standards. Stanley Aronowitz (2009) argued that education institutions are essentially flawed in their aims and methods, in that students are expected to learn topics of math, science, and literature in abstract and fragmented ways, which have nothing to do with their personal development or emancipation. As such, Aronowitz (2009) declared that students are forced to learn and memorize academic algorithms and processes in fulfillment of academic requirements, while they must endure a deadening educational process, as opposed to experiencing an enriching educational experience that critically awakens and prepares them to become subjects of history and full participants of their world (Freire, 2011).

Aronowitz (2009) maintained that the present education system ignores students’ social capital, while simultaneously forcing students through academic levels where they only gain cursory knowledge. He added that social promotion herds many students into

marginal careers and an intractable caste system. By an early age, many students' fates have been decided on, based on the quality or lack of their academic, socio-emotional and cultural development. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) argued that the schools that serve working class students of color often lack the resources and manpower necessary to ever meet the ascribed educational standards.

In communities of the poor and powerless, parents and students may engage in the public education process half-heartedly for a number of reasons: the material learned in school seems to remain unpractical and of little use to their home environment; assimilation is required to advance; and the desired outcome of the present educational process is an alignment with the dominant culture, one that ensures mediocrity and separation from one's primary culture. One-sided communication in education, where policy is dictated from the top down, curriculums are formulated and purchased, and then communicated to parents and teachers. The quality and pertinence of the most important endeavor in children's lives is predetermined by deficit preconceptions of potential regarding socioeconomic status, neighborhood, and parent's devotion to their child's educational process. The cultural exchange in mainstream education is one directional and devalues cultural diverse voices. America's foundation is rooted in diverse cultures that are considered to have melded into a new creation. In contrast, Hip-hop culture today exemplifies a sincere multiracial collaborative effort. Hip-hop has had and will continue to have contributors of all shades and languages that will continue to have a strong influence on American mainstream.

The United States remains the world's wealthiest country and many people continue to migrate here by any means necessary to attain wealth and prosperity. However, certain communities have consistently been excluded from access to the promise of the so-called free market economy. Nevertheless, some people, who seem to forego the educational process, such as rappers or entrepreneurs, learn and succeed in contexts of raw capitalism, and somehow seem to still retain their cultural identity. Moreover, they seem to obtain respect from the dominant society for having monetary wealth. Education's overall mission must adapt to the actual educational needs of today's children, particularly those from working class racialized communities. As opposed to meeting bureaucratic marks of compliance and creating end products of insufficiency, educators for social justice should be working tirelessly to open possibilities for learning that will not limit the dreams of our children or leave them frustrated without hope.

This desire to seek new possibilities for the education of young male students of color, a Hip-hop Pedagogy was used to conduct an ethnography with four young participants at a working-class community school. Unique cultural nuances were drawn from each participant's lived experience and contributions to the Hip-hop class. Dialogue supported cultural exchange process between the participants and with the researcher. Lessons and cultural characteristics were informative and the establishment of students' emergent voice and Hip-hop personas were major statements of their humanistic existence. Hip-hop based dialogues with primary aged children, this study showed, could possibly inspire them to partake in the art and become stewards that contribute to the evolution of the art form and their communities.

## **Implications for Students**

Historically, working class urban communities of color view education as a hands-off process, in which they have no input, primarily because there is little trust in educational professionals and the institutions. Students often complain that current topics of learning have little to no practical use in their lives. These topics range from the history of people who are long gone and forgotten to complicated mathematic algorithms that have no application in their daily lives (Kunjufu, 2012). For future reference, if education is to be considered useful and effective, the students who are most affected must believe that it can be so. Student confidence in educators continues to erode with each ill-equipped graduate, apathetic uninspiring lesson, and unethical action that transpires in these schools (Kunjufu, 2012).

This study strongly suggests that Hip-hop taught historically as an academic subject could mean the generational perpetuation of a subculture embraced by underrepresented cultural communities in American society and learning about Hip-hop historically could mean arriving to a new understanding of the geography of New York and the social climate that instigated Hip-hop's birth. Understanding Hip-hop Pedagogy theory requires recognition of the graffiti movement and the thrust and motivations behind counterhegemonic element of the culture. Upon grasping the fullness of the peopling in Hip-hop, further investigation will lead to an examination of the Hip-hop diaspora and adaption to various languages and cultures throughout the world; people would continue to appreciate and participate in all the elements of Hip-hop, as an emancipatory way of life.

Hip-hop based education could play a vital role here in galvanizing the humanity of students of all colors, in order to help them to achieve a meaningful educational experience (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Hill, 2009). Hip-hop also has the possibility to be taught as a vocation. Teaching Hip-hop skills such as deejaying, emceeing, graffiti, and dance could translate into a temporary occupation or meaningful careers that could build self-esteem and possibly produce a livelihood. In learning a Hip-hop as a vocation there is the inference here that technical skills will be taught the right way, and that through that exchange of procedural knowledge Hip-hop culture will continue to flourish. However, for Hip-hop to be accurately understood and critically engaged in the larger society, including academia, there must be an adjoining program that begins in the primary grades and continues into secondary schooling. Hip-hop stresses a level of excellence and quality through hard work and collaboration, if the art is to be shared with the world.

### **Implications for Teachers: The Instructional Gap**

In an interview with *Vibe* magazine in 2006, Hip-hop artist Talib Kweli stated, “Teachers have no choice but to learn how to use Hip-hop in the classroom. It’s the language of the children. They have to respect the culture of Hip-hop” (Runell, 2006, p. 2). The noticeable absence of Hip-hop in today’s urban classrooms suggests that “adulthood” exists in education in a manner that perpetuates an oppressive environment for young people (Runell-Hall, 2011, p. 175). There is a movement to enact Hip-hop in classrooms by education scholars; however, the strategy continues to be omitted as a serious methodology of educational reform. Teachers continue to complain about the



behavior of students and how they continue to ignore the instructional content; however the teachers also continue to ignore the needs, interests, and skill levels of today's students, particularly those from racialized communities.

Hip-hop culture has always been about what is next, from fashion and music to technology; regrettably many teachers are unable to keep up with students' trends and skill levels (Kunjufu, 2012). Education continues to be reflective of today's teachers and administrators' limited in their generational and cultural competencies. Some academic necessities and skills that were required in generations past are no longer relevant to the students today or even considered viable in the marketplace. Hip-hop Pedagogy represents an opportunity for teachers to learn and grow with their students, while actually fulfilling their duty to edify and support the critical development of students.

Runell-Hall (2011) ascertained that even teachers who had cultural backgrounds similar to those of the students they taught can struggle to motivate and engage students. However, regardless of race and class most students harbor some interest in Hip-hop culture that could potentially be channeled by a motivated instructor. The demand to measure growth consistently overshadows student interests and, thus, the development of the skills students desired.

In this instance, Hip-hop Pedagogy combined the dialogue of critical pedagogy with the practice of art-based instructional practices (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Rooney, 2004). High-level art education programs were once reserved for students in middle and upper class learning institutions, whereas graffiti evolved organically in resistance to the social stratification and the inequitable distribution of resources in a system that restricted

artistic knowledge to members of the dominant class. Urban working class graffiti writers used the art form to attack societal norms of inequity while establishing a genuine artistic voice and vision. Many writers involved in this art form have been able to transcend their own racialized and economic boundaries, in the commonality of graffiti (Christen, 2003).

Most graffiti art education programs entail informing adolescents about the dangers and costs graffiti represents to varying municipal agencies. However in New York, the birthplace of Hip-hop, and Philadelphia, the birthplace of America, there are two current programs that embrace the graffiti element to educate and empower the inhabitants of working class communities. In New York, the Red Bull Corporation sponsors an inner city arts program entitled, the “Write of Passage” in which 12 students were selected and taught to do graffiti, and in Philadelphia there is the “Paint Straight” program that exposes children to graffiti art in after school programs. These programs are effective, however, they are few and fleeting.

### **Implications for Graffiti and Art-based education**

Research suggests that melding graffiti and art-based education strategies could be beneficial in the development of critical literacy skills for male students of color in working class public school. This study validates the research of Jacobs (2008) and Rooney (2004), who advocate for the use art-based instructional methods. Rooney (2004) posited, “According to Project Zero, an educational research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, local community arts centers across the country help participants reach their social and educational goals. Community arts programs use arts

education, for example, to teach skills that are transferable to the workplace, such as planning and self-assessment” (p. 2).

Rooney (2004) observed that there were several methods to implement art-based instruction from whole school to models tailored to specific types of learners. As stated earlier art based instructional methods have positive impacts on school communities, the relationship between teachers and students, and develops the critical thought processes of all parties involved. Going further, Jake Jacobs’ (2009) research contended that middle-school students were more likely to be engaged with artistic technical instruction if it were given through a graffiti perspective and could potentially be used to improve graffiti skills. More importantly, this study highlighted the void of art-based instruction in elementary school settings, and proposes utilizing graffiti and dialogue to fill this absence.

### **Implications for this Research**

The researcher was an etic observer of four primary-school-aged students and their perceptions of a Hip-hop education curriculum. There was a very short time to establish rapport and create relationships that allowed students to lower their affective filter. This critical ethnographic research took place over five successive days. I hypothesized that by implementing a Hip-hop based curriculum grounded in dialogue student’s would have positive perceptions, be authentically engaged, develop greater literacy skills and critical consciousness about themselves and their environment. Creating dialogue was a primary task in building rapport, while also addressing the issues of critical consciousness development. The dialogical model created the conditions for the researcher and

participants to perch topics ranging from racism, poverty, and social inequality, to Hip-hop stereotypes and the distribution of wealth in the United States.

This Hip-hop exploration was significant because primary age male participants acquired historical knowledge from media and dialogue about important aspects of their cultural history. Through classic video clips, Hip-hop masters shared technical terms and practicing writing techniques, these boys become experts, as most young people and old people were not privy to this knowledge. The opportunity to learn to create graffiti required students to confront themselves as potential artists and consider how they wanted the world to view themselves and their art. During the process of the study, they all made poignant statements that spoke of their humanity and youthful exuberance. In this way, the research attempted to go beyond the failure of traditional instructional practices, to implement a culturally relevant teaching strategy that would expressed an appreciation for the student's culture and potential talent.

Participation in any facets of Hip-hop presumes a sociopolitical statement. The classroom process of the study provided participants with freedom to begin establishing their political voice. By the end of the week, there were no proclamations of racial allegiances, just an admiration and respect for a massive artistic movement that asked required effort and commitment. The study confirmed the existence of an achievement gap between students of color and white students as the result of gaps in the curriculum and insufficient instructional methods (Hilliard et al., 2003; Kunjufu, 2012). But the "achievement gap" is an inaccurate term for a much grander problem of economic inequality reflected in the teaching of working-class students of color (Bowles & Gintis,

1976). The voice of the youth is ever present in Hip-hop; but generally absent from the process of education reform and educational planning.

This Hip-hop instructional inquiry revealed that students wanted to be engaged and that they had valuable contributions to make about the direction of their academic development. There was value in learning about Hip-hop from an academic perspective, with an engaging and effective dialogical instruction approach. There are hosts of scholars who believed in the efficacy of Hip-hop based instructional methods, yet there are few teachers able or willing to implement them (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Prier, 2012; Rodriguez, 2009; Runell-Hall, 2011). Local agencies have ignored Hip-hop curricula as a part of reform, in exchange for less effective mainstream strategies. Yet, if closing the achievement gap is a

sincere goal, alternative critical pedagogical strategies such as Hip-hop Pedagogy should be considered in the formation of federal and state policies (Pardue, 2007). Sparse access to culturally responsive teaching, critical pedagogy, and Hip-hop Pedagogy is unfair to students who most need a curriculum of hope that is culturally edifying and ethically emancipatory. This study, in conjunction with the many others cited throughout this work, affirms moreover the promise of Hip-hop, in the education of working class boys of color in the United States. A possible area for further study is the transference of engagement from hip-hop based classrooms to traditional classrooms has not yet been investigated or measured; as there is no quantified effect of the relationship to hip-hop education and and academic achievement.

## Epilogue

I failed your class cause I ain't with your reasoning

You're tryin' make me you by seasoning

Up my mind/with see Jane run, see John walk in a hardcore New York

Come on now that's like a chocolate cow

It doesn't exist no way, no how

It seems to me that in a school that's ebony

African history should be pumped up steadily

But it's not

And this has got to stop

See Spot run, run get Spot

Insulting to a Black mentality

A Black way of life

Or a jet Black family

So I include with one concern

That You Must Learn!!!

KRS ONE as cited in Boogie Down Productions

“You Must Learn” (Parker, 1989, track 8)

Twenty five years ago, street-educated rapper and world-renowned scholar, KRS ONE saw the inherent flaw in the education that was forced upon people of color. He contended that the desired outcome of this type education was to create individuals who valued the dominant culture. Yet, what we know is that to successfully educate people of

various cultural backgrounds, students must be allowed to learn their true history. When I reflect upon the participants and the spirited discussions produced by this study, I feel positively motivated to continue in the quest to encourage other educators to create a space for student voice, their histories, and the culture of their lived experience. Engaging with Benny, Paul, Allen and Gary through Hip-hop changed my life forever, as we co-constructed knowledge about hip-hop history, graffiti, and its respective presence in our lives. Each young man was different, academically unique, furthermore, each possessed their own humorous interpretation of their current station in life. Through this work, I was able to impart upon them my love and respect for Hip-hop, as well as discover with them new pieces of knowledge. These young students were truly invested and wanted to grow in their knowledge of graffiti. We were determined to acquire Hip-hop specific knowledge together, and developed this sincere interest through the power of their input. As an educator who learned from several rappers positive examples, I feel encumbered to take up the emancipatory cause KRS ONE and many other positive rappers initiated 25 years ago, to create the space for edutainment.

From the study, I engaged in instruction and student interaction in ways that pressed me to reflect upon my current position as an educator. When I started this study I was a primary special education teacher; over the course of three years I have moved from the classroom, unto two different administrative positions. This study helped to refocus my intent as an educator of marginalized youth, as opposed to continuing as an educational bureaucrat. I realized that I craved that interaction with students and the yearly development I experienced, through my many experiences with them.

This study was completed from a teacher's perspective to improve teaching practices for young urban males of color, and used Hip-hop to initiate important dialogue about race and class. Hip-hop does not have to be the impetus nor the curricula; however, students of all colors crave sociocultural awareness and enrichment that many education systems ignore (Darder, 2012; Freire, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The consistent negligence of our students' humanity results in student apathy and loss of voice (Dalke et al., 2007; Darder, 2012).

The direct effects of systemic cultural bias in public education is everpresent. In my predominantly African-American community, I witnessed droves of young and old men of color on street corners searching for reasons to exist or die; therein would lie my professional motivation. Systemic racism strips victims of their self-conception and ability to positively affect their communities (Woodson, 2013). Many of the men of color in working class communities were woefully miseducated and culturally marginalized in these systems (Noguera, 2008). (Many have matriculated with very few options in life because their educational potential was systematically ignored, dismissed, or blighted; as evidenced by drop out rates, and incarcerations rates of this demographic (Kunjufu, 2012; Noguera, 2008; Owens & Valesky, 2011).

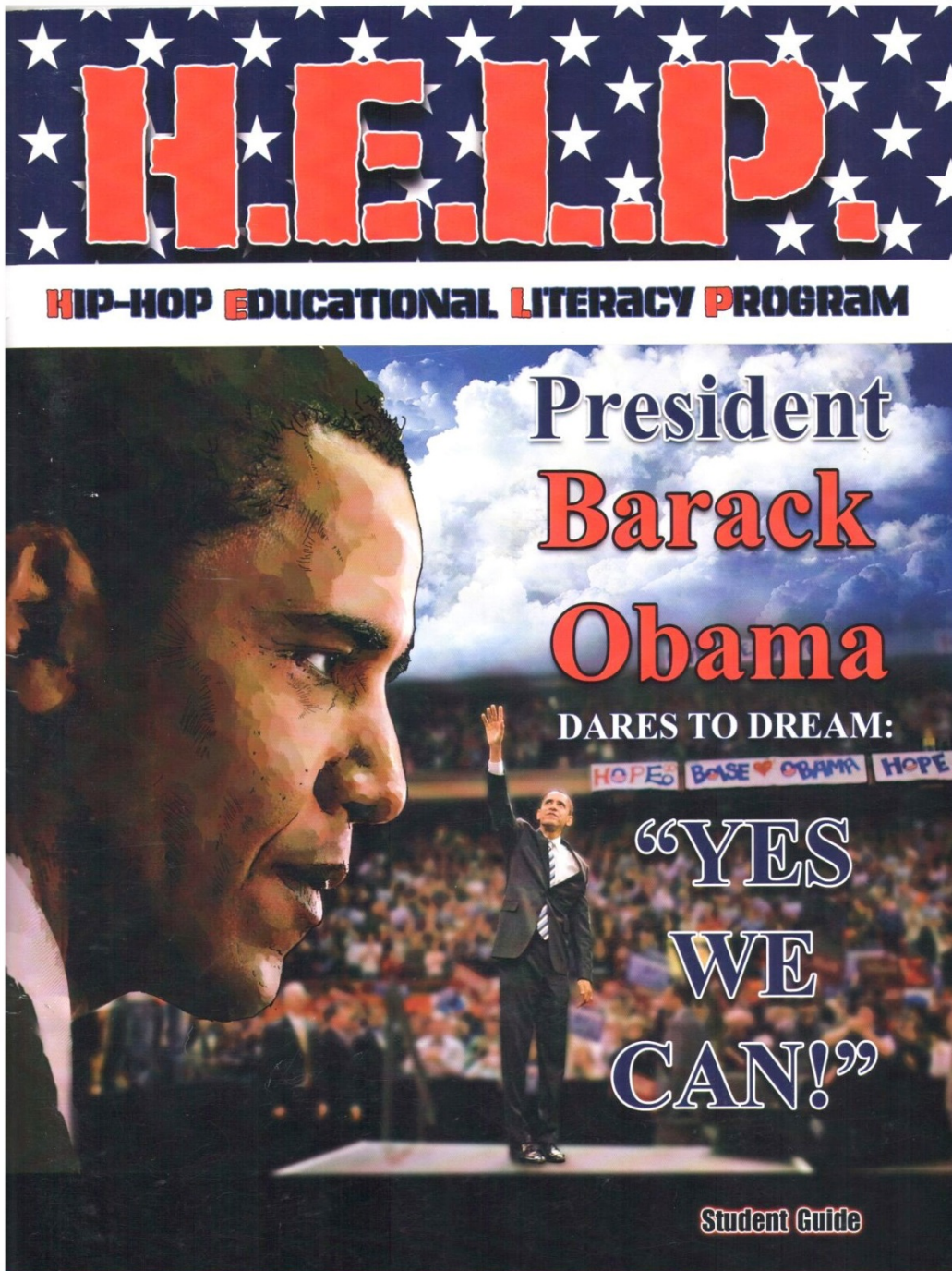
Carter G. Woodson was one of the early prominent culturally relevant educators who aimed to teach African-American students skills that would be meaningful in the improvement of their community. Over fifty years ago Woodson thoughtfully posited "Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly to learn, to begin with life as they find it, and make it better" (Woodson, 2013, p. 24). In this same revolutionary

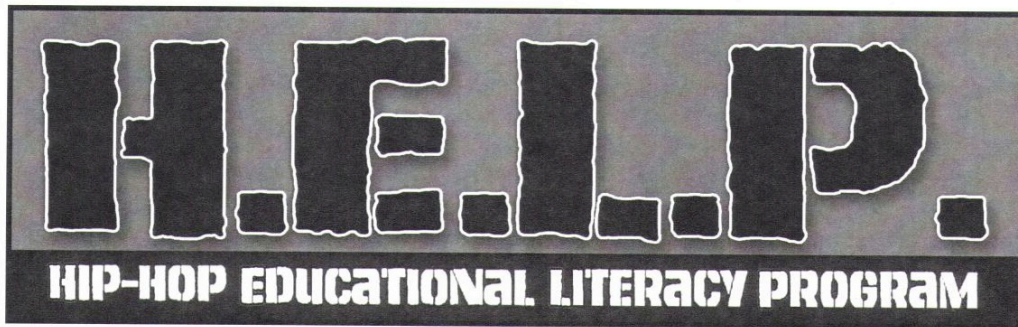


tradition, I mean to preempt the deracination of students of color with a pedagogical tools of empowerment combined with loving acceptance of their human possibility by exercising the universal language of Hip-hop in a classroom setting, as a sincere effort to transform the potential societal outcomes for all young people of color.

APPENDIX A

Hip-hop Educational Literacy Program (Benn & Henning, 2008)





President Barack Obama/  
will.i.am  
**"Yes We Can"**

Student Guide

## LYRICS

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation.  
Yes we can.

It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail toward freedom.  
Yes we can. Yes we can.

It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores  
and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness.  
Yes we can. Yes we can.

It was the call of workers who organized;  
women who reached for the ballots;  
a President who chose the moon as our new frontier;  
and a King who took us to the mountain-top and pointed the way to the Promised Land.

Yes we can to justice and equality.  
(yes we can, yes we can, yes we can...)

Yes we can to opportunity and prosperity.  
(Yes we can to opportunity and prosperity.)

Yes we can heal this nation.  
Yes we can repair this world.  
Yes we can. Si Se Puede.

(yes we can, yes we can, yes we can...)

We know the battle ahead will be long,  
but always remember that no matter what obstacles stand in our way,  
nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change.

We want change!  
(We want change! We want change...)

## GLOSSARY

### A-D

- abolitionists (n) - people who advocate ending slavery  
ballots (n) - sheets of paper used to vote  
chorus (n) - a group of people who sing or speak in unison  
cynics (n) - people who believe all people are motivated by selfishness  
creed (n) - a set of guiding beliefs  
declared (v) - stated firmly  
destiny (n) - beyond human power and control; meant to be  
distant (adj) - far away  
dissonant (adj) - being at variance or disagreeing

### e-k

- equality (n) - having the same as everyone else  
founding (adj) - beginning  
freedom (n) - liberty and independence  
frontier (n) - a region just beyond or at the edge of a settled area  
heal (v) - make healthy or whole  
immigrants (n) - people who leave one country to settle permanently in another  
justice (n) - the quality of fairness

### L-Z

- obstacles (n) - things that hold up progress  
pioneers (v) - people who enter into unknown territory to settle  
prosperity (n) - the condition of having wealth  
repair (v) - to fix



## BIOGRAPHY

President Barack Obama was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii, to Barack Obama, Sr., a Black man of Kenyan descent, and Ann Dunham, a White American woman from Wichita, Kansas. Obama's parents met while attending the University of Hawaii, and were married, but divorced when he was only 2 years old. Obama's father returned to Kenya and saw his son only once more before dying in an automobile accident in 1982.

His mother remarried when Obama was six years old, and the family moved to Indonesia, where he attended local schools in Jakarta until he was ten years old. Obama then returned to Honolulu to live with his maternal grandparents until his graduation from high school in 1979.

Following high school, Obama first attended college in Los Angeles, then transferred to Columbia University in New York City, where he majored in political science with a specialization in international relations. After four years in New York City, Obama moved to Chicago to work as a community organizer for three years on Chicago's far South Side. His accomplishments included helping set up a job training program, a college preparatory tutoring program, and a tenants' rights organization.

Obama entered Harvard Law School in 1988, where he accomplished achievements such as becoming editor, and the first black president of the Harvard Law Review in 1990. The publicity from his historic election at Harvard Law eventually led to the publishing of Obama's first book, *Dreams from My Father* in 1995.

After several years in the Illinois State Senate,

Obama was elected to the United States Senate in 2004. He is only the third African American to hold a U.S. Senate seat since Reconstruction.

On February 10, 2007, with his wife and two daughters present, Obama announced his candidacy for President of the United States in front of the Old State Capitol building in Springfield, Illinois. The announcement was a symbolic link to Abraham Lincoln's famous "House Divided" speech, given at the same location in 1858.

Obama's campaign garnered overwhelming support from a very wide variety of the American public, and has raised record amounts of money in support for his platform of "bringing change" to the old ways of government. Throughout Obama's campaign, he emphasized the issues of ending the war in Iraq, increasing energy independence, and providing universal health care as his top three priorities.

On August 28, 2008, the 45th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech, President Barack Obama accepted the Democratic party's nomination for president. With record-high fundraising and voter turnout, Obama won the presidential election against Senator John McCain. He was elected President of the United States on

Tuesday, November 4, 2008, making him the first African American president in American history. Countless Americans are inspired by President Obama's journey to the highest political office.

### Where did the song come from?

According to will.i.am, founding member and frontman of Black Eyed Peas, the "Yes We Can Song" was inspired by President Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign and especially the speech Obama gave following the New Hampshire primary. He states, "It made me reflect on the freedoms I have, going to school where I went to school, and the people that came before Obama like Martin Luther King, presidents like Abraham Lincoln that paved the way for me."

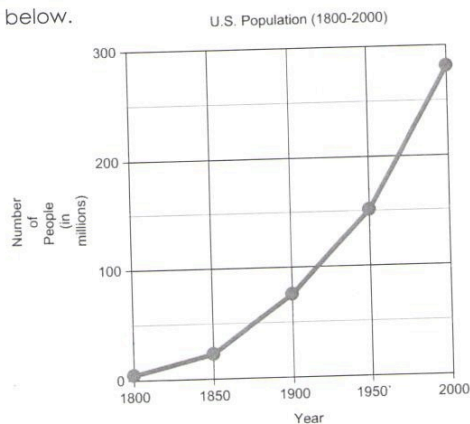
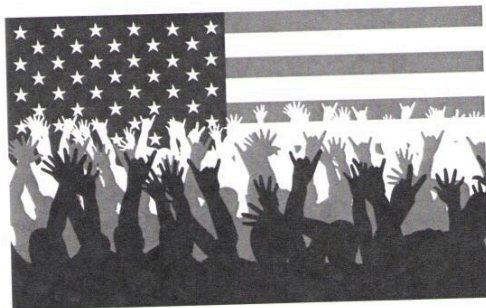
The music video for the song includes excerpts from Obama's speech and appearances from a variety of celebrities: Scarlett Johansson, John Legend, Herbie Hancock, Kate Walsh, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Adam Rodriguez, Kelly Hu, Amber Valetta, and Nick Cannon. "I'm blown away by how many people wanted to come and be a part of it in a short amount of time. It was all out of love and hope for change and really representing America and looking at the world," will.i.am said.

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

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

### DATA ANALYSIS: THE POWER OF MILLIONS

Directions: Use the graph to answer the questions below.



1. What does this graph tell us about?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. This graph tells us the number of people in  
a. millions    c. trillions  
b. billions    d. thousands
3. How many people lived in the U.S. in 1850?  
a. 100 million                                        c. 25 million  
d. 1,000    d. 250 million
4. Has the population of the U.S. gone up, gone down or stayed the same according to this chart?  
a. gone up    c. stayed the same  
b. gone down                                        d. none of the above
5. Between which years did the population increase by more than 100 million people?  
\_\_\_\_\_

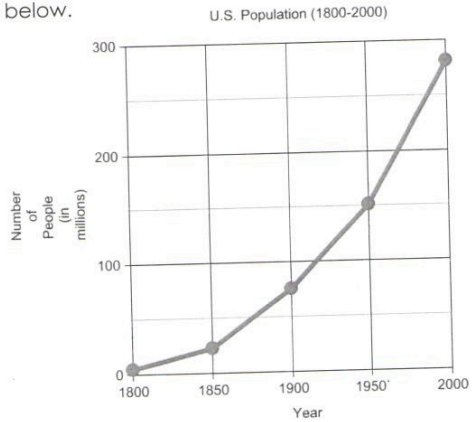
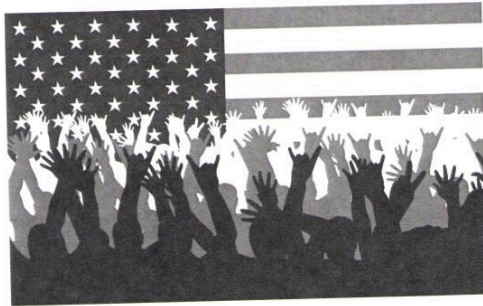
National Reading Standards Met:  
Evaluation Strategies  
Developing Research Skills  
Evaluating Data

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

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

**DATA ANALYSIS:  
THE POWER OF MILLIONS**

Directions: Use the graph to answer the questions below.



Source: www.census.gov

- What does this graph tell us about?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- This graph tells us the number of people in
  - millions
  - billions
  - trillions
  - thousands
- How many people lived in the U.S. in 1850?
  - 100 million
  - 1,000
  - 25 million
  - 250 million
- Has the population of the U.S. gone up, gone down or stayed the same according to this chart?
  - gone up
  - gone down
  - stayed the same
  - none of the above
- Between which years did the population increase by more than 100 million people?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**National Reading Standards Met:**  
Evaluation Strategies  
Developing Research Skills  
Evaluating Data



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

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

**VOCABULARY APPLICATION:  
VITAL VOCABULARY**

Directions: Answer the questions below using complete sentences. Make sure that your answer includes the highlighted word.

1. Who would you call if you needed to **repair** a car?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you ever been to a **distant** land? Describe it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your **creed**?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Where would you go to cast your **ballot** in an election?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Who would you go to if you needed to **heal** a wound?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**National Reading Standards Met:**

Communication Skills  
Evaluation Strategies  
Applying Knowledge  
Applying Language Skills

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

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

**CREATIVE WRITING:**  
**THE MEETING**

Directions: will.i.am made the video for "Yes We Can" without talking to President Obama. Draw a comic strip that shows the two men meeting. What would they say to each other?


**National Reading Standards Met:**  
Communication Skills  
Writing Process  
Applying Knowledge  
Multicultural Understanding  
Applying Language Skills

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

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

### LITERARY DEVICES: YES WE CAN!

Directions: People who write speeches have three (3) tools to get a listener to agree with them: logic, emotion, or morals. Circle the tool used in each sentence.

**Ex. We want change!**

In this sentence the author is using...



emotion



logic



morals

1. **Nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change**

In this sentence the author is using...



emotion



logic



morals

2. **Yes we can to heal this nation; Yes we can to repair this world**

In this sentence the author is using...



emotion



logic



morals

3. **We are not as divided as our politics suggests.**

In this sentence the author is using...



emotion



logic



morals

4. **We've been asked to pause for a reality check.**

In this sentence the author is using...



emotion



logic



morals

5. **It was the call of the workers...**

In this sentence the author is using ...



emotion



logic



morals

**National Reading Standards Met:**

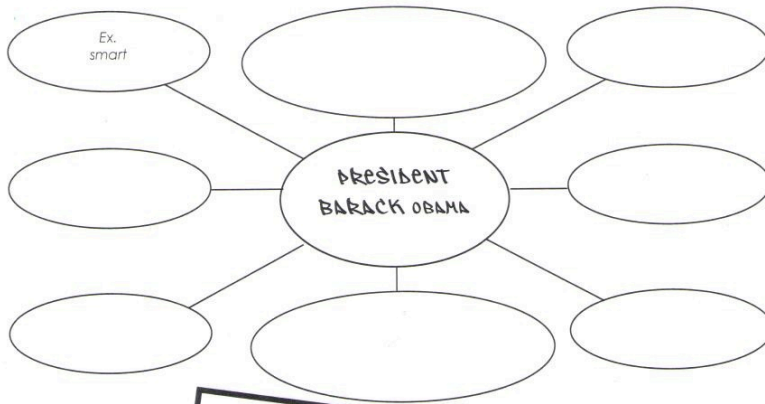
Evaluation Strategies  
Applying Knowledge  
Understanding the Human Experience

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

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

### WRITING PROCESS: CAMPAIGN POSTER

Directions: Write seven (7) words describing President Barack Obama. Then draw a campaign poster for him.



Make sure your poster uses

- three of your describing word
- three different colors.
- pictures and words.



**National Reading Standards Met:**  
Communication Skills  
Writing Process  
Applying Knowledge  
Applying Language Skills

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

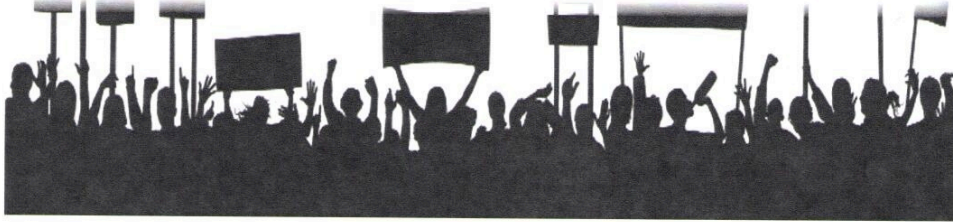
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPREHENSION:**  
**SI SE PUEDE!**

Directions: Read the paragraph. Use complete sentences to answer the questions.

Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez led a group called the United Farm Workers. The group protected the rights of people who worked on farms in the U.S. They wanted a way to tell people about the problems of farm workers. Chavez stopped eating for 25 days. Huerta made up the motto, "Si Se

Puede." They made people think about the farm workers. They helped to unite workers all over the world. "Si Se Puede" is Spanish for, "Yes We Can." Now, President Barack Obama uses the words, "Yes we can" to unite all Americans.



1. Who are Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What words did Huerta and Chavez use to make people think about the farm workers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. When you hear the words, "yes we can" what feelings do you have?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Why did President Barack Obama use the words "yes we can" in his speech?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**National Reading Standards Met:**

Reading for Perspective  
Understanding the Human Experience  
Evaluation Strategies  
Applying Knowledge  
Applying Language Skills

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

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

**VOCABULARY APPLICATION:  
SPEAKING OF SPEECH**

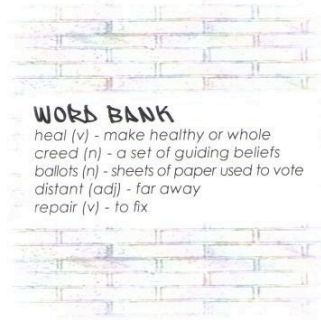
Directions: Imagine you were writing a T.V. ad that supported President Barack Obama's run for president. Fill in the blanks. Practice reading the script then act out the ad with your class. Draw a picture of what the ad may look like on T.V.

You will want to cast your \_\_\_\_\_ for  
President Barack Obama when you vote.

As president, Barack Obama will \_\_\_\_\_  
the United States and make it whole, not divided.

I like to think about a time that is not \_\_\_\_\_,  
but close by, when we all work together to \_\_\_\_\_  
the problems of the U.S. and fix them for our children.

President Barack Obama has a \_\_\_\_\_, a set of  
guiding beliefs, that brings hope to each of us.



**WORD BANK**  
heal (v) - make healthy or whole  
creed (n) - a set of guiding beliefs  
ballots (n) - sheets of paper used to vote  
distant (adj) - far away  
repair (v) - to fix



**National Reading Standards Met:**  
Communication Skills  
Evaluation Strategies  
Applying Knowledge  
Participating In Society  
Applying Language Skills



## LYRICS

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation.  
Yes we can.

It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail toward freedom.  
Yes we can. Yes we can.

It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores  
and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness.  
Yes we can. Yes we can.

It was the call of workers who organized;  
women who reached for the ballots;  
a President who chose the moon as our new frontier;  
and a King who took us to the mountain-top and pointed the way to the Promised Land.

Yes we can to justice and equality.  
(yes we can, yes we can, yes we can...)  
Yes we can to opportunity and prosperity.  
(Yes we can to opportunity and prosperity.)

Yes we can heal this nation.  
Yes we can repair this world.  
Yes we can. Si Se Puede.  
(yes we can, yes we can, yes we can...)

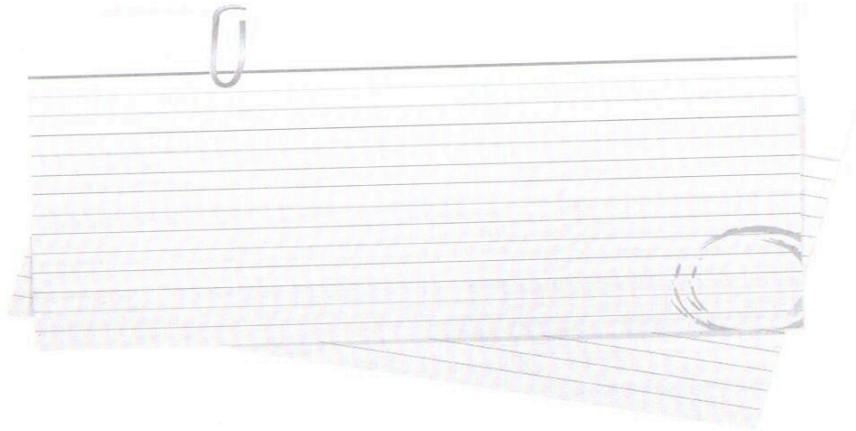
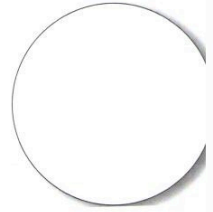
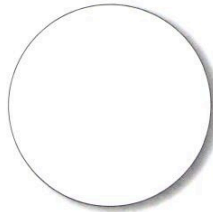
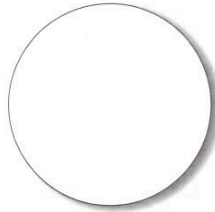
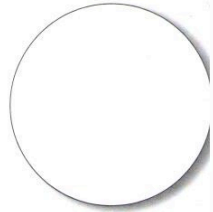
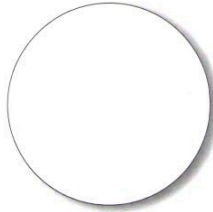
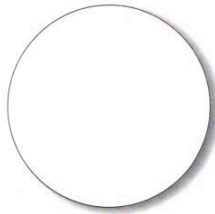
We know the battle ahead will be long,  
but always remember that no matter what obstacles stand in our way,  
nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change.  
We want change!  
(We want change! We want change...)

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

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

**CREATIVE WRITING:**  
**WONDERFUL WORDS**

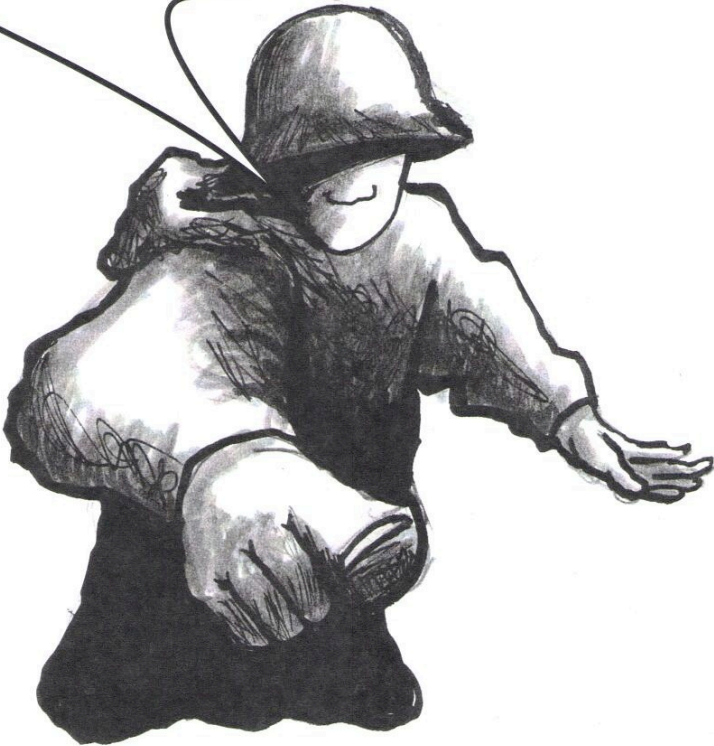
Directions: In each button write one (1) word that sounds interesting, powerful, or funny. Use the words you picked to write a speech, poem or story.



**National Reading Standards Met:**  
Communication Skills  
Writing Process  
Multicultural Understanding  
Applying Language Skills  
Applying Knowledge



GOOD WORK!  
YOU ARE LEAVING STUDIO A!

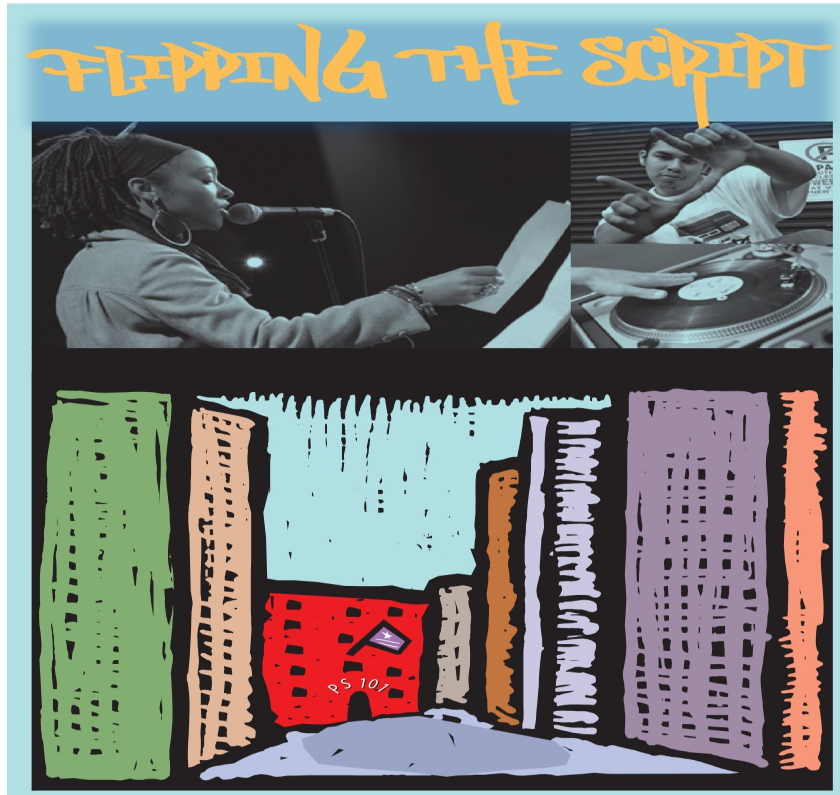


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## APPENDIX B

### Flipping the Script Curriculum (Flipping the Script, 2010)

pdf-notes for iPad



[www.justthink.org](http://www.justthink.org)



[pic.tv](http://pic.tv)

 **Economy**  
Corporation

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Hip-Hop has become so integrated into American society that it's essential that students examine its evolution and current impact. The music and culture trickle over into many other aspects of our lives, such as politics, history, values, fashion, and language. The following lessons delve into these areas, asking students to peel back the many layers of Hip-Hop.

# SOCIAL STUDIES

## Hip-Hop Timeline: Past, Present, and Future

### **Related Subjects:**

Economics  
Language Arts

### **Objectives:**

- o Analyze the evolution of hip-hop as a musical and cultural movement.
- o Evaluate the current state of Hip-Hop
- o Predict how Hip-Hop will evolve in the future

### **Materials:**

(each of the following articles can be downloaded on the website)

- o *My Culture at the Crossroads* (by Kevin Powell)
- o *Is Hip-Hop Dead?* (by Walter Dawkins)
- o *The End* (by Bakari Kitwana)

### **Resources:**

VH-1 History of Hip-Hop video

### **Introduction:**

This lesson is intended to have students examine where Hip-Hop came from and predict where it's going. The current state of Hip-Hop looks very different from its early days when urban youth had no access to mainstream media and were searching for an outlet for their creativity. Today, it's a multi-billion dollar international force, with new artists being churned out almost daily. In addition, today's artists are packaged and marketed in a way that reflects the massive media influence on youth culture, and that produces huge profits in return.

### **Activity:**

First, have students read and discuss the articles, as well as the Brief History of Hip-Hop in the Introduction section of the guidebook. Engage students in a general discussion about the evolution of Hip-Hop. (Make sure that the discussion doesn't put them in a position of having to defend the current state of Hip-Hop, but rather prompts larger conversations about how the culture and music has changed since its inception.) Possible questions include:

- o What do you know about the history of Hip-Hop?
- o What are the important milestones for Hip-Hop?
- o How has it changed over its thirty-year history?
- o What defines the current state of Hip-Hop?

### **Production Activity:**

Break students into small groups and have each group construct a Hip-Hop timeline. (You can also assign the groups different periods to focus on so that the class creates one comprehensive timeline.) Students should start at the beginning of Hip-Hop and identify the key people and events that mark the evolution of the music and culture.



# SOCIAL STUDIES CONF.

## Related activity:

### **Phase 1: The early days**

Based on the timelines that were created, have each group select one artist from the early days of rap and Hip-Hop. Students should spend some time researching the artist and chart his/her climb to notoriety. They should then present their findings back to the class. Some questions include:

- o Where is the artist from?
- o What message was the artist trying to convey through his/her lyrics?
- o What cultural forces were at work that resulted in this artist gaining a following?
- o Were their songs played on the radio or were they part of an underground movement?
- o Which record label were they signed to?
- o Were they also making political statements? If so, how were they received by the mainstream media?

Students should incorporate examples of the music into the presentation, as well as clothing style from the artist. What did their original artwork on the CD's or tapes look like? Was the group responsible for any fashion trends (such as the fat laces and Adidas that Run DMC made famous)?

### **Phase 2: Today's world**

Next, have the groups identify a current Hip-Hop artist. Have students use the same set of questions to examine this artist. Questions include:

- Σ What are the predominate messages in the music and videos?
- Σ What fashion contributions has the artist made?
- Σ How does the music reflect our current society?
- Σ How is the artist being marketed?
- Σ Which record label are they signed to?

### **Phase 3: The artist of tomorrow**

The final step is to have students use what they know about the evolution of Hip-Hop to predict what the artist of tomorrow will look and sound like. Tell students that they are the senior staff at the A&R department at a major record label. Explain to them that this is where the image of the artist is created. Students should then design a whole campaign for the artist. What kind of lyrics and images will the artist use? What fashion statement will they make? How will they be marketed and promoted?

*Note: We suggest devoting one class session per phase. We also suggest having each group make a short presentation to the class after each of the three phases. At the end of the presentations, have the class reflect on what they have just seen and heard. Do some common threads start to emerge? How would they characterize the different time periods? How has the music and culture evolved over time? What constants have remained throughout?*

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Site Permission**

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Wade E. Brown and I am a doctoral education student at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. I am hereby seeking your consent to have access to your site to implement the Hip-hop based curriculum. The research I wish to conduct for my dissertation involves implementing a Hip-hop based curriculum in primary public school setting. I would like access to your site to find 10 males of color to be participants in this study to investigate student's perceptions of the Hip-hop based curriculum's effectiveness.

The study will consist of 6-8 sessions; 50 minutes to an hour long sessions two times per week. Also this project will be conducted under the supervision of my dissertation chair Antonia Darder.

I will provide you with a copy of my dissertation proposal, which includes copies of the measure, and consent and assent forms to be used in the research process.

Upon completion of the study, I will provide your site with a summary of my findings. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [insert contact number, fax and email address]. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Wade Brown  
Loyola Marymount University  
Doctoral Candidate

## APPENDIX D

### Hip-hop PowerPoint (Brown, 2012)



## Hip Hop's Beginning

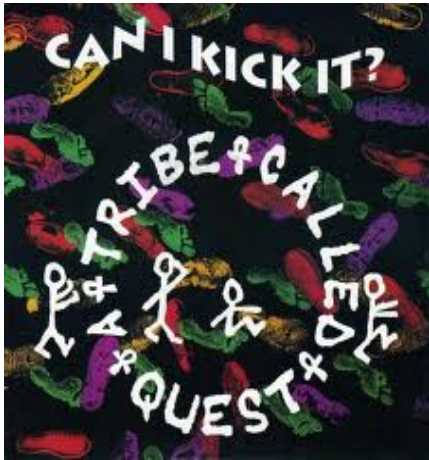
Hip hop is a musical subculture that originated from the Bronx in the 1970s. DJ Kool Herc is accredited with creating the entire culture.

# Pioneers





# Pioneers



# Hip Hop Elements

- MC ing
- DJ ing
- Bboy ing or Breaking
- Graffiti Art



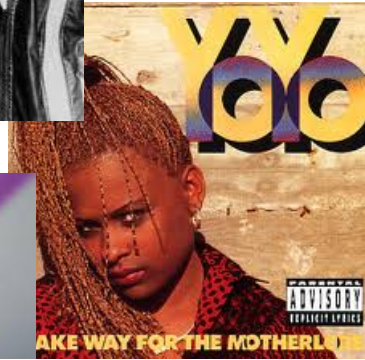




# Artists



# Female Icons





# Biggie vs Pac



# Generation Now





# Hip Hop Legacy

- Hip has been around for over 30 years and is part of American history
- Continues to change with the times
- Defy societal restrictions, class, and color barriers



## APPENDIX E

### Media List

#### Video

Portions of these videos will be viewed during study:

*Style Wars* (Silver et al., 1983)

*Scratch* (Blondheim et al., 2001)

#### Audio

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five “The Message” (Glover et al., 1982, track 7)

Nas “Project Window” (Jones & Isley, 1999, track 5)

Gangstarr “DJ Premier’s in Deep Concentration” (Elam & Martin, 1989, track 6)

KRS ONE “Out for Fame” (Parker, 1995, track 12)

## APPENDIX F

### Rap Lyrics

#### **“Project Window” (Jones & Isley, 1999, track 5)**

Black hoods, cops 'n projects  
sewers flooded with foul blockage  
The gutter's wild and every child watches  
Changin top locks with ripped off hinges  
doors kicked off, drunks stag off smirnoff, wipe your beard off  
Crippled dope fiends in wheelchairs stare  
vision blurry, cus buried deep in they mind are hidden stories  
Bet he's a mirror image of that 70's era  
finished for the rest of his life, till he fades out  
The liquor store workers miss him but then it plays out  
so many ways out the hood but no signs say out  
Mental slavehouse where gats go off, I show off  
niggas up north, prison-ology talk, till they time cut off  
You should chill if you short, prepare deep thought  
to hit the street again, get it on, get this paper and breathe again  
Plan to leave somethin' behind  
so your name'll live on, no matter what the game lives on

*[Chorus]*

Lookin' out of my project window

Oh, I feel uninspired

Lookin' out of my project window

Oh, it makes me feel, so tired

Yo, if this piano's the cake then my words are the candles

Light it up, make a wish, and them angels will grant you

Impatient once tried, but in those angels and bamboo

they lit it up, \*puff\* \*puff\*, hit it up, \*puff\*

Now they dismantled, think the whole world is crazy, got a 9

watch where you walk, 2 dollar fine, sign of the times here in New York

Hi Satan, United Nations quietly taken, to own your soul

take it or leave it, just my evaluation

Stack loot and guns, teach the girls karate, school your sons not to hate

but to stay awake, cus the scars a razor make is nothin' in comparison

to the gas left on this whole mass, if we don't get it controlled fast

might as well be, laughin' with Malcolm X's assassin as we die slow

perishin', brain dead from a Erickson

Words are the medicine, two teaspoons for goons

a cup of it for those thuggin' it, y'all sing the tune

*[Chorus]*

Another day, another dollar, my mother will holla  
She said "go and see the world for myself, and my brother Shafala"  
Pops was smooth, from his top to his shoes  
sang the rules, guitar strings he played smokin' his ?  
? hat, picture this yo, seventies cat  
He wrote his music in the back of the crib, I did my homework  
At night the windows were speakers, pumpin' life out  
a fight, people screamin' cus somebody pulled a knife out  
So I look at this poem, I'm hooked to this tune  
every night the same melody, hell sounded so heavenly  
But jail was ahead of me, ??  
Reading's what I should've done, cus my imagination would run  
I was impatient to get out and become part of the noise out there  
I used to stare, five stories down, basketball courts, shot up playgrounds  
and I witnessed the murders and police shake-downs  
Yo, the hustlas and hoes, drugs and fo-fos  
This was the life of every kid, lookin' out project windows  
  
Oh, outta my window  
Lookin' out of my project window

Oh, it makes me feel, so tired  
Lookin' out of my project window  
Oh, I feel uninspired  
Lookin' out of my project window  
Oh, it makes me feel, so tired  
Lookin' out of my project window  
Oh, I feel uninspired  
Starin out of, of my window  
Oh I, feel so tired  
Oh yeah, outta my window  
Oh, lookin' out, lookin' out  
Lookin' out my window, oh yeah  
Makes me, feel so tired  
Outta my window, out my project window  
Lord I feel, uninspired

**“The Message” by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five  
(Glover et al., 1982, track 7)**

It's like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder

How I keep from going under

It's like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder

How I keep from going under

Broken glass everywhere

People pissing on the stairs, you know they just don't care

I can't take the smell, I can't take the noise

Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice

Rats in the front room, roaches in the back

Junkies in the alley with the baseball bat

I tried to get away, but I couldn't get far

Cause a man with a tow-truck repossessed my car

Chorus:

Don't push me cause I'm close to the edge

I'm trying not to lose my head, ah huh-huh-huh

[2nd and 5th: ah huh-huh-huh]

[4th: say what?]

It's like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder

How I keep from going under

It's like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder

How I keep from going under

Standing on the front stoop, hangin' out the window

Watching all the cars go by, roaring as the breezes blow

Crazy lady livin' in a bag

Eating out of garbage pails, used to be a fag-hag

Said she danced the tango, skipped the light fandango

The Zircon Princess seemed to lost her senses

Down at the peepshow, watching all the creeps

So she can tell the stories to the girls back home

She went to the city and got social security

She had to get a pimp, she couldn't make it on her own

[2nd Chorus]

My brother's doing bad on my mother's TV

She says: "You watch it too much, it's just not healthy!"

"All My Children" in the daytime, "Dallas" at night

Can't even see the game or the Sugar Ray fight



The bill collectors they ring my phone  
And scare my wife when I'm not home  
Got a bum education, double-digit inflation  
I can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station  
Neon King Kong standin' on my back  
Can't stop to turn around, broke my sacrophiliac  
A mid-ranged migraine, cancered membrane  
Sometimes I think I'm going insane, I swear I might hijack a plane

My son said: "Daddy I don't wanna go to school  
Cause the teacher's a jerk!", he must think I'm a fool  
And all the kids smoke reefer, I think it'd be cheaper  
If I just got a job, learned to be a street sweeper  
I'll dance to the beat, shuffle my feet  
Wear a shirt and tie and run with the creeps  
Cause it's all about money, ain't a damn thing funny  
You got to have a con in this land of milk and honey  
They pushed that girl in front of the train  
Took her to the doctor, sewed her arm on again  
Stabbed that man right in his heart  
Gave him a transplant for a brand new start  
I can't walk through the park, cause it's crazy after dark

Keep my hand on my gun, cause they got me on the run  
I feel like a outlaw, broke my last glass jar  
Hear them say: "You want some more livin' on a seesaw?"

[4th Chorus]

A child is born with no state of mind  
Blind to the ways of mankind  
God is smiling on you but he's frowning too  
Because only God knows what you'll go through  
You'll grow in the ghetto, living second rate  
And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate  
The places you're playin', where you stay  
Looks like one great big alley way  
You'll admire all the number book takers  
Thugs, pimps, pushers and the big money makers  
Driving big cars, spending twenties and tens  
And you wanna grow up to be just like them, huh,  
Smugglers, scrambles, burglars, gamblers  
Pickpockets, peddlers even panhandlers  
You say: "I'm cool, I'm no fool!"  
But then you wind up dropping out of high school

Now you're unemployed, all non-void  
Walking 'round like you're Pretty Boy Floyd  
Turned stickup kid, look what you've done did  
Got sent up for a eight year bid  
Now your manhood is took and you're a may tag  
Spend the next two years as a undercover fag  
Being used and abused to serve like hell  
Till one day you was found hung dead in a cell  
It was plain to see that your life was lost  
You was cold and your body swung back and forth  
But now your eyes sing the sad, sad song  
Of how you lived so fast and died so young

Don't push me 'cause I'm close to the edge  
I'm trying not to lose my head  
It's like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under  
It's like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under

Yo Mell, you see that girl there?  
Yo, that sounded like Cowboy man  
Cool  
Yo, what's up Money?

Yo, where's Cooly an Raheim?

They is downstairs cooling out

So what's up for tonight y'all?

We could go down to Phoenix

We could go check out "Junebug" man

Hey yo, you know that girl Betty?

Yeah man

Come on, come all man

Not like it

That's what I heard man

What's this happening, what's this?

What's goin' on?

Freeze

Don't nobody move or nothin'

Y'all know what this is (What's happend?)

Get 'em up, get 'em up (What?)

Oh man, we're (Right in there) Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five

What is that, a gang?

No

Shut up

I don't wanna hear your mouth

Shut up

Officer, officer, what is the problem?

You the problem

Hey, you ain't gotta push me man

Get in the car, get in the car

Get in the god ...

I said, "Get in the car"

Why is he?

**“Out for Fame” by KRS ONE (Parker, 1995, track 12)**

\* train whistle \*

Yo right here, right here

It's right through the fence, right through the fence

Jump! \* feet landing \*

Yeah.. right there, right there

That's the 2's and the 5's

\* bag rustling \*

Joe gimme that, the fat, the fat cap, fat cap

Yeah..

\* train rolls in \*

Aight \* shaking can up \*

Aight, let's do it now, let's do it now

\* spray paint \*

Yeah.. yeah..

Nah gi-gimme the other cap, gimme the other one

Yeah right there

\* more spray \*

Front .. Page .. Entertainment .. Group

Yeah..

"I'm writin my name, in graffiti on the wall" (repeat 8X)

\* first time, minus "I'm" \*

Hah! Hahahaha

All graffiti artists hold tight, hooo!

All graffiti artists hold tight, word

Check check check it out y'all

Check check check check check it out y'all

[KRS ONE]

I got twenty-five cans in my knapsack, crossin out the wick-wack

Puttin up my name with a fat cap

Suckers that want to be in my face I just slap that

Big respect to Artifacts, Fat Joey Crack and

Mack and, Bio, and Brim come again

with B.G. 183, recognize me

with the mad colors, I'm a fiend for spraypaint

Laugh if you wanna, I really care if you ain't

cause you don't me see, and I don't know you

But I do know Cope2, he be gettin walls too

It's the underground community of what we call writers

Worldwide burners, gettin hotter gettin brighter

Whattup Nicer, whattup Razor, whattup Chino

Masta Ase in the place, you know we know

my man Rican, my man Zorro, taught me how to draw  
in the yards of the 5 train and the 4

So when I'm on tour I represent the hardcore  
I'm taggin up your blackbook sure, I'm out for the fame

"I'm writin my name, in graffiti on the wall" (repeat 4X)

\* first time, minus "I'm" \*

Yeah, check it out check it out check it out one time  
Hip-hop music in effect one time

[KRS ONE]

When I was growin up, I had no butcher baker candlestick maker  
I had rubbing alcohol and carbon paper  
Yeah, carbon paper and a blackboard eraser  
got me chased in the bus yards, with Rican and Nazer  
Historically speakin, cause people be dissin  
The first graffiti artists in the world were the Egyptians  
Writing on the walls, mixing characters with letters  
to tell the graphic story about their life, however  
today we do the same thing, with how we rap and draw  
We call it hardcore, they call it breakin the law  
There used to be a time when rap music was illegal



The cops would come and break up every party when they see you  
But now the rap music's making money for the corporate  
It's acceptable to flaunt it, now everybody's on it  
Graffiti isn't corporate so it gets no respect  
Hasn't made a billion dollars for some corporation yet, so  
in the name of Phase2, Stay High, Pre-streets  
Grab your cans and hit the streets, I'm out for fame

"I'm writin my name, in graffiti on the wall" (repeat 6X)

Yeah, Hip-hop culture in the house one time

All graffiti artists in the house one time

Yeah..

Biggin up the other side things here y'all

The visual, not your video (check it out)

[KRS ONE]

I'm livin in the city, inner city not a farm

Steady bombin til I get fatigue in my arm

Watchin for the beast cause many artists they shot em

And beat em in the yards, while doin a top to bottom

So pass me a can, not of Old Gold

but full blue, sky blue, watch me unfold

with the cold burner, of names you mighta heard of

like Fab 5 Freddy, Sam Sever

Word to the wise, Futura 2000 recognize

Nation of creation, G Man come alive

Checkin out Revolt and Zephyr

My man Easy, and Rembrandt, Mitch 77

Oh no with the paint we can never dilly-dally

Big up and respect to Con Art in Cali

The Soul Artists, The Rebels, The Rascals, 3YB

United Artists, TAT and Dondi

Yes the other side of Hip-hop is representin the visual

Toys we be DISSIN you, I'm out for fame

"I'm writin my name, in graffiti on the wall" (repeat 10X)

Hip-hop in the house one time

Video graf in the house one time

All graffiti artists in the house dig the rhyme

Put up your nine, put up your nine, yeah!

Fresh.. for nineteen-ninety-five

You SUCKERS!!!!

**“You Must Learn” by KRS ONE and Boogie Down Productions (Parker, 1989, track 8)**

Just like I told you, you must learn  
It's calm yet wild the style that I speak  
Just filled with facts and you will never get weak in the heart  
In fact you'll start to illuminate, knowledge to others in a song  
Let me demonstrate the force of knowledge  
Knowledge reigned supreme  
The ignorant is ripped to smithereens  
What do you mean when you say I'm rebellious  
Cause I don't accept everything that you're telling us  
What are you selling us the creator dwellin' us  
I sit in your unknown class while you're failing' us  
I failed your class cause I ain't with your reasoning  
You're tryin' make me you by seasoning  
Up my mind with see Jane run, see John walk in a hardcore New York  
Come on now, that's like a chocolate cow  
It doesn't exist no way, no how  
It seems to me that in a school that's ebony  
African history should be pumped up steadily, but it's not  
And this has got to stop, See Spot run, run get Spot  
Insulting to a Black mentality, a Black way of life  
Or a jet Black family, so I include with one concern, that

You must learn

[Hook x2]

I believe that if you're teaching history  
Filled with straight up facts no mystery  
Teach the student what needs to be taught  
Cause Black and White kids both take shorts  
When one doesn't know about the other ones' culture  
Ignorance swoops down like a vulture  
Cause you don't know that you ain't just a janitor  
No one told you about Benjamin Banneker  
A brilliant Black man that invented the almanac  
Can't you see where KRS is coming at  
With Eli Whitney, Haile Selassie  
Granville Woods made the walkie-talkie  
Lewis Latimer improved on Edison  
Charles Drew did a lot for medicine  
Garrett Morgan made the traffic lights  
Harriet Tubman freed the slaves at night  
Madam C.J. Walker made the straightening comb;  
But you won't know this is you weren't shown

The point I'm gettin' at it it might be harsh  
Cause we're just walkin' around brainwashed  
So what I'm sayin' is not to diss a man  
We need the 89 school system  
One that caters to a Black return because  
You must learn

[Hook]

"Alkebulan" is the original name  
Of Africa, now stripped of it's fame  
It's good to know that in ancient times  
Egyptians developed all sciences of the mind  
To the point where they ruled the planet  
But Rome, Greece, and Persia wasn't havin' it  
They attacked, and won the war  
But it wasn't enough, they had to get to the core  
Cause in that time it was Alkebulan  
That ruled religion, politics, and man  
In order to destroy the Egyptian race  
They had to wipe the sciences from off the face of the planet  
So they proceeded to ban it

Then replace it with Christianity  
And it's, been that way, all the way to today  
Learn what we teach; hear what we say  
But here comes the K-the-R-the-S-the-O-the-N-the-E  
The BDP and we rhyme intelligently  
Let me continue with Theodosyus  
A Greek ruler not known to most of us  
He, in the fourth century A.D.,  
Calls the Egyptians fools you see  
Two years later, Justinian rules  
Six A.D., was it for schools  
As a result, ignorance had swirled  
Over Christian Europe and Greco-Roman worlds  
This went on for a thousand years  
Of ignorance, stupidity, and tears  
Now comes the seventeenth century hardness  
Europe, began to come out of it's darkness  
So Johann F. Blumenbach, a German  
Came out of nowhere and started confirming  
White supremacy and men of colors  
Before this time, all men were brothers  
It was Johann, who went on to say

There are five different colors in the world today  
That's caucasian, malayan, and mongolian  
American-Indian, and ethiopian  
Yet, the ignorance gets scarier  
He believed whites were superior  
According to his idiotic fountain  
The purest whites were from the Caucas mountains  
J. A. Blofener, and H. S. Chamberlain  
Both supported this outrageous racism  
This went on to what the master race should be  
And why they killed the Jews in Germany  
Here is the reason why I'm so concerned  
Because you, must, learn!!!!

**“Reagan” by Killer Mike (Render, 2012, track 6)**

[Ronald Reagan]

Our government has a firm policy not to capitulate to terrorist demands. That no-  
concessions policy remains in force, despite the wildly speculative and false stories about  
arms for hostages and alleged ransom payments, we did not, repeat, did not trade weapons  
or anything else for hostages, nor will we

[Verse 1]

The ballot or the bullet, some freedom or some bullshit  
Will we ever do it big, or keep just settling for little shit  
We brag on having bread, but none of us are bakers  
We all talk having greens, but none of us own acres  
If none of us own acres, and none of us grow wheat  
Then who will feed our people when our people need to eat  
So it seems our people starve from lack of understanding  
Cause all we seem to give them is some balling and some dancing  
And some talking about our car and imaginary mansions  
We should be indicted for bullshit we inciting  
Hand the children death and pretend that it's exciting  
We are advertisements for agony and pain  
We exploit the youth, we tell them to join a gang  
We tell them dope stories, introduce them to the game  
Just like Oliver North introduced us to cocaine



In the 80's when the bricks came on military planes

[Ronald Reagan]

A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that's true, but the facts and the evidence tell me it is not

[Verse 2]

The end of the Reagan Era, I'm like 'leven, twelve, or

Old enough to understand the shit'll change forever

They declared the war on drugs like a war on terror

But it really did was let the police terrorize whoever

But mostly black boys, but they would call us "niggers"

And lay us on our belly, while they fingers on they triggers

They boots was on our head, they dogs was on our crotches

And they would beat us up if we had diamonds on our watches

And they would take our drugs and money, as they pick our pockets

I guess that that's the privilege of policing for some profit

But thanks to Reaganomics, prisons turned to profits

Cause free labor is the cornerstone of US economics

Cause slavery was abolished, unless you are in prison

You think I am bullshitting, then read the 13th Amendment

Involuntary servitude and slavery it prohibits

That's why they giving drug offenders time in double digits

Ronald Reagan was an actor, not at all a factor  
Just an employee of the country's real masters  
Just like the Bushes, Clinton and Obama  
Just another talking head telling lies on teleprompters  
If you don't believe the theory, then argue with this logic  
Why did Reagan and Obama both go after Qaddafi  
We invaded sovereign soil, going after oil  
Taking countries is a hobby paid for by the oil lobby  
Same as in Iraq, and Afghanistan  
And Ahmadinejad say they coming for Iran  
They only love the rich, and how they loathe the poor  
If I say any more they might be at my door  
(Shh..) Who the fuck is that staring in my window  
Doing that surveillance on Mr. Michael Render  
I'm dropping off the grid before they pump the lead  
I leave you with four words: I'm glad Reagan dead  
Ronald Wilson Reagan  
Ronald Wilson Reagan  
Ronald (6) Wilson (6) Reagan (6)  
Ronald (6) Wilson (6) Reagan (666)

## APPENDIX G

### Consent Forms (English and Spanish)

#### Critical Hip-hop Pedagogy in a Primary School

Your primary school child is invited to participate in a study of Hip-hop based education. My name is Wade E. Brown and I am a Doctoral Student at Loyola Marymount University School of Education. This study seeks to provide alternate teaching methods to marginalized students. To be very clear this study will entail strong historical Hip-hop perspectives about the pillars of Hip-hop; rapping, dancing, graffiti, and dee-jaying, yet through the perspective and filter of a compliant primary classroom setting. The classic award winning PBS documentary *Style Wars* and the VH1 documentary *And You Don't Stop: 30 years of Hip-hop* will be used to depict various facets of Hip-hop culture. All songs and video presented will be presented in this study will be the radio and television friendly edited forms. All songs and video that will be used in this study can found in the attached Media list. While all songs have been edited for expletive language, the study will address sensitive social topics addressed in the artistic expressions like poverty, social inequality, and the state of public education in the development of critical consciousness. Furthermore there will be frank discussions about the lyrics, street art, and other forms of media that that vividly depict working class communities and the lifestyle of certain communities that developed within the environment of extreme social inequality from a Hip-hop context. Nonetheless, the primary investigator will, maintain

the strict boundaries of a teacher to student relationship, in spite of the non-standard subject matter.

I am asking for permission to include your primary school child in this study because it focuses on the urban students response to Hip-hop used to learn. The selection criteria for the study include: a) the student must be a student of color; (b) the student must be in at least the third grade; (c) the student must be at least eight years old; and (d) the student must attend an urban lower socioeconomic public school in the researcher's local community. From the pool of families that meet these criteria, I will randomly select students for participation. I expect to have ten participants in the study. If you allow your child to participate, Wade E. Brown will be the primary researcher and will lead the direct instruction of the Hip-hop based curriculum for this study.

Classroom observation data will include audio recordings of class sessions made with an iPod audio recording application. Excerpts from audio and video clips will be presented and framed as discussion points

The Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your primary school child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. His or her responses will not be linked to his or her name or your name in any written or verbal report of this research project. As mentioned earlier, the confidentiality of participants will be maintained by the primary investigator with regard to publishing or presentation of data accumulated on university level. However the primary investigator has very little control over the levels of confidentiality at the

school site; and there may be conversations about the nature of the class and the participants. Nonetheless, the primary researcher will do his best to protect the integrity of the participants and study from outside interference.

Your decision to allow your primary school child to participate will not affect your or his or her present or future relationship with Loyola Marymount University. If you have any questions about the study, please ask me. If you have any questions later, call me at (323) 301-0663. If you have any questions or concerns about your primary school child's participation in this study, call David Hardy, Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board, at (310) 338-5294 .

You may keep a copy of this consent form.

You are making a decision about allowing your primary school child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your primary school child to participate in the study, simply tell me. You may discontinue his or her participation at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Name of (primary school child)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Investigator  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date

## FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO: Pedagogía Crítica Hip-hop en Una Escuela Primaria

Su niño de la escuela primaria ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio de la educación basado en hip-hop. Mi nombre es Wade E. Brown y soy estudiante de doctorado en la escuela de Educación de la Universidad Loyola Marymount. Este estudio pretende proporcionar métodos alternativos de enseñanza a los estudiantes marginados. Para que quede muy claro este estudio provocará fuertes perspectivas de hip-hop históricas sobre los pilares del hip-hop; rap, baile, graffiti y “dee-jaying”, a través de la perspectiva y el filtro de un entorno compatible con salón de primaria. El documental de PBS galardonado clásico Estilos de Guerra y el documental de VH1 y tú no te detengas: 30 años de hip-hop se utilizará para representar diferentes facetas de la cultura hip-hop. Se presentarán todas canciones y video presentado en este estudio será la radio y la televisión en formas editadas amigables. Todas las canciones y video que se utilizaran en este estudio se encuentran en la lista adjunta de los medios de comunicación. Mientras que todas las canciones han sido editadas para idioma expletivo, el estudio abordará tema social y sensible.

Estoy pidiendo permiso para incluir a su niño de escuela primaria en este estudio porque se centra en la respuesta de los estudiantes urbanos al uso del hip-hop para aprender. Los criterios de selección para el estudio incluyen: (a) el estudiante debe ser un estudiante de color; (b) el estudiante debe estar por lo menos en el tercer grado; (c) el estudiante debe ser por lo menos ocho años de edad; y (d) el estudiante debe asistir a una escuela pública socioeconómica inferior urbana en la comunidad local de los investigadores. Del grupo de las familias que cumplan estos criterios, seleccionare al azar a los estudiantes para la participación. Espero tener diez participantes en el estudio. Si permite que su hijo / a participe, Wade E. Brown será el investigador principal y dirigirá la instrucción directa del currículo basado en hip-hop para este estudio. Datos de observación incluirá grabaciones de audio de las sesiones de clase con una aplicación de grabación de audio del iPod. Extractos de clips de audio y video se presentarán y se usaran como puntos de discusión

Cualquier información que se obtenga en relación con este estudio y que pueden ser identificados con su niño de la escuela primaria se mantendrá confidencial y será revelada solamente con su permiso. Sus respuestas no estarán ligadas al nombre del estudiante o su nombre en ningún informe escrito o verbal de este proyecto de investigación. Como se mencionó anteriormente, se mantendrá la confidencialidad de los participantes por el investigador principal con respecto a la publicación o presentación de los datos acumulados en el nivel universitario. Sin embargo, el investigador principal tiene muy poco control sobre los niveles de confidencialidad en el sitio de la escuela; y puede haber conversaciones sobre la naturaleza de la clase y los

participantes. El investigador principal hará lo posible para proteger la integridad de los participantes y estudio de interferencia externa.

Su decisión de permitir que su niño de escuela primaria participe no afectará su o su propio presente o futura relación con la universidad de Loyola Marymount. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, por favor pregúnteme. Si tienes alguna pregunta más tarde, puede llamarme al (323) 301-0663. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud acerca de la participación de su hijo en la escuela primaria en este estudio, llame a David Hardy, Presidente de la Junta de revisión institucional, al (310) 338-703.623.5294.

Puede mantener una copia de este formulario de consentimiento.

Usted está tomando una decisión de permitir que a su niño de escuela primaria participe en este estudio. Su firma abajo indica que usted ha leído la información proporcionada anteriormente y ha decidido permitirle participar en el estudio. Si posteriormente decide que desea retirar su permiso que su niño de escuela primaria participe en el estudio, simplemente me puede decir. Usted puede suspender su participación en cualquier momento.

\_\_\_\_\_ Nombre del (niño de la escuela primaria)

\_\_\_\_\_ Firma del padre/madre o el guardián legal

\_\_\_\_\_ Firma del investigador

\_\_\_\_\_ Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_ Fecha

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Assent Forms (Spanish and English)**

#### **Critical Hip-hop Pedagogy in a Primary School Assent Form**

My name is Wade E. Brown, I am trying to learn about implementing a hip-hop based curriculum in an elementary school setting because we are trying to understand how students learn best and how they feel about the topics they are learning about. If you would like, you can be in my study.

If you decide you want to be in my study, you will need to attend 8 afterschool sessions; which will last about 50 minutes. Also as a participant you need to be ready have active talks about hip-hop and social topics, and be open to having hands-on hip-hop learning experiences.

You may have some conversations with classmates and the researcher about things that may make you feel angry, excited, or uncomfortable. But you will learn about hip-hop culture and how to use it in a good way.

Other people will not know if you are in my study. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other students your age, so no one can tell what things came from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it's OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that's OK. You can stop at any time.

My telephone number is (323) 301-0663. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don't want to be in the study any more.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

#### **Agreement**

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don't have to do it. Wade E. Brown has answered all my questions.



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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Pedagogía Crítica Hip-hop en un Formulario de Consentimiento De Escuela Primaria**

Mi nombre es Wade E. Brown, estoy tratando de aprender sobre la implementación de música hip-hop basado en plan de estudios en un entorno de la escuela primaria porque estamos tratando de entender cómo los estudiantes aprenden mejor y cómo se sienten sobre los temas que están aprendiendo ¿Te gustaría ser parte de mi estudio?

Si decides que quieres ser parte de mi estudio, necesitaras de asistir 8 sesiones de 50 minutos después de la escuela. Como participante necesitaras estar listo para tener conversaciones activas sobre temas sociales de hip-hop. También estar abierto a tener experiencias de aprendizaje de hip-hop.

Habrá algunas conversaciones con compañeros de clase para investigar sobre las cosas que pueden hacerte sentirte enojado, nervioso o incómodo. Pero aprenderás sobre la cultura hip-hop y cómo usarla en buen sentido.

Otras personas no sabrán que estás en mi estudio. Voy a poner las cosas que aprenda de ti junto con cosas que aprenda acerca de otros estudiantes de tu edad, así que nadie puede decir qué cosas son tuyas. Cuando reporte mi investigación a otras personas, no utilizaré tu nombre, así que nadie puede notar de quien estoy hablando.

Tus padres o guardián tienen que decir que está bien que estés en el estudio. Después de que ellos decidan, puedes elegir si quieres hacerlo. Si no quieres estar en el estudio, nadie se va a enojar contigo. Si quieres estar ahora en el estudio y luego cambiar de opinión, está bien. Puedes parar en cualquier momento.

Mi número de teléfono es (323) 301-0663. Me puedes llamar si tiene preguntas acerca del estudio o si decides que no quieres estar en el estudio.

Te dará una copia de este formulario en caso de que quieras hacerme preguntas más tarde.

### **Acuerdo**

Yo he decidido participar en el estudio, aunque sé que no tengo que hacerlo. Wade E. Brown ha respondido todas mis preguntas.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del participante del estudio

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del investigador

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

## APPENDIX I

### Reflection Journal Form

Date	Lesson
Student's levels engagement	Researcher's reflections
Students' interaction with the teaching	Researcher's reflections
Students level of lesson completion	Researcher's reflections

## **APPENDIX J**

### **Focus Group Questions**

1. What did you like about the Hip-hop class?
2. What did you not like about the Hip-hop class?
3. What things should we change? Add? Get rid of?
4. What did you learn from today's Hip-hop class?

## **APPENDIX K**

### **Post-Survey**

1. What did you like about the Hip-hop class?
2. What did you not like about the Hip-hop class?
3. What things should we change? Add? Get rid of?
4. What did you learn from the Hip-hop class today?
5. Which class lessons or activities did you enjoy most? Why?
6. Which class lessons or activities did you enjoy least? Why?
7. How is this class different from your regular classes?
8. What things do you like about your living in this community? Why?
9. Did the Hip-hop class help you to think differently about your community?? If yes, why? If no, why not?
10. Did the program help you understand Hip-hop culture? How so?

**APPENDIX L**

**Paul's Student Work**



Gary's Student Work



Benny's Student Work





Allen's Student Work



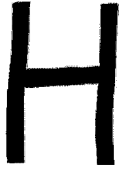
# APPENDIX M

Graffiti Worksheets (<http://graffitidiplomacy.com/website>)

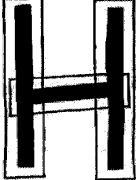
Page 1 of 1

**HOW TO DRAW A WILDSTYLE "H"** - by Graffiti Diplomacy

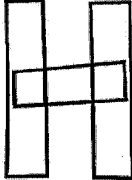
**Step 1.** Start by drawing an "H" with a pencil. You should have 2 vertical strokes and one horizontal stroke.



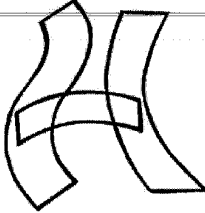
**Step 2.** Draw a bar around each stroke. Overlap the edges of the bars.



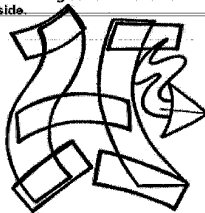
**Step 3.** Erase all of the inside guidelines.



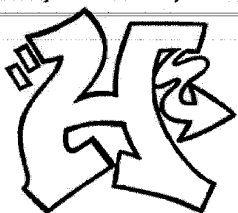
**Step 4.** Now bend the 2 vertical bars and the horizontal bar.



**Step 5.** Draw 4 small bars at the top and bottom ends of the vertical bars to form serifs. Then draw a long, curvy arrow extending off the bar on the right side.



**Step 6.** Draw a dark line all around the outside edges. Draw 2 small bits. Erase all of the inside guidelines. This is your finished Wildstyle letter.



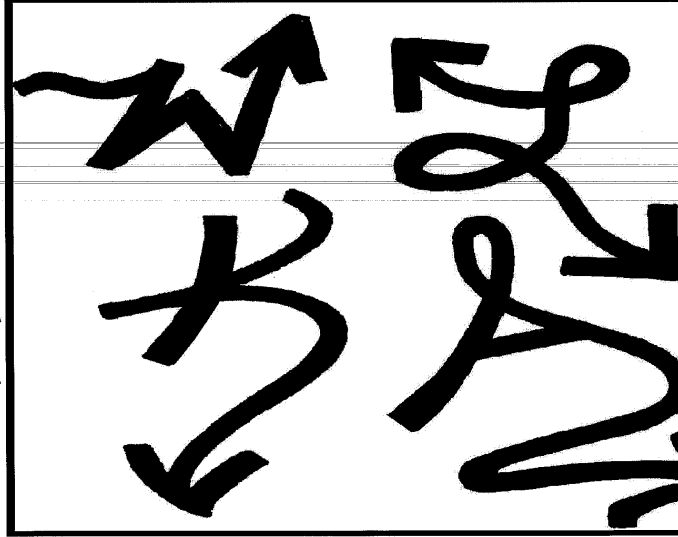
For more free graffiti drawing lessons and free graffiti coloring pages go to © [www.graffitidiplomacy.com](http://www.graffitidiplomacy.com)

[http://graffitidiplomacy.com/files/Lesson\\_-\\_How\\_To\\_Draw\\_A\\_WildStyle\\_H\\_-\\_by\\_Graffi...](http://graffitidiplomacy.com/files/Lesson_-_How_To_Draw_A_WildStyle_H_-_by_Graffi...) 12/18/2013

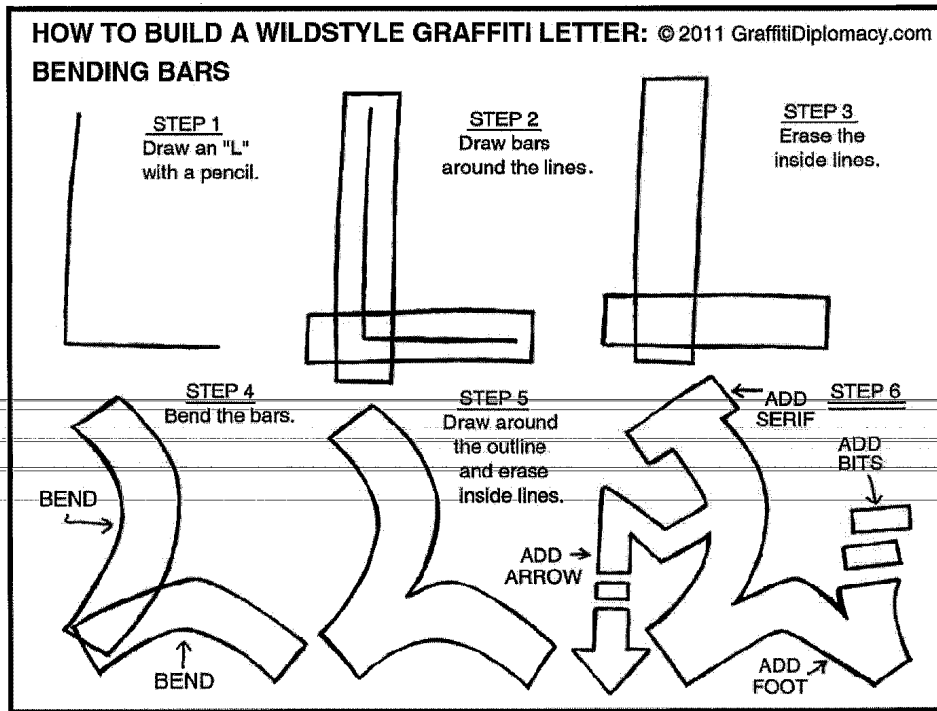


**ADD AN ARROW TO THE END OF  
TO MAKE IT A GRAFFITI TAG-STY**

© 2012 Graffiti Diplomacy



**FOR MORE FREE GRAFFITI LESSONS, VISIT US @ w**





# APPENDIX N

## Researcher Field Notes

CRITICAL HIP-HOP PEDGOGY

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Appendix D: Reflection Journal form

<p>Date 12-16-13</p>	<p>Lesson Overview - Survey + The Message</p>
<p>Student's levels engagement - Overall students were engaged - - had some moments of inattentiveness - - Wanted to be sure class was</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections - <del>Students</del> Students (- worried about sample size) want something different but but fun - [worried about location - no room - no equipment]</p>
<p>Students' interaction with the teaching - Loved the "Message" - The beat - they danced - grooved - Talked about - how the song made them think of their neighborhood</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections - The music playing under the <del>the</del> piqued their attention! - They realized though old hip-hop was not cool. - had to hustle it up</p>
<p>Students level of lesson completion neighborhood</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections until... no speakers</p>

Appendix D: Reflection Journal form

<p>Date 12-17</p>	<p>Lesson DS: Turntables</p>
<p>Student's levels engagement - Moderately engaged - technical sides drew off more ton  - Talking &amp; playing more</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections - while students were interested in the art of djing they needed to actually touch &amp; play w/ turntables</p>
<p>Students' interaction with the teaching - Students - engaged w/ idea of djing &amp; it's importance - <del>They</del> Understood the role of the DS - hip-hop</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections - Thought my interest in djing's technical side would translate to figure students interest did not</p>
<p>Students level of lesson completion</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections</p>

Appendix D: Reflection Journal form

Date	Lesson
<p>12-18</p> <p>Student's levels engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All students were engage from beginning to end → love the idea of being able to do a part of hip-hop</li> </ul>	<p>Lesson</p> <p>Grffiti Culture - tag</p> <p>Researcher's reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students asked to do graffiti - 1 student thought they would be using spray paint</li> </ul>
<p>Students' interaction with the teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- students loved learning about graffiti process that they don't know</li> </ul>	<p>Researcher's reflections</p> <p><del>students loved learning</del> my concern is that we were veering from my plan to use lyrics for - critical understand</p>
<p>Students level of lesson completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student's practiced creating name tag - will develop</li> </ul>	<p>Researcher's reflections</p> <p>graffiti is the area of hip-hop I know the least and the worst at. I have to figure out</p>

how to create critical dialogue around graffiti art!



Appendix D: Reflection Journal form

<p>Date 12-19-13</p>	<p>Lesson - Emergent lesson - Graffiti - Their class</p>
<p>Student's levels engagement - Actively engaged in most parts of the lesson - Posing and answering questions</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections - Students have input on lesson - - however - students age might affect the levels of</p>
<p>Students' interaction with the teaching - Tried to understand the various types of graffiti - - Who does graffiti and why - why do it</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections It was a struggle to make connections between graffiti and critical consciousness and also filter material.</p>
<p>Students level of lesson completion - Students continued to work on tag</p>	<p>Researcher's reflections so its appropriate for primary aged student They asked for more time to draw -&gt; - More lessons on graffiti and some on Break dancing</p>

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