CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE: CURRICULUM STUDIES IN ACTION

See You at the Crossroads:
Hip Hop Scholarship at the Intersections

Dialectical Harmony, Ethics, Aesthetics, and Panoply of Voices

Brad Porfilio
California State University at East Bay, USA

Debangshu Roychoudhury
Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA

and

Lauren M. Gardner (Eds.)
Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA

See You at the Crossroads: Hip Hop Scholarship at the Intersections Dialectical Harmony, Ethics, Aesthetics, and Panoply of Voices offers several essential contributions to the field of Hip Hop studies. It presents several snapshots of innovative work within (and at the intersections between) several intellectual fields of study. The collection of essays reveal the dialectical harmony and solidarity with which Hip Hop scholars, activists, and artists collectively mobilize, stand together, and collaboratively sustain in hopes of realizing social justice and actualizing global liberation. Several leading scholars in Hip Hop studies also provide insight to the aesthetic, the affordances, the ethics, and panoply of voices in Hip Hop culture. Finally, through empirical research, direct artistic engagement and critical pedagogical praxis, the contributors demonstrate how Hip Hop Based Education (HHBE) catalyzes civic engagement and democratic participation in schools through the use of democratic aesthetic tools to galvanize social change.
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Volume 7

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Scope
“Curriculum” is an expansive term; it encompasses vast aspects of teaching and learning. Curriculum can be defined as broadly as, “The content of schooling in all its forms” (English, p. 4), and as narrowly as a lesson plan. Complicating matters is the fact that curricula are often organized to fit particular time frames. The incompatible and overlapping notions that curriculum involves everything that is taught and learned in a particular setting and that this learning occurs in a limited time frame reveal the nuanced complexities of curriculum studies.

“Constructing Knowledge” provides a forum for systematic reflection on the substance (subject matter, courses, programs of study), purposes, and practices used for bringing about learning in educational settings. Of concern are such fundamental issues as: What should be studied? Why? By whom? In what ways? And in what settings? Reflection upon such issues involves an inter-play among the major components of education: subject matter, learning, teaching, and the larger social, political, and economic contexts, as well as the immediate instructional situation. Historical and autobiographical analyses are central in understanding the contemporary realities of schooling and envisioning how to (re)shape schools to meet the intellectual and social needs of all societal members. Curriculum is a social construction that results from a set of decisions; it is written and enacted and both facets undergo constant change as contexts evolve.

This series aims to extend the professional conversation about curriculum in contemporary educational settings. Curriculum is a designed experience intended to promote learning. Because it is socially constructed, curriculum is subject to all the pressures and complications of the diverse communities that comprise schools and other social contexts in which citizens gain self-understanding.
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Edited by

**Brad Porfilio**  
*California State University at East Bay, USA*

**Debangshu Roychoudhury**  
*Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA*

and

**Lauren M. Gardner**  
*Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA*

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PREFACE

*Hip Hop at the Intersection of Passion, Promise and Possibility*

OVERVIEW

It has been over thirty-five years since subjugated African American youth gathered in New York City in response to the unjust social conditions impacting their schools, families, and communities (Chang, 2005; Dimitriadis, 2001). Through various innovative forms of cultural production – such as break dancing, rap narrative, graffiti art, and music production – Hip-Hop artists, activists, youth and scholars have been authentically expressing their concerns and making-meaning of the world (Hill, 2009; Petchauer, 2009). Over the past three decades, Hip-Hop has become a site of contestation with a corporate music industry incredibly adept at redirecting Hip-Hop’s social energies away from critical expressions of struggle, protest, and resistance towards messages of materialism, greed, and individualism (George, 2005; Prier, 2010; Porfilio & Viola, 2012).

While Hip-Hop emerged as an urban American art form and has grappled with the corporate world contaminating its socially generative nature, it has gradually become multicultural, been embraced and recontextualized internationally, and has become a key action site through which Hip-Hop youth (and adults) critique, communicate, and develop their position on issues affecting their personhood and their community (Magubane, 2006; Perrilo, 2012; Porfilio & Carr, 2010; Lozenski, 2012; Porfilio, Roychoudhury, & Gardner, 2013; Porfilio & Viola, 2012). The members of our global culture critique the oppressive absolutism of grand- narratives in a way of becoming the post-modernist of the boom-bap, break and beat-box; suggesting that the Hip-Hop community seeks to become transformative intellectuals – a community of global gad-flies who possess the expressive acumen to critique and transform social inequity (Gardner & Roychoudhury, 2012). Social media has become a key linchpin for global Hip-Hop youth generating alternative activities and practices that will improve the quality of their lives as well as the lives of global citizens across the planet. For instance, global Hip-Hop intellectuals are harnessing various speed technology as a means through which they critique power structures and civic institutions as well as engage in dissent movement to build a socially just world (Porfilio, Gardner & Roychoudhury, 2013).

Over the past decade, Hip-Hop intellectuals, school leaders, schoolteachers, youth activists and artists have also found fissures amid oppressive schooling contexts so
as to implement Hip-Hop centered pedagogical projects dedicated to making youth fully human (Freire, 2005). For instance, hundreds of thousands of youth across North America been exposed to multimedia presentations, taken part in narrative writing assignments, been involved in collaborative choreography workshops, and been participants in dance performance, which are designed to make them reflect upon and take action on the forces responsible for what causing human suffering and misery. Although hip-hop based education (HHBE) should not be considered a silver bullet holding the potency to position all youth to become reflective change agents, an impressive body of research shows HHBE has engendered democratic relationships between educators and students, has sparked youths’ critical consciousness and positioned them as problem solvers in their schools, community, and the wider world, as well as has enhanced students’ understanding of traditional and non-traditional academic texts and improved their academic performance (Akom, 2009; Bryan, 2012; Gosa & Fields, 2012; Petchauer, 2009; Sawyer, 2012).

Beside scholarship that focuses on HHBE, researchers across the globe have captured the uniqueness of the aesthetic, the affordances, the ethics, and panoply of voices represented in our culture. This volume seeks to illuminate hip-hop scholarship at the intersections of various fields of study (including but not limited to: sociology, psychology, social work, social justice studies, urban education, pedagogy, criminal justice studies, law, critical race studies, Hip-Hop feminism, theology & spirituality) (Andersen & Hill Collins, 2010; Fernandes, 2011, Porfilio & Viola, 2012, Rabaka, 2011). It is our hope that this volume will expound upon recent Hip-Hop scholarship by presenting snapshots of innovative work within (and at the intersections between) these fields of scholarship, in order to uncover the dialectical harmony and solidarity with which Hip Hop scholars, activists, and artists collectively mobilize, stand together, and collaboratively sustain in hopes of realizing social justice and actualizing global liberation.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this edited volume is to highlight critical intersections of thought, integral calls to action, and crucial interdisciplinary collaborations that must be acknowledged and mobilized in order to actualize emancipatory messages articulated by creators and agents of counter-hegemonic Hip-Hop culture. Audre Lorde (1984) recognizes an urgent need for the production of new cultural tools, when she states “we can’t dismantle Master’s house with Master’s tools.” She also states that modes of oppression and control such as violence, political control, economic control, control of knowledge and information, control of sexuality must not be galvanized as tools towards salvation. Equally important, liberation psychology proclaims that freedom from oppression requires creating new tools for action. Lev Vygotsky conceptualizes tools as things that human beings create to help solve problems and oftentimes use to create systems of symbols, signs, and meanings (1978). Creative human action tools can be leveraged towards achieving the goal of
social transformation. This volume explicates the ways creative human action tools are actualized through Hip Hop cultural production from diverse genres of Hip-Hop scholarship. The contributors will describe how Hip-Hop cultural production actualizes creative human action tools towards emancipatory imagination, creative consciousness, critical consciousness, emancipatory knowledge-building, creative nurturance, and collective identity affirmation.

The contributors employ theory, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research to provide thick descriptions of the social realties (e.g., globalization, migration, poverty, criminalization, and racism) youth are resisting through what we recognize as a decolonial cultural politic. Their collective work describes how youth are employing Hip Hop to resist and transform the historical conditions that are at the roots of their dispossession and suffering. Finally, the contributors theorize how Hip Hop provides a counter space where divergent realities and intersecting identities get negotiated and transformed towards a collective dialectical harmony representative of the global reach of Hip-Hop culture.

SIGNIFICANCE

There is scant research on Hip Hop at the intersections of various fields of scholarship. Furthermore, the voices of artists, activists, and scholars have not been widely included in an equitable manner in genres of Hip-Hop scholarship. We believe that a cross-section of critical literature available in various social science fields can broaden our understanding of Hip-Hop scholarship and provide critical fodder for a unified theoretical basis. Due to this paucity we feel it imperative to highlight Hip Hop as a multi-domain phenomenon whose aesthetic cultural value needs the input and representation from various fields of study in order to be complete. To be sure, we recognize the important publications that broaden our understanding of Hip Hop from a multidisciplinary intersectional perspective towards transformational ends (Collins, 2006; Hadley & Yancy, 2012; Petchauer, 2012; Porfilio & Viola, 2012).

This collaborative project is of importance to scholars, practitioners, researchers, youth, artists, and clergy who are interested in working at the intersections of urban artistic expression, social justice, critical consciousness, Black feminism, therapy, and spirituality. Finally, this project will highlight the importance of research projects that link the production of interdisciplinary scholarship with the cultural activities, everyday practice, and social concerns of global youth in order to ameliorate the social, economic, and political problems that are transcending national boundaries in an age of corporate "globalization."

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

In addition to the introductory chapter, we have divided eleven chapters into three sections. The first section is organized around the theme “Hip- Hop Education and Critical Pedagogy” and it contains essays that focus on the methodologies of
pedagogy as well as the ways pedagogy can act as a springboard for social change across the globe. Through empirical research, direct artistic engagement and critical pedagogical praxis, contributors promote empowerment based development. Contributors also show the ways Hip Hop Based Education (HHBE) catalyze civic engagement and democratic participation in schools through the use of democratic aesthetic tools to galvanize social change.

HIP-HOP EDUCATION & CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

In the first chapter, “Hip Hop and Pedagogy, More Than Meets the Eye: What Do We Expect, What Will We Measure?” Raphael Travis Jr. and Alexis Maston illustrate how Hip-Hop culture created an environment conducive to empowerment-based development when guided by the “Individual and Community Empowerment Framework”. The authors begin this chapter by outlining some of the extant literature on Hip-Hop culture in education and documenting the role of social and emotional development in youth development. Next, the authors pinpoint the ways a social-justice informed Empowerment-Based Youth Development model can bridge the gap between understandings of the individual and community as non-separate entities in order to promote the intersectional notion of community identity and engaged citizenship. By taking a mixed methods approach towards analyzing their program, the authors find that rap musical forms of Hip Hop promote expression, collectivity and connectedness. Furthermore, results from qualitative analyses reveal that students relate to the musical narratives, feel that the narratives clarify roles for them and see rap music as engendering a sense of resilience among them. Although results suggested little statistically significant change in perspectives, more nuanced mixed-methods evidence suggests that student transformation occurred across all empowerment dimensions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change.

In the second chapter, “A Pedagogy of Cultural Sustainability: YEGH3 (Edmonton Hip-Hop History) as a Decentralized model for Hip Hop’s global microhistories” Michael MacDonald builds on his 2012 publication “Hip-Hop Citizens” to advocate for Hip-Hop culture as critically engaged arts pedagogy in order to develop a Hip-Hop pedagogy that emerges from Hip-Hop Kulture. Next, MacDonald outlines specific aspects of the Black Arts movement relevant to Hip-Hop pedagogical aesthetics as a democratic force to “decolonize the imagination”. MacDonald thus creates Hip-Hop Project Based Learning as “an engaged learning environment that would help students gain critical consciousness.” MacDonald concludes that the project based learning achieved at YEGH3 allowed all participants to press deeper into the meanings of Hip Hop and its inherited cultural aesthetic from the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Arts Movement as a uniquely critically-resistant form of pedagogy forging a more democratic society.

In Chapter 3, titled “We Do it for the People: Spoken Word Poets and Hip-Hop Artists as Agents of Social Change”, Crystal Endsley outlines a three pronged approach to creating “artist-agents for social change”. She starts by providing
exemplars of artists who shift between “roles of social change”. Endsley lists superstar Jay-Z as an example of an ally, one who alternates between accepting social responsibility for the conditions that created the same inequity he overcame while simultaneously ignoring responsibility and reciprocity in favor of an individualistic approach towards capitalistic gain. His privilege, power and large fan base allows for a critical questioning of performance from such a wide-spread audience. Endsley continues by suggesting that Carlos Andres Gomez is exemplary of an advocate for social change. She states, his “political power is in his voice and his articulation of the struggle to validate knowledge that is produced from outside of the boundaries of traditional education.” Endsley ends by stating that by far the most risky and demanding orientation towards social justice is that of social agent. She states that unsung heroes, High School teachers, leaders of arts-based organizations occupy this role creating a synergistic artist-agent orientation; in the road of praxis these new roles provide room for creative possibility.

HIP-HOP SPIRITUALITY AND IDENTITY

The second section is organized around the title “Hip-Hop Spirituality and Identity”. Contributors examine the ontological realm of Hip Hop and religion and spirituality including the ways the aesthetic, sensual and sensible realms of spirituality and other aesthetic manifestations instantiate through Hip Hop. A common denominator among these chapters is the notion that ontology and aesthetics are covalent and as such represent a powerful tool of re-negotiating hegemony, re-asserting individuality and fashioning identity. The contributors examine the critical junctures, contradictions and contours that shape identity and provide insight as to the multifaceted ways Hip Hop provides a site for exploration of identity through theology, aesthetics, performance and discourse to develop a nuanced understanding of self, and even of the divine, as contextual and intersectional.

In Chapter 4, “Baptized in Dirty Water: An Ontology of Hip Hop’s Socio-Religious Discourse in Tupac’s Black Jesuz” author Daniel White Hodge makes the argument that rap music provides a discursive connective medium that is a fundamental attempt to make the divine more accessible to people who have traditionally been ignored by spiritual institutions. Hodge explores the multifaceted ways by which Hip Hop acts as a discursive liaison between organized religion and the street in the effort to produce a contextualized god. Hodge concludes by suggesting that controversial images of God provide supple ground for theorization and appropriation from people most often marginalized by mainstream religiosity and that Hip-Hop artists devise the conduit through which non-domesticated images of deities can communicate with the social realities of inequity.

Chapter 5 is titled, “You Better Lose Yourself!: Reformulated Praxis Theory, Spirituality, and Hip-Hop Aesthetics” by author Kip Kline. Kline provides an overview of spirituality and Black musical expression and how Hip-Hop aesthetics relate to identity, praxis and power. Kline outlines theoretical understandings of
Chapter 6, “Fashioning Self, Battling Society: Hip-Hop Graffiti Jackets as a Method of Positive Identity,” offers insight into the idea of Hip-Hop fashion as a site for identity development. The authors Emery Petchauer and Antonio Garrison outline the history of the graffiti jacket tracing its roots from gang culture of the 1970’s to B-boy/girl culture to contemporary uses. The authors analyze one graffiti jacket in order to posit the argument that individuals can use Hip-Hop artistic forms to forge a sense of healthy identity.

In Chapter 7, “I do not need help to define myself: The Self-Location of Somali Immigrant Youth through Discourse and Agency” Chelda Smith and Brian Lozenski perform a critical discourse analysis on Somali women in a Spoken Word program. The authors make the argument that Somali poets utilize discursive spaces as places to “reproduce a transformational black feminist discourse”. By focusing on narrative shifts Lozenski and Smith show the ways Somali female poets are able to shift positions of personhood and in doing so produce “self-authoring and therefore self-determining” in order to counter hegemonic representations of Somali women.

In Chapter 8, “Are we there yet?: The political power of Aboriginal Hip Hop in Australia”, Chiara Minestrelli engages in an examination of the relationship between Rap music and Aboriginal politics in Australia. The author conducts an ethnography of two specific Hip-Hop groups including the The Last Kinection and Yung Warriors by combining theoretical aspects of Hip-Hop studies, post-colonial and cultural studies, together with critical discourse analysis of lyrics in addition to participant observation and interviews. Minestrelli provides a historical overview of Aboriginal Hip Hop and combines this with her ethnography to conclude that political messages in Aboriginal Hip Hop have provided an outlet to relieve tensions of living in a post-colonial society in addition to “carving out dialogic spaces to communicate with multiple audiences”.

HIP-HOP THERAPY AND HIP-HOP PSYCHOLOGY

The third section is organized around the theme “Hip- Hop Therapy and Hip-Hop Psychology”, and focuses on the application of HipHop into the fields of psychology, social work and psychiatry. Authors in this section focus on the therapeutic efficacy of Rap music and the contexts in which a Hip Hop based therapy may work. Authors also provide insight into the ways Hip Hop influences human development from a theoretical perspective. Authors push the boundaries of the mainstream clinical scientific cannon by suggesting that clinicians and theoreticians go further in understanding the deep psychological effects of Hip-Hop culture and cultural production. Here authors focus on the epistemology of Hip Hop and how such epistemology can influence healthy human functioning as well as human becoming.
In chapter 9, “From Voiceless to Victorious: Street Sounds and Social Skills for Gang Involved Urban Youth” Jaleel Abdul-Adil focuses on the ways rap music may develop critical consciousness in youth civic engagement organizations. Abdul-Adil provides an overview of the ways youth violence and urban street gangs create acute and complex challenges to positive youth development. The author outlines several micro-genres of Rap music and generally observes the styles of development they promote. Abdul-Adil ends by suggesting that youth civic engagement organizations may play a positive role in the development of empirically sound approaches to the field of Hip Hop in Psychology and Social Work.

Chapter 10, “Exploring the healing powers of hip-hop: Increasing therapeutic efficacy, utilizing the Hip-Hop culture as an alternative platform for expression, connection”, Sidney Dang, Derek Vigon and Jaleel Abdul-Adil overview the deleterious effects of Childhood Averse Experiences and youth trauma. Next, they provide a rare literature review of Hip-Hop therapy/music therapy, examining scant extant literature to provide a complete review on the topic. The authors examine a case study emerging from a model of Hip-Hop based psychotherapy to come to the conclusion that Hip Hop in psychotherapy provides a multifaceted and multi-dimensional approach to reducing pathology in comparison to a more static medical model of therapy.

The final chapter of this volume, “Theorizing Activism: Hip Hop and Human Development – The Eternal Dance between Theory and Practice” Debangshu Roychoudhury, Lauren M. Gardner and Anna Stetsenko posit that Hip Hop provides an alternative onto-epistemology in social-science, one that emerges from a composite between transformative activist stance and creative maladjustment. By positing that Hip-Hop cultural practice is a form of critical praxis, the authors re-affirm the humanity in human development by placing this Hip Hop onto-epistemology at root with transformative activism and in contrast to reductivist and positivistic notions of development. The authors end by suggesting that the endpoint of the Hip Hop onto-epistemology should be creative maladjustment or the use of creative tools to take a stance against contemporary oppression in the process of being and becoming.

CLOSING WITH PANOPLY OF VOICES

We overtly sought to create a text that brought together scholars from various fields that approach Hip Hop in a variety of different ways. Furthermore, we sought chapters that openly addressed the contradictions, complications and co-occurrences inherent in Hip-Hop scholarship. We come to understand that Hip Hop is ontology and an epistemology of understanding knowledge, developing identity, staking personhood, negotiating systems and managing oppression. The authors in this text also showcase the various contexts through which Hip Hop instantiates and re-contextualizes. There are also a variety of methodologies from critical autobiography to critical discourse theory to survey methods and interviews. The panoply of voices each speak from various departure points of the global culture that is Hip Hop and
provide a panorama of the diaspora. We hope that this refraction offers Hip-Hop scholars a moment of reflection to understand the diversity of our field, where it has been and where it is going.

We hope this text serves as a theoretical point of departure that ontologically disorganizes positivistic and reductivist models of understanding. It is our hope to stand on the shoulders of those whom we inherit from in this organized noise of disorganization. We seek to press the boundaries of the imagination to suggest that Hip Hop is at once individualistic and collective, and that like Blues and Jazz, the and not the or is the theoretical hinge on which our ontology stands. Ralph Ellison states:

There is in this a cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself. For true jazz is an art of the individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment … springs from a contest in which the artist challenges the rest; each solo flight, or improvisation, represents a definition of his [or her] identity; as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition.

Hip Hop continues the chain of Black aesthetic tradition and instantiates where we, as individuals, communities and an entire culture, take it. If the sample of the vocals here provides any example, it is that the future of Hip-Hop scholarship lies at the intersection between passion, promise and possibility. So, we’ll see you at the crossroads…

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HIP HOP EDUCATION & CRITICAL PEDAGOGY
HIP-HOP AND PEDAGOGY, MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
What Do We Expect, What Will We Measure?

INTRODUCTION

In a small undergraduate seminar, we simultaneously examined Hip-Hop culture and created an environment conducive to empowerment-based development. The course was guided by the Individual and Community Empowerment Framework introduced by Travis and Deepak (2011) and elaborated upon by Travis (2013). Recent discussions of Hip Hop integrated pedagogy capture the full range of its value to individuals and communities (Hall, 2011). For example, evidence continues to emerge about how Hip-Hop culture offers potential educational value from analysis of its content, and from use of the culture’s aesthetics for organizing coursework and engaging students. However, remaining vague, even within these comprehensive discussions of the value of Hip-Hop culture, are strategies for measuring and quantifying desired outcomes for youth or students. We discuss innovations in Hip-Hop integrated pedagogy, rap music analyses, and opportunities for measuring student level outcomes.

In the present study, we used the Individual and Community Empowerment Framework (Travis & Deepak, 2011) to guide pedagogy and inform a mixed measurement strategy of evaluating student outcomes that complements academic grades. We built a curriculum that used a range of elements of Hip-Hop culture to strengthen knowledge and attitudes, and inform behaviors relevant to health and well-being. Students not only learned about the specific art of rap music, but also b-boying, graffiti art, deejaying, and the socio-cultural context that birthed all components of Hip-Hop culture (Chang, 2005). We examined two of the implicit characteristics of Hip-Hop culture, self-awareness (i.e., knowledge of self) and
attention to social, political and economic injustices (Pulido, 2009, p.70; Trapp, 2005), along with their alignment with the guiding [ICE] empowerment-based framework. We discuss self-awareness and justice as prominent and integral facets of the culture. Students also learned about contemporary interpretations of Hip-Hop culture including style of dress and entrepreneurship.

We measured outcomes by (a) surveying students on their attitudes toward empowering and risky aspects of rap music engagement, (b) collecting weekly reflection journals that aligned themes of life-course development with narratives within rap music, and (c) facilitating an end-of-semester focus group and mixtape/CD. The focus group and mixtape/CD allowed students to discuss/express (a) the cumulative influences of education via Hip-Hop culture, (b) rap music engagement over the semester, and (c) their introspection through the lenses of the Framework’s five dimensions of empowerment: esteem, resilience, growth, community and change.

When surveying student attitudes, results suggested students elicit both empowering and risky messages from rap music. Students described rap music as an outlet for expression, a way to empathize and connect with others, and a facilitator of critical reflection. They also described their music engagement as associated with some risky behaviors such as substance use. These results did not change significantly between time 1 and time 2. The magnitude of empowerment messages elicited did not increase as much as expected, and the risky messages elicited did not decrease as much as expected.

However, reflection journals, a final focus group, and final project mixtape CDs/videos suggested that the course had a substantial positive influence on student empowerment. More specifically, results suggest that the course helped strengthen students’ perceived self-esteem, resilience, growth, sense of community and intent to engage in positive community change. The alignment of these empowerment dimensions with positive developmental outcomes, suggests Hip Hop in the classroom is more than simply a pedagogical tool. Hip Hop in the classroom has the potential to be a facilitator of positive development that includes academic competence along with a range of other important developmental outcomes. The current popularity of social and emotional learning/development in educational sectors aligns well with the present findings. Results also suggest that we must be deliberate about measuring the variety of ways in which Hip-Hop culture facilitates growth, including traditional academic outcomes and other developmental outcomes (e.g., social and emotional).

HIP HOP IN EDUCATION

Hip-Hop culture in education is rich with social and historical complexity (Dhokai, 2012). Hip Hop is appreciated for its aesthetics and ability to facilitate understanding of traditional academic content among students, especially those that are culturally aligned with Hip-Hop culture (Petchauer, 2011a). It is often embraced as a unique pedagogical asset by instructors whether they are culturally aligned with Hip-Hop
culture (Bridges, 2012; Hall, 2011), or not (Petchauer, 2011a). Finally, Hip Hop is also discussed “as its own public pedagogy” worth exploring for its multiple and competing messages (Hall, 2011).

An important trend associated with this latter interpretation of Hip Hop as a “public pedagogy” offers promise. Hip Hop can be analyzed closely allowing the deconstruction of cultural content and dynamics for personal growth and development, community well-being, and redressing inequities (Bridges, 2012; Clay, 2006; Emdin, 2010; Petchauer, 2011a & 2011b; Prier & Beachum, 2008; Seidel, 2011; Tyson et al., 2012; Veltre & Hadley, 2012; Viega, 2012). These affirmations of Hip-Hop culture are prominent in education and therapeutic settings, although similar assertions exist among other professions such as criminal justice (Baker & Homan, 2007), out-of-school time settings (Lashua & Fox, 2006), and health promotion (Fitzgibbon et al., 2013). Strategies for assessing, measuring and quantifying non-academic, health and well-being outcomes for youth and students remain vague. Before discussing a pilot project that integrates Hip-Hop culture and individual and community empowerment, we discuss trends in social and emotional development and higher education alongside the guiding theoretical framework of empowerment-based positive youth development.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Conversations about optimizing the role of prevention and youth development strategies alongside traditional reading, writing, math, science and history objectives have migrated from K-12 settings (Greenberg et al., 2003) to higher education (Seal et al., 2011). The premise is that we can foster core elements of healthy development within traditional educational structures as much as the traditional promotion of academics (e.g., “the three R’s - reading, writing and arithmetic). A collection of separate but overlapping concepts encompass these non-academic notions of developing health and well-being within the educational sector including social and emotional learning (SEL), social and emotional development, prevention, and positive youth development.

“In addition to producing students who are culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and committed to lifelong learning, high-quality education should teach young people to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways; to practice positive, safe, and healthy behaviors; to contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; and to possess basic competencies, work habits, and values as a foundation for meaningful employment and engaged citizenship.”

(Greenberg et al., 2003, pp.466-467)

One branch of this expanded focus, the social emotional development (SED) model emphasizes the salience of social emotional development in higher education (Seal et al., 2011). The SED model blends social intelligence and competence development research. The model is for both student assessment and goal setting,
with the developmental assumption that students can learn and strengthen their social and emotional competencies. The core outcomes to develop are self-awareness, consideration of others, connection to others, and ability to affect positive change. These desired outcomes align with current thought on the emergence of Hip Hop pedagogical orientations: (a) commitment to self-awareness, (b) call to service, and (c) resistance to social injustice (Bridges, 2012).

The unique value of a social and emotional developmental approach for college students is the oft-occurring role(s) within new social networks and increased social interdependence with peers, classroom peers, teachers, and neighbors (Seal et. al., 2011, p.9). Further, these students are chronologically closer to professional roles where their leadership and relational competencies take on greater significance (Seal et al., 2011).

The present chapter describes how the individual and community empowerment framework (Figure 1) guided an undergraduate seminar that builds upon key assumptions of the SED model in higher education (i.e., self-awareness, consideration of others, and affecting change). The seminar’s change strategy uses the prominence of developmental narratives in rap music to foster empowerment, with an understanding that variability will exist in what people take away from similar content (Travis & Bowman, 2011; Travis, 2013). The goal was to use rap music, one element of Hip Hop culture (others include but are not limited to deejaying, b- boying/b小女孩ing, graffiti art) to foster growth in knowledge of, attitudes about and eventually behaviors related to the empowerment dimensions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change. These dimensions have heightened value because they map directly on to the underlying theoretical constructs of EMPYD: connection, caring, character, confidence, competence, community identity, and active and engaged citizenship (Travis & Leech, 2014). These dimensions of betterment recognize that most people are working to get better, but that their strategies include varying levels of risk amidst any potential empowerment (The Better Principle™).

Figure 1.

The Individual and Community Empowerment Framework and Five Dimensions of Betterment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Individual and Community Empowerment Framework</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Empowerment</td>
<td>Community Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESPEEM: Feeling Better</td>
<td>COMMUNITY: Better Sense of Belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESILIENCE: Doing Better</td>
<td>CHANGE: Change for Better Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROWTH: Being Better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. The Individual and Community Empowerment Framework and its five dimensions of esteem, resilience, and growth for individual empowerment, and community and change for community empowerment. The framework and table are adapted from Travis & Deepak (2011).
Theory explicates hypothesized influences on student outcomes and the implicit objectives of the course. It suggests that the empowering features of and the functional uses of rap music stem from its dynamic use of sound and stories, the unique communicative ability of emcees, its developmentally relevant themes of coping and empowerment, and its strong connection to youth culture (Emdin, 2010; Hall, 2011; Tyson et al., 2012). Empowerment is the process of obtaining power and influence so that decisions about personal or collective well-being are person-centered or for one’s own behalf (Delgado & Staples, 2008, p.105). The empowered student, eliciting characteristics of individual empowerment dimensions (i.e., esteem, resilience and growth), is less likely to feel hopeless or helpless; less likely to feel victimized, less likely to perceive they would face continued adversity (Travis, 2013; Travis & Deepak, 2011). The empowered student is actively working to fulfill their perceived potential by using their existing knowledge, positive attitudes and interpersonal skills. At the community level, empowered students “envision change in the broader social, political and economic system and their role in creating positive change” (Wagaman, 2011).

**EMPOWERMENT-BASED POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: THE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY**

The empowerment-based positive youth development model is intentional. We proposed it as a “new vision of healthy developmental trajectories that is strengths-based, developmental, culture-bound, and action oriented” (Travis & Leech, 2014). The model embraces social identities and culture, without being fixated on the challenges of or ignorant of racial, ethnic or cultural dynamics” (Swanson et al., 2002).

It posits a *community identity* and *engaged citizenship* as two necessary factors for strengthening the relationship between person and environment. A sense of community is associated with feeling a part of “a readily available, supportive, and dependable structure” (Evans, 2007), but also “a sense of membership, influence, a fulfillment of needs and a shared emotional connection” (Chavis, Lee, & Acosta, 2008). Engaged citizenship is the action and agentic element of a sense of community. It transcends belonging, to be as much attitude as it is behavior, including civic duty, civic skills, civic connection, and civic participation (Zaff, Boyd, Li, Lerner, & Lerner, 2010). Finally, the model shows that prosocial developmental characteristics are not simply additive; rather, these are “reinforcing assets” that are exponentially valuable over time (Gibbs & Bankhead, 2000; Lee, 2011). The EMPYD model allows a structure for measuring competencies, but also for measuring longitudinally how other interrelated facets of growth and well-being evolve, including strategies for capturing the multiplicative influences of community and citizenship.

These dimensions of growth are important for the contextual realities of contemporary youth, particularly marginalized youth. High stakes standardized testing captures only one piece of the growth that teachers K-16 are accountable for in the classroom and on school campuses. Identities of mastery (i.e., connection,
confidence and competence dynamics at the individual and group levels) (Kleitman & Gibson, 2011) extend well beyond any given exam score. Students do much better academically when they feel welcome in the classroom, confident in their abilities, and connected to the teacher (Travis & Leech, 2014).

Teachers and campus administrators also regularly help students understand, cope and mature in relation to moral identities (i.e., connection, caring, and character dynamics at the individual and group levels). For example, traditional bullying and cyber-bullying are significant health challenges successfully addressed within schools where interventions help improve student empathy and prosocial decision-making (Jennifer & Cowie, 2012). Additional research connects the moral atmosphere in schools to student aggressive and delinquent behaviors. Stronger morals are associated with less aggression and delinquency (Foa, Brugman & Mancini, 2012).

The United States has spent more than $1 billion annually since 2002 for 21 Century Community Learning Center programs. These programs include academic enrichment during non-school hours and also a range of creative strategies to complement traditional academic programs such as music, arts, positive youth development, violence prevention and the increasingly popular science, technology, engineering and mathematics (S.T.E.M.) programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2013). Newer ideas of health and well-being necessitate sense of community and engaged citizenship as critical features. Youth and adults alike privilege membership in certain communities over others, and want to feel they belong (Correa-Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010). These identities are at the core of development, and these “communities” of identity reinforce other developmental features/assets/strengths. Gender, age, race/ethnicity, families, neighborhoods, teams, and other social networks (i.e., “communities”) exist independently but may intersect to promote belonging, mobilization and action for positive change. Individual’s sense of belonging and connection to a group is distinct from a relationship with any one individual. Physical safety and psychological safety combine to form the foundation, while knowledge building, asset reinforcement, character enhancement, resiliency, and pathways toward positive change follow (Travis & Leech, 2014).

However, in addition to altruistic intentions to engage and even contribute to better conditions in prioritized communities (i.e., whether family, interest group or community), there must be opportunities available to act on these desires to contribute to better conditions (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Watts & Guessouss, 2006; Travis, 2010). Active and engaged citizenship in the present model refers to participating in change efforts that can potentially result in substantive impacts to all members of a given community (Zaff et al., 2010). Youth-led civic engagement and youth organizing are two common terms amidst a range of possible terms that seek to capture the processes by which we involve youth in campaigns for community-level change (Delgado & Staples, 2008; Ginwright & James, 2002). These youth change strategies are precursors to later youth-adult partnerships, and adult driven community change strategies.
Figure 2. Conceptual model of empowerment-based positive youth development, including sense of community and active/engaged citizenship as necessary developmental features. The model also displays interrelatedness among all seven developmental constructs. Adopted from Travis & Leech (2014). First published in Travis (2013).

EMPOWERMENT: BELONGING AND AGENCY WITHIN COMMUNITIES OF CHANGE AS CRITICAL TO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Important features of the empowerment-based positive youth development model is the simultaneous attention to a critical mass of seven developmental assets, and the necessary link between person and environment as indicators of positive well-being (Figure 2). It adds to traditional social and emotional learning discussions in two ways: by integrating and prioritizing (1) the life-course perspective and (2) sociohistorical contexts (Travis & Leech, 2014). It explicitly acknowledges evolving relationships and dynamics over time and that both youth and helping professionals must be intentional about strengthening developmental assets within these evolving dynamics.

Further, the model recognizes a social and historical context that is uniquely meaningful for each individual, and particularly salient for members of groups
marginalized in some capacity within their histories. Again, each individual has his or her own story, his or her own adversities, own coping strategies and own well-being-aspirations embedded within these life stories. We must integrate these social and historical contexts well with in effort to promote positive development, an even more salient objective when looking at common challenges within education.

Contemporary efforts toward education, health and well-being offer significant attention to ensuring all racial, ethnic and cultural groups are included, engaged, and provided opportunities at optimal levels. For example, the 2011 National Research Council Report *Expanding Underrepresented Minority Participation* brought these dynamics to light for the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (i.e., S.T.E.M.) (National Research Council, 2011). The S.T.E.M. fields have emerged as a national priority with efforts to reposition the United States at the forefront of knowledge production along with a strong workforce of citizens highly knowledgeable and skilled in S.T.E.M. fields (President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology [PCAST], 2012). The proportion of United States’ undergraduate under-represented minorities that aspire to major in a S.T.E.M. field is similar to whites and Asian Americans (who are historically well represented in S.T.E.M. professions) (National Research Council, 2011, p.109). However, their four and five year graduation rates are lower. More importantly, research highlights how they face unique barriers to persistence and completion in comparison to other groups, starting with “an unwelcoming atmosphere from faculty” (PCAST, 2012, p.1).

Higher education obstacles prevalent in S.T.E.M. are consistent with the larger narrative about minority success in higher education. Sustaining motivation and confidence through high expectations is critical, while normalizing minority support programs and fostering a community of learners or family/social support are essential (National Research Council, 2011, p.134). Expectations, support and effective integration within higher education are consistent obstacles to success. Beyond race and ethnicity are temporal cohort effects, where students develop as functions of social and historical influences on their well-being.

This broader lens for understanding and promoting well-being within the context of learning adds to existing youth development and social and emotional learning research in higher education. Positive youth development research is most frequently within out-of-school time, K-12 education and other youth settings. Currently, discussions of SEL in higher education are mostly for coursework pertaining to emerging professionals (e.g., teachers/education, nursing, social work). These initiatives are valuable for emerging professionals as a priority group because these individuals will be immediately working as components of the developmental infrastructure (i.e., microsystems) of people still in their formative years of well-being - especially youth. However, opportunities to strengthen a robust collection of reinforcing developmental assets that improves the quality of fit between an individual and their environment, while potentially improving the conditions of these environments (also the communities they value) – while simultaneously learning academics in the classroom – are meaningful for *all* students.
METHOD

The Course: Hip-Hop Culture and Positive Youth Development

Two instructors led the course, “Hip-Hop Culture and Positive Youth Development.” One instructor was a University professor, while the instructor was a doctoral student whose scholarly research integrates Hip-Hop culture and spirituality with leadership, innovation and adult education. These instructors, and chapter authors, were responsible for this course, a small seminar at a large southwestern university. The Individual and Community Empowerment framework offered the guiding theory and practice framework for the course. Each weekly theme reflected one dimension of the framework (e.g., esteem) and each subsequent week built successively upon prior weeks since theoretical dimensions reinforce one another in the model. The course lasted fifteen weeks and met twice per week for a total of three hours per week.

The first and second weeks of the course began by defining and discussing the potential for risk amidst empowerment. The objective was to reinforce awareness of health and well-being challenges associated with risky attitudes and behaviors for individuals and communities. Concurrently, the objective used examples within society in general and Hip-Hop culture specifically. The major areas of risk from a content perspective are violence, substance use and misogyny. However, each dimension has more nuanced risky attitudes and behaviors specific to that dimension. For example, esteem enhancing (empowering) messages can include messages that promote violence, substance use, and misogyny as affirming to esteem. More nuanced elements of risk include exploitation of others, and a preoccupation with status, image, and money at the expense of integrity, friends, family or employment. Subsequent weeks included empowerment dimensions of esteem (weeks 3-4), resilience (weeks 5-6), growth (weeks 7-8), community (weeks 11-12), and change (weeks 13-14). The mid semester exam and spring break took place in weeks nine and ten.

Course Materials and Academic Requirements.

The two main course texts were Decoded by Jay Z and dream hampton, and Can’t Stop Won’t Stop by Jeff Chang. Decoded was chosen because it offers the perspectives of a prominent and gifted Hip-Hop artist. Often listeners interpret artists’ intentions with little affirmation of meaning or context within which to ponder an artist’s intent. This trend is changing with the introduction and popularity of the annotated music lyrics site www.rapgenius.com. The book Decoded also highlights the prominence in which the dimensions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change exist in Jay Z’s lyrics and his narratives about his personal life. Jeff Chang’s “Can’t Stop Won’t Stop” is rich in social and historical references providing excellent background and context for discussions and analyses.

Scholarly journal articles, book chapters, video clips, music, and music videos supplemented texts. Journal articles and book chapters provided information and examples from both positive youth development and Hip-Hop culture. For example,
students reviewed the latest state level results for the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to put risky elements of Hip-Hop culture in perspective. They coupled this with reading research by Catherine Squires and colleagues (2007) that discussed adolescent attitudes about responsibility/accountability in portrayals of gendered violence in images, stories and music lyrics. Articles on resilience, asset-building and using Hip Hop within youth programming were also features. Video clips, music, and music videos were resources to help analyze dimensions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change. Instructors selected rap music songs and videos in accordance with weekly themes. For example, Kendrick Lamar’s “Ignorance is Bliss” was one of the feature videos when discussing resilience and the tension between surviving and thriving. Tools and resources from the first author’s research and developmental intervention strategies augmented classroom activities.

Course assignments were a mix of traditional and non-traditional academic practices. Traditional activities included tests and homework. However, non-traditional activities included development of a lifemap and an accompanying narrative, weekly reflections, and a final mixtape CD or mixtape video. A mixtape CD or mixtape video is a compilation of music and other audio (CD), or a compilation of music, audio, and video (video). These end-of-semester audio or video mixes comprised stories about students’ lives (their life-course trajectory) up to the present, but through the language and structure of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change. Students revised and updated their narratives, reflection journal summary reports, and action plans. These assignments were the sources that captured potential changes in knowledge, attitudes and intentionality about themselves and their communities (i.e., the social and historical contexts within which they currently live, they have lived, and they will live).

Procedure

A mixed methods approach assessed desired outcomes. First, we used an abbreviated version of the Individual and Community Empowerment Inventory to survey student attitudes about influences of their personal engagement of rap music (Travis & Bowman, 2011). Second, students participated in a focus group at the conclusion of the course to discuss their perceptions of the course, potential changes in perspectives about Hip Hop culture, and changes in how they engage Hip-Hop culture, and their understanding of their own lives within the context of empowerment dimensions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change. Third, we examined students’ written reflection journals that took them through the 40 Steps Dashboard and questions prompting reflection and growth across all five dimensions of empowerment.

Inventory

This survey measure asks respondents to consider the influences of the rap music they listen to according to personal and community-embedded empowerment and risk.
These risk and empowerment related questions were 26 indicators comprising three subscales: individual risk, individual empowerment, and community empowerment. Four additional questions asked about depressive and anxiety symptoms. A subset of nine students completed the inventory at the beginning of the course and the conclusion of the course. Three students joined the course in the second and third weeks and thus did not participate in the baseline survey. We did not compute pre-post comparisons for these students.

**Focus Groups.**

The two authors facilitated the focus groups with eleven of twelve students. We asked students to sit in a circle and respond openly starting with two main questions. These guiding focus group questions were: (1) In what ways do you now feel you relate to Hip-Hop culture after taking this class? (2) What is your perspective about the integration of personal development and cultural studies in this course? We also asked students to respond freely to one another’s comments to promote a wider range of discussion.

**Reflection Journals**

Reflection journals, completed throughout the course, examined the five individual and community empowerment dimensions. We also explored students’ final summary reflections. Reflection journals linked to the Framework’s 40 Steps Dashboard, a tool to help students explore empowerment in relation to their own personal life. Table 1 displays a sample of the dashboard using the esteem and resilience dimensions.

The Dashboard places individual strengths and capacities at the heart of growth and well-being, for both students and their communities. First, we asked students to explore the music prompts of the week using the lens of that week’s dimension (e.g., resilience) to speak on empowering and risky messages. This allowed students to gain cultural awareness, try on empathy skills, and begin critical media reflection. The second part of the reflection journals corresponded with the Dashboard and critical self-reflection. During the first weeks of the course, assignments were not structured reflections on each dimension; these began in earnest in week three.

The course devoted five weeks toward reflections. The initial weeks of the course examined risk and esteem, however activities were largely in the classroom and focused on grounding students with key principles of the framework before initiating comprehensive reflections. For example, students explored esteem through a variety of activities including creation of a visual lifemap about the major events of their own life from birth to present, and writing an accompanying short narrative that discussed the lifemap features along with ideas about identity, self-image and the answer to the question “Who am I?” Subsequently, students participated in structured reflections about the remaining dimensions of the empowerment framework: resilience, growth, community and change.
Table 1. Sample of the 40 Steps Dashboard including the first nineteen “Steps” or prompts used to guide reflection and discussion. The nineteen steps are aligned with the esteem and resilience dimensions of the Individual and Community Empowerment Framework first written about by Travis & Deepak (2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICE Dimension</th>
<th>Interview, Reflection and Discussion Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>“Feeling Better”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Who am I?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How do others see me? Who do I sometimes pretend to be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>What is most important in my life today (what I value)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What types of people do I surround myself with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Whom do I look up to? Who are my role models?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Where do I see myself in 5 years? How do I want to describe myself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What will be most important to me then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>“Doing Better”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What do I do when I am feeling “down” that helps me feel good or better about myself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What brings me “joy”? What is an activity I enjoy so much that I tend to lose track of time? (Note: not based on your talent or skill)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>How can I tell that someone feels good about himself or herself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>What things do I have that I am proud of (that make me feel good)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>What areas of my life would I like to have more power or influence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>What stories about my experiences would I like to be able to tell others, but have not had the opportunity to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>What should people know about my life and reality to know “me”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>What types of things “get to me”? In what ways do these problems try to “trip me up”? Why have I let them be so powerful in my life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>How does my day-to-day life compare to that of my closest circle of friends? How does it compare to others that struggle or have it easy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>What life challenges am I proud to have overcome?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>What are my best strategies for coping with stressful situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>What have I done to try to prevent earlier challenges and problems from happening again?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Course Content

Students created their own unique mixtape CD or mixtape video that included music, audio and/or video capturing themes of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change, with descriptive narratives for each selected song on the tracklist. Students were encouraged to prioritize Hip-Hop music, but had the freedom to include songs from any genre in their final mix.

We concluded the course with a student action plan. Students used final reflections, self-analyses and insights to build their own concrete plan of action toward greater personal empowerment for the benefit of themselves and their community. The objective was for students to visualize their own enhanced empowerment and agency within the context of the communities they value. The premise is that voice, agency, and opportunity fuel the engine of change for individuals and communities. Although changes in knowledge and attitudes are important, these are only the beginning. Sustained desirable change requires initial action and maintenance of behaviors.
DATA ANALYSIS.

Inventory

The quantitative survey data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v.20 (2012). The small sample size required use of the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to compare baseline and end-of-course empowerment and risk subscales. Again, three students joined the class after the baseline survey questionnaire. These students did not complete an initial (Time 1) inventory. We analyzed scale score changes for nine students. Results provided preliminary insight about the utility of this measure.

Focus Groups

The two authors independently analyzed and coded focus group data. The process was to review data independently and identify themes as they surface. Coders were not to restrict codes to a priori sensitizing themes. Next, we compared each independent list of codes. Lastly, we noted agreement among themes. Substantial overlap in coding themes existed; most notably was agreement among the final four themes.

Reflection Journals

The first author independently reviewed reflection journals to determine the presence or absence of evidence of student growth along empowerment dimensions. Analyses were not for presence/absence of dimension themes, but instead analyses sought to identify narrative support for increases and strengthening of perceived empowerment by students in areas of resilience, growth, community and/or change.

Additional Course Content

Lastly, we provide anecdotal evidence from students’ final mixtape CDs/videos. We did not analyze these final mixes in a systematic manner, but these mixtape CDs/videos exemplify creative and non-traditional ways of illustrating how students experienced the course and resultant themes of developmental well-being.

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to assess evidence of the practical relevance of innovations in theory, pedagogy and measurement for educational settings that integrate Hip-Hop culture. We discuss results through multiple brief examples, as opposed to a few in-depth examples, to help convey the wide range of supporting evidence. Results include student voices from the survey questionnaire, focus groups, reflection journals, and mixtape CDs/videos.
Table 2. Individual item responses by frequency percentages from pretest (Time 1) and posttest (Time 2) data. The Empowerment subscale reflected in the table is a combination of the individual empowerment and the community empowerment subscales. Each item is the actual questionnaire prompt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>T1 YES</th>
<th>T2 YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rap music helps me make it through bad times.</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is easier to listen to Rap music that talks about issues in my life than for me to talk to other people about issues in my life.</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Listening to Rap music has made it easier for me to talk about my problems.</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rap music provides me an outlet to express myself.</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I hear messages about doing well in school when listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rap music gives me the chance to do things that I am good at in a way I can’t in school.</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rap music helps me think carefully about my behavior.</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Rap music helps me think about doing more positive behaviors.</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Rap music helps me feel I can make decisions that will have a definite positive impact on my life.</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rap music has helped me see that other people go through similar life problems as me.</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I connect with other people that share my interests through Rap music.</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Rap music encourages me to be proud of my race/ethnicity.</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Listening to Rap music has helped me think critically about the world around me.</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Rap music makes me want to do something positive for my neighborhood.</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Rap music that I listen to gives me hope that conditions in my neighborhood can be better.</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>T1 YES</th>
<th>T2 YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. I am more comfortable with the idea of smoking marijuana (i.e., weed) while listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I am more comfortable with the idea of selling drugs after listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I am more comfortable with the idea of drinking alcohol while listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I am more comfortable with the idea of using cocaine while listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I tend to feel more comfortable with using codeine promethazine (aka lean, drank, purple stuff, or purple) while listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I feel more okay about committing some crimes after listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I am more comfortable with the idea of using Ecstasy while listening to Rap music.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitudes about Hip Hop’s Empowering and Risky Influences

The Individual and Community Empowerment Framework Inventory, which measured student perceptions of the influences of rap music they personally engage, guided data collection at Time 1 (baseline) and Time 2. Individual item scores are below (Table 2) along with scale scores (Table 3). Results suggest no statistically significant changes in perspectives on rap music influences between Time 1 and Time 2. However, individual item scores showed that a substantial percentage of students reported their rap music listening habits as simultaneously empowering and risky.
For example, at the end of the course, more than half of the students reported, that rap music provides me an outlet to express myself (55.6%); rap music helps me see that other people go through similar life problems as me (66.7%); and I connect with other people that share my interests through rap music (66.7%). One hundred percent of students stated, listening to rap music helps me think critically about the world around me. Scaled items showed desirable, yet statistically insignificant, changes for individual empowerment and depressive symptoms. Scaled items showed undesirable, and statistically insignificant, changes for community empowerment and individual risk.

Table 3. Four scaled measures are reported across two time points: individual empowerment, community empowerment, individual risk, and depressive symptoms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Time 1 Mean</th>
<th>Time 1 SD</th>
<th>Time 2 Mean</th>
<th>Time 2 SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Empowerment</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Empowerment</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Risk</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptoms</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test; * p<.05, ** p<.01

Focus Group.

Again, the main focus group prompts asked: (1) In what ways do you now feel you relate to Hip-Hop culture after taking this class? (2) What is your perspective about the course’s integration of cultural studies and personal development? We also allowed students to respond freely to one another’s comments to promote discussion of other salient topics. Upon analysis, focus group responses had four major themes: reflection, relatable, resiliency and role definition.

Students reported the value of personal reflection opportunities facilitated in the course. They were able to reflect on themselves and their unique reality. Students described the course as “deeper” than they expected, conveying an ability for the course to help them beyond surface level discussions allowing depth and meaning. Students were able to use Hip Hop, particularly rap music to connect to and reflect upon powerful emotions and experiences. One student exclaimed, “I can feel it!”

Hip Hop, particularly rap music, is also very relatable to students. They cited the narratives as easily understandable and something they could connect and identify with. A common area that made rap music particularly relatable to students was in coping with adversity. One self-proclaimed “white student from the suburbs” paralleled their personal story with the stories of rap artists from the Bronx. It was here that he suggested that Hip-Hop narratives and life stories were good points for comparison. Kitwana (2005) offered in depth exploration of the complexities of the perception of white middle class youth and young adults as the largest consumers of rap music/Hip-Hop culture. Consumption does not equate to authentic engagement,
however authentic engagement also does not come in only one color and style, an issue explored in contemporary research examining perspectives about one’s own rap music engagement (Travis, 2013; Travis & Bowman, 2011). While it can be debated who is most authentically engaged in the culture, in the collection of students in this research, the consensus was that rap music is relatable, empowering and offers access across all races, class statuses and genders.

Many students highlighted how stories of overcoming adversity, or resiliency were extremely engaging and points of connection for them. Students also suggested that these “success stories” provided a counter story to commercial Hip-Hop culture. Stemming from identification with coping and resiliency narratives, many students felt motivated and inspired by bearing witness to heroic experiences of “bouncing back” from adversity and trauma. Students felt that if so many other people can get through hard times, then it is possible for them too. They felt especially emboldened by stories that described individuals successfully coping with situations that were more difficult than their own.

The final major theme was that of role definition, where students felt a sense of clarity and purpose within their respective life situations. Building on previous inspiration and motivation emerged a conviction and confidence for many students about “what comes next.” This aligns with the action-oriented element of the framework and model. Again, personal growth is the emphasis, but engagement in community growth is also prioritized. Unlike the original Five C model of positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2005), within the EMPYD model, engagement and action is a necessity not just a desirable outcome (Travis & Leech, 2014). Students felt the course was valuable in helping them elicit more empowering aspects of Hip-Hop culture, but they also felt that the personal development aspect of the course gave the opportunity to use this enhanced awareness. As one student indicated, “If I had a class like this 10 years ago, I would be so far ahead.”

**REFLECTION JOURNALS.**

Each reflection journal had a similar exercise asking students to identify both potentially empowering (i.e., esteem, resilience, growth, community, and change) and risky (i.e., substance use, violence, misogyny, instability, externalized esteem) themes within the songs of the week. Although some may argue that these are subjective ratings of empowering and risky content, research suggests that individuals can interpret rap music as having empowering and/or risky characteristics irrespective of the unique assessment of content by others (Travis & Bowman, 2011). We considered this essential for knowledge and analytical skill building, warranting a high level of competence. This skill can help youth quickly evaluate risky content and make decisions about subsequent attitudes and behaviors related to personal growth and development.

For example, when discussing the importance of survival during times of adversity, risky attitudes and behaviors are often prominent. However, individuals
must decide whether their intended outcome is survival, by any means necessary, or survival accompanied by prosocial relationships, concern for the welfare of other individuals, communities and family (Travis, 2013). A strong appreciation of the range of risks inherent in a given situation, including active pathways toward growth (in confidence and competence, but also caring, character and connection) offers promise for longer-term health and well-being (Travis & Leech, 2014). We provided specific songs as prompts (Figure 3). Students also had the option of identifying songs they felt captured the theme of the week for reflections on growth, community and change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection Journals</th>
<th>Sample Of Songs Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Journal 1: Resilience** | Let’s Take A Walk – Masta Ace  
Walk With Me – Wiz Khalifa  
The Ghetto – Freddie Gibbs  
In the Ghetto – Beanie Sigel  
**Choice A** | All I Got Is You – Ghostface Killah and Mary J. Blige  
They Reminisce Over You – Pete Rock and CL Smooth  
So Many Tears – Tupac |
| **Journal 1: Resilience** | Brenda’s Got a Baby – Tupac  
Lost Ones – J. Cole  
My Story - Jean Grae  
**Choice B** | Retrospect for Life – Common and Lauren Hill  
How to Love – Lil Wayne  
**Preview of Growth/Optional**:  
Fatherhood - Saigon  
Stay – Fabolous |
| **Journal 2: Resilience (continued)** | “Little Ghetto Boy”  
By Donnie Hathaway  
By John Legend featuring The Roots  
By Dead Prez  
By Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg |
| **Journal 3: Growth** | Talking to Myself – Eminem  
I’m Beaming – Lupe Fiasco  
Hey Young World – Slick Rick  
Push – Common Market  
Smile – Tupac |
| **Journal 4: Community** | U.N.I.T.Y. – Queen Latifah  
Empire State of Mind – Jay-Z  
Red Nation – Game/Lil Wayne  
The People - Common  
Tales of Men – Akua Naru  
If You Can’t Say Love – Visionaries |
| **Journal 5: Change** | Can’t Trust It – Public Enemy  
I Try – Talib Kweli  
Wounded Eyes – Blue Scholars  
Words I Never Said – Lupe Fiasco  
#Jan25 – Omar Offendum, The Narcicyst, Freeway |

Figure 3. Sample Song Selection for Reflection Journals Across Four ICE Dimensions
Results of the journal reflections suggested that the course had a substantial impact on student empowerment throughout the semester. Each week, students were able to demonstrate a personal connection to dimensions of empowerment by identifying links between the social science concepts, cultural dynamics, musical prompts and their own lives. Specifically, the course itself facilitated personal growth and well-being, as well as student sense of community and intent to engage in positive community change. Students were unanimous in that they understood the definitions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change better than they did prior to the class. They also emphasized that using the lens of rap music allowed them a greater ability to identify and appreciate the relevance of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change to their lives. The depth of these reflection journals is profound. The volume of material is beyond the scope of this project, however, several brief lines begin to tell the story of how students transformed during their engagement with these empowerment dimensions.

Esteem

“I can do anything I put my mind to. My self-esteem has risen. I now believe that I am capable of doing anything I put my mind to.”

Resilience

“Family… I honestly do not know what I would do without them and I am glad that I see that now. My mom has not been the wealthiest mom, or the friendliest, nor has she made the best decisions. But, in the end she did a damn good job raising me and I respect her, love her, and am eternally grateful to her for that!”

Growth

“[The course] made me realize that life isn’t just about me but more like we (meaning myself and the different communities I belong to). I came to the realization that instead of being a pharmacist I would rather be a pharmaceutical researcher and help humanity.”

Community

Students represented the dimension of community with a multitude of meanings. One student spoke of their residential dorm community while another student spoke of their fraternity. Two students spoke of their cultural heritage and connection to their international countries of origin. One student discussed their faith community while another spoke of their sexual identity. This rich array of manifestations of belonging highlights the essential value of community in the lives of individuals. Speaking on cultural identity, one student wrote,
“I have my roots… I always stay true to where I come from and who I am when it comes to my culture. I never feel ashamed to say [where] I am from. The fact that I lived there for six years is a blessing to me because I have been exposed to two different parts of the world… seeing the different living circumstances that people have.”

Change

“My goal is to let every member of the community not lose focus and let the situations they are now facing derail them from their dreams.”

Change In-depth: One of the final reflection assignments asked students to remake a Hip-Hop song by the artist Lupe Fiasco entitled “Words I Never Said.” A posting from a weekly Twitter chat #HipHopEd that focuses on using Hip-Hop culture in education inspired this assignment. The song and reflection activity were within the “change” dimension, because many of the original artist’s (i.e., Lupe Fiasco’s) messages exemplified pride and concern for communities he values and the desire to improve conditions in these communities. For the course assignment, students were asked to reflect on the communities that they value and consider ways in which they could play an immediate role in creating positive change in at least one community. Next, students used the song instrumental and developed new lyrics to describe their sense of belonging (community), concern, and corresponding thoughts about improving conditions in these communities.

The following assignment example exemplifies the interconnectedness of community and change. More importantly, this student embraces a sense of agency amidst the perceived injustices embedded within this community membership, and seeks to increase awareness and coping skills among others experiencing marginalization and yearning for better conditions,

(To the beat/instrumental of Lupe Fiasco’s song “Words I Never Said”)

In a community where there is more oppression than you would know
You cannot imagine how it feels until you through it for a day
The fact that I can never let my feelings for someone show
It is tragic that not everybody knows that you are gay
And, when you finally get the courage up to tell someone
Do not be surprised if they turn around and walk away...
Called out by the teachers, talked about from afar,
Told I was going to hell, and abandoned by friends like a broken car.
Went to three different places, all with the same result,
I wished that I could just drop out and move away,
Walking across the graduation stage was such a relief
I thought I would no longer have to hide who I would be
But, I was wrong about that too, as it would turn out
People are like that everywhere, and you will always be a minority
MIXTAPE CDS/VIDEOS.

The final project was creation of a mixtape CD or video to help consolidate the range of learning and growth that took place. A mixtape format is a traditional component of the Hip-Hop aesthetic offering freedom from the constraints of mainstream distribution in terms of flexibility of content, style and distribution. In the class, this format offers greater freedom of expression to help portray the developmental narratives that anchor the individual and community empowerment framework. The following introduction to one student’s tracklist is an example of the powerful resonance of the mixtape CD/video:

“I ordered the songs on this CD in such a way that it tells a story of the last year of my life. The beginning is songs that are more upbeat and have a positive message. This represents a time when I was happy but oblivious to my surroundings. In the middle, the songs are more serious, and talking about certain issues such as finding myself and dealing with certain friends in my life. Then towards the end I feel that I have more peaceful songs, which represents the peace that I’ve found within myself and with my surroundings.”

Students also reflected on individual tracks to demonstrate their perceived connections to course content and empowerment themes. For example, below are but a few abbreviated versions of many, comprehensive and in-depth statements from students in their annotation of songs and their influence within music engagement.

*Esteem*

*The Prayer* (by Kid Cudi): “Whenever I listen to this, I just sit and think about my life and how I want people to see me. This song makes me want to express my emotions better and say things that I normally know I couldn’t because I would be judged.” (Note: This was the most frequently included song among students).

Kid Cudi’s emotional transparency resonated with many students. Another student that chose Kid Cudi’s “Soundtrack to my Life” similarly stated,

“This song is the truth. “I’ve got some issues that nobody can see/And all of these emotions are pouring out of me/I bring them to the light/It’s only right.” These four bars me make feel more open to letting people get to know the things I’ve been through in my life so they can get to the person I am today.”

*Resilience*

*Doo Rags* (by Nas): “Nas says, “Turning nothing into something is God work/And you get nothing without struggle and hard work.” He speaks about resilience is these two bars. Coming from nothing to make something of yourself is resilience. Coming from some place and making a better place is resilience. The “come up” involved in these process embodies Hip Hop and the culture.”
In this reflection, the student was able to convey an understanding of one version of the concept of resilience, which is a positive instance of well-being in the face of risk or adversity. This student assessed Nas’ statement of “having nothing” as a state of adversity. Although clearly not an absolute association, growing up in poverty is imbued with risk for undesirable outcomes, specifically continued poverty, stress and (under)education/employment. Several students connected to the concept of resilience through their relationship with their mothers and the song “Dear Mama” by Tupac. First, one student wrote, “It a song that reminds me of my mom. It’s a song that makes me reminisce on growing up by her side. There are so many lines in this song that I can relate to.”

“Ain’t a woman alive that could take my mama’s place
And all my childhood memories/Are full of all the sweet things you did for me
And I appreciate, how you raised me/And all the extra love that you gave me
And when it seems that I’m hopeless/You say the words that can get me back in focus”

A second student, commenting on their own selection of “Dear Mama” for their mix, stated,

“Growing up I really didn’t have a close connection to my mother, at least not the kind that I wanted. I never understood why she had to work so much and was never able to go to any of my school plays or just spend time with me. I realized though as I gradually got older that she worked so much because she had to and that’s when I started understanding all the sacrifices she was making for us.”

_Growth_

Make Mama Proud (by Lil’ Flip): One student continued with the theme of a mother’s value. In this instance, a strong connection to his mother facilitates growth through both competency-building and character enhancement.

“I can relate to this song because I’m out here trying to do something positive with my life and make my momma proud. I used to be a knucklehead but know that I am older and wiser. I know that one thing that I never want to do is let my momma down.”

_Community_

Empire State of Mind (by Jay-Z featuring Alicia Keys): “I chose this song because my roots are from NY and I play this song to remind me where I am from and to never forget that side of me. It helps me maintain a sense of belonging to New York.”
Change

Heard ‘Em Say (by Kanye West): One student described how the song was their pathway to greater social awareness.

“I remember first hearing this song at school and we were talking about the injustices that went on in the world. The song made me realize that we were all part of this community and that although it may not be fair sometimes, it’s up to us to try and better it. Although the themes were dark and seemingly hopeless the tone of the song cheered me up and I think gave me hope.”

DISCUSSION

This course used rap music, one aspect of Hip-Hop culture, and the Individual and Community Empowerment Framework, anchored in empowerment-based positive youth development (EMPYD), as a doorway to personal and community change. Students learned about the social and historical correlates of Hip-Hop culture, the nuances of the culture’s aesthetics, strategies for analyzing content, along with the core principles of positive youth development. Not coincidentally, all of the students were successful on tests about social and historical concepts related to Hip-Hop cultures, and core positive youth development concepts.

Results suggested little statistically significant change in perspectives about the influences of rap music. However, results provided a more robust view of the novel influences of rap music and course content throughout the semester. Students were able to weave together rich narratives about the influences of greater awareness of and reflection on the empowering aspects of the rap music they engage. Evidence suggests student transformation across all empowerment dimensions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change. More importantly, these findings suggest that growth in these dimensions must be captured by distinct qualitative and quantitative measures of changes in the actual underlying developmental constructs (i.e., confidence, competence, connection, caring, character, community, and engaged citizenship). Measurement can be best utilized for: assessing (a) universally applicable, but often more covert, developmental outcomes along with (b) the more overt perceived influence of music on the empowerment constructs. The guiding theoretical model (EMPYD) allows measurement using empirically validated tools aligning with dimensions of esteem, resilience, growth, community and change (Travis & Leech, 2014).

Students began the semester exploring the fundamentals of self-esteem. The remainder of the course allowed students to build upon this foundation of esteem to help strengthen their core sense of self and community. They uncovered immense personal strength by examining their own resilience. They reinforced new and expanded visions for their future selves. Students recommitted themselves to communities and social networks. Among these commitments were declarations to be agents of positive change.
Again, the communities students valued and identified with ranged from society in general, to the academic university, to the university dorm, to sexual identity, to cultural identity, to the family. This range was among only nine students. The breadth of these prioritized communities reinforced notions that these ideas and principles of empowerment-based development are universal and can be embraced by many, while also having unique cultural relevance for members of underrepresented groups. These findings speak to emergent data on the profiles of teachers increasingly likely to integrate Hip Hop into pedagogy - those that may be cultural outsiders (Irby & Hall, 2011, p.234). Researchers state that a mismatch may exist between the perceived aims of cultural outsiders, and “the critical and culturally relevant aims of the traditional Hip Hop Based Education researcher” (Irby & Hall, 2011, p.234). The results of this study underscore how the individual and community empowerment framework may be of value as a guiding model that embraces both the universality of the human experience while maintaining substantial space and direction for critical and cultural priorities.

Aside from exams and using a scaled measurement tool in the seminar, students were able to create and express themselves and their growth through lifemaps, through written narratives, through poetry, through illustrations, through rap lyrics, through music, through video, through an action plan, and orally in the final focus group. Each creation and form of expression was a vehicle to capture and represent development throughout the course. These findings echo prior research highlighting the myriad ways that Hip-Hop aesthetics can be of value in higher education (Hall, 2011; Petchauer, 2011a; Petchauer, 2011b; Petchauer, 2012).

Students demonstrated advancements in social and emotional development and analogous areas of empowerment-based positive development: (a) increased self-awareness, and (b) deliberate actions toward positive change for themselves and their valued communities of identity. Results suggest that non-traditional measurement strategies, including the incorporation of Hip-Hop culture and other creative capacities can be beneficial in higher educational settings. Lastly, these examples of growth, advancement and well-being, have promise within an empirically robust developmental frame that is amenable to longitudinal measurement, strategic planning and interventions, and person-environment engagement.

Current research on Hip Hop integrated pedagogy is beginning to elaborate upon the complexities inherent in its use. Petchauer (2011a; 2011b; 2012) does an outstanding job of broadening our understanding of Hip Hop in the classroom by expounding on “the aesthetics of Hip Hop facilitating new learning experiences,” which is even broader than the uses in the present study. We may, as in this study, explore introspection and how people make meaning of lyrics or other Hip Hop “content.” However, we can also help students learn through the ways of Hip-Hop culture. Petchauer discusses how greater attention is given to helping students learn via the processes by which the culture is done (i.e., autonomy/distance and kinetic consumption), including sampling (Petchauer, 2012), resisting artificial binaries (embracing non mutual-exclusivity), critical discourses, localizing content, cogenerative dialogues, mentorship, and new ways of creating and participating in
content (Petchauer, 2011a, 2011b). He concludes that these educational strategies may but do not have to have different effects for teachers or students with different levels of familiarity with Hip-Hop culture (Petchauer, 2011b). A still emerging area within these expanded discussions of Hip-Hop pedagogy, is measurement, or tangible ways of measuring desired outcomes that speak to social and emotional development and outcomes that combat educations propensity to be “repressive, dehumanizing and depleting” (Bridges, 2012, p.335) for some students.

CONCLUSION

We understand that not all outcomes of Hip Hop engagement can be measured, and agree that there are certain influences that have to be “felt.” We suggest that the incorporation of some of Hip-Hop culture’s aesthetics into the university classroom can provide a lens to understand the individual within the community, and the communities that embrace the individual. From this person-environment relationship, “we must learn.” The exciting advances in Hip-Hop pedagogy can enjoy even more secure footing in partnership with well-defined, measurable dimensions that capture the whole student and the relationship between the individual and their prioritized communities. The individual and community empowerment framework provides a structure for Hip Hop and pedagogy to (a) help organize and direct measurement, (b) align conversations with social and emotional initiatives, and (c) help bridge person and environment. Hip Hop within education is more than a tool to reinforce positive academic outcomes. Evidence is accumulating about the many ways individuals engage Hip-Hop culture for betterment. Educators have harnessed the unique assets of Hip-Hop culture for the classroom, even in higher education. We now have tools to measure these influences on student growth and bring pedagogical excellence to life.

REFERENCE


MICHAEL B. MACDONALD

2. A PEDAGOGY OF CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

YEGH3 (Edmonton Hip-Hop History) as a Decentralized Model for Hip-Hop’s Global Microhistories

YEGH3: PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AS ENGAGED ARTS PEDAGOGY FOR HIP-HOP EDUCATION

Michael B. MacDonald PhD (Assistant Professor of Music, MacEwan University)

HipHop Kulture and Hip Hop, the elements of its practice, are slowly democratizing aesthetics and aesthetics education. The democratization of aesthetics is significant because it introduces a critical cultural dimension into aesthetics where none before existed. Aesthetics is still, for the most part, marked by universality that postcolonial scholars like Walter Mignolo (2011) indentify as a hallmark of modernity. In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss the emergence of ‘African- American aesthetics’ (Caponi 1999) or ‘Black Aesthetics’ (Neal 2000). I will also illustrate how critical consciousness resonates at the heart of HipHop Kulture.

In the second part of the chapter, I will introduce a pedagogical approach that has emerged from my work in HipHop Kulture, engaged art pedagogy, and the project-based learning methods that I have begun to employ as a consequence. I have found that as an aesthetics educator responding to the democratization of aesthetics, project-based learning has become an important element of my higher education curriculum. The chapter will conclude with an example of project-based learning, a microhistories iBook on Edmonton Hip Hop called YEGH3.

FROM HIP-HOP CITIZENS TO HIP-HOP HISTORY

This journey began with my 2012 publication, Hip-Hop Citizens, where I discuss the centrality of informal/community pedagogy in ‘street’ Hip- Hop education. As a note, I have since taken up KRS-ONE’s approach to writing HipHop Kulture/ Hip Hop/hip-hop from his 2009 Gospel of Hip Hop, so I would now have titled it Hip-Hop Citizens. I have since been engaged in community dialogue with members of the HipHop Kulture circle and Hip-Hop citizens, or hiphoppas, featured in that publication. These conversations have strengthened my commitment to a critical pedagogy of aesthetics that, inspired by John Dewey’s Art as Experience (1934), Maxine Greene (2001; 2004), and bell hooks (1990; 1994; 2010), might provide

B. Portfolio et al. (Eds.), See You at the Crossroads: Hip Hop Scholarship at the Intersections, 29–44. © 2014 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.
a basis for rethinking aesthetics education through HipHop Kulture. But I am also less naive to the difficulties that are often faced in the development of engaged arts pedagogy. I have identified in particular, two aspects of this challenge. First, there is the struggle to stay true to the goals set out by Paulo Freire in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (2010) and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), expanded by bell hooks as engaged pedagogy (hooks 1994; Florence 1998). The challenge is to develop an approach to Hip-Hop education that emerges authentically from HipHop Kulture. These are theoretical issues informed by community concern. More than one hiphoppa has expressed to me that school-based educators need to be sensitive to the cultural impact studio-based curriculum will have on HipHop Kulture when Hip-Hop elements are reframed for classroom use. This is an area where music theory, cultural studies, and music education cross, and a rich direction for future research, that I refer to as the cultural studies of aesthetics education.

The second challenge, which might be called the public pedagogy of hip hop (Giroux, 2009), stems from a lack of research on the cultural impact of global entertainment products that transform Hip-Hop elements (usually rap and graffiti art) into commodities for sale as ‘authentic’ HipHop Kulture. While there is a mountain of theoretical work generated by critical cultural theorists who discuss this process, there are few community-based research projects that examine these speculations and provide social science feedback on the potential long-term cultural effects, although there is every reason to believe the impacts would be significant.3

This situation might be complex enough if it was not for even newer struggles that Mark Anthony Neal frames as the post-soul aesthetic:

In the post-soul aesthetic I am surmising that there is an aesthetic centre within contemporary black popular culture that at various moments considers issues like deindustrialization, desegregation, the corporate annexation of black popular expression, cybernization in the workforce, the globalization of finance and communication, the general commodification of black life and culture, and the proliferation of black “meta-identities,” while continuously collapsing on modern concept of blackness and reanimating ‘Premodern’ (African?) concepts of blackness. I am also suggesting that this aesthetic ultimately renders many ‘traditional’ tropes of blackness dated and even meaningless; in its borrowing from black modern traditions, it is so consumed with its contemporary existential concerns that such traditions are not just called into question but obliterated” (Neal, 2002, 2-3)

Within this complex territory I am working towards the development of Hip-Hop pedagogy. My approach began with Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy for Critical Consciousness* (2010) documented in *Hip-Hop Citizens*. I formed a culture-circle of hiphoppas, all recognized as important community members. Over a period of months we discussed the above challenges and worked towards articulating our core concerns, our priorities, and next steps. I have since realized that I stumbled
A PEDAGOGY OF CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

into *Participatory Action Research* (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Fine and Torre, 2008; Noffke and Somekh, 2009).

At the close of the first phase of the Hip-Hop PAR, what we now call *Cypher*, we collectively decided that we needed to develop an Edmonton Hip-Hop curriculum and that this must begin with a documented history of Edmonton’s Hip-Hop practitioners. As YEGH, Edmonton (YEG) Hip-Hop History (H3) took shape, I leaned heavily on Freire’s assertion that “the starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people” (2010, 95). We decided it is necessary to frame the development of Hip-Hop locally, so that learners would recognize their place, and their lives, within and through community Hip-Hop history. We may be a long way from New York City or Toronto but we do have Hip-Hop Kulture.

What is at stake here is the opportunity to write a community collective history and in the writing of it, to work towards empowerment. Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* suggests this role for educators, just as surely as Afrika Bambaata’s *Zulu Nation* and KRS-ONE’s Temple of Hip Hop does for hiphoppas. This comparison is not a surface accounting. KRS-ONE, in his lecture at Temple University, said that low self-esteem is created when a person’s “well being is connected to something outside of themselves” this, he argues, is the beginning of poverty. Freire writes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) that: “the oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom” (47). These different voices coming from different times both identify that the pain of domination will be overcome with the development of critical awareness and the expansion of imagination.

What I began to puzzle over in *Hip-hop Citizens* was how a critical pedagogy of HipHop Kulture might be understood also as a critical pedagogy of aesthetics. But what I did not account for in that discussion was how the power of dominator culture is located in aesthetics. For instance, in the 18th century Alexander Baumgarten defined aesthetics as the science of how things are cognized by means of the senses, but soon after, in 1790, Immanuel Kant redefined aesthetics as *disinterested perception*. Kant’s definition has exerted a far greater impact on the philosophy of art in the Western tradition than Baumgarten’s. Once *disinterested perception* became the basis for aesthetics, and not a scientific study of human expressiveness and meaning-making (a cultural study, only European fine art is included in aesthetics. John Dewey’s *Art as Experience* (1934) attempted to overcome Kant’s mentalist construction of aesthetics and more recently, both Terry Eagleton and Luc Ferry have pointed out that aesthetics is really about an Enlightenment conception of individual/personal development and bourgeoisie morality (Guyer 2005, 30) and little about an inquiry into human practices of expression and reception. Walter Mignolo (2011) has argued that the very notion of art, upon which Kant’s aesthetics is based, is itself a social construction, used as a tool to establish *hierarchies of expression* that allowed European bourgeois cultural expression to dominate the rest with terms like folklore, craft, popular culture etc. Mignolo calls this technique the *colonial difference*.
In this chapter I contribute to this developing discussion by illustrating the way HipHop Kulture challenges the *colonial difference*. And since the practice of HipHop Kulture is found in the elements of Hip-Hop, a class project that documents the local history of its practitioners allows for a foregrounding of a postcolonial challenge to aesthetics, provides an opportunity for students to gain critical insights into the writing of history, firsthand experience in doing the cultural studies of aesthetics, and has led to the production of a freely available educational product that will likely make a positive contribution to our community.

**HIPHOP KULTURE IS ENGAGED ARTS PEDAGOGY**

I believed for some time that I was applying critical pedagogy to hip-hop. But as I read more postcolonial theory, studied the history of aesthetics, listened more to hiphoppas, and watched my students coming into awareness of their place and responsibility in university and their city, I realized that I was missing perhaps the most important aspect of my project. HipHop Kulture *is* critical pedagogy. I understand critical pedagogy to be an educational philosophy interested in developing socially oriented, critical consciousness that emerges when students are provided educational situations that engage with core values of democracy and social justice. The hiphoppas I worked with were all engaged in the development of critical consciousness, something central to HipHop Kulture.

When asked about media messages of the culture he grew up on, in a 2004 lecture at Temple University, KRS-ONE remarked that the dominant theme was “everything that you have has no value”. He goes on to explain that dominator culture works to convince you that your culture is valueless, and that the only way to become valued, to get validated, is to buy into its commodities, practices, and institutions. But there is a catch he says. These same institutions, the only ones that have the power to validate you, have created frameworks that keep you out. This negates any possibility of attaining the validation that you are told is essential. This is an impossible situation.

Gregory Bateson (1972) calls this impossible situation a *double bind* (271-278). He explains that it is technique of domination without the outward appearance of it, and sometimes, without the dominators even realizing they are upholding a system of domination. It works when a social actor, as a functionary of a system, makes two contradictory demands. This strategy is powerful as there is no way to solve the dilemma of the double bind within the system. If you stay inside the system, you will forever remain trapped in its double pincers. While Bateson did not theorize the double bind with aesthetics in mind it is evident in KRS-ONE’s story.

KRS-ONE explains that Hip-Hop was a movement to “create an entirely different community”. It needs to be noted that what emerges is a community based on aesthetics. HipHop Kulture is a new type of community culture that is not based, necessarily on traditional notions of ethnicity, language, and geography. In this sense, Hip-Hop HipHop Kulture is the emergence of a postcolonial culture based on aesthetics. This move is perhaps more complex than might at first be noted. It is
not just that a group of people that were kept out of the dominant system created an alternative. It is more significant than that. The emergence and success of HipHop Kulture as an alternative aesthetic illustrated that aesthetics are cultural.

Since this is so, then the philosophical discourse of aesthetics is also cultural and is the cultural product of European Art culture. The entire history of aesthetics is no longer a philosophical discussion of Art (universal), it is the detailed elaboration of one cultural system, one among a great body of other cultural systems, that is aesthetic systems, that are found all over the world. Art is one way of thinking about human creativity. This realization, that aesthetics is a cultural system, also means that Kant’s definition of aesthetics as disinterested perception only holds true only within the cultural system from which it emerged, and that we must reorient the study of aesthetics, so that it now might be the study of culturally informed aesthetics systems.

As you have likely already noted, when aesthetics is shown to be an aesthetic system, then the educational projects that serve it are also culturally bound. It is no longer enough to talk about music education, my area, or art education generally, we must now begin to research and experiment with culturally bound approaches to art/aesthetics education. Music education might now be understood as Western Art Music education, Hip-Hop education, Jazz education etc.

Returning to the issue at hand, the democratization of aesthetics and the double bind of the colonial difference is a struggle that was hard won (if indeed it has been won, of that I am not certain). It began to take shape in the Harlem Renaissance, was forwarded by the Black Arts Movement, and now flourishes in HipHop Kulture. Perhaps the search for HipHop Kultural education will start here.

THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

Inspired by civil rights and Black Power discourses of the 1960s, the Black Arts Movement was radically opposed to any concept of the artist that “alienates him from his community” (Neal 1968), and was “the period extending somewhat beyond the defining decade of 1964 (the year of Malcom X’s rupture with the Nation of Islam) to 1974 (the year of Baraka’s renunciation of absolute black nationalism), during which the category of ‘blackness’ served as the dominant sign of African-American cultural activity. (Benston 2002, 3). Black Arts built on Alain Locke’s 1925 publication The New Negro and upon the Harlem Renaissance which focused on ‘Blackness’. Kimberly Benston (2004) observes:

Blackness…a term of multiple, often conflicting, implications which, taken together, signal black American’s effort to articulate its own of possibility. At one moment, blackness may signify a reified essence posited at the end of a revolutionary ‘meta-language’ projecting the community toward ‘something not included here’; at another moment, blackness may indicate a self-interpreting process which simultaneously ‘makes and unmakes’ black identity in the ceaseless flux of historical change. (3-4)
By encouraging African-American artists to seek inspiration from an ancestral heritage as well as from the ghetto community, Locke believed a unique art “would emerge” (Fine 1971, 374). Black Arts joined with Black Power to form a political and cultural movement within ghetto communities:

The Black Art Movement artists are linked to Black separatist politics and Black Nationalism. The social political and economic conditions of the country during the 1960’s gave birth to the latter group of young, militant artists, who, disdaining the traditions of Western art, seek to communicate with their brothers and sisters in the ghetto. (ibid.)

This was the emergence of a separatist aesthetics. Its success depended, not upon eventual inclusion into aesthetics, but instead, upon creating an alternative, what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2012) has called, aesthetics ‘from below’. Walter Mignolo in *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2000) emphasizes the historical significance of this struggle:

In the sixteenth century, when European men and institutions began to populate the Americas, founding universities and establishing a system of knowledge, training Indians to paint churches and to legitimize artistic principles and practices that were connected with the symbolic in the control of authority and with the economic in the mutual complicity between economic wealth and the splendor of the arts. (Mignolo 2011, 20)

The complex relationships between aesthetics and politics (Werner 1994, 213-218) often called by Theodor Adorno (1977; 1984; 1991) and more recently Jacques Ranciere (2000; 2005; 2007; 2010) the politics of aesthetic/politics of aesthetics is usually reserved for white artists. But “as analysts from W.E.B. DuBois to Cornel West and bell hooks have continually asserted: in African and Afro-American life, culture is politics and politics is culture.” (Werner 1994, 213). This is not unique to any particular culture as Gena Dagel Caponi notes:

Through cultural expressions such as dance, religion, music, and play, societies articulate and transmit the ideas, values, and beliefs that bind people together. Within the very body of the expression—the form of the music, the shape of the dance, the worship practices of the religion—are embedded cultural values. The structure of cultural expression—the cultural aesthetic—reflects and supports the ethics of the society, reinforces its values and philosophy…they emerge from a particular culture in a particular way, and they carry with them what musicologist Gary Tomlinson calls ‘archaeological rules of formation,’ which means their structure has evolved over time in relation to their social function” (1999, 7-8)

Democratizing aesthetics education requires the acknowledgement that cultural aesthetics, because of the colonial difference, do not meet as equals. Just as postcolonialism works to undue political inequalities so too should aesthetics informed by postcolonialism. The first step of this, as I have noted above, is to
problematize aesthetics claim on universality, by recognizing cultural aesthetics. This is an act of aesthetic deconstruction that, in this case, might be understood as “African-derived American Culture (Caponi 1999, 17-31) and should perhaps be seen not so much in terms of participants of one system rejecting another aesthetic system, but more accurately as an emerging into consciousness of a new paradigm. This new paradigm is not anti-aesthetics, but always cultural aesthetics that function as complex social systems which inform the consciousness and identities of participants and observers.

The act of aesthetic deconstruction looks like aesthetic separatism, I think, because there is a political need to create public space for new art systems. An assertion of existence and therefore, independence, is made by the emergence of aesthetic systems that have been ‘othered’ (and dismissed like Black Aesthetics, African-American aesthetics among many, many others).

The separatist aesthetics of the Black Arts is instructive in this regard. Black Arts mentors supported young, mostly African-American artists to take inspiration from their home communities, to recognize their unique perspective, their unique imagination, and to use their arts to help rejuvenate their community culture. Often this would take the shape of “boldly patterned murals painted on the decaying walls of ghetto buildings” (Fine 1971, 374), community theatre, or literature based on street art and inner-city life, that emerged from place-based imagination. That it might be also beautiful is not the only characteristic of significance, the way it might be for aesthetics. It is also significant to note that the Black Arts, as Hip-Hop would later, is a place-based articulation of creative intelligence and a fully flourishing imagination blended with craft that does not require acceptance from (colonial) art institutions. In this regard Blues, Jazz, the Harlem Renaissance, Black Arts, Soul, Funk as well as HipHop Kulture’s emergence, are some examples of postcolonial aesthetic movements that contribute to the decolonization of the imagination. But I do not want to generalize too much, nor make too grand a claim. These are not examples of victories, but a history of public struggles in the realm of symbols, meanings, and social orders.

As the political elements of Black Power Movement were finding their aesthetic expression in Black Arts, they found new expression “in the aesthetics of Afro-American dramatists, poets, choreographers, musicians, and novelists” who were defining “the world in their own terms” (Neal 1968, 39). These elements, championed by a Black inner-city Avant-Garde, posed a challenge to aesthetics, stripping it of any illusion that it could, any longer, claim universality:

In critical theory, Baraka was instrumental in the creation of what became the ‘black aesthetic’ of the 1970s, as well as the ‘vernacularism’ of the 1980s, demanding that African American literature and music be examined in the context of the culture that gave rise to it, with particular focus on the oral traditions of storytelling, sermonizing, and music of all sorts—sacred and secular (Caponi 1999, 21)
Linda Martin Alcoff (2007), reflecting on similar findings between Foucault and Mignolo, remarked on the difference between hegemony-seeking versus subjugated knowledges:

Subjugated or local knowledges always tend to do less violence to the local particulars and are also less likely to impose hierarchical structures of credibility based on universal claims about the proper procedures of justification that foreclose the contributions of may unconventional or lower-status knowers. (80)

Black Arts work to undue the aesthetical double bind and create a new aesthetic order rooted in local expressive practices that leads to critical awareness and liberation. We might see this in the words of Baraka writing about Black Arts aesthetics in a language with which Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal (2006) would resonate:

Our theatre will show victims so that their brothers in the audience will be better able to understand that they are the brothers of victims, and that they themselves are blood brothers. And what we show must cause the blood to rush, so that pre-revolutionary temperaments will be bathed in this blood, and it will cause their deepest souls to move, and they will find themselves tensed and clenched, even ready to die, at what the soul has been taught. We will scream and cry, murder, run through the streets in agony, if it means some soul will be moved, moved to actual life understanding of what the world is, and what it ought to be. (Baraka and Harris 1991, 76)

Baraka’s career-long interest in showing “what the world is” is echoed in the street logic of HipHop Kulture, keepin’ it real. Marvin Gladney (1995) characterized this heritage: “Black art has always been rooted in the anger felt by Afrikan-Americans, and Hip-Hop culture has remained true to many of the convictions and aesthetic criteria that evolved out of the Black Arts Movement of the ‘60s, including calls for social relevance, originality, and a focused dedication to produce art that challenges American mainstream artistic expression…Public Enemy’s Chuck D refers to Hip-Hop as the “CNN” of the Black community”(Gladney, 291).

The Black Arts movement contributed to a political “movement poetics” (Smethurst 2003, 268) that helped create a symbolic politicization of the HipHop Kulture voice that, as Rachel Sullivan (2003) points out, has subjective impact, “African American rap fans are not arguing that rap leads them into social protest, they seem to be indicating that it offers a counter-dominant message that they use as an affirmation of their experience” (Sullivan, 616). It is precisely this self-affirmation that characterizes critical pedagogy and why I think the study of postcolonial aesthetics movements like HipHop Kulture lend an important basis for developing a culturally informed approach to music education that I call engaged arts pedagogy.
A PEDAGOGY OF CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

FROM ENGAGED ART PEDAGOGY TO PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Building upon Freire’s work and her own feminist and antiracist work bell hooks (1990; 1994) has critiqued tradition educational practices by noting:

(a) the metaphysical notion of knowledge as universal, neutral, and objective; (b) the authoritative, hierarchical, dominating, and privileged status of professors; (c) the passive image of students as recipients of compartmentalized bits of knowledge, which limits student engagement in the learning process by not considering them as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences; (d) the traditional notion that the sole responsibility for classroom dynamics rests on teachers; and (e) the Western metaphysical denial of the dignity of passion and the subordination of human affectivity to the rationality. She also points out that the reification of official knowledge from the implications stated above reinforces White supremacist, patriarchal, and capitalist ideologies. (Florence 1998, 77)

These observations are in keeping with the above characterization of the colonial difference that dismisses cultural approaches to knowledge. To counter this hooks advocates:

a. re-conceptualization of the knowledge base; (b) relating of theory to practice to make education more relevant and meaningful, (c) empowerment of students to assume responsibility in conjunction with teachers, for creating a conducive learning environment; (d) encouragement of teachers’ pedagogical emphasis on learner participation and engagement; and (e) understanding of teaching beyond “compartmentalized” schooling, a longer term involvement, development of critical consciousness, and teacher/student self-actualization. In sum, in addressing issues that impact students’ day-to-day lives, engaged pedagogy ‘restores to education and the classroom excitement about ideas and the will to learn,’ while simultaneously nurturing critical consciousness in students (hooks, 1994, p. 12)” (Florence 1998, 78) hooks calls this project engaged pedagogy. The idea of engagement is also found in arts pedagogy and was forwarded by critical aesthetic education pedagogue Maxine Greene: Engagement–the opposite of malaise and not-caring–has been trivialized in current times, as simply affect (certainly not as important in education as cognition) or as motivation (a way to get students to study the things teachers think they should). Engagement, to Greene, involved not just happy involvement or a motivational trick, but rather ‘arousing persons to wideawakeness, to courageous and resistant life’ (Stinson 1998, 224).

Maxine Greene’s definition of engagement is connected to consciousness and “recognizes the contextual and positioned nature of consciousness: ‘Human consciousness…its always situated; and the situated person, inevitably engaged with others, reaches out and grasps the phenomena surrounding him/her from a particular vantage point and against a particular background consciousness’” (Greene, 1988,
21, cited in Henderson et al. 1998, 193). The process of engaged music education therefore satisfies the coming-into-consciousness of the Freirian critical pedagogy, but does so in a way that it retains, and perhaps, elevates the body-in-community. Greene warns that if the aesthetic experience remains inside “aesthetic experience becomes pure escapism, a vacation from the cares of everyday life….aesthetic experience is not just a state of being in a feel-good place: ‘Consciousness…involved the capacity to pose questions to the world, to reflect on what is presented in experience’” (Stinson 1998, 225).

In an interest to create this type of engaged learning environment in a university cultural studies classroom, I approached members of the HipHop Kulture circle to discuss the possibility of producing a project that would connect hiphoppas and university students. I had recently been experimenting with iBook author and thought that an iBook of Edmonton’s Hip-Hop history would make a compelling project that would solve our problem of needing a history book. I pitched the idea to the HipHop Kulture circle and gained support. The project came to be known as YEGH3 (Edmonton International Airport letters [YEG] plus Hip-Hop History [H3]). There were two issues that I needed to address. The first was a curriculum issue, how would I frame producing an iBook as a class activity? The second, was another practical issue, how would we put the book together. That is, how would we write the history in a way that remained true to the aesthetics lessons learned above? The answer to the first question was project-based learning, and to the second, microhistories.

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE: PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional method advanced by the Buck Institute for Education. The method has a five-point definition:

(a) “Projects are central, not peripheral to the curriculum”; (b) “projects are focused on questions or problems that ‘drive’ students to encounter (and struggle with) the central concepts and principals of the discipline”; (c) “projects involve students in a constructive investigation”; (d) “projects are student-driven to some significant degree”; and (e) “projects are realistic, not school-like” Collaboration is also included as a sixth criterion of PBL. (Thomas 2000, 3-4)

PBL provided an environment where students and I, along with two hiphoppas who attended class as community representatives, could engage directly with the production of knowledge. PBL allowed me to put critical conversations into action. Student groups were paired with a historically significant Edmonton Hip-Hop artists, as decided by the HipHop Kulture circle, and were tasked to write their stories for the iBook publication. Not only would students finish the class with a new sense of their city, but also would have a writing credit in a digitally delivered free cultural history book of interest to the Hip-Hop community and likely to general readers.
COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE: MICROHISTORIES

It was decided early in the process that we would not write a single narrative history, but instead present individual histories of 16 artists. We found that there were so many different perspectives and versions of events in these stories that we could not privilege one over the other. This observation was supported by a discussion on writing postcolonial history, how we might learn from the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movements, as we write ‘our’ history. It was further expanded by a close reading of Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s (2012) *Decolonizing Methodologie.* We paid special attention to the chapter on *Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory.* From these class discussions, students engaged with the writing of their individual pieces, what we began to call microhistories. Microhistories is the recognition that history is constituted by a swarm of localized acts and negotiations that in their totality is recognized by its impact and effect as history. In the introduction to *Small Worlds* (2008) John Walton, James F. Brooks, and Christopher DeCorse argue that while microhistory “eludes formal definition”(4) the “link between micro and macro perspectives is not simply reduction or aggregation but rather qualitative and the source of new information” (6, quoted from Peltonen). Instead of framing microhistories in terms of master and metanarratives, I follow Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari (1983,1987), and Manual DeLanda’s (2006) philosophy of multiplicity and scale that recognizes knowledge and experience are produced by influences occurring at different scales. Therefore, reducing microhistories is the act of documenting history at a personal and metroscale, instead of a regional, national or global scale. The metroscale allows the researcher to resist the types of generalizations that make enlightenment modes of history so contentious to postcolonial scholars. Knowledge exists in geospatial nodes (Mignolo 2011, 84) and microhistory is a way of constituting these nodes. Furthermore, constructing nodes plays an important role in a postcolonial aesthetics because as Maida’s (2011) has recognized project- based learning is a critical pedagogy that supports “a sense of ‘knowing-in-action’ that emerges from participating in practice-oriented learning experiences” (763). Doing microhistory is therefore a method for engaged arts pedagogy.

YEGH3: STUDENT RESPONSES

The value of PBL has to be evaluated on the quality of the learning experience not on the quality of the product that is produced. While there is still much to learn about assessing the pedagogical value of PBL, I will contribute feedback provided by students on their experience with the project. The purpose of PBL for me was to create an engaged learning environment that would help students gain critical consciousness. One student’s response illustrated their newfound understanding of the world:

For me, project based learning was as much about the process as it was the final result. At first we were 3 kids emotionally shackled by the bonds of academia,
then we were rather fractionated with different opinions and dissent (which sometimes wasn’t taken lightly), eventually, however, we used all of our unique talents to form a piece with direction, insight, and, most importantly, a message. Unlike many other ‘group’ projects that I’ve participated in as a Political Science student, this project demanded collaboration. It’s impossible to capture the human spirit by merely dividing up the introduction, body, and conclusion to each different member- a common practice in other disciplines. This project demanded in-depth collaboration, emotional investment, and a common direction. By its end, I truly felt that we had achieved something and I take pride in what we produced.

Student comments that illustrated a focus on process over product were surprising. I expected that students would concern themselves with the end product of their world. It was a pleasant surprise to receive some comments that illustrated an awareness of the importance of process:

This has been an amazing journey that has opened my eyes to another culture that I would not have experienced otherwise because of this course. Music has the power to teach and connect people that may not be connected otherwise. This type of leaning (community based group work) was not easy at first because you have a group of different people coming together with different backgrounds/ideas for a project, but I learned a lot from the others in my group.

I definitely found that I personally learned more and was engaged more with this type of “hands-on” learning. I am grateful for this experience that showed me that research does not have to be boring.

YEGH3 provided an opportunity for classroom theoretical work to reach outside the walls of the university to engage students in the life of their community, as one student remarked: I very strongly think that this type of class is important to have more of at the university level and in classrooms more broadly as well. I feel that this type of project-based learning really forces students to interact with their community and helps to show students that they are capable of doing actual, immediate work that really matters to a particular group of people, as opposed to only doing it for a gpa, resulting too often in ambivalence. Project-based learning lends itself to more engaged and enthusiastic students and I know, for me at least, this has made a huge difference in my academic career and has in fact changed the path I will take in graduate studies - highly recommended.

But I have also learned that PBL does not happen without some significant challenges for some students. As a number of students remarked the process had many periods of struggle: Project-based learning helps you to step outside of your comfort zone by engaging in group discussion and teamwork. By doing this, critical thinking becomes more focused and more worthwhile by engaging you in topics you would have never
thought about before. It helps to remind you that everyone has diverse experiences and opinions and encourages a more open-minded, patient way of interacting with our world. I also found that PBL presented challenges for me as the instructor. Some students held resistance to the pedagogical experiments that I developed. As many students noted, PBL is not a norm in university classrooms which has the potential benefit of being new. But this benefit often serves as a double-edged sword. There is a threat that if the project does not go well, students might feel let down by the process, perhaps even used. While I did indeed have periods of concern, I am happy to note that the project was a success and students felt that their time was well used. Yet, it is interesting to note that resistance memories are still so present with students:

[student a] Since Project-based learning is not a norm in university classes, I was at first skeptical at how this will work, but as I attended the classes and did the work I realized that this is the best form of learning. Writing essays and exams just allows you to reiterate what you have learned and then you forget right away, but project-based learning allows you to take everything that you have learned and actually apply it and create something that you can say is mine. You actually have something that you have produced rather than just an essay or exam that you don’t even see or think of again. This is the best form of learning, it allows for the real world to collide with the classroom.

[student b] Overall I thought that the project based learning course was a nice change of pace from my other classes and I look forward to participating in another project based learning class in the future. It allowed me to fully engage in the subject material and further explore something that truly interested me. I enjoyed working with our Hip-Hop artist and learning about the history in our own city of Edmonton. I was hesitant about the group project portion but we all worked together nicely with the same end goal. I’m looking forward to seeing our creation come together!

[student c] This process was chaotic yet rewarding. There was no carved out path and no procedure for this project, but this allowed for a deeply honest and intimate portrayal of Hip-Hop history in Edmonton.

[student d] I was at first a bit skeptical because I’m used to more structured courses. But once my group and I began it started to flow. And I also enjoyed that the course promoted outside class interaction especially being able to interview artists.

[student e] This class was my first experience with project-based learning and it was probably my most enjoyable class at University. It was definitely challenging at times, mainly because I was forced to step out of my comfort zone, but it was well worth it by the end.
CONCLUSIONS

The PBL process and the product, YEGH3, pushed all of us (students, myself, the HipHop Kulture circle) deeper into the issues that will ultimately inform our Hip-Hop curriculum. In this process we learned invaluable lessons that we would not have come up with had our discussions remained only theoretical, or only practical. Finding a blend of theory and practice helped me see the value of developing engaged arts pedagogy.

One of the obstacles that I have been struggling to overcome is the divide between the world of culture creation and the world of aesthetics education in academia. The history of the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement and HipHop Kulture has illustrated that civil rights, ultimately the expansion of democracy, impacts all parts of our society, even (and maybe specifically) arts education. As an arts educator, I am committed to learning these lessons and finding an education environment that can nurture democratic learning, and contribute, in some small way, to a better world. I am relieved that after this difficult work a student will comment that a classroom “pushes you to develop the skills necessary to create an environment built out of a deep respect and responsibility for the community, your team, and your work” and that learning might “expand the way we see society and the cultures within it!” The history of the Black aesthetic is not just a history of African American artists; it is a history of community resistance that may help all students see their role in making a more equal society. As one student commented: “This project helped me connect with artists and musicians in my area, understanding that our experience of Edmonton was that of a community. It’s hard to feel like there is a place for the arts in this town. Because of YEGH3, I saw that there were other artists, struggling to build the same foundations.”

END NOTES

1 I use KRS-ONE’s terminology from the Gospel of Hip Hop (2009) as a guide to distinguish between HipHop Kulture as “our unique community of consciousness,” (80), Hip Hop as the name of the cultural acts that include Breakin’, Emceein, Graffiti Art, Deejayin, Beat Boxin, Street Fashion, Street Language, Street Knowledge, and Street Entrepreneurship” (ibid), and hip-hop, “those things and events associated with Rap music entertainment, hip-hop is a music genre” (ibid).
2 I use Aesthetics as the philosophical study of art that began in the 18th century, aesthetics education as the instruction provided to enhance cultural appreciation, and aesthetic in the casual sense of the term that means of the senses and in a general sense is the opposite of anesthetic.
3 I do not follow the traditional Marxists notion of dialectics, that HipHop Kulture is necessary changed by hip-hop products, but I have seen in this my research that Edmonton hiphoppas are invisible even to local fans of Hip-Hop elements. It is as if hip-hop controls the channels of access, the gateways to the Artworld, to use the sociological terms, and that this creates cultural undergrounds which HipHop Kulture is both obscured and protected.
4 Cypher5 because we are in a circle freestyle knowledge. Knowledge is the 5th element of HipHop Kulture after the first four artistic elements.
6 As reported in the University of Indianapolis Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning June 2009 report: Summary of Research on Project-based Learning.
REFERENCES