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HIP-HOP IS LITERACY: ENHANCING ENGLISH SKILLS USING HIP-HOP AS A
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MULTILITERACY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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by

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ABSTRACT

HIP-HOP IS LITERACY: ENHANCING ENGLISH SKILLS USING HIP-HOP AS A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MULTILITERACY

Kai C. Jones

Recognizing the effectiveness of multiliteracies and replacing canonical texts with hip-hop lyrics, teachers can actively engage students in English classrooms at the same time allowing for cultural diversity and appreciation in the classroom. Although, several studies have been conducted to show the effectiveness of the use of non-traditional text in the classroom and the effectiveness of utilizing a culturally diverse curriculum to help with reading engagement and comprehension; this study examined how recognizing the cultural differences between student's home and school life, acknowledging the importance of students' culture, and utilizing a wide range of instructional materials, can promote the development of critical thinking.

DEDICATION

To my daughter, may you never be made to feel like you are not enough in a system that historically refuses to recognize your greatness; you are more than enough!

To all my black and brown students who survived a system that refused to see you, but you still managed to shine. To all those who have ever felt unseen, I see you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my biggest and greatest support system and cheerleader, my mother. Through all of my stages in life and school, you remained a support and refused to allow me to stray too far. You taught my siblings and me the importance of education from a young age, and it is because of you, I formed a love for education as well as a love for helping others. You are still my rock and remain there even today, encouraging me to realize my dreams.

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Finally, thank you, Hip-Hop. We have been friends from young, and you continue to inspire me and generations behind me. There would be no #HipHopEd without you. Continue to speak life into urban teens who, without you, may be lost. Thank you for positively influencing my life, music, fashion, and vernacular. Most importantly, thank you for always letting me know I was not alone, and who I see in the mirror is enough!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School life and real life, for me, were separate entities growing up. School life consisted of being studious: sitting quietly and listening to the teacher or at least seemingly listening to receive a passing grade and prove that I had done well in my studies, being respectful of my elders at all times (even if I were being disrespected), and most importantly code-switching. Gleen and Johnson, in their 2012 study described code-switching “as part of mirroring and dissociation communication strategies when they interact with members of dominant social groups (2012). However, code-switching went beyond language and became a way for marginalized people to assimilate and be accepted by dominant culture. It affects the way people dress and behave in certain settings (Glenn & Johnson, 2012). There was no way I could enter a school building and speak in the manner in which I was accustomed outside of school life, while in real life. This was our life requirement for me and so many others while I grew up. Although we lived in New York City, one of the biggest and most diverse cities in the nation, we were told to leave the outside of the school building outside; that outside was inappropriate and had no place in a school building. We were never asked how we were feeling or what we needed, we were penalized when neighborhood beefs were handled in school, we were taught content that had no connection in our daily lives, and we often could not see the purpose of learning it. We were lectured about the dangers of doing drugs, although this was the 80's the epicenter of the crack era, and a part of most of my and my peers' everyday life. No one considered the student who might have had a family member on drugs, maybe even a parent when these lessons about drugs were taught. No one

considered the emotional turmoil one of the students might have been going through as they described these "monsters" who did these drugs and the life they would be living because of their addiction.

School was not a place for real-life; it was a place to play pretend. Pretend like I wanted to be there, pretend like I was learning, pretend like I did not use words like dope, fresh, diss, wack, or fly, and pretend that my neighbor's mom was not one of the "monsters" they lectured us about, pretend that my mother did not carry a stick with her as she walked us to the bus stop because we never knew whom we would encounter on our building stairs. The classroom is the place that fosters the belief that students of color cannot be who they are, and at the same time be smart according to the criteria these institutions have implemented (Emdin, 2016). This, in many ways, depicts schools as not being the safe space they were advertised to be; it was a place to teach us to be someone other than ourselves. To play pretend.

Being a former student and educator in the largest school district in the nation, New York City, I have witnessed countless students enter into the literacy classroom, lacking engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm. Each year I require my students to take a survey to ascertain their beliefs and ideologies of reading and writing. Every year I grow more discouraged at the lack of interest many students had in English. This brings me back to my childhood, where I could remember being what was considered a "good student" and having a thirst for knowledge but a lackluster feel to engage in the content being taught. My students, much like me, disliked English because they could not relate to what they were being taught, and therefore they shut down, causing them to be intimidated and disengaged even before the classwork began. Some were better at

pretending than others, but the over-testing, irrelevant content, and sometimes culturally insensitive curricula often swallowed my students, their creativity, and their confidence. As Emdin (2016) points out, “The longer teachers teach, the better they are at their practice. That practice may serve to empower students or it may break the students’ spirit. That decision belongs to the teacher”. I did not want to be the latter. I was aware of the negative connotations associated with students of color and the unfair demands placed on them by a system that did not see them. They did not lack the will or skill to learn; they were not given the tools to learn. School for them became a place that they viewed as working against them, which did not foster but crushed their dreams and became a place of dread instead of hope.

However, my peers and I did have one thing we could rely on to take us outside of our reality, unite us, teach us about our realities; music, specifically hip-hop. The roots of hip-hop are buried in the alienation from the world that marginalized people were forced to navigate, for students who are not fully able to participate in schools, hip-hop is often their solace (Emdin, 2010). Music has always taught us about the times we live in. In many ways, through music, we learn history; we learn about ourselves. We relate to artists who go through similar circumstances that we have. As children, music gave us the answers and the reassurance that we were not alone; that was needed during tough times, something schools did not give us. I also witness my students using music as their form of escape from reality. They often discuss artists, their lyrics, their clothes, how they flash money in videos and social media posts. Students often ask if they can listen to music as they complete their independent assignments as they believe that it helps them process information better. Music, specifically hip-hop, brings students together.

Purpose of the Study

In urban schools, identity is everything. Students show who they are by how they speak, dress, and even walk. This identity is usually the result of outside influences such as hip-hop artists. They are often ready and confident enough to face the world. However, when they enter the school building, they are immediately chastised for wearing their pants a certain way, showing too much skin, and speaking in a manner not deemed appropriate for the classroom. Urban youth are often discouraged from displaying their culture both inside and outside of the classroom. They are subjected to rhetoric that reinforces to them the notion that how they carry themselves directly reflects how successful or unsuccessful they will be in school. Emdin (2016) refers to this as "classroom colonialism," and unconsciously tells students that they "can only be smart when they are not who they are" (pg. 14). Because of this thinking, urban youth are often forced to carry the blame for low achievement in schools. In a speech given by Bill Cosby in front of the NAACP, Cosby alluded to the fact that urban poor parents would instead focus on buying their children sneakers and clothes than investing in their child's education (Suarez, 2004). However, this is not the case. In my experience, many urban youth, although motivated to learn, do not connect to what is being taught in urban schools and feel undervalued, causing many to shut down. Many urban students thrive when met with understanding, topics that relate to them, and content connections to real-life.

In this ethnographic study, I examine the impact of multiliteracies and replacing canonical texts with hip-hop literacies. Hip-hop as literature will be used to see its effects on students in urban schools. Also, this study examines how recognizing the cultural

differences between students' home and school life, acknowledging the importance of students' culture, and utilizing a wide range of instructional materials, can encourage students to become more motivated and engaged in the high school English classroom.

Significance of the Study

I suggest that a successful school in the 21st Century not only recognizes learning differences but also acknowledges different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. This study recognizes that the idea of culture goes beyond ethnicity to include but is not limited to: gender, gender identification, youth culture, and popular culture. For purposes of this dissertation, culture is defined as a combination of human activity, production, thought, and belief systems and recognition that culture is constantly changing (Ladson-Billings, 2014). When there is a lack of cultural references in schools and classrooms, it can negatively impact student learning (Alsubaie, 2015). A misunderstanding of culture and diversity can also lend itself to misdiagnosing of students and higher special education referrals (Farnsworth, 2016). This misunderstanding and misdiagnosis can ultimately not only hurt students but schools as well by continuing to contribute to the achievement gap that exists between minorities and their white counterparts. Ladson-Billings (2006) defines the achievement gap as more of an "education debt." By doing this, she is debunking the notion that minority students are lacking. Instead, we as a collective are forced to recognize and hold ourselves accountable for the financial, historical, sociopolitical, and moral debts that plague low socioeconomic neighborhoods, ultimately affecting children of color achievement in school. By ignoring a students' life outside of school and not recognizing cultural differences, schools contribute to the increase in the educational debt.

This debt manifests itself most in reading comprehension. Reading comprehension has been on a steady decline. Many studies have been dedicated to discovering the reason for the decline. Issues, such as socioeconomic status (Hart, Soden, Johnson, Schatschneider, & Taylor, (2013), English as a second language (Lesaux, & Kieffer, (2010), technology (Mangen, Walgermo & Bronnick, 2013), and text complexity & independent reading (Spichtig, Hiebert, Vorstius, Pascoe, Pearson, & Radach, 2016) are noted contributing factors in the decline. Although reading comprehension, in general, has been on a decline, the gap between the scores of white and Black students reading scores still exists. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report card, in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts, 12th-grade Black students scored 32 points lower on the 2019 reading assessment, down 2 points from 2015. Research has also been dedicated to showing the significance of the achievement gap related to test scores amongst low socioeconomic and minority students compared to others (Bornstedt et al., 2015). Although many interventions and reforms have been proposed throughout the years, the reading achievement gap still exists.

Scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) and Christopher Emdin (2016) have argued the positive role of culture and culturally relevant pedagogies in urban spaces. Hip-hop lends itself to the growing argument on how to incorporate students' culture within the lessons they are taught. Growing up in New York City, hip-hop was always a part of my everyday life. As a child, I can remember days in the playground in my apartment building in Queens, where we blasted hip-hop songs. Hip-hop was used to bring everyone together. From the beginning of its conception, hip-hop has been used to bring concepts together to form what we have come to know as hip-hop culture;

emceeing, deejaying, break dancing, and graffiti. This tradition has held true as hip-hop unites people from all cultural backgrounds. It is no surprise then that hip-hop can be used to unite youth culture with their elders and school culture with neighborhood culture.

When looking at current curricula, there has always been a lack of diversity with what is taught in classes, especially high school English classrooms. Many districts still rely on outdated, culturally insensitive material to be used in English courses. Canonical texts such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Beowulf*, and *The Canterbury Tales* are still requirements in many districts. More diverse texts are only offered as a small group or supplemental readings. However, as recognized by Ladson-Billings (1995a), "students are expected to 'engage the world and others critically,' rather than merely memorizing from outdated textbooks, which students in some urban communities only have access to" (p.162). Pedagogy in urban schools should allow students to learn about themselves and their communities while still immersed in rich and challenging content. hip-hop as literature can be used to teach English skills and at the same time teach students about themselves. Both Ladson-Billings (1995) and Emdin (2016) argue that schools committed to being culturally relevant should be using the content, materials, and lessons that challenge students to become advocates for themselves. Instead of ideally memorizing text, they should be able to speak about the inequities in their schools, classrooms, and the world around them and ultimately be able to fight for these inequalities that exist. Because hip-hop, like other music genres, speaks about the circumstances of the times, it is ideal that hip-hop can be used to teach literacy skills and at the same time teach students about the world around them. Ultimately

receiving "pedagogy that empowers [them] intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.18). Bridging the academic gap must be seen from the lens of receiving payments to reduce and ultimately pay off the "education debt."

Representation of teachers is also a factor in many schools. However, studies have shown that the percentage of white students has decreased by 13% over the last two decades (National Center for Education Statistics 2012). The Center for Public Education (2012) reports that Hispanic, Black, and Asian populations will grow significantly through the year 2050. The teacher population in public schools remains 79% white (NCES, 2020), many of whom are not culturally adept. When teachers do not understand the students they teach, they will not understand the different cultural references that the students bring into the classroom. Emdin (2016) suggested that teachers visit places like churches and barbershops to understand the youth that live in the neighborhood and go to the school they teach at. Exploring these establishments in an urban neighborhood gives you an idea of what the students in the neighborhood bring into the classroom, what engages them, and what they hold in high regard. These spaces are critical in urban neighborhoods.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

1. Does multiliteracies and the use of hip-hop pedagogy in English classrooms impact the motivation and engagement of high school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in sociocultural and critical theory frameworks. The ideas behind sociocultural theory are best explained by Vygotsky, who believed in the importance of understanding the connections between society, culture, and the development of minds (Unrau and Alverman, 2013). In essence, individuals are affected and shaped by their surroundings. In literacy, one's connection to text and vocabulary will ultimately be guided by their experiences outside of the classroom.

History of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978/1986)

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and belief that knowledge comes about from experiences within a student culture coincide with my approach. Children learn from who they are around, and that they will continue to learn based on whom they interact with daily. Teachers and adults encourage student's cognitive development by giving them a visual and model to follow or mirror. The more interaction and conversations a student is involved in, the better their vocabulary, understanding of language and creativity. As teachers', we have to recognize students' individuality based on their daily interactions and cultural experiences and understand that each student will be different and offer a unique experience. These experiences also include experiences and exposure in their everyday lives. Many urban students connect to one another and others through hip-hop culture.

History of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy (Freire, 1970/1993)

By sticking to the goal of critical theory, to understand and to help overcome the social structures through which people are dominated and oppressed, Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), creates a link to the classroom of the oppressed, which becomes known as Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy. Freire outlined the process of teaching

students reflective thinking where they not only learn about their oppressor and how they are oppressed; they also learn how to become change agents and question and challenge these oppressive ways. critical pedagogy as defined by Kincheloe (2008), “understands that people around the world constantly have to deal with modes of oppression emerging from dominant power” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. vii). Critical literacy uses reading and writing to empower the oppressed individuals and allows them to become more aware of the society they live in and the tools needed to liberate themselves (Unrau and Alverman, 2013).

Kincheloe (2004) suggests that anyone who is interested in educating children in America should question what goals that particular institutions of learning embrace and how they engage certain populations (Kincheloe, Bursztyn, Steinberg, 2004). This study focused on how the dominant culture, which has become the focal point in schools, should ensure cultural relevance in their curricula. For the past 500 years European American has an impact on education, yet, class is not addressed in schools and classrooms. Whereas, many people advocate for racism, sexism, and homophobia, there is, however, a void when dealing with class oppression within schools (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2007). Critical literacy is appropriate because the study addresses a present-day social issue and includes the four dimensions of critical literacy as noted in Unrau and Alvermann (2013). These factors, along with the idea that change is constant and needs to be present in education, more than words but with actions. The start is by changing requirements that are not representative of student populations. As stated by Lewison & Leland (2002), "interrogating the everyday world, questioning power relationships, appreciating multiple realities and viewpoints, analyzing popular culture

and media, and taking action to promote social justice" (p. 78) is one way to ensure cultural relevance and representation in curricula. Using Hip-hop as a gateway to social justice will afford students the opportunity to use their real-life interests, cultural references, and familiarity merged with literacy skills.

History of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, as defined by Ladson- Billings, 2014, "is the ability to link principles of learning with deep understanding of (and appreciation for) culture" (77). Proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy argue that it is a way to "ensure that those who have been previously disadvantaged by schooling receive quality education" (83). It is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Young, 2010).

In 1995, Ladson-Billings published two articles which she used to lay the groundwork for culturally relevant pedagogy. In her studies of eight teacher's success in an urban classroom setting, she attributed their effectiveness to three important domains; academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2014). She emphasized these findings by defining culturally relevant pedagogy as a "theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions perpetuate" (Young, 2010).

I am suggesting that schools develop curricula that respond to students' everyday life and recognize the culture of the population in which they teach. English curricula especially should be written with the student population in mind, and literacy skills

should be used as a tool for students to empower themselves and their communities. Also, schools should be reorganized in a way that uses the culture of its student population to create an actual safe space for students to learn and thrive, avoiding both conscious and unconscious ways of reinforcing negative stereotypes while pushing oppressive ideals.

Definition of Key Terms

The following operational definitions guided this study:

Breakdancing: Breakdancing, also known as b-boying and breaking, is a style of dance made famous in the 1970s but lost steam after "the Freak" came out, became popular again in the 1980s. Breakdancing combines coordination, acrobatic and intricate body movements, style, and aesthetics (Red Bull Editorial Team, 2020). It gained global popularity after the movie *Breaking* was released in the 1980s and became extremely popular amongst youth in South Korea, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, and Japan (History of Hip-Hop).

Call and Response: In the classroom, call and response typically refers to the teacher making a call and students responding in unison to the call. Although usually verbal, it can also include both hand and body gestures. The Call and Response strategy is usually used as a way to gain student attention. However, the origins of call and response can be found in the Black Church, often used as a way for the Pastor to keep the congregation engaged. Terms like "Amen" are shouted out when the Pastor feels like he may be losing his audience and in unison the congregation would yell "Amen" back, bringing everyone back in focus. This term also has roots in hip-hop. When MCs would try to get the attention of the crowd they would yell out popular phrases that the audience

would, in unison, respond to. In all instances, call and response is used as a way to gain attention and increase engagement when addressing a large crowd (Emdin, 2013).

Cogenerative Dialogue: Structured dialogues that build on students' Hip-hop identities and familiarity with the Hip-hop communal tradition of Cyphers are one of the most long standing cultural rituals of Hip-hop (Love, 2013). Cogenerative dialogue allows for different stakeholders in the classroom or school to engage in conversations about rules, roles, and responsibility of everyone to promote an environment of inclusion and respect.

Comprehension: The ability to understand and interpret what is read and integrate what is already known. There are several skills needed for efficient reading comprehension: knowing meaning of words, ability to understand meaning of a word from discourse context, ability to follow organization of passage and to identify antecedents and references in it, ability to draw inferences from a passage about its contents, ability to identify the main thought of a passage, ability to answer questions answered in a passage, ability to recognize the literary devices or propositional structures used in a passage and determine its tone, to understand the situational mood (agents, objects, temporal and spatial reference points, casual and intentional inflections, etc.) conveyed for assertions, questioning, commanding, refraining etc. and finally ability to determine writer's purpose, intent and point of view, and draw inferences about the writer (Reading Comprehension, n.d.).

Co-teaching - Usually defined as two or more professionals collaboratively teaching a group of students. However, this study will be defined as encouraging students to be the "expert at pedagogy...while the teacher is positioned as a novice who is learning

how to teach" (Emdin, 2011, p. 288). Co-teaching, in this instance, allows teachers to become the student and students to become the teacher, allowing teachers to study how students learn from one another to understand students' learning styles better and reflect on their teaching practices.

Cosmopolitanism - Based on the philosophical construct that human beings are responsible for each other and that individual differences should be.

Critical Literacy: Critical Literacy as defined by Lewison, Leland, & Harste (2008) is literacy practices that encourage students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice. (p. 3)

Five Dimensions of Critical Literacy:

1. Interrogating the everyday world- Students should see everyday issues with new lenses and not just accept what has been. Students should examine the impact of cultural and historical influence on their lives.
2. Questioning powerful relationships- Students should go beyond personal and begin to understand relationships' power/ unequal power. Educators should encourage the recognition and questioning of social structures that keep power in the hands of few amongst students.
3. Appreciating multiple viewpoints- Encourage students to look at situations from a multitude of perspectives. Students stand in others' shoes to gain a deeper understanding of text or situation.

4. Analyzing Popular Culture and media- Students should recognize the impact of popular culture and media in their everyday lives and how social norms are communicated through these platforms.
5. Taking action to promote social justice- students should be encouraged to take a course of action to bring about change in unfair practices they may encounter. Students should become actors instead of spectators and challenge the status quo (Guzzetti, 2002).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Culturally relevant pedagogy encourages educators to connect students' home and school lives while still meeting the expectations of the curricula. Ladson- Billings (1995a) coined the term as she identified the most effective ways for educators to reach and teach African American children. She outlined the necessary criteria for educators as follows: "(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160).

Deejaying: DJing is the act of mixing records on a turntable. A DJ is now more widely known as someone who mixes recorded music for an audience and can encompass anyone from a radio personality, mobile DJ to a club DJ (History of hip-hop). DJ Herc is known as the godfather of deejaying. Herc revolutionized the party scene in the Bronx by borrowing from dub artists like U Roy and creating the art of mixing; mixing encompasses assembling seemingly disparate clips of music into a cohesive, structured musical arrangement. He used multiple pieces of music to create a continuous soundtrack that would keep partygoers on the dance floor (Kitwana, 2002).

Emceeing: Emceeing (rapping) is one of the pillars of hip-hop culture. Also known as the Master of Ceremony, is the person who performs on stage. Walsh (2016) summarizes emceeing as the vocal style used in Hip-hop music and is characterized by spoken word or rhythmic chant. Like many other cultures, emceeing can be linked to the oral tradition. Before emcees were considered musical artists, they were used to getting the crowd excited for the Disk Jockey (DJ); they were the ones who could move the crowd in old-school hip-hop. After the recording of Rapper's Delight in 1980 by Sugarhill Gang, the emcee became the center of hip-hop (Walsh, 2016).

Graffiti: Graffiti is writing or drawings that have been scribbled, scratched, or sprayed illicitly on a wall, trains, bridges, and other surfaces in public places. In the 1960s, New York City Teenagers began "tagging" or stylized signatures of names they invented. Taggers multiplied in the 1970s and began to seek out even more risky and conspicuous tagging spots to enhance their reputations. Graffiti is also believed to express underlying social and political messages. Over the last three decades, hip-hop graffiti has become an international phenomenon across the world (Christen, 2003).

Hip-hop Culture: Hip-hop originated in the South Bronx section of New York City in the mid-1970s. Hip-hop was a way for Black and Latin youth to express themselves during a time of unrest and uneasiness as the Bronx burned (Chang, 2005). Hip-hop culture includes five elements: deejaying, emceeing, break dancing, and graffiti art. After its conception in the Bronx, hip-hop's influence spread to youth culture all over the world.

Hip-hop Generation: Hip-hop generation is a term that was coined in the mid-1990s by the head editor of hip-hop music magazine, The Source. The term refers to

those born between 1965-1984 as the age group most representative of hip-hop and influence in art, fashion, music, and dance. The term attempted to focus on the issues that define our time, which went beyond simply rap music but helped politically mobilize African Americans to address economic and educational difficulties. (Kitwana, 2002). For this study, the hip-hop generation will include high school students born after 2000.

Hybrid Learning: Hybrid learning combines face-to-face instruction, traditional classroom experiences, experiential learning objectives, and digital course delivery that emphasizes using the best option for each learning objective. (Boyarsky, 2020).

Literacy: Literacy is commonly defined as "the ability to read and write." However, according to Peterson (2020), literacy goes beyond the ability and is a tool used as a global metric to assess a community's health and competence. Where there are higher literacy rates, there has also been a correlation to better nutrition, more economic opportunities, and environmental sustainability such as crop rotation, recycling, and renewable energy, leading to better health.

Multiliteracies: Multiliteracies is defined by the New London Group (NLG), is a theory that "literacy teaching should be more responsive to the diversity of cultures, including subcultures, such as communities and affiliations, and the variety of languages within societies" (Mills, 2010). Multiliteracies erase the idea that literacy instruction is/should be monolingual or monocultural.

Pedagogy: Pedagogy refers to teacher approaches to teaching and the effect it has on learners. It is essentially how teachers teach and is formed by an educator's teaching beliefs and understanding the dynamics of culture and different ways to learn. In order to

help students to build on prior learning, meaningful classroom relationships must exist. Pedagogy is essential in helping students to learn more effectively.

Reality Pedagogy: Emdin (2011) defined "Reality Pedagogy" as a teaching method that focuses on the cultural understandings of students within a particular social space" (p. 286). Reality pedagogy comprises 5 C's, co-teaching, cogenerative dialogues, context, cosmopolitanism, and content. The 5 C's are tools that educators can easily use in their classrooms to be culturally relevant while using the reality of their students to drive their instruction.

Temple of Hip-Hop: Started in 1996 by hip-hop artist KRS-One is a hip-hop preservation society. It functions as an authentic hip-hop ministry that preaches the attainment of peace, love, unity, and safely having fun through the mastery of breaking, MCing graffiti art, and DJing. The mission began with the Stop The Violence mission in 1989 and Human Education Against Lies (H.E.A.L.) in 1991. KRS-One's goal was to show and inspire the hip-hop industry that hip-hop music went beyond music entertainment. He began to document and preserve the culture of hip-hop to pass it down from generation to generation and establish it as a global culture. Since 1991, every ten years, K.R.S. attempts to have the key players in hip-hop culture, including breakers, emcees, graffiti writers, D.J.s, beat-boxers, music executives, journalists, professors, and legendary artists of all sorts, contribute to the actual historical documentation of Hip-Hop's "cultural" existence (Templeofhiphop.org).

Urban High School: Urban schools are classified as city schools by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The NCES categorizes all schools into four locales by their size, population density and location in relation to a city. These schools

are located in high poverty, urban areas. These schools are often characterized by lower academic achievement than suburban schools, and higher enrollment than both suburban and rural schools (Urban Education, n.d.).

Youth Popular Culture: Culture is generally defined as the totality of how people live their lives and make sense of their existence. Youth culture is the norm that affects children, adolescents, and young adults. Within youth culture is popular culture; Hicks-Harper (2000) defines "popular culture" as how youth spend their time, values, attitudes, styles, and behaviors and transcends race, ethnicity, gender, and social or economic status. Youth popular culture also encompasses their concerns and how they interact with their peers and society.

Summary

This chapter discussed issues related to the lack of cultural diversity in curricula and its effect on reading comprehension of urban high school students. In particular, the chapter focused on the link between culturally relevant pedagogy and reading engagement. The need to recognize cultural diversity amongst students and the need to include curricula in schools that motivate and encourage students. The following chapter will present a review of literature related to the use of multiliteracies and hip-hop in classrooms and its effect on reading comprehension.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comprehension is the act of constructing meaning with oral or written text. The act of comprehension starts with code (pronunciations and spellings), linking them to words, and then linking the words together to form sentences, paragraphs, texts, and genres that reveal meaning. To comprehend what is read, a reader will need to learn skills tailored for each learner as well as have a significant amount of knowledge.

Understanding the definition of comprehension and what an effective reader looks like is not enough to teach children comprehension. Many teachers fall short with teaching comprehension for several reasons: curricula focus more on nonfiction than fiction, middle school curriculum replacing reading with English, teachers not being appropriately prepared in teacher preparation programs, and the lack of teaching a variety of comprehension skills and strategies with the student's backgrounds in mind. When Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was introduced, it included specific requirements for the amount of nonfiction reading versus fiction. The majority of the reading focus became the reading of nonfiction text and fiction excerpts. The idea behind the change was to help increase student vocabulary and schema, however, Stotsky (2012) an education professor argues:

This misplaced stress on informational texts (no matter how much is literary nonfiction) reflects the limited expertise of Common Core's architects...in curriculum and teachers' training...It makes English teachers responsible for something they have not been trained to teach.... There is absolutely no empirical research to suggest that college readiness is promoted by informational or

nonfiction reading in high school English classes (or in mathematics and science classes). The decline in readiness for college reading stems in large part from an increasingly incoherent, less challenging literature curriculum from the 1960s onward...and the assignment of easier, shorter and contemporary texts—often in the name of multiculturalism (Stotsky, 2012).

Along with Common Core Standards, many programs developed to be used in schools claiming the inclusion of CCSS and were implemented inside school. Scripted programs such as Code X and Expeditionary Learning were adopted by many schools; this took away much of the creativity and individuality of teachers. The programs focused on excerpts and the reading of nonfiction text. Resulting in even less exposure to a variety of text for many students, especially those in urban schools.

Cultural diversity in the classroom is an integral part of a student, and reading motivation, ultimately affecting reading comprehension. One cannot ignore a student's cultural background with the expectation that the student will be successful in a classroom environment. Cultural values should influence both educational research and practice. Diversity and cultural understanding are two essential factors for running an effective school. To effectively teach children, one must understand what the child needs to be successful, especially in the area of reading. Teachers must be able to teach a wide range of students with different backgrounds, both culturally and educationally.

Review of Literature

The Decline in Comprehension

Over the years, there has been a decline in reading comprehension. Many studies have been dedicated to discovering the reason for the decline, and most agree that as

students get older, their comprehension skills begin to show a decline. A study of 2,203 students in 34 public schools across six grades located in 16 states representing all regions of the United States done by Spichtig, Hiebert, Vorstius, Pascoe, Pearson, and Radach (2016) found a decline in reading comprehension and efficiency of current students with students from 1960. There are believed to be several factors that lead to the decline, including the push for silent reading and independent reading books.

Mangen, Walgermo, and Bronnick (2013) conducted a study where 10th-grade students were given the same text to read using different formats. One was given the text in print, the other as a PDF on a computer screen. The print group had better overall comprehension of the text, suggesting that the use of digital text can be a factor in the decline of reading comprehension.

The Role of Culture in Literacy

Culture plays a significant role in shaping literacy learning and teaching. When thinking about teaching literacy and reading practices, one must consider students' cultural differences in understanding. Students from different cultures can struggle with attention to cues when topics are outside of their cultural context and schema is not present: some include reading for comprehension, reading quickly and accurately, paying attention to detail, and understanding word meaning in context. In a study conducted by Steffensen, Joag-Dev, & Anderson (1979) demonstrated that when students are familiar with cultural norms, they make a better interpretation of the text than when they are not. Also, encoding can be affected if students speak different languages or differences in context and academic language. A student who has not been around schooled adults can have problems with strategic processing and self-regulation; background knowledge will

differ depending on the culture in the classroom and the one expected to be understood in the text they are reading and motivation to be successful in school. These types of differences are only learned through research and can only be corrected through practice. When students come to school with nontraditional backgrounds, those educators who try to facilitate literacy and reading comprehension processes need to systematically consider the learning and motivational implications of the classroom activities and materials they provide (Rueda, p 98).

Literacy instruction and research should examine teachers' instructional beliefs and practices. A teacher who wishes to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy must be cognizant of the students they have in front of them; this includes how curricula are written and what is used and recognized in the classroom environment. Teachers must consider the texts they use and the multiple contexts such as school and home in which literacy teaching and learning occurs. They must recognize the cultural differences between students' home and school life, acknowledge the importance of students' culture, utilize a wide range of instructional materials and multiliteracies, and maintain a growth mindset that helps their teaching and helps with the development of students' critical thinking abilities.

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Cultural diversity in the classroom is an essential part of a student's reading comprehension. One cannot ignore a student's cultural background with the expectation that the student will be successful in a classroom environment. Gay (2002), defines culturally responsive teaching as:

Using cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching more effectively...culturally

relevant pedagogy is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (p. 106).

Gay (2000) further outlines five components that can work together to produce culturally responsive teaching: 1) Development of a knowledge base about cultural diversity; 2) development of knowledge of culturally relevant curriculum; 3) demonstrated caring toward students of color; 4) development of successful strategies to communicate and work with students of color 5) cultural congruity in the classroom incorporating all of the components.

Cultural values should influence both educational research and practice. Diversity and cultural understanding are two essential factors for running an effective school. To effectively teach children, one must understand what the child needs to be successful, especially in the area of reading and writing. Teachers must be able to teach a wide range of students from different backgrounds, both culturally and educationally, making their pedagogy culturally relevant. In her book *The Dreamkeepers*, Ladson-Billings (2009), describes the basic ideas needed for teachers who want/do practice Culturally Relevant Teaching as follows:

1. Have high self-esteem and a high regard for others.
2. See themselves as part of the community. They see teaching as a way of serving the community, and they encourage their students to also give back to the community.
3. See teaching as an art and themselves as an artist.

4. Carry the belief that all students can succeed.
5. Have the conviction that all students come to school with knowledge and that knowledge must be explored for students to be successful (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Ladson-Billings (2014) believes that change in education is necessary, and as her ideas spread, so did its meaning. She explains that culturally relevant pedagogy is not merely adding a book to a lesson by an African American author during Black history month or having a Kwanzaa celebration. Culturally sustaining pedagogy instead of focusing on one racial or ethnic group, they push to understand multiple identities emerging in the arts, literature, music, athletics, and film. Culturally sustaining pedagogy attempts to move toward a "hybridity, fluidity, and complexity never before considered in schools and classrooms" (Ladson-Billings, 2014). In order for a teacher to address cultural relevance in their curriculum they must first acknowledge and understand that the education system in place is fundamentally inequitable. A teacher must be willing to stop the unfair practices of trying to transform children to fit into an unfair system or to send the message that they have the ability, if they work hard, to get to the top of the social caste pyramid. Teachers who recognize the inequities teach students how to end or change the inequities instead of just fitting in or accepting their place in an inequitable society (Fay, 2019).

Paris (2012) took the idea of "culturally relevant pedagogy" and expanded it even more. He felt that the use of the terms "relevant" and "responsive" was limiting. He offered a new term, "culturally sustaining pedagogy", as a term that supports the value of multiethnic and multilingual present and future. The term was not meant to devalue

Ladson-Billings' term but to improve upon the notion by speaking to the changing and evolving needs of pedagogy in the 21st century. The new term incorporated "multiple ways that pedagogy shifts, changes adapts, recycles and recreates instructional spaces" (Ladson-Billings, 2012).

In one study conducted by Young (2010) on culturally relevant pedagogy, the study set out to define, implement, and assess culturally relevant pedagogy as a viable pedagogical tool. The study was conducted in Maplewood Elementary, located in an urban part of the northeastern United States, and included both teachers and administrators. The first part of the study consisted of engaging both teachers and administrators in difficult conversations concerning race and achievement. The practice was based on a framework used in the critical race theory (CRT). Next, the participants and the researcher began looking at how culturally relevant pedagogy was used in scholarship and how they could establish a shared understanding of the theory to implement it effectively in classroom practice.

The research revealed that too many teachers' culturally relevant pedagogy seemed impossible as it clashed with traditional teaching methods. Many of the curricula were not created with cultural relevance in mind. Many new teachers found it challenging to learn the required curricula and incorporate what they had learned about culturally relevant pedagogy. The pressure teachers felt about deviating away from the material needed to be covered for the preparation of the high-stakes test that has become the focus of the education system.

Although Young (2010) admits that there were many limitations to the study, including the time frame and the number of participants, the study still raises many issues

with the education system. Although there is a push for districts, schools, and classrooms to become more culturally aware, the current system does not allow much flexibility to counter cultural bias. High stake tests have become a focus in classes instead of children's basic education; this "teach toward the test" attitude must be eliminated if there is to be any change seen in how schools and teachers approach culture in their teaching.

Reality Pedagogy. Emdin (2011) defined “Reality Pedagogy” as a teaching method that focuses on the cultural understandings of students within a particular social space, like a science classroom” (p. 286). His ideas, like Ladson-Billings, draw on the need to draw on students’ culture to drive instruction; he, however, includes the importance of utilizing the reality of students when teaching. Reality Pedagogy consists of what Emdin (2011) calls the “5 C’s”: cogenerative dialogues, co-teaching, cosmopolitanism, context, and content. Cogenerative dialogue allows for different stakeholders to engage in respectful conversations about rules, roles, and responsibility of everyone to promote an environment of inclusion and respect. Co-teaching allows students to become co-teachers and master specific content they will teach to their classmates. The teacher instead takes on the role of the student and they watch as the student delivers the information making note to what the student does that catches the attention of their peers and better understand students’ learning styles, while providing an opportunity for students to learn in ways that reflect their realities. The teacher can then use what they observe when they are disseminating information to the students. Cosmopolitanism, in Reality Pedagogy, is based on the social construct that individuals respect and value all individuals, and all individuals hold an equal right as humans. As humans and individuals, we all should respect each other’s differences. The fourth “C”

context is a way for both students and teachers to bring artifacts into the classroom that helps to bridge the gap between home life and culture with school life. The artifacts are used to represent who they are and where they are from. Finally, the last “C” content draws on the teachers’ willingness to acknowledge their own limitations with academic content relevant to student lives and to construct content and learn with students (Emdin, 2011). Through this approach to pedagogy, Emdin is acknowledging the necessity for teachers to understand, respect, and include students' cultures in the classroom. Students’ reality should be a part of pedagogy in order for them to relate to what is being taught.

Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies, as defined by the New London Group (NLG), is a theory that "literacy teaching should be more responsive to the diversity of cultures, including subcultures, such as communities and affiliations, and the variety of languages within societies" (Mills, 2010). Thus, instead of viewing literacy as language-based, multiliteracies refers to the making of meaning through the interaction of different communicative modes, especially those connected with the electronic media (New London Group, 2000). Multiliteracies erases the idea that literacy instruction is/should be monolingual or monocultural. Schooling in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was used to standardize national languages. The word literacy has been previously associated with a singular national form of language which requires students to master a complex set of rules that allows for others to distinguish the perceived notion of correct usage. Instead the NLG argue that it must be acknowledged that “there was no singular canonical English that either could or should be taught anymore”, linguistic and cultural differences create communication patterns that

incorporate specialist and situational language so the recognition and understanding of multiple “Englishes” is critical in 21st Century education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

According to the New London Group (1996), four related components are continually revisited: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice in multiliteracies pedagogy. Situated practice involves building on students' experiences from their out of school life and real-world connections with content. Overt instruction assists students in the learning process by learning what their individual needs are first. Critical framing enables students to develop their own meaning and more profound understanding by questioning texts and considering texts' social and cultural context. Transformed practice gives students an opportunity to utilize existing meanings to create new meanings (New London Group, 2000).

Multiliteracies focus on language as well as the use of multiple ranges of text forms that can be used in the classroom to teach both reading and writing. The recognition of multiliteracies also pushes the idea that teaching should include multimodality and allow for multiple channels of communication. When planning lessons, the use of aural, visual, kinesthetic, spatial, and social approaches are crucial to multiliteracies (Mills, 2010). As well as the use of linguistic, visual, spatial, and digital texts to support visual, media, technological and critical literacies (Albers & Harste, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Hobbs, 2006; Unsworth, 2006). Bringing the arts into the English classroom engages students in multiliteracies and expands the meaning of text to include paintings, ceramics, photographs, films, plays, storytelling, and concerts (Albers & Harste, 2007).

The literacies necessary for the 21st Century support the development of collaborative and communicative skills by providing students with different ways to represent knowledge and communicate that knowledge to others (Bruce, 2007). Therefore, when these skills are integrated into the classroom, teachers are not only supporting and encouraging the development of students' literacy skills but also helping to engage and improve students' social literacies. Multiliteracies in the secondary English classroom, students should be able to extend their understanding of the world's "culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 9).

An example of multiliteracies in action is the use of graphic stories to narrate immigrant experiences. The *Graphic Journey* project was a multimedia literacy project that took place in a middle school ESOL classroom. The students expressed themselves through "diverse linguistic modalities and engaged in multiple literacies to learn more about the English language, writing, and technology" (Danzak, 2011). The students first listened to read aloud of graphic novels, then interviewed their families, engaged in several writing assignments throughout the process, and all opted to use technology to create their graphic novels after exploring different options. The experience allowed for the multi-points of learning literacy while incorporating the student's personal lives, which is vital for keeping pedagogy culturally relevant.

Types of Literacies

Digital Literacies. Digital literacies refer to the ability to use technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use, and create information. To be digitally literate one must be able to navigate modernization and globalization in

information communication technologies. Digital skills should be transferable and be applied to new technologies. Digital technologies include social networking, film, and music, as well as dissemination tools like YouTube, and digital text (hyperdocs/links) (Kapur, 2019).

Visual Literacy. Visual literacy is the ability to decode, interpret, and communicate using a combination of traditional print and digital imagery. Humans develop visual abilities by seeing and at the same time incorporating other sensory experiences. In visual literacies individuals should have the competence to understand and create meaning from images. Digital literacies include photographs and art pieces, as well as the usage of applications such as Canva, YouTube, and videos (Kapur, 2019).

Cultural Literacy. Cultural literacy is the familiarity and ability to understand idioms, allusions, and informal language content that creates and constitutes society's culture. It allows all in a community to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences of other societal cultures' customs, values, and beliefs (Kapur, 2019).

Critical Media Literacy. Critical Media Literacy engages the ability to question, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and create media messages. Those who are media literate are aware of the impact of media on the individual and society. They can develop strategies to discuss and analyze media messages and awareness of media content as a text that provides insight into our contemporary culture and ourselves (Rosen, 2010) (Alvermann, Hagood, & Moon, 1999).

Multimedia Literacy. Multimedia literacy extends beyond simple reading and writing to the new forms of literacy formed by digital technology development. Multimedia literacy should include audio and visual components such as text, animations,

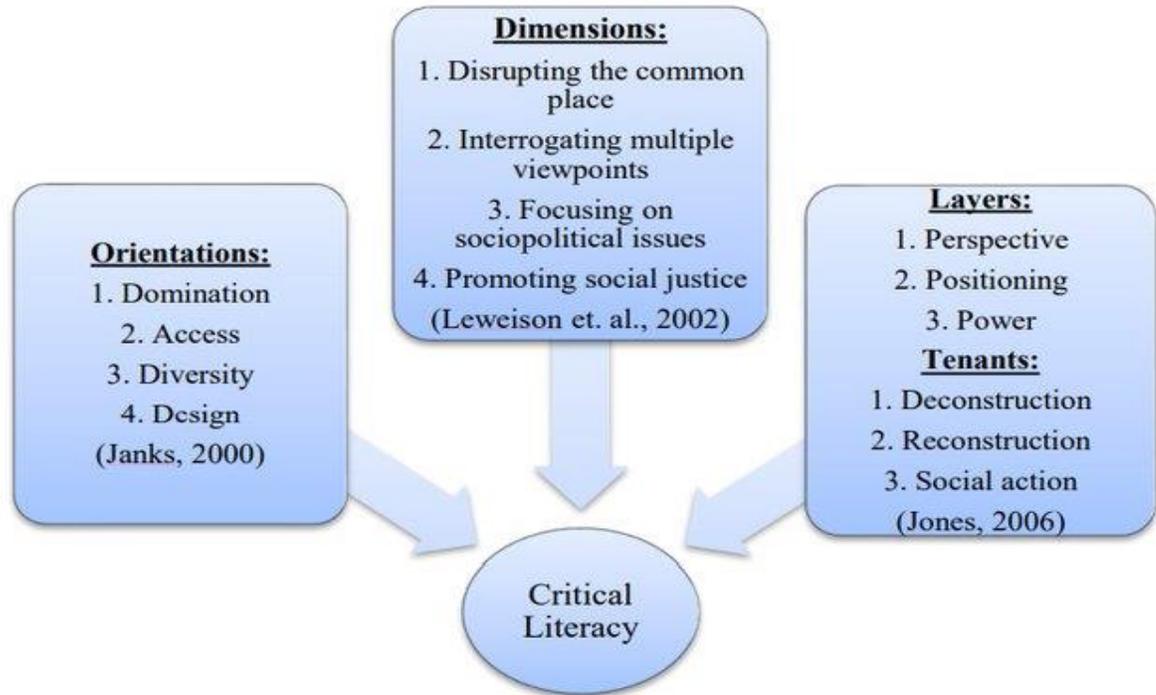
video, and images. Multimedia literacy is often associated with multimodal literacies as they incorporate the tools necessary to create and communicate multiple modes of literacy (Rosen, 2010).

Informational Literacy. Information literacy refers to the competency to locate, evaluate, organize, comprehend, create, and communicate off-line and online information appropriately within legal, ethical, and social guidelines. Someone who understands informational literacy should be able to access, evaluate, use, and manage information. In addition to using information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand, control the flow of information from a wide variety of sources and apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011).

Critical Literacy. Critical literacy is the ability to question, challenge, and evaluate the meaning and purpose of various texts and multimedia. It incorporates the ability to question, examine, or disrupt the opinion of an author. Those who understand critical literacy should analyze and evaluate a text, question the origin and purpose, and take action by representing an alternate perspective (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2011).

Figure 1

Orientations, Dimensions, Layers and Tenants to Critical Literacy



Note: (Langston-DeMott, 2016, p. 26)

Hip-Hop

The history of hip-hop can be traced back to the 1970s, in the Bronx, NY, and created by young people of color, specifically Black and Latinx, as a way of social protest. Hip-hop's origins came from youth looking for a way to express themselves during the Bronx's burning and a time of uneasiness while constructing identities and bond socially (Chang, 2005). Hip-hop was a way for marginalized and disenfranchised youth to use their voice. Although, today, often associated with rap, hip-hop has a rich artistic culture that includes emceeing, deejaying, break dancing, and graffiti. After its

conception in the Bronx, hip-hop's influence began infiltrating youth culture all over the world.

Hip-hop culture has woven itself across lines of racial difference in America and is not just a part of the poor, urban American landscape (Morell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Kitwana, 2002). Through media, hip-hop could cross many barriers and become more of a cultural entity, becoming a global phenomenon. According to Harvey (2000), hip-hop has expanded beyond the ghetto of the Bronx and is now a multi-cultural worldwide phenomenon. In 2001, hip-hop surpassed the country music genre as the most popular musical genre in the United States and has become a dominant cultural force here and abroad (Piekarski, 2004). As a result of its mainstream popularity, hip-hop began to influence the musical taste of youth, fashion choices, and language.

Hip-Hop In Education. Using hip-hop in education can help to transform children's thinking about the world they live in. Hip-hop has always been used by youth to express the trauma they were facing in the world around them. Artists such as JCole, Lauren Hill, KRS-One, and Kendrick Lamar, create albums that vividly tell stories of struggles they were forced to overcome, such as peer pressure, misogyny, alcoholism, and violence (Love, 2016). Kendrick Lamar, the first rap artist to receive a Pulitzer Prize for his 2017 album, DAMN, is known for his ability to tell stories intertwined with historical facts and speak life into youth and hip-hop fans. The Pulitzer committee called DAMN. "a virtuosic song collection unified by its vernacular authenticity and rhythmic dynamism that offers affecting vignettes capturing the complexity of modern African American life (History.com)." This achievement helps to solidify the idea that although hip-hop and hip-hop education has widely been criticized and have mistakenly been associated with

urban youth of color, it has significantly contributed to American culture. Moreover, although hip-hop got its start in Black America, it has been embraced by many worldwide (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). According to Runell (2008), both hip-hop music and culture is a powerful cultural art form and can influence so many because:

1. Hip-Hop music and culture have the capacity to stimulate the imagination and emotion of listeners through empirical story-telling;
2. Hip-Hop music and culture are able to create a public conversation where multiple experiences as well as multiple intelligences are valued; and,
3. Hip-Hop music and culture act as a public, global sounding board for artists and fans to question universal attitudes about nationality, race, class, and gender representations. (p. 51).

Hip-hop can be an effective tool in the classroom because it is relatable in youth culture, not just Black culture. Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) assert that hip-hop transcends race and can be used in the classroom, and hip-hop music and culture can be used to promote academic literacy and critical consciousness. In his song *HipHop Knowledge*, hip-hop artist Lawrence "Kris" Parker, better known by his stage name KRS One (an abbreviation of "Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone") and founder of The Temple of Hip-hop, explains that there are actually nine elements of hip-hop:

Well, today hip-hop, we are advocating that hip-hop is not, just a music, it is an attitude, it is an awareness, it is a way to view the world. So, rap music, is something we do, but HIP-HOP, is something we live. And we look at hip-hop, in its 9 elements; which is breaking, emceeing, graffiti art, deejaying, beatboxing,

street fashion, street language, street knowledge, and street entrepreneurialism – trade and business (KRS-One, 2001).

Hip-hop culture is more than just music; for many youth, it is a way to express themselves and to explore and relate to the world around them. For many youth, it is also a way to generate wealth for their families. Growing up in poverty, many urban youth spend time often rapping, listening to rap, or participating in cyphers. Those who are able to become famous prove to earn lucratively and buy their way “out the hood”. Rappers make money from the sales of albums, number of streams they receive, touring, and appearing on shows. Hip-hop generates more than \$10 billion a year (Watson, 2006). Many hip-hop artists have been able to use the money made to invest in other industries, for example, 50 Cent, Jay Z, and Diddy all have their own successful liquor brands.

For others it is a way to understand what urban youth experience in America and see the world from a different perspective. As when it was created, hip-hop has the ability to unite, educate and give a voice to the voiceless. In the classroom, the pillars of hip-hop can engage, bridge the gap between home and school life and teach youth at the same time. Chang (2005) refers to the five pillars of hip-hop and their connection to the classroom, with each addressing the learning styles of students: MCing (Oral), DJing (Aural), Breakdance (Physical), Graffiti (Visual), Knowledge (Mental), making it a viable tool for learning when used as more than a simple cultural connection to content or supplemental reading activity and instead used to acknowledge the contributions youth culture has had in this country as well as allowing for them evaluate the world they live in on their terms. While still encouraging them to use education as a tool to help them to make a difference in their lives and those around them.

Hip-Hop as a Language

Language vs. Dialect. In his 2016 article “What’s a Language, Anyway?” McWhorter attempts to explain the differences between a language and dialect. He claims that this is difficult to do because many people assume that dialects are lesser than languages, which is not necessarily true in that dialects are as grammatically complicated as familiar languages. Another assumption is that people can understand different languages until they get further away from where they originated. He suggests that if we are looking for a formal definition in that, “languages are written and standardized and have a literature, while dialects are oral, without codified rules, and have no literature” (McWhorter, 2016, para. 12). Language is what is deemed popular because it is actually written, and can be read by many in addition to being spoken, dialects are just spoken. As stated in the article, a typical objection to this notion lies in the recognition of oral literature. He concludes by saying that there are no languages, just dialects (McWhorter, 2016).

Hip-Hop, in its own right, is therefore its own language. Hip-hop is both oral and written (lyrics) and has multiple dialects. The dialects will differ depending on the location in which the song originates. Atlanta, New York, and California for example will all have the popular terms associated with their geographical locations. For example, the word “friend” in New York can be represented by the word “son”, in Atlanta “patna”, and California “bro”. Although the dialects differ, they are still understood by each other.

Hip-Hop Pedagogy. Emdin (2010) calls for a teaching approach “which involves a process of learning and or utilizing the complex nuances of communication in hip-hop and a valuing of student culture” (p. 62). Hip-Hop pedagogy entails incorporating the

creative elements of Hip-Hop into teaching. It is a way to authentically and practically invite students to have a connection with the content being taught. It also can assist with incorporating their experiences and everyday realities (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015).

Adjapong and Emdin (2015) tested the use of “hip-hop pedagogy” in their science classrooms, focusing on two pedagogical approaches; co-teaching and call and response. In hip-hop, a Master of Ceremonies (MC) performs for the crowd; they are usually accompanied by a fellow MC who is also familiar with the music and performance and can aid and add to the performance; in teaching, this is called co-teaching. Co-teaching in education is defined as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a group of students with diverse learning needs” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p.25). Co-teaching is usually referenced when speaking about two teachers paired to share classroom responsibilities and work together to educate students. When using this approach in a hip-hop pedagogy, the co-teacher is instead a student in the classroom who becomes the professional and teaches specific content to both the teacher and their peers. This gives the student a sense of ownership and empowerment. Where the teacher is usually viewed as the only expert, the responsibility is now shared.

The second hip-hop pedagogy that is referenced in the study is call and response. Call and response during a hip-hop performance is used by the MC to allow the audience an opportunity to participate in the performance and stay active during the performance. Call and response in teaching is similar where the teacher initiates an action, and the students respond with the same or a similar action (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015). For their study, Adjapong and Emdin (2015) used the clapping of hands in response to the teacher speaking a specific phrase as a management tool. The students knew that when they

heard that particular phrase, they responded by clapping. At the end of the clap, the students would hear the phrase “No Music” and began to clap the well-known hip-hop beat “No Music” by the Harlem rapper, Voice of Harlem. The hip-hop pedagogical approaches were well received in the classroom because they were rooted in the culture of the students and reflected life outside of the school.

Hip- Hop Practices. Jones (2018) recalls using hip-hop in class to increase writing and promote social justice. Although hip-hop was offered as an elective within her New York City high school, the class was used to enhance the writing and research skills of students. Students were exposed to hip-hop songs that tell a story and allow students to dig deeper into the content of the lyrics. J.Cole in particular, was used during one of the lessons. The song is played, then the lyrics are read. The students annotate the song to get the meaning from the lyrics. They then expound upon the lyrics and dig deeper to recognize some of the social injustices the rapper has experienced or is referencing in the song. This leads to further discussion and research about the injustices. The students can engage in hip-hop while still learning required literacy skills and enhancing their knowledge of the world around them (Emdin & Adjapong, 2018, Chapter 9, pg. 102).

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) designed a curriculum and incorporated hip-hop music into a "traditional" senior English poetry unit to increase motivation and participation in discussions and assignments and to teach critical essay writing and literary terminology in context. The study proved to be extremely successful among students. The students were engaged and used their expertise and positionality as subjects of the post-industrial world to make powerful connections to canonical texts; they were

also reported having fun while learning about a culture and a genre of music with which they had great familiarity.

Love (2011) conducted a study to prove the effectiveness of using hip-hop in the classroom of younger children to engage their learning through cultural relevance. She argued that examining the situated learning contexts of young urban learners who engage with hip-hop communities of practice is essential to understanding urban youths' lifelong developmental potential established from the onset of life. Through her study, she found that culturally responsive pedagogy (using hip-hop) allowed for complex language-shifting skills and learning through hip-hop's cultural practices was natural, tacit, spontaneous, and provided a sense of belonging for students from diverse cultures.

Research has also focused on teacher populations and their desire to incorporate nontraditional text into their classrooms with the hope of engaging students and making lessons more culturally relevant. Irby and Hall (2011) conducted a study to identify the extent to which hip-hop, non-research, teachers use hip-hop based education in their classrooms, who these teachers are, and what population they teach to gauge the interest of teachers to connect with their students. A majority of the teachers' work with populations in grades 1 through 8, 50% report having more than ten years of teaching experience and teach in the local "urban" school districts (Irby & Hall, 2011). Showing the desire, need, and willingness to incorporate hip-hop into their curriculum to engage their student populations and recognize their cultural backgrounds within a classroom/school setting.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Research Question

1. Does multiliteracies and the use of hip-hop pedagogy in English classrooms impact the motivation and engagement of high school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

Research Design

This study utilized ethnography, to examine how recognizing the cultural differences between a student's home and school life, acknowledging the importance of students' culture, and using a wide range of instructional materials can increase students' motivation and engagement in English while promoting the development of students' critical thinking skills. Ethnography is an attempt to describe aspects of culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Although there are several definitions of culture, when using this theoretical framework, "culture embraces what people do, what people know, and the things that people make and use" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 27). By embracing and utilizing hip-hop pedagogy in current curricula, students will be participating in learning that they are familiar with, either by being aspiring rappers or idolizing rappers they connect with culturally in their daily lives.

Qualitative Research Approach

This study used a qualitative research approach. I chose this approach because when considering a student's culture in learning and trying to dismantle the idea that all students should transform and learn according to the guidelines set forth by the more dominant

culture. One cannot merely use oppressive statistical ways of determining the importance of how one is motivated and engaged in a classroom setting. A qualitative research approach goes beyond numbers and looks at the student as an individual instead of comparing them to others. The study seeks knowledge of how nontraditional forms of pedagogy will impact students' motivation; this can only be determined through conversations and observations. Although motivation and engagement can coincide with how well a student may do on a test, this is secondary to a student genuinely learning and feeling a part of the education system.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) describe several qualitative research characteristics: it is naturalistic, uses descriptive data, and has meaning. This study is best suited for a natural setting because I will be looking for changes in student motivation and engagement in an English classroom. The classroom will be an obvious place to interview students. During the times of Covid 19, all learning has been switched to a virtual setting; therefore, the interviews and focus groups will be done in a zoom/virtual setting instead of the actual classroom. The data that will be collected through interview transcripts are descriptive and will not rely on numbers or statistical data. The data will be analyzed for common or recurring themes. Finally, this study is immersed and committed to understanding and accurately capturing the perspectives of student participants.

Paradigm

When I consider my research, philosophy, and literacy definition, my ontology will fall into the relativism category. I believe that truth changes and that there are multiple versions of the truth. Truth can evolve and change based on your experiences (Killam, 2015). More specifically cultural relativism because activities and beliefs should be valued

on their own culture and not be based on someone else's culture (Robbins, 2011). Since ethnography is the analysis of the characteristics of a people, it is then understandable why cultural relativism is important. Often students of color are misunderstood in the classroom or school setting because their values and morals are not known to others outside their culture or respected. Decisions that are made and behaviors that are exhibited are a direct result of the students' cultural values and should be expected as such not judged based on the culture, expectations, or ideas of the dominant culture. I cannot change the way a student engages in an English class by just changing the content within the class. It was necessary for me to understand and respect the whole student; that includes looking at them as individuals and understanding their customs, characteristics, and beliefs.

Emic is a subjective approach where the researcher interacts with the research subjects to gain an in-depth understanding of what is going on. I will say my research will lean more towards an emic approach. I want to conduct interviews and interact with the subjects of my study. I am also bringing my own knowledge and experience with hip-hop and the public school system. As I conduct my research, I will approach it from the view of an insider; not disconnected from the subjects. Although the study is inclusive and beneficial to all, the focus of the study is primarily on urban children of color. Ontology also dictates your epistemology; therefore, because my ontology is relativism, my epistemology will naturally be emic (Killam, 2015).

The underlying paradigm in this study is interpretivism. Researchers who use the interpretive paradigm seek to view the world through its participants' perceptions and experiences. Those experiences are then used to construct and interpret understanding from gathered data (Creswell, 2013). Because interpretivists believe that knowledge is

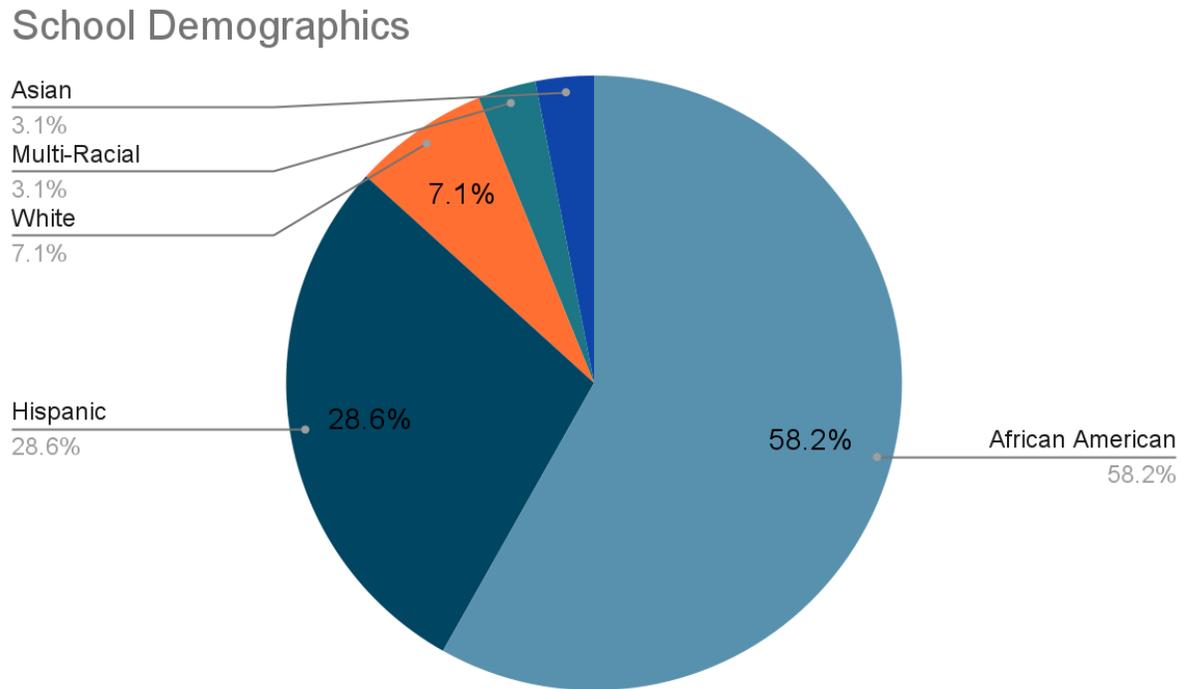
personally experienced, exploring the experiences of urban students applying English skills to hip-hop lyrics will allow students to use those personal experiences to learn content in an English classroom and expand their personal experiences into social justice. This study is an attempt to uncover what pedagogical tools can better motivate and engage students, using text that students are familiar with outside the school setting and can relate to, such as the lyrics to their favorite hip-hop songs, rather than those traditionally used in an English classroom setting.

Participants and Setting

For the study, data was collected from seven high school students in a 12th grade English classroom in an urban school in Charlotte, North Carolina. Students are randomly placed in an English classroom at the beginning of the semester through scheduling. The participants will be selected from a pool of volunteers in my, the principal investigator, classroom. Students had access to a flyer explaining the research and the need for volunteers located on my class Canvas pages and sent through my class Remind. Volunteers showed interest by contacting the principal investigator via email, stating their interest, and the researcher randomly chose students from the volunteer list. Students were males and females between the ages of 16 - 18 and had English as their first language. According to the school's website, the ethnic breakdown had not changed within the past five years and was as follows: 58% African-American, 29% Hispanic, 7% White, 3% Multi-Racial, and 3% Asian. 55% are eligible for free lunch, and 7% are eligible for reduced lunch. This site was selected because it is where I work currently. It gave me direct access to the students, especially during this time country dealt with Covid 19, and most schools were currently operating virtually.

Figure 2

School Demographics



Procedures

This study utilized a qualitative research design to examine how recognizing the cultural differences between students' home and school life, acknowledging the importance of students' culture, and utilizing a wide range of multiliteracies can promote the development of students' critical thinking reading skills. The primary data source for this study was focus groups, surveys, student interviews and the implementation of several literacies. Focus groups were conducted via Zoom and were recorded. Surveys were used to grasp students' perspectives of High School English Classrooms in the past and after completing the study. Individual interviews were conducted at the conclusion of

the study via zoom and in person. In person students are students who have chosen to return to in-person learning due to Covid-19 and hybrid learning.

Surveys- Were given to students both before and after the study. Surveys were given through a link provided in the chat during our scheduled class zoom call. All students were requested to participate in the survey with parent consent. Pre-surveys were conducted during the first week of the semester; the post was given at the unit's end. The surveys helped determine students' interest in English and reading as a whole and their perceptions of traditional text, and their perceptions of hip-hop before starting the study. At the end of the study, I again passed out a survey to see if their answers changed after participating in the study.

Focus Group- Randomly selected participants from the study were used to discuss attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions to the nontraditional text and how the nontraditional text affects their understanding of literacy skills and their engagement in English class. Focus groups were conducted randomly during different stages in the implementation of the unit.

Interviews- Random participants were chosen to participate in individual interviews after the conclusion of the unit. Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one zoom call, both my camera and the student's camera were turned off or face-to-face for in person students. Students responded to a series of questions that helped gain a more thorough understanding of their perceptions of current social issues, hip-hop, and future plans concerning social justice.

Data Analysis

Open coding was used to analyze data. Qualitative coding techniques, including open, axial and selective coding, was used to recognize common themes. The data analysis was ongoing. Focus groups and interviews were first listened to completely and transcribed verbatim in their entirety; narrative research was used to present the information in this dissertation. All transcriptions were entered into a Word document, and read thoroughly to ascertain common descriptions, the highlight feature in word was used to color-code descriptions. Next, descriptions were placed in a chart, sorted, and to combine into recurring themes. Several themes emerged from the data, the information was then chunked into 4 recurring themes; (1) independent thinking; (2) students' reactions to hip-hop and social media usage in the classroom (3) English class attitude, (4) hip-hop as literacy. The information was then written in narrative form, incorporating words from both the students and me.

Pre- and post- survey data was analyzed by comparing responses to both surveys. Survey answers were compared to gauge students' feelings and ideas about hip-hop, their perceptions of hip-hop being used to teach English skills, students' interest in English and reading, as a whole. I looked for changes in their individual perceptions, and then similarities and differences amongst all participant responses. I then synthesized the responses into the four recurring themes.

Ethical Considerations

Observer bias can be an expectation as a significant problem with qualitative research and observations. Because I have my own bias regarding curricula in schools, I chose to incorporate several qualitative research methods that allow the participants to speak for themselves. The three data analysis methods will help triangulate or check the

evidence's accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility will also be established through patterns (Scheurich, 1996); this will also counteract observer bias (Gay, 1996). In an attempt to triangulate and corroborate the collected data, surveys, focus groups, and interviews were used. Participants for the focus groups and the interviews were chosen randomly. I include participant quotes in the findings. Student names and the exact school identity will remain anonymous. Only I, as the researcher had access to the participants' names; the students were identified throughout this study's findings using numbers.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The study's purpose was to examine the impact of multiliteracy and how replacing canonical text with hip-hop literacies affects students in urban schools. I developed the study to investigate and recognize the cultural differences between students' home and school life, acknowledge the importance of students' culture, and utilize a wide range of instructional materials to encourage students to become more motivated and engaged in high school English classrooms. I used a variety of qualitative data analysis strategies to study the effects of multiliteracies and Hip-Hop literacies on student engagement. Pre- and post- surveys, focus group questions, and interviews were analyzed using open coding to find and repetitive group themes. I entered both focus groups and interviews into a Word document. Using the comment function and the highlight feature, I first color-coded the document and put descriptions in the comment section. After reading through all documents and providing descriptions, I looked for redundancy within descriptions and grouped them into categories. Next, I looked at the categories and created themes. The data analysis revealed the following themes:

- Ownership and interest in learning
- Students' connections to hip-hop and social media content in the classroom
- Increased student engagement
- Passion sparked

Hip-hop Supporting Students' Ownership and Interest in Learning

Through focus group discussions with the participants in this study, it became apparent that as the hip-hop lessons proceeded, students became more vocal and engaged

about what it was they would like to see happen within the classroom. In particular, after students were introduced to graffiti and given several articles about graffiti, several students suggested that we use what we had learned through the lessons and have a debate that argued the question: *Graffiti: Art or Vandalism*. The suggestion came as a surprise at the closing of the focus group that discussed the implementation of the graffiti unit and the interpretations of the graffiti studied, especially several pieces from the artist Banksy. The unit introduced students to the idea and background of graffiti, its role in hip-hop, and the meaning of the art form. They were then given several articles that gave arguments both for and against graffiti and were tasked with the job of locating additional articles that would support their argument. They also analyzed various works from graffiti artists. During the unit, they were asked to find graffiti around their neighborhoods, take a picture of it and add it to the class Instagram page with a brief description/interpretation of the piece. At the end of the focus group where we discussed the assignments given in the unit, the use of the technology used and the knowledge gained from the experience, when asked if anyone had anything they wanted to add:

Student 1 asked: Did you, did it ever come across your mind to like have this assignment be a debate, like a class debate?

Student 2: I don't know how that would work over zoom, but I remember like the first day of my English class, like the first semester it started, we got these articles and we read them and it was pick a side and then the class split and then the teachers split the class in half. And then the second day in the class with these new people that nobody knew we had a full debate.

Student 1: It's interesting to see people like really come out and argue their side, even if that's not what they like, they really came and like, we didn't really know anyone and its kind of like on zoom because we don't interact with each other. So that could happen too. And that would be kind of interesting.

The student who initially thought of the idea was a student who, due to Covid-19, started as an in-person student when school was reopened but decided to go all remote because she felt as if the year was too stressful on her and she was having difficulty concentrating. She, however, became highly interested in the graffiti lessons. The content prompted her to want to dig even deeper by having the class debate. She was looking for a way to connect to the students within the class despite Covid-19, as many students were reluctant or refused to speak over zoom calls.

During the same call, after the student gave the initial idea, another student agreed that we should do a debate; however, he felt that the class should do the debate on Instagram; specifically, Instagram live. Student 1, who had suggested to do the debate, added, "You can pretend to be like a talk show host and be like, join the live, they join the live and say their opinion." As a class, we had developed an Instagram (IG) page where students were given prompts or directions for posts, and they were able to send the post to the class Remind (an easy text format app that allows teachers and students quick access to each other, without needing individual numbers) and post anonymously to the IG page. Up until this point, the students had followed the directions for posting. However, this was the first time a student had suggested how we can use Instagram differently. The students began to show more of an interest in the assignments being

given. Still, they were also eager to share their ideas and take ownership of how they were engaged in the English class and ways to showcase their understanding and gained knowledge.

The students also made other suggestions during the focus group that pertained to social media usage within the class.

Student: Kids are always on social media. So the fact that, um, you can see stuff all the time, it's just like...

Teacher: So you think that's a quicker access to like class stuff?

Student: Right? So if you follow the Instagram page or let's say we had a class TikTok or something, like you'd be scrolling through like...

Teacher: None of y'all wanted to show me how to use TikTok. I just want to make that clear. I'm going to do a TikTok y'all don't try to make my video go viral either.

Student: Okay. (Laugh). But yeah so you'll like see it on like your feed and stuff, and then you can't ignore it because you can't...

Teacher: You can't ignore it...

The idea that we were using a social media page in class was not necessarily new to the students, as many stated they had in the past used some form of social media in class during other classes. However, each class utilized it differently. However, they did show a liking to the usage of the class Instagram page, and one student noted that he liked the idea that they could post pictures anonymously. He also suggested that the page be used

to give students information that might have been missed in class as students would see it because they were all on Instagram daily.

Student: [Instagram could be used] For you to put out new information that you didn't have time to put out. Like that could be a faster way to put it in. Also, like, just for some like assignments, like, um, let's say, we wanna, like, I guess like how we're doing right now, like sending you pictures and I like doing the course like right now. Like that's easy way to like put something that you feel but make it like anonymous, like.

Students' Connections to hip-hop and Social Media Content Being Used in an English Classroom

Through pre-surveys, focus group discussions, and final interviews, an additional theme emerged: students' perceptions of hip-hop being used in an English classroom and reactions to both hip-hop and social media post lessons. When answering the pre-survey question, students' answers showed an apprehension to the idea of using hip-hop in an English classroom. Surprisingly many cited that rap music and its lyrics may be deemed inappropriate in a school setting.

Student 1: Some songs maybe [can be educational] but in general the songs that I hear they don't talk about anything educational. The language that's being used in it I think is a big factor [to why hip-hop can't be used in an educational setting].

Student 2: No, they [rap songs] do not teach educational content. They focus more so on entertainment. [hip-hop can't be

used in an educational setting] because it can be very vulgar and graphic.

Student 3: Maybe back in the day they [rap songs] did because they would talk about how they came from nothing and made something out of themselves. nowadays they talk about sex, drugs, money, and things that are just for pure entertainment, not education. sometimes they may through lyrics in there for people to relate to and motivate them. Some factors [to why it can't be used in an educational setting] may be the language that they use, the fact that it doesn't explicitly scream education, and the fact that not everyone wants to listen to that and hear it.

Student 4: No, but I wouldn't say educational but some artist teaches me things about life. Some factors might be the language and message that is used that keeps it from being used in an educational setting.

Before engaging in the lessons, the overall consensus of the students was that they could not see hip-hop or rap lyrics being used in an educational setting, primarily because of the nature of the content within the songs and the language used. This is an unconscious reaction to what they have been repeatedly told throughout their years in the education system. Hip-hop to them is not a suitable form of literature because it contains content that has been deemed inappropriate in school. Although studied content such as, *Fences* by August Wilson, contains inappropriate language, and *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette

Walls contains what some may deem as disturbing yet still used in schools; hip-hop, to them, is inappropriate because it has not been considered or referred to as literature.

After implementing the hip-hop unit, students' attitudes toward using hip-hop in the classroom shifted. As a result of the hip-hop article of the week, where in place of their usual article of the week they chose a hip-hop song to analyze, students expressed an increase in their engagement within the class as well as a change in their ideas of how hip-hop can be used within an English classroom:

Student 1: I actually thought it was interesting and I kind of liked the idea because I got to choose something that I would like, like reading and actually connect with. That will be easier for me to reflect on and write, write comments and things like that.

Student 2: I liked that it was different and even though we got to pick our own thing, it wasn't just go online and research something and then have our own article. It was a song that pretty much either most of us probably already knew the song that we picked. So it was something familiar to us. And then he just like, kind of taught it to you, kind of, we use the guide that you gave us to teach you something that we knew. And I liked that.

Student 3: I was saying it's kind of cool. Like, how we would use like things that we listen to some of us on a daily basis and incorporate it into learning because most like teachers are very concrete in virtual school and they like to stick to how they've always taught. It's just kind of good to switch it up and it's kind of

shocking because we've always been doing a lot of Common Lits and Articles of the week based on current events and stuff. But I mean, I feel like it's a good change, and all.

Students responded with their opinions of the assignment; they also verbalized how much more engaged they were with this assignment and the idea that they wished they could do more assignments of this nature. Students felt like using something they were familiar with helped them understand and analyze better. They also were comfortable expressing their "boredom" with the typical assignments usually given within English classes, therefore piquing their interest in the change. They were also able to verbalize how they were still using English skills to analyze the song, although they were using lyrics to rap songs.

Student 1: Um, for me it kinda like what's the word, uh, reinforced, I guess that the song was telling a story. So it could have been written like as a book with just not all actually details, like it had to flow with the song. So I guess it was imagery. Cause I could hear what the song was saying or like I could read it and then see what was going on. And then also kind of like foreshadowing, I guess, because it would like say something and oh, and for inferencing.

Student 2: Yeah. And also, like, it made me try to like analyze it more, like find a deeper meaning of like things that are said.

Student 3: Um, I agree, it's definitely like the hip-hop, um, song was definitely easier to analyze and break down and find the

meaning of what they were trying to say rather than in a regular article of a week it's like, it's just plain boring information. It definitely made it easier to write the reflection because usually I struggle with like what to say in the reflection or how to put my comments together to come up with something. But this week I literally typed it so quickly and like got through it quick and it was easier to connect and make connection to write in the reflection.

The students expressed an increase in both understanding and engagement, as shown above. One student expressed their increase in understanding by explaining the fact that when they studied the written lyrics, they also had the opportunity and ability to listen to the song, this helped them specifically with foreshadowing and inferring. Another student stated that the song lyrics, unlike the typical article of the week, was not boring, so they were able to write their reflection with ease, something they had not been able to do in the past. The reflection is a major part of the assignment in that it is used as a tool to help students think critically and express that thought but respond and connect to the text. Using hip-hop lyrics gave them an opportunity to use schema to reflect on the lyrics through written words. They are not allowed to summarize the text but connect (text-text, world, self) and respond to it (agree, disagree, expound upon the content).

Through the songs, the students were still forced to break down and analyze information. They used their prior knowledge of English skills to annotate and find a deeper meaning in the song lyrics. They also were instructed to look for the context of the song by researching the time period in which the song was written and find out what historical events might have been taking place during the time period it was written, this

is something that they do not usually have to complete with the regular Article of the Week, yet no one expressed any concern with the extra work of researching. Before beginning the hip-hop lessons, most students expressed apprehension about the usage of hip-hop in the English classroom. After the lessons and hip-hop article assignments, students' attitudes had shifted, and they were eager to engage in more activities that included hip-hop.

Hip-hop Supporting Students' Expectations of Learning and Engagement Within a High School English Classroom

As part of the study, students were given pre and post-surveys. Through the analysis of the surveys, students' attitudes or expectations of High School English Classrooms shifted. In the pre-survey, students discussed their lack of enthusiasm and dislike for English class and the idea that all High School English classes were redundant and learned the same thing each year. By the post-surveys, the students' attitudes towards English class had shifted, the hip-hop lessons gave them a new lens on what an English classroom can be even during a global pandemic.

Pre-Survey question: What do you think about high school English? Why?

Student 1: I have never been a fan of the English classes. The higher in grades I got the harder it was for me to read something and remember or retain important information needed for a test. I catch myself reading the same sentence over and over again.

Student 2: I honestly hate English because it's usually always pointless unless we are talking about grammar and how to write

essays and things as such. Having us read text about things we could care less about and aren't going to use later in life is so pointless.

Student 3: It can be a bit overwhelming from time to time but overall it's a good class when you know what's going on.

Student 4: I guess it's normal. Normal like reading and writing are relevant skills beyond high school so it makes sense.

Student 5: I think that we shouldn't have to take 4 English classes to graduate because it feels like it's the same thing we're learning each year over and over and over again and it gets annoying so no one feels like giving it their best.

Post Survey question: What do you think about high school English, after incorporating aspects of hip-hop? What did you like most about this unit in your English class?

Student 1: I feel like it has become a better class where people talk up more. It wasn't like any other english class where you read a book and do assignments and most likely watch the movie at the end, it was interesting and easier to understand.

Student 2: I think it was more interesting and I enjoyed doing assignments after hip-hop was incorporated into the lesson. I liked that I was able to connect and actually understand what I was doing. I also liked the fact that music was incorporated into it so it was just chill and fun assignments to do.

Student 3: I think after incorporating the two caused my critical thinking skills to go to use as a whole and literacy skills. I loved the entire hip-hop unit.

Student 4: I loved it. It was a well-needed change of pace and geared to something the current students knew about- music. I liked the AOW with interpreting to song lyrics and also the debate a lot.

Student 5: It gets more interesting to take part of, you can actually have something to look for in English class. The debate.

Although they had different reasons for not being engaged in English before this class and the hip-hop unit, for the most part, they were not enthused about having to complete another semester of English. They cited redundancy, lack of interest, disliking of reading, and teacher involvement as some reasons for their disdain for high school English. However, after incorporating hip-hop, the students agreed that their engagement in English had shifted. Many wished that they were able to do more assignments like the ones they participated in. Students were also able to explain what they liked best from the unit. hip-hop incorporation helped students use the English skills they have been learning throughout high school in a new and engaging way. Combining their knowledge with something that they enjoyed and is a part of their daily lives gave them a completely different outlook.

Sparkling Passion for Learning When Hip-hop Culture Is Introduced In lieu of Traditional Text

Through focus groups and post-surveys, another theme that emerged was hip-hop as literacy. Participants in the study were 12th graders and were in their last semester of

high school. They had taken three high school English classes before taking my class.

They were familiar with English concepts and skills; through discussions and answering questions. Students verbalized the skills used and necessary to complete the hip-hop unit.

During a focus group discussion, the students were asked about the analysis of graffiti, and they responded that they felt analyzing graffiti was more rigorous.

Student 1: Oh, personally. Um, I like to look at graffiti because it's not just like regular, like, um, something you see every day. It makes you like think harder about what it's really trying to be said.

Teacher: Okay. So you think that it's actually, um, helping you to think more rigorous about what you're looking at? Why do you think that's the case with graffiti?

George: Because there's so many different ways to like interpret it.

Cali Li: Yeah, I was going to say that.

During the same focus group, students were also asked whether they believed the comparison of the graffiti was the same as comparing two texts and whether the skills needed for both were the same. The students believe that the two comparisons were similar and the skills that were necessary to compare both were the same; just one was boring.

Teacher: Is it the same skills? Do you think you're using the same skills?

Student 1: Yeah, I feel like I said, yeah. I just think one's more boring.

Teacher: Which one is more boring?

Student 1: The reading.

Teacher: The reading of text?

Teacher: So you'd rather compare the graffiti and do a controversial topic with the actual artwork.

Student 2: That one [graffiti] was more, I guess, easier.

For this particular lesson, instead of completing regular writing where they answered the question: Graffiti: Art or Vandalism? in essay format, students were asked to create a visual project that they would use to present their answers. They were asked if they felt that the English skills needed to complete the project were the same as completing an essay. The students agreed and named the English skills required to complete the task, although they could present the information in a creative way.

Student 1: Okay, so you still have to think about the side and you still have to defend it.

Student 2: We still have to use examples and support your evidence and why you think it and stuff like that.

Student 3: Analyzing.

Again, students were able to pinpoint the necessary English skills needed to complete the assignment, although the basis of the assignment was hip-hop. Students understood they were still utilizing English skills and incorporating their prior knowledge into their lessons. Still, they didn't mind because the content allowed them to be engaged in the lesson.

Integration of Multiliteracies

Digital Literacies. Digital literacies refer to the ability to use technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use and create information. To be digitally literate

one must be able to navigate modernization and globalization in information communication technologies. Students were able to search, read and learn about the history of hip-hop, different hip-hop artists and songs, graffiti and graffiti artists, and different eras in history.

Visual Literacy. Visual literacy is the ability to decode, interpret, and communicate using a combination of traditional print and digital imagery. Artwork was displayed throughout the classroom, including pictures of graffiti, photos were taken of graffiti in and around their neighborhoods. Visual literacy was advanced by technology by viewing graffiti on the internet. Students took photos of several pieces of found art to display on the class Instagram page. Students utilized YouTube to watch videos of songs being studied, spoken word poems and Ted- Talks about hip-hop and education.

Cultural Literacy. Cultural literacy is the familiarity and ability to understand idioms, allusions, and informal language content that creates and constitutes society's culture. Hip-Hop songs and culture were used as a means for the students who might not usually listen to the genre to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences of other societal cultures' customs, values, and beliefs. For those who do indulge in hip-hop the breakdown of the songs was a way for them to gain a deeper understanding of the value of the lyrics and culture.

Critical Media Literacy. Critical Media Literacy engages the ability to question, analyze, interpret, evaluate, and create media messages. Students located and evaluated media about the portrayal of hip-hop as well as the idea of graffiti (art or vandalism). They learned about perspectives based on media perception and compared and contrasted the different perspectives.

Multimedia Literacy. Multimedia literacy extends beyond simple reading and writing to the new forms of literacy formed by digital technology development. Students used the class Instagram page to post their ideas of art, examples of graffiti in their neighborhoods, found art, and representations of themselves.

Informational Literacy. Information literacy refers to the competency to locate, evaluate, organize, comprehend, create, and communicate off-line and online information appropriately within legal, ethical and social guidelines. Students were able to research about different events in specific eras, history of hip-hop, specific hip-hop artist, graffiti artist and perceptions of graffiti. They also participated in an online debate in which they used the information and facts they researched, along with opinions formed to argue whether graffiti is art or vandalism.

Critical Literacy. Critical literacy is the ability to question, challenge, and evaluate the meaning and purpose of various texts and multimedia. Students were able to question, examine, and evaluate the opinion of the artist.

Social Media. The children's desire to use social media came from their comfort with the format. Most were already familiar with how to use social media and they knew that although I was pretty well-versed they had more knowledge of the nuances of the app. This was their time to teach me, and they enjoyed the idea of being able to show me their skills. As one student stated, they are on social media every day. Adding the class Instagram page was beneficial to both them and the class, to me this aspect gave a new meaning to meet them where they are. It also was a perfect example of the hip-hop pedagogical tool, co-teaching, you become the student and the student becomes the teacher (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015).

Pre and Post Survey Data

Pre-Survey Data Questions	Post-Survey Data Questions
<p>1. What do you think about high school English? Why?</p>	<p>1. What do you think about high school English, after incorporating aspects of hip-hop?</p>
<p>2. What do you like most about English class?</p>	<p>2. What did you like most about this unit in your English class?</p>
<p>3. Describe the last time you remember being completely engaged in an English classroom.</p>	<p>3. Did incorporating hip-hop improve your overall experience in English?</p>
<p>4. What type of reader do you consider yourself? Explain. I read daily, I enjoy reading. I enjoy reading and I read when I can. I read when I have to but it's not something I do otherwise. I don't enjoy reading.</p>	<p>4. Explain a time during the unit that you felt completely engaged? What made this experience engaging?</p>
<p>5. In your own words, tell me, what is hip hop to you?</p>	<p>5. What are some connections you might make with hip-hop and English education? Please be specific and give examples.</p>
<p>6. How much of a role does hip hop play in your everyday life? Describe your experience with hip-hop.</p>	<p>6. What, if anything, do you think hip hop offers that other genres of music do not?</p>
<p>7. What are some hip hop songs or artist that you are familiar with?</p>	
<p>8. Thinking of the artist or songs you are familiar with do you feel that they teach educational content? Explain.</p>	
<p>9. What do you think might be some factors that keep hip hop from being used in educational settings?</p>	

When reviewing the pre and post survey data two question answers stood out the most. The change in the attitudes of the students and their ideas about English class was apparent through the responses. Questions 1 & 2 of the surveys concentrated on students' perceptions of English class both before and after the implementation of the lessons. Here are their pre and post survey responses:

Student 1

Pre-Survey Question 1: I think that we shouldn't have to take 4 English classes to graduate because it feels like it's the same thing we're learning each year over and over and over again and it gets annoying so no one feels like giving it their best.

Post Survey Question 1: It gets more interesting to take part of, you can actually have something to look for in English class.

Pre-Survey Question 2: Not much honestly, I just take the class because I need to graduate.

Post-Survey Question 2: The debate

Student 2

Pre-Survey Question 1: I have never been a fan of the English classes. The higher in grades I got the harder it was for me to read something and remember or retain important information needed for a test. I catch myself reading the same sentence over and over again.

Post-Survey Question 1: I feel like it has become a better class where people talk up more.class.

Pre-Survey Question 2: I enjoy the asynchronous days. Some of common lits that weren't that long I also enjoyed.

Post-Survey Question 2: It wasn't like any other english class where you read a book and do assignments and most likely watch the movie at the end, it was interesting and easier to understand.

Student 3

Pre-Survey Question 1: I guess its normal. Normal like reading and writing are relevant skills beyond high school. so it makes sense.

Post-Survey Question 1: I loved it. It was a well-needed change of pace and geared to something the current students knew about- music.

Pre-Survey Question 2: Class discussions when there's actual interaction.

Post-Survey Question 2: I liked the AOW with interpreting to song lyrics and also the debate a lot.

Student 4

Pre-Survey Question 1: I think it's alright. I'm only taking it to graduate at this point. I don't really see anything new I'm learning since the 9th grade that I could use in life, though.

Post-Survey Question 1: It was not as boring when hip hop was incorporated

Pre-Survey Question 2: There isn't really anything I can say I like most.

Post-Survey Question 2: I liked that this unit incorporated something that we are familiar with.

Students were able to express both their likes and dislikes of English class instruction both before and after the incorporation of hip-hop. In their responses, students express a disconnect from English instruction and classroom learning. They then expressed an increased interest in the class as a result of hip-hop incorporation. All students expressed

a connection to the material that was missing before. They were excited about the class and the lessons, and they looked forward to the next assignment. The incorporation of hip-hop, although still educational, was fun and engaging and their tone towards learning was transformed.

Interviews

Student 1

0:00 - 0:12

Okay, I'm going to ask you a series of questions. I just need you to answer these questions, honestly. Um, and that's it. Okay.

Okay.

So, some people think that hip hop has a negative influence on young people. What do you think about that?

• 0:13 - 0:21

I think it's both true and positive and negative crap.

• 0:24 - 0:25

Why do you say that?

• 0:26 - 0:37

Um, cause like, like basically any other thing, there's always a good and a bad to something. So like there are people talking about like positive things into some of the people that just want to spread negativity across.

• 0:38 - 0:50

So, you think it just depends on the artists?

Yeah, the artists.

Okay. What are some of the meanings you have taken from some of your favorite songs?

What do you mean? Like meanings?

Like what kind of message do they trying to get across?

• 0:54 - 1:10

Well, because I don't really listen to hip hop much. I listen more to like Spanish music, but like, um, the songs that I have t heard, I guess they're just talking about like, like drugs, sex, and like some like, yeah, some other stuff at the same time. There's some that.

• 1:10 - 1:12

What about the ones we listened to in class?

• 1:12 - 1:33

Uh, yeah, that's what I was gonna get to. Like some of the songs that I heard was like just trying to make the world a better place instead of having all this negativity and stuff. So, you know, there's just, it depends on the artist mostly cause like some artists are just basically talking about negative stuff. Some others are just talking about like positive views.

• 1:33 - 1:39

So, when you talk about the artist, that was rather negative stuff. Where do you mostly hear those songs?

• 1:40 - 1:49

On the radio? From my friends. Okay. Uh, sometimes I'm like ads on YouTube or something like that. Yeah.

• 1:49 - 1:52

What are some social issues that we are faced with in today's society?

• 1:58 - 1:59

I guess

• 2:01 - 2:07

racism, but at the same time, I feel like I don't know the word. Right. I'm just sticking to racism.

• 2:07 - 2:10

Not because I just, I don't know the other word I'm not looking for.

• 2:10 - 2:13

But yeah, racism, it plays a big part and I guess hip-hop.

• 2:14 - 2:22

But do you think that racism is an actual social issue of social injustice and it's happening right now in today's society? How do you know that?

• 2:22 - 2:28

Cause I see it everywhere. Social media in person. Uh, yeah.

• 2:29 - 2:34

Do you think that hip hop songs address social issues?

Almost definitely.

What about graffiti and social media?

• 2:35 - 2:52

Graffiti and social media. Social issues? Yeah, I'm pretty sure there's some graffiti like out there in the weather we haven't seen. Cause you know, there's a lot of graffiti and stuff, so like it's too much to actually take a look at all of them, but I'm pretty sure. I know at least one person has talked about like racism through graffiti.

• 2:53 - 2:55

Okay. And what about social media?

• 2:56 - 3:03

Oh, that one. Yeah, for sure. Yeah. I see. Yeah.

Why do you use social media?

Entertainment.

• 3:03 - 3:08

Entertainment. So describe what a day using social media for you.

• 3:10 - 3:33

I just be watching TikTok or Instagram scrolling through the videos. See, what's funny sometimes like my feed is like bipolar, so like one day it's about anime. Some other days is about, uh, I say anime, like political issues next day. It's just like funny videos the other days, but cars. Um, so yeah.

• 3:33 - 3:35

What types of accounts do you interact with the most on social media?

• 3:36 - 3:48

Uh, gaming accounts. And then this is one, like guy that talks about political stuff from both sides.

• 3:48 - 3:55

Okay. And after the implementation of the IG class page, has your idea of social media usage changed in any way?

• 3:55 - 4:05

Not really. Cause I always knew that you could use your platform to spread good messages and just post stuff. I just never really took the time to do it myself, you know?

So.

• 4:05 - 4:10

Okay. And do you feel that you have the knowledge and our ability to address social issues?

• 4:12 - 4:33

The ability, yes. Like the knowledge? Not really. Cause I like, I feel like it just goes through one ear and just goes at the other, like I, I really do try to like learn stuff, but like at the end of the day, just my mind just goes blank. I just can't think about something.

You worried about your gaming pages? Yeah.

• 4:35 - 4:41

Do you think if you had a social issue that, um, impacted you directly, you would probably learn more about it?

• 4:42 - 4:56

Like I said, like I try, I really do try, but it's just, I dunno. I feel like it's got to be in my, my, yeah. I don't know. Like I do, I do care about it, but I just, my mind is like after I try to remember like fact to say to somebody.

• 4:57 - 4:58

Yeah.

• 4:58 - 5:01

And just like, oh gosh. So I just don't talk about it.

• 5:01 - 5:12

Do you learn about it though? At least you are aware of what's happening around you even if you don't speak about it often.

Yeah.

Okay. Thank you so very much for your time. I really appreciate it. Have a good day.

Student 2

• 0:02 - 0:22

Okay. Good. Thank you for holding on. Sorry. Um, I'm going to do I'm with you like I did with everybody else so far. I'm just going to ask you a series of questions. I just want you to answer the questions, honestly. Okay.

Okay.

Okay. So the first question is some people think that hip hop is a negative influence on young people. What do you think about that?

• 0:25 - 0:33

Um. I feel like it's like depends on what they listen to. Cause like, I mean, there's good hip hop and there's bad hip hop, you know, you can't just like only focus on one and not count the other.

• 0:33 - 0:44

Okay. So, you think that it's just what you're listening to?

Yeah.

So, it's an individual choice of whether you want to listen to good hip hop or bad hip hop?

Yes.

When you say bad hip hop, what do you mean?

• 0:45 - 0:56

I mean, because some songs they do talk about like party all night, doing drugs and like sex and like, that's like, that's a different category to like the other hip hop where they actually send the message.

• 0:57 - 1:13

Okay. What are some of the meanings you have taken from some of your favorite songs?

What was that?

What are some of the meanings that you have taken from some of your favorite songs?

So what song, like the meaning from the song or the meaning of the song was addressing?

• 1:15 - 1:36

Uh, the, one of my favorite songs. Like, one of my favorite messages are like from this artist called Andy Mineo where like, he, like, he has like, um, let me explain it. Like, life is kind of too short. So, like why waste it, like, why be all negative and like you can be positive and do focus on yourself and do better for yourself.

• 1:38 - 1:44

Okay. Um, what are some social issues that we are faced with in today's society?

• 1:48 - 1:54

Um, I think it would be like racism, homophobia, inequality.

• 1:55 - 1:57

How do you know this? How do you know those things?

• 1:58 - 2:04

Well, you see on social media and like, you hear them in like the music.

Okay.

• 2:06 - 2:25

Um, do hip hop songs, you think address those social issues while you kind of said?

Yeah.

What about graffiti and social media? I think you said social media as well, right?

Yes.

So what do you see on social media that you feel like they address that issue? Or some of the issues of social injustice or social issues?

• 2:26 - 2:31

I mean, for social media, I would see like people posting so like more people are aware of like, what's going on.

• 2:32 - 2:37

Okay. Why do you use social media?

Hmm

Go ahead. I'm sorry.

• 2:38 - 2:42

It brings up like social media really brings out awareness of like what's going on.

• 2:42 - 2:46

So, you think that's a good place to kind of start with what's happening in the society?

• 2:47 - 2:51

Yeah. A good place to start or, but not like stay there. Cause like social media can be a little bias.

• 2:51 - 2:55

Okay. So, um, why do you use social media?

• 2:58 - 3:01

Usually just stay connected and be aware of the things that are going on.

• 3:02 - 3:09

So, describe like a day in social media for you. Are you like on there all the time? What are you doing on it? What social media sites are you using?

• 3:10 - 3:15

Um, Instagram.

That's the one you use the most?

Yeah.

• 3:15 - 3:18

And when you go on, what are you doing? Are you posting, are you just kind of staring at other people's? Are you creeping?

• 3:19 - 3:47

No, I'm looking at the other people's posts. I really don't post that much.

Okay.

So, I would like, usually like most, some people that I follow, like do like post like stuff that are going on, like about, um, what's happening right now and like Israel and Pakistan. So I seen that and like a bunch of like Black, Black Lives Matter movements and like the anti-Asian hate crimes things.

• 3:47 - 3:51

Do those catch your attention? Like do you learn stuff from them?

Yeah.

Okay.

• 3:52 - 3:59

Cause I guess like they will post it and it comes from like a, like more of a news page, Instagram. So it had like some information on it.

• 4:01 - 4:08

Okay. So you were able to kind of expand some of your knowledge on these issues?

Yeah.

Okay. So what type of accounts do you think you interact with the most?

• 4:14 - 4:20

Is it your peers? Is it news? Is it strangers? Is it stars? Like what do you think you interacted with the most on social media?

• 4:21 - 4:34

I would have to say like a bit of like my peers and like somewhat of the news. I'm not on social media too much. And then like usually busy, but I went to like a somewhat of the news side and like my peers.

• 4:35 - 4:41

Okay. So after the implementation of the IG class page, did your idea of social media usage change in any way?

• 4:42 - 4:55

I mean, no. Cause like I knew like, like social media could be used for something like that, you know, to like get more people involved and like see things and be more aware.

• 4:55 - 4:59

Okay. Do you feel that, you know, you have the knowledge and our ability to address social issues?

• 5:04 - 5:18

I wouldn't say not really. Not because like, I don't it's like for me, I don't really follow anybody, follow, and I don't have that many followers. So if I see something that's like wrong, I could like post that on my account, but it's like, I feel like that doesn't make much of a difference. You know.

• 5:18 - 5:25

Do you think that social media is the only way you could address those issues or social issues? Or is that like the way that you're familiar with?

• 5:26 - 5:32

No, I feel like going out to protest or like donating to like some charities to help those cause.

• 5:33 - 5:36

Would you do that?

Hmm?

Would you ever do that?

• 5:37 - 5:43

Go to a protest and donate.

Yeah.

Yeah. Have you done it?

No.

• 5:43 - 5:44

No. Just a personal choice.

• 5:46 - 6:00

Uh, I mean, we're like still in a pandemic?

Yes, we are.

'm still like, I just turned 18 like few months ago, you know? Like kind of that.

• 6:00 - 6:28

So you think now you, now that you are 18 and the pandemic, well, we're still in a pandemic, so let's not even say it's about over, we don't know what it's doing, but do you think that you may gain enough knowledge to fight for something that you might believe in a social injustice or social issue that you might believe in?

Yeah.

Okay. All right. Well, that's it. That's the end of the questions. So thank you very much for your participation. I appreciate it.

Student 3

• 0:00 - 0:13

So, I'm just going to ask you a series of questions. Just answer them honestly. Um, yeah.

And that's it. Okay. All right. So some people think that hip hop has a negative influence on young people. What do you think about that?

• 0:15 - 0:31

I think that it's not just hip hop and I don't feel like it's the people who make hip hop, um, responsibility to be the influences. If that makes sense.

• 0:31 - 0:33

So, you don't think it's their responsibility?

• 0:33 - 0:49

I don't know. I think it's the people that make hip hop or who make whatever they make, they make it because that's what they choose to do. And if someone views it as inappropriate or a bad influence, then that's.

• 0:51 - 1:05

Okay. Interesting. Okay. Um, so what are some of the meanings that you have taken from some of your hip hop songs then? Like some, a sip or any of your favorite music? So what's the meanings and within songs that you've taken?

• 1:07 - 1:38

Um, a lot of people talk about the experiences that they've been through it. Not anyone can just make a rap song and you have to actually know what you're talking about. So we'll talk about the struggles that they've been through in a way that is not just all, oh, this was bad, but they had to make it sound like not sound good because what they went through wasn't good. But they had the kids found nice so that people would actually want to hear their stories. Okay.

• 1:38 - 1:40

Okay. Um,

• 1:40 - 1:43

What are some social issues that we are faced with in today's society?

• 1:45 - 2:19

Uh, what, the first question that you asked, I feel like that's the issue that people feel like it's everyone else's responsibility to like produce things that they feel are happy and positive things when really not everyone else's responsibility. So that made me think of

the whole Cardi B thing. When they're like her music isn't for kids and then everybody, you like made it a thing and they're like, well, what do you think if it's like pop and hip-hop music, should it be for your kids?

• 2:19 - 2:29

And it's not, she's not making music for your kid. She's making music to make music.

And it's the parents' responsibility to monitor what their kids listen to.

Okay.

• 2:30 - 2:42

Do you think that any hip hop songs, um, or hip hop songs in general, do you think that they address social issues? And what about graffiti and social media? Do you think that any of those addressed social issues?

• 2:43 - 3:08

Um, yes. I think that they do, um, hip hop music, tells, like the stories, aren't just personal stories. It's not just me, me, me, I did this. It's more what the person has seen and been through. So, if they have been through some type of social issue or something, then most likely they'll put that in the song.

• 3:09 - 3:21

Okay. What do you think about graffiti artists and social media then? As far as social issues go, do you, do you think that social media, um, address social issues or graffiti?

• 3:22 - 3:45

I feel like social media is a smaller step than graffiti when talking about social issues, because it's not illegal to post what you think. So if someone feels something, then it's

easier for them to go to social media. And with graffiti I feel like that's something that's a step that's taken when social media isn't enough. So, yes.

• 3:46 - 3:49

Okay. Very good. And why do you use social media?

• 3:50 - 4:09

Um, I use it because I get bored. I would just, I'm stepping away from it now because I've noticed how much time I spend on my phone. And I'm looking at like other people's lives through my little screen, but that's not really feeding me. That's the sign of getting edited.

• 4:10 - 4:20

What's a day like for you on social media? So when you go on there, are you looking for something specific? Like what kind of accounts and stuff do you interact with the most?

• 4:20 - 4:51

Um, well now, like my Instagram feed is just a whole lot of people from college that I'll be going to, like, I've found like these pages or whatever it to connect me to them. So then they'll follow me and I'll follow them. And it's nice to see what the class is going to look like. But at the same time, it's a little pointless if I'm just seeing pictures of all of these people that I will see, but I don't really have a, like, I don't know these people basically.

• 4:53 - 5:01

Um, do you think that after the implementation of the IG class page, did your idea of social media usage changed at all?

• 5:02 - 5:20

No, not really. I feel like the social, I liked the idea of it and it would have been more successful if we weren't in like COVID time. If everything was like normal and we had this, then there, I feel like there would've been more interaction and it would have been like better and smoother.

Okay.

• 5:20 - 5:34

Gotcha. And do you feel that the knowledge and our ability to dress social, um, what do you feel about your knowledge and our ability to address social issues? Like do you feel that you can address social issues?

Yes. Ma'am

How?

• 5:35 - 5:55

Um, if somebody, if somebody has, if I have an issue with someone else, then I'll definitely like tell them some type of way, but I also understand that not everyone is going to feel the same way. So the end result, isn't getting the other person to agree with me. It's just trying to get them to understand.

• 5:56 - 6:15

Okay. Okay. Okay. Very good. That's all the questions I have. Thank you so very much for your participation.

Student 4

0:01 - 0:13

Okay. Hi. I'm going to ask you a series of questions and I just want you to answer the questions, honestly. Okay. Okay. All right. So some people think that hip hop is a negative influence on young people. What do you think about that?

• 0:13 - 0:38

I think that it can be both negative and positive. Like some songs, they just talk about like drugs, gang violence and all that. And that definitely does have a negative effect, but then there's also artists who rap about like other things like, um, body positivity and just, you know, they, um, their music has a chasm message, so it can be both good and bad.

• 0:38 - 0:44

Okay. What are some of the meanings you have taken from some of your favorite songs?

Um,

• 0:47 - 0:56

Hmm. The message that you don't need to change for anybody, and you should love yourself.

Do you know what artist?

Um, no.

• 0:56 - 0:58

I can't think of artists, you put me on the spot.

• 0:58 - 1:02

Like that's just really the most common message.

Okay.

• 1:03 - 1:06

Uh, what are some social issues we are faced with in today's society?

• 1:06 - 1:16

Um, racism, um, really just, uh, prejudice against different groups.

• 1:16 - 1:19

So, you think that's like the big one today? How do you notice? How do you know that information?

• 1:20 - 1:26

Um, I mean, I've seen it. Um, I see it, um, social media experienced it myself.

• 1:27 - 1:29

Okay. Interesting.

• 1:30 - 1:31

Um, do hip hop songs address social issues?

• 1:32 - 1:41

Yeah, they do. Um, there are songs that address, well, mainly it's racism that's addressed that I've been seeing, being addressed.

• 1:42 - 1:51

So you think that a lot of the hip hop artists, um, address racism in America, what about graffiti and social media? Do you think they address social issues?

• 1:52 - 2:11

Yeah, they do. Do I feel like, um, social media and graffiti are used to protest these injustices? Do you think they're effective?

Yes, I think so.

Why do you use social media?

Um, I use it mainly for entertainment because I'd be bored.

• 2:13 - 2:16

So, what's a day like for you on social media?

• 2:16 - 2:25

Um, I mainly, I mainly just use tech talk and Instagram.

Do you create tech talks?

No. No. You just went out to people, but I don't post them.

• 2:26 - 2:35

So they are only for you, they stay inside of your phone?

Yeah.

Okay. What type of accounts do you find yourself interacting with the most?

• 2:36 - 2:40

Um, accounts that post about like my interests.

• 2:40 - 2:53

Or like what?

Oh, shit. Interest. Anime.

Okay. So you interact with a lot of anime accounts?

Yeah.

Okay. After the implementation of the IG class page, did your idea of social media use has changed at all?

• 2:54 - 3:00

Not really, because I knew that you could use social media for class related things too.

• 3:01 - 3:05

Okay. Do you think it's a good idea to use social media for class?

Yeah.

• 3:05 - 3:08

Okay.

• 3:08 - 3:14

Do you feel that you have the knowledge and our ability to address social issues?

I don't think so.

Why?

• 3:15 - 3:32

Um, I don't think it's really like, well, firstly, I don't really have a platform, so it's not like I could reach a lot of people and um, I have to educate myself until like, I know that I'm a hundred percent sure about what I'm talking about.

• 3:33 - 3:41

So, you feel, you need to educate yourself before you're able to speak upon any of the social issues? Yeah. Okay. How would you go about educating yourself?

• 3:42 - 3:47

Um, doing research or, um, if I could talk to people who know about it.

• 3:47 - 3:49

So you wouldn't just trust social media?

• 3:50 - 3:53

No. Cause you can't listen to everything on social media.

• 3:53 - 4:03

Okay. Okay. So you think some stuff is kind of like you take like a grain of salt?

Yeah.

Okay. All right. Thank you so very much for your time. I appreciate it.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of this qualitative study. The data from pre and post surveys, focus groups, and interviews was analyzed to find recurring themes. Four major themes emerged: independent thinking, students' reactions to hip-hop and social media usage in the classroom, English class attitude, hip-hop as literacy. The most shocking of the results was the independent thinking. Students began to think about ways they could showcase and enhance their acquired knowledge. Social media allowed for a deeper connection to both content, each other and the English class.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, and CONCLUSION

Discussion of Findings

This qualitative study aimed to examine the impact of multiliteracies and hip-hop literacies in English curricula in an urban high school. Moreover, this study attempted to investigate how recognizing the cultural differences between students' home and school life, acknowledging the importance of students' culture, and utilizing a wide range of instructional materials, can encourage students to become more motivated and engaged in the high school English classroom. The goal of this study was to gain more insight into whether Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, specifically hip-hop, combined with multiliteracies would motivate high school students. Two focus groups, interview protocol, and surveys to gather the data, which were triangulated and analyzed to address the research questions. This chapter will summarize and analyze the findings related to the themes introduced in Chapter 4, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research and practice, and a conclusion.

This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the research question:

1. Does multiliteracies and the use of hip-hop pedagogy in English classrooms impact the motivation and engagement of high school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

As a result of the qualitative data analysis there were four major themes that emerged as discussed in Chapter IV:

- Ownership and interest in learning

- Students' connections to hip-hop and social media content in the classroom
- Increased student engagement
- Passion sparked

The study revealed that students begin to think more independently after the implementation of the hip-hop unit. Students were more inclined to share their thoughts about the lessons and what they felt could or should come next within the lessons; students expressed satisfaction with what they were doing and wanted to contribute to what else they could do to further their learning. For example, one student suggested that we should hold a class debate after learning about graffiti and being presented with the question: *Grffiti Art or Vandalism?* When prompted, students could precisely describe what that debate would look like on a Zoom call, being that we were amid the pandemic and many students had not returned to the school building. The students recalled times where they had done debates before and how engaged they were during the activity. They also had a few apprehensions about the debate being on Zoom but still expressed an interest in wanting to conduct one. Students completely ran the debate. The judges were students, and students asked questions. Students also picked the winners. The only responsibility of the teacher was the creation of groups A and B, which Zoom chose randomly. During focus groups, the students also expressed other ways to conduct the debate, such as using Instagram live. The hip-hop lessons, specifically graffiti, prompt these thoughts. The use of multiliteracies such as our class IG page allowed students to use what was familiar to emerge themselves more profound within the learning that was being done within the classroom.

Students' Connections to hip-hop and Social Media Usage in the Classroom

The students also had a positive reaction to social media and hip-hop being used in the classroom. When the researcher gave the first survey pre-unit, many students expressed concern or apprehension about hip-hop being used in the classroom. Although they listen to hip-hop on their own, there was a consensus that they weren't sure if the lyrics of rap music or some of the content would be appropriate in an educational setting. However, after beginning the hip-hop unit, students began to understand how hip-hop could be used within the classroom. Through self-selected songs, they were able to analyze and research the content of the songs, the time in which the songs were written, and the subsequent eras' relationship to the lyrics. The students expressed complete satisfaction at being allowed to choose a hip-hop song in the place of their Article of the Week. Many of the students like the idea of using something they were familiar with and being allowed to self-select their own song.

Many of the students also took advantage of the class Instagram page. Although many did not want to be identified and chose to post anonymously, the pictures and captions that they posted showed great detail and represented each individual student. The students' creativity and thought processes were apparent with what they decided to take pictures of and share. In one post, students were guided to find an image that represented them, and they were only allowed to use hashtags to describe why that picture reflected them. Surprisingly, several students decided to upload photos of themselves. With these pictures, they included hashtags that explained the reason for the choice. In particular, there was one young Black male who posted a picture of the waves hairstyle. To many, this picture would have been just a simple selfie. However, the hashtags he included were #waves #durag #black, three simple words with complex

meanings. This picture alone represents hip-hop culture. In hip-hop culture, appearance is essential. Many young Black males wear durags (also known as do-rags) and compete to see who can get the best waves (a ripple like pattern in hair). They are often told that durags are not allowed in school and are forced to take them off upon entering the building. They also carry brushes with them and brush their hair constantly, as this is part of the wave process; they are often reprimanded for brushing their hair in class. However, this is a friendly competition amongst many Black male youth. The waves represent pride in who they are, where they come from, and their culture. This picture was chosen strategically, and social media embedded in the lessons allowed him comfortable sharing.

Figure 3

Waves Hairstyle



Note: Student Instagram post showing waves hairstyle.

Students Overall Attitude of High School English

At the beginning of the unit, many students stated that they were not enthused about English class in their pre-survey. Many expressed that they felt that many of the things covered in the English classroom were redundant and repeated what was learned in prior years. The students knew they needed the English class credit to graduate, but they felt this year would be a repeat of years past. One student even commented that English was their worst class and they did not enjoy reading; they further stated that English was "a waste of time because they had to read texts about things they could care less about and aren't going to use later in life." By the end of the hip-hop unit, the student stated that they enjoyed this English class. Express that it was a good change of pace, and it wasn't what they expected out of an English class. They felt as if they were finally able to relate to what was being taught, and this allowed them to want to participate more in class discussions, utilize the class IG page and complete the assignments.

The students were engulfed in the planning of the graffiti debate. They took ownership of their learning and showed interest in how they expressed that learning. Many students commented about hip-hop being a part of their lives, something they were familiar with, and although they were still being challenged with rigorous activities, they were willing to do the work.

Hip-hop Is Literacy That Sparks Passion

Through the unit, students saw the benefits of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy in their regular curriculum. Through this unit, hip-hop was proven to be not only culture but also literacy. hip-hop was used to engage students in English content

while utilizing the same English skill set. Analyze, searching, writing, and reading was used with song lyrics, hip-hop videos, and graffiti. Students were able to recognize the skills they were using with hip-hop lyrics usually reserved for practice with canonical text. When asked about the usage of English skills, students discussed the difficulty they had with analyzing graffiti. However, they enjoyed the challenge and were able to think critically about the pieces of art they were exposed to. Their engagement was evident during the student lead debate; students argued their side of graffiti being art or vandalism. Many of the students felt that day they have been taught English skills throughout high school. However, they were constantly asked to present their knowledge in the same way, which became redundant and boring. They expressed the enjoyment of being creative, showing their thinking in other forms, and having content that they can relate to. Learning does not have to be boring. Learning does not have to be redundant. Content that is relatable to students and their lives can still be educational. Literacy has never been and should never be one-size-fits-all.

Implications for Theory and Research

This study can help create culturally relevant pedagogy and curricula that address the needs of all youth, not only youth in urban schools. Incorporating hip-hop and utilizing multiliteracies into English curricula can help bolster engagement among high school students, encourage independent thinking, and increase academic achievement. It also creates a model to follow for researchers to continue work on understanding how hip-hop is literacy and informs multiliteracies. The findings of this study suggest that incorporating hip-hop pedagogy into English curricula provides an opportunity for educators to integrate youth culture effectively into teaching and learning in a culturally

relevant way. Hip-hop culture and multiliteracies appropriately incorporated, positively impact student engagement in a high school English class. Students are empowered to showcase their learning using content they are both familiar with and can relate to while also being creative in presenting their knowledge.

Vygotsky Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky (1978) believed that knowledge comes about from experiences within a student culture, and children learn from who they are around and continue to learn based on whom they interact with daily. In this study, students were able to combine their knowledge of English content with their everyday lives. Many of the students on the pre-survey reported listening and interacting with hip-hop daily. The way they dress, talk, and behave is often imitated from their favorite hip-hop artist. Whether trying to duplicate what the artist looks like or raps about, hip-hop has a significant impact on learning in youth culture.

The results of this study aligned with Vygotsky's theory that the more interaction and conversations a student is involved in, the better their vocabulary, understanding of language, and creativity. Many urban students connect to their peers and others through hip-hop culture. Prior knowledge, familiarity, and comfortability of content allowed students to connect with one another and the content being taught, even despite being in a global pandemic and most participating on zoom calls. This connection permitted students to feel more inclined to share their knowledge with one another and the teacher in a variety of creative ways.

Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Critical Literacy

Critical literacy uses reading and writing to empower oppressed individuals and allows them to become more aware of the society in which they live and the tools needed to liberate themselves (Uran and Alverman, 2013). As a result of this study, students began to take ownership of their learning and how they were learning. When the content presented to them was connected to their everyday lives, the students begin not just to think to pass a class but to think on a level that engaged them within the class. Allowing students to see themselves within the curriculum also afforded them the courage and desire to participate in their learning. When students can relate to the content being taught, the knowledge they bring is even more challenging. The familiarity they have with hip-hop, and hip-hop culture forced them to dive deeper into the culture for them to connect the content back to their lives and the world around them. The students stop surface thinking about the music they listened to and begin to think about the actual impact the music has on youth culture and what can be done through music to help others.

Ladson-Billings' Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Young, 2010). Students in this study were immersed in content that was culturally relevant to them. This immersion resulted in students who, despite their learning being interrupted because of Covid-19, were engaged and willing to participate in required and extracurricular activities. The use of hip-hop culture in the classroom helped students to feel seen and empowered. Students, some for the first time, took ownership of their learning. They were eager to share their knowledge through the class

debate, IG posts, and individual projects. They also showed emerging leadership skills by planning and implementing a class debate, via zoom, with little to no help from the teacher. Students in the post-interview expressed a desire to do more learning and activities than those completed within the unit.

Future Research

For anyone who would conduct future research based on the findings, one area that could be addressed is how students utilize the learned content in their everyday lives. Because of Covid-19 and the shortening of the school year, students were not able to discuss how they would use the knowledge gained in the future or how they could use the tools given in both their personal and school lives. Future studies could track how and if the curricula change encouraged students to use their voices to advocate for themselves in other classes and the world.

Limitations

While conducting a qualitative research study, the researcher cannot ignore the fact that with qualitative research methods of data collection come limitations. Although the researcher still believes that qualitative research was the best choice for this study, the size of the study as well as restrictions due to Covid-19 may have had an impact on the results. Interviews and surveys were used but they were conducted mostly on Zoom or through hybrid teaching. The study size could have been larger if students were all physically back in the building. Many of the students were unable to attend class or participate due to other obligations such as working during school hours. Another limitation was created as the principal investigator and the teacher of the participants was one person for the study. Because relationships with the teacher were established before

and during the study, this could have been both an advantage and disadvantage in the study's outcomes.

Conclusion

Culturally sustaining pedagogy is a needed component in urban education. Research suggests that students in urban school districts could be characterized as disengaged learners (Darling-Hammond, 2002). The lack of cultural diversity in curricula in high schools, especially urban high schools, impacts reading engagement which can ultimately affect comprehension. Research has shown the link between culturally relevant pedagogy and reading engagement (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Students exposed to a culturally diverse curriculum and have the student population in mind would be better equipped to navigate society through consistent exposure to complex critical thinking activities that allow students to develop multiple perspectives and world views (Gay, 2002).

Recently, in Pennsylvania, Mars County has become the first district to ban the teaching of Critical Race Theory. Their school board instead voted to approve a “patriotism amendment” to the district’s mission statement. This amendment is said to be needed so that everyone feels included and no one will have guilt or anguish based on their sex, race, or religion. The board member who proposed the amendment stated that “Patriotism is not controversial (Zenkevich, 2021). However, this act defies the need to change the narrative that has already been ravishing school systems and excluding people of color. The idea that an amendment is needed to stop the teaching and learning about oneself in an educational institution is anything but patriotic. Creating specific amendments to keep diversity out of schools only fosters the need for the type of work

conducted in this study. The idea that the dominant culture assumes that it will be detrimental for children to diversify their learning is unfathomable. Not only does it exclude children of color, but it hinders the ability of the dominant culture to also learn about others while proving the idea of Critical Race Theory and its understanding that racism in America is systematic.

The results of this study suggested that there are several benefits to adopting culturally responsive curricula: (a) students became more invested in their learning by showing independent thinking and suggesting ways in which they could better learn and show knowledge (b) students reacted positively to the use of hip-hop and social media by participating and willing to show vulnerability during the sharing and learning process, (c) students attitudes toward English class shifted from feeling bored to asking for more assignments as those included in the unit, and (d) students changed their perception of hip-hop being used in a school setting and was able to use and verbalize the English skills necessary to prove that hip-hop is literacy when students are exposed to curricula that are relevant to their everyday lives the engagement increases. Exposure to relevant content is especially important in high school classes where students have, for years, developed fixed ideas about what an English class consists of.

Students' culture and reality should be a factor that drives instruction (Emdin, 2011). Utilizing what students are familiar with when teaching them allows them to take ownership of what they are learning and how they are learning. Boosting confidence in students can help them to engage more in English content and utilize learned English skills in ways that they will be able to duplicate even outside of the English classroom. Learning should not stop when the bell rings.

Incorporating hip-hop into lessons can bridge the gap between students' home life and school life. hip-hop transcends race and can be used in the classroom, and hip-hop music and culture can promote academic literacy and critical consciousness (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). Just as with canonical text, through hip-hop, students can learn and practice English skills such as analyzing, annotating, and researching. In addition, they also are learning about themselves and the world around them. Hip-hop addresses political and social issues and subjects that support social-emotional learning, such as peer pressure, misogyny, alcoholism, and violence (Love, 2016).

Research has shown that literacy instruction in the 21st Century should not be monolingual or monocultural (New London Group, 1996). Multiliteracies are a necessary component in today's classroom. 21st-century literacies must support the development of collaborative and communicative skills by providing students with different ways to represent knowledge and communicate that knowledge to others (Bruce, 2007). Teaching should include multimodality and allow for multiple channels of communication. Incorporating multiliteracies also will enable students to use what they have learned with familiar tools outside of school. The use of aural, visual, kinesthetic, spatial, and social approaches is also crucial to multiliteracies (Mills, 2010). The utilization of Digital Literacies (social media platforms), Informational Literacy (research findings and dissemination), Critical Literacy (analysis of hip-hop lyrics), Visual Literacy (YouTube, Canvas, Instagram), and Multimedia/multimodal literacy (final graffiti project), all contributed to a positive outcome with the implementation of the hip-hop unit.

Hip-hop is literature. The inclusion of hip-hop culture and multiliteracies in the curricula addresses the growing need for schools to develop and implement more diverse curricula. It also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, the ultimate goal of education. The hip-hop unit allowed the students to become advocates for themselves by giving them the opportunity to learn using content that they are familiar with. However, when creating curricula that incorporate culturally relevant tools such as hip-hop, we must ensure that the implementation is genuine. Adding multiliteracies and hip-hop pedagogy allows for learning to be engaging and rigorous. The results of this study show a need and desire for more engaging content inside high school English classrooms. Hopefully, districts and high schools will begin not only to recognize that hip-hop is literacy but put students first by appropriately and effectively incorporating hip-hop in English curricula.

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