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MC Means Mentor the Child: Examining School-Based Hip-Hop Clubs for Youth Empowerment, Leadership Development, and Capacity for Change

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MC MEANS MENTOR THE CHILD: EXAMINING SCHOOL-BASED HIP-HOP CLUBS FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Education Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

MC MEANS MENTOR THE CHILD: EXAMINING SCHOOL-BASED HIP-HOP CLUBS FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

This dissertation examined the relationship between students in a school-based hip-hop club and their ability to develop leadership capabilities through club activities. This study followed a hip-hop club at an urban high school in the Midwest to better understand how hip-hop spaces impact youth participants. The participants included four current members of the club and three alums, all of whom were African American. This study used qualitative methods through heuristic inquiry to understand the phenomenon of hip-hop clubs. Data collection methods included session notes, musical creations, semi-structured interviews, and a Microsoft Teams group chat. Additional heuristic data was collected through a researcher's journal, reflection process, and song lyrics. This study contributes to the growing field of hip-hop education research by examining school-based hip-hop spaces through a critical pedagogical lens and their contribution to youth development. As a result of this study, several key themes surrounding leadership development, the role of community in the creation process, and students' capacities to promote change arose through the data collection process.

KEYWORDS: Hip-hop, leadership development, heuristic inquiry, critical pedagogy, after-school programs, authentic leadership

Daniel Raymond Wolford

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03/28/2024

Date

MC MEANS MENTOR THE CHILD: EXAMINING SCHOOL-BASED HIP-HOP CLUBS FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

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DEDICATION

To the hip-hop club students and alumni, for your belief, trust, and time. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Hip-hop's journey from the train cars and cyphers of the Bronx to a global phenomenon has been far from linear. While navigating the political, socioeconomic, and cultural challenges of post-Civil Rights era America, hip-hop culture's practitioners innovated new ways of expression that make it the most consumed culture in the world today. Hip-hop exists perpetually; it has breathed life into almost every space in the world, from street corners to shopping malls to Super Bowl halftime shows. Hip-hop's children have won Pulitzer Prizes, achieved billionaire status, and spent time in the White House. Hip-hop's popularity has led to its emergence as a viable curricular resource for P-20 educators and administrators (Petchauer, 2009). While educators have acknowledged hip-hop's potential to support culturally relevant teaching practices and promote learning in underserved communities, very little research highlights how hip-hop spaces within schools contribute to learning structures.

This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between students and a school-based hip-hop club in Detroit, Michigan. Specifically, the study explores how this school-based club helps students conceptualize their identity and personal capacity for leadership, community solidarity, and praxis work. This study also highlights how high-school-aged hip-hop practitioners identify their relationship with hip-hop and how it impacts their lives. The study uses heuristic methods (Moustakas, 1990) and qualitative data, including a semi-structured interview, session notes, and student-created artistic outputs to create a complete canvas of the hip-hop club's functions and effects. Findings describe how this hip-hop club has affected participants' well-being, creativity, and

capacity for leadership. The findings also present information on community building, solidarity development, and the potential for activism. This study fills a gap in hip-hop educational research by addressing future implications in student-centered learning, after-school programming, and leadership paradigms.

Problem Statement

Public education in the United States has been engulfed in a decades-long struggle against inequities, especially as it relates to Black and Latino students. These inequities are most described as an "achievement gap," identifying Black and Latino students as lagging behind their white counterparts on standardized assessment scores (NCES, n.d.). While the achievement gap has narrowed, assessment data reveals that more needs to be done to eliminate inequities (Stanford CEPA, n.d.). Characterizing inequities as an "achievement gap" raises several concerns. First, the term "gap" views education through a deficit lens, centering Black and Latino students as an inferior group of students. Second, as Gloria Ladson-Billings (2007) notes, the term "achievement gap" makes one think that the problems are only student-based, as if students are the sole reason for assessment disparities. This terminology fails to acknowledge the range of other challenges impacting poor students of color, including per-pupil funding, health, and wealth gaps that impact performance in school (Ladson-Billings, 2007, pp. 317-318).

Furthermore, attempts at educational policy reform to reduce inequities have not had the desired effects; in some cases, policy reform that seeks to raise standards directly and indirectly harms underserved students while promoting whiteness and white populations (Gillborn, 2005). Whiteness defines the Black and Latino student experience through a wide range of outcomes. Since the conclusion of Reconstruction in 1876, Black

children were denied access to education to maintain a subordinate class of Black laborers to perpetuate white interests; the color line continues to explain how policy has been enacted and who it ultimately benefits (Lewis & Manno, 2011). White schools and students have been allowed to gather substantially more resources through school funding structures outlined by local property tax and high-stakes standardized testing policies. This punishes schools financially for schooling students who attain low scores. Policies such as No Child Left Behind have exasperated discrepancies by amplifying the ideas of colorblind school assessment. Rather than addressing inequities impacting student performance, tests are treated as the ultimate evaluator determining who receives financial penalties for low performance (Leonardo, 2009; Lewis & Manno, 2011). The lack of funding in schools that serve students of color affects the school experience in many ways. Teachers in majority-minority schools tend to be less qualified and receive substantially lower pay compared to teachers in predominantly white schools. The teachers who stick around in non-white schools tend to view African American and Latino students as inferior, academically incapable, and disruptive to classroom routines (Lewis & Manno, 2011). Black and Latino students tend to be tracked out of gifted and talented programs and make up an overwhelming majority of students declared as special needs. Curriculum in predominantly white schools tends to be defined by a whitewashed master script that minimizes the role of Black, Latino, and Indigenous historical figures as rule-followers who are exceptions to the main narrative (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Additionally, disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, are handed to Black and Latino students at statistically significant levels compared to white students (Lewis & Manno, 2011). Furthermore, subjective zero-tolerance policies

continue to harm non-white students, remove them from classroom instruction, and implicitly encourage dropping out. As Lewis & Manno (2011) unfortunately describe, "It is hard to name a time when the United States was ever providing all children with equal educational experiences. Today is clearly not such a time" (p. 108). The summation of these structures has created an educational, industrial complex where the needs for educational technology, testing, and policy have silenced the needs of Black children in schools (Aronson & Boveda, 2017).

Schools are searching for strategies to provide equitable student learning opportunities, such as after-school programs and innovative, culturally responsive curricula. After-school programs have been shown to improve student-teacher relationships, student-peer relationships, and satisfaction with school (Park et al., 2012). Studies also indicate that after-school programs can help schools support students' academic achievement, social-emotional development, and likelihood of graduation in elementary and middle schools (Sparks, 2019). Student academic performance improvement has been difficult to prove, especially since the implementation of No Child Left Behind; nevertheless, after-school programs have been linked to improved social and personal skill development (Durlak et al., 2010). Specific to this study, after-school music programs have been shown to affect participants' musical, personal, and relational levels (Sheltzer & Consoli, 2019). While there is evidence that after-school programs positively impact students, challenges still exist. In economically underserved schools, programs tend to focus more on student achievement than wealthier ones; some programs also struggle with consistent funding and staffing concerns (Bowman, 2001).

Hip-hop pedagogy has brought hip-hop art, culture, and worldview into classrooms as curricular tools. Born from developments in critical pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogies, educators have used hip-hop elements to innovate their approaches to learning. Primarily using hip-hop texts in the form of song lyrics, teachers have brought the culture into English Language Arts classes (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Hill, 2009), social studies classes (Stovall, 2006), and higher education (Rice, 2003). Hip-hop has been used in nonprofit youth spaces (Kuttner, 2016) and alternative education programs in Brazil (Pardue, 2004) to promote civic engagement and skill development that supports struggling school systems. Studies on hip-hop's power in educational spaces predominantly focus on using hip-hop as a tool to support mainstream curriculum and content learning standards. Many teachers have used a popular example of pairing hip-hop texts and linguistic patterns with Shakespeare as a bridge to understanding complex texts (Jones, 2019). As a developing field, pioneering hip-hop educational research justified hip-hop's value in the classroom and offered approaches for teachers to reach students who had seen their resources, needs, and brilliance ignored by educational policymakers. Through these groundbreaking studies, scholars have legitimized hip-hop's value to schools and classrooms around the globe.

As we progress through the 21st century, hip-hop educational research must shift its approach to hip-hop's role in learning. More work needs to be done to legitimize hip-hop as a standalone vehicle for learning and socioemotional development in students. Rather than using hip-hop to teach Shakespeare alone, teaching the art and culture of hip-hop to students presents its significant value that deserves to be studied. Spaces like school-based, after-school programs can support students' development as artists,

decision-makers, and humans. Hip-hop programs can fill this void as students search for after-school programs that offer enrichment instead of additional curricular instruction. Current funding gaps and other equity issues in education present crucial challenges to learners in underserved communities.

The lack of arts funding in schools can have catastrophic effects on learners. Kraehe, Acuff, and Travis's (2016) review of arts education research suggests that schools that serve families with high concentrations of poverty tend to have less access to adequate arts education resources; evidence also indicates that schools with greater access to arts education have higher graduation rates and higher test scores. However, schools across the country still do not have equitable access to arts education programs; a 2012 report on arts education in Michigan stated that 12% of high schools do not meet the state graduation requirement of one credit in the arts. Funding for curricular support in arts education equates to $4.39 per pupil in high schools and $1.67 per pupil in elementary schools (Michigan Youth Arts, 2012).

Educational outcomes and performance have been linked to socioeconomic status, with students qualifying for free and reduced lunch performing considerably worse in math and reading tests than students who do not qualify (Coffey & Tyner, 2023). Students who experience poverty are more likely to have inadequate facilities and curricular materials, lesser quality teachers, unstable home environments, less self-efficacy, and health instabilities (Buck & Deutsch, 2014). As of 2021, 17% of the U.S. population under 18 years old experience poverty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021). The American school system now faces the tremendous responsibility of providing high-

quality learning experiences for all students while mitigating the years of educational and socioeconomic inequities that have negatively impacted millions of American youth.

Purpose and Significance

This study aims to examine the effects of a school-based, after-school hip-hop club on students' abilities to conceptualize their relationship with hip-hop and build skills that support developments in leadership, community solidarity, and praxis. Second, this study analyzes how participants conceptualize their relationship with hip-hop in their daily lives. The study contributes to the gap in hip-hop educational research by analyzing an after-school hip-hop club that offers co-curricular support solely through hip-hop cultural and art instruction. The study examines the experiences of current students, alums, and instructors to provide a multi-dimensional approach to how this club functions and if it can support these goals. Building on the decades of research that legitimized hip-hop as a curricular tool, this study now centers on hip-hop art and culture as the primary experience of students. By analyzing its impact on participants' development, this study hopes to provide evidence that suggests the potential for hip-hop clubs and spaces to provide learning opportunities that support educational outcomes and contribute to a higher-quality, more equitable schooling experience for young people in urban settings.

By examining how students, alums, and instructors conceptualize leadership in hip-hop spaces, this study shows how after-school spaces could support leadership development among its participants. Viewed through an authentic leadership lens (Northouse, 2018; Wilson, 2013), this study offers insight into what leadership development in schools could look like and how it happens organically in after-school spaces. Study results may contribute to an overall framework of "hip-hop leadership" in

school spaces that centers students, community development, and hip-hop culture as part of the leadership development process.

Research Design and Questions

Research Design

This study was conducted over four months using a heuristic inquiry design. Heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) utilizes internal reflection to seek the meaning of a phenomenon. It is most effective when a topic is of intense passion and personal to the researcher. The researcher goes through a period of deep immersion in the data, deriving meaning from indwelling on the participants and identifying themes. These themes are displayed through a creative synthesis that addresses the phenomenon.

The study's setting is an after-school, school-based hip-hop club at a high school in Detroit, Michigan. The club meets twice weekly throughout the school year to discuss hip-hop culture, teach hip-hop art forms, and create through collaboration. The study's participants are four current club members and three alumni. All participants are African American, and four are women. All participants are between the ages of 14 and 24. Convenience sampling was used to gather participants.

Heuristic inquiry requires the topic of inquiry to be significant and of personal importance to the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). This study meets the requirements, as I am the founder and sole instructor of the club. My experiences with hip-hop have developed over the last twenty years, shaping my worldview and providing a creative outlet as I navigated my journey. The people I have met through hip-hop have forever altered how I view learning and the role of school for students. I was fortunate to grow as an educator by engaging with a rich community of hip-hop educators and artists who

have inspired me and offered support. Through these experiences, the hip-hop club that became the setting of this study was born. The heuristic process acknowledges my journey through hip-hop as the frame of reference to understand the club's impact on students. By designing the study this way, I could juxtapose participants' experiences with my own, analyzing the club's effects through student and teacher perspectives and generational and social dynamics. It allows me to recognize that our demographic differences have allowed us to experience hip-hop and conceptualize hip-hop's role in our lives in various ways. As a white male, I can also acknowledge through heuristics that I come to the hip-hop community as an outsider; my autobiographical experiences highlight a distinct set of cultural and social challenges from the participants. This dynamic allows for a deeper analysis of the phenomenon of this study.

Research Questions

The study utilizes the following research questions:

1. How do youth conceptualize hip-hop spaces' capacity to foster senses of community, agency, solidarity, and leadership within their lives?
2. How do hip-hop practitioners define the nature of their relationship with hip-hop?

Theoretical Framework

This study uses critical pedagogy as a theoretical lens to understand the challenges that underserved children face in schools and how the data collected describes what is occurring in hip-hop clubs. Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) applies critical theory to educational practices, raising awareness of what the oppressed face and how oppressors' decision-making affects them. Critical pedagogy examines schools in their historical context as institutions that produce society's dominant cultural, social, and

political norms (McLaren & Crawford, 2010). The practices within critical pedagogy allow students to construct learning through their lived experiences while promoting democracy through learning (Giroux, 1994).

Critical pedagogy grounds the research questions within the context of youths, hip-hop, and educational developments. The first research question allows for an analysis of students' lived experiences that is based in the context of Detroit. By examining youths' perceptions of hip-hop spaces, we can analyze how these spaces provide opportunities for engagement in learning beyond the banking system and move students towards a liberated version of education. The second research question observes how hip-hop practitioners define hip-hop's role in their lives, building a democratic definition of hip-hop culture in the process. This definition can then be used to dream of new possibilities within educational spaces and highlight hip-hop's role among students and teachers alike. Additionally, heuristic inquiry complements critical pedagogy by creating space for internal reflection and intuition to exist with the ideas of educational liberation. Instead of bracketing biases and preconceptions, heuristic inquiry requires the researcher to define them at the onset of the study. Therefore, my personal motivations for students' liberation from educational inequities are laid out on the table; my epistemology, ontology, and axiology are able to explore the idea of hip-hop clubs and their impacts on youth in a way that is most natural.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data was collected through club session notes, session reflections, club music creations, and a semi-structured, audio-recorded interview. The club members' Microsoft Teams chat transcripts were also collected as a data source. Heuristic data

included a researcher's journal and a self-interview. Data was sorted by participant, from which portraits were generated. Each portrait was analyzed through the heuristic steps of immersion, incubation, illumination, and explication (Moustakas, 1990). Participant portraits were then coded and grouped during analysis using open, axial, and selective coding (Gallicano, 2013). Codes were used to generate overall themes and build the structure of a creative synthesis, the final step of heuristic inquiry.

Conclusion

This study builds on previous research in hip-hop education to examine the effects of a school-based, after-school hip-hop club on students' leadership abilities, conceptualizations of their community, and perceived ability to create change. Critical pedagogy is applied as a lens to examine these spaces as a resource to address educational inequities in urban and underserved school communities. Heuristic inquiry methodology is used to synthesize collected data through deep personal reflection and creative expression, similar to the students' experiences in the club. This study looks to make a significant contribution to hip-hop education and leadership research by examining hip-hop cultural and artistic experiences in a school-based, after-school setting. It also considers the significance of community building and arts-based spaces in a student's school experiences.

This chapter provided an overview of the current challenges in public and urban education and how this study provides a potential solution to mitigate the impact of inequities and contribute to students' personal development. Chapter 2 will present an outline of scholarly literature on hip-hop education, the theoretical framework, and a contextual history of Detroit and its musical development. Chapter 2 will also provide an

operationalized glossary of critical terms for the study. Chapter 3 will outline the study's methodology, setting, and sample, including its data collection and data analysis processes. Chapter 4 will present the study's findings, and Chapter 5 will discuss and summarize the study's findings, including limitations, implications, and future research directions.

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CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study investigates the relationship between hip-hop spaces, students, and students' conceptualizations of leadership, agency, and praxis. Additionally, the study analyzes how students' relationship with hip-hop informs their relationship with their community. Critical pedagogy will be utilized as a theoretical framework to explore this phenomenon. The study will answer the following research questions:

1. How do youth conceptualize hip-hop spaces' capacity to foster senses of community, agency, solidarity, and leadership within their lives?
2. How do hip-hop practitioners define the nature of their relationship with hip-hop?

In this chapter, I examine existing research on the study's core concepts, definitions, and theories. I start with the methods and scope of the literature review. I examine past research on the central concepts of this study, including critical pedagogy, hip-hop pedagogy, after-school programs, authentic leadership, agency, community solidarity, and praxis. I also describe the significant gap in after-school co-curricular hip-hop space research that this study fills. I define and operationalize all key terms utilized throughout the study. Finally, I provide a contextual history of Detroit's socioeconomic development and music contributions.

Literature Review

Search Methods

The literature review is designed to build a foundation, demonstrate how the study advances knowledge, conceptualize the phenomenon, and provide a reference point for interpreting the study's findings (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2011). The literature review

process began by drawing a series of conceptual maps (UNC Learning Center, n.d.) of after-school hip-hop clubs. A conceptual map is a visual representation that organizes and connects key concepts, terms, and processes related to a specific subject or topic. Conceptual maps are helpful as they provide a comprehensive overview and facilitate a better understanding of complex ideas, relationships, and patterns within a specific domain, aiding in effective literature searches and analysis (Van Zele et al., 2004). These concept maps I created helped identify key terms, phrases, and processes that are or may be occurring. The collected terms formed an initial basis for the literature search. Additional search terms snowballed into the list as the review process occurred. Initial search terms included hip-hop, hip-hop pedagogy, critical pedagogy, solidarity, praxis, agency, hip-hop clubs, hip-hop, and leadership. Terms were also combined to analyze potential intersectionality across topics. In the next phase, texts were pulled from my personal library to analyze their fit in the study and identify additional literature sources. Dissertations and articles from my doctoral coursework were also used to create a master list of reviewable texts. Searches took place using the University of Kentucky library system through ProQuest Education, ERIC, SAGE Reference, ProQuest Sociology, and Alexander Street Black Thought and Culture databases. Individual texts were also entered into the main library search as they were found. While a wide range of journals, articles, books, films, speeches, and other sources were found, sources were considered if they met the following criteria:

1. They were written in English or translated into English.
2. Their topic described critical pedagogy, leadership, solidarity, agency, or praxis in ways that operationalized and contextualized the concepts.

3. Their study setting is in a similar context to this study (urban K-12 public schools)
4. Their study examines the relationship between hip-hop culture, youth development, community development, and/or identity development.

Emery Petchauer's (2009) text "Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop Educational Research" was a significant launching point for the study. Petchauer's review of hip-hop scholarship categorized and critiqued existing literature. The reference list of over 100 sources provided support to the literature review process by both introducing landmark texts and providing a process for eliminating irrelevant hip-hop texts.

Overview

The literature review establishes the study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Through this process, three claims were formulated. First, the establishment of critical pedagogy studies built the foundation of pedagogical evolutions that created space for hip-hop to enter schools. This process makes critical pedagogy an appropriate lens to evaluate hip-hop clubs and their impact on youth. Second, there are considerable gaps in the study of after-school, co-curricular hip-hop spaces that this study fills. Third, there are additional gaps in how engagement and relationship with hip-hop can impact a student's capacity for leadership, solidarity, agency, and praxis. The literature review begins with the theoretical framework and outlines critical pedagogy's development, components, and application. The second section describes the conceptual framework, which outlines the processes at work that connect the different aspects of this study. The third section outlines Detroit's socioeconomic and cultural history, including its impact on the music world. The final section is a glossary of operationalized definitions of key terms and concepts utilized throughout the study.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Pedagogy

Overview of Critical Pedagogy

Hip-hop's introduction to school curriculum can be traced to the creation of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy applies critical theory to understand and change educational practices, drawing on cultural theories such as Gramscian, feminist, post-colonial, and postmodernist theories (Sandars, 2017; Scholle, 1991). Critical theory is a lens to examine society's development and inequalities for social change (Buchanan, 2010). This theoretical framework exists to raise awareness of the inequalities the oppressed face while identifying the smaller group of oppressors that make decisions. First theorized in the 1970s, critical pedagogy reflects the application of Marxist analysis within educational research and practice (Pittard, 2015). Critical pedagogy offers an articulation of the pedagogical practices of educators committed to the elimination of social inequality (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). Critical pedagogy looks at schools in their historical context as dominant social, cultural, and political institutions rather than as sites of social mobility, recognizing how schooling reflects an asymmetrical distribution of power and access to resources based on race, class, and gender (McLaren & Crawford, 2010). Giroux (1988) argues that traditional education focuses on management and control, which wages war against the cultural capital that students who do not qualify with the "docility" required (Giroux, 1988). Traditional systems pose students as the problem and do not investigate how administrators and teachers create and sustain the problems attributed to students. Schools establish the conditions under which some individuals and groups define the terms by which others live, resist, affirm, and participate in constructing their own identities and subjectivities (Giroux, 1988, p.88).

Kirylo et al. (2010) argue that this context situates critical pedagogies against class exploitation, racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression that exist within public education spaces and society; Giroux (1988; 1994) also includes the standardization and regulation of teacher behaviors and curricula as traditional opponents of critical pedagogy. The goal of critical pedagogy is emancipation – the elimination of oppression in all forms. Critical educators believe that emancipation should enable learners to become active, democratically-oriented, non-complacent citizens sensitive to human suffering and critical of capitalism (Widdersheim, 2013). Giroux (1994) calls critical pedagogy "an opportunity to shift schools back to being 'democratic public spheres'" where students have opportunities to construct learning through their lived experiences (Giroux, 1994, p. 279).

Development of Critical Pedagogy

Critical theory is the development of critical studies in the field of education. The Frankfurt School, established in 1923 in Germany, is considered one of the first places where critical theory was applied to learning and schools as a tool against domination (McLaren & Crawford, 2010). African scholars such as Julius Nyerere, Amical Cabral, Franz Fanon, and Kwame Nkrumah also advanced critical theories toward educational spaces. Considered the seminal work of critical pedagogy, Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* represented the complete introduction and examination of critical theories surrounding schools. As the field of critical pedagogy has evolved, additional scholarly efforts have been undertaken to promote the democratization of learning (Giroux, 2011), the inclusion of culture's role in pedagogy (Giroux, 1994), and its role in urban education (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Fundamental Concepts of Critical Pedagogy

Freire's text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) established the struggle between humanization and dehumanization as a global reality. Due to the constant struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed, Freire posits that the oppressed face the historical task of liberating themselves from their oppressors while also liberating their oppressors from their role. Freire outlines several concepts that define the conflict at hand. First, a "fear of freedom" exists as a bidirectional relationship between the oppressed and oppressors. The oppressors fear giving freedom to the oppressed, while the oppressed fear the autonomy and responsibility that they would be given. Given that the oppressed have only navigated a world through behaviors prescribed by the oppressor, there are challenges in identifying the needed changes. This fear of freedom impacts the oppressed throughout the struggle for liberation; the oppressed mimic and engage as the oppressors, for this is their only example of existence. Freire references the fear of freedom as a duality – the oppressed desire freedom but fear a response from the oppressor and what comes next after liberation. Therefore, "to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (Freire, 1970, p. 47).

A second central concept is the pedagogy of the oppressed as a whole. According to Freire (1970), this pedagogy must be developed by members of the oppressed. The pedagogy has two stages. First, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and commit themselves to its transformation through the praxis. Second, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of

permanent liberation (Freire, 1970, p. 55). Members of the oppressors may help create this pedagogy, but their assistance can only be genuine if they enter a "profound rebirth" where they fully enter the realm of the oppressed. The pedagogy is in strict opposition to the traditional educational model, which establishes narrative as the current teacher-student relationship. Teachers describe reality as motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable (Freire, 1970). Freire refers to the traditional model as a banking system. This system is transactional; teachers project that students know nothing and can only learn through their intervention. Teachers fill students with knowledge, stifling creativity in the process. Freire labels liberation as a praxis that can only be achieved by tossing the banking system, injecting consciousness into the learning process, and returning humanization to the learning experience (1970). To achieve praxis in education, critical pedagogy suggests that problem-posing education should be utilized for liberation. In this model, students are posed with problems in their world and become charged to engage with them (Freire, 1970). Problem-posing education is a constant state of becoming; it erodes teacher-student relationship barriers and shifts towards a dialogical relationship. In this relationship, students and educators collaborate to find problems and present solutions, utilizing dialogue and praxis to drive solutions and learning.

Freire (1970) established dialogue as a concept that contains two primary pieces: action and reflection. He defined dialogue as the process of naming the world (p. 88). The summation of dialogue's action and reflection is praxis. Utilizing dialogue challenges students to critically perceive the way they exist in the current state of the world; citizens who comprehend the world around them are aware of their capacity to change it (Freire, 1970, p. 83). An individual's critical consciousness is fostered by problem-posing

education and helps guide them towards praxis, or the ability to act on injustices (Akom, 2009). Praxis requires identifying a problem, building a solution, acting on that solution, and reflecting on the progress made (Freire, 1970; Akom, 2009). This action-reflection-action cycle leads to new perspectives and the transformation of the self, the individual's reality, and the greater system in question (Thousand et al., 1999). According to Freire (1970), education is constantly remade in the praxis (p. 84). He also categorizes the actions of oppressors and the oppressed as "dialogical" and "anti-dialogical." Oppressors use anti-dialogical actions such as manipulation, divide and rule, and cultural invasion to retain their position of power. In contrast, the oppressed use the dialogical actions of unity, compassion, organization, and cultural synthesis. Thousand et al. (1999) add that dialogue requires creating a space for individuals to define their views and voices. Dialogue requires one to be reflective, willing to enter another's culture, and demonstrate listening skills.

Further texts developed concepts on critical pedagogy as a discourse on schooling and inequality. Critical researchers argue that schools should encourage pedagogical authenticity centered on high-order critical thinking activities that target decision-making and conflict-resolution abilities, frame students' roles in activism, and awaken the natural leadership capacities of students (Wilson, 2013, p. 71-72). Jennings and Lynn (2005) identified three theoretic and analytic strands of thought that develop into critical pedagogy: social reproduction theory, cultural reproduction theory, and theories of resistance. Social reproduction theory contains five principles. First, schools maintain the status quo by ensuring that existing social and economic relations remain constant (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). Schools are positioned as agents in regenerating and

solidifying existing political, social, and economic arrangements. Schools do this by preparing students for predetermined roles in the labor force. Jennings and Lynn do not suggest that schools reproduce social inequalities with malice; instead, this principle recognizes the hierarchical structure of schools and its tendency to mirror the "top-down" structure of the labor market (Jennings & Lynn, 2005, p. 18). While schooling supports the dominant class's goals, it also contributes to developing consciousness about social inequalities; Bowles and Gintis (1976) referred to this principle as contradictory. The final principle of social reproduction theory is that the relationship between the organization of schools and the labor market structure shifts according to the sociopolitical and historical contexts that have led to the current conditions.

Cultural reproduction theory refers to how schools reproduce social inequalities by promoting certain forms of class-specific cultural knowledge (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). The effects of this theory are limited by an individual's habitus, or "the way a culture is embodied" within an individual (Harker, 1990, p. 118; Jennings & Lynn, 2005). Habitus includes the specific ways an individual responds to the greater system. The final strand is theory of resistance, which is grounded in the idea that the oppressed have some agency that allows them to resist and collude with structures of domination (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). Resistance theory states that a school's social, economic, and political structure does not act alone; it is supported by people's actions who work to maintain or destroy it. Resistance theory is founded on the principle that the oppressed are producers of culture, presenting an opportunity to break the dominant culture's cycle of regeneration (Giroux, 1983). In all, resistance theory is centered around moral and ethical

implications, encouraging forms of oppression that challenge inequities (Jennings & Lynn, 2005).

Critical Pedagogy and Hip-Hop Spaces

Critical pedagogy is an appropriate framework for this study for multiple reasons. Hip-hop pedagogy, covered in the following section, originates from the foundation of critical pedagogy scholarship (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Akom, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Hip-hop pedagogical examples depict experiences where students utilize their cultural capital for learning and development (Dimitriadis, 2001; Hill, 2009; Kuttner, 2016). Through the vehicle of hip-hop, teachers and students shifted traditional learning paradigms to build community in the classroom through dialogue. Hip-hop pedagogy's shared beliefs in critical consciousness and student ownership provide an entry point for critical pedagogy to analyze the data in this study best.

Furthermore, creating a deliberate effort to empower individuals through art-based spaces and art-based literacies allows them to become familiar with the range of "languages" or symbols involved in art (Greene, 1992, p. 204). This language familiarity may provoke individuals to act in response to outside stimuli. Critical pedagogy opens the possibilities for understanding how hip-hop arts move individuals towards action in response to music and aesthetics. An examination of hip-hop's role in schools also highlights the connection between students' lives inside and outside of learning spaces. Giroux and Simon (1992) challenge educators to promote learning experiences that do not trivialize the objects and relationships important to students. Critical pedagogical approaches allow educators to utilize popular culture "as a terrain of images, knowledge forms, and affective investments which define the ground on which one's voice becomes

possible within a pedagogical encounter" (Giroux & Simon, 1992, p. 224). Hip-hop, as a foundation of youth culture and popular culture, presents opportunities for youth to make connections beyond their individual experience and envision new possibilities for themselves and greater surroundings.

Hip-hop's origin and purpose also mirror the desired objectives of critical pedagogues. Hip-hop was created by African American and Latino teenagers during the 1970s (Chang, 2005). While navigating oppressive conditions and deindustrialization in the Bronx, youth sampled existing Black, Latino, and Jamaican artistic expressions to create a phenomenon named by Afrika Bambaataa as hip-hop (Chang, 2005; Petchauer, 2009). The cultural shifts that emerged after the South Bronx gang peace treaty of 1971 created a sense of unity under common oppression that significantly reduced community violence and eroded the rigidity of youth movement across neighborhoods. This led to an increase of events and spaces that led to the creation of hip-hop, culminating in a "back to school jam" in 1973, which introduced DJ Kool Herc's "merry-go-round" style (Chang, 2005). With hip-hop's roots in anti-oppression and transformative politics, critical pedagogy gives opportunities to examine how current iterations of hip-hop spaces also connect students to their community and anti-oppression sentiments.

Finally, the concept of praxis allows for a deeper examination of hip-hop artistic outputs that students create. When students are guided by problem-posing educational experiences, their critical consciousness builds and allows them to act against injustices (Akom, 2009). Students follow the action-reflection-action cycle to challenge their current perspectives and build new conceptions of the world around them (Thousand et al., 1999). Hip-hop's artistic outputs (rapping, breaking, graffiti, and deejaying) provide

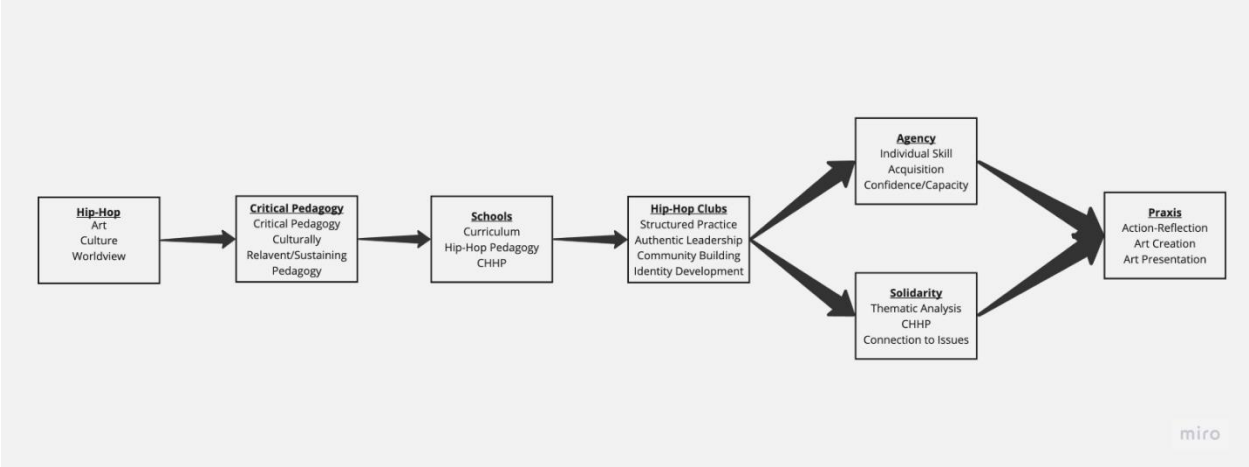
youth with a structure to develop ideas and creatively act against the oppressors around them. Hip-hop art has developed into a vehicle for expression where artists reflect their personal lives and experiences for a broader audience (Hains et al., 2021). From Grandmaster Flash's "The Message" to Tupac's "Changes" and Kendrick Lamar's "Alright," hip-hop music has developed a long track record of questioning sociopolitical norms and highlighting community issues. By examining youth creative outputs through a critical pedagogical lens, I hope to investigate further if and how this tradition is continued through modern hip-hop spaces.

Conceptual Framework: Hip-Hop Pedagogy, Spaces, and Critical Practices

Introduction: "One Mic"

Conceptualizing the themes and topics of this study has been a 21-month journey and several iterations of mapping. I created this concept map with two main intentions. First, I wish to clarify how these concepts have developed, interacted, and led to new processes as their relationships continue. Second, I want to develop the theory that guides this study by identifying holes or contradictions and building resolutions (Maxwell, 2012). Throughout the process, I challenged my own notions and biases by reviewing the present literature and constant questioning. This work was also heavily shaped by my active roles as a doctoral student, social studies teacher, curriculum developer, hip-hop club instructor, and board member for a hip-hop non-profit organization. The following map is an amalgamation of a process that blended emotion, experience, and literature to identify best the processes occurring within school-based hip-hop spaces.

Figure 1. "One Mic" Conceptual Map



The map aims to provide a cogent explanation of the study's connected phenomena. The diagram is meant to be read from left to right. I decided to shape the diagram like a performance microphone and named it "One Mic," based on the iconic 2001 song by Nas. The shape and name, while not prerequisites for a completed concept map, exist as a reminder of the purpose of my study, my hip-hop club, and my overall career: to amplify youth's voices and support their growth. I exist to provide students with "one mic, one beat, one stage" to challenge themselves, gain perspective, and realize that that their "time is now" (Jones, 2001). Furthermore, the concept map amplifies the processes that have led to hip-hop's introduction to schools, assimilation into co-curricular spaces, and development of youth identity and critical consciousness. The following narrative will analyze the map's components and describe their connectivity across hip-hop, education, and leadership realms.

Hip-Hop as Culture, Art, and Worldview

Hip-hop is the catalyst of this study. Hip-hop takes three distinct roles: art, culture, and worldview. Hip-hop was created by African American and Latino teenagers during the 1970s (Chang, 2005). While navigating oppressive conditions and

deindustrialization in the Bronx, youth sampled existing Black, Latino, and Jamaican artistic expressions to create a phenomenon named by Afrika Bambaataa as hip-hop (Chang, 2005; Petchauer, 2009). Hip-hop's artistic inception led to four primary creative mediums: graffiti/style writing, breaking, deejaying, and emceeing. These new artistic expressions created a space of identity development within communities of high crime, gang activity, and political neglect.

Further navigation of hip-hop art has spread its influence into the realms of art, fashion, and other genres of music; hip-hop practitioners were previously known to engage with multiple disciplines as the cross-pollination of hip-hop art forms supported their development over time (Chang, 2005; Cobb, 2007). After the success of Sugar Hill Gang's song "Rapper's Delight" in 1979, hip-hop began to crystallize as a commercially successful art form. While all hip-hop elements have seen developments and changes over time, rapping, deejaying, and musical expressions of hip-hop have become the most popular aspects of hip-hop (Chang, 2005). Hip-hop's artistic development has been heavily criticized as nihilistic, self-destructive, violent, and misogynistic (Petchauer, 2009); McWhorter (2003) labels the genre unintelligent and exploitative. Further growth and commercialization have shaped elements of hip-hop's musical outputs into a drive for sales and revenue (Cobb, 2007). With these reservations in mind, hip-hop is still a massive artistic and cultural phenomenon, becoming the most popular music genre in the United States (Sanfiorenzo, 2017).

The hip-hop art forms described above are the original foundations of hip-hop as a culture. Borrowing Lederach's (1995) definition of culture, which is "the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting,

expressing, and responding to the social realities around them" (p. 9), hip-hop represents the evolution of African culture from the Jamaican anti-colonial and the Civil Rights Era's Black Power movements (Chang, 2005; Cobb, 2007). The Bronx presented various socioeconomic challenges to its citizens: white flight, deindustrialization, blackouts, racial tensions, and rising gang activity. Youth navigation of these conditions led to the hip-hop spaces that created its art mediums; in their creation, a series of identifiable cultural structures emerged. Creativity, competition, and collaboration are cultural elements rooted in the youth movement, where participating members use each other to challenge themselves artistically and stylistically (Chang, 2005). Considered one of the first cinematic documentations of hip-hop, the film *Wild Style* (Ahearn, 1983) uses graffiti and breaking to exemplify these cultural components of hip-hop. The culture has also developed its linguistic structure and norms (Alim, 2006). Hip-hop culture has become a global phenomenon, with practitioners across ethnic identities engaging with various cultural elements in their traditional and localized forms (Pardue, 2004; Kitwana, 2005; Petchauer, 2009).

Furthermore, engaging with hip-hop culture and its history lends itself to individuals adopting a hip-hop worldview or identity. Worldviews comprise individuals' basic assumptions to create a way to interpret reality (Petchauer, 2012). Hip-hop worldviews are initiated through a deep appreciation of hip-hop and urban aesthetics (Ginwright, 2004). Petchauer (2012) examined how college students used their hip-hop worldview to make sense of university life. Individuals with a hip-hop worldview have a personal identity framework rooted in hip-hop's elements (breaking, deejaying, emceeing, and style writing). As they utilize the elements, hip-hoppers develop

sensibilities and ways of engaging, such as sampling, battling, and improvisation. Individuals also have specific habits and practices they use in their daily lives. Hip-hop worldviews help explain how hip-hop participants and cultural members use their hip-hop identities, aesthetic forms, and daily practices to make sense of the reality around them. Hip-hop's existence as art, culture, and worldview is paramount to the phenomenon I am studying. These three forms have a natural intersection in that art and worldview are products of the greater culture; the distinctions between art, culture, and worldview are essential to process across the development of the concept model.

Evolution of Hip-Hop into Sustainable Pedagogy

Hip-hop's introduction to the school curriculum required several layers of theoretical developments to advance curricular decision-making and build acceptance of hip-hop cultural artifacts. Critical pedagogy, reviewed in the previous section, is the first and most significant of these theories. Scholars who studied critical pedagogy evolved the discipline by focusing on additional responses to oppression. In a search for solutions to educational inequities for African American students, Ladson-Billings (1994) promoted the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy. This form of pedagogy centers on three main propositions: students experience academic success, students develop and maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness that can be used to challenge the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that a significant dilemma African American students face in the pursuit of academic success is maintaining and demonstrating cultural competence. Culturally relevant pedagogy offers a path to merge cultural competence and identity with the

learning process; by showing acceptance and inclusion of students' cultures, they can perceive learning and academic success as "cool" (p. 476).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy borrows concepts from critical pedagogy, including the need for critical consciousness and dialogue as a methodology for challenging inequities. Culturally relevant pedagogy shifts towards new ideas by centering students' culture as a vehicle for learning. Anthropologists targeted this approach to match teaching with the homes and communities that students of color came from who did not previously have academic success in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally relevant educators also push students toward academic success by modeling, scaffolding, and clarifying challenging curricula, using students' strengths as instructional starting points, taking personal responsibility for students' success, and developing high behavioral expectations (Morrison et al., 2008). Rather than a "bag of tricks" to harness students' attention spans, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy builds intellective capacity through a rooted pedagogical approach.

Hammond (2015) identified a framework to promote rigor through culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. In this four-part framework, educators build awareness of their socio-political consciousness, including their own privileges, the impacts of privileges on student evaluation, and the role of schools in their students' lives. Educators then build trust and partnerships with students and leverage the trust bond to promote higher expectations. In the third area, educators use their understanding of how culture impacts the brain's information processing to orchestrate learning in culturally congruent ways. Finally, the last stage focuses educators on using rituals and

routines to create a safe environment for dependent learners to stretch themselves and take risks (Hammond, 2015, pp. 18-20).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Additional researchers (Paris & Alim, 2017) support reframing of culturally relevant pedagogy into culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). This shift emphasizes the importance of using culture as a learning mechanism and building schools where cultural, linguistic, and literate pluralism can exist (Paris & Alim, 2017). The evolution of critical theory to critical pedagogy and culturally relevant/sustaining centers on the idea that to liberate oppressed people, an education that develops a critical consciousness and works towards praxis is crucial (Freire, 1970; Akom, 2009). Culturally sustaining pedagogy reflects critical pedagogy's ideals that historically oppressed communities experience schooling differently than others. Youth of color experience a school environment where they are placed under surveillance and taught that survival can only occur if they follow the rules and perform in specific ways that "others" their identity (Kinloch, 2017). Culturally sustaining pedagogy, in contrast, centers on youth culture as a rich vehicle for learning and development (Ladson-Billings, 2017). This pedagogical shift aligns with critical pedagogy by utilizing culture to promote liberation from oppression over survival (Wong & Peña, 2017).

Rather than focusing on learning deficits, culturally sustaining pedagogy shifts away from the white gaze and other marginalizing lenses to highlight student brilliance and capabilities (Kinloch, 2017). Culturally sustaining pedagogy does not include the situational use of commercial or trivial aspects of culture to promote traditional curricula or catch attention spans (Ladson-Billings, 2017). Instead, an example of culturally

sustaining pedagogy highlights how performing arts programs can promote social justice themes in the school community by using students' cultural competencies as means of expression (Wong & Peña, 2017).

Hip-Hop Pedagogy

Further analysis of learning experience differences between racial groups (Ladson-Billings, 2007) identifies the need to center the cultures of people subjected to hegemony to promote achievement and cultural legitimacy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017). These theories create a direct pathway for hip-hop art, culture, and worldview to enter schools as a viable resource for educators and administrators. Hip-hop pedagogy (Hill, 2009) formally inserts hip-hop into national curricula. Developments in critical theory, critical pedagogy, and culturally relevant pedagogy transformed hip-hop into a viable resource for educators and administrators to support diverse and creative populations (Petchauer, 2009). This advancement of hip-hop, known as hip-hop pedagogy, brings hip-hop art, culture, and worldview into classrooms as curricular tools. As schools build curricular goals, they establish a series of objectives, goals, or values that are activated and achieved through learning experiences (Wiles, 2009). Scholars, educators, and administrators have used hip-hop art and culture components to achieve their goals. Research trends in hip-hop pedagogy center on utilizing hip-hop artifacts (mostly texts such as song lyrics) to advance literacy goals. Examples of these hip-hop pedagogical experiences include using lyrics to scaffold themes in English Language Arts classes (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002) or initiating discussions on social issues (Stovall, 2006; Hill, 2006). Wakefield (2006) used hip-hop lyrics to teach research skills and citations. Hip-hop cultural traditions have also been utilized in the classroom;

educators have used sampling to teach writing argumentation (Rice, 2003) and as a model for project creation (Mahiri, 2006). Emdin (2013) describes the use of cyphers and battles in science classrooms to advance rap lyrics' role in education into its more complex cultural origins. Some schools have implemented the hip-hop arts creative process as the framework of an entire curriculum, such as the High School for Recording Arts in Minneapolis (Seidel, 2011).

Hip-hop pedagogy has also been utilized to promote identity development, critical consciousness, and globalization of hip-hop. Dimitriadis (2001) used elements of hip-hop culture, including lyrics and film with youth, to construct notions of identity and self. Akom (2009) demonstrated how hip-hop could promote concepts of critical pedagogy and educational liberation (Freire, 1970), including critical consciousness and praxis. Hip-hop pedagogy has been used to engage students in civic life through assets-based spaces and cultural-focused learning experiences (Kuttner, 2016). Hip-hop has been a curricular tool to develop leadership capabilities, community change, and student self-expression (Hains et al., 2021). Further research on hip-hop pedagogical approaches shows evidence for youths' abilities to participate in activism and community change (Noguera et al., 2006). As identity development occurs in schools, leaders who intentionally created space for hip-hop identities were able to challenge trends in marginalization and exclusionary practices of Black and Latino students (Khalifa, 2013). Hip-hop art and culture consumption has also been used to help Black middle and high school girls form ideas surrounding race, body, class, inequality, and privilege (Love, 2012).

Hip-hop culture, art, and worldview diffuse across "One Mic" due to critical theory, critical pedagogy, and culturally relevant pedagogy developments. The theoretical metamorphosis occurred due to the need to address social and educational inequities in America's current educational structure. Hip-hop has become a vehicle to promote self-expression, promote high academic expectations, and develop cultural competencies in the classroom. There are questions surrounding the research on hip-hop pedagogy. Most studies do not include complex data on academic performance standards and demonstrate quantitative examples of standardized improvement (Petchauer, 2009). There is also a lack of female participants in most studies. With these reservations in mind, hip-hop has become helpful for educators to meet academic, socioemotional, and cultural needs.

Critical Hip-Hop Pedagogy

Through the study of critical pedagogy and hip-hop pedagogy, scholars have formulated an alternative instructional strategy called critical hip-hop pedagogy (Akom, 2009). Critical hip-hop pedagogy (CHHP) is founded on the premise that hip-hop "is the dominant language of youth culture, and those of us who work with young people need to speak their language" (De Leon, 2004, as cited in Akom, 2009, p. 53). CHHP insists that youth are active agents and should analyze diverse data to solve community issues, similar to youth participatory action research structures (Akom, 2009). CHHP then borrows Freire's (1970) praxis model of action and reflection in a five-step process: identify a problem, analyze the problem, devise a solution, implement the plan, and evaluate the outcome (Akom, 2009). To keep the Freirian model relevant to students today, Akom (2009) suggests that students must be made into the subjects and architects of research. Through CHHP, "a pedagogical space of resiliency and resistance can be

developed that challenges the dominant mindset, increases academic engagement and achievement, and builds new understandings of the strength and assets of the youth of color and the communities from which they come" (Akom, 2009, p. 57). Villanueva (2022) adds that CHHP contains four primary principles:

1. CHHP challenges traditional white supremacist paradigms;
2. CHHP grounds intersectional analysis of identities and oppression;
3. CHHP focuses on local capacity building and empowerment; and
4. CHHP incorporates trans-disciplinary scholarship and media.

Williams (2009) describes an example of CHHP that utilizes the hip-hop cypher to build critical consciousness, engage in a discourse of enlightenment, and develop counter-narratives to analyze society through a lens that is less oppressive and more inclusive. This project, called the Critical Cultural Cypher, "can be used as a tool to help educators engage students in a dialogue about their understanding of Hip Hop culture and help the students begin to see the world as a malleable and complex system, rather than seeing it as rigid and simplistic (Williams, 2009, p. 25).

In considering challenges to implementing CHHP, Low et al. (2013) suggest that educators must acknowledge that including hip-hop texts and culture in learning spaces may highlight students' investments in the more oppressive representations of hip-hop in their lives. Hill (2009) described this phenomenon as "wounded healing" where spaces are created "of both voice and silence, centering and marginalization, empowerment and domination" (p. 10). Low et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of addressing authenticity in CHHP through honesty about hip-hop and society with participants, including analyzing the contradictions in messaging across more harmful elements of

hip-hop. Tan (2009) adds five principles CHHP should follow to ensure effectiveness and authenticity. CHHP should be rooted in hip-hop culture while recognizing that its histories and ideologies are socially produced and may need to be challenged and reworked at times; socially conscious of how hegemony operates within society and hip-hop culture; responsive to marginalization across intersectionalities; culturally productive by encouraging learners to be producers of their own hip-hop culture; and inclusive of multiliteracies across forms of media, technology, and culture (as cited in Low et al., 2013, p. 121). CHHP represents an opportunity to approach the learning experience through the merger of Freire's model of liberatory problem-posing education and culturally sustaining hip-hop pedagogy. CHHP also connects the critical consumption and creation of hip-hop culture in schools and community solidarity, agency, and praxis.

Co-Curricular and After School Programming

This study's participants are members of an after-school hip-hop club in Detroit, Michigan. Initially, there was much discussion surrounding how to label this club and its role surrounding learning: is it an *extracurricular* or *co-curricular* program? Based on Merriam-Webster definitions, extracurricular activities are organized student activities connected with school and carrying no academic credit. In contrast, co-curricular activities are outside of but usually complementary to the regular curriculum (Merriam-Webster). Based on the previously highlighted literature, evidence shows hip-hop's abilities to promote curricular goals (Stovall, 2006; Petchauer, 2009; Hill, 2009). The participant club in this study teaches students how to engage in hip-hop art forms, utilizing their literacies and cultural competencies to learn how to create hip-hop music. The club's structure fits Wiles' (2009) definition of curriculum, as it achieves similar

goals and values that the school day curriculum enforces. Therefore, I label the club as an after-school, co-curricular hip-hop club.

Research track records of after-school programs show that they can support students' math and reading achievements, social-emotional development, and increased graduation rates (Sparks, 2019). Cosden et al. (2004) identified that structured after-school activities significantly positively impact academic outcomes. This participation also reduced the likeliness of dropping out, increased connectedness to school and building strengths, and provided a gateway to conventional social networks (Cosden et al., 2004). Co-curricular programs are based on experiential learning, including direct skill development practice (Collins-Nelsen et al., 2022). Currently, interest in after-school programming is increasing rapidly; access to consistent and varied opportunities has not increased at the same rate, and socioeconomic conditions greatly determine student access (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

Studies on after-school music programs also show positive impacts on student development. An after-school music program for fifth graders found significant changes in students' perception of music-making ability and connection to other students; this program also reported an enhanced sense of school pride (Provenzano et al., 2020). Marsh (2012) highlighted an after-school music program for refugee youth in Australia. This program provided opportunities for cultural maintenance and cross-cultural transmission between students. The study found an increase in interpersonal connections, social cohesion, and student empowerment through music technological opportunities, as well as a sense of belonging to local, greater Australian, and global music communities. While these studies show positive outcomes created by after-school programs, it is

essential to note that research has not identified an agreeable structure or feature list that describes successful after-school programs (Sheltzer & Consoli, 2018). Additionally, after-school programs require structure and organization to maximize effectiveness (Cosden et al., 2004). After-school program designers must also consider the importance of creating programming that values students' culture and identity. Simpkins et al. (2017) state that students have better educational outcomes when they have the same ethnic/racial teachers and when their cultural practices are embedded within the school setting.

There needs to be more literature surrounding after-school programming and hip-hop. There are minimal examples of hip-hop clubs that teach students competencies in hip-hop art forms. Furthermore, examples based outside school structures (Dimitriadis, 2001; Clay, 2003; Low & Proietti, 2021) either focus on something other than hip-hop art technical development or need to be built for high school students. As high school students prepare for college and career opportunities, experiences like these hip-hop clubs are aimed to support their social-emotional, cultural, and academic development. Hip-hop clubs exist at the central transition point of "One Mic." These clubs are the next evolution of hip-hop culture, critical pedagogy, and hip-hop school curriculum: school spaces for learning hip-hop art forms. They are places where identity development (Dimitriadis, 2001) can occur and where individuals can navigate their relationship with hip-hop in a safe, controlled space. In the next phase, club actions result in notions of solidarity, agency, praxis, and personal relationship development.

Authentic Leadership and Hip-Hop

Authentic leadership is the leadership theory that models how hip-hop club instructors gain relationships and trust from students throughout the club's duration. Authentic leadership represents a newer area of leadership research and emerged out of people's need for trustworthy leaders during times of crisis (Northouse, 2018). Authentic leadership has no agreed-upon definition, but it focuses on building leadership that is genuine and real (Northouse, 2018). Authentic leadership assumes everyone has the capacity to lead by virtue of pursuing their life purpose and contribution to society (Wilson, 2013). This leadership theory has three viewpoints that create ways to understand its functions. The first viewpoint is the intrapersonal perspective, which focuses on the leader and their internal processes, including the leader's self-knowledge, self-regulation, and self-concept (Northouse, 2018). The second viewpoint is the interpersonal perspective, which highlights the relational aspects of leadership through individuals. Finally, the developmental perspective views authentic leadership as something that can be nurtured (Northouse, 2018). Walumba et al. (2008) adds that successful authentic leadership requires a leader grounded in strong ethics and psychological qualities. Authentic leaders genuinely desire to serve others through their leadership. They are more interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference than they are in power, money, or prestige for themselves. They are as guided by qualities of the heart, passion, and compassion as they are by qualities of the mind (George, 2003, p. 12).

George (2003) outlines the five characteristics needed for authentic leaders to be successful: understanding their purpose, practicing solid values, leading with heart,

establishing connected relationships, and demonstrating self-discipline (p. 18). He adds that each dimension has developmental qualities that individuals can improve to become better leaders: passion, behavior, compassion, connectedness, and consistency (p. 36). Walumba et al. (2008) defined four components needed for authentic leadership as self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. While still a new addition to the world of leadership theory, studies on authentic leadership highlight promising results for its impact on organizations and learning. The self-regulation behaviors of authentic leadership have been shown to promote positive team performance through team reflexivity and communication (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017). Additionally, authentic leadership helps to promote individual creativity by promoting affective commitment to the organization and its mission (Ribeiro et al., 2020).

Wilson (2013) builds upon the ideas of authentic leadership by introducing it to the world of hip-hop, where she labels it "leadership that keeps it real" (p. 75). Authentic hip-hop leadership is built on the foundation of vocation, where individuals pursue their life purpose to contribute to society. There is added importance to the accountability to self, others, and societies rather than from one power player to another. By developing authentic hip-hop leadership, leaders must utilize three essential questions: what does it mean to be human, what does it mean to be humane, and what does it mean to be real? (Wilson, 2013, p. 77). Authentic hip-hop leadership, in the context of this study, is the use of hip-hop culture and digital social media as applicable ways to acquire, nurture, and sustain these authentic leadership sensibilities (Wilson, 2013, p. 76). This process relies on the hip-hop pillar referred to as "knowledge of self" or self- and community awareness

(Wilson, 2013). Leadership in the "One Mic" model serves a mediatory role for critical pedagogy and critical hip-hop pedagogy to operate within hip-hop club spaces. Authenticity in leadership displayed by the instructor helps to increase participant buy-in and trust; through establishing trust and relationships, hip-hop learning and critical examination of society through hip-hop culture can take place.

Solidary, Agency, and Praxis

The final portion of the "One Mic" concept map is the microphone windscreen, which contains the diaphragm and technological pieces that amplify sounds and direct them to the speakers. In the case of the concept map, the hip-hop club's activities and processes operate to support solidarity, agency, and praxis. This segment of "One Mic" is the primary phenomenon being studied. To keep with the microphone metaphor, how does an after-school, co-curricular hip-hop club amplify student voices and abilities to affect change? A weekly hip-hop club session varies in content, but a few structures exist throughout the school year. Students decide on the group and individual goals at our first session. I give them a range of categories to guide their thought process, such as "technique," "knowledge," "created products," and "leadership." Students fill out a handout, and we discuss what they wrote. We identify our primary group goals together; individual goals are personal and are kept between the student and me. I base large portions of the club's sessions on these goals. We do a few things consistently every week. We check in on each other's well-being and discuss events in the community. We discuss new music releases and share songs we recently listened to that resonate. We also discuss hip-hop culture, history, and norms. If controversial topics emerge, we discuss them immediately. Through these discussions, I hope to build community within each

other and create a space that allows for hip-hop discourse to occur. Students also get an opportunity to share techniques for creating art with each other; when students reveal their abilities, I allow them to teach and explain their creative process. I also share my knowledge of rapping and making beats to help beginners get started. The final consistent pillar of club sessions is a prompt to create art. The prompt is for all club members: singers, rappers, and beat producers. Example prompts include, "Create a verse or beat based on an emotion besides love" and "Create a verse or beat that acts as a message to your younger self." For the last half hour of the 90-minute Tuesday sessions, students can record songs on a first-come, first-serve basis. On Fridays, students have an hour after school to record as well.

I have written twenty-seven letters of recommendation, held nine parent meetings regarding grades or behavior, supported four performances outside of school functions, and written a character statement for a student facing legal issues in my eight years of operating this club. I have helped students navigate depressive episodes, parental deaths, pregnancy scares, and relationship issues. My position in facilitating this club and promoting absolute acceptance has allowed students to build comfort with me and have access to an adult in the school whom they can trust. With these collective processes occurring throughout club sessions, students have opportunities to leverage their hip-hop talents toward affecting social change. Students can leverage club experiences to build cultural capital through hip-hop identity exploration (Clay, 2003) and shaping notions of self and history (Dimitriadis, 2001).

Solidarity, agency, and praxis are the secondary outcomes of hip-hop club activities. Solidarity is the positive form of unity that emerges between individuals and

communities (Chatterjee, 2011). Moral obligations exist between community members that encourage support as issues arise, creating networks of accountability and collective responsibility. Three primary forms of solidarity exist: solidarity of all humans based on humanity, civic solidarity to provide fundamental human needs, and political solidarity to support communities in social justice struggles (Chatterjee, 2011). Agency is the capacity for an individual or group to act and the sense of control and autonomy that an individual or group has (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). There are two primary types of agency: individual and collective. Collective agency represents the agency of individuals who comprise groups (Chatterjee, 2011). Two views of collective agency exist; these views determine an individual's role in collective agency. One view is that individuals maintain direct sovereignty over their actions and coordinate their efforts toward group goals. Another view is that group membership transcends the aggregate existence of individuals, which directs individual efforts toward group goals (Chatterjee, 2011). Regardless, agency by individuals contributes to the perceived control and autonomy of communities. As defined earlier, praxis is the ability to act on injustices (Akom, 2009). The process of praxis involves identifying a problem, creating and acting on a solution, and utilizing dialogue to reflect on progress (Freire, 1970; Akom, 2009). Praxis is the interdependence of critical consciousness and social action, a trait utilized by educators who build anti-racist and anti-oppressive learning experiences for historically marginalized youths (Carey et al., 2017).

This study hypothesizes that an intricate connection between hip-hop club activities and the development of solidarity and agency capacities makes students capable of utilizing praxis. As students participate in discussions that involve current issues in

hip-hop and society, they are exposed to various issues and social justice topics. Through analysis of artists and songs, students see how they utilize musical techniques to express issues and critiques. This exposure moves students toward solidarity with social issues. Students see how hip-hop artists utilize their lyrical choices to promote social issues. Coupled with their development in musical technique and increased perceived confidence, students will realize an increase in their capacities and agency. It is also hypothesized that agency and solidarity drive each other through club activities. Increases in solidarity with issues and communities may lead students to see how they can utilize their skills in support; increases in individual agency may help students conceptualize their collective agency and consider solidarity with the collective's movements. This relationship is represented in "One Mic" by the arrows between solidarity and agency.

Praxis operates in the concept map as the summation of the hip-hop club's work in solidarity and agency. The study hypothesizes that hip-hop club members can effectively utilize their critical consciousness when they engage in club activities and build solidarity and agency (Freire, 1970). By nature of the club's purpose, this action may start with creating music that raises awareness or challenges injustices; praxis may also expand into social justice activism opportunities. In this model, authentic leadership helps the club leaders direct or guide students through activities that challenge their musical skills and develop their critical consciousness. By establishing a strong moral standard, listening to members' needs, and motivating members to pursue club and personal goals, an authentic leader will support students in leveraging hip-hop skills for actionable social change.

History and Music of Detroit

Introduction

This study is positioned within the rich cultural context of Detroit. Knowledge and awareness of the city's history and socioeconomic status are needed to understand the study's background. This section is broken into two parts: contextual history and cultural history. The city's history is described contextually through the experiences of Africans and African Americans; this is done intentionally to center the demographics of this study. Detroit has a population of 632,464 citizens as of 2021. According to Census estimates, 17.8% of the population is of school age, between five and eighteen years old. 77.9% of Detroit citizens are African American, 12.9% are white, 7.8% are Latino, and 3.3% are of two or more ethnicities. The median household income is $34,762, and 31.8% of the population is estimated to be in poverty.

Contextual History of Detroit

The city occupies land initially settled by three Anishinaabe nations of the Council of Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi (NPS.org). French fur traders and missionaries crossed into the Great Lakes region by the 17th century, and Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac founded Fort Ponchartrain du Detroit in 1701 (Britannica). After being ceded to the British after the Seven Years' War, Detroit became part of the Michigan Territory after the American Revolutionary War. Due to its position along the Detroit River and access to the Great Lakes, the city developed into a major transportation hub for international trade. As soon as 1736, enslaved Africans were brought to the city, totaling 179 by 1782 (Boyd, 2017). Its proximity to Canada also made Detroit a destination for those escaping the shackles of slavery through the Underground Railroad. Second Baptist Church, founded by thirteen formerly enslaved persons, is the

city's oldest Black congregation and played a role in transporting information and people through the railroad (Boyd, 2017).

The emergence of the American Industrial Revolution led to a massive boom of factories across the city. Automobile innovators such as Henry Ford revolutionized labor processes and created a supply of relatively high-wage jobs, and the unionization efforts that followed stabilized the incentives surrounding those jobs. Enticed by Ford's five-dollar-a-day offer, immigrants from Poland, Germany, Ireland, Belgium, and Greece flocked to Detroit to fill that demand (Boyd, 2017). African Americans in search of economic opportunities as part of the Great Migration also began to move to Detroit; the city quickly became the fastest-growing urban center for African Americans in the country, with a 611% population increase (Boyd, 2017, p. 93). Due to discriminatory housing practices, most African Americans' living options were restricted to the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley communities on the city's east side. These neighborhoods developed into prosperous middle-class communities and provided opportunities for social mobility for the city's Black population. Detroit became the global epicenter of the automotive industry and demonstrated its manufacturing acumen during World War II, when over 2 million military vehicles were built as part of the Arsenal of Democracy (Detroit Historical). With support from advances by the NAACP and other Black advancement agencies, the UAW-CIO grew to support the sustainability of these new jobs and improve labor relations in the city (Boyd, 2017). By 1950, Detroit was America's fourth-largest city, with 1.85 million citizens (Weber, 2015).

Detroit's economic decline over the last 60 years resulted from several socioeconomic factors. The construction of freeways throughout the city destroyed Black

Bottom and Paradise Valley in the 1950s (Boyd, 2017). Some neighborhoods used racial covenants to keep Black Detroiters and other ethnic groups from desegregating their communities; when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled these covenants as unconstitutional via a series of decisions in 1948, white citizens began to leave the city en masse (Coleman, 2022). This phenomenon, known as white flight, critically reduced the tax base and job options. The battle against housing discrimination highlights the struggle with racial tension and oppressive practices that the city has dealt with since its inception. The city has had four documented racial incidents that escalated into full-blown riots: 1833, 1863, 1943, and 1967. The final incident in 1967 left 43 dead and over a thousand injured.

Post-1967 policies have also continued to harm the city directly and indirectly. The national War on Drugs agenda had adverse effects on employment, housing, crime, and healthcare in the city (Chang, 2005). The advent of the STRESS squad within the Detroit Police Department, an acronym for Stop the Robberies and Enjoy Safe Streets, marked a period of increased police violence and targeted assault on Black communities. During the decoy squad's three-and-a-half years of existence, STRESS officers killed 24 men, 22 of them African American, and conducted over 500 raids without search warrants (Boyd, 2017, pp. 226-227). STRESS exemplifies a period in which many aspects of life for Black Detroiters were under attack from oppressive structures and policies. Inadequacies in public education resulted in a student-led walkout from Northern High School in 1966 (Boyd, 2017). The influx of crack cocaine across the nation in the 1980s saw addiction rates, arrests, and violence from gangs such as Young Boys Incorporated and the Black Mafia Family. Mayor Coleman Young, the city's first Black mayor and longest-serving mayor, oversaw several major building projects, such as

the Renaissance Center and Joe Louis Arena. His twenty years in office from 1974 to 1994 were marked with attempts at business and community investment while navigating the perils of drugs and depleted finances. President Gerald Ford promised to invest $600 million into a public transportation system, culminating in the creation of the Detroit People Mover, which circulates a three-mile loop within the city's downtown district (Boyd, 2017). As Herb Boyd stated in his 2017 book *Black Detroit: A People's History of Self Determination,* the city spent decades battling the effects of "rapid deindustrialization, outsourcing, and the closing of factories that for generations were a reliable source of income" (p. 265).

Continued government corruption and mismanagement drove the city toward bankruptcy; the public-facing exemplar of the government's failure was Kwame Kilpatrick, Detroit's charismatic mayor, who was found using city funds for personal luxuries and later convicted of perjury, obstruction of justice, wire fraud, and racketeering (LeDuff, 2013). While corporate investment has revitalized Detroit's downtown and commercial centers, its residential neighborhoods have struggled with receiving access to those same resources (Williams, 2020). A study by Berkeley's Othering and Belonging Institute (2019) identified Detroit as America's most segregated city, suggesting that the battle against restrictive covenants and housing discrimination is still not over today.

Music and Culture of Detroit

Detroit's rich musical history has introduced the world to new genres and traditions; as George Clinton stated, "Detroit is the most important place for American music, hands down" (Slobin, 2019, p. 7). Paradise Valley was home to several Black-

owned theaters that welcomed successful blues and jazz artists for decades (Detroit Historical). As the American Gilded Age began at the turn of the 20th century, Black musicians could take advantage of performance opportunities at the newly opened clubs, bars, and lodges (Boyd, 2017). Detroit quickly became a home for innovation in the music industry. Theodore Finney, in 1857, became one of the first Black band leaders; he partnered with his friend John Bailey, and they were one of the first to feature syncopated music in their bands. John W Johnson's arrival in 1890 signaled the beginning of the brass band era, with performances at Belle Isle and the Germania Turner Hall. Furthermore, Harry P Guy holds a potential claim to the origin of ragtime music in Detroit as a partner with Fred Stone, who also created the city's first African American music academy (Boyd, 2017).

While many Black artists flocked to Chicago because of Detroit's lack of record companies, newly founded labels Fortune Records and Sensation Records were responsible for launching the careers of blues artists such as John Lee Hooker, Andre Williams, and Nolan Strong & the Diablos. The Jazz Age of the 1920s and 1930s also created a large jazz scene in Paradise Valley; jazz clubs such as Cliff Bell's and Baker's Keyboard Lounge have been operating in the city for over eighty years. Gospel acts such as Oliver Green's The Detroiters, Della Reese, and the Winans family have also emerged from the city's neighborhoods. Reverend C.L. Franklin also saw success with his recorded sermons; his daughter Aretha would become one of the most successful recording artists in history (Chilton, 2022). Cass Technical High School was known for its exemplary high school band, led by director Harry Begian, from 1947 to 1964 (Slobin, 2019). Copies of the band's recordings are stored in the Library of Congress as part of the

Harry Begian Collection, a testament to the band's talent level under his tutelage. Band members with successful jazz careers include Donald Byrd and Yusuf Lateef. As musicians who came via the Great Migration to engage in Detroit's industries, the city's nightlife took off, being only comparable to New York and Chicago in terms of Black music (Slobin, 2019).

Detroit's crowning musical highlight during the 20th century may be Berry Gordy Jr.'s creation of Tamla Records, which eventually became known as Motown Records. Gordy used songwriting teams such as Holland-Dozier-Holland to engineer the "Motown Sound" that successfully integrated Black soul music into white communities (Detroit Historical). Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Marvin Gaye, The Jackson 5, Diana Ross and the Supremes, Stevie Wonder, The Four Tops, The Temptations, and several other acts became some of the most successful musicians in the world thanks to Motown Records. Gordy's assembly line approach to music and brand creation launched artists to commercial success for white and Black audiences (Boyd, 2017). According to Mark Slobin (2019), "no other city made space for a Black-owned, homegrown music machine that fused musical sources and workforces on principles that consciously paralleled the auto industry" (p. 162). Motown staff songwriter George Clinton and the recently arrived Bootsy Collins created the foundation of the Parliament-Funkadelic collective in Detroit, which would revolutionize funk music and inspire future generations of hip-hop, rock, and electronic artists (Charnas, 2022).

Detroit is also responsible for several other musical innovations. Metro area bands MC5 and Iggy & The Stooges are credited with forming the foundation of punk rock music in the 1970s, and in the suburb of Belleville, Juan Atkins, Derrick May, and Kevin

Saunderson merged their inspiration from Parliament-Funkadelic and the German band Kraftwerk to create electronic music labeled techno. While these innovations spawned from two distinct demographics – punk rock from white bands and techno from Black artists – both genres represented underground countercultures that represented pockets of Detroit youth. Beyond its musical inventions, Detroit is also the home or birthplace of commercially successful artists like Madonna, Bob Seger, Alice Cooper, Aaliyah, Glenn Frey of The Eagles, and The White Stripes.

Detroit Hip-Hop Development

Hip-hop in Detroit emerged from its connection to techno and electro music. As early hip-hop pioneers gravitated towards electro music, such as Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force, Detroit acts such as Cybotron created futuristic-sounding tracks that focused heavily on danceable rhythms over lyrics (Rubin, 2013). The first primary lyricists were Felix & Jarvis in 1982; as the 1980s progressed, artists like Prince Vince & the Hip-Hop Force, Awesome Dre & the Hardcore Committee, and Kaos & Mystro introduced rap that reflected Detroit's declining conditions and the aggressive demeanor of the "Bad Boy era" Detroit Pistons (Rubin, 2013). Hip-hop fan bases grew in the city due to The Electrifying Mojo's radio show on popular station WJLB.

The 1990s saw the significant emergence of several Detroit artists who defined the city's hip-hop legacy. Rappers such as Esham and the Insane Clown Posse pushed the envelope of hardcore rap with aggressive themes and merging hip-hop with metal. Flint rapper MC Breed aligned his sound with the West Coast's G-Funk movement with songs such as "Ain't No Future in Your Frontin'" and "Gotta Get Mine" featuring Tupac (Rubin, 2013). Kid Rock originated as a break dancer and scratch DJ with the Beast

Crew; after being dropped from Jive Records, he established a hybrid rock-rap sound and became one of the best-selling artists in the 2000s. Further fueling Detroit's hip-hop scene was the battle rap culture at locations such as The Hip Hop Shop and St. Andrew's Hall. Fictionalized in the movie 8 Mile, Eminem sharpened his skills in these spaces to become the most commercially successful rapper of all time (Götting, 2022). Eminem's success also elevated the careers of his collaborators and peers, such as D12, Obie Trice, Royce da 5'9", and Trick Trick (Rubin, 2013). Outside of lyrics, producer J Dilla partnered with fellow Pershing High School students to create Slum Village to build a significant following. In a short period of time before succumbing to lupus in 2006, J Dilla revolutionized how sampling and drum patterns were created while developing instrumental albums and producing for Pharcyde, A Tribe Called Quest, Busta Rhymes, and Common, among others (Charnas, 2022). Further production developments came from DJ Assault and DJ Godfather, who merged gangsta rap and techno to create Detroit's iteration of "booty bass," which is traditionally faster than Miami's version (Rubin, 2013).

The 2000s saw the massive commercial success of Eminem and Kid Rock at full scale while also introducing more localized artists across the city. Groups like the East Side Chedda Boyz, Street Lordz, and Dopeboys Cashout built followings through hardened gangsta rap lyrics and synth-dominated beats. The deejay Moodymann used his label Mahogani Music to promote the cross-pollination between hip-hop, techno, funk, and soul across the city. Slum Village affiliates Guilty Simpson, Elzhi, and Black Milk all helped to build a thriving underground hip-hop scene rooted in J Dilla's legacy. The modern Detroit hip-hop movement has two distinct components. There is a hyper-

localized scene within the city where artists such as Cash Kidd, Damedot, Payroll Giovanni, and Icewear Vezzo continue the traditions of early 2000s artists with fast-paced beats and gangsta rap lyrical content. In the second component, a large group of artists have cracked the mainstream and achieved commercial success. Some artists fit the Detroit style and have reached national success (Sada Baby, Kash Doll, 42 Dugg, Babyface Ray, Tee Grizzley), while others have carved out a large following through other artistic stylings (Big Sean, Boldy James, Danny Brown, Dej Loaf). Female rappers are significantly lacking in Detroit's history, although pioneers Ms. Nicky D, Smiley, and the Boss saw early success in the 1980s and 1990s (Rubin, 2013). Kash Doll and Dej Loaf have maintained successful careers as well as female rappers. In total, Detroit's musical history has been shaped and evolved by its historical context. Migration patterns have repeatedly affected the city in the last 100 years, and those patterns have impacted the artistry created.

Conclusion

It is vital to explore how hip-hop developed into a viable pedagogical option for teachers and administrators to best understand the effect of hip-hop clubs on students. This exploration requires knowledge of critical theory and the processes in which critical theory was applied to the education system. When examining the literature surrounding critical pedagogy and hip-hop-based education, a clear connection emerges in how hip-hop has been leveraged as a classroom resource to combat classroom inequities and offer culturally sustaining work for student development. These connections create the conceptual foundation of this study, which operates as a guide toward understanding the phenomenon of hip-hop clubs. This study addresses critical gaps in the literature by

examining how hip-hop cultural experiences can operate in an after-school, co-curricular environment. Rather than viewing hip-hop as an extension of traditional classroom learning to meet a content-based goal, this study centers on hip-hop culture and art as the primary medium of dialogue and learning. By examining these spaces, one can see what types of learning and development are occurring and consider what these spaces mean for after-school programming and future directions of student-centered learning experiences. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to conduct this study, including researcher reflexivity in the heuristic process.

Operational Vocabulary

The following terms are used throughout the study. Definitions are provided in alphabetical order and intended to provide clarity and consistency throughout the dissertation.

Agency: (noun) The capacity for an individual or group to act and the sense of control and autonomy that an individual or group has (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013).

Community: (noun) A group of people who share similarities in geographic location, socioeconomic conditions, culture, history, or interests.

Culture: (noun) A socially constructed system of values, norms, beliefs, symbols, activities, and codes that give order and meaning to lived experience (Petchauer, 2009, p. 13, dissertation). Also, the shared knowledge and schemes created by a group of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them (Lederach, 1995, p. 9).

Cypher: (noun) A space where individuals form a circular pattern to participate in the expression of hip-hop art, such as freestyle rapping and breaking (Williams, 2009)

Deejay/DJ: (noun) A person who plays recorded music on the radio, in music venues, and/or in hip-hop spaces.

Deejaying/DJing: (verb) The act of being a deejay/DJ.

Hip-hop: (noun) Participatory, oppositional culture or subculture containing many hybrid characteristics of Black culture expressed most commonly through the four elements of hip-hop (Petchauer, 2009, p. 13).

Hip-hop art: (noun) Artistic expressions of hip-hop that are the most recognized and commercially successful aspects. Examples include music, dance, written graffiti, physical art, and fashion (Chang, 2005; Petchauer, 2009).

Hip-hop club: (noun) An organization within a school that offers hip-hop art and cultural instructional opportunities. These opportunities may also include performances inside and outside school and professional/personal development. A hip-hop club has structure, goals, and an instructor or leader.

Hip-hop elements: (noun) The hip-hop structures from the culture's onset. The four primary elements are emceeing/rapping, deejaying, breaking, and written graffiti/style writing. Additional elements include knowledge of self, fashion, and language. (Chang, 2005; Cobb, 2007).

Hip-hop space: (noun) A location, whether formal or informal, where hip-hop art, culture, and worldviews exist freely and can be expressed. I intentionally distinguish hip-hop clubs and hip-hop spaces throughout the study. Essentially, hip-hop clubs are hip-hop spaces, but not all hip-hop spaces are hip-hop clubs. The term "hip-hop space" emphasizes the location where hip-hop is taking place while paying respects to the hip-hop traditions of spontaneity. A hallway cypher, classroom, formal hip-hop organization

meeting, or bus seat may become a hip-hop space based on the norms established through spoken or unspoken norms.

Hip-hop worldview: (noun) An individual's basic assumptions to create a way to interpret reality (Petchauer, 2012). Hip-hop worldviews are initiated through a deep appreciation of hip-hop and urban aesthetics (Ginwright, 2004). Individuals with a hip-hop worldview have a personal identity framework rooted in hip-hop's elements.

Hip-hop youth: (noun) Youth who listen and engage in hip-hop music and practices on a regular basis (Emdin, 2013, p. 16).

Identity: (noun) An individual's conceptualization of self that often manifests differently (i.e., is performed) among various contexts and audiences (Petchauer, 2009, p. 14).

Knowledge of self: (noun) Considered the fifth hip-hop element (Chang, 2005), knowledge of self is the construction of self- and community awareness through studying history and engaging with hip-hop culture (Wilson, 2013).

Leadership: (noun) A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2018). For this study, leadership focuses on the ability to influence.

Praxis: (noun) The summation of dialogue in critical pedagogy; the period of action and reflection when solving community issues (Freire, 1970).

Solidarity, or community solidarity: (noun) The positive form of unity that emerges between individuals and communities (Chatterjee, 2011).

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CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigates the relationship between hip-hop spaces, students, and students' conceptualizations of leadership, agency, and praxis. Additionally, the study analyzes how students' relationship with hip-hop informs their relationship with their community. The primary participants are members of a Detroit high school's hip-hop club. Additional participants include alums of the school's hip-hop club. For the context of this study, hip-hop "spaces" include formal, semi-formal, or non-formal locations where hip-hop culture, art, and worldviews exist and interact. Hip-hop is the primary vehicle for conversation and activity in these spaces. Hip-hop art and culture instruction may be taking place and creating hip-hop art. These spaces differ from hip-hop pedagogy classrooms in that hip-hop is not just a tool to reach an academic end; it is the primary focus. This study's primary "space" is the activities of a Detroit high school hip-hop club called Lyrical Crusaders. The research questions for this study are:

1. How do youth conceptualize hip-hop spaces' capacity to foster senses of community, agency, solidarity, and leadership within their lives?
2. How do hip-hop practitioners define the nature of their relationship with hip-hop?

Heuristic inquiry and qualitative analysis were used to answer these questions. In this chapter, I will define heuristic inquiry and its phases. I then offer a rationale for the decision to use this methodology. After examining the methodology, I will outline the study's setting, sample, and situations. I will include the data collection methods and procedures, including the steps to protect participants' rights and privacy. I will describe

my data analysis process, including my reflexivity and the role of the researcher. Finally, I will present the study's timeline.

Heuristic Inquiry

Heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) originates from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or to find. The term refers to "a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Moustakas (1990) was the first to identify and describe heuristic inquiry at length. In heuristic processes, whatever presents itself to the researcher is an invitation for further investigation. This places the burden of understanding and sense-making on the researcher. Moustakas (1990) refers to this sense of discovery as "an unknown current," where the experience can be refreshing and peaceful or disturbing and jarring (p. 13). Therefore, the onus is placed on the researcher to make sense of the phenomenon and explicate its nature. Heuristic inquiry requires that the researcher has a direct, personal relationship with the phenomenon; the researcher-phenomenon relationship should be as close to autobiographical as possible. This relationship and connectedness with the phenomenon distinguish heuristic inquiry from phenomenology, which encourages levels of detachment in the process.

Heuristic Inquiry Concepts

Several concepts define the heuristic process. The process starts with a question that stands out to the researcher in a significant way; the question is autobiographical but also possesses social or universal significance (Moustakas, 1990). After identifying the question and phenomenon, the researcher begins a process of self-dialogue. Moustakas

(1990) refers to self-dialogue as the "critical beginning; the recognition that if one is going to be able to discover the constituents and qualities that make up an experience, one must begin with oneself" (p. 16). By encountering and examining the phenomenon, the researcher can understand its many facets and separate them into core themes.

A significant concept within heuristic inquiry is tacit knowledge (Moustakas, 1990). Tacit knowledge is the knowledge humans use to make connections but cannot put into words (Moustakas, 1990). Tacit processes help connect individual parts to build a sense of wholeness or understanding. Polanyi (1964) identified two elements of tacit knowledge: subsidiary and focal. Subsidiary elements are a phenomenon's visible and tangible elements; they can be placed and described. These elements intertwine with the implicit and unseen focal elements to create a whole experience and description of the phenomenon. When tacit knowledge is absent, researchers limit their possibilities for knowing and discovery (Moustakas, 1990). An additional important concept involving tacit knowledge is indwelling, or "the heuristic process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 24). Indwelling is a conscious and deliberate process where the researcher identifies connections between subsidiary and focal elements of knowledge. Heuristic researchers utilize focusing to "enable one to tap into thoughts and feelings that are essential to clarifying a question" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 25). The final concept of heuristic inquiry is the internal frame of reference. Moustakas (1990) contends that experiences and phenomena can only be processed by the person who has or is going through that experience. An internal frame of reference is the medium for

which heuristic inquiry occurs. These concepts comprise the primary skills and thoughts a heuristic researcher must process before embarking on a heuristic journey.

Heuristic Inquiry Phases

Heuristic research operationalizes the concepts above into six phases. Moustakas (1990) identifies those phases as the initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and the culmination of the research in a creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). During the initial engagement, the researcher discovers a topic or question of deep interest that holds social meaning and implications. Through self-dialogue and self-encounter, the researcher formulates a question that their intuition and tacit knowledge begin breaking down. Once the question is identified, the researcher immerses themselves in the question and topic. This process allows the researcher to get intimate with the topic and uses the world around them to challenge or analyze it further. After this period of intense, concentrated focus, the researcher retreats to incubate (Moustakas, 1990). While turning off the active engagement with the topic, the researcher allows his or her tacit understanding to grow.

After incubation, the researcher becomes open to the blossoming tacit knowledge and intuition. This illumination is a breakthrough resulting in clustering themes surrounding the topic (Moustakas, 1990). This period requires the researcher to be receptive and could result in new ideas or corrections to previous ideas. The researcher follows illumination by entering a period of explication or a deep dive into "what has awakened in consciousness" to understand its meaning (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). The researcher recognizes that the meanings derived are unique to an experience and tied to internal frames of reference. Heuristic concepts such as indwelling and focusing are

paramount during this inquiry phase. The final step is a creative synthesis, where the researcher combines the materials to describe the phenomenon thoroughly. Although this tends to be a written narrative, many other forms, such as a poem, drawing, or song, can be utilized. Knowledge of the data, periods of solitude, and meditation on the topic are crucial for the creative synthesis phase (Moustakas, 1990).

Moustakas (1990) suggests that data analysis occurs one participant at a time. After collecting the data, the researcher enters the immersion phase until it is understood. The data is then set aside to ensure the researcher is fresh in understanding. The researcher identifies themes within the data and double-checks the accuracy and validity of these themes. These steps are repeated until all participant data has been processed; the researcher creates a group description that synthesizes all common themes across participants (Moustakas, 1990). The creative synthesis is then derived from this group description. Sela-Smith (2002) suggests that this synthesis should prove that a transformation occurred during this process.

Comparison of Other Heuristic Models

Sela-Smith (2002) identified concerns regarding the ability to execute Moustakas' (1990) model of inquiry. Specifically, researchers have challenges achieving the ultimate deep dive and surrendering to the process as Moustakas desired. They were mostly tied to calendar dates or procedural rules that limited their subjective experience. Mixed messaging between the value of self and experience may have led to these detracting studies. Sela-Smith (2002) proposes that heuristic inquiry must center the notions of self and self-search over the experience; instead of studying the concept of loneliness, a heuristic researcher examines their personal feelings of loneliness. Since the personal

journey can be emotionally challenging to unpack, Sela-Smith hypothesizes that researchers avoid these deep feelings in the research process; she also suggests that researchers center the experience over the self to appease more positivist scientists (2002, p. 80). Sela-Smith (2002) indicates an evolution in heuristics called "heuristic self-search inquiry," in which the research suspends hypotheses and variable isolation in favor of a proper surrendering to the self-guided journey through the phenomenon (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 83). This new method suggests that researchers surrender to natural resistance and fear of emotionally complex concepts, remaining rooted in the self and personal journey. For this study, I am choosing Moustakas' (1990) approach to heuristics over Sela-Smith's (2002), as I wish to illuminate the experience and self equally.

Rationale for Heuristic Inquiry

Heuristic inquiry emerged as the most effective choice in the methodology selection process for a few reasons. First, the topic itself is exceptionally personal to me. Hip-hop has transformed my life and given me a career direction I cherish. I have seen hip-hop's potential to inspire young people's creativity and a sense of purpose within the hip-hop spaces I have created and occupied. My passion for hip-hop will allow for the personal nature that Moustakas (1990) recommends in a heuristic topic. Second, heuristics does not require the bracketing or removal of assumptions that ethnography or descriptive phenomenology requires. During bracketing, descriptive phenomenologists remove their attachments, biases, and knowledge of the phenomenon. Ethnography also requires the researcher to step away and detach from the community or phenomenon under investigation. Heuristic inquiry, however, does not ask the researcher to remove their previous knowledge of the experience. Moustakas (1990) argues that an internal

frame of reference is essential for understanding a specific phenomenon; their closeness and attachment to the topic create opportunities for heuristic exploration. Bracketing would remove the internal frame of reference's role in the research process, creating a sense of detachment from the phenomenon. As the founder and sole instructor of an after-school hip-hop club, conducting the study through an ethnographic or fully bracketed perspective would potentially reduce the ability to make connections regarding the relationships between youth and adults in these spaces. Heuristics also allows for deeper analysis and discussion surrounding the locality and geographic contexts of the phenomenon.

Third, my epistemology, axiology, and ontology align favorably with heuristic inquiry. Heuristic inquiry is a social constructivist paradigm that views "the context within which all experiences occur as central to the experiences themselves" (Sultan, 2020, p. 54). Epistemologically, heuristic inquirers cocreate knowledge and understand the nature of the phenomenon. Each co-researcher's perspective helps introduce new understandings and constructions to the knowledge base surrounding the phenomenon. Ontologically, social constructivists and heuristic researchers assume "reality is relative and is constructed based on an individual's contextual and subjective meaning-making of personal and shared experience" and worldviews (Sultan, 2020, p. 55). Axiology in heuristic inquiry requires reflexivity and the researcher explicitly stating subjective beliefs, values, and biases. I enter this study by viewing the world through a social constructivist paradigm; this helps establish heuristic inquiry as a methodologically solid option for my study.

Finally, heuristic inquiry concepts favorably match the process of *hiphopography*. Hiphopography is a term Alim (2006b) used to describe a methodology for analyzing hip-hop culture. It is an emic process that relies on participants within a culture to build an analysis reliant on insiders' perspectives. In hiphopography, distance and divisions between researcher and researched populations are minimal, and the community is engaged on its terms. This requires the researcher to have immense knowledge or participate actively in the culture. While heuristics requires the researcher to make sense of the phenomenon and its functions, hiphopography centers the voices of community members as essential for this meaning-making. Alim's description of hiphopography echoes heuristic methods within hip-hop while emphasizing the importance of community membership and respect throughout the study. Furthermore, hiphopography provides an example of a methodology that embraces hip-hop culture and its practitioners while centering their experiences alongside the researcher's meaning-making processes in similar ways to the Moustakas model of heuristic inquiry.

Validity of Heuristic Inquiry

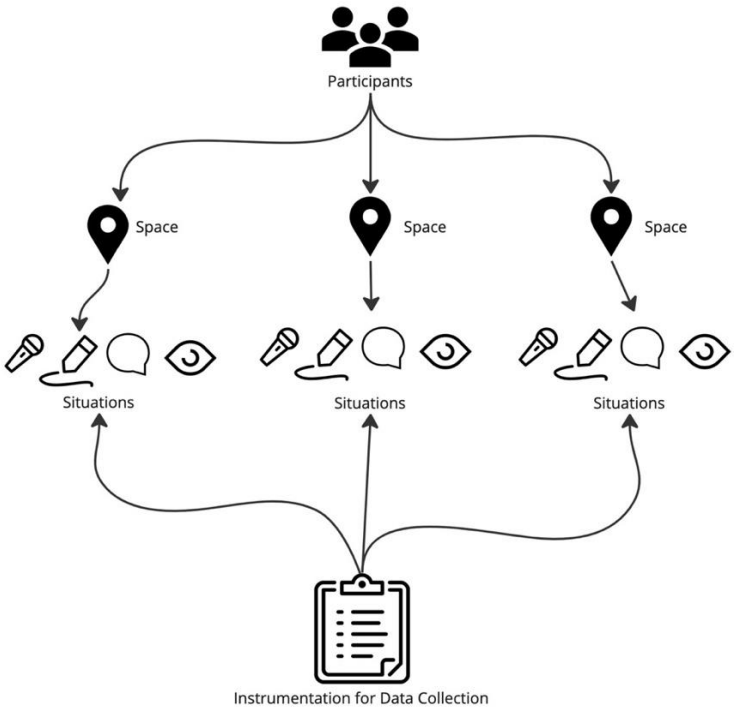
Quantitative statistics cannot determine validity in heuristic inquiry. Instead, validity is determined by the researcher: is the work rooted in the vivid, complete, and accurate depiction of the experience? Moustakas (1990) stated that the researcher's constant search for knowledge, partnered with the "constant appraisal of significance" and "checking and judging," brings validity to the research (p. 33). In most heuristic investigations, validity is determined by returning to the participants, presenting the findings, and seeking confirmation on the account's accuracy.

Setting, Situations, and Participants

Introduction

This section identifies the study's setting, which includes its location, participants, and situations. While some of these terms seem interchangeable, they are utilized purposely and distinctly from each other in this study. Figure 1 shows the differences between this section's central concepts, specifically setting, spaces, situations, and data collection locations. In this study, setting refers to the collective characteristics of the study's location. The setting establishes a geographic location and socioeconomic context from which participants will come from; this is the primary function of the setting. Within the setting, participants enter and create spaces for hip-hop culture to exist and be engaged with.

Figure 2. Distinguishments Between Setting Terminology



Spaces can be formal, such as concerts, clubs, and events, or informal like hallway cyphers or lunchroom conversations. Where spaces are where hip-hop can be

practiced or interacted with, situations are the individual moments where the interaction is actively occurring. For example, a student can attend a hip-hop club session and hang out in the back, disengaged from the other participants. They entered the "space" the hip-hop club has created but have not engaged in the "situation" of hip-hop dialogue and creation that occurs during club sessions. With the introduction of research instrumentation, the situations become data collection locations for the study. This process also transforms club participants into research participants and co-researchers.

Setting

The study's primary setting is the after-school hip-hop club at Eastside High School in Detroit, Michigan. It has a population of around 850 students that is 99% African American. The school is an examination school; all students must pass the Detroit Public Schools Community District admissions test to be considered for enrollment. The hip-hop club Motown MCs
(MC), has ten members. MC has an even split between male and female members, and all are African American. The club has rappers, singers, beatmakers, and DJs who meet twice weekly to discuss hip-hop culture, collaborate, and create music.

Situation

The primary study situation is the weekly MC club sessions. These sessions occur on Tuesdays and Fridays from 3:40 to 5:00 pm. During sessions, students check in on each other's well-being, discuss topics in hip-hop, and respond to a creative prompt that initiates the writing process. Instruction and troubleshooting creative techniques happen on an informal basis. Recording and unstructured creation occur as students navigate the

club spaces. The club only has two rules surrounding content: cursing is heavily restricted, and all songs must have a purpose or message.

Participants

The study's participants are Motown MC members and alums. All MC members are Eastside High School students. They can sign up to join during the fall club sign-up period or join as they learn about the program. Members include rappers, singers, beatmakers, DJs, and students who wish to learn how to engage with hip-hop art. Four students of MC's ten members have volunteered to participate in the study. Three participants are female and all range between 14 and 18 years old. All are African American. Additional participants include three MC alums. These participants range from 21 to 23 years old, and all are African American. All alums graduated from Eastside High School, two are male, and one is female.

Sampling and Selection

Participants were recruited through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling strategies. Since members will primarily come from the MC membership pool, promoting the club is a priority. However, it is important to note that membership to MC is not denied for students who choose not to participate in the study. Marketing for the MC program took place in September. MC alums were contacted in November to inquire about their interest in participating. At a meeting on October 3rd, students were given consent and/or assent forms, while the first official session for the school year took place on October 17th. The final session of the data collection period occurred on January 26th, although the club will continue to operate through the end of the school year. Participants

are required to be Eastside students/alums and at least 14 years old. Previous experience with hip-hop culture or art is preferred but is not required.

Privacy and Protection

Since most participants in this study will be minors, protecting their privacy and rights is critical. All participants received an informed consent form and were required to complete it before participating. Minors were required to sign an assent form and to have a parent or guardian sign an informed consent form. School names, club names, and participant names were replaced with pseudonyms. Since some prospective participants may be students in my classes, I included clear language stating that their grades or status in the program will not be altered if they choose not to participate; participation is completely voluntary. All participants will be given coded identifiers in field notes and journaling to protect their identity. Consent forms, master keys, and other paper data will be stored in a locked closet in a storage unit. Once data analysis has been completed, the master key will be destroyed. Interviews were conducted in the MC studio room as solo interviews to promote comfort and privacy. All recorded and digital data, including music files, will be stored on one external hard drive and transferred in a portable lock box. The MC studio room contains office furniture with lockable storage; this space will store data and equipment inside the study site. The Microsoft Teams chat for the club is automatically set to erase at the end of the 2023-24 school year. All data will be stored for a minimum of five years.

Data Collection and Analysis

Entry

As an employee of Eastside High School and facilitator of MC, entry into these spaces did not include any significant hurdles. I held a parent and participant meeting for all MC members to present the study and offer the opportunity to volunteer. This step helps provide transparency to all and allows prospective participants to ask questions and provide consent/assent.

Data Collection Locations

Data collection will occur in two primary spaces. The first is my classroom at Eastside High School, where some MC sessions were held. The second is the MC studio, an office renovated in January 2023 to include a recording booth and writing space. This room will serve as the primary space for students to record and create music. This will also serve as the interview location.

Data Collection Sources

Data was collected through multiple methods. After every club session, meeting notes, field notes, and journal reflections were compiled. Introductory data, such as the pre-meeting curriculum schedule and instructor goals, were considered throughout the year. Student creations such as beats, written lyrics, and recorded songs were collected as they were created. Student collaborative creations were only considered if all collaborators were participants in the study; otherwise, the non-participants were removed. A 90-minute, audio-recorded, semi-structured interview with individual participants occurred. The club's Microsoft Teams chat was also included in the data collection process. Throughout the year, I maintained a research journal. This journal allowed me to explore my personal reflections throughout the study to engage in self-

dialogue (Moustakas, 1990). Data collection occurred from October 17th, 2023 to January 26th, 2024.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument is an interview protocol administered to each participant. The protocol addresses pre-existing relationships with hip-hop and community, leadership, and identity perceptions. Questions were written in preparation for the interview to explain participants' actions during sessions and output creation. The interview protocol will help triangulate participants' actions in club sessions.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Kirk and Miller (1986) identify three forms of qualitative instrument validity: apparent validity, instrumental validity, and theoretical validity. Apparent validity suggests that responses are so "obviously" linked to the phenomena that they must be valid responses (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 22). Instrumental or criterion validity utilizes multiple data points and perspectives to triangulate responses. Theoretical validity is confirmed when evidence shows that the theoretical paradigm aligns with the observations. This instrument utilizes all three forms of validity to establish itself as an accurate measure of hip-hop's effects on youth. First, it maintains apparent validity by being closely associated with the phenomenon. Questions address hip-hop culture, creativity, solidarity, agency, praxis, leadership, art, and other topics relating to the research questions. The instrument possesses instrumental validity as it was triangulated with other data points in the study. By referencing interview responses with session recordings and artistic outputs, the instrument can confirm that it is producing the results

witnessed. Finally, the instrument was theoretically valid as the data collected confirms the study's theoretical paradigm.

To establish the instrument as reliable, it underwent a meticulous refinement process for accuracy and clarity. Two pilot interviews with alums who were not included in the study were used. This process ensured that the instrument was easy for high school-aged students to comprehend and give high-quality responses. The interviews were conducted in the same setting to reduce environmental variances.

Data Analysis

Heuristic data analysis is a process that cannot be restricted by time constraints. The data analysis for this study followed Moustakas' (1990) description of heuristic analysis. After all data had been collected and transcribed, it was organized by co-researcher/participant. Each co-researcher had a portrait assembled that was centered on the primary experience. Once the portraits were assembled with all the data, I began analyzing each portrait through the heuristic phases of immersion, incubation, illumination, and explication. Once the primary phenomenon and research questions were thoroughly understood and examined through the co-researcher's portrait, I moved on to the next co-researcher. This process was repeated until all data and co-researchers had been analyzed. Participant portraits were coded and grouped during analysis using open, axial, and selective coding (Gallicano, 2013). I used this analysis to create concept word maps using graffiti and stylewriting. These maps were used to develop the creative synthesis, the last phase of heuristics (Moustakas, 1990). Qualitative data was analyzed through the application Dedoose to support the heuristic process and identify consistencies or inconsistencies in my analysis.

Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity

Role of the Researcher

The heuristic process places me as the primary research instrument. While co-researchers are included to provide insight and perspective into what occurs in youth hip-hop spaces, Moustakas (1990) argues that the onus is on the researcher to process those findings and ultimately make the study's revelations. Moustakas (1990) identifies the researcher as the sole person who guides themselves and all co-researchers through the phases of incubation, illumination, and explication; this requires the researcher to take leadership of the study and to be aware of their values and understandings. Because autobiographical experiences and subjective interpretations inspire heuristic inquiry, reflexivity is crucial to establish from the onset of the study. Sultan (2020) refers to embodied reflexivity as a way for the researcher to engage in interpersonal, intrapersonal, and sociocultural dynamics unfolding throughout the study (p. 169). Through the research process, the journal becomes the primary method for researchers to maintain their reflexivity (Sultan, 2020). With that in mind, it is important to understand my reflexivity at the onset of this study. I approach this research fully aware of my historical and cultural background and proximity to hip-hop. I am forever indebted to the life transformations and experiences that hip-hop has brought me; this study attempts to show gratitude for these contributions and uplift the cyphers that made me the man I am. I wish to examine my reflexivity from two distinct perspectives. First, I will briefly outline the history of my relationship with hip-hop, which explains the journey to this study. Second, I will examine my beliefs and values through my reflexivity on the study.

Early Explorations: Beats and Embassy Suites

I grew up in a predominantly white and Arabic enclave of Sterling Heights, Michigan, twenty miles from Detroit. My only exposure to diversity at my private Catholic K-8 school was the occasional food exchange, usually limited to a table of hummus, falafel, and shawarma sponsored by a local Middle Eastern restaurant. My music knowledge and interests were defined by my mother, a retired radiology technician and Beatlemaniac, and my father, a farm child from western Pennsylvania who once played banjo in a country/folk cover band. My parents did everything feasible to expose me to as many different cultures as possible; by age ten, I had been to every museum and read every book a suburban child could access. Alas, I had never been exposed to Black culture in a meaningful way, outside of occasional Motown albums that my mother played while cooking.

I vividly remember the first time I consciously consumed hip-hop music: the summer of 2002. I had just completed the fifth grade and was on a trip with my family to Seattle, Washington. My father is an oral surgeon and frequently attends conferences around the country sponsored by various dental organizations. While he would attend the meetings, my mother and I would explore whichever city we were visiting. On this trip, my parents left to attend a dinner. They paid for room service dinner and allowed me to rent a movie on the hotel's on-demand service. While scrolling through the list of movie titles on the Embassy Suites television, I came across the music tab. I shuffled the options before reaching the "Ghetto Fabulous Hip-Hop" playlist. The cover image was a portrait of rapper Fabolous, staring back at me with his confident demeanor, navy blue bandana, and massive diamond earrings. At that moment, I was unsure how to process what I saw.

I had never seen the words “Ghetto Fabulous Hip-Hop” assembled and did not know what they meant. I had heard of “hip-hop” and “rap,” but usually in some comparison to what my family members saw as “real music” of the ’60s, ’70s, and ’80s. I clicked on the playlist and scrolled through the songs. The first song that played was “Why We Die” by Busta Rhymes, featuring DMX and Jay-Z. The album’s cover, Busta’s 2000 album *Anarchy*, took over the screen: A bright red background with an effigy of the anarchy symbol. The beat kicked in with a driving synthesized horn arrangement, followed by DMX’s gravel-like, snarling voice cutting through the kicks and snares. By the time Jay-Z (Carter et al., 2000) started his verse, I was hooked:

> *“They say the good die young, in the hood where I’m from*
>
> *I only got one question to that - why the fuck am I here?”*

I do not remember much else from that night besides a long conversation with my parents about the hotel charges I racked up; the “Ghetto Fabulous Hip-Hop” playlist was not free and was much more expensive than the movie I was supposed to watch. However, I knew I needed more of, well, whatever it was I experienced that night. We made a last stop at a Seattle mall the day we were leaving and strolled around. We went into FYE; I walked over to the rap section and recognized a white plastic tab with DMX’s name on it. I grabbed a copy of *It’s Dark and Hell is Hot* and asked Mom for it; her compromise was that I purchased the edited version. On the plane ride home, I broke open the plastic seal, put the disc in my Sony CD player, and pressed play on a life-changing moment.

“Where My Dogs At?”

My understanding of hip-hop for most of my adolescence was incredibly surface-level. I grasped hip-hop during the mid-2000s. While my classmates expressed their

teenage angst through punk rock bands like Sum 41 and Blink-182, I gravitated towards the intensity of DMX, Eminem, and the Geto Boys as my outlet. I used to wake up every Saturday morning and watch MTV2's hip-hop video show until my parents woke up. On those mornings, I soaked in what I saw and heard without being able to place the images as cultural expressions. I cannot imagine how my parents reacted as I bombarded them with fashion and style requests for every birthday and holiday that they probably did not understand: Timberland boots like DMX's, throwback jerseys like Jay-Z's, a full pink fur jacket with a matching pink Kangol hat like Cam'ron's. Realistically, I had no context to what I saw and the cultural implications that dress may or may not have had. I had no idea cultural appropriation existed, let alone what it meant. I saw these celebrities as the most extraordinary individuals in the world and wanted to replicate them. As I entered high school, I would use my weekly lunch allowance at Target to buy a new CD for my car. This exposed me to a wide range of hip-hop, especially in regions outside the traditional East Coast/West Coast paradigm. This exposure also led to me attempting to write my first rap and make music for myself.

"It's D-Flow, Ball Like Jud Heathcote"

I wrote my first song in 2009, the summer of my first year at Michigan State University. I used the rap moniker "Droflow," which is my last name spelled backward. My initial raps were based on comedy, with jokes about eating at local restaurants, partying, and being an uninhibited white college student. Slowly, they shifted to replicating the rappers I built my foundation on, and over time, they started to show some skill. I recorded a few mixtapes and occasionally performed with friends at open mic events. My friends and I formed loose cyphers in my living room. Five to ten of us would

gather, play beats, write some rhymes, and record them through my makeshift studio setup. I met a few musically inclined people who helped teach me mixing techniques, theory, and new rhyme schemes along the way. I eventually joined a band with some of these friends, a group of white guys who played hip-hop/funk fusion called the Freequent Flyers. Through this period of expression, I interacted with a very "collegiate" version of hip-hop; I was always in spaces dominated by white musicians, friends, and crowds.

While participating in the culture and some of its significant tenements, I needed to be in a place to address my role and existence within hip-hop spaces. I was aware of aspects of its history; my whiteness (Miller & Josephs, 2009) never insisted that I dive deep into hip-hop's roots. I set up for a presentation during the junior-year education course, TE 302; my professor Erik Skogsberg came to help me. While we fixed the settings on my computer to mirror display, Erik noticed a folder on my desktop: the Blue Scholars album *Bayani*. Erik was a Seattle native who shared stories about seeing them in concert. After class ended, we spoke more about our favorite artists and hip-hop experiences. It was the first time I had ever talked with a professor about anything outside of classroom curricula.

In the next class session, Erik met me at my desk when I sat down. He handed me a list of four books, five articles, and a few organizations to check out. "Hip-hop-based education" was written at the top of the list in big letters. Articles and books came from Christopher Emdin, H. Samy Alim, Django Paris, Bettina Love, Jeff Chang, and Michael Cirelli. These books and links showed me things I had never considered as a pre-service teacher. Rap battles about the periodic table? Connecting Nas lyrics to Shakespeare? Using Mos Def to talk about natural resources? Students feel free to express themselves

and have fun while learning? My mind was blown. These pages were filled with examples of incredible educators using hip-hop culture's many facets to teach students a variety of standards and topics. I felt my teaching philosophy aligned with a purpose and target. How can I build classrooms that look as close to this as possible?

I credit Erik for introducing me to Chang's (2005) transcendent text *Cannot Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*; this book was the first time I truly digested the history and narrative of hip-hop history. At first, I felt ashamed. A wave of cultural appropriation-based guilt swept over me. Here I was, a 6-foot-5 white man, rapping about double cheeseburgers and coming up with similes that described "how sick my flow was," with zero understanding of how hip-hop culture truly functioned. Hip-hop had always been the primary enjoyment of my life; I had never placed hip-hop as a cultural response to oppression before this moment. I spent a significant amount of time reflecting on what this meant and how to proceed as an educator.

"I Learned Through My Teachers But Became Through My Music"

I immediately started learning as much as possible about the history of oppression in America. I fought through a great deal of frustration towards my former teachers for never exposing me to more than a colorblind curriculum. I also vowed never to put my students in a similar situation. I used the last two years of my undergraduate program to soak in as many learning experiences as possible to build my toolkit of culturally responsive (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017) pedagogical strategies. My student internship classroom became the laboratory to experiment and refine my curricular decisions. I had students write graffiti based on Simon Bolívar and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, participate in rap battles between Martin

Luther and the Borgia family, and analyze lyrics to promote SAT vocabulary. I found a groove that let students develop their voice and, for my predominantly white population, expose themselves to institutional racism in ways that I was not privy to when I was in high school. I used hip-hop to build the world where my pedagogy and interactions resided while also re-establishing my north star towards thinking about justice, racism, and equity.

"Stay Hungry. Stay Focused. Show Respect. Keep Movin'."

I applied to school districts nationwide, searching for social studies teaching positions, and was eventually hired at Eastside High School in Detroit. While I was getting established at Eastside, Erik called me with two opportunities. One opportunity was to present at an MSU workshop on using the hip-hop lyric engine Genius in the classroom. I was blessed to meet Django Paris and David Kirkland, two early idols in my journey, and participate in a cypher with renowned freestyler Toni Blackmon. The second opportunity was to meet a man named Tyson Pumphrey. Tyson, a Seattle-born rapper named Ozay Moore, ran a non-profit organization called All of the Above Hip Hop Academy. AOTA's mission was to teach youth in Lansing the hip-hop art forms: rapping, DJing, graffiti, and breakdancing. I spent some time speaking with Ozay and observing his sessions with AOTA students. These sessions were masterclasses in engagement, energy, and student-led processes. Every student was locked in for two hours, collaborating, asking questions, hyping their classmates, and building some fantastic art together. I left every session and conversation inspired beyond words. This relationship would evolve years later into becoming an AOTA board member.

When I began teaching at Eastside, I saw hip-hop culture in almost every part of the building. Students walk the halls wearing Jordans with the unmistakable sounds of 808 bass and hi-hats leaking from their headphones. Hip-hop's linguistic imprints dot their speech. Almost distinctly, there was one clear space in which hip-hop was never permitted: the classroom. Excluding myself and a select few other educators, hip-hop's rich cultural artifacts were restricted at the door. I reflected extensively on the phenomenal experience of observing Ozay's work with AOTA. What would this space look like at Eastside? I spoke with my principal and founded Motown MCs in 2016. At its minimum, MC was a space where some students would play beats, have conversations, attempt to freestyle, and dance. At its apex, it has become a space where students create incredible pieces of music and even identify potential careers in music. In 2017, a friend nominated me as a Detroit Pistons Gamechanger, which came with a $1,000 grant for recording equipment. I transformed a closet in my classroom into a makeshift recording space. These opportunities have created waves of local partnerships to leave a more robust and extensive hip-hop cultural input at Eastside High School.

Hip-hop has, without exaggeration, played a significant role in my personal and career development. My love of hip-hop began with the aesthetic forms, detached from cultural significance. Over time, my engagement with hip-hop pillars and community gatekeepers has helped me understand where I had gone wrong and how to correct my misunderstandings. I am most grateful for how hip-hop has built relationships that have helped me examine my privileges, process my whiteness, and establish spaces to build my capacity as a co-conspirator in educational equity.

Reflexivity: Evaluating Values, Beliefs, Biases, and Attitudes

As mentioned earlier, I come from a social constructivist paradigm. I believe that reality and knowledge are socially constructed and dependent on interpreting context (Kivunja & Kuyuni, 2017). This paradigm influences how my processing of culture and history has changed over time based on shifts in context, experience, and exposure. While some of my values, beliefs, and biases were revealed in the previous section, I want to clarify some foundational conceptions. My role as an educator is to promote the skills and knowledge to move my students toward liberation from oppression (Freire, 1970; Love, 2019). The socioeconomic constructs of Detroit, from a failing transportation system to reliance on a declining manufacturing system, have negatively impacted the community in which Eastside High School resides. While investments have been made to improve the commercial accessibility of the Detroit Riverwalk and downtown districts, the east side has been largely underdeveloped. School-choice legislation in Michigan has resulted in the 6th-most charter schools in the country (Ballotpedia, n.d.), which affects Eastside's ability to fund our programs and staff adequately. Our school is understaffed, leading to overcrowded classrooms and limited instructional capabilities. As an educator, I believe my job is to navigate these constraints to provide students with learning experiences that will prepare them for life-long success.

Hip-hop culture is a vibrant cultural tradition with cultural capital for its practitioners (Clay, 2003). I believe that white people who wish to engage with hip-hop art cannot do so in a vacuum without understanding its history, meaning, and value. I believe hip-hop pedagogy brings the potential to center students' culture as valuable and important in ways that current curricular choices do not. I also believe that teaching hip-

hop art builds students' capacities for critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence. This belief comes from my experiences with Motown MCs and AOTA; I have seen students show significant emotional growth over time and build skills inside and outside music. I also come from a growth mindset perspective, where learning and mastery can be achieved through hard work and dedication (Dweck, 2015). I believe that hip-hop has the potential to connect students to their community, process their agency, identify solidarity with communities, and utilize praxis to make change. This belief is the fundamental driving force of this study.

Conclusion

This chapter identified heuristic inquiry as the methodology for exploring the phenomenon of school-based hip-hop spaces and their impact on youth development. This methodology assisted in processing the personal and vulnerable experiences of leading a school-based hip-hop club. It also allowed me to acknowledge my own understanding and perspectives alongside the students I engaged with. Furthermore, the heuristic inquiry was the most appropriate methodology for examining a phenomenon that is so personal to me and my experiences as an adolescent and eventual educator in Detroit. Data collection occurred in a way that maximized triangulation while protecting the privacy of the youth who volunteered their time and creativity for this study. The following chapter will examine each of those participants. I outline a portraiture of each participant as they experienced and engaged with the hip-hop club throughout the school year, including their previous experiences and conception of hip-hop's role in their lives.

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CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Introduction

This qualitative study explored the effects of an after-school, school-based hip-hop club on its participants' abilities to become leaders, conceptualize the world around them, and work towards praxis. The study followed the experiences of five members of an after-school hip-hop club as they engaged in club spaces from October to the end of January during the 2023-24 school year. Data was collected from club session notes, researcher reflections, the transcripts of a Microsoft Teams chat, artistic creations, and semi-structured interviews with four participants. Current club members ranged from 14 to 18 years old; three were female, and two were male. Supplementing the current members were semi-structured interviews with three alums, two male and one female. All participants are African American. Using heuristic inquiry as a methodology, this study includes constant reflection, journaling, and meaning-making by me, a 32-year-old white male who is the founder and sole instructor of the club.

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do youth conceptualize hip-hop spaces' capacity to foster senses of community, agency, solidarity, and leadership within their lives?
2. How do hip-hop practitioners define the nature of and their relationship with hip-hop?

This chapter describes the findings of the study. It is organized intentionally to model the six phases of heuristic inquiry. First, I will outline the six phases and explain the process related to this study. Second, I will provide a portrait of each participant. In this portrait, I will describe the participant and illuminate their stories, actions, and interactions with

them; the portraits are organized by major themes and concepts within and surrounding the research questions. The final portrait will be of myself, based on my research journal, reflections, and a self-interview utilizing the same research instrument presented to the participants.

Application of Heuristic Inquiry Phases

Moustakas (1990) outlined six phases of heuristic inquiry: initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. These phases were followed in order, with the goal of identifying tacit knowledge surrounding the phenomenon of hip-hop clubs in high schools. The creative synthesis portion exists in Chapter 5; the following section describes the other five phases and the journey through the study.

Initial Engagement

Initial engagement begins with the researcher identifying a profoundly personal topic with social meaning and implications. The researcher then uses self-dialogue and self-encounter to formulate primary questions that will cause their tacit knowledge and intuition to begin breaking down (Moustakas, 1990). Identifying with the focus of inquiry is about "immersing yourself, in existential fashion, in the highly personal experience you are exploring to understand how you and others are orienting to and interacting with it (Sultan, 2019, p. 81)." Through exploratory open-ended inquiry, self-directed search, and immersion in active experience, I worked to get inside the question and achieve an understanding of it (Moustakas, 1990).

I began the heuristic process at the start of the 2023 school year. Most of my engagements took place in moments of solitude, such as daily commutes and dog walks. I

centered my thoughts heavily on the concept of hip-hop clubs and built out a vision of a utopian experience for students, instructors, schools, and community members. This image allowed me to prioritize dreaming and consider the possibilities. For brief moments, I would transition between the heuristic researcher and educator roles, considering the solutions needed to meld imagination with the realities of urban public education. I planned for the club's school year solely on last year's student surveys, notes, and reflections. This decision ensured that the research process did not interfere with the club's functions and that I was not attempting to research a perfect iteration of a hip-hop club experience but rather the experience that I had built over the previous eight years. Through the initial engagement, I came to the final iteration of my research questions and defined the phenomenon.

Immersion

The second phase is immersion, where the researcher focuses immensely on the phenomenon. This deep, concentrated focus used self-dialogue to question, analyze, and understand the topic (Moustakas, 1990). I utilized the immersion phase in two distinct ways. First, I attempted to immerse myself in the experience of instructing, facilitating, and engaging with hip-hop club sessions. I remained in a constant state of self-dialogue surrounding my decisions, understandings, and reflexivity. I attempted to create art independently during several phases, including some lyrics, beats, DJ mixing, and style writing. While the creation did not always end with completed projects, it allowed me to experience the creative process that the student participants were experiencing. Instead of relying solely on past reflections of my creative and artistic journey, I re-engaged those muscle memories I had spent years building. This immersion also included constant

consumption of music, videos, documentaries, and art from familiar and new sources. Second, I immersed myself in the interviews and transcripts, repeatedly re-listening and re-reading. This part involved the creation of initial portraits of each participant, which became the primary structure of this chapter. Repeated listening to the interview audio files allowed me to notice how my participants shifted inflections and word delivery to add meaning and emotions to the transcript.

Incubation

After the period of intense focus, the researcher retreats to incubate (Moustakas, 1990). The incubation period "allows the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). During incubation, the researcher completely detaches from the phenomenon and questions completely to allow tacit knowledge to grow. This phase was the most challenging; I quickly realized how deeply hip-hop is woven into my daily life. I still had to continue operating the club while in incubation, which posed a challenge. Through incubation, I deliberately attempted to limit my engagement with hip-hop and the club as much as possible. While the club still operated as usual, I worked to quickly shift my mind to other interests and concerns as soon as it was over. I shifted my listening and viewing habits not to include hip-hop culture. My dog walks included less dreaming about utopia and hip-hop clubs. This phase led to more profound thoughts and conclusions about hip-hop's value as a consumer product while considering the importance of student-teacher relationships. I set aside two weeks for incubation to occur in my heuristic journey.

Illumination

After incubating, the heuristic researcher illuminates themselves to the clustering of themes surrounding the questions. Illumination opens the door for synthesizing fragmented knowledge, allowing for the potential discovery of ideas missed in the previous phases. Illumination can be an awakening to new aspects of experiences that result in new dimensions of knowledge, or it may correct distortions and open hidden meanings (Moustakas, 1990). During the illumination phase, I coded the interviews using open, axial, and selective coding (Gallicano, 2013). I revisited my initial portraits and added significant details, transforming bullet points into thick descriptions. Slight alterations were made to the first drafts, but overall, the illumination uncovered connections across and between participants through the questions' major themes.

While each participant and data source provided different insights into the phenomenon of hip-hop clubs, the coding process revealed four enduring themes across all data. I used open coding after completing the incubation phase to loosely group and define the key points in the data. I looked for relationships between the initial codes during the axial coding process, merging codes along the experiences that united them. In the selective code phase, I compared the axial codes to the research questions and identified the enduring themes or variables across all codes. Through this process, I identified four primary themes that were consistent across all data sources. Those themes are:

1) Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop

2) Effects of Hip-Hop Club Participation

3) Hip-Hop Club's Effects on Leadership Development

4) Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community Development and Praxis

The figure below shows a sample of this process for the first theme; the lettering next to each code shows how the codes evolved over time.

Table 1: Example of Code Filtration to Enduring Theme

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Enduring Theme
A. Journey to hip-hop A. Family connections to hip-hop culture A. Favorite artists and aspects B. Hip-hop definitions and perspectives B. Comparing hip-hop to other genres/pop culture B. Comparing hip-hop to itself C. Hip-hop and mental well-being C. Hip-hop and creativity C. Hip-hop as who a person is C. Emotions about hip-hop	A. Hip-hop origin stories B. Views on hip-hop culture C. Personal effects of hip-hop	Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop

Explication

The fifth phase is explication, where the researcher examines the new changes and developments in the conscious, understanding why connections were made using focusing and indwelling. Explication requires that the researcher "attend to their own awarenesses, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgments as a prelude to the understanding derived from conversations and dialogues with others (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31)." During the explication phase, I considered the connections I had unearthed previously, looking back through the transcripts to understand why those connections were made and what they meant for the overall phenomenon. This phase was the final preparation before building the narrative in the next section. I re-analyzed my notes, spending significant time on why my intuition led me to construct the themes in the way I had. Upon completing these five phases, I began the sixth phase, the creative synthesis, which is displayed fully in Chapter 5.

Portraits of a Hip-Hop Club, Participants, Alumni, and Instructors

Introduction

In this section, I provide the completed portraits of each participant in this study. I organized the portraits into three categories: current participants, alumni, and instructors. They are ordered within each subgroup by the length of time they have spent as club members, from most time to least. Each portrait describes the participant, historical information about my relationship with them, and a synthesis of their data broken into the major themes of the research question that the portrait addressed. I introduce the portraits with a narrative of the hip-hop club that describes the club's calendar, goals, and structures. This introduction provides context to the settings and structures referred to in

the portraits. The figure below highlights the name, age, gender, and primary hip-hop skills of all participants in this study.

Table 2: Breakdown of Participants

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Primary Hip-Hop Skill
1	Cash	18	Male	Rapping
2	Erikah	14	Female	DJing
3	Jordin	17	Female	Rapping
4	Alexis	17	Female	DJing
5	Lamont	21	Male	Rapping, producing
6	Tierra	23	Female	Rapping
7	RJ	23	Male	Rapping, curating
8	Dan	32	Male	Rapping, instructor

Hip-Hop Club: An Introduction

Calendar

The club, Motown MCs (MC for short), has existed at Eastside High School for eight years. It operates on Tuesdays and Fridays, from 3:40 p.m. to 5 p.m., from mid-October to the end of May. I operate the club as the founder and sole instructor. The club calendar is broken into two phases. From October to the end of January, Phase one introduces ideas, concepts, vocabulary, skills, and general knowledge. Phase two uses the remainder of the school year to allow students to create freely. Phase two is intentionally less structured than phase one, allowing students to use their talents and understandings to collaborate and create as they wish. The phases help to scaffold learning, build relationships, and develop common understandings of our purpose and norms. Planning

is done in the August leading into the school year. I revisit last year's end-year notes, assess my capabilities and current equipment status, and begin to build a master list of what I want students to learn. This list then gets broken into three categories: music skills, culture/history, and artistic growth. The table below shows the list I generated for this school year. I use this list and a copy of the school year's calendar to generate topics and themes for the club sessions. This generates a tentative spreadsheet calendar that I use to reference as the year goes on, with tweaks made as I assess students' needs, wants, and personal goals throughout the club calendar. The list does not change much from year to year but morphs; for example, my purchase of a DJ controller and two students' interest in DJing led to its inclusion this year, and the graduation of hip-hop dancers in 2020 led to dance's removal in 2021.

Table 3: Start-of-Year Table of Interests

Music Skills	Culture/History	Personal Growth
Music theory	Hip-hop history	Artist/identity development
Counting bars	Hip-hop culture	Artist plan/goals
Rhyme schemes	Detroit hip-hop history	Album concept creation
Storytelling/Concept creation	Regional differences in hip-hop	Sync licensing/making money in the music industry
Beat arrangement	Hip-hop aesthetics	
Sampling	Addressing issues through hip-hop	Careers in music
Ableton 11		
Recording/sound acoustics		
Mixing and mastering		
AKAI MPK and Maschine		
Traktor/DJing concepts		

Recruitment

Recruitment for the club begins during the second week of September. I create, print, and post flyers around the school's two floors. I email staff members, encouraging them to direct any students they see who are interested in hip-hop culture or hip-hop art forms to me. I then conduct a PA announcement blitz in the week leading up to the start date, describing the club and announcing the date of our first session. I also make announcements to my classes and visit the lunch hours I can to promote the club. At the very start of the year, I reach out to returning students with a tentative schedule, asking them to talk with friends who may be interested in joining us. This recruitment strategy attempts to cover as many sightlines for students as possible so they can see me, see the club, and ask questions about it.

Club Goals and Norms

The club's goals and norms have remained untouched since I founded it. We spend the first session together discussing what they are and taking suggestions and feedback. While I am the club's founder, I want students' input to create it into the experience they want. If there are ever disagreements, we work to find a middle ground. The primary club goals are:

1. Create space for hip-hop to be appreciated, discussed, studied, and engaged with
2. Create space for students to learn artistic techniques from experts and each other
3. Create space for students to develop themselves as artists, creatives, and hip-hop practitioners

The goals all start with the term "create space" for a reason. I have never been interested in creating a club that mimics the structures of the traditional school day. My first iteration of club goals in 2016 read like objective statements on a classroom whiteboard. I

did not want club goals to exist as a checklist for students to evaluate their abilities or growth. I am not "assessing" students in any formal way. Instead, I desired to create a space for students to navigate on their own. This shift acknowledges that students join the club with various skills, needs, and wants. Some students walk into the room with years of musical instrument training, and some students do not know what a chord is. Some students have written raps and recorded before; some have never done more than listen. Therefore, the aim to "create space" focuses on the student experience from where they are and where they want to go. The club goals are imperfect; a few students have gone through their time in MC without much being created. However, the framing focuses on the student experience and gives students a choice in what they accomplish during club sessions.

Club norms govern the behavior of participants. When the club began, there were almost eight norms; the number has been whittled over the years to three, removing redundancies and simplifying the experience for students. The norms are:

1. Create with a message or topic in mind
2. Create with limited cursing
3. Create and critique with love and growth in mind

The norms are the only attempt I make to shape the creative experience for students. I ask them to limit cursing for the sake of the school environment; since we are school-based, any art that is performed or played represents the school and must be clean from curses. However, I understand that some students want to vent through music, use certain words to drive a point home, or are having fun and freestyling. So, I encourage this reduction in cursing but do not eliminate it. I ask students to create with a message as a challenge to

themselves, focusing their art on a topic or theme. The only non-negotiable norm is the third one. Students cannot make music that perpetuates racism, sexism, hate, homophobia, or transphobia. Likewise, students cannot critique each other in a way that puts down or brings hate toward the artist. I intentionally model constructive criticism in the first weeks of the club, showing old music I have made that I believe is flawed. When introducing these norms, I spend the most time on the third one to break down what this means as a hip-hop critic. Because art is subjective, hip-hop must be treated that way. My favorite artists are not the same as my students' favorites. The qualities they seek in art that they prefer are different from mine. We must approach critiquing art from each other in that same vein. This norm is the most essential norm for building a healthy community of hip-hop practitioners who create and collaborate in a shared space.

Club Structures

Club structures are the varying tasks and segments of the club session. Every session starts with "what's hot, what's not," our check-in on what has happened throughout the week. This feature is relatively new to the club; I introduced it last year. Every person in the session shares "what's hot," something that has been going well or that they are looking forward to in the relatively near future. They then share "what's not," which is the opposite – something that has been a struggle or frustration for them. The check-in serves a few different intentional and unintentional purposes. First, it gives students a space to share their current well-being, allowing them to vent or open up about what is bothering them or what has been exciting in their lives. Second, it allows each other to create a community. They learn from each other, hear from each other, and get an opportunity to value each other's opinions. I ask that no phones be out during this time

so we give the speaker our full attention, allowing for every voice to be heard and valued. We are building a majority-student space that allows each other to be heard and share vulnerabilities they might not have access to otherwise. Third, the check-in format allows students to consider their emotional well-being at least twice a week, modeling what healthy emotional regulation or self-checks could look like for them beyond the club. Fourth, it unintentionally gives students an adult they can speak to whenever they have issues or concerns. I share last during every check-in and have always tried to model vulnerability. Regularly, I share about my mental health journey and how I navigate anxieties and frustration. Doing so has led to students coming to me outside of club hours regarding concerns or challenges that they are facing, providing them with an adult in their school lives that they can confide in and trust.

After "what's hot, what's not," we engage in our learning or discussion for the session. Sometimes, current events have brought something to the forefront that needs to be discussed, such as the importance of the Grammys or stream counts on streaming services. Other times, I select a concept from the list and engage with it together. This is the closest that club experiences come to feeling like "school," but it is very brief. Usually, I describe or model the skill and open space for students to experiment with it. I encourage students to bring equipment or computers if they have them, but otherwise, all of our creation and learning takes place on my MacBook Pro. I have an AKAI MPK Mini controller, a Maschine MK2 controller, and a Native Instruments Traktor Kontrol S3 DJ controller for students to use. In our studio room, there is a recording booth constructed out of PVC pipe and sound blankets gifted by Lowe's Black Store Managers Council as a gift to the school and PreSonus recording equipment. Software includes Ableton 11 Suite,

Maschine 2, and Traktor Pro. Using this equipment, we engage with music creation and hip-hop culture concepts. After our learning or discussion, students are given the rest of the time to create. Occasionally, events dictate what should be created; an example is our school play, which uses students' beats as the intermission and scene change music. Otherwise, students have free reign to create what they desire.

At the end of the session, students occasionally try to record a freestyle or partake in hip-hop through a more fun or relaxed lens. The Microsoft Teams chat serves as a hub for dialogue surrounding music between club sessions. Students share their work outside the club and offer feedback and support. While I will post occasional questions, instructions, and thoughts, I have mostly allowed this to be a student space for them to build community together. This description of MC provides context to the club and its operation. It defines the club in its entirety; within these spaces, the following portraits exist and were created. Through the goals, norms, and structures, students navigate their club membership; through this study, I examine how the club's existence impacts the students and their development.

Current Participant Portrait #1: Cash

Cash is the current longest-serving member of MC, and he is 18 years old. A native of the city's west side, Cash first joined during his sophomore year, the first year that we returned from the pandemic's virtual learning. Throughout that first year, I think I heard Cash speak a handful of times. He was always watching and always paying attention to what others were doing. When he joined, he told me he wanted to learn how to make beats and spent most of his time asking questions about members making them. I saw him dabble with a keyboard a few times, trying to get some ideas together. He

alluded to making some music outside of the club but never showed me anything until his 11th-grade year. Over that year, I saw his personality blossom. He was in my AP World History course, so I spent time with him during the school day and in MC. He began spending more of his free time in my classroom and started showing me his music. Using YouTube beats that were fast-paced and filled with melodic samples, Cash would layer in bars that he recorded one line at a time, a technique called "punching in." He has an incredible artistry in how he layers sounds and adds effects to his vocals. The lyrics were about girls, sexual escapades, and violence against his enemies – almost in complete opposition to the quiet teenager I had met in the previous year. Cash is able to deliver these lyrics in an incredibly interesting way.

We have talked almost every school day for about two years, rarely about music. Cash shares his life visions, goals, and aspirations with me, almost as if he is using me as a sounding board for the direction he is considering. He regularly asks for advice and feedback on his thoughts. He also does not possess a filter and will say whatever is on his mind, which makes for interesting and entertaining moments throughout the school day. For example, the day after he turned 18, he used his "what's hot, what's not" to complain that the dating apps he downloaded "did not have any bad hoes": zero filter, pure Cash.

Identity Through Hip-Hop

Cash's journey through hip-hop is motivated by one-upmanship. "Some dude in my class could freestyle, so I wanted to freestyle better than him." For a student who referred to himself once as a "Hall of Fame hater," that makes sense. He started being interested in hip-hop around 6th grade and started recording in 8th grade; similarly, because he heard a classmate make a song, Cash asked him to teach him how to do it.

Since these experiences, Cash has defined his identity through hip-hop, using his artistry to express himself and his emotions or mood. He defines hip-hop as an extension of his soul. He does not write, which he believes allows him to tap directly into his emotions and feelings. He uses music to support his mood; while he prefers heavily melodic hip-hop, such as Autumn, he will pick artists based on his mood. He sees hip-hop as his future and has a potential future as an artist. This connection is seen through his constant engagement with hip-hop, starting in the shower each morning. Cash and Jordin both discuss the idea of a "cap rapper" heavily. Cap rapping, rapping about things that are not true, is a release for Cash. It is a way to have fun with rapping and allows him to work on his storytelling and lyrical ability.

> To be a great cap rapper. You gotta think. You gotta paint a picture. I feel like cap rapping is maybe having a certain identity like you might be doing this, but you're not. So, making it as realistic as possible. You can't be rapping about you have fast cars and everyone knows you're poor.

Cash constantly battles with the idea of success, contributing to his identity and how he views hip-hop. On multiple occasions, Cash has made comments questioning his success and how his peers view him. During a "what's hot, what's not" share out in October, Cash lamented that he struggles with seeing other 18-year-olds making money and going viral. "I feel like I should have accomplished so much more by now." He often wishes that he would have stuck with sports or taken music more seriously so he could blow up like those he sees on social media. It is an interesting conundrum because Cash is a success by the standard metrics. He is ranked in the top 20 of his class by GPA, and besides MC, he is also on the chess team. He has been accepted into every college he applied to and is waiting to hear about the scholarships he could receive. However, he

views himself as an artist, someone with the potential to be like them, someone who could do it if he "ever took this shit seriously."

Cash's identity is also constructed through how those around him view his music. His instant reaction to defining hip-hop culture was "toxic." Through the internet and instant music critique, Cash sees hip-hop culture based on judgment and instant reactions that are predominantly negative. "I feel like toxicity comes from just being a critic, yeah. Because when you tell them that some people's music can be bad, you tell them the harsher way than the nicer way. I feel it's been there for a long time."

Furthermore, he sees that same toxicity in his classmates and friends. Cash does not see hip-hop, specifically students who make hip-hop, as accepted in school. "Everybody's going to have a stereotype of you, and it's not a good one." During our interview, he ranted about that feeling, the lack of support from his peers compared to other artists. "You would support Lil Baby, but I'm your friend, and you don't post my music, and you don't know Lil Baby. You know me; you see me every day. Then, as soon as you blow up, now everyone is cool with you all the time. They never helped you or anything."

Hip-Hop Club's Impact Through Community

Cash joined MC at the start of his sophomore year, searching for an activity and debating his future direction.

> I was in the process of thinking, do I want to take it [music] serious? And I felt like I could really do something if I took it serious…And I also wanted to learn more stuff so I could be better. I feel like this was a chance to learn something, also have fun, and do something I enjoyed doing. I was just like, I gotta do something, plus I didn't want to go to high school without joining a club. All the other clubs didn't seem interesting. Robotics was cool, but I joined there, but I never went, because I'm not going to build a robot. I never was interested in it. So it was a club. I was interested in joining them.

Over his three years in the club, I watched Cash become more comfortable speaking, asking, answering, and working with those around him. He always seemed to gravitate towards a group; even when he was not as vocal initially, Cash was always in the cypher. For him, this was the defining experience of his time in MC. “I feel like the major thing with MC is the people in there. In my 10th grade year, I was surrounded by people that I made coming to MC fun. Maybe we didn’t get a lot of stuff done, but I enjoyed seeing other people, and we’re doing the same thing; we’re all helping each other, having a good time, picking up some stuff, and learning from listening to them. That’s the biggest thing to me ’cause they even teach you some stuff.” He has now taken more of a vocal role in the group, especially in the Teams chat. He regularly posts his music outside the club and offers feedback to others who post things. He models the type of critique he wants from his peers, offering praise or suggestions on the mix of songs.

Cash has thrived in the community within MC, especially during freestyle sessions. In a December session, I introduced the group to RapPad, a website that offers tools and resources for rappers working on their music. One of these tools is a freestyle aid, which plays beats and gives one-word topics for users to freestyle about. Cash spent the entire session freestyling and bouncing off his peers; he does not smile much, but his joy was palpable on this session. When I asked him in his interview, he alluded to the value he saw in MC’s community. He values their opinion because they make music to some capacity as well, or at least are fans of the culture. “Not a lot of people understand unless they do something involving music. I feel like, with community and music, it’s very important.” Having multiple perspectives is essential to Cash, but his opinion remains Cash’s most important evaluator. “You have to make music that you like. If you

would genuinely listen to your song in a car ride or something, with a full car [of people], then it's okay music."

Leadership and Communication

Through his work within the group, Cash has begun to see himself as a leader and, in the same vein, has seen himself improve his communication skills. "There's stuff I've learned from those people that's been alumni, and they've taught me. Say, I'm working with somebody that doesn't know what they're doing. I feel like I can help. 'Oh, you're not doing this right,' and help them with certain things, or even if it's an experience from just doing music by myself at home, I can help more people trying to get a certain sound or how to say certain words. That's the leadership I've acquired from MC." Cash's leadership can seem very subtle. He encourages his fellow members. On occasion this year, he has encouraged his classmates to reach a creative wall in their process. He throws quick remarks, like "Nah, gang, you gotta finish that," offering support in his placid, monotone voice.

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Change

Cash has expressed a duality in hip-hop's ability to promote change and lead to praxis. On the one hand, he acknowledges its capacity. "People are affected by their environment. If you're a kid, you're in a trap house, you're listening to Rio Da Yung OG all the time, you're going to grow up to think you're supposed to sip lean and kill people, and now you're in jail. If people stop rapping about that, it probably would help the community. Or somebody raps and talks about the environment. And somebody might

spark an idea. And somebody here [at school], they might make a new invention or something. Yeah, I feel like it does influence people. It has a hold on the community." He believes that music can shape people, especially young people, and that more positivity or messaging in music can change things. He views the current state of Detroit hip-hop, highlighting a version of gloom and street life that does not necessarily spark joy. While his neighborhood on the west side of Detroit is home to a park that "is constantly blasting" music during the summer, he still sees Detroit's music scene with some negativity. "I picture colors. With Detroit music, I think of brown and black, gray, like a picture of a dumpster or an alley. I can't listen to it because it will put you in a bad mood, and now you'll feel like spinning on your opps." While he listens to a few Detroit artists, he tends to focus most of his listening time on music that is filled with melodies, improving his mood and giving him more listening enjoyment. He further acknowledges hip-hop's capacity to impact people when he considers his future through music. Cash stated in a club session that when he creates, he is targeting people of the same demographic with similar interests and tastes. He wants to one day perform at an "underground show" and talks fondly of what it would be like to be a successful rapper and connect with an audience.

> It'd be a fun experience, going state to state, flying out to do shows, seeing all the people, seeing how many people relate to my music because it's something that happened similar to them, so they feel good about it. Just seeing how many people with lives I could affect because music really affects people. You could really change somebody's life or something, because if I make a song about something that happened to somebody, that's why I really make it. I make songs about stuff that happened to me. People could go through something similar. Like we could bond and just see the community. And seeing people that like, seeing the support and stuff like that, it encourages me.

While Cash acknowledges hip-hop's capacity, he does not make music that utilizes this capacity. The music he has recorded during club sessions has been more along the "cap rapping" style he prefers. Almost every song he shared in our Teams chat follows that same format. Cash and Jordin jump in the booth and freestyle with each other when no one has anything to record at the end of sessions. Most of their freestyles are "catch an opp" freestyles, where they rhyme lines that describe what they would do to their enemies if they caught them, such as "catch an opp, make them do the Dougie for a week straight."

Similarly, he does not seek out politically conscious music when he listens. At the start of a session, I had Sa-Roc's *The Sharecropper's Daughter* playing on the classroom SMART board. Cash walked in, stared at the screen briefly, shook his head, and said, "That's crazy. I'm not trying to listen to anyone rap about Black power. If I wanted to hear the 'I Have a Dream' speech, I'd put it on." This interaction highlights Cash's duality as an artist. He understands hip-hop's power and how the culture has the power to build communities and inspire change. Yet, he has no interest in making that type of music; instead, he chooses to use music to express himself and have fun in the process.

Current Participant #2: Erikah

Erikah is the youngest club member, at 14 years old. She's the first student in the club's history who has ever had experience and expressed interest in the hip-hop element of DJing. I met Erikah during the summer of 2023. She participated in Eastside's freshman Bridge program, and I was the Bridge administrator. On the second-to-last day of the program, she approached me after hearing about a potential hip-hop club that the school had. "I walked up to somebody, and I was like, 'Do y'all have a DJing club?' And

he said, ‘Oh, we have a hip-hop club. Talk to Mr. Wolford.’ Who’s Mr. Wolford?’ ‘That man with the orange hair.’ Okay. ‘Hey, Mr. Wolford, do y’all have a hip-hop DJing club?’ ‘Yes, we need a D.J. We would love a D.J. Please come D.J. with us.’” Erikah spent the remaining free time during Bridge in the studio, tinkering with the equipment and discussing hip-hop with her friends. She possesses a bright, energetic personality and brings that enthusiasm to club spaces.

Family Influence on Hip-Hop Perspectives

Although she is only a freshman, Erikah possesses the most complete understanding of hip-hop of the current participants. She knows the four pillars and is deeply interested in them. The source of this wisdom is her grandfather, a DJ who lives in the American South. When she was seven or eight years old, she spent considerable time with him. “He would be downstairs in the basement DJing. He’s got very loud speakers, very big speakers. And sometimes I go down there and then watch him. He’ll start doing a little scratchy hand thing and start moving his hands around. I don’t know what he’s doing, but he’s doing something. The songs he’s playing are nice, and then he switches the songs, and sometimes I don’t even notice that’s how smooth it was.” Her hip-hop knowledge and appreciation also comes from car rides, where her grandfather would play Tupac, N.W.A., and Michael Jackson. Conversations in the basement or the car led to her foundational knowledge of the culture.

Identity as a Hip-Hop Practitioner

Erikah describes her identity as a product of hip-hop. Some days, she rocks her “extra hip-hop fit” to school, which requires a black hoodie with graffiti images across the front and her hair in a natural afro. Throughout her childhood, Erikah has become

somewhat of a Renaissance woman in hip-hop in that she tries everything. Besides learning to DJ, Erikah has also attempted graffiti, beat-making, rhyme writing, and breakdancing. Besides her grandfather's DJing lessons, Erikah is learning these art forms out of curiosity.

> I love breakdancing. I don't know how to do it. But I love them breakdancers, like when they be doing their little bone-breaking stuff, it's just amazing. I learned how to top rock and was trying to learn how to windmill off a YouTube tutorial. I actually was. I was spinning around on my living room floor and praying that nobody came downstairs and walked in on me.

Erikah expresses her identity in hip-hop through her fashion. She's constantly "implementing hip-hop in [her] daily life." She also believes hip-hop positively impacts her mental health and well-being, although when she seeks release from stress, she prefers painting over music.

Hip-Hop Clubs and Community

Erikah has been MC's loudest and greatest cheerleader throughout her time in the club. She is always active in the Teams chat, offering positive remarks and emojis on songs when people post them. She regularly jumps in to run recording sessions and quickly asks her peers questions about what they are making. She is inspired by the other members, thinking that "if they can do it, maybe I can make beats like that one day." She also tries to do everything and anything the club is doing. Since all sessions are only run on my personal laptop, there are some days that she is not always able to practice DJing with the controller. Even with that limitation, she will still try to make beats and share opinions on beats being made. She has also attempted rapping and freestyling when I put RapPad on. I consider Erikah a "glue gal" of the group. With her personality and constant support, she helps hold the group together and inject life into it. She is the creator of our

unofficial slogan, “assert dominance,” derived from one of her shareouts during “what’s hot, what’s not.” While venting about her dealings with a school counselor, Erikah said she needed to go to his office and “assert dominance until he fixes my schedule.” From there, it stuck. She likes that, in MC, “I can just be normal. I don’t have to be studious, I don’t have to be gangster, I don’t have to be anything but Erikah.” In most circumstances, “being Erikah” means being a crucial part of the MC community.

Hip-Hop’s Capacity for Leadership

Erikah views hip-hop clubs and hip-hop’s overall capacity for leadership similarly. Through the club, leadership shows itself as teamwork and constant collaboration. Sharing her club experiences in our interview, Erikah said, “It really helped me learn like teamwork…it really helped me be more considerate, learn how to work with people because, usually whenever it’s a project or something, I just be like, ‘y’all can go over there while I do it.’ Being in MC opened my eyes and said, ‘Other people can do stuff, too. Other people might do things better. I’m not saying I was full of myself. I’ve just found it hard working with the people and then communicating too, so being able to see that [in MC] really made everything better.” Erikah also demonstrated leadership by teaching others. When she heard that Alexis wanted to learn how to DJ, Erika quickly explained the basic process of DJing, defining the terminology and showing her how to use the controller. Erikah inadvertently leads by example; while she may not always try to lead directly, she is constantly lifting others up, motivating them, and offering support through all club spaces.

Hip-Hop’s Capacity for Change

Erikah's excitement about hip-hop is most apparent when someone brings up Tupac. He was the first artist that Erikah vividly remembers embracing. "He got those slow songs. He has those songs that make you want to go rough somebody up. He got those songs that made me go, 'Oh yeah, this is hype.' And then it's not only his songs. It's his background, his story, the stories in his song. He has songs just saying, 'Wake up, be a better person, stop killing each other, just do good.'" Even though his murder was almost 30 years ago, Erikah feels his message is still alive. She cites Tupac's song "Brenda's Got a Baby" as especially relevant in today's social climate surrounding abortion. Her love of Tupac highlights how she sees hip-hop promoting change within the community. She also referenced other artists who talk about social issues in their music, such as Chyng Diamond, who uses her lyrics and music videos to promote body positivity. To Erikah, her music encourages listeners to "basically stop hating on people, leave her alone, leave other people alone, just leave us alone" and to empower people to "not mess around, but mess with each other."

Furthermore, she also sees how more popular artists could use their platforms and lyrics to promote change. "We view them [famous artists] as objects or idols. And people follow idols. If everybody's following you, I feel like if you were to do things instead of shaking your butt, maybe they'll start doing stuff instead of shaking their butt." Erikah mentions the rapper Sexyy Red several times during her interview with disdain. Sexyy Red, known for lyrics that are vulgar and sexually explicit, bothers Erikah. She believes artists with songs and videos like hers have the power to be negative influences on young people. "Maybe if she said, okay, young ladies, don't do everything I said in my past songs. She said that [her lyrics] were a joke, but if she knew that people around my age

listen to her song and then they start 'shaking their dreads' in quotations...maybe you should be serious and say, 'let's not do that.'" To Erikah, popularity has the potential to spread messages by sheer numbers. Popular and mainstream music can potentially move the message to the masses.

Current Participant #3: Alexis

Alexis is a 17-year-old senior at Eastside High School. I first met her last year as a student in my AP World History class with Cash and Jordin. We have built a strong mentorship relationship over the previous year; she would constantly check in on my wedding planning progress and well-being during the process and ask questions about her plans and things that she should consider as she prepares to graduate. She has always engaged with her creative side and entrepreneurial spirit: she operates a nail business and a YouTube channel focusing on self-care tactics and fashion. She entered her senior year wanting to expand her horizons and try new things. She has wanted to learn how to DJ "since I was six years old" and saw my flyers looking for potential DJs to join MC. She admittedly has no previous experience or background in hip-hop or music creation, solely interest.

Relationship and Identity Through Hip-Hop

Alexis sees hip-hop as a movement about "starting something new…just creating stuff in life." Alexis's journey through hip-hop took place at her grandmother's house, whom she calls a "music freak." Playing music and dancing in her grandmother's living room, she gravitated towards R&B more than hip-hop, identifying Boyz II Men as the group that made her love music. While she does not identify as a hip-hop artist, she sees how hip-hop exists in her life: "fashion, writing, language, community, [and]

relationships." She believes hip-hop culture impacts her mental health and well-being daily. "Really, without hip-hop culture every day, my day would be boring. I would have no excitement, no fun, no nothing. It gives me something to look forward to daily, gives me motivation. And it just inspires me to keep going throughout the day. Hip-hop really just inspires me to be a better human." She considers sharing music as a love language. She has had an on-and-off romantic relationship with Jordin, and the two can be seen during club sessions, passing AirPods and sharing music regularly. Alexis has spent most of this year working to get in tune with her mental health and well-being, using hip-hop and music as part of her self-regulation. While Alexis has not recorded any music, she shared during "what's hot, what's not" that she was writing to work through her most recent separation from Jordin, showing that she recognizes hip-hop's capacity to support her mental well-being.

Hip-Hop Clubs, Community, and Leadership

When I asked Alexis what she liked most about being in MC, she started beaming joyfully. First, seeing the different pieces of music technology, software, and equipment was shocking. "I didn't know it was that much. I knew there were instruments, but not that many instruments." Furthermore, she thoroughly enjoyed the creative community that was formed. Typically, she does not utilize a community in her creative process. "Personally, I'm a loner when it comes to getting creative, getting the idea, and planning the execution. I do it all by myself." However, through MC, she has begun to see the value of community through support. She enjoys watching other members create and understanding their process "because everybody does it differently. So the way I would do it, Cash wouldn't do it, or the way I might write a song, he might not. He can write a

song in five minutes. I take ten hours, but still cool to see different people, how they get creative, and how they fall in love with what they create. I love it." She enjoys seeing the energy of the creative group and watching members' excitement rise as they make things. For Alexis, this can mean she takes a passive role, sitting back and watching those with more talent create and engage with the club. "Every time I come in here, it's good. Either I'm soaking up knowledge or just relaxing, watching everybody do their thing." MC has helped her with her musical confidence, mainly due to the tips and advice others gave her. This was clear when Erikah taught Alexis the basics of DJing. Alexis was hesitant and, at times, overwhelmed, but she spent the entire time asking questions and was amazed at the basic effects Erikah could apply. A few days later, she purchased her own DJ controller to practice and learn independently.

Alexis views leadership through control and community. She has spent the school year adjusting to a new leadership role: senior class president. While she openly admits, "I'm just a girl" and does not have genuine autonomy or control, she is using her time in MC to adjust to what leadership means.

> It has taught me to let go of control. Don't try to control nobody's creativity. Don't try to control nobody, how they do stuff. Just let them do what they do. So, it didn't teach me leadership, but it did teach me how to let things flow, like just let people do their thing.

This adjusted view of leadership is most prominent through two beat-making experiences she had in the club. I introduced students to Maschine, a drum pad controller used to chop and arrange samples into beats. On two consecutive sessions, the only three in attendance were Erikah, Jordin, and Alexis. We tried to make a "Detroit type" beat in the first session. These beats are characterized by a faster tempo, melodies dominated by quick piano and synthesizer sounds, and a thumping 808-driven bassline. All three girls worked

together on this track, taking turns to share responsibilities and delegating parts of the beat to each other. When they got stuck, they would turn to me for assistance or questions, but otherwise, the process was defined by experimentation. The next session, the girls decided they wanted to try chopping samples. Alexis said, "I've always seen people hitting the buttons and making things, that would be cool to try." We used my Splice account, an application that provides thousands of sample clips for musicians. After searching through the clips, they all loved a gospel choir loop, singing a basic phrase with organ and bass in the background:

"Lord, please, deliver us/Deliver me"

The girls constructed the beat shortly after by increasing the sample's pitch and adding a simple drum pattern. While Alexis took a little more of a backseat in creating this beat, she later recalled this as her favorite moment in the club. "I loved that, all of us together."

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community and Praxis

Alexis views her understanding of hip-hop and community as how hip-hop could impact society. Specifically, the concept of community could connect individuals with resources. "Once you know somebody who knows somebody, they connect you to somebody, and you and that somebody can connect and then create a community from there. I feel like the community isn't necessarily who you are close to but who you're familiar with. You may know something I don't know, so I'll tell you, you can help me. Your community is your resource; they help you." She sees how hip-hop artists build connections with where they come from and how they may represent their homes. In our interview, we spoke about the "Detroit-type" sound and how some rappers from the city are linked to it. Rappers have the ability to represent their community through their

sound. In a similar way, she compared how GloRilla may utilize her hometown of Memphis's culture and sound in her music. "It's a nice tribute to where you came from because I feel like where you came from really influenced who you are growing up. Especially in hip hop, as a teenager."

Alexis conceptualizes hip-hop in two categories: light and dark. Whereas light hip-hop is centered around positive energy and fun, dark hip-hop explores artists' struggles and challenges. She uses these lenses to view and interpret her eastside neighborhood. "I look at it like, okay, we're all struggling in a certain type of way, but some are just better than others…It [hip-hop] makes me look at my community in a lot of different ways, from a lot of different perspectives." Somewhat in line with Freire's definition of praxis, Alexis views the impact of hip-hop on her community through actions. "When it comes to good actions, that puts in my brain a good perception of the community." For hip-hop to have a positive impact on its community, it needs to bring positive influences to its constituents.

> I feel like people that have heavy influence when it comes to hip hop have to push out positivity. When you have a lot of people that are behind you, and you're pushing positivity, if young people really mess with you, you can persuade them to become positive. Music and action-wise… 'Cause I feel like, if there was more positive hip hop pushed out, we would just be better, honestly. We would be better. But more negative stuff is popularized, especially by the younger generation. Stuff affects us high school students more, so when we look at the negative, it's just in our brain now, it's just negative versus pushing positivity. If positivity is in our brain and we listen to positive stuff, things are gonna get better.

The negative images in hip-hop exist. There are images of violence, sex, drugs, and graphic descriptions of life in large, urban American cities. Artists may be cultivating menacing images of themselves and their lifestyles, perpetuated by record labels to market hip-hop to specific demographics (Petchauer, 2009). Alexis hears these lyrics,

especially as they highlight misogyny and homophobia. As a young woman and a member of the LGBTQ+ community, she sees how the negative imagery impacts the people around her. “At the end of the day, we're humans. So, why are we talking badly about each other like this? Especially as a lot of diss tracks are trending in hip-hop, too. Why are we dissing each other? We can't just have a conversation. Why are we dissing? I know you want money, but you're a human. Talk. I just feel so disgusted. I'm over it. There's no reason for that.” In Alexis’s world, a merger of the music and “good actions” of hip-hop may be what is needed to achieve praxis. Using music as the reflection aspect of Freire’s cycle, artists could create opportunities to inspire through “light hip-hop”, rather than continuing through the dark.

Current Participant #4: Jordin

Jordin is also a 17-year-old senior at Eastside. Like Cash and Alexis, she took my AP World History course last year and built a strong relationship with me over the year. Our relationship was cultivated over food; Jordin would come to my classroom during lunch and discuss what we made at home. At the beginning of the year, she asked if she could show me a song she made for her English class that summarized the concepts of the novel *Refugee* by Alan Gratz. I had never heard Jordin express interest in creating, but I was floored by what I heard. She maintained a tight flow and effortlessly weaved in and out of the book’s themes. I immediately told her about MC and that she needed to join. Since she started coming in November, she has maintained the best attendance of anyone else in the club.

Identity Through Hip-Hop

Jordin first gravitated towards hip-hop in 6th grade when her dad would play music. She heard Fabolous's song "Cinnamon Apple" and connected to his story about 6th grade. A few years later, she started making music herself during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Quarantine wasn't a sad time for me, but it was just a time where I was just in the house, so I had to discover myself." She spent time listening to music, especially Rod Wave and Detroit rappers. After hearing YN Jay's song "Coochie" go viral, she started rapping. "I just started. I just downloaded BandLab…And I just started doing it, just started saying stuff. My audio was really bad. I didn't know what I was doing, but I was having fun, so it was cool." Most of Jordin's music, both inside and outside of MC, has fit within the realm of "cap rapping," which she and Cash use regularly to describe their music. She makes music to have fun as a predominant priority. Because of this, she does not associate her identity with being a hip-hop artist. "Even though I really like it, I only share it with people close to me. If I were to make a song that I think is really nice, I would post it, not a song that I just have fun with. Man, I don't want to be a rapper, but it's cool." For Jordin, she listens to music to tap into her emotions. She jokes about how her enjoyment of Rod Wave is "embarrassing," but the singer's emotional songs resonate with Jordin. While she loves music and feels it impacts her mood positively, she does not listen to it all day. "I gotta have a break sometimes."

Hip-Hop Club's Impact

Her enjoyment of rapping fuels Jordin's enjoyment of MC. She also credits the environment I have tried to create as part of the reason for her enjoyment:

> I enjoy that we have a good time. It's not 'you have to do this, you have to do this.' It's fun, like when me and Cash just started freestyling. That was fun. You don't make it into a project. Of course, you encourage us to write songs because

> what's the point? But you don't force us to; you just let us create on our own, and we do it. It makes a good environment.

Her time in MC has impacted her abilities as an artist. She is not trying to turn this into a career; she has been accepted to her dream school, an HBCU, as a computer science major. However, she has felt herself improve. “It’s made me think more when I rap instead of just saying stuff. It made me want to record better. My audio was terrible; now I know how to make it sound decent. And it made me want to be more creative.” She has recorded several songs in MC. Most of the songs fulfill her desire to have fun, such as freestyling with Cash about “catching opps.” However, a few songs have been packed with meaning and messages. After making the “Deliver Us” beat with Erikah and Alexis, she was the first to write on it and record it. Her verse highlights the things she wished to be delivered from:

> I said deliver me -
> From all these pests, they pesticides/
> Deliver me from broke, you trying to steal my motion that they idolize/
> I get paid, they all be broke, no in between, so pick your side/
> Make fun of his motion, so I'm guessing that I hurt his pride/
> Back to the point - deliver me from danger/
> Do your homework on Jord’ for you decide to be a hater/

In a later song, Jordin explores her overwhelming feelings of loneliness and estrangement from her friends. In a Teams chat, she admitted that this beat is different than the Detroit-type beats she gravitates to; it is soulful, dominated by a saxophone loop.

> I feel so lonely/
> Are you even here for me or are you phony?/
> My are not my friends, they don’t even know me/
> Do they even want to know? I can’t be desperate for no homies/

In these songs, Jordin explores her artistry. While she has fun freestyling on RapPad and working within the group, she tests how she can use music to tap into emotions and express herself.

Jordin has been the most active Teams chat member, making her indirectly responsible for fostering the digital community portion of MC. She is regularly sharing the music she works on outside of MC, supporting others' posts, and asking questions from the group. She hass asked multiple times for artist or song recommendations, even expressing interest in trying new genres such as metal. At times, she has also monitored the younger students, checking them when they bicker with each other or post too many things unrelated to MC. She sees herself as a natural leader, "because that's just how I am." During sessions, she usually facilitates among the group, making sure people are included. She does this when we are using RapPad, making space for quieter members to jump into a freestyle. She did this while making beats with Erikah and Alexis, sharing her vision but allowing others to lay their vision as they worked. These examples highlight her natural leadership style.

> I don't like to be the person like that likes to have stuff done specifically. I don't want to be the boss of everybody…. I feel like it's not fun if everybody doesn't enjoy it. You can tell when somebody doesn't like something. That's when, if I can tell that they don't like the idea, I just go, what you think? Make them feel comfortable. I don't want to make nobody feel like they're not heard in here. It's supposed to be fun.

Therefore, Jordin's leadership is anchored in facilitation. She always remains her authentic self, working with others to increase their enjoyment of the club. If they feel included and are having fun, she will have fun in the process.

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community Development

Jordin sees hip-hop as a significant part of her future. “It’s a conversation starter,” where she can use music to network and connect with others. As she prepares to go to college in the fall, she is thinking about how she needs to learn “all the hustles” and the songs that are most likely to get played in community spaces. While she is relatively new to Detroit hip-hop, she feels connected to the music and how they grew up in similar places to her westside neighborhood. One of her favorite rappers is Kash Doll, who she loves because “she’s from here. She also doesn’t rap about what a lot of female rappers rap about.” That local connection helps Jordin relate to Detroit artists more than others.

Jordin also acknowledges hip-hop’s capacity for leadership and community development. “You can use hip-hop as a way to speak to people, instead of using it as a way to bash people.” She admits several times during our interview that “violence sells,” and these images may be spread solely for monetary gain. However, she believes many of these rappers are exaggerating or lying. Those who are not fully lying are projecting an aspect of reality in their music. “Even if the story is not about them, it's about somebody else. I feel like we could have really been in a situation like that.” She also believes that rappers portray their neighborhood in certain ways to protect their community. “I feel like the only reason they make music like that is to protect their neighborhood. Don't come over here and do that to us. I feel like it's a way to represent you but also protect the neighborhood in a way.”

In thinking about hip-hop’s capacity for social change, she highlights Lil Baby’s song “The Bigger Picture.” Released a few weeks after George Floyd’s murder by police in 2020, the song became a massive hit as Lil Baby expressed his frustration about police brutality and systemic racism in America. To Jordin, the message was well received

because “he’s Lil Baby,” one of the biggest hip-hop artists in the world. However, Jordin possesses legitimate concern about the longevity and authenticity of the message. “I don't understand why people only make music when that's the kind of stuff happening…he only did that because he knew he was gonna get a lot of money from it.” She raises these cautions to the reasons why popular artists may create socially conscious music, that their intentions may not be pure. It is interesting that Jordin’s statement, “violence sells,” applies beyond hip-hop and into mainstream media. In a way, music creates a cycle with the news and other entertainment sources that sell violence in their own ways. Jordin’s interpretation of artistic intentions comes across as untrustworthy. She labeled hip-hop culture as “lost”, fueled by social media. She sees artists inspired by others who portray messages of violence and sex. She identifies these inspirations as negative influences. In that same vein, she also recognizes the positivity that exists and hopes that positive artists can break through the “cap”. “I feel if the song is really good and if you genuinely mean what you say, positively, then you can definitely reach out to me and others.”

Alumnus Participant #1: Lamont

The interview with Lamont is incredibly emotional for me. We are sitting in the MC studio, a rarely used office room from when Lamont was a student. When I found out that it was being built, Lamont was the first person besides my wife that I told. There were tears and hugs when we walked into the space together for the first time. For Lamont’s entire existence in MC, we were constantly on the run, scattered to different spaces within the building, and treated as secondary to the fine arts and other after-school clubs. “We were just struggling to find a space just to create, just to be. And now they have that.” Lamont is now 21, an educator assistant at a large private school in Detroit’s

suburbs, and as Eastside's assistant band director. He walks the same halls he used to run through years earlier, this time with long loc'd hair and even more bass to his deep voice. Over his time in high school, we had countless conversations about music, sports, and life. We shared family stories, aspirations, and fears. We had several "come to Jesus" meetings over his struggling grades, including at least two phone calls with an assistant principal to ensure he was not removed from the school for academics. I watched his graduation with tears from a Microsoft Teams call during June of the 2020 pandemic. He read a poem in honor of his journey through high school and his father, who passed away at the onset of the pandemic. I was grateful that he was available for this interview because the story of MC could not have been told without Lamont.

Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop

Lamont is the first four-year member of MC. He is a self-proclaimed hip-hop scientist who loves dissecting lyrics and how rappers construct art in the way they do. "It was the first thing that I started looking at from a musical perspective rather than a listening perspective." His introduction to hip-hop came from his family, starting with his mother playing Bone Thugs-N-Harmony on drives to Chicago. His uncle is a rapper who has visited MC sessions in the past. As a family, they watch the BET Hip-Hop Awards together, specifically the yearly cypher segment. His first experiences rapping were spent with his brother playing the video game *Tak and the Power of Juju*, where they took the rap from the game and re-arranged it with their own lyrics. He developed a fondness for Kendrick Lamar and Kanye West, which helped support his infatuation with the culture.

Lamont's love and appreciation for hip-hop culture are evident in his description: "Brilliant…electric…fearless." He calls the pioneers of hip-hop "fearless… you're in this

era of creating something that's never been done, it's highly frowned upon, and you're in an environment that's literally on fire." Music has been a primary quality of Lamont's identity, whether as a rapper or a euphonium player in the school band. He sees all of his artistic qualities merging to define his identity:

> Outside of music, how I carry myself is as a musician. And that means music is so me that I'm the same everywhere. I'm the same in a professional setting because, in order to be an artist or a musician and be the best, you have to be able to manage all sides of the business. I'm the same way professionally. I'm the same way when I'm doing an interview. I'm the same way when I'm playing my instrumental music. I'm the same when I'm rapping. I'm the same when I'm beatboxing. I'm the same way. Music is my DNA and it all started with hip hop, so that IS the foundation. It's the foundation of myself, and then everything else kind of wrapped around it…And it's even how I teach. It's going to sound so corny, but I operate the classroom like I would a stage, like I would crowd work.

Lamont is incredibly appreciative of how hip-hop has impacted him. Simply put, he said hip-hop saved him. "Hip-hop was one of the few things that I felt was developing me positively." He acknowledges that hip-hop has shaped his ideas, language, fashion, and how he interacts with the world. He summarizes this section of the interview succinctly: "I'd say hip-hop is me."

Hip-Hop Club Effects

Lamont joined MC after seeing the flyers posted around the school. We often joke about how he did not know me or what I looked like before he decided to join and how shocked he was when he first walked into the room. "The way that the flyer described it, it was like, you don't have to be a dedicated anything. If your love for [hip-hop] is there, be here…It was just the fact that everybody was welcome and I came because everyone was welcome." After the first sessions, Lamont stuck around because he felt his skills were cultivated. He finally found a structure to pursue his craft and develop his artistic abilities. "I came for the inclusivity, stayed for the growth." He cherished the community

and friendships that he built through the club, some of whom he is still close with to this day. He built his skills through performances both inside and outside of school spaces. Lamont also acknowledges how his participation in MC led to him developing leadership skills:

> I didn't feel like it, especially at the time. I didn't feel like a leader, but honestly by senior year I realized that, hold on, these these underclassmen actually look to me for things. And it got even bigger when I became an alumni. And I was like, oh, they aspire to be me. I learned things like how to lead a group, how to manage personalities. I learned how to manage my time and learned how to encourage others in a positive way to ensure that they're doing the things that need to be done; not just for themselves, but for the full group. I also learned what it's like to be led 'cause I was one of those who could rap, could write, could do a lot of things, but boy, was I still writing my verse like the day before I performed it.

I laughed when Lamont said this because it reminded me of my constant struggle with him and his performances. Of the seven times he performed with MC, at least five involved him writing his lyrics the day before the performance. He would always make it work; at least one performance involved him breaking into a freestyle to cover up that he forgot his lyrics. Regardless, he always put on an incredible show. "I had to learn that's not okay. It's okay that I could do it. Not everyone can do that, but I learned that, hey, you could probably write even better stuff if you did it prior to." Furthermore, Lamont learned through MC that doing things in a way that makes you most comfortable could support improving the success of those things. "I like tight spaces, so I like to write under tables. I like to spit a verse in the dark, and I learned that allowing people to be comfortable doing the thing that they're trying that they want to do will greatly improve

the results." As Lamont continues to create today, he credits MC with his desire to create in groups or with collectives. "I owe a lot to you guys," Lamont says, pointing to the large Motown MC logo that hangs on the studio wall.

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community Development and Praxis

Lamont is almost offended when I ask him about hip-hop's capacity to promote change. "Hasn't it already?" He points to Public Enemy's "Fight the Power," N.W.A.'s "Fuck the Police," and Kendrick Lamar's entire *To Pimp a Butterfly* album as examples of hip-hop being used to promote change and being grasped by a larger audience. Regarding Kendrick's *TPAB,* Lamont believes the album "changed and affected how we responded to injustice in itself. I don't know how you could even refute the idea of hip-hop being able to change the way that the world sees things and the way that we reacted to oppression when they were literally chanting lyrics through the streets." Thinking through other examples, Lamont also brings up Lil Baby's "The Bigger Picture." Like Jordin, Lamont highlights how popular artists and those who do not traditionally make socially conscious music can spread important messages. "Everyone in all corners of hip hop can call attention to raise awareness and be able to inspire." He sees Kanye West's *College Dropout* album series as a way to draw attention to America's problems regarding college. Citing Lupe Fiasco and 9th Wonder as examples, "We're literally teaching hip hop in college classes…its ability to inspire can no longer, in my personal opinion, be ignored or be pushed to the side."

A lifelong eastside resident, Lamont has seen how hip-hop affects his community. He refers to his neighborhood as a "hot area"; it tends to be associated with high levels of gang activity and violent crime. Lamont grew up noticing that, whenever a significant

person of influence comes to his neighborhood for events, “everything stops. Everything’s cool.” He referenced when the rapper Cash Kidd threw a party at Lamont’s neighbor’s house when he was a kid. “All the negative things happening in the community just didn’t matter. We all came together to see somebody who’s made it, who’s been able to climb out of that area, and we’re just there to have a good time.” The community surrounds Detroit artists and treats them with respect and pride. He also sees them work together and rarely break into feuds. This support carries over to the youth in the hip-hop community. “It doesn’t matter where we’re from; it doesn’t matter who we are with or anything like that. It [hip-hop] brings all of us together. We’re all from different lifestyles, and we all support each other. It’s great.” There is local ownership over the music being created. The average Detroit hip-hop consumer can look at the sound and say, “That’s mine.” Lamont reminds me of Tee Grizzley’s “First Day Out,” a song that resembles Detroit hip-hop. When the song was released in 2017, it became a viral sensation. Shortly after, LeBron James posted a social media clip of himself working out with the song playing. Students were beyond themselves to hear “Joy Road, bitch, but the money long as 6 Mile” in this setting: their city, their streets on a massive platform. The youth in the city echo this love and supportive energy in how they carry themselves. “I can call several artists right now and get in the studio right now… it’s just, we want to make good music together.” With the new generation of artists within the city borders, hip-hop culture’s acceptance and support lives on.

Alumnus Participant #2: Tierra

Tierra is 23 years old and part of MC’s first cohort. She joined the club during her 11th-grade year; both Lamont and RJ refer to her as the “mother” of the club. She would

regularly participate in my "come to Jesus" meetings with Lamont, offering gentle yet firm advice and suggestions as we worked through his academic struggles. She was a flute player in the band for four years and was also the class vice president. She was always a good student who stayed out of trouble, although she did not have a choice in the matter: her mother was an active PTA member and spent a considerable amount of time at the school. She heard of MC through my world history class and decided to join, while also bringing a bunch of her friends with her. I credit Tierra with MC's high enrollment during its first two years of existence.

Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop

Tierra's relationship with hip-hop has two clear phases. In the first part of her life, she did not grow up with a large relationship with hip-hop. She grew up in a strict, Christian household that spent more time watching Star Trek and Law & Order: SVU than current hip-hop. She has two siblings who are over ten years older than her; while her brother eventually became a successful saxophone player, her siblings mostly passed on alternative rock and other bands to Tierra. Several times in her interview, she refers to herself as an "Oreo" child and as someone who grew up interested in things "that people would consider non-Black." The second phase of her hip-hop relational journey came through her introduction to Nicki Minaj when she was ten years old. She refers to her journey as "stumbling" into hip-hop.

> I was trying to find things until I found the voice that suited me. I listened to all the popular people, I listened to all the Coles and the Kendricks and everything else, but it's not until I found the female sector of hip hop, and then after that the alt-female sector of hip hop, that I was really like, oh yeah, this is my thing, I really like it.

Tierra and I first bonded musically while she was in my 7th hour world history class. Noname's *Telefone* album had been released the summer before, and it quickly became a go-to album to play while students were working on assignments. We connected over a mutual love for Noname's lyricism and intricate storytelling. By this point, she was in the second phase of her hip-hop relationship. She had begun to write poetry and lyrics. She does not consider herself to be a hip-hop artist today, but she was during high school. Tierra regularly used hip-hop, especially instrumentals by Nujabes, as part of her self-regulation process. Cardi B's "Be Careful" is her go-to song during breakups. "Music has always been a tool for me to release and understand my emotions," including making playlists for people Tierra cares deeply about as a sign of love. While she no longer creates, she acknowledges that hip-hop has played a crucial role in her life.

Hip-Hop Club's Impacts

Tierra joined MC as an escape from the marching band. Two years into her band career, she was frustrated with the band's restrictions on her and a perceived lack of creative freedom:

> I'm sick and tired of playing songs from the fucking 1980s nobody knows 12 times a week. And at that time, I think it was during marching band season, which was not my favorite season when I was a high schooler. I always prefer the more melodic things. I always prefer the things with heart instead of triangles on the goddamn football field every Friday.

While she is clear to say several times during her interview, "I don't mean to talk so badly about the band," her frustration is abundantly clear. "I did like band, but I needed autonomy, I needed choices, and band didn't give me choices." After hearing about the club, she talked with her friends. She saw it as a creative opportunity; she also enjoyed

having me as a teacher and decided, “why not?”. In the club, Tierra enjoyed the newfound freedom of her creativity.

> I actually got to express myself in the way that I wanted to, in the way that I needed to, being an angsty teenager with a lot of things going on in her life. It gave me a better outlet than trying to be angry playing the flute, so I got to explore a lot of feelings. I got to understand a lot of things about myself. I got to just be Tierra in a way that Tierra hadn't really been Tierra at that point in her life.

Tierra’s favorite moments involved being creative with her friends and making new friends, some of which have become “my family essentially.” She was able to become a leader, explore, and create. She sees how her time in MC has impacted her creativity and broadened her vocabulary in ways that she still uses today in the professional setting. “It opened my horizon to new music, new paths. It helped me explore my emotions in a different way that wasn't crying and listening to Amy Winehouse every time I came here from school. it gave me actual tools to be creative in a different capacity.” As a lead toddler teacher in a suburban Detroit district, she sees how MC helped her become a leader for her students. It also gave her the creativity to shape her direction in life. “I really didn't see myself alive on the planet past 18, so I didn't have a plan.” Tierra believes her time in MC has at least contributed to her ability to identify her future direction as a teacher. She sees being a teacher as a form of leadership, similar to how Lamont described running his classroom.

Hip-Hop’s Capacity in the Community and Praxis

Tierra’s strong opinions on the current state of hip-hop become clear quickly in our interview. “There’s a place for everyone in hip-hop.” She grows frustrated with hip-hop fandom, specifically extreme fans that have become known as “stans.” In Tierra’s words, “stan culture isn’t about, ‘I really like this artist and what they bring to the table.’

It's, 'My artist is better than yours; yours is just complete shit.' The need to constantly defend one's favorite artists and put down others' favorites creates a situation where rappers are all held to the same standards of lyricism and entertainment value. Tierra believes this is unfair to artists who make music for people seeking enjoyment over lyricism. "There's a place for Ice Spice in hip-hop…she doesn't need to drop bars like Eminem or Kendrick to be welcomed. There's a place for mindless music." Art is meant to be scrutinized and critiqued; "without critique…we wouldn't have Keith Harings, we wouldn't have Basquiat." In Tierra's eyes, hip-hop's leadership has failed the culture. "A lot of time in hip hop, people treat like the GOATs of hip-hop as if they're gods and not as if they are people with a ton of money and still need people to tell them "Hey, you wildin', get off Twitter right now." This lack of accountability has created a power vacuum where outsiders such as DJ Akademiks and VladTV are able to control messaging and restrict mainstream hip-hop's ability to connect. In her eyes, the outsider media sources need to be called out for their hypocrisy; she cites the 2017 interview where Vic Mensa directly responded to DJ Akademiks' past statements about Chicago hip-hop content.

> There should be at least once a year when somebody just chin-checks them as hard as possible. Realize you're making money off of us right now. You're not putting anything back into our ecosystem. You're not putting on any underground artists. You're just exploiting.

Tierra sees Detroit's music culture as embracing its artists and fans, including outsiders. "Big Sean's technically not from Detroit, but everybody loves him because he graduated from Cass Tech. Eminem's technically not from Detroit, but we still embrace him like that." As Detroit and Flint-based sound has exploded onto the music scene, she believes the region is finally getting its due as a pioneer in music. "You can't sit here and

say that Detroit doesn't have some of the best rappers. We literally invented the way modern music is. You wouldn't have Stevie [Wonder], you wouldn't have Michael [Jackson] without Motown, you know what I'm saying?" Tierra believes that this generation is getting the respect they deserve because they are more demanding for that respect. "You don't have to like me. I'm just asking you to acknowledge, 'Hey, this was my influence, and this is where I draw heavily from.'" This demand for respect may be deemed as disrespect by older hip-hop generations, but to Tierra, it is coming from a generation "that refuses to kiss ass" and is connected as a city and community.

Tierra's understanding of hip-hop's capacity for change is complex. In short, she believes hip-hop has the capacity for community change and to give young people a voice. However, she sees hip-hop and athletics as the only platform that Black youth, specifically young Black boys, are directed towards.

> I feel like a lot of times it's either hip-hop or ball where a lot of young people, specifically young Black boys, are able to express their autonomy and their creativity, which I wish that they would be able to do that with a sculpting class or something else. A lot of the images that are portrayed inside of the media about hip-hop give like this life where they have to be something that they're not. And I want young Black boys to be able to understand that they are able to be soft, they're able to be kind, they're able to be sweet, and hold space for that while also having autonomy and going after what you want. It [hip-hop] does foster leadership skills, but I also want other things to foster those skills as well.

Furthermore, Tierra also believes that hip-hop's ability for change is limited by its consumers' willingness to listen. "Hip-hop as a whole has always been political, has always addressed political issues, and it has always done a lot for policy, whether it be negative or positive. I think that we have the ability to do it in the city, but I don't think that a lot of people in the city are open to having their eyes open to the corruption in the city yet." While seeing hip-hop as a tool, she does not believe that the city is prepared to

discuss the changes that are needed. She spends most of the remaining interview time highlighting those issues: predator legislators from outside the city, the Illitch family and District Detroit's shortcomings, and gentrification as a whole.

> We don't need any gastro pubs. I don't care about your Asian-Italian fusion bullshit. Just put something down there that the kids can do. There should not just be one sad little place where you can do shit half the year round down there. Put a movie theater down there. Put a rec center downtown. I don't care about your A5 Wagyu. I care that there are kids out there who have nothing to do on the weekend and that the transportation is shit and that the Illitches keep buying up every square foot of property that's available just to sit on it and do diddly-squat with it. I want you guys to put the mental health centers back downtown so that way the business owners can stop saying that the homeless people are harassing them.

Tierra's urgency can be heard in her voice as we speak. She sees the problems in this city as deeply rooted and continuous. Since we conducted this interview, I counted five articles in the Detroit Free Press about new restaurants and luxury apartments. While she acknowledges the changes that are needed and hip-hop's ability to do it, Tierra recognizes that music and culture can only go so far when competing against the mechanisms of city politics.

Tierra believes that hip-hop has been unfairly placed as the sole representation and responsibility for Black neighborhoods. "I don't go to Keith Urban for representation of the white community, so I don't think it's fair that we make King Von the only representation for the Black community." She believes that those who have found success have a level of responsibility to give back to their communities. She also highlights the role of respectability politics in hip-hop; when it comes to women in hip-hop, certain women are cast aside as unfit to represent or be leaders. Tierra uses Sexyy Red as an example.

> There is no Sexyy Red without a Coretta Scott King. You can't have this upper echelon respectable Black woman without also showing the Black women who

> are also here on the ground every day. A lot of these non-respectable Black women got our rights. A lot of these non-respectable Black people got our rights. I don't want to see a Black person show up in their suit and tie and hair angled to perfection every day, but I also think you do have a responsibility to give back to your community and show up and support your community in any way that you can. I don't think that you should be exploitative Because at the day, that's what it is.

Tierra sees these clear gaps in how hip-hop exists within society. She grew up on the city's west side, directly next to the Boston Edison district, where some of the city's most expensive homes and historic landmarks reside. She drives past mansions juxtaposed against buildings that are still damaged from the city violence in 1967. She sees artists like Kash Doll make music videos and social media posts in the city's neighborhoods; to take the next step, she wants to see a more concerted effort from them to effect change and be the leaders she knows they can be.

Alumnus Participant #3: RJ

RJ is 23 years old, the oldest participant by a few months. Like most participants, he was a student in my world history class at one point. Our interview is still filled with the sarcastic back-and-forth banter that defined our relationship. I see a lot of myself in RJ. We are both naturally intelligent; we both also relied on that natural intelligence to skate by in school, much to the chagrin of our teachers. We also share a love for the band Linkin Park, who emerged in the early 2000s with their rap-rock hybrid sound. He has a deep passion for art as a whole; hip-hop is a part of that scope of art.

Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop

RJ sees hip-hop's influence on the world. "It's the number one form of music around the world. So modern hip-hop culture is almost everything. You could see influences pulled from hip-hop and hip-hop pulling influences from everywhere." RJ's

journey to hip-hop culture led him through various genres, building an appreciation of art from many angles. For RJ, it is words and lyrics that grasp him first.

> Music is very easily to be felt through the words. When it came to hip hop, it's just always a lot more words, if that makes sense. Like, the bands will go chorus, couple verses, back to the chorus; in hip-hop, you have full verses, and they're talking to you. I know they're not talking to you, but they're talking to you, and if you take the time to listen, you'll learn a lot about yourself, a lot about the world, a lot about everything, because you have these people full of knowledge. A lot of times, this is an undermined part of hip-hop, not rap music, but hip-hop's full of very knowledgeable, wise people when it comes down to them studying their craft. When you listen to what these people have to say, a lot of times, it's beyond the music. You learn a lot.

RJ's connection to the words helps him find meaning in what artists are saying. He can use lyrics to reflect on himself and his journeys. He also acknowledges a difference between hip-hop and rap; to RJ, "hip-hop is music created from the roots of where this stuff came from," and rap is "a modernized version of where we're going with it."

RJ is recently coming to terms with calling himself an artist. "I feel like my role has always been to connect with people and help them on their journey." He has recently become a curator in the Detroit hip-hop scene. He specializes in creating events and spaces for hip-hop artists to come together and perform. He connects with artists and helps build relationships with different groups across the city. He is currently in a collective that is co-led by a younger former MC student. While he does not write to create songs anymore, he still regularly freestyles with his current collectives during studio sessions. He has begun understanding that curating is his art, although he still does not count himself as a "solidified" artist. RJ moves beyond hip-hop and credits music in general for some of his leadership development.

> I feel like you can't lead anybody until you get over your own shit first. And I feel like music definitely got me to a place where, even if I'm not at the best place to

> interact with people, I'm at probably at a better place than someone else. Just off of the maturity, the days that I've just been sitting by myself with nothing but music. I've gotten used to my own thoughts, my own everything, and I definitely would chuck that up to the music. If not for that, I wouldn't be able to sustain the things that I'm doing now.

RJ is claiming that music, specifically the amount of time spent listening to music and alone in his thoughts, has helped prepare him for his role as a curator, where he gets to lead others and network with artists. This also suggests that music has the capacity to help RJ regulate his emotions and keep himself balanced as he experiences challenges.

Hip-Hop Club Entry and Impacts

RJ began writing poetry before arriving at Eastside, but he never cared about pursuing it seriously. Through an after-school poetry group, he realized he was at least "decent" at writing. "Poetry was never something that interested me. It was just something I was good at." He heard about MC through Tierra, whom he became close friends with during his early high school years. "Tierra decided, yes, I was going to be in MC." He was one of the more active members in MC; while he did not record often, he was always freestyling and jumping in the cyphers. RJ and I still talk about a song he recorded for his accounting class, a song that was done as a parody of popular hip-hop in 2017. It was exceptionally catchy and one of the only MC music videos made. I keep a copy of it on my external hard drive as a memory because it always makes me smile. "Don't act like that chorus wasn't heat," RJ says with a sly smile as we reminisced. RJ reflects positively on his time in MC. He is grateful to have been around art and artists in this way, which was a significant theme in his interview. He also appreciates how his experiences introduced him to a sense of belonging in hip-hop.

> It showed me anyone can fit in. I didn't feel outcasted, but I didn't feel like I was like everybody else. With hip-hop club, I felt like I was around people who felt like they also didn't belong around everybody else.

He thrived in a community of "outcasts," a space where everyone was fully accepted. He enjoyed jumping into the cyphers; although he was not as talented as the others, RJ was always exceptionally impressed watching others do it skillfully. "Wow, you were just able to construct that like that off the top of your dome? That's crazy." Since his graduation, RJ has come back to MC sessions several times. He is usually there to listen and be around the new generations; he occasionally jumps into the cypher with other students and challenges them to improve. Seeing him embrace the mentor role and support younger generations has been exciting.

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community, Leadership, and Praxis

RJ's understanding of hip-hop's ability for community development is constructed through his time as a curator and in local hip-hop collectives. Besides giving him opportunities to engage with art, curating has given him opportunities to support up-and-coming artists positively. "A lot of times, what a lot of people will do is take the connection and see how it'll benefit them before anything else. I'm quick to say, hey, I don't know how much I can do for you, but go check out this person and see If you connect over there, 'cause I feel like you would like them." His current hip-hop collective focuses on community work, connecting with the community by taking up space at events. Slowly, they are beginning to engage with the youth community. He is working with a group that wants to teach kids how to DJ, giving them access to a new hobby or passion.

RJ believes young people have always had the most prominent voice when it comes to affecting change. Speaking for the younger generation, “It doesn’t matter what you had to say about us because now we’re running the world.” As youth grow in social capital, they have a platform to use their voice how they choose to. RJ sees the youth’s engagement in hip-hop, although he characterizes it more as the “rap” facet he defined. He also sees an apparent problem in how the younger generations engage with hip-hop. “Honestly, we need to do less glorification of the hip-hop scene. And I’m not saying gatekeep it, but show the real work and grunt behind it and make people realize, if this is what you want to do, you will do it. But if not, don’t just do it for the kicks.” This would allow those who want to engage with hip-hop for economic reasons to understand the art, technique, and effort of creating art at the highest level. RJ thinks Hip-hop’s power to promote change and awareness is something “it’s done since its creation.” He cites several tracks that he believes have changed the world, including Outkast’s “Hey Ya,” which RJ believes challenges notions of monogamy in society. We also discussed Joyner Lucas’s “I’m Not Racist,” a song whose release sparked massive conversation around the country. In a way, our conversation was an enormous critique of the song, which we both felt missed the mark and provided faulty arguments on the racial divide in America. However, RJ still sees the song's impact in elevating the conversation. “Everybody had a different perspective on it. We got Fox News breaking down lyrics.” This song’s ability to be the topic of conversation on all news platforms signifies hip-hop’s potential. However, the 23-year-old RJ offers some caution to those looking to change the world through lyrics:

> The amount of people who take [music] seriously is like a 50-50 thing. You can use anything to say anything. But whether or not people actually sit there and

> listen to what you have to say is their choice. One track could change the world, and at the same time, one track may not change the world…If you feel like you're the person who can change the world, go ahead and make that track, and you won't lose anything. You don't gain anything if you don't even try.

Trying is something RJ is doing. He's creating space for the youth to build community. The message is clear to other young creatives like RJ: try to make that song that can change the world, because it might.

Instructor Self-Portrait

As part of the heuristic process, I conducted a self-interview to consider my thoughts on hip-hop clubs, their capacity for change, and my relationship with hip-hop. A self-interview allows me to consider how being an instructor, let alone a 32-year-old white instructor, changes how I view the club's activities. It also allows me to examine and put forward my biases; rather than bracket my experiences and connection to hip-hop clubs, I use the opportunity to lay everything on the table. This is an extension of the researcher profile outlined in Chapter 3. To stay consistent, I conducted the interview in the MC studio and used the same questions I used with the others. After including reflection notes, I coded and analyzed my responses using the same method.

Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop

Before I can think about my relationship with hip-hop, it is impossible not to acknowledge that I am approaching the culture as an outsider. I have strongly revered the culture and what it has meant for me and my life. Through hip-hop, I have found my voice as an educator and established my teaching philosophy. I have gained access to spaces that have advanced my career. I have made sense of the world through hip-hop culture and my engagement. Hip-hop has been exceptionally kind to me; it is only fitting that I return the favor and create space for students to practice it.

Hip-hop has become a significant part of my mental health development and self-regulation processes. I used DMX and Eminem to get fired up for competition in my athletic career. Every break-up was greeted by a heavy dose of Atmosphere and Anthony Hamilton, seeking to ease the pain of lost teenage love. As I have dealt with increasing levels of anxiety in my life, I turn to hip-hop when the moment comes that I need to recover and regulate my mind. This was incredibly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was the most challenging year imaginable. We were stuck behind computer screens, discussing topics with default pictures and blacked-out screens. The socioeconomic issues of the pandemic were beginning to affect my students negatively. As a teacher, I spent five hours a day talking to a sea of profile pictures; some days, I would hear from ten students or less. I thrive off social interaction when I am teaching; that was completely taken away during the virtual school year. For most of the 2020-2021 school year, I felt hopeless in my craft. With nowhere else to go, I turned to hip-hop for healing. I would spend my free periods on my Maschine drum pad; I was not necessarily trying to create music but to reach a level of creative release. That drum pad gave me instant stress release. It gave me a space to channel my frustration. I never made a beat or loop that became anything substantial, but I could let out the creative frustrations built up during the virtual school year. As we shifted to virtual in 2020, three albums were released that would become core to my listening behaviors. Those three albums – Westside Gunn's *Pray for Paris*, Boldy James and the Alchemist's *The Price of Tea in China*, and Freddie Gibbs and the Alchemist's *Alfredo* – developed into albums I used heavily for my mental health healing. When the waves of anxiety and panic attacks came, I would turn to these albums and embrace their vulnerability. Anxiety has become

a defining aspect of my life since the pandemic, but listening to hip-hop and how the production sets my moods have been paramount for me.

I used to identify as being a hip-hop artist. It was a massive part of my life; from 2009 to 2017, I recorded seven different mixtapes or projects. I was in a band and constantly in spaces with other artists. Over the last few years, I have not created to the same level that I have in the past. I still write occasionally, sometimes for emotional release, sometimes to prove that I can still do it at a high level. I now view myself as a hip-hop practitioner, engaging and instructing others through hip-hop while not creating as much art as before. I am grateful for the lifelong friends and connections that being an artist has brought me. Shifting to a practitioner identity still allows me to acknowledge hip-hop's impact on me while continuing to use hip-hop culture to shape my students.

Hip-Hop Club Impacts

Running MC has had a significant impact on me as an educator. It has led me to reconsider what classroom learning could look like. MC is based on experiential learning, where students receive hands-on learning opportunities through experiences. Working in hip-hop spaces has allowed me to see the possibilities of learning beyond traditional classroom designs. When I plan MC sessions, I do so to avoid making students feel like they are in school. When students come to MC, they have already spent seven hours going through the school day. I do not want our time together to feel like an eighth hour but instead, as an opportunity to take a break and pursue their interests. While occasional lessons, such as breaking down hip-hop history, involve some PowerPoint, I try to avoid those structures altogether.

I leave sessions inspired by students and their creativity. I enjoy seeing students grow over time and unleash their talents. I love the feeling of amazement when I hear a student do something great during MC. It affects me significantly and fuels my creativity. It may not always reveal itself as creating hip-hop, but I am challenged to bring creativity into as many aspects of my life as possible. I am also inspired by seeing my students develop skills over time. When students come to MC and begin to show that they are building their abilities, I feel something positive is happening within the space. I have a profound sense of joy when I can de-center myself and allow students to create independently. These are the ways leadership manifests naturally in work. When I am not leading, students make choices and decisions by collaborating and taking initiative. The musical and artistic choices are theirs; they do not follow my dictations or direction. Educationally, they do not have many opportunities for actual democratic choice outside of MC; they must have at least some autonomy during their school day. Finally, the last significant impact I see is the strengthened student-teacher relationships. Students in MC are always around me during the school day; they have a space in the school where they can feel comfortable. They have an adult they can confide in and rely on. I am grateful for the strength of these relationships and how I can support students behind classroom instruction and after-school programming.

The club is not perfect. There is room for improvement. This year's current lack of production concerns me because I want students to be in the space to create. I have been hard on myself about how I structure MC and always feel there is more that I can or should be doing. I am also overwhelmed by the amount of work and responsibilities besides MC. I cannot help but feel that I am stretched too thin and that it directly affects

my students negatively. I have had to cancel several MC sessions for meetings or other responsibilities; for my well-being, I need to make decisions to support my passions. If nothing else, MC is where my passions lie. It is the joy of my day, and from what I can gather from students, it seems that it is also their joy.

Hip-Hop Capacity for Community and Praxis

I think hip-hop's capacity for change is evident. Almost every significant social movement of the last 100 years has been accompanied by Black artistic culture narrating its existence. The nadir of American race relations saw the Harlem Renaissance bloom from it; the Civil Rights movement led to the voices of Nina Simone, Marvin Gaye, and Gil Scott Heron emerge to provide commentary; the failures of the American war on drugs introduced the world to N.W.A. and Public Enemy. It made sense that, as Americans poured into the streets to protest increased visibility of police brutality, they chanted the lyrics to Kendrick Lamar's "Alright" with each step. If you pick a topic, you can probably find a song that discusses it. Water access? Mos Def's "New World Water." Failing education systems? Listen to dead prez's "They Schools." There are few limits to artists' creativity on a song and how they address social conditions. However, there are some questions about the overall effectiveness of the music and movements. Songs can spread awareness, but how does awareness turn into action? How are artists putting their money where their mouths are? The examples exist; Rage Against the Machine's Zach de la Rocha skipped his band's Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction to attend a march in support of ending Palestinian oppression. Pusha T anonymously donated semi-trucks filled with water bottles to support Flint citizens during their water crisis, something he references in his song "Drug Dealers Anonymous." These are positive impacts, but more

momentum is needed to realize hip-hop's capacity for praxis fully. Praxis requires action and reflection; as artists make music and reflect on the systems, action is necessary to fulfill the cycle.

Conclusion

This chapter portrayed eight participants and the discoveries made during the data collection. After data analysis, participants were analyzed through the major themes of the research questions: identity and relationship with hip-hop, hip-hop's support of well-being, effects of hip-hop clubs, and hip-hop's ability to develop leadership, community, and praxis. By analyzing these themes, portraits were created to provide a narrative of students' experiences within the club and with hip-hop. Chapter 5 will give the creative synthesis, the final step of the heuristic process. The synthesis will analyze portraits from the lens of the literature in Chapter 2 and display information through artistic expression. Chapter 5 will also provide limitations to the study, describe future implications, and recommend further direction for research in school-based hip-hop clubs.

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CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study used heuristic inquiry and qualitative data to examine the role of after-school, school-based hip-hop clubs in developing leadership, community solidarity, and praxis within students. Four current students and three alums were participants in this study. Their data included interview transcripts, Microsoft Teams chat transcripts, and created music. As the heuristic researcher, I provided session notes, a researcher's reflection journal, and a self-interview as data. Through the analysis process, I created portraits that summarized participants' experiences in the club and thoughts regarding hip-hop and hip-hop club's capacities.

This chapter discusses the findings of these portraits and how they answer the research questions below:

1. How do youth conceptualize hip-hop spaces' capacity to foster senses of community, agency, solidarity, and leadership within their lives?
2. How do hip-hop practitioners define the nature of their relationship with hip-hop?

The portraits and research questions unveiled four enduring themes across all participants. These enduring themes are 1) Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop, 2) Effects of Hip-Hop Club Participation, 3) Hip-Hop Club's Effects on Leadership Development, and 4) Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community Development and Praxis. The chapter will be organized by these themes, using details provided in the participant portraits and analyzed from the literature highlighted in Chapter 2. After discussing the findings, this chapter will conclude with implications on the realm of educational leadership, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks on the study.

Creative Synthesis

As part of heuristic inquiry's creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990), a graffiti-based synthesis of the findings will accompany each enduring theme. While mulling over how to approach the creative synthesis, I narrowed the possibilities to written raps or graffiti images. I chose the images to center the words, themes, and concepts that the participants identified. I also wanted to go through the heuristic process by learning a new skill, something that I have never tried in any serious way before. This way, I was modeling hip-hop cultural learning in a similar way that I ask of students in the program. I used a range of sources for inspiration in developing my graffiti images, including Acker's (2013) book on graffiti hand styles, train cars on my commute to and from work, and several graffiti subreddits where users posted their work and advice. I broke the enduring themes into singular words or phrases that allowed me to encompass what participants

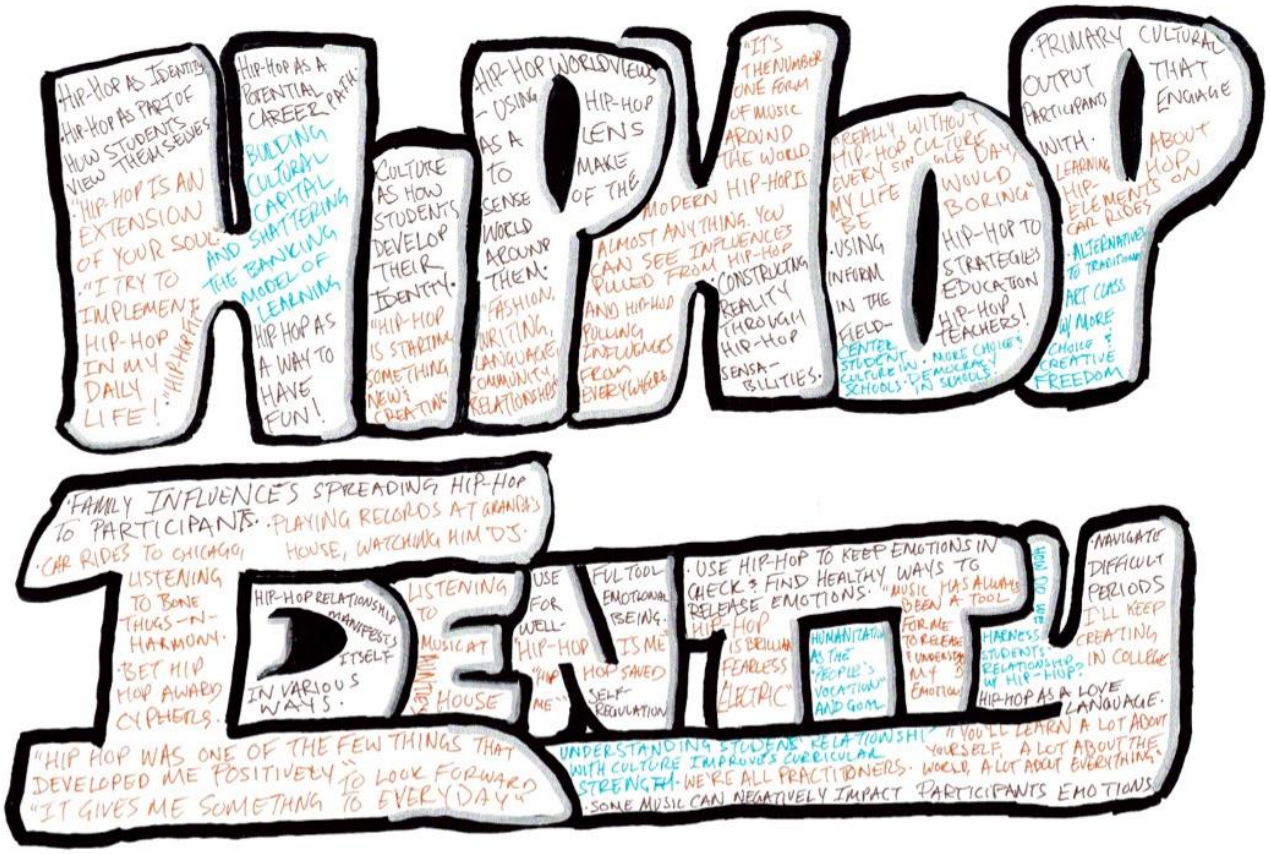
identified in the portraits. The terms used were “hip-hop identity,” “club effects,” “leadership,” “Detroit,” “capacity for change,” and “praxis.” Each term has three layers of descriptors and colors inside. The first layer briefly summarizes the themes that arose in the analysis. The second layer includes quotes from participants that build on or can be attributed to the themes. The third layer identifies implications, conclusions, or questions that stem from the literature analysis. The images are presented as appropriate at the start of each enduring theme and discussion, and larger scale versions are attached in the Appendix.

Creative Synthesis

Identity and Relationship with Hip-Hop

Identity and Hip-Hop

Figure 3: Hip-Hop Identity Synthesis



All participants spoke about hip-hop being part of their identity. While there is some variance in how they view their identity in association with hip-hop, they all acknowledge that it is a component of how they view themselves. Cash and RJ view themselves as hip-hop artists who aspire to make hip-hop artistry their careers. Jordin and Alexis recognize how hip-hop cultural elements are a part of their identity. Jordin acknowledged how her identity is tied to the music she listens to; Alexis identifies hip-hop as the prominent source of her "fashion, writing, language, community, [and] relationships." Lamont goes as far as to state that "hip-hop is me." These participants possess hip-hop worldviews, which they use to construct reality and interpret the world around them. RJ identified how hip-hop's lyrics allow him to "learn a lot about yourself, a lot about the world, a lot about everything." Their experiences with hip-hop inform

their presumptions and how they occupy spaces in their lives. Lamont and Tierra, for example, activate their abilities to improvise and control the crowd as educators. As the primary cultural output that all participants engage with, hip-hop contributes to how they interpret the world around them.

Relationship with Hip-Hop

Most participants' journey to building a relationship with hip-hop came from family influences. These exchanges took place in ways that are memorable to them and that they still hold with fondness. Erikah's grandfather was crucial in developing her knowledge of hip-hop culture and her interest in its artistic elements. Lamont's road trips to Chicago sparked a love for hip-hop that has led to the yearly tradition of watching the BET Award cyphers with his mother. Jordin remembers the specific song that her dad played in the car that sparked her interest. To these participants, their relationships with hip-hop have familial importance; hip-hop culture is shared across generations in some capacity.

Their relationship with hip-hop manifests itself in various ways, especially as a useful tool for their emotional well-being. Every participant described hip-hop's ability to support emotional self-regulation and positive mental well-being. For some, creating hip-hop art allows for the emotional release that they look for, such as Erikah's paintings or my work with the drum pad. For others, listening to hip-hop gives them an opportunity to de-escalate emotions or work through difficult periods. Tierra, for example, found that hip-hop allowed her to navigate relational break-ups in different ways than "crying and listening to Amy Winehouse." As individuals with hip-hop worldview, it makes sense to see them process emotional spikes through the culture and music they engage with the

most. Additionally, hip-hop is treated as a love language by some participants. Tierra reported that she sends playlists to those she cares about or loves, while Alexis and Jordin were observed sharing music and playlists with each other during their relationship. Cash acknowledged that hip-hop can negatively impact his mood; he cited Detroit rappers and their perceived gloomy sound as a reason for this. However, this seems to be more tied to his sonic preferences within his hip-hop tastes than the messaging. He prefers brighter, melodic sounds over the "gray" sounds of Detroit beats.

Critical Pedagogy, Identity, and Relationship

Freire (1970) refers to humanization as "the people's vocation," and the primary goal of all humans to realize. Through the conflict between those seeking humanization and those attempting to dehumanize, critical pedagogy is born to interpret this conflict. Educators who understand their students' identities and value what their unique experiences bring to the classroom can positively shift the learning experience. They contribute to the humanization process for students who otherwise are dehumanized by oppressive structures within the education system. This information presents a glimpse into students' lives and how they conceive themselves as they enter hip-hop clubs. While not all students are looking to join hip-hop clubs, understanding students' identities allows for experiences to be crafted that could improve positive behaviors about schooling. Understanding students' relationships with culture also contributes to the development of improved curricula. This process would require a dramatic shift in how learning is discussed and applied in public schools. Centering student culture and choice in curricula means that schools loosen their control over how individuals participate in constructing their identities (Giroux, 1988). As schools loosen their control over student

experiences, they are becoming more democratic, valuing students' needs, perspectives, and aspirations as central to learning. Popular culture, specifically youth-based popular culture, offers opportunities for educators to use the objects and relationships that students deem important to them (Giroux & Simon, 1992). Tierra highlights this idea in her discussion of high school band classes. Her tensions and unease about the band program stemmed from the lack of choices and ability to express her interests and identity. "Our band director said that if there's any music that you would like to play after 2010, you are going to have to make it yourself. And you're telling that to kids who do not know how to compose music." Acknowledging hip-hop and other cultural identities within students opens the door for democratic learning to occur, increasing the likelihood that knowledge levels grow and that students enjoy their time in school buildings.

Hip-Hop Club Effects

Club Effects on Artistry, Creativity, and Community

Figure 4: Hip-Hop Club Effects Synthesis

Participants expressed that they have all had an overall positive experience in the hip-hop club and that this club has impacted them in a few distinct ways. Most prominently, all participants acknowledged that the club's lasting impact was the friendships and community built during their time. The alums shared how they have lifelong friends that they continued to build friendships with since their graduation. Current members echoed how important community building has been for them, especially when it comes to their artistic needs. Cash and Jordin expressed how important feedback and valued sources' feedback supported their artistic development. Erikah shared that the "what's hot, what's not" component has been beneficial to her building community with those in the group. This community building has been evident in the

Teams chat, where participants share their music and get relatively immediate feedback from group members. This community is also evident to me as a classroom teacher, where I regularly see the MC students coming to my class to socialize with me and each other daily.

Through MC's community dynamics, participants experience several additional impacts. One, they are inspired by each other and their individual gifts. Alexis loved observing others in the group and seeing "how they get creative, and how they just fall in love with what they create." Erikah is inspired to create based on seeing her peers create beats; "maybe I can make beats like that one day." Two, they identify MC as a space where they feel welcomed for their identity and who they are. Lamont joined MC "for the inclusivity" and the acceptance of all levels of hip-hop appreciation and skill. Erikah echoed a similar sentiment: In MC, "I can just be normal. I don't have to be studious; I don't have to be gangster; I don't have to be anything but Erikah." RJ also felt welcomed within the club: "It showed me anyone can fit in…I didn't feel outcasted but I didn't feel like I was like everybody else. With hip-hop club, I felt like I was around people who felt like they also didn't belong around everybody else." These participants found MC to be a space where they felt comfortable and could exist as their authentic selves.

Additionally, participants stated that their MC membership has positively impacted their artistry, creativity, and expression abilities. Jordin, as an example, believes her participation has taught her how to record with higher audio quality and challenged her to be a better artist. Over the course of her time in the club, she has tried to add new styles to her repertoire. She has tried rapping on beats that she otherwise would not use and challenging her notion that she is "a Detroit-type rapper" in the Teams chat. Her

experiences remind me of Lamont's, who spent his club years rapping on a wide range of genres and testing his capabilities. Lamont and RJ also acknowledged how their technical rapping ability improved from their time in the club, based on the amount of time they spent freestyling and writing. Alexis added that, while she did not feel like she has improved her skills greatly, she has developed more "music confidence," where she feels she can begin learning how to DJ independently. Finally, some participants shared that they used the MC spaces to discover new ways to express themselves. Tierra shared that this happened through a broadened vocabulary based on her time in the club, where she had the freedom to make her own creative choices and focus on her improvement. Participants shared minimal critiques of their experiences in the club. There were three specific critiques mentioned. First, most participants wanted to hold the club more than two days a week so they could spend more time working on their craft. Alexis stated that she wished there were more instructors than just myself; she sees how I can be stretched thin with multiple members learning multiple skills or making multiple songs at the same time. Finally, Lamont expressed a desire for the club to spend more time on rappers' technical abilities, an admitted love of his.

These effects occur through culturally sustaining pedagogical experiences. Students in hip-hop clubs have their culture centered as a vehicle for their learning and development (Ladson-Billings, 2017). They experience skill and social-emotional development by navigating their cultural network and passions. Hip-hop club spaces are not one-off opportunities or a lesson during the school day; they are a constant space where students can access their current capacities and build with each other. Hip-hop clubs present humanization as the sole focus of the experience, where students can be

themselves and have their individual qualities supported and nurtured. When students are humanized in school spaces, dialogue and the development of critical consciousness can occur, and students can position themselves to contribute to the changing world around them.

Club Effects on Leadership Development

Figure 5: Leadership Synthesis

Club members and alums all credited MC with supporting their leadership development in some capacity. Analyzing their thoughts and my observations revealed three critical ideas about leadership. First, the leadership form is decentralized. While I control access to spaces and equipment, and establish the direction of the club, all members have a say in what gets accomplished each session and how they choose to approach their creative process. This is in line with building democratic experiences for students, giving them choice within a small aspect of their school day. Second, club participation led to improved interpersonal leadership qualities. Interpersonal leadership manifests its way into how members communicate with each other and navigate the space together. Participants shared that they saw the ways that MC supported their ability to communicate with others, be more considerate, manage personalities, and work well with others. Lamont shared that, in learning how to work well with others, he was able to learn how to be led and how to hold himself accountable as an artist. Participants defined these

skills as part of their leadership qualities that they value and have seen improvement over time. These skills give participants the ability to carry out leadership tasks and work with others within the group. A third idea of leadership involves understanding group dynamics and the action of leading. Examples throughout the club involve some level of leading my example and teaching others. A prime example is Jordin's leadership through facilitation, sharing creative responsibilities and making sure everyone in the group is involved. Alexis shared how MC taught her how to allow others to do what needs to be done and require less control; Erikah shared similar sentiments that she was learning how to allow others to use their skills on group tasks. Leadership was also expressed through participants offering advice, teaching each other new skills, and leading as role models. This aspect of leadership has continued to reveal itself as alums, specifically Lamont and RJ, return to sessions and engage with the current participants. They do not spend their time with reminiscent speeches; instead, they meet members where they are and offer direction in their musical paths.

Authentic Leadership and Hip-Hop Clubs

Authentic leadership focuses on building leadership that is genuine and real (Northouse, 2018). Authentic leaders use five characteristics: understanding their purpose, practicing solid values, leading with heart, establishing connected relationships, and demonstrating self-discipline (George, 2003, p. 18). The self-regulation behaviors of authentic leadership have been shown to promote positive team performance through team reflexivity and communication (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017). Additionally, authentic leadership helps to promote individual creativity by promoting affective commitment to the organization and its mission (Ribeiro et al., 2020). Authentic leadership through hip-

hop is tied to an individual's vocation and the fifth hip-hop pillar, knowledge of self (Wilson, 2013).

Leadership within Motown MCs can take two directions: from teacher to student and student to student. The teacher-student relationship contributed to the reasons a few participants chose to join MC. Of the seven participants, three shared that their previous relationship with me helped them join the club. I approach my career as an authentic leader; I am pursuing a vocation that I care about immensely. I work hard to build relationships with students to make them feel welcomed and supported in my spaces. These qualities seem to resonate with students, which makes them want to continue to be around my spaces and programs. When I run MC, I am still utilizing these authentic leadership qualities; creating spaces for students to create and be their authentic selves is a significant aspect of my purpose. The teacher-student leadership paradigm in MC is decentralized and based on facilitating and supporting. The strongest aspect of the leadership dynamic within MC is that all members are there for the same reason: to create and exist as hip-hop practitioners. Everyone is choosing to be in the space together, and it seems that every member has bought into the vision that I have for the program and wishes to stay.

Student-to-student leadership also possesses authentic leadership qualities. Again, since everyone is choosing to be in the space, they share similarities in their purpose for joining MC. Not all members want to turn hip-hop into their career, and that's okay; they still have goals and objectives that they are looking to accomplish through club spaces. Students work together and put their best intentions forward when giving each other feedback and support. The alums who return to work with current students also identify a

way that authentic leadership continues to exist in the participants' lives. Drawn together by a common vocation, students build relationships with each other that last well beyond their Eastside High School graduation date.

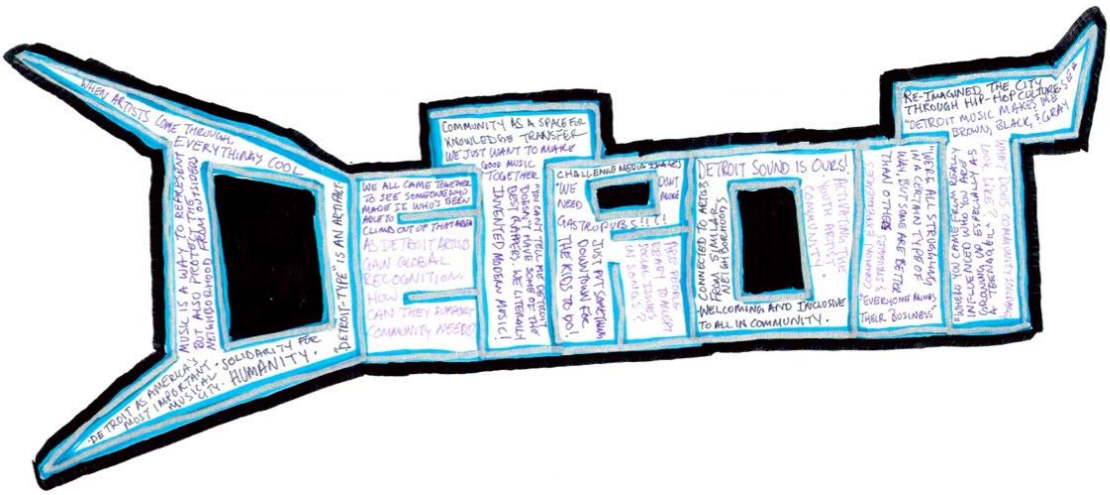
Leadership Through Critical Pedagogy

Viewing MC's leadership paradigms through critical pedagogy strengthens the importance of support and community in the club spaces. Hip-hop's history is rooted in creation and expression in the wake of an oppressive sociopolitical climate in the Bronx; from the onset of hip-hop's creative movement, groups and collectives have navigated these spaces together. Groups develop their own unique cultures and identities through collaboration and engagement with art. Christen (2003) identified how graffiti writers establish mentorship and apprenticeship networks that assimilate new members into groups. Similar processes occur within MC, as members build each other up through critique, support, and technical skill sharing. In a way, participants are naturally re-creating community structures that originate as artistic resistance to oppression. While I do some indirect modeling, students gather around the art spaces and demonstrate leadership of their own volition. Hands-on learning is occurring from member to member; there is a direct shift from the banking model of education that dominates schooling spaces (Freire, 1970). Participants enter the space and make their own choices, claiming ownership over their artistic and cooperative efforts. They use their shared interests and goals to learn from each other and develop a willingness to be taught. Through this intentionally democratic artistic space, students are engaging in experiences that guide them toward cooperative learning and leadership development through the arts.

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Solidarity, Change, and Praxis

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community Solidarity

Figure 6: Detroit Synthesis



Participants collectively reimagined Detroit through hip-hop culture. Some students saw Detroit as an inclusive community welcoming to all people, such as RJ. Lamont shared his story of meeting local rapper Cash Kidd and how his community came together to show love and support a young, up-and-coming artist. Others see hip-hop music as a reflection of the community. Cash connects the Detroit sound as gloomy and depressing, which he sees as a reflection of some societal aspects. Alexis views Detroit through hip-hop's "light" and "dark" lenses, which inform how she interprets community structures. Almost all participants acknowledge Detroit's role in music development and express some level of appreciation for their hometown's music history. Several Detroit artists are referenced in the interviews, each with some level of reverence and respect: Big Sean, Eminem, Rio da Yung OG, Tee Grizzley, Danny Brown, Kash Doll, and others. Participants acknowledge how Detroit's musical sound has spread outside the city and become a worldwide phenomenon. Tierra references how she hears rappers from

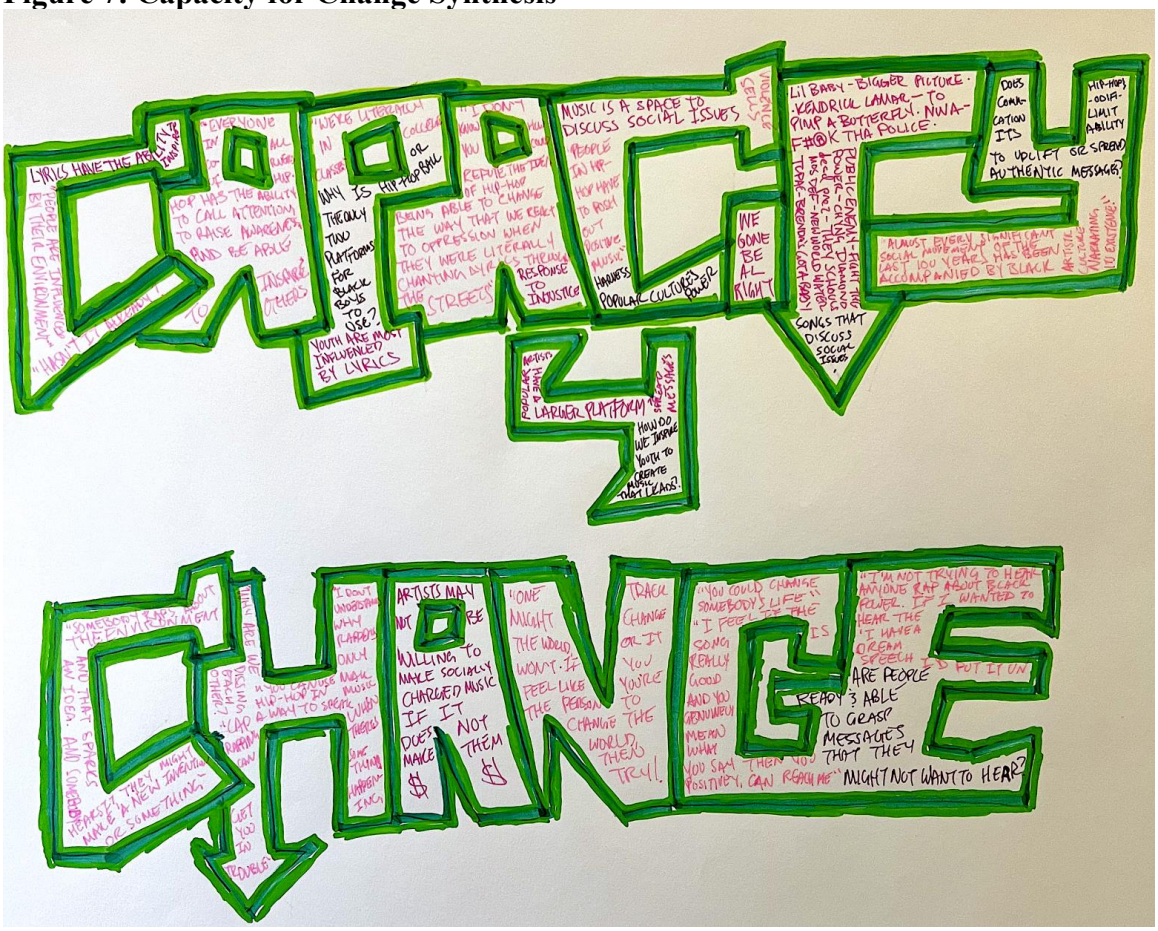
around the country and immediately recognizes ENRGY Beats, a leading producer of the Flint/Detroit sound.

Hip-hop's cultural outputs give participants something to claim as theirs, as a significant part of what makes Detroit unique. In lyrics, they hear the problems and experiences in the city that they or people they know have experienced. Jordin points this out when thinking about cap rappers and how they portray a specific lifestyle or experience. "Even if the story is not about them, it's about somebody else. I feel like we could have really been in a situation like that." She also sees artists displaying their communities as rough, challenging neighborhoods as a form of protection to push outsiders and threats away. Solidarity has developed this year through conversations about music, popular culture, and Detroit's situation within hip-hop. However, it is unclear which of the three forms of solidarity are most prominent, as these discussions have not yet materialized in music or artistic creations that show solidarity. At its fundamental level, participants seem to show solidarity for humanity in our discussions about hip-hop and Detroit. Beyond that, evidence of civic solidarity and political solidarity is not readily evident. It is also unsure how much the hip-hop club contributes to this solidarity. Conversations about Detroit, its music legacy, and societal problems arose as part of club session discussions. The most prominent example of these conversations occurred when Jordin, Alexis, and Erikah made the Detroit-type beat. We discussed what "Detroit-type" means, and Alexis referenced that the lyrics and topic matter are just as "Detroit-type" as the beats. This signals that, to some degree, students are capable of using hip-hop club spaces to think about their community and build solidarity; however, most conversations about solidarity with Detroit occurred in

interviews, which are not organic to MC's day-to-day existence. Additionally, no students this year have made music that demonstrates a sense of solidarity with the city or their community.

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Community Change

Figure 7: Capacity for Change Synthesis



Participants' discussion of hip-hop and hip-hop club's capacity for community change is complex. Most participants believed that hip-hop lyrics' topic matter has an impact on people and the ability to motivate. Specifically, participants believe that the youth are most influenced by what they hear and what they see more than others. Participants see hip-hop's impact on the youth in both negative and positive ways. While Erikah and Alexis see how explicit lyrics and images by female rappers may harm how

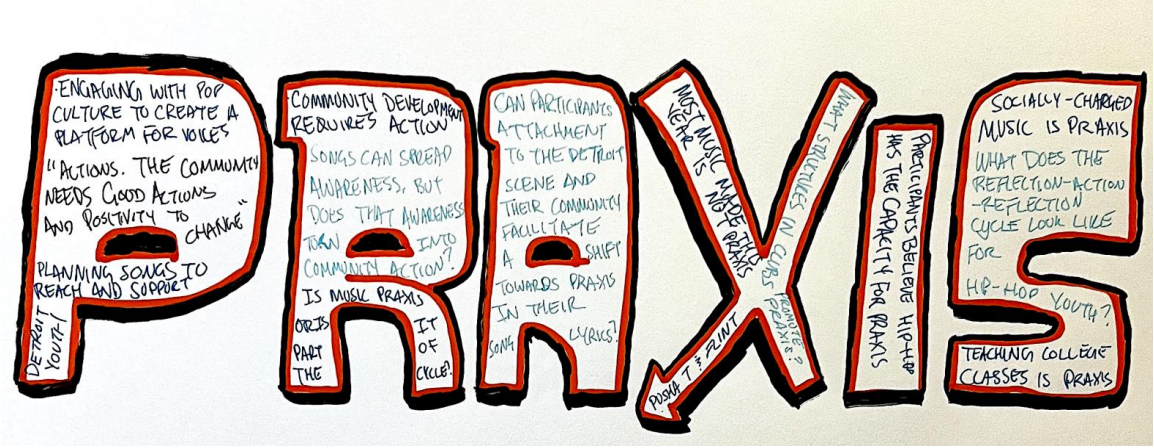
young girls present themselves or engage with the world, Cash sees positive messaging in hip-hop, sparking ideas in ways that could lead to new inventions or discoveries. Most participants believe that hip-hop music is a space to discuss social issues and spread information to listeners. Lamont took it an additional step and cited how Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly* album changed how Americans responded to injustice and oppression. "I don't know how you could even refute the idea of hip-hop being able to change the way that the world sees things and the way that we react to oppression when they were literally chanting lyrics through the streets," speaking about how Kendrick's song "Alright" was used as a rallying cry during police brutality protests in 2020 and beyond. A majority of participants believe that hip-hop gives artists a platform to promote social issues and change. Three participants referenced Lil Baby's song "The Bigger Picture" as an example of artists with immense popularity spreading a message calling for social change. Additionally, all alums and two current member participants stated that the youth can have the loudest voices of all on social issues. RJ especially acknowledged that youth's utilization of social capital gives them the ability to engage with social issues and participate in social change. "It doesn't matter what you had to say about us because now we're running the world."

While participants believe hip-hop has the power to affect change, they also identified some potential challenges that limit its capacity. Several participants shared that hip-hop's commodification challenges the authenticity of the message. Jordin, in particular, questioned why popular artists only make socially charged music when "bad things happen," rather than consistently including these messages in their art. She believes that artists realize they can capitalize on the moment and cash in monetarily.

Some participants also see hip-hop's negative messaging and challenge if it harms hip-hop's capacity for change. This view is evident in Erikah's frustration with Sexyy Redd and Jordin's repeated statement that "violence sells" in her interview. While there is space for hip-hop for a wide range of expression, participants see how commodification has highlighted more perceived negative images for profit. Both Tierra and RJ challenge that, while hip-hop presents opportunities to spread awareness and messaging, audiences may not be ready to listen and process the messages they receive. Cash's statements about not wanting to listen to music about Black power exemplify an example of this. Furthermore, Tierra sees limits to affecting change in a system that is so defined by capitalism and oppression. Citing Detroit's politics as an example, she said, "I don't think that a lot of people in the city are open to having their eyes open to the corruption in the city yet." While participants acknowledge hip-hop's capacity for promoting change, they do not directly state that Motown MCs have improved their ability to promote change. They believe that MC has contributed in many ways that are peripheral to one's capacity, such as improving their ability to develop a voice and express themselves. However, the direct impact on their individual capacities is not clear.

Hip-Hop's Capacity for Praxis

Figure 8: Praxis Synthesis



Considering hip-hop and MC through praxis proves to be equally as tricky. Alexis gave the most cohesive description of praxis through hip-hop. She believes that community development and social change can only occur through actions; hip-hop possesses the ability to create space and create art that promotes these actions. Therefore, the onus is on hip-hop practitioners to use their art to create these "good" actions that lead to improvements. RJ's current hip-hop collective engages in some form of praxis by providing youth access to DJing instruction. However, the participants have a hard time narrowing down what praxis looks like in hip-hop. Lamont sees the evolution of hip-hop artists teaching college classes as a form of praxis, such as Lupe Fiasco at MIT. Most participants define making socially charged music as some form of praxis, contributing to the conversation around social issues. In this regard, participation in praxis becomes accessible to all artists who wish to use their voices for social change. Given hip-hop's capacity for change and youth's potential to be the most prominent voice in activism movements, it seems that students believe that youth have the capacity to engage in praxis work through hip-hop.

Be that as it may, MC participants are not currently actively engaging in praxis through their music. Jordin has come the closest, with her song about loneliness and isolation from her friends. This song could be construed as praxis by addressing the socio-emotional challenges that youth face and presenting a healthy way to express those emotions. At the close of the data collection period, Jordin is also planning on making more songs about the experience of teenagers in Detroit and Eastside High. She believes these songs would give her an opportunity to address issues that other Detroit youth face, such as parental conflict, mental health struggles, and teen violence. However, no other participants are attempting to create praxis-based art at this time. Most recorded music has been freestyles or "catch an opp" freestyles done for fun and entertainment.

Hip-hop clubs and other hip-hop spaces allow students to engage their cultural capital and interests. Students utilize dialogue to shape their ideas and build community with each other within these spaces. In considering the hip-hop club's capacity for community solidarity, social change, and praxis, it is worth wondering if hip-hop's role is to provide the artistic and creative vehicles that drive praxis work. Giroux and Simon (1992) reference how critical pedagogy allows educators to utilize popular culture "as a terrain of images, knowledge forms, and affective investments which define the ground on which one's voice becomes possible within a pedagogical encounter" (p. 224). Hip-hop clubs may be using hip-hop culture in this vein, providing students with the tools, skills, competence, and confidence to use their voice through their art. While the praxis-driven art output has been low, participants' abilities to use their voices and promote change have increased.

Answering the Research Questions

The synthesis above presents a cohesive understanding of the participants' enduring themes that they addressed across multiple data points. Through these themes, answers to the study's research questions begin to reveal themselves.

1. How do youth conceptualize hip-hop spaces' capacity to foster senses of community, agency, solidarity, and leadership within their lives?

Youth in this study identify that hip-hop spaces can build community amongst themselves and connect to the larger community in which they reside. They believe that hip-hop spaces have improved their leadership capacities and contributed to developing artistic and individual agency within their own lives. Through hip-hop spaces, youth have defined leadership through their ability to navigate group dynamics and build inclusive atmospheres where all feel willing to participate. They have seen an increased attachment to Detroit's music scene and have grown to see it as an extension of themselves. While there has been an increase in ability and capacity to affect change through hip-hop artistic skill development, hip-hop spaces do not inherently gravitate youth towards engaging in community activism and praxis; youth have the power to use their voices but must be intrinsically motivated to do so within hip-hop spaces.

2. How do hip-hop practitioners define the nature of their relationship with hip-hop?

Hip-hop practitioners have a tight-knit relationship with hip-hop and view aspects of their identity through hip-hop culture and worldviews. They use hip-hop culture as a lens to view themselves and interpret the world around them. Most have shown that their love for hip-hop sprouted from familial lines and exposure from a young age. Several practitioners also expressed that their relationship with hip-hop allows them to regulate their emotions and improve their mental well-being in the process.

Implications for Educational Leadership

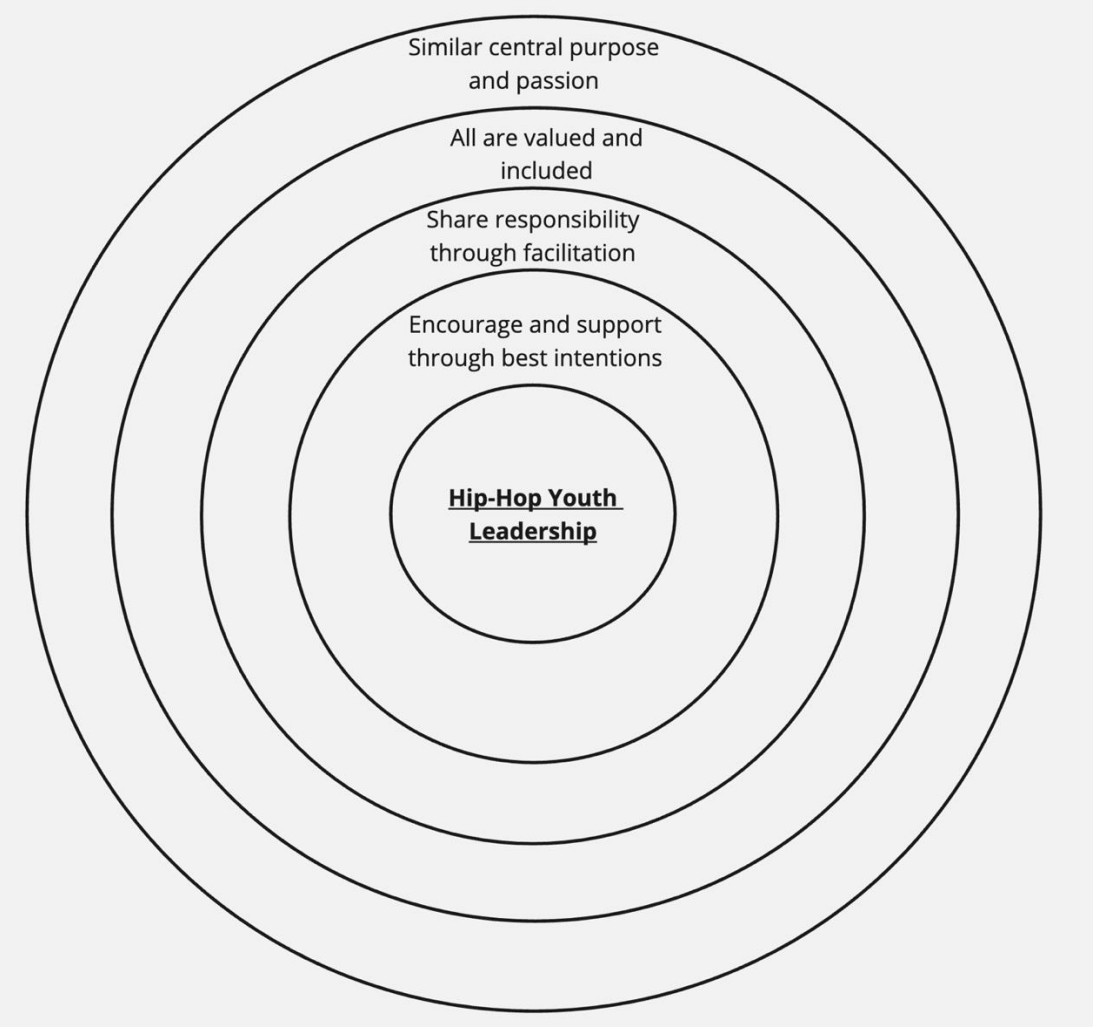
Through this study, several implications for the future of educational leadership and hip-hop pedagogy are identified. First, hip-hop spaces present opportunities for youth to engage with their cultural capital to build youth communities in which they feel supported and welcomed. These opportunities give students a needed break from the school day and exist in a place that values their humanity and life experiences. In an educational landscape entrenched with assessment and banking models of learning, schools may utilize hip-hop spaces to give students agency in how they express themselves and build lifelong intrapersonal skills. These spaces, especially school-based hip-hop clubs, provide students who do not fit into "traditional" art classes a chance to develop their skills. As the most consumed cultural output in the world, hip-hop clubs give school leaders an opportunity to embrace modernity and accept their students' cultures as part of daily school life.

Second, this study demonstrates how hip-hop culture and arts education can have standalone value to schools and students alike. 50 years after the culture's inception, hip-hop educational scholars have established what can no longer be denied: hip-hop is a valuable tool for school leaders seeking positive educational outcomes for their students. As we enter the next 50 years of hip-hop culture, it is crucial that schools acknowledge that hip-hop culture possesses educational capacity operated independently of core content classes and traditional subjects. Lyrics, videos, cultural images, and cultural processes will continue to have value to classroom teachers looking to center their students' interests and backgrounds in classroom instruction; however, hip-hop artistic engagement presents schools with a way to support arts education in modern ways while also contributing to youths' social-emotional development. As educational leaders look

for ways to innovate and support youths' development on wide-scale levels, this study provides an opportunity to discuss the current state of curricular learning and question the academic norms that remain untouched in American education. Leaders can imagine what school spaces would look like in a democratic, problem-posing environment that engages students through their cultural competencies as a future of schooling.

Third, this study's understanding of hip-hop spaces' leadership development has further implications for understanding the intersections of youth leadership. Through this study's data collection procedures, I propose a hip-hop youth leadership paradigm that defines how youth hip-hop practitioners engage with each other and develop leadership capabilities within hip-hop space activities. The figure below summarizes the qualities needed to foster leadership.

Figure 9: Hip-Hop Youth Leadership Paradigm



The paradigm is intentionally modeled after a vinyl record. I chose this image while mulling over how to best display this paradigm while listening to records and pondering what quantifies an album as great. Thinking about some of my favorite albums, they all have a common trend: the songs build on each other in a complementary way, creating a cohesive sound. One song does not make an album good; a strong record requires multiple tracks whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In that vein, this hip-hop youth leadership paradigm contains four "tracks" that conclude with individuals

engaging their surroundings as leaders. On the outer layer, youth must enter spaces in which they share a similar purpose and passion with those in the space. Not everyone needs to have matching skill levels, desires, or talents, but a shared central purpose and desire to be in the space is paramount. Next, youth must value all people within the space as welcomed and valued. This includes any adults or established leaders in the room; in MC, this example includes myself as the instructor. When everyone is treated with value and feels included, youth can navigate the space in ways that they desire. The next layer requires youth to share responsibilities and facilitate the group space. This not only increases youth's feelings of inclusion but gives everyone involved a defined role in the creation process. Finally, youth model support and encouragement through their best intentions. This ensures healthy communication occurs between members within the space. When all four components are engaged simultaneously, the paradigm proposes that leadership capabilities are stimulated and nurtured in hip-hop spaces. To continue the record metaphor, this paradigm exists on the spinning table of hip-hop club spaces; this could conceivably be any youth-centered group space. It may also require a "needle" to begin playing at first, which could be an adult or elder within the space that initiates the discussions and engagement. As this paradigm continues to be developed, opportunities for schools to consider how youth cultivate leadership organically in creative spaces can become a significant asset to schools and educational leaders.

Limitations of Club and Study

Limitations of Club Spaces

Through the heuristic inquiry process, I spent an immeasurable amount of time dreaming of utopia. During the initial engagement, I considered what a perfect vision of a hip-hop club could be for all stakeholders: students, instructors, schools, and community

members. This process allowed me to consider the possibilities of what MC could be while also understanding limiting factors that challenge this vision. An ideal world for hip-hop clubs has students of all talent levels and skill varieties spending time together to create. Students have access to multiple pieces of music creation technology and professional-grade audio spaces. They engage with instructors who have vast knowledge of their craft and can offer them guidance. They continuously work with each other and offer support, guidance, and friendly competition. Students are able to create full artistic projects, expressing themselves as they see fit. In a utopian experience, students create art that challenges oppressive structures and addresses topics that plague society in the same frequency that they create music that expresses their technical abilities and desire to have fun. Most prominently, they are accepted within the school and greater community for the artistic abilities that they possess. Students receive performance opportunities and are able to showcase their talents to their peers. They work with younger children in workshop and performance spaces to spark the same passion for hip-hop that was passed down to them. Club members are given an opportunity to transcend their status as students and become community leaders who represent their culture and city. In essence, the utopian hip-hop club experience gives students a chance to develop as leaders, artists, activists, mentors, and individuals.

When examining Motown MCs through this utopian vision, gaps emerge. The club is limited by having one instructor with one laptop to support multiple students at once. I encourage students to bring their devices with them, but not all are able to. I am fortunate to have music equipment to share with students, but the lack of multiple computers and software licenses limits how many students are actively engaging at once.

More can be done in regard to fundraising for this equipment, but the club struggles to qualify for arts-based grants because it is not a "traditional" arts education platform and is not a non-profit organization. The club is limited by the school day and school calendar as to how often they can participate. The school calendar limits how often students can perform and participate in community work., as it would require missing class. Furthermore, school-wide acceptance of hip-hop clubs as legitimized arts programs is needed to take the next leap in supporting students. Eastside High has begun to do this, but more can be done as an educational system to fully accept hip-hop art.

Limitations of Study

This study has potential limitations. Participants may have been more kind in their assessment of MC because they have a relationship with me as a teacher, mentor, or friend. In most cases, participants knew me for at least one year in advance. While I continuously stressed to them that I wanted their utmost honesty and objectivity in their responses, it is possible that they softened their true feelings because of our previous relationships. Additionally, not all MC club members volunteered to participate in the study. More participation from current members would have helped to paint a more complete picture of club experiences during this school year. A longer window for data collection, such as following the club for an entire school year, may have added additional data sources to enrich participant portraits and assess their growth of feelings over time. Finally, this study and heuristic process took place during the most challenging year of my life. Since the beginning of the study I have gotten married, seen both of my parents hospitalized and recovered from life-threatening medical situations, battled through a bout of coronavirus, taught classes, and built partnerships as the lead of a

school pathway. While it is impossible to measure if or how much these situations affected the study, I must acknowledge the high levels of emotional duress that I worked through while taking on a highly internal and reflective task.

Recommendation for Future Research

Based on this study's findings, additional directions for future research emerge. More work should be done to understand hip-hop clubs and organizations that teach hip-hop artistic elements to students. Additional hip-hop clubs should be evaluated to corroborate, expand, or challenge the findings of this study. Instructor decisions should also be studied to understand how to improve the after-school hip-hop club experience for students. Future research in hip-hop education should center on hip-hop art education rather than using hip-hop in core content classrooms as research already exists that shows hip-hop's potential in these areas. Additional research should examine the phenomenon through multiple perspectives and methodologies. Research from those who are not as invested and passionate about hip-hop clubs may present different findings or interpretations. Research can also focus on the "why" of how the findings were identified. Specifically, why do students feel a sense of community in hip-hop spaces? How could praxis happen in more defined and tangible ways? Are there correlations between the amount of music or art made in hip-hop spaces and their senses of solidarity, agency, and praxis? Future research should also consider how shifting curricular design to include democratic structures and student choices for deeper learning supports learning and development. While this study does not take place in a school-day classroom, it raises questions about how its structures could be applied to classroom spaces to support

students. Finally, research can be done to analyze the hip-hop youth leadership paradigm and how hip-hop practitioners can use its concepts outside of club spaces.

Closing Remarks

This study was born from a passion for hip-hop culture and creating space for students to create and engage with their interests in school. I am grateful for the educational leaders who allowed me to create Motown MCs and for the students who have joined me on the journey to this moment. This study opens the door for the larger conversation surrounding curriculum, learning, and youth development. It allows us to discuss our current systems and if we are doing what is best for children and their well-being. For the hip-hop youth, this study offers a concrete example of how schools can support their development. The culture's norms, artistic capacities, and space for intellectual and emotional growth present an immense amount of value for school leaders at a crucial time. As we continue to challenge the future of schooling, the adaptations to technology, and the issues that modern youth face, hip-hop presents abilities to support these conversations in ways that few other cultural phenomena can.

https://orcid.org/0009-0003-5518-0483

APPENDIX A: ASSENT FORM

MC MEANS MENTOR THE CHILD: EXAMINING SCHOOL-BASED HIP-HOP CLUBS FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Dan Wolford from the University of Kentucky. You are invited because you are a Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School student interested in joining the hip-hop club Lyrical Crusaders. The study's purpose is to investigate the relationship between hip-hop spaces, students, and students' conceptualizations of leadership, agency, and praxis. Additionally, the study analyzes how students' relationship with hip-hop informs their relationship with their community.

If you wish to join the hip-hop club Lyrical Crusaders, you can participate in this study. The club meets twice a week for the 2023-24 school year. In this club, you will have the chance to collaborate with fellow participants and create hip-hop music. You will have the chance to perform at multiple events throughout the school year. In Lyrical Crusaders, you will participate in voluntary well-being check-ins, discuss the world as it relates to hip-hop, and develop your hip-hop creative skills.

By participating in the study, you are contributing to research about hip-hop clubs and how they could help students become leaders and active community members. If you volunteer for the study, you will be asked to participate in a 90-minute, audio-recorded, one-on-one interview with Dan Wolford during this process. The interview will discuss your background, musical experiences, and how those experiences have affected you. The study will last from October to January. Any music that you record during a club session will be entered as data, as well as notes from club sessions that the primary investigator takes during or after the session. The club's Microsoft Teams group chat will also be entered as data; individual messages to the primary investigator will not be used. Collaborative recorded music will only be admitted as data if all individuals have consented to the study. Any potential performances would not be recorded as data, although notes from the performances would be used. The study will last 12 weeks for a total of 49.5 hours.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

There is a possibility that Dan Wolford is your teacher during the 2023-24 school year. Your participation or non-participation in the study will not have any impact on your grades.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Dan Wolford. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. You can still participate in the club and will not be punished in any way if you choose to withdraw from the study.

You can ask Dan Wolford questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your parent any questions you might have about this study. Dan Wolford's email address is daniel.wolford@uky.edu. The UK faculty advisor is John Nash, who can be reached at john.nash@uky.edu.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what to do.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study Date

_____ _____

Name of [Authorized] Person Obtaining Informed Assent Date

APPENDIX B: PARENTAL CONSENT FORMS

KEY INFORMATION FOR "MC MEANS MENTOR THE CHILD: EXAMINING SCHOOL-BASED HIP-HOP CLUBS FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE"

Your child is being asked to volunteer for a research study about hip-hop spaces and how they support students' conceptions of community, leadership, and agency. We are asking your child because he or she is a Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School student who participates in the school's hip-hop club, Lyrical Crusaders. This page is to give you key information to help you decide if you would allow your child to participate. We have included detailed information after this page. Ask the research team questions. If you have questions later, the contact information for the research investigator in charge of the study is below.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study aims to examine how engaging with hip-hop culture helps youth think about and consider their community, leadership potential, and capacity to promote change. The study will follow students' journeys as they engage with hip-hop culture and collaborate on artistic projects. By doing this study, we hope to learn how hip-hop culture benefits students' lives and prepares them for a future of community leadership, engagement, and activism.

Your child's participation in this research will last about 12 weeks at four hours per week (49.5 hours total).

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOUR CHILD MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

Participating in the study will allow your child to share their experiences in hip-hop clubs. This experience will contribute to research that may support the growth of school-based hip-hop clubs. Participating in conversations surrounding your child's experience in hip-hop clubs may lead to a deeper interest in participating in hip-hop spaces in the participants' community. This study may help your child to think about themselves as more than a student and instead as an artist and community leader in Detroit.

For a complete description of benefits and/or rewards, refer to the Detailed Consent.

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER YOUR CHILD FOR THIS STUDY?

You may not wish to allow your child to participate in this study if the time requirement is too significant or if travel requirements are too challenging. Your child can choose not to participate in the study and remain in the hip-hop club.

For a complete description of risks, refer to the Detailed Consent.

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to allow your child to participate in the study, it should be because they want to volunteer and believe it is a good opportunity. They will not lose any services, benefits, or rights they would normally have if they choose not to volunteer.

As a student, if they decide not to participate in this study, their choice will not affect their academic status or class grade(s). There is a possibility that the investigator is their teacher in one or more classes. Their participation or non-participation will not have any effect on grades in class.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or want to withdraw, contact Dan Wolford of the University of Kentucky, Department of Educational Leadership Studies at 586-863-3465. The study's faculty advisor is John Nash, who can be reached at john.nash@uky.edu.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact staff in the University of Kentucky (UK) Office of Research Integrity (ORI) between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Monday-Friday at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

DETAILED CONSENT:

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOUR CHILD WOULD NOT QUALIFY FOR THIS STUDY?

Your child may not qualify for this study if he or she does not participate in the Lyrical Crusaders hip-hop club at King High School.

WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND WHAT IS THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF TIME INVOLVED?

The research procedures will be conducted at Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School. There will be 24 club sessions during the duration of the study. Each of those club sessions will take about 2 hours. Additionally, there will be a 90-minute audio-recorded interview with Dan Wolford. The total amount of time your child will be asked to volunteer for this study is 49.5 hours over a three-month period.

WHAT WILL YOUR CHILD BE ASKED TO DO

All participants will be engaging in hip-hop club sessions at King High School. In these sessions, participants will discuss hip-hop culture and create hip-hop art together. During club sessions, your child will participate in informal well-being check-ins and discuss the world as it relates to hip-hop. At least once, your child will be asked to participate in a semi-formal, audio-recorded interview with the primary investigator, Dan Wolford. The interview will discuss your child's background, musical experiences, and how those experiences have affected your child. As part of the research, your child will be asked to participate in these sessions to the best of your child's ability. All music that your child records during club sessions will be entered as data, as well as notes from hip-hop club sessions that the primary investigator takes during or after the sessions. The club's Microsoft Teams group chat will also be entered as data; individual messages to the primary investigator will not be used. Collaborative recorded music will only be admitted as data if all individuals have consented to the study. Any potential performances would not be recorded as data, although notes from the performances would be used.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

This study has minimal risks; since hip-hop art requires certain amounts of emotional vulnerability, slight levels of emotional risk may be endured. There may be potential anxiety from participating in an one-on-one, audio-recorded interview with potentially sensitive questions.

WILL YOUR CHILD BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

We do not know if your child will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, if your child takes part in this study, the information learned may help others and lead to the creation of more school-based hip-hop clubs. Participating in conversations surrounding your child's experience in hip-hop clubs may lead to a deeper interest in participating in hip-hop spaces in the participants' community.

IF YOUR CHILD DOESN'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If your child does not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study. Your child may still participate in the hip-hop club whether or not you participate in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOUR CHILD GIVES?

When we write about or share the results from the study, we will write about the combined information. We will keep your child's name and other identifying information private. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that your child gave us information, or what that

information is. Paper records will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed when they are no longer needed. All electronic data will be stored on an external hard drive and locked when it is not in use.

You should know that in some cases we may have to show your child's information to other people.

For example, the law may require or permit us to share your information with:

a court or agencies, if your child have a reportable disease/condition;

authorities, such as child or adult protective services, if your child reports information about a child or elder being abused;

authorities or a mental health professional if your child poses a danger to themself or someone else (e.g. suicidal thoughts).

To ensure the study is conducted properly, officials at the University of Kentucky may look at or copy pertinent portions of records that identify your child.

CAN YOUR CHILD CHOOSE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY EARLY?

You can choose for your child to leave the study at any time. They may also choose to leave the study at any time. They will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

If you or your child choose to leave the study early, data collected until that point will remain in the study database and may not be removed.

The investigators conducting the study may need to remove your child from the study. This may occur for a number of reasons. Your child may be removed from the study if:

They are not able to follow the directions,

The investigators find that your participation in the study is more risk than benefit to them.

WILL YOU OR YOUR CHILD RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You and your child will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU AND YOUR CHILD NEED TO KNOW?

If you volunteer your child to participate in this study, they will be one of about 20 people to do so.

The primary investigator is a doctoral candidate at the University of Kentucky. He is being guided in this research by Dr. John Nash. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

WILL YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION BE USED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH?

All identifiable information (e.g., your child's name or date of birth) will be removed from the information collected in this study. After we remove all identifiers, the information may be used for future research or shared with other researchers without your additional informed consent.

INFORMED CONSENT SIGNATURES

This consent includes the following:

Key Information Page

Detailed Consent

You are the subject or are authorized to act on behalf of the subject. You will receive a copy of this consent form after it has been signed.

_____

Printed name of child whom parent is providing consent

_____ _____

Signature of parent or guardian Date

_____

Printed name of parent or guardian

_____Daniel Wolford_____ _____

Printed name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent Date

APPENDIX C: ALUMNI CONSENT FORM

KEY INFORMATION FOR "MC MEANS MENTOR THE CHILD: EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXTRACURRICULAR HIP HOP ORGANIZATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP, AGENCY, SOLIDARITY, AND COMMUNITY"

You are asked to volunteer for a research study about hip-hop spaces and how they support students' conceptions of community, leadership, and agency. We are asking you because you are a Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School alumnus who participated in the school's hip-hop club, Lyrical Crusaders, during your high school career. This page is to give you key information to help you decide if you would like to participate. We have included detailed information after this page. Ask the research team questions. If you have questions later, the contact information for the research investigator in charge of the study is below.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study aims to examine how engaging with hip-hop culture helps youth think about and consider their community, leadership potential, and capacity to promote change. The study will follow students' journeys as they engage with hip-hop culture and collaborate on artistic projects. By doing this study, we hope to learn how hip-hop culture benefits students' lives and prepares them for a future of community leadership, engagement, and activism.

Your participation in this research will last about 90 minutes.

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

Participating in the study will give you an opportunity to share your experiences in hip-hop clubs. This experience will contribute to research that may support the growth of school-based hip-hop clubs. Participating in conversations surrounding your experience in hip-hop clubs may lead to a deeper interest in participating in hip-hop spaces in the participants' community. This study may help you to think about yourself as more than a student and instead as an artist and community leader in Detroit.

For a complete description of benefits and/or rewards, refer to the Detailed Consent.

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

You may not wish to participate in this study if the time requirement is too significant or if travel requirements are too challenging. You may also choose not to participate if you do not wish to share about your time as a member of a hip-hop club.

For a complete description of risks, refer to the Detailed Consent.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to participate in the study, it should be because you want to volunteer and believe it is a good opportunity. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or want to withdraw, contact Dan Wolford of the University of Kentucky, Department of Educational Leadership Studies at 586-863-3465. The study's faculty advisor is John Nash, who can be reached at john.nash@uky.edu.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact staff in the University of Kentucky (UK) Office of Research Integrity (ORI) between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Monday-Friday at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

DETAILED CONSENT

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU WOULD NOT QUALIFY FOR THIS STUDY?

You may not qualify for this study if you did not participate in the Lyrical Crusaders hip-hop club at King High School while you attended.

WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND WHAT IS THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF TIME INVOLVED?

The research procedures will be conducted at Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School. You will need to schedule a 90-minute interview to fulfill your participation.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded, semi-structured interview with the primary investigator, Dan Wolford. This interview will last approximately 90 minutes. The interview will discuss your background, musical experiences, and how those experiences have affected you.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are minimal risks in this study. There may be potential anxiety from participating in an one-on-one, audio-recorded interview with potentially sensitive questions.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

We do not know if you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, if you take part in this study, information learned may help others and lead to the creation of more school-based hip-hop clubs. Participating in conversations surrounding your experience in hip-hop clubs may lead to a deeper interest in participating in hip-hop spaces in the participants' community.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

When we write about or share the results from the study, we will write about the combined information. We will keep your name and other identifying information private. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. Paper records will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed when they are no longer needed. All electronic data will be stored on an external hard drive and locked when it is not in use.

You should know that in some cases we may have to show your information to other people.

For example, the law may require or permit us to share your information with:

a court or agencies, if you have a reportable disease/condition;

authorities, such as child or adult protective services, if you report information about a child or elder being abused;

authorities or a mental health professional if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else (e.g. suicidal thoughts).

To ensure the study is conducted properly, officials at the University of Kentucky may look at or copy pertinent portions of records that identify you.

CAN YOU CHOOSE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY EARLY?

You can choose to leave the study at any time. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

If you choose to leave the study early, data collected until that point will remain in the study database and may not be removed.

The investigators conducting the study may need to remove you from the study. This may occur for a number of reasons. You may be removed from the study if:

You are not able to follow the directions,

The investigators find that your participation in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

If you choose participate in this study, you will be one of about 20 people to do so.

The primary researcher is a doctoral candidate at the University of Kentucky. He is being guided in this research by Dr. John Nash. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

WILL YOUR INFORMATION BE USED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH?

All identifiable information (e.g., your name or date of birth) will be removed from the information or samples collected in this study. After we remove all identifiers, the information or samples may be used for future research or shared with other researchers without your additional informed consent.

INFORMED CONSENT SIGNATURES

This consent includes the following:

- **Key Information Page**
- **Detailed Consent**

You are the subject or are authorized to act on behalf of the subject. You will receive a copy of this consent form after it has been signed.

_____ **Signature of research subject**	_____ **Date**
_____ **Printed name of research subject**	
_____Daniel Wolford_____ Printed name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent	_____ Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Introduction

Hello, thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is Dan Wolford, and I am conducting research on the relationship between hip-hop and leadership in Detroit high school students. Specifically, this study aims to explore how hip-hop music and culture shape the lives of high school students in Detroit, and how it supports their abilities to be leaders in their communities. I will be asking you about your experiences with hip-hop and how it has impacted your life. This interview will be recorded. If you don't understand a question, please feel free to ask for clarification. Do you have any questions before we start?

Relationship with Hip-Hop

1. How would you define hip-hop culture?
2. How did you first get interested in hip-hop? What was your first experience with hip-hop music or culture?
3. How often do you listen to hip-hop music?
4. What is your favorite hip-hop artist or group? Why?
5. Do you consider yourself a hip-hop artist?(e.g., rapper, producer, style writer, dancer, DJ, etc.)? If so, what art forms do you practice?
    a. When did you start creating hip-hop art? Why did you start?
    b. How much of your identity is connected with being a hip-hop artist?
6. Do you engage with hip-hop culture beyond music (e.g., dance, fashion, visual arts)? If so, how?
7. How do you feel about how hip-hop culture is represented in mainstream media?
8. How would you describe your relationship with hip-hop culture?
9. How does hip-hop culture affect your daily life? Does it impact your mental health? If so, how?
10. Do you think your relationship with hip-hop has helped you become a better leader?
11. How important is community in your creative process?

Hip-Hop Spaces

1. How did you hear about the hip-hop club? How long have you been a member?
2. Describe your experiences in your hip-hop clubs.
3. What do you like about participating in a hip-hop club? What would you like to see improved?
4. How does your participation impact your creativity?
5. Has participating in a hip-hop club affected your confidence, emotional well-being, or mental health state?

6. Has your participation helped you become a better leader? If so, how?
7. Have you ever been part of a hip-hop community or space in Detroit outside of hip-hop clubs? If so, what was your experience like?
8. Are you in any traditional school art class?
    a. If yes, how are those classes similar or different to hip-hop club?

Hip-Hop and Community

1. What neighborhood do you live in?
2. How would you describe your community?
3. Do you believe hip-hop culture influences your community in Detroit?
4. Does hip-hop culture impact your personal values and beliefs about leadership?
5. Have you ever participated in any hip-hop-related activities in your community (e.g., rap battles, ciphers, dance competitions, graffiti art events)? If so, can you describe your experience?
6. Has your participation in hip-hop clubs helped you become more attached to your community or think about your community in different ways?
7. In what ways do you believe hip-hop culture supports your ability to be a leader in your community?
8. Can you think of an example of how you have applied leadership skills you learned from hip-hop culture to a real-life situation?
9. How does hip-hop culture help you connect with others in your community?
10. How do you think hip-hop culture can give youth a voice and support leadership development?
11. In what ways do you think hip-hop culture can help address social and political issues in Detroit?
12. Do you think hip-hop culture plays in the lives of young people in Detroit? If so, what role?
13. Hip-hop often gets associated with negative imagery involving violence, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and materialism. In your mind, how do these images affect hip-hop's abilities to promote change or build community?
14. Do you think hip-hop artists are responsible for representing their community well and supporting its development?

Closing Questions

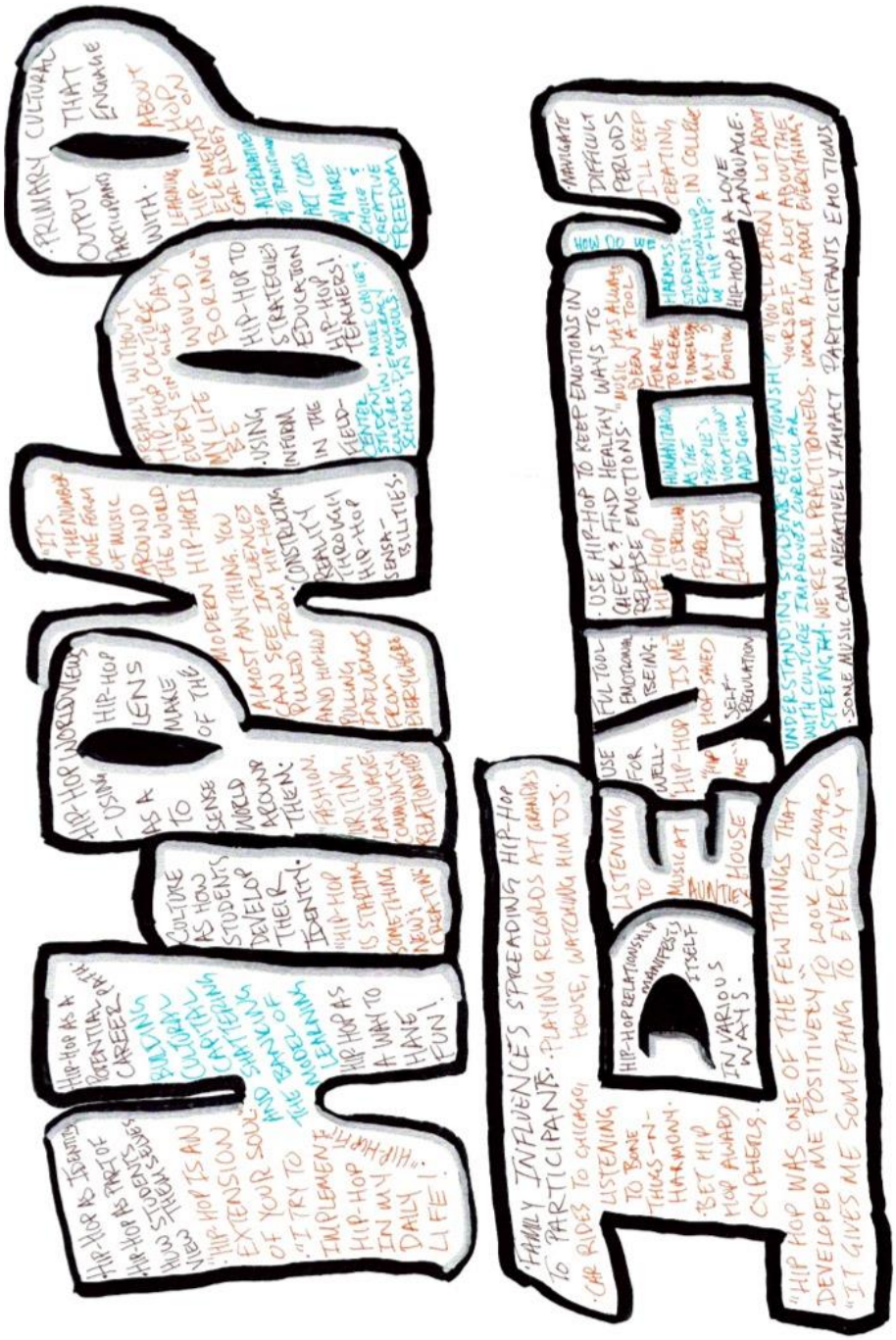
1. What are your future goals and aspirations, and how does hip-hop culture play a role in achieving them?
2. In what ways do you hope to use hip-hop culture to positively impact your community in the future?
3. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with hip-hop culture?
4. What message would you like to send to outsiders about hip-hop culture?
5. Are there any additional resources or information related to hip-hop culture that you would like to recommend?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add or any questions you have for me?

Demographic Questions

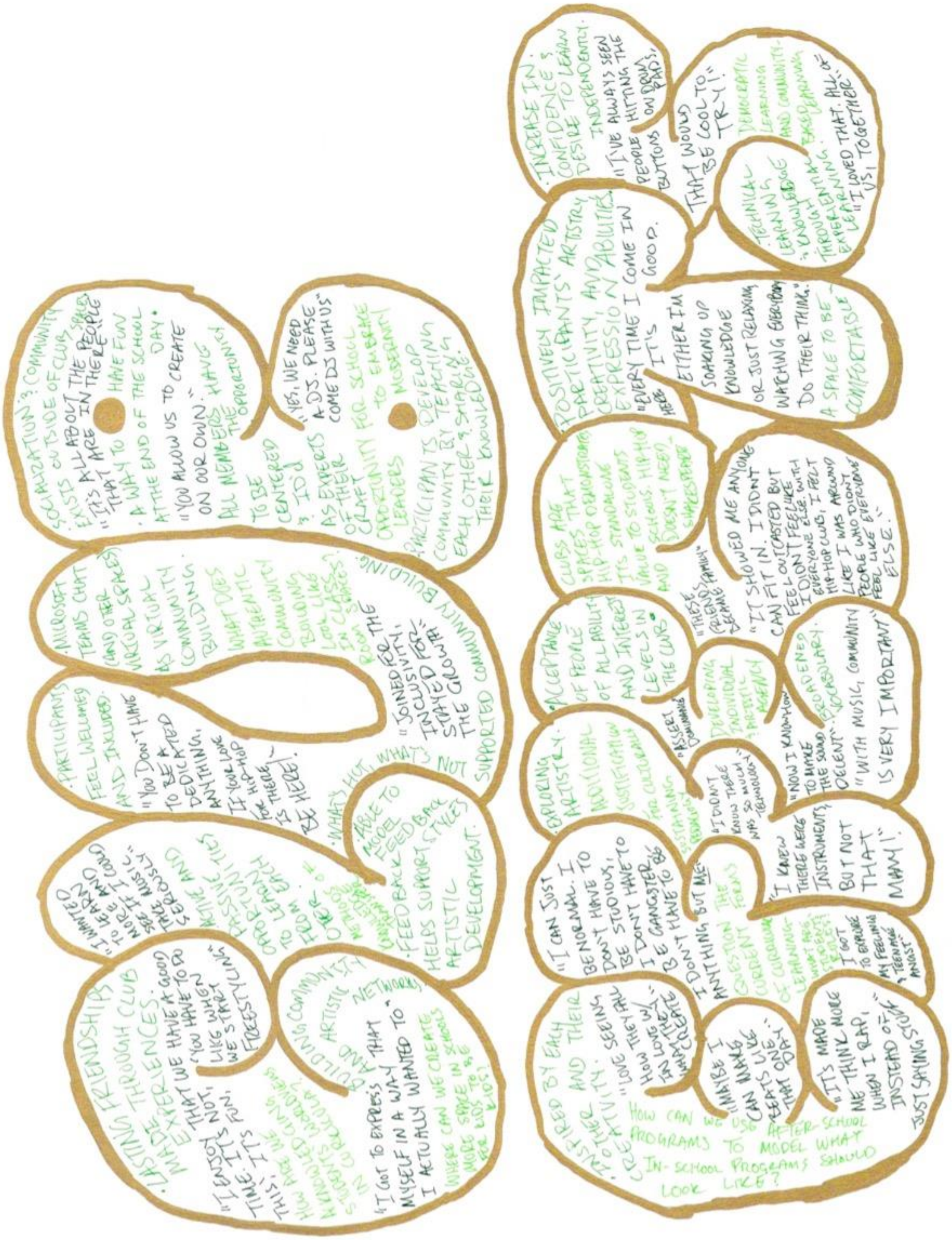
1. Please say and spell your name.
2. What is your age and grade level in school?
3. What school do you attend?
4. How do you identify?
5. What is your racial/ethnic identity?
6. Have you lived in Detroit your whole life?

Thank you for your time and participation in this interview. Your insights and experiences are invaluable to our study.

APPENDIX E: HIP-HOP IDENTITY SYNTHESIS

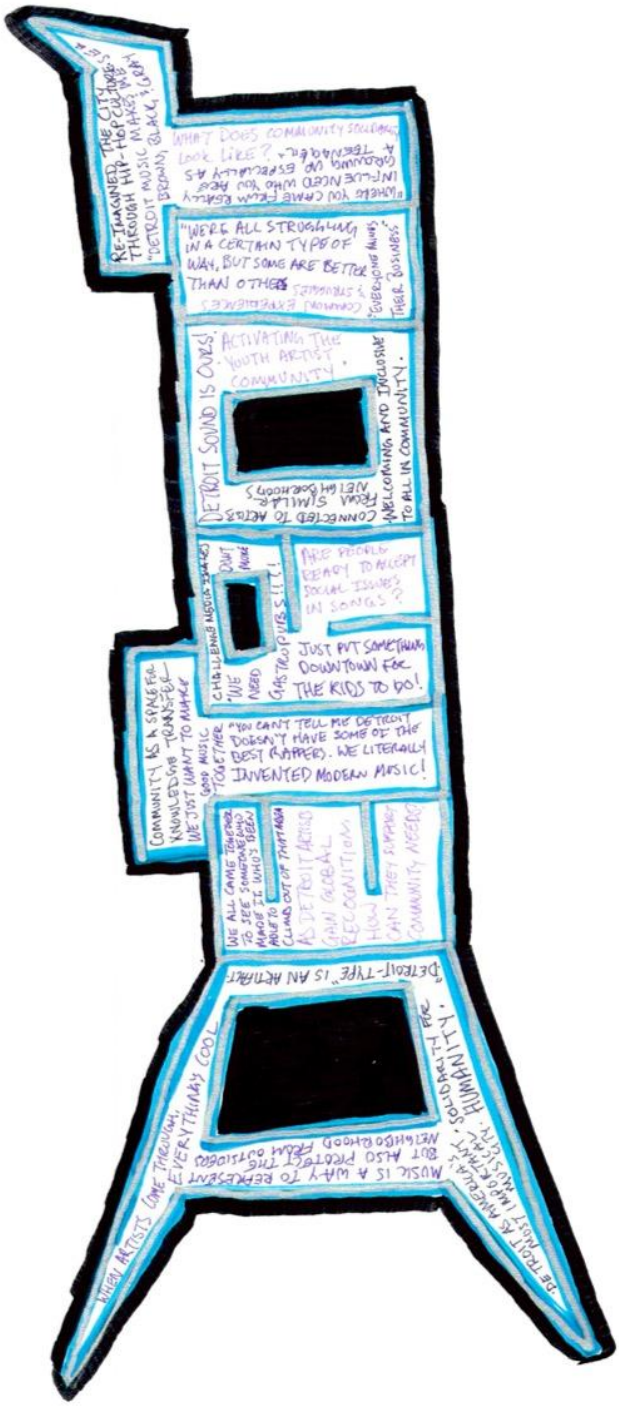


APPENDIX F: HIP-HOP CLUB EFFECTS SYNTHESIS

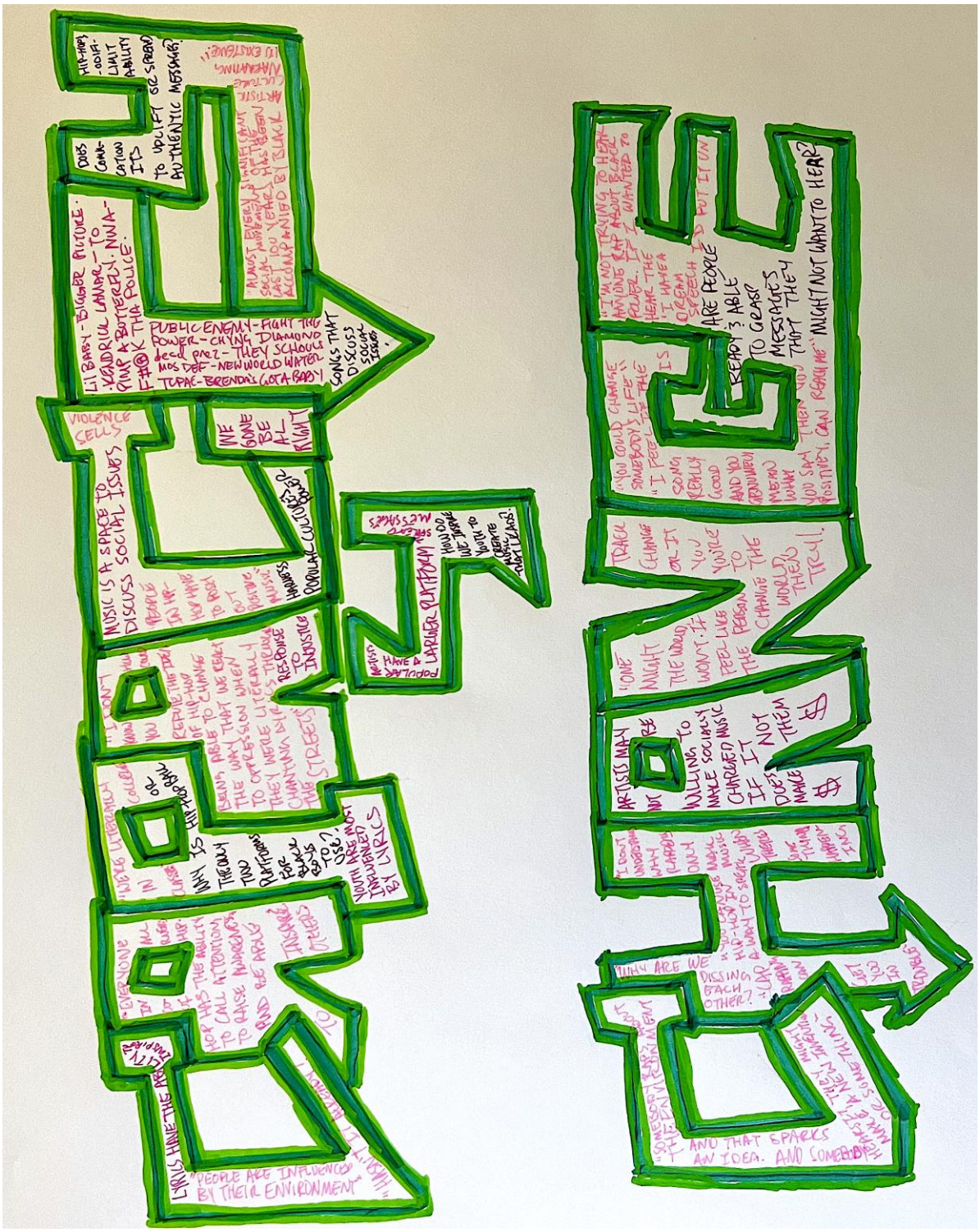


APPENDIX G: LEADERSHIP SYNTHESIS

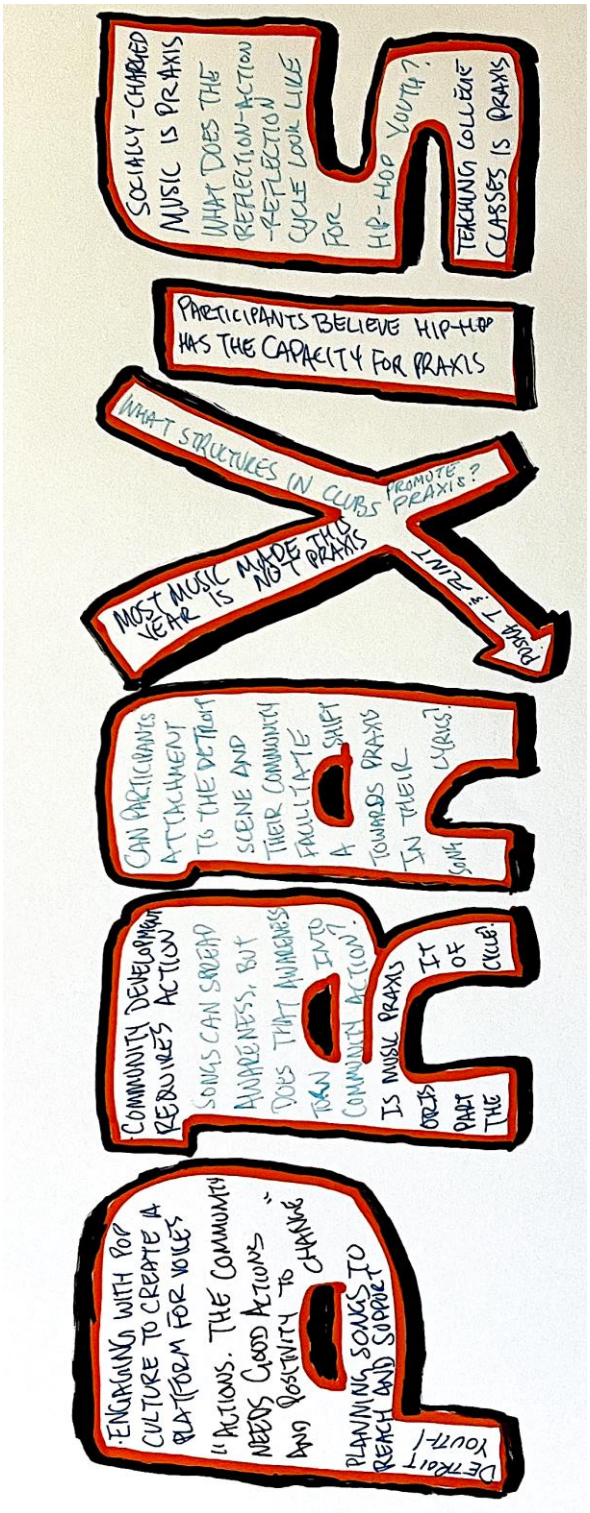
APPENDIX H: DETROIT SYNTHESIS



APPENDIX I: CAPACITY FOR CHANGE SYNTHESIS



APPENDIX J: PRAXIS SYNTHESIS



APPENDIX K: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

TO: Daniel Wolford, M.A.
Educational Leadership Studies
PI phone #: 586-863-3465
PI email: daniel.wolford@uky.edu

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Nonmedical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol
DATE: 9/5/2023

IRB Number: 85531

On 9/5/2023, the Nonmedical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:
MC Means Mentor the Child: Examining the Relationship Between Co-Curricular Hip-Hop Spaces, Community Solidarity, and Youth Praxis
Approval is effective from 9/5/2023 until 9/4/2024 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. If applicable, the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects can be found on the approved application's landing page in E-IRB. [Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.] Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review (CR)/Annual Administrative Review (AAR) request which must be completed and submitted to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" available in the online Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.

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VITA

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

2015-2024 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Senior High School

- Department Lead Teacher
- Sports M3 Pathway Lead

EDUCATION

2016-2018 Michigan State University

- M.A. Teaching and Curriculum, K-12 Administration Specialization

2009-2014 Michigan State University

- B.A. Interdisciplinary Social Studies Education
- History Minor
- Coaching Specialization

SCHOLARSHIPS

2023 University of Kentucky

- John Edwin Partington and Gwendolyn Partington Scholarship

PRESENTATIONS

2024 – Spring Research Conference (Louisville, Kentucky)

- MC Means Mentor the Child: Hip-Hop Clubs as a Space for Leadership Development

2021 – UCEA (Columbus, Ohio)

- Practitioners, Parents, and Students: How Does This Trifecta Impact Teaching and Learning in Times of Pandemic?

2016 – College of Education and Technology Conference (East Lansing, Michigan)

- The Genius in Youth and Popular Texts, with Erik Skogsberg