

21ST CENTURY MOJO: THE PRACTICE OF RITUAL AND HIP HOP AMONG
BRIGHT, BLACK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE
UNIVERSITY

by

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(Under the direction of Tarek C. Grantham and Elizabeth A. St. Pierre)

ABSTRACT

In this qualitative project, I interviewed eight Black male and female students, ages 22-30, to explore how they engage hip hop culture within the social, cultural, political, and historical conditions specific to the southeastern flagship university they attend. By focusing on their everyday lives and the interactions that are possible within the multiple social spaces of the university, my purpose was to better understand how these students use hip hop culture to make sense of their experiences on campus. More specifically, my dissertation locates the ritual practices that these students perform in the process of constructing and negotiating the socio-cultural terrain of the university; addresses the methodological issues that arise when conducting qualitative research that focuses on gifted, Black students; and explores the educative value of practicing hip hop.

The significance of this work lies with its attention to the intersection where the processes of cultural production meet giftedness as well as its emphasis on the socio-emotional development of gifted and talented Black university students.

INDEX WORDS: Interdisciplinary research, Hip hop, Culture, Gifted black students, Qualitative research, Ethnography, Gifted education, Curriculum, Performativity, Conjure, Rituals, Spirituality, Identity, Socio-emotional development

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to one of the most important people in my life, my son, Messiah Sol Ray-Callahan. You keep me inspired, focused, and motivated. This is for you, Siah.

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Did this really just happen? I finished my dissertation? I begin these acknowledgements with a sense of disbelief and serenity. When I started graduate school it was a hustle—a way to make ends meet while I put together a plan to take care of my newborn son and his mother. I knew the decision to pursue a Master's degree, and later a Doctorate, in Gifted and Creative Education would change my life. How much would it change? Well, I'm still trying to figure that out. My head is still spinning from my recent accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities that lie ahead.

With these words I wish to thank those who supported, pushed, and sometimes, dragged me through this dissertation process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Gifted and Creative Education program of the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Georgia offers students options in terms of the format they may choose for their dissertations. Because we are not limited to the traditional five-chapter format, I have chosen to write my dissertation in a non-traditional manner, one that is more practical and flexible—what we call the “journal article format.” My dissertation consisted of three completed journal articles written and formatted to be submitted to scholarly journals for publication. Much of the content of each article is the same because the dissertation is written in journal article format, and each article needs to contain similar information about the theoretical framework, method of analysis, and data used in the study. The dissertation is formatted as follows:

The first article in my dissertation is entitled *Ethnographic Research in Gifted Education: Exploring Trends and Possibilities*. It is a methodological piece that explores the development of ethnography in qualitative inquiry and juxtaposes that development against the development of ethnographic research in gifted education. This article provides an explication of the various methodological issues that impact gifted education research that uses ethnographic methods. It makes an argument regarding the importance of understanding the necessity for expansion and cultural significance regarding the theoretical frameworks used to study gifted black students. I intend to submit this article to the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*.

The second article is entitled *Into the Flow: The Educative Value of Engaging Hip Hop*. This is a qualitative research project that reports the experiences of five black students at a predominantly white university in the southeastern United States who engage hip hop. It focuses

on the learning that occurs during students' engagement with hip hop. This piece also provides implications for curriculum development in gifted education and future directions for research. I intend to submit this article to *The International Journal for Education and The Arts*.

The last article in my dissertation is entitled *Comfortable With Myself: The Use of Ritual And Hip Hop Among Bright, Black Students at a Predominantly White University*. This piece reports a qualitative study focused on the experiences of gifted and talented black students at the aforementioned institution. It highlights the ritual process these students used to negotiate the socio-cultural terrain of the university and the role that hip hop plays in those negotiations. I plan to submit this article to the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*.

The dissertation concludes with a general summary section in which I summarize the connections between hip hop and conjure and present implications for expanding the theoretical repertoire of ethnographic researchers in gifted education as well as gifted education programming. I also provide insight regarding my trajectories for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN GIFTED EDUCATION RESEARCH: EXPLORING
TRENDS AND POSSIBILITIES¹

¹ Callahan, J.S. To be submitted to the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relevance of ethnographic research for the field of gifted education with specific reference to the production of hip hop culture among gifted, black college students attending a predominantly white institution. It begins with an overview of the development of ethnographic inquiry (Vidich and Lyman, 1994), discussing the social and historical context underlying the key moments in its progression (Denzin and Lincoln, 1997, 2003). This socio-historical treatment is juxtaposed against ethnographic research trends in gifted education (e.g., Hébert, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001a, Hébert and Beardsley, 2001, Hébert and Hammond, 2006, Hébert and Sergent, 2005, Hébert and Spiers-Nuemeister, 2002, Grantham, 2004, Grantham and Ford, 1998, Kavoori and Matthews, 2004, Kitano, 1985, Koro-Ljungberg, 2002) in order to make a case for expanding the theoretical repertoire of ethnographers and social scientists conducting research with gifted and talented individuals.

The latter half of the paper addresses the issues related to theory that arise in the first half of the paper. I construct and propose a conceptual model that emphasizes the importance of socio-historical and cultural context in framing research and analyzing data in ethnographic studies. This model gives particular attention to the production of cultural identity among gifted, black college students as well as the processes by which production occurs.

Introduction

In Spring Semester of 2008 I took a course entitled “Contemporary Theory.” Every Tuesday for two and a half hours, we tangled with a different chapter of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In a conversation with a classmate, I likened the book to a conceptual acid trip. My classmate told me he felt it was akin

to boot camp, and he felt stronger, mentally, for having taken the course. I was initially intrigued by Deleuzian concepts that discussed subject formation—how power impacts the way people construct their identities. The idea of micropolitics or micromovements—the ways we handle or maneuver through subject positions like race, class, gender, and so forth—also piqued my interest. Another concept that caught my attention was the idea of being doubled—being able to reproduce oneself as someone or something other than what has been socially and historically imposed upon them. The roles that affect and imagination play in the process of doubling oneself also drew me deeper into this frame of thought.

As a requirement of the course, we wrote a paper on a topic of our choice that incorporated and discussed the concepts and ideas in the book. One day, as I listened to *Aquemini*, a record by southern hip hop artists, OutKast, ideas for the paper fell into place and I saw it write itself. I decided to analyze their lyrics in terms of the concepts micropolitics, doubling, and affect and imagination.

I was proud of the work I was able to do; it was a hard paper to write. I had fun doing it and I felt as if I learned something about myself. Still, I was still unsatisfied. Written by Frenchmen and an Italian, *A Thousand Plateaus* is very European in terms of the context and humor. I missed a lot of the jokes. The professor provided background information regarding the points the writers were making. However, I felt that if I planned to continue to do this kind of work, then hip hop, myself, and OutKast deserved to be analyzed with theories and concepts that were as funky, elegant, and audacious as the music that encapsulated the experiences of black people. Researchers who share this sentiment need theories that take into account the historical,

social, psychological, and cultural experiences of blackfolk in the South. The work that follows aims to do exactly that.

This paper is intended to contribute to the theoretical repertoire of qualitative researchers, particularly those conducting research that uses ethnographic methods. More specifically, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the relevance of ethnographic research for the field of gifted education with specific reference to the production of hip hop culture among gifted black students at a predominantly white university. It begins with an overview of theoretical frameworks commonly used in ethnographic research. These approaches are discussed in a manner that highlights key moments in the development of ethnographic research. This socio-historical treatment is juxtaposed against ethnographic research trends in gifted education in order to make a case for expanding the theoretical repertoire of ethnographers and social scientists conducting research with gifted and talented individuals.

The latter half of the paper will address the issues related to theory that arise in the first half. More specifically, I will propose a theoretical model that emphasizes the importance of social and cultural context when framing research designs in ethnographic studies. Furthermore, the approaches discussed will focus on the production of culture among racially and culturally diverse populations with particular attention to the processes by which production occurs. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications concerning the infusion of racially and culturally based theories and methodologies into ethnographic research focusing on the production of hip hop culture among gifted and talented students.

Ethnographic Inquiry

Ethnography, coming from anthropology, is one of the oldest traditions in qualitative research. Patton (2002) noted that the concept of culture is of the utmost importance in ethnography. The development of the tradition of ethnography can be divided into eight stages (Vidich and Lyman, 1994). For Denzin and Lincoln (2003), these moments are distinguished from each other through distinct shifts in aesthetics, epistemology, ethics, genre, politics, and style.

The Eight Moments in the Qualitative Inquiry

The First Moment. Ethnography has been described in stages that are influenced by the historical conditions of a particular time period (Vidich and Lyman, 1994, Denzin and Lincoln, 1997, 2003, 2005). (see Table 1.) Patton (2002) noted that this discipline and method of research played a huge role in the colonialization of indigenous people around the globe. “There were colonialists long before anthropologists and ethnographers. Nonetheless, there would be no colonial, and now no neo-colonial, history were it not for this investigative mentality that turned the dark-skinned *Other* into the object of the ethnographer’s gaze” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 2). This historical moment in the evolution of ethnography is referred to as the traditional period (1900-1940s) and is characterized by ethnographies concerned with reproducing reality and offering valid and reliable findings. British anthropologist, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) in his “Letters to the Editor” that appeared in the *American Anthropologist*, restates an earlier agreed upon definition of ethnography as the “descriptive accounts on non-literate peoples” (Radcliffe-Brown, as cited in Wolcott, 1999, p. 11). In terms of methodology, ethnographies focused on objective description of what was observed with very little acknowledgement of the ideas or

| Moments | Characteristics/Descriptions | Examples from qualitative research | Examples from gifted education where applicable |
|---------------|--|---|--|
| First moment | The traditional phase (1900-1940s) Characterized by on accounts of field experiences, classic ethnographies concerned with reliability, objectivity, and validity, patterned after positivist scientific paradigm. | Margaret Mead's <i>Coming of Age in Samoa</i> (1928), Arnold van Gennep's <i>Rites of Passage</i> (1909) | Margie Kitano's "Ethnography of a preschool for the gifted: What gifted young children actually do" (1985), Larry Coleman's "A "rag quilt": Social relationships among students in a special high school" (2001) |
| Second moment | The modernist phase (1950s-1970s) Descriptions of fieldwork and practice based on marginalized individuals in society, focused on formalizing qualitative methods. | Becker, et. al. <i>Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School</i> (1961) | Thomas P. Héberts' "Coach Brogan: South Central High School's answer to academic achievement" (1995), "If I had a notebook, I know things would change": Bright underachieving young men in urban classrooms" (2001) |
| Third moment | Blurred genres (1970-1986) Interdisciplinary approach emerges. Boundaries blurred between the social sciences and the humanities, researchers outfitted with diverse strategies and techniques, including narrative, feminism, phenomenology, critical theory, and cultural studies approaches. | Clifford Geertz's <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> (1973/1977), Victor Turner's <i>Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure</i> (1969) | Thomas P. Hébert & Teresa M. Beardsley's "Jermaine: A critical case study of a gifted black child living in rural poverty" (2001) |
| Fourth moment | Crises of representation (mid-1980s-1990) The blurring of genres troubles the process writing of research. Writing and research become more reflexive. The researcher's identity (e.g., race, class, gender, etc.) and power in the process is questioned. Connection between lived | James Clifford & George E. Marcus' (Eds.) <i>Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography</i> (1986) | |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| | <p>experience and text constructed by researcher is contested. Issues of validity, reliability and generalizability materialize, research becomes difficult to evaluate and its authority to improve practice is disputed.</p> | | |
| Fifth moment | <p>The postmodern period of experimental ethnography (1990-1995) Researchers attempt to deal with the calamities of the postmodern era; they search for different ways to write about the “other” and represent research. Grand narratives and “detached observers” give way to action-based and activist research.</p> | <p>Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (Eds.) <i>Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race, and Gender in United States Schools</i> (1993)</p> | <p>Miles Corwin’s (2000) <i>And Still We Rise: Trials and Triumphs of Twelve Gifted Inner-City Students</i></p> |
| Sixth moment | <p>Postexperimental inquiry (1995-2000) Lived experience is expressed in new ways; researchers use poetry, literary forms, autobiography, visual and performative approaches.</p> | <p>Carolyn Ellis’ <i>The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography</i> (2003)</p> | |
| Seventh moment | <p>The methodologically contested present (2000-2004) The significance of qualitative research is contested by demands for scientifically-based approaches to practice and knowledge. This foray is viewed as repercussion from the growth of qualitative research, postmodernist and structural stances, and a resurgence of conservatism.</p> | <p>Framed by works appearing journals like <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> and <i>Qualitative Research</i>.</p> | |
| Eighth | <p>The fractured future (2005-)</p> | <p>Laurel Richardson</p> | |

| | | | |
|--------|--|---|--|
| moment | Qualitative researchers defend against the recoil methodological tension arising from scientifically- and evidence-based research. | & Elizabeth St. Pierre's "Writing: A method of inquiry" (2005), Elizabeth A St. Pierre's "Scientifically based research in education: Epistemology and ethics" (2006) | |
|--------|--|---|--|

Table 1. Eight Moments in Qualitative Research

subjectivity they carried into the research endeavor. The distanced, detached position of the researcher in relation to the participants was used to invoke the objectivity that typified empirical sciences. The norms of ethnographic work in this phase were structured around four tenets: "a commitment to objectivism, complicity to imperialism, a belief in monumentalism (the ethnography would create a museumlike picture of the culture studied), and a belief in timelessness (what was studied would never change)" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 15).

The Second Moment. As the field of British anthropology shifted from its focus from description to the inclusion of theoretical analysis of the beliefs and behavior patterns of a non-literate "Other," American anthropologists studied literate populations without thought to the possibility that the people being written about might develop the ability and interest to read what was written about them (Wolcott, 1999). Vidich and Lyman (1994) referred to the second moment in the evolution of ethnography as the modernist phase (1950s-1970s). This phase draws on the works from the traditional period; many texts in this moment strove to formalize qualitative methods (Denzin, 1997, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted

that modernist ethnography during the Golden Age is characterized by the work of sociologists at the University of Chicago in the 1920's and 1930's. Labeled the *Chicago School*, this group of researchers became well-known for expanding the theoretical and methodological boundaries of qualitative research. Their theoretical perspective focused on the symbols and personalities that emerge during social interaction.

An example from the *Chicago School* is the work of Herbert Blumer (1969) who stated that symbolic interactionism is based on the assumptions that:

1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them; 2) that the meanings of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows; 3) these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretation process used by the person in dealing with the things he [or she] encounters. (p. 2)

Crotty (1998) explained that symbolic interactionism operates against a pragmatist philosophical background in which statements, actions, and appraisals of human beings somehow constitute a standard in the determination of truth, rightness, and value.

The Third Moment. Blurred genres (1970-1986) is the name of the third phase in the development of qualitative inquiry. Ethnographers and social scientists shifted their attention from explaining behaviors and patterns of interaction to interpreting local situations, blurring the boundaries between the social science and the humanities. This “erosion of the classic norms” (Rosaldo, 1989) interrogated the objectivism that underlies the foundations of theory, language, and detachment. Geertz (1983) explained that assumptions of objectivity cease to hold due to a shift in agenda by social scientists. He stated that

a challenge is being mounted to some of the central assumptions of mainstream social science. The strict separation of theory and data, the “brute fact” idea; the effort to create a formal vocabulary of analysis purged of all subjective reference, the “ideal language” idea; the claim to moral neutrality and the Olympian view, the “God’s truth” idea—none of these can prosper when explanation comes to be regarded as a matter of connecting action to its sense rather than behavior to its determinants. The refiguration of social theory represents, or will if it continues, a sea change in our notion not so much of what knowledge is but of what we want to know. (p. 34)

As such, refiguring social thought has led to the interweaving and foregrounding of culture, politics, and history as subjects of social analysis and critique in ethnography. Theories that attend to this interdisciplinary phenomenon by addressing issues related to agency, social structure, ideology, and cultural production arising from the study of particular cases rather than pursuing generalizations become integral to the new task of social thought (e.g., Clifford and Marcus, 1986, Rosaldo, 1989). Cultural studies is key to this theoretical turn (e.g., Rosaldo, 1989, Geertz, 1983), and this field of study includes perspectives such as ritual theory and practice (Bell, 1992), conjure theory (Smith, 1994), processual analysis, and social drama (Turner, 1969, 1974). Additionally, in terms of ethnographic writing, Rosaldo (1989) noted that the refiguration of social thought sparked a period of experimentation characterized by a celebration of creative possibilities and purposeful playfulness with literary form produced by the “loosening” of strict codes associated with ethnographies from the traditional period. This moment of experimentation and social analysis was propelled by host of conceptual, analytical and ethical issues that are linked to “changes in global relations of domination... [particularly]

decolonization and the intensification of imperialism...in the late 1960's" (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 38). For Geertz (1973), in this phase of ethnographic research, these issues materialize in the ideas that anthropological writings, in their entirety, are "interpretations of interpretations" (p. 17), that the observer's voice should not be privileged in the interpretations, and that theory should be used to understand local situations.

The Fourth Moment. A crisis of representation (mid-1980s- 1990) emerged alongside the movement away from positivist and behavioral approaches to ethnography towards more interpretive and pluralistic frameworks. This crisis is characterized by a "lack of confidence in the taken-for-granted patterns of...methodological objectivity and mathematized procedures...[in] Western science" (Lather, 2004, p. 206-207). In this fourth moment, writing and research became "more reflexive and called into question issues of gender, class, and race" affecting ethnographic research (Denzin, 1997, p. 18). Researchers became conscious of how their own subjectivities influenced the research process. As the traditional canon of anthropology and ethnography began to wane, research and writing from feminist and critical frameworks and racialized epistemologies became more visible in the field of qualitative inquiry.

Lather (2004) pointed out that in the postmodern moment, methodology and method are "inescapably tied to issues of power" (p. 208). Methods are linked to power through their disciplinary functions of controlling, defining, manipulating, evaluating and reporting during the research process. The political charge of research methodologies is clear in the pervasiveness of ideology. Lather asserted that while mathematized techniques and strategies may appear to increase rigor and decrease errors, ideology still plays a huge role in interpretive research. The approach and intentions of the researcher often overshadow the participant's agency, needs, and

desires in the research process. To disrupt this imbalance of power, Lather suggested a coalescence of scholarship and advocacy. Critical research designs that bring together scholarship and advocacy address unequal power relations between “researcher” and “researched” by foregrounding the interests of marginalized groups in the intellectual effort of the research process. Moreover, Lather insisted that critical ethnography be infused with a feminist poststructural approach to produce a “fertile site for the generation of new research methods that...[connect] meaning to the broader structures of social power...[and work] to build theory in a way that is grounded in respect for the everyday lives of people who are disenfranchised” (p. 208-209).

Wolcott (1999) seemed less impressed by the third and fourth moments stating that although

the postmodern critique and its “crisis of representation”...has sought to upbraid ethnographic authority and make literary form a central preoccupation in ethnographic discourse [helping] ethnographers become more sensitive to their roles as fieldworkers and more attentive to their writing. [P]ostmodernism became...a diversion that made the ethnographer so central that “I-witnessing” seemed about to dislodge “eye-witnessing. (p. 14)

Clough (1992) also offered a cautionary note to researchers dependent on the idea that new and creative forms of writing could ameliorate the “crisis of representation.” She stated that modernist as well as experimental forms of representation validate ethnographies in terms of empirical science through demonstrating that lived experience can be documented. Writing and research that use experimental approaches stand to re-instantiate the very structures of empirical

science. Furthermore, work from this perspective should engage in social criticism and enlist a new politics of writing that would resist the oedipal logic of empirical science.² St. Pierre and Richardson (2005) smeared the line between the writing and fieldwork, highlighting the process from in-field notes to written transitional meditations about data to formalized representations of their research experiences fit for publication.

The Fifth and Sixth Moments. The postmodern experimental ethnographic moment (1990-1995) is shaped and influenced by the shifts and crises described above. In the fifth moment, social scientists continued their efforts to write their “way out of writing culture” (Denzin, 1997, p. 18) and wrestled with new ways to write about their research and trouble the ideas of legitimacy. The sixth moment, postexperimental inquiry (1995-2000), is characterized by a call for qualitative writing that blurred the boundaries between humanities and social sciences and experimented with innovative styles of expressing lived experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Linking ethnography and journalism is an example that characterizes the direction of the postexperimental moment. This merger is based on voyeurism in the history of qualitative research. Denzin (1997) borrowed from the field of narrative cinema in the 20th century to explain that

[ethnographers] began as blatant observers during market capitalism ...we became anxious and furtive in our looking (the repressed voyeurism of mid-century capitalism).

² Clough (1998) stated “[F]eminist literary critics and film critics treated the oedipus story—this struggle to separate from a symbiosis with the (m)other to become self-identified like the father figure—as a narrative logic or form of emplotment. Feminist critics argued that an oedipal logic of narrativity not only gives a form of subject-identity which privileges masculinity, it also serves to authorize cultural productions of reality, as in the realist novel and realist narrative cinema (p. xiii).

Today we are back once again blatant, openly acknowledging our own place in the voyeuristic looking and gazing project. (p. 19)

The voyeur was systematically introduced into everyday life via the cinematic surveillance society and made the private and sacred available to public viewing. This voyeuristic gaze, shaped by media and television, allowed social scientists to link local situations with a multinational, multicultural environment.

The influence of 21st century technology (e.g., the Internet, cable and satellite television, mobile and smart phones) has lead to a conceptual amalgamation between journalism and social science. For Denzin (1997), writing culture in this period required ethnographers to deploy journalistic norms in ethnographic contexts. By upholding journalistic notions like freedom of press and public access to information, “the cloak of secrecy... that maintains the illusion of privacy within the postmodern world” (p. 280) is abandoned. As such, Denzin (1997) suggested that public journalism and ethnography integrate to form an everyday life, public ethnography, that operates on the assumption that ethnographers “willingly break with old routines and evidence a desire to connect with people (citizens) and their concerns and biographical problems [and moves] people to action, promot[ing] serious discussion about democratic and personal politics (p. 280). For example, in gifted education, Miles Corwin’s (2000) *And Still We Rise: Trials and Triumphs of Twelve Gifted Inner-City Students* chronicled the lives of high school seniors in an AP English class in South Central Los Angeles. Corwin documented how students negotiated gang violence, poverty, pregnancy, and, in some cases, homelessness alongside academic achievement in a gifted education context. Corwin did not focus on building theory from the data he collected or offer recommendations to educators or researchers; nor did provide

implications for policymakers and stakeholders. His work, instead, resembles aspects of a communitarian ethic model that “seeks to produce narratives that ennoble human experience while facilitating civic transformations in the public (and private) spheres,...ratifies the dignity of self,...and is committed to human justice and the empowerment of groups of interacting individuals” (Denzin, 1997, p. 277). The movement in his work away from traditional and modern approaches to ethnography toward a communitarian collaboration with the students, teachers, and administrators constitutes a public ethnography. In addition to employing a critical perspective for ethnographic research, this study prompts an interesting discussion regarding the development of ethnographic research in gifted education.

The Seventh and Eighth Moments. The seventh moment was referred to in 2005 as “The Methodologically Contested Present (2000-2004)” and is characterized by the successful publication of new qualitative journals, for example, *Qualitative Inquiry* and *Qualitative Research*, committed to publishing exemplary work that highlights the methodological contestation of the sixth moment in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The eighth moment, “The Fractured Future (2005-),” is an extension and intensification of the recoil associated with methodological tension and retrenchment. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), this moment spans from 2005 into the future and is depicted by the discussion surrounding scientifically based research. St. Pierre (2006), for example, pointed out that “scientifically based research treats methodology as if it can be separated from epistemology” (p. 239) and relies on a particular type of rationality to produce knowledge. This push to hold students, educators, researchers, and teacher-educators accountable to ill-formed decisions of many policies such those mandated in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2002—to make research

scientific and legitimate by what she calls the “science storm troopers”—is a foray against the “culture of education” (p. 243) aimed at discrediting the influence and import of qualitative inquiry as a way of producing quality educational research. To the point, the eighth moment in the development is marked by the battle for knowledge and how it is produced.

Development of Ethnographic Research in Gifted Education

The relationship between the emergence and development of ethnographic research and gifted education can be described as anachronous, at best. There is a discernible lag between the ethnographic work conducted in the field of gifted education when compared to the growth and possibility of ethnographic research as a field. This section focuses on the development of ethnographic research in gifted education as it relates to the eight moments of qualitative research described above. However, before proceeding with the discussion of ethnographies in gifted education, the distinction and relationship between ethnography and case study must be attended to. Gomm, Hammersley and Foster (2000) described ethnography, as a practice, as a method of collecting data; a case study, on the other hand, is a strategy for organizing and making inferences from data. Collecting data in qualitative inquiry can take place in a number of ways, including interviewing, participant observation, journaling, and photo elicitation. A case is constituted by the notion of boundedness—one or more characteristics of a phenomena warrant the application of qualitative methods (Merriam, 1998). For example, a study might be bounded by the phenomena of intellectual ability (i.e., giftedness) or gender (i.e., male). Although the research reviewed here clearly falls under qualitative case studies, it must also be noted that Merriam makes a distinction between several types of qualitative case studies. The studies in gifted education mentioned in this section may be categorized as what Merriam (1998)

calls interpretive case studies. For Mendaglio (2003) and Merriam (1998), interpretive case studies provide both a rich description of the environment and the people in it and the intention to analyze data by developing conceptual categories to illustrate relationships between variables or to develop theories. This aim to provide and interpret “thick description” such that the researcher is as able to make sense of reasons, contexts, and meanings attached to social actions performed by individuals and/or groups, for Geertz (1973/1977), is ethnography. As such, the research on the culture and sub-cultures in gifted education discussed below can be categorized as ethnographic case studies.

Kitano’s “Ethnography Of a Preschool for the Gifted: What Gifted Young Children Actually Do” appeared in *Gifted Child Quarterly* in 1985 over 90 years after Radcliffe-Brown’s heavily cited “Letters to the Editor” reiterated the consensus that designated ethnography as a way to study societies of non-literate people in *American Anthropologist*. This study of preschool children documented the culture of a school for the gifted. It adheres closely to the classic approach in anthropology and ethnography in that the researcher focuses primarily on describing behavior and interactions observed in a natural setting in order to gain a better understanding of the culture in the school. Observations took place in academic, social, and free play settings in whole group, small group, and individual situations. Data were analyzed using coding strategies (e.g., Bogdan and Taylor, 1975) and the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1969) to generate categories that characterized the behaviors observed into psycho-social variables such as “cognitive and achievement related behavior, social, affective, and motivational characteristics, and individual differences” and prompted implications for the preschool in terms of facilitating the development gifted young children (Kitano, 1985, p. 68).

Since the publication of Kitano's (1985) study, ethnographic research in the field of gifted education has primarily focused on two broad topic areas: "the inner life of people and...contextual-external circumstances" (Coleman, Gou, and Dabbs, 2007, p. 57). The "inner life" refers to the psycho-social processes, motivation, and affective development of gifted youth and adults. Contextual-external circumstances refer to the social and cultural factors that frame the experience under investigation.³ Much of the research focusing on inner life is "dominated by studies of the underserved [and is] often paired with underachievement" (Coleman, Guo, Dabbs, 2007, p. 57).⁴ In terms of external-contextual circumstances, studies have focused on issues related to culture, race, class, gender, ethnicity, and levels of ability are overwhelmingly representative of the classical and modern periods of ethnography,⁵ for example, Hébert's (1995) ethnographic description of the culture of academic achievement among a men's swim team in an urban high school. In this case study, Hébert found six components (a familial relationship among team, academic monitoring, an ideology of academic and individual excellence, acceptance from peer group, and an emotional support system that includes the swim team coach) that contributed to the academic success of these student-athletes. He concluded that this

³ More specifically, in terms of inner life, qualitative studies have focused on topics such as motivation of African American males (Grantham, 2004), girls' stories of success and competition (Rizza, 1999, Rizza and Reis, 2001), compensation strategies of gifted learning disabled (Reis, McGuire, & Neu, 2000).

⁴ This is partial representation of Table 2 listed in Coleman, Guo, and Dabbs (2007). For entire list see article.

⁵ Research in this area includes ethnographic and life histories of women of various ethnicities (Kitano, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000), Jimi Hendrix (2001); mentoring (Hébert and Spiers- Neumeister, 2000), and experiences in an urban high school (Hébert, 2001a). For entire list, see article.

sub-culture of achievement illustrates the possibility of a potential benefit to educators involved in nurturing the abilities of students because it serves as a model for talent development.

The pursuit of objectivity in the studies mentioned above can be located in the representation of the findings. The reliability and validity (i.e., credibility and trustworthiness) portrayed in the representation of the findings is tied to notions of monumentalism and timelessness. These ideas hold that the cultures described in the studies will look the same when replicated and recognized by other researchers when revisited in the future is implied in the research.

Other examples include a series of studies by Hébert (1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001) and Hébert and Beardsley (2001) that focus on behaviors and patterns of social interactions among gifted and talented African American and urban males that are characterized by a strict adherence to formalized methods of data collection and analysis aligned with interpretive qualitative case studies. Observation and interview data were coded, analyzed, and thematized in ways that produce a division between theory and data by creating a vocabulary of analysis void of any subjective reference, fastening a veil of neutrality to the representations of the participants' experiences. Furthermore, there have been few attempts to critique the social structures framing these patterns and behaviors or to relate the findings to any social or cultural theories that consider the intellectual, social, emotional, or psychological development of African Americans, in general, or young African American males, in particular. For example, Hébert (2001) asserted that underachievement in high-ability male students is influenced by the young men's families' inconsistent modeling of an achievement ideology, but he did not interrogate the

social foundation or cultural significance involved in the practice of such an ideology by African American students and their families.

In a similar example, Hébert and Beardsley (2001) used critical theory to frame an ethnographic case study of a gifted African American male growing up in poverty. He highlighted and described the social and historical context of rural Pine Grove, Alabama and made his intentions for social justice clear. Hébert and Beardsley delivered on their promise to use grounded theory (e.g., Stake, 1995) to analyze data, generate themes, present the findings, and “develop generalizations about Jermaine’s story in terms of patterns and how they compare and contrast with published literature on gifted students in rural communities” (p. 90). However, their findings and conclusions did not clearly link Jermaine’s negotiations of race, class, gender, and geographic location in a way that illustrates the role racial or cultural ideology played in shaping his actions. Ethnographic studies in gifted education, for the most part, have not acknowledged the idea that what is observed, analyzed, and re-presented is indeed the researcher’s elucidation of the participant’s perception of an experience. The descriptions of the cultures being studied often stop short of addressing the *‘how’* (certain patterns of behavior are possible) and the *‘why’* (certain patterns of behaviors are meaningful to participants) that underlie what the researchers have observed and documented.

The examples above are important because they illustrate the classic and modernist notions that pervade much ethnographic research in gifted education. However, studies that describe the cultures that nurture academic achievement among students is much needed in the field of gifted education in order to provide insight into how gifted behaviors are intertwined with social and cultural forces in an educational context. Ethnographic research also generates

theories about the social interaction that occurs in environments that support academic success by coding utterances and actions of gifted students, their teachers, family members, and other concerned individuals. In turn, these codes can be categorized into patterns and themes that allow the researcher to determine what these actions mean within the context of gifted education.

Studies that focus only on describing patterns of behavior and interactions and the social and physical context in which they occur are problematic. They promulgate the myth that objectivity can be achieved through methodological precision and the illusion that local situations can be interpreted outside of cultural, political, and historical contexts. In short, methodological approaches in gifted education need to be expanded to include concepts and theories that address the effects of culture and society-at-large on gifted students. The addition of social and cultural studies theories that add Marxist, postmodernist, feminist, and ritual theories, for example, to the methodological repertoire of ethnographic inquiry in the field of gifted education connects patterns of behavior and social interaction occurring in specific and particular contexts (e. g., men's high school swim team or male underachievers in an urban high school) to broader structures of society, culture, and history.

There are, however, a few studies in gifted education that are representative of the third and fourth moments of ethnographic inquiry, particularly the moments concerned with postmodern thought and writing culture. Koro-Ljungberg (2002) used deconstruction to interpret critical events in the lives of high-achieving adult Finnish scientists. Grantham (2004) and Grantham and Ford (1998) gestured toward racialized methodologies in their work with gifted African American high school students. A critical case study of a gifted young African American male by Hébert and Beardsley (2001) examined the impact of rural isolation and poverty on

creative behavior. While these studies lean toward the characteristics of critical research design (Lather, 2004), ethnographic research in gifted education has not quite made the postmodern turn.⁶

In terms of the fifth and sixth moments, qualitative research in the field of gifted education has not yet addressed the impact of media and television on students. Despite literature that proffers the benefits of guided viewing for gifted students who face socio-emotional challenges (Hébert and Hammond, 2006, Hébert and Sergent, 2005, Hébert and Spiers-Nuemeister, 2002), I could find no qualitative research that explores how gifted students engage media and television or documents the benefits of guided viewing. The field of gifted education could gain a great deal from investigating the relationship between gifted and talented students and contemporary television. For example, Kavoori and Matthews (2004) examined how undergraduates in a media research course interrogated the cultural landscape of contemporary television.⁷ Their four- year study holds important implications for ethnographic research in gifted education. In terms of ethnographic research, it provides an example of how a communitarian ethic can operate in qualitative research design. In terms of gifted education, it stresses the importance of understanding how bright students critically engage television

⁶ The terms postmodern and post-structural are used interchangeably here.

⁷ The Thinking Television Project (hereafter, TTP) is focused on an undergraduate Media Theory and Research methods course (Tele 3410 at the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication) at the University of Georgia. I have fashioned this traditional “methods” or a “theory survey” course into one that marries media theory and methods to media literacy. The course links learning research methods (focus groups, ratings, surveys) and media theories (from a cultural studies perspective) to developing television show concepts that reflect the range of cultural populations in the United States and re-thinking how minority populations have historically been represented. It also engages with on-going “cultural wars,” “the war on terrorism,” and emergent identity politics that underlies globalization and migration in the United States (Taken from <http://thinkingtelevision.uga.edu/> on July 3, 2007).

programming and articulate their perspectives on race, class, gender, multiculturalism, and sexuality. The operationalization of this ethic is demonstrated in the students' attempts to resolve the "conflicts between the critical premise and commercial viability" (Kavoori & Matthews, 2004, p. 104) in order to produce television programs that make money and make a difference. The dearth of research on how gifted and talented students think about media and culture indicates, among other things, the need for a theoretical framework that takes into account the influence of history, society, media, and culture (popular and mainstream) on the affective, intellectual, and creative development of this population. Moreover, the introduction of conceptual models links development of psycho-social processes, motivation, and emotions experienced by gifted individuals with a broader social context. For researchers, it provides a theoretical perspective for viewing participants' micro-level negotiate (e.g., actions, thoughts, and behaviors) in the context of macro-level social structures such as race, class, gender, and ability.

Theoretical Frameworks in Gifted Education Ethnographies

The Call for Theory

*"This field needs more theory!"*⁸ I have heard this call for theory in several courses I have taken on the socio-emotional, cultural, and educational needs of gifted individuals.⁹ This paper responds to that call by focusing on the use of different theoretical approaches (or the lack

⁸ This quote comes from several class lectures by Dr. Tom Hébert.

⁹ Dr Hébert attributes this insight to a conversation a number of years ago between himself and Dr. Terry Neu, a noted scholar of gifted education research at the University of Houston. Much of Dr. Hébert's research has focused on generating formal theory based upon qualitative research conducted with gifted, primarily African American, males using ethnographic methods.

thereof) for framing and interpreting ethnographic research on gifted populations. And while research methods are integral to ethnographic research, in this paper, they will be discussed in terms of the implications that theory holds for data analysis and interpretation.

Shifting Perspectives: Expansion and Cultural Significance

Clifford (1989) noted that

ethnography is... situated between powerful systems of meaning [and] poses questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. [It] decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion [and] describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes. (p. 2-3)

Ethnography brings to the fore how meaning is created and re-created by participants. Ethnography's "liminal" position between these systems allows the researcher to better understand how participants interrogate and negotiate boundaries of social structures. This is particularly important considering that much of the qualitative research in gifted education focuses on issues pertaining to racial, cultural, gender, ability and class minorities (Coleman, Gou, Dabbs, 2007). From this perspective, ethnography permits the researcher to depict the processes by which gifted and talented students apprehend meanings of signs and symbols and reorganize the structures that frame their experiences.

This shift in perspectives should also include interpretive frameworks that reflect an expanded, refigured social thought. Expansion, in this sense, implies a broadening of theoretical and conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and methods used in qualitative, gifted education research that focuses on the experiences of culturally and racially diverse populations. For

example, one could argue that if a researcher is studying members of the African American culture, then a conceptual framework for understanding the experience of peoples of African descent in North America should frame the study. When a conceptual framework based on the historical and everyday cultural and social experiences of blacks in America is used in research, it grounds the study in a way that is respectful of those experiences. Ford and Scott (2010) noted the importance of culturally and racially based theories and conceptual paradigms for understanding aspects related to the under-representation of African American students in gifted programs and effecting meaningful change through decreasing and/or eliminating under-representation. They present nine frameworks, theories, and conceptual models to help educators become aware of the inequities, shape teaching practices, and advocate for under-identified and under-served black students. They are as follows: 1) Deficit Thinking, 2) Voluntary and Involuntary Minority Groups, 3) Paradox of Underachievement, 4) Acting White, 5) Racial Identity Theory, 6) Stereotype Threat, 7) Afro-Centric Cultural Styles, 8) Multicultural Curriculum, and 9) Culturally Responsive Education. (See article for a description of the nine frameworks.) This is not to say that the studies reviewed above were offensive or disrespectful in any way, nor is it to say that all ethnographic research focusing on members of specific cultural groups should be situated within social or cultural frameworks that reflect their historical experiences. Rather, it is to say that employing a conceptual or theoretical framework based on the historical and everyday life experiences of culturally and racially diverse populations in ethnographic research focusing on individual(s), group(s), or communit(ies) optimizes the research process because it provides a perspective that gives the interpretations and findings cultural significance. Cultural significance, in this case, implies an increase in the explanatory

power of the process and product of ethnographic research such that data interpretation and theory are linked to and representative of the micro-level, individual actions and feelings of participants as well as the macro-level social structures that enable those actions and feelings.

To move toward expansion and cultural significance in my research, I draw from cultural studies methodology, “an approach in which pre-existing theory is used to interrogate and interpret data or texts...in light of broader cultural and social systems... to reveal the operation of power in cultural life” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 102). Using a cultural studies methodology is important in my research because it highlights how non-dominant groups and individuals resist and incorporate the practices, norms, and ideologies of dominant groups, linking the politics of culture to social and political structures. The theoretical assumptions that ground my research are based on conjure theory (Smith, 1994) and ritual theory (Turner, 1969, 1974, Bell, 1992, van Gennep, 1960). Conjure theory, for Smith (1994), focuses on the conjoining of signs and symbols emerging from social interaction with the practice of daily rituals in the lives of people. The meanings attached to signs and symbols and the rituals used to negotiate them are situated within the historical, cultural, and social experiences of Blacks in North America with particular attention to the feelings and emotions of people. Ritual theory (Turner, 1969, 1974, Bell, 1992) focuses on the process by which individuals and groups transition from one cultural state (or status) to another. As theoretical perspectives, conjure and ritual are equally important in the task of the expansion of cultural significance for different reasons. Conjure, like hip hop, is in many ways a social and cultural product of black people that also provides a framework for understanding their experiences. Ritual theory adds to the framework, emphasizing how individuals construct and negotiate the effects of structures of race, culture, and gender.

Conjure and Ritual: The Social and Cultural Significance of Conjure

The visibility and interest in conjure in America is paradoxical. Anderson (2005) and Flowers (2001) noted that for many Americans the word *conjure* invokes images of old, wrinkled hoodoo women or blue-gummed hoodoo men with misaligned jaws, living deep in the woods or the swamp with flat-headed, black cats. The perception of the conjurer, also known as a trick doctor or hoodoo doctor, is due, in large part, to the academic and literary interest in African American sorcery in the early twentieth century (Anderson, 2005). At that time, writings about conjure were commonplace and appeared in books, journals, and magazines. Anderson (2005) reminded us that since the Reconstruction era in the United States, interest in conjure has developed in a wavelike pattern, reaching peak interest the mid-1800s to early-1900s, then from 1920s to early 1940s, and reappearing in the 1970s. Although conjuring as a vocation is still alive in many black communities, black sorcery is not the first thing that comes to mind when most Americans think about black society.

Mid-1800s to early-1900s

How and *what* Americans think about conjure, according to Anderson (2005), is linked to certain intellectual and cultural shifts in the late 19th and 20th century that changed how blacks and whites have constructed identity. The first peak in interest emerged shortly after the Civil War. Conjure, commonly known as hoodoo, played a complex role in the cultural identity of black and white Americans. For whites, hoodoo played a dual role in the early 1890s. Faced with the rise of industry, the de-emphasis of agrarianism, and the threat of becoming a cultural facsimile of the North, southerners felt it necessary to construct a distinct Southern identity. To do this, writers drew from regional idiosyncrasies—hoodoo was one of those peculiarities.

Emancipation, and later Reconstruction, did not just separate blacks and whites physically but culturally as well. The newly acquired rights and entitlements of blacks increased their susceptibility to racism from whites. By the late 1890s, the sentiment “separate but equal” had materialized as *de jure* segregation based on race. The Jim Crow laws effectively cordoned blacks off from economic and political power. With this done, white authors used the image of the hoodoo doctor to symbolize the southern past, complete with images of the heroic aristocratic planter and their loyal, content “servants.” Conjuring up images of blacks as a backwards people, those authors used the folk beliefs of blackfolks to reinforce white superiority and regional distinctiveness (Anderson, 2005). However, simultaneously, the burgeoning black middle class became educated and took up an evolutionary perspective with the expectation that the self-serving characterization by whites would dissipate. In terms of social and economic advancement, abandoning black folk beliefs was necessary for racial empowerment. In short, whites used hoodoo to mark regional and national distinctiveness between the Civil War and World War II. Blacks viewed hoodoo as a negative feature of black society, a vestige of slavery that had to be abandoned in order to achieve equality.

1920s to early-1940s

The second wave of interest in conjure arose during the Harlem Renaissance. In the 1920s, according to Anderson (2005), working and middle class blacks travelled various avenues toward racial, economic, and political empowerment. Middle class blacks formed organizations like the NAACP to achieve racial equality through litigation. Working class blacks turned toward labor movements and class consciousness, adopting socialist and communist ideology to gain political and economic advancement. Others joined nationalist organizations such as Marcus

Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. This Pan-Africanist movement advocated separation from whites and unity amongst all dark-skinned peoples of African descent. Still others still turned to the arts and literature to create change.

After World War I, the black intelligentsia that gathered in Harlem challenged second class citizenship and white American conventions by creating a new black aesthetic, an African American high culture. This new aesthetic was intended to validate black's equality to whites through intellectual achievements in the arts and literature while creating a sense of worth in African Americans. One historical event, in particular, that fed the growing interest in black spirituality was the 19- year American occupation of Haiti that began in July 1915. Black and white writers used this event to shape their respective cultural identities. White authors produced books and articles that sensationalized Haitian Vodou and depicted Haitian people as superstitious and exotic. These portrayals were an attempt to substantiate American Imperialism under the pretext of paternalism—U.S. citizens had to be convinced that American intervention was necessary to protect the interests Haitians. Many blacks, however, saw the occupation as an extension of American racism abroad. And while not all blacks disagreed with America's involvement in Haiti, most took pride in the history and folklore of the only nation in the Western hemisphere founded by a slave revolt.

Many black authors also drew from the American occupation of Haiti to inspire African Americans. Over a period of 10 years, Zora Neale Hurston, for example, produced work that expounded her version of black cultural nationalism in three books that contributed to the scholarship of conjure. Her work concluded that hoodoo was mostly African in origin and a vital part of the racial identity of blacks. She stated that "Hoodoo, or Voodoo, as pronounced by

whites, is burning with a flame in America, with all the intensity of a suppressed religion” (Hurstons, 1935/1990, p.183). As important as her innovations were, Hurston was ignored by her contemporaries. Her audience, comprised mostly of middle-class blacks, was unwilling to trade social Darwinism for hoodoo when constructing cultural identity. Working-class blacks still took part in conjure but opted for labor-based reform rather than cultural nationalism to achieve “progress.”

1970s to present

The influx of Latin Americans of African descent into the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s marked the third resurgence of conjure. This population brought with them syncretic religions, such as Cuban Santeria, Brazilian Obeah, and Brazilian Candomble. Although black spiritual beliefs became more visible, African American spiritual beliefs and practices, for most authors, were still perceived as symbols of backwardness. This perception situated hoodoo as a set of antiquated superstitions and practices. As interest in cultural pluralism, postmodernism, and the New Age Movement increased in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Americans began to assemble group and individual identities that were not guided by a national culture. Cultural pluralism supports the idea of equality among diverse cultures in America (Kallen, 1956) and situated conjure as an acceptable expression of blackness.

As cultural pluralism increased in popularity, postmodernism emerged as a new trend among intellectuals. Although the meaning, impact, and value of postmodernism are still disputed among scholars, there is a consensus in regards to its characteristics. The denial of any moral authority outside of the individual is most important to the study of conjure. In postmodernism, breaking away from convention and assuming multiple social and cultural

positions are positive features that could place hoodoo on the same level as other major world religions, including Christianity.

The rejection of an overarching, despotic authority continued to be an important theme in the latest wave of interest in conjure. The New Age Movement, like cultural pluralism and postmodernism, offered a cadre of nontraditional religions that functioned outside Western convention. This revival of magic and mysticism increased the visibility of conjure. Authors began to align traditional hoodoo beliefs with mediumship, reincarnation, and extrasensory perception.

By building on cultural pluralism, postmodernism, and the ideology of the New Age Movement, the magical practices of blacks have been noted as a positive, less-stigmatized facet of African American society. This affirmative public awareness allowed blacks to use conjure as a symbol of identity. Moreover, with the rise of the Black Power Movement, black cultural nationalism turned toward militant ideology and actions in the quest for self-reliance and autonomy. To advance these aims, many Black Power adherents made efforts to assemble a version of black culture and history that equated the achievements of African Americans to those of whites. “By doing so, members of the Black Power Movement engaged in a form of identity politics that offered an alternative to Eurocentric ideas of civilization and progress” (Anderson, 2005, p. 20). This type of identity politics is important for conjure. Amidst the context of New Age ideas and black cultural nationalism, hoodoo began to symbolize resistance to Eurocentric culture.

In summary, the intellectual and cultural engagement of the folklore and magical beliefs of blacks that occurred over the last two centuries has shaped the cultural identities of black and

white Americans. White writers used conjure mythologize pre-Emancipation South and stigmatize blacks as archaic and cognitively underdeveloped, warranting *de jure* social separation and paternal surveillance. Blacks, on the other hand, had a paradoxical approach to conjure in the first wave of interest. Although conjure was viewed as a deterrent to the advancement of black people, documenting it was a way to prove that blacks were not without a history. In the second wave, conjure was used a tool to fashion an aesthetic through arts and literature devoid of Western influence and bolster black cultural nationalism. The third phase with its emphasis on diversity, anti-authoritarianism, and non-Western religions allowed blacks to reconceptualize conjure as a symbol of identity that foregrounded the accomplishments of blacks and signaled a method of resistance to Eurocentricism.

This paper emerges from the waves of interest in conjure described above. It enmeshes the scholarship of black folklore and magical beliefs with resistance to Western conventions to create new and different ways to approach research that focuses on black people. The next section extends the idea of conjure as an affirmative, cultural identity and method of resistance and conceptualizes conjure as a theoretical model for ethnographic research.

Conjure Theory: A Model for Ethnographic Research

Conjuring Culture

Smith (1994) used the terms *conjure*, or *conjunction*, for its “versatility as a ‘root metaphor’... that encompasses black people’s ritual, figural, therapeutic transformations of culture” (p. 4). Hence, he labeled this phenomenon “conjuring culture.” Conjure is fundamentally a magical folk tradition of Black North Americans performed to heal or harm others through ritual speech and/or action. At the same time, Smith conceptualizes magic as a

ritual cognitive system for navigating and negotiating the world in the form of signs rather than a supernatural, irrational, or unintelligible phenomenon. Additionally, he situated magic as a form of language that “[c]onstructs a network of signs that enables [its practitioners] to first apprehend and then transform reality” (p. 4) and makes certain to differentiate this view of conjure from the Eurocentric designation to mean only witchcraft. Smith argued that to

[reflect] on conjure in its full ethnographic and phenomenal reality... all conjurational elements are [to be] readily observed in Black American experience, including sorcery or malign occultism, the most prosaic deception and manipulation,... herbal healing and other pharmacopoeia practices. (p. 6)

This view of conjure performance encompasses psychosocial and sociohistorical transformations and folklore practices (Porterfield, 1987, Smith, 1994). For Smith (1994) these transformations are found in a) “ritually patterned behavior and performative uses of language and symbols b) conveying a...healing/harming intent, and c) employing biblical figures and issuing in biblical configurations of cultural experience” (p. 6). The psychosocial perspective draws from shamanism and insists that healing is created by the personal embodiment of symbolic production to attain psychological and social conflict resolution (Eliade, 1974, Perkinson, 2003, Porterfield, 1987, Smith, 1994). As a consequence, “[s]hamans [and practitioners] become...models of simultaneous sickness and overcoming because they are often the subjects of their own curative abilities” (Eliade, 1974, p. 37).¹⁰ Smith (1994), however,

¹⁰ Mircea Eliade (1974) definition of shamanism is a “recurrent phenomenon in religious extant in combination with various other elements of particular traditions and cultures but visible as primal ideology and technology of ecstasy” (p.28). According to Perkinson (2003), “shamanism focuses its energies on a threefold task of diagnosis, travel, and mastery (of spirits)” (p. 47). This phenomenon involves an initiation (and later practice)

elaborates this paradigm to recognize the consistent collective conjuring of culture by blacks in the New World for the purpose of evoking psychosocial and sociohistorical cures. Incantations, ritual trance or ecstatic behavior, and identity transvaluations are the three, distinct but interrelated, techniques that have seen steady use in the practice of collective conjuration.

Incantations, Transvaluations, and Ecstasy

Incantations. Historically, many black communities have embodied biblical symbols of suffering and redemption by “harnessing [these] symbols to their socially despised skin color and bodily feature[s]” (Smith, 1994, p. 60).¹¹ As incantatory signs, biblical symbols function at the

comprised of bodily dismemberment, “revelation of shamanic or religious secrets, ascent to the sky and dialogue with the gods or spirits, descent to the underworld to bring back a patient’s soul or escort the dead, evocation and possession by the spirits in order to undertake the ecstatic journey, magic flight, mastery over fire, [and] consorting with animal familiars” (Eliade, 1974, p. 2).

Through ecstatic techniques and rituals, shamans can repeatedly open passage to, navigate, and resurrect themselves from the space of death and create the possibility for others to make this journey as well (Perkinson, 2003). In acknowledging (or being forced to acknowledge) this inclination for shape-shifting and transcending time and space, the shaman’s own body is recognized as a “war zone, or site of combat,” with the spirits who guard this terrifying passage (Perkinson, 2003; Eliade, 1974).

¹¹ Another component vital to situating blackness as a shamanic category is the conception, negotiation, and navigation of the “double being” (Perkinson, 2003), or what Du Bois calls double consciousness. In developing the correlation between colonial and postcolonial domination through slavery, racism, and racialization and the requisites and practice of shamanic initiation, Perkinson (2003), explores conversion narratives of formerly enslaved Africans in America. Through dreams and visions, the recounted experiences of death and resurrection in these narratives are very often evocative of shamanistic journey and travail (Perkinson, 2003).

The theme of “double consciousness” can be found throughout these testimonies. In their visions, enslaved Africans spoke of seeing themselves in “two parts” or “two bodies.” The new spirit self, through the eyes of a significant other, watches the old self lying dead. In this context of “slave conversion,” the significant other is Jesus Christ, and the realization of “being doubled” is conjured into a gift (of second sight) that emerges as a positive critical awareness in which the enslaved can balance and negotiate the oppressive dichotomy between body and mind (Perkinson, 2003). Perkinson proposes that “[s]lave conversion parallels shamanistic initiation in affording not only visionary insight and flight into the realm of death but also visionary insight from that realm back into the “living” realm to view the slave’s old body as now dead and no longer of constraint” (Perkinson, 2003, p. 28). In this trek, enslaved Africans in North America became the center of their world experience and set out to overcome the dialectic by living this creative tension in a way that makes apparent the connection between their mental reconceptualization and reorganization of social structures.

level of the unconscious and are especially powerful in black North American conjuration (Perkinson, 2003a, Perkinson, 2003b, Smith, 1994). Incantation is described “as a device for inviting us to make ourselves over in the image of imagery” (Smith, 1994 cites Burke, p. 58). For blackfolks, an incantation is an act of imagination. In this sense, conjuring or summoning God through image or idea with the intention of gaining freedom constitutes an incantation.¹² Incantatory dynamics are also displayed in the revitalization movements such as the Black Arts and Black Power Movements of the 1960s well as any other therapeutic practices in which social and political visions interlink personal transformation and social change (Perkinson, 2001, Perkinson, 2003a, Perkinson, 2003b, Smith, 1994, Taylor, 2003). While identifying black communities’ motivation to transform and the shamanic preoccupation with shape-shifting and metamorphosis that underlie this cultural aptitude, Perkinson (2003a, 2003b) and Smith (1994) point to incantations as a hallmark of generalized conjurational proclivity that consistently appear in black creativity.

Identity Transvaluations. Black North Americans have been unfailingly creative in conjuring blackness through the transvaluation of imagery. For example, during the Black Arts and Black Power movements in the 1960s, the previously pejorative term *Black* and the concept

¹² He uses an excerpt from *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) as an example:

“Though our cruel oppressors and murderers, may (if possible) treat us more cruel, as Pharoah did the children of Isreal, yet the God of the Ethiopian has heard our moans in consequence of oppression, and the day of our redemption from abject wretchedness draweth near, when we shall be enabled, in the most extended sense of the word, to stretch for our hand to the Lord our God” (p. 59).

This reference to David Walker’s *Appeal* (1829) is taken from Psalms 68:31 (King James Version): “Princes shall come out Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God” to illustrate the operation of incantation within the black cultural experience. By performing incantations Black communities conjure into existence psychosocial and sociohistorical transformation.

Blackness were transfigured into qualities of pride, power, beauty, and soul. Instead of employing a new, less contaminated term, black communities transvalued the negative energies (continuously) associated with Blackness and being Black. Perkinson (2003a) argued that “[i]n shamanistic terms, the proclivity can be understood as a form of homeopathy, subduing the demon, wrestling it into a serviceable form inside one’s own body” (p. 40). This type of transfiguration also manifests in a contemporary context. For example, the use and prevalence of the *n-word* in hip hop culture and rap music also display the incantatory dynamics that connect social vision with social change. Like the term black and the concept of blackness, the word *nigger* (in all its various pronunciations) transvalued negative qualities and transfigured connotations into a term of endearment and solidarity among many hip hoppers. In conjuring black existence and cultural identity as positive and desirable, Smith (1994) “proposes that the meaning produced in Black American culture-particularly the meaning of its aesthetic, ecstatic, and ritual performance is best understood in terms of... identity transvaluations” (p.125).

Identity transvaluations are achieved through the process of style-switching; however, to reach this goal, identity first must be affirmed by the ritual subject(s). Identity affirmation occurs through the ritual subjects’ apprehension, negotiation, and communication of codes with/in black cultural aesthetics and ritual performance (Osumare, 2001, Smith, 1994). For Marks (1974) and Smith (1994), the alternation and interplay amongst sets of codes inscribed with social and cultural value by an individual reveals ones’ social and cultural position, thereby producing a social meaning. Social meaning, for Smith (1994), is comprised of individual and societal statements of cultural identity and is embedded in ritual performances. Moreover, Smith (1994) asserted that identity transvaluations and declarations are, indeed, components of ecstatic

and conjurational performances that speak to the practitioner's/performer's proficiency in systematizing the elements that comprise New World cultures.

“Style-switching... [a] structure common to both sacred and secular ritual events among black groups in the United States and the Caribbean” (Smith, 1994, p. 118) is another way ritual ecstatic behavior is attained. Building on the aesthetics of polyrhythm found throughout Africa, this alternating pattern of expression is an indispensable feature of trance behavior, ricocheting groups and individuals from the forms of one culture to the forms of another. In terms of trance behavior, according to Marks (1974), it is “both the abruptness and the direction of the shift [that] are critical to this power of inducing trance states” (p. 64). This shift is characterized by a “percussive” effect, breaking suddenly from one style and direction to another. Similarly, Smith (1994) referenced the ability of black music—religious and secular—to transcend duality. This ability displays the fundamentals of an anonymous form of shamanism operating in the core of black musical creativity and situates the secular performance of conjure rituals in black communities within the historical experience of internal colonialism in North America.

Style-switching in conjure theory is akin to what is referred to as code-switching in communication theory. Greene & Walker (2004) described code-switching among English-speaking African American students as both a “sign of the participants’ awareness of communicative conventions” that exist in different settings and a set of practices for “adapting to...various communication contexts...to convey social information and for stylistic purposes” (p. 435). An example of this alternation between cultural codes can also be found in gifted education research focusing on black students. Grantham (2004) explained that Rocky, a black male participating in a gifted program that was comprised of predominantly white students, took

on the role of educator for classmates who do not regularly interact with black people. Style-switching took place in several ways in this case. For example, Rocky had to switch roles and responsibilities from student and novice to teacher and expert when sharing information about his culture. Grantham reported Rocky's comment that "It's weird the things that they [White students] don't know about Black people, so I try to tell them certain things" (p. 212). His awareness of the differences in what is considered conventional knowledge among his white peers and his ability to negotiate that cultural gap is an example of his proficiency in style-switching.

In the same study, Grantham pointed out how Rocky maintained friendships with both white peers in the gifted program and black peers who are not in the program. Rocky explained that he was able to keep close connection with both communities by interacting with white peers while in the advanced level classes and black peers during lunch. In this example, as Rocky moved between these two contexts, he acknowledged and understood the styles/codes and values of each group and negotiated this understanding by shaping his interactions to express his recognition and respect of their respective values. He demonstrated awareness that contributing his opinions in class discussions and sharing knowledge about black issues in the advanced level classes were valued in this context. Additionally, Rocky garnered a great deal of admiration from his classmates for his intellectual ability, confidence, and outspoken nature in the classroom. He told Grantham that "anytime I have something to say, everybody gets quiet...I never even thought...that they respect me so much" (p.212). Conversely, eating lunch with his black peers nurtured his relationship with that community. Sharing a meal with others, in many cultures, is a

way to nurture communal bonds. This case is no different—by spending time with his black peers in the cafeteria Rocky demonstrated the value of their relationship.

Grantham (2004) pointed out that Rocky’s awareness of the values and social meaning of certain interactions and sustaining close connections with students in both contexts is major component of his academic performance. In terms of conjure, his negotiation of these contexts and his record of achievement is an example of identity transvaluation—that is, he effectively transformed the notions of “acting White” and “acting Black” through the practices that support his performance as a model student.

Ritual Ecstatic Behavior. The concept of blackness in the slave and post-slave era is understood to operate at various levels and intensities (Harris, 2003). For Smith (1994), it “functions as shorthand for a whole set of negative meanings in dominant cultural discourse and is imposed by that culture on the minority culture” (p. 41). Perkinson (2003a) noted that “white cultural imagination [has traditionally] equate[d] blackness with death and then socially, psychologically...economically (and today we should surely say “criminologically”) [made] it an ongoing negotiation with death in its manifold guises” (p. 45). In this negotiation, being in possession of or being possessed by blackness constitutes ecstatic trance—an affect that arises in the ritual process as a consequence of a subject’s positioning in-between social structures (Smith, 1994, Perkinson, 2003a, Turner (1969). In short, because black people in North America have historically been imagined by many white people (and themselves) to occupy spaces outside or within normative social structures, inhabiting these spaces generally included the simultaneous negotiation of life accorded to all human beings and the social death imposed by dominant white

cultural ideals, norms, and practices.¹³ This ritual ecstatic behavior transfigures various debilitating meanings and categories of “blackness” through incantations that combat “disorders generated by racism [such as] deteriorating self-esteem, internalized feelings of inferiority, and intergroup mistrust” (Perkinson, 2003a, p. 40).

Examples of ritual ecstatic behavior are Rockys’ experiences of negotiating multiple contexts and identities while participating in the gifted program and advanced level classes. More specifically, as stated by Grantham (2004), “Achievement is neither “acting White” nor “acting Black” (p. 214). In this case, achievement is indicative of Rocky’s positioning between social structures (i.e., White culture and Black culture) and highlights the transfiguration of the negative qualities that have been ascribed to “acting White and Black.” In other words, high academic performance and the practices that support it make achievement look differently. As such, the possession and successful negotiation of both sets of qualities by Rocky constituted ritual trance behavior. What is more, the evocation of ritual trance in the context of gifted education begins to expand the notion of achievement from a set of behaviors to an affect.

Viewing ritual processes, practices, and participants from the perspective of the black diasporic experience in North America situates the phenomenon of conjuring as an integral aspect of cultural identity production. Conjunction highlights ways in which many blackfolks understand and transform a social reality that is constructed in and through the effects of internal colonialism in North America. In addition to illustrating the social and psychological

¹³ That is, the journey here “is one that opens the mystery by “becoming it””, transcends death “by dying in life”, pierces duality “by embracing opposites”, reunites fractured forms by fashioning oneself as “a double being” (Perkinson, 2003, p. 23).

significance of cultural conjuration, Smith (1994) constructed a formulary for transformation that includes the use of figures and cultural events derived from the Bible as ideal models of transfiguration. While it is important not to discount the Bible and its role in the cultural formations of black North Americans, it must be noted that not all attempts at conjuration should be conceived as expressions of religious ideology and practice. Smith (1994) noted that transformations produced by rituals of conjure are as much secular as they are sacred, as illustrated by the examples described above from gifted education.

The techniques and attainment of ritual ecstatic behavior are uniquely important for conducting ethnographic research on black students in a gifted education context by drawing attention to the predicament students face in terms of negotiating multiple cultures and cultural norms during their participation in gifted programs (Frasier, 1997, Grantham, 2004, Grantham and Ford, 1998). More specifically, the techniques illuminate the process and politics by which black gifted and talented students handle situations that require the manipulation of multiple and, sometimes, opposing cultures. Because the reverberation between cultural styles is a component of many types of black musics as well as cultural production it follows that a proclivity for conjuration and ecstasies appear in the creative and cultural practices of gifted and talented students and youth who engage hip hop culture and rap music.

As a theoretical perspective, conjure supports ethnographic research by providing a framework for understanding the actions, utterances, and beliefs of people of African descent in North America. Conjure's focus on figural and therapeutic transformation serves as a foundation for ethnographers and social scientists interested in cultural production among individuals and groups in the black diaspora. Other important components of this framework include a set of

analytic methods that support an exploration of cultural production by using ritual theory and ritual process as methods for analyzing the transfigurations and transvaluations involved in cultural conjuration. For ethnographers and social scientists, the examination of ritual processes and performances provides a detailed explanation of how cultural norms, practices, and beliefs are structured and restructured by individuals and groups to achieve sociohistorical and psychosocial redemption and healing (see Figure 1.1).

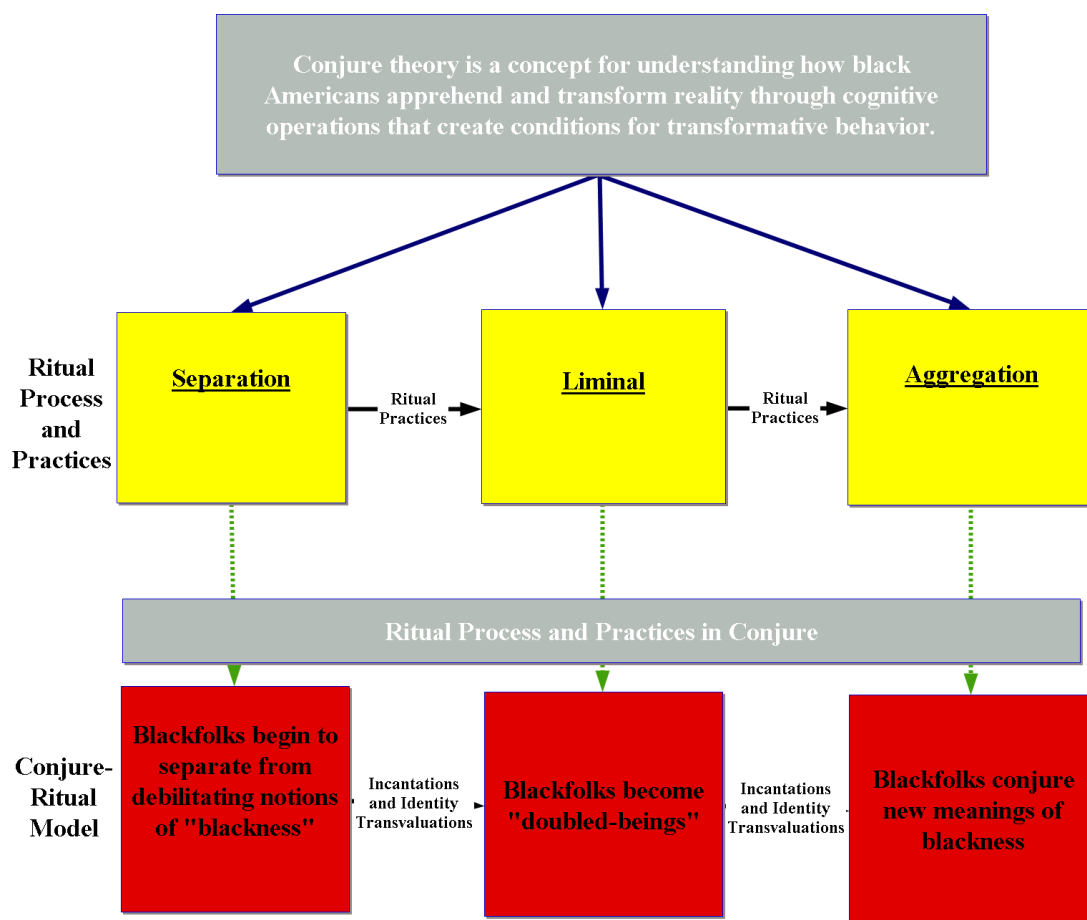


Figure 1.1 Graphic Representation of Conjure-Ritual Theory

Ritual Theory

As a concept, ritual theory highlights the process that people undergo to make sense of conflicting social and cultural viewpoints and that allows the researcher to produce meaning from the people's actions to ameliorate that conflict (Geertz, 1977, Turner, 1974, van Gennep, 1960). When combined with conjure theory, researchers can identify and analyze the rituals, ritual processes, and ritual practices black people perform to negotiate social and political marginalization based on race. Those ritual performances are linked to the techniques used in ecstatic and conjurational performance. In this sense, conjurational performances such as incantations, identity transvaluations, and style-switching are methods of achieving ecstatic or ritual trance behavior. Ritual trance behavior is characterized by the acknowledgement and negotiation of one's position in a social structure. In the case of conjure, acknowledgement refers to blacks' ability to apprehend the social status and value of that status (or perceived lack of value) in white mainstream society. Negotiation refers to the ability to both imagine a redemptive station in a social structure, strategize ways to achieve that position, and execute those strategies. In short, ecstatic behavior or ritual trance is recognition and negotiation of at least two conflicting warring souls; one that has been ascribed and one (or more) that is envisioned and actualized. Furthermore, in connecting the concepts of conjure and ritual, ritual ecstatic behavior is an indicator that a ritual process has taken place.

Ritual Process

The ritual process is an additional level of analysis that breaks down the ritual trance behavior of conjuration into phases. This process is composed of three phases: separation, limen (margin), and aggregation (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1968, 1974). Originally referred to as

“rites de passage” (van Gennep, 1960), movement through these phases characterized by transitions from one state to another. A “State...is a more inclusive concept than status or office and refers to any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized. [A] transition [is] a process, a becoming...even a transformation” (Turner, 1967/1987, p. 4). He went on to say the following:

The first phase of separation comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from a previous fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a “state”); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) is ambiguous; he [or she] passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated. The ritual subject ...is in a stable state once more and...has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and “structural” type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards. (p. 4-5)

What is more, Turner (1969) distinguishes at least two major types of liminality: one characterizes rituals of status elevation; the other, rituals of status reversal. The first includes the conveyance of a ritual subject from a low position to a high position in a given institutionalized social system. The second refers to a culturally defined point at which individuals and groups occupying low status positions in a social structure exercise ritual authority over their structural superiors.

In terms of conjure, the separation, liminal, and aggregation phase focus on the process by which blacks transition from a subjugated position to one that previously only existed in

their imaginations. In the *separation phase*, blackfolks began to cognitively separate themselves from derogatory, debilitating notions of blackness ascribed to them by mainstream society. In the *liminal phase*, blackfolks become doubled beings—not quite black in the historically ascribed notion imposed by many whites (and adopted many black people) but not yet black in a way that is acceptable in their sight and recognized in the social structure. According to Turner (1969), this state and the individuals and groups occupying it “are necessarily ambiguous, and elude normally located states and positions in a cultural space. [They] are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between these positions” (p. 95) designated and organized by custom, law, ceremony, and convention. The potential of the space betwixt positions is attributed to the power of imagination and the ability for an individual or group to reconceptualize symbols and the values and meanings attached to them (Turner, 1969). The potency of the liminal phase is carried over into the last phase of the ritual process. In the *aggregation phase*, blackfolks conjure new meanings of blackness that reconfigure the social structure, elevates social status, and/or empower individuals or groups with new knowledge that alleviates the dis-ease(s) that accompanied the initial position(s).

Additionally, the ritual process in conjunction with conjure theory allows the researcher to connect the behavior of people to larger social and cultural contexts. This approach includes the analysis of how occupants make sense of their own and other’s states and positions as well as their respective individual and collective negotiation of dominant social forces and the production of subjugated knowledges in a social structure. This approach also gives particular attention to the outcomes produced in ritual processes, especially those effects that reconfigure

the order of power in a given social structure.

Ritual Practice

Using ritual theory as a framework allows researchers to focus on the location and examination of multiple and opposing cultural states and social positions that individuals and groups occupy. Bell (2001) noted that a set of patterns emerges amid the different methodological perspectives and theoretical objectives of ritual. She reported that “ritual is a type of critical juncture wherein some pair of opposing social or cultural forces comes together [through] a mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of sociocultural integration, appropriation, or transformation” (Bell, 2001, p. 16). This description of ritual represents yet another level of analysis that focuses on locating the *practices* that facilitate the transition between states. Bell (2001) described practices as “1) situational and 2) strategic acts of agency 3) that often, but not always, take place unbeknownst to the “passenger” and 4) are able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of structural order of power in the world” (p. 82).

In the conjure model, ritual practice pinpoints the micro-level actions that black people perform to move through the ritual process. Attending to these practices highlights the acts used to separate from convention, move toward and induce liminality, and incorporate the insight and creative potential so that it is actualized in the social structure. Practices provide more detail regarding the incantations, identity transvaluations, and style-switching that occur in conjurational performance. For example, Smith (1994) noted how the Bible has been used by blacks to conjure a redemptive vision of life in America. He referenced David Walker’s (1829) *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* use of Psalms 68:31 (King James Version): “Princes shall come out Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God” to demonstrate

how incantations operate within the black cultural experience. In this anti-slavery document, Walker used this verse, and its interpretation as an “Exodus” motif, as a strategy to inspire enslaved blacks to rebel against and murder their masters to gain freedom. This act reconfigured structural order in several ways. First, it used religion to induce pride and hope by urging blacks readers to find value in their lives and assuring them that change would soon come. The vision Walker shared in his abolitionist manifesto moved blacks on a trajectory from wretchedness to divinity; the descendants of Africa would be emancipated by a God made over in their own image. Bell (2001) referred to the ability to transform the order of power as redemptive hegemony and described it as a strategic and practical creation of reality rather than a reflection, an ideology, or strict doxa determining a culture’s sense of reality. As such, the analysis of ritual practices in terms of ritual’s vision of redemption constructs the unexpressed postulations that make up an actor’s strategic apprehension of the place, purpose, and trajectory of the act. For Smith (1994), Walker’s *Appeal* is a strategic act of agency that illustrates how black Americans have used religion and worship in the service of liberation. It highlights the improvisational alteration of the Bible from an instrument of faith to an instrument of freedom in the structural order and draws attention to how black communities conjure psychosocial and sociohistorical transformation.¹⁴

¹⁴ The details of the methods of analysis and outcomes involved in ritual theory analysis are explicated elsewhere (*see* Comfortable with myself: The use of ritual and hip hop among black students at a predominantly white university, chapter four of this dissertation).

Qualitative Researcher as Conjuror

Thinking of the qualitative researcher as conjurer extends the conceptualization of bricoleur (Denzin, 2003) from the blurred genre phase. Originally coined by Levi-Strauss (1966), a bricoleur is described as a “jack of all trades, a kind of professional do-it-yourself” (p. 17). In terms of qualitative research, Denzin (2003) noted that the bricoleur learns to borrow from different disciplines and is conceived as quiltmaker or filmmaker who pieces together images into montages. Flowers (2001) referred to 21st century interpretations and practices of conjure as an “anytime, anywhere” method. In like fashion, conjurers, in their work, draw from different bodies of knowledge in ways that unify the social, psychological, and spiritual realms to produce affect, create meaning, and link the personal and local to the political, cultural, and historical.

This understanding of conjure can be applied to qualitative research, extending, in the interpretive sense, Denzin’s (2003) concept of the bricoleur. Denzin noted that “the interpretive bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and by those of the people in the setting” (p. 6). This current research project is formed around my history as a gifted, Black male whose schooling has occurred in settings that were predominantly White. This project is also fashioned from a long-term engagement with hip hop as a culture and a spirit and my disenchantment with research design and theory in the field of gifted education. Although the interpretive bricoleur described by Denzin may be helpful in framing research that explores how culture and education intersect, it falls short in terms of investigating the role that spirituality plays in the lives of gifted black students at a major research university in the southeastern United States.

An interpretive conjurer pivots toward blackness and recognizes it as both a gift and a curse—a form of traumatic, spiritual possession that gives the possessed the ability to transform affliction from something debilitating to something homeopathic (Perkinson, 2003a). In this case, hip hop, like blackness, is also a type of spiritual possession. In terms of situating hip hop as a spirit, the interpretive conjurer can pull from the ideas of literary practitioners of conjure and hoodoo. Hurston (1981) wrote about “Highjohn de Conquerer,” a spirit that lives in the John the Conqueror root used in hoodoo tradition for its magical powers that was called upon throughout history to protect blackfolk. Flowers (2001) extended Hurston’s Highjohn as “mojo” and depicted it as a spirit that is evoked in “conjuring: forcing reality to respond to your will” (p. 24). Reed (1972) wrote about “jes grew”, a virus, (e.g., spirit,) that is the personification of jazz and ragtime that mounts people and causes them to dance and shout uncontrollably. Connecting music to scholarship, Goldman and DiCorio (1999) placed hip hop in the “black chord”—the lineage and progression of black music through history. Similarly, Marks (1974) noted the spirit that is made available in the process of creating black music. Hoodoo has long been recognized as an African American folk healing tradition (Anderson, 2005, Haskins, 1978/1990, Mitchem, 2007, Mitchell, 1998). Literary conjurers and scholars alike have acknowledged the spirit that connects the practice of hoodoo with black music. From this perspective, hip hop is conceptualized as a spirit in the pantheon of African American healing traditions. There is a large amount of research (e.g., Keyes, 2002, Kitwana, 2002, 2005, Osumare, 2001, Perkinson, 2005, Pinn, 2003, Schloss, 2006, Sharpley-Whiting, 2007, Stovall, 2006) that has documented hip hop’s capacity to move, possess, heal, and empower blackfolks and members of just about every other race of people around the globe and alter their realities for better or worse. To the point, an

interpretive conjurer in qualitative research is interested in and attempts to understand the role of spirit(s) and spirituality in the research process as well as in the lives of people.

The interpretive conjurer also extends the concept of the bricoleur in terms of what their work produces. Denzin (2003) noted that “the product of the interpretive bricoleur’s labor is a complex, quiltlike bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage—a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations...a performance text... connecting the parts to the whole” (p. 6). The labor of the interpretive conjurer, on the other hand, produces text that evokes spirit. More specifically, for conjurers, the images and representations are presented in a way that, in the conjuric sense, performs a ritual. Thus, as a performance text, the product of an interpretive conjurer, among other things, functions as an incantation. In terms of linking the parts to the whole, this perspective recognizes the impact that hip hop as a form of spirituality has on how black students negotiate the social and cultural terrain at universities heavily attended by white students. The descriptions and symbols of hip hop, spirituality, and the university are connected in a way that the movements, motivations, and transformations of these students are situated in relation to structures of culture, gender, and race. This connection is made possible by drawing on ritual theory (Bell, 1992, Turner, 1969, 1974) that locates structural patterns and practices that make the amalgamation of opposing social and/or cultural forces possible. For the interpretive conjurer, ritual theory provides a vantage point for viewing the practices that people use to make sense of conflicting social and cultural obligations and reconfigure the structural order of power in a given context.

The work of interpretive conjurers also serves as *medica materia* for others who take up this approach to qualitative research. That is, the texts produced operate as a collected body of

knowledge to be used to locate rituals and discern the meaning of peoples' actions in these rituals.

Conjure-Ritual Theory, Hip Hop, and Ethnographic Research in Gifted Education

Conjure as a theoretical and interpretive framework is new to the field of education, in general, and to gifted education, in particular. Ritual theory, on the other hand, has been used as a framework for interpretation in several studies in education (see McLaren, 2000, Manning, 2000, and Cox, 1980) to explain events that confirm growth and change in society and to acknowledge an individual's shift in social positions. As in Smith's (1994) work, conjure can also be used as a metaphor for framing and interpreting data in ethnographic studies. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) note that the "use of metaphor, simile, and analogy requires greater divergence of thought and artistry [and] can be powerful ways to create linkages between seemingly unrelated topics" (p. 203). Conjure-ritual theory can be used together to amplify the explanatory potential of ethnographic research in gifted education in several ways. They provide tools for studying how gifted black students understand and alter themselves and cultural and social structures—acknowledgement that the order of the world has been re-envisioned by their will.

Conjure-ritual theory also provides researchers with a frame for the actions, utterances, and artifacts of gifted and talented hip hoppers such that the deconstruction and reorganization of meanings, signs, and structures occurring at the edges of culture, race, class, and gender can be interpreted as a process and product of culture. Conjure-ritual theory reveals how gifted and talented students situate themselves in relation to social structures such as race, class, culture, and ability. More specifically, the ritual process illustrates the series of negotiations involved in the construction of cultural identities, namely gifted culture and hip hop culture. Lastly, a

conjure-ritual approach to this process links the beliefs of gifted and talented students to specific practices, thus connecting an ideology to their actions.

The conjure-ritual theory also accounts for the use of popular, print, and internet media texts for conjuration. This is particularly important in studying hip hop culture and its practitioners. Because of its proliferation and pervasiveness, hip hop culture and its influence on students should not be underestimated or ignored. Gifted education researchers would do well to attend to how gifted African American students interact with the images and ideas used in hip hop cultural texts and take note of the impact of these representations. Acknowledging and exploring this engagement is critical in understanding hip hop and what it means to gifted students.

Overall, discussing the relevance of ethnographic research as it relates to the field of gifted education foregrounds the need for alternative approaches. One is the need to use racialized and/or cultural theories at the beginning of a study to frame the study and produce the research design rather than just using those theories at the end during analysis. Another approach is to use postmodern and poststructural perspectives to call into question the theoretical concepts of culture that frame ethnographic research projects in gifted education. This approach, for example, reveals the privilege that product receives over process. That is, ethnographic research in gifted education emphasizes the idea of culture as a product rather than a process. The inclusion of theories that focus on processes and modes of cultural production provide a different way of understanding and thinking about the behaviors and interactions of gifted and talented students of African descent as they engage and experience hip hop culture. Using conjure-ritual theory to frame ethnographic research on gifted black students is one way to close the distance

between has been done in gifted education research and what is possible within that field. These possibilities included important psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual processes of development that black students undergo to deconstruct and reconstruct culture. This gap must be minded if we are to take seriously the impact that culture, in general, and hip hop culture, in particular, has on the lives of gifted, black students and appropriately prepare them to succeed in advanced and gifted programs populated predominantly by white students.

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CHAPTER 3

INTO THE FLOW: THE EDUCATIVE VALUE OF ENGAGING HIP HOP¹⁵

¹⁵ Callahan, J.S. To be submitted to the *International Journal of the Education & The Arts*.

Abstract

This study explored how bright, black male and female university students at a predominantly white university engaged hip hop and what they learned from their respective engagements. Using a performative approach, I located the ritual practices that students perform to engage hip hop and organized them into three categories: cultural, social, and academic. The learning outcomes linked to these practices are discussed in terms their educative value (Dewey, 1938/1963) and their potential to be translated into educational objectives that can be infused into the programming standards set forth by the National Association for Gifted Children.

Introduction

As we review the life of African American people over several generations, it is evident that different cultural methods of surviving in America have evolved. It is often the music of the different generations of African Americans that defines and expresses these different cultural performances. For example, the blues culture, rock and roll culture, jazz and be-bop culture, and rhythm and blues culture are reflected in music and other expressions spanning the decades from the early 1900's to the 1980's. Now, there is hip hop culture and rap music which began in the 1970's and continues into the present day. This culture, as have the others, provides an insightful reflection of what young people think, like, and do in terms of their dispositions and worldviews (Belsey, 2003, Keyes, 2002, Kitwana, 2002, Kitwana, 2005).

The national conversation regarding hip hop has included reactions to Kanye West's searing criticism of the way the Bush administration handled the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the incarceration of numerous hip hop artists and entertainers (e.g., T.I., Lil' Wayne, and Gucci Mane) for serious federal offenses, and students from Ron Clark Academy using T.I.'s

“Whatever You Like” to create and perform a song to engage civic participation in the 2008 Presidential election. Similarly, Will.i.am, from the hip hop group Black-Eyed Peas, offered a series of Obama-inspired songs that garnered attention in the U.S. and abroad. The McNally Smith College of Music made headlines when it began offering programs and diplomas hip hop studies.

Conceptualizing Hip Hop

When one considers the range and tone of these events, it is understandable that parents, educators, and the public-at-large experience confusion when trying to make sense of hip hop. Schloss (2006) contended that this puzzlement is semantic and stems from the notion that the term *hip hop* is used to refer to several overlapping, yet distinguishable, concepts. The first conceptualization of hip hop includes a collective reference to a set of visual, musical, and kinesthetic art forms taken up by Afro-Caribbean, African American, and Latino youth in the inner-city neighborhoods of New York City in the 1970’s. In this sense, *hip hop* also refers to the events at which these youth practiced these art forms, expressed a common aesthetic awareness, and performed activities to sustain those traditions. For Schloss, the face-to-face interaction that is necessary to facilitate these events, practices, and sensibilities eschews the commodification that introduced hip hop to the mainstream through rap music, movies about b-boying, and the brief stint of graffiti in the high-culture art galleries in the early and mid-1980’s. Schloss (2006) wrote “[T]his branch of hip hop: ‘hip hop culture’... suggests that [it] is something lived rather than bought or sold” (p. 5). To quote hip hop pioneer KRS-One, “Rap is something you do, hip hop is something you live!” (KRS-One, 2003)

Schloss (2006) described hip hop as a term that refers to the music that grew from the hip hop culture. “Rap music” was the moniker given to the translation of hip hop culture into a product (Dimitriadis, 2001). Dimitriadis (2001) and Chang (2005) explained that hip hop, as an event, was filtered through a sixteen bar format with hooks and bridges that characterized rock songs into hip hop, the music and mass media commodity.

The culture, art forms, and attitudes that have emerged and developed over time are complex and make hip hop hard to understand and difficult to define in a few sentences. Shapiro (2004) and Osumare (2001) noted that the interaction between hip hop and mass media has led to the culture’s global proliferation and popularity as a form of self-expression, creativity, and social resistance among youth across ethnic, racial, and geographical borders. Osumare (2001) observed how hip hop has been taken up by young people who have been marginalized, alienated, and underserved. Ironically, in education, in general, and gifted education, in particular, this population of students is often the focus of our conversations about schooling and academic achievement (Coleman, Gou, & Dabbs, 2007).

With that said, it is understandable that educators bemoan the tenacious hold this culture has on young people. Because of this perception, a great number of educators feel that hip hop and rap have been impediments to student learning, and thus, remain uninterested and misinformed about hip hop and black youth culture (Mahiri, 1998). This attitude toward youth culture, Giroux (1981) asserted, fosters the sentiment among many young people that their wants, needs, desires, and interests are being marginalized by those in power within the school setting. Nevertheless, a great number of students have come to identify with hip hop and rap cultures (Sharpley-Whiting, 2007, Stovall, 2006, Osumare, 2001, Schloss, 2006, Kitwana, 2002,

2005, Keyes, 2002) and that fact sparks a discussion regarding what young people learn from engaging hip hop. This study joined that discussion by exploring how bright, black male and female university students at a predominantly white university engaged in hip hop and what they learned from their respective engagements.

The Four Elements: A Literature Review

Research has shown that youth and students learn a great deal from engaging cultural art forms of hip hop. The following literature review focuses on how this population constructs identity, communicates across and within cultures, and attends to aesthetics while engaging hip hop. The studies discussed below focused on the art forms b-boying (breakdancing), rap (including poetry and spoken word performances), and graffiti.¹⁶

B-Boying/B-Girling¹⁷

Breakdancing is a mainstream term used to refer to the cultural art of b-boying/b-girling (QD3 Entertainment and Isreal, 2002). As an element of hip hop culture, b-boy culture cultivates its own principles, aesthetic norms, and historical self-awareness through a unique set of traditions (Hoch, 2006, Pabon, 2006, Schloss, 2006). B-boy culture is difficult to describe with a single definition; however, it is generally agreed upon by many that it developed from a dance form that became popular in the 1970s in New York City. B-boy culture originally emerged from

¹⁶ Presently, scholarly research concerning youth and student engagement of the art of djing will not be included in the discussion.

¹⁷ The term “B-boy” was coined in the 1970’s by hip hop pioneer Dj Kool Herc to describe the young boys who flocked to hear him cut. B-boy later took on a life of its own, becoming the catchall name for any kid, male or female, caught up in the music, clothes, and dancing...At one time its use was so widespread that b-boy almost became the word for what we now call hip hop culture” (George, Banes, Flinker, and Romanowski, 1985, p.5).

block parties and so-called “park jams” where a variety of popular dances were performed by young blacks and Latinos. Presently, however, “b-boying exists primarily exists in the context of “battles,” or formal contests at which b-boying is the primary style performed and virtually all attendees are b-boys and b-girls” (Schoss, 2006, p. 413). Its values and ideas are heavily influenced by a specific type of music and provide the foundation for the traditions young people use to cultivate the art of b-boying. For Schloss (2006) “[t]he tempo, intensity, and aggressive feel of [b-boy] songs” are inspired by 1970’s funk and driven by Latin percussion and horns (p. 414). “Give It Up or Turnit Loose” by Marvin Gaye, “Apache” and “The Mexican” by Babe Ruth (1972), and “It’s Just Begun” by The Jimmy Castor Bunch (1972) are considered by many to be classic b-boy songs. The aesthetic features of these songs impel b-boys and b-girls to dance and elicit the formation of a b-boy cypher¹⁸ (or cipher) and/or possible battle [confrontational dancing] as a form of socializing. “In a cipher, the circular dance space that forms naturally once the dancing begins, the dancers can direct their performance in various directions, unihibited and free from all counts and cues” (Pabon, 2006, p. 24). Amongst the participants and onlookers, it is understood that certain moves are executed at certain times in the song in order to produce particular effects or to convey a message (Osumare, 2004). Songs that embody the qualities mentioned above and produce similar reactions in people contribute to the canon of the cultural art form of b-boying. For Schloss (2006), the communal aesthetic generated through sharing,

¹⁸ A cipher (or cypher) in hip hop refers to group activity where participants take turns displaying their respective skills. Cyphers can be composed of b-boys/girls, mcs, or simply a group of people sharing information or their personal experiences.

teaching, and practicing the traditions supported by these songs is both a result and a tool of tradition-building.

These tradition- and community-building practices are intertwined with intercultural communication and identity construction. The practice of identity construction in hip hop includes the consumption of popular and hip hop culture in the form of music, music videos, and other forms of mass media images that allow and require practitioners to fuse expressions of personal and local styles and experience (Osumare 2004, Shapiro, 2004). The transformation that takes place through this practice allows youth and students an opportunity to learn how to construct their identities as b-boys and b-girls that produce and are produced by hip hop culture.

The practice of intercultural communication informs the process that builds community and tradition amongst b-boys and b-girls (Osumare, 2004, Schloss, 2006). “[T]he intercultural body is a tangible result of the globalization of American pop culture in general and hip hop culture in particular” (Osumare, 2002, p. 32). By engaging in the art of b-boying, youth are introduced to cultural traditions and techniques that are recognized by other b-boys throughout the world. As a result of the learning that takes place in the practice of b-boying, youth who speak different languages and are unable to verbally communicate with each other can interact and communicate via the bodily expression of traditions that signify similar meanings across both local and global contexts.

In addition to the practices of hip hop identity and community formation, youth and students also learn different ways of engaging and producing aesthetics. B-boys engage and appropriate various and particular types of aesthetic forms for different reasons. For example, in a study that focused on the institutionalization of breakdancing into a university dance program

in France, Shapiro (2004) noted how the aesthetics from traditional ballet formats were taken up by French b-boys as a way to gain acceptance from and communicate with mainstream audiences while traditional ballet dancers took up a b-boy aesthetic to enrich and expand the canon of traditional dance. In another study, Osumare (2001) noted how Hawai'ian b-boys use an African aesthetic to flow back and forth between local and global contexts of popular culture. Lastly, in the United States and abroad youth and students of various ethnicities employ a Latino and Afro-Caribbean aesthetic to provide the historical and technical framework for b-boying in general (Osumare, 2004). What is more, according to Schloss (2006), by calling upon these different cultural styles students learn to produce and reproduce a communal aesthetic or spirit. The invocation and appeasement of this "hip hop spirit" (Osumare, 2004, p. 326) connects b-boys and b-girls across cultures, ethnicities and geographic location (Shapiro, 2004, Osumare, 2001). The practice of b-boying/b-girling as a hip hop cultural art form serves as a means by which youth and students learn to construct identity, develop intercultural communication skills, and build and sustain a community through the appropriation, manipulation, and circulation of aesthetics.

Graffiti

Graffiti is another hip hop cultural art form that attracts many young people. According to Cristen (2003), "[g]raffiti writing satisfies a complex set of needs, functioning for most participants as a furious but relatively benign antidote to adolescent isolation, boredom, powerless, and anonymity" (p. 61). In the course of satisfying these needs, youth and students learn a great deal from engaging this art form. Young people who write graffiti and participate in graffiti crews learn formal and informal painting techniques, modes of thinking that nurture

academic achievement and social mobility, and modes of self-expression and representation (Cristen, 2003, Bowen, 1999, Kan, 2001). Most importantly, for Cristen (2003), graffiti writers develop a useful set of transformative practices directed toward the apprehension and critique of social structure and resistance to the marginalizing effects of social constraints. Gastman, Rowland, and Sattler (2006) noted that the same individual and communal expressions of identity and knowledge that are perceived as antagonistic by dominant society are used to beautify socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods where many graffiti writers reside. These expressions also create opportunities to gain professional experience, notoriety, and monetary compensation (Cristen, 2003, Bowen, 1999). In short, the transformative potential of the cultural practice of graffiti writing is located in a reversal of traditional power relationships through exerting control over a form of communication, reorganizing social structure, and aesthetically improving their community.

Rapping/Emceeing

Rapping or emceeing has become the most recognizable cultural art form of hip hop. Studies that focus on rapping have reported that multiple forms of literacy, practices of identity construction, and strategies for apprehending, resisting and transforming reality are developed by young people who engage various aspects of rapping or emceeing (Cooks, 2004, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell, 2000, Jocson, 2006, McCormick, 2003, Weinstein, 2006). Rapping and/or emceeing within the context of this discussion include written and extemporaneous composition and performance of rap songs, critiquing and writing poetry, and spoken word performance.

In a study of black, working-class and poor inner-city high school youth, McCormick (2003) found that students used rap to negotiate categorizations like “criminal/noncriminal”

imposed upon them by school officials and faculty. In particular, “teens reaffirmed and subverted harmless/dangerous labels by disguising themselves and creating personas through the use of clothing, graffiti, and poetry” (p. 111). For these students, practicing hip hop culture helps achieve anonymity, assert alternative identities, and resist dehumanization. Pardue (2002, 2004) has also noted similar practices of identity construction, creativity, and resistance in studies focusing on young Brazilian hip hoppers.

Jocson (2006) noted how the cultural forms of hip hop influence students’ experiences within and outside of the school setting. She asserted that when educational activities are integrated with specific purposes of reading, thinking, speaking and writing about what matters most to them learning becomes meaningful. She used the concept of hybridity to affirm the intertextual nature and relevance of popular culture in the form of music, poetry, literature, and media in the lives of urban youth.¹⁹ By focusing on the description and analysis of Antonio, an

¹⁹ Hybridity refers to a third space “where learning is contingent on and situated within participants’ cultural and sociocultural knowledge... [it is] the forging of connections between diverse cultural forms” (Jocson, 2006, p. 237). Jocson (2006) draws from the work of Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Tejada (1999) who state that

[o]ur analysis of third spaces has shown that learning contexts are immanently hybrid, that is, polycontextual, multivoiced, and multiscripted. Thus, conflict, tension, and diversity are intrinsic to learning spaces. [B]y attending to the social, political, material, cognitive, and linguistic conflict, we also have documented these tensions as potential sites of rupture, innovation, and change that lead to learning (Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, & Gutierrez, 1998; Engestrom, 1987, 1990, 1993; Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989). Here we define an activity system as social practice(s) that includes the norms, values, division of labor, the goals of a community, and its participants’ enduring dispositions toward the social practice (Gutierrez & Stone, in press). [The] purposeful use of hybridity and diversity stimulates the transformation of activities into robust contexts of development. Diversity here not only includes racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity, but also diversity in the mediational tools, roles, and the activity systems themselves. Hybridity and diversity, then, are not problematic but rather are viewed as important cultural resources in children’s development (Cole, 1998). Hybridity and diversity serve as the building blocks of Third Spaces (p. 287).

African American male whose interest in the practice of creating poetry within and outside of the classrooms lead to participation in two poetry writing programs, Jocson illustrated “how hybridity through text, context, and interaction shaped his intersecting literary practices around poetry” (p. 252). She concluded that by participating in spoken word performances and slams youth like Antonio, who successfully negotiated collaborative and hybrid spaces, can use poetry and poetry related activities to shape their identity, empower themselves, develop as artists and poets, and explore their ability to write. Weinstein (2006) argued that the practice of writing and reciting raps engages “the kind of learning that involves taking risks, trying new things without worrying about getting everything ‘just right’, and pushing oneself past previous knowledge and accomplishments, looks a lot like play”, thus “pleasure...is a quality-of-learning issue (p. 275).²⁰

Students also used rap to negotiate unpleasant social experiences. Cooks (2004) focused on the written expression of Black students’ experiences of race and racism. Students were first prompted to write an essay describing to someone from another country how it felt to be an African American in the United States. They were then asked to rewrite the essay as a rap. Cooks reported that students displayed more complexity in their rap rewrites of the essay than in the original essay, employing a combination of narrative, dialogue, and analogies.

Post-colonial theorist and inventor of the concept of hybridity, Homi Bhabha (1985), wrote that “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (p. 211).

²⁰ Weinstein (2006) identifies three forms of pleasure significant to the writing practices of these four youth: 1) the pleasure of membership discourse, 2) the pleasure of “self-expression and 3) self-presentation”, and 4) “pleasure as play.”

Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2000) argued that using hip hop culture in the classroom is an effective way to motivate students to develop academic literacy skills. They asserted that because rap music and urban youth are so closely aligned, rap texts are helpful to students when used to build upon complex literary concepts. In their analysis of the effectiveness of an intervention unit designed to link canonical poetry to the lives of urban high school seniors, the authors found that situating hip hop as a genre of poetry that youth used to respond to postindustrial society helped students understand the role canonical poets played in their own society. Students learned to critically analyze popular media through juxtaposing rap and canonical texts. The authors concluded that “students engaged in critical, intellectual work...that has currency in the academy...will help them navigate the gate-keeping mechanisms that preclude them access to higher education and economic empowerment” (p. 31).

The literature indicates that youth and students in the U.S. and abroad learn much from the cultural art forms of hip hop culture. Young people who engage these art forms learn practices that appropriate and transform images and representations from multiple hip hop communities in order to produce hip hop culture and hip hop cultural identities. Within these acts of cultural production youth and students use improvisation and imagination to communicate, build community, re-create traditions with other hip hoppers, provide pleasurable experiences as well as means to protect themselves against perceived social and/or psychological threats.

Given the popularity, creativity, and accessibility of hip hop, one would be remiss to assume that gifted students remain unaffected or uninterested in hip hop as an art form, culture, mass media commodity, or ethos. In fact, the opportunities for young people to connect to the many representations of this cultural phenomenon presents fertile ground to investigate how,

when, and for what reasons students engage hip hop. With that said, this study explored how bright, black college students engage hip hop while attending a predominantly white institution in the Southeast U. S in order to produce an understanding of what these students learn from their respective hip hop practices. The research questions guiding this investigation are: 1) How are bright, black students at this PWI engaging hip hop? 2) What do students learn from their engagement with hip hop?

Methods: A performative approach

To investigate the influence of hip hop culture on a group of bright, black males and females in their mid- to early- 20s who engage hip hop culture and who have attended or still attend a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the southeastern United States I employed a *performative approach to ethnographic methods* in this interview study. The primary goal of this study was to explore how hip hop culture influences the everyday experiences of black students at a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the southeastern United States. It entailed “the close study of culture as lived by particular people, in particular places, doing particular things at particular times” (van Maanen, 1995, p. 23). I used a *performative approach to ethnographic methods* to explore these particularities.

A Performative Approach to Ethnographic Methods

Performance and performativity. This approach to ethnographic methods “views culture as complex performative process [that] seeks to understand how people enact and construct meaning in their daily lives” (Denzin, 2001, p. 21). Denzin (2003) suggested this process, in turn, produces cultural performances. “Performativity and performance exist in tension with one another, a tension between *doing*, or performing, and the *done*, the text, the

performance” (Denzin, 2000, p. 190). That is, the everyday practices people take up that produce performances can be described as performativity. Performance is the product of performativity (Denzin, 2001). Therefore, this study focuses on the cultural practices that gifted, black students invent and reproduce to *do* hip hop and also on what gets *done* in their cultural performances of hip hop.

According to Denzin (2000), qualitative research requires methodological practices that move inquiry from the personal to the political. Jones (2005) noted that within the performance-performativity dynamic, performances cannot be separated from performers and that performativity and politics are inextricable. Moreover, personal narrative imbricates the personal within the political, and vice versa, in ways that must always matter. Therefore, this study, following Denzin (2001), focused on personal narratives as a political act and employed “narrated words and stories to fashion performance texts that imagine new worlds, worlds where humans can become who they wish to be, free of prejudice, repression, and discrimination” (p.21). The use of words and stories are political because they insert themselves in the world in a way that can be empowering to the tellers of those stories.

Performative approach to fieldwork. Wolcott (1999) articulated interviewing and its relationship to ethnography in a way that emphasized the performative aspects of fieldwork and called attention to what a researcher is expected to do in order to accomplish the task. The *performative approach to ethnographic methods* used in this study also draws from this idea. Referred to by Wolcott (1995) as the “art of fieldwork” (p. 47), “experiencing, enquiring, and examining” (Wolcott, 1995, p. 46) are methods that facilitate the *doing* of ethnography. He explained that although “observational research plays out almost entirely in what we see...and

hear,” (p. 46) experiencing entails information that is processed through the senses. For Wolcott, the “difference between being present as a passive observer of what is going on and taking an active role in asking about what is going on” (pp. 46-47) is critical. In this case, moving from onlooker to actor in fieldwork constitutes enquiring or interviewing.

By and large, the nuances entailed in the *doing* of ethnography are attended to by emphasizing the performative aspects of fieldwork. When conventional methods of data collection restrict the researcher unnecessarily, it is not enough to simply be in the field and observe and talk with participants. In the art of fieldwork, what is most important “in all observation is achieved not in the act of observing but in recognizing...the potential significance...[of what] has been observed” (Wolcott, 1995, p. 162-163).

I found that fieldwork informed by performative methods was particularly important for *doing* ethnography with gifted and talented students who engage hip hop culture. I, myself, have been a practitioner of hip hop and a scholar of African descent participating in advanced programs since the early 1980’s. From those experiences, I accomplished a great deal of fieldwork during my life in what might be called a long-term prior ethnography. That is, decades of personal prior ethnographic experiences with both hip hop culture and a culture of giftedness provides the foundation for this project. To the point, research projects do not necessarily begin with permission from the institutional review board to start collecting data. In many studies, as in this one, the researcher began collecting data many years before the official project began. These observations, conversations, and insights become research when construed in academic contexts and practices. For the researcher, recognizing and actualizing the “artfulness” that informs the research process is encouraged by a performative approach to ethnographic methods.

Doing research using a performative approach to ethnographic methods produces a different intelligibility, one that recognizes the potency of the utterances and actions of gifted and talented black university students who engage hip hop during their matriculation at a mostly white university. It is a decidedly different approach to thinking about and understanding the experiences of gifted black students. This intelligibility draws attention to how these students understand and negotiate various and conflicting socio-cultural contexts, connect their micro-level movements (i.e. thoughts and actions) to macro-level structures (i.e., race, culture, religion, and education), and interpret the meaningfulness of these movements for the students and the researcher.

Research Site

This study took place on the campus of a major public land grant institution in the southeastern United States. The institution's 2010 *Fact Book* reported a total enrollment of 34,677 students. While black students comprise 7.73% of the student population, approximately 71% of these students identified themselves as white. Although the institution is located in a rural area of the state, many students from the state's nearby capitol city and its affluent suburbs are attracted to this institution, casting a metropolitan overtone to the pastoral scenery of the school. The university is Research Extensive and Division 1 institution that is internationally acknowledged for its research and numerous athletic championships titles. Furthermore, the town is well-known for its support of independent rock music. The downtown area is lively and has several venues, bars, and clubs that offer ample opportunities for aspiring musicians and singers to network and develop their craft. In January of 2001, I began to notice an increase in flyers and handbills advertising hip hop shows, freestyle battles, and open mics posted on campus and

in the downtown area. As a student who participated in a program for the gifted while in school and as a current graduate student/researcher/hip hopper at a PWI interested in the experiences of gifted, black students at this university who engage hip hop culture, it was logical to formally conduct my study at this site.

Sample Selection and Criteria

For this study I interviewed five Black males and three females who are attending or have attended this institution and who are involved in hip hop culture. The sample selection criteria for participants in this study required that they be (1) Black, (2) gifted, (3) active in hip hop culture, and (4) between 20- 25 years old. In terms of race, participants identified themselves as black. Participant's giftedness is affirmed by virtue of their attendance at this university. In other words, admission standards set by the institution satisfy the criteria for giftedness for this study. Participants demonstrated involvement in hip hop culture in a variety of ways that included, but was not limited to, attending live hip hop performances, composing original lyrics for songs or poetry, producing (orchestrating) hip hop related events (i.e. spoken word sets, live shows, ciphers, community outreach, public protests), writing graffiti, break(danc)ing, enrolling in courses that focused on aspects and issues related to hip hop culture and history, or simply listening to hip hop music. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 25 years old. Participants were identified through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) that allows the researcher to select "information-rich cases ... from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research" (p. 169). Although there are a number of strategies for selecting information-rich cases, I chose to use theory-based or operational construct sampling. This strategy samples specific occurrences, periods of time, "slices of life," or people based upon

their potential to manifest theoretical constructs of interest (Patton). Participants for this study were chosen because I believed they could provide data that included both a range of experiences on campus and various levels of involvement with hip hop as bright, black students at this PWI. These students' stories about their engagement in hip hop and everyday life on campus represented instances of the ritual processes and practices included in the cultural production of hip hop.

I conducted one one and a half to two hour, semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interview with each of the eight participants between April and August of 2008. I provided the interview protocol to participants at least two weeks prior to the interview to give them an opportunity to think about what we would talk about and prepare a response, if they chose to do so. Those interviews were intended to document the participants' experiences on and around campus as well as their experiences with/in hip hop culture in this town. All but one of the interviews were transcribed (one of the interviews was inaudible). I gave copies of the transcripts to participants for member checks. Participants did not ask to change or delete any of the interviews. Walker and Dos, however, did ask that I use their stage and street monikers rather than a pseudonym in the interviews, stating that they stand behind everything they said in the interview. They felt no reason to hide behind a pseudonym. I also conducted eight participant observations at the weekly open-mic nights and a panel discussion focusing on the role women in hip hop culture. This panel took place on the campus of the university during April of 2008. I attended this event primarily because Dana, a participant in the study, was a discussant on the panel. It provided an opportunity for me to observe her in a context in which she engaged hip

hop culture and academics.

Descriptions of Participant

Walker is a 25-year old, third year law student at the research site university. As a youth, he attended a school for the arts and was often on stage as a performer. Later, he attended and graduated from a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). He was introduced to hip hop by his mother and older siblings and remembered making mixtapes with friends after school. He earned his stripes as a battle rapper and pursued a career as a hip hop artist, even signing a contract for a record deal. However, after the deal fell through he enrolled in college, vowing never to rap again. During his four years as an undergraduate, rather than rap, he promoted hip hop shows. His passion for MCing was reinvigorated during law school as a way to alleviate stress and monotony.

Dos is a 25-year old senior majoring in sociology. He attended racially-integrated, culturally diverse public schools and enrolled in an HBCU before transferring to the research site university. He was introduced to hip hop through an older brother who was deaf. He remembered being a loner and eventually becoming involved in graffiti, b-boying, and djjing during his youth. As a student at this university, he organized hip hop shows, student organizations, and student-led protests. He was also a master of ceremonies for hip hop shows and a weekly open mic/poetry night as well as manager for several local hip hop artists.

Flo is a 23-year old senior majoring in history. She attended a predominantly white private school from elementary to high school and was introduced to hip hop through watching the video for Coolio's *Gangsta Paradise* on cable television with her friends during middle school. She stopped listening to hip hop in middle school and early high school, gravitating to

metal groups like Korn. However, she began listening to underground hip hop more frequently during her college years because her boyfriend was an MC in local hip hop group. She admitted to listening to and enjoying crunk music, a genre of hip hop made famous by artists like Lil' Jon, for fun. Her preference in hip hop music, however, is trip hop; a sub-genre of hip hop characterized by surrealism, ambient soundscapes, ethereal vocals, and moody, dub basslines backed by hip hop beats that originated in the U.K in the early 1990s.

Alice is 22-year old senior majoring in art education. Like Walker, she attended a school for the arts. She admits that she grew up around a lot of white people and that her engagement with hip hop was marginal until the latter half of college when she began dating a hip hop music artist who made beats and instrumentals and exposed her to “conscious” hip hop music artists like Mos Def, Talib Kweli, and the like. Like Flo, Alice also listened to crunk music for fun but preferred trip hop and instrumentals.

Dana is a 24-year old Masters student in social science education. She attended a magnet high school and later enrolled in an HBCU. Her older sister introduced her to hip hop. During middle school she dabbled in graffiti, b-girling, and rapping. Like Flo and Alice, she listened to commercial hip hop for entertainment. But she also engaged hip hop academically, exploring issues of race, class, gender, and power as they relate to music and culture.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The analysis and interpretation of data in this study were driven primarily by the study's two research questions: 1) How and for what reasons do bright, black university students use hip hop culture to make sense of their experiences at a mostly White institution? 2) What practices of hip hop culture do they use or invent to help themselves negotiate everyday relations? Analysis

began with the construction of the interview protocol for which I developed interview questions that would elicit data that would answer the research questions. Participants' responses to questions did indeed address the research questions while often providing additional data that contextualized their responses. My interview questions worked well, and participants provided rich data.

Data analysis and data collection occurred simultaneously. All audiotapes were transcribed word-for-word except for one tape that was inaudible. After all participants were interviewed, I began an intensive period of data analysis and carefully read and studied each transcript during transcription. I did this repeatedly in order to get both a sense of each participant's specific responses and also a general sense of all data. Using the research questions as a guide, I studied the data and looked for participants' descriptions of their experiences with hip hop as university students. The interview questions focused specifically on participants' relations to hip hop, campus culture, gender, spirituality, and their relationships with other students and faculty. Thus, it was expected that these themes would appear within the data. However, participants did occasionally discuss issues around hip hop that were not included in the interview protocol.

Once I established general themes, I began to more deliberately use ritual theory to interpret the data. More specifically, I looked for instances of ritualization in the interview data. According to Bell (1992), ritualization involves ways of acting that differentiate and establishes a privileged distinction from other ways of acting. She added that, "acting ritually is first and foremost a matter of nuanced contrasts and the evocation of strategic, value-laden distinctions" (Bell, 1992, p. 90). Thus, I purposely sought out instances in the data where students described

specific reasons and times for engaging hip hop. For example, Flo and Alice mentioned engaging hip hop as part of their art-making processes. After I located several ritual acts in the data, I analyzed those acts for ritual practices. Participants' ritual acts were characterized by practices that situated their engagement with hip hop as a powerful and important aspect of their everyday lives as students at this university. Ritual acts are differentiated from ritual practices in the sense that practices are described as "1) situational and 2) strategic acts of agency 3) that often, but not always, take place unbeknownst to the "passenger" and 4) are able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of structural order of power in the world" (p. 82). In other words, acts are comprised of practices. The ritual practices in this study included listening practices that influenced students' cultural knowledge, creative process, and spiritual development; cultural practices they took up as hip hop cultural art forms in which they critiqued and produced aesthetics related to hip hop, and re-created hip hop cultural traditions; and academic practices that were connected to their academic performance as students at this particular university.

Ritual Practices: Listening, Cultural, Aesthetic, and Academic

Listening Practices

Listening to learn. Students in this study reported that they listened to hip hop to expose themselves to aspects of black culture which they're not familiar with. For Alice and Flo, who both admittedly interact socially with mostly white people, listening to hip hop music and attending shows introduced them to a variety of realities experienced by many black people.

Alice shared a similar experience. "I hang out with a lot of white people at the art school and they don't listen to hip-hop. Even though I'm a black person, there's a lot of aspects in the black culture that I don't understand [because] I'm not active in [them]." She mentioned that a

friend recently introduced her to the music of Talib Kweli, Mos Def, and other artists whose music has been categorized as “conscious hip hop.” Conscious Hip Hop or rap, according to hip hop historian, Alridge (2005), “examines historical problems within black communities such as racism, police brutality, crooked politicians, greed, poverty, and substandard education... and often espouse[s] racial solidarity, community empowerment, and liberatory education as ways to ameliorate problems in black communities” (p. 249). Alice elaborated that listening to conscious hip hop “really help[ed] me understand the people who live those lives. They’re speaking truthfully about their experiences that happened first hand and so it’s a window into another world.”

Flo talked about an experience similar to Alice’s. “First of all,” she said, “I’ve been exposed to a lot more black people. That alone is awesome ‘cause [I’ve been raised] with this whitebread kinda thing. I was one of two [or] three black people in my grade. I just didn’t know any black kids, if I did they were like me. So I think [hip hop has] definitely expanded my view. Rather than us and them, it’s all of us.” Later in the interview, Flo told me about a shooting that occurred in front of the “black” club in the downtown area of her hometown when she was in high school. She admitted that this incident colored her perception of the people who frequented that establishment, causing her to develop socioeconomic stereotypes that she has since relinquished because of her growing interest in hip hop.

Listening and the creative process. In this study I also found that students listened to hip hop music to facilitate a creative process. For Walker, the process of writing rhymes was supported by listening to an instrumental version of the song he was composing. Walker explained that his listening practice is part of his creative process. “My process of writing is

[that] I'll listen to the record and I write to the beat. I never write acapella. I always write to a beat."

For Flo and Alice, their listening practices included instrumental hip hop and trip-hop music, a type of hip hop that originated in England in the mid-1990's that blended hip hop breakbeats with house music. The end result was a laid-back, moody hip hop with a heavy downbeat that emphasizes instrumentation over lyrics and surrealism over social consciousness. Alice told me that the hip-hop she listened to while making art are "usually instrumentals, like Flying Lotus, Mr. Scrubb's, D.J. Shadow, or Bonobo." Hip hop music plays an important role in helping her produce art. As she explained, "[hip hop] definitely gets me into the flow of working. If I'm listening to it and the beat's (beat is) really good, it helps me clear my head. So I can just let myself work without over thinking and over working." Flo described similar experiences with trip hop music. She recalled "listen[ing] to music and design[ing] clothing along with the music. It was all trip hop music. I loved the beats" she said. "Portishead, Bjork, Esthero, Pelican City, Dj Dangermouse; his Pelican City stuff. I just get lost in it."

Listening for spirit. The study also found that listening to hip hop music influenced participants' spiritual development. More specifically, Dos, Flo, Walker, and Alice reported that listening to hip hop was an alternative to adhering to traditional concepts of religion and spirituality.

Dos was raised in the Christian tradition but began to expand his conception of spirituality through listening to hip hop music. As he explained it, "hip hop affected my spirituality because it allowed me to think. It allowed me to evolve. It allowed me to gain knowledge of self. I think hip hop, specifically, did that by allowing me to open up [without]

pushing me towards any one religion or one spiritual way of thinking.” He admitted that listening to hip hop prompted him to attend mosques, synagogues, and churches. Furthermore, talking to people who practiced Islam, Judaism, and Christianity eventually lead him to create his own concept of spirituality. Dos explained to me that he listened to certain songs at certain times that are specifically for spiritual maintenance. “I feel like certain music keeps me grounded. ‘Cause I get into the rat race and it’s almost like have these blinders on.” The *rat race* he is referring to is comprised of a full-time, third shift job, a weekly poetry night that he emcees, and a roster of local and national artists he is responsible for managing and developing.

Walker never expressed an adherence to a specific traditional religion, but he did describe an affinity for hip hop as a spiritual practice that is similar to Dos’. Hip hop is particularly important to both participants in moments of distress. “It’s certain songs,” he explained, “that when things are going rough, you can lean on. Maybe it’s just who I am as a person, but I definitely lean to the lyrics of a dope song more than I would lean to the lyrics, to the text of the Bible. I just know hip hop better than I know the Bible. I couldn’t tell you one verse from the Bible. I probably can’t say “Our Father’s Prayer” correctly. But ‘They Reminisce Over You’ record. ‘The World Is Yours’. I could tell you [about] a lot of records. I think that sometimes the things [mcs] say really can give you insight. I mean that’s what people read in the Bible for, some sort of insight to [their] purpose, [their] life, [their] struggle. God speaks to me through some of these lyrics sometimes--through other people’s growing, you know what I mean? God speaks to me in that way. I just get a thought, but a lot times that is what sparks a lot of the lyrics.”

Alice told me that during her childhood her mother practiced Buddhism. But in terms of her own spiritual development, she shared this experience. “I don’t really have a religion [but] I believe that there is a universal force out there. But sometimes if I need to meditate, if something is, like, holding me down, I’ll pick a song that mentally carries me away. I’ll listen to the song and use it to help me let go of a problem ... that I’m still really “bugging” over. I’ll use songs to help me meditate and relax and just get over it.”

Cultural Practices: Artforms, Aesthetics, and Traditions

Students in this study also engaged hip hop as a culture. That is, they took up hip hop cultural art forms, produced hip hop cultural aesthetics, and practiced hip hop cultural traditions. In terms of the art forms, only two of the students in the study, Walker and Dos, actively practiced a traditional hip hop cultural art form. Walker, an MC/rapper, and Dos, MC/host, worked together to run an event production company that organized and promoted shows, open mics, and other hip hop-related events. Flo also engaged the cultural traditions through organizing a cipher for a course she took that focused on hip hop. Dos, Flo, and Walker all discussed the various ways they produced hip hop aesthetics.

Engaging hip hop as an art form. Walker exhibited an intense dedication to hip hop culture and the art and craft of emceeing. His commitment to this craft can be described as a double-edged sword. On one hand, he admitted that the combination of hip hop and law school kept him from visiting his sister who was in the final stages of her battle with HIV. Walker told me that his sister passed in the latter part of one fall semester, just as final exams were about to begin. He spoke candidly about the depression he experienced during those times. “My mind had deteriorated to a point of entropy of any concern for what was going on academically,” he told

me. On the other hand, hip hop motivated him and offered solace after his sister's death. As he recounted, "[I]f it wasn't for hip hop and the work me and Dos [are] doing, I don't know if I would have made it through, mentally. The work we [are] doin' in hip hop, the work I'm doin' as an MC gave me a reason to get up. And then I could get in some time to do some schoolwork."

Walker's engagement of the cultural art form of MCing was extremely important to him and was a significant part of his character development. In his writing process, he incorporated a habit of self-critique that guided the content of his rhymes. In the following excerpt he elaborated that "Because I'm a performer and a writer and mc, it's made me very conscious of what I say. Sometimes you write something and you don't realize what kind of attitude it portray[s about you]. Many times when I'm writing a verse, I end up going through edits. Not because I'm tryin' to sensor myself. Hell no! But strictly because somebody might think I'm this kind of person if I say this and I'm definitely not [that kind of person], you know what I mean."

This habit of self-critique also supported his continuous development and craftsmanship as a stage performer. For Walker, "being an MC is being a master of ceremonies. I feel like as stage performer, with experience you get better. So I feel like at this point I'm a pretty solid stage performer. I always hope to get better, to achieve the optimum level that's possible with my skills." For Walker, effectively mastering the ceremony seemed to be a life-long process that is focused on improving his craft.

Engaging hip hop as an event. Before hip hop became a big business commodity it was an event that required the presence of practitioners and an audience (Dimitriadis, 2005). Students in this study carried out this cultural tradition in several ways. Dos recounted the story of how several of the events he and Walker produced came to be. "Every Thursday night at my

apartment I did what was called the cipher session. Then we went to [what is now a pub downtown]. Every Wednesday we'd have open mic. I saw that that concept worked and I started a freestyle session at my house on Fridays. Then we were doing freestyle battles on campus. We did 'King of the Ring.' So we started that and it took off on campus." Dos informed me that what began as a small group of students and friends from the community gathering at his apartment grew into audience and collective that, at times, reached over 75 people. Even more exciting is the fact that they were able to generate enough money from those events to invite a well-known hip hop artist to the university to perform. This core group of friends and students eventually formed a hip hop collective and applied to become a student organization on campus.

Dos' dedication to hip hop came with a price, however. Because he spent so much time organizing and attending meetings and functions related to hip hop, he lost a young woman who, at that time, he referred to as "the love of my life." Academics also became less of a priority for him. He explained, "I'm not going to blame it on hip hop but I'll blame it on my lifestyle which is hip hop as to why I didn't finish school. I went on tour with Ish and KRS-One. [Then] a bunch a people was asking me to manage them. Hip hop just engulfed my life and it reached a point where I was fine with it."

Hip hop was also used to address race relations (e.g., the lack of black students, particularly black male students) and other issues of diversity at the university. Dos recounted the following experience from the Spring of 2006. "[The Collective] was already formed. We [were] doing our thing. We felt like we kinda had a voice 'cause now we had this scene. I could call certain people and you talking 100, 200 people would show up to an event. We had a six-point platform that we came up with and we presented it to [the president of the university]. We

ended up doing a silent protest in front of his office. We had done a couple of marches from the [student center] to [north campus]. [H]ip hop related to that because now I could call my hip hop friends even though they didn't go to [the university and] they could participate in the march, the silent protest, [and] the "building sessions."²¹ Dos explained that having founding members of [The Collective] that also held leadership positions in a more traditional, well-established graduate student organization helped to harness the artistic power of hip hop into political power that could be understood and acknowledged within the traditional structure of the university. In sum, according to Dos, "[T]he scene that was built with hip hop and poetry [was] turned into a political wing, you know what I mean."

Although the agendas of these two student groups (the hip hop collective and the graduate student organization) were easily aligned, reaching and connecting with the student body at-large proved more difficult. Walker elaborated the obstacles he and Dos faced in the course of producing events that would engage and include all university students. "We been tryin' real hard over the last two years to create some sort of network where we can chime into, frankly, the student dollar [and] the student ear. The dollar in the sense that they come to the show to support what we doin so that we can continue to do it. And then the ear because it's so many people that come to school from all over the place that go back home and take music back home. They take music before they take their books!" He mentioned that the events like the "Hip Hop Homecoming" weeks that they organized in 2007 and 2008 were marginally successful.

²¹ "Building" is a practice in hip hop culture that refers to informal discussions about a particular topic or conversations where personal knowledge and insights are shared amongst those participating in the session.

“Hip Hop Homecomings” are week-long celebrations comprised of battles, open mics/poetry, shows and ciphers that take place alongside the university’s homecoming events.

Aesthetics. Students in the study engaged hip hop culture by actively producing and re-producing aesthetics related to hip hop. Dos recalled, “When I was going to [the university] I might be wearing a suit jacket one day and then the next day just be totally hip hopped out. Hat cocked, real baggy jeans, XXX[Large] t-shirt and all that. So it was a lot of times I could almost see people not knowing how to take me.” Dos believed that his appearance as well as his attitude set him apart from his predominantly white, non-hip hop peers. He elaborated, “Being a hip hopper, black male, dread-head on this campus I already have so much going against me, you know? [I dress] hip hop, talk in slang sometimes, you know? [I don’t] say the right things always [and] sometimes just speak my mind. It’s like I got all these check marks going against me.”

Dos provided examples of how aesthetics are produced through self-representation, language, and attitude. He also made certain to note that originality and style are two things that are not so readily expressed in the more recent, mainstream representations of hip hop culture. “Hip hop showed me [how to] pave your own path, you know what I mean? Don’t be scared to be the trailblazer. I think that’s what a lot of the young people are missing today. It went from blazing your own path to I’m going to follow his path.” Being a vanguard in hip hop culture and society-at-large is also an important aesthetic. Dos shared the experiences he had while on tour with hip hop pioneer and icon, KRS-One. “KRS-One used to have these roundtable discussions. He [would] go around the room and [ask] ‘Let me know who you are.’ At that moment I felt like he wasn’t like this icon. I felt like he was Kris Parker,... my boy, you know what I mean? And I

tell him about who I am. To have him say, 'I understand you, I know who you are.' I knew I was the total embodiment of hip hop. I am hip hop."

The study also revealed the aesthetic engagement involved in creating hip hop music. Walker talked about the effect he tried to create in lyrics and music. He told me, "The test of all my records is when I'm walking with my headphones on, do I feel like I'm walking through the video? If it's visual, it makes me feel like I'm somewhere else then it's 'dope.' If not, then we need to go back to the drawing board on this record. Something is wrong, the lyrics or the beats. Something is wrong. Something is missing."

Walker mentioned that seeing drugs and prostitution in his neighborhood as a youth and the loss of his sister to HIV during law school impacted his growth as an MC as well as the content and tone of his lyrics. He explained to me that "You start to do less ignoring. [You go from] whatever I can't change, take part in; or whatever I can't change, pretend it ain't there to 'this is wrong, let me do my part [to change it].' Whether it be [to] not call woman a bitch in a song or whether my part is not to talk about having sex with some women so explicitly on a record that a 12 year-old or a 10 year-old could figure it out." He told me that he feels those types of expression are inappropriate. He elaborated that "a lot of that comes with me being 25 years-old. I [have] a Bachelors of Science in Business Administration and Finance. I graduated with honors. I've been on internships at Fortune 500 companies. I put myself through law school. I worked at the solicitor's office. I worked with domestic abuse victims, you know what I mean? And, I'm from the ghetto! So I got all these different perspectives and points of views conflicting each [with] other all the time." Walker told me he feels that hip hop is the only way he can truly articulate his views and opinions. He expressed a kindred connection with the art form and told

me, “I think the energy of hip hop, generally, is rebellious in nature. So my rebellious spirit has been somewhat transformed by this experience at [the university] to where my rage isn’t against the system. My rage is against social ills that we contribute toward and help to breed and harvest. So this experience of the internships that law school provided and being in an all-white environment [that’s] very, very different ... helped me to see different things. [I]t’s really the social ills less than it is the system. If you can change the people from the bottom we can eventually change the order at the top.”

Academics

Students in the study also engaged hip hop through academics. Dana, a master’s student in social science education, told me about a conference presentation that focused on a topic related to hip hop. “I presented at a conference, [the] topic ... was on black women working in strip clubs. [It] related to hip-hop because I was talking about authenticity in hip hop and how black people, in general, don’t have the same mobility, the same privilege as white peopleas white artists do. Celine Dion, when she’s on stage, she’s performing and you gotta understand that when she’s off stage and [at] home she’s a mom and she’s allowed to have different layers that aren’t always allowed to black artists.”

In another example, Dos told me about the connections he made between hip hop and his experiences in the classroom as a sociology major. “Sociology was my life; all [the teachers] were giving me was the academic terms. I felt like I did more teaching than learning at [the university] and I credit that to hip hop. When I’m on stage or when I’m studying an MC ... [i]t’s like you’re teaching and you’re learning. It’s a flow of knowledge and I think hip hop and the university have that in common. Because I was able to do it in hip hop, I think I did it better at

the university. Even though I did more teaching than I did learning I obviously learned a lot at [this university].”

While some students were able to integrate their engagement in hip hop with school, others, like Walker, worked to keep the two separate. He stated that “[Hip hop and law school are] totally different worlds. I separate them totally. I don’t mix worlds, you know what I mean? I try not to let the student body know [that I MC] but by virtue of advertising and publicity and different people coming to shows ... they find out anyways.” When I asked how he felt about that, he told me, “I would prefer them not to know. This is something I love to do and I don’t want it to be looked [at] under the microscope of other obligations I have to myself or my profession that totally don’t relate, you know what I mean? When we send out press releases [for] shows I don’t let Dos put on the bio that I’m in law school. [T]hat’s not something I want people to know. Because then, you become a gimmick and I’m not trying to sell nothing. I’m just trying to do hip hop, you know what I mean?”

Discussion

In situations where students engage hip hop through listening to music, critiquing and producing aesthetics, recreating traditions and art forms, and negotiating their participation in hip hop with academics, they do so through strategic acts of appropriation, transformation, and representation. Those acts highlight how students perform their respective hip hop identities. Osumare (2001) found that the performance and performative acts that Hawai’ian b-boy and b-girls (breakdancers) used to engage hip hop also constructed hip hop identities. She described performance as the conscious appropriation of learned and codified practices that represent socio-cultural values within hip hop. Performativity, on the other hand, is described as the “often

unconscious but meaningful” (p. 31) acts that signify a social identity. Participants in her study took up hip hop practices and styles typically seen on mass media outlets like MTV and BET alongside current rap artists and meshed them with a

style [that] seamlessly conjoined an MTV cut-and-pastiche with a personal, improvised freestyle virtuosity that juxtaposed the three major hip hop styles: breaking, popping, and locking. These performance decisions represent the agency that the dancer practices in order to mediate the of global pop culture influences in relation to his or her individual personality. (pp. 34-36)

Students in the current study exhibited similar enactments of hip hop. The acts of appropriation occurred through their various and multiple engagements of hip hop. These acts included listening to music, enacting traditional art forms, and reproducing certain aesthetics and sensibilities. The alterations of what students appropriate from hip hop are interpreted as acts of transformation. That is, the music they listened to, the art forms they engaged, and aesthetics they produced were arranged and rearranged in ways to fit their respective needs and desires. The acts of representation are illustrated through the identities students constructed from the exploration and alteration of the messages, affects, and attitudes they took up from hip hop. Furthermore, the cultural capital they produced through organizing hip hop events, making hip hop music, participating in conference presentations that focus on hip hop and pop culture, and negotiating classroom discourse with hip hop culture is also interpreted as acts of representation.

Identity Construction. In the performances of hip hop, those acts represent the agency that students practice in order to negotiate their engagement of hip hop as it relates to their personal, professional, spiritual and meditative needs. In terms of performativity, those acts

speak to how students construct their social identities and the role that hip hop plays in that process. Both Walker and Dos drew from hip hop and consciously constructed hip hop identities. Furthermore, the aesthetics, attitudes, and ideas presented in the music they listened to and art forms they practiced were engaged with the intention of creating a hip hop identity. Flo, Dana, and Alice, on the other hand, unknowingly constructed hip hop identities through their engagements with hip hop. The affects, worldviews, and messages they took from hip hop, unbeknownst to them, corroborated the construction of their hip hop identities. Dimitriadis (2001), McCormick (2003), and Pardue (2002, 2004) have noted how students draw from the lyrics and messages in hip hop music to construct identities that provide protection from social, emotional, and psychological threats.

Cultural, academic, and social literacy. The practices participants used to engage hip hop are an indication of the various types of learning that occur within the culture. Taken together, the listening practices, cultural practices, and impact on academic performance can be categorized into three forms of literacy: cultural, academic, and social. The development of academic literacy is demonstrated by the use of hip hop as segue to or a form of scholarship. An example of this type of literacy can be seen Dana's conference presentation that focused on the social mobility of black female artists. Dos' organic understanding of the field of sociology is another example of how his engagement of hip hop nurtured his academic performance. The development of cultural literacy is demonstrated through the consumption and critique of images and representations of hip hop culture in music and print media and on the internet and television. This kind of literacy can be seen in Walker's critique of the hypersexual and misogynistic content of some hip hop lyrics as well as his efforts to create dope music. Other

examples include Flo's, Alice's, Walker's, and Dos' use of hip hop for spiritual and meditative purposes. The development of social literacy is exhibited through students' awareness of their own material condition within the campus in particular and in society-at-large as well as perceiving the material conditions of others. The marches and social protests organized and conducted on campus by Dos and The Collective is an example of the social awareness that is supported through the engagement of hip hop. Walker's practice of separating his passion for emceeing from his career in law is another example of social literacy.

Although these forms of literacy are distinguishable from each other, they operate together; that is, one type of literacy informs another. The ritual practices that comprise academic literacy are supported by ritual practices that make up cultural literacy. The practices in this case include drawing from real-world and personal experiences to spur research, developing skills for research and analysis, and successfully presenting the culmination of these skills and experiences in an academic context. For instance, Dana's conference presentation on the social mobility of black female performers and authenticity in hip hop is dependent on the consumption of hip hop and pop culture. What is more, her combination of cultural and academic literacy demonstrates a type of social literacy. The analysis of representations of black female artists in the media in terms of the nuances and limitations of the social mobility of black women is one such example. In Dana's case, the images and representations of hip hop she consumed are critiqued with particular attention to the social positions that black women are allowed to occupy. Alice and Flo also provided examples of how different types of literacy inform each other. In this case, their academic literacy and social literacy linked together and supported their cultural literacy. Both of them mentioned that their schooling experiences occurred in environments that were mostly

white; this, in turn, led them to participate in social groups comprised of primarily white people as students at the university. Flo and Alice, by their own admission, are not as knowledgeable about black culture as they would like to be. Listening to hip hop music introduced them to aspects of black culture they had not experienced firsthand.

In these examples, three forms of literacy—academic, social, and cultural—intersected and operated in concert to highlight the combinations of various and multiple texts made available through mass media, the contexts in which forms of hip hop are engaged and practiced, and the interactions that occurred between fans, students, and practitioners in the course of engaging hip hop. Additionally, because the literacies these students used to engage hip hop were intertwined, it follows that the texts they consumed were also connected. That is, the social, academic, and cultural texts consumed through their practice of hip hop were woven together to create what is described as intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980).

Intertextuality and hip hop engagement. Generally, the notion of intertextuality is attributed to Kristeva (1980) who stated that “any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (p. 37). In terms of young peoples’ acts of absorbing and transforming, texts that participants encountered are critical to this study for several reasons. According to Duff (2004), children and young adults develop repertoires of pop culture icons and narratives that are part of their background knowledge, cultural repertoire, social practice, and identity. During social interactions, participants drew upon those components to establish their membership in a group, share interests, and provide them with a sense of power or authority. The participants in this study absorbed and transformed icons, stories, social practices, cultural inventories, and identities found in hip hop culture and re-presented in the

classroom, on, and around the campus of the university. The intertextual nature of these elements and practices constituted a hybrid, alternative form of literacy unique to this group of hip hoppers (Jocson, 2006, Weinstein, 2006, Cooks, 2004).

The students in this study engaged hip hop and learned to negotiate multiple cultural texts and social contexts, to induce collaborative action via individual effort, to nurture creative and critical thinking, to support the representation and transformation of social and cultural identities, and to stimulate the production of new and different knowledge through the aesthetic engagement and reproduction of pleasurable experiences. The value of this learning is its ability to create experiences organized around those qualities and skills. It is through the construction of such experiences that young hip hoppers learn to create themselves. To further demonstrate the significance of learning, this skill set and the educational potential that accompanies its acquisition, it is necessary to situate this set of competencies and practices in a framework of educational theory. More specifically, the processes of appropriation, transformation, and representation identified in the practices of engaging hip hop can be fruitfully discussed in relation to the educational theories of Eisner (1994, 2002), Dewey (1938/1963, 1959), and Siegesmund (2001, 2004), respectively. Grounding these processes and practices in such a framework serves to better prioritize the learning experiences that occur during the practice hip hop culture.

What is the Educative Value of Practicing Hip Hop Culture?

The concepts of educative and miseducative are fundamental to Dewey's (1938) educational philosophy founded on the idea that educative value "depends upon the quality of the experience that is had" and that "[t]he quality of any experience has two aspects" (p. 27). The

first aspect is the agreeability of an experience, and the second is the effect of this quality on later experiences. According to Dewey (1938), the former is more apparent and easily discernible by educators of young learners while the latter is not as obvious and requires educators to arrange resources and experiences that engage the student in order to increase the likelihood of having subsequent enjoyable experiences. In terms of the ritual and intertextual literacy practices that students in this study performed, it can be argued that they engaged hip hop in ways that gave them pleasure and promoted the enjoyment of future experiences with hip hop.

Educative value of hip hop rituals

How are their ritual practices educative? How did students in the study create and maintain educative experiences and skirt miseducative experiences? In terms of distinguishing between educative and miseducative experiences, the quality of the experience is the determining factor. Miseducative experiences are those that distort or arrest the development of future experiences (Dewey, 1938/1963), experiences that are imbued with qualities that “engender callousness, produce a lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness, modify the quality of subsequent experiences so as to prevent a person from getting out of them, [the experiences], what they have to give” (p. 26). Experiences that lack a cumulative connection to one another, regardless of how lively, exciting, or interesting they are, also constitute a miseducative experience because they form habits that increase the likelihood of controlling future experiences. Educative experiences, on the other hand, prepare students to grow and learn in ways that are enjoyable and progressive. They are enjoyable in the sense that the possibilities of having richer experiences later are not diminished and are progressive in the sense that

experiences are linked in ways that sustain and focus the energy of students and avoid the formation of habits that undermine the self-control or agency required for growth.

The students' experiences with hip hop were educative in a number of ways. First, the students in the study enjoyed how they engaged hip hop. Their experiences are characterized by acts of appropriation, transformation, and representation that worked to maintain and focus their energy and intention so that the habits that nurtured the agency necessary for growth were strengthened. Even in situations where there was an increased possibility of the development of a miseducative experience, students were able to transform them into pleasurable, progressive engagements with hip hop. For example, Dana's engagement with hip hop could have very well have produced qualities of indifference regarding the restricted social mobility and identity politics of black female artists in the hip hop and adult entertainment industry, hindering her from learning from that experience and diminishing her ability to control future experiences within hip hop and pop culture. This experience, instead, provided Dana an opportunity to craft herself as an academic, a hip hopper, and a feminist by engaging in scholarly research that focused on issues of gender, race, culture, and power and that engendered qualities of concern, self-direction, and intrigue. This finding illustrates two major principles of the educative and miseducative experience: continuity and interaction.

Continuity and interaction

Continuity and interaction are the chief arbiters in distinguishing educative experiences from miseducative experiences. Continuity of experience, also referred to as the experiential continuum, is founded on the ideas "that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes" (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 35) and that every experience appropriates

something from previous experiences and modifies the quality of those experiences which follow. The modifications that take place affects the quality of subsequent experiences and influences the formation of subjectivities, emotional and intellectual attitudes, and shape how one interacts with his or her environment. The current study found that these students were able to produce experiences that impacted their identities and drew from the previous experiences with hip hop. Their respective modifications occurred in ways that created the possibility that future experiences with hip hop will be just as, if not more, pleasurable. The focus on pleasure is not new or foreign to hip hop.

The ability to consistently produce and reproduce pleasurable experiences with/in hip hop culture was important for the educative experiences of students in this study. The participants' continuous engagement with hip hop exemplified an experiential continuum that shaped their identities as sentient, socio-culturally conscious, academically engaged hip hoppers. These experiences with hip hop included critiquing messages of intolerance toward women in certain expressions of hip hop, examining the conditions and patterns that make those messages possible, and fostering resistance to the effects of intolerance by creating opportunities that connected hip hop with the university. Because these students were able to link hip hop to various aspects of their academic performance (e.g. conference presentations, motivation for engaging coursework, negotiating peer group interaction) and socio-emotional development (e.g. meditation and spirituality) and also to recreate traditional social and cultural rituals (e.g. ciphers, shows, MC battles, open-mic events) that generate environments that are inclusive, it can be argued that they developed an experiential continuum that promoted persistence, tolerance, and pro-social behavior (Dewey, 1938/1963).

In addition to the production of pleasurable experiences, the qualities of the conditions surrounding their experiences are also important. For Dewey (1938/1963), the qualitative differences of the conditions were also fundamental in establishing the criterion for discriminating between experiences that are educative and those that are miseducative. There are two types of conditions at work here: objective and internal (Dewey, 1938/1963). The former refers to the external conditions that accompany an experience and alter, to some extent, the conditions under which an experience occurs. External conditions are best illustrated as restrictive features of the social environment in which the present experience takes place. The latter refers to the “formation of attitudes, desire and purpose” that occur in every experience (Dewey, 1938/1963, p. 44). External conditions are exemplified by the constrictions and effects of institutions such as school, race, gender, prison, community/family, and class whereas internal conditions are represented by the feats of improvisation, imagination, and resistance. When the external conditions are altered, it follows that the qualities of experience as well as the internal condition are also altered.

Examples of objective conditions in this study were represented by students’ perceived cultural deficits and their awareness of the distance between themselves and other peer and social groups, their acknowledgement of the strictures of traditional religion, as well as their commitments to academic responsibilities that characterized their experiences on campus. How students experienced the conditions of the university contributed to the formation of the attitude among them that this environment is imbued with qualities that are divisive and constrictive. Those conditions are also linked to their desire for positive qualities in those experiences. Flo and Alice altered the external conditions of their experiences by using hip hop to increase their

knowledge of black culture and ameliorate what they saw as their cultural deficiencies. Those alterations increased opportunities for them to relate to the socio-cultural experiences of black people they did not encounter in their daily lives. Dos and Walker used hip hop to close the distance they perceived between the hip hop community and the student body. They also used hip hop to improvise and create spiritual and meditative practices that resisted and addressed the inadequacies of formal religions. Dana, Dos, Flo, and Alice were all able to make connections between their academic commitments and their personal interests in hip hop. Those experiences piqued their interests, fortified their initiative, and arranged their desires and intentions in ways that helped them withstand and overcome obstacles they perceived. These examples exemplify the notion that the knowledge and skills one learns in one situation are carried over and used as tools to effectively negotiate future situations and illustrates, according to Dewey, the process by which experiences are constructed.

Through *interaction*, internal and external conditions receive equal consideration in the construction of experience (Dewey, 1938/1963). In terms of learning that results from student engagement in hip hop traditions, aesthetics, and cultural art forms, it is clear that the knowledge created and the skills gained from creating educative experiences can be carried over from one situation to the next. However, when the knowledge and skills one has acquired from past experiences do not apply or results in ineffective interactions with present and subsequent situations, a split occurs. For Dewey, this split disrupts and disorders the process of experience such that a type of schizophrenia is induced. That is, when what one has learned is without value or utility in a situation, it is assumed, according to Dewey (1938/1963), that the individual is not in his or her own environment or even in a different aspect of one's own world but in a different

world altogether. A divided, fragmented world is created for learners when continuity and interaction merge in ways that disrupt the process of constructing pleasurable experiences. The creation of “a world whose parts and aspects do not hang together is at once a sign and a cause of a divided personality...[O]nly when successive experiences are integrated with one another...can... a world of related objects [be] constructed” (p. 44). In other words, students who practice hip hop culture and construct hip hop cultural identities in an educational context that supports their respective practices and identities skirts schizophrenic experience and makes schooling a pleasurable, educative experience.

Pleasurable experiences are educative experiences and, for Dewey (1938), the promotion of pleasurable experiences in education is critical. He stated that “experience guides and results [in] a plan for deciding upon subject-matter, upon methods of instruction and discipline, and upon material, equipment, and social organization of the school” (Dewey, 1938, p. 28). Students whose educative experiences are situated in environments that nurture the practice of intertextual literacy forms and the intentional construction of hip hop identities require a progressive approach to education. Moreover, those students require an approach that acknowledges the process of aesthetic engagement involved in the achievement of learning outcomes that are different from those promoted in most school settings. As such, hip hop learning outcomes need to be prioritized differently in contemporary school settings such that the qualities characterizing educative experiences can be reproduced.

From Educative Experience to Educational Context: Introducing Hip Hop Learning Objectives into Schools

Performance art pedagogy provides a viable framework for integrating hip hop learning objectives into school curriculum. Garoian (1999) suggested that performance art pedagogy is founded on three attributes of cultural production: performance, performativity, and performance art. He described performance as “an expanded, heterogeneous field of cultural work within which the body performs...socially and historically constructed behaviors that are learned and reproduced (p. 8). As illustrated above, bright, black students are responsible for negotiating the behaviors and expectations of several, sometimes opposing, social and historical forces. Those negotiations are exemplified by the work that individuals put into performing identity roles such as student, hip hop, artist, gifted, black, and academic.

Garoian (1999) noted that performativity is characterized by a reflexive process by which students attain political agency through critiquing the culture they embody. By interrogating both dominant and non-dominant cultural paradigms, students locate themselves within the culture through a critique informed by their personal memory and cultural history and view their performances in relation to cultural history at-large. Participants in this study demonstrated critical insights regarding the student culture of the university, mainstream views of black female hip hop performers, traditional religion, and so on and located themselves in relation to those paradigms. Students also interrogated non-dominant cultural paradigms such as hip hop, trip hop, and neo-soul music. This ability to critique what brings them pleasure and bolsters empowerment as well as what brings them dis-ease not only supports the reflexive process but intensifies the

reflexivity. In other words, the act of self-critique nurtures a deeper understanding of themselves as artists, students, academics, black people, hip hop artists, and spiritual beings.

The third attribute of cultural production highlights the agency of artists within the context of modern industrial culture. New technologies, consumer capitalism, and rapid modes of production allow postmodern performance artists to develop interdisciplinary strategies and investigate across a combination of cultures. Those strategies and explorations are aimed at exposing the hidden agendas of mainstream culture by “aestheticizing ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, race, and class distinctions” (Garoian, 1999, p. 10) such that dominant authority is resisted and decentralized. Participants in the study were able to produce hip hop culture and identity by drawing from different bodies of knowledge and multiple cultures. For example, Dana used a feminist perspective informed by hip hop culture to deconstruct the images and representations of black female performers in mainstream media. By attending to the qualities that distinguished the social mobility afforded to white female performers from their black counterparts, she began to articulate an agenda purposed to marginalize and delegitimize the agency of black female artists. Her performance of hip hop feminism functioned to resist and de-center dominant perceptions of black women.

Performance art pedagogy is important to the process of translating experience into educational objectives. It addresses “the tension between students’ performances of personal knowledge and their performance of socially and historically determined curricula imparted through schooling” (Garoian, 1999, p. 1). According to Garoian (1999) performance art pedagogy attends to this tension by situating aesthetic elements included in the performative acts that produce identity as an educational imperative. Furthermore, he insisted that this educational

process involve a practice of teaching that makes the critique of hegemonic cultural performances a necessity. In this sense, the qualities of hip hop texts, in particular, and cultural texts, in general, that were perceived, critiqued, conceptualized, and expressed by participants in the course of identity construction are important to the educational process. The development of performance art pedagogy in the classroom takes into consideration the stories students create to make sense of their reality. For Garoian (1999), these new myths highlight the *doing* of things that need to be *undone*. From this perspective “performance art pedagogy represents a liminal space, an aesthetic dimension, wherein socially and historically constructed ideas, images, myths, and utopias can be contested and new ones constructed as they pertain to students’ experiences of reality and their desires to transform that reality” (p. 10).

Performance art pedagogy represents an approach that not only engages a process of aesthetic development but also supports the aims and outcomes associated with hip hop cultural production among students. More specifically, this pedagogical approach supports the transformations of social categories, develops students’ capacity to locate their own cultural performances as well as the cultural performances of others within historical and social contexts, provides access to and increases the social mobility of youth in ways that assist the integration of these aims and outcomes into educational curriculum.

Developing hip hop learning objectives

Integration of the outcomes and behaviors that indicate learning has taken place must be translated into clearly stated educational aims and objectives that can be easily observed and assessed by educators. In terms of curriculum planning and teaching, Eisner (1994) noted that “[o]bjectives are the specific goals that one hopes to achieve through an educational program”

(p. 108) and can take the form of behavioral objectives, problem-solving objectives, and expressive outcomes. Behavioral objectives refer to the performance of a desired student behavior in a particular subject matter. Eisner (1994) explained that objectives stated in terms of behavior describe the performance of an observable change in the learner that can be measured after a learning experience. The observable change communicated in these objectives “specifies the criterion level that must be achieved to demonstrate competency in reaching the objective” (Eisner, 1994, p. 109). A behavioral objective based on the learning that occurs in hip hop could be stated as follows: the student will be able to identify at least six major socio-political and historical events between 1977 -1987 that contributed to the development of hip hop culture. This objective specifies a behavior that can be identified simply by assessing the whether or not students can articulate these events and the context in which they occurred.

In problem-solving objectives, students are given a problem to solve or formulate a problem based upon their own interests and concerns. Eisner (1994) noted that these objectives can assume different shapes. Traditionally, however, they involve a format in which learners are “given a set of criteria or specifications and asked to create a product that will satisfactorily meet those criteria [and] situations [where] the potential answers are not known beforehand” (Eisner, 1994, p. 116-118). In terms of the learning that takes place in hip hop, a problem-solving objective could be stated as follows: students will be able to critique various representations of hip hop culture in the media (i.e. television, internet, print, and radio) in terms of race, class, and gender and/or according to local, national, and world histories. Another possible problem-solving objective could be stated as follows: students will compose a response to their critiques using poetry, graffiti, short film, internet technology, dance, or song accompanied by an essay

explicating the creative process and social, cultural, and /or historical significance of their product. For Eisner (1994), “ingenuity breeds interest” (p. 118). Problem-solving objectives emphasize intellectual exploration, higher order thinking, and mental flexibility and require ingenuity to satisfy specified criteria.

“Expressive outcomes are the consequences of curriculum activities that are intentionally planned to provide a fertile field of personal purposing and experience” (Eisner, 1994, p. 118-119). In expressive outcomes, there are no specific objectives or pre-planned problems posed before the activities. There is only the feeling that the activities will be pleasurable and “that some ‘good’ will come from them” (p. 119). Curriculum activities that allow students to academically engage the traditions, histories, and art forms of hip hop culture satisfy the criteria that constitute a pleasurable experience also produce expressive outcomes. What is noteworthy is the subjective nature of satisfying such criteria. In other words, the “good” that comes from expressive activities is produced in the act of achieving personal standards that comprise a “good time.”²² In the study, the pleasurable experiences that are produced when students engage hip hop culture eases the strain of bridging the space between the institution of schooling and the inspiration that hip hop provides. In turn, hip hop learning objectives are constituted by educational aims that engage social, historical, and cultural contexts, forms of literacy, and/or processes of identity construction that involve hip hop.

²²The notion of creating and having enjoyable experiences in the classroom does not garner top priority within the institution of schooling. Nonetheless, it is one of, if not, *the* most important ideas in designing pedagogy and curriculum that connect the performance of academic expectations with the performativity of non-academic experiences.

Connecting hip hop learning objectives with gifted education standards

Although there is little research that explicitly connects hip hop with the field of gifted education, there have been several studies that provide evidence-based research regarding the effectiveness of curricula that infuses or is based on hip hop. Many of the practices used to facilitate hip hop-based curricula as well as student outcomes in those studies have much in common gifted education pedagogy. Those outcomes and practices can be connected to National Association for Gifted Children's Programming Standards. Standard 3: Curriculum and Planning and Instruction is described as follows:

Educators apply the theory and research-based models of curriculum and instruction related to students with gifts and talents and respond to their needs by planning, selecting, adapting, and creating culturally relevant curriculum and by using a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to ensure specific student outcomes. (p. 10)

Studies by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2000, 2002), Stovall (2006) and Jocson (2006) employed pedagogical approaches that support the construction and implementation of hip hop-inclusive curricula and the achievement of hip hop learning objectives that relate to the curricular and instructional specified above. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2002) also focused on curricular objectives such as developing oral and written debate skills, critiquing a poem/song in a critical essay, and developing note-taking skills during lectures and presentations. Stovall (2006) used underground hip hop music in a secondary social studies classroom to develop pedagogical practices that foster critical thinking and teaching. For example, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2000) designed a poetry unit that juxtaposed underground hip hop and rap music lyrics like "Don't Believe the Hype" by Public Enemy and "Cell Therapy" by Goodie M.O.b

against canonical poetry like “O Me! O Life!” by Walt Whitman and “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou to achieve hip hop learning objectives. The objectives of their pedagogy were as follows:

to increase motivation and participation in discussions and assignments,...teach critical essay writing and literacy terminology in the context of, among other types of poetry, rap music,...situate Hip-hop historically and socially and discuss its inception as a response to urban post industrialism,...encourage youth to view elements of popular culture through a critical lens and to critique messages sent to them through popular media,...and to help students understand the intellectual integrity, literary merit, and social critique contained elements of their own youth culture. (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2000, p. 90)

In terms of connecting these objectives to programming, Student Outcome, 3.1 Curriculum Planning (NAGC, 2010) insists that gifted and talented students display growth that matches their abilities. This outcome is facilitated through curricula that bring together two complex and conceptually different genres of poetry. The practice of fusing underground hip hop with traditional poetry meets the requirement described in Evidence-Based Practices, 3.1.4.²³ Other connections between hip hop-infused curricula and programming can be located in Student Outcomes, 3.2 and 3.3 Talent Development (NAGC). Outcomes in this area insist that students with gifts and talents increase their competency in multiple talent arenas and across aspects of learning as well as grow their abilities in their domain of interest(s). These outcomes are

²³ National Association for Gifted Children Pre-K -12 Gifted Programming Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction, Evidence-Based Practice 3.1.4. states: “Educators design differentiated curricula that incorporate advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, distinctive, and complex content for students with gifts and talents” (p. 10).

exemplified by the idea that students must situate hip hop and canonical poetry within history and discern the social functions of both genres. By attending to the historical and social significance of and qualitative differences between these poetry genres, the conditions described in Evidence-Based Practices 3.2.1. can be fulfilled.²⁴ Similarly, the practices depicted in areas 3.3.1 call for the use of strategies and materials that respond to diversity.²⁵ The range of the music and poetry used in the unit do exactly that. For example, the music of the southern hip hop group, Goodie M.O.b, is very different from that of the New York-based, Public Enemy. Both represent two different regions of the U.S. and two very different aesthetics of hip hop. In terms of satisfying the conditions of 3.3.3., the practice of infusing hip hop into curricula allows students with gifts and talents who are interested in hip hop to develop, research, and explore those interests.²⁶

Regarding Instructional Strategies, area 3.4. of Programming Standard 3, infusing and exploring hip hop music and culture in gifted education curricula supports gifted and talented students' development as independent investigators. More specifically, this development is aided by the practice of juxtaposing hip hop music with canonical poetry and critiquing both genres in terms of aesthetics, historical and social dimensions.

²⁴ National Association for Gifted Children Pre-K -12 Gifted Programming Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction, Evidence-Based Practice 3.2.1. states: "Educators design curricula in cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social, and leadership domains that are challenging and effective for students with gifts and talents" (p. 10).

²⁵ National Association for Gifted Children Pre-K -12 Gifted Programming Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction, Evidence-Based Practice 3.3.1. states: "Educators select, adapt, and use a repertoire of instructional strategies and materials that differentiate for students with gifts and talents and that respond to diversity" (p. 10).

²⁶ National Association for Gifted Children Pre-K -12 Gifted Programming Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction, Evidence-Based Practice 3.3.3. states: "Educators provide opportunities for students with gifts and talents to explore, develop, or research their areas of interest and/or talent" (p. 10).

Another example of how critical thinking strategies are used to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents can be seen in the work of Jocson (2006) who reorganized the traditional structure of schooling by implementing two writing workshops, Poetry for the People (P4P) and Youth Speaks (YS).²⁷ She demonstrated how “hybrid literacy practices (i.e., writing and slamming poems, reading books and magazines, watching films, listening to and mixing music, etc.) were viable building blocks for realizing and expanding [the] ability to write” (p. 234). She highlighted the “urgent poetry” strategy in the P4P group workshop as a place students’ writing ability would grow.²⁸ This approach was designed to “move students’ perspectives and attitudes toward an understanding of how words matter...to get students to think about what’s important to them” (p. 243). In this case, students interrogated themselves and the world around them and used creative-thinking strategies to produce poetry that reflected what they learned from their observations and critiques.

The studies described above highlight the connection between Culturally Relevant Curriculum, area 3.5. of Programming Standard 3, and curriculum that has been infused with hip hop. That is, engaging and investigating hip hop music and culture assists gifted and talented

²⁷ P4P is a writing workshop sponsored by a school-university partnership that takes place in English classrooms during school hours approximately 3 days a week for a 4 to 6 week period in which students receive personal instruction in writing. This workshop culminates with a program that showcases the work of the student poets. “Youth Speaks is a San Francisco based organization that provides youth ages 13-19 the space and mentorship to grow as writers and performance poets” (p. 233). Each year YS culminates with a competition which results in the selection of a National Teen Slam champion.

This group exercise was initiated by prompt about Amadou Diallo, a twenty-one year old Black man shot 41 times by New York City policemen when he reached for his wallet. The assignment was to create an urgent poem based upon these discussions, to which the participant constructs a poem entitled “No One Cares” that centers around “the increasing homicide rate in Oakland that had recently made national news,...an earlier discussion on Amadou Diallo, [and] current events [focusing on] the criminality and overrepresentation of young Black males in local papers and other news media” (p. 245).

students to “develop knowledge and skills for living and being a productive in a multicultural, diverse, and global society.” Jocson (2006) created and implemented a curriculum that responds to controversial social dilemmas, such as the shooting death of Amadou Diallo, to engage students. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2000) altered traditional curriculum and carried out a curriculum that nurtured the deep exploration of both hip hop and long-established Western literature, including the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which these works were created. These studies provide evidence of the practices that support the growth of gifted and talented students as prescribed by the conditions of 3.5.1. and 3.5.3, respectively.²⁹

Behaviors such as demonstrations of critical and creative thinking skills and intercultural and intertextual literacy skills, improvement in writing and speaking proficiencies, and the expansion of vocabulary observed in youth and student production of hip hop culture are educational objectives produced through performative approaches to pedagogy and curriculum. The performance of these behaviors supports the national programming standards of gifted education and produces changes in students that are easily observed and assessed by classroom teachers.

Conclusion

The fact that findings of studies in art education focused on learning in the arts are similar to findings in studies focused on learning with/in hip hop is no coincidence. Research from both fields have shown that the learning processes involved in the practice of creating art hold

²⁹ National Association for Gifted Children Pre-K -12 Gifted Programming Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction, Evidence-Based Practice 3.5.1. states: “Educators develop and use challenging, culturally responsive curriculum to engage all students with gifts and talents” (p. 10). Evidence-Based Practice 3.5.3 states: “Educators use curriculum for deep explorations of cultures, languages, and social issues related to diversity” (p. 10).

important implications for education in general. In particular, intertextual literacy, intercultural communication, and transformative practices that are supported by a process of qualitative reasoning underlie the aesthetic development of young people participation in hip hop.

Hip hop also serves as an intermediary practice that links out-of-school and in-school experiences of students. The qualities of experiences created in individual and collaborative art forms undertaken in the “spirit” of hip hop during non-school hours can be recreated in the classroom via arts education. That is, the out-of-school processes that make such experiences possible can be translated into in-school expectations. As such, the same spirit that compels students to pursue the cultural art forms of hip hop in non-academic contexts and can be manifest and used to sustain students’ passion for learning in academic endeavors. In this study, educative experiences in the classroom that took advantage of this intermediary aspect of hip hop culture nurtured the connections participants made between these disparate worlds.

Because learning in hip hop resembles learning in the arts, pedagogies and curriculum strategies drawn from arts education can provide the structure necessary for institutionalizing the behaviors, aims, and techniques associated with hip hop into schools and classrooms. Furthermore, the learning that takes place within hip hop, as an art form, contributes to the argument for arts education in school and belies the claims that teaching art to students is without educational benefits (Winner and Cooper, 2000).

There are, however, some concerns that arise from the research on learning in hip hop. One of the most notable is the focus on urban contexts as sites of research. While it is duly noted that hip hop started in the inner cities of U. S. industrial centers in 1970’s and 1980’s, the present-day proliferation of hip hop into rural areas of the U. S. goes without saying. Despite the

practice of hip hop in these areas, there has been very little educational research conducted with young people practicing hip hop in non-urban contexts. More specifically, studies focusing on this population practicing hip hop in southeastern U.S. are non-existent.

In this paper I have illustrated the learning that occurred in the study's participants through their participation in the art form, hip hop. The learning outcomes include a form of literacy that includes the appropriation and manipulation of text from television, music, the internet, and print media drawn from various social, historical, and cultural contexts, a method of aesthetic development characterized by a process of qualitative reasoning; social, cultural, and historical awareness developed through an intentional production of hip hop culture and cultural identity; and a transformative practice that creatively reorganizes social structures and re-routes the circulation of power within those structures in ways that enable social mobility for hip hoppers. Most importantly, this study located the educative value of hip hop within its ability to mend heretofore unrelated experiences of schooling and practicing hip hop culture. Moreover, it demonstrated how experiences with hip hop similar to those of the participants in this study could be introduced in schools' curricula in ways that are educationally beneficial and legitimate.

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CHAPTER 4

COMFORTABLE WITH MYSELF: THE USE OF RITUAL AND HIP HOP AMONG
BRIGHT, BLACK STUDENTS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITY³⁰

³⁰ Callahan, J.S. To be submitted to the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*.

Abstract

In the field of gifted education the impact that hip hop culture is having on bright, black students goes virtually unattended. In this qualitative study, I explored how gifted and talented black students who attended a predominantly white institution in southeastern U.S. engage hip hop culture. Findings showed that students used hip hop music to help apprehend and transform their reality through a ritual process (Turner, 1974) and a set of ritual practices (Bell, 1992). In this article, I will share examples of the process and practices and conclude with implications for the social and emotional development of bright, black students.

Introduction

The airbrakes on the city transit bus squeaked and whooshed as it came to a stop in front of the Memorial Hall bus stop. I stepped off and headed toward the university library. Walking past the psychology building, I heard a voice from the top of the staircase overlooking the bus stop. “Ziiiggy!” he called. I could hear the smirk in his squeal. Trying to ignore him, I cursed, then prayed, and pressed on. Again, he drawled, “Heeey, Ziiggy!” Now, I know doggone well that I don’t look anything like Ziggy Marley. Sure, we are both Black men with dreadlocks and scruffy beards, but I’m at least five, six inches taller than Ziggy. This guy was mocking me. His arrogance invaded my nostrils like the stench of the river that meandered around the sprawling campus and through the small rural, university town. I looked up but didn’t need to see him to deduce that my assailant was more than likely a young White male between the ages of 18 and 22, a typical undergraduate at this large, public, research university. And no, this is not a grand indictment of all Whitefolks who attend this university; nor am I implying that every person who has insulted me by calling me a name has been White. But when one considers that of the more

than 34,000 students who attend this university over 75% identify as White, I felt fairly certain about my assumptions.

I wish I could say this kind of thing didn't happen often, but I can't. It occurs entirely too much to be taken as flattery. My name is not Ziggy or Bob. And I'm not Jamaican. However, given the fact that I haven't shaved since 1998 and my hair drapes past my waist, I can understand how my appearance might evoke thoughts and images of Rastafarians and reggae music. But who I am, what I am, and what I strive to be is much more than cool hair, an exotic accent, and an embodied soundtrack for smoking overpriced marijuana. As long as blood, breath, and spirit circulate, it is completely within my rights and capacity to offer something spectacular without having to become a spectacle. And if this young man was unable or unwilling to appreciate my efforts, then that should be his problem. I have my own fears to conquer; I don't need to be reminded of his. After this incident, I had had enough and to decrease the likelihood of something like this happening again I used a portion of my graduate assistantship stipend to buy a 256MB mp3 player. With music in my ears, I imagined it easier to deal with the forays of disrespect and ignorance.

With my newly purchased mp3 player, a cheap pair of earphones, a black wool/poly knit toboggan that I "borrowed" from my girlfriend and a massive collection of hip hop music, I created a social prophylactic to defend myself against any incursions of bigotry and ill-formed curiosity as I walked around campus and the downtown area. Outkast's *Aquemini* was the first cd that I downloaded onto that player that became like Afro-American Express for me—I never left home without that little blue box. I mumbled the lyrics of the song to myself, tucking a few errant locks under my black hat. The ritual of twisting and tucking my hair into this hat prepared

and protected me. The music worked like a talisman set to hand drums and synthesizers warding off haints sent to cause tension and dis-ease.

That experience is one of many that compelled me to pay more attention to the role hip hop played in the rituals I used to negotiate the tensions that arose in everyday life on a very White university campus in the southeastern United States. Listening to hip hop was more than a simple act of disengaging from my surroundings. The lyrics were scriptures and provided insight for successfully sustaining multiple identities, traversing treacherous socio-cultural landscapes, and developing individuality and self-awareness. The artists' music, like much of the hip hop I listen to, speaks to my experiences as a Black person and doctoral student on this campus—moving between and through multiple worlds, challenging conventions, and devising tactics aimed toward “finessing the struggle” (Flowers, 2001, p. 2). When I thought about that particular experience, I wondered how other Black students on campus made sense of similar encounters. What kind of stories might they relate? Had they too created ritual practices to protect themselves from stressful situations? Did hip hop play a part in their rituals as well? These concerns and questions provide the impetus for this study focused on the work of hip hop in the lives of gifted black students at a predominantly White university.

Cultural Experiences of Gifted Black Students: Literature Review

A growing body of literature examines the cultural experiences of gifted and talented Black students and other ethnic minority students in educational contexts. This study focused on the cultural experiences of gifted black university students at a predominantly white institution and the role of pop culture, specifically hip hop, in these experiences. The literature that addresses the cultural experiences of gifted, black and minority students will be discussed first as

it provides a foundation for the literature that focuses on gifted students and pop culture. At this time, there is no literature that attends to the relationship between gifted students and hip hop.

Cultural Experiences of Gifted Black Students

In a case study of bright, underachieving white, black, and Latino adolescent males in an urban high school, Hébert (2001a) highlighted the major socio-cultural factors that contributed to the academic underachievement of this group of young men. His study identified maladaptive personality traits; dysfunctional and inconsistent parenting; a mismatch between learning styles, interests and curricular needs; the need to maintain masculine peer group values; and guidance counselors' inability to successfully work with high-ability underachievers and youth from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds as factors that need to be addressed in order to reverse underachievement. In a similar case study, Hébert(1995) described a culture of academic achievement among a men's swim team comprised of White, Latino, and Black students in an urban high school and reported that (a) a familial relationship among team members, (b) academic monitoring, (c) an ideology of academic and individual excellence, (d) acceptance from the peer group, and (e) an emotional support system that included the swim team coach were six components that contributed to the academic success of the student-athletes. He concluded that this sub-culture of achievement is a potential benefit to educators of gifted students because it serves as a model for talent development.

Grantham (2004) explained the motivation of Rocky Jones, a gifted black male, to participate and thrive in an all-white gifted program and in so doing, revealed the cultural and social influences that contributed to his academic success. More specifically, Rocky's perceptions of peer relations and peer respect and recognition, favorable interactions with

teachers, appreciation of the benefits of gifted classes and curriculum, and a positive response to his ability to handle the rigors of advanced level classes compelled him to engage and excel in the gifted program at the middle and high school level. In another study, Grantham and Ford (1998) investigated how Danisha, an underachieving gifted black female student, perceived socio-cultural variables that included unfavorable perceptions of peer relations with Caucasian peers, meeting teacher expectations to serve as positive example for her African American peers, and her need to identify with her African-American culture. Danisha dealt with psycho-social variables that included conflicting “self-perceptions and personal feelings as an African American female [and] perceptions of her African American peer interactions” (p. 99) that perpetuated her underachieving behavior. In addressing her perception of these variables, the researchers were able to attend to her social and emotional needs through counseling. Hébert and Beardsley (2001) used critical theory to interpret a case study of Jermaine, a gifted African American male growing up in poverty in rural Alabama. Their study described the interactions between creative behavior and poverty and discussed how Jermaine’s relationship with his estranged father, the influence of his maternal grandfather and extended family, and the impact of satellite cable television on how he understood himself and made sense of his surroundings.

Much of the qualitative research on gifted black students has focused on describing the contextual-external factors and the “inner life” issues that impact their academic underachievement (Coleman, Guo, Dabbs, 2007). Studies (e.g., Grantham, 2004; Grantham & Ford, 1998; Hébert, 1995, 2001; Hébert & Beardsley, 2001) in this area have documented and discussed how social and cultural forces such as race, gender, class, media, and family relationships affect psycho-social processes, motivation, and socio-emotional development of

gifted and talented Black students. However, it is the connections that these students make with pop culture and media and, specifically, with hip hop that pique queries for this researcher.

Gifted Students, Popular Culture, and Media

The influence that media and television have on bright and gifted students has not gone unnoticed by qualitative researchers in gifted education. Literature that provides resources for and proffers the benefits of bibliotherapy for gifted students who face socio-emotional challenges is available (Hébert & Kent, 2000; Hébert & Hammond, 2006; Hébert & Sergent, 2005; Hébert & Spiers-Nuemeister, 2002). Bibliotherapy capitalizes on the effectiveness of biographies and literature in ameliorating social and emotional development (Frasier & McCannon, 1981, Hébert & Kent, 2000) and uses reading to illicit positive changes in affect and personality development of individuals (Halsted, 1994). However, there has been very little qualitative research that documents and describes how gifted students engage media and television or the benefits of guided viewing and bibliotherapy. Researchers in gifted education could gain a great deal from investigating the relationship between gifted and talented students and media.

Kavoori and Matthews (2004) explored how undergraduates in a media research course interrogated the cultural landscape of contemporary television³¹. In a project designed to integrate critical thinking with the process of producing television production programs, students

³¹ The Thinking Television Project is focused on an undergraduate Media Theory and Research methods (Tele 3410 at the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication) at the University of Georgia. I have fashioned this traditional “methods” or a “theory survey” course into one that marries media theory and methods to media literacy. The course links learning research methods (focus groups, ratings, surveys) and media theories (from a cultural studies perspective) to developing television show concepts that reflect the range of cultural populations in the United States and re-thinking how minority populations have historically been represented. It also engages with on-going “cultural wars,” “the war on terrorism” and emergent identity politics that underlies globalization and migration in the United States (Taken from <http://thinkingtelevision.uga.edu/> on July 3, 2007).

worked in groups to create proposals for television shows to be produced and distributed. The shows highlighted the connection between youth culture and critical media pedagogy. Their four-year study stressed the importance of understanding how bright students critically engage media through “niche cable channels, Internet sites, and computers” and articulate their perspectives on race, class, gender, multiculturalism, and sexuality through their proposals for television programs (p. 111). This multi-year study, in combination with the literature on bibliotherapy and qualitative studies that focus on the cultural experiences of gifted Black students in educational contexts, provides a sturdy segue for documenting and describing how students from this population engage with hip hop culture and media. To date, there has been very little attention focused on the influence of hip hop culture on gifted and talented black students. What is more, there is little research in the field of gifted education that focuses on the influence and role of hip hop culture in the lives of these students.

With that said, the purpose of this paper is to discuss a qualitative interview study that investigated the influence that hip hop culture had on a group of bright, black males and females ranging from 22 to 25 years of age who engage hip hop culture and who have attended or still attend a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the southeastern United States. The research reported here was guided by the following research questions: (a) how do bright, black university students use hip hop culture to make sense of their experiences at a mostly white institution and (b) what practices of hip hop culture do they use or invent to help them negotiate everyday relations?

Ritual as a Theoretical Framework

Ritual theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. Ritual theory emerged from the work of anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of religion. Scholars who study ritual, ritologists, have been influenced by the work of theorists such as Catherine Bell, Emile Durkhiem, Clifford Geertz, Ronald Grimes, Victor Turner, and Arnold van Gennep. Durkhiem (1912) analyzed the social dimensions of religion and reported that ritual plays a critical role in integrating and consolidating society. As theoreticians began to focus on ritual's effect on social interaction and balance, anthropologists began to interpret these effects in terms of social communication and symbolization. For instance, anthropologists like Geertz (1973/1977) and Turner (1974) analyzed cultural ritual as both an object and unit of analysis. Bell (1992) noted that a set of patterns emerges amid the different methodological perspectives and theoretical objectives of ritual. She reported that "ritual is a type of critical juncture wherein some pair of opposing social or cultural forces comes together [through] a mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of sociocultural integration, appropriation, or transformation" (p. 16). From these patterns, she critiqued the discourse on ritual theory in order to refine and redirect how ritual is constructed as object of a cultural method of interpretation.

What constitutes a ritual? How are rituals constructed?

For Bell (1992), ritual is constituted through the emergence of three key structural patterns. The first pattern is comprised of a dichotomous relationship between thought and action. She described thought as mental concepts such as symbols, myths, beliefs, and creeds that may inspire, direct, or encourage activity but are not activities in themselves. Action, on the other hand, expresses or performs these mental concepts.

Another pattern uncovered by Geertz (1973/1977) builds upon the distinction he makes between ethos and worldview. Ethos encompasses the aesthetic and moral facets of a culture and is supported by the “underlying attitudes people maintain about themselves and their world” (p. 89). Dispositions are also considered a part of ethos and are described as the probability of action occurring under specific circumstances. He extended this differentiation of disposition into two types: moods and motivations. Worldview, on the other hand, points to peoples’ understanding of their general conceptions of the order of existence, “the cognitive, existential facets of culture” (p. 90).

The second pattern of ritual discussed by Bell (1992) described a dialectical relationship between differentiated units rather than reproducing unmediated dichotomies (Geertz, 1973/1977). The second structural pattern illustrated the fusion or synthesis between ethos and worldview. He insisted that these symbol systems that inform our worldviews and conceptions of the world are cultural patterns that function as “models for” and “models of” apprehending reality. Systems such as religion “give meaning ... [or] objective form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves” (pp. 92-93). Pinn (2003), Perkinson (2003), and Kitwana (2002, 2005) have noted that hip hop, like religion, is a system for conceiving and fusing together worldviews with attitudes and motivations toward action. For ritual in particular, Geertz asserted that the moods and motivations that sacred symbols stimulate in people and the general ideas about the order of existence they create are ceremonial in form and reinforce each other. He continued: “In ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turns out to be the same world” (p. 112-113).

The third structural pattern in Geertz's (1973/1977) concept of ritual shifts the emphasis from the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of the participants to the role of the researcher and materializes in the cultural performances for the believer fuses dispositions with concepts. He explained that this junction serves as a site where "the interaction between them can be most readily examined by the detached observer" (p. 113). He insisted that the outsider is only able to engage ritual conceptually, through models and theories for analysis or aesthetic appreciation. Participants, on the other hand, experience the integration of their own worldview and dispositions in the ritual. Understood this way, Bell (1992) extended Geertz's (1973/1977) argument and located a third structural pattern that addressed the meaning-making process in ritual theory: "ritual participants act, whereas those observing them think" (p. 28). Bell suggested that meaning in ritual activity is produced through the fusion of conceptions and dispositions for participants. Meaning for the theorist is produced through perceiving the meaningfulness of the ritual for the actors. She went on: "By recognizing the ritual mechanism of meaningfulness for participants, the theorist in turn can grasp its meaningfulness as a cultural phenomenon. Ritual activity can become meaningful to the theorist" (p. 28).

Ritual process as a mechanism for meaning

In terms of analysis, the ritual mechanism for recognizing meaningfulness in ritual activity can be best described as a process. This process builds upon the three structural patterns of ritual that differentiate, integrate, and interpret the dichotomies and dialectical relationship between thought and action that produce a cultural meaning from the ritual acts of participants. The ritual process is composed of three phases: separation, limen (margin), aggregation (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1968, 1974). Originally referred to as "rites de passage" (van Gennep,

1960), movement through these phases are characterized by transitions from one state to another. A “State...is a more inclusive concept than status or office and refers to any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized.” (Turner, 1967/1987, p. 4). Examples of various states can be seen in relationships such as undergraduate-graduate and bachelorette-wife. He went on to say that:

The first phase of separation comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from a previous fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a “state”); during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) is ambiguous; he [or she] passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase the passage is consummated. The ritual subject ...is in a stable state once more and...has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and “structural” type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards. (p. 4-5)

When behaviors and interactions are framed as “rites de passage” or ritual processes, the theory and data are no longer separated. Rather, the data that is collected is viewed in terms of how it exemplifies the theory. Participants in this study are viewed as ritual subjects that transition from one state to another.

Structure and anti-structure

In addition to the transformation of a ritual subject from one state to another, it is very important to note that this process takes place within and between social structures. Structure, in this sense, refers to a social structure, “a more or less distinctive arrangement of culturally dependent institutions and the institutional organization of social positions and/or actors which

they imply” (Turner, 1974, p. 272). Class, race, gender, and age are all examples that qualify, for Turner, as a structure due to the “measure of alienation...that tend[s] to produce distance and inequality...leading to exploitation” of and between individuals and groups that occupy these positions in society and culture. In sum, “Structure... holds people apart, defines their differences, constrains their actions” (Turner, 1974, p. 47). Turner, however, did not set anti-structure opposite of structure nor did he refer to it as a negative aspect of structure. Rather, anti-structure is between structures. Turner described anti-structure as a bond, a “consciousness and willingness” (p. 45) that unites people over and above the distance and difference that characterizes formal social structures. Examples of anti-structure can be found in religious rites and ceremonies such as communion (Turner, 1974) as well as academic ceremonies such as graduation (Manning, 2000).

Turner (1969) asserted that anti-structure is accessed through the liminal phase of the ritual process “as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated... community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to general authority” (p. 96). He continued to develop this concept through use of the Latin term *communitas* as opposed to “community.” Turner made the distinction that community implies an “area of common living” whereas *communitas* is mode of social relatedness. *Communitas* emerges in between, at the edges, and from beneath structure through cultural attributes of liminality, marginality, and inferiority. The ability to erode normative structures of institutionalized relationships and purge the stereotypes associated with status positions with other individuals in fact or imagination is an indication of the immense potency that accompanies the materialization of *communitas*. According to Turner, the concrete and imaginary dissolution of cultural

restriction as well as the spontaneous mobilization of human cognition, agency, and historical memory liberate energies imbued with ‘soul’ and vitality that make *communitas* so potent. This modality is achieved by the passengers whose positions (in a structure) change during the rites de passage.

Upon acquisition, passengers are considered to possess attributes of (a state of) liminality. According to Turner (1969), this state and the individuals and groups occupying it “are necessarily ambiguous, and elude normally located states and positions in a cultural space. [They] are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between these positions” (p. 95) designated and organized by custom, law, ceremony and convention. In sum, anti-structure materializes where structure is not and is constituted by attributes like *communitas* and liminality such that the former is a cultural manifestation of the latter. That is, *communitas* is a cultural expression of liminality accessed during the ritual process. An example of *communitas* can be seen in many of the shows performed by black rock n’ roll artists such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and James Brown in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Many shows were monitored by local police officers and began with a rope that ran the length of the floor to segregate black and white fans. However, it was long before the ropes were dismantled by young people from either side. Enraptured by the music, young folks forewent convention and came together to ‘get on the good foot’. In this case, liminality emerged from the erosion of social norms and law (i.e. doing away with the rope and disobeying authority) and *communitas* is conjured amongst the young black and white patrons of rock and roll through music and dance.

Ritual as method

Ritual theory was used to analyze the interview and observation data. Ritual theory analysis includes locating structural patterns and practices that make the amalgamation of opposing social and/or cultural forces possible (Bell, 2001, Turner, 1969, 1974). Turner (1974) described ritual as a cultural process that takes place within and between social structures; unveils the classifications, categories, and processes that organize the roles, status, property, and power in a society; and reveals how structure delineates our differences, keeps people apart and limits our interactions with each other. Structure can be identified in the rules, practices, values, and beliefs used to socialize a person into a particular culture or social setting (van Gennep, 1960; Manning, 2000). This ritual process (Turner, 1974), originally referred to as “rites de passage” (van Gennep, 1960), operates as a sequence of three phases characterized by transitions or transformations from one state or culturally recognized condition to another. *In the separation phase*, the individual or group exhibits behavior that signifies a movement away from a set of cultural conditions or a fixed position in a given social structure. In the transition phase, the individual enters a liminal or “in-between” period. During this phase the state or position of the individual is ambiguous and may exhibit none or few of the attributes of the previous or impending state. The transition is consummated in the third phase, incorporation. The individual or group acquires the rights and privileges of certain social positions and is required to behave according to norms and standards ascribed to those positions (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1974). Examples of rituals can be seen in marriages, graduation ceremonies, fraternity and sorority initiations, and inaugurations. Manning (2000) used the term ritual generically to refer to the rites of passage, secular ceremonies, and cultural performances that take place in campus culture. In

addition to these three main anthropological concepts of ritual, she delineated at least seven types of ritual that are prevalent on college campuses. These ritual types include reification, revitalization, resistance, incorporation, investiture, entrance and exit, and healing. Although each of these rituals has its own unique function in college culture, the structural pattern of establishing a dichotomous relation between two entities (i.e. bachelor-husband, bachelorette-wife, undergraduate-graduate, etc.) through differentiation and then invoking a dialectic relationship that fuses these entities together by engaging in ritual activities (i.e. exchanging vows, convocations, and baccalaureates) is still salient.

In terms of analysis, Bell (1992) focused on the practice of ritual acts: “Acting ritually is first and foremost a matter of nuanced contrasts and the evocation of strategic, value-laden distinctions” (p. 90). Ritualization involves ways of acting that differentiate and establish a privileged distinction from other ways of acting. This differentiation is supported by the criteria that constitute ritual practice. Practices are described as “1) situational and 2) strategic acts of agency 3) that often, but not always, take place unbeknownst to the ‘passenger’ and 4) are able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of structural order of power in the world” (Bell, 2001, p. 82). Examples of ritual practices can found in rap’s “struggle for liberatory experience amid entrapment” (Taylor, 2003, p. 119). He goes on:

When rappers tell stories while facing police brutality or prison warehousing of racially stigmatized poor, depicting the struggle, survival, and flourishing of oppressed communities ... they challenge power inequalities and material oppression, deploying polyvocal discourse that destabilizes dominant discourses and patterns (p. 119).

In other words, artists who practice rap reconfigure the structural order of power by acknowledging and critiquing the painful and pleasurable effects of postindustrial conditions that shape hip hop culture (Rose, 1994).

Using ritual theory as a framework allows researchers to focus on locating and examining multiple and opposing cultural states and social positions that individuals and groups occupy. Included in this framework is the analysis of how occupants make sense of (their own and others') cultural states and positions as well as their respective individual and collective negotiation of dominant social forces and the production of subjugated knowledge(s) in a social structure. This framework also gives particular attention to the outcomes produced in ritual processes, especially those effects that reconfigure the order of power in a given social structure.

Methods

In this interview study I employed a *performative approach to ethnographic methods* to investigate the influence of hip hop culture on a group of bright, black males and females in their mid- to early- twenties who engage hip hop culture and who have attended or still attend a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the southeastern United States. The primary goal of this study was to explore how hip hop culture influenced the everyday experiences of a small group of black students at a predominantly white institution (PWI) in southeastern United States. It entailed "the close study of culture as lived by particular people, in particular places, doing particular things at particular times" (van Maanen, 1995, p. 23). To investigate these particularities I used a *performative approach to ethnographic methods*.

Performative approach to ethnographic methods

A performative approach to ethnographic methods “views culture as complex performative process [that] seeks to understand how people enact and construct meaning in their daily lives” (Denzin, 2001, p. 21). This process, in turn, produces cultural performances. Performativity and performance exist in tension with one another, a tension between *doing*, or performing, and the *done*, the text, the performance” (Denzin, 2000, p. 190). In other words, performativity can be described as the everyday practices people take up that produce performances. For Denzin (2001), performance is the product of performativity. Performativity was important in this study because it allowed the researcher to focus on the cultural practices that participants invented and reproduced to *do* hip hop and what got *done* in their cultural performances of hip hop.

Denzin (2000) stated that “the next moment in qualitative inquiry will be one in which the practices of qualitative research finally move without hesitation or encumbrance from the personal to the political” (p. 61). For Jones (2005) “because the performance-performativity dynamic asserts that performances are inseparable from performers and that performativity is inseparable from politics, ...personal narrative...enmesh[es] the personal within the political and the political within the personal in ways that can, do, and must matter” (p. 12). Drawing from Denzin (2001), the use of personal narratives in this study can be described as “a political act [because] it inserts itself in the world in an empowering way. It uses narrated words and stories to fashion performance texts that imagine new worlds, worlds where humans can become who they wish to be, free of prejudice, repression, and discrimination” (p. 21).

Performative approach to fieldwork

This *performative approach to ethnographic methods* also draws from Wolcott's (1999) articulation of interviewing. The relationship between ethnographic methods and interviewing emphasized the performative aspects of fieldwork and called attention to what a researcher is expected to do in order to accomplish the task. "Experiencing, enquiring, and examining" are methods that facilitate the "doing" of ethnography and constitute what Wolcott (1995) referred to as the "art of fieldwork" (p. 46-47). He explained that "experiencing includes...information that comes directly through all the senses [despite the fact that] observational research plays out almost entirely in what we see...and hear" (p. 46). "Enquiring or 'interviewing'"[constitutes]," according to Wolcott, "the critical difference between being present as a passive observer of what is going on and taking an active role in asking about what is going on" (Wolcott, 1995, pp. 46-47).

Another important facet of this performative approach to interviewing is that it addresses the openness and indeterminacy of postmodern interviewing, which informs my research. Scheurich (1995) noted that interviewees often resist the asymmetrical power relations of the interviewer/interviewee relationship because each has different goals, intentions, and questions. He goes on to say that "[i]nterviewees do not simply go along with the researcher's program. [They] carve out space of their own; [and] can often control some or part of the interview" (p. 247). The moments where participants took control in the interview in my study I describe here were most notable when they uttered the phrase, "I know I'm getting off the subject"

Overall, the emphasis on the performative aspects of fieldwork draws attention to the nuances entailed in the *doing* of ethnography. It is not enough to simply be in the field and

observe and talk with participants, particularly when those conventional methods of data collection restrict the researcher unnecessarily. The art of fieldwork “in all observation is achieved not in the act of observing but in recognizing...the potential significance...[of what] has been observed” (Wolcott, 1995, p. 162-163).

In terms of *doing* ethnography with gifted and talented individuals who engage hip hop culture, I found that fieldwork informed by performative methods was particularly important to this research project. Because I am a practitioner of hip hop culture and a scholar of African descent participating in a gifted program, I had already accomplished a great deal of fieldwork during my life in what might be called a long-term prior ethnography. That is, this project was based upon decades of a personal prior ethnography experiences with both hip hop culture and a culture of giftedness. Doing research using performative approach to ethnographic methods produced a different intelligibility that recognized the potential significance in the utterances and actions of gifted and talented, black university students who engage hip hop during their time at a mostly white university. This intelligibility can be described as a decidedly different approach to thinking about and understanding the lives of gifted black students, one that highlights the role of hip hop culture in their lives, emphasizes how they understand the various and conflicting socio-cultural contexts they negotiate, connects their micro-level movements (i.e. thoughts and actions) to macro-level structures (i.e., race, culture, religion, and education), and interprets the meaningfulness of these movements for the students and the researcher. The point here is that research projects do not necessarily begin with institutional review board permission to start collecting data. In many studies, as in this one, the researcher began unofficially to collect data decades before the official project began. These experiences became research when construed in

academic contexts and practices. A performative approach to ethnographic encourages the researcher to acknowledge the artfulness in the performance and performativity all of which inform the research process.

Research site

This study took place on the campus of a flagship land grant institution. The institution's 2010 Fact Book reported a total enrollment of 34,677 students. Approximately, 71% of those students identified themselves as white, while black students comprised 7.73 % of the student population. Although the institution is located in a rural area of the state, it attracts many students from a nearby large metropolitan city and its wealthy suburbs, layering a middle- and upper-class urban overtone to the bucolic landscape of the university. Like many Research Extensive and Division 1 institutions, the university is internationally acknowledged for its research and has also earned many athletic championship titles. Furthermore, the town is well-known for its support of indie rock music. The lively downtown area has several venues, bars, and clubs that provide ample opportunity for musicians and singers to network and develop as artists. In 2001, I began to notice flyers and handbills advertising hip hop shows, freestyle battles, and open mics posted on campus and in the downtown area. It was logical to conduct my study at this site. My experiences from participating in a gifted program while in school as well as my experiences as a current graduate student/researcher/hip hopper at a PWI interested in the experiences of gifted, black students at this university who engage hip hop culture informed my decision to do so.

Sample and Sample Selection Criteria

In this study I chose to interview five black males and three females who are enrolled at or have attended this institution and who are involved in hip hop culture. The sample selection criteria for participants in this study required that they be (1) Black, (2) gifted, (3) active in hip hop culture, and (4) between 20- 25 years old. In terms of race, all participants identified themselves as “black.” The fact that these students met the admission standards set by the institution and attended the university satisfied the criteria for giftedness for this study. Participants demonstrated their involvement in hip hop culture by attending live hip hop performances, composing original lyrics for songs or poetry, producing (orchestrating) hip hop related events (i.e., spoken word sets, live shows, ciphers, community outreach, public protests), writing graffiti, break(danc)ing, enrolling in courses that focused on hip hop culture and history, and/or simply listening to hip hop music. I knew all but one of the participants through meeting them at hip hop and hip hop-related events. Participants ranged in age from 22-25 years old. I identified participants through purposeful sampling, (Patton, 1990) that allows researchers to select “information-rich cases ... from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research” (p. 169). There are a number of strategies for selecting information-rich cases, however, I chose to use theory-based or operational construct sampling. This strategy samples specific occurrences, periods of time, “slices of life,” or people based upon their potential to manifest theoretical constructs of interest (Patton). Participants for this study were chosen because I believed they could provide data that included both a range of experiences on campus and various levels of involvement with hip hop as bright, black students at this PWI. These students’ stories about their engagement in hip hop and everyday life on campus

represented instances of the ritual processes and practices included in the cultural production of hip hop.

Between April and August of 2008, I conducted a one and a half to two-hour, semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interview with each of the eight participants. I gave participants a copy of the interview protocol at least two weeks in advance in order to give them a chance to think about the questions we would discuss during the interview. The chief purpose of the interviews was to elicit and document participants' everyday experiences as black students on and around campus as well as their experiences with/in hip hop culture in this town. All but one of the interviews were transcribed (one of the audiotapes was inaudible). I gave copies of the transcripts to participants and asked them revise them if they wished; no one did. I also conducted participant observations during the sixteen weekly open-mic nights at local venue and observed a presentation on campus by a nationally-known female hip hop scholar that was followed by a discussion of the representation of women in hip hop culture. Dana, a participant in the study, was a panelist for that discussion. The weekly open-mic nights were events that included performances by local poets, arts, and musicians. Performers represented various races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Students, community members, and artists from the large metropolitan city an hour away all shared the stage. Music ranged from blues and folk to gangsta rap to conscious hip hop to acapella singing to rock and pop. Spoken word artists who performed regularly sometimes collaborated on poems. The site of the research offered a multitude of opportunities to collect data for this study.

Descriptions of Participant

Walker is a 25-year old, third year law student at the research site university. As a youth, he attended a school for the arts and was often on stage as a performer. Later, he attended and graduated from a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). He was introduced to hip hop by his mother and older siblings and remembered making mixtapes with friends after school. He earned his stripes as a battle rapper and pursued a career as a hip hop artist, even signing a contract for a record deal. However, after the deal fell through he enrolled in college, vowing never to rap again. During his four years as an undergraduate, rather than rap, he promoted hip hop shows. His passion for MCing was reinvigorated during law school as a way to alleviate stress and monotony.

Dos is a 25-year old senior majoring in sociology. He attended racially-integrated, culturally diverse public schools and enrolled in an HBCU before transferring to the research site university. He was introduced to hip hop through an older brother who was deaf. He remembered being a loner and eventually becoming involved in graffiti, b-boying, and djjing during his youth. As a student at this university, he organized hip hop shows, student organizations, and student-led protests. He was also a master of ceremonies for hip hop shows and a weekly open mic/poetry night as well as manager for several local hip hop artists.

Flo is a 23-year old senior majoring in history. She attended a predominantly white private school from elementary to high school and was introduced to hip hop through watching the video for Coolio's *Gangsta Paradise* on cable television with her friends during middle school. She stopped listening to hip hop in middle school and early high school, gravitating to metal groups like Korn. However, she began listening to underground hip hop more frequently

during her college years because her boyfriend was an MC in local hip hop group. She admitted to listening to and enjoying crunk music, a genre of hip hop made famous by artists like Lil' Jon, for fun. Her preference in hip hop music, however, is trip hop; a sub-genre of hip hop characterized by surrealism, ambient soundscapes, ethereal vocals, and moody, dub bass lines backed by hip hop beats that originated in the U.K in the early 1990s.

Alice is 22-year old senior majoring in art education. Like Walker, she attended a school for the arts. She admits that she grew up around a lot of white people and that her engagement with hip hop was marginal until the latter half of college when she began dating a hip hop music artist who made beats and instrumentals and exposed her to “conscious” hip hop music artists like Mos Def, Talib Kweli, and the like. Like Flo, Alice also listened to crunk music for fun but preferred trip hop and instrumentals.

Dana is a 24-year old Masters student in social science education. She attended a magnet high school and later enrolled in an HBCU. Her older sister introduced her to hip hop. During middle school she dabbled in graffiti, b-girling, and rapping. Like Flo and Alice, she listened to commercial hip hop for entertainment. But she also engaged hip hop academically, exploring issues of race, class, gender, and power as they relate to music and culture.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Analysis of the data began with the construction of the interview protocol for which I developed interview questions that would elicit data that would answer the research questions. Participants responded to questions with data that did indeed address the research questions but often provided additional data that contextualized their responses. My interview questions worked well and participants provided data that suited the study well. The analysis and

interpretation of data in this study were driven primarily by the study's two research questions:

1) How and for what reasons do bright, black university students use hip hop culture to make sense of their experiences at a mostly white institution? 2) What practices of hip hop culture do they use or invent to help themselves negotiate everyday relations?

Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection. I immediately transcribed all audiotapes word-for-word except, for one tape that was inaudible. After I interviewed all participants, I began an intensive period of data analysis and carefully read and studied each transcript during transcription, repeatedly in order to get both sense of each participant's specific responses and also a general sense of all data. I studied the data using the research questions as a guide and looked for participants' descriptions of their experiences with hip hop as university students. The interview questions were specifically designed to ascertain how students related to hip hop, campus culture, gender, spirituality, and their relationships with other students and faculty. Thus, it was expected that these themes would appear within the data. However, participants' responses did occasionally discuss issues around hip hop that were not included in the interview protocol.

At this point, I began to more deliberately use ritual theory to interpret the data. For example, Rose (1994) explained that flow, ruptures, and layering were a part of the social and aesthetics dimensions of hip hop. Her theory worked well with my data. Therefore, I first noted all occasions when participants either resisted or were excluded from conventional structures of race, culture, gender, and spirituality. In their descriptions of those experiences they may or may not have referenced their experiences with hip hop. For example, one young woman in the study, educated in predominantly white private schools, preferred to date white men and often found

herself unaccepted, socially, by black men for that reason. Next, I used ritual theory's concept of anti-structure and liminality to identify how they used hip hop to further resist conventional structures, to transform themselves to find emotional well-being, and spiritual grounding. For example, Flo, the young woman who was rebuffed by some black men for dating white men, found comfort in the ideas and messages in the certain hip hop and neo-soul music.

Finally, I identified practices that help facilitate students' transition through the ritual process, from structure, to anti-structure, and back again. This phase of analysis is achieved through locating the ritual practices prompted by moods and motivations that attract participants to hip hop. I located ritual practices or cultural performances that symbolize the liberatory, liminal, and integrative outcomes of hip hop rituals performed by participants, thus uncovering the dialectic by which participants transform themselves and their surroundings, and fuse together opposing cultural and social forces experienced on and around campus. More specifically, I used ritual theory to analyze how participants: (a) conceptualized hip hop, race, campus culture, gender, and spirituality; (b) positioned themselves in relation to these structures; (c) formed moods and motivations that stemmed from perceived positions in the structures; (d) practiced hip hop as a students at this university; (e) and used hip hop practice to address the tensions that arose from negotiating the social structures of race, gender, culture, and spirituality. This analysis focused on the worldviews, tensions, dispositions, and ritual practices that this group of high-ability, black students found meaningful to their everyday lives at a university that is predominantly white. By distinguishing how rituals become meaningful to the participants, I am able to understand the rituals' meaningfulness as a cultural experience (Bell, 1992).

In this multi-layered analysis, ritual process (Turner, 1974) and ritual practices (Bell, 2001) are used ritual theory to identify and interpret how gifted black students apprehended, resisted, and incorporated the practices, norms, and ideologies that make up the culture of this university and better understand the role that hip hop plays in this process.

Ritual theory is essential to understanding the complex explanations of the everyday lives of people (Grimes, 1994). The concepts and methods discussed above assist in this task by creating a perspective that allows a different understanding of how people make sense of and negotiate their social terrain, an understanding that is not commonly seen in the field of gifted education. By locating and analyzing the ritual practices that young black people perform to facilitate movement through the ritual process, we can generate a distinct understanding of the social lives of these students. In the next sections, I present interview data that illustrate how bright, black university students use hip hop to traverse the structures they encounter during their experiences in and around campus. The first set of excerpts and vignettes focuses on the how students make sense of socio-cultural terrain and the exclusion they experience while attending a predominantly white university. In them, they describe experiences from the classroom that have shaped their perceptions of university student culture. The second set of vignettes focuses on ways students become involved in and engage hip hop. Here they talk about their reasons and motivations for making hip hop a part of their lives while attending this university. These experiences revealed the practices that facilitate their movement through the ritual process and address the tensions that arise from their exclusion.

Findings

Step into my World: Experiences in the Classroom and on Campus

It must be noted that the interview questions were intended to elicit these student's experiences on and around campus. Students had the opportunity to discuss a myriad of experiences. However, experiences with race and the dominant culture of the university emerged as salient and important issues to this group of students. When I asked participants about their experiences in the classroom and on campus, Dos, a 25-year-old male, shared this story with me.

“When I came to [PWI] it didn't have anything that really appealed to me. [I] wasn't into the Greek system. So talking to some of these student around here, I feel like I could relate to them but they couldn't relate to me. I could step into their world but they couldn't step into mine. [PWI] is real cliquish.”

Walker is a 25-year-old, 3rd-year law student. When asked about his experiences in the classroom, he shared this insight with me:

Bigots, when it comes to their disdain for black people, have been taught enough from TV and movies that you can't be racist. You can't be f**ked up. You can't create systematic method of oppression. Whether you gotta coffee shop or you gotta university, you can't just do that. But I think what they do is channel their frustration and anger and bigotry towards individuals that refuse to assimilate, you know, and I'm nothing like the black people in my class. So anytime I say things in class it's viewed as leftist, radical talk and it's really not that far off.

Flo, a 23-year-old history major, had a response similar to Walker's when I asked about her experiences in the classroom.

[I]n my hip hop class there was one day when I had mentioned that my boyfriend was white and I got a bunch of negative looks from a bunch of the guys. I feel very alienated from the black community at [PWI] especially. Just standing at the [Center] bus stop [where] all the black kids hang out together, I get looks and stuff. I don't feel part of the black community. I've never really felt part of the black community. I've always gone to private schools.

The excerpts presented above illustrate how some black students perceive their position in relation to other students and the social structure at the university. What is more, these excerpts emphasize the conflicting social and cultural expectations of students' experiences. Dos was disassociated from the student body and the Pan-Hellenic or Black Greek social system at the PWI. Flo experienced alienation from the black community in class and on campus. Walker was marginalized in class for expressing his viewpoints. These incidents highlighted the patterns of exclusion that existed in this university setting and that are produced in a number of ways. Dos perceived his relationships with many students as one-way, "I can step into their world but they couldn't step into mine." He interpreted the PWI student social scene as "cliquish," "layered," and comprised of worlds that he can travel between. Walker gave a nuanced understanding of the social and cultural forces in play, was careful to distinguish between racism and bigotry, and cited the latter as part of the source of the marginalization he experienced in the classroom. He described himself as an "individual who refuses to assimilate" and seemed almost to expect to be the target of his classmates' frustration, anger, and bigotry. Being "nothing like the black people in [his] class" leads his classmates to perceive him as left of center and radical.

Flo perceived herself to be an outsider to the black community at the PWI and in the town. She explained that she did not fit in and cited her education at predominantly white private schools as a reason for this separation. She believed her choices in romantic interests and prior experiences in school were reasons for her lack of connection with the black community. For Flo, the negative looks from many of the black males in the class for dating outside of her race produced feelings of alienation from black community. Like Walker, Flo also seemed to expect to be ostracized by classmates and peers. “I’ve never really felt part of the black community,” she said.

How Hip Hop Became Automatic for the People: Experiences with Hip Hop at Predominantly White Institution

This next set of vignettes highlights how participants in this study become involved in and engaged hip hop at a university in a town known for rock, pop, and folk music. In the vignettes, they talked about their reasons and motivations for making hip hop a part of their lives while attending the university. Their experiences revealed practices that facilitated their movement into the liminal phase and through the ritual process and also addressed the tensions that arose from their exclusion.

When asked about his involvement with hip hop while at University, Dos told me that: I couldn’t survive [PWI] without having some form of hip hop. So, every Thursday night at my apartment [we] did what was called the cipher session [an impromptu gathering where participants take turns rapping, speaking, or dancing] and would invite people from the community as well as students from all walks of life. We would sit in a circle and pass incense around. When the incense came to you, you could introduce yourself or

say a poem or talk about something that's happening in the news. You could do whatever. When we first started it might have been 10 of us. It went from 10 to 50 to 75 people showing up at my house within a year.

For Dos, hip hop was an option not readily accessible within the structure of the university. As a self-identified hip hopper, he felt compelled to address this deficit and conducted ciphers as a ritual practice to do so. He explained as follows:

So next we went to the Bar E [and] every Wednesday we'd have open mic. The same crowd that was in my living room was now coming out Bar E and it was a beautiful thing. Seeing how well that concept was working we started a freestyle session at my house on Fridays. Again, I can honestly remember it being 3 mcs to just more than I could handle. From that one flagship then we [started] doing freestyle battles on campus and it took off. I pretty much help build what I needed in Athens. I couldn't imagine going to [this university] without that, you know what I mean.

Flo explained that organizing a cipher for a course on the history and educational foundations of hip hop was one of the ways she engaged hip hop. "The cipher was the main involvement that I had; putting together that event at the end of your hip hop education class. We had different artists and poets come in [from the hip hop community]. Just, people come and speak their mind ... I liked it a lot." Flo's method of engagement is particularly interesting when we consider the alienation she felt from many of the black people in the class and on campus. The cipher presented an opportunity for her to provide for others what she felt she lacked—a conscious and willing connection with other people that transcended the structures that would normally restrict such a relationship.

Walker disclosed to me that engaging hip hop helped disrupt the monotony of his academic experience. “Law school is just so static. I’m just so easily bored. It’s just too much of the same, like the schooling of it. So I ended up going to the poetry night and I did a couple poems.” After receiving accolades from Dos, Walker met another producer/musician, Ben Juan, who recognized his skill as an emcee. “I don’t write no poetry. I write rhymes,” he told me. “So me and Ben Juan connected ... and that’s how we started the little local production, [Town] Entertainment, that me and Dos run. That’s how I started doin’ stuff in [this town].” For Walker, the tedium and uniformity of law school instigated a ritual practice. His decision to participate in cipher-turned-open mic night and operating an event production company were especially important considering that prior to entering a four-year college and, later, law school, Walker had discontinued his pursuit of a career as an MC after a record deal he had negotiated was rescinded. Walker revitalized his experiences at this predominantly white university by revisiting the craft of emceeing. The production company he and Dos operated organized and conducted weekly open mics, art shows, and artist battles in the area.

The cipher ceremony and the ritual practices that took place within it were integral to the experiences of bright, black students at this university. However, the cipher is not the only practice they performed. For the participants in the study, the practice of listening to hip hop functioned as a practice that induced liminal experiences not necessarily dependent on the physical presence of participants or an audience.

When I asked about hip hop’s impact on her spirituality, Flo told me the following:

Not going to church...has kinda sparked the spiritual side of me. [I] listen to this music and look in. [You] kinda feel the sense of earth in your surroundings, in your being, being

comfortable. Being comfortable with yourself is very spiritual. I think [Erykah Badu and Jill Scott] are very comfortable with themselves. And I know they're still working on it, but I just wanna [be] very comfortable with myself. To get to that point of where they are is awesome and very few people, especially women, get to that point.

In this case, Flo's listening practice is intriguing for several reasons. She alluded to the function of formal religion as a form of spiritual cultivation that provides stability and the opportunity for introspection. Traditionally, religion has been prescribed as panacea for tensions and dis-eases that arise in everyday life. However, it was the lack of attending church that initiated a spiritual experience for her. She sought comfort to ameliorate the feelings of exclusion and the bouts of sexism she faces on campus. Comfort, for her, is achieved by listening to the music of black, female, neo-soul/hip hop artists who easefully and simultaneously express both vulnerability and strength. What is more, she listened to this music with the intention of making herself available to those effects. By allowing herself to become susceptible to the effects of strength through vulnerability she was able to re-imagine how she might negotiate experiences that caused anxiety and existed comfortably with/in the limitations and possibilities of the institution.

Walker explained that

[M]aybe it's just who I am as a person but I definitely lean to the lyrics of a dope song more than I would ... the text of the Bible. Possibly because I just know hip hop better than I know the Bible. I couldn't tell you one verse from the Bible. I probably can't say "Our Father's [sic] Prayer" correctly. But "They Reminisce Over You", "D'Evils", I could tell you that record. I think that sometimes the things they say as emcees really can give you insight. I mean that's what people read in the Bible for some sort of insight to

[their] purpose, to [their] life, to [their] struggle. I feel like where ever you find that at, hey... God speaks to me through some of these lyrics.

Walker's listening practice was a way to gain spiritual insight. Like Flo, Walker expressed a departure from formal religious ritual practice. In this case, he substituted lyrics of hip hop music for biblical text as a source of support when faced with difficult times. Considering that his older sister battled and passed away from HIV during his first year of law school, it is clear that discussions of reverence and appreciation for family members and friends that have passed on were a priority to him. Furthermore, his familiarity with hip hop music enabled him to use it as a spiritual text. Here again, guidance and insight was acquired by listening to hip hop artists who express vulnerability and strength in their music. Like Flo, Walker also listened to music with the intention of making himself available to these effects. By opening up to these effects he was able to gain divine wisdom for navigating life's tough situations, including the loss of close relatives.

Dos reported that

[W]hen I wake up, before I even turn on that boobtube, before I do anything; the one song that I used to listen to probably for a year or two ... was Bob Marley's "Three little birds." I used to listen to it every day. That was my alarm clock. That's what got me up in the morning. The alarm clock went off and I pushed play. And I'd have to listen to that song waking up every day. It's like everything's gonna be alright, you know what I mean. This how it is and music does that for me. It touches my soul.

Although Dos did not express a separation from formal religion as did Flo and Walker, his listening practice helped to quell tension experienced during moments of exclusion and

division in class and on campus. His morning ritual created a liminal experience without the physical presence of other ritual participants. “Listening to that song waking up everyday” generated other effects as well. In this instance, Dos’ listening practice functioned as a ritual that protected and prepared him for the rest of the day with the reassurance that, regardless of the diseases he might encounter, “everything’s gonna be alright.”

The ritual practices described above serve a dual purpose. According to van Gennep (1960), liminal rites can function as incorporation or post-liminal rites. In other words, the same practices these students performed to redress tension, demonstrate transformation, and invoke spirit also work as a method of re-integration into the social structure. The ciphers, freestyle battles, and open mics that took place downtown and on campus helped create a space for hip hop within the culture of the university and the local music community, incorporating this underground culture into mainstream customs and traditions. This re-integration allowed Dos, Flo, Walker, and other hip hoppers to reposition themselves in the social structure of the university. Their listening practices also played an important role in the post-liminal phase. The energies, connections, and insights produced by these practices in the transitional phase worked as lubricants to ease students’ passage into incorporation phase, providing them with the confidence, strength, and wisdom necessary to negotiate everyday life on and around campus as well as creating opportunities for others to do the same. The results of this re-integration included the consummation of the ritual process (Turner, 1974; van Gennep, 1960). In this case, the cipher ceremonies, including freestyle battles and open mics and the listening practices consummated the ritual process by revealing the concrete re-structuring that occurs on and around campus and the imaginal re-structuring that occurs within the mental conceptions of

the participants. The material transformations can be observed in the addition of new sets of practices, customs, and expectations and participants' adjustment to the social and cultural contours of the university. The cipher that Flo helped arrange was particularly important. Because it was part of a course on hip hop offered at the university, it contributed to the institutionalization of hip hop culture as a legitimate and fruitful field in academe.

Discussion

The findings of the study elucidate the process that guided how participants made sense of their experiences at this PWI, including their perceptions of their university environment, tensions that arose from their perceptions, rituals they performed to address their tensions, and the outcomes of those rituals. In sum, this study helped identify an understanding of the role of hip hop in the lives of a group of gifted Black students.

Exclusion

The data above illustrate how these students understood the customs and beliefs of the social and academic cultures of this predominantly white university. Conservative and moderate viewpoints steeped in traditions such as participating in fraternal organizations and not engaging in intra-racial dating characterized the social structure of this PWU. From the perspectives of Dos, Flo, and Walker, students who adhered to the structure were perceived to be intolerant of the viewpoints of those who have dissimilar experiences and customs. The findings of this study are consistent with literature that draws attention to the influence that experiences of alienation and racial bigotry have on black students' perceptions of predominantly white university environments (Hébert, 2002; Williamson, 1999; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The findings are also consistent with the literature on gifted black females' experiences with gender and racial

bias (Kitano, 1998; Hollinger, 1995; Grantham and Ford, 1998). Not only did participants' experiences reveal the contours of their social and cultural structure, they also described tensions that arose within the structure when they resisted customs and expectations. Those tensions, expressed in the microaggressions—"stunning, automatic acts of disregard that stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority and constitute a verification of black inferiority" (Davis, 1989 p. 1576)—between students who conform and the discontent of students who do not created stressful situations from which students like Flo, Walker, and Dos sought liberation and relief. Declining to participate in Greek fraternities, admitting to unapproved dating practices, and voicing non-centrist viewpoints can be read as rites or rituals of separation because they indicate a detachment from positions in a social structure they were expected to assume. As rituals of separation, those practices also foreshadow participants' movements towards the liminal phase of the ritual process.

Tension, liminality and communitas

This study located the ritual practices students used to address the tension that results from their experiences that breached the structure of the university. Ciphers, freestyle and artist battles, and ritual practices highlighted the importance of hip hop and community in the lives of a group of gifted, black students on this campus. Flo, Walker, and Dos all participated in organizing events that allowed people from different segments of the university and the surrounding community to come together under the auspices of hip hop. Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) noted that

Marginalized students are often familiar with their group's voices being silenced in the classroom discourse or with having their personal and/or group experiences and beliefs

discounted. Perhaps as a response to their position of marginality on their campuses,
 ...students...create academic and social counter-spaces along racial and gender lines. (p.
 71)

The participants in this study responded to experiences of marginalization in much the same fashion. However, rather than separating along lines of race or gender, these students cleaved along cultural lines in the interest of integrating various race/ethnicities, genders, students, faculty, and townspeople. This finding is consistent with studies that noted the importance of integrated peer-group experiences in the academic achievement of gifted, black males (Hébert, 2002).

In the process of building a hip hop community on and around campus, *communitas* was invoked in ritual hip hop practices (Turner, 1968). Ciphers, artist and freestyle battles, and open mic/poetry nights were primary rituals in the practice of hip hop in this study. These informal, often impromptu, ceremonies allowed the tensions that arose in everyday life to be acknowledged and communicated by the participants. The *communitas* created in their rituals produced an effect that helped students manage these tensions. Ciphers can be also formal, planned events, but it must be remembered that *going off* and *snapping* are major practices in hip hop (Schloss, 2006). As such, the inclination, an expectation even, for unpredictability and unabated expression during a cipher must be considered. The more ritual participants *go off*, the more available the participants become to the potency of liminality. As a result of this potential, cultural constrictions are eaten away and replaced by a bond maintained, in part, through the spontaneity of the participants and their willingness to suspend their belief in normative ideas and expectations (Turner, 1974). By organizing ciphers, Flo, Walker, and Dos increased the size

of the hip hop community in the town and, more importantly, created a mode of social relatedness much different from the relations they normally experienced on campus.

Liminality also plays a role in the connections subjects are able to make between themselves and the music they listen to. The findings highlighted how important it was for the participants to establish strong connections to hip hop, neo-soul, and reggae music. Their listening practices make *communitas* possible. *Communitas* is an effect that materializes in the liminal phase during the ritual process. The dissolution of normative structures is a powerful process accompanied by release and the invocation of “spirit” and “soul” (Turner, 1974). By releasing negative energies associated with stereotypes and the constraints of structure, the subjects were open and available to positive energies expressed in the music. It is through this exchange that the connection between listening practices and spirit become clear. The listening practices performed by the participants allowed them to create a space for the invocation of benevolent spirit(s) or energy. For Flo, Walker, and Dos, their conscious and willful attempts to call and connect to the spirits in the music constituted the materialization of *communitas*. It is through this manifestation that effects like vulnerability, strength, reverence, and comfort were invoked and received for the purposes of healing and divine guidance.

Transformation

The findings in the study also highlight the importance of transformation in the everyday listening practices of the participants. Hip hop listening practices assisted in guiding the process of transfiguration that occurred during the liminal phase by providing participants with alternative symbols and meanings to replace the symbols and meanings of the dominant social structure. For the participants, this process helped to prepare them for and protected them from

stressful situations that stemmed from unequal power relations they experienced in their everyday lives on campus. In Flo's case, the reconfiguration of power occurred when the practice of listening to secular, hip hop/neo-soul, music replaced attending and participating in the sacred practices associated with church services. This was done as a way to deal with the effects of alienation she experienced on campus. In Walker's case, the reconfiguration of power occurred when he used the lyrics of hip hop music instead of biblical texts to deal with the death of loved ones. Dos' reconfiguration of power occurred when he used the practice of listening to reggae music as a tool of spiritual maintenance and cultivation rather than music related to more traditional religions. In this case, listening to hip hop, reggae, and neo-soul music ushered the participants into a space where the re-ordering of power was not only a possibility but a priority. Smith (1994), Perkinson (2003), and Taylor (2003) noted how black North Americans have traditionally used religious texts (i.e. the Bible, church services, etc.) to re-imagine themselves as valuable and to find solace in the face of adversity. From this perspective, imagination does not mean "make-believe"; rather, it means that the participants had the volition and ability to envision themselves as empowered. Dos, Flo, and Walker made themselves available to the effects produced and invoked during ritual hip hop practices. By opening up to these effects, they were able to imagine themselves different from how they were perceived by others. The fact that these students included "wordly" texts in sacred practices should prompt gifted education researchers to take a closer look at the roles digital and new media popular culture play in the lives of gifted students.

Incorporation

This study sheds light on the role of hip hop in participants' positive contributions to the social structure of the university. The ciphers, shows, and freestyle battles they arranged and participated in on campus altered the social structure of the university by creating academic and social spaces for hip hop ritual practices. The opportunities for community-building, social networking, self-expression, talent development, and the possibility of experiencing *communitas* in these spaces were examples of hip hop culture's potency as a producer of social capital. Renzulli (2002) posited that creating and effectively using social capital is an important aspect of educating gifted students so that their social and cognitive strengths have a civic impact. He explained that

Social capital is a set of intangible assets that address the collective needs and problems of other individuals and our communities at large. Investments in social capital benefit society as a whole because they help to create the values, norms, networks, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation geared toward the greater public good.
(p. 34)

Schloss (2006), Osumare (2001), Shapiro (2004), Irizarry (2009), Brown and Upski (2004) noted the positive impact hip hop has on its practitioners and on society. Brown and Upski (2004) presented several stories about young civically-engaged hip hop activists/students who created change in their local and national governments.

Summary

This study explains how a group of bright, black university students engaged popular culture, in general, and hip hop culture, in particular, to negotiate their everyday lives as a

student on a campus that is predominantly populated by white students. Black music culture (i.e. hip hop, reggae, and neo-soul) played a critical role in Flo's, Dos', Walker's experiences of alienation and exclusion as well as community, spirit, and transformation on and around campus at a predominantly white institution in the southeastern United States. Their stories should serve as reminders to educators that gender, racial, and cultural bias persists and can have deleterious effects on the academic and social lives of gifted and talented students. Their stories should also expand educators' notions about how these students negotiate "demanding learning situations" (Renzulli, 2002) in order to achieve the emotional security and social mobility necessary for academic success. Hip hop culture and ritual have not received much attention in the field of gifted education. To paraphrase a recent National Association for Gifted Children presentation on hip hop and gifted education by Henfield and Thompson (2009): "we don't know enough about hip hop's role in the lives of gifted, black students." What is more, Manning (2000) reminded us that "[w]hat cannot be ignored ... about the consequences of rituals are their characteristics that participants and spectators discuss most: feelings, connections to community, freedom to achieve goals, and inspiration reaped from these events" (p. 67). In the field of gifted education what "we don't know" and "what cannot be ignored" deserve our attention if we intend to continue to serve as custodians of gifted learners.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Hip Hop Conjures

How does this study connect hip hop to conjure? Hip hop is a form of conjure. In the same way that elements of black music, in general, and hip hop, in particular, are traced back to Africa and early African American history, the progression of conjure or hoodoo also shares the same rudiments and history. In fact, several hoodoo historians and writers (e.g., Perkinson, 2005; Smith, 1994; Reed, 2008; Flowers, 2001) recognized this connection between hip hop and hoodoo and invited writers and scholars from different disciplines to work toward exploring this link. This study accepted their invitation and articulated some of the connections between hoodoo and hip hop. The ritualistic practice of hip hop conjures. Conjures what? It conjures spirit/affect, reality, and identity of the hip hop practitioners in this study.

Spirit/Affect

In terms of spirit/affect, hip hop conjures hip hop. In other words, the practice of hip hop by the participants conjured the spirit of hip hop. Those who practiced traditional customs of hip hop (e.g. emceeing/rapping, arranging/participating in ciphers, personal presentation and worldview) made themselves available to the spirit of hip hop. Ritualistically practicing these customs were offerings intended to not only appease the “hip hop spirit” (Shapiro, 2004, p. 326) but also to evoke that spirit. In the same sense that b-boys and b-girls sacrifice their bodies to practice their art in battles and (dance) ciphers (Isreal and QD3 Entertainment, 2003, Schloss, 2006), students sacrificed breath, intellect, time, acceptance from other students on campus, and energy in the name of the hip hop.

Hip hop conjures the spirit of learning. More specifically, what is conjured is referred to by Rodriguez (2005) as “*Nemachtilli*—the energies, powers, and spirits intrinsic to all learning and all teaching” (p. 45).³² He reminded us that the spirit of learning cannot exist without its counterpart, the spirit of teaching. Students in the study had specific reasons for engaging hip hop in the ways they did. They used hip hop as a “prayer in motion” (p. 43) to teach themselves about themselves. For Rodriguez (2005), this kind of teaching highlighted the energy imbued in our intentions and purposes.³³ The intentions, both known and unknown, that guided these students’ engagement of hip hop were made clear in this study. How they practiced hip hop drew upon their talents and callings, connecting the “imaginal with the concrete, the spiritual with the practical, [and] the artful with the necessary” (Meade, 2004).³⁴

Hip hop conjures the spirits of creativity and solace. Guided by specific intentions, students in the study invented their own hip hop rituals and customs. They listened to certain artists and music in certain ways at specific times to evoke particular effects. Students used hip hop in the process of making visual art and writing lyrics. They used neo-soul, reggae, and hip hop music to craft methods for inducing comfort and emotional stability, what Flowers (2001) referred to as, “souleasery, helping folk to address the challenges of life and be greater than they are” (p.16).

³² *Nemachtilli* is a Nahuatl word for spirit of learning. Nahuatl is an Aztec language still spoken by many Mexicans today.

³³ Rodriguez attributes this quote and insight to Anthony Lee, Navajo elder and teacher at Diné College.

³⁴ Taken from <http://www.mosaicvoices.org/Page.cfm?Id=67>, date retrieved May 19, 2011.

Reality

Hip hop conjures culture. In this study, it created a social space on campus for itself and its practitioners. Students in the study practiced hip hop by organizing events that made it possible for like-minded individuals to participate in ciphers and battles. Additionally, these events and live shows introduced newcomers to the traditions and ceremonies of hip hop culture. In both cases, the ritual hip hop practices performed by these students are examples of the many ways hip hop culture can be produced and re-produced.

Hip hop conjures opportunities for the social mobility for students. Education has long been touted as the great equalizer, providing access to better jobs, higher income, and healthcare. In their educational experiences the students in the study used hip hop to fulfill scholarly/academic responsibilities (e.g., conferences, panels, and class assignments). By accomplishing those tasks, these students progressed towards completing their degree requirements. In so doing, they placed themselves in positions that allowed the pursuit of advanced degrees and gainful employment.

Hip hop conjures understanding. It was used by participants to apprehend reality. From a Piagetian perspective, ritualistically practicing hip hop facilitated formal operational cognition. That is, hip hop is a scheme, an abstract knowledge structure, which participants used to assimilate and accommodate new information and events they encountered. In this process, students constructed knowledge about their surroundings and gained insight into the cultural politics of the university. From a Vygotskian perspective, the ritual practice of hip hop can be a co-construction of knowledge. That is, hip hop can be an interaction that occurs between a more knowledgeable person and a less knowledgeable person. What participants learned from

engaging hip hop and each other was internalized and become part of their cognitive process.

Identity

Hip hop conjures identity. It functioned for the participants in this study as a type of black cultural identity different from black and white identities that prevailed at their university. Their engagements with hip hop encouraged them to be self-reflective about their identities. Self-reflection provided insights for these students, and traditional and invented hip hop ritual practices created opportunities to imagine themselves differently. The successful approximations students made toward transforming themselves as they envisioned supports the notion that hip hop identities are ritualistically constructed.

Conjure and Gifted Education

How does the study of hoodoo and hip hop connect to gifted education? The connections materialize as possibilities created for scholars, researchers, and practitioners in the field. The links between hoodoo and hip hop and gifted education are nascent, interdisciplinary, and multidirectional. They serve as guideposts for future research.

Theoretically, conjure and hip hop provide a perspective for understanding the social-emotional/spiritual development of gifted, black students. Although there is a growing body of research that focuses on the socio-emotional development of gifted, black students, the spiritual development of this population of students has been overlooked in gifted education. Additionally, the emphasis on ritual allows the researcher not only to connect the actions of gifted students to their beliefs but also to link micro-level acts of agency to macro-level structures of gender, race, education, culture, and class.

The performative framework used in the study allows for conceptual models in gifted education to be used as guides for creating new methods of interpreting data. The Frasier-Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors (F-TABs), (Frasier et.al., 1995, Frasier, 1997, Frasier & Passow, 1994), originally conceptualized as a model for identifying talent across cultures and socioeconomic statuses, is one possible new direction for interpreting data. F-TABs can be transformed into a tool for locating and organizing the actions and utterances of gifted and talented students. This is important to gifted education because it creates a model for understanding how a culture of giftedness is produced and reproduced, a topic regularly attended to in the field. Future research might focus on retooling and aligning the F-TABs model with a performative approach that invites researchers to attend to how individuals perform giftedness.

In terms of pedagogy, using a performative framework is important in gifted education for a number of reasons. Obviously, it can support the process that students employ to aesthetically engage hip hop. An approach that focuses on this process provides an opportunity for researchers to begin to understand the aesthetic development of gifted students. More specifically, in terms of curriculum and instruction, the emphasis on how gifted students perceive, conceptualize, and express sensory impressions related to their engagement of hip hop invites a connection to art education's teaching strategies, especially to qualitative reasoning (Eisner, 2002, Siegesmund, 2004). Additionally, a performative framework also facilitates the transformation of habits of mind, talents, and insights that students develop through producing hip hop culture into measurable educational objectives. With work, those aims and outcomes can be linked with gifted education standards stated on the National Association for Gifted Children's website.

One of the ironies of research in gifted education is the idea that we, as researchers, scholars, and educators, urge (if not demand) that our students be imaginative and think outside the box. However, much of the work published in journals is chained to convention and constrained by traditional, mainstream structures of knowledge and intelligibility. Research must be accomplished and then represented in texts that are palatable to the audience, non-experimental, linear, and non-rhythmic. In other words, the theories, frameworks, and methods of data collection, analysis, and representation need to be more progressive, performative, and liminal if we are to create ways of thinking and writing about gifted education that are more reflective of the times we live in. Introducing a performative framework and foregrounding cultural politics contributes to the movement toward interdisciplinary research agendas in gifted education.

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Appendices

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- 1) Tell me, how did you get into hip hop? What was going on your life at the time?
- 2) If you had to explain hip hop to someone how would you describe or define it?
- 3) Tell me about your involvement in hip hop now/while at UGA.
- 4) Tell me about a time when your involvement hip hop positively/negatively affected your academic performance.
- 5) Tell me about a time when it was difficult/easy to strike a balance b/w your involvement in hip hop and your family/work/other (social) responsibilities.
- 6) Tell me about a time when your involvement in hip hop helped you to understand your experiences at UGA.
- 7) Tell me about an experience at UGA that changed or helped you to understand your involvement in hip hop.
- 8) In terms of your definition/description of hip hop, how do you decide what's 'dope'/'fresh'/'fly'? **What makes you say “that’s my sh!t”, “That’s my jam!”** What is/was it about a particular song/poem/artist(breaker, graf, mc, dj)/book,etc. that makes you ‘feel’ it?
- 9) The phrase “I am hip hop” is used quite frequently among people in our generation, tell me about time when you felt like that phrase applied to you. Tell me about time when you ‘felt’ like hip hop?
- 10) a) How do you think your involvement in hip hop has affected your views on race? Have your views changed over time? If so, how?

- b) How do you think your involvement in hip hop has affected your views gender? Have your views changed over time? If so, how?
 - c) How do you think your involvement in hip hop has affected your views sexual relations? Have your views changed over time? If so, how?
- 11) How has your involvement in hip hop affected your spirituality/religion? Or vice versa...how has your religion/spirituality affected your involvement in hip hop?
- 12) The phrase “Hip hop is dead” has also been used very frequently as of late. Is hip hop dead? Why or why not?
- 13) How do you envision hip hop in future? In what directions do you see it going? In what directions would you like it go?