OUTKAST'D AND CLAIMIN' TRUE: THE LANGUAGE OF SCHOOLING AND

EDUCATION IN THE SOUTHERN HIP-HOP COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

by

JOYCELYN A. WILSON

(Under the direction of Judith Preissle)

ABSTRACT

The hip-hop community of practice encompasses a range of aesthetic values, norms, patterns, and traditions. Because of its growth over the last three decades, the community has come to include regionally-specific networks linked together by community members who engage in meaningful practices and experiences. Expressed through common language ideologies, these practices contribute to the members' communal and individual identity while simultaneously providing platforms to articulate social understandings. Using the constructs of community of practice and social networks, this research project is an interpretive study grounded primarily in the use of lyrics and interviews to investigate the linguistic patterns and language norms of hip-hop's southern network, placing emphasis on the Atlanta, Georgia southern hip-hop network. The two main goals are to gain an understanding of the role of school in the cultivation of the network and identify the network's relationship to schooling and education. The purpose is to identify initial steps for implementing a hip-hop pedagogy in curriculum and instruction.

INDEX WORDS: Hip-hop community of practice, social network, language ideology, hip-hop generation, indigenous research, schooling, education

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JOYCELYN A. WILSON

B.S., The University of Georgia, 1996

M.A., Pepperdine University, 1998

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JOYCELYN A. WILSON

Major Professor:		Judith Preissle
Committee:		Kathleen deMarrais
		Asa Hilliard
		William A. Kretzschmar, Jr
		Jerome Morris

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

This part of my life is called "happyness." To my mother, Mavis J. Wilson; my sister, Jennifer Wilson; my father, Jimmy L. Wilson; and my Mudear (grandmother), Emmett Jimerson. I love you with every inch of my heart, soul, and spirit. I thank God each and everyday for blessing me with your unconditional love and unwavering support. Without Him or you, nothing that I've done or will do is possible. To my folks and family, friends and foes, I dedicate this work to all who love and hate. Thanks Cousin Ted and Mike Webster for the hip-hop lessons!! To my first class at Mira Costa High School, thanks for accepting me for who I was then and pushing me to be who I've become. To my dynamic committee – Judith Preissle (chair), Kathleen deMarrais, Jerome Morris, William Kretzschmar, and Asa Hilliard – thanks for supporting me from the beginning until the absolute very end. All of your support provides the inspiration needed to keep it trill and keep it movin'. The work we do can be thankless, but we do it because we love it. Thanks for the guidance, the bumpy roads, and the smooth sailings. You saw my vision and I appreciate it. Thank you P.E. Cobb, former music editor for Rap Pages magazine. You gave me my first shot at hip-hop journalism and I love you for it. Bonsu Thompson you took the torch and believed in this southern hip-hop. We made XXL look like they were on the job. Thank you BME Recordings, Grand Hustle, Block Entertainment, chain of thought, David Banner, DJ Toomp, Charlie Braxton, and everybody else that is part of this movement. Outkast, Goodie, Mob, ONP, Southwest Middle School, B.E. Mays High (CO '90), Doug, and all the Atlanta Public Schools. We gave birth to this Atlanta network. We must protect it.

To Ambassador and Mrs. Andrew Young, I appreciate all of the love. To his children, Andrea, Paula, Lisa, and Bo, thanks for sharing your dad with me.

To hip-hop, my saving grace. I'm doing this for you!!!

Welcome to hip-hop culture.

Where DJ-ing, MC-ing, graffiti art, breaking

and the philosophies are expressed everyday within the inner cities

Of America, and the world.
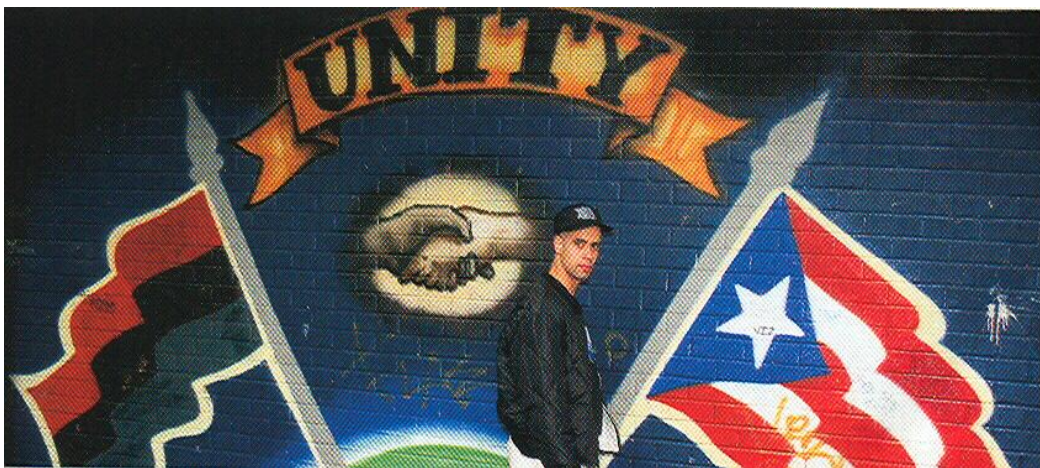
You are not doing hip-hop.

You ARE hip-hop.

Love yourself and your expression, you can't go wrong.

KRS-One (1999), "1st Quarter - The Commentary," I Got Next, Zomba Recordings

A little girl standing in a b-girl stance (arms folded, jogging suit,
Kangol hat, big glasses) (Paniccioli, 2002)

"Universal people lookin' for the perfect beat."
Afrika Bambataa, Tommy Boy Records. (Paniccioli, 2002).

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INTRODUCTION

Universal people lookin' for the perfect beat: The Infrastructure of Hip-hop Culture

To me, hip-hop says, "Come as you are." We are a family…It is not about me being

better than you or you being better than me. It's about you and me, connecting one to one.

That's why it has universal appeal. It has given young people a way to understand their world,

whether they are from the suburbs or the city or wherever.

DJ Kool Herc (2005). *Can't Stop Won't Stop: The History of the Hip-Hop Generation*.

pp. xi.

In this section, I present the purpose and significance of my study of hip-hop culture. It

includes an introduction to the infrastructure of hip-hop, as well as the research questions and

aims that have guided the data collection methods and analysis techniques of the research.

Developed around breakdancing, DJing, graffiti art, rapping, and what has been termed street

philosophies, hip-hop is a cultural movement that spreads coast-to-coast, sea-to-sea, and

continent-to-continent. Invisible are the lines that separate one hip-hop stage from the next.

Various are those who perform and tell their stories using the hip-hop aesthetic. It is a worldwide

phenomenon, as the introductory quote emphasizes. It has brought people together who may

have never had an opportunity to be together. From this perspective, hip-hop, in many ways,

gets us closer to the dream forefathers such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X sought to

achieve but were unable to experience. Its force is so powerful that youth in Asia join hands with

those in Africa – even if the links are through hip-hop dance, style, dress, and language. Hip-hop bridges the culture gap as we know it. "It brings white kids together with Black kids, brown kids with yellow kids," writes DJ Kool Herc. "They all have something in common that they love. It gets past the stereotypes and people hating each other because of those stereotypes" (p. xi.)

Amongst this diversity sits a nucleus of aesthetics from which hip-hop functions. Rooted in deeply structured African traditions, verbal and non-verbal language styles were imported to at least the Caribbean and American South by way of Middle Passages and slave trades. The transition created a new experience – a pan-African experience – that included new languages, new stories, and new expressions like slave work songs, the spirituals, blues, jazz, rhythm and soul, rock, funk, reggae, and any kind of art form drawing from African music. This cultural whole is filtered through social conditions and remains consistent regardless of the challenges faced by people of African descent. From this vantage point, hip-hop is merely a layer of a more extensive cultural tradition. It is a small portion of a larger cultural whole cultivated by ancient customs and tendencies. It is a miniscule piece of a total dynamic with rap music as its megaphone.

Rap music, the form, and rappin', the technique, is hip-hop's most functional mode of storytelling. It is the culture's *CNN*, *New York Times*, or *Wall Street Journal*. Through 16-bar verses and catchy, but informative hooks, the lyrics and rhymes broadcast the dramatic scripts of the community. Through the use of the microphone (referred to as "mic" hereinafter), these messages are transmitted. An example of its strength is heard on the song "One Mic," performed by Nas, one of hip-hop's most popular rappers (or MCs.) Employing the poetic device of repetition, the New York-born artist says all he needs is "one mic, one beat, [and] one stage," all of which allow him to speak to others and speak for himself. Through the clarity of a mic, rap

music thus becomes the cultural, sonic, and linguistic windows for many young people, writes Tricia Rose, author of *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994, p. 19.)

Rose published her research on hip-hop in 1994. A graduate of Brown University in Rhode Island, she sat on the cutting edge of a cultural studies breakthrough as a student writing about the social and political economy of hip-hop and rap music in post-Industrialist America. The outcome of her research was *Black Noise,* and it set the tone for scholarly examinations into contemporary urban culture. Twelve years after the publication of this seminal work, hip-hop has now aged into an over-thirty, multi-ethnic phenomenon nourished by an over-thirty African American, Latin American, Afro-Caribbean core audience broken up into generational cohorts of hip-hop members as young as 10 and as old as 40. Bonded by hip-hop elements, these hip-hop age groups share many similarities and differences. Like me, they have either continued working in the movement or opted out to be just a fan whose livelihood has nothing to do with sustaining hip-hop for future generations of youth.

Hip-hop's cultivation makes for a pervasive culture with perplexing continuities. The common narrative insists that the culture initially resulted as a reaction to the consequences of the industrialist, Civil Rights, and Black Nationalist movements. The hip-hop generation – African American, Latin American, and African Caribbean youth born between 1965 and 1984 – used various performative expressions to articulate meaning and common social experiences about life in the racialized, under resourced urban ghetto (Kelley, 1996; Kitwana, 2002, 2005; Rose, 1994). What was solely urban and underground then is now suburban, rural, conservative, liberal, and mainstream as well. Surreptitiously, it had extended from the ghettos and barrios of New York into the boardrooms of Fortune 500 companies, causing it to become a music of

preference of the U.S. mainstream. Not only has it been the predominant artform within the

urban communities of ethnic minorities, after thirty years, hip-hop has sprouted into a billion

dollar industry and has created popular trends with global implications on the European, African,

and Asian continents (Androutsoeoulos, J. & Scholz, A., 2003; Mitchell, 2001; Perry, 2004;

Prevos, 2001).
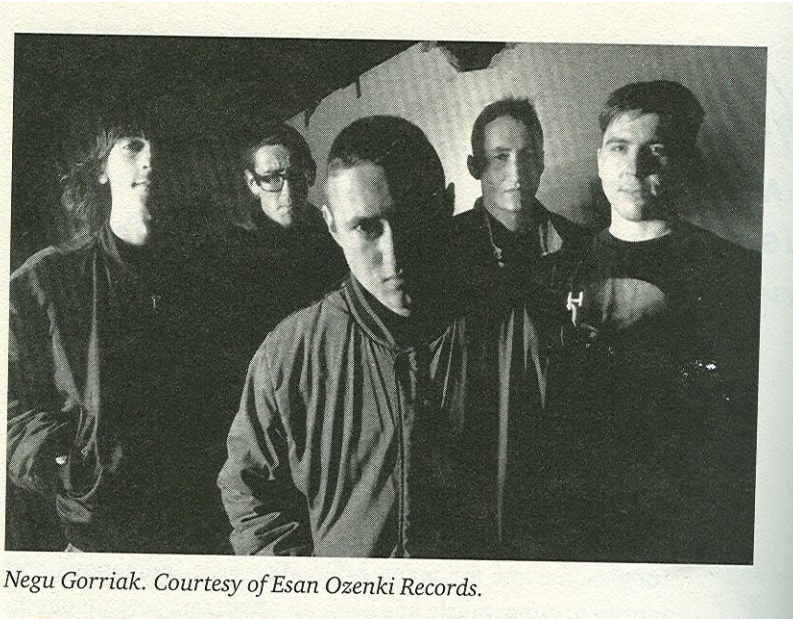
Negu Gorriak. Courtesy of Esan Ozenki Records.

Negu Gorriak, Eurorappers from the Basque Country (Urla, 2001)

Along with hip-hop's global success came a mystery about a counterculture that on the

one hand was the voice for the voiceless, but on the other communicated some of the most

violent and misogynist messages found in 20th and 21st century art. Debates about hip-hop

culture ensued. Heated discussions saturated television and newstalk radio programs. Constantly

in an ebb and flow hip-hop prevented itself from being marked as singularly *this* and only *that*.

Universities and colleges soon became part of the conversations, and critical discussions ensued

in the halls of academia. Top-tier educational institutions like Yale, Berkeley, University of

Connecticut, and University of Georgia offered hip-hop-centered courses. Harvard University

opened a Hip-hop Archives that later moved to Stanford University in East Palo Alto, California.

No longer was the culture parented by Afrika Bambataa and DJ Kool Herc just a form of artistic expression *for* blacks *by* blacks. As Boyd points out in *The New HNIC: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip-Hop*, this offspring of jazz, blues, drum and bass, reggae, and dancehall morphed into an "interdisciplinary academic community... offering a choice of electives to its subscribers" (2002, p. 13).

While I've seen hip-hop integrated into the subject matter of various disciplines, I have also seen it situated in narrowly defined frameworks that theorize culture along the borders of political contestations and conflicts. I believe culture viewed as rooted in social constructions such as race, gender, or economic viability is a dangerous approach because it promotes stereotyping. For a culture as complex as hip-hop, it is not enough to break it down and organize it around a battle between the haves and the have-nots. Examining hip-hop solely as a site for the exchange of goods and services, production and consumption, ignores the celebratory aspects of the hip-hop community as well as its many other features. An alternative lens for studying 20th and 21st century hip-hop culture is through an African-centered orientation that places historical, epistemological, value-laden, tradition-driven elements at the crux while allowing secondary allegiances to be acknowledged in the political and social economy of the culture. In this ancient orientation, it is the symbolic aspects of culture from which the secondary and more materialistic aspects are filtered (Carruthers, 1995). Besides, culture is a tricky concept. When subjected to examination, it gets even trickier (Clifford, 1988; Marcus & Fischer, 1999). The kaleidoscopic nature of culture forces it to carry theoretical and conceptual baggage that often relegates its aesthetic features of intellectual, spiritual, and linguistic value into the shadows of power, authority, and the manipulation of the two. I take this position neither to minimize these perspectives nor to claim that they are unimportant.   For culture always has a political edge. But

before it is a mechanism for espousing policies or determining economic outcomes, it is (and mostly) a historical tool used by groups of people to reflect on their past in order to understand their present in preparation for their future (Hilliard, 1995, 1997, 2002).

This is how I define culture. As a network of generations tied together by ethnic origin, spiritual orientations, geographic tendencies, kinship norms, and several other community-oriented practices including artistic expressions, communal traditions, philosophies, social values, and imposed social orders. The fundamental infrastructure of hip-hop culture builds on this definition. Its primary function is to tell the story of an ancient people's travel through time and an oppressed people's continued efforts towards a community-defined freedom and emancipation. Exploring from this theoretical point of view, I present the purpose and significance of *Outkast'd and Claimin' True: Schooling and Education in the Southern Hip-hop Community of Practice.*

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>

My study of hip-hop culture is three-fold. One is to explore the concepts of community of practice and social network (Lave & Wenger, 1998; Milroy & Gordon, 2003; Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Wenger, 1998) together as an alternative approach for exploring the culture of hip-hop, its aesthetics, values, and politics, in addition to its politics of geographic space and place (Forman, 2004; Perry, 2004). Community of practice and social network are two closely related concepts. A fundamental postulate of a community of practice is that social groups engage in joint interactions and common practices. Simultaneously they create meaning, develop relationships, and construct an identity around these activities, some of which depend on location and region (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Community of practice is a construct that provides a framework for locating sites of interaction where social meaning is indexed by language. In

these environments where interaction takes place, language variation and social meaning are also co-constructed (Eckert, 2000; Milroy & Gordon, 2003). In the social sciences, education particularly, the essential set of data is that which spotlights the cultural values and symbols of a group. A social network is a construct that provides an informed analysis of these meaningful values through an examination of the connections between the members of the community and the strength of these ties.

The most obvious similarity of the two concepts is their concern with personal relationships. A community of practice focuses on the activities that connect people, which can happen remotely. A social network's significance relies on who knows whom and the opportunity to get together. For example, hip-hoppers in Germany and those in California are part of the hip-hop community of practice because of their shared participation in the practice of doing hip-hop. The German hip-hoppers who see and talk to each other more often than to their Californian counterparts are considered part of the German social network. Social network as a conceptual tool does concern itself with a community's local practices, but its significance relies on the strength of the ties from which these practices are formed (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). Therefore location and geographic intimacy are principal.

I use the community of practice approach to explore the practice of hip-hop more closely while highlighting first generation hip-hoppers who belong to the southern U.S. network: that is, African Americans, the Gullah population and their descendants, and Afro-Cuban immigrants born between 1965 and 1984 and raised in Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, South and North Carolina, Kentucky, Arkansas, or Virginia. Second-generation hip-hoppers, or those Kitwana (2005) labels as the millennium generation, are also of

concern for this project. According to his categorization, these are hip-hop members born between 1985 and 2004.

The second purpose is to study educational and ideological issues in rap music lyrics and participant interviews to learn more about hip-hop culture and its assumptions about values and schooling. My third purpose is to study educational issues and perspectives in hip-hop culture to learn more about African American community education and socialization practices. I want to explore the ideology of hip-hop culture, placing emphasis on the U.S. South as it is defined by hip-hop culture. These second two purposes represent an important step toward deepening the discourse on African American schooling and education, formal and informal, within the context of African American cultural production and music. The study may also provide a descriptive first step for rationalizing the use of hip-hop and other popular texts within educational curriculum. Having said this, I examine these practices along with how aspects of representation and identity are manipulated in southern-based hip-hop culture. The overall objective is to generate a substantive theory of the educational discourse among the broader hip-hop community of practice, while focusing primarily on southern hip-hop culture's network. My primary and secondary research questions are these:

1. What is southern hip-hop culture? What unique characteristics define the southern hip-hop network and southern hip-hop generation? What language ideology is used that represents southern hip-hop culture?

2. How does southern hip-hop culture reflect representations of formal and informal schooling and education in its rap music lyrics and artist interviews? What are the relationships between southern hip-hop and the culture of schools? Under what conditions are these sentiments expressed?

3. How do these expressions reveal the worldview of hip-hop's community of practice, the southern hip-hop network, as well as African American cultural production, schooling, and education?

Addressing these questions permits me to pursue the following aims:

- To extend the scholarship on hip-hop culture by emphasizing its southern network, its use of language, and its perspectives on school and education

- To explicate themes of school and education contained in the song lyrics of and interviews with hip-hop artists and other hip-hop participants and identify conditions that influence these representations.

- To generate a substantive grounded theory of how school and education are portrayed in hip-hop culture, placing emphasis on southern hip-hop culture, thereby offering a perspective on representations of identity as they are carried out in African American cultural production

- To identify data-based implications of patterns in this group for teachers and communities whose youth are part of the hip-hop culture.

The research questions and aims listed above are related to the significance of the study, which is presented in the next section.

Significance of the Study

Outkast'd and Claimin' True is significant for several reasons. First, it has the promise of contributing to how teachers and educators view popular culture, particularly hip-hop culture, and its efficacy for the classroom.

I learned of hip-hop and rap music's classroom influence during my first year as a high

school math teacher. I was 23 years old, teaching at a public high school in the Los Angeles suburbs, and working as a southern hip-hop correspondent for the LA-based *Rap Pages* magazine. It was easy to share this other life with my students. Some of them were at most 18 years of age. My youngest students were at least 14. Many were Asian, African American, or Hispanic. Most of them were white and came from the surrounding affluent beach communities. They wore baggy jeans, fitted baseball caps, and other urban fashion staples. They asked me on several occasions if I had heard of this rap artist or that rap artist – probably because of our closeness in age. Hip hop became a line of communication between my students and me that continued well after I had moved back to Atlanta to teach at a predominately white private school.

When I published an article, I told my students about it. Many of them came back to school having read what I wrote. If I attended a concert, I told them about it. When a new video aired on MTV, I asked whether they had seen it. Sometimes we talked about the video – especially if it displayed violent or misogynist themes. One time I was sitting at a red light on Peachtree Road in Atlanta's Buckhead community when a student and his friend tapped on the trunk of my car to get my attention. "Hi Ms. Wilson," they said after stopping while riding their bikes up the sidewalk. Startled, I turned down the rap song "Here We Go" by Run-DMC and said "Hello." When I entered class the next day, they asked me to burn them a copy of the CD.

The point is that the hip-hop literacy I used in the classroom was a pedagogical asset. My students trusted me a bit more. Hip-hop was our meeting point. They worked hard when they did not want to. After-school tutorial sessions were full, and students helped students. I even went as far as playing instrumental hip-hop music very softly when the students worked independently. Structuring the classroom environment around informal conversations about the latest Outkast

album and the application of the quadratic formula also added to the teaching and learning process. Using these teaching strategies brought a focus to the class that was amazing to me, and this is by far the central impetus for my research on the relationships between popular culture and pedagogy.

Second, the study should be of interest to scholars examining geographically specific hip-hop networks. Using qualitative research techniques and sociolinguistic network analysis strategies, I explore ties and connections in the southern hip-hop community of practice. Generally speaking, southern hip-hop is hip-hop practiced in the southeastern region of the United States. The community existed in the early 1980s as a regional expression of hip hop. Not until Outkast put Atlanta on the map in 1994, Master P took the New Orleans' independent music scene to new heights in 1997, and Lil Jon opened the market further in 2003 did southern hip-hop move into a predominant position in the overall industry. Other than popular commentary and press, southern hip-hop culture has lacked a research-intensive examination that provides an understanding of its simultaneously local and global nature. The focus on southern hip-hop opens a new line of inquiry about hip-hop's nuances and contributions, along with its sentiments about school, education, and other socialization practices and agencies.

The third significance of *Outkast'd and Claimin' True* points to its potential to extend the growing scholarship on hip-hop culture amongst the broader academic community. By this I mean hip-hop is a viable topic of research in disciplines outside of education and schooling. Its scholarship contributes to the understanding of hip-hop culture as (1) an extension of African and African American education and cultural traditions; (2) a post-Civil-Rights era social protest youth movement; and (3) a trend of popular culture. The study of hip-hop can additionally bring together two networks, or 'hoods as they are referenced in the culture, that would otherwise exist

separately. The popular 'hood and the academic 'hood generally operate as divided communities because of long-standing stereotypes (Zelizer, 2004). For example, the voice of the journalist gets little respect from the academy, usually because of a lack of rigor found in popular research. Similarly, the academician is challenged by the journalist because of the absence of involvement in the culture being researched. Analyzing from the sidelines is what this act is called in hip-hop. I have experienced this binary from both my music editors and professors. I am all a journalist, scholar, and teacher. I am not only part of the Kitwana-defined hip-hop generation, but also a life-long member and participant of the culture. I've also documented southern hip-hop since my middle school years. Of course I did not know this youthful endeavor would become my life's work. So a rare combination is how I've heard my position described. So I bring a rare combination of positions to this study. Unlike many scholars who write about hip-hop, I bring a triangulated perspective – maybe even a 4-pronged perspective – unusual in either network, the popular or the academic. *Outkast'd and Claimin' True* forces the two to feed off one another.

Hip-hop has materialized on the local, national, and global scenes, and my study addresses this development. It focuses on the history of hip-hop culture and how it plays out in the social experiences of African Americans and other populations. It connects the cultural, social, and political history of hip-hop by stressing how school and education are represented in primary narratives. It is a medium for exploring 20th and 21st century urban epistemology, African American music-making, and African-American identity representation. Continuing to push the analysis envelope allows us to examine hip-hop culture for comparisons and contrasts of politics, community relations, and global perspectives. We can learn and challenge points of view about family, kinship norms, language patterns, lifestyle values, and notions on schooling and education. I hope to foster an understanding of the contexts, practices, and networks of hip-

hop, thereby broadening perspectives rarely emphasized in mainstream and academic forums. By exploring and analyzing these multiple perspectives, *Outkast'd and Claimin' True* offers a springboard for using hip-hop as an educational resource, relevant across both the popular and academic arenas. In the next section, I present an outline of the chapters as well as the focus of each chapter.

<div align="center">The Flow</div>

Nelson George, in *Hip-Hop America* (1998), shies away from articulating an organizing theory about hip-hop. He says that its rate of change prevented him from doing such a thing. He writes that hip-hop, "its use, and therefore its meaning, has evolved too rapidly since it first appeared on the national radar screen back in 1979 (p. ix.)" Continuing with this line of thought, George concludes, "Whenever I think I know enough, there's another twist in the saga, another way to see this culture and the country that spawned it (p. ix.)" Hip-hop culture remains a powerful voicemail for groups of people around the world. In many ways it influences their epistemologies, value systems, and worldviews. My study draws on this perspective to understand hip-hop culture less as a phenomenon guided by commerce and industry, but more as an entity rooted in historical, philosophical, and linguistic traditions. Because of popular culture's ability to communicate dimensions of our society, I use theories, methods, and analyses from culture-specific disciplines to examine the representations contained in the narratives, all of which highlight the educational discourse among the hip-hop community. Connecting the centrality of schools in modern youth culture with the cultures youth join to respond, resist, represent, and reconstruct schooling and education broadens the pedagogical strengths of hip-hop culture. To understand the composition of hip-hop culture in general, and southern hip-hop culture specifically, I must analyze the socialization and schooling practices it represents. This is

my primary argument. Linking these two themes provides a clearer angle for understanding the complexities of the culture. Therefore, the proposed study is a cultural critique and involves exploring themes for their theoretical significance and then synthesizing these images into conceptual explanations about teaching and learning as they are connected to and formulated in hip-hop culture (e.g., Giroux & McLaren, 1992; hooks, 1994; Mahiri, 1998, 2004).

Using the conceptual framework of community of practice and social networks, I interrogate the nature of hip-hop by applying grounded theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) and inductive analysis strategies (Charmaz, 1990; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, (2002); Spradley, 1979; Stubbs, 2001) to rap music lyrics and ethnographic interviews with hip-hop artists. To frame my interpretation of this material, I draw from existing African American sociocultural frameworks (Du Bois, 1930, 1960; Hilliard, 1995, 1997; Obenga, 2004), cultural studies approaches (Denzin, 1992, 1997; Gans, 1974; Hall, 1990; hooks, 1994; Storey, 1993, 1996), and theories of language variation and analysis (Eckert, 2000; Kretzschmar, 2003; Kretzschmar, McDavid, Lerud, & Johnson, 1993; Milroy & Gordon, 2003). I also examine popular press material from hip-hop journalists and critics, along with my own reviews and commentary, because several of these pieces explicitly address school, education, and its place in hip-hop.

Taking the hip-hop community of practice approach offers another lens for exploring the complexities and features of this culture. It also permits me to explain the specialties of southern hip-hop culture and its history, social and linguistic behaviors, and educational perspectives. A design of this nature is an innovative contribution to the canon of literature on hip-hop, cultural studies, educational research, and qualitative methodology.

The six chapters that comprise this study are outlined according to a conventional dissertation, but are intended to be organized as journal articles. The first chapter situates my theoretical position through the articulation of my intersubjectivities within the hip-hop and educational community. Chapter 2 offers a critical review of the literature on hip-hop culture's philosophical and educational underpinnings. Chapter 3 provides a review of the qualitative and sociolinguistic methodology and the ethnographic techniques taken to analyze cultural texts of hip-hop, mainly lyrics and interviews. Chapters 4 and 5 present the material I found during my analysis of the lyrics, interviews, participant observation field notes, and archival data. Chapter 4 describes the network and community of practice of southern hip-hop. Chapter 5 takes this a step further by offering the ideological critiques found in the data according to the southern hip-hop community of practice and network. Conclusions and implications shape Chapter 6, the final chapter. Here, I present a case for implementing elements of urban culture within micro- and macro- educational policy.

In the early 1980s, Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force, released a song called "Lookin for the Perfect Beat." Breakdancers, rappers, graffiti artists, and the like performed to this song like it was the anthem of the culture. It was to many, including myself. The song articulates the epitome of hip-hop and can be understood in at least two ways. Maybe the universal people are people of color all over the world who are oppressed, subjected to imperialism, and trying to maintain within the madness. Hence, looking for the perfect beat. Another way to read "universal" suggests that while hip-hop is rooted in African traditions and people of African descent, its aim is to bring people together regardless of race, class, gender, age, or ethnic origin to push towards perfect unity. Again, the perfect beat. In the following

chapter I express my struggle towards the perfect beat and the role hip-hop played in the

construction of how I see myself and my life's work.

CHAPTER 2

It's understood, I do it for the hood: A Southern Hip-Hop HerStory

Every time I do it I do it for my 'hood.

And every time I do it I do it for they 'hood.

And every time I do it I do it for yo 'hood.

It's understood. I do it for the hood.

Young Jeezy (2005), "My Hood," *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*, Corporate Thugz

Entertainment/Def Jam Recordings

This study of southern hip-hop and education is rendered by a scholar who is herself a hip-hop artist-member. In this chapter, I represent my insider view in my insider voice by presenting my subjectivities towards hip-hop culture and how they reveal themselves in my scholarship.

A B-Girl is Born

I have to start this hip-hop story where hip-hop starts for me.

My mother bought me a portable record player. I was seven years old, living in a middle-class neighborhood in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and attending predominately white Skyland Elementary School. A single mother and schoolteacher, Mom figured it would be in both of our best interests to feed a growing hunger because my favorite pastime consisted of messing around in her albums, trying to see what this beautiful thing called music was all about. The player she surprised me with that Christmas morning was white with a gigantic silver latch on the front. "Ka-klunk" was the sound it made when I opened it. Closed, it resembled a workman's toolbox.

In many ways, I guess it was. It was heavy and very necessary. But instead of wrenches and hammers, I carried 12-inch records and albums.

It was a funny sight, to see me leaning and rocking when I lugged my player around. On the top were the words "The Bee Gees" spelled out in bright orange and purple letters. On the inside was a mini-mural of Barry, Robin, and Maurice dressed in white butterfly-collared shirts. The trio welcomed me with a smile every time I snapped the player open. Giddy and innocent, I returned the smile like a kid in a candy store because I dug the Bee Gees. *Saturday Night Fever*, John Travolta, and "Stayin Alive." Ultimate disco was the sign of this time, and I took my player with me everywhere so that I could hear it. My Bee Gees player accompanied me to my grandmother's house, to my daddy's house, and to my aunts and uncles' homes in Atlanta, Georgia. I took it to the neighbor's house when my mother needed a sitter to watch my sister and me while she was out. I took it to slumber parties with my friends and had it when I hosted slumber parties *for* my friends. Anywhere and everywhere I *could* take it, I *would* take it. A young Radio Raheem. That's what I was. Only the female version.

The majority of the music I listened to was borrowed from my mother's extensive collection of vinyl. Like then, she is still very protective of every organized-by-genre album. The Ohio Players, the Commodores, B.B. King, Bobby "Blue" Bland, Millie Jackson, and the Gap Band. She loved Reverend James Cleveland and adored the spirituals of Shirley Caesar. Michael Henderson's "Wide Receiver" made her dance, and Kenny Rogers's "The Gambler" articulated a perspective on life I later understood. "You got ta know when to hold 'em. Know when to fold 'em. Know when to walk away. Know when to run." She would look at my sister Jennifer and me and say: "You never count your money when you're sittin' at the table. There'll be time enough for countin' when the dealin's done." Jennifer and I laughed each time Mom sang that

country hit. Certainly our childish innocence afforded us no idea of card playing, counting money, or gambling protocols. Still, she sang it to us like the good mother she is, knowing that one day the message would penetrate. Kenny Rogers played in the background on Sunday evenings as my sister and I got dressed for our weekly visit to the local skating rink. Millie Jackson usually followed Kenny Rogers after Jen and I were out of the house. There was no way she was letting us hear Ms. Jackson scream and shout about men and sex.

Growing up amongst this variety of music was a highlight of my childhood. The diversity shaped the early framework for my interests in rap, hip-hop, and other musical genres. Sometimes I pause on VH-1 Country when flipping back and forth among the MTV video channels, and I don't flinch when my mentor Andrew Young plays blues tunes from Marvin Sease and the country raps of Trace Adkins. I just laugh and listen as Sease sings about being the "Candy Licker," especially because his explicit sexual descriptions remind me of several rap tunes I hear on the radio. And Adkins's "Honky Tonk Badonkadonk" pulls a wee bit from the hip-hop aesthetic, but I don't nod my head just because of his use of the hip-hop word 'badonkadonk,' another way to describe a woman's derriere. Part of the draw is that my mother listened to country music and missed not one episode of *Dallas*. She watched movies like *Smokey and the Bandit* and *Convoy*. Also we lived in Alabama. Ain't no way in the world I could ignore all the square-dancing, cowboy hats, cowboy boots, and tight-fitting Wrangler blue jeans. Heck! That's all my white friends wore!

I can't say what my white friends listened to back in the late 70s when I was 7 years old. I'm not too sure. But I played a collage of my mother's country music, soul tunes, and disco jams alongside my G-rated nursery rhyme *Children's Favorites* album. My father didn't have a jukebox like my mom's, but he did give me Donna Summers's "Bad Girl" on 45-rpm.

Eventually, Mom passed on her full-length album of a disco group named Chic, whose song "Good Times" was quickly climbing the pop charts. These offerings sparked my personal vinyl library. But around the same time that Daddy gave me the Queen of Disco's hit single and Mommy hipped me to Chic, the lively music started falling victim to its own popularity. Disco's production style and instrumentation remained an attractive element to DJs, yes. But the singing and dancing that made exclusive clubs like Studio 54 infamous for loud music, extravagant clothing, and high-priced drugs was beginning to fade to black.

"Good Times" was one of the genre's last efforts. Produced by Nile Rodgers, the festive tune rose as the bridge between disco, which was headed to the bench, and rap music, pop culture's next power forward. The bassline groove that made "Good Times" the jam that it still is today became the musical backdrop for a song called "Rapper's Delight." Performed by a New York trio called the Sugar Hill Gang, "Rapper's Delight" went down in history as the first rap song to garner mainstream attention outside New York's African American, African-Caribbean, and Latino-populated urban centers. Performed by Wonder Mike, Big Bank Hank, and Master Gee, "Rapper's Delight" reached #36 on the U.S. pop charts and #4 on the R&B charts (George, 1998). Using sampling techniques unique to hip-hop music, the boastful song removed the members of Chic singing "Good times. These are the good times" and replaced it with the threesome introducing the world to a style of music layered with upbeat, rhythmic wordplay over funk and disco productions. One major problem remained though: no one took rap seriously, not even the black record executives who looked like the black people who created it. "I'd argue," writes George (1998), "that without white entrepreneurial involvement hip-hop culture wouldn't have survived its first decade on vinyl" (p. 57). He continues

It is indisputable that black-owned independents like Sugar Hill, Enjoy,

and Winley cultivated and supported hip hop from 1979 to 1981. But it

was white small-businesspeople who nurtured it next. Scores of white

stepmothers and fathers adopted the baby as their own and many have

shown more loyalty to the child than more celebrated black parental

figures (George, 1998, p. 57).

To some, this performance of articulating stories in a rapid cadence was a major glitch in

the pop music matrix. But it wasn't a fault to my friends and me. Rap music was our music, and

"Rapper's Delight" was our song. It was new and it was fun. We danced to it at school sock

hops. We skated to it at the local rink. My sister and I recited every word, syllable, and sentence

just like the rappers did. She would say, "Now, what you hear is not a test. I'm rappin' to the

beat." I followed. "And me, the groove, and my friends are gonna try to move your feet." She'd

go, "See, I am Wonder Mike, and I'd like to say "Hello." In unison we rhymed, "To the black, to

the white, the red and the brown. The purple and yellow." The culture calls it rap music. Outkast

later referred to it as "ghettomusick" because essentially it was the music of the ghetto performed

by the children of the ghetto. Somewhere down in the souls (or soles) of our little hearts (and

feet) we knew an innovative sound of music was upon us. We *didn't* know rap would spread a

culture called hip-hop around the world. *I* didn't know hip-hop would influence my life and

career or subsequently how I see myself, at least not the way that it has. Like disco, rap was

something everyone could feel. Wonder Mike told us this. Caught up in the early phases of a

cultural movement, my body moved to the beat when I heard "Rapper's Delight." I had to have

it – especially because none of my friends were able to get their hands on a copy. A turning

point in the evolution of my identity is how I describe this phase of my life. I was seven years

old and a third grader learning the basics of formal education: reading, writing, and arithmetic. But at the feet of a family member, a cousin, I became another student of what later became known as hip-hop culture, an alternative way to get an education.

Ted was a DJ/graffiti artist/b-boy (a boy who knows the fundamentals break-dancing) four years my senior. He lived in Atlanta and was the son of my mother's oldest sister. Ted seemed to have every song way before I got a chance to hear it. He had "Rapper's Delight" and suggested I ask my mother to purchase me a copy of the commercial hit. She did. Now, I had my Bee Gees player and my first 12-inch record. A bit of a young negotiator, I convinced my mother, a schoolteacher, to let me take my player and the song to school for show-and-tell. She approved reluctantly. Show-and-tell would prove to be my crowning as the schoolyard b-girl because I was the only kid with a personal copy of "Rapper's Delight." Not only was the song the rest of the world's introduction to rap music and hip-hop culture, but also it peaked our young interests because it sounded different. The wordplay was different from any kind of music we had previously heard. Although disco was one of many predecessors, rap was clearly not the music of my mother's era. It was an emerging alternative, and my youthful ears could hear it. We enjoyed it and hoped that there were more songs like it to come. There were.

Cousin Ted, excited about this new music and its associated culture, began to take me on as a distant protégé. Although he and I lived some 200 miles from each other, he spotted my interest whenever I visited Atlanta for spring breaks or during his visits to Tuscaloosa for Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. He sent me mix-tapes that included Kurtis Blow's "Christmas Rappin" and "The Breaks." A young DJ, Ted made sure I was up on songs like the Sugarhill Gang's "Apache" and Mantronix's "Fresh is the Word." Afrika Bambaataa and the Soul Sonic Force's "Planet Rock" is a classic song to the culture, but to me because I was

skating to it when I fell and fractured my left pinky finger. Even with injury I continued to skate to the hippity-hop. I had to. My reputation depended on it. Ted hipped me to new styles and new songs. I was his student and he was my teacher. Watching him I learned the techniques for rapping, the basic concepts for blending music, color schemes when drawing graffiti, and body movements for pop-locking and break dancing. He even taught me how to win at video games like Pac-Man, Centipede, and Galaga. Unaware of it, but all-encompassed by it, I was an 8-year old student in hip-hop culture 101. With every moment that allowed for it, I found refuge in some hip-hop element. After school, hip-hop. During lunch, hip-hop. After I completed my homework, hip-hop. When I learned that all the hip-hoppers in New York wore Nikes, Pumas, and Adidas, I begged and pleaded to my uncle to take me to the mall to buy a pair. My sister Jennifer got the Nike's with the red swoosh and I got the Nike's with the royal blue swoosh. Our only requirement from the family adults was to make good grades in school. We did. In return, there wasn't a song that I couldn't rap by heart. There wasn't a breaking technique that I would refuse to attempt to perform. By the time my mother decided to give up her job as a teacher and what I thought was a black middle-class neighborhood to move herself, my sister, and me to Atlanta, I was nine years old and a certified hip-hop head. I lived it. I breathed it. I rapped it. I danced it. I wore it.

At this juncture I latched on to hip-hop in a way that I hadn't before. The move to Atlanta was a difficult adjustment for me. Of course the city offered great spring breaks, summer vacations, and winter holidays with my aunts, uncles, and cousins who already lived there. But I was *not* trying to move away from my grandmother, my father, or my friends. Initially, I hated making Atlanta my new home. I despised my mother's decision, especially because our relocation came shortly after Wayne Williams was identified as the culprit behind the Atlanta

Child Murders. New to the city, new to a *new* life in a 2-bedroom apartment that we shared with my mother's youngest sister and her daughter, the construction of my world changed. We moved from living with one aunt to living with another. Eventually my mom got our own apartment, but a freeze on hiring teachers in the early 1980s forced her to work at Rich's department store. Unable to make ends meet on five dollars an hour, times got really hard for the single mother of two young girls. Things got so bad that I would come home from school one day to find what was left of my belongings on the curb next to a MARTA bus stop. She could not keep up on the rent.

Another adjustment was the lack of diversity I'd grown accustomed to. All of my schooling until college would be at predominately African American schools with a similarly complexioned faculty and administration. In Alabama, my school had been populated with white and black Americans, white and black teachers, white and black friends. We lived in a house, nothing too big, but something more secure than Atlanta offered. My Dixieland neighborhood had been a combination of black professionals and retirees. The park where I often walked was a mile down the street. Suddenly I was living in an apartment building right off Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in the heart of Atlanta's southwest side where people hang out until the wee hours of the night. Walking anywhere except to the car and back was out of the question. My mother wouldn't even allow my sister or me to walk alone to the corner 7-eleven. If reading, writing, and listening to rap music were favorite pastimes in Alabama, they grew even stronger when I found myself in the city of Atlanta. When I could not comprehend why drugs and violence plagued the southwest side of MLK Drive but not North Peachtree Street, I sought answers from the important people in my life: father, mother, teacher, and preacher. Some answers they gave satisfied my mind's naiveté, and other times I was left unsatisfied, yearning to

know more. Still searching, I resorted to street wisdom: knowledge and ideologies learned

outside the school, home, or church community (Smitherman, 2000).   Without my mother's

approval, I created friendships with people in my neighborhood and got to know the fiends,

pushers, pimps, and prostitutes that frequented the corner store. The cultivation of my informal

education was in full effect.

My formal schooling changed, I believe, as a result of the move. I got in trouble, ended

up in a few fights here and there, but still made good grades. I had good teachers. A few were

white. Most were black. I was a pretty likeable student, but reacted when I felt ill-treated. I had

an insatiable desire for understanding my social experience through the eyes of an African

American female. I rejected the narratives offered in fictitious songs and tales about life, love,

and the pursuit of happiness. I wanted the *real* story as I grew older and saw more. Who was I,

and why were people who looked like me battling a life vexed with struggle and oppression?

Unbeknownst to me then, hip-hop culture would be the launching pad for my journalistic and

academic career. How I see, view, experience, participate in, react to, judge, and value my social

world is filtered by this perspective.

From B-Girl to Hip-Hop Scholar

Acknowledging these early experiences as predecessors for later ones, Joycelyn Wilson is

what Michael Eric Dyson calls "an experiment in identity." I am a "testament to a process of

evolving self-awareness" that reveals itself in the content of my writing and in the opportunities I

allow into my life. At the heart of my work are questions like these: Who am I? What does it

mean to be an African-American female born and raised in the South during a period of

supposed social advancement for black people? Who am I as a part of the hip-hop generation?

How does hip-hop culture's formative years influence my role as a teacher, scholar, journalist,

and critic? How does this hip-hop perspective inform my views on race, class, gender, and cultural-ethnic oppressions? How can I use this hip-hop as a tool for addressing the racial and economic injustices disproportionately placed on people of color? How can I take what I know as a thirty-something junior scholar-teacher-educator-journalist-social critic-community activist-sister-daughter-friend and share it with other audiences who don't necessarily get what it means to be hip-hop? How can I make that happen so that multiple audiences get a chance to speak and work with each other toward a common goal? How can I use hip-hop aesthetics to forge better relationships between Africans and African-Americans? How can I talk about God when many of the preachers and pastors turn a deaf ear to the hip-hop community? How can I talk to the hip-hop community about many of the socially destructive habits we form because we want to "keep it real" or "keep it 100"? How can I convince the public school system that hip-hop is a pedagogical tool that can save our children? These are questions that prod my psyche every single day. These difficult questions and the difficult answers that come from them are born from the multiple identities that started evolving when my mother nurtured my interest in music using her musical insight. And of course these multiple identities battle one another. At any given time, my black self wants to come before my female self, and both want to precede my views on economics. These multiple identities are represented in the nervousness that swoops down on me when I'm sitting among teachers who think they know it all and who believe their students know nothing. Just the mention of a hip-hop pedagogy sends them into crossed legs and folded arms as if they are thinking, "What the hell is she talkin' bout a hip-hop pedagogy? It's the hip-hop that's killin these kids." No, it's *you* that's killing the kids—their spirit at least. How do I help develop these ill-informed perspectives about hip-hop and use them as benefits for the children of the school system and the teachers who work within it?

Thinkin' 'bout the Scholarship

Acknowledging my stories, questions, and apprehensions at the outset of *Outkast'd and Claimin' True: Schooling and Education in the Hip-hop Community of Practice* indicates the experiential lens through which I have constructed my theoretical frameworks, collected and analyzed my data, and reached conclusions and implications about the relationships among hip-hop, "the culture," school(ing), "the process," and education, "the ideology" as it is experienced in the southern region of the United States. My hip-hop herstory, threaded throughout the theory and findings of this project, reveals that hip-hop culture has served as an educational vehicle not only for my life, but also for other "hip-hoppers" with similar experiences and interactions.

From a subjectivist position "the knower uses past experience, dreams, or other sources to attribute meaning to the known," write Preissle and Grant. "The evidence gathered during research is never separable from researchers' selves and is inextricably linked to the perspectives of the researchers, who are the only instruments of data collection" (2004, p. 175). This "self-centeredness" acts as a filter for assumptions, purposes, and conclusions acquired during field research. Denzin (1992) applies this theoretical stance under the rubric of interpretive interactionism, also known as symbolic interactionism, an interpretive critique that involves the construction of individuals' everyday social worlds – be they problematic or nonproblematic. Interpretive interactionism takes the position that people are self-reflective agents with experiences embedded in a social, cultural, linguistic, political, and historical context, all of which encompass multiple layers of meaning. For me these meanings, or interactions, create biases that scholars bring to the situation when gaining entry into the structural contexts of these social worlds. Because I am a scholar who is at the center of the culture I am studying, I must attend closely to my influences as I engage this research. My work is on hip-hop culture because

I am a hip-hopper interested in not only the views of my hip-hop peers but also those perspectives that drive *my* thought process and research methodology. I have a personal and professional connection to the culture. I live it. I breathe it. I listen to it. I critique it. I celebrate it. I speak it.

Through my studies, I've found a relationship between subjectivism and the hip-hop perspective on articulating experience. In hip-hop culture, for example, participants are expected to draw genuinely on their experiences, ideas, values, and perspectives to have their identity and narratives taken seriously. I have mentioned this construct previously and explore it more in Chapter 2, *keepin' it real*. Qualitative researchers refer to this level of trustworthiness as fairness or authenticity. "Fairness was thought to be a quality of balance; that is, all stakeholder views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices should be apparent in the text" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 180). Similarly, to "keep it real" means to provide an introspective account of your own social and cultural experience. It means to stay true. It means to be critical. A heavily policed concept from core members of the culture, "keepin' it real" means to say it like it is, no holds barred. In other words, to speak candidly even if it means compromising discretion. Authenticity requires fairness, balance, and conscientiousness. To be authentic means to look at multiple perspectives, interests, and realities. Authentic representation begets trustworthy accounts about the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Patton, 2002). Sometimes attaining this level of legitimacy requires putting aside conventional assumptions and being open to new ones.

These concerns with authenticity require that I trace the genesis of this research project to personal experiences predating my graduate srudies. My initial concern with schooling and hip-hop culture was formulated while reminiscing with a close friend about our school days. We were discussing the support we received from our school administration for our love for hip-hop.

While we were in middle school, the Fat Boys, a popular rap trio of the 1980s, came to visit us as part of a back-to-school tour sponsored by the local radio station. That same year rappers Kurtis Blow, Whodini, and Oran Juice Jones and the popular break-dancing crew called the New York City Breakers came to our pep rally. Again, it was a school surprise, and our principal supported the visit. Like any other school, ours had talent shows, pep rallies, and football games. But we students did not expect rapper-actor LL Cool J to attend one of our football games. To this day, I have no idea who invited him.

In 1994, Atlanta's hip-hop scene began to take off under the auspices of LA Ried, a former rhythm and soul singer turned label executive. His roster included rap groups Outkast and Goodie Mob, the production team called Organized Noize Productions, and the girl trio TLC. Ironically, the majority of his artists either attended my high school, graduated in my class, or attended another high school in the Atlanta Public Schools or Fulton County school system. My high school, Benjamin E. Mays High School, was not a performing arts school. None of Mr. Reid's artists attended a performing arts school. Did he consciously sign artists from the same neighborhood, or was this concentration of artists from the same area a coincidence? I wanted to know. And furthermore, what inspired many of us to develop our careers within the hip-hop paradigm? Was it the support of the school administration? I wanted to know.

Curious about this pattern, I started collecting school-centered hip-hop lyrics on entering the social foundations of education doctoral program in 2001. The lyrics I collected focused on school, aspects of school, and sentiments about school elements like teachers, students, the curriculum, the social dynamics, the administration, and the system. Analyzing these lyrics led me to look at broader notions of education, particularly those considered informal and grounded in the practices and values of the culture. I began to examine how education was defined within

hip-hop culture and compared to how education is viewed in public and formal school culture. grounded in. For example, dropping out of school was a theme inherent in many of the lyrics. Trying to get to the heart of these implicit meanings, I sought a second data set, interviews with participants in the hip-hop culture, to corroborate or refute my questions and conclusions.

So far, I have collected 238 songs, 125 school songs and 113 songs that reference the word bitch. The school songs speak directly or indirectly to schooling and education. Not all of the songs are from southern hip-hop artists. For comparison purposes, the song sets are separated into two categories: southern and non-southern. See Appendix F and Appendix G. The majority of my interviews, however, are from southern-based hip-hop members who attended one, or both in some cases, of the school districts previously identified. Some are rappers while others are producers, photographers, journalists, label executives, managers, and consumers of the culture. Along with excerpts from two hip-hop documentaries: *Raw Report Presents Yung Joc: The Jocumentary* and *Dirty States of America: The Untold Story of Southern Hip-hop*. Ten interviews from hip-hip community members are included in this research study. Interviews began during the second semester of my first year of graduate school, and many of them took place while I was on assignment for popular magazines that I write for. Others were scheduled solely as part of this research project. The interviews and lyrics were augmented by field research and participant observations in the hip-hop scene in the southeastern United States. I have a media services and content development company called Joyce Productions. Oftentimes, I offered my company services in return for access to events and scheduling of interviews. Many of these observations were video-recorded and analyzed later as the basis for describing southern hip-hop culture as its own entity or southern hip-hop and its relationship to the public school culture.

These three data sets provided the significant artifacts to guide me through this cultural, identity-centered exploration.

Reviewing the lyrics that introduce this chapter and in the spirit of keepin' it real and being authentic, I stand on the words of Young Jeezy, a southern rapper based in Atlanta, Georgia. His song "My Hood" is an ode to his community and locates his reasons for his work. Simply stated, he does it for the 'hood. Me too. At the heart of my work is my community or my 'hood, a community-oriented terrain that emerges from the discourses and narratives of rap music and hip-hop culture. Other related terms for the 'hood are "the ghetto" and "inner city" (Forman, 2002). Rappers also refer to the 'hood as "the block" or "the projects." Regardless of the various names used, these spatial designations represent the positions from which hip-hoppers deploy a discourse about urban space, urban locality, and urban place. From these geocultural centers hip-hop members "articulate notions of subjective and collective identities, urban experience, racial consciousness, and spatially structured patterns of power" (p. xviii). But as I have previously acknowledged, I belong to another 'hood – the academic 'hood that represents the articulation of collective identities in a different way. In this space, academicians conduct research about human experiences and phenomenon. It is then packaged and presented at conferences, workshops, and class seminars and published in books and journals. What is learned during research ultimately becomes part of the academic discourse, and it is from these two spaces that I interpret the evidence and data collected for this research project. To do anything less will get me kicked out of both: my hip-hop hood and my academic hood. I must interpret what I have learned in ways authentic to both worlds.

<u>Potential Challenges of a B-Girl Scholar</u>

In addition to obligations researchers have to both their participants and their colleagues, they must account for how who they are affects what they study. Like other African American scholars (Alridge, 2003), I may be challenged for my membership in the culture I study. For example, when I conducted my interviews, the members and participants were open and willing to address my questions and statements. Warren and Twine (2000) refers to this as the benefits of color-matching. But in my role as a woman, how should I interpret the threads of patriarchy and misogyny that were themes in my conversations with participants? Have I been desensitized to the exploitation of women? This may be a necessary position in my balancing of roles to maintain legitimacy among my peers and colleagues. Using Adler and Adler's (1987) framework for researcher roles, I was a complete-member-researcher or CMR, participating in a "range of behaviors that vary along a continuum by the researcher's degree of commitment to the group and its goals" (p. 67). CMRs relate to their subjects as status equals and partake in the common set of group experiences, feelings, and goals. CMRs engage in the production of meaning that characterizes the group. As part of the community of practice CMRs create first-order ties or network membership affiliations within the group (Adler & Adler, p. 77). These connections can be based on kinship, ethnic orientation, and friendships (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). In conducting their research, then, CMRs often adopt the overt, "opportunistic" role (Riemer, 1987).

Ngugi articulates a tension among a writer's different audiences in *Moving the centre: The struggle for cultural freedoms* (1993). Although his concern is the outcomes of language use and how language is received, his argument about audience and his attempts to reach particular audiences resonates with my own issues. He writes,

It is to be noted that the mediating languages in both the new literatures from Africa and the literature departments that were accommodating them were European languages. This was a question that was to haunt me for a long time until 1977 when I started writing in Gikuyu, an African language. … <u>I came to realize only too painfully that the novel in which I had so carefully painted the struggle of the Kenya peasantry against colonial oppression would never be read by them</u>. In an interview shortly afterwards in the Union News, the student newspaper, in 1967, I said that I did not think that I would continue writing in English: that <u>I knew *about* whom I was writing, but *for* whom was I writing</u>? …It was once again the question of moving the centre; from European languages to all the other languages all over Africa and the world; a move if you like towards a pluralism of languages as legitimate vehicles of the human condition. (p. 9-10).

I frequently tell my colleagues and friends that having the hip-hop community revoke my "ghetto pass" because of cultural misrepresentation is not an option. On the other hand, cultural critiques grounded in the data collected are not only necessary, but also crucial to the sustainability of the core hip-hop community. I anticipate pissing some people off! The reality is that my position as a complete-member-researcher (CMR) includes a variety of behaviors. When I display the worldview or the *weltanschauung* shared among core members, I find my role as a hip-hop member-researcher of hip-hop more acceptable to other members who are not trustful of outsiders – especially outside researchers. When I attend a hip-hop concert, I am a hip-hopper. I dress the part and talk the part while observing my surroundings and interactions.

Code-switching between my hip-hopper role and my researcher role presents its difficulties. For example, in addition to being a hip-hopper-researcher, I am also a popular music journalist. I am assigned music reviews and feature stories that focus on some aspect of the rap artist's life and career. When I get too detailed, my Bonsu Thompson, my former music editor for *XXL Magazine*, is quick to say, "Enough of the thesis talk, Joycelyn" or "We have to feed our readers apple sauce before we give them the apple." This project represents my ongoing growth as an educator, cultural critic, artist, writer, and scholar. It picks up where the popular press cuts me off: that place of rigorous critique and thorough description held standard within the academic disciplines. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) acknowledge this disciplinary identity as integral to the "scientific merit of the study." Therefore, for this work I use the polyphonic voice I speak – primarily academic, but also popular, with a dash of hip-hop vernacular and street language for emphasis and color. Referring to bell hooks and befitting to the hip-hop state of mind, I intend this work to be an act of "celebrating and affirming insurgent intellectual cultural practice" (1994, p.7).

I intend this work to also contribute to the growing research on hip-hop and how it is a useful way of understanding the current perspectives of all its members: those fortunate enough to grow up during its formative years and those who begin their hip-hop associations later during its development. Chapter 2 takes a look at the early beginnings of hip-hop culture, its influence on mainstream culture, and how it continues to be an applicable means for social advancement and empowerment. Through a review of books, essays, journal articles, and popular writing I present an exploration of the culture's philosophical and epistemological underpinnings.

CHAPTER 3

Tell it like it is: Authentic Representation in Hip Hop Culture, A Review of the Literature

I can't hold my tongue. I'ma tell it like it is.

This biz ain't all fun. I'ma tell it like it is.

Give it to ya straight no chase. I'ma tell it like it is.

Look you straight in yo face and I'ma tell it like it is.

Ludacris (2006)."Tell It Like It Is," *Release Therapy*. New York: Disturbing Tha

Peace/Def Jam

In an interview with rapper Chris "Ludacris" Bridges, I asked him to tell me why he titled his latest album *Release Therapy*. He said that this album was the most honest ever. He told me that the story rhymes were based around being as truthful and real as possible about his experience as a rap artist, but also as a human being: a black man, a friend, a father, and a son. "I'm not trying to be anything that I'm not," Ludacris said. "And I'm not trying to sugarcoat anything." The "sugarcoat" is a no-no in hip-hop culture. Dishonesty, misrepresentation, miseducation, or just plain ol' dancing around what one might truthfully say or think about some*one* of some*thing* are grounds for indictment by cultural peers. A case in point is Vanilla Ice, the one-hit wonder kicked out of the rap industry because his song "Ice Ice Baby" was a terrible attempt at capitalizing off the rap game. According to critics, neither Vanilla Ice nor his four times platinum-selling album *To the Extreme*, which contained "Ice Ice…," were real with a capital R or authentic with a capital A. First it was revealed that Robert Van Winkle (Ice's government name) was not mentored by hardcore rappers, as he claimed to have been. He was not from the 'hood but the suburbs, another claim he made. And as if things couldn't get any worse, the originality of his music was challenged when the catchy hook from "Ice Ice Baby"

was recognized as the signature chant for the predominately black Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity (Morthland, 1991, p. 63). Vanilla Ice's career came crashing down as quickly as it soared, mainly because he misrepresented himself, the culture, and the music; a music "leased" to him under certain "guidelines" established by a hip-hop code of ethics. One of those rules is to "keep it real," or "keep it trill (true and real)" in southern hip-hop language. Real is the opposite of fake and means don't lie. Don't lie about your situation. Don't lie about *the* situation. Refrain from false teachings, be true to yourself, and always tell it like it is.

"Telling it like it is" is an educational exercise that comes from the African American cultural tradition. To "school" in hip-hop means to educate, to transmit relevant information. Hip-hop culture has a special affinity to philosophical and epistemological realism, both of which are found outside rap boundaries. It is in blues, jazz, poetry, folktales, gospel, rhythm and soul, rock, dance, and several other paralinguistic forms of cultural expression (Floyd, 1995; Jones, 1963). African Americans tell the truth about their experiences in these traditions. Rose (1994) foreshadows this claim: "The cultural responses of dance, language, and music produce communal bases of knowledge about social conditions, communal interpretations of themes and quite often serve as the cultural glue that fosters communal resistance" (p. 100). Rose's argument insists that the continuity between hip-hop and its elder culture is one worth unpacking further – particularly the trend of authenticity addressed in the rhetorical history of ancient Kemetic culture (Asante,1986; Carruthers,1986). To me, a literature review on hip-hop should focus on the history of the culture *and* the social ramifications of the culture. But it should begin with the political ideology (and thus the philosophy) of hip-hop culture. An approach such as this links hip-hop to a broader context that can be located in African philosophical traditions.

This chapter reviews the concept of realness or authentic representation in hip-hop culture to examine what scholars, journalists, and critics say about realness in hip-hop and to illuminate the philosophy revealed in hip-hop rhetoric. These ideas are extensions of the research questions and aims listed in the introduction, and my objective is to understand the educational ideology of hip-hop. This requires exploring the key value of authentic representation that hip-hop's foremothers and forefathers relied on to construct their narratives. Exploring how realness is negotiated in hip-hop is essential to learning the ideology that represents the hip-hop community of practice, how these sentiments are expressed in the culture's narratives, and what the ideological representations indicate about the hip-hop worldview.

I draw from historians, linguists, social scientists, scholars, cultural critics, and popular journalists. This range of perspective is necessary to address my research questions and aims, and it emphasizes patterns found between hip-hop and ideology. My review of hip-hop and rap music begins primarily in the scholarship of the subjects. For example, I rely on books such as these: Tricia Rose's *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994); Robin D.G. Kelley's *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (1996); *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap and Hip-Hop Culture* (1995), the edited volume of essays by William Perkins; and Todd Boyd's *The New HNIC: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop* (2003). The sociology of hip-hop is linked to an indigenous expression, as identified in the scholarly literature and the works of African historians such as Theophile Obenga (2004) and Asa Hilliard (1995, 1997, 2002). Bakari Kitwana's *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (2003) and *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America*

(2005) along with Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop: The History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (2005) are works that suggest there is a hip-hop generation with a worldview distinct from (albeit based on) any time prior to the 1960s. This review examines this notion of a hip-hop generation along with its social and cultural implications.

The extension of the political ideology of rap music and hip-hop into the 21st century is also important to my study. The review of material such as Cheryl Keyes's analysis *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (2004) adds the view of an ethnomusicologist. Keyes applies many of Rose's perspectives on rap music to consider how the music – that is, the mix of African and Caribbean musical tendencies – is put together to articulate an identity of street consciousness. Yvonne Bynoe's *Stand and Deliver: Political Activism, Leadership, and Hip Hop Culture* (2004) and Imani Perry's *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (2004) reinforce this focus on political ideology in the music and culture. Relying on lyrics to substantiate her claims, Perry focuses on realism in hip-hop. Bynoe's concern is more practical as she offers strategies for using the ideology to promote social and community awareness. Teacher educators such as Joyce King (1991, 2005) and Lisa Delpit (1988, 1995) highlight rap music and hip-hop as influential in the culture of school. The assumptions of my research study reinforce their claims regarding the use of hip-hop in the classroom. Many scholars and practitioners, such as Harriett Ball and Eric Cork, have demonstrated how powerful hip-hop can be when teaching literacy, mathematics, writing, social studies, and history.

A claim made in my introduction is the idea of hip-hop as a community of practice: a community of social networks that "do", or practice hip-hop. The construct of a community of practice was developed in the early 1990s and has not yet been used to explore the organization of culture in hip-hop. Social network theory adds to the functionality of the approach because it

blends the factors of race, class, and gender with environment, region, and location. Murray Forman's *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (2002) explores hip-hop's urban space relations. These books on hip-hop were supplemented with essays and journal articles from edited volumes on the history of hip-hop, such as the volume edited by Derrick Alridge for the *Journal of African American History* (2005).

Virtually all hip-hop stories, including Alridge's (2005), are introduced with preliminary information about hip-hop's history and sociopolitical origins. The majority of these critiques center the topic of hip-hop politics in the context of U.S. social ethics. I follow a similar pattern, but emphasize the connections between hip-hop's social and philosophical roots. Realness in hip-hop is a governing principle that, when used appropriately, functions as cultural capital for maintaining black identity and challenging the preservation of the status quo. This is one of the reasons why rapper Young Jeezy's "Can't Ban the Snowman" marketing campaign was such a successful movement. It inspired and motivated people who understand life under racially oppressive and poverty-worn conditions – especially in the South where Jeezy is from. But because southern hip-hop is a cultural enigma, ideas of realness go unnoticed or misinterpreted. This is why the review introduces the growing criticisms of southern hip-hop, therefore addressing my first research question: What is southern hip-hop culture?

Most of the time keepin' it real is used incorrectly. This does not depend on whether or not a member is from the southern network, the East coast, or the West coast. When keepin' it real goes wrong, that is, when all aspects of ghetto life are supported, even those that are destructive, the concept can be misconstrued, and the idea of authentic representation in hip-hop turns in on itself. The results are detrimental outcomes for the individual and the community as a whole. I acknowledge this negative side of realness in my review. More importantly, in Chapter

6, I illuminate the positive elements of hip-hop authenticity as a design essential for educational policy, curriculum, and teaching. As part of the discussions and implications, I explore the work of those who have committed themselves to the application of what I call "keepin' it real in the classroom." These practitioners use hip-hop as a device for increasing literacy, meeting national standards, designing curriculum, and fostering teacher education alternatives. Highlighting the work of these practitioners supports my research question that focuses on representations of school and education in hip-hop narratives.

<div align="center">The Sociocultural Context of Hip-Hop Culture</div>

Hip-hop culture is an offspring of African expressive culture and history (Gaunt, 2004; Perkins, 1996; Smitherman, 2000). It is an extension of African and African American traditions and pulls from techniques such as poetry, verse, call-and-response, and dance. Its music samples blues, jazz, and soul to create drum patterns and bass percussions synchronized with various forms of narrative devices. Converging in the early 1970s in the boroughs of New York City, hip-hop culture borrows from its musical and cultural antecedents to articulate the black person's experience following the industrial period and the implementation of civil rights legislation, both of which left a divide *between* the races and a class gulf *within* the black community (Alridge & Stewart, 2005; Boyd, 2003; Kelley, 1996, Keyes, 2003; Neal, 2001; Rose, 1994). Russell Potter (1995) defines hip-hop as a postmodern critique: a self-conscious political practice and component of popular culture where joy, happiness, disappointment, and resistance are celebrated through language, dance, art, and music. Michael Eric Dyson also analyzes hip-hop through a postmodern lens, describing it as a movement representative of the fragmentations of the black experience (Dyson, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2003). To both Dyson and Potter, hip-hop is a

platform that allows for the free expression of diverse and fragmented selves born out of a fragmented social existence.

Hip-hop grew from experiences both similar to and different from those African Americans who grew up during the heyday of the Civil Rights and Black Nationalist movements when songs like Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come", Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?", and Aretha Franklin's "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" voiced community-identified concerns to popular culture's mainstream. Even as far back as the Jim Crow era, Billie Holiday's "Strangefruit" speaks to the abundance of lynchings that wrecked havoc on African American communities throughout the racist South. Not a song recorded during the Civil Rights movement, "Strangefruit" is perhaps one of the first civil rights protest songs in the U.S. As do slave songs, gospel, blues, and jazz, hip-hop culture finds a similar space for celebration *and* protest (Baraka, 1963, Levine, 1977). It is grounded in three postmodern critiques: post-Industrialism; post-Soul; and post-Civil Rights/Black Nationalist Movement (Boyd, 2003; Keyes, 2002; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1994). Cultural critic Mark Anthony Neal refers to hip-hop as a post-soul aesthetic. Neal suggests that, before it took the mainstream pop arena by storm, it first and foremost "plugged into inner-city lampposts and youth culture and was later embraced for its postmodern sensibilities by 'avant-garde' critics…" (Neal, 1999, p. 11). Other perspectives consider hip-hop from a feminist or Womanist framework (e.g., Springer, 2005), and when speaking about the hip-hop generation, journalist Jeff Chang offers somewhat of a postcolonial perspective.

> My own feeling is that the idea of the Hip-Hop Generation brings together
> time and race, place and polyculturalism, hot beats and hybridity. It
> describes the turn from politics to culture, the process of entropy and
> reconstruction. It captures the collective hopes and nightmares, ambitions

and failures of those who would otherwise be described as "post-this" or "post-that (2005, p. 2).

The scholarship of hip-hop culture remains new to academia, although hip-hop as a subject of discussion has existed since the late 1980s, when the *Source* magazine started publishing hip-hop journalism. Rose (1994) and Kelley (1996) wrote the first two seminal books on hip-hop culture, its origins, contexts, and implications. Rose's *Black Noise: Rap Music and Street Consciousness* set the framework for Kelley's *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* because it placed the production of hip-hop within the economic downturn characteristic of the postindustrialist U.S. Citing Houston Baker's reflection on blues, Rose described hip-hop culture and rap music as meeting at the "crossroads of lack and desire" where "social alienation, prophetic imagination, and yearning intersect" (p.21). The practice of hip-hop is an attempt to constructively manipulate the experiences of marginalization brought on by these social times. At the outset, it functioned as a means for negotiating the lack of positive opportunities for social advancement while representing a world that disregarded the cultural imperatives of the African-American, African-Caribbean, and Latino communities. The production and development of hip-hop culture was brought on by the tensions created by unemployment, disenfranchisement, deindustrialization, the criminalization of youth, ineffective welfare policies, drug use and trafficking, AIDS, teenage pregnancy, underresourced schools, and the detrimental consequences of racism, classism, and the marginalized black identity.

Provided the material, burgeoning assessments of hip hop are no longer limited to departments of African American history, culture, and sociology. Hip hop scholarship has found its way into anthropology and folklore (Gaunt, 2004; Keyes, 2003), sociology (Perkins, 1996), adult education (Guy, 2004), media and communications (Boyd, 2003; Dimitriadis, 2001),

studies of popular music and society (Chang, 2005; Dyson, 2001; George, 1998; Mitchell, 2004; Morgan, 1999), religion (Dyson, 1996), dance education (Engel, 2001), sociolinguistics and language variation (Alim, 2002, 2003; Morgan, 2001; Smitherman, 2000), child and family development (Phillips & Stephens, 2003), and education (Ginwright, 2004; Mahiri, 1998, 2004), where the focus is on literacy, curriculum and instruction, teacher education, and professional development.

Although these disciplines offer diverse perspectives on hip hop, their common narrative, as well as most critiques, essays, and reviews outside academia, describe hip-hop culture as an African American cultural extension developed in the early to mid-1970s in South Bronx, New York. The story is that a rapper-producer named Afrika Bambataa and a Caribbean DJ named DJ Kool Herc grew frustrated with the ills of a racialized U.S. society and the thrust of Republican values, which directly influenced the poverty, crime, and violence of the urban centers. These two artists convinced marginalized youth to turn their anger away from one another and into performance. Instead of battling and fighting with fists, battling and fighting through language, dance, and visual art became an alternative outlet. Communicating the realities of urban youth depended on these fundamental performances: DJing, Breakdancing (also called B-Boying or B-Girling), Graffiti art, and Rapping (also called MCing). Other aspects of performance such as fashion, film, and writing are extensions of hip-hop culture's primary elements as it continues to grow into a global and market-driven entity (Cepeda, 2004, Oh, 2005). The goal of each element of performance is total expression of oneself. In hip-hop rhetoric this level of expression stems from knowledge of self.

The attempts to draw on social experience to express community-oriented values, traditions, and norms have opened hip-hop to severe criticisms from members of elder

generations, scholars, critics, and writers who participate in hip-hop and view themselves as part of the culture. In the next section, I review critiques that insist that hip-hop is a destructive culture that offers little necessary to the black community.

"Rap music bamboozles my race!: Critiques of Hip-hop Culture and the Hip-hop Generation

Many activists, writers, journalists, educators, and scholars have denounced the voice of the hip-hop generation (Crouch, 2003; McWhorter, 2003). In doing so, they have reduced its philosophy of social commentary and cultural awareness to one of misogyny, violence, individualism, and material consumption, all of which are consequences of a culture now guided by the media industry. See the figure below that shows the six largest corporate media conglomerates. Figure 1 is a visual display of how mass media is compartmentalized and controlled by a select few.

The influence of corporate media is a common critique in hip-hop. Most examinations of hip-hop and its influence from the mainstream begin with the argument that hip-hop has come to

cater to a more global crossover audience. In doing so, it has sacrificed its indigenous approach to expressing social and political commentary (Bynoe, 2004). "Problematic" (p.194) is the adjective used by Cole and Guy-Sheftall (2003) to describe rap music. West (1999) referred to rap music as "fun" and "entertaining," but as also "lacking vision and analysis" (p. 299). Using a one-dimensional lens, he initially claimed that rap music and hip-hop culture "helps sustain the rituals of party-going on the weekends." Throughout his ongoing examination of hip-hop, West's critique shifts to a more expansive analysis of hip-hop as a culture imbued with analytical vision yet constrained by the forces of poverty, industry, media, and technology. Using the lyrics of the Atlanta-based hip-hop group Outkast, West acknowledges in *Democracy Matters* (2004) that "the best rap music and hip-hop culture still expresses stronger and more clearly than any cultural expression in the past generation a profound indictment of the moral decadence of our dominant society" (p. 179).

The irony of hip-hop culture is that it is a victim of the very issues it critiques—capitalist excess, material gain, dishonesty, and degradation of men and women. At many levels, the culture of hip-hop participates in its own subjugation. This is an example of when keepin' it real goes wrong. In her book *Outlaw Culture*, bell hooks (1994) asked rapper Ice Cube about the violence associated with what she called "gangsta ideology." "It seems to me that there is a kind of gangsta ideology that says I'll kill you if you fuck with me, period." Ice Cube responded,

> That's the law of the world…and it goes all the way back to slavery, when
> white people made black people slaves, they put greed in front of
> humanity. So they really stripped us of all our knowledge of the whole
> story and became our teachers. So now, what we do is put greed in front of
> humanity. So it's easy for us to kill and shoot each other for the almighty

dollar, because that's the way our teachers do (p. 131).

Taking this comment seriously, McWhorter (2003) seems to think it is time to stop blaming the white man for all of black folks' problems with self-love. In his essay "Hip-Hop Holds Blacks Back," he fervently claims,

> For those who insist that even the invisible structures of society reinforce racism, the burden of proof should rest with them to explain just why hip-hop's bloody and sexist lyrics and videos and the criminal behavior of many rappers *wouldn't* have a powerfully negative effect upon whites' conception of black people (http://www.city journal.org/html/13_3_how_hip_hop.html)

Categorizing hip-hop as "lacking vision," "problematic," "violent," and "misogynistic," nevertheless, treads on misrepresentation. Contrary to the sentiments of McWhorter, one of the main functions of hip-hop culture is to provide a voice for silenced and marginalized people through performance. It is more than music, language, and style. It is dialogical and acts as the vein, if not the artery, for the flow of expression to and from the hearts of many impoverished communities around the world. Although the rap performance is connected to blues, jazz, and other forms of expressive culture, it is *the* linguistic window of the hip-hop generation. Its fundamental nature questions, challenges, and attacks mainstream and hegemonic U.S. values, allowing the culture to remain a viable network for voices of the margins (Keyes, 2003; Rose, 1994) for conversations about their experiences. Rap music is hip-hop's primary filter for delivering these messages.

The complexity of hip-hop culture and its controversial relationship to the U.S. mainstream attracted the attention of scholars who examine the production, distribution, and

consumption of culture. I return to Rose because she prophetically acknowledged the potential

for scholarly tensions when attempting to define hip hop culture accurately. She argued that

scholarship that locates hip-hop as merely a successor to premodern oral traditions "fail to do

justice to its complexities, and how hip-hop's primary properties of flow, layering, and rupture

simultaneously reflect and contest the social roles open to urban inner-city youths at the end of

the 20th century" (1994, p. 22). Next, then, I look at the practice of rap in relation to the

sociocultural context outlined in hip-hop scholarship.

I ain't no fool or new jack poppin' fake rap: Rap Music and the Practice of Hip-hop

Hip-hop is one of the most conflicted forms of popular culture. It is celebrated but

abhorred, admired yet devalued, embraced but refused. It is a culminating force. It binds people

together to walk hip-hop, talk hip-hop, look hip-hop, and think hip-hop. Rap music remains hip-

hop's primary means for discussing life experiences, be they real or imagined. It is hip-hop

culture's most significant means of communication, albeit the conversations that take place in the

lyrical realm may "seem irrational when they are severed from the social contexts where

everyday struggles over resources, pleasure, and meanings take place" (Rose, 1994, p. 2).

The power of the language of rap lies in the salience of the stories about oppression and

resistance to marginality in U.S. mainstream media and popular culture. Writes Rose, "It is at

once part of the dominant text and yet, always on the margins of this text; relying on and

commenting on the text's center and always aware of its proximity to the border" (p. 2). This

may be why scholars and critics are slowly receiving rap music as explorative text.

In multiple ways, the lyrics chronicle the culture's activities, values, and norms while

confronting mainstream social norms as hypocritical and divisive. Within this framework, rap

music and hip-hop culture challenge the dynamics of race, class, and gender as inherent

throughout the local and global terrain. Rose (1994) refers to rap music as a "hidden transcript" of lyrics that consumes the politics of rap, a perspective of rap music given little public attention. She argues that rap music "uses cloaked speech and disguised cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current power inequalities" (Rose, 1994, p, 100). These inequalities are "articulated and acted out in both hidden and public domains, making them highly visible, yet difficult to contain and confine" (Rose, 1994, p. 101). Rose admits that not all rap music directly critiques domination. She insists, however, that "a large and significant element…is engaged in symbolic and ideological warfare with institutions and groups that symbolically, ideologically, and materially oppress African Americans." "In this way," Rose continues, "rap music is a contemporary stage for the theater of the powerless" (p. 101).

Hip-hop culture and rap music recount social experiences, but also reflect cultural developments and trends. These are extended through elder forms of African cultural expression and represent a component of black popular culture where joy, happiness, disappointment, and resistance are celebrated through the culture's language, dance, art, and music (Rose, 1994).

Hip-hop culture emerged as a way for youth to exert an alternative identity in the wake of an overall social community whose institutions were destroyed by greater economic, cultural, and political forces. Looking at how these social forces contribute to the development of performance is integral in the study of hip-hop and other forms of popular culture. "It brings into focus," writes Rose, "how significantly technology and economics contribute to the development of cultural forms. It also illuminates both the historically specific aspects of musical expressions and the stylistic links between musical forms and historical periods" (1994, p. 23). As mentioned previously, that the culture of hip-hop is shaped by technological and economic shifts is a key interpretation, and one beyond the brevity of this review. The most significant idea here,

however, is how Rose purports that social and cultural forces can highlight the historical and stylistic traditions of African American expressivity. By focusing on the "postindustrial city," she claims that we can explore the "context for creative development among hip hop's earliest innovators" (p. 34). It is this economic infrastructure that "shaped their cultural terrain, access to space, materials, and education" (p. 34).

The practice of hip-hop is embedded in black cultural storytelling, signifyin', toastin', and other African-oriented elements that use rhyme, street vernacular, chants, and rhythmic speech to recite life stories over musical productions (Forman, 2004, Keyes, 2003, Rose, 1994). It is shaped by cultural traditions, technology, and the political economy and through race, class, and gender relations. The interconnectedness of these elements – space, cultural priority, and social derivatives – demonstrates the following hip-hop traits:

1. That gender in hip-hop is "a by-product of sexism and the active process of women's marginalization in cultural production"

2. That the form of hip-hop is "fundamentally linked to technological changes and social, urban space parameters."

3. That the contempt in hip-hop is "produced by contemporary racism, gender, and class oppression."

4. And that the joy in hip-hop comes from the subversion of these social forces and the affirmation of an African identity that can be traced through historical traditions (Rose, p. 61)

Rap music and hip-hop culture are often used interchangeably. Rose, for example, argues that rap music and hip-hop culture are political and commercial forms of expression, and for many young people they are the primary cultural, sonic, and linguistic windows of the world (p.

19). In the music and in the literature, clear descriptions signal the relationships between the two. Returning to the ethnomusicologist Cheryl Keyes (2003), I emphasize her point that rap is an act or performance. Hip-hop is a way of life shared by a community of people with shared values and a common experience. Usually, the experiences come with economic, political, and social baggage performed through the rap. The experiences are also filtered through an ideology that insists that each cultural participant represent both rap and hip-hop in a way that is politically and socially authentic. I explore this idea in the next section.

<div align="center">Ideology of "Real" in Rap and Hip-Hop</div>

Geneva Smitherman illustrates the meaning of authenticity in hip-hop culture and black culture by writing,

> Black raps ain't bout talkin loud and sayin nothin, for the speaker must be
>
> up on the subject of his rap, and his oral contribution must be presented in
>
> a dazzling, entertaining manner…black raps are stylized…symbols of how
>
> to git ovuh (Smitherman, 2000, p. 205).

What Geneva Smitherman (1977) calls *gittin ovuh*, Ludacris (2000) calls *disturbin tha peace*. What the slave community called *puttin' on ol' massa*, Field Mob (2000), two rappers living in Albany, Georgia, calls *stompin' ol' massa t' da flo*. Fundamentally, *gittin ovuh*, *disturbin tha peace*, *puttin on ol' massa*, and *stompin' ol' massa t'da flo* are various lexical forms of *realness*, having a sense of authenticity and maintaining an allegiance to cultural values, forms, and tendencies. *Gittin ovuh*, for instance, has two interpretations. In the secular world, it means overcoming the pressures of the black experience in the U.S. In the spiritual realm, it means to gain knowledge of self to be able to negotiate the trials of a sinful world. Ultimately all of these phrases challenge the human spirit to exist in a place of balance, harmony, happiness, and contentedness – regardless of the circumstances (Smitherman, 2000). *Keepin' it real* is the

framework for executing methods of survival in a world of oppressive social institutions and values. Although co-opted by popular culture, to tell someone in the black community to "keep it real" is to suggest they testify to black life by providing an accurate lens for interpreting (and interrogating) the black experience.

Placing the lexicon of realness in the ideological dynamics where it exists, the next section is an overview of the relationship between the values of hip-hop and those of the mainstream U.S. – particularly the hegemonic forces promoted within the mainstream. Politically, what does it mean to be authentic? What is the political practice of real? These are examples of questions addressed in the next section. Following a discussion on hip-hop's political nature in relation to its social nature, I explore three views of realness inherent within the hip-hop scholarship. In this part of the review I supplement the concept with a broader, more African-centered epistemology. The chapter ends with a brief application of how the practice of realness, rap, and hip-hop can be used in education and schooling.

My country shitted on me. She wants to get rid of me:

Hip-hop Culture, the Hip-hop Generation, and the American Ethos

I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the

oppressed in the ghettoes without having first spoken clearly to the

greatest purveyor of violence in the world today, my own

government…I love America, but in order to eliminate the triple

evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism, America

must undergo a radical revolution of values (King, 1967).

Hip-hop culture is comprised of the voices of the best-kept secret in the U.S.: the children of the ghetto, youth (and their families) with little access to healthcare and no access to good

healthcare. I am referring to those youth (and their families) who by law must attend schools with very few resources, and if by philanthropic efforts these at-risk institutions are granted resources, the bureaucracy of the system prevents these folks from gaining a quality education. I am talking about the urban and the rural. I do not make a distinction. Poverty is poverty no matter where or how you slice it. Violence is violence, and drugs get sold in the city hood and in the country hood. So when I say urban, I do not mean the big city living where ballers and shotcallers live in overpriced lofts and high-rise condos. Urban in the hip-hop sense is that grimy, ignored part of the city where project buildings dwell, and liquor stores sit on every corner next door to a check-cashing mart and a restaurant called "Buffalo China." And when I say rural, I mean places like Albany, Georgia, where clear and present lines separate the haves from the have-nots, the blacks from the whites, and both the blacks and the whites from the Mexicans. These urban and rural people of color and little money have come to represent the hip-hop generation, albeit the culture originated in the early 1970s in New York boroughs occupied by poor African-American, African-Caribbean, and Latin populations. Leading up to the hip-hop movement was the Civil Rights and Black Nationalist movement. As the 1960s moved into the 1970s, the ghosts of movements past – be they integrationist or nationalist – dissolved with the deaths of both leaders, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. But the struggle for social, political, and economic equality and cultural-ethnic determination would come to grip the U.S., a place already plagued with war inside and outside its borders. Protests over education grew stronger; clashes between white police and black youth became almost an urban epidemic during this time (Boyd, 2003; Chang, 2005; Kelley, 1996; Keyes, 2002; Kitwana, 2002; Neal, 2001; Rose, 1994).

I have come to believe King was having one of his many prophetic moments when he made the 1967 speech excerpted at the beginning of this section. He knew where the country was headed if its values remained steeped in racism, poverty, and war. He knew that his task of telling oppressed peoples to practice nonviolence would grow more and more difficult if the greatest purveyor of violence, his own government, did not stop exploiting its citizens through hegemonic tactics. If justice, balance, and harmony were not available to all people, those exploited by the contrary would ultimately rise to create an alternative movement against the system and its people. So is the case with hip-hop, a cultural movement designed around the aesthetics, expressions, values, norms, and wisdoms significant to the African Cultural Tradition (ACT).

On the heels of what Rose calls "life on the margins of postindustrial urban America" (1994, p. 21) and what Neal argues as "the change from segregation to desegregation" (Neal, 2001, p. 3), the hip-hop generation became the beneficiaries of policies and procedures that made them "the first generation of Black Americans to experience nostalgia." That is, hip-hop is the first group of African Americans to experience a crucial time of transition in the U.S.: the transition from the Vietnam War; a transition from segregation to desegregation; a transition in economic and political accessibility for African Americans. "It all showed up in the music," George contends (1998, p. 11). The hip-hop generation, as defined by Kitwana (2002), is made up of African American, African Caribbean, and Puerto Rican youth born between 1965 and 1984. I should note that the hip-hop generation is an aspect of what has been identified as generation x, but everyone in generation x is not necessarily part of the hip-hop generation. As I have emphasized previously, the hip-hop generation consists of thinkers whose worldviews have been affected by unemployment, the crack cocaine epidemic, crime and violence, mass-mediated

propaganda, the lack of access to quality education, and Reaganism (Chang, 2005; Ginwright, 2004; Kelley, 1996; Keyes, 2002; Kitwana, 2002, Mahiri, 1998, 2004).

Reaganism significantly influenced the worldview of hip-hop culture and the social experiences of the hip-hop generation. Based on the philosophy of President Ronald Reagan, Reaganism represented conservative right-wing politics of the 1980s. It was "a return to old-fashioned Republicanism" (Dallek, 1984, p. vii-viii) and reflected "the cultural and historical sign, for many whites, of the 'real' America" (Gray, 1995, p. 16). Reaganomics, the economic strand of Reagan's philosophy, embraced tax breaks for the rich and budget cuts in public healthcare and education that affected the lives of the U.S. poor. Reaganism included "weaker enforcement of civil rights, fewer controls on industry, less protection of the environment, and emotional rhetoric on the virtues of hard work, family, religion, individualism, and patriotism" (Dallek, 1984, p. vii-viii). The spread of Reaganism worsened the well-being of African American, Latin American, and other ethnic minorities, both in material conditions and through media propaganda, as I illustrate here. It is one of those periods when African peoples were detached even more from traditional means of socialization through budget cuts in public education, for example. Cheryl Keyes, author of *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, argues that Reagan's ideas "served as an open-book testimony to America's problems" (2002, p. 5). Young minority women were tagged as welfare queens; the minority underclass was identified as lazy and irresponsible; and the moral decay of the urban center was blamed on teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, and crime (Kelley, 1996; Kitwana, 2002; Perkins, 1996; Rose, 1994).

The first hip-hop generation acknowledges a life molded by many of these social consequences following the Civil Rights and Black Nationalist movements, as well as the Reagan-Bush presidential era (Boyd, 2003, Chang, 2005, Kitwana, 2003). The second generation

of hip hoppers, what Kitwana (2005) calls the millennium generation, was born between 1985 and 2004 and experience life through an integration under the perils of resegregation. The millennium generation, exposed to the economic advancements forged by the dot-com companies, what Oh (2005) calls hip-hop's Bling Bling era, and the social strategies of the Reagan, Clinton, and Bush Administrations, has a worldview cultivated by the proliferation of crime and violence; terrorism; 911 and the destruction of civil liberties; the war in Iraq; and increased cases of AIDS in the black community – especially among African American women. Unemployment, continued lack of access to quality healthcare, exposure to new drugs such as ecstasy and heroine competing with crack and cocaine have created even more volatile conditions for black youth and the coming generations of hip-hop. If the first hip-hop generation experienced life through the politics of Reagan, and the millennium generation opposed the direction of the Bush administration and the revocation of civil liberties, how might the current hip-hop generation of youth make sense of the exposure not only to AIDS in the black community and a continuation of Republican values, but also increased joblessness, the war on terrorism, the denial of civil liberties, educational policy such as *No Child Left Behind*, and healthcare policies that deny underprivileged families access to certain treatments and drugs? Who is the hip-hop generation now, and how do issues of race, class, and gender play out in the growth of the cultural form? A key theme of my literature review is the relationship between hip-hop culture, the social experience of its associated generations, and how it is performed and expressed. The next section compares and contrasts the values of the hip-hop community with the social ethos of the U.S. sociopolitical infrastructure as an approach for understanding the socio-philosophical nature of realness in hip-hop.

Hip-hop America: A Love-Hate Relationship

As noted previously, the most common vehicle for expressing hip-hop culture is through the African tradition of the rap. The rap includes proverbs, songs, hymns, sermons, and poems all geared toward "disturbin' the peace" of white and black social conservatives in the U.S.. Rap music, as Rose describes, "brings together a tangle of some of the most complex social, cultural, and political issues in contemporary American society" (p. 2). Drawing from sources like James Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1992) where he argues that relationships of power are situated in hidden social transcripts, Rose claims,

> Rap music's desire to respond to social issues that pertain to black
>
> life in America is part of a long-standing tradition in black culture
>
> to refashion dominant transcripts that do not sufficiently address
>
> racial slights and insults…To understand…we must concern
>
> ourselves not only with economic or institutional discrimination
>
> but also with social indignities carried out in public transcripts and
>
> acted out by individual representatives of the state. (1994, p. 123)

Rap music's concern with the social contradictions of the government and the people in positions of power to control the government defines a political component of realness. Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.'s edited volume, *Farther to Go: Readings and Cases in African American Politics* (2001), locates these social indignities in the fabric of a U.S. ethos whose ideological inheritance can be linked to the values of the Enlightenment period. This ideology is buttressed on three major principles: (1) equality; (2) economic individualism; (3) and limited government intervention. These three principles, as described by Kinder and Sanders (1996), have played the most important roles in studies that analyze the relationship between the U.S. political tradition and the black community. But more far-reaching and essential is how each principle directs

various perspectives held about politics, ultimately causing a genuine disagreement about equality, economic empowerment for all, and government intercession.

For example, Garry Wills in his work, *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government* (1999), contends that two main clusters of values, antigovernment and progovernment, operate in the U.S. Willis's term "antigovernment" generally means antihegemonic, with the belief that

> …government, as a necessary evil, should be kept at a minimum; and that
>
> legitimate social activity should be provincial, amateur, authentic,
>
> spontaneous, candid, homogenous, traditional, popular, organic, rights-
>
> oriented, religious, voluntary, participatory, and rotational (1999, p. 18-
>
> 19).

Contrasting values, identified as progovernment values, insist that our governing body should promote ethics that are "cosmopolitan, expert, authoritative, efficient, confidential, articulated in its parts, progressive, elite, mechanical, duties-oriented, secular, regulatory, and delegative, with a division of labor (1999, p. 19).

The values set forth by Wills can be cross-listed with the principles set by Kinder and Sanders. For example, Wills places *division of labor* as a progovernment, Marxist value in the U.S. that can fall under Kinder and Sanders's principle of economic individualism. This value, when examined more closely, works to promote the stratification of society according to race, class, and gender. Dr. King refers to this central tendency as economic exploitation where the poor get poorer, the rich get richer, and rappers such as Tupac Shakur, Nasir "Nas" Jones, and OutKast talk about it through poetry and storytelling. Looking at the values that promote limited

government involvement, there is the suggestion that social activity should be homogenous and communal, which is relative to the principle of equality amongst U.S. society.

The value system of the U.S. represents a strange paradox. According to Wills, that system, created primarily during the writing of the U.S. Constitution, was developed to maintain sets of values that promote the sustainability of the country and its ways, despite the disagreements among the writers of this document. However, Wills contends that government has always existed as a necessary evil that has to be accepted "while resenting the necessity" of it. He argues that

> government should combine all these values in a tempered way, since one set does not necessarily preclude the other. But as a matter of empirical fact I find that group after group in our history does treat the first cluster of values as endangered by the second, under siege from them. And a recognition of this fact helps explain things that look merely perverse or irrational unless one sees what values are at work and what are their interconnections (1999, p. 18)

Similar paradoxes and contradictions permeate U.S. culture and can be seen in the complex and contradictory nature of hip-hop's rap lyrics. Recall my argument that hip-hop operates from at least a dual reality that brings about conflicting value positions. On the one hand, rap music is empowering, community-oriented, authentic, and organic. On the other hand, it is violent, misogynistic, individualized, and economically exploitive. Smitherman accounts for this complexity historically. She argues that rap's function is to be entertaining, but also intriguing. It is designed to pull no punches and to tell it like it is regardless of how it may or

may not disrupt the status quo. Hip-hop's attack on government does not stop at its design, but continues with indictments of those in power to facilitate the design.

The U.S. system, intended to maintain itself, has shifted only because the views of many people have changed. Wills's framework for views as antigovernmental and progovernmental is a dichotomy intersecting the binary set up in *Culture Warrior* (2006), the latest book by anti-hop-hop conservative Bill O'Reilly. O'Reilly polarizes the U.S. population into two value extremes: traditionalists versus secular-progressives, or S-P's where S-P's interests rest in drug legalization, rights for teenagers, rehabilitation instead of criminal punishment, separation of church and state, and government tax of the rich to fund housing, healthcare, and education for the poor. Mapping O'Reilly's binary to Wills's, S-P's are antigovernment and the traditionalists are progovernment. There is a popular claim that the Framers of the country, if concerned about the welfare of the masses, would have included aspects of the Constitution to reflect the ethos and sentiment of the people. Wills claims anti-governmentalism is a deep part of the U.S ethos "that any constitution which did not embody *it*, along with the machinery of the government, would not be an authentic expression of the American people's ethos" (p. 207). In many ways, hip-hop rebels against this idea of deliberate inefficiency.

Hip-hop is an example of a revolutionary culture where the central tendency is to question governmental values and texts that promote cultural and ethnic hegemony. If Wills's dichotomy of progovernment vs antigovernment has any validity, then let me point out that hip-hop can't absolutely fall under either when its critique is anti-domination. That is, anti-political domination, anti-social domination, and anti-cultural domination. These sentiments are overwhelmingly present in the lyrics and documented by the scholarship. Although explicit at times and misunderstood and devalued at others, the keepin' it real critique interrogates the

status quo, including the government, the people running the government, the entertainment industry, and the media outlets (VIACOM, MTV, BET, Fox News, etc.) linked to the conventions, ideologies, and goals of the conservatives, neoliberals, and secular progressivists.

In this section, I have argued how hip-hop's distrust of the social institutions on which it haphazardly depends provides a way for understanding its tenuous relationship with the U.S. social order. In education, for example, this complexity is apparent. Schools are necessary in modern socieities, and many families depend on public schooling to provide a substantive education for their children. This is not always the case, especially in underresourced schools. The consequence, as I show in chapter 5, is negative sentiments and perplexing indictments of the public school system, a system designed by a central governing body. Social enigmas such as this are questioned and oftentimes attacked by hip-hop culture, even as it demonstrates a connection to many of society's pro-government, traditionalist views.

<u>Authentic Representation in Hip-hop: Three Perspectives</u>

We are a nation with no precise date of origin, no physical date of origin, no physical

land, no single chief. But if you live in the Hip-Hop Nation, if you are not merely a fan

of the music but a daily imbiber of the culture, if you sprinkle your conversation with

phrases like "off the meter" (for something that's great) or "got me open" (for something

that gives an explosive positive emotional release), if you know why Dutch Master make

better blunts than Phillies…then you know the Hip-Hop Nation is a place as real as

America on a pre-Columbus atlas.

Toure, New York Times, 1999, p.1

Hip-hop culture is too broad to be pinned down to one category. Doing so can limit the numerous perspectives that provide insight into the culture's tradition and complexities. It is extremely diverse and means many things to many people. But as pointed out in prior sections, the tradition of hip-hop culture, especially in relation to realness, is etched in the fabric of the culture. It is probably the one thing about hip-hop that remains pretty much the same. Tricia Rose (1994), Michael Eric Dyson , Bakari Kitwana (2003, 2005), Todd Boyd (2003), Nelson George (1998), Russell Potter (1995), and Cheryl Keyes (2004) are only a few of many scholars and critics of hip-hop culture, and, to varying degrees, they all address the concept of realness in their critiques. Toure (1999), as noted in the introductory quote, places the concept in nationhood, something that I return to later. In this section of the review I consider how the concept of realness is illuminated in the work of noted journalists and scholars.

In Todd Boyd's *The New HNIC: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop* (2003) to keep it real means to "remain true to what is assumed to be the dictates of one's cultural identity….this quest for authenticity often translates to one's perception in the marketplace" (p. 19). In Boyd's perspective realness is influenced by economic capital and people's access to it. Tricia Rose (1994) addresses the idea through her description of rap music and hip-hop's relation to the streets. To Rose, keepin it real is "a persona that incorporates an attitude shaped around values and aesthetics that represent the people who make up the streets" (p. 1). Cheryl Keyes (2002) identifies realness in the context of gangsta rap, a genre of hip-hop music representing guns, cop killing, robbing the rich and giving to the poor, gang affiliation, and drug culture. As in other popular culture genres, the excitement with material wealth and consumption and having a variety of women to choose from is also prevalent in gangsta rap.

In *Hip Hop America*, Nelson George substitutes gangsta rap for reality rap. More than a political tool, Nelson and others (i.e.,Dyson, 2001; Keyes, 2002; Kitwana, 2002) see reality rap (or gangsta rap) as a critique of the social establishment. To be sure, gangsta rap paints an uglier picture of inner-city life than other rap genres. And to categorize reality rap in a one-dimensional frame prevents songs such as the Furious Five's early 1980s classic "The Message" from being a song that kept it real. To the contrary, this song represents the epitome of keepin it real with its vivid description of the project environment and the feeling of desperation explicit in the lyrics.

> Broken glass everywhere. People pissin' on the stairs, you know they just
> don't care. I can't take the smell, can't take the noise. Got no money to
> move out, I guess I got no choice… Don't push me 'cuz I'm close to the
> edge. I'm tryin' not to lose my head. Uh huh ha ha ha. It's like a jungle
> sometimes. It makes me wonder how I keep from goin' under.

The social critique here is similar to that of NWA (Niggaz With Attitudes) member Ice Cube when he screams,

> Fuck the police. Comin straight from the undaground. A young nigga got
> it bad cause I'm brown. And not the otha color so police think they have
> the authority to kill a minority. Fuck that shit, cause I ain't the one…
> Searchin' my car, lookin' for the product. Thinkin' every nigga is sellin'
> narcotics.

"The Message" is considered a rap song about social awareness. It is a way of narrating the experience of living in the ghetto. "Fuck tha Police" takes a political stance against police brutality, a blatant reality for African American youth.

Imani Perry, author of *Prophets of the Hood* (2004), describes the political nature of realism in hip-hop culture. "The "Real" with a capital R," she writes, "constitutes a political rather than purely sociological stance that gives testimony to the emotional state resulting from the experience of poverty, blackness, and the crises of urbanity" (p. 87). This is represented in songs like E-40's "Outsmart the Po-Po's," Chamillionaire's "Ridin' Dirty," Rick Ross's "Push It (to the Limit)," Ludacris's "The Potion," and Outkast's "Hollywood Divorce." Perry also describes community-based realness as centered around family, "the location where an individual remains committed to his or her community, professes that allegiance, and remains honestly and organically rooted in his or her position in the world" (2004, p. 88) Young Jeezy's "My Hood" is an example, along with Tupac's "Pour Out Some Liquor," that acknowledges his ancestors or "dead homies" through libations. And finally there is Juvenile's "Ghetto Children," where he ends his ode to the 'hood with "Lawd."

The "lawd" that Juvie ends the hook with implies a spiritual realness that Perry leaves out. Noticeably, "spirit" is not a focus of discussion in most essays I have read on hip-hop. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal edited a hip-hop studies reader called *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. Published in 2004, the 7-part volume includes a variety of essays about the origins and elements of hip-hop, black urbanity in hip-hop, corporate consumption of hip-hop, women in hip-hop, and authentic representation, which is separated into two parts. Part II includes debates about authenticity and questions the extent to which the concept is valid. Part V explores the political application of real, challenging hip-hoppers to leverage their hip-hop centeredness into a more empowering cultural movement. But none of the essays in this extensive collection focuses on religiosity or the spirit of realness in hip-hop culture. Paul Gilroy pushes for a new perspective on nationalism, but there is no essay that explores a new

way – a realer way – for a perspective on spirituality, religiosity, and what either has to do with maintaining an authentic connection in the black community – especially becaues as hip-hoppers get younger, the divide between them and the church grows wider. That's another story; one I will have to address in a later paper. However, my point is that the culture (the language, the spirit, the wise self) of reality rap, realness, keepin' it real – whatever one chooses to call it – is usually left out although it is key to understanding the worldview of hip-hop culture from within its cultural essence. Spiritual realness provides insight to the individuals' relationship with a higher power. This is often expressed as an act of forgiveness, a prayer for protection and health. Some songs, such as Pac's "I Wonder if Heaven Got a Ghetto," are about mercy and grace, questioning whether a good afterlife awaits children of the ghetto. Other artists and songs use imagery to sustain a higher self. The rapper Nas's album titled *Street's Disciple* not only employs rhetorical metaphor, but also visual metaphor, adapting the famous depiction of the last supper. His album *God's Son* is another example of this theme.

I refer again to the introductory quotes on authenticity in rap, particularly Smitherman (2000), which extends the spiritual interpretation of *keepin it real* into the linguistic and cultural. Her analysis orients the linguistics of black popular culture as an extension of African cultural and philosophical expression. In doing so, Smitherman locates realness in a tradition of thought, giving it a stronger foundation on which to rest her spiritual-secular-social-political argument of *gittin ovuh* as a way to stay true to self, as represented in hip-hop rappers such as KRS-One, Rakim, Nas, Queen Latifah, and Lauryn Hill. Knowledge of self also has a place in the philosophical wisdoms of ancient Africans. Molefi Asante discusses the system in "The Egyptian Origin of Rhetoric and Oratory," a chapter he contributed to *Kemet and the African Worldview: Research, Rescue, and Restoration*, edited by Maulana Karenga and Jacob Carruthers (1986).

Writing about the nature of speaker-audience relations in the ancient rhetorical system, Asante says,

> The speaker…was a nexus for the past and the present. In order for an orator to
>
> carry out his functions he had to know the special duties of the speaker which
>
> related to Maat. No orator could effectively speak with the eloquence of Thoth
>
> (the lord of divine speech) unless he understood the special character of Maat.
>
> "Know thyself," the admonition written on the temple of Karnak, reverberated
>
> deep in the heart of the ancient Egyptian orator….The quest for wisdom and truth
>
> occupied the lives of the elders but it was a quest actively pursued by initiates
>
> who knew it as the pathway to establishing the proper order….Ignorant orators
>
> are violators of Maat, bringers of disharmony….Maat is a social, ethical, and
>
> rhetorical term…meaning justice, truth, harmony (p. 182)

Asante is not the only historian who speaks to the ancient traditions of Ma'at and its relationship to the production of culture and life. His work is preceded some thousands of years by the *Teachings of Ptah-Hotep*, which states clearly the governing system and bed of wisdom of the ancients. For other explorations on the tradition of speech and the ancient rhetorical system see Jacob Carruthers's "The Wisdom of Governance in Kemet" (1986) and probably his greatest contribution to African philosophy, *MDW NTR (Divine Speech): A Historiographical Reflection of African Deep Thought from the Time of Pharoahs to the Present* (1995). See also Theophile Obenga's *A Lost Tradition: African Philosophy in World History* (1995) or even Jawanza Kunjufu's *Hip-Hop vs. Ma'at: A Pyscho/Social Analysis of Values* (1993), which raises the question of the ultimate virtue of art.

The values of Ma'at are found in many hip-hop songs because the concept is a spiritual one based on truth, relating it to hip-hop in a broad sense. An example of this is rapper T.I.'s song "Motivation." Throughout it are themes of truth, balance, harmony, as well as the four other Ma'at virtues: reciprocity, justice, order, and righteousness. T.I. raps,

> You can look me in my eyes. See I'm ready for whatever [Truth]
>
> Anythang don't kill me, make me betta. [Balance, reciprocity]
>
> I ain't dead nigga. You can take the fame and the chedda
>
> And the game, any deal, I'm still a go-getta. [Truth, real]
>
> Take my freedom for the moment but it ain't fo-evah [Justice]
>
> I got the spirit of a god, heart of a dope deala. I'm a King… [Ma'at, the act]

Other songs representing Ma'at are Nas's "One Mic," Field Mob's "All I Know," even Juvenile's "Ha." I am not claiming here that the rappers indicated in this research project knew they were engaged in some ritualistic performance activity rooted in ancient Africa. I am not even claiming that they would acknowledge these connections. What I am considering is whether these patterns may be used for the benefit of cultural unity, continuity, and teaching through hip-hop. What if the teachers of the young hip-hop generation used an excerpt of T.I.'s "Motivation" in the class to motivate their students to learn? How would the youth respond? What I have attempted to do in this study is outline the origins of hip-hop, describe its social and political contexts, provide a general definition of the hip-hop generation, and offer perspectives on authentic representation in the culture. I took this approach because my overall goal is to foster an alternative to meeting the needs of today's inner-city child, an alternative grounded in the child's own familiar milieu. .

CHAPTER 4

There's a message in my words, you gotta decode it:

A Methodology for Analyzing Narratives of the Hip-hop Community of Practice

An epistemology identifies ideological assumptions about the acquisition of knowledge. It is concerned with how this knowledge is produced, transmitted, and used to advance what is known about a social and cultural reality. The objective-subjective debate that surrounds the appropriate to studying meaningful human experience remains ongoing, and preferred positions are generally based on the researchers' relationships to their social worlds and their perspectives on how these worlds are culturally (re)produced. Crotty (1998) writes, "Culture has to do with functioning. As a direct consequence of the way in which we humans have evolved, we depend on culture to direct our behaviour and organise our experience" (p. 53). Premises about how culture works and informs our approach to understanding experience drive all of the epistemological controversies surrounding research methodology. Part of the researcher's job is deciphering and (deciding) the necessary considerations for investigating cultural and scientific truths about people, their world, and their experiences. How does the epistemology chosen influence the theoretical outcomes and conclusions of the research? What role does positionality play in the development of the approach such that the concluding truths are valid interpretations? Many of the answers to these questions are philosophical and therefore feed the debates about scientific research and methodology. Positivists say human behavior, thought, structure, governance, and culture can be explored objectively, free from any baggage we humans carry around. Interpretivists say that culture is so tightly woven into our experiences (researchers' included) that it is virtually impossible to explore community-specific details with a neutral objectivism.

Interpretive interactionists acknowledge the varied cultural experiences we carry around as gendered and nongendered motives or "ideological constructions" that

> create specific forms of interactional subjectivity in concrete situations. Power, emotionality, and force are basic features of everyday life. Intersubjectivity – the shared knowledge that exists between two persons regarding one another's conscious mental state – is basic to shared, human group life. Intersubjectivity is established through shared emotional experiences which are temporally constituted …. constantly preoccupied with the daily, ritual, and enforced performances of stigmatized identities (Denzin,1992, p. 20)

The concept of culture is semiotic (Denzin, 1992, Geertz, 1973). It is a mixture of "shared creativities and struggles" of a people (Hilliard, 1995, p. 10). The blending of the group-specific ideas, values, and experiences position the human as "an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself [sic] has spun" (1973, p. 5). This idea of culture is the guiding principle for many of Geertz's seminal projects. "I take culture to be those webs," he writes, "and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (1973, p. 5). Taking this point seriously, I believe that cultural biases are one of the (if not the single) most important pieces of data brought to a cultural studies-based research project. Our relationship to culture (our own and others') is socio-political in origin and influences the general approach taken to research methods and design.

A review of research methods and design should explain not only how a study was done, but also the assumptions underlying the choice of approaches. Such is the aim of this chapter: to articulate a culturally centered design when examining hip-hop culture, a popular subculture based around the performance of rap. If chapter two addresses *why* study hip-hop culture,

chapter three proposes *how* to study hip-hop culture. For three reasons I apply the conceptual assumptions of Smith's theory on *indigenous research*, Wenger's views of a *community of practice*, Milroy's sociolinguistic notions of *social networks*, the grounded methods of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), and Spradley's domain analysis.

1. The theme of the narrative in chapter one is to locate an integral part of my identity in hip-hop culture and its core community of African Americans. In this light, I am an indigenous researcher committed to understanding hip-hop culture's sociopolitical character and cultural origins.

2. Culture, the term that is, can be over-used and theoretically exploited. Community of practice and social network are fresher concepts that maintain the spotlight on the actions and behaviors significant to a group or social network. The specificity of these concepts avoids the ambiguity associated with the term culture, especially as it has been appropriated in public discourse over the past quarter century.

3. Interpretivist interactionists are not interested in generating grand theories (Denzin, 1992). Our commitment is to produce a substantive interpretation about a group based on the themes that emerge from the collected data. My choice of using an ethnographically grounded design is informed by the research methods of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) (developed initially by Glaser and Strauss) and the inductive analysis strategies of Spradley (1979). Using an approach situated in the collected data is important when exploring hip-hop culture because it remains somewhat of a perplexing form of popular culture and African American performance.

The three concepts – *indigenous research, community of practice* and *social networks* – inform my methodology and interpretations. Working together, each is a conceptual strategy for getting to patterns that comprise the objects, desires, and values of hip-hop. Connecting the three as co-existent ideas, I articulate an ethnographic notion of hip-hop as an indigenous community of practice with related social networks.

This chapter includes a review of the community of practice and social network ideas, but begins with a review of the indigenous research movement. Following a discussion of culturally responsive research methodology is a review of the data collection methods used in this project to support my exploration of hip-hop culture, the southern network, and its ideological views on education and schooling. The primary data collected, rap music lyrics and interviews, are an integral source for generating knowledge about the hip-hop community of practice. Participant observation notes and archival data augment the lyrics and interviews. These include videos that I collected and produced, as well as hip-hop articles, reviews, and other organic materials acquired outside of the academy. The chapter concludes with a section called "Using Domain Analysis to Analyze Hip-Hop Narratives." In this section I discuss the effectiveness of domain analysis as a coding technique for locating themes in rap music narratives.

Decolonizing Culture Frames: The Indigenous Movement

Culture is explored in several ways (Blumer, 1986, Fanon, 1966; Geertz, 1973, Hurston, 1970, Mead, 1928, Spradley, 1979, Storey, 1993). How culture is approached generally determines how it is defined. Essentially, it is a way of life for a particular group, people, or period of time. It is explored with the assumption that a community has certain practices

associated with a systematic body of ideas. Taken as a political construction, Storey (1996)

writes,

> The object of study in cultural studies is not culture in the narrow sense, as
>
> the objects of aesthetic excellence (high art); nor culture defined in an
>
> equally narrow sense, as a process of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual
>
> development; but culture understood as the texts and practices of everyday
>
> life…as a terrain of conflict and contestation (Storey, 1996, p. 2)

Culture, as Storey defines, presents a limited view on the wealth of information one can gather

about a group of people and their customs. Epistemologically interpretive, an indigenous

research methodology is concerned with relationships of power and indigenous cultures, in

addition to its communal norms, values, and lifestyles. Smith (1999) contends that the activity of

research as it relates to indigenous cultures and peoples is a "significant site of struggle between

the interests and ways of knowing the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other"

(p. 2). Delpit's (1995) culture of power concept is applied to public education using this very

idea. Both Delpit and Smith agree that the pursuit of knowledge is the function of culture and is

deeply embedded in multiple layers of imperial and colonial research practices. Writing from

the perspective of a Maori social scientist in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and*

Indigenous Peoples, Smith (1999) insists that social science researchers, in their quests to unlock

the cultural significances of indigenous cultures, have either failed to take full advantage of

inquiry methods for studying the "native" groups or have used their methodologies

inappropriately, resulting in interpretations and value judgments that contribute little to

community maintenance. The overall claim is that a researcher's approach is embedded in an

intersubjective perspective that can either promote a community's self-determining lifestyle or

marginalize its fundamental efforts and histories. For Smith and other indigenous researchers, the latter leaves a shortage of resources for advancing the indigenous lifestyle and overcoming consequences that stem from acts of imperialism.

The indigenous research agenda defines culture as the experiences accumulated through racially centered and economically stratified circumstances and, most importantly, the deeper connections of people's existence: ethnic origin, kinship values and norms, language patterns, group philosophy, ancestral wisdoms, shared struggles and collective creations. For the culturally indigenous social scientist, culture *can* but is not *always* politically expressed. Its production, reproduction, and continuity relies little on tenuous social situations. Culture out of conflict and politics might enhance that which is already ethnically and aesthetic. Merging the political with the community's indigenous way of life is essential to an indigenous methodology.

Indigenous is a term concerned with these cultural fundamentals. It identifies distinct populations whose common experience is colonized oppression and the loss of community-centered activities because of the takeover of land, culture, practices, art, expressions, and other deep-seated values and traditions. A synonym for *indigenous* used in the scholarly literature is *Other.* Although indigenous populations differ, many of them have shared experiences about what it means to have their languages taken from them and what it means to operate within a social system that determines the shape and quality of their lives (Smith, 1999). These populations are also called *indigenous peoples*, a term born from the 1970s American Indian Movement (AIM) and Canadian Indian Brotherhood. It represents the struggles of some of the world's colonized people. Smith insists that the term indigenous peoples is a way to bring together these collective voices with the goal of expressing their ideas and issues of self-determination.

The *indigenous peoples* "movement" supports rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as it is defined according to community laws, traditions, and values. It also recognizes the many differences of colonized people and enables the coming together of collective voices for strategically implementing an agenda for community advancement under imperialist conditions. An *indigenous* research model sheds light on the deep structural elements that shape the personality of a community. The overarching goal of such a model is "to learn, share, plan, organize, and struggle collectively for self-determination on the global and local stages" (p. 7). Smith writes,

> In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent. Taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively does not help people to improve their current conditions. It provides words, perhaps, an insight that explains certain experiences – but it does not prevent someone from dying (p. 3).

An indigenous research design is concerned with understanding the sociopolitical elements of a culture, but more importantly the ethnically-centered lifestyle norms and patterns of a community of group. Augmenting a methodology with constructs such as community of practice and social network allows the researcher access to the practices that cultivate a group's identity in addition to the links that fuse individual members of the group together.

Community of Practice and Social Network Theories

Every person belongs to a community of practice. Some of them know it, and others recognize it only when they are made aware of it. Most people belong to several communities of practice: A senior-citizen's bingo club. The neighborhood motorcycle gang. A local school PTSA. A national school PTSA. That garage band banging on their drums in the middle of the night. The crew of hip-hop DJs living in Atlanta who came together to ban the music of rapper Young Buck because he jumped on one of their members. Even the collective of critical, postmodern, feminist social science researchers attending next year's QUIG conference. These are all communities of practice. They get together once or so a year, every other day, maybe everyday. Membership varies: there might be only 15 bingo seniors but 10,000 national PTSA members. The motorcycle club might include both men and women, and some individuals might know some members better than others. The band's lead singer, for example, might hang out with the guitar player more often than with the drummer. And maybe DJ Voodoo went to high school with DJ Punzo Green. Maybe they even lived next door to each other and ate dinner at each other's house just before practicing how to blend one song into another without missing a beat. If so, chances are the two deejays will know one another a little better than some of the other DJs because they engaged in the practice more closely. It depends. The personality of a community of practice is contingent on many of the possibilities I have presented in the preceding examples: multiplicity, the gendered and nongendered make-up of the group; the location of the group; the membership ties (Wenger, 1998).

All of these characteristics are important, but the most integral component that links members of a community together is the common *practice.* Conceptualized by Etienne Wenger, a computer scientist, and Jean Lave, an anthropologist, the *community of practice* concept is a social theory that makes the individual, the practice, the engagement in the practice, and the

learning that evolves from the practice mutually constitutive (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger

(1998) defines *practice* as "a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources,

frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action" (p. 5). So for the

senior citizens it's playing a numbers game. For the PTSA it is promoting parent, teacher, and

student involvement in education.

A fundamental postulate of communities of practice is that they are catalysts for learning.

The process begins with newcomers on the periphery, becoming more complex as their

participation in the practice moves from the outside in toward the active and core areas (Wenger

et al., 2002). Simultaneously these social learning systems help promote meaning, develop

relationships, and construct identities around several activities and practices, some of which

depend on factors such as location and region (Eckert, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Milroy,

1987, Wenger, 1998). An essential claim is that learning sits at the center of our lived

experience and participation in the day-to-day world. The knowledge gained from this

experience is often tacit, codified, existing in the human act of knowing (Wenger, 1998).

Knowing, as Wenger describes, is "a matter of participating in the pursuit of…active

engagement in the world" (p. 4). It is "fundamental," "inevitable," and ultimately the producer of

meaning, which is "our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as

meaningful" (p. 4). These assumptions support the theory of learning as social participation.

When Wenger speaks about the conceptual nature of participation, he does not limit it to

engagements in certain activities with certain people. An additional layer is the notion that

participation is "a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of

social communities and constructing identities in relations to these communities." He continues,

"A social theory of learning must therefore integrate the components to characterize social participation as a process of learning and of knowing" (p. 4-5).

The primary components for this process are: meaning, practice, community, and identity, all of which are interconnected. *Community* is defined by Wenger as "a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence" (p.5). *Identity*, as part of these four elements, is described as "a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities" (p. 5). When Wenger uses the concept of *community of practice*, he does not exclude the other elements. Rather, the conceptual and analytical power of the *community of practice* "lies precisely in that it integrates the [other] components…while referring to a familiar experience" (p. 5). It causes us to push more toward the notion that participation has both individual and community-oriented implications for learning. Wenger lists them:

- For *individuals*, it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities

- For *communities*, it means that learning is an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generations of members. (1998, p. 7)

To illustrate, I look at the community of scholars example mentioned previously. First, our entry point is the practice of research. We align ourselves with theoretical frameworks, most of which are subjectively informed, and judge according to codes of ethics for interpreting our conclusions. We attend conferences to "present" our research to other members of the academic community and "dialogue" and "debate" about our findings. We show the strength of our relationships through citations and quotes in the papers and essays and chapters we write. We

have people and ideas that we are closer to than others. We prepare budding scholars by pairing

them with professors, the goal being the advancement of a particular theory, point of view, or

research approach, all of which ensures the progress of the academic network. Although we may

function within our home disciplines, that does not stop us from delving in and out of other

disciplines to "advance" our research practice. As an intellectual core of researchers who get

paid to measure and qualify, we "constitute a complex social landscape of shared practices,

boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections, and encounters" (Wenger, 1998, p. 118). Our

strength, as in all communities of practice, is in our membership ties, for they provide us with the

meaningful resources for managing our day-to-day lives as scholars and solving our day-to-day

problems as interpretive researchers (Mitchell, 1986; Milroy & Milroy, 1992.) In this respect, a

community of practice is characterized according to the practice, purpose of the practice, *and* the

closeness of the relationships among the individuals engaging in the practice (Lave & Wenger,

1991, Wenger, 1998). Communities of practice are identity-shapers. They operate as a key for

opening the implicit and explicit patterns and experiences significant to a community (Wenger,

1998).

My example also illustrates the point that people belong to multiple communities of

practice because people engage in multiple practices at multiple levels (Wenger, 1998).

Communities of practice can have few members or several members, all of whom can come from

various backgrounds and exhibit different personalities. They can span time, be located in one

place, or be globally recognized. A sense of belonging is another factor that influences the

character of a community of practice. It reinforces participation, meaning making, and identity

formation. This interactive process stems from the social network. A derivative of the

community of practice, social networks constitute the number of relationships contracted with

others. It is "a boundless web of ties which reaches out through social and geographical space linking many individuals, sometimes remotely" (Milroy, 1980, p. 117). Like communities of practice, the individuals who are part of a social network may also be members of other social networks. A social network may also be composed of communities other than communities of practice. Extended families are an example of this. The synergy of a community depends on the strength of its network ties because this is the structure providing the shared resources: the language, the activities, the traditions, the objects, the values, the perspectives, the practices.

Social network theory comes from the work of social anthropologists, but was later adopted by linguistic variationists to supplement macro-level sociolinguistic models aimed at correlating sociological and linguistic variables. The fundamental idea of network theory is to understand the linguistic patterns of a community of practice and the influence of intracultural connections on these behaviors (L. Milroy, 1980; Davies, 1999). Network theory is also a way for exploring the symbolic language and interactions within a social group. Applying a network analysis can allow the study of "how people produce their situated versions of society" and "how people are constrained by the constructions…they inherit from the past" (Denzin, 1992, p. 23).

First-order ties, that is ties with family and friends instead of mere acquaintances, are the strongest and influence learning and participation the most because they offer the primary resources for addressing daily life (Mitchell, 1986, Milroy & Gordon, 2003). For this very reason the network analysis approach remains an attractive one to different disciplines, including sociolinguistics and variationist studies where network analysis is becoming an alternate approach to quantification of relevant social identities. The argument is that the approach allows focus on individual behaviors without discarding the analysis of group behaviors (Lippi-Green, 1989).

Eckert's (2000) study of the language practices of students attending a Detroit high school is probably one of the most recognized examples of how the community of practice and social network approach is used in sociolinguistics. Interested in how patterns of pronunciation and grammar interface with the local high school social order, Eckert conducted two years of sociolinguistic and ethnographic field research at one primary high school (and three secondary school sites) to explore two distinct social categories: jocks and burnouts. Eckert's study focused on the use of social categories (gender, class), networks (clusters), and local group practices. Using this approach, Eckert discovered how the practices and social categories that represented each group are related to the socioeconomic patterns of the area. She concluded that these "spaces" are not completely about *what* gets done, but rather about the interactions among those engaged in the activities. She concluded that these group practices and interactions are indexed by linguistic variability. (Also see Russell's study, 1982, in Mombasa, Kenya; Schmidt's research,1985, with Australian Aboriginal adolescents; Bortoni-Ricardo's study, 1985, of changes in the language of rural migrants to a Brazilian city; Lippi-Green's research, 1989, on dynamics of change in the rural alpine village of Grossdorf, Austria; and Milroy's study, 1987, of the Belfast community.)

The structure of a network ranges network to network. This heterogeneity of networks presents a challenge for researchers when designing a network analysis. An advantage of network analysis, however, is that it allows the researcher to devise a unique study based not on a canonical procedure, but developed to complement the personality of the local network and the practice that binds its members together. Milroy and Gordon (2003) list several reasons why the network approach is useful to sociolinguistic research. These reasons are also relevant to my study on hip-hop culture. First, network analysis provides a set of applicable procedures that are

easily used with small groups (minority populations, indigenous peoples, migrants, rural populations, etc) where speakers are not "discriminable" by any kind of social class index. Second, networks, because of their association with membership ties and connection to local practices, have the potential to explain language changes and shifts. Finally, network analysis can deal with variation among individual speakers rather than being limited to groups designed around predetermined social categories. Edwards's (1992) study of an inner-city Detroit African-American neighborhood is an example of this. Whereas in many similar studies class operated as a superordinate variable, the socioeconomic homogeneity in the site propelled Edwards to seek an alternative approach for studying the local linguistic variations. Using age and participation in the neighborhood culture as variants, Edwards devised an index based on each individual's physical integration into the neighborhood and focused on individuals' interactions with kinfolk, fellow employees, and friends.

Community of practice and social network theory is significant in (1) how each part directs the researcher-analyst to the characteristics, functions, and connections of a social group, and (2) in its ability to reveal the landscape of a community's internal structure, including its political, economic, social, linguistic, spiritual, and educational values. Rather than focusing on macro-level constructs such as race, class, or gender, community of practice and social network emphasize microanalytic features such as kinship and ethnic norms, worldview, and language patterns. As constructs representing human experience, community of practice and social network overlap. The most obvious similarity between the two concepts is their concern with personal relationships: a community of practice focuses on the practice that connects people together; a social network relies on who knows whom and the available opportunities for network members to get together. How strongly the network is integrated, particularly around

kin, work, friendship, and neighborhood, directly influences individuals' use of certain vernacular variants (Milroy, 1987), but it also influences individual and group learning (Wenger, 1998).

Community of practice, social network theory, and the related methods and designs contrast with the more conceptually neutral approaches of grounded theory method and design. In some respects indigenous research designs also have a substantive orientation because of the emphasis on work that supports and maintains communities.

<div align="center">Grounded Theory</div>

Grounded theory methods shape my design and analysis (Charmaz, 1990, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McCann & Clark, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Originally devised by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), a grounded theory method is used for understanding experience – its social and social psychological processes – through rigorous inductive approaches situated in data acquired through fieldwork (Charmaz, 2002). Inductive analysis assumes that the researcher enters the field with no predetermined hypotheses. Only after initial data collection are preliminary hypotheses formed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The verification of these provisional guesses come from further data collection (Charmaz, 1990). An "emic" or insider's point of view is necessary for generating a grounded theory about a culture or community of practice because it entails an empathetic understanding of the insider's view. The "etic," or outsider view, can cause an imposition to the ideas, feelings, and experiences of the insider (Harris, 1976, Stern, 1994.) The etic position, in my opinion, may influence objectivity but can also sacrifice subjective points of view that are necessary for fully understanding the researched community.

Detailed coding for categories and concepts, focused and repetitive interviewing, concurrent data collection and analysis (memo writing), theoretical sampling, literature as a source of data, constant comparisons of the emerging data, and integration of theory serve as guidelines for conducting a study supported by methods of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2002; Creswell, 1998; McCann & Clark, 2003). Instead of approaching research with an explanation to test, grounded theorists inductively manipulate these guidelines to generate themes and patterns such that theoretical explanations emerge directly from the data (Denzin, 1992; Dey, 1999).

Grounded theory method is a relatively new research approach in the human and social sciences and continues to be developed in various ways. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who first formulated the method in 1967 are a case in point. Years after their seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, they reached fundamental differences about the best way to further develop the methodology (Dey, 1999; McCann & Clark, 2003), and consequently a variety of approaches to grounded theory methods have been pursued. The most notable approach, in comparison to the classic method of Glaser and Strauss, is that of Strauss and Corbin. Although both approaches to grounded theory are informed to varying degrees by positivism and assumptions of objectivity, Glaser and Strauss purport that reality can be discovered, but only incompletely because neither the researcher nor the researched can fully comprehend their situation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Opposed to this postpositivist paradigm is the social constructivist, less positivist, postmodern framework. Developed by Strauss and Corbin, this approach supports a dialectical and active researcher role where meaning is not discovered but interpreted (Charmaz, 1990). Like that of classic grounded theory method the research problem emerges from the study, but is also informed by personal experience, by the

literature, or through the suggestion of others. The theory generated is thus interpreted and not necessarily conceived (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

Grounded theory method is an influential strategy for analyzing and generating theory that explores the interaction between people's social roles and behaviors (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It comes from the tradition of symbolic interactionism, where the focus is on the use of symbols, words, interpretations, and language to understand social reality (Denzin, 1992). The underlying assumption of researchers who use grounded theory methods is that individuals who share a common circumstance, experience, or practice, hip-hoppers in the case of this project, share common perspectives of reality. They experience common thoughts, behaviors, and kinship values, which are all strengthened through network ties. Social beings order their world according to shared particularities that may be seen as disorganized and irrational to an outsider. The role of the grounded theorist is to articulate these unique experiences that are not always expressed, leaving the group and the experiences of the group misunderstood or marginalized (Hutchinson, 1993). The grounded theorist identifies this problem, collects data about the problem (preferably via interviews), and attempts to "demonstrate relationships between conceptual categories and…specify the conditions under which theoretical relationships emerge, change, or are maintained" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 675)

Many qualitative researchers opt to use these methods rather than deductive analyses that require hypotheses, findings, conclusions, and implications that conform to preexisting frameworks (McCann & Clark, 2003). Denzin (1992) argues that data should serve four basic theoretical functions: data should initiate new theory, and reformulate, refocus, and clarify existing theory. Grounded theory should develop from a close relationship between researchers and their data "rather than…[from] what they may have previously assumed or wished was the

case" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 676). Grounded theory method is especially useful if little is known about a particular phenomenon, topic, or social experience (McCann & Clark, 2003). It is an approach that provides potential for explaining or predicting a group's behavior (Hutchinson, 1990). Using a grounded theory method for my research design has helped me articulate the underlying themes, processes, and practices of a community of practice – in the case of *Outkast'd and Claimin' True*, the hip-hop community of practice. The next section is an application of the community of practice/social network construct to hip-hop culture. In this part of the methodology review, I introduce the characteristics of a hip-hop community of practice as it relates to designing an indigenous research methodology.

<u>The Hip-Hop Community of Practice in the Indigenous Research Agenda</u>

As I have suggested, community of practice is a concept used in various fields and disciplines concerned with the social and stylistic interactions of a group. In *Situated Learning* with Lave (1991) and in *Communities of Practice* (1998), Wenger set out to develop the concept around the process of learning. Since then it has been used in a number of other studies carried out from the 1990s into the 21st century. Wenger expanded the concept into the field of organizational development in 2002 when he, along with McDermott and Snyder, published *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Although he adapts the concept to business development, he outlines seven principles for cultivating communities of practice that offer varying relevance to other areas, including hip-hop culture. The principles are:

1. Design for evolution

2. Open a dialogue for inside and outside perspectives

3. Invite different levels of participation

4.   Develop both public and private community spaces

5.   Focus on value

6.   Combine familiarity and excitement

7.   Create a rhythm for the community (2002, p. 51).

As I have emphasized previously, hip-hop was created in the streets of New York by an Afro-Caribbean deejay name DJ Kool Herc and a former gang member, Afrika Bambaataa. Its philosophy is to "keep it real," and its expressions are designed around four main elements: rapping, deejaying, breakdancing, and graffiti art. But hip-hop culture – while it is easy to spot the practice –can impose different methods of inquiry on researchers because of the diversity it uplifts and promotes. This openness suggests theoretical variation and focus that I must attend to. In this section, I outline the principles of what I call the *hip-hop community of practice*. The outline is based on the debate about the notion of a hip-hop generation and who its members are and on the cultural protocols that must be acknowledged at the outset of studying the cultural community.

Kitwana (2003, 2005) and Chang (2005) write specifically about the characteristics and the history of the hip-hop generation. Although their descriptions overlap, these journalists diverge on one important issue: hip-hop's community of origin. Author of *The Hip-Hop Generation*, Kitwana characterizes the group within an ethnic, racial, and sociopolitical context. Chang's view is more global and virtually ignores the ethnic character that Kitwana relies on. For me, the hip-hop generation falls somewhere in between these two perspectives. Essentially hip-hop is the most recent African American manifestation of the African performance tradition (Smitherman, 1999, 2000), a tradition that depends on the oral and written power of the word to share the communal knowledge Smith (1999) refers to throughout her ten-chapter review of

western-oriented research methods. From this perspective, hip-hop is a culture rooted in the indigenous traditions of an indigenous people.

I am applying Smith's use of the word indigenous as a lens for my study, examining what it means, how she used it, and how it is relevant to a methodology for studying hip-hop. As noted above, indigenous is a collective term that has come to represent distinct people of the world who have been victimized under imperialism. Because these populations are not unique to one location, the experiences of the indigenous are very diverse. It is this definition that joins the perspectives of Kitwana and Chang. I would be remiss to ignore for one second that hip-hop is not a "black" thing, and that it was born out of the circumstances of African descendants. Everything in the hip-hop literature acknowledges this fact. These colonized and oppressed descendants of Africa – no matter where they lived, the Caribbean, North America, South America – who offered other ethnic minorities – Asians, Arabs, Iranians, Egyptians, and others – the chance to "be down" with hip-hop's goal of authentic social, cultural, and political representation. Even hip-hop's white brothers and sisters have been welcomed with the cardinal rules being "keepin' it real" and "tellin' it like it is."

From this perspective, hip-hop is a community of practice with networks situated in several locales, the U.S. South being one location. The perspective of hip-hop as a community of practice suggests that it is a culture connected by features such as ethnicity, kinship values, language norms, styles of dress, spirituality, race, gender, and social class. In short, it is a social group with common hip-hop practices, a common language, and a common worldview (Alim, 2002; Smitherman, 2000). It has a cultural history to which the community relates and a psychological dimension influencing its members to adjust patterns of their behavior according to its norms (L. Milroy, 1980). For example, a member of hip-hop culture who works in a formal

9-to-5 environment may dress differently at a hip-hop concert, a place where more informality and less structure is accepted if not required. This practice is also reflected in hip-hop's philosophical tradition where "keepin' it real" remains a primary value. To adhere to this principle, members are expected to accurately articulate their experiences regardless of the message's profane directness. Members who are suspected of not being "real" or "true" risk the possibility of loosing network respect.

Hip-hop culture's community of practice encompasses several geographically specific social networks. For example, hip-hoppers in Germany and those in California are part of the hip-hop community of practice because of their shared participation in doing hip-hop. But the German hip-hoppers have more chances to see and talk to each other, as do the California hip-hoppers. In cases such as these, location and geographic intimacy is principal. They are part of two distinct social networks of hip-hoppers: the German network and the California network.

When conducting research with the hip-hop community of practice, cultural protocols must be addressed and used as part of the design. The first I have already addressed. It is the notion of hip-hop having an ethnic origin. As I have previously remarked, both hip-hop culture and the hip-hop generation have become ambiguous and contentious terms. For arguments sake, I steer clear of both problematic terms. Hip-hop community of practice is my replacement term and assumes the following.

> ➢ The hip-hop community of practice is rooted in deeply structured African traditions, verbal and nonverbal language styles, imported to the Caribbean and U.S. South by way of colonization and imperialism (slave trades). The transition to the Western Hemisphere in these circumstances created a pan-African experience that included a new language and

expressions such as slave work songs, spirituals, blues, jazz, rhythm and soul, funk, reggae, rock, and such. All of these performances are elder aesthetics that inform the expressions of the hip-hop community of practice.

➢ There are key founders of the hip-hop community of practice who nurtured its early performative and ideological elements.

➢ There is a community of people bonded together around the essential practices of rap music and rapping, graffiti art, breakdancing, deejaying, and the philosophy of authentic representation.

➢ The core hip-hop community of practice includes African-American, African-Caribbean, and Latin populations born from the urban decay of the post-Industrialist, Civil Rights, and Black Nationalist movement. These members of hip-hop's formative years were born in the early 1960s.

➢ There is generational variation within the community of practice. This variation usually relies on the current social climate to define its intracultural uniqueness.

➢ Amongst the hip-hop community of practice are social networks. These networks are specific to region and usually map their geographic nuances within the core elements and epistemology of the hip-hop tradition.

➢ There is a linguistic repertoire from which the hip-hop community of practice pulls. Much of the phonology, grammar, and syntax are related to the tradition of African American Language (AAL). However, the

community has its own linguistic strategies, many that extend the usage of AAL.

The Language of the Hip-hop Community of Practice: Why Investigate?

Hip-hop culture is by far one of the most influential pop culture phenomenons in the U.S. Constructed from the aesthetics of black performance coupled with post-1960s social ills, its elements have shifted the way companies advertise their products, how songs are written and produced, and how people (regardless of class, age, gender, or race) wear their clothing. Even the way language is manipulated has been affected by hip-hop. Geneva Smitherman (2000) describes the language of hip-hop culture as an embodiment of the "communicative practices of the Black speech community" (p. 271). These linguistic practices and behaviors are products of the African slave trade and serve as a counter-language to European American language (Smitherman, 1977). Within these practices are linguistic codes that operate as a quasi-lingua-franca of the African American cultural community. "If hip hop is about nothing else," explains Todd Boyd (2002), "it is about the redefinition of language…these cultural improvisations on English alter the language in new and interesting ways" (p.72). For the voices of this network, "all images, sounds, ideas, and icons are ripe for recontextualization, pun, mockery, and celebration" (Rose, 1994, p. 3). An illustration of this point is presented in the next chapter as I present the findings from examining the hip-hop text and language. What I demonstrate is variation and meaning of its use.

At the heart of hip-hop's value aesthetic is the notion of change. Hip-hop is so influential not even language, our most fluid construct, can escape. An illustration of this is how the Adidas tennis shoe company saw unprecedented profits when Run-DMC made the song "My Adidas"? Everyone, including myself, went out and bought a pair of Adidas (with the fat-laces). Another

example is the baggy jeans that kids get kicked out of school for wearing these days because all their favorite rappers and rock stars let their Girbaud jeans (or Gap Khakis) sag way below their hips. Recently I heard the announcer on sports radio (a white man) say the game was "Off the heezy! Fo sheezy," which in non-hip-hop terms means the game was "fun and exciting for sure," The point I am making here is Adidas was just a tennis shoe before Run-DMC made it hip in the hip-hop (and popular) community. Girbaud was just a jean until the Cash Money Millionaires made them so popular that they are now part of the Louisiana urban dress code. More importantly, it is possible and logical to gain insight into the linguistic transactions that take place within a culture by studying abstracted words, phrases, and narratives used by its speakers. Without belaboring this point, I want to emphasize that the speakers' participation in these register-dependent conversations help construct, establish, and interpret cultural identity (Le Page et al., 1985). An example of this is the work of Sonja L. Lanehart (2002). In her book *Sista Speak* she used the narratives of five African American women who represent three generations of her family as a means for probing themes of "language, literacy, identity, ideologies, education, and…issues that touch all of our lives" (p. 2). By taking this approach, Lanehart concluded that the stories of the African American women are not unique to her chosen subset, but are shared with other disenfranchised community members. She argues that "their stories are reflections of ourselves and glaring reminders of our educational and social needs as a nation and community" (p. 224). By examining language texts closely, we are better able to draw conclusions and implications about its speakers and about their connections with others.

It is also reasonable to assume and observe language as inseparable from culture and context (Smitherman, 2000; Milroy & Gordon, 2003) because words do not function free from people and people do not function free from words (Stubbs, 2001). In this sense, speakers of a

register embody particular sociocultural characteristics and therefore adjust - either consciously or subconsciously - to the parameters of the register(s). Words, how they sound, and their meanings create sociocultural situations and realities when used by speakers (Stubbs, 2001). So, essentially people *do* words. This jumping in and out of different registers affords speakers the ability to manipulate features of language. In similar semantic spirit, Geneva Smitherman (1977) reflects how the black English statement, "It bees dat way sometime," sung by Nina Simone, shows more than the use of the verb *be* as indicative of a habitual occurrence. Instead it is a reflection of black English style that "suggests a point of view, a way of looking at life, and a method of adapting to life's realities" (p. 3).

Signification is another form of black English common to African American speech communities. Commonly referred to as siggin' or signifyin', in hip hop, this sarcastic, cunning, and clever act of verbal assaulting where at least one conversationalist talks or raps negatively about someone else or some*thing* is called battle rappin' or dissin'. Outsiders and some insiders of the culture refer to "the diss" as violent, gangsta, misogynistic, or profane. So, for example, when Ice Cube darts, "Get off my dick nigga/And tell yo bitch to come here," he is telling a guy (the nigga) to stop jockin' (hip-hop for harassing) him simply because he is a famous hip-hop personality. He goes on to command the nigga to instruct his girl (cast as the bitch) to ditch her date and come see what Cube wants. Herein lies yet another reason why African American vernacular culture is worth interrogating (Spears, 2001).

When the southern rap group Trillville uses the *bitch-nigga* combination to rhythmically signify "Bitch nigga you can neva eva get on my level ho!" they are not loose in their verbal attack, but extremely calculating about whom they are referring to as a *bitch-nigga* (and *ho*). In the May 2003 issue of XXL magazine one of the group's members explains, "Actually, when we

wrote the hook we was thinkin' 'bout people like [George W.] Bush. That's a Bitch Nigga!" (Wilson, 2003, p. 60) Trillville's coded yet direct language that refers to President Bush as a *bitch-nigga* is an ancient but improved way to prioritize subordinate voice (Rose, 1994). Looking at the phonology and the meaning behind words like *bitch* in hip hop narratives further adds to understanding the culture's language, speakers, beliefs, expectations, and values.

The act of rapping and the creation of rap music narratives are two key practices of the hip-hop community. Exploring the language ideology contained in the narratives brings me closer to understanding the complexities of hip-hop while simultaneously giving me access to how the narratives help shape the identity and worldview of community members. Following a discussion of the hip-hop community of practice and the language ideology of the community is a description of how I approached the collection of these narratives and how, once collected, they were analyzed for themes and patterns.

<u>Methods of Data Collection</u>

Many grounded theorists use qualitative interviews as their primary data source for conducting a qualitative research project. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate the collection of a variety of data sources for projects pursuing a group's social experience. Charmaz (2002) argues that "rich data" are imperative for developing "robust theories" (p. 677). Glaser and Strauss, along with Charmaz, indicate why it is important not to rely on just one kind of data source or method of acquiring data. For this project music lyrics were the primary data set. They were supplemented by ethnographic interviews and field notes taken from participant observations. As the heart of rap music, lyrics are "the primary cultural, sonic, and linguistic windows on the world" for many African youth and people in the U.S. (Rose, 1994; p. 19). The interviews and

field notes were introduced as part of the theoretical sampling process and comparisons of data. The triangulation of these data collection methods—documents, interviews, and participant observation—helped me define category properties that influenced the generation of theory. Introducing interview data also helped specify the conditions under which these categories are related (Charmaz, 2002).

Rap Music Lyrics as Narrative Texts

The songs for the lyrical corpus were selected from a variety of sources: *egotrip's book of rap lists*, compilation CDs, music charts, and mix-CDs. *Egotrip's book of rap lists* is a good source because it lists rap songs according to categories and themes. For example, the songs for the analysis of *bitch* and *nigga* were selected from their "99 songs containing bitch or nigga." Compilation compact discs are a good source for selecting music because of the random nature of the songs available. The same is the case with mixed-compact discs where, unlike compilations, the music is blended together, one song after the next with seamless transitions. In both instances, the deejay selected the songs. Music charts offer another objective means for song selection. Some of the southern songs I selected to analyze for phonological features were chosen from the Billboard magazine charts, the music industry's flagship music charting resource. The overall corpus of lyrics totaled 238 songs and 137,231 words, excluding repetitive refrains and choruses. Each song was placed in a category: southern songs and school songs. The southern song category is made up of popular southern songs and was used to identify linguistic variations in three African American Language (AAL) features significant to southern speech. These phonological features are discussed by scholars such as Pederson (1965), Smitherman (1977), Kretzschmar et al. (1993), and Rickford (1999), I used them to explore the uniqueness of the southern network's language ideology.

The school category includes songs that speak to formal or informal schooling and education. The selection of the school and education songs presented a challenge unlike that of the other categories, mainly because the articulation was not always obvious and on the surface of the lyrics. In the nonsouthern songs, aspects of school could be located more easily than southern songs, where the messages were oftentimes cultivated more implicitly, sometimes hiding behind metaphors. So to identify the school songs, I augmented my word search approach with an alternate strategy of asking hip-hop DJs and producers to identify songs that contained messages about school and education. Another approach relied on my personal knowledge of rap music. When listening to rap music, whether in the comfort of my home or in the field, I always listened for direct and indirect messages about education. By listening to music CDs and compilations, in addition to viewing rap music videos, I developed a body of rap songs that focus on representations of formal and informal schooling. The accuracy of the lyrics was verified through either Leo's Lyrics (www.leoslyrics.com) or the Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archives (www.ohhla.com), two websites that host transcripts of rap lyrics. I addressed all inaccuracies in the transcripts by listening to a recording of the song and comparing it to the lyrics. I transcribed the song, if it could not be verified through ohhla.com or via alternative web searches.

Most of the rappers in the lyrical corpus represent the southern region. In some cases, such as songs in the school and education category, the rappers come from other parts of the United States. Each artist is well known and respected within the hip-hop community. The surveyed works are written and performed primarily by ethnic minorities although I include lyrics from white rappers such as Eminem and the Beastie Boys. The majority of the artists represent inner-city communities characterized by violence, drugs, crime, and underresourced public housing, schools, clinics, and hospitals. Hip-hop is also very much a male-dominated

industry. Although I use the work of Bahamadia, a female artist from Philadelphia, the works that predominate are those created by men of the community.

This project's focus is southern rap songs and their implicit and explicit messages about formal and informal schooling and education. Because composing, distributing, and enjoying these documents constitute a central practice in the hip-hop community, making the music lyrics central to the data collection is crucial to understanding the culture.

Interviews and Participant Selections

Interviews constitute the second data set as part of the theoretical sampling and constant comparisons of grounded theory. Theoretical sampling is the "pivotal self-correcting step" of grounded theory and fits "hand and glove" with the constant comparative method, key to the generation of data-based categories and themes (Charmaz, 2002, p. 689; Patton, 2002. p. 239). The lyrics also helped me construct focused interview questions about the hip-hop community of practice, its southern network, and its ideological perspectives. Listening to the songs, gathering a context, and extracting the lyrics is the approach taken to shape the interviews. Charmaz talks about straight-forward questioning in grounded theory research. If the wrong question is asked, she argues, "the interviewer will fail to elicit the participant's experience in his or her own language." "Thus," she continues, "researchers need to be constantly reflexive about the nature of their questions and whether they work for the specific participants." The focus on the interview should therefore "emphasize the participant's definitions of terms, situations, and events and try to tap the participant's assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules" (2002, p. 681). Using the lyrics to help construct interview questions helped me achieve these goals.

Situating my approach to interviewing in a clear research purpose and grounded theoretical perspectives contributed to concise selections of interview participants. DeMarrais,

in her study of qualitative interviewing, uses her selection of women teachers who experience

anger in the classroom to emphasize this integral element of qualitative research.

> Interview researchers select people to talk with who have the
>
> knowledge and experience about the particular focus of the study.
>
> A primary consideration is to select participants who can talk about
>
> the topic or phenomenon under study. It would be fruitless for me
>
> to attempt to interview women teachers who said they never
>
> experienced anger in the classroom or school settings. There may
>
> be many people who could be interviewed about a particular
>
> research topic, so it is necessary to select from a larger population
>
> of participants (2004, p. 59)

Cole and Knowles suggest locating a small constituency of individuals who are dedicated

and committed to speaking with the researcher over a period of time who will promote in-depth

insights into themes and areas of mutual interest (2001). This small group can be selected from a

larger group. Kvale (1996) advocates interviewing enough participants to find out what needs to

be known. So in addition to talking with rappers to discuss sentiments toward schools, I

interviewed other southern members to gather their descriptions of the southern network. The

selection of the participants began with those hip-hop members with whom I already had solid

relationships. The participants were selected according to a criterion-based selection model

(LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The members must have (a) attended at least high school in the

South, and (b) considered themselves a member of the southern hip-hop network, that is, they are

involved in the production of the culture. Many of these participants graduated from my high

school, in my graduating class, or from a nearby school or school district. Others I met while on

assignment as a music journalist. Because I did not know everyone in this extensive network, I asked my interviewees for recommendations that led me to another member interested in dialoguing about southern hip-hop culture, education, and schooling.

Other participants included photographers, producers, entertainment attorneys, and the like. These interviews were videotaped, with the participants' consent, for future documentary use (see appendix for IRB and attached consent form). My interviews took place primarily at production studios. Some lasted thirty minutes while others lasted up to three hours. Appended are my interview questions and probes.

Participant Observations

Southern hip-hop culture is not produced or consumed in one particular place. Most of the observations made during the course of fieldwork happened at a local record store or at production studios and while working as a media manager for a local record label from February 2006 until July 2006. During this time I conducted interviews with artists, many of them informal, but I also observed an album being put together. In this context, I spoke to the music producer as well, but took notes on the types of conversations that took place, the lyrics that the artist wrote, and the way he said things. I also paid close attention to the dynamics of the environment: who talked to whom, what were the topics of conversation, and such. All of this contributes to the network description used in this project. As I mentioned before, my work extends into the popular realm as a music journalist for hip-hop magazines. Oftentimes my assignments resulted in ethnographic descriptions of environments unique to southern hip-hop. One assignment was a report on a neighborhood club and pool hall and the other was a report on a neighborhood exotic dance club. Other impromptu observations took place at concerts, cultural gatherings, and awards shows. Notes from these observations were recorded in my

research journal. Some are included in the next chapter as part of my description of the southern hip-hop social network.

Archival data

Another component of ethnographic inquiry is the archival database. A master list of possible data sources includes the following: CDs, DVDs and videotapes (movies and documentaries), fliers, newspaper articles, magazine articles, posters, lyrics, quotations, speeches, yearbook pictures, journal articles, relevant books, interviews, participant-observation reports, video footage, cassette tapes, surveys (30 surveys from students who were questioned about hip-hop culture), music videos, ad clippings, and television commercials. Examples of the artifacts used as part of the project include video footage, documentary film, performance footage, high school talent show footage, fliers and handbills, pictures of southern network members, and yearbook pictures of southern artists. Appended is a matrix that identifies relationships among the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and the data collection methods.

Data Analysis Strategies

Data analyzed and triangulated included (1) transcripts of interviews; (2) document analysis of lyrics and other artifacts; and (3) field notes of observations. The data set was analyzed inductively to locate major patterns and themes. The lyrics data set was systematically analyzed and organized for patterns. The final presentation contains grounded recommendations represented within the data for how to interpret southern hip-hop culture and its philosophical, historical, social, political, and anthropological roles.

Insofar as grounded theory methods involve looking for a variety of data sources, coding and analyzing the data content using different strategies (structured and unstructured) influenced the development of interrelationships between themes and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Charmaz, 2002; Davies, 1999; Dey, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Grounded analytic procedures prepare the researcher for the construction of focused interview questions that ultimately lead to "richer concepts and models of how the phenomenon being studied really works" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000; p.783). I used inductive analysis strategies to analyze the lyrics and interviews for representations of schools as well as the hip-hop community's language variations.

Inductive analysis strategies inform grounded theory and methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). "The strategy of inductive designs," argued by Patton (2002), "is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be" (p. 56). Initial stages of inductive design involve dealing with subjectivities and biases followed by engaging of techniques that help generate conceptual relationships inherent in the content (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Researchers propose several strategies for designing inductive-driven research projects. The main method of analysis within the grounded theory tradition is the "constant comparative method," which involves four steps (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Dey (1999) articulates these steps as "(1) generating and (2) integrating categories and their properties, before (3) delimiting and then (4) writing the emerging theory" (p. 7). Theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method enforce the comparison, contrast, aggregation, and arrangement of the categories. These four main activities "establish classificatory schemes for organizing data" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 242). All

methods of inductive analysis, including the constant comparative method, begin with coding

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Coding is a dynamic process and can be broken down into a series of

activities that lead to interpretations of the data (Charmaz, 2002). There are two kinds of coding:

open coding, which involves a line-by-line distribution of descriptive tags and labels (Strauss &

Corbin, 1990); and selective coding, which includes "more abstract, general, and simultaneously,

analytically incisive" tags that "cover the most data, categorize those data most precisely, and

thus outline the next phase of analytic work" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 686). The next phase is the

development of themes and patterns. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) refer to this task as

"systematic content analysis" where the researcher indicates aspects of similarity and difference

among the categories and their attributes (p. 242).

Spradley's (1979) domain analysis method guided the development of themes and

categories. I used Spradley's semantic relationships to analyze the lyrics for representations of

schools as well as features of African American Language. The creation of a domain involves

designation of a cover term (y), which can be an invariable recurrent code-category or the blend

of overlapping codes-categories; variable terms (x) that belong to the category and contribute to

the creation of the semantic relationship; a semantic relationship; and a boundary that

differentiates what cover terms belong inside the domain versus those that belong outside the

domain (Spradley, 1979). The domain analysis informs the construction of a taxonomic analysis

that "involves a search for the internal structure of domains and leads to identifying contrast

sets" (p. 140). Following the taxonomic analysis is the componential and theme analysis, which

respectively involves "a search for the attributes that signal differences among symbols in a

domain" and "a search for the relationships among the domains and how they are linked to the

culture as a whole" (p. 140). Spradley's techniques, while seemingly tedious, offered a way to

consistently compare the data. While primarily used by scholars to analyze interviews, I used Spradley's ethnographic typology to interpret the lyrics and explore the artist's linguistic productions. The primary sources of data, then, include (1) transcripts of interviews; (2) document analysis of lyrics; and (3) field notes of observations, all of which were triangulated to locate valid patterns and themes. Chapters four and five present the findings of the analysis. Chapter four focuses on language practices to describe the southern hip-hop network. Chapter five moves into the ideological examinations of southern hip-hop through locating sentiments expressed toward formal and informal education and schooling among the hip-hop community of practice. Emphasis is on the southern network.

CHAPTER 5

Outkast'd and Claimin' True: A Description of the Southern Hip-Hop Community of

Practice

Operatin' Unda The Krooked American System Too Long!

O.U.T.K.A.S.T.

Pronounced OUTKAST.

Adjective meaning homeless, or unaccepted in society.

But let's look deepah dan dat.

Are you an OUTKAST?

If you undastand and feel the basic principles and

fundamental truths contained within this muzik, you prob'ly are.

If you think it's all about pimpin' hoes and slammin Cadillac doe's

you prob'ly a cracka, or a nigga dat thank he a cracka, or maybe just don't undastand.

An OUTKAST is someone who is not considered to be part of the normal world.

He's looked at differently.

He is not accepted because of his clothes, his hair

his occupation, his beliefs or his skin color.

Now look at cho'self.

Are you an OUTKAST?

I know I am.

As a matter of fact, fuck being anythang else

It's only so much time left in this crazy world

Wake up niggaz and realize what's goin on around you:

Poisonin of the food and water

Tamper in da cigarettes

Disease engineerin' control over yo' life

Take back your existence or die like a punk

This is Big Rube, sayin' right on to da real, and death to the fakers

Peace out

OutKast f/ Big Rube (1994). "True Dat." *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik,* LaFace Records.

I begin my initial findings chapter with the words of Ruben "Big Rube" Bailey for several reasons. First, his toast represents many of the themes that I set out to explore throughout my study. It sums up the message in the title of the research, *Outkast'd and Claimin' True: Schooling and Education in the Southern Hip-Hop Community*. Second, the linguistic style used to convey his message is of interest to me because it addresses the following research questions:

- What is southern hip-hop culture?

- What unique characteristics define the southern hip-hop network and southern hip-hop generation?

- What language ideology is used that represents southern hip-hop culture?

The aim is to extend the definition of hip-hop culture by emphasizing the links among the different southern hip-hop production centers, the variation of language patterns in the network, and how, in Atlanta specifically, an experiential ideology is expressed through the language of the lyrics, interviews, and narratives. Its ideological perspectives on school and education are presented in Chapter 5. In this chapter, I illuminate the links of the Atlanta network because my findings suggest that the formative years of the network are cultivated around the school environment.

Another reason I begin the chapter with Bailey's toast is because his speech pronunciation patterns indicate a tradition of African American Language (AAL) found in southern speech. Key is the syntax or the ways in which he organizes his sentences. The lexicon of the language shows considerable evidence of hip-hop's use of oral patterns used to transmit information throughout the community. Bailey is part of this hip-hop community of practice. He

is instrumental in the early development of Atlanta's southern network, and his commentary sets the tone of the next two chapters. As I proceed, my focus remains on the dynamics of the southern network: the sound of the language, the message(s) in the language, and how they are intertwined with key experiences recounted by the southern hip-hop generation. Like many network-specific songs, "True Dat" challenges the intracommunity stereotype that southern hip-hop lacks a political, social, and cultural consciousness. The next two chapters offer a corrective to this misreading as "True Dat" articulates a social message representative of not only the overall hip-hop community of practice, but also one unique to the U.S. South. This material affords me the opportunity to unpack messages in southern songs as well as ask questions about the characteristics of an *outkast* and the factors that influence an *outkast's* existence.

Addressing part of the first question, I present a section on the background of southern hip-hop: its foundations and contribution to the overall community of practice. As mentioned above, a description of the Atlanta network, a network that I found originated in the local school system and that has helped cultivate the direction of hip-hop culture for the last 13 years, is presented in Chapter 5. Following a discussion of the aesthetics of southern hip-hop, I consider the language ideology represented among the network. Hip-hop's language ideology is based on African-American norms, values, language practices, and stylized speech constructed against dominant values and norms of the status quo. According to Morgan (2001), the technological shifts of the late 1970s and early 1980s pushed hip-hop into other networks, families, and crews developing outside the culture's East Coast.

> This resulted in new speech community formations and a drive to
> distinguish and articulate linguistic characteristics to represent major cities
> and regions on the East and West Coasts. This drive initially resulted in

the marginalization of the Southern US and the Midwest. But as Hip-

Hop's cultural norms of local representation stabilized, the South's "Third

Coast" and "Dirty South" contingent found permanent recognition. Hip

Hop urban language ideology…resulted in an increase of widespread yet

locally marked lexicon and an awareness of the importance of phonology

(mainly working class) – especially the contrasts between vowel length,

consonant deletion, and syllabic stress – in representing urban cultural

space (2001, p. 188).

To understand this ideology and the relationship of hip-hop language to African

American Language, Morgan and other linguists interested in language tendencies in hip-hop

(see Alim, 2002; Edwards, 1998; Morgan, 1999, Remes, 1991; Rickford & Rickford, 2000;

Smitherman, 1997, 2000; Spady & Alim, 1999) have conducted primarily quantitative analyses

of hip-hop language. My strategy for conducting an analysis of the language practices adds to

this body of work with an exploration of 170 southern hip-hop songs (approximately equaling a

36,000-word corpus) measured for the frequency of three speech pronunciation features found in

AAL and southern artists' lyrics and speech: (1) vocalization of postvocalic /r/ (Kretzschmar et

al., 1993; Smitherman, 1977), (2) realization of "ing" as "ang" and "ink" as "ank" (Smitherman,

1986), and (3) syllable-initial fricative stopping (Cooley, 1997; Pederson, 1965; Wolfram, 1999).

Several phonological and grammatical features are used by scholars to identify African

American Language. I have counted at least 17 phonological features and 24 grammatical

features in the research on the language patterns of African American speakers. Any (or all) of

these features can be used to analyze the collected narratives. However, I found the three listed

above to occur frequently during my analysis. The phonological findings, however, present only

a slice of the material, using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) formulation, and I have consequently also examined the narratives' contextual meanings. In the lyrics and the interviews I found artists talking about social experiences unique to their geographic location. Just as West Coast rappers refer to the 1992 Los Angeles riots as part of their hip-hop "selves," I found Atlanta-based hip-hop members referencing schools, the Civil Rights movement, and community-directed mysteries such as the Atlanta Child Murders as influential in developing their regional, cultural, social, and generational identities. These stories complement the phonological findings and are presented later in this chapter. Another aspect of southern hip-hop speech that takes its direction from the overall community's language ideology is the frequent use of words such as *bitch* and *nigga.* Arguably, each word is controversial because of its layers of meanings in hip-hop and popular culture. However, in the course of developing a corpus of hip-hop narratives according to themes, a pattern of frequency of use of both words developed. *How* did these rappers use each word to support whatever message they were conveying? This question remains at the forefront of understanding elements of hip-hop's language ideology. To illustrate the patterns I am claiming, in Chapter 4 I present findings for the use of the word *bitch*. I have developed a matrix that categorizes bitch-use into four types, placing emphasis on bitch-type 4: how the word is used to reference oppressive forces and institutions such as school. The use of the word in this way conveys the position of the social establishment as a bitch, thus connecting this analysis to my findings about sentiments toward education and schooling in the hip-hop community of practice and the southern network. (The other forms of the word can be used to study other relationships in hip-hop.) Chapter 5 explores this connection. To show regional relationships in the usage of the word in rap songs, I highlight the southern versus nonsouthern variations. The analysis of the use of the term *nigga* will be presented elsewhere.

Informed by the concept of social networks, features of African American Language (AAL), and theories of linguistic variation, the next two chapters offer a definition and description of southern hip-hop grounded in the ethnographic data collected. I suggest that the southern network shares similarities with the overall hip-hop community of practice, but also differentiates itself from other regional expressions, offering clear and valid reasons for the distinction. Following a description of the southern network, I discuss the elements used to perform the practice of southern hip-hop. These two sections establish a foundation for understanding the phonological tendencies found in the southern hip-hop narratives. Several themes from the phonological analysis provide an explicit representation of the southern network. In the interviews and the lyrics, the topic of how the Atlanta Child Murders affected the creative development of the southern network is addressed. I finish the chapter with my bitch findings, demonstrating how the term is used to address hegemonic social forces. Doing so, I stress two patterns: (1) I systematically show that the word, while profane, serves a meaningful purpose in the hip-hop language ideology, and (2) I connect this political ideology to the community's educational ideology.

<u>Foundational Elements of Southern Hip-Hop</u>

Representin' that South.

That South.

And dis ain't no muthafuckin' hip hop records.

Deez country rap tunes.

So you could separate us from the rest.

Like I tol' you the last time.

Underground Kingz (UGK) (2001). "Let Me See It." On *Dirty Money*. Jive Records

Almost every form of music popular in New York City, hip-hop music specifically, gets its roots from the South. Jazz, blues, soul, funk were carried right along with the migration of African Americans who escaped to northern and midwestern states for the benefits that a Jim Crowed South did not offer. In the early 1970s, hip-hop culture was formed around these musical styles, but with a creative twist that linked elements of style, dress, and talk with a worldview considered rebellious and militant to peripheral on-lookers. Because hip-hop culture gelled in the South Bronx, New York, it is historicized as a culture created in New York, and with this has come a regional arrogance that continues to rear its ugly head. Even in the scholarship, New York is credited as the birthplace of such a dynamic culture. Lacking is the recognition that hip-hop culture samples its elements from southern-born expressions that currently dominate the overall hip-hop community of practice.

The presouthern hip-hop era began in the late 1970s, early 1980s when the South generally depended on the North to feed its appetite for rap music and hip-hop culture.   During this time, southern hip-hop created its own signature style to fill the regional void while simultaneously being influenced by the elements of its up-North innovations. For example, down-South hip-hoppers wore hip-hop fashion styles such as Kangol hats, Adidas jogging suits, and fat-laced tennis shoes just as up-North hip-hoppers did. Graffiti art also made its way to the sides of MARTA trains and freeway overpasses as southern break dancing, popping, and locking were also popular. In fact, Atlanta modified the dance style with the inclusion of a one-two side-to-side hustle and called it yeek dancing, or simply yeeking. But southern hip-hop not only modified the dance element of hip-hop. In many ways it changed the way hip-hop talked, dressed, even packaged its music.

Southern hip-hop is hip-hop produced in the U.S. South. Atlanta, Georgia, Miami, Florida, Houston, Texas, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Memphis, Tennessee are its main production centers, with Atlanta producing most of the current popular southern hip-hop music. Although there is overlap in these sites, each has its unique contribution to the overall culture. A hybrid developed in Miami, for example, is called bass or booty music. It is also recognized by many southern hip-hop members as the foundation of southern hip-hop music. "Miami is to southern hip-hop what the Bronx is to hip-hop itself," says Vincent Phillips, a local native and entertainment attorney.

> So when everybody was listenin' to hip-hop up-North our true ol' school rappers are in Miami. Before it was any of the other southern scenes, there was a Miami scene that dates back to the early 80s. By the time the late 80s came around, the artists out [of] Atlanta were influenced by the artists of Miami. You had the Shy-D's and Raheem's. It was a take on the Miami style rather than a take on the New York style. (phone interview, July 11, 2005)

Part of the draw to the Miami sound of hip-hop was the blending together of bass-heavy tones with call-and-response chanting and a bit of Cubano-style rhythms. Oftentimes the music is laced with sexualized hedonistic lyrics popularized by rapper Luther Campbell of the 2 Live Crew. Although Campbell's music was explicit, his fight for freedom of speech opened the door for hip-hop music to be as extreme and rebellious as it desired to be. In more ways than one, Luther Campbell and the 2 Live Crew politicized hip-hop music in a way that is still discussed in law classrooms. Explains Vincent Phillips,

In the Luther Campbell vs Roy Orbinson case, Roy sued Campbell for a

misinterpretation of his record "Oh Pretty Woman." But instead of using it

as a sample, Campbell, for his rap song "Pretty Woman" did something

that was actually pretty smart. He parodied the song, which kept him from

getting sued for copyright infringement by Orbison's people because they

came after the 2 Live Crew. In a Supreme Court decision they ruled that a

parody is protected as fair use speech. Because a parody falls under the

same category of a comedian, say, parodying a speech of the president or a

cartoon strip and you see someone who is highly recognized done over in

a cartoon in a way that the person didn't like. Well the person can't sue

and is protected under the first amendment right of free speech. Luke's

parody fell under the same protection (phone interview, July 11, 2005).

Miami hip-hop is southern hip-hop but has contributed to the growing dynamics of the

overall hip-hop community of practice. For example, in 1989 the 2 Live Crew released their

controversial album, *As Nasty As They Wanna Be*. The album included the single "Me So

Horny," which took its name from a Vietnamese prostitute in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal

Jacket*. A parental advisory sticker on the album was not enough to stir up tension between the

members of 2 Live Crew and the American Family Association. The group was charged with

obscenity violations that were supported by then Florida Governor Bob Martinez and the

Broward County Sheriffs Department, led by Nick Navarro, who threatened the prosecution of

any record store owner who sold the album. Subsequently 2 Live Crew filed a suit against

Navarro citing infringement of rights to freedom of speech, but June of 1990 Judge Jose

Gonzalez ruled against the rap group because of the obscenities on the album. Following the

arrest of Charles Freeman, the record store owner who sold the album to an undercover police officer, and the arrest of three of the group's members, the case went to the Supreme Court, who in 1992 overturned Gonzalez's decision and subsequently refused to hear Broward County's appeal. A key feature of the case was the statement of African American history professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr, who testified that the significations contained in the music had roots in a broader aesthetic of the African American literary and cultural tradition. A commentary on society's hypocrisy, and with the support of rockstar Bruce Springsteen, the 2 Live Crew released *Banned in the USA*, a parody of Springsteen's Born in the USA. From this perspective, Luther Campbell and the 2 Live Crew are four of hip-hop's freedom fighters. Their tenacity to express themselves however they chose liberated hip-hop – especially southern hip-hop. "I always predicted this," Campbell says in *Country Fried Soul: Adventures in Dirty South Hip-Hop*. When speaking about the contribution the southern region made to hip-hop, he continues, "But nobody really wanted this to become a reality. It gets real deep. Even to this day right now, the South is really not respected" (2005, p. 18).

The southern centers of hip-hop respect each other, however. Houston's variation of southern hip-hop is considered trill (the combination of the words "true" and "real") music. One of the city's most notable rap duos, Underground Kingz (UGK), insisted that hip-hop operate on the grassroots street-level. To them, this is where the true and the real occur. "Bun B definitely flipped the meaning of trill," admits Michael "5000" Watts, a Houston native, deejay, and partner of the Swishahouse music label. When talking about how Bun B, one of the members of UGK, supported his partner, Pimp C, when he went to jail, Watts shows the authentic nature of trill. "His loyalty was award-winning," Watts continues. "I never ever seen anybody hold it

down like he did for Pimp C." In addition to having a certain philosophy about friendship, Houston, in comparison to the other southern networks, is similar, but nuanced. Explains Watts.

> Our culture is totally different from every other major black city. It's funny. Like crunk music anywhere, they have hip-hop but when it comes to Houston, it is a different vibe. Say when I go to Georgia or Alabama or even to Dallas, I can play crunk the whole night and everybody will stay crunk. But in Houston there is a wider variety of music. You can play crunk, but there are places I DJ at I didn't have to stay on it. Normally when I come off the road, I'm on that crunk vibe after being on the road. When I come home, I have to calm myself down. We are laid back in Houston. Most people bounce when they hear the music, we have a rockin' type thang we do when we vibe versus when everybody else bounce. That's how we are. (Michael Watts interview transcript, p. 5)

The music of Houston hip-hop indicates that its members were raised on blues music and soul sounds, but also on the intergalactic funk grooves of such bands as George Clinton and the Parliament.

> The way our music is, it is sorta funky-like. If I can put like an in-between crunk and funk type thing, that's how I think our music is. It's changed a lot more because our stuff is more up-tempo. But we still got our funk but the energy is a little more. I think that has something to do with crunk music changing our music a li'l bit. A great example is the new Paul Wall single "Break 'em Off," it mixes crunk wit' our shit ya know" (phone interview, November 24, 2006)

Memphis and Houston share a special affinity in the production of the music. This is not only because many of the Tennessee artists traveled back and forth to Houston to record with well-known label houses like Rap-A-Lot Records and Suave House Records, but also because Memphis hip-hop was weaned on the music of Isaac Hayes, Al Green, Otis Redding, and the Bar-Kays. This lineage is heard in the music of groups like Outkast and multi-platinum producers such as Phalon "Jazze Pha" Alexander (the son of songstress Deniece Williams and Bar Kays drummer, James Alexander) and Isaac "Ike Dirty" Hayes, III, now a hip-hop music producer. When asked about how his father's musical legacy influences his production style, Hayes responds,

> Sometimes I hear it coming through. It just depends on the song. A lot of the melodies, especially in the strings, I hear him in my music. If I'm ever afforded a number one record on my own, at that point I will sample my father. It's one of those things that I want to get there on my own first if at all possible. (phone interview, November 25, 2006).

Referring to Mick Jagger while speaking about how music is passed on, Jazze Pha recalls,

> He used to show up in the pit and take in the performance. Just really studying the whole movement. And then, even like when I've seen him doing stuff, when they did a big tour and they did "Start Me Up," it was certain things that the lead singer in my dad's group was doing, he was doing. Certain moves that he was doing on stage were really taken from there. Just like Michael Jackson might get something from Fred Astaire or Sammy Davis. It's just passed on you know? (Palmer, 2005, p. 39)

These comments from Jazze Pha and Isaac Hayes III show a passing on of the music through generations and musical families, but also within performance, production, and style of musical genre. Unsurprisingly, soul music, rock music, funk, and blues find a place in the sound and flavor of southern hip-hop.

Two of Memphis's most famous hip-hop groups are 8ball and MJG and Three Six Mafia/Hypnotize Minds. Triple 6, as they are often called, is the rap group and music label that sent pop culture into a frenzy when they won an Academy Award for their song "It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp," the title song for the movie *Hustle & Flow*. Likewise New Orleans hip-hop pulls from the city's jazz tradition. Known as "bounce" music, the form is somewhat of a seamless thread from the elements of the brass band to the music of New Orleans artists like Master P, Juvenile, Souljah Slim, and the work of well-known producers such as Mannie Fresh, Beats By the Pound, and KLC. Charlie Braxton, a hip-hop journalist living in Jackson, Mississippi, explains the influence of New Orleans music on hip-hop culture.

> No matter where you go, you can hear the New Orleans syncopated beat
>
> that makes a listener know that that particular artist is from New Orleans.
>
> You hear it with Master P and Cash Money. And unlike any other hip-hop
>
> network, New Orleans is the only place that fuses the musical heritage of
>
> their music into their hip-hop. That made their music stand out from
>
> Atlanta music, which is the point of hip-hop. To take your musical
>
> heritage and create something different. New Orleans was isolated from
>
> the mainstream of hip-hop. That's what is so good about southern hip-hop
>
> because it is so spread out. For example in [St. Louis rapper] Nelly's
>
> "Country Grammar" that chant on the song goes back to classic bounce

> DJs. It's that kind of chanting that is rooted in West Africa and Central
> Africa that travels up the Mississippi that wound up influencing a lot of
> artists (phone interview, November 28, 2005).

New Orleans, just like the other southern hot-spots, is the site of one of the most successful blueprints for selling records without the help of a major label. Says Earl "E-40" Stevens, a rapper from the Bay area,

> Selling tapes out of the trunk of the car, that was pretty much patented by
> E-40, Too Short, Tony Draper at Suave House, Rap-A-Lot, people like
> that…Then came along the Master P's of the world and the Cash Moneys.
> They watched the game and did what they supposed to do and now they
> reaching for the stars. Ain't no limit, like Master P says…[Cash Money's]
> Baby and them said, "Man, we seen y'all for years. We studied y'all for
> years." They seen how a muhfucker did it. (Palmer, 2005, p. 30)

The independent, selling music "out the trunk of the car" distribution method is one that separates southern hip-hop from many of the other community social networks. "We had to sell our music on our own out of necessity," explains Vince Phillips. "For so long, major labels did not check for what we were doing so we had to do things on our own." The point here is that southern hip-hop, while related to hip-hop in other locations, has its own personality and way of doing things. From the production of the music to the style of dance to the independent distribution channels, hip-hop below the Mason Dixon is no mere cultural imitation, but a cultural adaptation with its own identity.

All of these regional off-shoots have forged the creation of specific genres that give southern hip-hop its unique appeal: Bass music, crunk music, trap music, and snap music. Each

has operated as its own entity, but not at the exclusion of the others. For example, crunk unites musical elements such as bass, booty, dancehall, trill, funk, rock, r&b, and soul. It is a bass-heavy style of music that blends pounding beats from a production tool called an 808. These beats are usually set at about 160 beats-per-minute (bpm). Trap music is not usually set at a rate as fast as crunk. More along the lines of what is identified as gangsta rap, trap music is representative that part of the ghetto – the trap – where drug-dealing is prevalent. A trapper, as opposed to a rapper, is a rapper who once sold drugs, but who used his hustle status as leverage to move into the rap game. Snap music is a form of southern rap that fuses a minimal production sound of a kick drum, hi-hat, and snap over rap lyrics. Many "trappers" say their raps over snap music, which in 2005 contributed to record-breaking sales in digital downloads in songs such as "Laffy Taffy" by rap group D4L (Down 4 Life), "Lean Wit It Rock Wit It" by Dem Franchize Boyz, and Lil Jon's "Snap Ya Fingaz."

Although different in sound, each musical style shares links with other styles. For instance, all of them borrow from oral traditions of call-and-response, poetic verse, and dissin' (hip-hop for *signifyin'*, see Smitherman, 1977). Another oral variation of call-and-response is the add-lib where rappers thread repeat chants and words like "yeah," "that's right," "ayyyyyy," "what," and "okaaaaayyyyy" through their rap verses. Using these words as chants, or fillers within the music, is a common tool in the southern network, and heard in rap songs such as Young Jeezy's "Thug Motivation," Lil Jon's "Who U Wit," Crime Mob's "Rock Yo Hips," Three Six Mafia's "Tear Da Club Up," and Lil Scrappy's "No Problems." Another element is location; the place where most of the music is produced, tested, and celebrated: the nightclub. In crunk, for example, the club is for "gettin' crunk," which is a celebratory dance where men and some women dance around each other as they participate in call-and-response singing and

chanting. "Lil Jon screaming on a hook ain't about rapping," says Lavell "David Banner" Crump in Tamara Palmer's *Country Fried Soul: Adventures in Dirty South Hip-Hop* (2005). "It's a feeling. It's like going to church. It's a spirit. That's why they can't understand why Lil Jon is selling how he's selling" (p. 7). "We just goin to have fun and make them feel like they're part of the show," Lil Jon told popular magazine *Murder Dog*. "Because when they feel like they're part of the show, they feel like they're getting something and they have a good time." Music historian Charlie Braxton places the crunk style of music in the context of slave times on the oral history documentary *Dirty States of America*: *The Untold Story of Southern Hip-Hop* (2004).

> Crunk is the type of music that the slaves, if they were around today when
> they got tired of masta and they knew they couldn't go whoop massa's ass,
> they'd go to the clearing and they go: "Ugh." That's what crunk is. When
> Lil Jon goes "yeeeaaaahhhhh,"when he says that, that's 400 years of
> oppression he is releasing.

Like the people of a southern Baptist church on Sunday morning and the community of the Kalahari Kung where chanting, singing, and rhythmic dancing is used to create a therapeutic, community-healing ceremony, whether it's called "catchin the Holy Ghost" or "gettin crunk," the boiling energy often leads to syncopated jumping, shouting, and "bow throwin." Throwing elbows is when the hip-hoppers begin to swing their arms and push one another, a therapeutic frenzy that can turn violent if not managed. Sean Paul of the rap duo The Youngbloodz chants over and over in a low whisper "Get'em off…Shake em'off…Get 'em off…Shake 'em off" and then raps "Sean Paul. Gotta get 'em drunk. Gotta shake 'em off in da club. I get it crunk." This is an example of how the club acts as an environment for a stressful relief; a place to shake off

whatever issues life presents. Mike "Killer Mike" Render explains further on *Dirty States of America*: *The Untold Story of Southern Hip-Hop* (2004).

> When you see crunk music in a club it's like a revival. We doin' it so we
> don't kill each other in da street. We get it all out in da club…. This is us.
> We in the fields celebratin' dat big house burnin' down. We celebratin'
> the end of dis war…But if we forced to hold it in, it's gon' get let loose on
> somebody.

The violence that can result from "throwin' 'boes" is expressed in Three Six Mafia's song, "Tear Da Club Up," when they chant, "Tear da club nigga, tear da club up," and then DJ Paul raps, "I thought you knew that I'm from Memphis where the shit is so thick. When at the club we got so bucked we try to tear up some shit."

The Memphis variation of crunk is called buck dancing and is heavily influenced by New Orleans hip-hop culture. "Buck music is influenced by bounce music," explains Charlie Braxton, "because it travels up the Mississippi" (phone interview, November 28, 2005). The music is equally energetic, but also very soulful. The beats can be hollow, slow, and very monotonous—sometimes fast, but also haunting and hypnotic. The performance of crunk and buck creates a vibrancy similar to that of a mosh pit[1] at a punk rock concert. In fact, crunk culture has been called the black punk rock. Explains Crump,

> Lil Jon's music is the grunge music for black kids. The way that
> Kurt Cobain made kids feel when he came out yelling, "Teen
> Spirit." The same way when Pastor Troy tells them that "We
> Ready," or T.I. talking about "Trap Muzik," or when 8ball and
> MJG talk about "Memphis City Blues," or when David Banner's

talking about Mississippi. That's something that a person would

never be able to understand. It's a feeling. (2005, p. 8)

Atlanta has its own style and history, a history developed around the early skating

rink movement and artists such as Mojo and Sammy Sam. But Atlanta is also the city

where southern hip-hop converges. Rapper T.I. calls the city a "hustler's market,

especially when music started pickin' up."[2] It is where all the nuances of each southern

scene, be it bass and booty, bounce and buck, or Houston trill, come to mix and market

the music into a communal sound. As music producer Rico Wade says on the CD

Southernplayalisticfunkymuzik, Atlanta is "the new Motown of the South." It is where

"all these 'ex-patriots' who came from places like Memphis, Miami, Houston, and New

Orleans in the early 90s. Those like Scarface, Triple 6 Mafia, and Project Pat's early

music" (Charlie Braxton phone interview, November 28, 2005). These community

members brought their music with them, ultimately creating a stronger network and

extending a tradition of expression to a younger generation of southern hip-hop

community members who rely on these foundational practices.

Southern Hip-Hop History, Speech, and Cultural Patterns

Dey (They) thank (think) we kuntry niggaz. And we ain't got shit t' brang (bring) da mainscream

(mainstream) doe (though). But we got da scruggle (struggle) in our shit.

Unidentified southern hip-hop member (2004), *Dirty States of America: The Untold Story of*

Southern Hip-Hop.

Ruben "Big Rube" Bailey is a member of the Dungeon Family (The DF). The DF is the

hip-hop family that gave birth to groups such as Outkast and the Goodie Mob. In 1994 when

Outkast released their platinum-selling debut album *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, Big Rube served as one of the production team of four who provided the duo with the beats to connect with their lyrics and rhymes. What made Outkast different from other groups, for example in New York, was the way they used language and the linguistic repertoire they drew from to represent their identity. Rube was the philosopher of the crew. On many of the Outkast and DF albums his smooth, yet direct, spoken-word interludes provide insights on the experiential views of an African American male living in the South, a place that retains many of its old traditional values. Rube's contributions provided a deeper understanding of the album's content and direction. The manipulation of language is essential for the speaker and audience to communicate values and experiences – especially because call-and-response is an imperative in the musical production of southern hip-hop. It is a fluid and interactive process (Haslett & Weinberg, 2004).

In "True Dat," the poem that introduces this chapter, the semantics and phonology of AAL play off one another. These features are also indicative of southern speech (Pederson, 1965; Smitherman, 1977; Kretzschmar et al., 1993; Bailey & Thomas, 1998) and represent the influence African language retentions have on white English (Mufwene, 1998; Smitherman, 2000). For example, vocalization of postvocalic /r/ shows up for "hoe" instead of "whore" and "doe" for "door." Throughout the poem are also many examples of the alternation of final stressed /n/ for /ŋ/: pimping → pimpin' and slamming → slammin', as well as vocalization of unstressed syllabic /r/: understand → undastand, cracker → cracka, and nigger → nigga. These phonological features are embedded in how Ruben articulates the characteristics of an outkast (the person) as a way of understanding the complexion of Outkast, the rap group. Ruben's definitions are two-fold. On the one hand, an *outkast* is someone who is subordinated within the social system because of race, socioeconomic status, spiritual and religious perspectives, and

language. An *outkast* also represents how southern hip-hop has struggled to be taken as a legitimate art form since the 1980s. What has now turned into what I call a "play-play" civil war started brewing in 1995 when hip-hop fans booed Outkast for winning the award for Best New Artist at the Source Magazine Awards, hip-hop's first official awards ceremony sponsored by the first magazine of hip-hop journalism. Regional arrogance from East coast hip-hoppers was the catalyst for the crowd displeasure, but southern language practice (linguistic and paralinguistic norms and values) is probably the most crucial reason for this relegation.

In the February 1999 issue of Rap Pages magazine, Robert "The Rza" Diggs responds to a question about the listenership of Wu-Tang Clan's music. "Who do you think listens to Wu-Tang Records?" asked Jay W. Babcock, the writer and interviewer of the story. Diggs said, after explaining a story about a conversation with a listener from the West Coast Bay area who said their music was virtually incomprehensible,

> There do seem to be a gap between Wu-Tang and the 25-and-older crowd
> because of the rawness and roughness and radicalness; and these people
> been programmed already, they've been programmed to go with the
> normal radio-program-type songs.

Continuing his argument about consciousness in hip-hop music, Diggs remarks,

> He was telling me that people in the Bay Area, people in the South listen
> to P. He says they listen to the tape, it's like we're talking French, they
> don't know what we're talking about. I said, "Because you don't KNOW
> nothing."…You gonna compare me to f*ckin' P? All P is saying in talkin'
> drugs, guns and pussy, and 'Uggh." And you're gonna say that Wu ain't
> the sh*t?...Basically, especially in those Southern states, there's a total

lack of knowledge. I've been there. There's nigga that are like sixth-grade

dropouts. So of course they don't know what the f*ck we're talkin' about.

And I told him, "I ain't making it for them. I'm making it for the

children."

The Rza, who also refers to himself as Bobby Digital, is a popular New York rapper-producer

whose success is due to his direct affiliation with the Wu-Tang Clan, a hip-hop crew of nine

members who sold millions of records across the world, especially in Asia where the fusion of

1970s martial arts movies and a cosmology of ancient teachings resonated with the continent's

youth. Just as Outkast responded to the crowd of booers, so did Jackson, Mississippi, rapper

David Banner on his song "The Eulogy." "They came in dey bombaz but left in dey caskets.

Dat's what dey get for bein' playa hatin' bastards." The "dey" (or they) Banner refers to are

New York rappers like the Rza who make disrespectful comments (i.e., playa hatin') about

southern music, language, and culture. These New York rappers dress mostly in bomber jackets

and Timberland boots, a signature New York hip-hop style. On the same song, rapper Bo Hagon

of Columbus, Georgia, directs his rap directly to Diggs. "You claimin' that you *digital* (a

reference to Diggs's alter-ego Bobby Digital) when you really an ol' black and white. An AM

station dat ain't actin' right." The underlying message is so what if Master P made the phrase

"Uggh" catchy throughout popular culture? It does not mean Master P is an idiot, but a New

Orleans hip-hop member who draws from a tradition of using the voice as an instrument. Being

one of Forbes's richest Americans also means he is an astute businessman with a sensitivity

about the appropriation of culture.

Big Rube asserts that listeners have to "undastand and feel the basic principles and

fundamental truths contained within this muzik" to be outkast'd. Just by virtue of being a black

man growing up in New York City, the Rza is an *outcast* of his city's social system. However,
Rza not an *outkast* because Ruben claims, "If you think it's all about pimpin' hoe's and slammin
Cadillac doe's den you prob'ly a cracka, or a nigga dat thank he a cracka, o' maybe jus don't
undastand." The Rza, like many community members outside the southern hip-hop network,
"jus don't undastand." He jus don't undastand the stylized speech or the truths, principles, or
experiences of the African American hip-hopper who happens to grow up in the South rather
than the North. Like Rza, and as Morgan (2001) implies, many East Coast hip-hoppers maintain
a built-in bias, even an arrogance, about hip-hop culture. Many believe they have more
ownership of the performance because they believe that all of its elements took shape in the Big
("rotten") Apple. And so the stereotype has been fed, and the Rza and others have considered
southern hip hoppers to be linguistically challenged speakers who are uneducated, slow-to-
advance, and caught up only in wearing gold teeth, pimping women, and driving fancy cars.

The double irony of this example shows how language ideology contributes to cultural
and community significance. Hip-hop as a performance and cultural community has struggled to
become part of the dominant discourse of popular culture. Southern hip hop has faced even more
difficulty because the intracultural ignorance about language variation associates southern speech
patterns with stereotypes about those who live below the Mason Dixon line. Many of these
embellished notions have historical origins, leaving southern hip-hoppers with little choice but to
press their way on to the hip-hop scene to tell their stories. Now, over 20 years later, other
southern hip-hop groups such as Lil Jon & the Eastside Boyz, Lil Wayne, Three Six Mafia, Yung
Joc, T.I., and Young Jeezy dominate the Billboard and radio charts, as well as music award
nominations. This newfound success is greater reason for exploring the wealth of thought
inherent in such a popular style of expression.

The DF's family tree, or relationships with other musicians, provides insights into southern success. They have sold millions of records, indicating that the language they speak has been globally embraced – even if it still, on many levels, cannot be fully comprehended. With Outkast being the first Atlanta-based rap group to attain mainstream and commercial success, the city has become the bedrock of southern hip-hop culture. To reveal the cultural and linguistic markers of the southern hip-hop network, I next introduce a personal narrative taken from a bracketed interview. My intention here is to establish a foundation for connecting selected speech patterns and language ideology with its meaning.

One summer evening a rapper-friend of mine asked me to ride with him to Carrollton, Georgia. One of the city's music promoters had invited him to perform for the city's hip hop crowd. This small town, known primarily as a college town for the students of the University of West Georgia, is approximately forty-five minutes west of Atlanta. The drive was interesting. It was extremely dark. There were few streetlights, and my rapper-friend was navigating the trip with directions given by frequent cell phone calls to the promoter, asking, "Ok, where do I go next?" We had no clear map and ultimately got lost. The frequency of Carrollton police officers and Georgia State Troopers who continuously passed us also made him extremely nervous. He pulled over and I drove. After we found our way from being 15 miles outside of where we should have been, we met up with the promoter. The iced-out[3] Jesus piece around his neck along with his Allen Iverson basketball jersey, sagging Girbaud jeans, lily

white Reebok Classics tennis shoes, and platinum grill[4] suggested he was definitely in a hip hop state of mind – as far as style is concerned. Everything about his physical dress symbolized resistance, rebellion, and cultural retention. The only thing missing from the stereotype was his Cadillac Brougham or his Chevrolet Impala sittin' on 22-inch rims. Actually he drove a Dodge Intrepid. Nor did he have a loud boomin' system blaring from the trunk of his car. No, the promoter was not decorated with all the popular stylistic features of what a southern hip-hopper should look like, but when he opened his mouth to speak, it was clear that the event promoter was in fact a hip-hop member born and raised in the South. "Now I wanna warn you," the promoter said in a slow Southern drawl. "You consida'd a stah down here, dawg. So get ready fa people t 'be starin' and prob'bly askin' fa pictures and autographs." The promoter jumped back in his car, and we followed him to the first location where my friend was to make a guest appearance.   We turned off the main highway onto a dirt road. "Where is he takin' us," we asked each other. As we drove down the rocky hill for about a half-mile, I began to see cars parked in no organized fashion. Standing alone at the end of the dirt road was an old yellow shack with Christmas lights adorned around its roof.

My friend *thinks* he is a superstar so we parked as close to the house as possible. I heard the sounds of N.W.A., Ludacris, and Bubba Sparxxx screaming from the little windows. "Is *this* the club," I asked. There were just as many people inside as there were outside. There was a

porch with a man who looked like he was old enough to be someone's grandfather sitting by the front door. And like a chaperoning parent, he checked everyone as they came in. The hip-hoppers who were outside were conversing with each other, but they seemed to stop in midsentence as we walked by. Somehow they knew we weren't natives - of Carrollton, that is. I with the long dreadlocks I wore at the time, and my rapper-friend with multiple tattoos etcha-sketched all over his forearms. We just stuck out like sore thumbs. I thought maybe they recognized him or even the huge engraving on his arm that read "Dungeon Family." It was hard for me to be sure.

When we got out of the car, I saw a golden-brown dog laid off to the side. I thought the dog was sleeping, but it did not move when people walked by it. "Is that dog dead?" I asked. Everyone who heard me looked, but no one answered. We walked toward the door. Onlookers greeted my companion with hospitality and gratitude. "I got cho' album, dawg. It's tiighht!" one fan congratulated. "Yeah, man," another cosigned, "I pre'shate chu comin' down here t' see us Carrollton folk." My rapper-friend said "thank you" and proceeded through the crowd. I, on the other hand, was *still* caught up in the scene. My mind was trying to come to grips with the environment of dead dogs, dirt roads, and the smell of fried chicken coming from the window of the kitchen. Apparently so was my friend. We thought his performance was supposed to be at a club, not someone's house. As we got closer to the door of the little shack, we

realized it *was* the club. We looked at each other and said almost in

unison, "This is a jook joint!"[5]

In her essay, *Characteristics of Negro Expression*, Zora Neale Hurston (1970) describes

the "jook" as an indigenous structure of black cultural formation rooted in the U.S. South

"Jook" is a word for a Negro pleasure house. It may mean a bawdy

house. It may mean the house set apart on public works where the

men and women dance, drink and gamble. Often, it is a

combination of all these (1970, p. 39-46).

There I was. A hip hop veteran who grew up on Mojo, MC Shy D, DJ Magic Mike, the

Sugarhill Gang, Run DMC, 2 Live Crew, Public Enemy, NWA, break dancing, and school talent

shows witnessing cultural retention among youth under 25 who considered themselves part of

the hip hop generation (Kitwana, 2002). The way they danced and shoved one another indicated

that their jammin'-at-th'-jook-joint was a natural expression of what the ol' folks call "shakin' a

load off" or "gittin ovuh" (Smitherman, 1977). That was then. Now it is called "gittin' crunk."

And maybe the hip-hoppers were "gittin crunk" *to* "git ovuh."

The focus of this chapter is not simply jook joints sprung off the west highway of

Carrollton, Georgia, and its significance.[6] This is only a small element of a bigger whole that

took shape in 1994 when Frederick "Cool Breeze" Bell coined a term called "The Dirty South"

as a radical response to "The New South." The New South was supposed to have left the values

of the Confederacy behind. Its advocates contended that southern states were becoming more

metropolitan, economically empowered, and socially aware. "The New South" purported to

reject the social oppressions that once characterized the region as old, out-dated and unpracticed,

subordinating part of its people. Advancement in cities like Atlanta blinds some from

recognizing how far the South has to go before its old traditions are a thing of the past. The premise of the Dirty South has been to prioritize the voice of African Americans on the receiving end of these traditional southern values and sentiments. Historically the South has been considered to be a region opposing change, even if its stability required another group to be made inferior. Although some of these descriptions are accurate, the emergence of any form of creative expression from the South, especially hip-hop, has had the challenge of confronting these stereotypes.

Blues culture is an example. The origin of blues music is uncertain, but it is certainly no older than the presence of black people in the United States (Jones, 1999). LeRoi Jones, author of *Blues People*, contends that blues, the parent of jazz, is "the product of the black man in this country" and "could not exist if the African captives had not become American captives" (1999, p. 17). Afro-American and American Negro songs were the predecessors of blues, and their musical origins were West African. By the late nineteenth century, these African songs and dances were seen and heard in the South, particularly in New Orleans's Congo Square. But these songs were different from their West African counterparts. The transfer brought about syntactical and rhythmical differences. Most importantly the Africans and their offspring had a tendency to speak their new language in the same way they spoke their native languages. The African elements in African-American English that is referred to as a "southern accent" is the drawl of an African slave trying to speak English in the same manner of his oppressor (Smitherman, 1977, 2000). Many slave masters laughed at how unintelligible the Negro sounded in these attempts. The "broken" and unstructured grammar indigenous to the South Atlantic sea islands soon became known as Black English, African American English, African American Vernacular English, or Ebonics.

This "bluesy" form of speech developed to a linguistic aesthetic in black expression rooted in freedom and culture:

> Oh Lawd, I'm tired, uuh
>
> Oh Lawd, I'm tired, uuh
>
> Oh Lawd, I'm tired, uuh
>
> Oh Lawd, I'm tired, a dis mess

This same type of message can be heard in the hip-hop lyrics of Carlos "Cee-lo" Burton, a southern hip-hop member:

> Oh Lawd, I'm so ti'ed, I'm so ti'ed
>
> My feet feel like I walked most of the road on my own
>
> All on my own.
>
> We alive bu' we ain't livin', that's why I'm givin' until it's gone
>
> Cause I don't wanna be alone.

Although small African American communities existed in the Northeast, the Great Migration of Negroes north did not occur until the early 1910s, well after the linguistic style of the freedmen had been established. So, why, in a region responsible for musical genres such as the blues, jazz, and rock 'n roll, do some question its deep structure contribution to the evolution of hip-hop culture (a form of blues) and rap music? In *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*, John F. Szwed (1999) poses a question: Does rap have a beginning? In his pursuit of the mother and father of rap, he errs. He first contends that rap has "twisted and shouted" its way into popular culture, suggesting it has no origin. If the first African slaves who were brought to the New World were dropped off in towns such as Charlestown, South Carolina (now known as Charleston), or Jamestown, Virginia, then the linguistic variations that are heavily laced in this

southern drawl and steeped greatly in black English got their early beginnings in the U.S. Southeast. When the subject is communication, its styles, and constructions, it is important to identify as accurately as possible the place where most African-American slaves originated (Asante, 1990). Although slaves were taken to all states, records show that the Atlantic slave trade landed slaves mostly in southern states (Curtin, 1969). The validity and authenticity of the South's contribution to the evolution of contemporary black cultural expression are crucial to an overall understanding of the hip-hop community of practice and its cultural and linguistic values.

Speech Pronunciation Patterns of Southern Hip-Hop

In addition to its performance features southern hip-hop uses a system of words and symbols representative of its temperament. As shown by many sociolinguists, hip-hop's language patterns are closely related to the language and linguistics practices of AAL. Smitherman (1997) listed several examples of AAL features that appear in hip-hop lyrics. Two phonological features are (1) the absence (or vocalization) of postvocalic /r/ (as in "Knockin' doe's [doors] down) and (2) realization of "ing" as "ang" and "ink" as "ank" (as in "Ain't nothin' but a 'g' thang [thing]). Syllable-initial fricative stopping is a third feature that stands out in the lyrics and narratives. An example is the introductory title "True Dat," which means "True That" in "standard" English.

Audience, according to the work of Bell (1984), is the most influential factor in speech style. In hip-hop language the artists direct their music to other hip-hop members, primarily the African American members, even though a substantial number of hip-hop consumers are white. As this pattern suggests, there is a higher number of occurrences versus the number of nonoccurrences for the three phonological features – especially because the features of AAL are the preferred mode of communication within the culture. As observed by Alim (2002), "artists

capitalize and exploit these features" (p. 299). As the phonological features indicate, the three features of African American Language appear in the lyrics and interviews of the southern artists. What is also clear is the relationship between occurrences and nonoccurrences: the frequencies show a substantial difference.

Table 1.

Examples of phonological features in AAL found in southern artists' lyrics and speech (frequency of occurrence of feature compared to nonoccurrence)

170 songs

2 video excerpts

10 interviews

35,667 words

Vocalization of Postvocalic /r/ (Smitherman, 1977)

Examples from Southern Artists (number of occurrences)	*Instances of nonoccurrence in Southern Artists' Lyrics*
shawty (55)	shorty (7)
lawd (15)	lord (2)
fa' sho' (7)	for sure (0)
do' (15)	door (0)
mo (27)	more (0)
Total = 119 (93%)	Total = 9 (7%)

Realization of "ing" as "ang" and "ink" as "ank" (Smitherman, 1977)

Examples from Southern Artists *Instances of nonoccurrence in Southern Artists' Lyrics*

(number of occurrences)

thang (37)   thing (5)

sang (4)   sing (0)

blang (0)   bling (16)

thank (8)   think (4)

Total = 49 (67%)   Total = 25 (34%)

Syllable-Initial Fricative Stopping (Pederson, 1965)

Examples from Southern Artists *Instances of nonoccurrence in Southern Artists' Lyrics*

(number of occurrences)

dem (17)   them (4)

deez (21)   these (4)

dis (32)   this (1)

dey (6)   they (3)

dat (27)   that (0)

den (10)   then (0)

Total = 113 (90%)   Total = 12 (10%)

Following a similar study conducted by Minnick (2001), if a type (feature) appeared more than 10 times, I arbitrarily considered it a frequent occurrence. If the type appeared each and every time, I noted that in addition to those occurrences that appeared less than 10 times. I did not measure the frequency of occurrences of these features in southern lyrics compared to that of nonsouthern lyrics. In this case my goal is not to compare, but to determine if southern

hip-hop rappers use an authentic language practice embedded in a linguistic history of southern speech patterns.

The chart indicates that southern hip-hop artists use features of southern speech to shape the sound of their music and communicate with their audience. They endeavor to maintain their identity because they want to "keep it real" as much as possible. This action is heightened when the speaker (or rapper in this case) stands before the hip-hop audience. LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985) situate this speaker-audience relation as dependent on utterances. They argue that "the individual creates for himself [sic] the patterns of his linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished" (p. 182). The artist also embeds meaning into these utterances that are not always visible in a phonologically oriented quantitative design. For example, such studies indicate only that Big Rube alternates the final unstressed /n/ for /ŋ/ in *pimping* and *slamming* and drops the /r/ for *whore* and *door*. But what does he mean when he says "…pimpin' hoes and slammin' Cadillac does?" This requires exploring the context in which he places the beginnings and endings of a rhyme, and doing so indicates that Bailey is contradicting the stereotypes placed on southern hip-hop that represent the culture as interested only in exploiting women and driving nice cars. Ruben asserts the stigma as a false reality, an unreal distinction.

Mixing Meaning within the Phonology

Many of the cryptic messages found in southern hip-hop are mistaken as lacking the commentary important to keeping hip-hop as "real" as its forefathers and foremothers intended. Most of the time the problem is introduced when these aesthetics are co-opted, commodified, exploited, and marketed to the mainstream for mass distribution and profit generation for cultural

capitalists. The results are repackaged images sold using stereotypical strategies that provoke tension within the African American community and among the hip-hop community of practice (Wilson, 2007). What goes unnoticed are the number of southern songs that challenge traditional notions of hip-hop and that comment on issues of poverty, prison, and drug culture, as well as inefficient social institutions, such as school, church, family, and various socialization practices. Studying the language use – the way it sounds and the contextual meanings – reveals many of the messages inherent in hip-hop culture, and southern hip-hop specifically.

During the early 1980s, signature methods of language use, styles of dance, and delivery of rap began to emerge below the Mason Dixon line. In addition to hip-hop's expression of music, language, and dance, the southern hip-hop worldview was influenced by post-civil-rights outcomes that, on the one hand, catapulted many African Americans to inexperienced socioeconomic levels while, on the other hand, produced the plight of those African Americans who fell victim to the ills of the Reagan-Bush era: the devastations of crack-cocaine; inadequate housing and healthcare; illegitimate schooling; and other outcomes of poverty and racism. To the contrary, African Americans seemed to be on the rise in the city of Atlanta. The mid-1970s brought a black political presence to the city. The late Maynard Jackson was in the midst of his term as the city's first black mayor and was soon to pass the torch to Andrew Young, who at the time was the Ambassador to the United Nations under the Carter Administration and had been the top aide to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. By the early 1980s, the environment worsened when the city's African American population experienced the Atlanta Child Murders, which left over 29 children and adults – all black, mostly poor – murdered and an Atlanta native named Wayne Williams ,a graduate of the Atlanta Public Schools, convicted of just about every kidnapped killing.

The Atlanta Child Murders are important to the worldview of the southern hip-hop generation and provide a theme revealed not only in the lyrics but also in my interviews. Using the AAL features of alternation of final unstressed /n/ for /ŋ/ and realization of "ing" as "ang," Andre "Andre 3000" Benjamin raps,

> But my crystal ball see the pistol fall to the wayside.
>
> Nobody would die in cops and robbers when we used to play (right).
>
> Huh, the only thang we feared was Williams, Wayne.
>
> Never thought about hittin' licks or slangin' caine.

Based on examples from the lyrics and the interview data gathered when I asked participants to talk about the factors that shaped the rise of early southern hip-hop, this pattern that influenced the cultivation of the Atlanta network's worldview is my next topic.

Other Elements of Southern Hip-Hop Culture

Hip-hop culture is designed around at least four elements: rapping, deejaying, breakdancing, and graffiti. Southern hip-hop applied regional characteristics to each of these elements. For example, the southern rap has a drawl; it's soulful, descriptive, energetic, and boastful. Some of the songs are full of calls and responses with little to no verse, while others mix verses, chants, and ad-libs. Oftentimes the language of southern rap is symbolic, metaphorical, and extremely coded.[7] The southern hip-hop visuals appreciate voluptuous women of color. We see this in the hip-hop videos, but another case in point is the artwork that is displayed on Outkast's *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik* disc. The appreciation of "thick" women is also embedded in the music of Miami-based rapper Trina, who claims that her fine figure is due to a diet complete with cornbread and cabbage. The music is percussion-heavy and relies on trickling hi-hats, techno and organ-based synthesizer keys, bells and chimes, guitar riffs, horns, and

bottomless 808 bass drops. Since achieving mainstream notoriety, the music of southern hip-hop has influenced producers outside the region to create more melodic and soulful songs that pay homage to artists like Isaac Hayes, Bar Kays, Earth, Wind, and Fire, and George Clinton.

Southern hip-hop's popular attraction may reside in how the rappers rap and the producers produce. The techniques, motivations, and polyrhythm of dance associated with the culture are also integral to this popular appeal. From an African perspective, Lomax (1975) describes this rhythm as one born out of the pelvis, in which "the trunk and the pelvis of the dancer and the hands and sticks of the drummers steadily maintain two separate and conflicting meters" that blend "African work and play with the steady feed of pleasurable erotic stimuli."[8] The jook joint demonstrates this relationship,[9] as does the southern strip club. Like the jook joint, the strip club is a southern-based social environment where talking, laughing, drinking, a bit of prostitution, and a lot of dancing take place. If the deejay plays a song with a heavy drum pattern and deep bass drop, the strippers are guaranteed to move their pelvis to the beat of the drums, generating erotic pleasures for the men who standby and pay to watch. The problem is introduced when these aesthetics are mass marketed through media conglomerates – the rap industry included – ultimately creating an imbalance of stereotypical messages and values (Wilson, 2007).

Post-Civil-Rights Worldview and Experience in Southern Hip-Hop: The Atlanta Child Murders

"What chu really know about tha derrty South?"

Atlanta rapper Cool Breeze asked this question in 1994 on Goodie Mob's *Soul Food* album. With a voice hoarsed-out by marijuana smoking, a slightly stuttered rhyme flow, and a perspective on life shared by many of his hip-hop peers, Frederick "Cool Breeze" Bell propelled the southern hip-hop movement to the top of the entertainment chain with a question that has come to define hip-hop in the U.S. South. The question was preceded by a description of drugs

and their side effects. Using AAL phonological features, he raps, "Powdah get you hypah. Reefah make you dumb. Cigarettes gi' you cansah. Woo-woo's make you dumb." And then the hook (or question) followed: "What chu really know about tha derrty South?" The focus on drugs and hustling shapes the theme of the hook. On the surface the rap may sound like a young man observing the consequences of substance abuse. A closer look shows something different and raises the question, "Exactly what *should* I know about the dirty South?"

Like Ruben Bailey, Frederick Bell is part of the Dungeon Family. And like the Goodie Mob and Outkast, Bell's lyrics interrogated the system and articulated an experience through the eyes of a young man trying to make sense of his world: a dirty southern world vexed by violence, criminalization of youth, geopolitics, and the epidemic use and selling of crack cocaine. In 1994, southern hip-hop had already gone through one of its major historical periods: the time of bass music and the explicit lyrics of the 2 Live Crew and Luther Campbell was ushered out. What followed was another example of the consciousness of southern hip-hop, that while not overly explicit, offered another way to understand the region's social reality. In many ways, Outkast, the Goodie Mob, Cool Breeze, and the Dungeon Family introduced the world to the language, the talk, what it means when said, the dress, and the style of southern hip-hop music. In 1994 they made their mark by telling the world what it is like to be hip-hop in the South. The hip-hop generation is sometimes described as the children of the civil rights and Black Nationalist movement. They are a post-civil-rights generation whose perspective on life is viewed through complex lenses and precarious situations. Atlanta is a bedrock of the Civil Rights movement. If hip-hop is a post-civil-rights generation, then the southern network caught the brunt of its outcomes.

Atlanta, Georgia, was described as "the city too busy to hate" in the December 1968 issue of *Nation*. Ahead in the race game and brimming with economic and political prosperity, Atlanta has continued to be considered a progressive influence in the Southeast. In 1864, toward the end of the Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman and his Union Army set the city on fire as a statement to the Confederacy that legal slavery was past tense– whether they liked it or not. Atlanta bore the weight of the Civil Rights Movement over a century later; it was the home of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and its leaders: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, his top aide, former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, Hosea Williams, and Ralph David Abernathy. The political presence from the Movement opened the door for an increased African American population in the heart of the city and the election of its first black mayor, a young attorney named Maynard Jackson. Subsequently, Atlanta became the corporate hub for Delta Airlines, Coca-Cola, Cox Communications, the Braves, Hawks, Falcons, and the Centennial Olympic Games. Even music producers LA Reid and Babyface set up shop in the A-town to build LaFace Records and jumpstart the careers of Toni Braxton, Usher, TLC, Goodie Mob, and Outkast. With a stubborn tenacity and persistent diligence, Atlanta's determination has been likened to the mythical phoenix raising itself from the ashes. A statue that embodies this mythical idea sits in Woodruff Park located downtown at Peachtree Street and Edgewood Avenue, ironically cattycornered to Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies.

But by summer 1979 and spring 1981 when twenty-nine African American children – mostly male and from some of Atlanta's most notorious neighborhoods – turned up missing within months, weeks, and days of each other, what seemed like a city free of any social stigmas fought diligently to maintain its racial integrity and socioeconomic credibility. So on Monday,

March 1, 1982, law enforcement officials, without a trial but consequent to a preponderance of evidence, declared Wayne Williams, a graduate of Atlanta's Frederick Douglas High School, guilty of twenty-three of the twenty-nine murders. But by no means was Williams's conviction the end of the case of Atlanta's missing and murdered children.

In the midst of Lil Jon's whats, yeahs, and okaaaays and all the other Atlanta hip-hop hype, the city got attention in May 2005 when Georgia's Dekalb County Police Chief Louis Graham announced the reopening of the cases of the murders of five young boys killed during this gruesome time: Aaron Wyche, 10; Patrick Baltazar, 11; Curtis Walker, 13; Joseph Bell, 15; and William Barrett, 17. What follows is a reflection on the Atlanta Child Murders through the lens of the southern hip-hop generation, that is, youth of color born or raised in the South between 1964 and 1985. If Patrick, Aaron, Curtis, Joseph, or William were alive today, they would be well into their 30s. Many of southern hip-hop's most notable artists are thirty and above and from many of the same neighborhoods. The DJ Toomp's or the Andre 3000's of the industry might well have been snatched up on their way home from the skating rink or the local recreation center or just simply walking to the store to get some sugar for a next-door neighbor.

On July 28, 1979, an elderly woman rummaging for recycled aluminum cans stumbled on a body peeking out of some leaves and branches. The victim was barely clothed, wearing nothing but a pair of shorts. He was found near Niskey Lake Road in an upper-middle class neighborhood in southwest Atlanta. When the police arrived, to their dismay they discovered another body buried just 150 feet away. Body #1 was identified as fourteen-year-old Edward Hope Smith. An autopsy revealed the rising high school freshman died from a .22 caliber gunshot wound to his upper back. He had been missing for one week. Body #2 was thirteen-year-old Alfred James Evans, aka Little Q. Probable asphyxiation by strangulation was the determined

cause of death. He had last been seen July 25 between 3 pm and 4 pm when he had headed off to see a karate movie at the Coronet Theater on Peachtree Street in downtown Atlanta. His body was found three days later on the other side of town. No one knows if he made it to the movie. Other than both young men being black, from two of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods, mysteriously kidnapped, and gruesomely murdered, very little evidence suggests that Smith and Evans even knew each other.

Evans lived in the Eastlake Meadows housing projects in east Atlanta with his mother. The neighborhood was such a harsh environment that it became known as "little Vietnam." Still, Little Q's disappearance startled the community. "It was a panic more than anythang," said Russell "Block" Spencer, the CEO of a local rap label. "I grew up in Eastlake," he explained. "It was like we was immune to the shootin' and the fightin' and all dat. We *wasn't* used to kids gettin' snatched up." Smith, on the other hand, was from the Kimberly Courts projects. He had last been seen on July 21, 1979, wearing his black and red football jersey representing Therrell High School, a popular Atlanta city school. According to the rink manager, Edward Smith left with a girlfriend from the Greenbriar Skating Rink, later known as Jellibean's Skating Rink, located in the Ben Hill community. Only a mile or so from his home, Smith and his friend went separate ways when they reached the intersection of Campbellton and Fairburn roads. Edward went west on Campbellton toward County Line Road. Little did he know he would never again be seen alive. "That's when we was like, 'Hey, this is real'," said Aldrin "DJ Toomp" Davis, former Jellibean's DJ, resident of the Ben Hill community, and graduate of Therrell. "We saw it on the news and we felt [like] there's actually li'l kids' bodies bein' found. That's when we started travelin' in like groups of five."

The group trips did not prevent an increased level of fear and angst in the community. "Me and my friends were ridin' our bikes on Village Drive off Fairburn Road," remembered Vincent Phillips, a local entertainment attorney. "I remember a black car, tinted-out, that came into the neighborhood and followed us down and around three streets." Vincent and his friends turned around in a driveway when they became suspicious. The car turned around in the same driveway. "We were so damn scared we didn't dare look to see who was in the car." The group of friends decided to split after approaching an intersection. Vincent went up the hill. One [friend] went down the hill, and the other went straight ahead. The strange car sat at the same intersection while the driver seemed to contemplate which way to turn. The car turned toward Vincent. Fortunately he reached home in time to dump his bike and run into the house. "Kids couldn't be kids," exclaimed Phillips. "Everybody was scared and on straight look out!" Not too long after this incident Vincent's family moved to Savannah and then out of the state entirely. It would be four years before they returned to Atlanta from South Carolina.

In the time to come, more bodies were found, and more patterns were left than clues. Fourteen-year-old Milton Harvey, for example, left his parents' house located on Nash Road in northwest Atlanta to pay a bill for his mother at the Citizens and Southern Bank, now Citizen's Trust. It was September 4, 1979. Milton made it to the bank; it was only three miles away. But Milton never made it back home. His body was recovered November 16 off Redwine Road in East Point, Georgia. East Point is over a dozen miles from Milton's home. He was still clad in the white-tee and blue cutoff shorts he had on when he left for the bank. But his knee-high socks with the stripes at the top *and* his old blue sneakers were missing. The local media, city administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Atlanta Bureau of Police Services were slow to link any of the murders. Not until the abduction and murder of Yusef Bell did the

black community generate a persistent pressure that could no longer be ignored. Nine-year-old Yusef Bell had lived in the Mechanicsville projects on McDaniel-Glenn near what used to be the Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. Big Gee, a local rapper and former resident of the Mechanicsville project community, independently distributed a song called "Zone 3," an autobiographical narrative about growing up in the neighborhood of Zone 3, as it was identified by the Atlanta Police Department. Regarding the murders, he rapped,

> Once upon a time in dis A-T-L zone 3
>
> Lived a edgehanga, headbanga Big Gee
>
> …Wayne Williams on the loose still.
>
> Atlanta had a curfew.
>
> 6 o'clock fa da li'l kids.

Many of the artists spoke about how having a citywide curfew forced them to tap into a creative spirit.

> Since we had to be in the house by 6 [pm], I couldn't play outside like I
>
> prob'ly would have if the murders weren't happenin'. This is when I got
>
> into deejayin'. I'd just go in the house and get on the turntables. In a way,
>
> I guess that's the good that came out of all of this. (DJ Toomp, p. 6).

Shannon McCollum, a hip-hop photographer and graduate of Douglas High School described how the fears of the time helped him tap into his individuality.

> The school administration was trying to keep us very aware. I remember
>
> announcements over the intercom or notes goin' home, and people just
>
> tryin' to make – especially if you were a bus rider – they were like, "Go
>
> straight home." I was in the 1st grade, and I think for me it gave me a

sense of being an individual. When everybody was telling you to walk in packs, and I just decided that I was a li'l different than everybody and I was gonna take the short cut home like I always did. And walking through the woods, I was learning about myself and beating everybody to school, but goin' through that short cut I was capturin' my fears and sayin' that this dude can't get me, and I don't have to do what all the other kids did. I was li'l outcast from everybody else. At one point I was kinda mad that I couldn't wear what the other kids wore, and it was a li'l annoying, but it gave me my own individual style. So I jus' ran with that. As an only child I had no choice but to come up with things to do. I was at home by myself and had to be in at a curfew. So it was practice piano lessons, practicing photography because my dad was a photographer. My dad used to staple pictures to the wall, and it was a gang of pictures. I used to sit there and stare at those pictures and imagine being where those people were and thinkin' about bein' there and not thinkin' about bein' locked up in the house. And goin' through that and bein' in the dark room smellin' that crazy shit and opening up his Kodak paper. So we had boxes of 8 by 10 pictures of when he worked with the AJC newspaper. So I would be in the house staring at pics of Muhammad Ali, Jimmy Carter, and Coretta Scott King, hopin' one day I'd get a chance to shoot people like that. (phone interview, June 11, 2006)

Jen Farris, local resident, graduate of Westlake High School in Fulton County, and public relations manager for hip-hop artists, describes how the missing and murdered incident influenced her as a child.

> When the missing and murdered children was going down, we actually had to ride the bus because we were part of East Point's Talented And Gifted program (TAG) which allowed us to go to school in East Point, [Georgia]. But because we were bused we had to be at the bus stop at 7 a.m. when it was dark. I remember how scary that shit was. So my mom and a neighbor would tag team on waiting with us at the bus stop. But when we got back, they weren't there and we was scared as hell. We had to walk home, and the first few kids were found literally a block away from where we had to walk over near Bunche Middle School. So we were shook for years catching the bus home after school. I remember one day, when me and my brother were walking up our street, we saw something laying in the street. And he and I went back and forth arguing loud about whether it was a man or a dog. We were so loud that the man got up out of the street and ran in the woods. So of course we ran backwards back to our friend's house terrified. We had to walk pass the crosses everyday coming home. Three crosses of Jesus on the side of the road. All the PSA's had us so funkin scared and so we stayed inside. So me and my brother…I remember more memories of being in my father's record collection more than anything. I lived in that room because we listened to James Brown, Isaac Hayes, Jean Carn. We got lost in my

daddy's records. We loved it so much that we didn't care about going

outside. We would take new school hip-hop and find the songs in my

daddy's collection that they sampled from like James Brown. As a matter

of fact, we call my brother the walking jukebox. He can name any song

and it came from us being inside. We learned lyrics, the composition of

music, the arrangements of music, and it was because we couldn't go

outside during the missing and murdered children. If we weren't listening

to my daddy's records, we were listening to V103, the Fresh Party,

WAOK's Live at the San Souci, Z93,…we fell in love with all this during

the Atlanta Child Murders. I don't have a lot of memories of playing

outside in that neighborhood. It wasn't fun anymore. We couldn't be

kids. Like Halloween wasn't fun no more. They were stickin' fuckin'

nails and shit in the candy and tryin' to kill little kids so I was, like, let

me take my ass back in the house and listen to my music. I would've

probably had a miserable childhood if it wasn't for my father's records.

(Jen Farris, p. 9)

In 1981, Goodie Mob member Terrance "T-Mo" Barnett and his family got a phone call.

The voice on the other end asked them to come to identify the body of a young girl who had just

been pulled out of a southwest Atlanta creek. "I was like 9-years-old," T-mo recalled. "I

remember seeing it come on the news that they found a young lady in the creek somewhere dead

off of Camp Creek [Pkwy]." "You look at [the news] and you don't ever think it's your family,"

he continued. "An hour later we got a call. My mama just started screaming and screaming." The

coroners were accurate. The young girl, Angela Pitts Fuller, was T-Mo's little sister. Her body

was found during the Atlanta Child Murders. "I was just so scared because it was happenin' so quick," T-Mo continued. "I didn't know whether to cry or what because we didn't know." The tragedy of young Angela was eventually deemed an isolated incident committed by a copycat murderer who presently sits in jail. "It didn't have nothin' to do with the Atlanta [Child] Murders," he said. "But at that time we didn't know."

With children found dead within days of each other, the series of murders created confusion and violent chaos that brought what would become the crunk capital to its knees and helped shape the views of the southern hip-hop generation. When Andre wrote the rap quoted on page 24, only a few knew that he was referring to the Atlanta Child Murders and how scared little black children were of getting picked up by Wayne Williams and later being found floating in the Chattahoochee or South River. In 1994 when the DF started gaining popularity, few were checking for Outkast, Goodie Mob, anything musical, or anybody hip-hop from Atlanta or the South. This indifference was clear over a decade after T-Mo's life-altering experience when Outkast was recognized as hip-hop's best new rap group at the 1995 SOURCE Magazine Awards. Standing before a booing crowd of hip-hoppers caught up in the attraction of the battle between the East Coast and the West coast, Andre 3000 asserted, "the South got somethin' to say," and then walked off the stage. With a subtle arrogance, he, along with Big Boi, Goodie Mob, and the rest of his crew anticipated that the mainstream would soon have no choice but to listen from the southside of the fence, especially from Atlanta's section.

Radical Symbolism in Southern Hip-Hop

The symbolic effect of experiences such as the Atlanta Child Murders and of constant exposure to southern Confederate values is represented in southern artists' music, videos, and lyrics. The music video for "Bombs Over Baghdad," for example, shows Andre running through

a field with a group of children from the Bowen Homes housing project. Although expressed through visual symbolism, Andre's point was not only to show his connection to the children who buy his music, but also to offer a history lesson for his listeners outside the city of Atlanta who may not know that some of the children identified in the murders were from Bowen Homes as well as other housing communities around the city. Southern hip-hop also uses the art form to respond to southern Confederate traditions. A case in point is again Outkast's Andre 3000, who uses his style of dress to display his objections to the Confederate flag. He wears a belt-buckle of the symbol that is not red, white, and blue, but red, black, and green, the representative colors of the African nation. On the cover of the November 2003 *Source* magazine, David Banner, Lil Jon, and Bonecrusher, all Southern rappers, stomp a burning Confederate flag (see below).

Confederate flag symbolism in southern hip-hop

Denzin (1992) explains this kind of gesture as a way to reveal power, "the micro-power relations that structure the daily performances of race, ethnicity, gender, and class in interactional situations" (1992, p. 24). When explored more closely, relations with school are also used to make statements about power. For example, Trillville, a southern rap group, used the school environment to film the video for their song "Neva Eva." The video portrays agitated youth responding to a schoolteacher. One scene shows the youngsters engaged in a food fight. In another scene the rap group is standing on top of a school bus, "gittin' crunk and throwin' boe's." Trillville's song, "Neva Eva," became one of the most played rap songs of 2003. Although I return to it in more detail in the next chapter, the song's hook exemplifies an anger

comparable to that of punk rock. Although implicit, the song's use of the word *bitch-nigga* to describe oppressive situations offers even more insight into the southern hip-hop network. These themes are further explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

You should be gettin' it while the gettin' is good: Schooling and Ideology in the Southern Hip-

Hop Community of Practice

When we say *bitch-nigga*, we talkin' 'bout people like George W. Bush. That's a *bitch-nigga*.

Anybody, teachers, schools, people, a *bitch-nigga* can be any obstacle that's in yo' way keepin'

you from progressin'.

Don P, one-third of the southern rap group Trillville, 2003, p. 4

I'm D.M.C.

In the place to be.

I go to St. John's University.

And since kindergarten I acquired the knowledge.

And after 12th grade I went straight to college.

Run-D.M.C. (1984). Sucker M.C.'s. *Run-D.M.C.* Profile Records.

Chapter 4 focuses on describing aspects of the southern hip-hop network and its language

ideology. Relying on three speech pronunciation features, I measured the frequency of

occurrence versus nonoccurrence to determine if there was evidence of a distinct way of

communicating within dominant cultural and linguistic norms. My analysis revealed that the

southern hip-hop network's language is an extension of southern speech patterns found in

African American Language (AAL). To further understand the network's identity, Atlanta

specifically, I explored the cases of the missing and murdered children that preoccupied the city

during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The lyrics and interviews pointed to this incident as

integral to the formative years of the southern hip-hop generation's worldview and creative

energy. Furthermore, these results suggest that hip-hop networks, while linked by a global social and political climate, are also concerned with local occurrences that contribute to the social perspectives of the local community. This chapter is an extension of the last. My goal here is to focus on the representation of education in the hip-hop community of practice, emphasizing how members talk about and experience informal and formal methods of schooling and education in the southern network.   Notwithstanding the generalization that the overall hip-hop community of practice in the U.S. developed in response to the social abandonment of urban schools and communities, I found substantial themes and patterns that suggest concern with education is an integral component of the cultural ideology of southern and nonsouthern hip-hop networks.

I rely on two corpura in this portion of the study: one is a database of 238 rap songs and 9 interviews that identify perceptions of schools and education, and another, overlapping one is a collection of lyrics that use the word *bitch* as a descriptive term for school. Given that grounded theory methodology and methods shaped the study's design and analysis of the data (Charmaz, 1997; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McCann & Clark, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), my research questions for this part of the study follow: (1) In what ways are school and education conceptualized and articulated in hip-hop lyrics and interviews, and (2) Under what conditions are these experiences expressed? My purposes include these*:*

- To explicate themes of school and education contained in rap music lyrics and interviews, placing emphasis on the southern networks expressions.
- To identify conditions influential to these representations.
- To cultivate a grounded theory about how school and education are portrayed in the collected rap music lyrics and narratives.

Using open coding strategies, I found distinct ways in which hip-hop members discuss education. Sometimes it is positive; sometimes it is negative; and other times they speak about alternative means for obtaining an education, be it formal and institutionalized or informal and gained through what is called a street education. I also noticed from the lyrics gathered that nonsouthern artists speak more explicitly about the school system than southern artists do. On the surface, this might suggest that southern members are less interested in school and education. A closer analysis shows something more subtle. The concern is there, but is integrated into the narratives in a more implicit way (i.e., through the use of terms like *bitch*). My reason for triangulating the lyrics with the interviews was to determine whether southern members had a view on educational ideology. What I found is that the southern artists cited in this chapter talk about informal schooling often situated in what is understood as street education. Three primary domains emerged from the narratives: (1) representations of schools; (2) representations of teachers; and (3) representations of content and curriculum. I divided the categories into thematic subsections that focus on the purposes of schools, the institutional nature of schools, the school environment, student-teacher-administrator interactions, teacher pedagogy, and curriculum. The lyrics also reflected sentiments toward dropping out and the conditions that lead to dropping out. Another important pattern from the narratives is the suggestion that the ties of the hip-hop network are formed in the schools.

A Night at the Tabernacle: Frustrating Revelations of the School System

One hot and humid summer evening in Georgia I attended a concert called the Okay Player Tour. It was held at the Tabernacle, a cathedral-like music venue located in downtown Atlanta. The tour included hip-hop artists such as the Roots, Talib Kweli, Common, and dead

prez. Outside the venue a line extended far from the entrance as attendees anxiously waited in the thick Georgia humidity for their opportunity to get inside. Appreciating the crowd's diversity distracted me from the summer heat and how the long dreadlocks I wore at the time contributed to the sweat dripping down my back. I saw black and white men and women. I saw young and old. I saw other hip-hoppers with "natural" hairstyles as well as perms and hair weaves. I saw Bohemian-influenced wardrobes accented with head-wraps and sandals alongside stiletto heels and mini-skirts. The scene was vibrant as no one seemed to care about the heat or the crowd variations.

It was packed wall-to-wall inside the Tabernacle. The heat generated by the gang of hip-hop fans who either sat in the balcony or stood on the main floor amplified the outside scorch. And still, no one seemed to care. Most of them patiently waited, waved their hands back-and-forth hoping for a whisp of cool air, or wiped their foreheads and faces with napkins and tissue paper. Some people had brought face towels in anticipation of the night's extreme heat and the audience's perspiration. By the time the music indicated that the show was about to begin, the crowd's electricity was tangible. Indeed the fans were more than ready to participate in their well-paid-for hip-hop extravaganza.

The first group to perform consisted of two African American men – Mutulu "M1" Olubala and Khnum "stic.man" Olubala. As a rap duo they go by the name of dead prez. M1 is a rapper from Brooklyn, New York, and his partner, stic.man, is from Tallahassee, Florida. The themes of their rap songs unambiguously focus on social politics and culture. As soon as M1 and stic.man came on stage, the crowd erupted. The duo introduced "They Schools" after completing a few of their well-known rap songs. "They Schools" is a rap song that offers an analysis of the current state of urban public schools as experienced by an African American student. When

stic.man said into his microphone, "Man this school shit is a joke," the crowd responded with a loud cheer as he continued to explain. "The same people who control the school system control the prison system, and the whole social system." The crowd cheered even louder. By the time dead prez reached the chorus of the song, the diverse hip-hop crowd was engulfed in the song's message and cadence. They sang along, "They schools can't teach us shit!" The audience bellowed, "My people need freedom. We tryin' to get all we can get." In an exchange of call-and-response, dead prez called, "All my high school teachers can suck my dick," as the hip-hoppers responded, "Tellin' me white man lies. Straight bullshit."[10] I sat in the balcony watching and thinking, "Wow there are white people shouting these lyrics just as clear as the black people." I looked and wondered, somewhat puzzled but not amazed. At the time of the concert, I was a teacher at a mostly white and affluent private school. Of course the students listened to rap music. They told me so. They also liked to wear their school uniforms baggier than necessary, an indication of hip-hop's influence.

My attendance at the Okay Player concert was no accident. No one bought me tickets or invited me to tag along as a second leg. It was my choice to use my press credentials to gain access to the environment. Was I engaged in the crowd-chanting? Yes, as a member of the hip-hop community and as a teacher only months shy of beginning doctoral work. The irony, however, was that my participation was not based on a disdain for schools. To the contrary, I love teaching and working in schooling and educational environments. Moreover, I am a staunch supporter of public and community-centered education. Rather, it was the reaction of the crowd and my participation in it that contributed to my concern about how schools are represented in rap music and hip-hop culture.

Representations of Schools in Popular Culture

School and aspects of school are topics commonly represented in popular culture forums. *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Lean on Me, Dangerous Minds,* and *Coach Carter* are movie exemplars that invite viewers into the complicated world of student-teacher-administrator relationships, various outcomes of teacher practices, and the relationships between the school and its community contexts. *Boston Public* and *Welcome Back Carter* are television series that convey images of the school environment as did the Saturday-morning comedy *Saved by the Bell*. Because people's beliefs about society are affected by images conveyed in popular culture, researchers take an interest in how school culture is represented in media such as film, television, fiction, and music. Keroes (1999) is one example. Drawing from literary theory, she explores representations of schoolteachers in novels, films, and letters. Her point is to interrogate critical tensions of reality and representation as they are revealed in the narratives' stereotypical images (see also Joseph & Burnaford, 2001). Butchart and Cooper (1987) take a similar approach in their analysis of rock 'n' roll music lyrics. Drawing from songs popular between 1950 and 1980, they found the lyrics to be "antiteacher," "antieducation," and symbolic of a youthful resistance toward formal schooling. Brehony (1998) explores aspects of schools in rock, pop, and Britpop music lyrics ranging from the 1950s to the late 1990s. Among other themes, Brehony emphasizes the romanticizing of schoolteachers in the lyrics. He concludes that representations of school, while scarce in pop and rock songs, are powerful signifiers articulated within different forms of popular media.

One of the primary themes inherent in Brehony's analysis as well as in the other exploratory cases is the idea of school as a social center. It is characterized as an environment where peer relationships are developed and structures of authority are constructed and resisted.

Unlike Keroes, Butchart and Cooper, and Brehony, my interest is not themes of school and education in novels, films, letters, or rock music lyrics, but in rap music lyrics. An example of my focus is the excerpt introducing the chapter where the rapper DMC, one-half of the rap group Run-DMC, brags about his transitions from elementary school, to middle school, to high school, then on to college at "St. John's University." In hip-hop culture artists often thread perspectives about schools and education throughout their music lyrics, even in songs on other topics. Some of the views endorse schools, as in Run-DMC's Darryl "DMC" Mack who brags about how "since kindergarten" he "acquired the knowledge" to attend New York's St. John's University.[11] In other instances schools are described as social environments where youth learn about being cool, dressing well, and negotiating gender relationships.[12] More poignant in the narratives are critical and sometimes profane analyses of school. For example, personal schooling experiences are addressed in Erykah Badu's "…& On" when she sings, "I remember there in school one day I learned I was inferior."[13] Nasir "Nas" Jones uses metaphor to declare, "Schools where I learned they should be burned" before describing them as "poison."[14] On teachers, the rap group Gangstarr questions, "How many teachers reach all the kids in the classroom?"[15] The rap group dead prez suggests teachers "beat us in the head wit' dem books." The result, dead prez claims, is "it don't reach us."[16] Lyrical narratives in hip-hop music also target standards of educational reform, school violence, and disciplinary methods. Comparing the quality of Mississippi's new and old schools, Lavell "David Banner" Crump, a rapper and graduate of Southern University, shouts with frustration, "New schools but the black kids still ain't learnin 'bout shit."[17] A mentee of Tupac "2Pac" Shakur suggests, "Schools turn to war zones…leavin children to play caged and raged." He asks, "How come?" and then concludes "The Good Die Young" by dedicating the song to "All 'dem young kids that died innocent - that died young - at Columbine High."[18]

Dead prez questions school disciplinary policies on "Know Your Enemy." They ask, "Why they puttin' jails in schools? Is it subliminal?"[19]

Many of these ideas about school come from a lack of a community-centered faculty, staff, and curriculum. These sentiments are also related to poverty, which poses a peculiar dynamic when the message of the school system is that a high school diploma can alleviate longstanding socioeconomic and cultural problems. The next section focuses on four songs, all of which are commentaries on the relationships among school, education, and socioeconomic access.

Now tell me, what the fuck am I supposed to do?:

Interrogating School, Poverty, and the Sociocultural Context of Hip-Hop

Urban poverty has a profound influence on urban schools. The combination of an underresourced school environment and an overworked teacher and administrative force tied to a student body challenged with day-to-day realities of political, economic, social, and cultural disenfranchisement presents a frustrating and volatile predicament. Four rap songs articulate this tenuous relationship: (1) KRS-One's "Love's Gonna Get Cha (Material Love)," (2) Ice Cube's "A Bird in Hand." (3) Grandmaster Melle Mel's "The Message," and (4) T.I.'s "Rubberband Man." These songs characterize the relationship between school and poverty by profanely challenging the common notion that regular school attendance, good grades, and productive citizenship equals opportunities for success: the acquisition of a respectable job, pleasant home, and financial stability and the possibility to rise above poverty. KRS-One, Ice Cube, and Grandmaster Melle Mel offer scenarios that trouble this fundamental claim about the outcomes of schooling. T.I. does not directly address schools. Instead he puts himself in the position of a teacher who can offer ways to circumvent the poverty that he speaks about in his lyrics.

Lawrence Krishna Parker, or Kris "KRS-One" Parker, is one of hip-hop's notable rappers. From the outset of his career as a member of Boogie Down Productions, he has been respected as an artist by other rappers and hip-hop members who view him as the epitome of a hip-hop MC. Many hip-hoppers also call him "Blastmasta" or "The Teacha" because of the educational content he fuses within his lyrics. "Love's Gonna Get Cha' (Material Love)" appears on *Edutainment*, Boogie Down Productions' fourth album. Shortly after BDP released "Love's Gonna Get Cha' (Material Love), Oshea "Ice Cube" Jackson' s album *Death Certificate* came out. Among a host of politically astute songs was "A Bird in Hand." Ice Cube is a former member of the controversial rap group NWA (Niggaz With Attitudes). So it was little surprise for him to write a song such as "A Bird in Hand," which articulates a narrative of a young man faced with the decision of getting a low-paying job to take care of his family or hustle birds, that is, sell cocaine.

As part of a classic catalogue of rap songs, "Love's Gonna Get Cha…," "A Bird in Hand," "The Message," and "Rubberband Man" are considered four of hip-hop culture's most poignant social critiques. Each song is from an artist who represents different geographic networks: KRS-One and Melle Mel, New York; Ice Cube, Compton, California; and T.I., Atlanta, Georgia. A common theme, however, is that each song narrates the story of a young black male growing up in the 'hood, who, given his social situation, either *chooses* or strongly considers street hustling tactics as a means for overcoming poverty. One difference is that Ice Cube's subject, unlike KRS-One's, actually graduates from high school. In "The Message" the narrator confesses to having a "bum education," which indicates he may have graduated, but with little to no skills to make any significant life changes. In part of the song the rapper speaks for his son, who would much rather drop out of school because the environment is not conducive

to learning. Unlike the other songs, "Rubberband Man" does not present an explicit narrative of a young man who decides to drop out of school to sell drugs as a way of providing for his family. Only through other T.I. narratives is it revealed that he is a high school dropout. Yet, he claims, "I could show ya how to juggle anything and make it double." Still, each rapper takes a different trajectory to explicitly or implicitly articulate a narrative about a youngster's social situation and the role of school and education *within* that situation. What stands out is how each song shows the complexities of managing racialized oppression and poverty.

Another characteristic of these songs is that they span the course of hip-hop's three decades. Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five recorded "The Message" in 1982. "Love's Gonna Get Cha" was recorded in 1990, "A Bird in Hand," 1991, and "Rubberband Man, in 2003. A common thread of struggle, however, is a theme in each song. An example is "The Message," which was released during the Reagan-Bush era, a time when minority populations were prevented from gaining benefits from the Civil Rights movement, school desegregation particularly. The early rap era marked the first of the generations to realize the story, "if you go to school and graduate, a job will be waiting for you," was a fabrication. Run-DMC's "Hard Times" was the theme song of this era. In only a few years, African Americans went from singing "Ain't no stoppin' us now. We're on the move" to "Hard times is coming to your town. So stay alert. Don't let them get you down" (Run DMC, "Hard Times, 1984). Verses like this pointed to warnings of approaching social ills such as war, unemployment, and decreased funding for schools.

Verses like "Got a bum education. Double-digit inflation. Can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station," suggest the intersection among education, culture, class, politics, and the economic instability of the 1980s. Here is another example of this theme:

My son said 'Daddy I don't wanna go to school

cuz the teacher's a jerk.

He must think I'm a fool

And all the kids smoke reefer

I think it'd be cheaper

If I just got a job

Learn to be a street sweeper

Or dance to the beat

Shuffle my feet

Wear a shirt and a tie and run with the creeps

(Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, "The Message," 1982)

The song openly attacks the schools, calling the teacher a "jerk" and suggesting he [the teacher] approaches the students as though the youth are inferior. So his son does not want to be in school. Besides, the students do nothing but get high. Therefore, the son weighs his options: dropout and get a job, use his culture as a means of entertaining the masses and creating wealth, or sell-out to work for "creepy" conservative corporations. Clear in these lyrics is a historical context that points to the limited opportunities of the early 1980s. People were on strike, inflation was at an all-time high, and Ronald Reagan cared little for those who did not look like him. The complexities between the positions of the school as bad and the school as a necessary societal means, as "The Message" continues, signal that dropping out of school is not the answer for these issues embedded in society's fabric.

You say I'm cool, huh, I'm no fool.

But then you wind up droppin' outta high school

> Now you're unemployed
>
> All non-void
>
> Walkin round like you're Pretty Boy Floyd
>
> Turned stick-up kid, but look what you did
>
> Got sent up for a eight-year bid

"The Message," "A Bird in Hand," and "Love's Gonna Get Cha," deal with this issue of school as a necessity – even in the wake of racialized oppression and socioeconomic hegemony. Each song also expresses one of hip-hop culture's values: street hustling. More explicitly, "Love's Gonna Get Cha (Material Love)" and "A Bird in Hand" situate the value through two distinct voices: a youth who dropped out of school to sell drugs and a youth who graduated, but reluctantly resorted to "the hustle."

KRS-One raps the story in first-person to suggest that the youngster is the writer of the song although it is clear in the context of the rap that the rapper invites the listener to adopt the position as the subject. The song begins with "I'm in junior high with a B-plus grade" to indicate the protagonist's age and level in school. The narrator continues with "at the end of the day I don't hit the arcade" to signal that life for him is unlike the average youth. As he walks home from school, his route forces him to "tell the suckas[20] everyday 'don't start it.'" The community is described as a place where fear is an enemy and violence and drug dealing are everyday events. He thus has to "stay on course," which means to stay focused and determined to rise above his current situation. The youngster befriends a boy named Rob, the neighborhood drug dealer. After greeting the Benz-driving Rob, the nameless youth walks upstairs to his apartment to greet his family. Before too long, the interruption of gunshots serves as reminders of the violent environment he and his family live in.

The scenario's content suggests he is an older sibling. His mother works, but struggles to provide for her three children. He expresses concern for his sister's popularity in school and recounts how he and his brother are ridiculed because they share clothing. "But there's no dollars for nothing else," he raps. "I got beans, rice, and bread on my shelf." So what does he do to help his family get food and better clothing? He looks for work, but "get[s] dissed like a jerk." He takes odd jobs, but "come home like a slob." At this juncture in the song the youth is presented with an alternative. Rob, the neighborhood drug dealer, gives him two hundred dollars for what he describes as "a quick delivery." After continuing these deliveries, the youngster is able to help provide food for his family. Ultimately, he and his brother become partners in crime. His mother is nervous, yet for about three months his family seems to be better off than before. The verse ends with, "Now tell me what the fuck am I supposed to do?" The second verse begins.

The youth and his brother are making money as street hustlers. To be sure, each now owns a gun: an uzi and a 9mm. In the song's second verse, he begins by saying that business is good. He is providing for his family and "everything is cool." He says, "I pull about a 'g' a week. Fuck school." A 'g' is short for a grand or $1,000. Confronted with the choice of staying in school or street hustling as a way out of poverty, he chooses the latter. School becomes secondary in light of his decision. A year goes by. The youth is a school dropout, but the new neighborhood drug dealer. He feels great. His ego is heightened, and he has managed to gain local respect. In the same way Rob gave him the opportunity to make quick money, the youth himself now has employees. As the boss, he is able to relax at home and watch his 55-inch TV. "Every once in a while," the narrator explains, "I hear 'Just Say No,'" or the other commercial, "The one that says, 'This is your brain on drugs.'" The narrator is unaffected by the messages

conveyed in these commercials. To be sure, he says, "I pick up my remote control and just turn. 'Cause with that bullshit I'm not concerned.'"

Dismissing antidrug messages as "bullshit" is another common position represented in hip-hop's lyrics. During the Reagan era, the "Just Say No to Drugs" campaign was launched as an initiative to confront the crack-cocaine epidemic and end the distribution of drugs in the United States – particularly in the inner city. Rose (1994) argues that the Reagan-Bush era of the war on drugs gave police the right to exercise significant power, causing increases in police brutality in the urban community. She argues, "The antidrug war metaphor intensifies an already racially fractured urban America and labels poor minority communities an alien and infested social component and a hot spot for America's drug problem. The nature and character of this drug effort has collapsed categories of youth, class, and race into one 'profile' that portrays young black males as criminals" (p. 106). Hence, the protagonist's dismissal of the commercials. Instead, the narrator shares his perspective on wealth. In addition to a 55-inch television he has a "BM," short for BMW, both of which make him feel like a "superstar." Things take a turn for the worse when Rob, his former street mentor, attacks him and his brother while they are sitting at a traffic light. Again, he addresses his dilemma by asking, "Now tell me what the fuck am I suppose to do?"

The first line of the first verse clearly establishes that the protagonist had been a successful student in school. However, school was not directly assisting him with his impoverished home and community life. Subsequently he turned against school and turned to materialism and capital gain, quick money. The last verse of the song describes helplessness, betrayal, and violent confrontations between two community members. To bring the song's message to the forefront, the narrator focuses on the possible consequences of choosing to drop

out of school for a life of street hustling. This verse brings the youth's complete experience to a finale. Although his initial goal was to provide for his family, along the way he compromised his integrity with bad decision making.

As the first line of the third verse describes, the narrator's brother decides to stop hustling. The narrator, on the other hand, wants revenge. The money and respect that he fell in "love" with are at stake. Thus he says, "I'm in it to win it." Caught up in the reality of betrayal, he and some of his friends plan an assault on Rob. As the verse illustrates, the youth shoots three times. Two shots hit Rob, but one also hits a police officer. Before he and his three friends can get away, police officers have them surrounded. Everyone is shot except for the protagonist. Tangled in a web of violence, deceit, and an initial desire to rise out of poverty, the youth is caught. Again, he asks, "Now tell me what the fuck am I suppose to do."

I began this discussion with "Love's Gonna Get 'Cha (Material Love)," a song about choices and consequences. To convey the song's messages, KRS-One uses the concept of "love" as a thematic foundation of the narrative. In a repetitive fashion, he points out its seriousness and its outcomes when misunderstood, as is the case with the story's protagonist. The youth gets caught up in "loving" material items and looses sight of his initial goal to provide a better life for his family. At the end of each verse, after the narrator explains his situation, he asks, "Now tell me what the fuck am I supposed to do?" This question, which is repeated throughout the song, interrogates institutional power and confronts the strain among school, poverty, and ways of finding a liberated space in each. The question suggests a sense of desperation that is also shown in "The Message" when the rapper says, "Don't push me 'cuz I'm close to the edge. I'm tryin' not to loose my head" or when Ice Cube confess, "A bird in hand is worth more than a bush."

Similarly to "Love's Gonna Get Cha," Ice Cube begins his story with his position in school. The first line of the narrative is "Fresh out of school 'cuz I'm a high school dad." The second line, the one that sets up the protagonist's dilemma, is, "Got's ta get a job 'cuz I'm a high school dad." Here is a young father who must provide for his child. Like the young man of KRS-One's story, this young black male tries the legitimate route of finding a regular job. And because he has received an "AEE," an associate degree in electrical engineering, he applies for a job at AT&T, which he does not get. The alternative is working at McDonald's, employment that he describes as making him feel like "half a man cuz whitey says there's no room for the African." Additionally, the little money that he makes at McDonald's is subject to federal taxes, and Cube asks, "But what about diapers, bottles, and Similac?" before asking an interesting question: "Do I gotta go sell me a whole lotta crack for decent shelter and clothes on my back? Or should I just wait for help from Bush or Jesse Jackson, and Operation Push?" Clearly, the young man's frustration is not racially centered, but is rather an indictment of the socioeconomic system. He questions not only his president, but also his community activist and organization, before suggesting that the U.S social system "needs a douche. A Massengel." Increased frustration, a child in need, and a young man committed to a better life turns to selling birds, "better known as a kilo" of cocaine. Financial rewards come almost immediately for the young black male. But he, like KRS-One's protagonist, is subjected to police surveillance.

The young man in "A Bird in Hand" offers a deeper commentary situated in the conspiracy theory that the war on drugs is a government hoax and that crack-cocaine was sold to Los Angeles gang members by a Latin American guerilla army supported by the U.S Central Intelligence Agency (Webb, 1999). The outcome was the proliferation of the sale and use of crack cocaine in Los Angeles, a place known as the crack cocaine capital of the world. Ice

Cube's lyrics indict this conspiracy, implying that the money the narrator makes from selling drugs is not something he wants to do, but an act of desperation brought on by few alternatives to providing food, clothing, and shelter. He says, "Now I remember I used to be cool 'til I stopped fillin' out my W-2. Now Senators are gettin' hot and your plan against the ghetto backfired." Pointing to the "Just Say No" drug campaign that came along with the crack-epidemic, he says, "So now you gotta pep talk. But sorry this is our only room to walk. 'Cause we don't wanna drug push. But a bird in hand is worth more than a Bush," meaning he can rely more on the sell of cocaine to make ends meet than he can depend on then President Bush to act on behalf of a young black male who is poor.

"Love's Gonna Get Cha" and "A Bird in Hand" are two songs that portray the tension between school and poverty as they offer a depiction of the complex sociology of hip-hop culture. In his song "Rubberband Man," T.I. describes the way out of this complexity as a "grand hustle" and the rubberband as symbolic of "the struggle…until dey come up wit' anotha plan." These songs reveal patterns of conflict that surface from mismatches between a strategy for liberation and a desire to rise out of poverty. More concretely, KRS-One and Ice Cube focus on the stress among institutional powers of school, poverty, and morality. By interrogating the options for young, poor, and working-class ethnic minorities, each rapper points to the fragility of the urban community, but also to larger social institutions of power, such as schools.[21] The best funded social networks in many urban areas are gangs and drug organizations. Schools and social agencies are missing the opportunities to provide alternative networks. Likewise, that informal and formal communities of practice in urban areas (churches, youth organizations, and such) lack the support, protection, and attention that similar communities of practice receive in wealthier neighborhoods.

Rep Yo High School, Rep Yo City: School and the Development of the Southern Hip-hop

Network

Murray Forman examined the dynamic of space in *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*. He wrote, "Social subjects ground their actions and their identities in the spaces and places in which they work and play, inhabiting these geographies at various levels of scale and personal intensity" (2002, p. 2). The school is one of the primary "spaces" where human intra- and interrelations are constituted. It is the place where many of these hip-hop identities started and developed. The key to the origin of the southern hip-hop network is the local schools and school systems because many members of Atlanta's hip-hop generation attended Atlanta city schools, the Fulton county school system, or schools in East Atlanta, Decatur, and Dekalb County. This is one of the reasons excitement ensues when rapper-producer Lil Jon and others take part in music awards, New Year's Eve festivities, and other defining events of pop culture. He and others like Outkast are part of our indigenous southwest Atlanta community. When we see them, we see ourselves.

These network members represent either the southwest side of Atlanta, referred to as the SWATS by groups such as the Goodie Mob; the Westside, which includes Bankhead highway and is rapped about by artists like T.I. or Young Dro; the Eastside, or Decatur (see Lil Jon and the Eastside Boyz); College Park (Ludacris); or East Point (Cool Breeze, Big Gipp of the Goodie Mob). Like many of Atlanta's hip-hop artists, most attended area high schools like Benjamin E. Mays, Frederick Douglass, D.M. Therrell, and Tri-Cities. For example, TLC's Chili, as well as the members of the Goodie Mob, attended Mays. So did Shanti Das, Executive Vice President for Universal Music Group/Motown. Shanti and Chili graduated in 1989. I graduated in 1990 with three members of the Goodie Mob: Willie "Khujo" Knighton, Terrance "T-MO" Barnett, and

Cameron "Big Gipp" Gipp. Khujo and I met while attending the same elementary school. We continued to be part of the same peer group through middle school, high school, and into our adult life. The same is true of Lil Jon. He and I went to the same middle school. But instead of coming to Mays, he decided to attend Douglass, Mays's rival. Lil Jon graduated in 1989, years before Clifford "T.I." Harris and Mike "Killer Mike" Render started attending the school. T.I. later dropped out as Killer Mike completed a stint at Morehouse College before devoting himself to developing his music career.

Outkast is from the Fulton county schools. They attended Tri-Cities high school. The production and management team behind early Outkast music is Organized Noize Productions: Ray Murray graduated from Mays in1987 and Pat "Sleepy" Brown and Rico Wade graduated from Therrell in 1989. Another Therrell graduate and contributor to the development of southern hip-hop is Aldrin Davis, commonly known as DJ Toomp. Toomp is known mostly for producing T.I.'s "24s," "Motivation," and the Grammy-nominated "U Don't Know Me." Toomp is to Atlanta hip-hop what Kool Herc is to New York hip-hop. First, he was key in creating the regional marriage between Atlanta and Miami versions of hip-hop. Fresh out of Therrell Toomp signed a production deal with Luke Skyywalker, Luther Campbell's record label. This agreement created an outlet for songs like "In Atlanta" and "Shake It," two classic tunes Atlanta claimed as its own. Toomp produced both songs, in addition to "Raheem the Dream," which he had fashioned two years before as a tenth grader.

The Atlanta metropolitan area high schools – particularly those of Atlanta city and Fulton County – played an integral role in southern hip-hop's formative years. As early as 1983 and as late as 1997, these schools were fertile ground for tapping into hip-hop culture while localizing it to elements of southern language, culture, fashion, lifestyle, and dance. Even as the new

millennium progresses, the high school works as a key environment for developing relationships that contribute to the strong network ties of the southern hip-hop community of practice.[22] At the network's most authentic level, everybody knows everybody – either directly or indirectly – and the name of the high school often serves as a measuring stick for determining how "connected" a person may or may not be. However, the relationships with southern hip-hoppers in cities like Houston, Texas, are also strong. The communities of hip-hop practice are porous, and they intersect. Nelly is from St. Louis, Missouri, a place not considered part of the southern region. However, the tightness of these regional bonds depend on a history of working together as independent distribution centers: Atlanta with its affiliate networks like Miami, Florida, Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans, Louisiana. For so long, their East Coast brethren denied the slow coast access to full membership benefits. By 2004, however, this Hotlanta thing was coming full circle and really hitting home for any and everybody who never gave their alliance with southern hip-hop culture a second thought. All of the members and participants of the southern hip-hop generation, as well as hip-hoppers from other regions and cities, were affirmed in their allegiance to the music of the South[23] So just as southern hip hoppers celebrated in 1993 when Memphis, Tennessee's Eightball and MJG released *Comin' Out Hard* or in 1994 when Houston's UGK (Underground Kingz) released *Supertight* and Outkast dropped *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik* or in 1995 when Master P dropped *Ice Cream Man* and the Goodie Mob's *Soul Food* came out, so did we rejoice in 2005 not only because southern hip hop was succeeding economically but also because we knew Lil Jon; we supported the grind of the Ying Yang Twins; and Ludacris, a graduate of College Park's Benjamin Bannekar high school, was a hometown hero. The figure below is an index that shows examples of how these relationships play out in the culture and are rooted in the neighborhood and school community.

Figure 2. Southern Hip-hop Network (Atlanta) and Cultural Index

Southern Hip HopSocioculturalIndex

- The artist or artist crew affiliates are featured on one another's album.
  Represented by lime green arrows
     - A single arrow coming from a network member means that this artist or a member of the artist's crew appe
       on the album of which the arrow points to. For example, Big Boi from Outkast appears on The Youngbloo
       "85."
     - A double arrow means that each member appears on each other's album project

- The artist appears as a producer.
  Represented by black arrows

- The artist(s) attended the same school(s)
   Represented by red arrows
     - A solid arrow means that the artist's or a member of the artist's crew graduated in the same high school
       class as the other network member.
     - A dotted arrow means that the member's went to school together
       but did not graduate together.

- The artists are related to each other via kinship
  Represented by blue arrows

- The artists grew up in same neighborhood community
  Represented by pink arrows

- Outside the activity of music production and recording, the artists participate in other activities together.
  Represented by green arrows
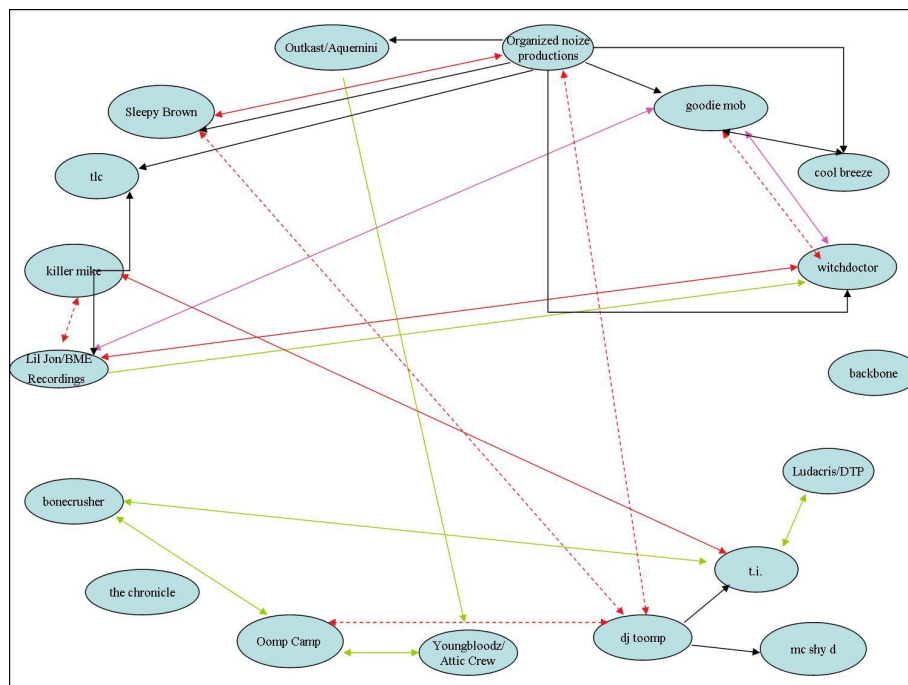
Representations of Schools

School Metaphors

In rap lyrics, the idea of schools is represented in metaphors. From a generational perspective, "old school" is used to identify hip-hop's elder generation and the thoughts and behaviors that symbolized their time. "New school" represents the views of a more current generation of hip-hoppers. Many artists rap about the school of hard knocks. The school of hard knocks is similar to what I identified above as a street education. It is an informal socialization environment that exposes people to violence, crime, consequences of poverty, racism, and discrimination. An artist who "graduates" from the school of hard knocks, as Jay-Z implies in his ghetto anthem "Hard Knock Life," is someone who has risen above the decay of urban and rural communities. An example is Jay-Z's "I Am What I Am" ad campaign for Reebok tennis shoes, which reads, "I got my MBA from Marcy Projects."[24] When speaking about the institution of the public school system, rappers use more poignant metaphors. Nasir "Nas" Jones describes schools as "poison" in "What Goes Around."[25] Kanye West, a protégé of Jay-Z, has built his rap career on school metaphors to articulate the meanings of his last two CDs. The first, *College Dropout*, builds off his decision to leave college to pursue music. His second album, *Late Registration*, takes a similar approach.

The oppressive nature of the public schools can kill a child's spirit, instead of instilling life in them. The works of Delpit (1988, 1995), Fine (1991) and others such as Fordham and Ogbu (1986) champion the idea of creating meaningful learning environments for children. From the perspective of Nas, schools that do not offer these positive opportunities to children should be "burned." Dead prez describes the psychology of school as a "12-step brainwash

camp" that makes students believe their only chance to advance in life rests in the hands of the

schooling institution. If students do not adhere to the choices set by the school system, dead prez

insists that only two choices exist: to "get paid," which means to street hustle as a means of

survival, or "get locked up," which means to go to jail, a usual consequence of street life. Dead

prez indicates that this false rehabilitative nature of schools is detrimental because school

officials insist students should "'get a diploma' so you can get a job." Dead prez goes on to say

that "they don't never tell you how the job is gonna exploit you every time." As shown with the

case of "A Bird in Hand," a diploma does not always ensure employment. In response to the

potential of labor exploitation, dead prez frustratingly responds, "That's why I be like 'fuck they

schools.'" In dead prez's lyrics, high school is characterized as a "four-year [prison] sentence"

where "the principal is like a warden." References to prison circulate throughout dead prez's

analysis of schooling. To be clear, the song begins by describing school as a "joke." It goes on

to claim that the "same people who control the school system [also] control the prison system."

Dead prez also reference the school environment. In the next section, I provide evidence of how

rappers talk about the community of schools.

The School Environment

> Cool chief rocker. I don't drink vodka.
>
> But keep a bag of cheeba inside my locker.
>
> [I] go to school everyday.
>
> Run-D.M.C. (1984) Here We Go, *Run-D.M.C.* Profile

Many rap songs highlight the school environment as a center for social exchange,

immature activity, peer interaction, and being cool. In the introductory quote from Run of Run-

D.M.C he's the "cool chief rocker," meaning he is an astute lyricist, who likes to indulge in

smoking marijuana, the term for cheeba, as opposed to consuming alcohol. He even keeps the marijuana in his school locker. On Outkast's 1994 album *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, Big Boi raps on the song "Git Up, Git Out," "In middle school I was a bigger fool. I wore tank tops to show off my tattoos. Thought I was cool." On the same song, his rap partner, Andre 3000, contributes, "Cool is how I played the tenth grade." He goes on to define his perspective of cool by rapping, "I thought it was all about mackin' hoes and wearin' pimp fades." Being cool had its consequences for Andre 3000. He raps,

> Instead of bein' in class, I'd rather be in some ass. Not thinkin' 'bout them
>
> 6 course that I need to pass. Graduation rolled around like roly poly.
>
> Damn dat's fucked up. I shoulda listened when my momma told me, 'If
>
> you play now, you gonna suffer later. "[26]

Environmental conflicts in the school arena emerge from the lyric texts in light-hearted reflections. For instance, the classroom is described as an "unknown" space in KRS-One's "You Must Learn." He says, "I sit in your unknown class while you're failing us." Although he does not address what he means by "unknown," it is apparent that he is addressing someone who is in an evaluative position. Quite possibly, an unknown class is one where the teacher and student have no relationship or a class where the material subjects the student to messages of cultural, racial, or economic inferiority (Tatum, 1999).

In "They Schools," dead prez describes their school environment as racially diverse. They rap, "I went to school with some redneck crackers." Referring to white people as "rednecks" offers a glimpse into the school's racial climate. They also describe their school environment as "full of teenage mothers" and "drug dealin' niggas." They go on to say that "the po-po (hip-hop for police) was always present. Searchin through niggas' possessions. Lookin for

dope and weapons." Toward the end of the song, dead prez returns to the descriptions of the school environment as akin to a prison environment. Their point is to argue how the nature of the school is not conducive to learning because students "go to school [and] the fuckin' police searchin' you [as] you walkin' in like this is a military compound." Schools are portrayed as mini-prisons, or rather a school to prison pipeline, in the lyrics above. Below I hone in on sentiments of the school content and curriculum.

Representations of Content and Curriculum

There should be a drug class. There should be a class on sex education. On scams, on religious cults. There should be a class on police brutality, apartheid. There should be a class on racism in America. There should be a class on why people are hungry, but there are not. There are classes on...gym. (Tupac Shakur, 2002, *Thug Angel*)

Embedded in the hip-hop narratives are references to content and subject matter that are often times not community-centered. Instead of embracing the subject matter promulgated by public schools, the lyrics reject subjects such as math and history, especially. Although many of these objections point to matters of irrelevance, other objections point to the content of the subject matter. For example, both dead prez and Eminem display similar messages about math classes. Viewed from their lens, math class means little to nothing to the poverty-stricken child unless "you addin up cash in multiples, unemployment ain't rewardin. They may as well teach us extortion" ("They Schools," 2000), a means of gaining wealth or money via acts of force or coercion. Again, the reference is to the street hustle. When Eminem contends, "I didn't have to graduate…to know that," he is referring to knowing how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. He expresses, "Look at my sales. Let's do the math - if I was black, I woulda sold half." He ends

his verse with "But I could rap, so fuck school. I'm too cool to go back" ("White America," 2002).

Much of the challenge to the school system centers on the techniques of teaching courses (for example, history) that play a critical role in how a child views himself or herself as a member of society. "It seems to me that in a school that's ebony, African history should be pumped up steadily. But it's not. And this has got to stop" (KRS-One, 1989, "You Must Learn," The Blueprint). KRS-One, as do many scholars who focus on connecting the home and school culture, stresses the ramifications of an inferior or hegemonic curriculum when he asserts, "See Spot run, run get Spot. Insulting to a black mentality. A black way of life or a jet black family" ("You Must Learn," 1989).

Tupac Shakur is quite possibly the most vocal about schools and what their roles should be in addressing what hooks (1994) calls transgressive education. His passion for learning and education is explicit in his lyrics. He was an actor, and he loved to read. As a 17 year-old high school student, he asked pertinent and leading questions that reflect his perceptions of schools and the role they play. *Thug Angel*, which documents Tupac's life history, includes archival footage of young Shakur addressing what he deemed as important and prevalent issues that directly challenge schools and their content, as the introductory quote to this section reveals. Tupac attended the Baltimore School for the Arts after moving from New York. On his arrival he began to organize committees and organizations dedicated to resolving the high teenage pregnancy rates, the high rates of black-on-black violence and the increased rates of HIV infections that plagued Baltimore's African American community. He was a staunch advocate of teaching and education. He believed adults should be reeducated and that rich people and poor people should change roles on a weekly basis.

As a young adolescent, Tupac was well-read in books such as the Tibetan-attributed *Ponder On This* and Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*. He patterned *Makaveli,* his first posthumous album, on the politics of Machiavelli. He explored topics such as spiritual alignment, the ancient mysteries, the art of war, Christianity, Islam, astrology, the impact of color, occult teachings, and states of consciousness. Tupac's lyrics reflect his readings of books such as *Roots, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Mastering the Art of War, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, The Phenomenon of Man,* the *Kabbalah, and the Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*. A close analysis of Tupac's lyrics shows how much emphasis education played in his life as it is reflected in his song titles, album titles, poetry, and narratives (Dyson, 2001). Like many scholars, Tupac attacked common definitions of color and multiculturalism. As Leila Steinberg, his former manager, reports, Tupac attacked definitions scholars placed on words such as "cultural literary" by asking what these words meant for people of color. Jada Pinkett-Smith, a childhood friend of Tupac, agrees, "He was quick to tell me what book I should be reading. He was a well-read brother. And I loved that because he always had something to teach me. And he didn't graduate from high school" (Dyson, 2001, p. 71).

Just as Tupac Shakur and other artists questioned the content of the schools, many hip hop artists have made similar proposals that illustrate the African American's experience. Most of their proposals are situated in an Afrocentric curriculum designed to "reflect how we gon solve our own problems" ("They Schools, 2000). To do this, KRS-One believes,

> If you're teaching history filled with straight up facts no mystery,
>
> teach the student what needs to be taught
>
> Cause Black and White kids both take shorts.
>
> When one doesn't know about the other one's culture

Ignorance swoops down like a vulture.

Cause you don't know that you ain't just a janitor.

No one told you about Benjamin Banneker.

A brilliant Black man that invented the almanac.

Can't you see where KRS is coming at

With Eli Whitney, Haille Selassie

Granville Woods made the walkie-talkie

Lewis Latimer improved on Edison

Charles Drew did a lot for medicine

Garrett Morgan made the traffic lights

Harriet Tubman freed the slaves at night

Madame CJ Walker made a straightenin comb

But you won't know this is you weren't shown

The point I'm gettin' at it might be harsh

Cause we're just walkin' around brainwashed

So what I'm sayin' is not to diss a man

We need the '89 school system

One that caters to a Black return

    KRS-One (1989), "You Must Learn," The Blueprint

In addition to KRS-One, dead prez points to the socialization process fueled by schools.

They contend schools teach nothing "but how to be slaves and hard workers for white

people…Make their businesses successful while it's exploiting us." Similar to Tupacian

pedagogy, KRS-One and dead prez believe the proper schooling of African Americans should

teach "How to get crack out the ghetto…how to stop the police from murdering us and brutalizing us…how to get our rent paid…and teach our families how to interact better with each other" ("They Schools," 2000).   They further believe that, until the school system reflects how African Americans can better solve the problems indigenous to their community, then black youth will continue to drop out of school or risk not graduating because "school don't even relate to us" ("They Schools," 2000).   Tenuous relationships between youth culture and the school culture are created because of the lack of educational validity, but also because of a lack of leadership. The next section explores this theory.

<u>Representations of Teachers</u>

Student-Teacher-Administrator Interactions

Interpersonal interactions with teachers and administrators were themes in the lyrics. Although there are teachers who are passionate about their teaching positions, the lyrics suggest that there are others who devalue the student. In contrast to Butchart and Cooper's demonstration that rock 'n' roll lyrics occasionally refer to teachers as sex objects, teachers in hip-hop lyrics are viewed more negatively. For example, members of the Atlanta rap group Crime Mob said their teachers and administrators frowned on their budding rap career that began while they were still in school. Diamond, a female rapper in the group, was called a "school disturbance" by administrators, who later asked her to leave school. "They really don't want us there," she claims. Princess, the other female rapper, excelled as a student. But after only the first two weeks of her junior year, her teacher refused to recognize an excused absence for a photo shoot, following her slight toward Princess with insults of "thug girl." "I was like ok. I don't need to get my work? In a few years I'll buy the school and just fire you." "It ain't all the

teachers," Chris, a male member in the group, explains. "It's the ones that always tell you you always gon' be locked up" (Wilson, 2005, p. 82-83). Rapper Don P referred to unsupportive teachers as bitches or bitch-niggas when he explained the implicit use of the word on the song "Neva Eva."

More often than not, teachers are viewed as condescending, sometimes racist, and insensitive to the needs of the students. Christopher "The Notorious B.I.G." Wallace dedicates his first album, *Ready to Die*, to "all the teachers that told me I'd never amount to nothin'."[27] Rapper GURU of the New York-based duo Gangstarr asserts on his solo album, *Jazzmatazz*, that the U.S. is "living in the age of doom," and furthers his verse by asking "how many teachers reach all the kids in the classroom?"[28] The subsequent lyrics suggest GURU's disenchantment with the schools, with children victimized by social and physical violence with no where to turn for help or guidance, not even schoolteachers.

Schoolteachers from various cultural backgrounds are described in the lyrics. Some of them are considered misleading, unsupportive, and insensitive to students' cultural backgrounds and needs. In "What Goes Around," for example, Nas challenges teachers to "think about the kids you mislead with the poison." KRS-One blames his failing of a class on the teacher when he says, "I failed your class cause I ain't with your reasoning." The Beastie Boys express their dissatisfaction with teachers by rapping, "Your teacher preaches class like you're some kind of jerk." [29] Referring to "They Schools," stic.man calls the white teachers "racist." Black teachers are taken to task when he refers to them as "high class niggas" whose "nose [is] up [in the air] cuz we droppin' this shit." He then says, "Fuck y'all. We gon' speak for ourselves," relying on "observation and participation" as his "favorite teachers." It is not exactly clear whom Andre 3000 is referring to when he raps,

> …the question is 'should we take that bullshit from *them* people?'
>
> I'm makin' 300 on my SAT and I am equal. Ain't no sequel. No
>
> saga. No way out. I'm nervous. I've had it up to fo'head of suckaz
>
> tryin' to serve us…

The result of his frustration makes him "feel like a steering wheel for *them* is tryin' to turn me into a hate monger." "Them" is a pronoun for "suckaz" and used similarly to how Don P uses bitch. The "suckaz" are teachers, administrators, counselors - anyone who attempts to feed him information that may cause him to question his intellect, creativity, and equality. It is clear, however, as the verse continues, that one of his adversaries is the police, a group with which many black youth, particularly male, frequently find themselves at odds. He raps, "Officer Friendly [is] tryin' to dig up in me. He said I'm half-assed and got no future. And so he sent me up the creek. Strokin' like hell without no paddle." [30]

In *Ghetto Schooling*, Jean Anyon interviews students of, the Marcy School in Newark, New Jersey. She recounts that many of the black and Hispanic students feel direct rejection and opposition from both black and white teachers who cannot understand why the students "can do all the things in the street they won't do for us. Did you ever see a drug dealer that couldn't make change? They're walking spreadsheets" (1997, p. 33). In the work conducted by Anyon, she describes how the Marcy School has visible teachers of African ethnicity who are dedicated, talented, and hard-working. She further explains how she makes contact with other African American teachers who are consistently frustrated with their students.

This frustration often led to abusive and condescending discourses between the teacher and the student. Anyon (1997) describes how she overheard an African American male teacher tell a young woman that her breath "smelled like dog shit." He continued his degradation and

disrespect by claiming her clothes "smelled like stale dust." These comments may seem harsh by a white on-looker (Hale-Benson, 1986, as cited in Anyon, 1997; Delpit, 1995) and can very well lead to students' negative perceptions of teachers.

The lyrics communicate a huge gulf between teachers and administrators and their students, particularly on students' dress. Schools do not usually endorse the style of clothing preferred in hip-hop culture. For example, many kids influenced by hip-hop fashion wear suede Adidas tennis shoes and oversized pants without a belt. As a response to this style, dead prez contends teachers "try to make you pull your pants up" as a way of conveying the disconnection between them and their students. Oftentimes the students and teachers fight in expressing their discrepant expectations. The students then "get took away in handcuffs" or expelled. Dead prez claims that the result of all this is a labeling of the students as a "failure."

Teacher Pedagogy

The way teachers teach and relate to their students sometimes conveys a privilege that suggests that acting white is the desirable standard (Fordam & Ogbu, 1986). KRS-One uses "seasoning" as the metaphor for assimilation through teaching practices. This lens of privilege also leads to mislabeling of students as a school disturbance or behavior challenge. Nas articulates this sentiment on "Bridging the Gap" when he claims the school called his father, Mr. Jones, to "please come get your child 'cause he's writin' mad poems and his verses are wild." In this verse, "mad" and "wild" are two adjectives that mean "a lot" and "colorful," respectively. Because Nas's way of learning was nonstandard, he was labeled as having "dyslexia." This verse is a clear description of how easy it is to mislabel children when their behavior is measured against inflexible national standards. A child such as Nas, who expresses his intelligence outside these norms, is often tagged as having a learning disability.

Those teachers referred to positively in the surveyed lyrics are generally nontraditional teachers, commonly referred to as elders. Examples are Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, Angela Davis, and in some instances Martin Luther King, Jr. Tupac Shakur, who insists, "Schools didn't know what to do with him," refers to his teachers as "Mutulu Shakur, Geronimo Pratt, Mumia Abu Jamal, Sekou Obinga, [and] all the real O.G.'s" ("White Man's World," 1997). An O.G., as used by Tupac, is short for "Original Gangsta." Gangsta in hip-hop is often used to refer to someone who has survived against the odds. Usually the values of survival are taught outside formal networks such as schools or churches, and in informal environments such as peer groups, gangs, or through street knowledge. The next section contrasts formal education and schooling with informal education and schooling. It explores this idea of gangsta music, or, trap music, as it is often called in southern hip-hop.

Thug Motivation 101: Informal Representations of Education in Trap Music

KRS-One is a high school dropout. Tupac "2Pac" Shakur is a high school dropout. T.I. is a high school dropout, and so are Carlos "Cee-Lo" Green and Andre "Andre 3000" Benjamin. Eminem is a dropout. The Notorious B.I.G. is a dropout, and so is Nasir Jones. Too Short is a dropout, as well as stic.man of dead prez. This is a decision-making pattern—either getting kicked out of school and not returning, as is the case with rapper 50 Cent, or seeking alternative means for obtaining an education, one dealing directly with their current socioeconomic problems. These rappers are some of the most respected lyricists in the hip-hop community. Their rhyme delivery is sharp, and their music contains social and political commentaries known for shaking up the community and challenging the overall fabric of popular culture. In the next section, I want to turn my attention to the representations of school and education as I found in southern hip-hop narratives. Looking at the appended chart, it appears that southern hip-hoppers,

in comparison to nonsouthern artists, talk about school and education more often. The numbers imply this notion: 74 southern and 51 nonsouthern. But the content does not support this claim. I found in my analysis that nonsouthern artists use words like "school," "teacher," and "education." In fact, the word search on Leo's Lyrics pointed me to more nonsouthern songs. So why are there more in the southern category? The next section addresses this question. Southern hip-hoppers use a more informal approach to talking about education. Rather than expressing an attitude about formal schooling, they articulate an alternative curriculum and pedagogy that addresses "getting' out the hood" a lot faster. For example, rapper Young Jeezy called his first album *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*. The 20 songs on the collection articulated his experience as a young black male who did not make a way for himself through a formal education system, but one that included street hustling. Throughout the album, he narrates stories about his life, but also presents informal lessons to young people who are growing up in a similar position. For example, he begins "Thug Motivation," repeating "You gotta believe, you gotta believe." He then draws a comparison. "I used to hit the kitchen lights, cockroaches e'erywhere. Now I hit the kitchen lights and its marble floors e'erywhere." As the song continues, Young Jeezy says that he "is what the streets made him. A product of [his] environment. What the streets gave me, product in my environment," which suggests that his socialization was cultivated among poverty, oppression, and the sale of drugs as a way out. This is the reality that schools, particularly underresourced schools in urban and rural areas, have to compete with.

CHAPTER 7

There's no need to argue, parents just don't understand:

A Case for Urban Pedagogy in Urban Schools

The overall objective of this research project has been to generate a substantive theory of the educational discourse among the broader hip-hop community of practice. The southern network – especially the Atlanta, Georgia, nexus – was the focus of the study. My primary and secondary research questions were as follows:

1. What is southern hip-hop culture? What unique characteristics define the southern hip-hop network and southern hip-hop generation? What language ideology is used that represents southern hip-hop culture?

2. How does southern hip-hop culture reflect representations of formal and informal schooling and education in its rap music lyrics and artist interviews? What are the relationships between southern hip-hop and the culture of schools? Under what conditions are these sentiments expressed?

3. How do these expressions reveal the worldview of hip-hop's community of practice, the southern hip-hop network, as well as African American cultural production, schooling, and education?

The questions were designed around the following aims and goals:

- To extend the scholarship on hip-hop culture by emphasizing its southern network, its use of language, and its perspectives on school and education

- To explicate themes of school and education contained in the song lyrics of and interviews with hip-hop artists and other hip-hop participants and identify conditions that influence these representations.

- To generate a substantive grounded theory of how school and education are portrayed in hip-hop culture, placing emphasis on southern hip-hop culture, thereby offering a perspective on representations of identity as they are carried out in African American cultural production

- To identify data-based implications of patterns in this group for teachers and communities whose youth are part of the hip-hop culture.

In this chapter, I offer a discussion of how the findings are connected to the research questions and aims. I address implications for further research for researchers interested in using the community of practice and social network concepts in their methodology, and I address implications of further research for educators of African American children. Keeping in mind the work of Morris (2004) when he interrogated the valuable nature of African American education within the context of social variables such as race and poverty, I question the value of African American education, but in relation to urban pedagogy.   That is, what value can come out of African American education when it is faced with poverty and racialized inequalities? I suggest that the use of hip-hop in educational settings, including the school classroom, is a strategy for promoting school achievement, but also a move toward invoking an attitude of self-determination within the African American community. My argument is that hip-hop culture is a device to reclaim African American social institutions: the school, the church, and the family. The first part of the chapter addresses what can be learned about other networks and communities of practice based on my research design.

<u>An Initial Theory of the Language of Schooling and Education in Hip-Hop</u>

In subversive amusement, these participants *signify on* those who are in power as a way of countering hegemonic policies, structures, and behaviors (Rose, 1994). Within these personal

communities, individuals create safe spaces for addressing and solving problems inherent to the daily life of their networks (Milroy, 2003). The ideology and philosophy of hip-hop offer a template for critical examinations and interpretations of U.S. schooling and the roles marginalized communities are forced to play in its maintenance. Using the conceptual framework of keepin' it real to address the issues of the hip-hop generation is one way of redefining the tradition of African American intellectual history.

Keepin' it real is the overarching, contradictory, complex-natured, African-centered, socially-aware, politically-astute concept in hip-hop culture. In hip-hop culture, the ideology is a normative imperative that demands hip-hop members and participants express their social and emotional vulnerabilities honestly and openly. Imani Perry calls the idea a "rallying cry" that includes "celebrations of the social effects of urban decay and poverty…assertions of a paranoid vigilance in protecting one's dignity…" (2005, p. 86-87). In addition to what could be a self-destructive application, realness also taps into the spirit of hip-hop, challenging it to strive toward an existential peace that could literally change lives, thought, actions, perspectives, behaviors, teaching methods, and learning practices. My theory is that this perspective, albeit controversial and complex, is the decision-making filter for many of the culture's members, and it is therefore crucial to the growing canon of hip-hop scholarship. Another reason why realness and authenticity sit at the nucleus of this study is that conflict between formal and informal schooling and education rises out of the narratives, as shown in Chapters 4 and 5.

Implications for Further Research

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, everyone belongs to a community of practice, whether the community is a group of yoga instructors who travel to an annual conference on health and

wellness or a cohort of researchers interested in a new strategy for exploring ethnographies. In the first case, the practice is developing an inner peace through stretching and breathing exercises. In the second case, the practice is learning a way to analyze interviews, fieldnotes, and other cultural artifacts. In both cases, each community member also learns more about himself or herself and the peers. A community of practice, much like a culture, is a group or family of people who have a common way of living. Certainly, a community of practice involves values, norms, and lifestyles but the focus is the practice of some activity. – a doing; those collective actions and the meaning invoked by them when put into practice.

Hip-hop is referred to as a culture because its practice has assumed values, norms, and lifestyles that are comparable to other subcultural domains in modern society. Defining hip-hop culture and describing what it is usually relies on its four elements of rapping, break dancing, graffiti art, and deejaying. These cultural elements are called the practices of the hip-hop community of practice. For example, rapping is not merely an aspect of hip-hop culture, but rather the most used action to communicate narratives. It is the essential vehicle that gives meaning to the hip-hop community. The community of practice concept is useful in ways other than the access it provides for formulating the details of a group's activities. When connected to the theory of social networks, it suggests examining a specific location and the cultural nuances of that location. In my case, I looked at the southern hip-hop network. The southern hip-hop network includes three main cities: Miami, Florida, Houston, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. By focusing on Atlanta, I was able to generate a theory about the dynamics of southern hip-hop: its language, style of dress, perspectives on the world in which we live, notions of schooling and education. The substantive theory of my research was developed using ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis. The community of practice and social network model provided a

lens for me to understand the collected data, but the concept also worked as a compass for locating practices particular to network. Pairing qualitative methods of data collection and analysis with the constructs of community of practice and social network was an innovative strategy that allowed me to develop a clearer and more detailed picture of hip-hop culture. I was able to better reveal the complexities of hip-hop culture that continue to be misunderstood within the culture and on its periphery.

Linking community of practice to social network is a new model. Social networking is a concept used frequently in sociolinguistics, but remains to be developed in many other areas. As a perspective for exploring hip-hop culture, I have found no evidence of others addressing hip-hop's social networks. I have located no research on hip-hop that directly uses the community of practice construct. For example, Morgan (2001) explored the notion of gangsta rap through the music of rap artists who are considered gangsta rappers. The idea of gangsta rap came out of a group called N.W.A (Niggaz With Attitudes) based in Compton, California. Their music was so brash and bold that the music industry dubbed the music gangsta rap. Because of this, the West Coast – southern California in particular – is considered the birthplace of gangsta rap music. Morgan found evidence of a language ideology significant to West Coast rappers. When speaking about these rappers, she did not use the conceptual terms "social network" or "community of practice." She anticipated these terms, but she did not explicitly say that she was using either of these concepts to explore the language of what I would call the western hip-hop social network. Similar subtle allusions to the social network concept occur in Murray Forman's work on urbanity and spatiality in hip-hop culture. Forman is one of the premier scholars whose work examines the spatial politics of hip-hop culture and how these politics are represented in the music. His book, *The 'Hood Comes First*, provides the closest understanding in hip-hop

studies research of the special nature of inner-city and rural neighborhood spaces. Relying on video footage, radio interviews, and other cultural artifacts, Murray emphasizes terms such as "ghetto" and "inner city" to understand how these political spaces are used to define individual and group identities inherent in the culture. Oftentimes, these spaces are both real and imaginary, but work to articulate social perspectives and views.

As the study of hip-hop culture continues to grow into a viable field for academic research, it will become increasingly important to use a methodology that opens the culture to ways of understanding its complexities and contradictions. This is crucial because of hip-hop's global influence – an influence that arranges the community around common practices of rapping, deejaying, graffiti art, and breakdancing coupled with specific articulations based on the location-sensitive nuances. What is the importance of understanding hip-hop's global and regional influence? Space is political. It is racialized. It is gendered. It is class-specific. How adults and youth interact in spaces, both using and creating spaces, constitutes the content of human experience. My purpose for this research project is to explore the language of schooling and education not only in hip-hop culture (in the global sense), but in southern hip-hop culture (the local sense). My concern for formal schooling and education continues to grow as I see more and more African American students turned off by the dynamics of the formal classroom. Although this is a national problem, I see many of these challenges in classrooms located in the South. In contrast, the students who attend these schools do identify with the informal means of education that hip-hop culture has to offer. An aim of my research is to take advantage of the hip-hop community's practice efforts and map them onto specific issues faced by schools in the South. Below are implications of this work for educators.

Implications for Educators

Reflections of schools, schooling, and education permeate the narratives of the hip-hop community of practice. Songs such as Nas's "One Mic," dead prez's "They Schools," and KRS-One's "You Must Learn," speak directly to the school system, its administration, the curriculum and content supported by the school, and the ways in which this information is taught. In the southern hip-hop network, representations of formal and informal schooling and education are also contained in its rap music lyrics and artist interviews. These data address how the network is formed in the school setting and how the experiences of the school spill over into the stories the rappers tell through their narratives. I found that the lyrics are only one slice of data that speak to the school. For example, the rap group Trillville, although their song "Neva Eva" says nothing about schools directly, shot the video of the song in a school environment. This is also the case with the southern rap group Crime Mob. The five-member rap group spoke about their relationships with teachers in XXL magazine, but also shot the video for their song "Rock Yo Hips" on location at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia. Furthermore, the imagery in the video included yearbook pictures of each group member, a school marching band, and segments filmed in the school gym with the words "Crime Mob College" across a banner. The dancers in the video wear t-shirts that say "Crunk Univerity." The rapper Young Jeezy juxtaposes formal schooling and education with an informal, street-centered education on his album titled *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*. The title of this album, along with the data collected for this research project, shows a relationship between southern hip-hop, the culture of schools, and the educational process. In Jeezy's case, thug motivation 101 is a motivational course for young black men living in poverty-stricken environments. The song begins with Jeezy whspering "You gotta believe" and continues with instructions and lessons about earning money

selling drugs and hustling rather than sitting in a classroom. The findings indicate that these sentiments are expressed under a variety of conditions. One condition is the necessity to learn ways to operate in a racialized, class-based society. In dead prez's narratives, for example, the rapper says that schools teach students "how to be slaves and hard workers for white people…" rather than teach poor African American students how to solve intra-racial problems such as "how to get crack out the ghetto…, how to stop the police from murdering us and brutalizing us,… [and] how to get our rent paid." More importantly, dead prez says that schools do not teach African American families how to interact better. As a result, the schooling and education become an informal process received and transmitted in informal environments.

I have concluded that schools are experiencing increased resistance from their main client, the student. I could conclude that these "at-risk" students are merely antieducation, antiteacher, and antilearning. I could conclude that they are just misguided souls caught in a worldwind of confusion, most of which is fed to them through the media. But that view removes the school as partly accountable, placing the responsibility solely on the student. It clears our social system from any responsibility to aide schools with qualified teachers, implementation of a community-centered curriculum, a pedagogy steeped in critical engagement, and administrators who understand the necessity of meeting national standards, but are not afraid to use alternative strategies for helping their students achieve. Children are vibrant individuals who, in my opinion, do not come into the world unmotivated and indifferent about learning. If they can soak up the raps of Young Jeezy, they can memorize a times tables rap written to the instrumental music of Young Jeezy. When they are culturally oppressed and their way of life and learning is stigmatized by imperialist and hegemonic structures, it is extremely difficult to tame the fire they have within. As a result, youth find a way to release their frustration. They create a means of

survival in life's day-to-day challenges. They dig inside the depths of their souls to express their inner visions through art, literature, dance, music, and verse. The narratives I put forward are calls for help and democratic change within the public school system. They are cries for rethinking decisions that have shaped life and work in the U.S. The lyrics reflect the atrocities many of our African American youth confront and their disenchantment with their schools. If policymakers take the time to listen to their voices of discontent as battle cries and not misdirected ragings, a clear assessment can be made about the decisions that must be taken to preserve our public school system. Otherwise, the implications of doing nothing are grave.

When faced with racial inequalities and poverty, how d some African American schools provide a meaningful education to students? What skills do people need to challenge oppression when (1) drop out rates continue to increase among black youth; (2) standardized testing remains a racially biased reality; (3) statistics reveal more black men in prison than in college; (4) empirical and qualitative studies expose an overrepresentation of black children in special education classes; (5) an unskilled and unqualified labor force predominates in schools and needs to learn love and passion instead of cookie-cutter curricula, pedagogy, or behavior management systems; and (6) the research reveals the virtual disappearance of black teachers in black schools. Examples of the pain, frustration, and aggravation toward aspects of the social system, in general, and the educational system, specifically, are embedded in various genres of popular art, literature, and music that represent the views of youth.[31]

Instead of focusing on social reform, education critics, community members, and policymakers, as Joel Spring (2002) points out, generally blame schools for society's dysfunctions and refuse to examine the socioeconomic conditions that continue to promote crime, poverty, gun violence, drug and alcohol abuse, broken families, war, teenage pregnancy,

misguided socialization, and the plethora of other troubling social ills. The most important voice, that of the student, is often marginalized. Taking into consideration students' voices and the views of those who genuinely work for the betterment of the student is crucial for legitimate reform of youngsters' lives and educations. Students are too often barred from any definitive conversations about their livelihood. Likewise, the educational needs of the African American community continue to be ignored and diverted from the goals of self-sufficiency, self-determination, and cultural preservation that can only be met by processes of education for liberation (Delpit, 1998, 1995; Smith, 1999).

I do not mean to sound pessimistic about the progress that has been made in African American education in the face of continued challenges. However, its achievements and failures seem to matter to the rest of society only when measured against immediate goals. For example, education for the African American in 1950 can arguably be defined as favorable and strong because more blacks were being admitted to higher education and obtaining opportunities that were not afforded just a century before. Blacks were directed to pursue college, hence focus shifted from secondary education to postsecondary education,. But, at what cost? The late 1800s brought admittance to Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes, however, contingent on following their founders'emphasis on industrial education. Black scholars, Du Bois as the most critical and forthright, opposed this model of dumbing down the curriculum. Not only did it represent "the ideological antithesis of the educational and social movement begun by ex-slaves" (Anderson, 1988, p. 33), it slighted the Negro's level of intellectual capabilities that directly influenced his or her place in the social hierarchy.

In a similar but more recent vein, *Brown v. Board of Education* can be interpreted as a successful reformation, although ideas about whether or not its policies benefited the African

American school community remain at the heart of many scholars' work, past and present. W.E.B. Du Bois (1960), the most eloquent and interpretive historian of his time, addressed the idea of whether African Americans would benefit from an integrated system long before desegregation was written into the law books. James D. Anderson (1988) points to similar ideas in his historical analysis that traces the education of African Americans in the South between the years of 1860 and 1935.

Ending legal segregation resulted in a decrease in African American teachers nation wide. In April 1960, W.E.B. Du Bois delivered "Whither Now and Why," an essay published in the *Quarterly Review of Higher Education Among Negroes* (July 1960), to the Twenty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Association of Social Science Teachers, in Charlotte, North Carolina. In his essay, Du Bois predicts what would occur as schools desegregated. He foreshadows, "Negro teachers will become rarer and in many cases disappear. Negro children will be instructed in public schools and taught under unpleasant if not discouraging circumstances" (Du Bois, 1960). These predictions have been substantiated by the plethora of literature that speaks to the deficit of public schoolteachers who are skilled, loving, and culturally sensitive toward public school students of diverse backgrounds (Hilliard, 1995, 1997, 2002; Delpit, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1998; Wilson, Williams, de Marrais, 2002).

At one time in African American history, schoolteachers were viewed as competent and diligent workers dedicated to the education of the newly freed Negro. As cited by historian James D. Anderson, planters were "only willing to have colored teachers employed, thinking that such schools would amount to little or nothing. In this they are mistaken, as many of the most prosperous schools in the State are taught by competent colored teachers" (Alvord, as cited by

Anderson, 1988). In contrast for the post-school-desegregation period, if teachers are referred to positively in any of the lyrics I surveyed, they are generally nontraditional teachers.

Keepin' It Real in the Classroom: Hip-Hop, Literacy, and Public Education Reform

What if the rappers included in this research project knew they were engaged in some ritualistic performance activity rooted in ancient Africa? Would they acknowledge it? Would they use it for the benefit of cultural unity, continuity, and teaching? What if the teachers of the young hip-hop generation used the T.I.'s "Motivation" in the class to motivate their students to learn? Would the students respond? What I have attempted to do in this study is outline the origins of hip-hop, describe its social and political contexts, provide a general definition of the hip-hop generation, and offer perspectives on authentic representation in the culture. I took this approach because my overall goal is to explore education and why knowledge of self is an applicable and necessary tool for teaching today's black children (Asante, 1991). Kunjufu (1993) urges teachers, parents, and other youth advocates to gain a level of hip-hop literacy. Taking a position that refuses to condemn rap, but instead acknowledges it as part of the world of youth, Asa Hilliard, writes,

> I believe that we and our children need to be informed about the world as
> it really is, and not as the various propagandists would have us believe it
> is. We need to be able to distinguish friends from foes. We need to be
> able to distinguish facts from falsehoods. We need to be able to
> distinguish what gives life from what causes death…many of our children
> are unable to decode the negative messages about them in the mass media.
> (1995, p. 132)

What Hilliard identifies as an educational need can be addressed through a hip-hop pedagogy designed to facilitate instruction in a way that does both: (1) school the children according to standards, and (2) educate the children so that they have a better understanding of their social and cultural world.

Several educational practitioners are already using hip-hop in the classroom, and many are seeing positive results. Harriett Ball, for example, is a former elementary school math teacher in the Texas public schools. She designed a program called "Fearless Learning," a program that uses music, raps, and chants to learn math concepts. The consistency of the approach made students comfortable with the sounds, movements, and gestures, and ultimately test scores started to rise. Other elements of her program include wholesome competition and constant activity, both influencing the students' long-term memory. Her approach is also helpful in teacher professional development. "To share with teachers what not to say to students, especially struggling students, is an integral part of my mission," Ball explained in an article in Education World (2004). "Words definitely can kill a child's spirit, his desire to learn, and his belief that he is a winner." On alternative approaches to teaching, Ball suggests, "If you are doing something that's working for your students, and it's frowned upon because it's different or new, don't let the naysayers sway you." Another educator who uses the technique of rap in the classroom is Eric Cork. His workshop, "Rap, Rhythm, and Rhyme: Rebuilding the Writing Foundation," takes the techniques of rap music to suggest ways teachers can help build their students' writing and literacy skills.

<u>Still, in Search of Legitimacy in Education</u>

This approach toward achieving literacy comes while the educational system of the U.S., one of the primary agencies of socialization in the nation, continues to fall short of providing its

African American generations with a quality education. The education system has also neglected to focus on community-centered education and how it is necessary for achievement of students with diverse needs. This notion of a curriculum and pedagogy that reflects the needs of the community dates back to early 20th century intellectual history.

In his 1960 essay, in the face of demands for equality and legal movements toward racial balance, Du Bois argued that equal citizenship laws should not be assumed to eradicate U.S. problems involving race and culture. Quite to the contrary, he predicted that new laws would be "a beginning of even more difficult problems of race and culture" (p. 193).

Among other penetrating forecasts, Du Bois hypothesized that 1) segregation would take on a new personality whereby schools will "not discriminate against colored people," but "deficiency in knowledge of Negro history and culture, however, will remain" (p. 196); 2) the African American community as well as the nuclear family would "have to…take on and carry the burden which they have hitherto left to public schools" as "the child in the family…must learn what he will not learn in school" (p. 197) through his social life or through involvement in alternate community networks, and 3) in a strategic and systematic way, African-Americans must learn their cultural history "by a new Negro literature which Negroes must write and buy" (p. 197). Taking what Du Bois says seriously, is part of the African American's cultural history being written by the scribes of hip-hop culture?

The theoretical perspectives of Charles V. Hamilton are relevant to the questions I am posing. In 1968 he published "Race and Education: A Search for Legitimacy" in the *Harvard Educational Review*. In his essay Hamilton argued that African Americans and Europeans were essentially asking two dichotomous questions about schooling in public institutions. For European- Americans, the issue was whether or not public schools were systematically *efficient*.

African Americans saw the issue differently. To them the question was whether or not the school was culturally *legitimate*. Hamilton's idea of legitimacy focused on the process *and* the content. His concern was similar to that of Du Bois as it advocated the implementation of methods and the hiring of administrators and teachers whose concerns were not strictly verbal and computational, but who were equally concerned with maintaining African and African American cultural awareness (Hilliard, 1998, Woodson, 1933) in such a way that "the preservation of African history and culture [is] as a valuable contribution to modern civilization as it was to medieval and ancient civilization" (DuBois, 1960, p. 196).   To Hamilton, this level of legitimacy was, as it is today, a value that remains ignored by policymakers and practitioners.

In the music. In the language. In the safe network spaces of voice and artistic collectivity, these issues are addressed implicitly and explicitly. The core hip-hop audience experiences what it means to lack an adequate education. Could it be that the reason Erykah Badu (2000) sings, "I remember there in school one day I learned I was inferior," is because she, as a post-civil-rights member of the hip-hop generation, experienced the suppression of group identity that Du Bois, Hamilton, and Hilliard imply in their commentaries? What about Lavell "David Banner" Crump, a rapper living in Jackson, Mississippi, who raps, "new schools, but the black kids still ain't learnin" (2003)? This statement echoes one of the consequences of African American integration predicted by Du Bois forty-three previously. When examined more closely, the lyrical narratives of hip-hop culture allow for an exploration into how young African-Americans, in search for cultural legitimacy or, in hip hop language, in search for *the real*, view schooling and education within their network.

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[6] A mosh pit, located in Zone 1 of an audience, the area closest to the stage, is where fans thrust their bodies against one another. In some ways it is an act of bonding. In many instances it has turned into violent chaos.

[7] T.I. (2003). *Dirty States of America: The Untold Story of Southern Hip-Hop*. Image Entertainment.

[3] Iced-out means saturated with diamonds. Fashion and jewelry is a huge element of style in Hip-Hop culture. Since the early days of Eric B & Rakim, who both wore big gold chains with huge medallions (Crosses, car emblems, names, etc.) around their neck, the infatuation with jewelry has escalated enormously. Many rappers make songs about their jewelry. The Cash Money Millionaires of New Orleans, Louisiana, who are responsible for Billboard toppers such as "Bling, Bling," "Stay Shine," and "No.1 Stunna" are an example. Rapping about how much platinum and diamonds they possessed created a nationwide following of youth who fantasized about and romanticized the idea of gaining material wealth.

[4] Grill is another name for the top or bottom row of the front teeth. Having gold or platinum teeth is another style element of Black culture. Many rappers, particularly in the South, have gold or platinum teeth. It is another form of adorning the body with expensive taste. In addition it is a form of resistance because of its contradictory nature to what is accepted and what is not accepted. For example, men or women who have permanently capped their entire front top or bottom row of teeth with gold plates are unlikely to have a job working in corporate U.S. Exceptions are Master P, whose front grill is all gold, and Bryan "Baby" Williams, who has an entire top and bottom grill dipped in platinum. These two artists are responsible for selling millions of albums through major distribution companies. Their success has not required them to

compromise their style or expression because they had something the distributor wanted: hip hop music.

[5] Historically, the jook joints' reputation has depended on a record of fights and disruptions. I guess that is why the "bouncer" insisted I leave my purse in the car.

[6] In crunk culture jook joints are called mud pits. See "Mud Pit," *Drankin Patnaz* (2003), The Youngbloodz.

[7] Trillville, a southern rap trio that lives in Atlanta, uses the "bitch-nigga" combination on their song "Neva Evah" to signify "Bitch nigga you can neva eva… get on my level ho!" Never in the song do they identify the "bitch-nigga." They do not directly point to a young lady, a man, or institution. This can make an untrained ear to the coded nature of southern rap think the three rappers are loose in their verbal attack. They are not. Don P and Dirty Mouth, both of whom are college-educated, and LA, the third member, are extremely calculating about whom they are referring to as a "bitch-nigga" (and "ho"). One of the members took the time to explain when I interviewed them for the May 2003 issue of XXL magazine. He said, "Actually, when we wrote the hook we was thinkin' 'bout people like [George W.] Bush. That's a Bitch Nigga!" See Joycelyn Wilson, "Call of Da Wild," *XXL Magazine*, May 2003, p. 40.

[8] Alan Lomax, "Africanisms in New World Music," in *The Haitian Potential*, eds., Vera Rubin and Richard P. Schaedel (New York, 1975), p.50; quoted in S.A. Floyd, *Power of Black Music* (New York, 1995), p. 27.

[9] Zora Neale Hurstom, *Mules and Men* (New York, 1969)

[10] It is worth noting here whether or not The Roots, Common, or Talib Kweli have any songs that express sentiments towards schools. Say something like, "Although The Roots, Common, and

Talib Kweli did not perform any of their songs that express thoughts about schools…" then list them.

[11]Also see "Dumb Girl" by Run-D.M.C., which offers another endorsement of schools. Run rhymes, "You're the flyest girl in the whole school but they don't call you fly. They call you fool' because you won't go to class. You will not pass."

[12] See the Pharcyde (1992)."Passin Me By." *Bizarre Ride II*; and Goodie Mob (1994),."Git Up Git Out." *Soul Food*. Both from LaFace Records. ????

[13]Erykah Badu (2000). …& On. *Mama's Gun.* Motown Records

[14] Nas. (2002). Poison. *Stillmatic*. Columbia Records.

[15] Guru. (1996). Livin In this World. *Jazzmatazz*. Capital Records.

[16] dead prez. (2000). They Schools. *Let's get free*. Columbia Records.

[17] David Banner. (2002). Mississippi. *Mississippi*. Universal Records.

[18] 2pac featuring The Outlawz (1999). The Good Die Young. *Still I Rise*. Interscope Records.

[19] dead prez. (2002). Know Your Enemy. *Turn Off the Radio*. The Mixtape.

[20] A " sucka" is another name for a low-life or bully. Vocalization of unstressed syllabic /r/: sucker → sucka. See Bailey, G. and Thomas, E. (1998), Some aspects of African-American vernacular English phonology. In S.S. Mufwene, J.R. Rickford, G. Bailey, and J. Baugh (eds.) *African American English: Structure, history, and use* (pp.85-109). New York: Routledge.

[21] "A Bird in Hand," by O'Shea "Ice Cube" Jackson, is another song that takes a similar storytelling approach to addressing the connections between school and poverty. One of the differences between "A Bird In Hand" and "Love's Gonna Get Cha" is that the subject of the song does not kill anyone, nor does he end up in jail. See Appendix for transcript.

[22] Joycelyn Wilson, "How We Do," *XXL Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2005, p. 82.

[23] My definition of the southern hip-hop generation is based on the framework of Kitwana, 2002. Localizing it to the South, a preliminary definition of this generation is African American, Afro-Cuban, Mexican, and Gullah descendents born in Georgia, Florida, Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia between 1964 and 1985.

[24] See http://mixunit.com/posteriamjayz.html

[25] Footnote Nas

[26] Outkast (1994). Git Up, Git Out. *Southernplayalisticfunkymuzik*. LaFace Records.

[27] Notorious B.I.G. (1994). Juicy. *Ready to Die*. Bad Boy Records.

[28] GURU. (1989) Livin' In this World. *Jazzmatazz*

[29] Beastie Boys. (1986). You Gotta Fight for Your Right (To Party). *Licensed to Ill*. Def Jam.

[30] Outkast (1994). Call of Da Wild. *Southernplayalisticfunkymuzik*. LaFace Records.

[31] Ronald E. Butchart and B. Lee Cooper surveyed perceptions of education in Rock n Roll lyrics between 1950 and 1980. In there analysis, rock music focused on three distinct themes: images of the teachers; images of the content and process of socialization fueled by the content; and images of school as a center for youth activity.