The Role of Hip-Hop Music and Culture: Opinions of the Lives of Ethnically and Racially Diverse College Students

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[THE ROLE OF HIP-HOP MUSIC AND CULTURE: OPINION OF THE LIVES OF ETHNICALLY AND RACIALLY DIVERSE COLLEGE STUDENTS]

By

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Abstract

Hip-hop music has become relevant in the field of education due to the implications it contains for understanding social issues, race relations, and diversity. This study takes a look at how minority college student leaders experience and relate to hip-hop music and hip-hop culture. The study also critically reviews how their responses are relevant in the classroom. Sociologically, hip-hop music can be viewed from different perspectives. In my research, conflict theory is most useful for analyzing the participants’ responses. Results indicate participants’ struggles directly correlate with the application of hip-hop music in their lives as well as their leadership roles. Social activism is crucial to these individuals’ roles. Their position on these Executive board depended on their ability to uplift their respective communities from minority statuses. Through their programming, these agencies promote the awareness of the issues that affect their community. Discussion should be continued on how effective hip-hop music can be in the classroom on the topics of advocacy for anti-discrimination, anti-racism and bringing about social change.

Introduction

Hip-hop culture can be found in almost every aspect of life, from the music heard on the radio to the Supreme Court cases that set precedents about the first amendment’s right to freedom of expression. Hip-hop culture grew as a response to the social and economic status of African Americans and Hispanics in America. Hip-hop music has grown from a small subculture in the South Bronx to a multibillion-dollar industry, but its popularity is not limited to the African-American community and other minority groups. Hip-hop music stems from hip-hop culture. Hip-hop culture can be fined as expressive practices that draw from Black and Latino cultural roots, which brings a community together, incudes but not limited to music, rap, art, Djing, and graffiti. There is much overlap in what is considered hip-hop culture and what is considered hip-hop music. As a result of this, many individuals use the terms interchangeably.

Hip-hop music has become relevant in the field of education and educational research due to the increasing rate of high school teachers as well as college professors’ who use of hip-hop music in order the classroom to actively engage students in the curriculum. There is popularity in designing their curricula within the context of musical texts in order to captivate
marginalized students’ interest. While hip-hop music captivates students in the classroom, the hip-hop culture is also instrumental to identity formation. “The creative processes of hip-hop and the messages constructed in the music are woven into processes of identity formation by which youth and young adults conceive of themselves, others and the world around them” (Chang 2006). Identity formation is the process by which an individual develops and forms their distinct personality.

Since its inception, hip-hop music was labeled controversial because of its politically charged nature. Hip-hop music has also been accused of perpetuating racial stereotypes through its negative portrayals of African Americans. However, these negative themes cannot be generalized to a whole genre of music. “Confusion also exists because of the different perspectives on hip-hop as an expression of racial identity and affliction in the 21st century,” this confusion is the opposing mindsets that scholars have on hip-hop music (Petachauer, 34). Hip Hop’s controversy is an important aspect of hip-hop culture because race is directly tied to its roots. “Rap in essence became the voice of urban plight in response to oppression” (Brooks). The strong effect that hip-hop culture exhibits is directly correlated to the treatment of African Americans historically. “Black urban youth utilized these tools in order to project their experiences that often focused on issues of racial oppression and hyper-masculinity” (Brooks). Hip-hop music was thus used to express the opinions and experiences of a voiceless group of individuals.

Although hip-hop music has been blamed for exacerbating social problems it has also been praised for giving a voice to disenfranchised populations. For this reason, opinions about hip-hop culture should be examined, and implications of these opinions should be considered. Earlier studies on hip-hop music only target the negative themes of hip-hop culture and therefore
do not measure the actual effect that hip-hop music has on its listeners. The most important aspect of understanding the way hip-hop music influences individuals is how they relate to the music. In a 1994 study, scholars made two interesting observations about the respondents’ answers: “First, they claimed that rap music was a form of cultural expression. Second, they stated that understanding rap was rooted in understanding the cultural underpinnings of the music” (Brooks). This is why it is important to consider race, ethnicity, socio-economic status as well as the gender of participants when measuring how college students experience and relate to hip-hop music differently. Hip-hop music is an important aspect of education due to its popularity and the influence it has on its listeners. College students were the main targets due to the influence they can have on their society. A great example of this influence is Jay Z’s campaign to “Rock the Vote,” a campaign to bring political power to young people. With the help of hip-hop/rap’s largest moguls, President Barack Obama was able to use hip-hop music to mobilize the youth vote in 2008. 60% of Obama’s voters were young people. The implications of this study urge America to evaluate its view of hip-hop culture and the effect it has. College students have the capability to enact change through social means, and therefore their opinions need to be heard.

When taking a look at the 2010 United States Census, we can gather the race and ethnicity demographics that reflect those of the student body of Florida State University. In America, Whites comprise about 74% of the U.S. population, Blacks make-up about 14%, and Asians make-up about 5.6%. The category of Hispanic or Latino is not a race in the 2010 Census, but is instead considered an ethnicity. Hispanics can be found in all three of the races mentioned above. Fifty three percent of the Hispanic population identified their race as White, while only 2.5% identified as Black (2010 Census).
At Florida State University, White students make up about 68% of the student population, Black students comprise about 9%, and Hispanic or Latino students make up about 15% of the student body. Those students who identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander make up about 3% of the population (Forbes). Since Florida State is a very diverse campus, the Student Government Association has established different agencies that cater to the respective identities. Through programming created specifically for each community, these agencies are able to address issues that are relevant. Through this programming, the awareness of these issues is promoted to the entire student body. Through this programming, they are able to engage a critical mass and are able to gage the issues that are relevant in order to the advocated for these issues to individuals higher up. These student leaders do not only provide a positive image of a particular community, they are also directly in contact with the FSU Student government and FSU officials. By providing the needs of minority students, like resources for their educational and cultural learning, minority students become empowered. Through support and direct persistence, students envision their future and plan their goals accordingly. Students’ first step is graduation from FSU. Through this awareness, diversity and unification among these cultures is fostered.

The reason underlying the existence of the Student Government Association’s agencies at the Florida State University is identity formation. Not only do the agencies reflect the racial and ethnic demographics of the United States, but they also reflect minority statuses. Two of the Student Government Association’s agencies, however, do not reflect racial or ethnic categories: the Pride Student Union and the Women Student Union. Women make up about 55% of Florida State’s student body but are considered a minority because they do not share the same powers, privileges, rights, and opportunities as men (Forbes). The Women Student Union serves to
prepare, educate, and advocate for women personally, professionally, and politically. The Pride Student Union is an agency that caters to the needs of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and transgendered (LGBTQ+) students, who are also considered a minority group. This minority status is due to the unequal opportunities proffered to these students compared to those that the majority group is granted. The main purpose of these Student Government agencies is to uplift these populations from their minority status and empower them to have a voice on our campus.

“Hip-Hop culture was created in the postindustrial Bronx of the early 1970s as a source of identity formation and social status by and for Black and Latino young people,” (Petchauer). The SGA agencies and hip-hop music are tied together because they were created for the same reason: identity formation. This process defines individuals to both themselves and others. Hip-hop music was formed as a source of identity, which grew into a subculture of its own; similarly, the Agencies were formed as a source of identity and therefore have also become a culture of their own.

Hip-Hop culture must be researched because of its importance; it is a reflection of the oppression that minorities have suffered due to their lower social and economic status. “It was in this crumbling physical and social context because of post-industrialization that youth” hip-hop music is a social commentary on the contemporary values of those in the culture and is interlaced with uncompromising social identity. (Petchauer).

Through identities, which individuals have formed as a part of their cultural expressions, which are rooted in the hip-hop culture, we can accurately measure and capture the diversity of college students’ connections with hip-hop (Brooks). Scholars, policy makers, educators, and various media outlets have expressed concerns about hip-hop culture's potential negative influences and have praised its potential to improve racial relations through the awareness of
racial identify as well as helping meet educational goals through fostering interest and active engagement in the classroom. Through in-depth qualitative interviews, this study examines how ten college students consume and relate to hip-hop. Identity formation is constructed through cultural expression and this study analyzes how this relates to hip-hop music and hip-hop culture. It is important to note differences across social groups in order to develop effective policy implications.

**Methodology and Hypothesis**

*In-depth Qualitative Interviews*

My research sample will be drawn from students of the Florida State University. I have chosen five agencies of the Student Government Association (SGA), which are based upon identity formation. This not only makes my sample diverse but also bases it on the most important aspect of my research question, which is the formation of culture through identity formation and how this relates to hip-hop music and hip-hop culture. The five agencies of Florida State University’s Student Government Association are the Asian American Student Union, the Pride Student Union, the Black Student Union, the Hispanic/Latino Student Union as well as the Women Student Union. I have chosen to recruit two members of each of their executive boards to interview. I chose student organizations and student leaders. I will have a total of ten participants for my study.

Minorities will interpret, process and experience hip-hop music differently from Whites. These students have used their time on Florida State’s campus to become leaders of these Student Government Agencies; they have given back to the community to which they feel they
belong to. Their identity formation has led them to empower their own race, ethnicity, gender, and/or sexual orientation. I believe these Student Government Agency leaders derive significant meanings from listening to hip-hop music. It also resonates with them and can be appreciated on a personal level by these individual students because hip-hop music plays a significant role in their lives. This significance is monumental to their lives on a daily basis, helping them to improve their lives and their leadership abilities. Themes in hip-hop music that are relevant to these minorities include but are not limited to racism, stereotyping, classism, violence, identity, and gender issues such as masculinity vs. femininity and the subjection of women. Issues and themes such as these, probably, are some of the reasons and influences as to why these students serve in their positions.

**Hypothesis**

I hypothesize that as a result of the effects of being a minority and wanting to create change within their community, hip-hop music becomes a reference to further enlighten their perspectives on the status quo that they are seeking to change. Due to the struggles that these participants have endured and their resulting critical conceptions of ethnic, racial, gender and sexual orientation identities, I expect that their development of critical social consciousness will prove to be different from that of the majority.

**Data Analysis**

**Hop Music and Culture: Interpreting Definitions**

The first thing to inquire in the data analysis of this study is to define what is considered to be hip-hop music. Hip-hop music is one of the key components of hip-hop culture. The term
hip-hop music can be broadly defined since there is a plethora of subgenres in hip-hop music that currently exist. Instead of defining what is considered hip-hop music in this study, the participants were directly asked the question: “Have you heard the phrase ‘hip-hop culture’ and ‘what do you think it means?’” Participants had a wide range of responses to this question. One can assume from their responses that hip-hop culture represents a certain attitude. For these participants, many artists (pop, rap, rock), clothing styles, slang, art, etc. were categorized under the context of hip-hop music and hip-hop culture. Many participants noted that hip-hop culture covers such a large audience and cannot be easily defined into specific or distinct elements. All the participants did note that hip-hop culture is rooted in the urban population’s reflection of the treatment of African Americans and Hispanics. While most of the hip-hop music heard on the radio today is popular with the masses, it only encompasses one of the original themes that its founders established. The foundational elements that current hip-hop artists retain provide stability and coherence to hip-hop music. While there are many subgenres of hip-hop music, many of the participants enjoyed the hip-hop music heard on the radio but related to the subgenre of hip-hop music known as Conscious hip-hop. Conscious hip-hop music is directly tied to the roots of hip-hop music. The creation of hip-hop music was rooted in the social commentary of African Americans and Hispanics and due to this, the participants listened to this kind of hip-hop music more than any other genre of music. Sociologically, hip-hop music can be viewed from different perspectives.

When hip-hop culture is viewed from a structural functionalist perspective, hip-hop music focuses on the functions that hip-hop culture serves in society. Hip-hop Culture serves as a means through which to enlighten listeners on the social inequalities that minorities suffer. Functionalists believe that society is held together by social consensus. The hip-hop community
is not part of the majority therefore it is viewed as deviant. Functionalism views active social change as undesirable because it promotes the status quo. The participants of this study are actively engaging in social change.

The Symbolic Interactionism theory focuses on the events occurring in one particular social situation while emphasizing the effects of hip-hop culture. These particular individuals view hip-hop music differently than the majority as a result of being a part of the hip-hop culture. From the Symbolic Internationalism perspective, the messages they interpret from hip-hop music are a result of their social interactions with each other as well as their constituents. Through these interactions, these student leaders have bonded with one another and together have deemed what issues what are important and relevant. It can be said that the manner in which these individuals interpret these messages, constructs their social realities. While Symbolic Interactionism places emphasis on these interpretations, it fails to take into account the institutions of power that play into the issues that hip-hop music comments. These issues are constructions of social realities.

While symbolic interactionism states that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true, conflict theory determines that hip-hop culture echoes the realities of African Americans and Latinos. Conflict theory recognizes that hip-hop music is a reflection of the power differentials that minorities suffer. It also recognizes this is a result of the institutions of power. In this research, conflict theory is most useful for analyzing the participants’ responses as well as illuminating the findings.

**Casual Listener Versus Avid Listener**

The first step in analyzing how the statements reflected the participants’ relation to hip-hop music was to group the participants into types of listeners. The casual listener stated they
listened to hip-hop music a handful of times a week, mainly on the radio or that of their own preference, while the avid listener was a major fan of the genre and listed to hip-hop music on a daily basis. The avid fan also actively sought out hip-hop music in their spare time. In this study, 50% of the participants were avid listeners and the other 50% were casual listeners.

**Significant Themes**

While analyzing the in-depth qualitative interviews, finding the significant themes that resonated in some or all of the participants in the study was essential. These are the main elements that tied all the participants’ free responses together. These themes are crucial to understanding how these individuals experience hip-hop music and how they relate to it on a personal level. It is key to keep in mind that due to my research sample and selection, all the participants have some college education. These individuals were chosen from the executive Boards of the SGA Agencies; therefore these participants are directly involved in the planning and/or programming for Florida State University’s campus. The function of the agencies is to uplift the identities from their minority status. The purpose of this study was to gage the impact that hip-hop music had on its audience as well as to find what kind of meanings they take away from the musical genre. Statements were grouped together based on codes. The six major themes that were coded were social issues, empowering or motivational statements, statements that mentioned coping with a struggle or with a moods, energy, and individuality. The social issues theme encompasses an abundance of elements including but not limited to everyday minority struggles such as racism, economic problems, politics, classism, poverty, domestic violence, and White privilege. Empowering and Motivational Statements details a pursuit of greatness, inspiring thoughts and actions, as well as confidence the listener gained as a result of listening to the music as well as the drive to achieve their dreams and goals. Coping with Mood or Struggle
is comprised of statements that the listener defines as “emotional.” It also contains statements that make the listener feel understood, as well as a catharsis of stress relief, tensions, frustrations and struggles. Energy Statements are categorized into a motivation to do physical activities such as play sports, write a paper, or go out with friends. Lastly, Individuality Statements are those that the listener felt that hip-hop music let them define what something means instead of the limiting constructions in which society confines them.

Do you relate to hip-hop music?

When participants were asked if they directly related to hip-hop music, many of them were hesitant to respond with a decisive answer. Many of the participants replied, “Yes, but it depends on the type of hip-hop music.” While many of them did enjoy the commercialized hip-hop music heard on the radio, they did not relate to it. All of the participants noted that commercialized hip-hop music tended to popularize the party lifestyle and its elements, mainly alcohol, drugs and sex. Most commercialized hip-hop music can be categorized under the subgenre of gangsta rap. Gangsta rap can be defined as music that glorifies the street life, which promote violence, materialism, misogyny of women, and the hyper-masculinity of men. Eight of the ten participants stated that they related to hip-hop music while three of the eights participants specifically stated that they only related to some hip-hop music depending on the artist and/or lyrics. Three of the ten participants did not relate to hip-hop music. When asked how they related to hip-hop music, the answers differed quite notably. One participant stated: “Not letting people get to you and your dreams and ambitions.” Another participant stated: “Because hip-hop has a
way to make you feel you can take over the world, a sense of empowerment.” Both these statements fall under Empowering or Motivational Statements. Another participant stated: “I relate to just pictures that I been through, it compares my struggle without talking about it and thinking about it and automatically comparing your struggle on how similar and different they are from the artists’.”

All the participants in the study agreed that hip-hop music does perpetuate negative portrayals of African Americans and Hispanics. While all the participants did agree that hip-hop music did promote themes such as violence, drugs, and crime, they also noted the positive themes in hip-hop music. Some of the positive themes of hip-hop music include but are not limited to the motivational aspects, creativity of rappers, and the importance of persistence and hard work. For all participants that did not relate to hip-hop music, they explained that hip-hop music sheds light on a disenfranchised population and serves as a voice for the African American and Hispanic communities. One of the participants that did not relate to hip-hop music stated, “Hip-hop [music] looks into another side of culture that I’m not comfortable with, it brings about topics that I may not be comfortable with in conversation through hip-hop social venue.”

Participants also appreciated and respected hip-hop music’s [positive] messages and themes. One participant said: “makes you feel something, realize things, it makes you really listen to the lyrics and the message."

The most common positive theme of hip-hop music was the reference of social issues. Hip-hop music sheds light on America’s problems and calls into question the causes of these problems. Hip-hop music serves as a call to action to its listeners. Hip-hop music calls for the spread of knowledge of these problems as well as how to combat them. When asked “what are some the positive themes in hip-hop music?” one participant said:
“It [hip-hop music] lets you see the truth and see the real world happening in some communities. It makes me a good social activist. Hip-hop music makes you aware of these issues: Racism, Women’s rights, and poverty. These are prevalent to the hip-hop community.”

This participant directly correlated the messages in hip-hop music to her own involvement in bringing about social change in her community.

It is important to note that the coping with mood or struggle theme can be directly correlated with the social issues theme. While some of the participants applied hip-hop music to directly combat [emotional] moods, others were combating and enduring a specific kind of struggle. Some of these specific struggles are the same social issues that hip-hop music reflects on in its lyrics. As stated above, the avid listeners stated that they choose to listen to the hip-hop music genre more than any other due to the fact that it reflected social issues. It is important to note that these social issues are relevant to each of the participants’ lives. The participants of this study are combating these social problems daily.

These issues that hip-hop music strives to enlighten society include but are not limited to: racism, discrimination, stereotyping, classism, white privilege, violence, identity and gender issues such as masculinity vs. femininity, and the subjection of women. These issues are controversial in nature, and most Americans have different viewpoints on them. Conscious hip-hop music is a social commentary that often identifies systematic causes of violence, poverty, and racism experienced by ethnic minorities, generally critiques capitalism, and affirms a Black identity (Petachauer). Hip-hop music lyrics’ provide the victims’ viewpoint of the unequal treatment of African Americans and Hispanics in the criminal justice system. Due to its political nature, hip-hop music has become a controversial topic to discuss for White America. From a
conflict perspective, the members of this subculture are seeking to advance their own interests because they lack the same social and economic resources of the majority. As a result of this, they are minorities and they are at the bottom of the social order.

These social issues are important to the participants’ lives as well as the lives of their friends, families, and peers. These individuals are all student leaders and therefore directly apply these social issues to their respective positions on the Executive boards of the Agencies in which they serve. All these individuals apply hip-hop music as a lens through which they can interpret society’s problems. Through the conflict Theory, it can be interpreted that these leaders gained the tools from hip-hop music to challenge the status quo. The messages that hip-hop music contains reflect the social issues that these individuals are combating in their lives, as well as in their Executive board positions. It is crucial to understand how these individuals view the negative aspects of hip-hop music. These student leaders use hip-hop music’s messages in order to serve their constituents. The Florida State University student body is this constituency. Through their Agencies’ programming these student leaders indirectly apply hip-hop music to educate themselves, their community, and the FSU student body on the social issues.

The other aspect of Coping with Struggle or Mood theme was coping with emotions. Many of the participants in the study directly admitted to applying hip-hop music to combat negative [emotional] moods. One participant stated: “I think of as [hip-hop] music as a soundtrack to my life and what I’ve been through in my life, I feel like no matter what I’m thinking, there’s always a hip-hop song to catch that feeling that I’m not alone.” These participants applied hip-hop music as a coping mechanism. Another participant stated, “When I’m down, I listen to hip-hop to get out of that bubble.” This is another example of hip-hop music being applied in a positive way. The participants explained personal difficult situations that
caused these moods and emotions. Some of the stressful personal situations, as mentioned earlier, were combating discrimination and racism while others included personal relationships. One male participant mentioned being in love with a woman as a stressful situation. The level of identification with hip-hop music and lyrics directly correlated with the social conditions the participants were currently facing.

One interesting finding that linked the participants together was one of the reasons why they listened to hip-hop music more than any other genre. While all the participants did enjoy Hip-hop music’s messages, they also enjoyed its fast-paced beats. The fast-paced beats were crucial in using hip-hop music for energy. The participants applied hip-hop music to “pump” themselves up for the gym or to play sports. It was surprising to find that for some of the participants, hip-hop music gave them energy to get up in the morning or to write a paper for class. For all of the participants, hip-hop music also gave them energy to go out at night with their friends. One participated stated that it gave her energy, “Mostly, when I’m in the mood for fun.”

For two of the participants, hip-hop music gave them a sense of individuality. Hip-hop culture was created as a result of the reflection of the social constructions. People are not always a reflection of society’s expectations. Through hip-hop culture, artists are able to re-define words and concepts. For one participant, hip-hop music allowed him to become who he really was. This participant admitted, “I think I received an identity. It [hip-hop culture and music] allows you to think different, to speak your mind and to stand up against stereotypes. I am myself, not my background. The way I act and conduct myself is a reflection of hip-hop’s attitudes and emotions.”
Discussion

This study is one of the first in-depth qualitative studies to actively capture how hip-hop listeners experience the music genre. Most of the prior research on hip-hop music has focused on Whites and this limits the understanding of hip-hop music and its effects. Brooks’ study calls for a study to be done on Black audience members to understand what impact rap music has on them and what kinds of meanings they take away from the music. This study goes on step further to include racial and ethnic minorities like Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. The two minorities were included but are not racial or ethnic were Women and the Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender community. This sample diversifies the findings to a larger context. Iwamoto et al’s study is limiting because it does not include non-racial or ethnic minorities.

Brooks questions how the audience of hip-hop music actively critiques the music rather than just understanding how they are affected by it. This study shows how listeners of hip-hop music interpret the music in order to socialize the issues that are problems in their own lives. This study suggests that all the participants tended to apply this music genre to counter negative moods and to vent their daily frustrations, which is consistent with Iwamoto et al’s findings. These tended to be either “emotional” moods or a mechanism for coping with a certain struggle.

It is important to note that all the participants in this study accept and are aware that hip-hop music contains and promotes negative themes. Conflict theory suggests that these negative themes are a result of inequality and power struggles that the hip-hop culture endures. This study displays how the participants use these negative themes in their everyday lives. The participants found hip-hop music to be motivational and to aid them in enduring the criticisms and problems that hip-hop music illuminates upon. The level of identification with hip-hop music directly correlated with the social conditions the participants were currently facing. All the participants
appeared to focus on the positive aspects of the lyrics and messages of hip-hop music. Through the positive aspects in the lyrics, these individuals are able to promote social change. While the avid listener always identified with the lyrics and genre as a whole, the casual listener did not. The participants found hip-hop music educational in nature. The casual listeners that did not relate to Hip-hop music did state that Hip-hop music is an eye-opening experience and that they can respect and appreciate its messages.

*Implications*

Hip-hop music can be a vital tool in the classroom. All participants in the study found hip-hop music to be educational. If hip-hop music is examined and analyzed by an appropriate individual and facilitated in the educational field, it can be an effective tool in which scholars and students can come together to stimulate each other. Hip-hop music can be used in the classroom as a lens through which students can accurately capture the effects of social issues on its victims.

In this study, we found that hip-hop serves as a social change agent. For these student leaders, hip-hop music aided them to understand what issues were prevalent in their communities and how could they advocate for these issues. Hip-hop music also brings all these individuals together. This is essential to the topic of race relations in America. Some of the issues that these minorities are facing overlap, due to this, many of the agencies have come together in their programming to support each other. This is one example hip-hop music indirectly improves race relations in the lives of college students. Hip-hop can continue to serve as a teaching mechanism in order to enlighten scholars and students.

Hip-hop music can serve as a facilitator of conversation in the classroom about social issues directly mentioned in hip-hop music. These conversations are important in order for
individuals to be aware of the situations going on around them and how these situations affect them, and others. One of the most important aspects of programming for college students is the ability to share their opinions and experiences. Programming serves as a platform through which these individuals share the issues that are affecting their community, when issues are prevalent in more than one community, they serve as a common ground for the communities to come together. When these individuals’ stories of struggle are heard, they are validated. This not only benefits the community in which that individual is a part of but it fosters the understanding of personal growth and toleration. Hip-hop music serves as a bridge between social and cultural communities. Through understanding of the race, ethnicity and gender/sexual orientation, respect can be formed. This directly correlates with interpersonal skills individuals use on a daily basis. Through these conversations, students can share their knowledge, as well as gain knowledge to form the communication skills that are necessary when encountering individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Limitations and Recommendations

The sampling process of this study limits its wider application. All of the participants are Florida State University students and therefore only reflect that of individuals that have the opportunity to attend a higher learning institution. While all the participants are college students, not all the participants are wealthy. It is important to keep in mind, that all the participants are granted with FSU’s abundant resources. These responses only reflect college-educated individuals. It is also important to note that all the individuals interviewed are all student leaders. The participants serve on an executive board; therefore they already have an interest in enacting
social change for their community through their leadership positions. Students that are not actively engaged at FSU or in their community should be interviewed.

Despite the fact that various racial and ethnic minorities are represented in this study, they directly reflect the individuals’ representation of themselves. The individuals’ minority representation is choice of identification. All these participants chose to identify with the corresponding minority statuses. Some of the participants in this study are bi-racial and identify with the more than one ethnicity. This is limiting to individuals that identify with more than one racial or ethnic group. While Iawmoto et al’s study is limited by the factor that the participants were purposely drawn from a sample that were knowledgeable fans of hip-hop music, this study does not.

It is important to note that many of the participants in the study mentioned that hip-hop is the only genre of music that directly comments on political or social issues. This is not true. The participants of this study are not aware of the other music genres in which also comment on social issues. Rock music was the first genre to be criticized due to their lyrics on police brutality and due to this they are forced to add a Parental Advisory Label to their recordings. Another genre of music that was criticized for their lyrics is country music. Due to this, other music genres should be studies on how they relate to social issues and what effect they have on minorities.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature that addresses the implications of hip-hop music in the educational field for diverse individuals. Future studies might explore on how individuals of the same age range and minority status that do not attend a public university experience and reflect hip-hop music. While this study does have a wide range of minorities, other ethnic groups’ experience should be examined. Some of these might include but are not
limited to Native Americans, Arab Americans, and individuals with disabilities, veterans and immigrants. Research in the area of educational hip-hop has barely begun to unfold its potential on race relations on the world’s youth.

Free response Questionnaire

*Name:*

*Age:*

*Race/Ethnicity:*

*Gender:*

1. Do you listen to hip-hop music?
   a. What kind of hip-hop music do you listen to?
   b. What do you like about it?

2. How long have you been listening to hip-hop music?
a. How often do you listen to hip-hop music?

3. Why do you listen to hip-hop?

4. Have you had any references to hip-hop music in class? (at FSU)
   a. If yes, where they positive references or negative references?

5. Have you heard the phrase “hip-hop culture”?
   a. What do you think it means? What are your views on it?
   b. What do you think are some good things and bad things about it?

6. Do you view hip-hop as just entertainment?
   a. Do you relate to hip-hop music?

7. What connections do you make with hip-hop music?
   a. Does it have a deeper meaning for you?
   b. Do you think hip-hop music has redeeming social value?
   c. If yes, how so?

8. Do you think hip-hop music is a form of story telling? Or it is all fake?
   a. Do you think it insightful to real life situations?

9. Do you view any hip-hop artists are role models?

10. What do you take away from hip-hop music?

11. Does hip-hop music motivate you?
    a. What does it motivate you to do?

10. Do you think hip-hop music enforces stereotypes?
    a. What negative stereotypes does it enforce?
    b. What Positive stereotypes does it enforce?

11. Have you heard the phrase “conscious hip-hop”?
a. What do you think it is?

b. What artists do you think are considered conscious hip-hop?

c. Do you listen to those artists?

12. What do you expect to gain from hip-hop music?

13. Do you listen to hip-hop music on a certain occasion?

A. Or maybe when you are in a certain mood?

b. Frustrated? Serious? Fun?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues</td>
<td>1. I think more real than other genres. Straightforward, Social issues which you enjoy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Hip-hop is making these social movements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I think what hip-hop outside viewer not in those communication hip-hop represents a taste or look insight how things how they can make a person feel, speaking real things economic problems and poking holes governmental flaw reminding people plight that, voice for youth, voice world needs to know most social classes racism, Most- positive in college teach</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
you something, not put down a race.

4. When social issues, poverty, racism, classism, hip-hop stems, discussion, using other form of struggles into the verse into the piece of artists. I gives a voice to those who voiceless. You see racial divided in this country class divide, social activism involved oppressed minorities you start a see greater value of any community forms of expression, expression of oppression.

5. Well I can open your eyes an entirely way of looking at life whether you like it or different point of view music amazing way of connecting an idea to people, connecting social and political ideas, sometimes messages behind the songs sparks conversation.

6. I like hip-hop addresses issues struggles problems a lot other music genres don’t, controversial topics about scandal and degradation.

7. Hip-hop addresses problems, issues and topics that others don’t and it does and in a meaningful way. Still have smart conversations behind a song and why there is controversy compelling that everyone minorities actually represented.

8. Conversations- we forget problems exist race- drugs- domestic violence, n word, privilege, topics addressed people don’t think are issues.

9. Hip-hop helps me see other people struggle definitely keep in mind what surface what underneath.

**Empowering/motivation**

1. Because hip-hop has way for you make you feel you can take over the world, empowerments.

2. It makes me set an example for the youth.

3. Hip-hop form different groups and identities and relate gives something to look forward to.
4. The mindset the music puts you in: focus, calm relax and inspire.
5. Those experiences, what you going through to motivate you to succeed in life. I can chase my dreams and be everything I can be not be afraid of failure.
6. I learned anything I take away just that sharing those experiences what you going through and motivates you.
7. Hip-hop inspires you and light at the other end of the tunnel, Nothing will destroy you and you can cover come anything

8. Look into side of music another side of culture that I’m not comfortable with, to bring topics in conversation topics I may not be comfortable through hip-hop social venue.
9. Really zone in motivate focus on top of work. Hip-hop higher energy feel to it.
10. Confidence you can get from hip-hop. I’m working towards the future and make it dreams and goals.
11. A motivation for the future reflection on the present and past to pull on who I am and where do I wanna be powerful. We don’t have progress as a society unless where we going on and past we past repeat past mistakes.

**Cope with Struggle or Mood**

1. Whether growing up in a broken home, and not being able to afford. It understands the tone and people that have struggles; music is good way to cope.
2. It gives you good mood. It definitely expresses emotions.
3. My parents came over and struggled with racism and discrimination and join in and relate Hispanics. It expressed emotions and that I’m not alone.
4. I think as music as a soundtrack to my life and what I have been through in my life. I feel like no matter what I’m
1. Thinking, there’s always a hip-hop catch that feeling of I’m not alone.

5. As way release and go off stress reliever similar problems easy way release tension.

6. It compares my struggle without talking or thinking about how it automatically is similar or different than yours. About overcoming struggles.

7. Hip-hop speaks out, be part of a community. Hear music, you understanding that there is not one type of person in the world; people connect to ideas to different ways. It’s an outlet to portray that and best communicate it that way.

8. Hip-hop can be insightful human nature struggle.

9. Current mood make contemplate what’s going on.


11. I think its constructive for minority men who live inner cities because they look to music let go of frustrations instead of negative influences.


13. Once you know struggling, I feel not even a big deal find a way to over come it.

14. When I’m down, I listen to hip-hop to get out of that bubble.

15. Streets on the music this is my way out and its positive way of coping.

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Energy

1. It motivates me to clean my house.

2. The music produced something in tune my life gym fueled and energized.

3. Go to the gym fueled and energized.

4. To play sports.

5. Mostly when I’m in the mood for fun. Every morning, it pumps me up and energizes rather than slow song, I listen to most in the morning and when I go
out getting ready for the day or go out
going ready to do a paper.
6. It gives me energy when I go out and
when I'm tired and still have things to
do, it gives me more energy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuality</th>
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| 1. Beyoncé cause she’s great, powerful
and she defines her own idea of what a
woman should be. |
| 2. I didn’t have to be the Stereotypical
Asian; I was change out of bounds. I
think I received an identity. It allows
you to think different, to speak their
mind. Standing up against stereotypes.
I am myself. Not my background, the
way act and conduct myself same
attitude and emotions and other people
act and music. |

**Glossary of Terms**

| Hip Hop culture | Expressive practices that draw from Black and
Latino Cultural roots which brings a community
together, includes but not limited to music, rap, art,
Djing, and graffiti |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hip-hop music  | Hip-hop and Rap genres of music that includes
conscious rap, gangsta rap |
| Conscious rap  | Referred to music by artists such as dead prez or
Talib Kweli that often identifies systematic causes of
violence, poverty, and racism experienced by ethnic
minorities, generally critiques capitalism, and affirms
a Black identity (Petachauer) |
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Gangsta rap</strong></th>
<th>A subgenre of hip-hop music that glorifies the street life of violence, materialism, misogyny of women, hyper-masculinity of men, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **The Black Student Union**  
( BSU)  
Sga.fsu.edu/BSU | BSU’s mission is to create a form of identity and a social life. They seek to develop unity among Black Students, and express concerns and problems faces on campus, gives minorities on campus an opportunity to network and explore all of the different options that Florida State University has to offer. |
| **The Hispanic/Latino Student Union**  
(HLSU)  
sga.fsu.edu/HLSU | HLSU serves to unify, inform and serve the Hispanic/Latino community at FSU. It strives towards encouraging and enabling the academic, professional, and social success of Hispanic/Latino students while also trying to better educate students on the resources that are readily available to them, while teaching them about the diversity the Florida State University prides itself on. |
| **Pride Student Union**  
(Pride)  
sga.fsu.edu/PRIDE | Pride strives to create a safe and positive environment for students no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation. Pride’s mission is to provide services and programs to address the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and to increase the awareness of issues pertinent to them while also attempting to create a supportive and healthy environment for the welfare of all students regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. |
| **The Asian American Student Union**  
(AASU)  
sga.fsu.edu/AASU | The AASU represents the Asian American community at FSU and promotes the spread of Awareness pertaining to Asian American heritage and culture. AASU serve to encourage and promote for the civic engagement of the Asian-American community. It also functions as an educational and cultural learning instrument for the FSU community, by providing cultural programs and materials, which promote awareness of and appreciation for the various and distinct Asian cultures. |
The Women Student Union  
(WSU)  
sga.fsu.edu/WSU

The Women Student Union fosters the growth of women personally, professionally and politically. The WSU will celebrate the power existing within every woman to promote self-autonomy, denounce all limitations, educate on systems of oppression and advocate inclusivity within a diverse community. WSU facilitates a network among organizations, departments, and services to embrace, engage and empower.

Works Cited


Sorokin, Pitirim Aleksandrovich.(1928). Contemporary sociological theories."
