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Teachers' Views and Uses of Hip Hop Culture

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TEACHERS’ VIEWS AND USES OF HIP HOP CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates teachers’ views and uses of Hip Hop culture. Many sociologists have used cultural capital theory to explain educational disparities among social groups. Cultural capital theory posits that because schools value and reward dominant cultural capital, low-income students of color are placed at a troubling disadvantage. Previous research has found that low-income, minority youth feel as though their non-dominant cultural capital is devalued within educational settings, especially by teachers. Little is known, however, of the actual views teachers have in regard to non-dominant cultural capital. In regard to teachers use of Hip Hop culture various studies have documented cases of Hip Hop being brought into classroom lesson plans by experts as a form of culturally relevant pedagogy. However, most Hip Hop based education studies do not examine the experiences of in-service teachers.

This work contributes to both the literature on cultural capital theory and the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy by exploring teachers’ views and uses of Hip Hop culture. Data come from in-depth interviews with 24 secondary teachers serving in two low-income, high-minority schools. Transcripts of interviews are analyzed through coding, sorting, local integration, and inclusive integration.

Findings reveal that while some teachers held positive views of Hip Hop culture (explaining how artists shed light on important social issues), the majority held negative views, expressing concern over how Hip Hop distracted students from school, broadcast sexist images and lyrics, encouraged illegal drug activity, promoted violence, focused on materialism, and spoke out against authority. Teachers also believed that earlier forms of music were more positive than the newer music their students consumed.
In regards to teaching, findings reveal that several teachers occasionally played edited Hip Hop music in their classrooms and brought Hip Hop into lesson plans with varying levels of success. Several younger black teachers brought Hip Hop into their classrooms in continual and organic fashions, connecting course material to Hip Hop references. Some teachers also relied on their knowledge of Hip Hop to implement effective classroom management techniques. Factors that impeded Hip Hop’s inclusion into the classroom included teacher’s concern over content, administrative surveillance, and teachers not seeing Hip Hop as necessary to their pedagogy.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“This album is dedicated to all the teachers that told me I’d never amount to nothing.”
The Notorious B.I.G (1994), Hip Hop artist

“I felt so inspired by what my teacher said/ Said I’d either be dead or be a reefer head/
Not sure that’s how adults should speak to kids/ Especially when the only thing I did was
speak in class.” Jay-Z (2009), Hip Hop artist

“Think about the culture for a second. Jay-Z, on his latest album, hit album, he’s using
the ‘n-word’ repeatedly. You think, ‘what is going on here?’ [Think about] Snoop Dogg.
It’s pornographic! And it invites people to think authentic blackness is, you’ve got to be
Hip Hop, you’ve got to be hard. Education—not valued. To me, this is the tragedy of
our day.” Juan Williams (2013), journalist and political analyst for Fox News

Hip Hop culture has had a complex relationship with the broader American society.

Some scholars have commended Hip Hop’s ability to give a voice to historically disenfranchised
people and bring different demographics together through a shared interest in the culture’s
elements (Dyson 2007; Stout 2011). Others have criticized Hip Hop for exacerbating racial
stereotypes, as well as promoting norms and behaviors that are seen as incompatible with upward
social mobility (Ferguson 2001; McWhorter 2003). This complex relationship is perhaps best
highlighted within with the institution of education. Several Hip Hop artists, such The Notorious
B.I.G. and Jay-Z, have expressed their disdain for schools because of poor relationships with
teachers. Critics of Hip Hop, such as Juan Williams, have denounced Hip Hop for undervaluing
education and impeding progress towards racial equality.

In order to address the disconnect between Hip Hop and education, a growing body of
work has called for the incorporation of Hip Hop in schools as a form of culturally relevant
pedagogy (Emdin 2013; Hill and Petchauer 2013; Ladson-Billings 2013; Prier 2012). A
fundamental argument for Hip Hop based education is that by respecting the non-dominant
cultural capital of low-income, racial minorities, teachers can increase engagement and make
educational settings less hostile places (Emdin 2010; Goldenberg 2013; Stovall 2006). Some scholars, however, remain skeptical of teachers’ abilities to effectively bring Hip Hop into their lesson plans in order to improve educational outcomes (Gosa and Fields 2012).

This dissertation adds to the understanding of Hip Hop’s place within educational settings. Using data from in-depth interviews with secondary public school teachers working in two high-minority, low-income schools in the Southeast region of the U.S., I examine how educators view Hip Hop culture and use it in their teaching practices. This dissertation consists of two articles: one which is presented in Chapter 2 and the other which is presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 addresses the following research question: how do teachers of low-income, minority youth view non-dominant culture, specifically Hip Hop? I use cultural capital theory and critical race theory as frameworks for this investigation. While past studies have shown that Hip Hop is an important form non-dominant cultural capital among black youth (Clay 2003), and that racial minorities feel as though their non-dominant cultural capital is devalued in educational settings (Carter 2003, 2005, 2006), little is known regarding the actual views teachers have of non-dominant cultural capital. The findings show that while some teachers held positive views of Hip Hop culture (explaining how artists spoke on important social issues), the majority of teachers held negative views, expressing concern over the ways in which Hip Hop distracted students from school, broadcast sexist images and lyrics, encouraged illegal drug activities, promoted violence, focused on materialism, and spoke out against authority.

In Chapter 3 I examine two research questions: (1) how do teachers incorporate Hip Hop into their teaching? and (2) what factors impede teachers’ willingness to bring in Hip Hop, or limit their successful incorporation of Hip Hop into teaching? This work contributes to the
literature on culturally relevant pedagogy, and more specifically Hip Hop based education. While several studies have documented first-person accounts of school interventions that incorporate Hip Hop (Hill 2009; Morell and Duncan-Andrade 2002; Stovall 2006), little is known regarding in-service teachers’ experiences using Hip Hop. Findings reveal that several teachers occasionally played censored Hip Hop music in their classrooms and incorporated Hip Hop into lesson plans with varying levels of success. Several younger black teachers brought Hip Hop into their classrooms in continual and organic fashions, connecting course material to Hip Hop references and recognizing when their students did so as well. Some teachers also used their knowledge of Hip Hop to employ effective classroom management techniques. Factors that impeded Hip Hop’s inclusion into the classroom included concern over content, administrative surveillance, and teachers viewing Hip Hop as unnecessary to their pedagogy.

Chapter 4 serves as the conclusion to the dissertation. In this chapter I review the findings from both Chapter 1 on teachers’ views of Hip Hop culture and Chapter 2 on teachers’ uses of Hip Hop culture in the classroom. I discuss how these findings contribute to the literature on cultural capital and culturally relevant pedagogy. I then present theoretical and practical implications of my findings. Finally, I explain the limitations of my research and provide suggestions for future research relating to this topic.

For the remainder of this chapter I provide a brief history of Hip Hop culture for readers who are not familiar with it. This is not meant to be a comprehensive history, but instead one that discusses the culture’s origins, primary elements, controversies, and global diffusion. I conclude this section citing empirical studies that show Hip Hop is a form of non-dominant cultural capital for black youth and explain why its place in educational settings is important for scholars to understand.
A Brief History of Hip Hop Culture

Hip Hop culture originated in low-income, black and Latino/a neighborhoods in the Bronx, New York during the early 1970s (Ogg and Upshal 1999). Scholars recognized Hip Hop as a reaction to urban renewal projects, government cutbacks in social services, and the removal of music and art programs from New York City public schools (Chang 2005; Rose 1994; Stovall 2013). An especially significant social force that contributed to the conditions from which Hip Hop originated was the construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway (Hurt 2006, Rose 1994). Overseen by city planner Robert Moses this expressway was built during the late 1940s and the early 1970s to enable travel to and from New Jersey and Long Island, New York (Caro 1974). While this expressway created a convenient travel option for affluent people living in suburban neighborhoods, its construction demolished 60,000 Bronx homes and forced 170,000 residents to relocate (Rose 1994). This project also led to the departure of businesses and middle-class residents from the South Bronx as it became plagued with high levels of unemployment, poverty, gang activity, and crime (Chang 2005). Hip Hop can be viewed as a response to such conditions.

Rose (1994) states that Hip Hop culture provided youth in the Bronx with an outlet to both channel their frustrations and, more broadly, to form racialized urban identities. Faced with limited options and resources because of their socioeconomic positions, early Hip Hop practitioners would engage in innovative activities such as DJing, breakdancing (also known as B-BOying and B-Girling), MCing (also known as rapping), and graffiti writing. Together, these make up the four primary elements of Hip Hop culture (Chang 2005; Ogg and Upshal 1999).

DJing gained popularity in the Bronx through parties hosted in apartment recreation rooms and neighborhood parks. At these events, DJs would manipulate various Soul, Funk, Rock ‘N Roll, and R&B records in order to create Hip Hop instrumentals. DJ Kool Herc, who
many regard as the founder of Hip Hop (Davidson 2009; Nelson 2004; Stout 2011), gained notoriety for his technique, “the Merry-Go-Round,” where he created continuous dance rhythms by elongating the instrumental or percussion section of records (Chang 2005). These sections of songs were known as “the breaks” within Hip Hop culture (Ogg and Upshal 1999). The art of DJing was embellished by Grand Master Flash, whose technical knowledge enabled him to create smoother transitions between songs (Perkins 1996). Afrika Bambaataa, another DJ living in the Bronx at the time, used his influence as a former gang leader to encourage youth to turn away from violence and participate in Hip Hop events hosted by his newly established Hip Hop organization, the Zulu Nation (Charnas 2011; Ogg and Upshal 1999). The element of DJing laid the foundation for Hip Hop. DJ Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, and Afrika Bambaataa are acknowledged by both scholars and members of Hip Hop culture as the three primary pioneers of Hip Hop (Chang 2005; George 2004; Stout 2011).

Breakdancing became popular as those who attended Hip Hop functions danced to the breaks that were extended by DJs. B-boys and b-girls (short for “break boys” and “break girls”) impressed crowds with high-energy dance moves that required physical strength and advanced motor coordination (Ogg and Upshal 1999). Early practitioners such as Crazy Legs, Spy, and Robbie Rob advanced this dance style as they constantly sought to better their competition (Chang 2005). Although the pioneers of breakdancing often claimed that their foremost influence came from the performances of James Brown (Chang 2005), Holman (2004) states that breakdancing’s roots can be found in ancient Africa, feudal China, and tribal Eurasia.

MCing evolved as DJs spoke over records through microphones in order to excite attendees at Hip Hop functions (Ogg and Upshal 1999). MCing, also known as rapping, became a highlight of events as DJs, or their accompanying MCs, developed intricate rhyme schemes
embedded with metaphors, similes, and instructions for crowds. Grandmaster Flash recognized
the role MCing played in Hip Hop shows, and formed a group with five MCs known as
Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5 (Chang 2005). This collective performed in clubs
throughout New York City and would later go on to record one of Hip Hop’s most celebrated
songs, “The Message.” Though the element of MCing gained prominence after DJing and
breakdancing, Perkins (1996) claims that it has roots in the call-and-response performances of
Cab Calloway in the 1930s, the rhymes said on air by black radio personalities in the 1940s and
1950s, the poetic boasts made by boxer Muhammad Ali in the 1960s, and the vocal stylings of
Millie Jackson, Isaac Hayes, and Barry White in the early 1970s.

Finally, graffiti writing spread throughout New York alongside the evolution of the other
three elements. Scholars claim that the media attention given to one graffiti artist by the name of
TAKI 183 through a front page New York Times article helped spark this movement throughout
the city (Chang 2005; Cooper and Chalfant 1984; Rose 1994). Other graffiti artists realized that
they could receive notoriety as they wrote their names (also known as “tags”) with spray paint on
buildings, busses, handball courts, and subways (Chang 2005; Rose 1994). Additionally, artists
would create graffiti-painted clothing and produce artwork on DJ platforms, all which were
present at Hip Hop events (Rose 1994). Influential graffiti writers such as TRACY 168, PINK
LADY, and SPAR ONE gained fame in their neighborhoods through their vibrant tags and
murals (Chang 2005; Cooper and Chalfant 1984).

By the mid-1970s, Hip Hop culture gained prominence throughout New York City.
Graffiti-covered subway trains traveled hundreds of miles each day, broadcasting this element to
thousands of people (Cooper and Chalfant 1984). B-boys and B-girls formed crews, challenging
each other to see who could perform the most intricate dance moves (Holman 2004). DJs
recorded the sounds of extended breaks and rapping from Hip Hop parties onto cassette tapes and distributed them throughout New York City and surrounding areas (Charnas 2011).

In 1979, Hip Hop’s appeal increased drastically with the release of the song “Rapper’s Delight” (Dyson 2004). The song was recorded by the Sugar Hill Gang, a rap group that was formed by Sylvia Robinson, a singer who also founded the music label, Sugar Hill Records (Stout 2011; Charnas 2011). “Rapper’s Delight” had international appeal, attracting fans not only in the United States but also in Jamaica, Brazil, Germany, and Cuba (Fernandes 2011). However, despite the song’s commercial success, prominent members of the Hip Hop community from the Bronx greeted it with contempt (Ogg and Upshal 1999). To them, the song sounded formulaic, and the Sugar Hill group members, Wonder Mike, Big Bank Hank, and Master Gee, lacked the skills and reputations of Hip Hop pioneers like DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash (Chang 2005).

In 1982, two important songs were released that yielded both commercial success and respect from the Hip Hop community in the Bronx (Fernandes 2011; Ogg and Upshal 1999). The first was “Planet Rock”, a song by Hip Hop pioneer, Afrika Bambaataa, and his group, Soulsonic Force. The success of “Planet Rock” enabled Afrika Bambaataa to tour internationally and display the four elements of Hip Hop during each performance to people across the world (Fernandes 2011). The second significant song released during this time was “The Message” by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. This song described the characteristics of disadvantaged neighborhoods in the inner city and the psychological toll living under such conditions had on residents. “The Message” demonstrated that Hip Hop songs could not only entertain, but could also shed light on social issues (Fernandes 2011). In the song’s first verse and chorus, group member, Melle Mell, raps:
Broken glass everywhere/ People pissing on the stairs, you know they just don’t care/ I can’t take the smell, I can’t take the noise/ Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice/ Rats in the front room, roaches in the back/ Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat/ I tried to get away, but I couldn’t get far/ Cause a man with a tow truck repossessed my car/ (Chorus) Don’t push me ‘cause I’m close to the edge/ I’m trying not to lose my head/ It’s like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under (Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five 1982).

Throughout the mid-1980s Hip Hop continued to grow in popularity in the U.S. One group which helped broadcast the culture to mainstream audiences was Run-D.M.C. In 1984, Run-D.M.C. produced the first Hip Hop album that was certified gold (i.e., sold 500,000 units) (Dyson 2004). Later that year they became the first Hip Hop artists to have a music video aired on MTV, a television channel founded in 1981 that focused primarily on playing music videos (Charnas 2011). In 1986, they released the hit song, “Walk This Way,” which featured the Rock ‘N Roll group, Aerosmith, and introduced more white audiences to Hip Hop (Perkins 1996). The success of Run-D.M.C. showed corporations that Hip Hop had mainstream appeal and could be used to sell products. Run-D.M.C. went on to sign a lucrative endorsement deal with Adidas athletic apparel company during the peak of their career (Stout 2011).

During the late 1980s, Hip Hop became firmly established in mainstream American popular culture (Perkins 1996). In 1988 MTV launched Yo! MTV Raps, the first television program to exclusively play Hip Hop music videos (Charnas 2011). The show was hosted by graffiti writer, Fab Five Freddy, and broadcast videos from artists such as LL Cool J, Salt-N-Pepa, Eric B. & Rakim, Big Daddy Kane, and The Beastie Boys (Ogg and Upshal 1999).

Many scholars refer to the late 1980s as the “golden era” of Hip Hop due to the advanced lyrical complexities and sociopolitical messages conveyed by artists (Dimitriadis 1996; Samuels 2004). Hip Hop groups such as Public Enemy spoke out against capitalism’s exploitation of people of color, the distortion of information in mainstream news media, and government policies that harmed inner-city neighborhoods (Neal 2004; Perkins 1996). In 1989, several
popular MCs, including as KRS-ONE, MC Lyte, and Kool Moe Dee collaborated to release the song, “Self-Destruction,” which brought attention to violence in black communities (Dyson 2004). During this time female Hip Hop artists, such as Queen Latifah and Monie Love, expressed sociopolitical messages, addressing the intersecting forces of racism and sexism from a black woman’s perceptive (Forman 1994; Keyes 2004). In the 1989 song, “Ladies First,” Queen Latifah raps:

I break into a lyrical freestyle/ Grab the mic, look into the crowd and see smiles/ Cause they see a woman standing up on her own two/ Sloppy slouching is something I won’t do/ Some think that we can’t flow/ Stereotypes, they got to go/ I mess around and flip the scene into reverse/ With a little touch of “Ladies First” (Queen Latifah 1989).

The late 1980s also featured new controversies related to Hip Hop stemming from a growing uneasiness related to the lyrical content of Hip Hop music and the visual content of its music videos. In 1988, the Hip Hop group, N.W.A., released the album Straight Outta Compton. One of the more notorious songs on the album, “F*** The Police,” received major criticism from media outlets and prompted the FBI to write a letter to NWA’s record label, Priority Records, denouncing the lyrics (Light 2004; Samuels 2004). The song, “F*** The Police,” begins with group member, Ice Cube, expressing his disdain for police officers:

F*** the police coming straight from the underground/ A young n**** got it bad cause I’m brown/ And not the other color so police think/ They have the authority to kill a minority/ F*** that s***, cause I ain’t the one/ For a punk m*****f***** with a badge and a gun (N.W.A. 1989).

Additional controversy surfaced when the Hip Hop group, Two Live Crew, released the album As Nasty As They Wanna Be in 1989. The album received significant attention from journalists, talk show hosts, and news anchors for its sexually explicit content (Light 2004; Perkins 1996). In 1990, the group was arrested and charged with obscenity after a performance in Miami, Florida (Light 2004; Ogg and Upshal 1999). The media coverage the group received
from their lyrics and legal troubles ironically led to an increase in their commercial success, as
their album went on to sell over three million copies (Ogg and Upshal 1999).

During the early 1990s a variety of styles of Hip Hop were present on radio airwaves and
television screens. Public Enemy released more sociopolitical albums such as Fear of a Black
Planet in 1990 and Apocalypse 91...The Enemy Strikes Back in 1991. Hip Hop groups like De
La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest gained prominence as they released music that has been
described as Afrocentric, inquisitive, and witty (Light 2004). “Gangsta rap,” (a label often
assigned by mainstream pundits) (Neal 2004:377) which gained popularity during the rise of
N.W.A. in the late 1980s, continued to spread with releases like Dr. Dre’s album, The Chronic,
in 1992 and Snoop Doggy Dogg’s album, Doggystyle, in 1993. This gangsta rap subgenre of
Hip Hop often focused on living amongst drugs, crime, and violence, and became very
commercially successful, especially among young upper and middle-class, white audiences (Ogg
and Upshal 1999).

Though most Hip Hop artists up to the 1990s had originated in either the Northeastern or
Western regions of the U.S., Southern Hip Hop artists began to achieve national appeal toward
the close of the century. The Texas Hip Hop group, Geto Boys, released their third album, We
Can’t Be Stopped, in 1991 which contained the hit song, “Mind Playing Tricks on Me”
(Westhoff 2011). Other Southern Hip Hop groups followed including UGK, as well as Outkast,
who won a coveted Source Magazine award in 1995 for Best New Rap Group after the release of
their album, Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik, in 1994 (Wilson 2013).

The most recent writing on how Hip Hop has changed in the U.S. includes the claim that
the music and the broader culture has become “corporatized” or coopted by profit interests,
straying far away from earlier political and economic criticisms. Several scholars claim that the
late-1990s saw a significant decrease in the variety of Hip Hop music played on radio stations in terms of content and style (Fernandes 2011; Folami 2007; Guy 2004; Kitwana 2002 Rose 2008; Watkins 2006). They posit that neoliberal policies, especially the Telecommunications Act of 1996, allowed for a drastic increase in the corporate takeover of radio stations and the promotion of “commercial hip hop” (Rose 2008:25) or “corporate rap” (Fernandes 2011:14). Both terms refer to music that lacks the sociopolitical messages of earlier Hip Hop and is instead designed for mainstream consumption. Guy (2004) and Rose (2008) state that the commodification of Hip Hop resulted in an increase in content that was sexist, racist, violent, and materialistic. Record labels were said to push problematic depictions of people of color because white audiences (which came to make of the majority of Hip Hop consumers in the early 1990s) were more attracted to images of “gangsta rappers” than to politically conscious Hip Hop artists (Rose 2008).

It should be stated, however, that the commodification of Hip Hop and changing radio structures did not eliminate socially conscious Hip Hop. In fact, several progressive lyricists emerged during the late 1990s and early 2000s, including Mos Def, Talib Kweli, M-1, and stic.man, who spoke on economic and racial issues. Fernandes (2011) posits that prevalence of corporate rap on the radio lead to the development of an “underground” Hip Hop movement, where artists recorded and distributed music without major label support (p.16). Artists such as Immortal Technique and the Hip Hop group Little Brother generated large fan bases without major label backings in the early 2000s. They also unapologetically denounced artists and music executives that pushed music they deemed harmful to society.

Hip Hop continued to grow throughout the 2000s as artists such as Jay-Z, 50 Cent, Eminem, and Nelly released multiplatinum albums and signed lucrative endorsement deals
Southern artists also gained prominence as indicated by the commercial successes of Lil Wayne, T.I., Missy Elliot, and Ludacris (Westhoff 2010). By the mid-2000s the internet enabled independent Hip Hop artists (those not signed to major record labels) to attract large followings, as fans could be accumulated by the millions through YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace.

Currently, Hip Hop continues to grow with the number of fans and practitioners stretching across six continents (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009; Fernandes 2011). Alridge and Stewart emphasize the culture’s significance and impact, stating (2005):

…Hip Hop has developed as a cultural and artistic phenomenon affecting youth culture around the world. For many youth, Hip Hop reflects the social, economic, political, and cultural realities and conditions of their lives, speaking to them in a language and manner they understand. As a result of both its longevity and its cogent message for many youth worldwide, Hip Hop cannot be dismissed as merely a passing fad or as a youth movement that will soon run its course. Instead, Hip Hop must be taken seriously as a cultural, political, economic, and intellectual phenomenon deserving of scholarly study, similar to previous African American artistic and cultural movements such as the Blues, Jazz, the New Negro Renaissance, and the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Arts Movements (p.190).

**Hip Hop as an Important form of Non-Dominant Cultural Capital for Black Youth**

While Hip Hop has achieved global reach over the past few decades, it is of particular importance to black youth in the U.S. (Emdin 2013; Ginwright 2004; Powell 2003). Through empirical investigations scholars have documented the ways in which Hip Hop is used among young black people to create identities (Clay 2003; Carter 2003, 2005, 2006). Knowledge of Hip Hop culture can demonstrate authenticity among such peer groups. Therefore, researchers should take seriously the ways Hip Hop is treated in educational settings. Hip Hop has the potential to be incorporated into lesson plans as a form of culturally relevant pedagogy, or it can be dismissed by educational gatekeepers and contribute to the reproduction of racial inequality.
This dissertation contributes to such knowledge by examining teachers’ views and uses of Hip Hop culture.
CHAPTER 2

TEACHERS’ VIEWS OF HIP HOP CULTURE

Introduction

Despite some improvement over the past few decades, the educational underachievement of black youth continues to be a persistent social problem, indicated by substantial black-white differences in grade point averages, scores on standardized tests, high school completion rates, and college attendance (Ferguson 2001; Hallinan 2001; Kovach and Gordon 1997; Persell 2015; United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2015). The persistence of the racial disparity in educational outcomes has received attention from scholars of various disciplines, including sociology (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Kao and Thompson 2004), education (Harper and Wood 2015; Ladson-Billings 2006; Norman et al. 2001), economics (Austen-Smith and Fryer 2005; Fryer and Levitt 2004), and anthropology (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 2004). The wide range of scholarly studies on the racial achievement gap is indicative of its complexity and relative intransigence. This enduring educational inequality runs counter to the U.S. achievement ideology of equal opportunity. It also has significant implications for other dimensions of racial inequality, given the strong links between education and income (U.S. Census Bureau 2016), health (Ross and Mirowsky 2010), and avoidance of the penal system (Harlow 2003), for example. Thus, it is vital that the reasons behind the racial achievement gap are well understood in order to develop effective interventions.

One set of explanations focuses on culture, namely the cultural disposition of educational institutions and the match between students’ and school’s cultural orientations. A prime example is cultural capital theory. Many sociologists have used cultural capital theory to explain
educational disparities among social groups, including those defined by race and ethnicity (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Lamont and Lareau 1988). This theory posits that schools, disguised as neutral social institutions, reproduce inequality by rewarding “high-brow” cultural knowledge and skills (Bourdieu 1977). For example, children who are shown documentaries of renowned historical figures in their homes and are taken to theatres to see classical plays gain cultural capital that is valued in educational settings. Since schools place a high value on the cultural capital associated with the white upper-middle class, low-income students of color are placed at a troubling disadvantage.

In contrast to the cultural knowledge and interactional styles that are valued by teachers and school administrators, low-income, minority groups often possess and value “non-dominant cultural capital” (Carter 2003). Fashion, music, and language associated with Hip Hop are prominent forms of non-dominant cultural capital for black youth (Clay 2003; Ginwright 2004; Goldenberg 2013). Empirical investigations have shown that non-dominant cultural capital has significant importance within black communities and may be used to gain acceptance among peers (Carter 2003, 2006; Clay 2003). Even though educational institutions may ignore, undervalue, or even punish non-dominant cultural capital, it remains valuable for black youth during time spent outside of the classroom.

Critical race theory also advances the claim that part of racial inequality in education is due to the devaluation and denigration of non-dominant cultural capital associated with people of color. This perspective challenges the ways in which mainstream cultural capital is implicitly valued and rewarded in schools and other institutions, and instead argues for recognizing the unique knowledge, skills, and abilities of marginalized and oppressed social groups (Yosso 2005). Critical race theory suggests that instead of requiring students to assimilate into the
dominant culture, schools should encourage people of color to maintain their non-dominant cultural capital (Delgado and Stefanic 2001). It seems likely that proponents of cultural capital theory and critical race theory would agree that one approach to addressing racial gaps in education is to promote culturally relevant pedagogy—that is, ensuring that the learning environment recognizes and values the non-dominant cultural capital of low-income, black youth (Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b; Ladson-Billings 1998).

This study seeks to understand how non-dominant cultural capital functions in educational settings by examining secondary teachers’ views of Hip Hop culture. According to research by Carter (2003, 2005, 2006), for example, low-income students of color perceive that teachers and school administrators often have negative views of the fashion, music, and language associated with Hip Hop—in other words, non-dominant cultural capital. This study seeks to contribute to this literature by exploring teachers’ views of Hip Hop and its place in educational settings. Because teachers are significant educational gatekeepers, their views of Hip Hop and other forms of non-dominant cultural capital may play a significant role in reproducing inequality within educational spaces. Negative attitudes about Hip Hop culture among educators may contribute to a student-teacher mismatch that impedes academic success and exacerbates the educational achievement gap (Goldenberg 2013).

To extend the literature on non-dominant cultural capital and educational inequality, I interviewed twenty-four teachers working in two secondary schools with high percentages of black students from low-income backgrounds. In these interviews, I asked teachers about their views regarding Hip Hop and whether Hip Hop can/should be incorporated into the school curriculum. The findings reveal that while some teachers held positive views of Hip Hop culture (explaining how it expressed important messages on social issues), the majority of teachers
expressed concern over the ways in which Hip Hop distracted students from school, broadcast sexist lyrics and images, promoted illegal drug activities, promoted violence, focused on materialism, and spoke out against authority. The implication of these findings is that if Hip Hop based education is included in curricula, it should be paired with critical media literacy in order to simultaneously engage students, while also helping them deconstruct problematic images broadcast through various media outlets.

**Literature Review**

**Cultural Capital**

Sociologists have used Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory (1977, 1986) to explain educational inequality. One definition of cultural capital is “the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills passed from one generation to the next” (MacLeod 2009:13). Although U.S. achievement ideology depicts schools as unbiased, merit-based institutions, cultural capital theory counters that schools actually reproduce inequality by implicitly rewarding high-status cultural capital and assigning lower scores to students who do not possess such capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Rosenweig 1994; Sadovnik 2016). Students whose parents take them to history and science museums, read them classical poetry, and pay for expensive musical training acquire cultural capital that is valued by the dominant culture and that is embedded in the educational curriculum. Students who miss out on such opportunities because of their socioeconomic status are thereby placed at an educational disadvantage (MacLeod 2009). Studies show that wealthier families are significantly more likely to expose their children to activities that increase students’ knowledge of and comfort with high status (or dominant) culture (Murnane and Duncan 2011). The institutional bias toward high-status cultural capital may be present in high-stakes, standardized examinations as well as in teachers’
assignments and classroom interactions. Scholars have argued that standardized testing rewards and reinforces dominant cultural capital (Nanna and Moses 2007). Likewise, in addition to coursework mastery, teachers may grade students on skills, styles, and habits (Frankas et al. 1990). Overall, cultural capital theory claims that the rewarding of dominant cultural capital in schools reinforces existing power structures and reproduces inequality across generations.

Cultural capital theory has provided a framework for research on educational inequality. Using various operationalizations, several studies have shown that the possession of cultural capital is associated with higher academic success (DiMaggio 1982; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Eitle and Eitle 2002; Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, and Shaun 1990; Kalmijn and Kraaykamp 1996; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999). For example, DiMaggio (1982) found that cultural capital, as measured using self-reports of participation in music, art, and literature, had a positive impact on grades among a sample of 2,906 eleventh grade white students. Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) examined the relationship between cultural capital and educational achievement from a more racially diverse sample of 16,189 eighth grade students. Using two ordinal measures of cultural capital, which included cultural trips to museums and cultural classes (for music, art, and dance), and measuring educational achievement using grade point averages and standardized test scores for math and reading, they found that black and low-income students received less educational returns on cultural capital. They posited that such disparities might be a result of micropolitical teacher evaluations of students that take place in the classroom.

While these studies have made significant contributions to the sociology of education and the understanding of the reproduction of social inequality, more research is needed on teachers’ views of and reactions to the cultural capital possessed by their students. Kingston (2001:92)
explained that “despite calls for investigating the ‘micropolitics’ of students’ evaluations in
schools (Lamont and Lareau 1988; Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999), we know little about
how teachers actually evaluate students.”

While this study does not specifically examine teachers’ evaluations of students, it does
examine their views of Hip Hop, which is an important form of non-dominant cultural capital for
black youth. A devaluation of Hip Hop by teachers may contribute to poor evaluations of
students who consume/participate in Hip Hop. Likewise, an appreciation for and incorporation
of Hip Hop by teachers may create as less hostile atmosphere for students who
consume/participate in Hip Hop (Stovall 2006; Emdin 2013). I now turn the literature on non-
dominant cultural capital which confirms that Hip Hop is an important form of non-dominant
cultural capital for black youth.

Non-Dominant Cultural Capital

By examining the associations between students’ cultural capital and their academic
success, researchers have generated evidence that cultural preferences and assumptions are one
way that schools reinforce existing power structures in society and reproduce inequality across
generations. However, many of the theoretical frameworks used in past studies have been
limited by exclusively focusing on white, middle-class (or dominant) cultural capital (or its
absence). The “non-dominant” cultural capital of disenfranchised social groups has too often
been ignored by scholars (Carter 2003; Yosso 2005; Goldenberg 2013).

According to Carter (2003), non-dominant cultural capital “embodies a set of tastes, or
schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that include
preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles” (p.138). For socially
marginalized groups, non-dominant culture can be valuable in several social settings including
the home, neighborhood, or places of worship. By displaying non-dominant cultural capital, an individual reaffirms that he or she is an authentic member of a racial or ethnic group. Despite being important in various social contexts, the non-dominant cultural capital of many racial and ethnic minorities is often ignored, misunderstood, and even punished within schools (Khalifa 2014; Low 2010) and workplaces (Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Moss and Tilly 1996). For example, in a two-year ethnographic study taking place in a public alternative school in the Midwest, Khalifa (2015) found that black students felt administrators continually criticized their speech patterns and clothing styles. Also, in a study of hiring practices of Chicago-area firms, Kirschenmen and Neckerman (1991) found inner-city black people often performed poorly in job interviews in part because of race and class related differences in culture between themselves and potential employers.

Carter’s (2003) study provides an important contribution to understanding the role non-dominant cultural capital plays in the lives of racial minorities. She gathered interview data from a sample of 44 low-income, black high school students in Yonkers, New York, to explore their views on academic achievement, involvement in educational activities, and appropriate behaviors among family members and peers. These youth participated in a larger study (Carter 2006) that I discuss later in this section. The study finds that most of the students acknowledged the value of dominant cultural capital for academic and occupational success. They also valued non-dominant (or black) cultural capital, describing it as way to show racial and ethnic authenticity when around family and friends. The students described black cultural capital as being displayed through speech patterns, fashion, and musical knowledge/taste.

In her interviews many of the high school students explained to Carter that a knowledge of and taste for Hip Hop music and fashion was valuable “currency” among their peers (2003:}
They also explained that although their non-dominant cultural capital was important in several social spaces, school was often not one of them, as they felt that teachers and administrators consistently demeaned it. For example, a student with the pseudonym Nina told Carter (2003):

> Like I say, I mean…the way you present yourself to someone, that’s the approach that they take upon you. And some Black kids, you know, when they go to school, the first thing the teacher looks at is how you present yourself. So you come to school with baggy pants and hat to the back, with the radio, they look at you and be like, “I’m not going to waste my time.” But they see the other, like you know, not the whole [person] white or black, but when they see another fellow, or male or female you know, quiet, and then that’s the one they’ll spend more time with. But not knowing that person came with the baggy pants, could be more intelligent, you know, have more intellectuals [sic] than a quiet person (p.148).

The devaluation of black cultural tastes among school officials was discouraging for many of Carter’s participants, and ultimately undermined their academic success. Carter explained (2003):

> My data suggest a paradox: poor black students’ non-dominant forms of cultural capital yield social benefits and rewards within their communities, but within the school walls, students find that officials devalue precisely these cultural attributes. Further research is needed to evaluate the impact of this cultural strain on student academic performance (149).

While it is clear that black youth in Carter’s investigation perceived that teachers devalued their cultural capital, it is important to add the perspective of teachers to this body of work. In the next section I briefly describe the history and elements of Hip Hop culture, as well as studies that provide evidence that Hip Hop is a valuable form of non-dominant cultural capital for black students.

**Hip Hop as an Important Form of Non-Dominant Cultural Capital**

Hip Hop refers to both forms of performance and to associated cultural styles of dress, language, and fashion as discussed by Carter (2003, 2006). Hip Hop as types of performance includes breakdancing (also known as b-boying), MCing (also known as rapping), graffiti...
writing, and DJing (Alridge and Stewart 2005; Chang 2005). Hip Hop originated in low-income, black and Latino/a neighborhoods in the Bronx, New York during early 1970s (Ogg and Upshal 1999; Rose 1994). Scholars see Hip Hop as a response to multiple negative developments in the borough at the time, such as government cutbacks in social programs, the removal of art and music education from schools, and the destruction of thousands of homes due to urban renewal projects (Chang 2005; Rose 1994; Stovall 2013). Hip Hop was first introduced to mainstream America in the late 1970s with the release of the song, “Rapper’s Delight,” by The Sugar Hill Gang (Dyson 2004) and has since grown dramatically in the U.S. and abroad (Fernades 2011; Higgins 2009).

Hip Hop is particularly important in the lives of black youth in the U.S. (Kelley 1994; Ginwright 2004; Watkins 1998). Empirical investigations have documented the significant role Hip Hop plays in the construction of racial identity for young black people. Clay’s (2003) study used ethnographic data on daily interactions obtained from a youth center in Northern California serving primarily black teenagers to show that Hip Hop was a valuable form of non-dominant cultural capital. Young people used it to gain popularity and to demonstrate their authentic racial identity. As Clay noted (2003):

The use of Hip Hop culture, that is, fashion, gestures, language, and performance as cultural capital established the boundaries of who is and who isn’t popular, who gets the most support and encouragement, and who is and isn’t black in settings such as the City Youth Center (p.1356).

Other studies have also shown that Hip Hop contributes to the construction of racial identity. Carter (2006) used survey and interview data to analyze how low-income, black and Latino/a youth from Yonkers, New York, negotiate the boundaries between school and peer contexts. She discerned three groups among the 68 participants in her study: “cultural mainstreamers,” “cultural straddlers,” and “noncompliant believers.” Cultural mainstreamers
were students who displayed the dominant cultural capital that was rewarded at school and who felt it was necessary for racial and ethnic minorities to assimilate to mainstream culture in order to succeed. Noncompliant believers, while mainstream in their achievement orientations (e.g., aspiring to gain upward social mobility), embraced their nondominant cultural values and styles. They did not subscribe to “the mainstream (marked as ‘white’) and middle-class ways of being” (Carter 2006:308). Cultural straddlers were the most successful in multiple social contexts. These students possessed both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital, and drew on specific vernaculars they deemed appropriate for both their peer and school environments.

Carter’s study demonstrated that Hip Hop music and clothing styles were important forms of non-dominant cultural capital for all three groups of black and Latino/a youths, even the ones who did not want it to be. Some cultural mainstreamers were teased by peers for not embodying the “hip-hop style” and some noncompliant believers were labeled deviant by teachers for embodying the “hip-hop style.” Carter (2006) presented the following implication from her findings:

One implication is that schools that implement practices that promote interculturalism may yield better academic and social results among their minority students than those that do not. The challenge will be to create school societies in which educators, parents, and students value and work to incorporate effective methods for developing cultural expansion among all the principle stakeholders (p.324).

Since Hip Hop is an important form of non-dominant cultural capital among black students, the devaluation of non-dominant cultural forms such as Hip Hop is problematic, and may contribute to the social reproduction of racial inequality in educational outcomes by marginalizing students. Some students have the ability to become cultural straddlers, and display both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital across school and non-school contexts in order to simultaneously achieve academic success and racial authenticity. However, not everyone possesses such the resources to develop such skills.
Seeking to understand the link between non-dominant cultural capital and the education gap, several scholars have turned to critical race theory. In the next section I discuss critical race theory, as well as a competing explanation for the black-white achievement gap, which focuses on the oppositional culture of black students and how it undermines academic success.

**Critical Race Theory, Competing Ideas, and Educational Implications**

Critical race theory examines the way racism is embedded in institutions that structure everyday life (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2013:316). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) described five tenets of critical race theory. The first is the ordinariness of racism, which challenges the idea that racism only occurs among extremist organizations. The second tenet is “interest convergence,” which is the notion that racism persists in society because it benefits middle and upper-class white people materially and working-class white people psychologically (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:7). Therefore, progress towards equality only occurs when the interests of white people align with the interests of racial minorities. The third tenet is known as the “social construction thesis,” which states that race is a based on arbitrary biological traits that society deems significant (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:7). The fourth tenet is intersectionality, which claims that no individual has a unitary identity. In addition to race, social characteristics such as gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class significantly contribute to person’s experience in society. The fifth tenet is known as the “voice of color thesis,” which holds that racial and ethnic minorities have a unique ability to speak on racial issues because of their firsthand experiences with oppression (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:9). With few exceptions, critical race theorists tend to endorse these tenets, and they also share a commitment to social justice (Carter 2008).

Several scholars have used critical race theory to analyze racial injustices in the education system (Carter 2008; Ladson-Billings 1998; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Solórzano, Ceja,
and Yosso 2000). This theory is critical of school systems that solely value dominant cultural capital associated with the white upper and middle class, and it is also critical of policymakers and educators who view students of color as deficient in proper culturally ways of being. Critical race theorists such as Ladson-Billings (1998) and Yosso (2005) push for a move away from viewing racial minority students as deficient and instead advocate focusing on the often unrecognized cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities that disenfranchised groups possess. The implication is that schools should not dismiss non-dominant cultural capital but should instead recognize and value it through instructional practices. Likewise, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) recommend that racial and ethnic minorities retain their culture if they choose to do so, and that society should not require them to assimilate in order to receive various rewards such as educational achievement, jobs, or housing.

It should be noted that scholars have challenged critical race theory’s explanations for the black-white achievement gap. Ogbu (2004) has suggested that a history of racism in the United States has blocked opportunities for black people, and this social situation has caused black students to take on an “oppositional cultural” that discourages educational attainment. Such an explanation moves away from placing an emphasis on the problematic practices of administrators and teachers and instead shifts the focus to students who actively resist school goals. Some researchers have suggested that the rise of Hip Hop exacerbated the oppositional cultural of black youth, promoting anti-school views and ultimately increasing the achievement gap (Ferguson 2001; Johnson, Jackson, and Gatto 1995).

Acknowledging various (and often competing) explanations for the achievement gap, educational scholars have stated that non-dominant cultural capital should be brought into the
classroom in order to increase student engagement. Goldenberg (2013:10) makes an interesting claim:

…students of color from low-income, urban neighborhoods do have a distinct culture—just as white, middle-class individuals do—and regardless of whether students’ culture is actually oppositional or not is further irrelevant; moving into a more antideficit framework, educators must tap into students’ nondominant cultural capital to promote academic success.

It is important to further examine what teachers think about the non-dominant cultural capital of their students in order to understand why (or why not) they tap into it to promote educational achievement.

**Purpose of Study**

More work is needed in order to examine the specific views teachers have in regard to non-dominant cultural capital. The past research reviewed in this chapter reveals that low-income students of color feel marginalized when—in their eyes—educational authorities disparage non-dominant cultural capital. However, there is a paucity of research that directly examines teachers’ perceptions of Hip Hop and its positive or negative impact on students. Therefore, I used in-depth interviews to answer the research question: how do teachers of low-income, minority youth view non-dominant culture, specifically Hip Hop?

My research is not intended to undermine the views students have regarding how their non-dominant cultural capital is treated in educational settings, especially considering that if people perceive situations as real, they are real in their consequences (Thomas 1966 [1931]). Furthermore, the evidence in this dissertation is limited to interviews with teachers. What teachers say they think and report they do might be quite different from how their thoughts and actions are perceived by students. Nevertheless, I found that teachers had varying views in regard to Hip Hop culture, but mostly negative ones.
Methods

Data for this study come from in-depth interviews with 24 secondary public school teachers who worked at two high-minority, low-income schools in the Southeast region of the U.S. The first school, which I refer to as Core School, was located in a midsized, urban city. According to the most recent Census data, the county where the school was located had a median household income of around $47,000, with 23% of the people under the age of 18 living in poverty. The racial/ethnic composition of the county was 63% white, 30% black, and 6% Latino/a (of any race), and 3% Asian. While I only conducted interviews with secondary school teachers, Core School was a developmental K-12 research school affiliated with a nearby university. Core School was a Title I school, with a predominantly black student body, and around 70% of its students receiving free or reduced price lunch. The state department of education where Core School was located assigned the school a “C” letter grade in 2014 and 2015.

The second school, which I refer to as Rural High, was located in a nearby rural town. The county where the school was located had a median household income of around $36,000, with 40% of the people under the age of 18 living in poverty. The county population was racially diverse, and consisting of a composition of 56% black, 36% white, and 10% Latino/a (of any race). Rural High was a traditional public high school, serving students in grades nine through twelve. Like Core School, Rural High was a predominantly black Title I school, and 45% of its students received a free or reduced price lunch. The state department of education gave Rural High a “D” letter grade in 2014 and a “F” letter grade in 2015.

In the state where both of these schools were located, school grades were based on several measures of achievement and progress on standardized test scores for reading, math,
science, and writing. Schools that received an “A” letter grade or improved one letter grade from
the previous year received financial rewards from the state to provide bonuses for faculty and
staff, purchase educational equipment, and hire temporary personnel. Schools that did not make
an “A” letter grade, or did not improve their letter grade from the previous year, did not receive
these financial awards. Schools that made “D” or “F” grades after several years were placed on a
differential accountability support list and received extra support to address educational issues.

I interviewed 10 teachers from Core School and 14 teachers from Rural High, for a total
of 24 participants. Fourteen teachers were female and 10 teachers were male. The teachers
ranged in age from 25 to 66, with a median age of 44. Nine teachers’ highest level of
educational attainment was a bachelor’s degree and 15 teachers had some form of a graduate
degree (one of those being a doctorate degree). In regards to race, 15 teachers identified as
black, eight identified as white, and one identified as American Indian. Information on age,
racial/ethnic identity, and academic background was obtained by having each participant fill out
a demographic information fact sheet as recommended by Warren and Karner (2010). All
teachers were given pseudonyms to protect identities.

It is important to note the conservative/religious nature of the region where this study
took place. During interviews several teachers brought up their religious beliefs (most of them
Christian) and five teachers served significant leadership roles at their churches (i.e. pastor,
minister, and worship leader). Many characteristics of Hip Hop (especially commercially
successful rap music) have received criticism from the far right and religious leaders (Perkins
1996). However, recently a growing number of Christian Hip Hop artists have gained
commercial success and significant approval from mainstream America, most notably Lecrae

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(Harris 2014). As seen in the findings section, some teachers stated that their religious beliefs influenced their views and responses to Hip Hop culture.

I interviewed teachers who taught a variety of subjects, including the core subjects of English (eight teachers), history (five teachers), science (four teachers), and math (one teacher), as well as the elective courses of industrial arts (one teacher), art (one teacher), music (two teachers), and Spanish (two teachers). I learned of each participant’s subject area from their school’s website and confirmed this information during the beginning of each interview. I sought teachers from various subject areas because studies on Hip Hop based education have documented the successful inclusion of Hip Hop in a variety of classes. It was also important to understand how teachers may contribute to the marginalization of students in each specific classes. Since Hip Hop is a culture consisting of numerous elements (MCing, breakdancing, graffiti writing, and DJing), it has the potential to effect student-teacher interactions and perceptions in several different educational contexts. For example, an English teacher might be more likely demean the language used by Hip Hop artists, while a music teacher may hold strong opinions on the instrumentation of Hip Hop songs.

Interviews began in May 2014, with the last interview completed in December 2015. I recruited some participants via email or telephone, obtaining addresses and phone numbers from each school’s website. Other participants were recruited when I attended an open house for Rural High in August of 2015. At the open house, I approached teachers, informed them of my study, and obtained contact information in order to schedule interviews. After interviews, I asked respondents if any of their colleagues would be interested in participating in the study and was often given one or two names. Therefore, I employed a combination of convenience and snowball (or chain-referral) sampling (Biernacki and Dan Waldorf 1981; Weiss 1994).
Interviews ranged in length from 33 minutes to 100 minutes, with a mean interview length of 57 minutes. Twenty-one interviews were administered in the teachers’ classrooms, either after school hours or during the teacher’s planning period. One interview took place at a coffee shop, one interview took place at a public library, and another at bookstore. Most interviews were completed in one sitting, however, one interview took place over the course of two meetings (both in the participant’s classroom) and another was completed over the phone because the participant did not finish answering all questions during the first part of the interview which took place during her planning period.

For each interview, I sought to establish an appropriate rapport with the participants. Warren and Karner (2010) argue that “underrapport” likely results in respondents providing short, impersonal answers, while “overrapport” may lead to the respondents attempting to please the interviewer with insincere answers (p. 162). In order to avoid each extreme, I maintained a demeanor that I believed to be professional, courteous, and most importantly, engaged. I emphasized that I was very interested in the views and experiences of each respondent and maintained eye contact during most of the interview, the exception being when I briefly took notes. I tape recorded each interview, as recommended by Weiss (1994) and Seidman (2006). I found that the tape recorder allowed me to focus more on the participant and their responses, as I did not need to frantically write down each word they spoke. Participants also seemed comfortable with the tape recorder, especially since I had them sign consent forms before the interview began, informed them that pseudonyms would be used in any publication of my study, and told them that I would turn off the tape recorder immediately at their request. I only had one respondent ask that I turn the tape recorder off during an interview, and this occurred when she decided to tell me of a personal story that she wanted off the record.
Most interviews began with questions regarding the teachers’ experience in education. I asked them how long they had been teaching and which subjects and grade levels they taught. As the interviews progressed, I asked participants if they were familiar with Hip Hop, how they felt about Hip Hop, if their students listened to Hip Hop, if they felt Hip Hop impacted their students, and if they ever used Hip Hop in their teaching. After conducting seven interviews, and discovering an emerging theme of teachers feeling that Hip Hop led to discipline issues, I revised my interview protocols in order to further explore this topic. Though the interview protocols helped structure the general progressions of most interviews, I allowed the respondents’ answers to shape the direction of each interview as recommended by several qualitative researchers (Charmaz 2014; Dezin and Lincoln 2005). For example, a few teachers immediately started talking about their feelings toward Hip Hop shortly after I met them. This was likely due to the fact that when I recruited participants via email, I stated that my research was on teachers’ views of Hip Hop culture. Rather than redirecting them so that we could strictly follow the interview protocols, I allowed them to continue their discussion in order to gather rich data.

The total sample size for this study was 24. Studies relying on data from qualitative interviews have varied significantly in the number of participants, as there is no universal guideline for an adequate sample size (Charmaz 2014; Guest, Bruce, and Johnson 2006). Seidman (2006) explains that researchers using convenience samples must consider two dimensions when evaluating their sample size: sufficiency and saturation of information. Studies achieve sufficiency when they contain a range of participants that enables readers from various demographics to connect with findings. My study achieved sufficiency, as I interviewed men and women from different races and ages who taught a variety of subjects. The second
dimension for evaluating a sample according to Seidman (2006) is “saturation of information” (p.55). When interviewers begin to hear the same experiences and views described by participants and are no longer learning new information, they have likely reached a point of saturation. I felt I reached saturation, as teachers described similar aspects of Hip Hop they viewed as positive and negative. To be sure, in the findings sections I explicitly state the number of participants that held each view rather than relying on ambiguous descriptions such as “some” or “most.” I transcribed each interview using Windows Media Player to play the interviews and Microsoft Word to type the transcriptions. I felt that transcribing the interviews personally was advantageous for several reasons. For one, avoiding using outside help allowed me to convey to my respondents in the consent form that I would personally transcribe their interviews, so they did not have to worry about anyone else having access to their statements. I believe this made the participants feel more comfortable about confidentiality and contributed to more candid interviews. Several respondents conveyed information during the interview of which they stated they did not want their superiors to be aware. Performing my own transcriptions also allowed me to essentially “relive” the interview. I was able make notes on aspects of the interview that I missed when it occurred in real time, and such notes helped me improve my interview skills as the study progressed. Additionally, transcribing the interviews ensured that I accurately captured the various speech patterns of participants (i.e., laughs, pauses, or voice fluctuations). Poland (2002) argues the researcher risks losing these important elements of the interview when hiring others to construct transcriptions.

Warren and Karen (2010) claim that there is debate in the literature on qualitative methods over altering the speech of respondents during the transcription process. Some argue that researchers risk losing the original meaning of statements when grammatical errors are
corrected or vernacular is changed. Others fear that verbatim transcriptions may present the respondents as incompetent or inarticulate, which can reinforce stereotypes of certain populations. Poland (2002) states that if quotes are altered, they should be done in a way that does not change the actual the meaning of the statements. I subscribed to this rationale, and modified quotes in order to make them read easier. I did, however, keep grammatical mistakes if they were initially made by the respondent in order to emphasize a point. This often occurred when teachers were imitating one of their students, which was an important piece of data that should not have been lost through the transcription process or the presentation of quotes.

In order to analyze the data, I employed four distinct analytical processes as recommended by Weiss (1994). The first process was coding, in which I carefully read transcripts and assigned the data codes. Saldaña (2013) defines a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p.3). My codes were grounded in the data, as recommended by Charmaz (2014), though my analytical lens as a sociologist who studies educational inequality shaped perceptions and interpretations of the data (Saldaña 2013). I began by using numerous codes through a process known as “open” or “initial” coding (Charmaz 2014, 116-117). Through increased interaction with the transcripts my codes gained precision, effectively capturing portions of the data that related to my research questions. After initial coding, I moved to the second analytical process known as sorting, which involved placing similarly coded passages into excerpt files. I placed these similarly coded passages into a total of 56 excerpt files which contained labels such as “administrative surveillance,” “distraction,” and “sexism.” This analytical process of sorting is similar to the analytical process of focused coding as described by Charmaz (2014). I preferred sorting over focused coding because it allowed me
to better organize my data and make comparisons among the statements made by participants. I then moved to the third analytical process, local integration, in which I summarized the excerpt files, examining patterns of what was being said among the respondents. Through local integration I discovered how often certain views were expressed as well as interesting variations among teachers. For example, I had one sorting file containing excerpts of teachers stating that older music was more positive than the newer music consumed by their students. It was during the local integration process that I noticed patterns based on the ages of the teachers regarding the years when music decreased in quality. The final analytical process was inclusive integration, where I developed a logical framework of the areas of analysis that derived from local integration. I present this framework in the next section in order to answer the research question: how do teachers of low-income, minority youth view non-dominant culture, specifically Hip Hop?

Findings

Teachers described Hip Hop as popular among their students, confirming that it was a prominent aspect of the student culture at both schools. Teachers also believed that earlier forms of music (even earlier Hip Hop) was more positive than the music consumed by their students. Some teachers held positive views of Hip Hop, focusing on how it expressed important messages on social issues. However, the majority of teachers expressed negative views of Hip Hop, stating their concern over the ways in which it distracted students from school, broadcast sexist lyrics and images, promoted illegal drug activities, promoted violence, focused on materialism, and spoke out against authority. I describe these findings below using quotes from interviews, along with interpretative summaries and analysis.
Hip Hop Viewed as Popular among Students

All twenty-four teachers stated that Hip Hop was a popular among their students. Most teachers would learn of their students’ musical preferences through conversations with students, hearing music played from their headphones, and/or hearing students rap lyrics during class. Though a few teachers stated that students sometimes listened to other genres, Hip Hop was described as the most prevalent musical style among students at both Core School and Rural High. When asked if any of his students were involved in Hip Hop or listened to it, William Hester, a 35-year-old black music teacher at Rural High, stated (AM is the interviewer):

WH: That’s almost all they listen to.

AM: All they listen to?

WH: All they listen to. Anything other than Hip Hop, and I’m going to be honest with you, even the R&B with our kids, they aren’t as big on that as they were a few years ago. But that’s almost all they listen to. Anything other than that, I introduce them to it.

Later in the interview I asked Mr. Hester how he knew that his students exclusively listened to Hip Hop. He explained that he had students document their listening patterns for an assignment:

WH: I have them submit what I call a listening log. And we’ll do this for about a two to three-week period.

AM: Beginning of the semester?

WH: The beginning of the semester, yeah. And it’s for about a two to three-week period, and they’ll submit what I call a listening log. And what I’ll find is most of the music is pretty much the same. They all listen to the same radio stations. They all are downloading the same music. They don’t buy albums anymore, so they all are downloading the same stuff off of the internet. They all listen to the same thing on Pandora, YouTube, or whatever. And so, from the listening log, we kind of do like a little chart. I wish I had it here. I could show you. But it’s like a big graph where we kind of put everything together: genre, style of music, and everything kind of parallels itself together. So we’re able to then, what I call define the musical culture of the class. Where are we now? This is what we listen to, you know.

Of all of the teachers interviewed, Mr. Hester’s listening log assignment was the most
systematic method for examining the musical consumption patterns of his students. Later in the interview, he explained that the listening log contained a chart for students to indicate the time of day and their location when they were listening to each song. Another teacher who collected information of students’ musical tastes was Henry Donaldson, a 45-year-old white history teacher at Rural High. At the beginning of the year, Mr. Donaldson collected a survey from his students to gather information about their interests. One survey question asked students to name their favorite songs. During our interview Mr. Donaldson grabbed a folder where he kept the student surveys and began reading answers to a survey question so he could explain the musical preferences of his students:

HD: You know, just going through different people’s stuff. This was at the beginning of the year this year. You know, [the survey asked] “What are your favorite songs?” [The students answered] “Dirty Laundry” “Hell Yes” and “Fumble.” Uh, “Ball Out,” “Fugazi,” and “Gunsmoke,” and “Macaroni Time.”…There’s a wide range but they’re almost all into Hip Hop culture.

AM: Oh, so you ask the top 5 songs, and most of them come from Hip Hop? hh

HD: I would say so.

When asked if students were involved in Hip Hop or listened to Hip Hop, several teachers used phrases like “of course,” and “it’s very popular.” Others seemed to assume that I already knew it was prevalent among students and went on to immediately describe their feelings about Hip Hop, stories of classroom incidents relating to Hip Hop, or conversations they had with students about Hip Hop music. Four teachers explicitly tied the racial makeup of the school with the musical preference of their students. For example, Rhonda Clark, a 58-year-old black history teacher at Rural High was confident that her students were listening to Hip Hop even though it was her first year teaching at the school:

AM: Oh, now, moving towards your students that you teach at Rural High, do they listen to Hip Hop music or are they involved in Hip Hop?
RC: I could probably bet a million dollars in rent that they do listen to it.

Later in the interview Ms. Clark went on to explain her reasoning for believing that her students listened to Hip Hop:

And I will say this, Rural High is a black school. How their zones were just black, I don’t know, which I have a problem with. And there’s a few whites. I’ve seen maybe, maybe five white students. But, um, so when you get a bunch of black people together, you’re going to have Hip Hop. You’re going to have whatever music it takes to get us started. And um, so, as a black school, trust me, they got it.

Though Ms. Clark did not consider herself familiar with Hip Hop music or culture, she felt strongly that in a school serving mainly black students it was the prominent genre. To Ms. Clark, the prevalence of Hip Hop was a result of a school segregated by race.

Several scholars across disciplines have emphasized the importance of Hip Hop culture in the lives of black youths (Alim 2006; Carter 2003, 2005, 2006; Clay 2003; Emdin 2010, 2013; Ginwright 2004; Kelley 1994; Ladson-Billings 2013; Powell 2003). Over the past four decades Hip Hop has drastically spread from the Bronx, New York partly because its messages resonate with marginalized groups (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009). Despite the vast literature on its appeal among young racial minorities, it would still be problematic to assume that Hip Hop is prevalent in every school serving high percentages of black youth. Therefore, I was sure to gather data from teachers indicating that Hip Hop was widespread in both Core School and Rural High. It was especially important to obtain this data from the perspective of teachers. The views these teachers held toward Hip Hop would be significantly less consequential if they did not believe students listened to or participated in Hip Hop.

**Older Music Viewed as more Positive: Rose-Colored Glasses or Industry Shifts?**

Fourteen teachers viewed older music as more positive than current Hip Hop music. This seemingly superior older music was often the music that the teacher listened to growing up. Ms. Clark explained that she grew up listening to “nice” music made by artists like Stevie Wonder.
and The Temptations, but felt that Hip Hop was leading her students to disruptive behavior.

Mark Ross, a 62-year-old white English teacher at Rural High, felt strongly that the music from the 1960s and 1970s was of greater value than current Hip Hop. When asked how he felt about Hip Hop culture he stated:

Well, I think that they [Hip Hop artists] really look down on their audience. And I think they’ve really gone to the lowest common denominator in most cases. Rihanna being a good exception. I don’t know if you call that Hip Hop or not. I guess, I assume I would. But, um, I just think it’s a shame that there isn’t the idealism that fueled so much of the music that I grew up with that we still hear. I mentioned to the class, you know, a couple years ago, Lil Wayne put out an album the very same day that The Beatles rereleased something that had been released 25 years earlier, and The Beatles kicked his ass. The Beatles outsold him something like 3 or 4 to 1. I said, “Why? They [the fans] all had heard those songs again and again and again and again.” I said, “Why?” I said, “Because there’s value to it.” I said, “There’s timeless qualities that last. Why do we still study Shakespeare all these years later? Because there are universal truths in the music, in the play, in what they’re writing, whatever it is, that lasts. Things that are always going to be true.” I said, “I don’t see that in much of this music. It’s a fad. It’s a passing thing.” One of the examples I used was Soulja Boy. I said, “Thank god we haven’t heard anymore from Soulja Boy! Thank god! There is a god!” In fact, I even had a clip about that in one of my classes. We just read Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, which is a really optimistic play about life and the future of humanity, and I said, “Would Shakespeare have been so optimistic had he known that something like Soulja Boy was going to happen many years in the future?!” You know, the kids got a big laugh out of that. I just think it’s a shame that they don’t respect their audience more and try to raise the bar like The Beatles did. Like Springsteen did. Like Bob Dylan did. Certainly, you know, they raise the level of intelligence of their readers and listeners. I mean, it happened to me. And I don’t see that happening. We know they [Hip Hop artists] love guns. We know they don’t like the police. We know they love drugs. We know they want to talk about sex or whatever. It’s a shame. Cause I think these are hungry minds [minds of his students]. They want to be challenged. I’ve seen it in my classroom. When I can show them the good stuff. When I can raise the bar, you know, they’re there. They know Thoreau. Thoreau’s not easy. And they respond to him? If they respond to him then why couldn’t they respond to some of these Hip Hop artists talking about real issues, not just, you know, how many women they’ve slept with, or that they’re at the club.

Mr. Ross makes several interesting comparisons throughout this passage. He claims that the majority of Hip Hop artists fail to speak on issues that stimulate minds and instead resort to a focus on hedonistic pleasures and violence. The works of authors such as Shakespeare and
Thoreau are said to be of higher value than the majority of the work produced from Hip Hop, which Mr. Ross viewed as a depreciable. Such views reinforce the separation of dominant cultural capital and non-dominant cultural capital. These views credit work that has traditionally been included in most educational curriculums and demeans Hip Hop, a culture that has been marginalized in various institutions since its inception. In addition to Shakespeare and Thoreau, Mr. Ross viewed the classic rock artists he grew up listening to as intellectually superior, stating that the meaningfulness of their work was the reason they continued to outsell current Hip Hop artists. It is important to note, however, that he felt his students would respond to Hip Hop artists that had more thought provoking content.

Other teachers who were younger than Mr. Ross and Ms. Clark also felt that the content of the music they grew up listening to was of greater value than what was being produced by current Hip Hop artists. These teachers often emphasized how the content of Hip Hop music had worsened over the years. Catherine Boyd, a 45-year-old black English teacher at Rural High, had fond memories of Hip Hop in the 1980s and early 1990s because of its inspirational messages. When I first meet Ms. Boyd she immediately told me how she would play music in her classroom, but only the music that was from her generation. During our interview I brought this topic back up in order to learn why this was the case:

AM: When I was walking here you had said that you play some of the music from your generation?

CB: My generation. Salt-N-Pepa, Run D.M.C., oh, I can’t even think of them all. Heavy D. Things of that nature. Um, Queen Latifah. Things of that nature. If you notice, back then it was more inspiring. Uh, it wasn’t so belittling. The music that they’re [her students] listening to today, it’s telling them that women aren’t blank. And you have to steal and rob to be somebody or to have money.

Ms. Boyd went on to explain how her students would tell her of artists and songs they enjoyed. She would go home and listen to them which often resulted in her being gravely
Ms. Boyd, who also served as a pastor in the community, said, “I’ll go home and listen to it, and pray about it, because after you finish listening to their music you need to pray about it.”

Frank Green, a 42-year-old black history teacher at Rural High, held similar views regarding the evolution of Hip Hop and the deterioration of its content. He believed that in the late 1980s more Hip Hop music spoke on important social issues affecting disenfranchised populations, yet its subject matter changed drastically. Mr. Green stated:

I’ve seen it move from an expression of reality in the neighborhood to more of a misogynistic, denigrating kind of music. You know, it’s all about, you know, money, guns, women—the music per se. There are some people who have some things to say. Kendrick Lamar and others who’ve got some stuff to say. Um, J. Cole. But for the most part it’s become a big industry now. And it’s about what’s going to make money, rather than what’s going to make a statement.

Like Mr. Ross, Mr. Greene provided examples of current artists that were an exception to the recent trends regarding the content of Hip Hop music. The artists who he mentioned (Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole), however, were more widely accepted as Hip Hop artists compared to Rhianna, who is generally viewed as a R&B or Pop artist that frequently collaborates with Hip Hop artists. While their examples were different, they both agreed that newer artists who discussed topics of importance were exceptions to the overall trends of current Hip Hop music.

Teachers who were younger than both Mr. Greene and Ms. Boyd agreed that current Hip Hop was of lesser value compared to past Hip Hop. However, they often referenced relatively newer artists when making comparisons. Brittany Roland, a 35-year-old black Spanish teacher at Rural High, provided the following the response when I asked her how she felt about Hip Hop:

[Sigh] It’s not what it used to be. It’s really not what it used to be. I can’t think of an artist that compares to an artist of the past. I mean, it’s hard. Like, Outkast is a favorite. A Tribe Called Quest is a favorite. Um, Lil Wayne has fallen off. You know,
Drake, he was once good. But I think it’s actually dying out. Cause T.I.’s not even what he used to be. Yeah, so I think Hip Hop is like really dying. It has fallen by the wayside.

Ms. Roland agreed that Hip Hop changed for the worse, however, the past artists she referenced released material from the early 1990s to the 2000s. Similar comments were made from other teachers who were similar in age to Ms. Roland.

While 14 teachers stated that older forms of music were better than the current music being produced, three teachers felt as though the criticism recent Hip Hop was receiving was no different than past criticisms directed at other earlier genres of music. Greg Jamieson, a 30-year-old black history teacher from Core School, stated:

You know, I don’t think that it’s [Hip Hop] going anywhere. It’s the same thing that they said about Elvis shaking his hips on the television screen and saying this is too much and this is rebellious and it’s out of control, and they didn’t think it would last long. Rock is still around. Same thing they can say about rapping with the biopic, the N.W.A. movie [“Straight Outta Compton”]. And, I mean, it’s interesting that that has a biopic, and Elvis doesn’t. Or just yet anyway. He has documentaries, but that’s more so about his death. But these people [members of N.W.A.] are still alive and have a documentary? (Chuckles). And I think that it’s funny because they said that that would die quicker than Rock ‘N Roll would. And it’s still around. But yeah, I love it because of what it represents for the people. Now it’s largely influenced by youth culture. You know, whatever the youth say goes almost within it [Hip Hop].

Mr. Jamieson drew interesting comparisons, stating that much like Rock ‘N Roll, Hip Hop would last despite initial criticism. He also stated that young people have a profound influence on Hip Hop culture, which has been the case historically (Rose 1994; Chang 2005).

Similar views and comparisons were made by Mr. Hester. When asked how he felt about Hip Hop he stated:

I like it. I do. Because I’m a music teacher, I don’t think any particular genre of music deserves a stigma or a stereotype, or a tag put on it, because, if you think about it, when the Beatles first came to America back in the 60s, everybody looked at that like, “What is that? What are they doing?” You know, it was different. You know, so I think it’s the same way we look at Hip Hop today. Fifty years from now we’ll look back at Hip Hop and those will be classics, you know [laughs]. Fifty years from now [laughs].
Mr. Hester acknowledged the stigma associated with Hip Hop, but felt it was unwarranted. Both Mr. Hester and Mr. Jamieson predicted a longevity for Hip Hop, unlike teachers who believed it was either a “passing fad,” or had already “fallen by the wayside.”

There are various ways to interpret the finding that several teachers believed older music had better content compared to the current music popular among their students. Variations in tastes and the classification of newer music as deviant could be the result of generational differences. Adult society has often denigrated newer musical genres (Binder 1993). Older generations once complained that the Blues, Jazz, and Rock ‘N Roll were corrupting young people (Binder 1993; Peterson 1972; McDonald 1988; Rosenbaum and Prinsky 1991). These musical forms, which were once seen as destructive, later went on to be highly respected and studied in educational settings.

While it is plausible that teachers’ strong opinions regarding the content of newer Hip Hop could merely be the result of generational differences, there is also merit to the argument that the content of Hip Hop music has indeed become more problematic in recent years. Scholars studying the history and evolution of Hip Hop culture have claimed that neoliberal policies of the mid-1990s allowed for a drastic increase in the corporate takeover of radio stations and the promotion of “commercial hip hop” (Rose 2008:25) or “corporate rap” (Fernandes 2011:14), terms referring to songs that lack a progressive political message and are designed for mainstream consumption. Rose (2008) states that the widely disbursed “commercial hip hop” of the past couple of decades has contained a troubling increase in lyrics that are sexist, racist, and violent in nature. In addition to changing radio structures, Rose (2008) explains other factors contributing to this change in content, which include artists who solely
care about financial gains, as well as fans, journalists, and academics who have failed to take a
necessary critical look at Hip Hop music and videos.

Whether newer music is more degrading than past music or not is or is beyond the scope
of this study. It is important, however, to note that several teachers found the music their
students consumed to be of lesser value compared to the music of their generation. I now turn to
findings regarding the positive views teachers had towards Hip Hop, as well as the negative
ones, noting that most of the negative views were associated with the current Hip Hop enjoyed
by their students.

**Positive Views of Hip Hop: Increasing a Sociopolitical Consciousness**

Nine teachers expressed positive views of Hip Hop, most often by stating that Hip Hop
addressed important social issues. Mr. Jamieson described how despite Hip Hop’s sometimes
explicit language, it ultimately represented the legitimate frustrations of younger people and
should be taken seriously:

> I feel like if politicians, or I feel like if people in government positions or a social service
> worker actually listened to what was coming out the mouths of some of these rappers,
> they actually might be making policies to counteract what’s going on with some of the
> problems that they are talking about. And that’s why I love Hip Hop, because it’s
descriptive. It’s sociology, if you will. It lets you know what’s going on amongst the
> people, around the people [chuckles]. You know you can study that.

During the interview Mr. Jamieson referred to Hip Hop artists as “urban philosophers,”
“street philosophers,” and “street poets.” Analogous descriptions have been made by Morrell
(2008), a scholar who calls for the inclusion of Hip Hop in educational curriculums. Mr.
Jamieson concluded the interview by saying that he believed the art produced from Hip Hop was
a reflection of reality.

Similar comments were made by Mr. Greene, who focused on the issue of police
brutality:
And when I first experienced Hip Hop culture it was about making a stance. You know, you have a new movie that came out about *Straight Outta Compton*, and lot of what they said was controversial, but when Ice Cube said, “F*** the police,” it was because the police were in their neighborhoods antagonizing them. And so it was out of that context that he was able to write that music. And so it was an expression of their reality.

Both Mr. Green and Mr. Jamison believed that the language used by Hip Hop artists was warranted because it spoke to serious social problems. Mr. Vickers, a 55-year-old black art teacher at Core school, and Whiney Smith, a 50-year-old American Indian industrial arts teacher at Core School, also believed that Hip Hop shed light on social issues. They did not always feel this way about Hip Hop, but their views changed after discussions with their children and students. When I asked Ms. Smith how she felt about Hip Hop she replied:

Well, it always goes back to this one artist I *really* didn’t like. And his name was Tupac Shakur. And for some reason I didn’t like him because some of his lyrics were kind of, they had a lot of profanity in them. And so then I started hanging out with my friends and then different people would have him playing at different parties. I’m like, “Here is this song again. Why are they playing this so much?” And then my own child became of age and wanted to start listening to it. And he said, “Well mom, maybe you should start listening to this more often because he’s talking about things that you’re concerned about.” I’m like, “Really? Like what?” [My son said,] “The economy and why blacks are doing this, why whites are doing that.” And then he [Tupac] said that all blacks and whites and all different cultures smoke crack at night. I’m like, “Really?” So I start listening. And then what he said made sense. The young man was kind of telling a story about what he saw out in the street that, if you don’t go out at night, or if you don’t hang around people that are in low socioeconomic conditions, some of these things you would never know about unless you hear it in a song.

The idea that Hip Hop speaks to important social issues by giving a voice to historically disenfranchised populations has been conveyed by numerous scholars studying Hip Hop culture (Dyson 2007; Fernandes 2011; Perry 2004). Though teachers varied somewhat in the issues they focused on, nine teachers believed Hip Hop shed light on important social problems. This was indeed the most prevalent positive view that teachers had in regard to Hip Hop. Such views relate to Ladson-Billings’ (2014) concept of a “sociopolitical consciousness,” which she claims
students should develop through culturally relevant pedagogy (p. 75). Through a sociopolitical consciousness, students are taught to critically analyze social structures which perpetuate inequality. It is important to note that nine teachers felt some Hip Hop artists spoke to important social issues, perhaps highlighting Hip Hop’s potential to help students develop a sociopolitical consciousness.

Teachers also discussed other positive aspects of Hip Hop including the impressive technological innovations of Hip Hop artists (two teachers), its ability to inspire philanthropic activities (two teachers), and its ability to bring people together (one teacher). I now turn to the negative views teachers had towards Hip Hop.

Negative Views of Hip Hop: Promoting Problematic Ideas to Young People

Fifteen teachers believed that Hip Hop had a negative effect on their students by distracting them from school. Hip Hop was said to distract students from academic achievement in two ways: (1) it presents an unlikely path to financial success and (2) students would rather listen to Hip Hop or perform rap songs than complete schoolwork. Six teachers focused on the unlikely path to financial success presented by Hip Hop, while seven teachers stated that students preferred Hip Hop over school work assignments; two teachers described both as problematic.

Kate Willis was a 25-year-old black Spanish teacher at Rural High. I met her at the Rural High open house, but by the time I conducted an interview with her she had moved to a school in another county that served students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The constant relocation of teachers at Rural High was common, as it historically had high teacher turnover rates. Ms. Willis stated that students at her new school had aspirations that were “attainable,” unlike the students at Rural High. During our interview I asked how many of her students at Rural High were involved in Hip Hop. I present her reply in the exchange below:
AM: How many [students] write their own raps or are involved in it?

KW: All of them! Mainly all the boys. The girls too! Yeah, they’re all aspiring rappers. They all want to be a rapper. But I just told them, like, have a plan B. [They will say,] “Plan B is being a football player.” Alright, “What’s a plan C?” “There is no plan C.” So, that’s when I come in like, “Let’s face reality.”

Another teacher who felt Hip Hop presented an unlikely path to financial success was Ruthie Parker, a 59-year-old black English teacher at Core School. She stated:

Rapping is very simple. You don’t have to be smart to rap. And a lot of our guys have this false hope that, “I’m gunna be rapper.” And they spend their entire time pulling lyrics together and no educational work. Like, T-Pain. Everybody wanted to be a T-Pain when T-Pain came out. And it didn’t require any education. It’s just lyrics and a beat. So you’ll find them spending most of their time doing lyrics and beats, but not learning math and algebra and stuff. So, I would say within the last 15 years it has affected us very, very negatively in the last 15 years. Maybe a little bit more.

Dr. Parker believed Hip Hop was a distraction because students thought they could become prosperous through rapping, an activity that she felt required very little intelligence and was not relevant to other scholarly activities. She referenced T-Pain, a versatile Hip Hop and R&B artist, who gained international fame in the mid-2000s. Though T-Pain symbolized success for her students, to Ms. Parker he was a poor role model that distracted students from their studies.

The views expressed by these teachers align with those of Ferguson (2001) who states that in the late 1980s the rise of “gangsta rap,” a subgenre of Hip Hop that focuses on living amongst drugs, crime, and violence, encouraged black and Latino/a youth to internalize the messages promoted through songs. Ferguson claims gangsta rap likely led to a decrease in leisure reading and promoted the idea that excelling in school was not a viable way to achieve success. These ideas are similar to those found in Ogbu’s oppositional culture theory (2004), which states that black youth do not put forth sufficient effort in school-related activities because
they view formal education as unrelated to success in later life due to society’s opportunity structure.

Rick Simmons, a 60-year-old white science teacher at Core School, did not state that he felt Hip Hop presented a faulty avenue for success that pushed students away from schoolwork, but he did feel that students’ constant listening to music through electronic devices inhibited productive classroom participation. Mr. Simmons expressed his frustration by saying:

You know, I don’t know how many times this year I said, “Put the cellphone away. Put the headphones away. They’re supposed to be in your locker.” I didn’t make an issue out of it like I probably should have. But, I thought they’d caught on, you know, that there’s a time for this and there’s a time for something else. And the something else is chemistry or biology or environmental science or whatever.

Simmons made a clear distinction between science and listening to Hip Hop music. Though he understood that his students enjoyed listening to music, he believed they needed to concentrate on science when they were in his classroom. Such comments indicate that Mr. Simmons would prefer that his students be what Carter (2006) refers to as “cultural straddlers,” leaving their music behind when entering his science class. Emdin (2010, 2013) has critiqued such pedagogical philosophies, calling for the inclusion of Hip Hop into science courses in order to engage students so that they don’t have to see the classroom as “something else,” which has seemingly little relevance to other aspects of their lives.

Other teachers felt that even when physical devices (such as cellphones or MP3 players) were not being played by students in the classroom, the constant consumption of Hip Hop in other spaces still led to problems inside the classroom. Ms. Clark explained:

I’m sure they have their telephones with them and their earphones and somewhere down the line, they use it. If it means going to the bathroom, taking it with them to the bathroom. So they’re going to listen to their music. And I think sometimes they sit in those classes and they hear the music in their head. Like, they’ll tune out what the teacher is saying, but they can play that music in their head psychologically.
In addition to distracting students from school, several teachers were concerned about the sexism promoted by Hip Hop lyrics and videos. Of the fourteen women interviewed in the study, seven discussed the problems with sexism in Hip Hop, and of the ten men interviewed, five brought up problems with sexism in Hip Hop. While the men were concerned with misogynistic lyrics (often taking issue with the derogatory labels given to women through songs), the women spent more time elaborating on the images projected by music videos and the effect this had on their students, and sometimes even themselves.

Jan Richards, a 62-year-old white English teacher at Rural High, explained how she was disturbed by sexism in Hip Hop, particularly gangsta rap:

So, but yeah, Hip Hop, for me, I mean, of course all my students listen to it. You know, gangsta rap is what I don’t like, because of all the negative connotations that there are to the words and the actions and the videos. Really repulsive I think, because the men are always fully dressed. The women are always practically nude, and all the bling.

She later went on to say she was troubled and confused by the sexual imagery that was broadcast through various media outlets:

I’ll watch like MTV and some of the black groups that are on, and, you know, and the magazines and the books and things that they have are, you know, the guys are all clothed in T Shirts and jeans and hats. The girls are practically bare, just writhing around as sexual objects. Even the bright women.

Ms. Richards associated this sexist imagery with “black groups.” While she was indeed disturbed by the sexism projected through Hip Hop, she did not seem to internalize the messages. During the interview she also stated that she could not understand why “bright women” would participate in such exploitative activities as revealing so much of their bodies in music videos.

Ms. Willis shared Ms. Richards concern regarding the sexism in Hip Hop, but appeared to be more personally affected by it:

Then you have those rappers who are talking about gang violence or drugs or, you know, disrespecting women, and then that’s reflecting back on the kids and how they view themselves. So and now the girls are thinking they have to get, and even just me, I’m
thinking I have to have this Beyoncé booty when I’m not blessed like that [slight laugh]. And the girls are wearing booty pads for that reason, or wearing so much makeup, or eye brows on fleek [manicured eyebrows]. whatever you want to say. They think that’s how they’re supposed to look, or that’s how they’re supposed to be, or you’re supposed to be a man’s property, or it’s ok if man has a side woman. No! It’s not ok.

Unlike Ms. Richards, Ms. Willis could directly relate to the expectations to obtain an unrealistic physical appearance. Her comment, “even just me” shows that she was personally affected by the images presented through Hip Hop. When saying, “eyebrows on fleek”, she was referring to the pressures to maintain manicured eyebrows. She also was concerned for the young women she taught, who she believed were also affected by such images and lyrical content.

Ms. Boyd was another teacher who was troubled by the sexism in Hip Hop, primarily in regards to the newer music and videos. She would show her students Hip Hop videos of earlier female groups like Salt-N-Pepa, a trio that gained popularity throughout the mid-1980s and early 1990s. She explained her reasoning for exposing students to these artists:

I was trying to teach the young ladies, you know, you love shaking your rump, ok, well let me show you how we shook our rump back in the day. It wasn’t so provocative. And you can even show them what we had on. We had on jeans. They were cut out, but you didn’t see any body parts. The music that they listen today, the females in the videos, they’re half naked. So I’m like, come on, something’s wrong with that picture. And to me, that’s a female crying out for attention. And then, I take myself. I always use myself as a testimony. “Look at what Ms. Boyd has on today. You know, I can still dance and have a good time. A young man’s still going to be attracted to me, and you see no body parts.” So you try to teach them self-esteem.

Ms. Boyd believed that showing less sexually provocative Hip Hop videos from the past would present a more positive image of women to her students. She also used herself as an example of how woman should dress, unlike Ms. Richards who appeared more removed from the issue, and Ms. Willis who seemed more negatively affected by the issue.

Hip Hop has indeed received staunch criticism for sexist lyrics and video images from numerous scholars (e.g., Low, Tan, and Celemencki 2013; Rose 2008). Several Hip Hop albums
and music videos consumed by millions worldwide often portray women as disposable sexual objects, readily available to please men, thus reinforcing an oppressive system of patriarchy. Arnett (2003) states that sexual exploitation of women in gangsta rap is at a transgressive extreme which is unlike anything seen in previous musical genres. Kitwana (2002) argues that this objectification and exploitation of women has increased in Hip Hop since the late 1980s. Several teachers in my study were deeply troubled by the sexism in Hip Hop and its effects, with the men focusing on derogatory terms used by rappers, and the women elaborating on the problematic images presented in music videos.

Ten teachers shared concern over the drug references presented in Hip Hop. Five of the teachers were concerned primarily with music that promoted drug use, two teachers were concerned about the promotion of selling drugs, and three teachers expressed concern over the promotion of both selling and using drugs.

Cynthia Sanders, a 26-year-old black history teacher at Rural High, explained that she witnessed a student suffer from what she presumed to be addiction to Molly, a psychoactive drug (3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine). Ms. Sanders despised any form of music that promoted drug use, whether it be Hip Hop, Rock, Pop, or R&B. She stated, “Because in our community, in the community that I’m in, it’s like a war on Molly. Molly is taking over our youth. Molly is destroying this generation.” Similar views were expressed by Ian Perkins, a 43-year-old white science teacher at Rural High. Like Ms. Sanders, he was disturbed by the promotion of drug use in Hip Hop and other forms of music:

I just know that there’s some artists who glorify drugs, and it’s not just Hip Hop, I should make that clear. It’s popular, you know, music and just different styles. A lot of artists in popular music are promoting drugs, and I’m not happy about that because kids think it’s safe to do that stuff. It’s not.
Monica Pint, a 32-year-old black English teacher at Core school, emphasized the problem of Hip Hop’s promotion of selling drugs, which was also referred to as “trapping” in several current songs. In the passage below, she explains the effect Hip Hop could potentially have on students:

AM: So, what sort of effect do you think that Hip Hop has on the students?

MP: Um, it could kind of have a negative affect at times, because I think their minds aren’t mature enough to know and understand the reality. You know what I’m saying? Like, I have students talking about, “Oh, after school we going to the trap house.” [I will tell them,] “No, you’re going to your grandma’s house. I know where you going. You know, you don’t know nothing about the trap house. You don’t know nothing about the struggle. You know, you have Jordans on your feet [expensive shoes]. You have Beat headphones [expensive headphones]. You don’t know nothing about slanging dope. You know nothing about that.”

AM: Will you tell the students that?

MP: Yes, because they think they’re just big and bad. And I can remember too. You know, listening to music you think you’re big and bad, but then, you know, you have to be brought back down to reality too. And, you know, that has a lot to do, maybe, with, you know, home training. Yeah, it’s just music, but don’t let it sink into your brain as if to make you think you’re something that you’re not. Especially if it’s not in positive way.

Ms. Pint saw the negative influence that songs about drug dealing could have on students and thought it was necessary to have conversations with students about this issue. Later in the interview she explained that she would tell some students that a life of drug dealing was not ideal and would inevitably lead to incarceration or an early death. Ms. Pint told her students to refrain from the alternative avenue of drug dealing presented in Hip Hop and instead focus on school as a way to achieve success. It is important to note that Ms. Pint did not see Hip Hop’s promotion of drug dealing as a reflection of her students’ present realities, but instead as something that could shape their future realities in a negative manner.
Nine teachers expressed concern over the violence in Hip Hop music. Teachers stated that it was important for students to understand the difference between reality and the fantasy of violence projected through Hip Hop. Mr. Greene described the serious problems occurring in the lives of young men who were influenced by the violence in Hip Hop:

I’ve seen more of the negative impact of Hip Hop and how you have young guys who especially feel like, ok, I’m just supposed to be hard and hang and, you know, have all the women I can have, and carry guns and shoot. And they don’t understand that if you live your life like that, you’re going to see downfall. I’ve been to the courtroom. I’ve been to jailhouse visits. I’ve visited hospitals. I’ve buried people who got caught up in the more thuggish side of Hip Hop, you know. And so, that’s where I’ve seen the more negative effect.

Mr. Greene’s concerns are similar to those of Giroux (1996) who contends that young black men are entrapped in a culture of violence that has been commercialized and promoted by various media outlets through Hip Hop, thus exacerbating the problem. Arnett (2003) claims that the violence in gangsta rap is transgressive, as artists “describe murders they have committed, brag about evading others’ murder attempts, and warn adversaries not to cross them or face potential violence” (p.137). Mr. Greene, who served as a Pastor in the community, saw the serious harm that came from his former students being encouraged by violent content.

Seven teachers described concerns they had regarding promotion of materialism through songs. Sara English, a 40-year-old white English teacher at Rural High, stated:

SE: It’s very popular here [Hip Hop]. Yes. And I think the worse part of it is that it makes kids only care about, like, it’s all about money. A lot of the songs are all about money and cars and that leads to women [chuckles].

For many teachers the materialism promoted through current Hip Hop was also related to other activities that were troubling. Paula Morris, a 48-year-old black English teacher at Core School, explained:

Because I mean, it’s talking about partying, smoking, drinking, getting cash illegally [said with emphasis] half the time. And just materialistic things. And I’m like, but you
have to earn that. You have go out there and work and be a productive citizen. Get a
degree. Get a training, you know.

Five teachers were troubled by Hip Hop artists speaking out against authority figures.
This was not surprising, considering that the teachers were in a position of authority themselves,
holding a job that required instilling discipline in youth. Three of the teachers focused on
rappers speaking out against police officers, but unlike Mr. Greene who believed that aggressive
lyrics condemning police brutality from earlier artists were understandable, these teachers had
deep concerns about such rhetoric. Ms. Sanders described this negative aspect of Hip Hop in the
passage below:

CS: You know, some Hip Hop says that police are pigs and police aren’t good, but in
actuality there are still some good policemen out there. So, that’s the negative impact
that it can have.

AM: So do you see that as a problem? Especially now with all this awareness of police
brutality?

CS: I feel like no one should speak out against the police in a rap song right now because,
just in light of everything that’s happening, you don’t want to have a negative attitude
when the police stops you right now, because look at all things that are happening. Look
at Sandra Bland. Look at, um, just everything that’s happening. I was going to say
Jordan [Davis] but didn’t. That was a whole other situation. So, I feel like you shouldn’t
even have a bad attitude with the police right now. You should be as pleasant as
possible. But I don’t think rappers should be rapping against police right now. Because
their music reaches the masses so it can affect the wrong person.

AM: Have you heard rappers rapping against the police?

CS: Ice T back in the day. I think he made a song about the police, but, you know, like I
said, I don’t really listen to that. Yeah.

AM: Right. But that approach is not something that you think is a good thing?

CS: It’s definitely not. Not at all.

Similar views were held by Ernest Coughlin, a 56-year-old black music teacher at Core
School. He discussed his disdain for the increase in vulgarity in rap lyrics throughout the years:
And based on the other thing that I see that’s happened in the Hip Hop culture, it’s become extremely vulgar. It’s become extremely derogatory. It’s become extremely negative. Whereas, at the very outset, there were those social ills that were addressed in a very, very positive way. Now, I don’t get the positive aspect out of it. I get a lot of, like I said, I get a lot of the derogatory stuff. This whole black and white label issue is something that just appalls me. You know, because not only are you [a Hip Hop artist] creating it, but you’re creating it with the expressed intention of actually sharing that information with people who really aren’t prepared to hear that, to get that, and to establish that mindset for themselves. The majority, or, a good number, I won’t say the majority, but a good number of our listeners to those explicit lyric pieces are 18 years and younger. You know, so now you’re creating this mindset and this mentality that it’s ok for you to walk up and say any ole kind of thing. Why? Because you just heard it on the record.

When speaking of the “black and white label” issues, Coughlin was referring to labels placed on albums to warn listeners that they contained explicit content. These labels currently prevent people under the age of 16 years old from purchasing such albums at stores. Coughlin later went on to say that such music contributed to an attitude among young black men that was lackadaisical in nature and failed to respect authority:

You know, our African American males right now are coming into places where authority figures, that should be authority figures, are not being recognized as authority figures. So as a result of them not being recognized as authority figures, they step out of this domain and they go into the public where they don’t have a concept of what authority is. And because they don’t have a concept of what authority is, and what authority means and authority does and what authority should do for them, and what authority should do to support them, and things of that nature, they have a misnomer of what that actually is. And subsequently, your reaction and your response to authority sometimes puts you in situations, or detrimental situations, detrimental actions, even, what’s the word I’m looking for, fatal actions taking place.

Mr. Coughlin was clearly troubled by the attitudes against authority projected by young black men, and subsequently disapproved of such messages being reinforced through Hip Hop culture. Though some scholars have argued that Hip Hop expresses a passionate stance against police brutality (Boyd 2004), Ms. Sanders and Mr. Coughlin disapproved of any antipolice messages. They shared a deeply passionate concern over interactions between minorities and police officers, and did not want them to result in deaths.
As stated above, teachers held several negative views of Hip Hop culture, primarily due to the lyrical content of songs, the images projected via music videos, and the detrimental effects they felt these productions had on their students. Three teachers made negative comments about the musical style of Hip Hop, stating that it was loud, tedious, or overly simplistic. One teacher did not approve of the homophobia in Hip Hop, saying that it was continually “bashing gay rights.” For the most part, however, teachers focused how Hip Hop distracted students from school, conveyed sexist messages, contained references to drugs and violence, was overly materialistic, and spoke out against authority.

While most black and white teachers were in agreement regarding the aspects of newer Hip Hop music that they found troubling, the statements made by black teachers were often more powerful and personal compared to those of the white teachers. For example, while both Mr. Ross and Mr. Greene did not approve of the violence in Hip Hop culture, Mr. Greene, a pastor in the community, stated that he had “buried people who got caught up in the more thuggish side of Hip Hop.” Likewise, while both Mr. Perkins and Ms. Sanders worried about the drug use promoted through popular music, Ms. Sanders felt that drugs were negatively affecting the community in which she lived. Another example of powerful and personal comments came from Dr. Parker, who felt Hip Hop had negatively affected the academic performance of her children. While critical race theory implies that non-dominant cultural capital should be valued in educational institutions, this perspective can also be used to understand why stereotypical images and problematic content promoted through commercial rap music are likely more troubling to racial minorities compared to white people.
Discussions and Implications

This study contributes to the work on non-dominant cultural capital in social institutions. Past studies have shown that students feel as though their non-dominant cultural capital is devalued by educators (Carter 2003, 2005, 2006). My study supports this notion, but adds nuance to the discussion by shedding light on the specific aspects of Hip Hop culture that teachers find troubling.

Several teachers felt the recently released music their students consumed was more degrading than that of the past. This could either be the result of older generations viewing newer music as deviant (Binder 1993; Peterson 1972; McDonald 1988; Rosenbaum and Prinsky 1991), an actual deterioration of musical content due to the commodification of Hip Hop culture for corporate interests (Fernandes 2011; Folami 2007; Guy 2004; Kitwana 2002 Rose 2008; Watkins 2006), or a combination of both. One implication of this finding is that teachers incorporate critical media literacy into their pedagogy (Kellner and Share 2005; Morrell, Dueñas, Garcia, and López 2013; Morell and Duncan-Andrade 2006). Through critical media literacy, students can be taught to deconstruct problematic images and content presented to them through various media outlets.

The finding that nine teachers felt Hip Hop shed light on important social issues relates to Ladson-Billings’ (1995a) concept of students developing a sociopolitical consciousness through culturally relevant pedagogy. Hip Hop’s ability to speak to social issues, as recognized by these teachers, highlights it’s potential for meaningful inclusion in lesson plans. This finding also shows the mixed views teachers had in regard to non-dominant cultural capital, as they did not all see Hip Hop to completely lack positive substance.
The findings that teachers believed Hip Hop conveyed sexist messages, contained references to drugs and violence, was overly materialistic, and disrespected authority adds to the understanding of what teachers find troubling regarding this form of non-dominant cultural capital. Though these teachers expressed negative views of Hip Hop culture, it was usually out of deep concern for the wellbeing of their students. Teachers stated that they wanted their students to live productive lives, excel in school, and not participate in illegal activities. I believe that these findings call for Hip Hop based education to be paired closely with critical media literacy in order to simultaneously value students’ non-dominant cultural capital, while also teaching them to reject problematic ideals. Kellner and Share (2007a) state that critical media literacy broadens the literary practices taught in classrooms to include various forms of popular culture and mass communication. Critical media literacy is said to empower students by enabling them to understand the power structures that produce content consumed by the masses (Kellner and Share 2007b).

Recently there has been literature promoting Hip Hop based education in order to engage students who have historically been marginalized in educational settings (Hill 2009; Hill and Petchaur 2013; Ladson-Billings 2013). Several studies have highlighted successful inclusions of Hip Hop in curriculums as a form of culturally relevant pedagogy (Petchaur 2009). Low, Tan, and Celemencki (2013), however, make an important statement in regard to the inclusion of Hip Hop in educational spaces:

…very few educators detailing their critical rap pedagogies grapple with the tensions that hip-hop culture’s contradictory politics of representation around issues such as violence, gender, race, and materialism pose to education; this is in large part because scholars and educators are working in an advocacy mode to legitimate knowledge and literacy practices that are either ignored or disparaged by mainstream schooling. In advocating for this work, scholars often gloss over the tensions between hip-hop and school (120-121).
This study does not gloss over tensions between Hip Hop and school, but instead confronts them from the perspective of teachers. Such work may be important for those who advocate for Hip Hop based education.

While the devaluation of non-dominant cultural capital may contribute to the reproduction of inequality by marginalizing students in educational spaces, scholars should seek to understand which aspects of non-dominant cultural capital educators denounce. This study adds to the understanding of how Hip Hop is viewed by educational gatekeepers. Future research should continue to examine ways non-dominant cultural capital functions in institutions that have the potential to reduce or reproduce inequality.
CHAPTER 3

TEACHERS’ USES OF HIP HOP CULTURE

Introduction

The “achievement gap” often refers to the persistent disparity between black and white students in educational outcomes, including standardized test scores, grade point averages, and college attendance (Persell 2015; United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2015). This educational underachievement of black youth has been of interest to scholars across disciplines for several decades (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998; Fordham 1988; Guskey 2007; Hallinan 2001; Jensen 1969; Ogbu 1974). It is of great importance that these racial disparities in education are eliminated. Closing the achievement gap will likely help solve other social problems, considering the significant associations between education and income (U.S. Census Bureau 2016), avoidance of the penal system (Harlow 2003), and physical and psychological well-being (Reynolds and Ross 1998).

In the search for interventions that might reduce the achievement gap, some educational scholars have pushed for changes in teacher training and school curricula that will take into account students’ cultural backgrounds through “culturally relevant pedagogy” (Ladson-Billings 1995a). This chapter focuses on the potential of incorporating Hip Hop in predominantly low-income, black schools. The implementation of Hip Hop based education offers some promise in improving educational outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities (Hill and Petchauer 2013; Petchauer 2009, 2015). Bringing Hip Hop into the classroom as a form of culturally relevant pedagogy is said to help communicate to students that their culture is valued, making educational settings less hostile spaces for those who do not subscribe to the dominant culture (Stovall 2006). While past empirical investigations have documented successes in engaging students through
Hip Hop culture, they mostly rely on ethnographic accounts from experts who have described interventions (e.g. Hill 2009; Morrell and Duncan-Andrade 2002; Stovall 2006).

This study draws on in-depth interviews with teachers at predominantly low-income, black public schools in order to map out the various ways teachers attempt to incorporate Hip Hop into their pedagogy. It also uncovers factors that might impede the successful incorporation of Hip Hop into pedagogy. I find that teachers had varying levels of success at adding elements of Hip Hop into their classrooms or lesson plans. Younger black teachers described connecting Hip Hop with course materials and concepts, while also recognizing when their students make such connections. Additionally, some teachers relied on their knowledge of Hip Hop culture when using classroom management strategies. The incorporation of Hip Hop into classrooms was impeded by teachers’ concerns over content of Hip Hop songs or videos, perceived reluctance or opposition from the school administrators, and teachers not seeing Hip Hop as relevant to their subjects. Such findings contribute to the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy, highlighting successful examples of Hip Hop based education, while also identifying challenges to its broader implementation.

In the section that follows I provide a review of the literature on the teaching of racial and ethnic minorities. I begin with a description of “deficit approaches” that were prevalent during the 1960s and 1970s and move to an explanation of the “difference approaches” that followed (Paris 2012). I then explain culturally relevant pedagogy and its three central tenets: academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. From there, I explain how culturally relevant pedagogy inspired Hip Hop based education, providing examples of important studies in this field. Finally, I highlight the significant gaps in this literature and show how my study makes an important contribution.
Earlier Approaches to Teaching Racial and Ethnic Minorities

During the 1960s and 1970s, some educational scholars promoted “deficit approaches” for teaching racial/ethnic minorities and low-income students (Lee 2007; Paris 2012; Paris and Ball 2009; Valencia 2012). According to Paris (2012), deficit approaches “viewed the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling” (p.93). The deficit model thus views the values, beliefs, and norms of students from marginalized groups as inferior to those of the dominant culture, or the culture associated with the white upper and middle class. Successful schooling, in this view, requires that students adopt dominant cultural ways of being. Valuing, promoting, or upholding the culture of minority students is not necessary, and in fact may be detrimental to educational success, according to deficit approaches. These pedagogical models were advanced in the work of Bloom et al. (1965), Black (1966), and Edwards (1967), and relate to the “culture of poverty” explanation for inequality of Lewis (1961).

Paris (2012) states that in the 1970s and 1980s educational scholarship shifted from deficit approaches to “difference approaches” (p.94). The difference approach regards the cultures of racial and ethnic minorities and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as different from the dominant culture, yet still “equal” (Paris and Ball 2009). While these approaches to teaching were an improvement over deficit approaches, they still maintain a problematic implication that schools’ cultures and students’ backgrounds can be dissimilar, and schools need not be concerned with affirming the heritage or community practices of their students (Paris 2012). In other words, difference approaches acknowledge cultural differences
but do not advocate strategies to make educational materials and school environments more reflective of non-dominant cultures. Examples of such pedagogical models include Labov (1972), Heath (1983), and Smitherman (1977).

Educational researchers later drew attention to the how elements of racial and ethnic minority students’ cultures could effectively be brought into the classroom in order to improve educational outcomes and narrow achievement gaps (Au and Jordan 1981; Erickson and Mohatt 1982; Jacob and Jordan 1987; Vogt, Jordan and Tharp 1987). Rather than dismissing non-dominant cultures as deficient or in need of correction, this teaching approach argues that educational inequalities can be combated by matching the culture of educational settings with the culture of students (Goldenberg 2013; Paris and Ball 2009). The work of the late 1980s helped lay the groundwork for culturally relevant pedagogy, an educational theory and practice that has inspired teachers and researchers to move further away from deficit and difference approaches to educating racial/ethnic minorities. I describe culturally relevant pedagogy and its three dimensions in the next section.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Building on scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s that advocated bringing non-dominant culture into the classroom, Ladson-Billings (1995a) proposed a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. This theory was constructed from Ladson-Billings’ empirical investigation of eight highly successful elementary school teachers serving primarily low-income, black students in a school district in Northern California (1990). Ladson-Billings interviewed each teacher, performed observations of their classes, videotaped their teaching, and asked participants to analyze each other’s teaching practices. Her ethnographic analysis of effective classroom
practices for teaching racial/ethnic minorities resulted in her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (1995a).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is an approach to instruction that seeks to empower students “intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings 2009:22). There are three fundamental dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy: academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings 2014).

The first dimension, academic success, refers to students gaining educational skills that will enable them to be productive members in a democratic society (Ladson-Billings 1995b). In order for students to live productive lives they must have advanced literary and mathematic skills, as well as knowledge of governmental structures and the scientific method. Effective culturally relevant pedagogy leads students to acquiring the salient skills and knowledge base related to various academic disciplines. Ladson-Billings emphasizes this idea by stating that culturally relevant pedagogy “requires that teachers attend to students’ academic needs, not merely make them ‘feel good’” (1995b: 160). Though teachers might value the culture of their students, if they fail to provide them with skills and a knowledge base that ensures scholastic achievement, they are not culturally relevant teachers according to Ladson-Billings’ theory. In other words, teachers should not include non-dominant cultural capital as simply window dressing for a course, but instead should make sure that the inclusion of culturally relevant material is tied to substantive concepts and learning objectives.

The second dimension of culturally relevant pedagogy is cultural competence, which states that teachers should incorporate class materials that empower students by maintaining their cultural integrity and heritage (Ladson-Billings 1995b). In order for this dimension to be upheld,
teachers must develop a solid familiarity with the culture of their students. This cultural knowledge allows teachers to implement effective classroom activities and establish productive working relationships with their students. For example, Ladson-Billings (1995a) noted that one teacher in her study taught elements of poetry using lyrics from rap songs. The teacher used rap lyrics as a vehicle to move to other types of poetry, while valuing the culture of her students. The dimension of cultural competence helps prevent students who do not subscribe to the dominant culture from feeling alienated or marginalized in educational settings. This dimension also allows students to see educational environments not as places where they have to change who they are in order to succeed, but rather as places where their cultural ways of being are respected. From a sociological point of view, this principle ensures that teachers value the non-dominant cultural capital of students (Carter 2003, 2005, 2006).

Sociopolitical consciousness is the third dimension of culturally relevant pedagogy. This principle refers to students developing the “ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems” (Ladson-Billings 2014: 75). Though many students may be victims of several social injustices, through culturally relevant teaching they are taught to recognize and critique societal inequities, to connect their frustrations and experiences of injustices to their larger structural origins. Students are also encouraged to engage in activities (sometimes outside of the classroom) that address social issues (Ladson-Billings 1995b). This dimension is highlighted by teachers in Ladson-Billings’ (1995b) study by who taught students to critique the Eurocentric ideals presented in their assigned textbooks. These teachers also had students write letters to the local newspaper to inform the community that their textbooks were grossly out-of-date. A sociopolitical consciousness can also be obtained by bringing critical media literacy into the
classroom, which enables students to analyze the power dynamics of media outlets that produce content consumed by the masses (Kellner and Share 2007a). While this dimension is of great importance, Ladson-Billings admits that this is the most challenging aspect of her pedagogical theory to implement, and many teachers who claim to practice culturally relevant pedagogy do not pursue the sociopolitical principle (Ladson-Billings 2014).

The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy inspired the work of many educators and researchers for over two decades (Aronson and Laughter 2016). Ladson-Billings’ classic piece (1995a) laid the groundwork for scholars to develop and study innovative strategies in order to reach traditionally underserved student populations. Researchers and educators in numerous schools implemented culturally relevant pedagogy to teach a variety of subjects including English (Christianakis 2011), history (Esposito and Swain 2009), science (Milner 2011), and mathematics (Gustein 2003,2006). The dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy are also seen in the conception of “culturally responsive classroom management” which encourages teachers to understand their students’ cultural backgrounds and the broader sociopolitical context in order to use effective classroom management techniques (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran 2004).

Culturally relevant pedagogy provides a theory-based justification for bringing Hip Hop into the classroom to reach educational goals. Since the publication of Ladson-Billings’ groundbreaking work, Hip Hop has grown significantly and received increased attention from numerous educational scholars (Alim 2006; Emdin 2010; Goldenberg 2013; Hill 2009; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade 2002; Petchauer 2009; Pier 2012;). I now turn to a brief explanation of Hip Hop culture and its infusion in classrooms through Hip Hop based education, highlighting...
examples of how Hip Hop has been successfully brought into some classrooms in a variety of subjects.

**Hip Hop Based Education**

Hip Hop is a culture that originated in low-income, black and Latino/a neighborhoods in the Bronx, New York during early 1970s (Ogg and Upshal 1999; Rose 1994). Young people living in these disadvantaged neighborhoods brought resources together and participated in various artistic expressions. Many scholars view such activities as innovative responses to government cutbacks to social services, the removal of art and music programs from New York City public schools, and the destruction of thousands of homes due to urban renewal projects (Chang 2005; Rose 1994; Stovall 2013). Early members of Hip Hop culture practiced breakdancing (also known as b-boying or b-girling), MCing (also known as rapping), graffiti writing, and DJing (Alridge and Stewart 2005; Chang 2005), all of which make up the four primary elements of Hip Hop culture.

Since its inception over four decades ago, Hip Hop has become a global phenomenon, appealing to millions of people cross six continents (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009). Hip Hop has been viewed as a means for oppressed groups all over the world to speak on serious social problems (Dyson 2007; Fernandes 2011). It has also been appropriated by those in privileged positions for entertainment and financial gain (Kitwana 2005; Rodriguez 2006; Tate 2003). Despite the interest that various social groups have taken in Hip Hop, it remains especially important to black and Latino/a youth in the United States (Alim 2003; Carter 2003, 2005, 2006; Clay 2003; Emdin 2010; Ginwright 2004; Kelley 1994; Ladson-Billings 2013; Morrell and Duncan-Andrade 2004; Powell 2003). The significant role Hip Hop plays in the life
black youth makes its inclusion in educational spaces a potentially effective form of culturally relevant teaching.

Scholars and researchers have reported several examples of successful Hip Hop based education. For example, Stovall (2006) described a series of workshops he led for a public high school in Chicago. The workshops took place in a social studies class made up of black and Latino/a students. In the workshops, the students and Stovall discussed similarities between the writings of James Baldwin and the lyrics of the Hip Hop artists, Mos Def and Talib Kweli. Stimulated by Baldwin and the lyrics of socially-conscious rappers, the students in the class engaged in critical writing and discussions about structural inequalities. The workshops received positive evaluations from students who participated, yet many said they would have preferred to have chosen the Hip Hop songs, perhaps indicating their engagement with the exercise and implications for future uses of Hip Hop in the classroom.

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) designed and implemented a classroom unit that incorporated Hip Hop music in a high school English class in Northern California. They used Hip Hop as a bridge between urban cultures and the traditional literary canon. According to the authors, the students used Hip Hop to develop oral and written debate skills and become familiar with various poetic forms (i.e., sonnet, elegy, and ballad). Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) explained:

The unit was consistent with the original goals of being culturally and socially relevant, critically exposing students to the literary canon, and facilitating the development of college-level expository writing. The positioning of Hip-hop as a genre of poetry written largely in response to post-industrialism was a concept to which the students were able to relate (p.91).

Another important study in Hip Hop based education comes from Hill’s (2009) teacher-researcher study conducted in a high-minority, lower socioeconomic high school in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hill documented his experience teaching an English literature course centered in
Hip Hop culture. During the course, he led conversations among students which compared how the discussion of what is concerned “real” Hip Hop within the Hip Hop community related to which texts are considered legitimate in the school system. Students also engaged in critical analyses of Hip Hop lyrics, reading the lyrics of The Notorious B.I.G. and Jay-Z, and discussing how their songs described structural forces that oppress people of color. Though this study is highly praised among advocates of Hip Hop based education (Petchauer 2009; Prier 2012), some have critiqued Hill for failing to explore how being a black man might have allowed him to gain deeper connections with students while teaching this material compared to teachers of different races/ethnicities at the school (Carroll 2010).

The studies explained above provide examples of how Hip Hop can be incorporated in liberal arts courses such as English and social studies/history. Hip Hop’s relevance to English and social studies may seem apparent because of the poetic elements and social commentary present in many artists’ lyrics. Yet, Hip Hop’s pedagogical value may extend to the natural sciences as well. For example, Emdin (2010,2013) has written about Hip Hop’s potential for urban science education. Emdin (2010) conducted classroom observations followed by group discussions with students and teachers, also known as cogenerative dialogues (Tobin and Roth 2005), at two low-income, high-minority schools in New York City. Emdin found that science teachers initially failed to engage students in science classes, and that students held feelings of alienation in such settings. However, during cogenerative dialogues students often used analogies that related Hip Hop culture and science. For example, students compared the chemical process of thermosetting to the strong bonds among rap groups from the same neighborhoods. When teachers brought such analogies into lesson plans, Emdin (2010) observed increased discussion and engagement among students.
Emdin believes educational curricula that incorporate Hip Hop can spark student interest and combat feelings of alienation from school and from science in particular. Emdin (2013) has recently expounded on ways in which Hip Hop can be brought into science classrooms. For example, he states that teachers can make comparisons to the argumentation employed by Hip Hop artists over who is the better lyricist to the argumentation employed among scientists over formulas, theories, and the contributions of past scientists. Emdin (2013) emphasizes the need for an inclusion of Hip Hop in science classrooms by stating, “In essence, culturally relevant approaches to the academic needs of urban youth will inevitably result in ineffective teaching when they [teachers] do not consider that these youth are deeply immersed in hip-hop culture” (p.12). While the work on Hip Hop based education in science classrooms provides innovative examples of classroom lessons that can potentially engage students, there is still limited evidence that such practices increase student understanding in measurable outcomes.

Ladson-Billings has strongly endorsed the concept of Hip Hop based education, stating that Hip Hop is an important cultural vehicle for engaging students. In a recent piece, she explained the characteristics of 21st century students, stating how technological advancements and the rise of social media have shaped their lives (Ladson-Billings 2013). She claimed that educators should see Hip Hop as much more than merely a passing fad, but instead as a “common culture” among students (p.108). Perhaps Ladson-Billing’s most prominent endorsements of Hip Hop based education come from recent scholarly talks she continues to give at colleges and universities across the country titled, “Hip Hop/Hip Hope: Reinventing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.” She concluded a talk at Loyola University Maryland on October 16, 2014, with the statement:
I’m going to end with the question that nobody asks, but is always on peoples’ minds, “Well, what if the kids are not interested in Hip Hop?” The answer to that question is, “Well, what if they’re not interested in Shakespeare?” We will teach what we value.

Though there are numerous examples of effective Hip Hop based education, as well as strong endorsements from renowned educational scholars, some remain skeptical of the inclusion of Hip Hop in educational settings to engage racial and ethnic minorities. Gosa and Fields (2012) question whether the incorporation of Hip Hop in schools prepares students for success later in life as students enter other institutions (perhaps ones that strongly devalue Hip Hop culture). They also are skeptical of the authority and cultural knowledge of in-service teachers in regards to Hip Hop. While bringing Hip Hop into the classroom has the potential to captivate traditionally marginalized students, it could also be viewed as pandering, inauthentic, and a form of cultural appropriation.

In addition to Gosa and Fields’ concerns, there remain significant gaps in the literature on this topic. For one, most of the evidence of effective Hip Hop based education comes from case studies and episodic deployments of Hip Hop lesson plans where experts in Hip Hop enter schools and document successful teaching strategies. These are not always scientifically-based investigations of Hip Hop’s efficacy as culturally relevant pedagogy. Hill and Petchauer (2013) call for a move beyond teacher-researcher accounts:

In particular, while much of the HHBE [Hip Hop based education] research has been conducted by classroom teachers and community educators who often possess deep personal, social, and cultural connections to hip-hop culture, we know little about the lives of the preservice and in-service teachers for whom HHBE scholarship is intended. By failing to attend to this gap, HHBE scholars squander valuable opportunities to connect hip-hop based educational projects to the needs and interests of teachers and teacher educators (p.3).

It is indeed important to examine the experiences of in-service teachers who have considered, and perhaps succeeded at, incorporating Hip Hop into their classroom settings and lesson plans. Teachers who have less knowledge of Hip Hop culture compared to the experts
who have documented successful uses in the classroom will likely face challenges. Also, race, gender, and age might shape the degree to which teachers feel comfortable with and effectively use Hip Hop. While Hip Hop may help break down the barriers that contribute to student-teacher mismatches (Goldenberg 2013), its use in the classroom may also create new problems for teachers.

Additionally, there is little work on the use of Hip Hop in educational settings in the Southeast or in rural areas. Though Hip Hop originated in New York City, many prominent artists have come from Southern regions of the United States (Westhoff 2011; Wilson 2013). These southern artists have described the ways in which their environment has shaped their lyrical content, fashion, and instrumentation. They have also gained millions of fans in Southern regions and have contributed to Hip Hop’s international appeal. The deep connection that black youth have toward Hip Hop outside of urban areas in the Northeastern, Midwestern, and the Western regions should not be neglected by researchers examining culturally relevant pedagogies.

Purpose of Study

My study speaks directly to the gaps in the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and Hip Hop based education. I move beyond teacher-researcher accounts by conducting in-depth interviews with 24 in-service teachers serving in two predominantly low-income, black public schools in the Southeast. Two fundamental questions guide my research: (1) how do teachers incorporate Hip Hop into their teaching? and (2) what factors impede teachers’ willingness to bring in Hip Hop, or limit their successful incorporation of Hip Hop into teaching?

This study not only fills gaps in the literature in the aforementioned ways, it also has implications for educational policy. It may uncover innovative pedagogical techniques that
incorporate Hip Hop culture as a form of culturally relevant pedagogy. If so, such educational approaches and techniques could be emulated by other educators teaching low-income, black students. In her classic study on culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings (1995b) noted:

I believe this work has implications for both the research and practice communities. For researchers, I suggest that this kind of study must be replicated again and again. We need to know much more about the practice of successful teachers for African American and other students who have been poorly served by our schools (p.163).

This study moves beyond teacher-researcher accounts as recommended by Hill and Petchauer (2013), but maintains a qualitative nature. Louie (2016) states that qualitative studies can help reduce educational inequality by uncovering both cultural and social relationships, as well as examine challenges to the implementation of educational interventions. This study also answers calls for an interdisciplinary approach and seeks to reveal practices that might reduce inequality, rather than merely adding to the understanding of it (Gamoran 2014).

Methods

Data for this study come from in-depth interviews with 24 secondary public school teachers who worked at two high-minority, low-income schools in the Southeast region of the U.S. The first school, which I refer to as Core School, was located in a midsized, urban city. The second school, which I refer to as Rural High, was located in a nearby rural town (Please see Chapter 2 for more information on each school and their surrounding counties).

I interviewed 10 teachers from Core School and 14 teachers from Rural High, for a total of 24 participants. Fourteen teachers were female and 10 teachers were male. The teachers ranged in age from 25 to 66, with a median age of 44. Nine teachers’ highest level of educational attainment was a bachelor’s degree and 15 teachers had some form of a graduate degree (one of those being a doctorate degree). In regards to race, 15 teachers identified as black, eight identified as white, and one identified as American Indian. Information on age,
racial/ethnic identity, and academic background was obtained by having each participant fill out a demographic information fact sheet as recommended by Warren and Karner (2010). All teachers were given pseudonyms to protect identities.

I interviewed teachers who taught a variety of subjects including the core subjects of English (eight teachers), history (five teachers), science (four teachers), and math (one teacher), as well as the elective courses of industrial arts (one teacher), art (one teacher), music (two teachers), and Spanish (two teachers). I learned of each participant’s subject area from their school’s website and confirmed this information during the beginning of each interview. I sought teachers from various subject areas because studies on Hip Hop based education have documented the successful inclusion of Hip Hop in a variety of classes.

Interviews began in May 2014, with the last interview completed in December 2015. I recruited some participants via email or telephone, obtaining addresses and phone numbers from each school’s website. Other participants were recruited when I attended an open house for Rural High in August of 2015. At the open house, I approached teachers, informed them of my study, and obtained contact information in order to schedule interviews. After interviews, I asked respondents if any of their colleagues would be interested in participating in the study and was often given one or two names. Therefore, I employed a combination of convenience and snowball (or chain-referral) sampling (Biernacki and Dan Waldorf 1981 and Weiss 1994). After interviews were transcribed, I employed four distinct analytical processes as recommended by Weiss (1994). The first process was coding, in which I carefully read transcripts and assigned the data codes. Saldaña (2013) defines a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p.3). My codes were grounded in the data, as recommended by
Charmaz (2014), though my analytical lens as a sociologist who studies educational inequality shaped perceptions and interpretations of the data (Saldaña 2013). After coding, I moved to the second analytical process known as sorting, which involved placing similarly coded passages into excerpt files. I then moved to the third analytical process, local integration, in which I summarized the excerpt files, examining patterns of what was being said among the respondents. The final analytical process was inclusive integration, where I developed a logical framework of the areas of analysis that derived from local integration. I present this framework in the next section in order to answer the research questions: (1) how do teachers incorporate Hip Hop into their teaching? and (2) what factors impede teachers’ willingness to bring in Hip Hop, or limit their successful incorporation of Hip Hop into teaching? (Please see Chapter 2 for more information on interviewing and analytic processes).

Findings

Teachers described various ways in which they attempted to bring Hip Hop into the classroom. These efforts varied in their level of depth and connection to course concepts. Several teachers occasionally played Hip Hop music in the classroom while students were working on assignments, for special occasions, or to reward good behavior. Teachers incorporated Hip Hop into specific lesson plans with differing levels of success. Some younger black teachers were able to connect course material to Hip Hop or to recognize when students made such connections. Additionally, teachers relied on their knowledge of Hip Hop for classroom management purposes. The inclusion of Hip Hop into classrooms was impeded by teachers’ concerns over content of Hip Hop songs or videos (due to profanity, sexist images, and promotion of drug use), perceived reluctance or opposition from the administrators, and teachers
not seeing Hip Hop as relevant to their subjects. I describe these findings below using quotes from interviews, along with interpretative summaries and analysis.

**Changing the Learning Environment: Playing Music during Class Time**

A common use of Hip Hop, and the approach first brought up by many teachers when asked, was playing Hip Hop and other music to enhance the classroom environment. This admittedly minimal incorporation of Hip Hop does not constitute culturally relevant pedagogy as defined by Ladson-Billings’ theoretical model. Yet, it does reflect an attempt by teachers to reduce the gap between the school environment and black teen culture, thereby addressing broader issues of cultural match and the value of school personnel acknowledging non-dominant cultural capital. Twelve teachers stated that they would play music during class time; nine of these teachers played Hip Hop songs. Teachers would play music when their students were working on an assignment, as a reward when assignments had been completed, or during special occasions. Monica Pint, a 32-year-old black English teacher at Core School, explained why she would play music in the classroom:

One of my seniors had a birthday day back in November, so I played a version of “The Happy Birthday Song” by Luke. I played the clean version of that for the first three minutes of class and let him and his little classmates, you know, celebrate. But yeah, every blue moon I will play like, you know, something, but it’ll be the clean version.

Ms. Pint described playing music in class only during special occasions as indicated by her use of the phrase “every blue moon.” She made sure that when she did play a song it was the censored version, also known as the “clean version.”

Ms. Pint’s cautious use of Hip Hop forecasts one of the obstacles to implementing Hip Hop based education: concerns about lyrics that contain profanity, negative views of women, and references to violence and illegal activity. This concern over content was prominent, as eight of the nine teachers who played Hip Hop during class refrained from playing music that contained
lyrics they considered profane or derogatory. For example, Kelly Johnson, a 30-year-old black science teacher at Rural High, stated:

Sometimes… as a good teacher, if they have completed all their work… I’ll put on some clean music. Clean. No cussing. No drug affiliations. None of that. Which means usually old school music or something like, “I’m Happy” by Pharell (laughs).

While the need to play “clean” music was emphasized by almost all of the teachers who played Hip Hop in their classrooms, the exception to this rule is informative, which came from Kate Willis, a twenty-five-year old black teacher, who formerly taught Spanish at Rural High. I met Ms. Willis when I attended an open house at Rural High. However, by the time I conducted an interview with her a few weeks later she had moved to a school in a nearby county that served higher-income students. Ms. Willis stated that low pay and frustration with the administration at Rural High prompted her to leave the school during semester. In regards to playing music for students, Ms. Willis explained that she did not make an effort to play the censored version of Hip Hop songs in her classes (AM is the interviewer):

AM: So, like you’d bring in a radio? Or would you play it…

KW: No, I have the best system in the classroom. I used to get asked all the time [to play music]

AM: Which system?

KW: There was a really big speaker in the class and it was really loud. It was almost like we had a club in my classroom. And I used Pandora or I used my Google Play. And I would actually go home and research the songs. They were like, “Ms. Willis you listen to this stuff?” And I’m like, “Yeah, I listen to it!” When I really didn’t, but I played it for them.

AM: Which Pandora Station would you play?

KW: Um, the Hip Hop and Rap one. It plays the new songs. A lot of Rich Homie Quan and also, what would they listen to? Drake, they love Drake. And sometimes we’ll through it back with like my music with like Trick Daddy. Like the 90s. We’ll through it back with some Trick Daddy or some Uncle Luke. But it’s mainly just like trap music or Chef Keef. I hate Chef Keef, but I’ll turn it on if they want to listen to it.
AM: Was it clean?

KW: No (laughs)

AM: But that didn’t…

KW: Not at all. Not at all. But, I wasn’t like a bad teacher, but in [the school’s county] that’s the kind of relationship you have with your kids. You want to get a kid to listen to you? You cuss them out. I hate to say it. Referrals and sending them home? That’s not going to work. Cuss that kid out like they mama would cuss them out and you got um (snaps fingers) (Laughs).

Ms. Willis’ willingness to play music that was uncensored in the classroom reflected her desire to better relate to her students, to communicate with them in a way that was more consistent with black teen culture in this predominantly low-income school. Ladson-Billings’ principle of cultural competence states that teachers must develop a solid familiarity with the culture of their students, which Ms. Willis did by researching popular Hip Hop songs to play during class time. Profanity was not a concern for Ms. Willis because she would often use such language in order to gain obedience among students and develop a rapport. She viewed more formal measures, such as referrals and suspensions, as ineffective.

Later in the interview Ms. Willis also stated that while she did not play censored versions of songs during class time, she would explain why certain lyrics of popular Hip Hop songs were problematic. Playing uncensored music, and sometimes pulling up the lyrics on various websites, allowed Ms. Willis a chance to convey the meanings of songs that promoted drug use and misogyny in ways that were implicit to her students. Ms. Willis explained:

And sometimes we would talk about it. They would say, “Hey, can you pull up the lyrics?” Cause a new song would come out and they would want to know what the lyrics are. And I’d pull them up, and I was like, “You guys do realize what he’s saying, right?” And they were like, “Yeah, he’s just talking about,” Like Fetty Wap’s song, “Trap Queen.” They were talking about, “Yeah, I want to be a Trap Queen.” “Y’all all realize that this man is talking about selling dope?” (slight laugh) “And making crack in his house?” But they don’t realize that. They just, you know, think the lyrics are catchy.
Well, when you show it to them they are like, “Oh, he is talking about that.” “Yeah you guys, I don’t think you want to be a trap queen.”

Though Ms. Willis’s practice of playing uncensored music in a classroom full of minors would be viewed by many as questionable, it allowed her to have conversations with students about problematic lyrics in popular Hip Hop songs. The conversations Ms. Willis had with her students enabled them to gain an understanding of the meanings of various terms that were popularized by commercial rap songs and frequently used by students and their peers. Telling students, “I don’t think you want to be a trap queen” relates to Ladson-Billings’ principle of sociopolitical consciousness, as students were taught to be critical of lyrics. During the interview Ms. Willis stated that some of her students wanted to pursue career paths that were either unrealistic or deviant in nature, and she hoped to change their minds through her teaching and discussions with them. Ms. Willis did not, however, state that playing music helped students with the subject matter of Spanish. Therefore, the principle of academic success was likely not reached through this teaching technique.

Three teachers played music of other genres in the classroom, despite Hip Hop’s popularity in both schools. These teachers all varied in their reasons for such selections. Mr. Greene, a 42-year-old black history teacher at Rural High, explained the type of music he would play during class time:

I play music sometimes while they’re doing individual practice work at their seats. And so I’ll play other music. I’ll play old school R&B. I’ll play, um, The Standards, Michael Bublé, and others. Frank Sinatra. I play some Jazz. And I tell them, I’ll say, “If are really going to be an artist, a Hip Hop artist, you got to be a musician. You got to appreciate music. Because the rappers who are doing well today and have some positive things to say, they’re musicians. They’re artists. It’s deeper than just coming from the hood, putting some rhymes together. Got to be an artist. Got to appreciate the craft.”

Mr. Greene stated that he was introducing students to other musical genres, playing songs previously unknown among his students. Through selections like Michael Bublé, Frank Sinatra,
and Jazz, he was exposing students to dominant cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Mr. Greene, however, was doing so in a way that respected Hip Hop culture instead of belittling it. He equated being a Hip Hop artist with being a musician, and in order to be an effective one, stated that students had to understand other forms of music. Hip Hop’s tendency to sample other musical genres (Schloss 2014) (many of which are associated with dominant cultural capital) gives teachers the potential to expose students to dominant cultural capital while still valuing their non-dominant cultural capital (Carter 2003).

Like Mr. Greene, Mr. Ross, a 62-year-old white English teacher at Rural High, would play music other than Hip Hop while students were working. However, his reasoning for doing so was significantly different. Mr. Ross explained that playing Classic Rock music in class was a technique he used to prepare students for the pressure of taking standardized tests:

MR: I try to use music in class. I mean, in fact a couple times, it’s funny, in fact a couple of weeks ago, before preparing for this test I played music. I put in my little IPod here, Civil War model [said while holding IPod and showing the interviewer that it was an older model], and just played, you know, kind of like Classic Rock stuff really. And, some of the kids, it was driving them nuts.

AM: Oh, they didn’t like it?

MR: Because it’s not their music. You know, if it’s not, you know, Hip Hop stuff they just go crazy. But, I said, “Look, I’m trying to prepare you for what the test is going to be like. It’s going to be stressful. You know, I’m trying to raise your stress level so that you can focus and function in that setting.”

Mr. Ross had significantly different musical taste from his students, as indicated by the Classic Rock he kept on his IPod and his knowledge of students’ strong preference for Hip Hop and disdain for other genres. He utilized this dissonance to prepare students for standardize testing. This was not a case of a teacher playing his favorite music in mere spite of his students’ preferences, but rather he was attempting to create a stressful environment that he felt would be comparable to the actual test day. This strategy does not align with Ladson-Billings’ concept of
cultural competence. Though Mr. Ross was somewhat familiar with the musical tastes of his students, he used such knowledge to try and create stress and anxiety in an educational setting. Mr. Ross’s rationale for doing so was because of the high-stakes testing that was administered in the Rural High. He believed that students needed to have familiarity with performing well under stressful conditions. This highlights a structural factor which prompted Mr. Ross to play Classic Rock in the classroom. It also adds support to the notion that Hip Hop was important to the students at Rural High, as the playing of any other form of music caused them stress, according to Mr. Ross.

Some readers may find Mr. Ross’s actions to be questionable or even sadistic in nature. Playing music to intentionally cause stress among students while they are attempting to prepare for a high stakes test could very well have created a hostile classroom environment. However, Mr. Ross’s willingness to include Hip Hop based lesson plans (as discussed later in this section) makes him a somewhat ambivalent case.

Rick Simmons, a 60-year-old white science teacher at Core School, would sometimes play music while students were working on assignments. While he shared the concern other teachers had regarding the content of the music, he also stated he could not get the class to agree on a music streaming service channel to play. Mr. Simmons inability to find Hip Hop music that the entire class could agree on likely was the result of his lack of non-dominant cultural capital. Therefore, he played music by Whitney Houston or Gloria Estefan. Unlike Mr. Greene or Mr. Ross, Mr. Simmons was not trying to make a provocative statement through the music he played, but instead simply wanted to avoid controversy.

The examples above show many teachers’ willingness to incorporate non-dominant cultural capital into the classroom setting in order to enhance student learning. But, they also
show various concerns teachers had when playing music in the classroom, as well as their reasons for doing so. It could be argued that playing Hip Hop music during class as a reward or during special occasions helped create an environment that respected students’ culture, and is in accordance with the cultural competence principle of culturally relevant pedagogy. Playing music while students are working on assignments, however, could be seen as an indicator of didactic pedagogy, which focuses on mundane seat work (Gamoran, Secada, and Marrett 2000) and lacks the interactive nature of teaching that middle-class, white students are more likely to enjoy (Diamond 2007). Proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy and Hip Hop based education seek to move beyond the mere playing of music in class, and imply that teachers should incorporate it into lesson plans (Hill and Petchauer 2013). Playing Hip Hop in the classroom as background music may not constitute as culturally relevant pedagogy as envisioned by scholars, but this was a common response from teachers when asked if they ever used Hip Hop in their teaching. This means teachers may think they are incorporating Hip Hop, but the impact on student learning likely will be small and indirect. That said, one should not quickly dismiss low cost strategies such as this to make a more welcoming classroom environment for a group whose culture is not often celebrated in educational settings (Emdin 2010). I now move to findings of cases where teachers brought Hip Hop into lesson plans, highlighting both successful and unsuccessful attempts.

**Hip Hop in Lesson Plans: “I Was Speaking their Language”**

Around half (13) of the teachers interviewed had incorporated Hip Hop into their lesson plans in various ways and described having differing levels of success. These efforts moved beyond simply playing Hip Hop in class as background music. Seven of the teachers who described including Hip Hop into lesson plans were English teachers, perhaps indicating its
applicability to the subject. For example, Ruthie Parker, a 59-year-old black English teacher at Core School, incorporated Hip Hop into a poetry lesson. Dr. Parker began her lesson by presenting the work of Tupac Shakur, a renowned Hip Hop artist who was known by many of her students. She then asked her students to share lyrics of Tupac that they knew. After this step, she had students write their own Hip Hop lyrics and told her students to ensure that their lyrical pieces contained all of the elements of poetry they learned in class through the TPCAST model. (TPCAST is an acronym for title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shift, and title). Dr. Parker emphasized that in order for students to earn full credit on this assignment, all seven elements of the TPACAST model needed to be included in their lyrical pieces. Overall, she was very pleased with her students’ work:

AM: Did you find that the students were more engaged when you presented Tupac Shakur’s pieces compared to a Hemingway?

RP: Undivided attention.

AM: And you hadn’t seen that with the other poetry?

RP: I was speaking their language. And first of all, they were shocked that I knew it. Because I’m considered the old teacher (laughter). They were shocked that I knew it. They were shocked that I would present it to them and actually allow them to discuss it, write about it, and present it.

AM: So they were shocked?

RP: Very much so.

AM: Ok, shocked but at the same time…

RP: Very appreciative.

AM: Ok. Did you find that the quality of the work was better?

RP: They worked better for me. They worked more when I put them individually. I wish I had kept some of the pieces that they did, because quite shockingly, some who had not written anything really well for me the entire year got into that project. Even when we were working in groups of three’s or four’s, everybody participated. It’s like I didn’t
have to go to the groups and say, “Ok, [name of student], why aren’t you providing some information?” Even the ones who I’ve never seen with headphones on in the hallways, or listening to music, not knowing their passion for music, they all got involved.

Dr. Parker stated that her students were more engaged when Tupac was included in the assignment compared to past assignments that focused on poets like Ernest Hemingway found in mainstream literary curricula. By tapping into the non-dominant cultural capital of her students, Dr. Parker reported she was able to increase participation levels of students. Dr. Parker recognized this stating, “I was speaking their language.” It is also important to note that through this assignment, Dr. Parker was able to overcome the generational difference she had with her students. During the interview, I made sure to clarify that though the students were initially surprised that Dr. Parker knew of Tupac, they appreciated her acknowledgement of him during the poetry lesson. Dr. Parker did not say that the students felt she was being inauthentic or pandering to them. Instead they were “very appreciative.”

Through this assignment Dr. Parker subscribed to the principle of cultural competence, as she brought in an artist that many of her students admired, and allowed students to express themselves through the construction of their own lyrical pieces. Additionally, she reached academic success, as the students provided high quality work, displaying that they understood title, paraphrase, connotation, attitude, shift, and title (revisited).

Mr. Ross also had successful experiences using Hip Hop in his English class. At the very beginning of our interview he explained his reasoning for including Hip Hop in his lessons:

Well, obviously being an older white teacher at a school that’s 99% African American [makes it] important for me to try to be receptive to their ideas, to their culture, which I’ve tried to do since I started here. That’s not to say that that’s all we do because I don’t. I try to bring in elements of culture that they don’t know about. And I do use music quite a bit in my class. Um, but I do think it’s important for us to kind of understand where they’re coming from. Um, we do talk about it, we do write about it in number of different ways. And it’s been instructive.
For one assignment Mr. Ross had students write a five-paragraph essay on the media’s depiction of a 2007 feud between two Hip Hop artists, Kanye West and 50 Cent. He provided students copies of stories about the feud from major media outlets such as *Rolling Stone* magazine. He then asked students to think critically about the ways in which these articles were depicting two multi-platinum artists who had several highly successful business ventures. The students wrote essays analyzing both the legitimacy of the feud and how the artists had been portrayed by the media. Mr. Ross stated:

So that was something that I did that was using Hip Hop culture that was really instructive and it was, you know, high level. It wasn’t sort of dumbing it down, it was sort of taking the game and raising it up, and making them really look at the media and what these guys were trying to do and, you know, the message, the whole bit. How writers do it and everything else. It was a really good assignment.

Like Dr. Parker, Mr. Ross saw the value in bringing elements of his students’ culture to help bridge the social distance related to age between him and his students. Mr. Ross was aware of the racial and generational differences between him and his students, and perhaps these social mismatches prompted him to incorporate Hip Hop into lesson plans. Mr. Ross felt it was important to be receptive to the cultural ideas of students, which aligns with the cultural competence principle of culturally relevant pedagogy. Additionally, he stated that students learned important academic skills through the assignment, which is consistent with the culturally relevant principle of academic success. Mr. Ross’s requirement that students analyze images put forth by mainstream media outlets of two Hip Hop artists also relates to Ladson-Billings’ principle of sociopolitical consciousness. Through this assignment, students were encouraged to be critical of messages promoted by popular magazines, potentially providing students with tools to deconstruct images they might encounter in the future.
It is worth noting that Mr. Ross felt the need to explain that his use of Hip Hop in the classroom was not a form of “dumbing it down.” This may have been indicative of an underlying negative disposition toward this form of non-dominant cultural, a limitation possibly attributable to race. Indeed, later in the interview he explained his displeasure with the majority of Hip Hop, that it was less intellectual compared to the works of Shakespeare and Thoreau. Therefore, some teachers may bring Hip Hop into the classroom in recognition of its appeal to students, but they still have reservations regarding its intellectual value and true place in the curriculum.

Another description of a successful implementation of Hip Hop in a lesson plan came from Brittany Roland, a 35-year-old black Spanish teacher at Rural High. Ms. Roland’s degree was in English Literature, and she spent her first two years teaching English at a school in the same county as Rural High with similar student demographics. While teaching English at the other school, she had students read song lyrics and watch videos by both Jay-Z and Alicia Keys that described growing up in New York City. While both artists grew up in the same city, their described experiences were vastly different, and Ms. Roland wanted students to recognize this. After examining both musical pieces, students were asked to compare and contrast these songs. Ms. Roland described the success of the lesson:

Well, the kids, I gave a test. Um, I think it was like a couple of days later. Well, when I was teaching, a couple of days after I stopped the lesson. And all the kids passed. They got like an 80 or higher on the exam. And then I had to like, you know, record the data. And, the Principal actually called me and asked me, what did I do, and I told her what I did.

Ms. Roland’s assignment addressed Ladson-Billings’ academic success principle of cultural relevant pedagogy, as indicated by the high scores her students earned on the test on comparing and contrasting content given after her lesson. She also subscribed to the principle of cultural competence, later stating that students were engaged by the incorporation of Jay-Z, a
popular Hip Hop artist, and Alicia Keys, a popular R&B artist who frequently collaborates with Hip Hop artists. Ms. Roland had not utilized this Hip Hop lesson at Rural High because at that school she was hired to teach Spanish during her first year. Teachers in low-income, high-minority schools are more likely to work out-of-field (Peske and Haycock 2006), and this had an effect on Ms. Roland’s pedagogy, as she could no longer implement the same assignment to teach the ability to compare and contrast. This highlights a potential obstacle to the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy, as past lesson plans may not be applicable to lesson plans in other subject areas.

Heather Long, a 39-year-old white English teacher at Rural High, also described a successful lesson that used Hip Hop. She presented transcriptions of Hip Hop songs on her Smartboard from the website, “Rap Genius” (http://rap.genius.com). Students examined the lyrics in order to uncover the various literary devices used by Hip Hop artists. Ms. Long believed the assignment was both beneficial and necessary:

We could actually sit together around the Smartboard and analyze songs together. “Do you see the simile? Where are the similes?” Or actually I don’t even have to say that. They would see it. They would be like, “Oh, man!” You know, and they could see the figurative language. It’s really cool because we could look more deeply into what each line meant. Those are the kinds of things you have to do. I think you have to have that.

By asking students to identify similes in rap lyrics, Ms. Long achieved academic success and cultural competence as indicated by her description of the assignment. Later in the interview she stated that students felt as though they “had gotten away with something” during that assignment, “when in reality they were learning.” Such comments likely imply that the incorporation of non-dominant cultural capital during class lessons was a unique and pleasant experience for her students. Though Ms. Long saw such assignments as advantageous on
various levels, she did not implement them as often as she would like due to administrative surveillance/resistance, a topic I explore in a later section.

Not all attempts at incorporating Hip Hop into lesson plans were as successful as those described by the English teachers above. For example, Ian Perkins, a 43-year-old white science teacher at Rural High, instructed his students to write Hip Hop style rhymes incorporating scientific vocabulary words. He provided an account of the assignment:

Yeah, I had a vocabulary list from the chapter and I gave them the task of trying to find words that rhymed with the words we were studying because you can remember it more by associating it with something. And then I tried to have them describe what the word means in a poetic or rhythmic way or by rhyming it. And I really thought they’d be more enthusiastic about that then they were. But it turned out to be pretty complicated with words like “hypothesis” and “observation” and “methodology” and stuff like that. It was hard for them to rhyme.”

Beyond the fact that many scientific research vocabulary terms have few rhyming words, a significant flaw of this assignment was that Mr. Perkins assumed that most of his students could rap. Later in the interview he stated that he was surprised more of them did not have this ability.

The culturally relevant pedagogical principle of cultural competence requires that teachers are aware of their students’ culture. This awareness comes from developing personal relationships with students in order to discover their specific cultural tastes and activities. While Hip Hop was popular at Rural High (as confirmed in my interviews), it is highly unlikely that all students were MCs or wrote rap lyrics on a consistent basis. Mr. Perkins also was unfamiliar with the art form of MCing or writing rap lyrics, as only advanced Hip Hop artists have the ability to rhyme four and five syllabus words like “observation” and “methodology.” Mr. Perkins’ lack of cultural competence led to a failed instance of culturally relevant pedagogy, and he admitted that the assignment did not contribute to students’ academic success.
Another description of an unsuccessful attempt to incorporate Hip Hop came from Erin Fowler, a 25-year-old white math teacher at Core School. She described how once she put students into groups and instructed them to come up with songs (which could either be rapped or sung) on how to solve equations. After the songs were created, students were asked to record the songs using her IPad. A lack of clear instructions, however, undermined the assignment’s success:

Cause I thought that kids would be like so excited about that they would just make their songs and then they’d be excited to use my IPad and then they would be excited to make the video. Not really (chuckles). So they needed a little bit more, um, direction there. But yeah, so I definitely want to incorporate it more next year though.

Like Mr. Perkins, Ms. Fowler did not get the intended response from students when implementing elements of Hip Hop in a class assignment. These examples highlight that Hip Hop should not be viewed as a magic bullet that takes the place of understanding student needs and developing well-structured lesson plans. While scholars have encouraged the use of Hip Hop in the classroom (Hill and Petchaur 2013), others have questioned whether enough teachers are qualified to effectively use it (Gosa and Fields 2011). Also, while there has been a recent push to extend the incorporation of Hip Hop beyond English courses (Emdin 2013), these math or science teachers struggled to effectively implement of Hip Hop culture in their lesson plans.

Recognizing Connections Between Course Material and Hip Hop

Six teachers described bringing Hip Hop into their classes, although their implementations of Hip Hop were more organic and situational compared to the specific lesson plans described in the previous section. These teachers made connections to course material and Hip Hop, and/or facilitated spaces for students to make such connections. Cynthia Sanders, a 26-year-old black history teacher at Rural High, described several times when students associated historical figures with current Hip Hop artists and personalities. For example, after her history
class read *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli, her students connected the ideas presented in this literary piece with those of Tupac, a Hip Hop artist who studied the works of Machiavelli and adopted the alter ego, “Makavili,” in the mid-1990s. During a class, students had discussions of similarities between the work of the Hip Hop artist and the Renaissance philosopher. Ms. Sanders did not plan for this association to be made, however, she was pleased that students thought critically about the course material. A similar occurrence came when the class covered a section in their history textbook on the 18th century secret society, the Illuminati. Students began to discuss various pop culture figures rumored to be in the Illuminati today such as Hip Hop artist, Jay-Z, R&B/Pop singer, Rhianna, and Hip Hop fashion designer, Kimora Lee Simmons. When the class moved on to cover Civil Rights activist, Rosa Parks, students discussed the Outkast song named after her and why the Hip Hop group experienced legal trouble after using her name. Ms. Sanders was happy students were having these discussions, and stated, “I think that’s very good. I think that makes them think critically when they make connections like that. And I love for them to make real world connections.” Though she did not plan for students to make these connections, Ms. Sanders helped facilitate an atmosphere where such discussions could take place. In order to do this, she had to have a significant level of cultural competence, respecting comparisons students made to dominant cultural capital and non-dominant cultural capital.

Greg Jamison, a 30-year-old black teacher of history at Core School, also made interesting connections with course material in his classroom. He described how his pedagogy benefited from his familiarity with Hip Hop culture:

I know I can use the terminology and lingo, or at least the dialect or the talk, to get through to students. Oh, perfect example! Perfect example! And I think that maybe because I’m a History teacher I am able to do this. But, when I’m teaching United States History, and I get to one of the units where I’m talking about Western expansion, and
moving West, and you know, what the American government did with the Native Americans and the Trail of Tears, and what have you, and then you get to the counteraction of the Native Americans, the Chief Joseph’s, the Battle of Little Big Horn, and Custer’s Last Stand, and those things. I refer to those individuals like gang violence. And this is something that they [his students] see in their neighborhoods or hear in the music they listen to a lot. If I can teach that to them and use that as an analogy or on a broader scheme of things, if I have to do that I will. Just for me to know that they understand exactly what I’m talking about. What these people went through is no different from territorial turf wars (chuckles). You understand what I’m saying? And the resources that come from the turf wars. I relay that information over to the way in which they may understand it (chuckles).

Mr. Jamison also said that he quoted a Tupac lyric when teaching the “Guns or Butter Theory,” which analyzes a nation’s investment in ammunition for protection versus the investment in domestic issues. The Tupac lyric he quoted came from the song, “Keep Ya Head Up,” stating, “You know it’s funny, when it rains it pours/ They got money for wars, but can’t feed the poor.”

Mr. Jamison’s descriptions of his pedagogy relate to principle of the cultural competence. He was able to use vernacular and references to popular culture and Hip Hop in order to make connections to course material. Mr. Jamison shared the non-dominant cultural capital of students, and frequently demonstrated this throughout his teaching. Hip Hop was not a foreign culture Mr. Jamison needed to research. When I asked Mr. Jamison about the music his students listened to, he abruptly interrupted me, stating, “I listen to it too, first of all!” During the interview, Mr. Jamison also suggested that his subject matter, history, enabled him to make such connections. He also stated that the demographics of his school allowed for such teaching techniques to be effective. Additionally, the ideas Mr. Jamison described teaching his students relate to the principle of sociopolitical consciousness. He was teaching his students to be critical of the United States government for their distribution of resources (i.e. spending money on war
materials instead of domestic issues) and conquests of land previously occupied by Native Americans.

Kelly Johnson also made interesting connections to Hip Hop culture during her science classes. Ms. Johnson knew that her students were fans of the artist, Young Jeezy, and his Atlanta-based Hip Hop group that went by the name of USDA. Young Jeezy’s USDA group stood for “United Streets of Dopeboyz of America,” and often made references to “trapping” which meant drug dealing. In an effort to expose students to career opportunities, Ms. Johnson explained that there was another USDA, the United States Department of Agriculture. Ms. Johnson, a trained entomologist, explained to students they could “trap insects” for the USDA. She enjoyed making creative references such as these and thought it had a positive impact on her students. Though these specific techniques were not planned lessons to meet specific course objectives, they were in accordance with the principles of cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness. Ms. Johnson demonstrated her knowledge of cultural referents familiar among students, but employed creative wordplay to expose students to job opportunities and encourage them to pursue a career.

Frank Greene, a 42-year-old black history teacher at Rural High, described how both he and his students would make connections to Hip Hop culture:

AM: So, do you have any examples of certain lyrics that you quote during a lesson plan?

FG: Um, things just come up sometimes. I can’t give you a specific one. It just kind of comes up. Today, in the African American History class, we were talking about graduates of HBCUs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and I put my name on the list. I had Martin Luther King, Mary McLeod Bethune, Lewis Sullivan, and others. And I put my name on the list. I said, “Because we’re internationally known.” And that brought out, “I’m not internationally known, but I’m known to rock the microphone.” So that kind of thing.

The reference “I’m not internationally known, but I’m known to rock the microphone” is a common statement in Hip Hop culture, which originated from the 1988 song “It Takes Two”
by Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock. Mr. Green also described how Hip Hop references were brought up by students during class:

I asked my African American History classes to name a prominent African American and tell me why they’re prominent. And one of my students said J. Cole. And I said, “Ok. J. Cole?” And I acted as if I didn’t know who he was. I said, “J. Cole?” I said, “Why? Who is that?” And then they started explaining, and they said, “Mr. Greene, you got [said with emphasis] to listen to J. Cole! He got something to say!”

Mr. Greene went on to ask students which songs J. Cole had made, and required that their discussion of his songs use “academic words” instead of slang or inappropriate terms. Mr. Greene did not plan for this class discussion, but students connected the course material to Hip Hop and he guided the conversation that followed. This exchange relates to the concepts of both academic success and cultural competence. Mr. Greene respected the non-dominant cultural capital of his students (their admiration for the rapper J. Cole), while also encouraging them to explain his influence using “academic words,” or those related to the dominant culture. Mr. Greene later explained that by using “academic words,” he prevented students from using profane or derogatory language in the classroom.

William Hester, a 35-year-old black music teacher at Rural High, continually made connections with the older forms of music and Hip Hop. Mr. Hester described his class and as well as his pedagogical philosophy below:

We introduce them to a wide variety. We go all the way back to the Baroque period, the Romantic period, the Classical period. We move all the way through the early 20th century. We talk about the Blues and then Jazz. And from the Jazz movement we move into the 1960s Soul pieces and that sort of thing. And we parallel that along with the popular tunes from the 60s because of the split culture, the white culture, the black culture. So we listen to both of those, and then look at how music crosses over. We look at the 70s, and that whole free spirited period, when everybody was kind of just out there, kind of finding themselves, and how much crossed over into Disco. My class kind of takes it in a chronological order, you know. So we introduce them to a lot of things, and the kids will surprisingly find the connections from what they’re listening to today and say, “Oh, you know what? That same syncopated rhythm is in this song.” And you know, “You think he may have picked that up from this piece?” Or something like
that, you know. So kids are always comparing the listening. But I never pull them totally away from Hip Hop.

AM: Now, can you elaborate on that? You said you never totally pull them away.

WH: I never pull them totally away from it. And I’m saying that to say, um, in other words, when we’re talking about these other genres, these other periods of time, and we also talk about music that appeals to social movements, you know, how music affects a social movement. You know, I don’t know if you’re familiar with “What’s Going On” by Marvin Gaye from the 70s when they were doing all that stuff. We talk about that and I don’t take them away from the Hip Hop because I say, you know, “If this was the song for that day, can you find me something today that matches what was going on with that period? Is there something today that symbolizes the same passion about the world?” You know, and so they’re able to find those connections. And so, as we’re studying all of this, we’re continuing to listen and talk about the things that they’re listening to today because that’s how you keep their interest. You know, I can’t totally isolate what it is that they’re listening to today and go all the way back the Baroque period. Nobody wants to hear that stuff (laughs). You know, so if you’re able to keep it simultaneously moving then they’re able to find the connections, they’re learning something on this end, and at the same time I’m showing them that I appreciate what it is they’re totally into and absorbed by. Because they’re living it.

Mr. Hester recognized that his students made connections between older genres of music and Hip Hop. Since Hip Hop has historically sampled earlier forms of music (Rose 1994; Schloss 2014), it is not surprising that students were able to recognize elements of older genres in the newer music they listened to frequently. Mr. Hester understood the importance of always relating course material to the material students found interesting. Throughout his course he exposed students to dominant cultural capital (music from the Baroque period), while also valuing the non-dominant cultural capital of his students. Such techniques relate to Ladson-Billings’ principles of academic success and cultural competence. Additionally, Mr. Hester stated that he would ask his students to analyze the sincerity of stories told by commercially successful rappers and why they might portray a false image to increase sales, thus encouraging his students to develop a sociopolitical consciousness.

The six teachers above described how they incorporated Hip Hop into their pedagogy either through connections that they made between course material and Hip Hop, or connections
they allowed their students to make. These teachers’ descriptions of using Hip Hop in the classroom did not emphasize any one specific lesson plan. Instead these teachers were able to make spontaneous and organic connections between their subject matter and Hip Hop. They were able to do this, it seems, because to a certain extent they possessed and valued the non-dominant cultural capital of students. The age differences between these teachers and their students tended to be small, and notably all of these teachers were black.

**Enhancing Classroom Management: “No 2 Chainz Today”**

Six teachers stated that their knowledge of Hip Hop aided their ability to manage their classroom, specifically in regards to addressing discipline issues. Ms. Johnson explained how she relied on the knowledge of her students’ culture in order to confront issues such as tardiness. In the passage below she stated:

> KJ: There’s like a song called, “Do the Quan,” or something like a crazy little dance that they do walking around. I caught one of my students being late to class because he wanted to do The Quan down the hallway. I said, “Mr. [name of student], this is not a dancehall. I need you in my classroom before that bell rings. Don’t do the Quan down the hallway. Let’s get in this class.”

AM: And that was effective?

KJ: Yeah, I wasn’t playing with him. “Get in this class and stop dancing!”

AM: Now, how much more effective is it, the fact that you said, “Don’t do the Quan dance?” Like, if you just said, “Stop being late,” is that not going to be as effective as, “This isn’t a dance hall. Don’t do the Quan dance?” Does that add something to it?

KJ: It was the fact that I kind of shocked him that I said it because, like, “Oh, she knows about our life a little bit.” It’s like, “Oh my goodness, there’s not too much we can put past Ms. Johnson because she knows.”

Ms. Johnson recognized that her knowledge of the popular Hip Hop dance enabled her to communicate with the student in an effective manner. While telling a student to not be late to class is a common task of teachers, the fact that Ms. Johnson knew the name of the specific Hip
Hop dance both surprised her student and lead to him following her instructions, according to Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Fowler employed similar classroom management strategies. She explained how her students often rapped Hip Hop songs during class. Instead of simply telling her students to be quiet, Ms. Fowler good-naturedly confronted them while making specific references to the songs they were rapping. She explained:

Yeah, I try and keep things kind of humorous with them. That’s more of when I’ll pop in and be more like, “Ok, no 2 Chainz today.” Or “None of that today.” Or “No, Lil Wayne will have to be after school.” And stuff like that, so, like, because I’ll know the songs and I’ll recognize the artists. And so then, they’re so caught off guard by me making that comment that they’re kind of “Oh, ok.” And then that kind of passes, you know.

Sarah English, a 40-year-old white teacher of English at Rural High, explained her experience using language associated with Hip Hop:

SE: Yeah, and it sounds just so unnatural coming out of my mouth and they’d laugh.

AM: So you said some slang? Like, what types of things would you say?

SE: Just, I don’t know, what was it, oh, I had one kid, this was my last year at [a nearby school with similar demographics], he was always pouting and stuff. And I was like, “Don’t try me today.” And he would start laughing. Cause the kids just thought that was so funny. If I would say, “Don’t try me.”

AM: So it was in a good way?

SE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think if you can use that to build a rapport with kids, they know that’s not the way that you speak when you go to an interview. They’re smart enough to figure that out.

Like Ms. Johnson, Ms. English and Ms. Fowler surprised students when they displayed knowledge of Hip Hop culture. Both Ms. English and Ms. Fowler, two white teachers in predominantly black schools, emphasized how their Hip Hop references were seen as humorous, as they used phrases like “the kids just thought that was so funny.” Through showing students that they were familiar with their culture, these teachers defused potentially tense situations.
The use of Hip Hop references to address student behavioral issues relates to Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke (2004)’s conception of culturally responsive classroom management. Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke (2003) state that teachers of racial and ethnic minorities must acquire “cultural knowledge content” (p.270) in order to enact productive classroom management strategies. The six teachers who drew on the non-dominant cultural capital of students established a rapport that helped with student obedience, in these teachers’ views. This appeared to be an especially effective method for teachers who differed in race from the majority of their students.

**Personal and Administrative Obstacles to Using Hip Hop**

Teachers described various factors that impeded the use of Hip Hop in the classroom. As noted above, many teachers explained they had concerns about the profane language in some Hip Hop music, especially the newer music that was popular among their students. Paula Morris, a 48-year-old black English teacher at Core School, explained this concern:

AM: What are some things that would prevent you from using Hip Hop in the class? Is it the language?

PM: I would think the language, yes sir. The profanity of it. Um, I’m just not at that level where I can sit there and just bypass it and say, “Ok, but think about it this way and that way.” It has to be where it’s already readymade for me. And that’s the least of my worries.

AM: Now when you say “readymade,” you mean it’s clean?

PM: Yes

AM: Or the assignment is…

PM: The clean. Yes, sir. The clean. That it’s clean. The lyrics. Oh, I can revamp the assignment to make it work for that part. But I need it were you can just look and say, ok, these are clean lyrics. I don’t have to worry about anything with this and I can go with it.
Ms. Morris stated that she did not want to bring in songs that contained profane language. This was not surprising, as teachers across the nation have faced serious repercussions for incorporating controversial content from Hip Hop songs in lesson plans (Kauder 2010). Her statement, “I’m just not at that level where I can sit there and just bypass it and say, ‘Ok, but think about it this way,’” shows a lack of comfort in her ability to deconstruct derogatory lyrics with students. Proponents of Hip Hop based education have documented ways teachers can lead students to think critically about problematic lyrics and images by examining the structural factors that influence their production (Morell and Duncan-Andrade 2006). While such critical media literacies are important, in-service teachers may not feel comfortable in their current abilities to help students develop such skills. Ms. Morris wanted to use music that was “clean” or “readymade” for classroom inclusion.

Jan Richards, a 62-year-old white teacher of English at Rural High, expressed similar concerns in regards to the language of Hip Hop songs. She explained that even if she played a censored version of a Hip Hop song, students would say the profane words:

JR: I would like to play ‘Started from the Bottom.’ I like that one without the curse words in it. You know, but I haven’t yet because the students will fill in. What they’ll do is they’ll fill in the words that they’re not supposed to because they’re so immature, so I can’t do that.

AM: So even if it’s edited?

JR: Yeah. They’ll go ahead and yell out what’s supposed to be there. It’s not supposed to be. You know, they can’t accept it that other way because they just want to, you know, show out that they are, you know. So I can’t use that one.

In addition to the content of the song, Ms. Richards feared that her seventh period class would be too rambunctious if music was brought into the class. Earlier in the interview she described an incident when she had students sing a song from a story they were reading in class
and students began to loudly shout and become an extreme disturbance. Therefore, Ms. Richards predicted similar episodes would occur if she were to play a Hip Hop song in class. She stated:

I know what they’ll do because they just started screaming when they heard this. It was just ridiculous! I wished I’d videotaped it. People just wouldn’t even believe! Totally out of control…They just couldn’t handle singing the song.

Ms. Richards explained that it was not only the content of lyrics that prevented her from incorporating Hip Hop into lesson plans. She also feared students would fail to comply with what she felt to be appropriate classroom decorum. Scholars have stated that racial and ethnic minorities display their non-dominant cultural capital through behaviors and expressions that differ from the dominant cultural capital associated with the white middle class (Goldenberg 2013). Hale-Benson (1986) described important cultural characteristics of black children such as spontaneity, exaggeration, and expressiveness. Such characteristics are often devalued in educational settings by teachers, like Ms. Richards, who see them as a disruption.

Another factor that inhibited the use of Hip Hop in the classroom was administrative surveillance. There was a significant difference between the amount of freedom teachers felt they had at Core School and Rural High. Teachers indicated feeling more constrained regarding pedagogical flexibility at Rural High. This was likely due to the significant differences in standardized test scores and overall school grades between Core School and Rural High. As stated in the methods section, in 2015 Core School received a “C” grade while Rural High received an “F” from the state department. Thus, administrators and teachers at Rural High were under significantly more pressure to raise standardized test scores. During my interviews teachers at Rural High also told me that jobs at Rural High were less desirable than teaching jobs at nearby schools.

Five teachers at Rural High felt as though students could work better while listening to music through their headphones, however, this was against school policy and they feared
repercussions from administrators Ms. Long explained her views on letting students listen to their headphones at Rural High:

HL: I mean, most of our kids have the music on their cellphones. And I’ve got students that will concentrate better and sit still if they’re listening to music.

AM: So you let them listen to music?

HL: Every once in a while I would. And then a teacher got written up. And it went in his file because he allowed his students to listen to their headphones. So I was a little bit more careful about that, you know, afterwards.

AM: How did he get written up? A Principal walked in?

HL: The Principal was actually looking in the window. And he walked in and was like, “You got students with their headphones in.” And he was like, “Yeah, I know. They’re finished with their work.” Or “They finished the test, so they’re working on their homework, and I’m letting them listen.” And that was not appropriate. So, you know, I find that when I do, depending on what they’re doing, I might get better work out of them, cause they’re going to concentrate.

Like Ms. Long, other teachers who did not agree with the Rural High’s anti-headphone policy stated that they believed students concentrated better on assignments while listening to their music through their headphones. These teachers would also state that such policies seemed outdated. Once again, this could be evidence of teachers’ emphasis on didactic pedagogy (Gamoran, Secada, and Marrett 2000), as interactive group projects or presentations would likely not be possible with headphones on students’ ears.

Four teachers from Rural High described the how administrative surveillance inhibited lessons plans. Teachers in core subjects (math, science, history, and English) were required to submit their lesson plans to administrators two weeks before giving them to students. Teachers also were assigned textbooks and needed to receive approval for showing videos other than the ones provided by the textbook publisher. Ms. Long believed that teaching literary devices through the use of rap lyrics was beneficial, but an emphasis on standardized testing from the administration prevented her from implementing creative teaching techniques more frequently.
When I asked Ms. Long if she could relate creative teaching to benchmarks (or course objectives) developed by the state she answered:

Yeah, you can. You know, the figurative language. There is a specific benchmark linked to figurative language, so yes. But if somebody from the county office had walked in, and we were doing that, it’s not the textbook, so I probably would have gotten in trouble for doing that if somebody from the district had come in and seen it. They would have been like, “Well, when are you using your literature book?”

Ms. Long went on to say that officials who worked for the school district often visited Rural High due to consistently poor school grades. I asked if Ms. Long if the officials would want to see her teaching similes using rap lyrics and she responded, “No. Heck no! No. No.”

Though he was able to consistently bring Hip Hop into his classroom, Mr. Hester explained that he felt music and arts received a lack of resources at Rural High. I asked him if felt the administration valued the music and the arts. He explained:

I think if there weren’t other pressing matters, then they would. But because they’re other matters that are pressing. Again, the pressure from the state with the standardized testing, and with the school grading, and making sure that we meet this benchmark and we meet that benchmark so we can get a decent school grade, you know, from the state, um, that has caused the arts programs and other electives to be put on the back burner. You know, so I wouldn’t just say that they choose to neglect it, but it’s just that other things are pressing.

Mr. Hester later stated that the classes of core subjects received more attention from the administration, however, and that this forced those teachers to focus strictly on content that would be presented on the standardized tests. While his music class did not receive the resources he felt it should, he did appreciate the pedagogical freedom he had in his class which other teachers did not enjoy.

Factors such as administrative surveillance and standardized testing administered by the state must be taken into consideration when examining teachers’ abilities to employ culturally relevant pedagogy. Though teachers may desire to implement innovative teaching strategies in order to engage students, they may not have the flexibility or resources to fully do so. In a
systematic review of literature of culturally relevant education, Aronson and Laughter (2015) state that high-stakes testing and standardized curricula have marginalized culturally relevant educational reforms. Prier (2012) states that neoliberalism’s influence on public education has pushed towards an excessive focus on standardized testing, leaving little room for a multicultural curriculum, much less the inclusion of Hip Hop in pedagogy.

Though administrative surveillance and concern over content impeded the use of Hip Hop in the classroom, it must be stated that three teachers simply did not see any need to incorporate Hip Hop in their classes. These teachers did not claim to be held back by administrative surveillance or a concern over content. For example, Fredrick Jones, a 66-year-old black science teacher at Core School, never brought Hip Hop into his classroom. A long time football and track coach, Mr. Jones said he established productive relationships with students through alternative means of rapport—sports.

Mr. Simmons was another teacher who did not bring Hip Hop into the classroom. While expressing his frustration with students listening to music at school, Mr. Simmons stated:

You know, I don’t know how many times this year I said, “Put the cellphone away. Put the headphones away. They’re supposed to be in your locker.” I didn’t make an issue out of it like I probably should have. But, I thought they’d caught on, you know, that there’s a time for this and there’s a time for something else. And the something else is chemistry or biology or environmental science or whatever.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Simmons did not see the need to incorporate Hip Hop into his science classroom, as Hip Hop was seen as “something else.” This separation of science and Hip Hop is common in most educational settings according to Emdin (2010), however these persistent distinctions may reduce racial and ethnic students’ interest in science (Emdin 2013).

Rhonda Clark, a 58-year-old black history teacher at Rural High, also had yet to incorporate Hip Hop into the classroom at any level and seemed almost hostile to the idea. Ms.
Clark described her unfamiliarity with Hip Hop culture, as well as its absence from her pedagogy:

RC: Yeah, you know what I might need to do, I might need to listen to some Hip Hop music so that I will know if someone answers me with a dumb answer in regards to Hip Hop or tries to compare it to Hip Hop, you know, because my classroom is not part of Hip Hop at all. So I need to know if somebody is trying to compare that.

AM: Ok, so you said that your classroom is not a part of Hip Hop at all?

RC: Not a part in regards to me teaching. I don’t teach it. I don’t teach it. I don’t use it. I don’t know anything about it. But I’m sure, you know, it might be a part of, I mean, I can’t visibly see that, or I can’t mentally think that. Not yet.

Ms. Clark began by stating that Hip Hop had absolutely no place in her teaching, and in fact, she felt the need to make sure that students did not bring it into her class in any way. The idea of Hip Hop being implemented into her history class was inconceivable. Not only did Ms. Clark make no effort to bring Hip Hop culture into her class, she also wanted to prevent her students from doing so. Based on cultural capital theory, I expected more participants to hold views similar to Ms. Clark. It is possible that other teachers held analogous views to Ms. Clark at both Core School and Rural High, yet did not respond to my recruitment procedures because they felt Hip Hop and education was something unworthy of research.

Concern over content, administrative surveillance, and a lack of desire among teachers to use Hip Hop decreased Hip Hop’s presence in the classroom. Proponents of Hip Hop based education, as well as other forms culturally relevant pedagogy, must take these factors into consideration. Larger structures such as high stakes testing and the marketing of commercial Hip Hop with problematic content may contribute to a decrease in the implementation of Hip Hop into educational settings.
Discussion/Implications

This study provides an important contribution to the literature on Hip Hop based education, and more broadly culturally relevant pedagogy. While past studies have relied on teacher-researcher or ethnographic descriptions of Hip Hop based education, I present data from in-depth interviews of teachers serving in two low-income, high-minority schools in the Southeast region of the United States. The setting of this study is significant, as the majority of past research on Hip Hop based lesson plans took place in Northeastern, Midwestern, and Western regions of the U.S.

I find that several teachers occasionally played censored Hip Hop music in their classrooms while students worked on assignments or to reward students for good classroom behavior. Teachers also included Hip Hop in lesson plans, with the most successful lesson plans described by English teachers. The lesson plans provided by a math and a science teacher were described as less successful, likely due to a lack of organization and cultural competence. Several younger black teachers in this study brought Hip Hop into the classrooms in continual and organic fashions, which was likely made possible by their possession of non-dominant cultural capital. Hip Hop knowledge also proved to be a valuable resource for teachers when managing their classrooms. Factors that impeded Hip Hop’s inclusion in the classroom included concern over content, administrative surveillance, and teachers viewing Hip Hop as unnecessary to their pedagogy.

This study sheds light on the experiences in-service teachers have when bringing Hip Hop into the classroom. Some of the effective techniques and strategies explained in the previous section may be applicable for teachers in different educational settings. However, the inclusion of Hip Hop should not be seen as a magic bullet that will close the achievement gap.
While Hip Hop has provided several vivid and powerful descriptions of the experiences of oppressed people (Dyson 2007), it cannot take the place of understanding specific student needs and cultural ways of being. The inclusion of Hip Hop in a lesson plan also cannot make up for a lack of organization and clear instructions. Teachers who decide to incorporate Hip Hop into their classroom should do so in a responsible matter, aware of how their own social characteristics shape student perceptions of them.

This study documents several issues in incorporating Hip Hop in the classroom on various levels. In terms of playing Hip Hop in the classroom, most teachers needed to discover music that had appropriate language and satisfied the tastes of their students. In terms of building lesson plans, teachers seemed to have more success when teaching English classes, perhaps highlighting Hip Hop’s applicability to this subject. In order to organically and continually relate Hip Hop to course material and recognize when students related Hip Hop to course material, teachers needed to be well-versed in this form of non-dominant cultural capital. Considering that not all teachers were, it is likely that some teachers missed past opportunities to do so in class. Teachers under strict administrative surveillance due to working at a school with poor test scores also did not have the freedom to implement Hip Hop into the classroom any way they desired.

More research is needed in regards to how in-service teachers’ implementations of Hip Hop based education contribute to measureable academic success. While my study documented cases of teachers believing that some Hip Hop based lessons led to learning, increased student outcomes could not be confirmed through my methodology. This is not to belittle the importance of teachers creating an atmosphere that respects and includes the culture of their students. However, if the racial achievement gap is to be closed, we need to know more about
how different forms of culturally relevant pedagogy lead to higher outcomes such as grade point averages, standardized test scores, dropout rates, and college attendance.
CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation examines Hip Hop’s place in educational settings by investigating the how teachers both view Hip Hop culture and use it in their classrooms. Past calls for the broader incorporation of Hip Hop into schools that serve minority populations have come mostly from teacher-researcher accounts of success stories. The prospects of building Hip Hop into lesson plans or class discussions across a wider range of topics and instructors may be met with some challenges. Though the merits of such an endeavor are predicted by both cultural capital theory and the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, past research has paid inadequate attention to the obstacles of this adoption and the hesitation teachers and administrators may have. Interviews conducted with secondary teachers at two predominantly low-income, black schools in the Southeast shed new light on the feasibility of Hip Hop based education and the views of gatekeepers who often have some negative orientation toward Hip Hop. Interviews also revealed how Hip Hop may be used to engage students and increase learning.

In this concluding chapter, I provide a review of the findings from both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, and I discuss how these findings contribute to literatures on cultural capital and culturally relevant pedagogy. I then discuss implications for theory and practice. From there, I explain the limitations of this study, and lastly I provide suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings from Chapter 2

Chapter 2 examined the research question: how do teachers of low-income, minority youth view non-dominant culture, specifically Hip Hop? While past studies have shown that students feel as though non-dominant cultural capital is devalued in educational settings (Carter 2003, 2005, 2006), little was known regarding the actual views teachers held towards non-
dominant cultural capital. This study adds nuance to the discussion, explaining the specific aspects teachers appreciated in regards to Hip Hop culture, as well as the characteristics that troubled them.

All the teachers recognized the central place that Hip Hop occupied in the daily worlds of most of the students in their classes. They thus seemed to be in tacit agreement that it constituted an important form of non-dominant cultural capital, and perhaps for that reason many teachers did attempt to enhance their instruction through some use of Hip Hop materials or references. At the same time, most of the teachers believed earlier forms of music were more positive than the current Hip Hop music consumed by their students. This could be the product of older generations viewing newer musical forms as deviant, which has shown to be the case historically (Binder 1993; Peterson 1972; McDonald 1988; Rosenbaum and Prinsky 1991). If so, the cultural gap between teachers and students has as much to do with age as with class. This also could be due to real changes in the content due to the commodification of Hip Hop culture and the influence of corporate interests (Fernandes 2011; Folami 2007; Guy 2004; Kitwana 2002; Rose 2008; Watkins 2006). Or, as cultural capital theory would argue, the negative view of contemporary Hip Hop reflects a difference in class position between teacher and student, a result of the filtering process associated with obtaining the credentials to teach and the tendency for educational institutions to embrace middle-class values and tastes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Yet, teachers varied in their appreciation of Hip Hop, more than is suggested by scholarly portrayals of schools that assume homogeneity among teachers due to their middle-class occupations (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987). Several teachers expressed positive views of Hip Hop culture, stating that it spoke to important social issues including economic and
racial inequality. This finding highlights Hip Hop’s potential to help students develop a sociopolitical consciousness, and acknowledges that some teachers see educational value in non-dominant cultural capital. To be sure, some of the teachers at Core School and Rural High were themselves fans of Hip Hop and did not view the student culture at their schools as vastly different from their own. Keeping in mind the limitations associated with the sampling design used in this study, the findings suggest that younger black teachers were more likely to appreciate Hip Hop (especially more current Hip Hop). It is certainly a sensible, though untested, proposition that younger black and Latino/a teachers are more familiar with Hip Hop and may be best able to implement it in classrooms. If true, and if Hip Hop based education improves student success, then this provides another justification for increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. teacher workforce (Albert Shanker Institute 2015).

The majority of teachers, however, expressed primarily negative views of Hip Hop. These negative views were sometimes based on teachers’ perceptions of the way it directly interfered with education, for example distracting students from schoolwork because of headphone use and presenting an unlikely path to upward social mobility. Much of the basis for concerns about Hip Hop derived from perceived conflicts with teachers’ values, and it is less clear that these concerns directly translated into student outcomes. These concerns were that Hip Hop broadcast sexist lyrics and images, promoted illegal drug activities, encouraged violence, focused on materialism, and spoke out against authority. This suggests that teachers perceived a connection between student consumption of Hip Hop and the risk of them developing an oppositional stance toward school. Given the above, it is not surprising that some teachers expressed mixed feelings about incorporating Hip Hop (especially newer Hip Hop) into their classrooms.
Summary of Findings from Chapter 3

Chapter 3 examined two research questions: (1) how do teachers incorporate Hip Hop into their teaching? and (2) what factors impede teachers’ willingness to bring in Hip Hop, or limit their successful incorporation of Hip Hop into teaching? Though past studies on Hip Hop based education have documented successful incorporations of Hip Hop into classrooms, most of the evidence was based on teacher-researcher or ethnographic accounts (e.g. Hill 2009; Morell and Duncan-Andrade 2002; Stovall 2006). Studies on Hip Hop based education also have taken place mainly in the Northeastern, Midwestern, or Western regions of the U.S. My study makes a significant contribution to the literature, as I document ways Hip Hop is used by in-service teachers in the Southeast, as well as factors that impeded such use.

Several teachers at Core School and Rural High periodically played Hip Hop music in their classrooms, a minimal form of implementation. The music in these instances was not part of a lesson plan and usually was not the basis for class discussion. It was used to enhance the learning environment while students worked on assignments or to reward students for good classroom behavior. This incorporation of Hip Hop therefore does represent an attempt to make school more culturally “comfortable” for the students, which may have small benefits and might reduce issues of cultural mismatch between the school and the student population. It does not, however, represent culturally relevant pedagogy as conceived by Ladson-Billings, and could possibly be evidence of didactic teaching.

Teachers also incorporated Hip Hop into lessons plans with varying levels of intensity and perceived effectiveness, and these experiences varied according to the class topic and the degree to which the teacher was familiar and comfortable with Hip Hop. Several English teachers provided accounts of successful lesson plans, teaching students to learn literary devices
through Hip Hop lyrics. In contrast, the lesson plans administered by a math and a science teacher were less successful, likely due to a lack of clear instructions and cultural competence. Several younger black teachers brought Hip Hop into the classrooms in ways that were spontaneous and organic, in classroom discussions where students were sometimes initiating the connections between class content and Hip Hop culture. This approach to the implementation of Hip Hop into the classroom was made possible by their familiarity with this form of non-dominant cultural capital. Hip Hop knowledge also proved to be a valuable resource for teachers when managing their classrooms, perhaps implying that Hip Hop can be employed to achieve culturally responsive classroom management.

There were, however, factors that impeded Hip Hop’s inclusion into pedagogy. For one, some teachers did not feel that the content of newer Hip Hop songs was appropriate to bring into the classroom, a concern that has often been neglected in literature on Hip Hop based education, despite a few exceptions (Gosa and Field 2011; Low, Tan, and Celemencki 2013). Some teachers at Rural High also expressed concerns over administrative surveillance. Though these teachers saw value in Hip Hop based lessons, or allowing students to listen to headphones while they worked on assignments, they feared punishment because it was against school policy. Inclusion of Hip Hop in the classroom was sometimes done at the teachers’ own risk. Another factor preventing Hip Hop based education was teachers not seeing Hip Hop as relevant to their subject.

**Implications for Theory**

Cultural capital theory has guided a great deal of sociological research on the ways that schools reproduce inequality, focusing our attention on the various ways teachers and the curriculum confer advantages to those who possess “highbrow” or dominant culture capital
Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Lamont and Lareau 1988). Carter (2003, 2005, 2006) advanced this theory by shifting the focus toward non-dominant cultural capital and the role it plays in the lives of low-income, minority youth. Not only are schools positively oriented toward middle-class values and tastes, they often actively discredit the cultural objects of non-dominant groups, putting low-income, minority youth in a cultural contradiction whereby the cultural preferences that yield them status among peers also are a deficit in the school setting. The devaluing of non-dominant cultural capital is problematic, and teachers are often thought of as primary agents for this devaluation and the reproduction of inequality (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Carter 2003).

This study adds to the understanding of cultural capital theory, and more specifically non-dominant cultural capital. Though teachers held negative views of non-dominant culture (in this case Hip Hop), it appeared that this was often out of deep concern for their students’ wellbeing. These concerns do not perfectly map onto the conceptual model laid about by cultural capital theorists, and it would be facile reasoning to suggest that the concerns derive primarily from middle-class or white sensibilities. The teachers’ concerns also reflect what they felt would be longer term negative consequences of adopting the values represented in contemporary Hip Hop culture. One theoretical implication is that important gatekeepers (such as teachers) must operate within larger structures in a society that often marginalize or commodify non-dominant cultural. Structural factors may complicate the ways gatekeepers view and approach non-dominant cultural capital.

Another theoretical implication is that familiarity with both dominant and non-dominant cultural capital may assist with dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy or culturally responsive classroom management. This insight is the result of bringing together
complementary theoretical perspectives from both sociology and education. Carter (2006) found that minority youth who were cultural "straddlers" were most successful at navigating peer and school environments, which they did by strategically displaying different forms of cultural capital depending upon the circumstance. The findings from Chapter 3 suggest that teachers who had characteristics of cultural straddlers were most able to bring Hip Hop into the classroom. These teachers engaged in a form of cultural straddling by connecting scholastic concepts to Hip Hop culture and by strategically inserting Hip Hop references to facilitate classroom management.

**Implications for Practice**

One implication from the findings of this study is that Hip Hop based education might be best served when paired with critical media literacy (Kellner and Share 2005; Morrell, Dueñas, Garcia, and López 2013; Morell and Duncan-Andrade 2006). Critical media literacy education teaches students to analyze the content projected onto them by various media outlets (i.e. radio stations, magazines, television programs, and websites) (Kellner and Share 2007b). Through critical media literacy education, students also examine the power structures that produce content that is distributed to the masses (Kellner and Share 2005). When critical media literacy is paired with Hip Hop based education, students can be taught the social forces that push problematic content and learn to question depictions of marginalized groups in popular culture.

I arrive at this implication because of the negative views of Hip Hop culture expressed by teachers in this study. Several teachers held negative views of Hip Hop because they felt it promoted sexism, drug use, violence, and disrespected authority. Teachers’ frustrations with Hip Hop seemed to stem from a concern for their students’ wellbeing, as they wanted their students to excel academically and later in life. Hip Hop based education paired with critical media
literacy has the potential to simultaneously value student cultures while also developing a sociopolitical consciousness to confront problematic images and lyrics.

Another implication is that teachers can benefit from a familiarity with the non-dominant cultural capital of their students. Recent scholarship stated that white teachers should embrace the cultural capital of students of color in order to achieve better teaching and learning (Emdin 2016; Goldenberg 2016). My study found that younger black teachers (those who seemingly had the least social distance from their students) were able to make spontaneous connections between Hip Hop and course content, as well as recognize when their students made such connections. Both black and white teachers expressed how a knowledge of Hip Hop culture aided classroom management strategies, highlighting a benefit of familiarity with non-dominant cultural capital that has received less attention in the literature.

While knowledge of the non-dominant cultural capital of students can be advantageous, teachers should also be aware of how their social characteristics affect students’ perceptions of them, especially when racial/ethnic student-teacher mismatches are present (Gehrke 2012; Howard 2003; Weiner 1999). When white teachers attempt to implement Hip Hop in the classroom they need to be aware of the specific needs and tastes of their students. There is an important difference between respecting student cultures and pandering to problematic stereotypes (i.e., assuming all black students can rap). While the use of non-dominant cultural capital has the potential to break down barriers due to social distance, it also has the potential to create new issues that interfere with student learning.

An additional implication is that culturally relevant pedagogy should be part of preservice teacher training and education. As student populations continue to become more diverse, teachers remain overwhelmingly white and middle class (Goldenberg 2013; National Education...
Association Report 2014; Sims 2010). Training in culturally relevant pedagogy and Hip Hop based education may help address problems related to student-teacher mismatch. Such training should highlight how poorly implemented culturally relevant practices may exacerbate problems deriving from mismatches.

Limitations

This study’s qualitative research design was required to yield “thick description” (Geetz 1973) and rich data on teachers’ views and uses of Hip Hop culture. Of course, teachers’ attitudes about Hip Hop, and their experiences of incorporating it, are likely to vary across settings. Teachers working in different regions may hold contrasting views of Hip Hop culture. Also, teachers working in states with a different standardized testing policies may have more or less pedagogical freedom to employ culturally relevant practices. Additionally, the likelihood of homogeneity increased due to the ways in which respondents were recruited (Weis 1994). Using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques I was fortunate to gather teachers from a variety of races and ages who taught several different subjects, however, a third of my participants were English teachers. Hip Hop may be more easily implemented in English classes because of the poetic elements and literary devices found in the lyrics of artists. Therefore, English teachers might have been more likely to respond to my recruitment strategies. I also relied on teachers’ accounts in regards to their lesson plans. What teachers say they did and what they actually did (especially from a students’ perspective) might vary considerably.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies should examine the perceptions of other forms of non-dominant cultural capital within educational spaces. Although Hip Hop is an important form of non-dominant cultural capital for black youth, there are other important forms of non-dominant cultural
possessed by this group and other historically marginalized groups (Yosso 2005). For example, teachers in my study discussed other student interests that were outside of the traditional educational curriculum including television shows, social media platforms, and sports. The appreciation and incorporation of a variety of forms of non-dominant cultural in the classroom may increase student engagement. Scholars have suggested that educators can learn from student participation in sports (Nasir and Hand 2008) and interest in films (Garland 2012) in order to implement effective teaching practices and create productive learning environments.

Future research should also examine how non-dominant cultural capital is viewed by gatekeepers working in other spaces that reproduce inequality including the workplace or courtrooms. Such work has the potential to reduce oppressive practices in these settings and may also be of great value to culturally relevant educators who must prepare students to navigate other institutions later in life.

Studies of Hip Hop based education should continue to move beyond teacher-researcher accounts and examine how in-service teachers implement Hip Hop into their pedagogy. In order to address the limitation stated above that this studied relied on what teachers said they did and how they were perceived, future research should include classroom observations of Hip Hop based lessons along with reflective interviews from both teachers and students. Such work could can gain valuable insight by adopting a symbolic interactionist approach and discussing how the teachers’ habitus contributes to their ability to successfully bring Hip Hop into the classroom. Longitudinal designs and experimental approaches can measure student outcomes to determine the effectiveness of these and other culturally relevant practices. Additionally, it is important to understand how administrators view Hip Hop based education, considering that they often are in charge of approving lesson plans and establishing schoolwide regulations.
APPENDIX A

INITIAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Prompt: Hello, my name is Andrew Mannheimer and I am a graduate student at Florida State University. I am conducting research on teachers’ views of Hip Hop culture. Please read the FSU Behavioral Consent Form and sign it if you agree to participate in this study. Thank you. I really appreciate you taking the time to answer some questions. Please fill out the Demographic Fact Sheet. (Wait until information is filled out). Ok, let’s begin the interview:

1. Please tell me about your career as an educator. How long have you been teaching? Have you taught outside of [current school]? Which subjects and grade levels have you taught? What subjects and grade levels do you currently teach?

2. Please tell me about how you got into teaching.

3. Can you tell me about some obstacles you face when teaching students? (Probe) What strategies do you use to overcome these obstacles?

4. Can you tell me about the students who do well in your classes? What characteristics do they possess? What about the students who don’t do well in your classes? Can you tell me about them?

5. When you are teaching in the classroom, how do you get students interested? How do you relate to students? Are there certain techniques that work well?

6. Are you familiar with Hip Hop culture or Hip Hop music? How do you feel about Hip Hop? (Probe)

7. Do your students listen to Hip Hop music, or are they involved in Hip Hop?

8. Do you believe that Hip Hop has an impact on your students? If yes, in what ways? Does Hip Hop have in impact on your student’s achievement?

9. Do you ever use Hip Hop to teach in the classroom? If so, how? (Probe) Do you know of other teachers who use Hip Hop to teach?

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your teaching strategies or views on Hip Hop?

Thank you for participating in my study. I can be contacted at [redacted] or at *****@fsu.edu. Is it all right if I contact you if I have a follow-up question?
APPENDIX B

REVISED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Prompt: Hello, my name is Andrew Mannheimer and I am a graduate student at Florida State University. I am conducting research on teachers’ views of Hip Hop culture. Please read the FSU Behavioral Consent Form and sign it if you agree to participate in this study. Note that the names of all participants in this study will be given pseudonyms in order to protect identities. The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. Also, if at any time during the interview you would like to stop, please let me know and I will turn off my recorder immediately. (Wait until information is filled out). Thank you. I really appreciate you taking the time to answer some questions. Ok, let’s begin the interview:

1. Please tell me about your career as an educator. How long have you been teaching? Have you taught outside of [current school]? Which subjects and grade levels have you taught? What subjects and grade levels do you currently teach?

2. What do you find most satisfying about your job when it comes to the students?

3. What do you find least satisfying about your job when it comes to the students? Do you face particular problems in this student population?

4. Are you familiar with Hip Hop culture or Hip Hop music? (Probe)

5. How do you feel about Hip Hop?

6. Do your students listen to Hip Hop music, or are they involved in Hip Hop?

7. Do you believe that Hip Hop has a negative impact on your students? How so? (probe if they mention vulgarity to find out what exactly they find vulgar.) Do you think it hurts their academic achievement?

8. Is students’ interest in Hip Hop ever something that leads to discipline issues in your class? Can you give an example?

9. Do you believe Hip Hop has a positive impact on your students, or that it could have a positive impact on them?

10. Have you ever used Hip Hop in your teaching? Can you give me an example? If not, is this something you have considered doing? (Probe, if they don’t say why they didn’t: Why not? Is this because of standardized testing, the principal of the school, and/or the curriculum?)
11. Do you know of other teachers who use Hip Hop to teach and how that went for them?

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your teaching strategies or views on Hip Hop?

*Please fill out the Demographic Fact Sheet. (Wait until sheet is completed). Thank you for participating in my study. I can be contacted at [contact information] or at ****@fsu.edu. Is it all right if I contact you if I have a follow-up question?*
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC FACT SHEET

Please provide the researcher with the following information:

Your sex: Male_______                        Female_______
Your age: ________
Highest level of education attained: _______________
Ethnicity/race: ____________________
APPENDIX D

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Florida State UNIVERSITY

Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 04/17/2014

To: Andrew Mamheine [Redacted]
Address: [Redacted]
Dept.: SOCIOLOGY

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Teachers' Perceptions of Hip Hop Culture

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(c) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 04/16/2015 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to ensure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IEB00000446.

CC: John Reynolds [Redacted], Advisor
HSC No. 2014.115-13

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APPENDIX E

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE REAPPROVAL

The Florida State University
Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 - FAX (850) 644-8382

RE-APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 4/22/2015

To: Andrew Mannheimer

Address: 
Dept.: SOCIOLOGY

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Re-appraisal of Use of Human subjects in Research
Teachers' Perceptions of Hip Hop Culture

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 4/20/2016, you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the committee.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your renewal request, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this re-appraisal notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting of research subjects. You are reminded that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols as often as necessary to ensure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc: John Reynolds, Advisor
HSC No. 2015.15378
APPENDIX F

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE REAPPROVAL

Florida State University

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
P. O. Box 3052742
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8075 · FAX (850) 644-4892

RE-APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 04/13/2016
To: Andrew Mannheimer
Address:
Dept.: SOCIOLOGY

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair
Re: Re-approval of Use of Human subjects in Research:
Teachers’ Perceptions of Hip Hop Culture

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 04/11/2017, you are must request renewed approval by the Committee.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your renewal request, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this re-approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting of research subjects. You are reminded that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

Cc:
HSC No. 2016.18075
APPENDIX G
CONSENT FORM

FSU Behavioral Consent Form
Teachers’ Perceptions of Hip Hop Culture

Principal Investigator: Andrew Mannheimer, Department of Sociology, Florida State University

Introduction: You are invited to participate in a research study of middle and high school teachers. You were selected as a participant because you are currently employed as a teacher in a public middle or high school. The purpose of this study is to better understand teachers’ perceptions and utilization of Hip Hop culture.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, we will have a face-to-face interview lasting between thirty minutes and one hour. The interview will take place at a location convenient to you. With your permission I will record the interview. I may contact you within six months of the initial interview if I have a quick follow-up question.

Risks and benefits of being in the study: There are no significant risks or benefits to you from participating in the study.

Compensation: You will receive no payment or compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. Only I will have access to the audio files of interview notes, both of which I will personally transcribe. The digital audio files and interview notes will then be destroyed immediately after transcribing them. In any sort of report that I publish, I will not include information that would make it possible to identify any participants.

Voluntary Nature of Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect any current or future relations you might have with Florida State University. If you participate, you are free to answer any question or withdraw at any time.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting the study is Andrew Mannheimer. You may ask him any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact him at 850-932-0500 or amh08@fsu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or do not wish to participate, you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 109 Levy Street, Research Building B, 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-7900, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and I consent to participate in the study.

__________________________
Signature

__________________________
Date

__________________________
Signature of Investigator

__________________________
Date

HSC # 2015.15378
APPENDIX H

SCHOOL APPROVAL

DATE: November 4, 2016

TO: [Redacted]
FROM: [Redacted]

PROJECT TITLE: [815569-2] Teachers' Views of Hip Hop Culture: An Examination of Secondary Teachers' Beliefs and Behaviors in Regard to Non-Dominant Cultural Capital

REFERENCE #: 015-96
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: November 4, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: November 4, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of [redacted] materials for this project. The [Redacted] has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UNANTICIPATED and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events) must be reported promptly to the office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 4, 2016.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.
If you have any questions, please contact the XXXXX project leads. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

For questions, please contact XXXXX.

Title

Date
APPENDIX I

SCHOOL APPROVAL

April 18, 2014

Mr. Andrew Mannheimer,

We received a copy of the approval memorandum to do research from your school (Florida State University). We are excited about being a part of research, which will add to the scholarly literature of education. We do understand that Florida State University has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446; this is our way of knowing your application has been approved for research.

Therefore, you have approval to gather data in the classroom with the instructional staff. Please know the collection of data should not include students, support staff or administrators in the classroom. You are advised to make contact with school level administration via a letter of introduction, explaining the research purpose and method of collecting data from teachers at the school sites. We appreciate the opportunity to assist with research. Thank you for your collaborative efforts.
REFERENCES


**Music References**


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

CURRICULUM VITAE

Andrew H. Mannheimer
Department of Sociology
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2270

EDUCATION

In Progress Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, Florida State University
Dissertation title: “Teachers’ Views and Uses of Hip Hop Culture.” Committee: Dr. John Reynolds (Chair), Dr. Irene Padavic, Dr. Dan Tope, and Dr. Robert Schwartz
2013 Qualifying Exam: Health and Aging
2012 Master of Science in Sociology, Florida State University
2009 Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Minor in Sociology, Auburn University

RESEARCH FIELDS

Education, Race, Ethnicity, Culture, Religion, Health

PUBLICATIONS


Book Review


In Progress


Hill, Terrence, Patrick Hodge, and Andrew Mannheimer. “Racial Variations in the Health Benefits of Educational Attainment”


**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

2013 Mannheimer, Andrew and Lisa Weinberg. *Keeping It Fresh: Teaching Social Inequality through Hip Hop Culture.* Presentation at the meeting of the Southern Sociological Society, Atlanta, Georgia.


**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**New Course Development**

2012 Sociology of Hip Hop, Codesigned and Instructed with Dr. Lisa Weinberg

**Instructorships**

2015 Sociological Theory, Spring Semester, Florida State University

2014 Sociology of Education, Fall Semester, Florida State University

2014 Sociology of Education, Spring Semester, Florida State University

2013 Introductory Sociology, Fall Semester, Florida State University

2013 Introduction to Sociology, Summer Semester, Florida State University

2012 Introduction to Sociology, Fall Semester, Florida State University

**CoInstructorships**

2015 Sociology of Hip Hop with Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Fall Semester, Florida State University

2014 Sociology of Hip Hop with Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Spring Semester, Florida State University

2013 Sociology of Hip Hop with Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Fall Semester, Florida State University

2013 Sociology of Hip Hop with Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Summer Semester, Florida State University

2013 Sociology of Hip Hop with Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Spring Semester, Florida State University

2012 Sociology of Hip Hop with Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Summer Semester, Florida State University
Teaching Assistantships

2015 Families and Social Change for Lisa Weinberg, Fall Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2015 Families and Social Change for Lisa Weinberg, Spring Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2014 Examining the Educational Achievement Gap for Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Fall Semester, Florida State University

2014 Families and Social Change for Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Fall Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2014 Methods of Social Research for Abraham Pena-Talamantes, Summer Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2013 Deviance and Social Control for Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Spring Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2012 Deviance and Social Control for Dr. Lisa Weinberg, Spring Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2011 Introduction to Sociology for Lisa Weinberg, Fall Semester, Florida State University (Hybrid Course)

2011 Population and Society for Hanna Jokein-Gordon, Fall Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2011 Alcohol and Drug Problems for Dr. James Orcutt, Fall Semester, Florida State University (Online)

2011 Medical Sociology for Dr. Annette Schwabe, Spring Semester, Florida State University

2010 Introduction to Sociology for Dr. Isaac Eberstein (Hybrid), Fall Semester, Florida State University

2010 Methods of Social Research for Miriam Sessions (Online), Summer Semester, Florida State University

HONORS AND AWARDS

2016 Best Graduate Teaching Award, Florida State University

2015 The Initiative for 21st Century Literacies Research and The FSU English Education “People’s Choice Award” for digital poster presentation

2015 Florida State University Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award Nominee

2010-2015 Graduate Assistantship, Department of Sociology, Florida State University
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2015 Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Irene Padavic
Department of Sociology, Florida State University

2011 Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Brian Starks
Department of Sociology, Florida State University

2010 Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. John Taylor
Department of Sociology, Florida State University

GUEST TALKS, WORKSHOPS, AND PANELS

2015 “Teaching as a Graduate Student.” Invited panelist for Dr. Isaac Eberstein’s Teaching Sociology at the College Level course, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

2015 “Hip Hop and Education.” Invited speaker and workshop leader at Otis A. Mason Elementary School, St. Augustine, Florida.

2015 “Supporting Students.” Invited presenter for Program for Instructional Excellence Meeting, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.


2014 “Hip Hop and Education.” Invited speaker and workshop leader at Forest Hill Community School, West Palm Beach, Florida.


2014 “Teaching as a Graduate Student.” Invited panelist for Dr. Isaac Eberstein’s Teaching Sociology at the College Level course, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

2014 “Hip Hop and Social Change.” Invited workshop leader for the sixth annual Southeast PeaceJam Conference, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

2014 “Symposium on Hip Hop and Education.” Discussion leader and co-program director, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

2013 “Hip Hop and Social Change.” Invited speaker for the Mayor's Summit on Race, Culture and Human Relations, Tallahassee, Florida.
2013 “Enhancing Community through Creativity.” Invited speaker at the Tallahassee City Commission Meeting, Tallahassee, Florida.


2013 “Hip Hop and Social Change.” Invited workshop leader for the fifth annual Southeast PeaceJam Conference, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.


2011 “First Year of Graduate School.” Invited guest speaker for Proseminar Sociology at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

**MEDIA ATTENTION**


February 25, 2014 Vaughn, Mark. “Symposium on Hip Hop and Education at FSU.” *Florida State 24/7.*

July 5, 2013 Edwards, Danna. “‘Tallahassee’ rap video celebrates hometown spirit” *Tallahassee Democrat.*

June 4, 2013 Regan McCarthy, Reagan. “Tallahassee Rap Song Soars To 20,000 Views.” *WFSU.*


January 6, 2013 Spitler, Jasmine. “A debut in teaching and rapping: Andrew Mannheimer
relates to students through hip-hop.” *FSView.*

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS**

2013-2014 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion
2013-2015 American Sociological Association

**HONOR SOCIETIES**

2014-present Phi Kappa Phi

**SERVICE**

2015 Member of the Graduate Planning Committee for the 21st Century Literacy Lecture Series
2015 Mentor for “Shop Talk” hosted by Tallahassee’s Equity and Workforce Development Division and Palmer Munroe Teen Center
2015 Member of Research Workgroup for The Visioning Team of Trinity United Methodist Church
2014-2015 Elected Student Representative for FSU Department of Sociology Graduate Program Committee
2014 Student Representative on the FSU Graduate Policy Council Ad Hoc Committee
2013 Served on the Citizen Interview Committee for Chief of Police of Tallahassee Police Department