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CURRICULUM OF THE MIND: A BLACKCRIT, NARRATIVE INQUIRY, HIP-HOP

ALBUM ON ANTI-BLACKNESS & FREEDOM FOR BLACK MALE COLLEGIANS AT

HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

A DISSERTATION

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CURRICULUM OF THE MIND: A BLACKCRIT, NARRATIVE INQUIRY, HIP-HOP
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HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY

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DEDICATION

To my son, Amir: always speak truth to power, listen to your mother, know that I love you more than life itself and recognize that you're not free until all Black and Brown folx are free.

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This dissertation is a collective body of scholarship. I recognize that I did not complete this work alone. I was supported, pushed and moved in ways that I did not know existed. I was pushed by greatness that came in the form of friends, family, colleagues and peers. They helped me to realize that I can be a member in the academy, but not of it. I love my village and although I may inevitably miss some people, I would like to thank:

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Curriculum of the Mind:
A BlackCrit, Narrative Inquiry, Hip-Hop Album on Anti-Blackness & Freedom for Black Male Collegians at historically white institutions

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Abstract

Curriculum of the Mind is a Hip-Hop album that explores how Black male collegians at historically white institutions (HWIs) theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness in an effort to take flight or become free. Few previous studies have connected anti-Blackness to the field of higher education, and none within the field of Hip-Hop studies. This study examines how Black male collegians who currently attend, have graduated from, or have stopped attending an HWI use the fugitive space of Hip-Hop to theorize and/or disrupt anti-Blackness, to define and make meaning of what freedom is, and to narratively express their notions of freedom and experiences of anti-Blackness at HWIs. This study employs a narrative inquiry approach utilizing theoretical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit), as well as marronage. The catalyst, or medium, used in this dissertation consists of Black male collegians creating a Hip-Hop album that aesthetically illustrates their individual and collective theorizations of anti-Black experiences at HWIs.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

It's just the curriculum of the mind
Conflicted within, in prison, the system & its design
Look, they teach a nigga a sentence to give 'em time
And that's when they decide they should finally throw the book at 'em
Like we don't wanna see these niggas, look at 'em
Get 'em outta here we don't want shit to do wit rapping
That's what I be feeling in the hallway when I pass
My nigga, I'm just on my way to class – (*Bob Marley*[1])

There is an ample amount of research on Black[2] male collegians and the holistic factors that negatively affect their persistence, graduation trajectory, and overall student success at historically white[3] institutions (HWIs)[4] (Allen, 1992; Bates, 2017; Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Fleming, 1984; Harper, 2009, 2012a, 2015; Strayhorn, 2008). Scholars have provided empirical evidence to illustrate how Black male collegians experience social isolation, academic barriers, and cultural insensitivity, as well as overt and covert racism from white peers, faculty, staff, and administrators, particularly at HWIs (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Fries-Britt, 2004; Harper, 2015; Sedlacek, 1999; Strayhorn, 2008). For most Black male collegians, these factors are directly connected to the outcomes of their low persistence and graduation rates at HWIs (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Fries-Britt, 2004; Harper, 2015; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015; Sedlacek, 1999; Strayhorn, 2008).

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[1]Bob Marley is a pseudo name for one of the Black male collegians that participated in the study.
[2]Dumas (2016) states that "*Black* is understood as a self-determined name of a racialized social group that shares a specific set of histories, cultural processes, and imagined and performed kinships" (p. 12-13). I use the term "Black" instead of "African American" to include the diverse experiences of people of African descent in the U.S., including diversity in historical lineage, generation status, and country of origin.
[3]The word "white" is not capitalized because "white" and "whiteness" are nothing more than social constructs that, in comparison to "Black," do not describe a group of people with common experiences, except "colonization and terror" (Dumas, 2016, p. 13).
[4]The term "historically white institution" is typically interchangeable with the term "predominantly white institution" (PWIs), which denotes institutions with white student enrollment of 50% or more. However, the term PWI eradicates the historical dehumanization of enslaved peoples as property, who built and maintained the upkeep of these "prestigious" and predominantly white institutions and universities. For the sake of this dissertation, historically white institutions will be abbreviated as HWI.

The percentage of Black males who attain bachelor's degrees is lower than the percentage of white males who do so. This gap has been persistent over time. Black males in 1976 accounted for 5.5 percent of the U.S. population, but received only 2.7 percent of bachelor's degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; NCES, 2017), signifying underrepresentation of 51%. (See Figure 1.1.) In other words, Black males received 51% fewer bachelor's degrees than their representation in the population would suggest. White males, on the other hand, accounted for 42.4 percent of the population in 1976 and received 48 percent of bachelor's degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; NCES, 2017). This indicates overrepresentation of 13% among white males; that is, they received 13% more bachelor's degrees than their prevalence in the population would suggest. By 2014, these figures had shifted very little for Black males: Black males represented 6.3 percent of the U.S. population and received 3.7 percent of bachelor's degrees in 2014, signifying underrepresentation of 41%. Although this is better than 51% in 1976, it is still disparate and problematic. It is interesting to note that, during the same time period (1976 to 2014), white males' prevalence in higher education shifted dramatically from overrepresentation to underrepresentation. In 2014, white males accounted for 38.8 percent of the population but only 28% of bachelor's degrees received, representing underrepresentation of 27%, a conspicuous decrease from their overrepresentation of 13% in 1976. Yet even with this notable decrease in white males' proportion of bachelor's degrees earned, they remain more likely than Black males to earn a bachelor's degree. In other words, the degree attainment gap between Black males and white males has narrowed over the last 40 years. This is, of course, a desirable trend. However, the narrowing gap unfortunately does not signify that Black males' degree attainment has increased significantly. Instead, the narrowing gap is attributable mainly to white males' sharp decline in degree attainment over the last 40 years. A related example involves

Black males' "persistence" in higher education. The proportion of Black male college students who complete a bachelor's degree within six years was 35.3 percent in 2017, the last year for which figures are available. The rate for white males is 60.1 percent (NCES, 2017).

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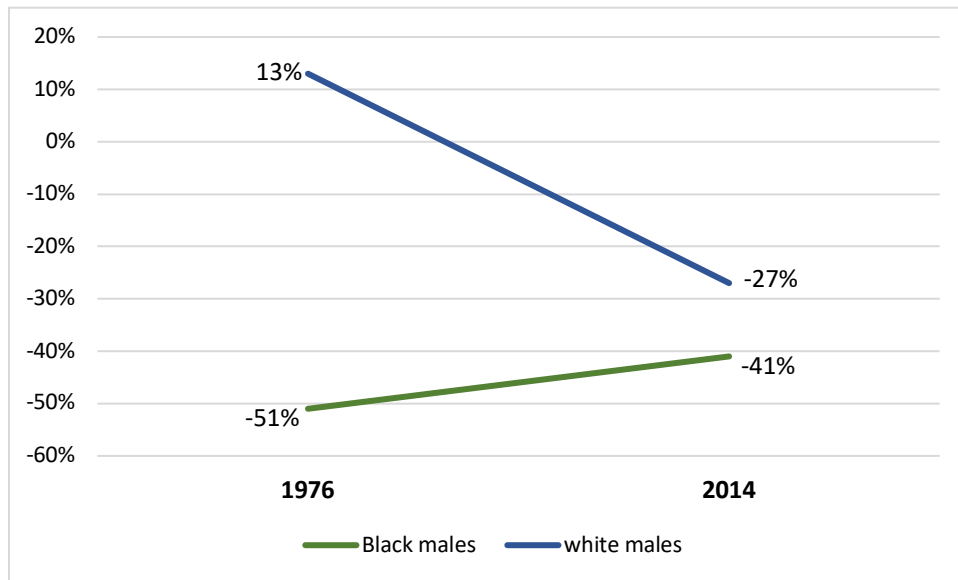
Figure 1.1 Disparity between Black males and white males in bachelor's degrees earned, as a proportion of their representation in the overall U.S. population, in 1976 and 2014.

If we examine the statistics for college enrollment rather than graduation rates, we see similar trends. In 1976, Black male collegians represented 5.7 percent of the population and 4.3 percent of fall enrollment in degree-granting post-secondary institutions, indicating underrepresentation of 22 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; NCES, 2017; see Figure 1.2). White males, on the other hand, accounted for 42.4 percent of the population and 43.8 percent of enrollment in 1976, an overrepresentation of three percent (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; NCES, 2017). In 2014, Black males accounted for 6.3 percent of the population, and their enrollment

rate had risen to 5.1 percent, signifying higher education underrepresentation of 19 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; NCES, 2017). This is a very slight improvement over their 22 percent underrepresentation in 1976. In 2014, white males' proportion of the population had fallen to 38.3 percent, but their proportion of enrolled students had dropped much further, to 24.6 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; NCES, 2017). Again, this indicates that white males had shifted from overrepresentation of 3% to underrepresentation of 13% in higher education between 1976 and 2014. Taken all together, these statistics indicate that the higher education representation disparity between Black males and white males narrowed significantly between 1976 and 2014. Indeed, if the current trends continue, the disparity between Black males and white males might even disappear within a decade or two.
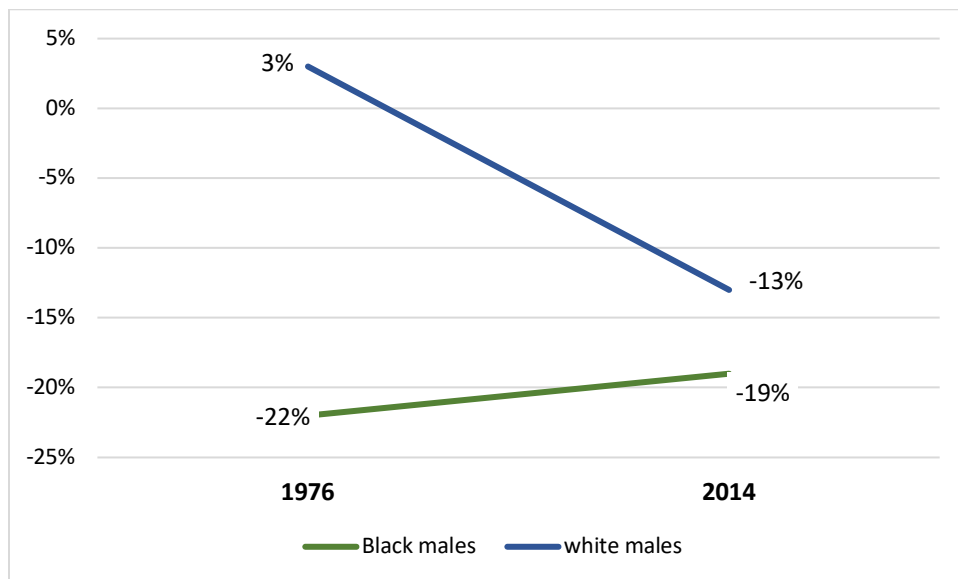
Figure 1.2 Disparity between Black males and white males in college enrollment, as a proportion of their representation in the overall U.S. population, in 1976 and 2014.

However, it is crucially important to view these trends without losing sight of Black males' continued and significant underrepresentation in higher education. The representation

disparity between Black males and white males is decreasing sharply, but this is due mainly to white males' significant decline in representation. Black males' increase in representation, although a desirable trend, has been much less dramatic than white males' decrease. As a result of these continuing disparities, critical scholars continue to explore and question the institutional factors that may account for Black males' underrepresentation in higher education such as sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2008); access and equity (Fleming, 1984); social isolation (Allen, 1992; Cuyjet, 1997; Fleming, 1984); internalized racism (Harper, 2009; 2015); lack of formal and informal mentoring programs (Brooms, 2018); and others (Bates, 2017; Cuyjet 2006; Harper, 2012a; 2015).

It is important to illuminate the institutional factors that lead to high attrition rates of Black male collegians at HWIs. Harper (2012b) claims that higher education researchers typically minimize their theorization of how racism and racist institutional norms explicitly affect Black male collegians at HWIs. In their complacence, many scholars fail to acknowledge the elephant in the room, typically discussing the "negative postsecondary experiences of minoritized students, as well as racial gaps in access, achievement, and attainment without naming racism as a possible explanatory factor" (Harper, 2012b, p. 14). Although some studies have shown how high-achieving Black male collegians (e.g., students who have a 3.0 GPA or above) respond to racist stereotypes at HWIs (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007), no study to date has theorized how Black male collegians discuss, disrupt, or respond to the ways in which HWIs are complicit in anti-Blackness.

Background of the Problem

Anti-Blackness is the violent notion that the Black body is a threat to society and is therefore a problem, unworthy of an education, and even unworthy of life (Dumas, 2016).

Racialized discourses regarding the success (or lack thereof) of Black male collegians at HWIs often fail to incorporate a competent discernment of anti-Blackness. In doing so, they fail to realize that "organized political struggle and appeals" with the institution are not the way to eliminate institutional racism or increase persistence of Black male collegians. Instead, what is needed is a "deeper understanding of the Black condition within a context of utter contempt for, and acceptance of violence against, the Black [body]" (Dumas, 2016, p. 13).

Typically, HWIs were created by the free labor of enslaved Black people (Dancy, Edwards & Davis, 2018). Many enslaved Black people endured sexual assault and physical violence, such as whippings, which ultimately led some to commit suicide (Anderson, 1988; Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018). Today, HWIs may not exhibit racism in the same ways that they did in previous centuries. But I would argue that these institutions continue to replicate anti-Blackness in ways that directly impact Black male collegians (Dancy, Edwards & Davis, 2018; Dumas, 2016; Harper, 2007; Harper, 2012b; Harper, 2015).

HWIs are a microcosm of a society that inflicts suffering on Black males (Harper, Wooden, & Patton, 2009). Black male collegians have continuously fought to gain acceptance into white institutions. For example, during the 1940s and 1950s, admitted Black male collegians at HWIs were subjected to listening to lectures in hallways and not being allowed to eat in dining halls. From the 1960s, Black male collegians often were perceived as being accepted to the institution only due to affirmative action (Harper, 2013; Harper & Griffin, 2011; Jaynes & McKinney, 2017). In fact, most Black male collegians who enroll at HWIs expect to experience racism (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Fleming (1984) posits that Black students at HWIs experience high levels of racial stress, isolation, and psychological trauma. In more recent research, scholars studied 36 Black male collegians at seven historically white research one institutions and found

that white faculty, staff, students, administrators, and campus police create an environment filled

with anti-Black male stereotyping, marginalization, and hyper-surveillance of Black male

collegians (Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016). As a result, many Black male

collegians experiences anxiety, fear, anger, and resentment of the institution (Smith, Mustaffa,

Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016). Black male collegians articulate that they persist and perform

better when administrators, educators, and peers validate not only their intellectual ability, but

also deal with racial issues that permeate college campuses (Hurtado, 1992; Patton, 2006;

Strayhorn, 2008). It is perhaps not surprising that most institutions are more reactive than

proactive when it comes to addressing racism. As Smith, Hung, and Franklin (2011) describe,

Black male collegians contend with the three following stressors when navigating HWIs:

> spending mental energy on whether they are generally accepted or just
> tolerated…discerning the difference between individually supportive whites and
> destructive actions by white people as a collective and…confronting unique race-based
> stress identifying when, where and how to resist oppression versus when, where and how
> to accommodate to it. (pp. 65-66)

Black male collegians carry not only white people's racist and negative depictions of what it

means to be Black, but also white people's misandry toward, hatred for, and perception of the

threat of the Black man, which in essence is anti-Blackness (Smith, Hung, and Franklin, 2011).

Smith, Hung, and Franklin (2011) state that Black male collegians "constantly confront

oppressive agents, environments or situations that limit their space, time, energy, and motion" (p.

67). These experiences are prevalent at HWIs; Carroll (1998) describes them as mundane

extreme environmental stress. Furthermore, the racial, social, and psychological experiences that

Black male collegians face at HWIs are ubiquitous, engrained into the fabric of the historical and

ideological foundation of American society and higher education institutions (Wilder, 2013).

This ultimately creates undeserved stress in which the space, "time and energy [wasted] could

have been used for more creative, educative, professional and humanitarian goals" (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011, p. 67), such as focusing on academic persistence. As a result, the space of HWIs presents trauma to Black male collegians that negatively impacts their success in college. Examples of these types of trauma come in the forms of microaggressions, racial battle fatigue, and stereotype threat.

Black male collegians are subjected to racial microaggressions perpetuated both consciously and unconsciously by classmates, faculty, and administrators (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2011). Microaggressions are subtle or explicit verbal and nonverbal insults directed toward people based on their race, gender, language, sexual orientation, or accent (Smith, Yosso, & Solorzano 2011). Accumulated microaggressions cause what is called racial battle fatigue (RBF), which comes in many forms, including psychological (e.g., anger, anxiety, fear), physiological (e.g., headaches, high blood pressure, tooth grinding), and emotional (e.g., procrastination, isolation, poor school performance) (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Scholars have discussed and argued that many educators are dismissive of microaggressions' harmfulness, expressing the idea that these abuses are subtle or non-threatening (Harper, 2007; Harper, 2012b; Harper, 2015; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015; Singer, 2016; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2011). Moreover, these scholars make the argument that microaggressions are nothing less than acts of anti-Blackness that attempt to create negative emotional responses in the minds of Black male collegians.

Stereotype threat is one emotional response that Black male collegians endure due to RBF and racial microaggressions (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Steele and Aronson (1995) emphasize that many Black students internalize negative stereotypes and overt racist experiences, fearing that they will fulfill or fit the description of the

stereotypes placed on them by society or higher education institutions, such as being inferior to whites, having low academic achievement, and lacking the ability to persist through graduation at an HWI. In essence, the possibility of imitating a negative stereotype about Black male collegians could be enough to demoralize their persistence and academic performance at HWIs (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2015; Steele, 1997; Steele and Aronson, 1995).

A study by Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) demonstrated how racial microaggressions produce psychological conditions of RBF among Black male collegians. Students reported experiencing racial microaggressions in academic settings (e.g., classrooms, student centers), social venues (e.g., Greek organization houses, Black student functions), and public spaces (e.g., computer labs, off-campus restaurants, off-campus functions), as well as being racially profiled by campus law enforcement (Smith, Allen, & Delaney, 2007). These negative experiences also led to psychological, physiological, and emotional responses of RBF. Moreover, the racial strife that Black male collegians experience at HWIs encompasses racial and gendered implications that affect their persistence. To combat this problem, Black counter-intellectual and economic spaces must be created that "prioritize the survival and edification" of Black male collegians at HWIs (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018, p. 190).

Problem Statement

Black counter-intellectual and economic spaces are defined as spaces that "center African ways of knowing and being in the world…[with both] an exploration of the theoretical and technological legacies of African descended peoples...[and] a substantive and unapologetic critique of settler colonial logics predicated on anti-Blackness" (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018, p. 190). Moreover, this theorization calls for Black divestment from colonialism, or radical self-determination, in an effort to attain freedom. Counter-intellectual and economic spaces, I would

argue, are synonymous with fugitive spaces (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014). Fugitive spaces, particularly within Black radical studies, embody "a desire and a spirit of escape and transgression of the proper and the proposed. It's a desire for the outside, for a playing or being outside, an outlaw edge proper to the now always already improper voice or instrument" (Moten, 2018, p. 131). Ultimately, fugitivity provides a space to create dissonance and disruption in an effort to connect subjects that our predeterminations may lead us to think have little relation.

In this study, I am connecting Hip-Hop[5] to the anti-Black experiences of Black male collegians and their definitions of freedom. Moreover, I am using Hip-Hop to show that it is a "dehiscence at the heart of the [historically white] institution on its edge; [for Hip-Hop's] broken, coded [lyrics] sanction walking in another world while passing through this one, graphically disordering the administered scarcity from which [B]lack studies flows as wealth" (Moten, 2018, p. 155).

Hip-Hop culture, historically, has been a fugitive space and tool that has allowed Black and Brown[6] folx[7] to reimagine life, address systemic forms of oppression, and cathartically heal from domination (Love, 2016; Washington, 2015; Washington, 2018). I would define Hip-Hop as an onto-epistemological and multifaceted art form grounded in self-determination, resistance, and the enduring fight for Black freedom, through the elements of Black culture, defined by Black people.

Although Hip-Hop culture has Afrodiasporic roots that far precede the 1970s (Love, 2016), it originated in the "Boogie Down" Bronx in the mid-1970s. Hip-Hop culture was formed

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[5]I capitalize Hip-Hop to highlight and pay respect to the fact that it is a culture and provides a set of shared beliefs that connect Black and Brown people in the continuous struggle to disrupt systems of oppression.
[6] Brown describes people of color who are not considered Black, such as people who are Asian American or Latinx, as well as Native Americans, although most Native Americans identify as Indigenous.
[7] Folx is the alternative spelling of folks that is a gender neutral collective noun. I use the term folx in my study to be inclusive of all people, particularly Black and Brown folx.

in a post-industrial society (Chang, 2005; Kitwana, 2002; Rose, 2008), and several scholars

claim that Hip-Hop was a byproduct of deindustrialization (Petchauer, 2009; Rose, 1994). With

deindustrialization came the dramatic rise of the service industry. These trends had a calamitous

impact on many individuals, particularly Black and Brown folx, because wages in the service

sector were significantly lower than in industrial jobs. For example, in the 1970s, as the post-

industrial economy emerged, about 40 percent of Black families lived in extreme poverty

(Jencks, 1991). William Julius Wilson (1987), in his book *The Truly Disadvantaged*, claimed

that the majority of Black and Brown folx growing up in ghettos did not have the expertise or

education to compete for high-tech service industry jobs, exposing many of them to

unemployment, poverty, gang violence, crime, and drugs. But even individuals who were able to

find jobs in the service industry were still affected by racial discrimination and income

inequalities, earning considerably less than their white counterparts (Kusmer, 1995).

Consequently, tension and anger rose among Black and Brown communities, creating a Zeitgeist

ripe for the emergence of a new art form.

Scholars have attested that Hip-Hop emerged as a byproduct of deindustrialization

(Petchauer, 2009; Rose, 1994), but I would argue that the culture of Hip-Hop developed as a

result of the "absoluteness of power" ensnaring [B]lack life" (Hartman, 1997, p. 86). As Saucier

& Woods (2014) state,

> every account of [H]ip-[H]op privileges the role of economic restructuring in the post
> civil rights period and a reinvigoration of racial animus attendant to these changes, at the
> expense of a reckoning with the war against the [B]lack community and its inexorable
> freedom struggle across the better part of a [millennium]. (p. 270-271)

As Saucier and Woods discuss, this war against the Black community reflects the metanarrative

that Hip-Hop culture was established due to the economic downfall resulting from

deindustrialization. But my argument is that Hip-Hop emerged organically due to the

continuation of the Black Freedom Struggle (BFS). The Black Freedom Struggle represents an emerging Black consciousness movement during the 1950s and 1960s that emphasized self-reliance, cultural pride, and a more forceful response to white violence. Civil Rights and Black Power leaders pointed out the gratuitous violence, as well as the discriminatory practices against their own lives, the indiscriminate bombing of other countries, and even the counterintelligence activities that subverted the rights of U.S. citizens, specifically Black citizens. For example, in 1956, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) created a program called the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) that intentionally and illegally targeted, imprisoned, falsely charged, and assassinated Black families and domestic political organizations that the government believed were a threat to American society. In essence, COINTELPRO was a central means to repress the BFS. As Tibbs (2012) states,

> between 1966 and 1969, the federal government engaged in numerous counterintelligence operations against Black liberation organizations and their leaders. Between 1971 and 1973, nearly 1000 Black people were killed by law enforcement. This is a higher rate of state-sanctioned death–over one police murder per day for three years– than during the height of anti-Black lynchings around the turn of the twentieth century. (p. 52)

In short, COINTELPRO was a violent government-sponsored organization established to kill off the Black revolution. Yet even while these acts of violence were taking place, Black people found ways, including musical ways, to express their discontent, frustration, and anger about the social, economic, and political disparities that they encountered. One way in particular was through soul music, which incorporates rhythm and blues, gospel music, and jazz into a form of protest that expresses the lived experiences of the Black struggle (Maultsby, 1983; Stapleton, 1998). Soul music artists such as Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, Sun Ra, James Brown, and Sam Cooke created music that revealed the discernible impatience and courage of Black people, as well as the reassurance needed to reimagine freedom for Black people. In essence, soul music

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became the voice of Black pride, Black identity, and Black unity. Furthermore, I argue that the BFS did not stop during the 1960s but continues today, and just as soul music was the soundtrack of the 1950s and 1960s, Hip-Hop was an extension of this struggle during the 1970s that continues to be a voice today.

In an effort to stop violence in the Bronx during the 1970s, individuals such as Afrika Bambaataa, Leader of the Zulu Nation, and Caribbean disc jockey Kool Herc planned large block parties to help urban youth direct their frustrations through aesthetic movements that promoted a positive and embracing environment among community members (Chang, 2005). The cultural forms and inspiration of "mambo, funk, and Jamaican soundclash" (Petchauer, 2009, p. 946) were sampled to formulate the new sound called Hip-Hop. The five core musical dimensions of Hip-Hop include turntablism (e.g., DJing), emceeing (e.g., rap), graffiti, b-boying/b-girling (Kitwana, 2002), and self-knowledge (Love, 2016), although there is much debate about other elements, such as art and fashion (Akom, 2009; Love, 2016). These elements were intentionally created to help youth appreciate their individuality, make sense of the societal and cultural disparities affecting their neighborhoods, and find effective ways to connect their reality to the world (Greeson, 2009). As Rose (1994) states, rap music is a "[B]lack cultural expression that prioritizes [B]lack voices from the margins of urban America…[and] from the outset, rap has articulated the pleasures and problems of Black urban life in contemporary America" (p. 2). In essence, rap music stems from the sentiment that Black life matters and speaks to the lived experiences of Black people.

One key feature of Hip-Hop culture is rap music. Rap music, in particular, centers the voices of Black people through rhythmic storytelling that articulates the full range of experiences

of urban life in contemporary America (Rose, 1994). Sealey-Ruiz & Greene in particular convey

the significance of rap music to the core beliefs of Hip-Hop (2010):

> Rap is an expression of protest similar to Black cultural expressions of the past. While many forms of Black cultural ingenuity (i.e., jazz, blues and rock and roll) provide social and political commentary, perhaps what makes rap so unique is its forthright and unapologetic critique against oppression, inequality, and the status quo. Rap critiques the white dominant society as the cause of Black pain and suffering, and asserts control, giving voice and power to those often made invisible by society. For many urban youth, rap validates their life experiences and their existence. (p. 342)

Moreover, Hip-Hop has been and will continue to be a fugitive space. But just as the Black male

body is viewed as a threat to society, so too is Hip-Hop. Hip-Hop culture confronts anti-

Blackness because Hip-Hop is demonized by white faculty, staff, and administrators (Belle,

2014). Although Hip-Hop provides a fugitive space to wrestle and confront anti-Blackness, many

Hip-Hop fugitive spaces are constructed in heteropatriarchal, misogynistic, homophobic, and

transphobic ways that ultimately oppress Black women, trans and queer people, and non-gender-

conforming folx (Durham, Cooper & Morris, 2013; Love, 2016; Stallings, 2013). This critique

will be discussed further in my literature review section in Chapter 2. As a result, many higher

education institutions create narratives insinuating that Hip-Hop is nothing more than a global,

commercialized product of disenfranchised groups that expresses chauvinism, objectification,

and homophobia for the purpose of economic gain (Belle, 2014). Thurman Bridges (2011)

depicts these sentiments as follows:

> Hip-Hop has been both demonized and commodified in the field of education and in broader U.S. society. It has been characterized as hyper-masculine, overtly sexual, and criminal and, as such, antithetical to the positive, personal, and academic growth and development of urban youth. At the same time, Hip-Hop has been commodified and sold to young people of all backgrounds by the media and entertainment industry, and it has been packaged as an instructional tool for advancing traditional and, often, narrow curricular goals. It is no coincidence that these processes of demonization and commodification reflect parallel practices in schools and society that strip away the value and promise of Black boys and men, who are the primary creators and supporters of Hip-Hop. (p. 325)

Bridges argues that Hip-Hop culture is vilified in educational spaces through the production of negative stereotypes by white people who feel superior to Blacks, while simultaneously acknowledging Hip-Hop as commodifiable property to be used, reused, and consumed as entertainment for white people. This is a prime example of what Dancy, Edwards, and Davis (2018) point out regarding the reproduction of anti-Blackness at HWIs. They remind us that anti-Blackness at HWIs is replicated in two specific ways: the extraction of labor as property and the negative, stereotypical metanarratives that are policed on Black bodies. As a result, the Black male body is viewed as property, other than human, and a threat to society, so anything associated with it is deemed a threat as well. In essence, because Hip-Hop originated among Black (and Brown) people, the culture in of itself is a result of colonialism, or property of whiteness.

Yet despite the majoritarian, negative narratives created around Hip-Hop, the culture remains a fugitive space that provides agency for Black male collegians. This sentiment is conveyed in Jenkins' (2006) article "Mr. Nigger: The Challenges of Black Males Within American Society" when he states:

> Hip-Hop has served as a system of inclusion for Black male intellectual thought and growth. At the same time that Black males were being silenced and marginalized in the classroom, they began to create an alternate cultural structure that welcomed their social and political commentary, reflections on their lived experience and expressions of rage against the power structures of America…Within the cultural structure of Hip-Hop exists many of the factors that seem to be absent in the educational arena for Black males: freedom of thought, inclusion, competitiveness, encouragement, and immediate reward, all taking place in a nontraditional yet intellectually stimulating environment. (p. 147)

In short, Jenkins (2006) argues that Hip-Hop provides Black male collegians the opportunity to grapple with both the fixed and the fluid elements of anti-Blackness, economic oppression, and other systemic issues, in hopes of (re)imagining a world where they can not only survive, but become free (Love, 2016). Furthermore, I would argue that Hip-Hop is connected to anti-

Blackness, because white people are aware of Hip-Hop's liberatory power and as a result, understand that the study of Hip-Hop through the structure of anti-Blackness illuminates a culture of politics that insists on using Blackness to fulfill an anti-Black agenda (Wilderson, 2010). In short, Hip-Hop has been used by white people as an aversive tool to control and illustrate why Black male collegians are not worthy of life, for the culture associated with them is worthy of nothing more than commodifiable goods. This is demonstrated in a study by Reyna, Brandt, and Viki (2009), which found that white people's negative attitudes toward rap were associated with negative stereotypes of Blacks (who were blamed for their economic plight), as well as discrimination against Blacks, such as supporting policies that negatively target Black communities. Thus, the negative images and lyrics "associated with rap [become] easy scapegoats through which to validate stereotypes that Blacks are to blame, and thus they do not deserve the benefits that society has to offer" (Reyna, Brandt, & Vicki, 2009, p. 375). Thus, even when attempting to reimagine how life could be better for Black male collegians, HWIs fail to take seriously the lived experiences, culture, and art associated with Black men.

These ideas are likewise expressed in the larger society beyond white-dominated educational spaces. Greene (1995), in her critically acclaimed book *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts and Social Change*, claims that images depicted in art that reflect the authenticity and vulnerability of lived experience not only raise awareness of systemic issues faced by marginalized groups, but inspire, reimagine, and suggest ways to improve society. Greene (1995) states that when

> we see more and hear more [regarding violence], it is not only that we lurch, if only for a moment, out of the familiar and the taken-for-granted but that new avenues for choosing and for action may open in our experience; we may gain a sudden sense of new beginnings, that is, we may take an initiative in the light of possibility. (p. 123)

I agree that "many forms of art can enable us to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed" (Greene, 1995, p. 123). But many white people seem to lack sufficient reimagination and proactivity to sustain and love Black life. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2014) posits, "there can be no question that [B]lack life is both cheap and expendable in the eyes of law enforcement and the criminal justice system of which it is a part." From the slave ships of Africa to the creation of the #BlackLivesMatter movement due to the senseless killings of Black men, women, trans folk, and children—such as Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Zelia Ziona, Philando Castile, Terence Crutcher, Trayvon Martin, and Mike Brown—Black life continues to be viewed as constitutionally and morally disposable for the greater good of America. Black girls and boys are not afforded the luxuries of childhood and are even perceived as adults (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). In light of this, I argue that Hip-Hop, despite its negative stereotypes, is art that provides the liberatory power that Black male collegians need to discuss anti-Blackness, reimagine a future in the present, and speak truth to power regarding the disparities experienced by Black males at HWIs.

Purpose Statement

This study explores how Black male collegians who (a) currently attend, (b) have graduated from, or (c) have stopped out (i.e., did not persist to graduation) at an HWI theorize and/or disrupt anti-Blackness, how they define what freedom is, and how they narratively express their notions of freedom and experiences of anti-Blackness, through the social and fugitive space of Hip-Hop. The medium used in this dissertation consists of Black male collegians creating a Hip-Hop album that aesthetically illustrates their theorization of anti-Blackness and their individual and collective processes of flight. The notion of flight reflects an

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individual's process of becoming free from bondage. In this study, flight is an apt metaphor to describe the Black male collegians' creation of a Hip-Hop album to discuss not only what freedom is to them, but how they fight for their freedom despite the anti-Black experiences they face at HWIs.

The Black male collegians in this study identified with one or more of the following identities: artist, rapper, musician, composer, producer, poet, activist, b-boy, disc jockey (DJ), audio engineer, historian, entrepreneur, graffiti artist, graphic designer, campus leader, scholar, photographer, videographer, or "Hip-Hop collegian," a term coined by Petchauer (2012). According to Petchauer (2012), Hip-Hop collegians are

> college students who make their active participation in Hip-Hop relevant to their educational interests, motivations, practices, or mindsets. A student who listens to rap music is not a Hip-Hop collegian. But a student who feels rap music—is invested in its genealogies, studies its micro-eras, deconstructs its themes with friends, and holds it as an authoritative source of knowledge parallel to course material—is a Hip-Hop collegian. (p. 7)

Most participants in this study identified as a Hip-Hop collegian, although some do not. Those who did not consider themselves Hip-Hop collegians were musicians or graphic designers that provided a critique of anti-Blackness and a skillset that was essential to the process of narratively expressing the individual and collective theorization of anti-Blackness and freedom. Through the creation of a Hip-Hop album, these Black male collegians explored, based upon their own definitions, whether freedom existed or not, and how the process of wrestling with the concept of anti-Blackness produced the agency (both individually and collectively) for Black male collegians to "take flight," that is, to reimagine what freedom could be. Black male collegians were situated not only as participants in the study but as creators of the content for the Hip-Hop album.

Research Questions

This study draws on the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw, 1991, 1995; Delgado, 1995, 1998, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) (Dumas & Ross, 2016), as well as the conceptual framework of marronage (Roberts, 2015). The methodological approach used in this study is Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). This study is guided by the following research questions:

> How do Black male collegians at HWIs theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness in a Hip-Hop album?

> How do Black male collegians at HWIs make meaning and narratively express their understandings of freedom in a Hip-Hop album?

These research questions are grounded neither in an exploration of Hip-Hop's role in increasing Black male collegians' persistence and graduation rates nor in an examination of whether adding Hip-Hop Studies to HWIs' curricula leads to better academic performance among Black male collegians. Instead, the research seeks to disrupt anti-Blackness and organize through the fugitive space of Hip-Hop (using the creation of a Hip-Hop album as a fugitive tool) in hopes of actualizing Black male collegians' agency, or, more specifically, their radical self-determination and self-knowledge (Dancy, Edwards & Davis, 2018; Love, 2016). In the article "Fugitive Indigeneity: Reclaiming the Terrain of Decolonial Struggle through Indigenous Art," Martineau & Ritskes (2014) engage the idea that Indigenous art "evoke[s] a fugitive aesthetic that, in its decolonial ruptural forms, refuses the struggle for better or more inclusion and recognition and, instead, choose refusal and flight as modes of freedom" (p. IV). Moreover, the authors state that they are not interested in maintaining any ties or relationships with colonialism, but instead prefer to "reimagine, remap, and reconstitute an "elsewhere" in the present, through the intent of becoming free" (p. IV). Furthermore, "instead of struggling against the marginalization within dominant society (i.e., colonialism)—a struggle that leads back to inclusion—liminal spaces of

fugitivity should be imagined as part of a decolonizing 'trajectory into freedom'" (James, 2013, p. 124). Ultimately, this study was for Black male collegians, created by Black male collegians, in an effort to fashion a Hip-Hop album, through self-knowledge and radical self-determination, to narratively discuss, disrupt, and theorize their anti-Black experiences at HWIs, in order to reimagine freedom.

Significance of the Study

According to Love (2013), one path to self-knowledge is the study of Hip-Hop culture and music, alongside an examination of issues within one's surroundings, to create positive change in one's community. This notion of self-knowledge has been prevalent in the curation of Hip-Hop scholarship. Hip-Hop scholarship began in the 1980s and 1990s with the use of rap lyrics in language arts classes and in community education settings (Alexander-Smith, 2004; Dimitriadis, 2001; Hill, 2009; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Richardson, 2006; Stovall, 2006). But since then, it has expanded into additional disciplines, including Black girlhood studies (Brown, 2008, 2013, 2014; Love, 2012), higher education (Petchauer, 2012; Sule, 2016), and science education (Emdin, 2010a, 2010b), among others (Hill & Petchauer, 2013). In education, this expansion has also entailed leveraging newer conceptual points of entry such as Hip-Hop feminism (Cooper, Morris, & Boylorn, 2017; Durham, Cooper, & Morris, 2013; Morgan, 1999, 2012, 2018; Lindsey, 2015) and Hip-Hop aesthetics (Petchauer, 2015), derived from the wider body of Hip-Hop scholarship.

Dimitriadis (2015) posits that "new forms of self-reflexivity are necessary for scholars, [students], and critics who look to "frame" Hip-Hop as an object of analysis" (p. 32). One unexamined area in the expansion of Hip-Hop scholarship is how students both individually and collectively communicate, express, and build knowledge of their experiences through Hip-Hop

modes of creating music. Carson's (2017) "Owning my Masters: The Rhetorics of Rhymes and Revolutions" is a 34-track, digitally archived rap album dissertation (accompanied by a traditional written dissertation) that discusses his lived experiences as a doctoral student at Clemson University, an HWI located on land that was formerly a slave plantation. In creating this project, the first of its kind in Hip-Hop scholarship, Carson's motivation was his recollection of the systemic racial, environmental, and institutional experiences that he faced while on campus. This form of radical, creative, expressive, and disruptive scholarship is the quintessential manifestation of a scholar making sense of his experiences in an effort to express himself through a Hip-Hop lens.

My study is significant because it expands upon Carson's (2017) self-reflexive study in creating a Hip-Hop album that brings together Black male collegians from various HWIs to disrupt anti-Blackness and reimagine what freedom is and could be. Scholars and students have analyzed these modes of production (e.g., discussions of the work of artists such as Tupac, Nas, & Lauryn Hill), but there are no instances of education scholars or students working together to use these modes to (in)form new scholarship. Moreover, this study "define[s], redefine[s], imagine[s], reimagine[s] and mobilize[s] the power of Hip-Hop culture, scholarship and praxis" (Ladson-Billings, 2016), in hopes of freeing Black male collegians from the potential ruptures caused by anti-Blackness. In essence, this type of scholarship "embrace[s] radically creative, expressive, and disruptive action in place of traditional forms of organizing, previously legitimized by established political institutions" (Davis, 2015, p. 59), such as HWIs.

Conclusion

This study claims that anti-Blackness is the overarching culprit that hinders Black male collegians' educational persistence. Although many scholars have discussed the institutional

barriers of social isolation, overt and covert racism, microaggressions, RBF, and stereotype threat, all of these issues boil down to the hatred of Black life among white administrators, faculty, and students at HWIs. Many studies have focused on why Black male collegians have (or have not) persisted at HWIs, but not one study utilizes a Hip-Hop album, created and curated by a collective of Black male collegians, to focus specifically on anti-Blackness and its connection to freedom. As Martineau & Ritskes (2014) convey,

> The freedom realized through flight and refusal is the freedom to imagine and create an elsewhere in the here; a present future beyond the imaginative and territorial bounds of colonialism. It is a performance of other worlds, an embodied practice of flight. The fugitive aesthetic is not an abdication of contention and struggle; it is a reorientation toward freedom in movement, against the limits of colonial knowing and sensing. It seeks to limn the margins of land, culture and consciousness for potential exits, for creative spaces of departure and renewal. (p. IV)

Moreover, this dissertation's intent is to attain freedom by employing Hip-Hop aesthetics to disrupt anti-Blackness, refuse colonialism, organize through a Black cultural lens, and renew the imagination. My objective is to illuminate how Black male collegians garner radical self-determination at HWIs through discourse around anti-Blackness and freedom through Hip-Hop's dynamic and multimodal forms of expression, such as "lines, images, words, movements, performances and sounds that break *from* and *through* colonial enclosures to (re)discover...open spaces of imagination and creativity" (Matineau & Riskes, 2014, p. X).

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

The mode of professionalization that is the American university is precisely dedicated to promoting this consensual choice: an antifoundational critique of the University or a foundational critique of the university. Taken as choices, or hedged as bets, one tempered with the other, they are nonetheless always negligent. Professionalization is built on this choice. It rolls out into ethics and efficiency, responsibility and science, and numerous other choices, all built upon the theft, the conquest, the negligence of the outcast mass intellectuality of the undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 33).

As mentioned in chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to explore how Black male collegians at historically white institutions (HWIs) theorize and/or disrupt anti-Blackness, how they define what freedom is, and how they narratively express their notions of freedom and experiences of anti-Blackness, through the social and fugitive space of Hip-Hop. In this section, first, I provide an overview that discusses how anti-Blackness historically has been used as a nationally sanctioned and state-sanctioned (specifically in Oklahoma) tool to dehumanize and oppress Black people in general, and Black males in particular, through established, traditional, patriarchal establishments such as HWIs. Particularly within the section regarding state-sanctioned anti-Blackness in Oklahoma, I discuss pivotal Black Oklahoma community leaders and students who responded to and disrupted anti-Blackness in educational settings in Oklahoma. Second, I provide empirical evidence showing how, through these efforts of disruption, Black male collegians are still socialized in white, patriarchal ways that affect the performance of their manhood and masculinities at HWIs. Third, I provide empirical evidence showing how Hip-Hop has been used as an intervention in higher education, acknowledging and critiquing the fact that no research to date has connected Hip-Hop Studies to anti-Blackness, masculinities, freedom, and space. Fourth, I discuss the importance of Hip-Hop feminists' role in helping me understand the importance of an intersectional approach, one that is "percussive in

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that it is both disruptive and generative…and allows for the creativity that ensues from placing modes or objects of inquiry together that might not traditionally fit" (Durham, Cooper & Morris, 2013, p. 724). In short, Hip-Hop feminism makes the argument that even though Hip-Hop is misogynistic, homophobic, transphobic, and hypermasculine, it still provides a space to critique these oppressive forces, created by whiteness, that are reinforced by Black male collegians..

Fifth, I draw upon Queer theorist Judith Butler (1990; 1993; 1995) and the concept of fixed bodies in transitional spaces, connecting her work to Hip-Hop to point out that most Black male collegians understand race through a patriarchal lens and do not necessarily grasp the importance of gender and sexuality. Last, I discuss my theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit), as well as my conceptual framework, marronage, and how these frameworks interact with my argument for approaching anti-Blackness and freedom through a Hip-Hop lens via the creation of a Hip-Hop album.

Anti-Blackness, Slavery, & HWIs

The foundational structure of the United States is the "history of Black suffering in America" (Coles, 2018, p. 7). The ideology of Black people as property at HWIs can be traced back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as more than 12.5 million African men, women, and children, over a span of 400 years, were brought involuntarily to various parts of the Americas (Stein, 2016). White Christianity, and more specifically the interpretation of the Bible by white colonial ministers, was used to rationalize and normalize the categorization of white people as superior, and Black people as inferior, or *other than human* (Cannon, 2008; Fanon, 2008; Dumas, 2016; Stein, 2016). As the slave trade made its way to New England, it participated in the founding of Harvard University in 1636 (Wilder, 2013).

Wilder (2013) states that the "academy never stood apart from American slavery—in fact, it stood beside the church and state as the third pillar of a civilization built on bondage" (p. 11). As the slave trade and colonial plantation economy grew exponentially, the profits accrued and were funneled into the accounts of universities such as Harvard (1636), the College of William & Mary (1693), St. John's College (1696), Yale (1701), the University of Pennsylvania (1740), and others (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018; Patton, 2016; Stein, 2016; Wilder, 2013). These institutions were managed by college presidents and clergymen who collected enslaved Black people as personal attendants to free them from labor. Furthermore, the accumulation and influx of Black bodies, specifically from the West Indies, for the benefit of free labor, produced a high (as a hallucinogen does); and, I would argue, slave owners derived pleasure from the gaming spectacle of slave auctions, of acquiring Black flesh that was perceived as fungible, disposable and objectively as property (Hartman, 1997; Sharpe, 2016; Spillers, 1987; Stein, 2016; Wilder, 2013; Wilderson, 2010). With regard to HWIs, Dancy, Edwards, and Davis (2018) emphasize that

> Black people erected the buildings, cooked the food, and cleaned the dormitories and yet were not understood as laborers, but as property. Colonizers advocated (from college campus podiums) for the inhumane treatment of Black people everywhere, and violence was a common experience for the enslaved on college campuses. Colonial college trustees (many of whom were minsters) tortured and murdered enslaved Black men, women and children in the most sadistic ways. (p. 182)

Furthermore, Wilder's (2013) analysis of HWIs standing as the third pillar of American slavery, which includes the dehumanization of Black bodies through violence, expresses the ideology that is embedded in the DNA and fabric of these anti-Black establishments, from white students, faculty, and staff all the way up to college administrators (Dancy, Edwards & Davis; Wilder, 2013).

Enslaved Black people experienced staged exhibitions of violence, which consisted of vicious acts of "whippings, mutilations, incinerations and dismemberment, to the daily hand-to-hand combat or rape, to the mockery of the coffle, auction block, and traders' pen (Saucier & Woods, 2014, p. 273). As Yancy (2008) states, the mere existence of a Black body is a threat to society and, as a result, is "confiscated within social spaces of meaning construction and social spaces of transversal interaction that are buttressed by a racist value-laden episteme" (p. 4). This is what Wilderson (2010) describes as gratuitous violence, which means that the violence perpetuated on Black people is not "contingent on transgressions against the hegemony of civil society" but is structural, in that it places Black people "ontologically outside of Humanity and civil society (p. 55). In essence, the ontology of Blackness is an illusion, or not real in the eyes of white people, and exists only within the "structure of Master/Slave" (Kline, 2017, p. 53). Moreover, Blackness connotes non-humanity, non-existence, and inferiority within the gaze of white people (Yancy, 2008). This dichotomous and diametrically opposed political and ontological structure is at the epicenter of society at large, and HWIs in particular (Kline, 2017; Stein, 2016; Wilder, 2013; Wilderson, 2010). Furthermore, the idea of Blackness is inherently problematic, and this notion of anti-Blackness is replicated in HWIs, particularly the ways in which Black male collegians are perceived as threats to society (Wilderson, 2010).

Anti-Blackness & Oklahoma Statehood

Before I present empirical evidence showing how Black male collegians have been socialized within HWIs, it is important that I provide a historical synopsis, from a Black perspective, of how anti-Blackness has been a state-sanctioned tool in Oklahoma. Because this study takes place within the context of Oklahoma HWIs, it is imperative that I discuss the unique ways that anti-Blackness has oppressed Black people in education and the role of great Black

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leaders in fighting and disrupting these anti-Black systems and laws to liberate and empower the Oklahoma Black community.

In his book *Journey Toward Hope: A History of Blacks in Oklahoma,* Jimmie Franklin (1982) recounts what Blacks endured to fight for citizenship in Oklahoma, particularly during the time when Oklahoma was becoming a state. Blacks in Oklahoma were met with violence while fighting for the "separate but equal" rights that they were supposed to receive, and white supremacists created laws and policies that resulted in the gratuitous violence placed on Black bodies, in hopes of ensuring their superiority over Black people.

On June 16, 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill known as the Enabling Act, which laid the foundation for Oklahoma to become a state.This act "provided that Indian Territory and Oklahoma be combined to form one state and that a constitutional convention be held consisting of 112 delegates" (Cayton, 1977, p. 37). Although the act did not initially include a voting provision, groups of Black Oklahoma citizens, such as the Equal Rights Association of Kingfisher, fought for Congress to amend the act and guarantee class legislation, particularly asking for protection against "barbarous, inhuman and ungodly treatment at the hands of [white] citizens" (Franklin, 1982, p. 35). Franklin (1982) states that, after the Civil War, Black Americans aligned themselves with the Republican Party. As Republicans fought for votes, many leveraged the Black vote by providing minor (not major) political offices to Black people, such as county clerks, tax collectors, and territorial board memberships (Franklin, 1982). As white Democrats persuaded voters that "they could best promote white supremacy and, consequently, the interest of the new state…the party repeatedly sounded the theme of race mixing against the GOP and accused the Republicans of opposition to separate schools and railroad coaches" (Franklin, 1982, p. 37). In short, Democrats used race and power to convey to

white Oklahomans that Republicans did in fact want to create equitable opportunities for Blacks, as opposed to making the claim that white people were in fact superior to Blacks. This type of propaganda did not sit well with racist Republicans as they continued to fight for delegation seats for the constitutional convention (Franklin, 1982). As a result, many white Republicans rejected "any claim [B]lacks had on the party and bluntly told [Blacks] that the GOP had fulfilled any past obligations to the race" (Franklin, 1982, p. 38). In essence, like white Democrats, white Republicans feared "Negro domination…[and] pledged to use every means possible to prevent the nomination or appointment of [B]lacks to office" (Franklin, 1982, p. 38).

The question of "the negro as problem" was settled during the constitutional convention, as Oklahoma defined itself as a white man's country. As a result of these political tactics, Democrats won 100 of the 112 seats and prepared for the constitutional convention in Guthrie, Oklahoma, in November of 1906 (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982). The constitutional convention, under the leadership of William H. Murray of Tishomingo, fought for and created a Jim Crow program that would legally make Black people second-class citizens, limited to occupations such as porters, agriculturalists, and "boot-blacks and barbers" (Franklin, 1982, p. 41). Murray was overtly racist because he believed that white Christians were the only people who could oversee and make the right decisions for society (Franklin, 1982). Although Murray initially endorsed including a Jim Crow clause in the constitution, he held off on the clause until after the convention, on the advice of white leaders such as Charles Haskell, who would ultimately become the state's first governor. Haskell believed that the Jim Crow laws could be established with the majority-Democrat legislative body (Franklin, 1982). Instead, Murray focused his efforts on other matters, such as public transportation, interracial marriage, and school

segregation, and on November 16, 1907, the constitution was ratified and approved, making Oklahoma the 46th state (Franklin, 1982).

School Segregation, Music Education, & the Legacy of Zelia Breaux

School segregation, among other issues, was a fact of life in Oklahoma. As Cayton (1977) states, "a majority of cultural, recreational, educational, and economic resources were withheld from [B]lack people and their children…and [B]lack educators in Oklahoma were assigned the task of providing some semblance of education for the [B]lack children…without proper financial, moral, or even spiritual support" (p. 45). In essence, Black educators had to be innovative with paltry resources to engage students. One area that was initiated in Black schools was music- and arts-based education, which began prior to statehood (Anderson, 1957). Zelia Breaux was a pioneer in developing music education in Black schools. Breaux was the superintendent of music for Black schools in Oklahoma City as well as head of the music department at Douglass High School. Prior to becoming the music department head at Douglass in 1918, Breaux taught instrumental music at Langston University, Oklahoma's only Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Anderson (1957) states that, in 1907, "the course of study [at Douglass] listed music as a subject to be taught in either the fourth or fifth grade in the elementary school, and in the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades of the secondary school as an elective" (p. 34). Although music was listed as an elective, Douglass High School placed as much emphasis on music education as on the required subjects. Douglass was one of five Black schools in Oklahoma to provide a music- and arts-based education. Anderson (1957) emphasizes that many music teachers simultaneously taught other subjects such as science, English, history, or math. If schools did not have a music teacher, principals sometimes took on responsibility for overseeing the music program.

As a Black woman, teacher, distinguished musician, and daughter of Langston University's first President, Dr. Inman Page, Zelia Breaux established music-based education in Oklahoma's Black schools during a time of Jim Crow, overt racism, and oppression. Due to limited resources and equipment, most schools focused their music programs on choir rather than instrumental music, but Breaux organized Black teachers, principals, and administrators to invest in a curriculum that incorporated the cultural and social capital of Black people.

Although Breaux advocated for music education in schools, she also provided a platform for the Black community to engage in Black cultural aesthetics. Breaux owned the the Aldridge Theater, the only Black theater in Oklahoma City, which was located in the historic Deep Deuce area of Northeast Oklahoma City. It opened in 1920 and remained open until the 1950s (Anderson, 1957). Breaux's theater saw the likes of blues singer Jimmy Rushing, composer Duke Ellington, pianist Count Basie, guitarist Charlie Christian, and other renowned performers (Anderson, 1957).

The Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers (OANT) was established in 1907 for the purpose of improving teachers' competence through in-service training and educating teachers about how school systems worked, how state funding was allocated, and how educational environments affected Black communities (Todd, n.d.) As membership expanded, OANT's values and mission shifted to meet a need for professional development in leadership and self-expression. The focus on self-expression aligned with Breaux's vision of music-based education, and in 1946, she became the first woman president of OANT. As previously mentioned, Breaux's father, Dr. Inman Page, was the first president of Langston University, but was also the principal at Douglass High School when renowned Oklahoma writer Ralph Ellison was a student there. Ellison (1986) writes that "Dr….Page [was] the parent of a most wonderful daughter

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whose name was Zelia N. Breaux, and her impact upon our community was in some ways as profound as that of her father" (p. 134). Ellison describes Breaux as an individual who sparked his interest in music, saying that her teaching of classical music and European folk dances provided him the exposure to understand not only his own vernacular and voice, but the importance of learning about the various cultures around him.

Love (2016) states that educators "must use the binary space of [H]ip-[H]op and what it represents to imagine what is lost and what never really existed as we create [H]ip-[H]op education alongside youth that push us to resist formulaic materials and narratives for resistance and self-determination" (p. 424). Although Breaux did not specifically use Hip-Hop with her students, she revolutionized music education in Oklahoma by exposing students to various forms of the arts during an era steeped in segregation, oppression, and anti-Blackness. Under her leadership, arts education blossomed in Oklahoma's Black schools, and it continues to be part of curriculum both in K-12 and higher education settings. Breaux was a liberator who provided students the opportunity to uncover or reimagine the possibilities of the world, despite the strife they faced in it. As Ralph Ellison (1986) states in *Going to The Territory*:

> for while I was to become a writer instead of a musician, it was Mrs. Breaux who introduced me to the basic discipline of the artist. And it was she who made it possible for me to grasp the basic compatibility of the mixture of the classical and vernacular styles which were part of our musical culture. Such individuals as [Zelia Breaux] worked…as an act of faith: faith in [herself], faith in the potentialities of [her] own people, and despite [her] social status as [a] Negro, faith in the potentialities of the democratic ideal. (pp. 136, 144)

Breaux represents the type of artist and leader that James Baldwin (1962) describes in his essay "The Creative Process," in which he states that the

> precise role of the artist, then, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through that vast forest, so that we will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place. (p. 1)

Breaux was a pioneer not only in Black education, but in education as a whole in Oklahoma, for she shifted the paradigm of the state's history through her leadership and dedication to bridge education and music. In essence, she disrupted the anti-Black experiences that she and her students suffered by providing the space to let her students make sense of their world and reimagine new possibilities in a white society.

One element that makes music so powerful is its connection to media and the press. Another example of Black leadership and dedication was the innovative pioneer Roscoe Dunjee, who used his voice and the resources of his press, *The Black Dispatch,* to raise public awareness and shape public sentiment about issues of anti-Blackness, particularly as they were connected to higher education.

Roscoe Dunjee, the Black Press & Higher Education

Roscoe Dunjee, founder of the first Black newspaper in Oklahoma City, the *Black Dispatch*, was born in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, in 1883 and launched the *Black Dispatch* in 1915 (Hadley, 1981). Dunjee was heavily influenced by the perseverance of his father, John Dunjee, a runaway slave who attended Oberlin College, later becoming a Baptist minister and a financial agent for Storer College, a HBCU located in West Virginia (Hadley, 1981). Roscoe Dunjee's father had also published his own paper, the *Harper's Ferry Messenger*, established in 1871 (Franklin, 1982; Hadley, 1981). This inspired Roscoe Dunjee, whose *Black Dispatch* was highly influential in Oklahoma City and "provided the first means of direct publicity by the Black community and affiliated national organizations in an effort to awaken both Black and White citizens to racial discrimination" (Stewart, 1974, p. 197). In essence, Dunjee created his paper to "supplement the metropolitan papers and to print the Black issues [w]hite papers covered up deftly, adroitly, and subtly" (Luster, 1950, p. 1).

Dunjee reported on topics ranging from poverty, political disenfranchisement, educational disparities, and restrictive housing laws (Franklin, 1982; Hadley, 1981). Many of these topics were problematic for Black people because of William Murray's role in shaping the state constitution into a document that denied equal citizenship to Black people (Franklin, 1982). Two examples of Dunjee's impact are evident in the Oklahoma court cases of William Floyd (1923) and Sidney Hawkins (1935). In 1916, both Oklahoma City and Tulsa passed restrictive housing ordinances that prohibited a "Black or white person from acquiring property in an area where their race was decidedly in the minority" (Franklin, 1982, p. 50). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1917 that these restrictive housing laws were unconstitutional. However, many white-majority cities and towns ignored the ruling and continued to create ordinances discriminating against Black people (Franklin, 1982). Dunjee recognized this issue and galvanized the support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to help fight these housing cases (among other Black civil rights issues). Both William Floyd (1923) and Sidney Hawkins (and his partner Onie Allen) (1935) purchased property in restrictive zones, and both were arrested immediately following their purchases. Each time that these individuals were sent to jail, Dunjee, with members of the NAACP, paid their bonds and encouraged them to return home.

Floyd's (1923) case was ultimately dismissed by a judge in Oklahoma County, specifically during a time when Oklahoma was under martial law. Martial law, essentially, is the use of state or national military force to implement the will of the government of the people (Richardson, 2019). Jack C. Walton, Oklahoma's Governor from January to November of 1923, declared martial law in Okmulgee and Tulsa counties, in direct response to the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 (as well as lynchings of Black people following the massacre), in which mobs of white

people killed more than 300 Black residents and burned down Black businesses of the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, after a white woman, Sarah Page, falsely accused a Black shoeshiner, Dick Rowland of assaulting her (O'Dell, n.d.). As a result of this massacre, the Ku Klux Klan's power began to grow tremendously in Oklahoma. In 1923, Governor Walton declared martial law in hopes of containing the violence, but he was impeached by Oklahoma Legislature later the same year (O'Dell, n.d.) and martial law ended in November 1923. These details are important because in 1933, William Murray, now the Governor of Oklahoma, created an executive order to segregate Blacks living in white neighborhoods (Franklin, 1982). During his tenure as Governor from 1931-1935, Murray, who declared martial law more than 30 times, called upon the Oklahoma National Guard to step in to enforce state laws regarding issues such as oil production[8], toll bridges, and segregated housing. As a result of Murray abusing his power as Governor, Sidney Hawkins' (1935) case ultimately went to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, which ruled that Murray's executive order was "void and that martial law gave no excuse for the enactment of the unconstitutional housing law" (Franklin, 1982, p. 51).

In short, Dunjee was a voice for the Black community in Oklahoma who used his platform to critique anti-Black measures that directly affected the livelihood of Black people. He particularly critiqued the unequitable treatment of Black people in schools. As Hadley (1981) states, "the subject of education for Blacks was one of the most important issues to Dunjee and he seldom missed an opportunity to voice his opinion about schools" (p. 53). Dunjee wrote many editorials that targeted or called out state legislators who hid behind Jim Crow and distributed "separate but unequal" funds to Black school districts. He likewise denounced disparities in higher education. For example, Dunjee criticized "per capita spending, maintenance and upkeep,

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[8] Murray used the Oklahoma National Guard to reduce oil production in hopes of raising gas prices.

and [the] financing" (Hadley, 1981, p. 75) of Langston University compared to two HWIs, the University of Oklahoma (OU) and the A&M College at Stillwater (now known as Oklahoma State University) (OSU). In addition, in 1930, Dunjee castigated state legislators in the *Black Dispatch* for appropriating $1,894,000 to the two HWIs and only $94,000 to Langston University (Hadley, 1981). Dunjee also discussed pay disparities between white and Black professors, pointing out in his 1939 editorial "White Education vs. Black" that white college professors were paid 52 times more than Black professors (Hadley, 1981).

To place Langston University's situation in context, it is important to understand its history as a land-grant HBCU. The first Morrill Act, in 1862, had created the first land-grant colleges in the United States (Anderson, 1988; Dancy & Brown, 2008; Harper, Wooden & Patton, 2009). The second Morrill Act, in 1890, significantly extended access to higher education for Black people by creating 17 public land-grant HBCUs, one of which was Langston University. The purpose of these public institutions, particularly in the South, was to prevent Black people from attending white colleges and pigeonhole them into vocational and agricultural training rather than liberal arts education (Roebuck & Murcky, 1993). As a result, many Black students chose to leave the Oklahoma to attend colleges where they could obtain a liberal arts education. By the 1940s, many Black students who had received undergraduate degrees at Langston University were seeking graduate programs in Oklahoma, because Langston did not offer graduate degrees at that time. Dunjee became highly engaged with the issue of Black students' right to attend HWIs (Hadley, 1981). Through his influential writings and political actions, he ultimately set the stage for Black students, such as Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher and George McLaurin, to be admitted into an HWI.

Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher

Franklin (1982) argues that "the open attack upon separation in higher and professional education came in 1946 when a young [B]lack woman named Ada Lois Sipuel requested admission to the University of Oklahoma College of Law" (p. 76). Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher graduated from Langston University in 1945, at a time when the NAACP and Dunjee were looking for a plaintiff in a court case testing Oklahoma's laws regarding segregation in higher education. The "test case" plaintiff would need to be a Black student who met the admission requirements for OU's law school (Fife, 2012). Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher offered to be the test case and, in 1946, applied for admission to the OU College of Law, which "rejected her solely based on her race" (Fife, 2012, p. 35). OU's President at that time was George Lynn Cross, a native South Dakotan. Urged by Dunjee, Cross denied Fisher's application because of her race, not because Langston University lacked appropriate accreditation, which was the strategy that white Oklahoma officials had recommended to Cross (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982). Fisher and her lawyer, Amos Hall, went to the Cleveland County district court to ask the court to require Fisher's admittance, which the court turned down (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982). In the wake of this denial, the NAACP provided chief counsel in April of 1947, and Thurgood Marshall, founder of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and future Supreme Court Justice, assisted in bringing the case to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, which also turned it down (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982. Unfortunately, Marshall and the NAACP failed to reverse the Oklahoma Supreme Court's decision (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982).

Fisher then filed an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court, which heard the case on January 12, 1948 (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982). Fisher's legal team cited *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938), a U.S. Supreme Court decision addressing the case of Lloyd Gaines, a graduate of Lincoln University, a HBCU, who had been was denied admission to the University of

Missouri's Law School. Although the state of Missouri intended to create a law school at Lincoln University, the court ruled that, in failing to provide equal access to public education within the state, Missouri was inadequate in upholding its constitutional duty to provide equal protection under the law. In Fisher's case, the U.S. Supreme court overturned the Oklahoma Supreme court decision regarding Fisher's admittance into the University of Oklahoma's law school, although "the decision did not address the constitutionality of segregated facilities in higher education" (Franklin, 1982, p. 77). To circumvent this decision, the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education not only created a "Langston University School of Law" in a matter of days, but provided Langston with its accreditation. This timing was ironic; only a few months earlier, the Regents "had found the [B]lack university deficient in curriculum, faculty, physical plant, and equipment" (Franklin, 1982, p. 79). Clearly, white officials simply did not want a Black person in an all-white institution. Consequently, when Fisher renewed her request for admission to the OU law school, the Cleveland County District Court ruled that Fisher did not need to attend OU, because the Langston University School of Law was equal to OU's law school (Franklin, 1982).

Yet again, the NAACP and Dunjee devised a strategy not only to gain Fisher's admittance into the OU College of Law, but also to completely end segregation in Oklahoma higher education (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982). Because the state had created the "Langston School of Law" in a week, the NAACP tactically got six Black students to apply for admission to six different graduate programs. President Cross denied admission to all six students. The NAACP knew that the Regents would not be able to create and fund "equal educational facilities" for of all these Black students (Fife, 2012; Franklin 1982). This was made clear in a special report that the Regents had received from deans at OU and OSU. As Hadley (1981) states, Dunjee's editorial "Graduate Training for Negroes" was a response to a report prepared by deans from OU

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and OSU for the State Regents of Higher Education. This report argued that, instead of creating

graduate programs at Langston, it would be more cost-effective and feasible to admit Black

students to HWIs on a limited-enrollment basis. Hadley (1981) states that Dunjee believed the

report was needed

> because it was not prepared by Blacks but, instead, by eminent [w]hite educators who at
> that time were in the employ of the state and were charged with the responsibility of
> preparing the report by the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education. Because of these
> facts, Dunjee concluded that the report should not be labeled propaganda. He emphasized
> the fact that the [w]hite educators correctly recognized the colossal cost of maintaining a
> dual system of graduate training in Oklahoma, while at the same time they pointed out the
> great need for expansion of facilities in medical professional fields in order to graduate
> more Black doctors, dentists and pharmacists. (p. 83)

Due to this calculated move by the NAACP, Ada Sipuel Lois Fisher was admitted into the OU

College of Law on June 18, 1949, more than three years later after she had first applied, due to

the fact that the Langston University School of Law due to the fact that the Langston University

School of Law was scheduled to close within a few weeks (Fife, 2012; Franklin, 1982). As the

law program at that time was undergraduate work, Fisher became the first Black undergraduate

student admitted to the University of Oklahoma (Fife, 2012). Fisher's case served as the

precedent for the six other Black students' cases, especially George W. McLaurin's.

George W. McLaurin

George W. McLaurin, an instructor at Langston University, was one of the six Black

students who applied to OU while Fisher was fighting for admittance into OU's law school

(Franklin, 1982). McLaurin, who applied to the doctoral program in OU's School of Education,

was initially denied admission. (Fife, 2012). After he filed a lawsuit in federal court in Oklahoma

City, the Regents approved his admission on October 14, 1948, making him the first Black

graduate student at this HWI. Yet McLaurin was subjected to segregation at OU: he was required

to sit behind barrier walls that the university constructed in his classrooms, the library, and the

dining hall so that the white students could not see him as he attended class, studied, and ate his

meals. McLaurin believed that these harsh and unequal conditions hampered his ability to learn

effectively. As Franklin (1982) states, the "enforced segregation within the university, in his

judgment, constituted a badge of inferiority and it negatively affected McLaurin's relation with

other students and with his professors. The mental discomfiture produced by his isolation made

effective study impossible" (p. 81). Although McLaurin was admitted as a student, the Oklahoma

City federal court attempted to keep him segregated because they believed it was not their job to

enforce social equality between classes and races (Fife, 2012). As a result, McLaurin appealed to

the U.S. Supreme Court, under the counsel of Thurgood Marshall, and the decision was

overturned, as the courts unanimously ruled that these restrictions did in fact inhibit McLaurin's

ability to "study…exchange views with other students, and to master his discipline" (Franklin,

1982, p. 81).

The cases of Ada Sipuel Lois Fisher and George W. McLaurin broke segregation's seal

and ultimately provided the blueprint for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which ruled that

racial segregation in educational institutions was no longer legal. Although this provided a great

victory for Black students and their access to education, many were met with violence. For

example, Fife (2012) recalls that a white student group, upset by the decision to admit Black

students, created a petition that read:

> We the undersigned, all students at the University of Oklahoma, hereby petition the board
> of regents to uphold the segregation laws of this state and to prohibit the admission of
> Negro students to the University…We're not against the Negroes. We just don't want them
> in [our] school. (p. 49)

Increasing numbers of Black students gained admittance to HWIs after Fisher and McLaurin

were admitted, and an infrastructure of programs and organizations gradually was formed at OU

and other HWIs to provide support and a sense of belonging to Black students on campus. These

organizations included the Black People's Union (BPU), Black Greek letter organizations, the National Society of Black Engineers, and Black Studies curricular program, among others. Although these programs have provided ways to help Black students, including Black male collegians, navigate the oppressive structures of HWIs, they also socialize Black male collegians in ways that are problematic.

The Socialization of Black Male Collegians: Manhood v. Masculinities

No child is born with an innate idea of what it means to be a man. Boys and men gain their understanding of what it means to be a man through a socialization process that comes from exposure to other people in positions of influence and authority. Black male collegians' ideas about "being a man" are shaped by what they see in the media and in pop culture, such as Hip-Hop; what they experience at home and at school; what behaviors they observe in their teachers and family members; and what they learn through social interactions with peers. "Manhood" and "masculinities" are related but distinct concepts. Dancy states that "manhood is about meanings men construct about themselves as men…[and masculinities are]...about the related or unrelated behaviors, demonstrations, and performances that emerge from manhood constructions" (Dancy, 2011, p. 478). In other words, Manhood is characterized as the principles and ethics of what it means to be a man (Dancy, 2012; Davis, 2006), whereas masculinities are defined as the performances of manhood that have been socially and culturally assembled by an individual based on their environment (Dancy, 2012). In this study, I use the plural term "masculinities" because "there is no one version… of how individuals perform what it is they believe it means to be a man…as one may embody or enact multiple forms of masculinity simultaneously" (Travers, 2018, p. 23). The theorization of masculinities takes us away from a restrictive binary approach to studying masculinity and moves us to a broader discourse regarding gender expression and

norms (Dancy, 2012; Travers, 2018). Later in this chapter, I will provide empirical evidence

showing how Black male collegians are socialized in higher education, specifically at HWIs.

However, it is essential that I first provide a historical context of how anti-Blackness operates

systemically in American society and how Black male collegians, in particular, have been

conditioned to think about and perform their manhood and masculinities, in hopes of surviving in

white America.

Anti-Black Origins of Masculinities among Black Men

As previously mentioned, the foundational structure of the United States is the "history of

Black suffering in America" (Coles, 2018, p. 7). Throughout American history, no group of men

has faced more oppression, psychological and physical trauma, or organized racism regarding

their manhood, than Black men (Travers, 2008). In her classic text, *We Real Cool*, feminist

theorist, artist, and writer bell hooks (2004) asserts that patriarchal ideology and practices

constitute the most extreme genocidal threat to Black men in America. Specifically, hooks

(2004) states that:

> Black males often exist in a prison of the mind unable to find their way out. In patriarchal
> culture, all males learn a role that restricts and confines. When race and class enter the
> picture, along with patriarchy, then Black males endure the worst impositions of gendered
> masculine patriarchal identity. (p. xii)

Black men's unique persecution is a by-product of Black culture, traditional ideals of manhood,

anti-Black experiences, and negative stereotypes that create a limited metanarrative for Black

masculinities. From the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Black men have been regarded as

hypersexual, hypermasculine barbarians who are inferior to white people and disposable (Dancy,

2012; Dancy, Edwards & Davis, 2018; Dumas, 2016). In addition, hooks (2004) claims that

Black men have been "seen as animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers…and have

had no real dramatic say when it comes to the way they are represented" (p. xii). In short, Black

men have been excluded from "ideal" notions of traditional white manhood, first because they were seen as chattel under slavery and later because of anti-Black state and federal laws through systems such as Jim Crow and mass incarceration (Alexander, 2012). In American society, the notion of traditional white manhood generally describes a man who is white, heterosexual, cisgender[9], and middle-class, who possesses traits such as vigor, aggressiveness, and toughness. Thus, Black men have been forced to enact their manhood in alternative ways, which has resulted in stereotypes of Black males as sexually promiscuous, hyper-aggressive, violent, apathetic, misogynistic, performatively heterosexual, and disengaged with education (Bowleg, 2004; hooks, 2004; Majors & Billson, 1992; Neal, 2012; 2015). These characteristics of masculinity are specifically engrained into the minds of Black male collegians. Although traditional white standards of manhood lead to a range of toxic masculinities among young (and old) Black men, alternative expressions of manhood based on more African principles have also been passed down to Black male collegians.

Afrocentricity

Literature supports the notion that Black male collegians' masculinities are informed by factors based in both American and Afrocentric ideals of manhood (Mutua, 2006). "Afrocentricity" refers to a "quality of perspective or approach rooted in the cultural image and human interests of African people" (Karenga, 1988, p. 404). The primary goal of Afrocentricity is to center Blackness and reclaim Black agency. According to the Afrocentric perspective, Black people who view themselves through a Eurocentric lens are misguided in large part

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[9] Cisgender is a word that describes a person whose sense of personal identity and gender is congruent with their birth sex.

because they are culturally "disoriented" (Mutua, 2006). Although Afrocentricity is a liberating lens in untangling the complexities of manhood and masculinities among Black male collegians, it is also problematic because it perpetuates a sexist and homophobic culture in placing manhood at the center of its philosophical traditions. Nevertheless, several research studies have found that Afrocentric ideals are present in Black male collegians' meanings of themselves as men and in the ways in which their masculinities manifest themselves on college campuses (Dancy, 2012; Harper, 2004). I propose that Hip-Hop falls within the scope of Afrocentricity because, while serving as a liberating force, it also is marked with elements of sexism and homophobia. Later in this chapter, I will elaborate on this idea in my critique of Hip-Hop Studies.

Scholars have demonstrated that Black male collegians' conceptualizations of manhood and masculinities are shaped by social and cultural identities such as age (Hunter & Davis, 1994), socioeconomic status (Dancy, 2012; Hunter & Davis, 1992), gender identity (Jourian, 2017), spirituality (Dancy, 2012), and sexual orientation (Strayhorn & Tillman-Kelly, 2013). These social and cultural identities stem from the notion that men are expected always to be dominant in nature, particularly in the United States (hooks, 2004; Mutua, 2006). As Mutua (2006) points out, "This is not a person but an ideal. And a man's masculinity is measured by how close he comes to the ideal. Though, this ideal is dominant or hegemonic, it is not the only idea of masculinity" (p. 13). This is how manhood and masculinity are connected to patriarchy, the sociopolitical structure wherein men hold the majority of power, control most aspects of society, and are deemed superior to women (hooks, 2004). Manhood and masculinities grounded in patriarchy not only subordinate women holistically but also dismiss as inferior anything acknowledged as conventionally feminine (Travers, 2018). In essence, an ideal conception of manhood implies that "real" men are competitive, dominant, and in control, whereas men who

are nurturing, vulnerable, and emotional are relegated to the margins of manhood (Connell, 2005; Dancy, 2012). As a result, even though Black male collegians may possess certain traditionally feminine qualities that they enact in various settings, those who subscribe to the ideology of patriarchal manhood will protect themselves or mask their performance in an effort to cover up aspects of their true selves while endorsing society's expectations of manhood (Dancy, 2012; Edwards & Jones, 2010).

In addition, the performance of masculinities also serves as a site of oppression over the bodies of non-heterosexual and non-cis men. Ultimately, Black men who transgress the normative ways of traditional manhood run the risk of condemnation, ostracism, and violence at the hands of Black, heterosexual, cisgender men, particularly as traditional manhood relates to homophobia and transphobia (Blockett, 2017; Dancy; 2012; Edwards & Jones, 2010). Homophobia and transphobia are similar in nature in that both reflect fear of, discomfort with, or hatred for people on the basis of their identity as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (homophobia) or transgender or gender non-conforming (transphobia) (Blockett, 2017). Even worse, those who identify as non-heterosexual or non-cis Black men stand at the intersections of multiple forms of oppression (i.e., anti-Blackness, heterosexism, transphobia) based on any combination of various noticeable identities that may include their racial, sexual, or gender non-conforming status (Blockett, 2017; Strayhorn, Blakewood, Devita, 2010). For certain groups, like Black male collegians, the archetype of white manhood unfortunately continues to be informed largely by the historical and present-day subjugation and plunder of Black bodies, particularly at HWIs (Dumas, 2016).

Manhood and Masculinities in College

Within the last decade, an emerging body of scholarship has focused specifically on the study of Black college men as racialized gendered persons (Bates, 2017; Dancy, 2010; 2011; 2012; Harper, 2004; Harris et al., 2011; Martin & Harris, 2006; McClure, 2006; McGowan, 2014; Strayhorn & Tillman-Kelly, 2013). Despite very limited scholarly attention, early claims suggest that Black college men draw on multiple, and sometimes, competing markers to define their manhood. Analyzing survey data, Strayhorn (2011) found that Black male collegians assert that "real" Black men have multiple female sexual partners; desire success, power, and competition; and exude confidence even when they may not have it.

In his book *The Brother Code: Manhood and Masculinity among African American Males in College*, Dancy (2012) discusses manhood and masculinities among Black male collegians. His qualitative analysis presents three major themes regarding participants' definitions of their manhood: self-expectations; responsibilities and relationships to family; and worldviews and life philosophies. Participants shared reflections about being self-deterministic, resilient, and remaining real, and they described college as an opportunity to build a future and provide for their current and prospective families. In addition, participants referred to their worldviews and life philosophies as they expressed the importance of practicing a spirituality or faith, giving back to the Black community, remaining culturally aware, and mistrusting white people. Dancy's (2012) findings also identify the ways in which colleges and universities reinforce certain elements of traditional manhood. Dancy highlights four areas as being critical to how Black male collegians see themselves as men on their respective college campuses: institutions' lack of attention to Black male collegians, Black male students' relationships (or lack of relationships) with faculty, the availability of mentorship and support, and the ability to bridge campus and community.

More recently, McGowan (2014) examined perceptions of masculinities among a sample of Black male collegians at HWIs. McGowan identified three themes from his interviews with 17 Black male participants: definitions of masculinity, influence of race on ideas of masculinity, and evolving definitions of masculinity. Like the Black men in Dancy's (2012) study, participants used terms like respect, toughness, and community uplift to define their masculinities. Participants also identified the role of race in their definitions of masculinity, recognizing that being Black added a greater level of intensity regarding traditional definitions of manhood. They also described how their understandings of masculinities had changed over time.

Another area of study has looked at the varying perceptions of manhood and masculinities among Black male collegians. Drawing on interviews with 32 participants, Harper (2004) found that high-achieving Black male collegians identified alternative notions of Black manhood in comparison to their Black male peers who did not have high achievement levels. For example, while their peers enacted more traditional notions of Black masculinities (i.e., dating and pursuing multiple romantic relationships with women; prioritizing athletic activity; focusing on competition; accumulating and showing off material possessions), high-achieving males define their manhood through leadership, community advancement, responsibility to family, and working toward the future. Interestingly, Harper also found that high-achieving Black male collegians in the study were accepted by their peers despite their transgressive forms of masculinities (e.g., academic achievement, campus leadership) and non-conformity to patriarchal manhood. Harper's treatment of Black masculinities among high-achieving Black male collegians offered a nuanced understanding of manhood among college men, demonstrating that constructions of Black manhood are more than just pathological and that some ideals can be fashioned into forces of resiliency, achievement, leadership, and community uplift.

In their seminal work *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*, Majors and Billson (1992) argue that young Black men have adopted a "cool pose" to counter the stress caused by institutional oppression, racism, and educational inequality. Majors and Billson (1992) offered the following as a definition:

> Cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control. Black males who use cool pose are often chameleon-like in their uncanny ability to change their performance to meet the expectations of a particular situation or audience. (p. 4)

While cool pose is a phenomenon that affects Black men of all ages, the formation of cool pose begins at an early age. Early socialization of what it means to be a man shapes the ways in which Black men move through the educational pipeline (Davis, 2006; Ferguson, 2001). Those who do persist and enter postsecondary education continue to be tasked with negotiating manhood and masculinities as they navigate college campuses.

Despite a collection of studies indicating that Black male collegians draw on nontraditional standards of masculinity (e.g., Harper, 2004; Martin & Harris, 2006), some evidence suggests that patriarchal masculinity is still present even for high-achieving Black males. In fact, the "cool pose" adopted by boys and young men in K-12 schooling also informs the experiences of Black male collegians. In one study, Harris, Palmer, and Struve (2011) interviewed 22 Black male college students, examined their definitions of Black manhood, and analyzed how such conceptions influenced their academic and social behaviors. They found that participants associated their masculinities with toughness, fortitude, strength, aggression, material success, and responsibility (related to "cool pose"). Findings also indicated that participants' conceptions of manhood led to three behavioral outcomes: "(a) leadership and

student success in college, (b) homophobia and fear of femininity, and (c) engaging in sexist and constrained relationships with women" (p. 54).

One finding is clear from the area of scholarship focused on definitions of manhood and masculinities among Black male collegians. Multiple definitions abound, and although community uplift and responsibility are strong pillars of Black manhood, patriarchy and dominance, also are prominent elements in many Black male collegians' views of themselves as men.

Martin and Harris (2006) used qualitative methods to investigate alternative conceptions of manhood specifically among Black male student-athletes at National Collegiate Athletic Association Division 1 institutions. In line with Harper (2004), participants in the study associated their understandings of Black masculinities with academic success, strength, and high moral character and integrity. Further, participants viewed monogamy and respect as critical in their relationships with women, notions that run counter to traditional constructions of Black manhood. The themes highlighted in Martin and Harris's study were particularly insightful in light of prior research indicating that Black male student-athletes are faced with racism, racial stereotypes, and low teacher expectations in college (Harper, Williams, Blackman, 2013) and are socialized from a young age to prioritize sports over academics (Beamon & Bell, 2006; Dancy, Edwards & Davis, 2018).

Another area of scholarship provides evidence showing how various components of Black manhood and masculinities influence the academic and social experiences of Black male collegians. Higher education scholars have specifically investigated notions and manifestations of manhood for Black male collegians who participate in Black Greek letter fraternities (BGLFs). For example, Jones (2004), author of *Black Haze*, asserts that Black male collegians

engage in ritualized aggression toward one another to assemble and define masculine traits among prospective members. In addition, Jones indicates that Black male collegians in BGLFs are subjected to peer pressure to embody a hard, cool, traditionally masculine bravado. Following Jones's work, McClure (2006) used interviews to explore the influence of membership in a BGLF on Black male collegians' constructions of masculinities. McClure found that Black male collegians primarily understand their masculinities through both hegemonic (e.g., anti-feminine, restrictive emotionality) and Afrocentric ideals (e.g., collectivist, community-based). In fact, participants referred to their membership in BGLFs as an opportunity to defy negative stereotypes associated with Black men and redefine what it means to be a Black man.

Another set of studies have explored various types of institutions in researching the influence of masculinities on Black males' collegiate experiences. For example, Czopp, Lasane, Sweigard, Bradshaw, and Hammer (1998) compared Black male collegians enrolled in HBCUs with their Black male peers at HWIs. Their findings suggest that those who were less concerned about academic performance (consistent with stereotypes of Black men) were viewed as more socially attractive and masculine than their peers who were concerned about their academic achievement. More recently, Davis (2012) assessed the relationship between gender roles and engagement for a sample of Black male collegians. Davis selected two colleges for his sample, and HBCU and an HWI. Findings from a regression analysis indicate that gender role norms (e.g., strength, hypermasculinity) significantly predicted academic engagement behaviors among Black male collegians. Furthermore, the HBCU students scored higher the HWI students on dimensions of hypermasculinity and antisocial/competitiveness. In another study, Harris (2010) proposed a conceptual model of the meanings that Black male collegians make of their

masculinities, how they come to make such meanings, and how their meanings shape their collegiate experiences. Patriarchal conceptualizations of manhood among the male participants in Harris's study informed their campus involvement and their choice of academic major (i.e., those with more patriarchal conceptions of manhood were more likely to choose majors associated with high-paying careers, affirming the "breadwinner" ideal of manhood).

Prior research also has indicated that masculinities influence the academic and social experiences of Black male collegians at two-year colleges. For instance, Harris and Harper (2008) present four racially diverse profiles of men of color enrolled in community colleges and describe how each of them was confronted with several issues related to their masculine identity. While some participants struggled with the need to fulfill the breadwinner role, others encountered challenges with the male gender role characteristic of restricted emotionality and disdain for homosexuals. Although only one participant in Harris and Harper's study identified as a Black male collegian, many of the other participants' struggles with their masculine identity in the collegiate context are consistent with the experiences of Black male collegians cited in other studies (e.g., Harris et al. 2011; Strayhorn & Tillman- Kelly, 2013). Regardless of the type of institution that Black male collegians attend or the co-curricular experiences they engage in, it is quite clear that traditional conceptions of manhood are at odds with student success indicators (Bates, 2017). In fact, Harris and Harper (2008) conclude that, "When examined critically, the incongruence between the behaviors that are linked empirically to student development and success in college and those that constitute the performance of traditional masculinities are evident" (p. 29).

Black Male Collegians and the Civil Rights Movement

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Despite the gratuitous violence and the problematic socialization into manhood that Black male collegians face, they have always had a high regard for education, viewing it as the great equalizer to liberate the Black race (Du Bois, 1903; Woodson, 1933). The identity of the first Black student to attend and graduate from an HWI is a matter of debate; some scholars claim that it was John B. Russwurm from Bowdoin College or Edward Jones from Amherst College, both of whom graduated in 1826 (Grant, 2004; Haynes, 2006; Pifer, 1973). Other scholars, however, assert that the first Black student to receive a degree from an HWI was Alexander Lucius Twilight at Middlebury College in 1823 (Harper, Wooden and Patton, 2009). However, these students all were admitted as special students; none of the three colleges accepted Black students on a regular basis. Oberlin College (Ohio), founded in 1833, was the first higher education institution fully open to Black students prior to the Civil War (Harper, Wooden & Patton, 2009).

With the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation was unconstitutional in secondary schools and postsecondary institutions, anti-Blackness reestablished itself through more acts of violence from the hands of white supremacists. HWIs were not exempt from anti-Blackness during the Civil Rights movement. To protect James Meredith, the first Black student at the University of Mississippi, President Kennedy sent federal troops to the campus for a full academic year in response to rioting and outrage by white faculty, students, staff, administrators, and community members (Pifer, 1973). Likewise, in 1963, President Kennedy deployed National Guard Troops to the University of Alabama to supersede Governor George Wallace's intent to prevent three Black students from enrolling. In this case, two students, Vivian Malone and James A. Hood, ultimately enrolled (Hall, 2005; Morris, 1981).

One of the most prominent Civil Rights Movement organizations for Black college students was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which emerged in 1960

through the vision and direction of the great Ella Baker (Zinn, 1964). The SNCC was sparked into existence by four freshmen at A & T College in North Carolina (now called North Carolina A&T State University) who took seats at Woolworth's lunch counter in downtown Greensboro (Zinn, 1964). Although many historians name this as the beginning of the sit-in movement, the sit-in movement actually started in Oklahoma City when the NAACP Youth Council and its leader, Clara Luper, walked into the Katz Drug Store on August, 19, 1958 (Frazier, 1963; Morris, 1981; Luper 1979). News of the 1960 Greensboro sit-in spread like wildfire across the world through radio, newspapers, and television, and within days, 15 major cities in five Southern states witnessed non-violent demonstrations, with ultimately over 3,000 people spending time in jail (Zinn, 1964). Many Black students, along with some white allies, had cigarette butts and food thrown at them and were pulled out of seats and hurled outside the building (Zinn, 1964). James Lawson, a Black male collegian attending Vanderbilt University's Divinity School, an HWI located in Nashville, Tennessee, practiced nonviolent resistance and even encouraged students to "violate the law" (Zinn, 1964, p. 22). Vanderbilt's trustees, many of whom also had business affiliations with the department stores where the sit-ins occurred, gave "Lawson the choice of withdrawing from the movement or dismissal from the University" (p. 22). As Lawson declined their ultimatum, trustees of Vanderbilt terminated him as a student, even though he was only three months from graduation (Zinn, 1964).

Black Studies

Baker (1993) states that by the mid-1960s, it was apparent than an "outside 'social' ambiance and an inside 'academic' atmosphere had converged like giant weather fronts. And no one needed a meteorologist to know that a hard rain was gonna fall" (p. 10). Black students, many of whom had participated in the sit-in movements, began to realize the need for college

courses that spoke to their lived experiences in the face of HWIs' intent to sustain a "critical intellect, higher education…[that] served to strengthen and conserve the prevailing social order" (Allen, 1974, p. 3). Following their participation in the SNCC, Black students returned to college at HWIs and HBCUs, including Howard University, South Carolina State University, Texas Southern University, Kentucky State University, and Shaw University. They advocated for "separate and/or improved housing and dining facilities, Black cultural centers, space for Black student organizations, and Black Studies programs" (Edwards, 1970, p. 61). Thus, Black Studies courses and departments were established primarily as a result of Black students' demands upon white administrators at various colleges and universities that were decidedly separatist in nature (Baker, 1993; Edwards, 1970). The goal of Black Studies was to seek "both the collective elevation of a people, with education of, from, and for the masses, and the training of a mass-minded [B]lack conscious middle class" (Hare, 1972, p. 33). Black Studies first took shape in 1962, as students in the Bay area, particularly at the University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley), formed an Afro-American Student Union (AASU) and organized study groups focused on topics such as Black history, African languages, and community organizing (Colón, 2008). AASU members included Maluana Karenga, who led the group's Southern California chapter; Jimmy Garrett, President of the Black Student Union at San Francisco State College (SFSC); and Black Panther members Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton (Baker, 1993; Colón, 2008; Fenderson, Stewart & Baumgartner, 2011; Karenga, 1988).

By 1965, both Seale and Newton had become displeased with AASU's failure to connect higher education with community action, so they established the Soul Students Advisory Committee (SSAC) (Colón, 2008) at Merritt Community College in Oakland, California. The SSAC became the archetype of Black student organizations that made demands that would

ultimately increase on white college campuses, as Seale, Newton and the SSAC produced the first organized Black Studies curriculum in the nation[10] (Colón, 2008).

The SSAC's efforts to establish a Black Studies curriculum inspired the Black Student Union (BSU) at San Francisco State College (SFSC). The Black student population at SFSC had decreased from 11 percent in 1960 to 3.6 percent in 1968, primarily due to the military draft into the Vietnam War and the tracking of Black male collegians into vocational training schools (Colón, 2008). These factors contributed to a growing sense of rage as SFSC's Black students launched a strike in November 1968 to demand, among other things, a Black Studies department with full-time Black faculty members (Colón, 2008; Robinson, 2012; Rooks, 2006). After five months of rallies, marches, sit-ins, and police beatings, the strike ended in March 1969 with the resignation of the university president and the creation of a Black Studies program. The strike at SFSC influenced other campus strikes during the 1960s and 1970s at institutions such as the University of California at Berkeley, Cornell University, Yale University, Northwestern University, and the University of California at Los Angeles. But the SFSC administration's reaction to the strike also led to another outcome: a growing relationship between HWIs and the Ford Foundation**.** (Fenderson, Stewart & Baumgartner, 2011; Rooks, 2006).

Black Studies and the Ford Foundation

During the mid-1960s, under the leadership of its president, McGeorge Bundy, the Ford Foundation declared its intent to "solve" the most pressing societal problem of the time, the issue of Black people's full and equal rights (Baker, 1993; Rooks, 2006). Bundy announced that implementing and institutionalizing Black Studies programs across the academy would be the "primary method" that would address the "Negro problem" and worked to convince white

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[10] The SSAC established the first curriculum but not the first department. The SSAC was established at Merritt College but SFSC had the first Black studies program.

administrators "in colleges and universities that the new field was a tool for achieving democratic racial reform" (p. 63). In reality, the Ford Foundation's goal was to soothe racial tensions, which was not the primary intent of the Black student activists who had originally advocated for Black Studies.

Black Studies, at its Black Power root, is an alternate paradigm that disrupts the mainstream Western order of knowledge (Wynter, 2002). However, Saucier and Woods (2014) convey that the Ford Foundation

> consciously sought to weaken the influence of the militant Black Power movement that led to the formation of [B]lack studies in the first place. Instead, Ford sought to foster a [B]lack studies that would service the needs of white people for racial understanding and acceptance. With but two exceptions, all of the grants made between 1968 and 1971 were awarded to programs and institutions that viewed [Black] studies as a means to diversify a [historically] white curriculum and university, promote integration, and provide intellectual legitimacy for disparaging Black Power ideology. The Foundation rejected almost every single proposal from [B]lack students or organizations to develop programs based on [B]lack consciousness. This early strategy of containing [B]lack revolution and shaping the content of [B]lack studies in the period of the 1960s and 1970s would lead to the multicultural wars of the 1980s, a period that resulted in the further institutionalization of the liberal politics of integration, a withering triple assault on affirmative action, the industrial urban workforce and the welfare state, and the undermining of the [B]lack studies intellectual project within a hegemonic ethnic studies formation that has redrawn the colorline as obtaining between whites and a multiracial coalition now known as "people of color." Under the guise of "transcending" the [B]lack-white binary, multiculturalism in fact entailed nothing less than the outright rejection of antiblackness as inessential to the organization of the social. (p. 271-272)

In essence, the Ford Foundation funded programs and organizations that maintained the status quo, advocating for inclusivity and multiculturalism while disassociating itself from the radical ideology stemming from Black Power. Furthermore, by enacting capitalist practices, the Ford Foundation used its financial and social capital in an attempt to shut down talks of a Black consciousness, to contain protests, and to control the narrative around race relations in America.

The Black Radical Tradition

Despite the Ford Foundation's attempts to eradicate the Black consciousness by funding and influencing Black Studies programs, many Black Studies directors and chairs established a sense of Afrocentricity and political critique within the Black Studies curriculum. Black Studies was designed to politically and intellectually emancipate Black students and to affirm the intellectual importance of research and scholarship relating to the African, African American, and African diasporic presence in the world (Thomas, 2005; Karenga, 1988). These characteristics of Black Studies, and the ways in which information is disseminated and discussed within these interdisciplinary programs, are an extension of the Black Radical Tradition (Robinson, 1983; Saucier & Woods, 2015). Robinson's (1983) explanation of "racial capitalism" in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* was vital to the political impulse of Black Studies. As Thomas points out (2005), "*Black Marxism,* in particular, not only identified and analysed earlier major radical theorists of the Black condition, but also located a hitherto subterranean, yet always existent and insistent, Black radical tradition" (p. 1). Robinson critiqued Karl Marx and Marxists theorists, whose analysis of class and social conflict in relation to capitalism failed to comprehend radical movements outside of Europe (Kelley, 2017; Robinson, 1983; Saucier & Woods, 2015). To rectify this, Robinson crafted a proper "rewrite" of American history, from ancient times to the mid-twentieth century, that characterized the rebellions of Black enslaved people as expressions of what he termed the Black Radical Tradition (Robinson, 1983; Kelley, 2017). In regard to racial capitalism, Robinson critiques the Marxist idea that capitalism was a negation of feudalism, which is the notion that the wealthy become the ruling class and are deemed superior, and the merchants evolve into the capitalistic society and are deemed inferior (Kelley, 2017). In essence, Robinson (1983) pushes back against Marxist critiques of capitalism, stating that capitalism and racism both evolved from

feudalism to produce a new world system of racial capitalism that was dependent on slavery,

violence, imperialism, and genocide. Robinson's point is that racialism was already engrained in

Western feudal society from the beginning.

> The first forms of struggle in the Black radical tradition, however, were not structured by a critique of Western society but from a rejection of European slavery and a revulsion of racism in its totality. Even then, the more fundamental impulse of Black resistance was the preservation of a particular social and historical consciousness rather than the revolutionary transformation of feudal or merchant capitalist Europe…This perhaps is part of the explanation of why, so often, Black slave resistance naturally evolved to marronage as the manifestation of African's determination to disengage, to retreat from contact. (p. 310)

Kelley (2017) reflects Robinson's sentiments in stating that

> To acknowledge this is not to diminish anti-Black racism or African slavery, but rather to recognize that capitalism was *not* the great modernizer giving birth to the European proletariat as a universal subject, and the "tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate–to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into "racial" ones (paragraph 5).

Furthermore, Robinson's scholarship provides a thorough analysis of how Marxism

"incorporated theoretical and ideological weaknesses that stemmed from the same social forces

that provided the bases of capitalist development" (Robinson, 1983, p. 10). In doing so,

Robinson draws upon the work of Black scholars such as W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson,

C. L. R. James, Eric Williams, Oliver C. Cox, Frantz Fanon, Harold Cruse, and others.[11] In

addition, the Black Radical Tradition invokes a history of resistance rooted in a particular

experience, which is un-inscribable or incomprehensible to Marxism, because the emphasis is

placed on the other-than-human, *non-human* attempting to assert their humanity through

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[11] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) *& Black Reconstruction (1935)*; Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933); C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution (1963)*; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery (1944)*; Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race (1948)*; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth (1963)*; Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual from its Origins to the Present (1967).*

resistance, a vision that goes beyond the traditional way of being (Kelley, 2017; Robinson, 1983).

The Black Radical Tradition calls attention to the fact that Black male bodies are perceived as fungible and disposable, warranting the gratuitous violence placed on them (Hartman, 1997; Spillers, 1987; Stein, 2016; Wilder, 2013; Wilderson, 2010). Patterson (1982) and Hartman (1997) discuss the notion of slavery's afterlife, or social death, in which the residue of slavery continues to be alive and well in the matrix of social, political and economic relations through the *structural positionality* of anti-Blackness. Or put in better terms, Black male collegians are subject to gratuitous violence just for being Black, although their presence is perceived as absent from humanity. Furthermore, Black Studies is intertwined with structural positionality because its "analysis of the fungibility of [B]lackness, the centrality of [B]lackness to the world's symbolic economy, is often characterized in terms of a "social death" (Saucier & Woods, 2015, p. 15). In essence, Black Studies has many ways to critique and create discourse around issues of social death that are at times controversial within the interdisciplinary field, specifically as "related to the political efficacy of cultural performance…cultural analysis, and what to make of violence, in, on, and by the [B]lack community" (Saucier & Woods, p. 15).

Likewise, this is a primary goal of my dissertation. Through an ethical account of anti-Black violence in higher education, specifically at HWIs, I aim to show, through a Hip-Hop album, how Black male collegians disrupted anti-Blackness, by means of a Black Radical Tradition focused on their liberation process. However, to show this, I first must provide an overview of Hip-Hop Studies, and review and critique the empirical evidence presented in Hip-Hop interventional studies in higher education.

Hip-Hop Studies

In 1994, Dr. Tricia Rose developed and transformed the landscape of Hip-Hop scholarship in her critically acclaimed and thought-provoking book, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. This book was preceded by others, including David Toop's *Rap Attack* (1984), Steve Hager's *Hip Hop: The Illustrated History of Breakdancing, Rap Music, and Graffiti* (1984), and James Spady's *Nation Conscious Rap: The Hip Hop Vision* (1991). However, *Black Noise* is unique in providing not only a historical recollection of the formation of Hip-Hop, but also a contextual analysis of the "profound dislocation and rupture[s]" (Rose, 1994, p. 39) that Black and Brown folks endured due to postindustrialism. Rose (1994) poses the question:

> What is the significance of flow, layering and rupture as demonstrated on the body and in [H]ip [H]op's lyrical, musical, and visual works?...Let us imagine these [H]ip [H]op principles as a blueprint for social resistance and affirmation: create sustaining narratives, accumulate them, layer, embellish, and transform them. However, be also prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, in fact, *plan on* social rupture. When these ruptures occur, use them in creative ways that will prepare you for a future in which survival will demand a sudden shift in ground tactics. (Rose, 1994, p. 39)

Rose (1994) argues that the aesthetic qualities of Hip-Hop, such as flow, layering, and rupture, are crucially important because they provide youth a birthplace of "alternative identity formation and social status in a community whose older local support institutions had been all but demolished along with large sectors of its built environment" (p. 39). Rose's analysis broke new ground and created new expectations for the field of Hip-Hop Studies.

Hip-Hop Studies is not typical disciplinary field, as it addresses a plethora of intersectional aspects of Hip-Hop culture. Its topics include cultural literacy and composition (Alexander-Smith, 2004; Dimitriadis, 2001; Hill, 2009; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Richardson, 2006; Stovall, 2006), Black girlhood studies and space (Brown, 2013; Love, 2012), higher education (Petchauer, 2012; Sule, 2016), science education (Emdin, 2010a; 2010b), Hip-

Hop–based education (Hill & Petchauer, 2013), hip-hop feminism (Durham, Cooper & Morris, 2013; Morgan, 1999; Lindsey, 2015), religion (Miller 2012; Miyakawa, 2005; Pinn, 2003), masculinity (Jeffries, 2011; White, 2011), Hip-Hop aesthetics (Petchauer, 2015), and many more. A prime example of Hip-Hop Studies' breadth and depth is Mark Anthony Neal and Murray Forman's *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader (2012)*.

In his 2009 journal article, "Framing and Reviewing Hip Hop Educational Research," Petchauer provides a comprehensive overview of the various categories and strands of Hip-Hop scholarship (see Figure 2.1). Petchauer (2009) identifies three forms of Hip-Hop literature: historical/textual literature, social commentary, and grounded studies.
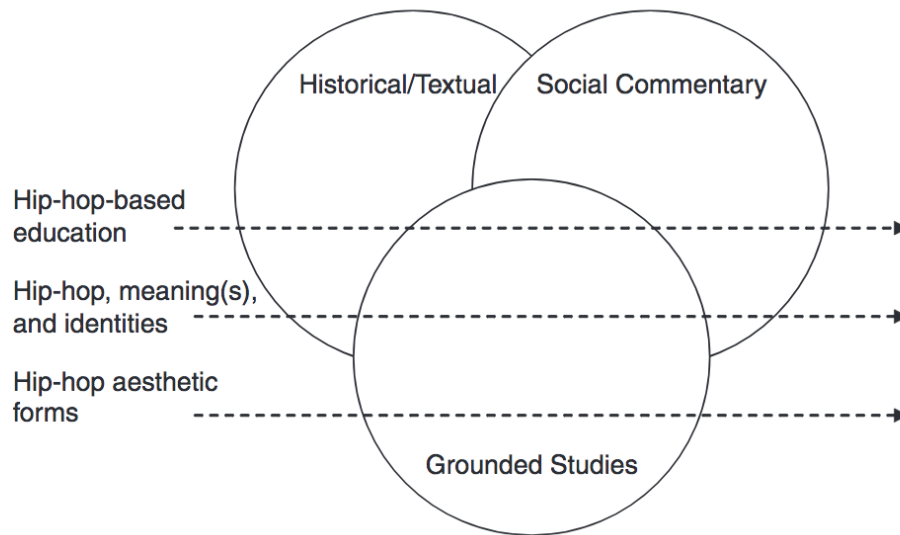
Figure 2.1 Petchauer's Three categories and three strands of Hip-Hop Scholarship.

Historical/textual literature centers on the analysis of Hip-Hop from discipline-focused perspectives, typically produced by scholars within the academy. Many scholars focus on the historical context of Hip-Hop and its relation to sociopolitical and cultural movements in society (e.g. post-industrialism, the Civil Rights Movement, Jim Crow, African Origins, the War on Drugs, mass incarceration). An example of this type of literature is Rose's (1994) *Black Noise:*

Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America, as its analysis is focused on a "sociohistorical analysis of [Hip-[H]op and the postindustrial context that surrounded its genesis in the Bronx" (Petchauer, 2009, p. 950). Rose (1994) further posits that "Hip-Hop is a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutality, truncated opportunity, and the oppression within the cultural imperatives of African American and Caribbean history, identity and community" (p. 21). The limitations, however, of historical/textual literature are the absence of the voices of those who are part of the lived experience of Hip-Hop culture, who are in direct contact with the conditions that create the music and the music itself (Petchauer, 2009).

Social commentary is typically created by scholars and activists outside the academy who are insiders within the Hip-Hop community (Petchauer, 2009). Although most social commentary adopts some of the tenets of historical and textual literature, its emphasis its emphasis is on the lived experience of individuals affected by Hip-Hop culture. One example of social commentary is Jeff Chang's (2005) *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation.* Although social commentary captures the voices of the oppressed while showcasing the power of Hip-Hop as a globalized culture, it limits "one to evaluate conclusions through a critique of chosen techniques of data collection and analysis, all of which are necessary for replication and evaluation of the validity of the arguments and interpretations presented" (Petchauer, 2009, p. 951). In short, there is no research design or data analysis in place to critique or replicate the influential work happening in the Hip-Hop community, which keeps the field of Hip-Hop scholarship at a standstill.

The last type of literature is grounded studies, which refers to the methodological approach used in producing empirical Hip-Hop scholarship. As Petchauer (2009) states,

grounded studies "fills the void created by historical and textual approaches because they are derived from local participants and creators of [H]ip-[H]op rather than from products or texts…[and are] often [established] through [qualitative] research designs" (p. 951-952). In essence, grounded Hip-Hop scholarship bridges the gap between theory and practice, encapsulating historical and textual literature and the lived experiences within social commentary (Petchauer, 2009). Although my dissertation is influenced by historical/textual Hip-Hop literature and consists of social commentary elements due to the incorporation of Black male collegians who discuss their lived, anti-Black experiences through Hip-Hop, it ultimately falls within the realm of grounded studies, as it is grounded in axiological, theoretical, and methodological approaches that provide concrete evidence of Hip-Hop as an intervention to be used to disrupt anti-Blackness at HWIs.

Most Hip-Hop scholarship incorporates culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to Ladson-Billings (1994), CRP is a "pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes" (p. 18). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasizes that CRP is grounded within three criteria: "(a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160). CRP therefore builds upon Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970):

> Humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality – historical awareness itself – thus represents a step forward from emergence, and results from the [conscientization] of the situation. [Conscientization] is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence. (p. 82)

Although much Hip-Hop scholarship is focused on K-12 urban spaces, empirical studies have been conducted in higher education as well.

Iwamoto, Creswell, and Caldwell (2007) conducted a phenomenological study of Hip-Hop's impact on ethnically diverse college students. Participants in the study were four males and four females, who were selected through purposive sampling and who identified as white, Asian American, Latino/a, or Black. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were used, and the results showed that rap music played a significant role in the participants' lives across racial and gender lines (Iwamoto, Creswell & Caldwell, 2007). The researchers also discovered that Hip-Hop stimulates "psychological and physiological responses, and serves as a coping mechanism and outlet for frustration and stress" (Iwamoto, Creswell & Caldwell, 2007, p. 346). Although students were consciously aware that rap music had negative messages at times, they focused on the positive aspects and the ways that Hip-Hop counteracted their "negative mood [to]….vent their daily frustrations" (p. 348). The findings also revealed that the students who had more ruptures or socioeconomic conditions to navigate listened to Hip-Hop more frequently than their counterparts. Furthermore, students who experienced systemic racial oppression (i.e., Black and Brown students) listened to Hip-Hop more often than their counterparts (Iwamoto, Creswell & Caldwell, 2007).

Petchauer (2007), using a phenomenological approach that incorporated naturalistic inquiry design with portraiture (Lawrence-Lighfoot & Davis, 1997), explored Hip-Hop collegians, their Hip-Hop worldviews, and their ways of engaging in education (Petchauer, 2012). Participants were eight students (six males and two females) from three different institutions and three different locations in the United States. The study's results showed that participants not only

validated Hip-Hop as a pedagogical method in education, but navigated their institutions based on Hip-Hop principles.

Related to student persistence and development of Hip-Hop collegians (Petchauer, 2012) as they navigate institutions of higher learning, Sulé 's (2016) phenomenological study looked at how Hip-Hop provides a sense of belonging for students at two HWIs. Sulé used purposive and snowball sampling to recruit 19 student participants, including six Black males, who were affiliated with Hip-Hop organizations or Hip-Hop related events. Questions were centered around "educational aspirations, transition to higher education, academic participation, social memberships, diversity experiences, perception of campus climate and commitment to Hip-Hop culture" (Sulé, 2016, p. 184). The findings showed that Hip-Hop provided a sense of spiritual, anti-oppressive, and emotional release that reduced students' stress levels (Sulé, 2016). This study provided evidence of how Hip-Hop offers cross-cultural dialogue and counter-spaces where students can self-discover and self-affirm their identity, which ultimately gives them agency to tap into their cultural wealth and knowledge (Yosso, 2005) about Hip-Hop and its connection to their experiences, particularly at HWIs.

As institutions of higher learning incorporate Hip-Hop into curricular and co-curricular experiences, students have begun tapping into their critical consciousness (Petchauer, 2011; Carter, 2017). Carter (2017) explores the lived experiences of college-aged, non-collegian Black men in Los Angeles County. In this study, "non-collegian" refers to Black men who had previously enrolled in higher education but had stopped out (Carter, 2017). Using a phenomenological approach, Carter's (2017) study investigated the experiences of non-collegian Black men who identified with Hip-Hop culture and demonstrated a critical consciousness of the holistic factors (e.g. economic, political and social) that they experienced in the United States,

specifically through rap music. Overall, the study's intent was to use Hip-Hop to build a greater

understand of Black men for the purpose of recruiting, retaining, and graduating them at higher

rates (Carter, 2017). The findings showed that

> rap music did not dissuade students from enrolling in college but rather motivated them to
> attend; community and educational environments were essential in influencing the post-
> secondary academic success of Black men; non-collegian Black men, although they did not
> finish college, possess a critical consciousness; and critical literacy is gained through rap
> music. (Carter, 2017, p. 121)

This study, moreover, highlighted the importance of embracing Hip-Hop culture to support

Black male students and alleviate the negative factors, or ruptures, associated with not persisting

to attain their college degree.

Critique of Hip-Hop Studies

Although the expansive field of Hip-Hop Studies has provided opportunities for scholars

and students to engage in discourse around numerous topics, some scholars have criticized Hip-

Hop Studies as nothing more than a tool of multiculturalism that allows institutions to contain

Black politics, similar to the Ford Foundation's successful strategy with Black Studies during the

1970s (Saucier & Woods, 2015). As Saucier and Woods (2015) point out,

> [H]ip [H]op studies is…not of the [B]lack struggle that produced both the radical
> conception of [B]lack studies and [H]ip [H]op itself...Hip [H]op studies should be viewed
> as nothing more than a prosthetic of multiculturalism, and in this sense its purpose in the
> academy is to further sabotage the radical history of [B]lack Studies from within…[Hip-
> Hop] scholars often deemphasize and dehistoricize the centrality of [B]lackness and its
> relationship to [H]ip [H]op culture…[and] often fail to deal with the legacy of [B]lack
> people as property and what this means for who can claim ownership of [H]ip
> [H]op…[thus] it undermines the radicality of the [B]lack studies *structural* assault on
> antiblackness by highlighting the diverse *performances* of resistance at the expense of a
> sustained ethical confrontation with black suffering and black refusal-of-victimization. (p.
> 160-161)

In other words, Hip-Hop Studies is a product of the liberal "multiculturalist university—not of

the Black struggle"—because the field lacks a critique of anti-Blackness, particularly in relation

to HWIs (Saucier & Woods, 2014, p. 272). As Kelley (2016) states, "Black studies was conceived not just outside the university but in *opposition* to a Eurocentric university culture with ties to corporate and military power" (paragraph 15). In essence, Saucier & Woods (2014) ask Hip-Hop Studies not to ignore the "historical context of gratuitous violence and counter-insurgency against [the] [B]lack freedom movement" and to avoid "portraying [H]ip [H]op's representations of violence as a pathological feature of [B]lackness" (p. 278-289). The pathological feature of violence in Hip-Hop does not stem from Blackness itself, but from the stereotypes about Blackness that are perpetuated and reproduced by the anti-Black narratives created by institutions like HWIs in their effort to "police, control, imprison, and kill" (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018, p. 180). These pathological features also reflect of how Black males are portrayed in the media and how Black male collegians are socialized in HWIs, as discussed earlier in the literature review.

Furthermore, within this dissertation, my grounded, Hip-Hop Studies framework "become[s] [B]lack studies, and…confront the ways in which [B]lack existence in an anti-[B]lack world...is bound up with" notions of freedom (Saucier & Woods, 2014, p. 285). The work is grounded within a Black Radical Tradition that pays respect to and honors Black Studies. It also contextually analyzes the role of gratuitous violence in the lives of Black male collegians at HWIs and the ways in which they discuss and disrupt the traumas of generational violence and slavery that continue to affect their lives. Furthermore, because my work is a theorization and deconstruction of anti-Blackness, not of race, I am invested in how Black male collegians disrupt anti-Blackness through the creation of a Hip-Hop album.

Critiques of Hip-Hop: Misogyny, Patriarchy, Sexism, and Mainstream Rap

No social, political, institutional, or cultural movement is exempt from critique. Most, if

not all, organizations and cultures, including Hip-Hop, manifest systemic issues around power,

misogyny, patriarchy, and capitalism, and these must be addressed. Hip-Hop has become an

international phenomenon that has been commodified and distributed to individuals across the

world (Bell, 2014). A by-product of this transformation has been society's influential, yet

narrowing perspective on Hip-Hop (Belle, 2014). Many critics characterize mainstream Hip-Hop

as the commercialization of rap artists, particularly Black males, who are hypermasculine, sexist,

and excessively violent (Petchauer, 2009) and who have the ability to "cross over" and attract

white and international audiences. Another term synonymous with mainstream Hip-Hop is

"gangsta rap" (Petchauer, 2009), whereas "conscious rap," in contrast, tackles systemic issues of

oppression, raising critical consciousness and affirming Black identity (Love 2016; Petchauer,

2009, Stovall, 2006). Most conscious rap is not considered mainstream rap and is not promoted

as heavily (Love, 2012), and it is often regarded as underground music (Petchauer, 2007; 2009).

bell hooks (2004) expresses the notion that at "the center of the way Black male selfhood is

constructed in white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy is the image of the brute, untamed,

uncivilized, unthinking and unfeeling" (p. xii). Lemelle (2009) takes it a step further, claiming

that

> major social institutions managed the domination of the Black males. The basic four
> cultural institutions are military, jails, organized athletics, and the entertainment industry.
> In each case, masculinity is an image of machismo spectacle. In each role, expectations for
> Black males are to produce a particular brand of masculinity. (p. 52)

As these images are expressed in pop culture and media, Hip-Hop becomes convoluted with a

majoritarian narrative that does not reflect its true essence and elements (Petchauer, 2009).

Although Hip-Hop manifests systemic issues of misogyny, patriarchy, and sexism, it also

expresses elements of self-reflection and self-examination (Rose, 2008).

Love (2013) conducted an ethnographic study exploring the ways in which three Black male teens, between the ages of 14 and 16, rejected the monolithic stereotypes placed on them by society and by the mass media. Love, however, finds that although these Black male teens boys were critically conscious in dissecting how they were depicted in the media, the process of hegemony positioned them to feel as if nothing could be actively done to counteract these depictions. This is a crucial point: the Black male teens embodied the oppressed role, but in some cases, due to hegemony, served as the oppressor as well (Love, 2013).

Hip-Hop Feminism

Women in Hip-Hop, particularly Black women, have typically been undervalued compared to Black men (Collins; 2006; Rose, 2008). Love (2016) argues that Hip-Hop hop culture is "rooted in the ideas of determination, resistance and the long enduring fight for Black freedom, but existing alongside the seductiveness of the material and psychological conditions of capitalism, sexism and patriarchy" (p. 415). Lindsey (2015) and other scholars highlight the prevalent deprecation of Black and Brown women's work within Hip-Hop, focusing on how women and girls shape Hip-Hop or position the culture within a herstory of defiance and resistance (Brown, 2008; Brown, 2013, Love 2012; Morgan, 1999, Pough, 2004). In essence, Hip-Hop feminism provides a framework that is reflexive in nature, specifically wrestling "with a culture and a broader society marred by pervasive sexism, racism and misogyny" (Lindsey, 2015, p. 56).

Joan Morgan (1999; 2012), in her critically acclaimed book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*, coined the term "Hip-Hop feminist" with the intent to connect Black feminists and Hip-Hop feminists. She believed that, although a critique of Hip-Hop was warranted, a feminist politic and theory also was needed to account for

the messiness and contradictions of lived experience. Morgan defines Hip-Hop feminism as a "feminism brave enough to fuck with the grays" (p. 59). The "grays" refers to the "tension between competing and often contradictory political and cultural projects [such as] Hip-Hop and feminism, [that] is percussive in that it is both disruptive and generative…allow[ing] objects of inquiry together that might not traditionally fit" (Durham, Cooper & Morris, 2013, p. 724). As an example, Love (2012) conducted an ethnographic study of Black middle school and high school girls in Atlanta, centering their voices regarding their navigation of and participation in Hip-Hop culture. One particular finding from the study is the correlation between Black girls and the sonics (i.e., waves, vibrations) of Hip-Hop sound. Love illustrates that even as these Black girls were conscious and critical of Hip-Hop's misogynistic and sexist rhetoric, the lyrics and images for them were secondary to the beat of the music. This finding is congruent with Morgan's perspective about theoretically framing a space where contradictions of lived experienced connect with one another.

Hip-Hop feminism is invested in an intersectional approach that insists on "living with contradictions, because failure to do so relegates feminism to an academic project that is not politically sustainable beyond the ivory tower" (Durham, Cooper & Morris, 2013, p. 723). Although I do not identify as a Hip-Hop feminist, I draw upon the work of Hip-Hop feminists, because my analysis (in Chapter 4) will connect the interactions of Black male collegians in a recording studio and the lyrics that are created and recorded (which will be discussed in Chapter 3), to their socialization processes at HWIs. As Durham, Cooper & Morris (2013) point out,

> even when male-centered [H]ip-[H]op studies embrac[e] a critical masculinity lens, an approach made possible by [B]lack feminism's critique of gender, the work often recenters [H]ip [H]op studies and [B]lack studies on the issues of [B]lack men to the detriment and exclusion of [B]lack women. (p. 722)

I recognize that this study focuses specifically on the anti-Black experiences of Black male collegians at HWIs, not Black women. This study's intent is not to exclude Black women, but to build upon the critiques that Hip-Hop feminists have established, as there are not many Black male scholars who have analyzed or critiqued the connections among Hip-Hop, Black male collegians, anti-Blackness, freedom, patriarchy, and masculinities. Moreover, I understand that it is my responsibility as a heterosexual, cisgender, critical Black male scholar to fully engage in critiques that reflect the tensions between and Hip-Hop and Black male collegians.

Space and Place: Hip-Hop and Black Male Collegians

Race is a social construct (Omi & Winant, 1994), and HWIs are spaces that have not always been accessible to people of color (DuBois, 1930; Harper, 2010). Therefore, Black male collegians have had to maneuver through various "physical, social and mental processes...to produce meaning" (Smith-Tyus, 2017, p. 27) regarding the world they live in. This, in essence, is the process and production that occurs among spaces, human interactions such as anti-Black incidents, and individuals' histories, because navigating through HWIs' many social and physical spheres can be difficult for Black male collegians (Lefebvre, 1991; Smith-Tyus, 2017). In his book *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) states that "subjects are situated in a space in which they either must recognize themselves or lose themselves, a space in which they may both enjoy and modify" (p. 35). Furthermore, the identities of Black male collegians are filled with unrest, as they continuously struggle to negotiate socially constructed meanings such as race, manhood, and masculinities (Merrifield, 2003). In other words, Black male collegians make sense of their lives in a dominant, white, heteropatriarchal society through Lefebvre's (1991) triad of space: representations of space, representational spaces, and spatial practices.

The first conceptualization of space is through representation. Lefebvre (1991) emphasizes that this is the process in which dominant culture or groups of people are allowed to mentally create space, physically build space, and determine who should occupy the space. For example, HWIs are able to create the metanarrative that racial strife is non-existent, using as evidence the fact that Black male collegians are attending and graduating from college. White people adhere to and maintain this narrative, but its message erases the experiences of Black male collegians at HWIs.

Black male collegians occupy an environment at HWIs in which they are shaped by anti-Black experiences and in which their autonomy to create their own environment is limited. Lefebvre defines this as representational space (Lefebvre, 1991). As Smith-Tyus (2017) states, "within the academic classrooms of higher education, there is an expectation from faculty that all students will perform well within the classroom setting. [So] they are all treated as scholars who are capable to do the work and are at the institution to learn" (p. 30). That is, even though students may be at an HWI to learn, some students may not possess the skills needed to perform at the level of other students. The expectation that all students are prepared is false and demonstrates the institution's lack of empathy and support for these students. As a result, these experiences shape Black male collegians in negative ways, leading them to seek ways to make sense of incidents so that they can navigate the institution productively. This is an example of what Lefebvre (1991) calls "spatial practices."

Also known as "perceived space," spatial practices describe how individuals such as Black male collegians allow themselves the space to process and critique how their lived experiences are connected to their "identities and difference…[and] reproduction and resistance [of these representational spaces]" (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 305). Although Smith-Tyus (2017)

states that "those who fail to engage in such spatial practices…do not possess the necessary competence or knowledge of the space and threaten the space's continuation" (p. 31), my dissertation claims precisely the opposite: that Black male collegians at HWIs do, and must, possess the ability to disrupt the space occupied by the prevalent narratives. As the space of HWIs is filled with institutional racism and negative narratives regarding the intellect of Black male collegians, it is imperative that Black male collegians find a way not only to threaten the institution's complacency, but to disrupt the institution's space to create their own Black counterintellectual space. Furthermore, this study uses Hip-Hop as the intervention for creating such a counter-space. Unfortunately, even these counter-spaces are centered in racial and heterosexual lenses rather than intersectional ones.

Hip-Hop: Race, Space, Gender & Sexuality

In the article "'Represent': Race, Space and Place in Rap Music," Murray Forman (2000) makes the argument that spatial discourses in Hip-Hop are defined and shaped by race, stating that Hip-Hop music is

> one of the main sources within popular culture of a sustained and in-depth examination and analysis of the spatial partitioning of race and the diverse experiences of being young and [B]lack in America…and can be observed that space and race figure prominently as organizing concepts implicated in the delineation of a vast range of fictional or actually existing social practices which are represented in narrative and lyrical form. (p. 66)

Although Forman makes a fitting connection between Hip-Hop, space, and its connection to Lefebvre's (1991) triad of space, he fails to recognize gender, sexual orientation, and the performance of masculinities. As Stallings (2013) states, Forman does not "consider the nook and cranny spaces of transitional bodies and public spheres … [which] contribute to the proliferation of a gender hierarchy…and belie [the] misogynist, homophobic, sexist tag [of Hip-Hop] when it is centered on transitional bodies in transitional spaces, rather than a fixed body in transitional spaces" (p. 1).

Queer theorist Judith Butler (1990; 1993; 1996) connects this notion of fixed bodies in transitional spaces to the performance of sexualities in public spaces. Butler (1993; 1996) disrupts dominant understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality, which assume that there are exactly two bodies, two genders, and that heterosexuality is the inevitable relation between them. Butler (1996) argues that heterosexuality is a constructed social relation, claiming that

> If a word…might be said to "do" a thing, then it appears that the word not only signifies a thing, but that this signification will also be an enactment of the thing. It seems here that the meaning of a performative act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting. (p. 200)

In essence, Butler argues that "doing" or performing masculinities, for example, already includes established conceptualizations of knowledge that produces socialized individuals, because "the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" (Butler, 1990, p. 24). Furthermore, Butler understands that discourse regarding space and performance contains multiple and contradictory layers but ultimately produces specific effects for Black male collegians, such as their socialization process at HWIs, particularly through a white, heteropatriarchal lens. This lens with where the power becomes problematic (Butler, 1990; 1993; 1996). In my study, I analyze Black male collegians' experiences using an intersectional approach that reflects more than just race; it reflects a conceptualization of Blackness that encompasses race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. In the next section, I will discuss the theoretical frameworks underlying my approach to theorizing not only race but also Blackness.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study uses the creation of a Hip-Hop album to explore how Black male collegians make meaning of and disrupt anti-Blackness, how they define freedom, and how they narratively

express these experiences and reimagine their notions of freedom. The theoretical frameworks used in this study are Critical Race Theory and Black Critical Theory.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that draws on Critical Legal Studies (CLS) (Crenshaw, 1991; 1995; Delgado, 1995; Delgado, 1998; 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CLS, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, applies legal scholarship and practice to the struggle to create a more humane, egalitarian, and democratic society (Kennedy & Klare, 1984). By the 1990s, some legal scholars came to believe that CLS did not effectively offer strategies for societal transformation, particularly for people of color, because it failed to incorporate an analysis of race and racism (Delgado, 1998, Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT emerged as an approach to redress this deficiency in CLS. According to Solórzano (1998), "CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of women and men of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education" (p. 122). CRT's foundation is grounded by five tenets (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), paraphrased below:

1. Race and racism are mundane and iterative and are connected with other subordinate forms of oppression, such as class and gender

2. It is crucial to challenge elements of dominant ideology, such as objectivity, white privilege, colorblindness, equal opportunity, and race neutrality

3. CRT is committed to social justice that is emancipatory in nature for people of color

4. Experiential knowledge of people of color is valuable in critiquing and disrupting racial subordination.

5. CRT centers the historical and contemporary context of race and racism within

   transdisciplinary areas of study

The elements of CRT center the voices and lived experiences of people of color while

exposing whiteness and white supremacy, explaining systems of domination that oppress people

of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Counter-storytelling is one method of applying CRT

(Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling is a tool for "exposing, analyzing and

challenging majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). CRT uses

> narratives, as well as historical triangulation of facts that have an impact on present-day
> discrimination, to argue that a color-blind view of race upholds white supremacy in terms
> of sweeping away racial classification, but leaves political majorities intact, which in turn
> uses the power of racism to undermine minority interest. (Parker & Stovall, 2004, p. 173)

There are three kinds of counter-storytelling: personal narratives, other people's stories, and

composite narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Because I am a researcher and Hip-Hop

scholar grounded in CRT, I consider it important to give agency to students of color in the

process of creating counter-stories about their personal and professional experiences of race and

racism, allowing them to tell their stories in their own unique way without being limited by the

restrictions of white supremacy. Hip-Hop and CRT are connected by the goal of understanding

voices that have been marginalized, supporting the notion that racism is at the core of

institutional and societal oppression. As Love (2016) puts it,

> CRT and [H]ip-[H]op view storytelling and counter-storytelling as a way to recognize
> and [legitimize] the experiential knowledge of people of color [in] understand[ing],
> analyz[ing] and teach[ing] about systemic racism…allow[ing] one to name, own, and tell
> his or her reality…shaped by the fixed, fluid and shapeshifting terrain of racism,
> economic oppression, strict racial housing segregation, and technological advances. (p.
> 418)

Prier and Beachum (2008) state that "the use of [H]ip-[H]op [is] a way of life for marginalized

populations of color, [because of] the social construction/anti-essentialism thesis of race and the

construction of [H]ip-[H]op as a democratic public space for the empowerment and self-actualization of Black male youth" (p. 530). In my study, Hip-Hop provides a space that allows Black males collegians to engage in discourse on issues of race and racism at HWIs. Moreover, in my study, CRT explains how HWIs became spaces where white people stereotype and exclude Black students through acts of racism and microaggression (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso & Solórzano, 2011). As Black male collegians attempt to persist and succeed at HWIs despite the negative majoritarian and monolithic stereotypes about them and despite HWIs' overt and covert racism, it is important to use a framework like CRT to unpack, challenge, and find productive ways to describe individuals' stories (i.e., personal narratives) and collective stories (i.e., composite narratives and others' narratives).

Black Critical Theory

Although CRT enables a foundational examination of how race and racism are embedded in society, my dissertation is focused less on a "critique of white supremacy" and more on a "theorization of Blackness" (Dumas & ross[12], 2016, p. 416). Scholars typically have used CRT to provide Black (as well as Native and Latinx) theorizations of race. Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit), on the other hand, is a critical theorization of Blackness that "confronts the specificity of anti-Blackness, as a social construction, as an embodied lived experience of social suffering and resistance, and perhaps most importantly, as an antagonism, in which the Black is a despised thing-in-itself (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 416). BlackCrit's genealogy stems from the work of critical race scholars (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as well as intersectionality theorists (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). CRT does not address how anti-Blackness enables the institutional practices that result in Black students' suffering at HWIs. Furthermore, CRT "cannot fully

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[12] kihana miraya ross spells her name using all lower-case letters

employ the counterstories of Black experiences of structural and cultural racisms, because it does not, on its own, have language to richly capture how antiblackness constructs Black subjects, and positions them in and against law, policy and everyday (civic) life" (p. 417).

As I mentioned previously, the field of Hip-Hop Studies has not produced scholarship that deconstructs anti-Blackness, even though institutions of higher learning, specifically HWIs, were created and sustained due to Black people being used and perceived as only property. By applying the foundational tenets of CRT and the work of BlackCrit, I engaged in conversations with Black male collegians at HWIs in an effort to more critically "analyze how [historically white institutions]…serve as forms of anti-Black violence...[and] legitimize Black suffering" (p. 419). The use of these frameworks and the process of collectively creating a Hip-Hop album allow me to understand how Black male collegians theorize Blackness and disrupt anti-Blackness.

According to Dumas and ross (2016), BlackCrit resists or is not fixated by the "notion of *tenets*"; instead, it offers expansive framings that directly connect to CRT, but with an exploration on Blackness (p. 429). The framings of BlackCrit discussed by Dumas and ross (2016) include:

- Antiblackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life (p. 429).
  - BlackCrit intervenes at the point of detailing how policies and everyday practices find their logic in, and reproduce Black suffering; it is also to imagine the futurity of Black people against the devaluation of Black life and skepticism about (the worth of) letting Black people go on (pp. 429-430).
- Blackness exists in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination (p. 430).

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- o Black people are seen to stand in the way of multicultural progress, which is collapsed here with the advancement of the market, which in turn, under neoliberalism, is presumed to represent the interests of civil society and the nation-state. BlackCrit proceeds with a wariness about multiculturalism (and its more current iteration, diversity) as an ideology that is increasingly complicit with neoliberalism in explaining away the material conditions of Black people as a problem created by Black people who are unwilling or unable to embrace the nation's "officially anti-racist" multicultural feature (p. 430).

- BlackCrit should create space for Black liberatory fantasy and resist a revisionist history that supports dangerous majoritarian stories that disappear [w]hites from a history of racial dominance, rape, mutilation, brutality, plunder, and murder (p. 431).

BlackCrit is a precise fit for my study for two reasons. First, I aesthetically illustrate how Black suffering is produced in the lives of Black male collegians at HWIs, while completely disregarding the use of multiculturalist analysis that has permeated Hip-Hop Studies throughout its existence. Second, I provide "a fantasy of the eradication of a prison [and cell] and the beginning of a necessary chaos…[for] it represents the beginning of the end…the first taste of freedom" (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 431). In short, to acknowledge freedom as a possibility or fantasy, one must first attack its power, and ultimately that has been anti-Blackness, the focus of my study.

Before I elaborate on the study's conceptual framework, I will address BlackCrit's intersectionality within its critique of anti-Blackness. Although the CRT framework intends deconstruct race and racism, it risks placing more emphasis on racial formation while compartmentalizing class and gender or specifically ignoring gender oppression as a whole.

Thus, Crenshaw (1989; 1991; 1995), through her formulation of intersectionality, argued that women were not homogenous, and that Black women's experiences of politics, sexual violence, and discrimination were dismissed by feminists (e.g., white women) and men of color (e.g., Black men) unless it benefitted those particular groups, a notion that Bell (1980) referred to as "interest-convergence." In this way, Black women are eradicated from society (Crenshaw, 1989).

Collins (2015) states that intersectionality

> can be conceptualized as an overarching knowledge project whose changing contours grow from and respond to social formations of complex social inequalities…[thus] chang[ing] in relation to one another in tandem with changes in the interpretive communities that advance them. (p. 5)

Collins (2015) posits that the use of intersectionality as a theoretical and analytical tool looks at a particular field of study based on power relations and the social location of a selected field of study, with the intent to produce new knowledge and new forms of critical praxis. In essence, for Collins, "scholarship and practice are recursively linked, with practice being foundational to intersectional analysis" (Collins, 2015, p. 5). Furthermore, Dumas & ross (2016) state that intersectionality "is an attempt to capture the complexity of Black experience, for Black women, first of all, and also for Black men" (p. 423). Although my study does not explore how Black women collegians theorize anti-Blackness, I recognize that my work is "inherently and always a coalition of Black people with different social location, across boundaries of gender, but also social class, sexuality and other differences" (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 423). BlackCrit helps me understand that "criticality necessitates an acknowledgement of, and a wrestling with difference, and interdependence across difference" (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 423), because many Black male collegians in the study will not share the same Blackness, social class, or sexual orientation, despite sharing the same race.

Conceptual Framework: Freedom as Marronage

Whereas BlackCrit is a theoretical framework focused on the theorization of Blackness, marronage is a concept that reflects the process of African flight, or the intent to become free, from slavery in the New World (Dilts, 2017; Roberts, 2015; 2017; Mills, 2015). Since the 1500s, marronage has been documented in relation to enslaved Black peoples' anti-colonial and anti-slavery insurgences (Roberts, 2015). The Spanish word cimarrón, which originally denoted the untamed cattle of Spanish colonialists, evolved to distinguish "enslaved Africans seeking escape from chattel slavery beyond plantation boundaries" (Roberts, 2015, p. 5). Through of its use by enslaved African people, the word "cimarrón" became globalized as "marron" or "maroon" (Roberts, 2015). Marronage took shape in the early 1500s, but it is particularly discussed during the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) when enslaved Africans, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, defeated the French army, abolished slavery, and established an independent government (James, 1963; Roberts, 2015). However, marronage is also prevalent in other marron societies and countries, such as Jamaica, Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico (Roberts, 2015).

Roberts (2015) states that "flight can be both real and imagined…[and] freedom is not a place…[but] a state of being (p. 11). Marronage is both a fugitive act and a state of being, and it can be enacted in four different ways. *Petit marronage* refers to individual acts of running away from slave plantations. *Grand marronage* is the "creation of communities of freedom outside the parameters of a plantation society within which majority of agents live" (Roberts, p. 10). ; *Sovereign marronage* denotes mass flight from slavery through the approval of the slave master. *Sociogenic marronage* refers to the "revolutionary process of naming and attaining individual and collective agency, non-sovereignty, liberation, constitutionalism, and the cultivation of a

community that aligns civil society with political society" (Roberts, p. 11). Roberts claims that

marronage is a

> flight from the negative, subhuman realm of necessity, bondage, and unfreedom toward the sphere of positive activity and human freedom. Flight is multidimensional, constant, and never static…There is no consideration of the transnational space between unfreedom and freedom. Agency exists prior to and during a slave's dialectical encounter with the stages of liberation and freedom. Agency is temporally fluid because of the political imaginary underlying it in the minds of the slave and the free. Modern Western theories of freedom obscure the degrees of agency and their relation to freedom due to their inattentiveness to the act of flight, (p. 15)

Moreover, the experience of active "refusals, resistances and rejections," although fluid at times,

"is a space for freedom" (Dilts, 2017, p. 201). Marronage is a conceptual framework not

typically used in higher education studies; it is primarily applied in the fields of anthropology

and history (Roberts, 2015). However, for two reasons, the marronage framework is significant

for and appropriate to my study. First, the study is centered on Black male collegians theorizing

Blackness and expressing their anti-Black experiences at HWIs. Because flight is never static,

this framework positions me for greater understanding of how Black male collegians wrestle

with flight in an effort to make sense of their anti-Black experiences and ultimately to liberate

themselves. Western, colonized, anti-Black society does not validate Black male collegians'

agency, but through marronage, "there is agency with potentiality…[because] actuality is merely

the manifestation of a heightened form of activity in the action of flight" (Roberts, p. 10).

Second, in this study, the end product of the Hip-Hop album is less significant than the process

of flight for the Black male collegian participants. In other words, my main focus is on

understanding how Black male collegians select experiences connected to their anti-Black

experiences, and how, in creating a Hip-Hop album, they fluidly attempt to take flight, wrestle

with, and express these issues in an effort to become free. In essence, Hip-Hop will be used a

lens to understand their theorization of Blackness, but the creation of the album will be used as a *flight tool,* or medium, to track their process of flight.

Roberts (2015) states that marronage consists of four pillars:

- Distance – a spatial quality separating an individual in a current location or condition from a future location or condition.

- Movement – the ability of agents to have control over motion and the intended directions of their actions. Flight, therefore, is directional movement in the domain of physical environment, embodied cognition, and/or the metaphysical.

- Property – the designation of a physical, legal, and material object that is under the possession and ownership of an individual, institution, or state. Property can be private, collective, or common.

- Purpose – the rationale, reasons for, and goal of an act begun by an individual or a social collective. (pp. 9-10).

Although Roberts (2015) states that "movement is the central principle of marronage" (p. 10), I argue that movement does not come to fruition until a purpose has been established and expressed in a way that creates the very moment that the individual or collective wishes to experience (based on their preference of flight). My study starts from the assumption that Black male collegians are viewed by HWIs and white-dominant society as property and that their "distance to freedom" will vary depending on individual factors such as their perceptions of the institution, sense of belongingness, institutional support and comfortability of articulating and expressing first-hand accounts of their anti-Black experiences at HWIs. My purpose in creating a Hip-Hop album is not that "it's cool" but that it allows Black male collegians to examine the historical discourse around anti-Blackness, the enslavement of Black people, the complicity of

HWIs, and the evolution of anti-Blackness in a #BlackLivesMatter movement. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2016) states, "every moment needs a catalyst, an event that captures people's experiences and draws them out from their isolation into a collective force with the power to transform social conditions" (p.153). There are so many examples of how Black life has been taken from and by this anti-Black world, but it is my hope that a study of this magnitude and purpose is a liberatory catalyst for Black male collegians to come together to transform social conditions. In the next chapter, I present and justify the methodological framework of narrative inquiry as well as the incorporation of a Hip-Hop album into a narrative inquiry approach.

Chapter 3:

Methodology

The argument that the rap music mixtape [album] be fashioned into a form of mass media that can help disseminate those visions and dreams of fallen struggles (and call for their re-emergence) is born of the recognition of the primacy of colonialism, the need for anti-colonial struggle, and the notion expressed…that popular scholarship, media, and, therefore, ideas are fashioned in such a way as to discourage such perspective and activity. (Jared Ball)

This research study is a Hip-Hop album that examines how Black male collegians who (a) currently attend, (b) graduated from, or (c) stopped out at a historically white institution (HWI) theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness in an effort to "take flight" or become free despite the anti-Black experiences they face at HWIs. A large body of research starts from the assumption that Black male collegians are academically unprepared and disengaged in class (as well as at the institution), while having the highest attrition rate amongst racial and gendered student groups. Most research regarding Black male collegians is centered around a deficit framework (Harper, 2012a). These metanarratives are connected to the institutionalized racism that HWIs (and society at large) fail to address (Allen, 1992). Many research studies have addressed student success and retention rates (Bates, 2017), but little research has been done to investigate how Black male collegians respond to or disrupt anti-Blackness at HWIs (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018; Dumas, 2016). In this project, through the use of Hip-Hop aesthetics (Petchauer, 2012; 2015), Black males collegians at HWIs have created a Hip-Hop album that both expresses their notions of freedom and describes their experiences with anti-Blackness. This project starts with the following research questions.

> How do Black male collegians at HWIs theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness in a Hip-Hop album?

> How do Black male collegians at HWIs make meaning and narratively express their understandings of freedom in a Hip-Hop album?

This study required a methodological framework that pays particular attention not only to the importance of describing narratives but also to the "exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18). In this section, I first provide an overview of narrative inquiry as my methodological approach, focusing specifically on how Hip-Hop creates and (re)defines space as social (De Certeau, 1984; Lefevbre, 1991, 2004; Wilkins, 2000) in relation to sociality, temporality, and place (Clandinin, 2013). Second, I describe how this method, by its nature, limits objectivity because it relies on a relationship of trust, listening, and sharing between the researcher and participants through a process that treats their stories as objects of research (Hendry, 2007). Last, I convey how Hip-Hop in general, and the creation of a Hip-Hop album in a studio setting in particular, embody the trust between researcher and participant, and how these processes are connected to the study's research questions, purpose, significance, and methods.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the "study of experience as story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). Clandinin (2013) states that narrative inquiry's study of experience is both "methodology and phenomenon" (p. 16), relying on the relationship between researcher and participant.

Narrative inquiry emerged as a social science methodology in the 1990s. Although the terms narrative inquiry and narrative research are used almost interchangeably in current research literature (Clandinin, 2007), they signify research methodologies, not the forms of narrative analysis often used within the broad field of qualitative research. Narrative inquiry and narrative research, across various disciplines and multiple professional fields, aim at understanding and making meaning of experience primarily through conversations and dialogue.

John Dewey's (1938; 1958) view of experience is cited most often as the philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Narrative inquiry is further grounded in the ideas of psychologists Jerome Bruner (1986) and Donald Polkinghorne (1995) about paradigmatic and narrative knowing; philosopher David Carr (1986), who writes about the narrative structure and coherence of lives; anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson (1994), who describes continuity as people learn, adapt, and improvise as a response to life's uncertainties; and Robert Coles (1989), who applies narrative inquiry in proposing that teaching and practice (in medicine) should ideally inform each other.

Moreover, narrative inquiry aims to capture the "wholeness of experiences, working against dissecting identities from interactions in the story" (Berry & Cook, 2018, p. 88). Dewey's criteria of experience, interaction, and continuity, enacted in situations, provide the grounding for the attention in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin, 2013).

Commonplaces of Narrative Inquiry: Sociality, Temporality, and Place

According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), people make meaning of their experiences through the stories they tell, or live by, and the way that they live in those particular stories. The experiences that they tell or live in consist of personal stories, institutional stories (e.g., school stories), or cultural-temporal stories (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative inquiry has evolved into a methodology that focuses on the use of interactions and experiences between individuals as well as spaces that reflect temporality, sociality, and place.

Sociality describes the intersection between personal conditions (e.g., feelings, reactions, dispositions) and social conditions (e.g., cultural, social, environmental, institutional narratives) and how participants, as well as researchers, are ordered by these factors (Clandinin, 2013). This

is reflected in Hip-Hop, in which music created through this space is predicated upon the experiences of the individual in relation to society. This study is focused on how Black male collegians and researchers approach experiences narratively through the creation of their own Hip-Hop music.

Temporality reflects an understanding of the relationship between past, present, and future experiences of participants and the researcher, in relation to places, things, and events (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The commonplace of temporality emphasizes the idea that narrative inquirers are constantly making meaning of their experiences; in other words, they are always in temporal transition with living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories, based on time and interaction with others. This connects to marronage in that the process of flight for an individual, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is fluid, based on time and the event that is happening.

The final commonplace is place. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), this notion refers to the "specific, concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). This is important because place has a significant impact on the experiences of participants and the researcher, regardless of whether the stories told are personal, institutional, or cultural-temporal. Place also refers to the location or the occupation of a location. In other words, *place* is specific and within a lived *space*, whereas *space* is a by-product of the people that shape, produce, and reproduce it, based on a specific time, place, and social formation (Lefebvre, 1991; 2004). In the next section, I explore the connections of space with narrative inquiry and Hip-Hop.

Narrative Inquiry and Hip-Hop: Hip-Hop as Social Space

The process of re-storying and shifting the institutional, social, and cultural narratives within the commonplaces of narrative inquiry is visible in the elements of Hip-Hop, particularly DJing, or turntablism. As Rice (2003) conveys:

> The pedagogical sampler, with a computer or without a computer, allows cultural criticism to save isolated moments and then juxtapose them as a final product. The student writer looks at the various distinct moments she has collected and figures out how these moments together produce knowledge. Just as DJs often search for breaks and cuts in the music that reveal patterns, so too, does the student writer look for a pattern as a way to unite these moments into new alternative argument and critique. (p. 465)

Moreover, the creation of Hip-Hop music has the ability to provide a more nuanced connection with narrative inquiry. It allows Black male collegians to sample and deconstruct parts of experiences and memories connected to music that reflect their worldview regarding anti-Blackness and freedom, with the intent to re-story and express the personal, institutional, and cultural-temporal stories that transform or help resist oppressive, societal metanarratives, and the gratuitous violence that is placed on their bodies (Chase, 2005).

Some scholars, however, have created a stigma surrounding sampling, claiming that it is simply a "mechanism" of plagiarism, but they fail to understand the relevant ways in which sampling is different from academic methods of citation attribution (Hess, 2006). Hess (2006) points out that "[i]n academic writing, listing sources builds one's credibility as an author who reads widely and understands the current conversation surrounding her topic, but…in sampling, one's credibility is built from discovering unused material, and to reveal sources is to give away secrets of the trade" (p. 282). In other words, sampling, like academic citations, builds upon existing texts, making and creating new connections and responding with new ideas, but in ways that require the sample source to remain obscure, discoverable only by those "in the know" who are familiar with the source material. The point of academic citation practices is to make it easy for readers to track down an author's sources. But in sampling, the point is to create a

community among those who have the arcane or specialized knowledge required to decipher or

discover the sample. Rose (1994) expresses this idea in greater detail:

> sampling technology is also a means of composition, a means of (post) literate
> production. Using sounds and rhythms as building blocks, rap musicians store ideas in
> computers, build, erase, and revise musical themes and concepts…Sampling in rap is a
> process of cultural literacy and intertextual reference…[that] affirms [B]lack musical
> history and locates these "past" sounds in the "present." (pp. 88-89)

That is, Hip-Hop is invested in discovering unique material that reflects individual and collective

experiences of the culture (and its people) and transforming this material in distinctive ways

(Hess, 2006; Schloss, 2004). Furthermore, narrative inquiry, with the incorporation of Hip-Hop,

helps individuals "understand the invention and creativity [that] go[es] into sourcework" (Hess,

2006, p. 293). For the purposes of this study, sourcework reflects the stories that are sampled or

used, as well as the pre-existing sounds and texts (i.e., music) that reflect Black male collegians'

experiences and they ways in which they wrestle with notions of freedom and anti-Blackness,

through creation of a Hip-Hop album. This is the premise behind creating radical self-

determination in Black counterintellectual and economic spaces, as discussed in Chapter 1

(Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018; Martineau & Ritskes, 2014). But how do Black male

collegians figure out which stories to tell, retell, or live in? To uncover this process, researchers

must comprehend the importance of social space, in relation to the three commonplaces of

narrative inquiry.

All of these commonplaces encapsulate the idea of social space, a concept discussed by

Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991; 2004), scholar Michael De Certeau

(1984), and others (Love, 2012). In *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre posits that space

is a social product: "(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other

products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their

coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder" (p. 73). Moreover, Lefebvre argues that space is not predetermined or predestined, as suggested by most Western notions of space, but rather produced by the people who inhabit it. In short, social space reflects the "social activities that occur in a particular time and place that…are specific to…the establishment of a distinct social context (Wilkins, 2000, p. 8). Social contexts will be discussed later in this section. However, these social activities, or practices, develop the construction of relationality between place and the inhabited group, as well as the characteristics of this group.

Social space is also reciprocal because it depends upon people for its (re)production: recognizing, shaping, and affirming the identity and uniqueness of the people who shape, produce, and reproduce it through their movement through space (Lefebvre, 1991; Wilkins, 2000). This notion of movement through space is conveyed in De Certeau's theorization of space, as he sees movement as a way to communicate with others through memory and experience (De Certeau, 1984; Wilkins, 2000). In short, space is a practiced place, contingent on the "operations that orient it, temporalize it, and make it function" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 117). Moreover, Wilkins (2000) states that communication is reciprocally transformed (like sampling, as mentioned above) through elements of language (i.e., verbal/nonverbal communication, music, etc.) that are "appropriated, adapted, and employed by people to communicate meaning that is unique to that particular group, space and time" (p. 8).

Furthermore, Wilkins (2000), based on the work of Lefebvre and De Certeau, suggests that space, with respect to reciprocity, is a

1. phenomenon of *spatial* organization and use, realized in a distinct social contact (people interacting)
2. dependent on experience and memory, linked to time—past, present and future
3. defined and communicated by people through patterns of use. (p. 9)

This idea of social space is reflected in Hip-Hop because the music, embedded in the culture, is

created and performed in a distinct social context through experience and memory. As Wilkins

(2000) points out, Hip-Hop music is an integral way of life, and "we live in sound-defined

spaces" that create identity (p. 8). Similar to notions of space as reciprocal, with the

incorporation of music, Wilkins (2000) also posits that space embodies a

1. Socially constructed phenomenon of *sonic* organization and use [that is]
2. Dependent on experience and memory, linked to time – past, present and future [and]
3. Defined and communicated by people through their patterns on use. (pp. 10-11)

These elements of space are strongly expressed in Hip-Hop music. Hip-Hop music was birthed

during a technological period in history, and its social construction was defined by Black and

Brown people who inhabited specifically urban spaces. The idea of sampling is embedded in the

DNA of Hip-Hop music, as DJs, producers, and engineers have manipulated sounds with the

express purpose of mixing "several disparate sources of sonic pleasure into [a] listening

experience" (Wilkins, 2000, p. 9).

In short, the distinct *social context* of Hip-Hop, in many cases, has been the recording

studio. This point is particularly relevant to this study because it shows why creating a Hip-Hop

album is a particularly relevant way to construct a social space for Black people and artists. In

this study, Black male collegians not only sample their experiences and memory based on

temporality, both individually and collectively, but they also sample experiences that exemplify

how they have been socialized in higher education, particularly at HWIs.

Wilkins states that, with regard to time, Hip-Hop music is vital to Black people because

of

[its] nature (rhythm, repletion, layering, flow, rupture, which recalls the link to its African origin…its orality (toast, call and response, storytelling griot), which descends from specific African, Caribbean, and American influences…and…its content (oppression,

segregation, self-determination, self-naming), which is constituted…of the project of reclaiming the Black *subject* from the Negro object. (pp. 9-10)

Moreover, Hip-Hop music is sonically an ontological representation of the Black experience, the connection to Afrodiasporic traditions and origins, and the hope of establishing or sustaining radical self-determination for a better future. This project has created an album around theorizations of freedom, anti-Blackness, and self-determination, through the social and fugitive space of Hip-Hop, with the intent to reclaim what has been stolen by the *objectification* of the Black male body. This project's process thus demonstrates how Black male collegians are able to tap into their experiences and memory, select stories connected to these particular topics, and (re)define who they are and what they represent. The use of narrative inquiry, infused with the social space of Hip-Hop and the distinct social context of the recording studio, has enabled Black male collegians to create, produce, and "express their individual and collective identity—the "who" [they] are" (Wilkins, 2000, p. 10)—through a Hip-Hop album.

The Epistemology of Listening: Limitations of Narrative Inquiry

Although narrative inquiry is the methodological approach used in this study, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge its limitations while simultaneously emphasizing how the incorporation of Hip-Hop compensates for these particular limits. In her article "The Future of Narrative," Hendry (2007), who identifies herself as a narrative researcher, claims that scholars must rethink the very notion of narrative as research because it "reduces stories to objects thereby reifying a positivist view of knowledge" (p. 487). In essence, she proposes that researchers should consider exploring narrative outside the confines of research that honors the "sacredness of…stories and humanity" (p. 487). This is what Hendry calls a spiritual and political act of trust. Thus, the conceptualization of narratives told by researchers must go beyond capturing meaning or analyzing stories, and instead recognize that life is much more

complex and can "never be [fully] understood, let alone represented" (p. 491). With regard to

reducing or objectifying the lives of participants, Hendry (2007) states that narrative researchers

> construct lives by reducing them to a series of events, categories, or themes and then put
> them back together to make up a whole called *narrative*. Thus, by constructing narratives
> we not only ultimately erase part of our lived experience but also impose a particular way
> of thinking about experience. (p. 491)

In short, narrative researchers consciously and subconsciously analyze participants' stories in an

effort to make narratives linear, or to "fit" them to their own preconceived notions and

worldview. In essence, Hendry is saying that this line of research is no different from the

positivistic philosophies that try to quantify human experience, calculating dimensions of stories

in ways that most qualitative researchers adamantly claim they oppose.

As a result, Hendry (2007) claims that we must "envision lives without narrative" in an

effort to rethink the very nature of research (p. 492). She recommends viewing research as an act

of spiritual and political faith and trust, through what she calls the "divine" act of being present

in the moment, *listening* to the stories being told, retold, and lived in, without being concerned

about whether the stories are literally true or untrue. Furthermore, the epistemology of listening

is, in Hendry's (2007) words, a "sacred space" that builds communion and shifts the ideology of

research as a place that eradicates the dichotomy of "research/nonresearch, subject/object, and

knower/known" (p. 496).

As a researcher, I have constructed a form of analysis for this study, but my vision for

this work far exceeds the parameters of narrative analysis. This work is not a matter to analyze as

a "mode for saying what [I] want to say…[but for] really listening to what is being said" by

participants (Hendry, 2007, p. 493). Furthermore, this concept of the epistemology of listening is

predicated on the fact that I am listening and present at all times, trusting that meaning is made

from what Black male collegians have privileged me to hear, witness, and express with regard to their complex lives and experiences.

The medium of the Hip-Hop album allows me to listen to the totality and contradictions of Black male collegians' stories. In *Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip Hop as Text, Pedagogy and Lived Practice*, Greg Dimitriadis (2009) emphasizes that his work as a researcher and scholar evolved over time as he discovered how popular culture, especially Hip-Hop, and his interactions with youth helped him see his role in the field as "open to constant renegotiation" (p. 167). Dimitriadis (2009) claims that maintaining objectivity between the researcher and participants does not always enhance the credibility of the research. In other words, he recognizes that the youth were not only participants in his study, but researchers alongside him. Or even better, he was a participant alongside the students. Dimitriadis (2009) learned not only to listen to and trust the complex stories that students were telling him and how they connected to Hip-Hop, but also to "unlisten" and refrain from seeking solutions to the problems shared in the students' stories. Dimitriadis states that

> As we get closer and closer to the [embodied narratives] of young people's lives, we see how they live in the middle of multiple, overlapping, and often contradictory modes of identification. It is very difficult in a study such as mine to offer simple "take-away" lessons that can be applied in rote and unthinking fashion in other contexts.…Such embodied narratives put us in the middle of questions, issues, and struggles to think through—not to master or "solve" in ready-to-hand ways.…Studies must be willing to see popular culture in radical context [and allow it] to be challenged by the young people themselves, the complexities of their individual biographies, and their broader cultural and material circumstances. (p. 168)

Creating a studio-produced Hip-Hop album generates a unique social context that defies the limitations of traditional qualitative research. By using the epistemology of listening and by understanding my role as researcher, I position myself in this study as a learner-participant, prioritizing the importance of listening to participants' stories, in an effort to challenge how they

engage in the reflexive process of unpacking their lives' layered and contradictory experiences. In short, although I identify as a Hip-Hop collegian myself, I understand that my role as researcher is to provide an uncensored space where participants can discover ways to narrate their own stories to their own beat. In essence, the creation of a dissertation album complicates, yet complements, the analysis of participants' narratives, provides an opportunity for participants to control the motion and space of the study, and allows me as a researcher to plug in to the experience of listening effectively, positioning narrative inquiry, incorporated with Hip-Hop, outside the conscious view of research.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Creswell (2013) describes researcher reflexivity as a stance in which the inquirer "reflects about…their role in the study and their personal background, culture and experiences that hold potential for shaping their interpretations" (p. 186). In other words, reflexivity is the process of critical self-reflection and acknowledgment of one's biases, theoretical predispositions, and experiences (Schwandt, 2014).

Hip-Hop is a part of my identity. It is no coincidence that my project draws upon the work of Black Hip-Hop feminists. Black women have continually had a profound influence on my life's direction; in fact, Black women first brought Hip-Hop into my life (Durham, Cooper, & Morris, 2013). My first-grade teacher, Ms. Ford, was a Black woman (and my only Black teacher during my K-12 years). She had a huge impact on my life when she incorporated Hip-Hop into our classroom. The culture-shaping film *Sister Act II* was released in 1993, and every morning, Ms. Ford would have us in class singing, "If you want to be somebody, if you want to go somewhere, you better wake up and pay attention." I vividly remember other teachers coming by our classroom to witness the "ruckus" that we were making. Although I did not understand the

foundation of Hip-Hop at the time, Ms. Ford was disrupting traditional pedagogical spaces to encourage me to love my Blackness and see a reimagined life, despite growing up in a neighborhood of concentrated poverty. Through song and repetition, Ms. Ford provided me the love, care, and confidence I needed not only to survive but to thrive in school. Thanks to her efforts, I knew that my Blackness was real and did not need to be hidden from society. Furthermore, hearing music by my mother's favorite Hip-Hop artist, Lauryn Hill, played at school provided an affirmation of my cultural identity.

Ms. Ford introduced me to *Sister Act II*, in which Lauryn Hill played a significant artistic role, but it was my mother who familiarized me with the iconic album *Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Hill, 1999). Growing up, I did not fully understand everything that Hill was saying in the album. But I did recognize that, as my mother played the album in her 1992 Hyundai Sonata, it allowed her to make sense of her reality, specifically as a single mother who feared that deadly violence would be acted upon my body. The commonplace of temporality is of particular importance to me because it has taken me almost twenty years to process and describe the significance of the album. Songs such as *To Zion* and *Forgive Them Father* helped my mother describe her love for me and the sacrifices she made for me while forgiving the individuals who hurt her along the way.

Hip-Hop artists such as Lauryn Hill and Tupac have enabled me to make sense of my own complex life, both consciously and subconsciously. As a first-generation college student who attended and graduated from an HWI, I experienced many challenges before attaining my degree. The lack of connection or sense of belonging to the institution was my primary hardship. I initially felt isolated, with no purpose on campus except to go to class, make good grades, and get a good job. During my second year in college, my perspective changed. With encouragement

from my roommate, I became interested in teaching myself how to DJ. As my craft developed, I started to seek out ways to express my talents through avenues such as student organizations and community events. On many occasions, I wondered how an introverted individual like myself had become a DJ. It took almost ten years after learning to DJ before I realized that the power of Hip-Hop had been engrained in me by Black women. Black women have continually saved my life by providing direction, standing up for me, and giving me a strong sense of self-worth and confidence. For me, Hip-Hop has become a vehicle not just for creating music but for finding creative ways to connect my past with my current state of being, in hopes of providing a better future for Black and Brown people. For this purpose, the Hip-Hop album is an intervention that provides the tension of creating conversations among Black male collegians that critique not only the institutions that we hope to disrupt but critique the ways that anti-Black tools, such as capitalism and the heteropatriarchy, can be reinforced within Black spaces. In short, Hip-Hop is the vehicle that connects my purpose to my passion, particularly in higher education. As Sule (2016) states,

> I came to realize that the boundary between my [H]ip-[H]op interest and my higher education career was much more fluid than expected. For instance, my epistemological framework is firmly rooted in interdisciplinary perspectives and experiential learning. Like [H]ip-[H]op, I believe that knowledge creation stems from the integration of intellectual genres as well as lived experience. Also, [H]ip-[H]op showed me that it is acceptable to represent counter-narratives and to promote social equity. My scholarship is reflective of these principles. (p. 185)

These sentiments are reflected in my own scholarship. As a university administrator of various retention initiatives for students of color, I have built strong relationships with my students, particularly Black male collegians. My own experience of navigating college has afforded me the opportunity to effectively help my students do the same. My work in student retention brings me close to students' lives and stories and allows me to stand alongside students, helping them make

meaning of their reality and conceptualize how anti-Blackness is a part of their collegiate experience. In my work, I learned quickly to be vulnerable, accessible, and unapologetic about my experiences. One common denominator in my bonding with my students has been our genuine connection and discourse around Hip-Hop.

Hip-Hop has enabled me to create a platform where I feel my life has meaning. Navigating through an anti-Black, white supremacist world has been difficult, but when using my talents as a DJ and producer, I feel I can control at least some of life's circumstances. In essence, this is the only time that I feel free. Whether through call and response or the blending of songs through a mixer and two turntables, Hip-Hop has allowed me to bring people together, creating continuity between me and my audience. Creating blends, smooth transitions from one song to the next, and tricks that produce crowd reactions provides not only continuity but a place and space that brings together past, present, and future experiences. Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) point out that narrative inquiry is "within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then becomes a part of future experience" (p. 41). The ability to come alongside my audience through song is the art of narrative inquiry. Furthermore, Hip-Hop to me is self-care and liberation, a space where uncensored truths can be articulated without remorse or worry about what others may think. Hip-Hop, in essence, is a form of narrative freedom, because it is "attentive to the intersubjective, relational [and] embedded spaces in which lives are lived out" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 24). In short, due to my ontological and epistemological perspectives, Hip-Hop complements and provides a different lens through which we describe, process, and express narratives.

Van Manen (1990) states that "it is better to make explicit our understandings [than]…to hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn [our] knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby

exposing its shallow or concealing character" (p. 47). I acknowledge that my roles as a student affairs professional and a DJ/producer include elements of power and authority. As a cisgender Black male, it is important for me to make sure that my role does not exclude participants based upon my own knowledge of the research topic; instead, I must effectively listen, process, and support Black male collegians as they express their experiences, while building trust along the way.

My final note on reflexivity relates to a pilot study I conducted that explored how Hip-Hop shapes the lived experiences of Black male collegians at HWIs. Students participated in focus groups, and I coded the themes that emerged and shared them with participants, who used the themes in creating a Hip-Hop project that discussed Hip-Hop's influence. The process of conducting this study, along with the commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place, have allowed me to reimagine how the work could be better structured. For example, the pilot study placed emphasis on Hip-Hop, rather than the Black male collegians' stories, as the phenomenon being studied. The intent of this study, specifically, is to use a Hip-Hop narrative approach in examining how anti-Black experiences impact Black male collegians' notion of freedom and how these experiences are expressed through a Hip-Hop album. In other words, the creation of Hip-Hop music by Black male collegians is the tool that employed to express participants' narratives. In essence, by combining the thorough methodological approach of narrative inquiry with the epistemology of listening, this study's research design places more emphasis on the participants and their stories than on the album produced.

Participants

This study consists of 14 Black male collegians who have attended, are currently enrolled at, or have graduated from an HWI in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. Participants range

from first-year students to graduate students, as well as students who have stopped out. The purpose of the study is to explore how Black male collegians describe, process, and express their experiences with anti-Blackness and their understandings of freedom. Engaging such a wide range of participants allows me to include former students as well as current students in addressing this topic. More specifically, study participants include Black male collegians at Oklahoma HWIs who

- are currently enrolled at Oklahoma HWIs and have completed at least 12 credit hours, including undergraduates, graduate students, and transfer students attending part-time or full-time, or

- have attended Oklahoma HWIs in the last 10 years and have either stopped out or graduated with an associate's or bachelor's degree

Opening the study to both current and former students allowed me to recruit participants with a variety of socioeconomic statues, social identities (e.g., sexual orientations), and experiences, countering the notion that Black male collegians are monolithic.

Participants also identify as an artist, rapper, producer, poet, activist, b-boy, disc jockey (DJ), producer, audio engineer, historian, graffiti artist, painter, graphic designer, campus leader, scholar, photographer, videographer, web designer, dance performer, musician, entrepreneur, or Hip-Hop collegian (Petchauer, 2012). Some participants identify with more than one of these categories.

This study uses purposive sampling because it facilitates "identifying and selecting individuals or groups that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest" (Palinkas et. al., 2015, p. 534). This is appropriate for my project because "what constitutes information-rich cases will depend upon the phenomenon under

investigation, the methodological approach, and the questions designed to illuminate

understanding of this phenomenon" (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2013, p. 107). Because the study

uses the creation of a Hip-Hop album to explore Black male collegians' experiences of anti-

Blackness at HWIs, it requires knowledgeable participants who identify with the categories

mentioned above (rapper, poet, etc.), and who can voice their responses to these issues in an

aesthetic manner.

To recruit Black male collegians who meet these criteria, I emailed Black male students

and departments that interact directly with potential participants from HWIs in the state of

Oklahoma. To recruit students who have stopped out, I contacted colleagues who had

connections with these students; in essence, this is process of snowball sampling (Emerson,

2015). In addition, I used email and social media (Facebook, Twitter, GroupMe, and Instagram)

to contact student organizations, such as the National Panhellenic Council (NPHC), TRIO

programs, the Black Student Association, the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People (NAACP), Black Male Initiative programs. To recruit graduate students, I used

alumni associations' email lists and contacted colleagues with connections to recent graduates.

After completing IRB consent forms, participants received a demographic questionnaire

that asked questions about family income, parents' educational attainment, the HWI that they

attended or are currently attending, their major and classification, and their identities (e.g., part-

time graduate student and rapper; stopped out producer; graduate activist and DJ).

In *Decolonizing Education Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, Patel (2016)

describes a study that she conducted with undocumented youth:

> masking the identities of participants is seen to be one of the pre-eminent ways to protect
> participants…In this project, undocumented youth activists used their names and their
> stories in loud and explicit ways as forms of public pedagogy, activism, and social
> agitation. None of them wanted their names masked in the research. To them, this seemed

> to be completely out of keeping with what they were trying to counter: an anonymizing of identity to deny personhood. To conduct research with them into these practices begged at minimum a reconsideration of what is seen to be default "good practice" in university-sanctioned research. (p. 65)

Decolonization is a process that engages in discourse with colonialism and imperialism at multiple levels, particularly as it relates to Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples. Although many scholars resist colonialist perspectives in the academy, research "continues to be structured…through a lens that makes [scholarship]…legible to scholars who are thinking about the world exclusively through western ways of knowing" (Fortier, 2017, p. 20). My scholarship, I would argue, is centered around the decolonization of western ideologies. By implementing the epistemology of listening, my primary goal is to consistently reevaluate the "nature of each relationship of accountability that [participants and I] initiate and determine principles to help make decisions that honour decolonizing relationships," (Fortier, 2017, p. 28). Throughout the study, I communicated honestly with participants and made the research intentions transparent. Patel makes it clear that participants in her study chose to resist anonymization. My research design provided the option for participants to decide whether they wanted to remain anonymous. All participants decided not to anonymize themselves through the album, but they are not identified in the written portion of this dissertation. I understand both sides of the anonymization issue: it is important both to protect participants' privacy and to let them make their own decisions about whether to use their preferred name or a pseudonym. My task was to provide a thorough, axiological space that made individuals feel supported and welcomed, regardless of the decision they made regarding anonymization.

Site Location for the Study

The study took place at the University of Central Oklahoma's (UCO) Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM), which is located in the Bricktown district, the heart of downtown

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Oklahoma City. Established in 2009, UCO's ACM offers associate and bachelor degrees for students pursuing careers in the music industry, with focused curricula in music performance, music production, music business, and technological application studies (ACM@UCO, 2018). This location was used because ACM had "four professional recording studios, five large rehearsal spaces, fully-equipped classrooms and practice rooms, two technology labs and a five-hundred capacity performance lab" (ACM@UCO, 2018). Participants were given free access to classrooms and recording studios. The classrooms were used for the focus groups, and the recording studio was used to discuss, create, and record the Hip-Hop album.

Crystallization, Trustworthiness and Credibility

Before discussing data collection and analysis, it is important to understand how my role as researcher is grounded in axiological scholarship that is both trustworthy and credible. Triangulation is the process of using multiple data sources or methods to verify facts under study. Schwandt (2014) states that triangulation is a "procedure used to establish the fact that the criterion of validity has been met" (p. 307). Triangulation is conducted through procedures such as self-reflection and peer debriefing (i.e., inviting a non-researching peer to probe and ask questions about the research design) (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2013). One method used in triangulation is known as member checking. When using member checking, the researcher shares data with participants so that they can provide feedback about whether the data accurately reflects their experiences. Member checking is one of the methods used in triangulation, but there is a theoretical difference between member checking and peer debriefing, as member checking is "focused on reassuring the credibility of constructions of the participants" (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 323).

Although triangulation recognizes the importance of using multiple sources, its notions of "validity assume [that] there is one truth that can be found as long as multiple types of data demonstrate the same point" (Kuby, 2014, p. 131). In other words, it does not provide space for the possibility that multiple data sources might uncover multiple truths. For this reason, this study also uses crystallization. Ellingson (2009, as cited in Ruby, 2014) states that crystallization

> combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (p. 131)

The process of crystallization requires a full immersion by the researcher both to collect and analyze data, but also to effectively plan, imagine, and reimagine the research design prior to and during data collection, with the intent to iteratively reflect and adapt throughout the research study (Cho & Trent, 2006). According to Richardson and St. Pierre (2008), crystallization "provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic…[where] we know more and doubt what we know [as researchers and not the stories of participants]" (p. 963). Crystallization allows me as a researcher to go a step further than triangulation. Processing multiple and possibly conflicting experiences of how Black male collegians discuss freedom and anti-Blackness may lead me to multiple truths (Cho & Trent, 2006; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011).

Trustworthiness and credibility of the researcher are established only through an iterative and reflective process of transparency (Patton, 2002), methodical-ness (Stewart & Gapp, 2010), and adherence to evidence (Yin, 2011). Trustworthiness is the quality of an investigation that makes it noteworthy to the reader, whereas credibility is achieved when participants are satisfied

that the researcher has reconstructed and represented them accurately in the study (Schwandt, 2014). Riessman (2008) claims that the

> credibility of an investigator's representation is strengthened if it is recognizable to participants…Giving a transcript of an interview to a participant for commentary and correction is one thing…while giving [y]our interpretive conclusions back for a "check" can be quite another. (p. 197)

To maintain transparency with participants, I provided detailed accounts of the project plan, transcripts of interviews, focus groups, studio sessions, observations, and member checked with participants and scholar colleagues. Stewart and Gapp describe "methodical-ness" as the orderly approach of "compiling, disassembling, and reassembling . . . data collection and analysis" (Stewart & Gapp, 2006, p. 10). Thus, the flow or outline of the study is organized intentionally to show how trustworthiness and credibility is built within the design. Last, adherence to evidence establishes a connection between the methods used and the evidence shown, within the chosen methods of "compiling, disassembling, and reassembling" data (Stewart & Gapp, 2006, p. 10). Furthermore, these elements lend trustworthiness and credibility to this study.

It is essential to recognize elements of crystallization, trustworthiness, and credibility because this study's approach—using narrative inquiry through the process of creating a Hip-Hop album—is novel, and it is important to me to be transparent, honest, and methodical, adhering to evidence throughout the process of research design.

Data Collection

Clandinin (2013) emphasizes that "narrative inquiry [is] fluid inquiry, not a set of procedures or linear steps to be followed but a relational inquiry methodology that is open to where the stories of participants' experience take each researcher" (p. 33). There are multiple ways to collect data within a narrative inquiry approach. Because this study focuses on Black male collegians telling, living, retelling, and reliving their stories of experiences centered around

anti-Blackness, multiple methods were needed (Chase, 2005; Clandinin 2013; Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; 2006). Because the purpose of this dissertation is to examine how Black male collegians at HWIs define or make meaning of freedom, disrupt anti-Blackness, and narratively express their notions of freedom through the creation of a Hip-Hop album, the following methods were used in this study (see Figures 3.1 –3.4).

Figure 3.1 Data Collection Overview
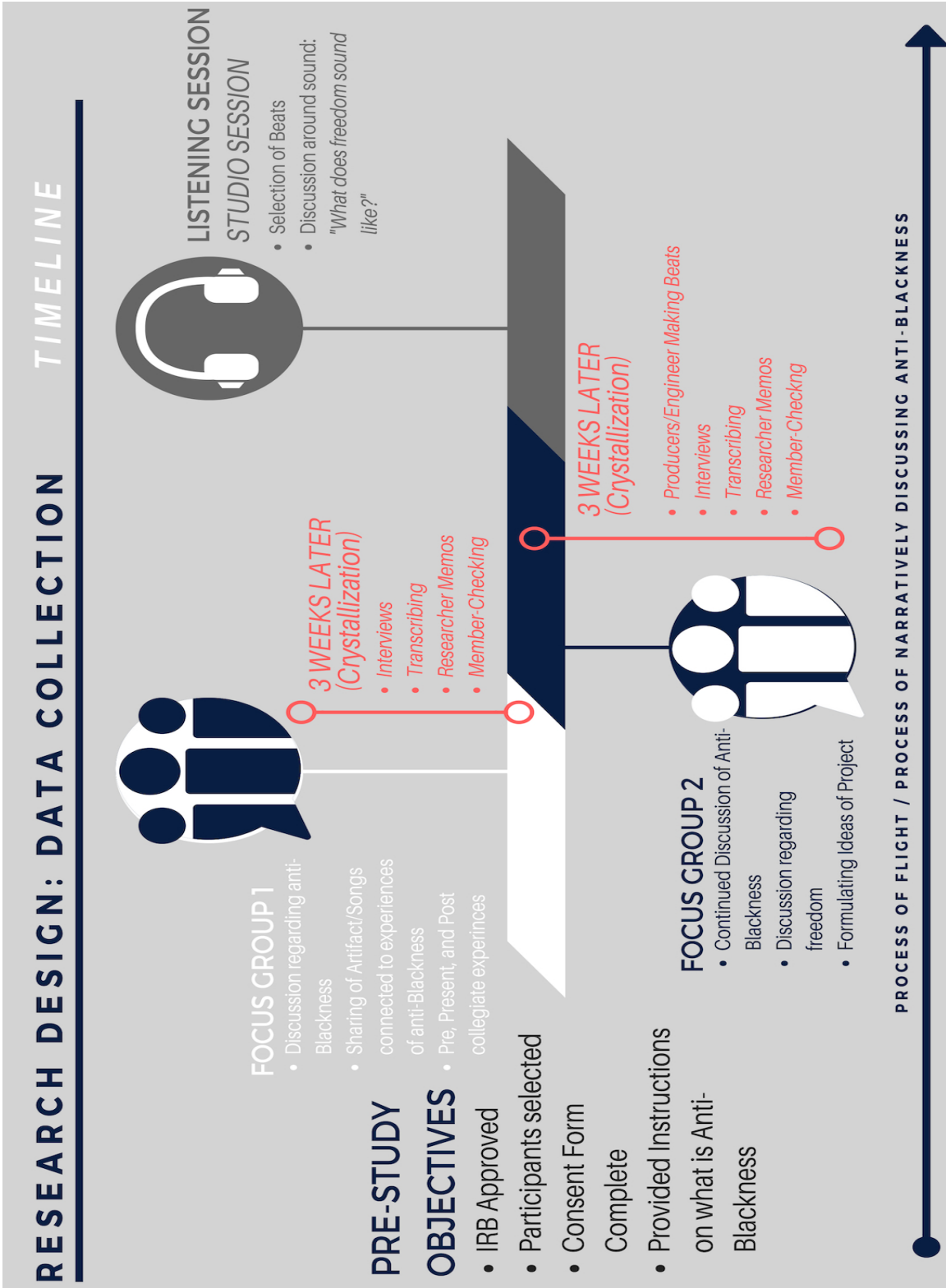
Figure 3.2 Data Collection Overview
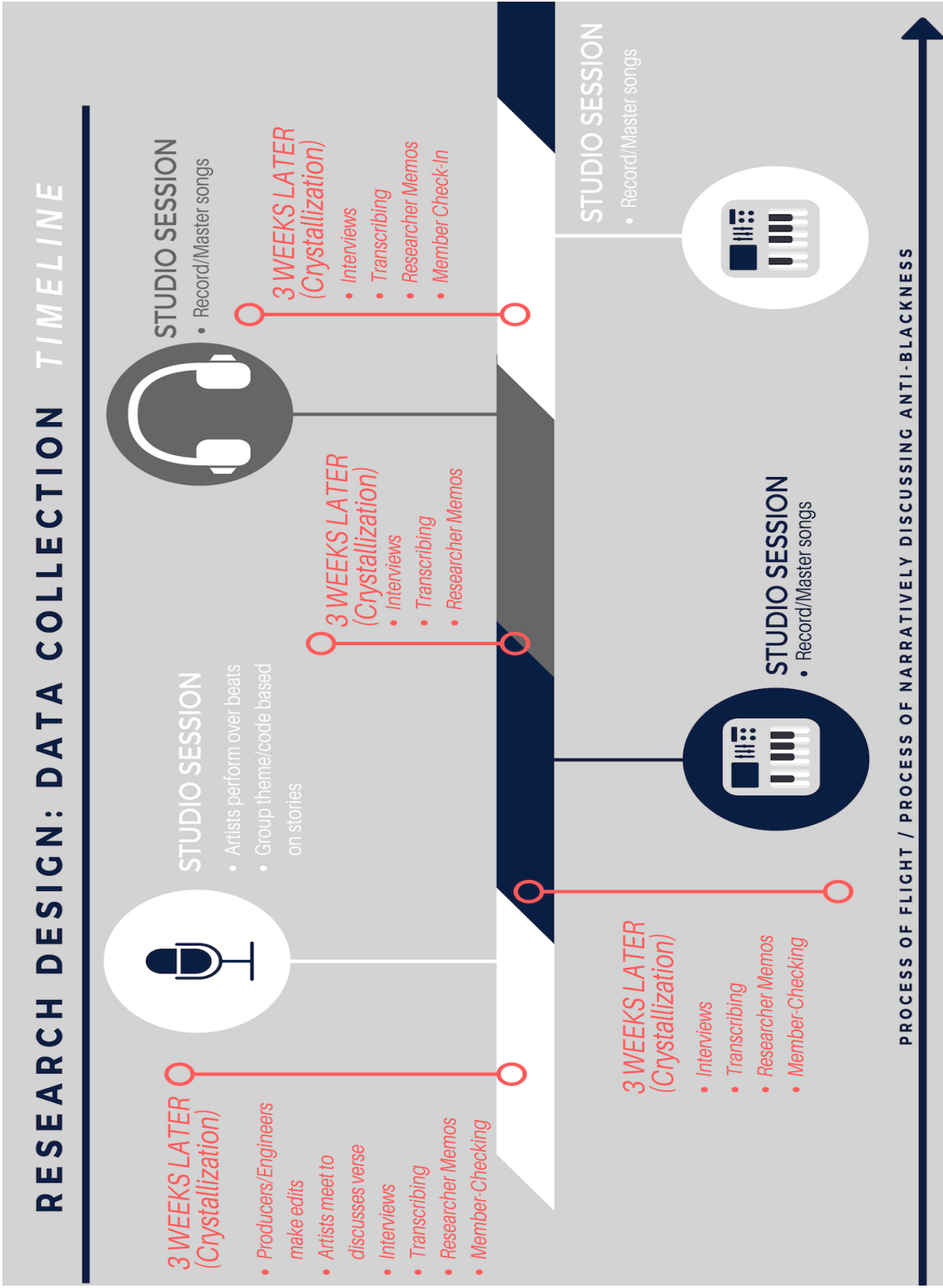
Figure 3.3 Data Collection Overview
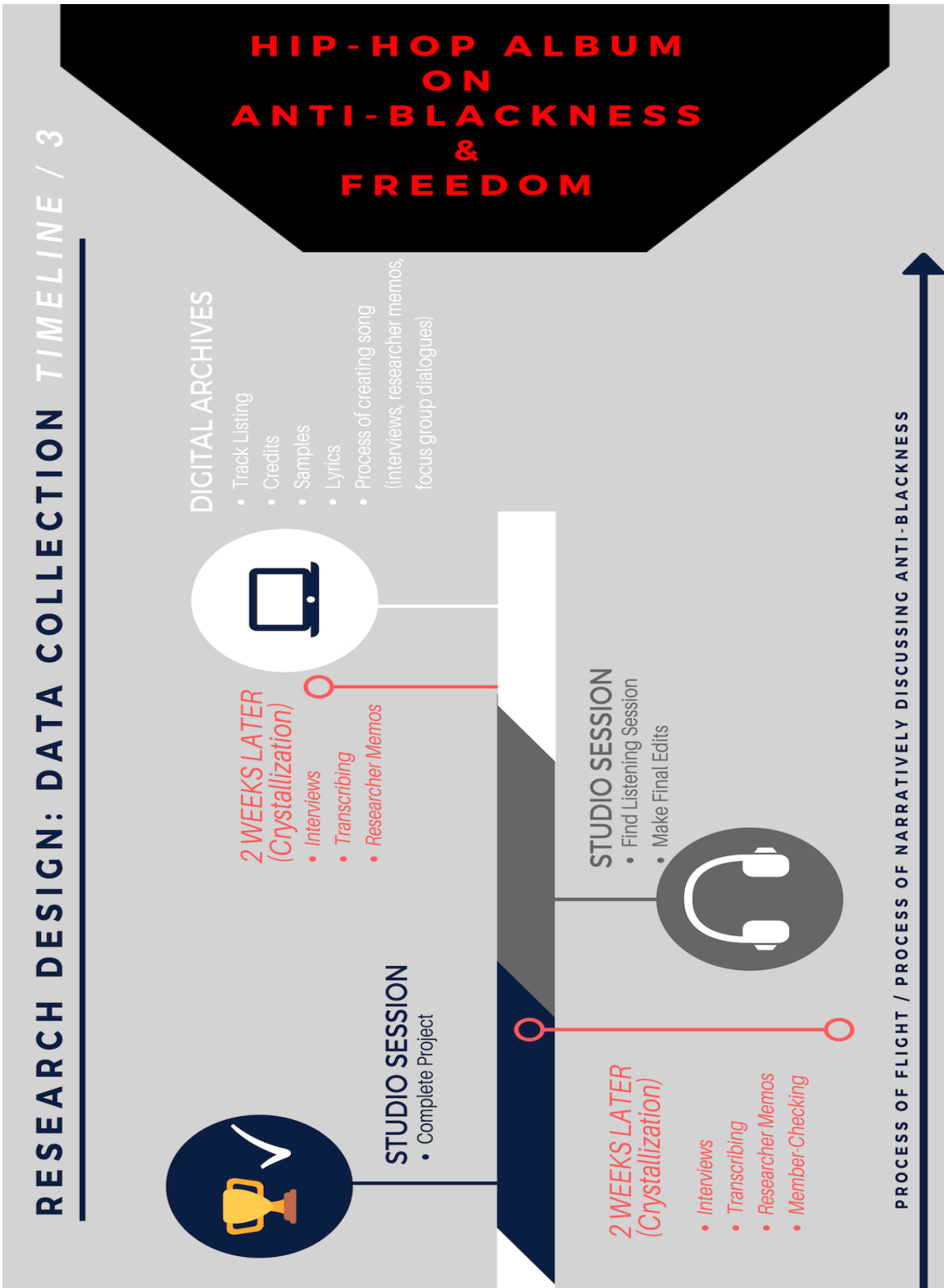
Figure 3.4 Data Collection Overview

Focus Group 1. After participants joined the study and completed the pre-study questionnaire, I used email to arrange focus groups. Each focus group took place in the writing room at the ACM and lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. In the initial email, I asked participants to bring three to four artifacts to the first focus group. The artifacts reflected and represented participants' pre-collegiate, present, and/or post-collegiate experiences centered around anti-Blackness (up to three artifacts) and one artifact that expressed their conception of freedom. The point of this method was to allow participants to live in and articulate their experiences narratively and to connect their artifacts to the commonplaces within narrative inquiry (e.g. sociality, temporality, and place). These artifacts symbolized their experiences, based on time, space, and historical context, and how they were reflected in the socially constructed mechanism of anti-Blackness, how anti-Blackness has affected and shaped their lives, and how these experiences were connected to their understandings of freedom. This process also provided an opportunity to see how Black male collegians' perceptions of anti-Blackness and freedom differed among the group members. For example, a currently enrolled student may provide artifacts that specifically describe his pre-collegiate and present experiences of anti-Blackness and may have an optimistic or pessimistic view of what freedom is, based on the experiences he has already encountered, prior to and during college. A student who has stopped out or graduated, on the other hand, might use different artifacts and attribute different meanings to them than current students do. These differences serve as a way for me to identify multiple truths among the participants' stories.

I define artifacts as physical items and/or archival records (e.g., letters, photos, diaries, yearbooks) that students brought to the focus group (Brundage, 2017; McCulloch, 2004). Because I asked participants to identify and think about these items and their meanings before

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our first meeting, we were able to maximize our time during the focus group to build comradery amongst group members and engage in living in stories together (Clandinin, 2013). This meant that we were in a position to create a dynamic, social space that embraced the art of listening and connecting stories, even if we did not have similar experiences, in a way that organically built trust within the group.

Next, in addition to sharing the three artifacts that represented their pre-collegiate, current, and post-collegiate experiences of anti-Blackness, participants were asked to share three songs that reflected these items and describe them to the group. This process allowed participants to connect their experiences to Hip-Hop.

Focus Group 2. The second focus group, which consisted of the same participants, held three weeks after the first, consisted of checking in with participants through questions posed or stories told in focus group 1. Participants were able to ask each other questions to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences and the ways in which they described and processed them. The conversation transitioned from specifically describing and processing their experiences to discussing ways that they attempted (if at all) to disrupt anti-Blackness and describing what freedom meant to them. In essence, the focus group provided a space where participants could pause and start making sense of their experiences. This transition was centered on the process of actualizing participants' agency and discussing ways for them to express these experiences narratively in a Hip-Hop album.

Individual Reflective Time & Instrumentals Meeting. After focus group 2, we had three weeks before listening session 1 (see below). I asked participants to spend some of this time reflecting on and writing about their experiences during the first two focus group sessions, using poetry, journaling, music, or any form of writing with which they felt comfortable. During

this time questions that were posed were "What were your thoughts regarding these meetings?" "Whose artifacts and songs resonated with your experiences the most?" "Is there an artifact that you wished you had brought instead?" "What is your definition of freedom and how do you express it through music?"

I want to emphasize again that although I believe the final product of the album is important, my focus was centered more on the individuals' process of creating and presenting narratives around anti-Blackness and freedom through Hip-Hop. As Lefebvre (1991) states, "social space [is] both *work* [the interaction] and *product* [what is created by the interaction]," (p. 102) and is *connected to a specific* social context, which in this case is the studio. In short, the experiences that came out of these conversations in the studio were at the heart of this study.

During this same three-week period, the group's producers and audio engineers met to create or share the instrumentals, or beats, that they had created (either prior to the first focus group or based on the conversations from the focus group sessions). All participants were invited to attend, but it was not mandatory. The goal was to select 50-60 instrumentals prior to the next focus group meeting.

Listening Session 1. Three weeks later, during the first listening session, participants voted on the beats created by producers. After each beat was played, participants discussed its pros and cons, with the goal of selecting the top 20-25 tracks. These beats themselves were a form of member checking, as participants were able to provide feedback about anything that needed to be added or omitted. In addition to creating discourse about the beats, this session implemented the epistemology of listening, specifically listening to and understanding why the beats were made and justifying why the selected beats should be used (Hendry, 2007).

Editing and writing. During the three weeks between Listening Session 1 and Studio Session 1 the producers made edits as needed to the beats that had been selected in Listening Session 1, and I emailed them out to the group. Rappers, artists, poets, activists, and scholars were specifically asked to prepare a hook and a verse for each beat selected, or as many as they could create, to present at the upcoming studio session. These hooks and verses reflected the individual and collective stories that participants described in the focus groups.

Studio Session 1. Three weeks after Listening Session 1, participants who had written hooks and verses took turns presenting their material over the selected beats in the recording studio. All hooks and verses were recorded as drafts and emailed to participants to make changes prior to Studio Session 2. Participants asked questions about the narratives that were shared through artists' hooks and verses, in hopes of finding themes and the right sound for each song. For example, when one participant discussed how anti-Blackness is expressed among faculty on campus on one beat, and another participant discussed the same thing on another beat, the group collectively made the decision to put both participants on the same track, even though the two stories about faculty might have been quite different in content or perspective.

It is important to note that participants' words and expressions were not censored in this study, as I wanted participants to know they could be authentic and honest at all times, which helped establish trust within the group as a deliberate spiritual and political affirmation (Hendry, 2007). After all artists were heard, hooks and verses selected, and order of tracks solidified, the participants sent me their lyrics so that I could compile them into one document for distribution to the entire group.

Studio Sessions 2-4. The study included three additional studio sessions that lasted up to 120 minutes each, with three weeks between sessions. With the help of the group's audio

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engineers, participants were able to lay down their hooks and verses for the project. All participants were encouraged to attend studio sessions, including those who might not be recording, to encourage others, provide feedback on delivery, and help generate creative ideas. The compiled lyrics were distributed to participants so that everyone could read along as the project was being recorded. Participants' lyrics were also edited in the studio.

Interviews. I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the artists, poets, and rappers who provided recorded parts on the project. A group interview with these participants also was conducted at the end of the album as a wrap-up session. Each interview lasted between 60 and 75 minutes and addressed the connection between participants' experiences of anti-Blackness and the process of creating an album. The interviews elicited informal, unstructured "behind-the-scenes" conversations about the process of creating the album. These interviews affirmed that the project's importance lay more in the participants' process of making sense of anti-Blackness and freedom, rather than the end product of the album itself.

Memos and Transcripts. Throughout the project, I assembled various kinds of memos: observational (e.g., field notes), theoretical (e.g., emergence of themes), and methodological (e.g., documentation of issues or concerns regarding methods used) (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Wahyuni, 2012). These memos consisted of notes taken during and after interviews, focus groups, listening sessions, and studio sessions. Writing my researcher memos was a time of weekly self-reflexivity connecting my told and lived stories to the experiences of conducting the study and coming alongside participants throughout the process. I listened to participants' stories, connected them to my own experiences, and, as a researcher-learner and particularly as a

producer, I too created instrumentals and beats to connect participants' experiences through sound.

Data collection also included audio- and video-recorded transcripts of focus groups, listening sessions, studio sessions, and interviews. As part of the process of member checking, I shared all transcripts with their respective participants so that they could identify places where I needed to make corrections or add information.

Final Listening Session and Digital Archive. After participants completed the verses and hooks, the project was mixed and mastered for sound quality. Next, the participants and I, along with several colleagues and peers we had invited, listened to the project in its entirety, making final changes to the track listing. The colleagues and peers included individuals from within and outside the academy, as well as members of the Hip-Hop community. Also during this session, participants came up with the name of the project, Curriculum of the Mind, as well as the name of the collective group, The Space Program (TSP). The name of the project originates from the title of the track, Curriculum of the Mind, that the group believed encapsulated their stories and their disruption of anti-Blackness in higher education. The group's name, The Space Program, stems from the lyrics of a track titled Space Program by the American Hip-Hop collective A Tribe Called Quest: "There ain't a space program for niggas" (Fareed, Taylor & White, 2016). In essence, TSP is reimagining a space program filled with the elements of Hip-Hop for Black male collegians to engage in discourse regarding anti-Blackness and freedom at HWIs.

After we solidified the graphics and names, we packaged the project into a digital archive. Haskins (2007) states that

> the internet has made collective authorship a practical reality, fulfilling many literary
> critics' desire to free texts from authorial constraints…[because] the internet levels the
> traditional hierarchy of author-text-audience, thereby distributing authorial agency among
> various institutions and individuals involved in the production of content and preventing

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any one agent from imposing narrative and ideological closure upon the data. (pp. 405-406)

One purpose of the digital archive was to show that the stories presented were not based upon my own interpretations but were collectively expressed by all participants. The digital archive includes not only the album but also a timeline showing how the project was created. Other tabs on the site include (a) a group interview about the stories lived in, told, retold, and relived by participants, along with the settings of stories described (e.g., time, place); (b) a description of each track and its process of creation; (c) examples of writing from several participants, including journal entries, research memos, and notes about research and participant observations; and (d) transcriptions of collective commentary from the interviews, focus group discussions, listening sessions, and studio sessions. Participants approved all information before it was presented in the archive. The digital archive is a supplement to the written dissertation, but more than this, it is a way to share the information generated during the project with individuals who may never read the dissertation.

Limitations

As a researcher, I recognize that this research design is extensive and multi-layered. This study required a lot of time and patience from both me and the participants. For the most part, I met the challenging goal of minimizing participants' time commitment while keeping up their morale, but I must acknowledge that I could not control all aspects of life for each individual. The participation of some individuals was not consistent as we progressed through the album process, but I was prepared for this type of rupture (Rose, 1994). Due to the constraints of time and life circumstances, I understood that uneven participation would be a major limitation of the study.

Data Analysis

This project's design includes many moving pieces and layers, not to mention a wide variety of written documents. It would be unwieldy to attempt textual analysis on all documents produced in this project, so my textual analysis focuses on the lyrics created and recorded for the album and the observations of interactions during studio sessions, focus groups, and interviews. In addition, to provide a more crystallizable study, I reached out to over 50 scholars, activists, community organizers, colleagues (within and outside the academy), and friends/lovers of Hip-Hop to provide a critique of the album. Reviewers received a private and secure link to the digital archive site, prior to the release of the project to the general public, and were encouraged to assess any component of the album in any manner that they saw fit. However, I also asked them to engage in a critical analysis that consider one or more of the following subjects: gender, class, sexuality, politics/political motivations, constructions of Blackness (i.e. how Black male collegians are defining what it means to be Black? Globally, locally, culturally, etc.?), constructions of freedom, production, lyricism, and flow of the narrative/storyline. In essence, I want to make sure there was a thorough and intersectional analysis of the stories told, in connection to patriarchy, masculinity, the socialization and space of Black male collegians and their constructions of Blackness and freedom at HWIs.

Moreover, this sociological approach to narrative inquiry is difficult but as Ozias (2017) states, "whereas other qualitative method/ologies employ processes of coding and theming, narrative inquiry involves a different, but no less intentional and rigorous process of meaning- and knowledge-making" (p. 68). Narrative inquiry is more than the collecting and retelling of stories; it requires the careful analysis of narrative data against a series of frames, including those of the research participant, the researcher, and the larger cultural narratives in which these individuals are situated. Clandinin (2013) highlights that it is a labor-intensive process for the

research and participants to move from field texts (e.g., data collection) to interim texts (e.g., partial texts, the creation of lyrics, negotiated between participants and researchers) to research texts (e.g., dissertation or album). The intent of inquiry is to mirror temporality, sociality, and place, because "only through attending to all [these] dimensions can we see the disruptions, interruptions, silences, gaps, and incoherences in participants' and our shared experiences" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 50).

Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) analytical tools of *broadening*, *burrowing*, and *storying and re-storying* comprise the process of the study's intentional transition from field to research texts. Broadening is the act of expanding or connecting field texts with the social, institutional, and cultural environment discussed within the literature review. In essence, broadening is the process of bridging the gap between historical contexts and empirical data, finding gaps (or more gaps) in the literature, and showing the significance of the study. Burrowing relates to the "details that are experienced by our participants from their points of view" (Kim, 2016, p. 207). Burrowing provides an in-depth look at how participants express their stories and the impact that these expressions have on their lives. In essence, burrowing is the process of trying to understand how Black male collegians at HWIs express, through Hip-Hop, what freedom is, what freedom means to them, and what role anti-Blackness plays in their lives. Storying and re-storying is the process of moving field texts to research texts, but in a way that centers the experiences of participants, allowing them the opportunity to visit and revisit past and present experiences while imagining and reimagining future ones (Kim, 2016).

Furthermore, *broadening, burrowing,* and *storying and re-storying,* in connection with the three commonplaces, are foundationally based in this study because Black male collegians both individually and collectively describe, process, and connect their experiences (i.e.,

temporality) to the historical context of anti-Blackness within and outside of higher education, particularly at HWIs (i.e., broadening). The researcher's analysis alongside participants as they make meaning of their experiences provides the space to capture their feelings and understandings (i.e., burrowing). This occurs specifically as they express their personal and social interactions (i.e., sociality) that have molded their worldview around freedom, but also how, through the process of storying and re-storying, creating a Hip-Hop album centers their experiences and highlights the significance of place.

Conclusion

My project's qualitative design, although complex, provides a "multigenre approach to analysis and (re)presentation that…brings together artistic ways of analyzing and communicating research with rigorous methods from a potential range of paradigms" (Kuby, 2014, p. 130). Patel (2016), in discussing the development of her graduate students, expresses her hope that

> graduate students are learning something much more important than a textbook-worthy semi-structured interview protocol. [She hopes] they're learning that if research is worth its mettle, it won't simply seek the cherries in the data that all but shout "quotable," but that the research makes the theories work as well as works the theories in relation to the data…[For] that is research that is considerate of its fundamental nature of movement and impact without trying to control every aspect. (p. 64)

To conduct powerful scholarly work effectively and ethically, it is necessary for me not only to give agency to my participants but also to create a new way of discussing experiences connected to anti-Blackness, freedom, and Black male collegians in higher education. For this reason, I have chosen the methodology of narrative inquiry with multilayered methods and analyses. Hip-Hop, alongside narrative inquiry, provides unconventional yet complementary knowledge about Black male collegians at HWIs. I assert that this research design (in)forms scholarship that makes theory work and works theory based upon data (Patel, 2016), with respect to crystallization, reflexivity, trustworthiness, and credibility; informs higher education of the ways

in which anti-Blackness is sustained in HWIs; and clearly conveys the ways in which these

Black male collegians disrupt these experiences, in hopes of attaining freedom.

CHAPTER 4.

Data: Demographic Overview and Participants' Narratives

Follow your passion, resist professionalization, act and read, and read and act, all fearlessly (Ruth Nicole Brown, Disrupting Qualitative Inquiry: Possibilities and Tensions in Educational Research).

The primary intent of this research study was to narratively engage with Black male collegians regarding their anti-Black experiences at historically white institutions (HWIs) and their conceptualizations of freedom through the creation of a Hip-Hop album. In this chapter, the research questions remain central to the development and evolution of this study, and are as follows:

How do Black male collegians at HWIs theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness in a Hip-Hop album?

How do Black male collegians at HWIs make meaning and narratively express their understandings of freedom in a Hip-Hop album?

This chapter provides a demographic overview of and brief narrative by each participants. As part of the study, I asked each participant to write his own short narrative, in his own words, to describe his upbringing with family, friends and their environment; his secondary and post-secondary educational experiences; and any anti-Black experiences he had at the HWI he attended. My point in asking for participants' narratives in their own words was to honor my role as a researcher who would "simply listen and trust that meaning [would] be made" (Henry, 2007, p. 494). Most participants completed this task, particularly with regard to describing their anti-Black experiences, but for some, I had to provide an example of an anti-Black experience that was recorded during our one-on-one interview.

In chapter 5, I answer the research questions based on the research findings or themes, which are generated by the lyrics expressed in the album, the one-on-one interviews, and the

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focus groups. Next, I connect the themes to the theoretical frameworks of CRT, BlackCrit, and

the conceptual framework of marronage. Last, I present my observations of the process of

creating this album, particularly discussing the prevalence of traditional constructions of

masculinity.

Demographic Overview

The study's thirteen participants are Black male collegians who are currently enrolled,

have stopped out, or have graduated from an HWI in Oklahoma (see Figure 4.1, below, for a

short demographic overview of each participant). Participants self-identified as Black/African-

American, and their average age was 27, with a range from 19 to 37. The pre-questionnaire

survey showed that 54 percent of participants identified as a first-generation college student and

85 percent were native to Oklahoma, with 77 percent form Oklahoma City or its suburbs. The

HWIs attended by the participants represented both public and private institutions, including

community colleges and religiously affiliated institutions. Two participants identified as student-

athletes. Most had chosen their institution based on its cost and/or its proximity to family and

friends. For the purposes of the written dissertation, participants selected pseudonyms based on

their favorite Black artists (not just Hip-Hop artists), as shown in Figure 4.1.

Name	Age	Student Type	HWI Type	Major/Degree(s)	Identity	Hometown	First Gen?
William Grant Still	28	Graduate	4-year public Oklahoma institution	Bachelor of Arts in violin performance; Master of Music in music composition	Artist; musician	Oklahoma City, OK	Yes
Jay Electronica	28	Stopped out	4-year public Oklahoma institution	Advertising	Rapper/MC	Oklahoma City, OK	No

Inspector Deck	37	Current graduate student)	4-year public Oklahoma institution; 4-year private Oklahoma Christian liberal arts institution	Bachelor of Science in psychology; Master of Science in counseling psychology	Poet; scholar; Hip-Hop head	Jersey City, NJ	Yes
Pimp C	28	Graduate	4-year public Oklahoma institution	Bachelor of Arts in public relations; Master of Public Administration	Artist; activist; Hip-Hop head; photographer; web designer; graphic designer	Oklahoma City, OK	Yes
J. Cole	19	Currently enrolled undergrad student	4-year public Oklahoma institution	Psychology	Poet	Oklahoma City, Ok	Yes
Nas	28	Graduate	4-year public Oklahoma institution	Associate's degree in music production	Rapper/MC; Hip-Hop head; entrepreneur	Chicago, IL	No
Bob Marley	28	Graduate; student-athlete	2-year public Oklahoma community college; 4-year private Oklahoma Baptist liberal arts institution	Bachelor of Business Administration	Hip-Hop artist; entrepreneur	Lawton, OK	No
Black Thought	34	Graduate	4-year public Oklahoma institution	Bachelor of Business Communication; minor in African & African American studies	Artist; activist; poet; scholar; Hip-Hop head	Oklahoma City, OK	Yes
Kendrick Lamar	19	Currently enrolled undergrad student	4-year public Oklahoma institution; online, for-profit university on West Coast	History education	Activist	Spencer, Oklahoma	No
Talib Kweli	28	Graduate	2-year public Oklahoma, community college; 4-year public Oklahoma institution	Bachelor of Science in general studies; minor in music business	Rapper/MC; artist; producer; poet; entrepreneur	Oklahoma City, Ok	No
Jay-Z	33	Graduate; student-athlete	4-year private Oklahoma institution	Bachelor of Arts in communication	Rapper/MC; artist	Oklahoma City, OK	Yes
Tupac	19	Stopped out	4-year public Oklahoma institution	Forensic science	Rapper/MC; artist	Oklahoma City, OK	Yes
Kanye in '04	25	Stopped out	2-year public Oklahoma community college	Liberal studies	Rapper/MC; artist; producer	Oklahoma City, OK	No

Figure 4.1 Participant Demographic Overview

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Participant Introductions

This section presents participants' narratives to familiarize the reader with participants' stories beyond the pre-study questionnaire.

William Grant Still

I am a 28-year old Black male that was born and raised in Oklahoma City. I grew up in a household with a single parent for about half of my childhood. The other half of my life, my mother was married to my sister's father, on two different occasions. My family is very churchy with lots of ministers, minister's wives, and my grandfather, who was a pastor. I grew up in church. My grandpa was a pastor. Three out of four of my uncles are ministers. Most of my aunts married ministers, then I have an aunt who has like a doctorate. I think her doctorate degree is in theology. So we're a very churchy family and definitely influenced the way that I think about a lot of things, the way that I view the world, and much of that has been challenged, especially lately, the last five years or so, because I realize that their interpretation of the Bible is very narrow-minded. It's very closed-minded.

The church is where I was introduced to music. I would attend rehearsals of all sorts with my cousins, sing in musicals and I even directed the youth choir while I was in elementary school. I started playing the violin in fourth grade and eventually went to a fine arts school in Oklahoma City to major in orchestra. In sixth grade I started playing saxophone and nearly every year after, I experimented with or learned a new instrument, including piano, oboe, Hammond organ, bass clarinet, flute, baritone saxophone, and tenor saxophone.

William Grant attended a four-year public HWI in Oklahoma, obtained a Bachelor of Arts in violin performance, and went directly into a master's program at a four-year public university in North Carolina, where he received a Master of Music in music composition. During

his undergraduate years, William had an experience in which a white professor told him that his name was misspelled.

William Grant Still: I can't remember what class it was, or professor, but I remember telling the professor my name and then spelling it, and they said, "Oh, that's not how you spell [your name]." So I was like, okay, well how do you spell it because you asked me my name? You asked me how to spell it, and I tell you, and you're going to tell me that's not how you spell the name? I think in that moment I was just like, "You're dumb," but I didn't necessarily internalize it as being anti-Black.

Me: How does that make you feel now?

William Grant Still: Like, "what the fuck do you mean? This is my fucking name. Yeah, just shut up." I know that people get creative now, because my name is essentially made up. And if you don't know my name or if you won't learn my name, then that shows you don't really give a fuck. You don't respect me as a person to even learn my fucking name.

Jay Electronica

I am a 28-year old Hip-Hop lyricist from the east side of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I am the last of three children, with two older sisters. I grew up in the church, which is where I learned my love for music. I got my first opportunity to make my own music as a teenager, putting out my first collaboration project with one of my closest friends at the age of 17 during my senior year of high school. I grew to love music, and pursued it vigorously throughout my time in college with some tempered success. I opened for some major acts such as Kendrick Lamar, Mac Miller, Dom Kennedy, Killa Priest, Big K.R.I.T., Schoolboy Q, The Cool Kids and others, and in that time also headlined a lot of my own shows. I attended college at a four-year public institution in the state of Oklahoma, but stopped out during my senior year. I was dealing with a lot of personal issues that made it difficult to focus during that critical time of my last semester in school. After that didn't work out I focused on working and making music, releasing two solo projects and being featured on a lot of other local artists projects. The first Space Program project [the pilot study] *was a good reinvigoration for me as I had become somewhat*

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uninterested in the stale situation the Oklahoma music scene had reached. With the response the

group saw from the first project, it was inevitable that there would be a reiteration of the first

project but on a larger scale and more polished overall. This brings me to where we are today.

Jay Electronica discussed an anti-Black experience he had during a class discussion of

(ironically) Hip-Hop.

> **Jay Electronica:** I want to say it was the Hip-Hop studies class or something. We were talking about Hip-Hop in the class. This white kid stood up in the back of the class and he was saying something, he was basically trying to validate himself on why he's an authority [figure] on Hip-Hop music or why you should be listening to him. He gets up, he's saying something, something, something. He says, "Yeah, I got to a lot of concerts, I really listen to a lot of Hip-Hop music. I probably know more about rap music than that guy right there," and pointed at me. First of all, for you to pick me out of a random class of people that you haven't spoken to, it's one of the first couple of weeks of class, and to point me out to say you know more about Hip-Hop than me, obviously I look like Hip-hop for you to pick me out of that crowd of people. I didn't even venture to say anything back to him. I think that's just an example. They want to be us so bad.

> **Me**: It wasn't even a matter that he said *you*, he said *that*—what?

> **Jay Electronica**: *That guy*.

> **Me**: *That guy*. As if you weren't even there.

> **Jay Electronica**: Yeah.

Inspectah Deck

I'm 37 years old and I was originally born in Jersey City, New Jersey. Throughout my

high school years I attended several different high schools in two different states. While all of my

friends were attending the typical high schools that Black males attend in Jersey City, I decided

to attend a Catholic high school due to my love for basketball. The school, which is now closed,

was at the time the best high school basketball team in the country. This school wasn't easy to

get into. They put you through several standardized tests during the summer between your eighth

grade and freshman year of high school. I can remember the day my grandmother opened my acceptance letter. She was excited about the opportunity I would have and so was I.

My stay at this high school only lasted a few short months. My grandparents finally decided to migrate to Jacksonville, Florida after years of contemplation. I didn't hesitate to ask my mother if I could go as well. I loved my hometown and I knew I would miss my mother but as a fourteen year old who was witnessing and experiencing more detriment due to the continued expansion of the drug trade, the increasing numbers of gangs, and my all of my closest friends' involvement in these activities, I chose to leave Jersey City.

In Jacksonville, Florida, I attended a high school named after a confederate soldier. I was unaware of who this confederate soldier was at the time, but each day attending this high school would bring upon a new racist experience for me. From the racist scribbling in the bathroom stalls and on the tile walls to the dress code the white male and female students participated in, it became more difficult by the day. I watched a divide between the Black and white students. It was difficult to find any friends. Since I was new to the high school and didn't have any allies, I chose to stay as far away from the racist acts I was seeing from the white students and I found out very quickly that I didn't fit the mold of your typical Black southern student, or at the least I found out very quickly that they weren't ready to accept me, a northern east-coast–born Black male into their crew. Needless to say, my grades dropped, I started to isolate myself, and after experiencing bullying for the very first time in my life I would eventually develop depression symptoms.

After a tearful conversation during my second year of high school, my mother told me I could finally come home to Jersey City once the year was over. I was still a freshman after my first year of high school so I worked extremely hard to improve my grades in my second year so

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when I returned home, I would be a junior. I was motivated by the fear of returning home to my friends and being a grade behind. I returned to Jersey City in 1997 and graduated from high school in 1999.

In 1999, I attended a Jesuit college in New Jersey. It wasn't my first college choice but one of the only two choices I had. During my senior year of high school I was unaware of the college application process. As a matter of fact, I failed to apply for any colleges at all. I remember during my senior year expecting to be called to the office and be assisted with the process. When I was finally called to the office towards the end of winter in my senior year, my school counselor asked me which colleges I applied for. I stated that I didn't apply for any. The disgust on her face told the story. My freshmen year of college was much like my freshmen year of high school minus the racism and bullying. I didn't fit into this new academic environment. I felt like an outcast. I was hard pressed to find many Black male students. I picked my major of computer science on a whim. I felt alone and isolated, and when I tried to ask for help, I wasn't getting any from anybody on the campus. I started going to class and taking the 15-minute bus ride back home as soon as class was over. I spent very little time on campus, and when I had a gap between my classes, I would just skip my afternoon classes. My depression symptoms returned, and much like my freshmen year, my GPA was very low and I didn't advance into my second year as a sophomore but rather a freshmen again.

During the summer between my first and second year of college, my parents separated. My mother took on a second job to help pay the bills, and I agonized at the thought of going back to college for my second year after barely making it through my freshmen year both mentally and academically. When the tuition bill came in the mail a month into my second year of high school I finally got the courage to tell my mother that I didn't want to attend college anymore because I

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didn't want her to have to take on a loan or increase her hours at her two jobs or get a third job to make ends meet. That was only half of the truth. I also didn't want to attend college anymore because I didn't feel like I belonged. Looking back I realize how disappointing it is for a student with my academic prowess, love for learning, and 3.7 GPA coming out of high school to feel uncomfortable at an educational institution.

It would take me ten years to go back to college. It took me ten years to get my affairs in order but to also get the courage to go back. The longer I was out of college, the more I felt that I couldn't go back and get through the process. Fortunately, the unforgiving workforce, my unhappiness of working my nine-to-five, and my love for learning would get me back in college at the age of 29 in 2011. I made it to my senior year of college by going to class and going to work immediately afterwards. I didn't spend any time on campus. I didn't involve myself in any activities and I didn't even read my emails pertaining to anything that was happening on campus. All I cared about was passing my classes. However, I still noticed some of the same things happening at the predominantly white institution I attended in Oklahoma that were similar during my time at Jesuit college in New Jersey and the high school I attended in Jacksonville. The academic environment wasn't vastly improved for Black males or any person of color. It was still uncomfortable, it was still a divide between races and cultures, and still not much was being done by the institution to improve any of this. Because of this I got involved with a program called the Black Male Initiative and Fellows during the second half of my senior year in an effort to be impactful for my culture and for those Black males who had the same feelings and thoughts about their college experience. I saw this as a preventative method of helping young Black males avoid what I couldn't.

I graduated from college with my bachelor degree in 2016. Since education has always been something I found of great value, I decided to go to graduate school. In the fall of 2017, I started graduate school at a four-year private liberal arts institution in Oklahoma. The continued experience has been similar to my experiences as an undergraduate and as a high school student. I'm the only Black male in my counseling program, and at times I do feel like the token Black male that was selected to attend, despite knowing that my academic qualifications are far beyond good enough to be accepted into this program. However, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The program director made a remark during a night class in which I was asked to help out with interviews for prospective graduate students attempting to get into the program. There was one Black male that interviewed that night, and while deliberating with professors and other students who were selected to help out with interviews that evening, this program director made the remark of, "We will take him, he fills our quota." He said it in a joking manner but I still questioned his comment. In a very serious tone I addressed his remark in front of his peers and my fellow students. I left that night understanding that the more things change, the more things stay the same.

Pimp C

My name is Chad Lamont Butler, also known as "Pimp C." I am 28 years old, and I have lived all 28 years of my life in Oklahoma City. For background, where I grew up is very important to me. In fact, I feel that growing up on the east side of Oklahoma City helped to mold what I consider to be my knowledge of "Blackness." Naturally, in a predominantly Black area of the city, there is an opportunity to have more Black experiences as compared to my peers.

My education journey was just as unique as my environment. Until the first grade, I was able to attend a private school located on the east side of Oklahoma City. Growing up in single-

parent household comes with its complexities, and being able to continue to pay for private education was another complexity my mother was faced with. The private education was just too expensive at the time. Around this same time, there was a new magnet school being built in northeast Oklahoma City. I attended this school with pretty much everyone that I had seen in the neighborhoods around me, and I felt like I was at home. Entering the sixth grade would require me to now enter another school. For most kids (that were lucky) the two top choices at the time were two magnet high schools, one which was located on the east side of Oklahoma City.

Ignoring the racial implications of the statement at the time, I took the recommendation of one my teachers at my elementary school to seek "the best" education at the magnet high school which was not on the east side of Oklahoma City. Attending this school was a complete culture shock as this was literally an institution that had the whitest demographic of people that I had ever seen. Even with my doubts, everything was positive. All of the teachers were helpful, all of the students were more than nice, and I can say that I never encountered any racism while attending this high school. To be clear, there was no racism inside of the school. The outside surrounding neighborhoods and businesses were much different. I can remember very vividly the racial epithets that would be spoken while a group of Black kids walked through the local neighborhoods. I can also remember being a pre-teen and going to the local grocery stores to buy snacks and being questioned where I got the money to buy items that totaled no more than five dollars. My white peers were of course never treated in the same manner. My biggest experience from my time here is that I very quickly understood that life is about balance—there will be positives and negatives along the way.

After graduating high school, I enrolled in a four-year, public institution in the state of Oklahoma that identified as a predominantly white institution (PWI). My college experience was

the first time that I truly felt like a minority. Sure, in high school there weren't many Black students, but there was much more of a community structure present as compared to the college experience. In college, there are thousands of students on campus, and racial subset groups are naturally developed. My college experience was also the first time where it was made clear to me that I was being treated different because of the color of my skin, yet also understanding that this type of higher learning institution was not designed for my success. I had doors shut in my face for being less than 3 minutes late to class, I was refused office hours consultations because "my peers seem to be doing just fine without it," I was being treated completely different than my white classmates.

Even with all of the accolades I received in high school, I chose to go to a smaller school because of the cost and the hope that I would have an experience to help me be successful. I didn't receive that. Instead I learned what anti-Blackness is, and I learned that it is promoted by many outside forces that will be different as the situation changes. To be Black in America is a journey within itself and having to fight against the experiences seen at PWIs makes the journey that much harder. I, like many others associated with this project, have found a sense of pride in being involved. As a writer, I am given the experience to share my journey and also share my success in hopes that it could push someone else over a hump that they are facing.

J. Cole

My name is J. Cole and I am a 19-year-old freshman at a four-year public institution in the state of Oklahoma. I was born and raised on the east side of Oklahoma City my whole life. All I've ever wanted to do is put my city on the map. What I mean by that phrase is that I wanted to grow up and show people in my community that you could make it out doing other things than just playing sports. I wanted to show kids in my hood that there is nothing wrong with being from

the east side. Even though we are from lower income areas of the state, I wanted them to know

that you have to take pride in where you come from, because if you don't know where you are

from, how can you know where you are going?

I am a poet and started doing poetry a week after I graduated from high school in May of

2018. When I first started, I didn't know if it was going to be something that I stuck with and

wanted to make a career out of. But after my first performance I seen that people were actually

interested in what I was saying. I realized that I could use poetry to be a voice for the youth. I

wanted to touch on subjects that most people would be afraid that I knew but I wasn't, even

though I am 19.

J. Cole is a first-generation college student who is learning how to navigate the HWI that

he currently attends. J. Cole mentioned that he was excited about attending college, but much has

changed in his first-year of college:

> I was hyped up, because like I said, where I'm from going to college is like winning the
> lottery. Once they hear that you're going to school, I had a lot of support backing me up.
> I had a lot of people telling me, "Hey, I look up to you." I had a lot of people, "You made
> it." Literally. Once I got here it wasn't that. The journey had just begun. One thing I've
> learned about being in college, is if you want to survive being in college and being
> African American, you've got to get active. That's something, you've got to be able to
> express when you're struggling. You can't really keep to yourself and make it here.
> There's no way possible that that's going to happen. It may work a semester or two, it
> may pull you through but it's not going to be enough for you to finish at the finish line.
> So much you're going to go through, not even with school, but emotionally and
> sometimes when you don't have that person you can talk to, I don't care how hard you
> try, if you're not mentally stable, you can't fight that emotion of depression and that
> doubt like, "I can't do this." If you don't have that person that you can express that to,
> you won't make it.

J. Cole also described his experiences with anti-Blackness on campus, particularly in class:

> I feel like sometimes the only time I'm acknowledged by a white person here is, I notice
> a lot of time when it came to move-in day or even just with anything in general, most of
> the time for example, I can be in class and if it's a white girl already in class, if she's
> there early and I walk in, I literally witness a grabbing their backpack and putting it on
> the side or getting up and walking to a different seat or making it seem like they got up to

go blow their nose so they can move to a different seat, or just walking by somebody who would normally just walk by me, but if they've got a lot of stuff, "Hey could you help me with this?" It's like if anything, if I could help do something, they'll come in contact with me.

Nas

I'm 28 years old. I was born in Chicago, Illinois but I don't remember much about my years in Chicago because we only lived there for about five years. I was fortunate to have both of my parents in my life and two brothers. My dad graduated from Dillard University in New Orleans and my mom never went to college, but she always had a high expectation of me and my brothers as far as college and our future. The neighborhood we lived in in Chicago was decent from what I remember. We didn't really get out into the neighborhood that much, just really played in the yard. Sometimes we would play with this little white boy that lived behind us, but his family was racist and his parents didn't like that he played with me and my brothers. The only thing I really remember outside of that was getting into a big fight between him, one of his friends and a bunch of our friends that were visiting.

From there we moved to New Orleans for about a year and then moved to Dallas, Texas when I was 6. Most of my childhood that I remember was in the 13 years I lived in Dallas. I was homeschooled for a long time which, ironically, I experienced a lot of racism with. Homeschooling isn't the most common thing with Black families, so we were the only African Americans at anything we were involved in. Most people think you just stay home, but we took classes at different places and with us being either the only Black kids there or one of few, we pretty much had to keep to ourselves. Other kids would come up and ask to touch our hair because it wasn't like theirs or try to pick on us even though they couldn't fight for shit. From there I started taking college courses at a local community in Dallas at the age of 15, to get my basics out of the way. Family life was all over the place through the years we lived in Dallas. At

one point, my dad worked a lot and was gone all day while my mom was a stay-at-home mom

and helped us with school work. Then around age 11, my family bought 3 Smoothie King

businesses, which kind of forced us to grow up fast. We helped a lot in the businesses to keep

costs low. My parents paid us and taught us about money management at a young age, so I

already had a hustler mentality and was focused on getting money early on. The business didn't

do well though and we ended up having to file for bankruptcy. We then moved to a small condo

in a Black suburb in Dallas. This was the most difficult time for my family financially and we

went from a decent-sized house to a two-bedroom condo. Outside of my immediate family, my

dad's family lived near us in Dallas, but we rarely saw them due to family issues. I was never

close with anyone in my family except my older brother. The main thing I got from how we were

brought up and watching my parents was to be hard worker and learn as much as I could. After

that we moved to Oklahoma when I was about 18 or 19. I didn't go back to college for the first

few years because I really didn't know what I wanted to get a degree in and out-of-state fees

were ridiculous. Once I found out about an institution that offered a music degree, I enrolled and

got an associate's degree in music production. Now I'm rappin' on this space program shit.

Fuck….let me get my head phones.

During our interview, Nas described an experience in class in which the professor

skimmed over Black artists/historians in one of his music history courses:

> We talked about music history. I'm sitting there looking around. "We just going to skim over these [Black] artists like this?" We literally spent three or four weeks talking about The Beatles. The Beatles are annoying as hell to me. I feel like those type of artists get glorified. "They're a genius. He's a genius." How can you say somebody is a genius if they stole half they catalog? We talked about Elvis Presley. How can you say he's the king of rock and roll? It's documented that he stole music from Chuck Berry. I think, for me, that was the biggest letdown.

Bob Marley

I identify as a 28-year old Hip-Hop artist, entrepreneur and all-around creator. Born in Lawton, Oklahoma, I now reside in Oklahoma City. My life was centered around basketball growing up. I began writing music at the age of 16 with some friends as a hobby in the off seasons and downtimes when we weren't playing basketball. Although it wasn't something I took serious at the time, those formative years definitely planted the seeds that would grow into the person I am today. Thanks to basketball scholarships, I attended, played at and graduated from a Oklahoma junior college in 2010 with an associate's degree and went on to play at and graduate from four-year, private Baptist institution in 2013. In addition to studying business management in college, my father's entrepreneurial spirit definitely rubbed off on me as I launched a clothing line less than six months after graduating from college. Deciding against trying to play overseas basketball, I made the decision to pursue my passion for music, and in essence build a brand that would allow me the freedom to create how and what I pleased, as well as retain full ownership of what I created. As I worked on building my clothing line and music brand, I also held a day job as an entertainment booking agent for the first couple of years after graduation, in efforts to learn more about the industry I was interested in. After the monotony that comes with the common day job, I switched paths and decided to explore the finance industry as a finance professional where my entrepreneurial spirit was enriched in a 100% commission, "build your own business" position. Beginning as a life insurance agent that helped clients plan their retirement accounts and investments, my passion for creating and owning my own business only grew as I began to understand investments and the importance of capital. The racial wealth gap I learned about in my time as a finance professional sparked a fire in me that was most likely initially lit as a child of a teacher and business owner. After 2.5 years of being in the finance industry I decided to go back into the employment world for the stability that would

allow me to continue building my brand. Now, with over 10 years under my belt in producing

music, more than five years of entrepreneurial experience, as well as more than five years of

mentoring youth, I am poised to create and own for myself, as well as teach others how to do the

same thing.

Bob Marley discussed the environment of both HWIs that he attended when he expressed

that

> Both [institutions] are like the epitome of whiteness. [The first institution] has a rural, white, small-town, downtown look like the 1950s still. Brick roads and same kinds of parking lots, in front of the little stores, same store structure. Hasn't evolved at all. It's a community full of them. And then [the second institution] is fifteen minutes down the road, and what looks like a little bit better, it's just a lot of liberal white folks, who went to liberal arts school. In Oklahoma, there's a lot conservative people there too, there for church, stuff like that. My freshmen year of college [at the first institution] I lost my scholarship after that year. I had to come back on a half scholarship because [me and my Black teammates] got into these brawls because these racist [white students] who... in they small ass towns [said] the word nigga and the whole team got in a brawl. It had to happen because [the white guy] hit him, then we got into it, and we had to leave because [white people] was in the middle of the country [and they] gonna get rifles and shit. So we had to get out. We had to do this crazy conditioning, the president found out. And it's a small town so everybody knows about shit.

Black Thought

I am a 34-year-old Black male, poet and author that has obtained certifications in areas

such as financial literacy education, project management, and business process improvement.

Passionate about educating Black youth, I have taken that education and conducted financial

literacy workshops throughout the Oklahoma City metro area. I have served as an educational

chair for corporate companies, partnered with diversity councils and assisted in establishing

relationships for the [four-year public institution's] outreach and minority mentoring programs

in which I attended. I am a member of a Black Greek-letter fraternity organization, a veteran of

the Oklahoma Army National Guard, an adjunct professor in higher education, and co-founder

of a non-profit organization. I'm a husband and father of two toddler girls.

In May of 2008, I earned a Bachelor of Arts and Science degree in business communications, and next I earned a Master's in Business Administration. As a professional, I have partnered with colleges and corporate companies in diversity initiatives along with conducting numerous financial literacy workshops through the OKC Metro area.

Since the time of my adolescence, I have studied the art of rhyming and fell in love with Hip-Hop and its poetry origins. I was raised as a Blues and Hip-Hop enthusiast, and as a result, my focus while writing usually delves into areas, lyrically, that are personal narratives on race relations, class, religion, and personal evolution. My writing addresses the injustices as well as the beautiful complexities of this world with passion and a human sensitivity for shared experiences. My body is confined to cubicles within office buildings, but my mind is lost in the pursuit to provide creative ways to express myself through literary masterpieces. My aggressive yet eloquent messages have the intent to inspire people, evoke emotion, and present visions for all while giving a front row view of my life story and the facets that have either plagued or pushed me within.

Black Thought describes an experience he had with the "white gaze,"[13] a term coined by George Yancy (2008a; 2008b), when a white female student expressed fear as he and his childhood friends got on to an elevator when moving into his residence hall.

> I'll never forget this shit. We're moving in, me and my boys from my neighborhood came up to help me move in. It's a white girl on this elevator, right? We about to go up. So me, four other of my dudes, we walk into this elevator with this little white girl. She has an aquarium in her hand. And soon as we walk on, she just starts shaking. Like we gonna do something to her on this bright ass day. She's scared. She's shaking. And it's grimy, but my

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[13] As Yancy (2008b) states, "The black body is shown to undergo a process of 'confiscation' through the phenomenon of the white gaze, which is a form of learned embodied seeing, while the white body elides any responsibility for holding the black body captive. The white gaze is theorized as a cultural achievement, which is productive of a form of ignorance" (p. 834). Ultimately this elevator example demonstrates that race is insidious and negatively impacts the integrity of the Black body.

homeboy, I still love the fact that he did this. As we get off the elevator, he turns around and says, "Boo." And she drops her aquarium, water and everything floods the whole elevator. But my thing was, why are you that afraid? Four young black men walk in the elevator with you, amongst all of these people. And you that afraid that you are shaking where you can't even control what's in your hands? And then, I never forget feeling that, you're at [this four-year public institution], and you're feeling like you're at a place where people are maybe more open minded. Or maybe just more educated. And that's not what it is.

Kendrick Lamar Duckworth

"All great achievements require time." This is a quote that over time I've learned to live by. I am 19 years old and was born and raised in Spencer, Oklahoma. Spencer is a small country town on the outskirts of Oklahoma City where almost everyone rides horses. I was blessed to be raised in a two-parent household. My mother and father have been married for over 25 years. I am the fifth of seven children. Being part of the younger siblings strongly tested my patience. Watching my older brothers grow up and gain more freedom and responsibility while I was still stuck to my parents made me feel like I wasn't moving at all. During my elementary and middle school years, I went to the neighborhood schools which were predominantly Black. These schools were close to gang neighborhoods so there were a lot of problems I faced during my earlier school years. In elementary school I didn't have a teacher from second to fourth grade. I had a substitute teacher every day. If it weren't for my mother tutoring me after school every day I could've been two years behind my grade level until I graduated. In middle school there was a period when there was a fight every day for a month. Teaching became a side thing and the school became more about discipline. Due to all these factors and the fact that none of my brothers made it through their second year of college, when it came to high school my mother took me out of the neighborhood schools and took me across town to a fine arts academy. This school was the biggest culture shock I'd ever experienced in my life. Previously I'd been in an all-black school but this fine arts academy was predominantly white. From the moment I stepped

foot in the school I felt uncomfortable and out of place. The black people that did go to the school built a friendship and we stuck amongst ourselves as much as we could. Freshman and sophomore year my grades weren't great, and I was ineligible for sports. At the end of my sophomore year, I was given my transcript and saw that I was third-to-last in class rank with a 2.1 GPA. That's when I realized I was making my race, my family and myself look bad and I knew something had to change. My senior year I raised my GPA up to a 2.9 and was deciding on a college. I received my first college acceptance letter from [a four-year public institution in Oklahoma] and then they also gave me my first scholarship when I went to their Black Male Summit. I submitted a scholarship essay which I thought I had no chance of winning, but to my surprise they called my name and from that second on, I knew I was sold on this school. I'm currently in my second year at this institution and I major in history education. I don't know when I will graduate but even if it takes 10 years it will get done. My goal in life is to become an educator then some sort of local politician. In the Space Program I define myself as an advice giver to everyone. I'll do what's needed of me when it comes to helping others.

Kendrick Lamar discusses his experiences with anti-Blackness at his institution, one which involves attending a concert on campus and another which includes an in-class observation.

> I went to a concert, right, and even though I'm at the concert and the song is playing and it has the N word in it ... It's crazy, I'm at the concert and I know that the word is about to come and I take a pause from me turning up to hear if white people are gonna say the word, which they do and I just start looking around. That made me feel some type of way. White professors, not all, but some, seem to just not really care at all. I've raised my hand in classes before and nobody, the teacher, didn't call on me and I feel like even though you can say that's not anti-Blackness, they just didn't wanna call on me, it could be just because I'm a male or something. For some reason in my heart I feel like it's because I was black. I sit in the front of the classroom and try to make myself noticeable but sometimes you just feel like they don't really care about you.

Talib Kweli

The key to success is resilience. This is a fundamental lesson I've learned as a child growing up watching my mother and father struggle. In fact, my entire childhood life has been focused on the idea of observation, learning from both my parents and my own mistakes. They lived separately, and I stayed with my mom. My mother was the first to discover my internal complexity and my concern for the people around me. My father, on the other hand, was the first to see my self-reflection at a young age, realizing my limitations as a child whilst being aware of my own morality.

My internal complexity is comprised of my sympathy and concern for others. Attempting to see what they see. I became the perfect mix of both of my parents. My mother was the outgoing one of the parents. She was always trying to get me to do new things. Some things I hated but as I got older I started to respect my mother more for it. We traveled back and forth to hang out with my cousins and made sure we stayed connected with each other. My father was different. He was more structured and consistent. He influenced me a lot by his sense of nobility and selflessness. He was adamant about putting his kids first. Even as a kid, I could see his concern about the world and his desire to want to change it.

My father discovered my desire to create. He would listen to complex stories I would tell him about with my Legos. My journey was slowly but surely coming together as the big move happened. The big move happened when my mother couldn't afford an apartment, so we moved from the "upscale" south side of Oklahoma City to the northeast part of Oklahoma City.

At the age of 11 I started my journey at a predominantly Black elementary school. The three major words that describe my first experience to this new place are: roaches, gangs, and prostitutes. Before our move I had no exposure to that type of environment. The culture shock

was prevalent and mentally I wasn't aware of what was to come. My mother transferred me to a fine arts elementary school in the neighborhood but I had a love/hate relationship with it as well.

My fifth-grade teacher was the absolute worst. At the time, I didn't realize she was being prejudiced. I remember her being extremely aggressive with me and accusing me of sleeping in her class when I was reading quietly to myself. At this point, I knew she didn't like me, but I didn't know why. Then, about midway through the semester we started working on long division. I was decent but it was certain things I didn't know. This particular day was tough because we were doing problems I still wasn't familiar with. We had to solve the problem on the board in front of the whole class and I was already nervous. Instead of my teacher seeing that I was obviously troubled by the problem and nervous, she decided to call me stupid in front of the entire class. Because the teacher was too intimated by my brilliance, she decided to belittle me, and from that point on, I always doubted myself in mathematics after that.

The good definitely overshadowed the bad there. My other classes involved my first time ever playing stringed instruments and piano. I learned to play bass, cello, violin and viola. This began to bring out my creative self. I started writing a lot of poetry and my father supplied the dictionary and thesaurus. By the end of the semester I was leaving elementary school with the idea of being a dope rapper.

My middle school adventures took me to a middle/high charter school. At this time my writing had gotten better and my focus on rap grew. Soon, I was known throughout my school as one of the best rappers there. I became excited knowing I was considered cool amongst the high school kids. Around the same time things started to change around my house. For the first time ever my house was a target for a robbery. After that, we were hit two other times. I started to pay more attention to my surroundings and my writing began to reflect my newfound awareness.

High school moved quickly. I felt like I just blinked and all of a sudden it was my senior year. It turned out to be the most important. I joined the student council as vice president, I was prom king and my life began to change once again. During my last semester, I ran across some issues with my school. They picked on the black kids more often than the other groups. They also had an issue with kids speaking Spanish in the classroom.

I started to learn more about this world. I was never really good at basketball but I loved seeing my friends do well in sports. I wanted some way to contribute my support so I created our theme song for the school. It definitely changed the game for me as a student and I began to take me craft with the pen more seriously.

On graduation day I released my first album. Both teachers and other students in my class bought a copy. I left the school with a mind full of memories and a pocket full of money. I graduated from high school in 2009. That same year my first semester of college was set in my crosshairs.

I attended a community college in Oklahoma, but they didn't have a music business degree, so I took business classes. After two years of learning business basics and numbers I wanted to learn more about the business in music. I was happy to know that a [four-year institution] offered music business classes and degree. I transferred, and it became my focus.

After my transfer I had recently released another music project. This is where I learned about this music industry and it discouraged some of my plans quite a bit. I was no longer just making music for fun. It now had a purpose. These few moments in my life molded who I am today. I define myself as a poet, creating colors with words while painting on a canvas of life with a vivid imagination and a heart full of resilience.

Talib Kweli discusses an anti-Black experience when a white professor totally

disregarded his Black culture during a discussion and on a test he took in class:

Talib Kweli: I felt like I was a property of the school. Like, I wasn't seen for who I am and what I can bring to the table. For example, we had one of our professors—I can't remember his name. If I did, I'd say his name all up in this place, but like, my mind would not allow me to remember that ignorance. It was a class he was teaching about, it was like, music history, some type of music history class, and we get on the subject of Hip-Hop. He talks about ...

Me: Did he know you were a hip-hop artist before?

Talib Kweli: No, he didn't, even though we introduced ourselves, and I talked about what I did, he didn't remember. He was literally like, maybe three or four years older than me. He had a band. I don't remember what the band was, that's why, but basically, his idea, his final, I guess you can say analysis of Hip-Hop was that Hip-Hop originated in Germany, and that—this was on the test!—

Me: Wow.

Talib Kweli: This was on the test! Based off of a sample used, from Afrika Bambaataa [for the song Planet Rock, in which Afrika Bambaataa sampled the German electronic music group Kraftwerk] we all know, from Germany, so therefore, the professor makes the claim that Hip-Hop was inspired from Germany, so Hip-Hip is the originator, originated in Germany. That was his full circle.

Me: So, did you say anything?

Talib Kweli: I said, this is stupid.

Me: Out loud in class?

Talib Kweli: Yeah, I said it, and everyone else was like, Yeah, we agree. He was like, Now, now, guys, now, listen up. Now, I'm just saying. This is based off the facts. OK, it's based off the facts, you know. I felt like, this dude's a joke. They let him be a teacher, meanwhile, I'm the student with more knowledge than he has. That blew my mind. It blew my mind. I was like, the amount of time wasted, and money wasted. Y'all don't know how hard it was for me to get into this school. Like, you know, my parents, my mom took money out of her savings, her retirement money that she's supposed to use when she gets old and she can't move anymore, on my future, on something she feels like is going to give me success. Like, she wasted her money on this school, because she feels like that is the key to my success, and then, I have to be punched in the face by my class saying that Hip-Hop originated in Germany. The audacity to waste my time and my effort into something that is taken with little concern or respect of my culture.

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Jay-Z

I am a 33-year-old Black male from the east side of Oklahoma City. I am a father of four, a husband, a college graduate, a former gun-carrying, street-fighting, drug-pitching, football-playing MC. So much for monoliths. I was raised primarily by my mother. She is a God-fearing, hard-working woman. My father is deceased, but when he was alive, he was only partially available physically and completely unavailable emotionally. He was also a drug addict. I have two older brothers that showed me what it means to be a solid nigga. I had to learn how to be a balanced man later on in life. I went to a predominantly Black high school on the east side of Oklahoma City, which is one of the east side hood Trinity high schools. I have seen a lot, I have done a lot, and there are still things that I am attempting to correct, however in the words of the actual Jay Z, "I'm bartering my tomorrows," meaning, I am doing everything I can in the present and future to atone for my past. I find music to be the ultimate universal language. My goal is to make music that breaks the barriers of language, race, or culture. I want to make music that sounds like the spirit of God. I am beautifully ugly, wonderfully horrible, the answer and the problem. I have learned that my life is one granted by Grace, and I am respectful of the legitimacy of that claim. I wouldn't change any of my past because it brought me to my present and the wisdom which I have taken in has prepared me for my future.

Jay-Z, in particular, discussed his experiences with campus police and professors at his four-year private Oklahoma institution:

> Any time I had any interaction with campus police it came from a place like, "Why do you all keep fucking with me? Why every time I'm walking on campus... You know I go here, nigga. My face is on one of the fucking posters in front of the stadium, nigga [he was a student-athlete]. Seven, zero [70 was his jersey number] is right here. You know it's me, nigga. Why the fuck every time I'm walking across campus are you flashing lights at me, my nigga? What does that even mean?" I had to deal with that constantly, and I had to deal with professors trying to make me feel like their superiority was more than what they knew. "I can respect a nigga's agency, but at the end of the day, you bleed

like I bleed, my nigga. If I have a question, or some shit, don't make me feel like my question is dumb, or some shit. If I knew, I wouldn't have asked you. Ain't that what the fuck I'm here for? Aren't you all supposed to teach me some shit? Ain't I supposed to learn something? I asked you a question that's uncomfortable, and that hurts your fucking pride, and now you wanna act like the nigga is the problem in the classroom. No, the nigga ain't the problem in the classroom, my nigga, your fucking ego is the problem. When I have conversations with niggas that done did what they did in the streets, and I can shake hands with niggas, and look killers in the fucking face, and all that shit, the reason why I'm able to do all that shit is because I know deep inside of there, there's something that makes us more similar than not alike, my nigga. We bleed the same, my nigga. I have an understanding of that from a base level, so you mean to tell me that with all your doctorates, and shit, you don't know that?"

Tupac

I am 19-year old Black male. From age four, I grew up in a single-parent household living with just my brother, my sister, and my mom. My father was an alcoholic and also addicted to crack cocaine. His habits led him to run off from my family. My father's absence placed a strain on my entire household, forcing everyone to learn to cope with this new life that we were forced into. My brother dealt with this pain through anger, often leaving me as the scapegoat. Growing up, I was showered with love and affection by the women who raised me, but I also developed this reckless mentality due to my brother's constant reminder of how bad life is. I grew up on the Nawfside [north side] of Oklahoma City where I witnessed a wide variety of social issues stemming from financial instability to gang violence and drug abuse. My mother tried her best to keep me on a narrow path, attempting to control the radius of influence. I went to charter schools from elementary to middle school. After middle school, I attended a predominantly Black high school on the north side of Oklahoma City my freshman year and then transferred to a charter preparatory school. It was at the preparatory school where I learned to write the way I do now and I am forever grateful for it. I graduated from there, earning multiple scholarships, and even got accepted to [a four-year public institution in Oklahoma]. Things were looking bright until that transitional summer from high school to college. My brother and I's

long-term animosity reached a boiling point and resulted in me moving out the house. I bounced

from house to house until I moved in with my sister. At the time my sister wasn't living well and

couldn't pay her rent. As a result, I started hanging out with the wrong crowd, engaging in

activities that would only lead me further astray. However, I made it through the summer and

was set to move into my dorm on campus. That first week of college I was arrested on felony

drug possession charges. I dealt with this case throughout my college stint, running back and

forth to courts. To make matters worse, I was arrested again by campus police on another

possession charge later on that same year. I fell into a dark depression and turned to drinking

instead of my studies in school. In my mind, I believed that for 18 years, I stayed clear of issues

and didn't find trouble until I made the decision to further my education. Now a college dropout,

I am setting out to go back to school and also pursue the passion that has kept me pushing

forward, which is music. I am heavily inspired by a wide variety of music from 2pac all the way

to the sweet melodic sounds of the Temptations. I love whatever sounds good, so I've never been

limited to just one of Hip-Hop's beautiful subsets.

Tupac describes the experiences of the looks that he receives from white faculty, staff

and students on campus, as well as being harassed by campus police:

> I really started seeing it around probably midway through the first semester of my
> freshman year. Just going to class, and always... It would just be a mug or a look, or
> sometimes teachers would show leniency to other white students, in regards to late
> assignments. I've been trailed by campus police. It's almost like they're waiting for you
> to fuck up. I've been harassed... I've been harassed campus police. And it's been going
> on for so long out here nobody even tends to want to speak on the topic… It is what it is.

'04 Kanye West

I am 25 years old and was born March 24th, 1994 in Oklahoma City, raised by two

parents. Both of my parents worked. My father was licensed therapist, who later went on to open

his own practice, and my mother worked for the state as an administrative assistant. I also have

a younger brother. I define myself as a storyteller through music. Growing up I always had a love for music and knew that's what I wanted to do. I had an infatuation with rap and performing on a stage. At a young age, I would beg my dad to record me acting out a performance. At the time I didn't even know how to rap so I would literally speak gibberish in the cadence of a rap flow. My parents wanted to keep my best interests at heart when it came to my upbringing and school, so for elementary school, I attended an all-Black, private Christian academy on the east side of Oklahoma City. Mostly opposite of what other Black kids go through in elementary school, I remember only having one white teacher, in the fourth grade. During that time, I was dealing with the anger of losing a close cousin that inspired me to rap. I got into so much trouble in that year that my parents decided to take me out of private school and send me to a public school that was in my district, which was on the northwest side of Oklahoma City. It was a completely different experience from the Christian academy because it was a predominantly white school. There were a few Black kids and a few Latino kids, but mostly white. Still dealing with the death of my cousin, I continued to act out by not caring for my school work. Public school was way different because it was more relaxed. It took away structure for me and I started to fail, so my parents decided to put me back into the Christian academy. Nonetheless, in the fourth grade, I discovered my love for Hip-Hop. Even though I continued to act out in school, I received a hundred dollars for Christmas. All year, all I was eying was a toy called a Mixman. It was a toy turntable with software that allowed me to make beats with the loops it provided. At first I was just playing and scratching on it, excited that I had a piece of equipment that was remotely close to what they used in Hip-Hop. One of my cousins came to visit during Christmas break and I showed him how to export his beats and mixes into mp3 files. From then on, I got a mic and started recording on the beats I made and started my

"rap career." During my middle and high school years, I attended a predominantly Black public middle/high school on the east side of Oklahoma City. In middle school, I was drawn to the high school band, particularly the drumline. I wanted to join and then got initiated in. The school had a lot of ups and downs. For example, in seventh grade I started slacking off again and was ineligible for activities. I just didn't care much about school and was solely focused on my music career. I was on the fence about going to college until I discovered a college in Oklahoma where I could study and get a degree in contemporary music. Even though being in a two-parent household, I wasn't able to afford tuition there. My dad convinced me to go to a community college and get my basics knocked out. Since I graduated from an Oklahoma City public school, my tuition was waived. So my father's plan was for me to enroll at the community college for my first two years of college to save money and then finish up at the [four-year public institution] that offered a degree in contemporary music. Honestly, I thought college was a scam. I didn't understand paying all that money and going through so much unneeded stress just to be "successful," but I reluctantly went with it. I majored in liberal arts. I barely made it through of my classes the first semester, just making C's. The only good thing to happen for me in college is that I joined the Black Student Association. I instantly felt a sense of comfort and that I was a part of something. It made it easier for me to make friends and have support while on campus. During my second year I had the opportunity to go the Big 12 Conference on Black Student Government. This is a conference where Black Student Associations and Governments from all over the country would meet up and have workshops, network, and fellowship with one another. It was like being at a HBCU [historically Black college or university] for a week. Although this experience was enlightening, it didn't change my mind about school. Although I managed to stay for a year in college, I became more and more disinterested with the system. While in school I

was working a part-time job and focusing on my music, which I felt was taking off. I ended up

dropping all my classes and started working full time to focus on music. Since then, I've seen

progression in my music career.

'04 Kanye West elaborates on the notion of college being a scam, particularly as it relates

to the unfair treatment of Black people and job salaries.

> It's a motherfucking scam bro. I think it's a scam, like I'm going to pay you [an institution] money so I can get a job? Like I have to pay you to get a job? When I was working for the state I was wanting a promotion, I was 24, everybody else was getting promoted. Some of the people had bachelor degrees and that's how they got to $40,000 a year. So I gotta go do all this extra bullshit, of learning stuff that I'm probably going to forget, or I gotta learn all this extra bullshit that I probably can learn on the job, for an extra piece of paper for you to pay me more? They [the institution] don't have to charge that goddamn much bro. Like if public schools are free my nigga, what the hell? The whole system is a dumb-ass system. It's just white people, because my Momma and Daddy tell it best, every time the Black person gets past the finish line they move it back, do you know what I mean? In order to get a good job you have to get a high school degree, once we get a high school degree, we had to get college, after you get college you have to go and get a master's, now you have a master's you gotta get a doctorate.

Conclusion

These 13 stories are first-hand accounts of participants' experiences and expectations of

their upbringing with family, friends and their environment; their secondary and post-secondary

educational experiences; and their anti-Black experiences in higher education, particularly at

their respective HWIs. These stories emerged throughout the dissertation album. In the next

chapter, I answer the research questions using the findings and themes from the study, which are

based on the lyrics expressed in the album, the one-on-one interviews, and the focus groups. In

addition, I connect the album's themes to the theoretical frameworks of CRT, BlackCrit, and the

conceptual framework of Marronage, and I present my observations regarding the process of

creating the album.

Chapter 5

Findings and Data Analysis

I said I wasn't going to write about freedom anymore
Because I can never get back what I lost in the fire (Inspectah Deck)

In this chapter, I present the study's findings themes, as well as my analysis of these themes, based on the lyrics expressed in the album, the one-on-one interviews, and the focus groups with participants and album reviewers. Simultaneously, I answer the research questions and connect the themes of the album to the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit), and the conceptual framework of marronage. I also present a critique of the heteronormativity of the process of creating the album.

Theoretical & Conceptual Frameworks

Three frameworks were used to analyze the data for this study: CRT, BlackCrit and marronage. These frameworks were chosen as most appropriate based on the research questions for the study, particularly as they relate to anti-Black experiences and notions of freedom for of Black male collegians at historically white institutions (HWIs). These theories were discussed in detail in chapter 2; below is a brief summary of each one, followed by an analysis of the themes emerging from the participants' narratives.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT functions in my study to provide "basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant [anti-Black] positions in and out of the classroom" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). According to Solórzano (1998), "CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of women and men of color is legitimate, appropriate, and

critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education" (p. 122). CRT's foundation is grounded by five tenets (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), paraphrased below:

1. Race and racism are mundane and iterative and are connected with other subordinate forms of oppression, such as class and gender.

2. It is crucial to challenge elements of dominant ideology, such as objectivity, white privilege, colorblindness, equal opportunity, and race neutrality.

3. CRT is committed to social justice that is emancipatory in nature for people of color.

4. The experiential knowledge of people of color is valuable in critiquing and disrupting racial subordination.

5. CRT centers the historical and contemporary context of race and racism within transdisciplinary areas of study.

As stated in chapter 2, Hip-Hop and CRT are connected by the goal of understanding voices that have been marginalized, which supports the notion that racism is at the core of institutional and societal oppression. In essence, as Black male collegians navigate HWIs, despite the negative majoritarian and monolithic stereotypes about them, a framework such as CRT is useful in unpacking, challenging, and finding productive ways to describe individuals' counterstories (i.e., personal narratives) and collectives' counterstories (i.e., composite narratives and others' narratives). However, CRT is limited in scope, particularly in my study, because it is a theorization or critique of racism and white supremacy, and not a theorization of Blackness.

Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit)

Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) is a critical theorization of Blackness that "confronts the specificity of anti-Blackness, as a social construction, as an embodied lived experience of social

suffering and resistance, and perhaps most importantly, as an antagonism, in which the Black is a despised thing-in-itself (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 416). BlackCrit's genealogy stems from the work of critical race scholars (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as well as intersectionality theorists (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; 1995). CRT does not address how anti-Blackness enables the institutional practices that result in Black students' suffering at HWIs. Furthermore, CRT "cannot fully employ the counterstories of Black experiences of structural and cultural racisms, because it does not, on its own, have language to richly capture how antiblackness constructs Black subjects, and positions them in and against law, policy and everyday (civic) life" (p. 417). For this reason, this study not only takes on the language needed to capture how anti-Blackness constructs Black subjects, but allows the actual participants to create the language themselves.

According to Dumas and ross (2016), BlackCrit resists or is not fixated by the "notion of *tenets*"; instead, it offers expansive framings that directly connect to CRT, but with an exploration of Blackness (p. 429). Dumas and ross's (2016) framings of BlacCrit are given below:

- Antiblackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life. (p. 429)
  - BlackCrit intervenes at the point of detailing how policies and everyday practices find their logic in, and reproduce Black suffering; it is also to imagine the futurity of Black people against the devaluation of Black life and skepticism about (the worth of) letting Black people go on. (pp. 429-430)
- Blackness exists in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination. (p. 430)
  - Black people are seen to stand in the way of multicultural progress, which is collapsed here with the advancement of the market, which in turn, under

neoliberalism, is presumed to represent the interests of civil society and the

nation-state. BlackCrit proceeds with a wariness about multiculturalism (and its

more current iteration, diversity) as an ideology that is increasingly complicit with

neoliberalism in explaining away the material conditions of Black people as a

problem created by Black people who are unwilling or unable to embrace the

nation's "officially anti-racist" multicultural feature. (p. 430)

- BlackCrit should create space for Black liberatory fantasy and resist a revisionist

  history that supports dangerous majoritarian stories that disappear [w]hites from a

  history of racial dominance, rape, mutilation, brutality, plunder, and murder. (p. 431)

In short, BlackCrit, helps scholars better analyze the ways in which "social and education policy

are informed by antiblackness, and serve as forms of anti-Black violence" (Dumas & ross, 2016,

p. 419) against Black students and the ways in which Black students respond to these acts of

violence. This ultimately uncovers the truth about HWIs, that they perceive "Black bodies [as]

marginalized, disregarded, and disdained, even in their highly visible place within celebratory

discourses on race and diversity" (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 417).

Marronage

Marronage is the condition or process of flight, of living apart from the plantation, with the

intent to become free from slaveholding society (Dilts, 2017; Roberts, 2015; 2017; Mills, 2015).

As mentioned in chapter 2, my main focus in this study was understanding how Black male

collegians selected stories connected to their anti-Black experiences and how, in creating a Hip-

Hop album, they fluidly attempt to take flight, wrestle with, and express these issues in an effort

to become free from the anti-Black tools of HWIs. In essence, Hip-Hop was used a *lens* to

understand their theorization of Blackness, but the creation of the album was used as a *flight tool,* or medium, to track their process of flight.

Roberts (2015) states that marronage consists of four pillars, which are given below:

- Distance – a spatial quality separating an individual in a current location or condition from a future location or condition.

- Movement – the ability of agents to have control over motion and the intended directions of their actions. Flight, therefore, is directional movement in the domain of physical environment, embodied cognition, and/or the metaphysical.

- Property – the designation of a physical, legal, and material object that is under the possession and ownership of an individual, institution, or state. Property can be private, collective, or common.

- Purpose – the rationale, reasons for, and goal of an act begun by an individual or a social collective. (pp. 9-10)

Furthermore**,** marronage is both a fugitive act and a state of being that requires agency that is "multidimensional, constant and never static" (Roberts, 2015, p. 15). In essence, the use of marronage in this study is to convey that Black male collegians' quest for freedom is always fluid, never-ending, and in constant (re)negotiation with self.

Themes

The next section consists of an analysis of the lyrics and stories conveyed in the album, the interviews, and the focus group responses, as well as by the album reviewers. This analysis and the theoretical frameworks are used to answer the research questions. As noted in chapter 3, I used a line-by-line textual analysis approach to establish the themes for this study.

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I would like to explicitly say that theming and coding the lyrics, interviews, and album reviews were challenging because Hip-Hop stories are complex and nonlinear, and Hip-Hop artists therefore deliberately avoid ascribing themes to their works. This, in essence, is what Hendry (2007) describes as the importance of seeing narrative work as outside of research, to avoid "reduc[ing] stories [of people] to objects" (p. 487). Nonetheless, to present the written dissertation in a clear and linear manner, I organize the study results into four overarching themes: (a) the proclamation, construction, and pride of Blackness; (b) the dismantling of the institution through righteous indignation and rage; (c) the double entendre of trauma; and (d) the reimagination of Black life and collective knowledge production. In the next sections, I use the themes that emerged from the study to address and answer the research questions. The analysis emphasizes the lyrics conveyed in the album, but I also draw on the empirical evidence conveyed in one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and album reviews, in an effort to streamline and crystallized the data and connect the empirical evidence to the theoretical frameworks.

Research Question 1: How do Black male collegians at HWIs theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness in a Hip-Hop album?

Artists who participated in the study theorized and disrupted anti-Blackness by first defining anti-Blackness (see Figure 5.1'), but more importantly by defining what Blackness means to them. If we view this process through the theoretical frameworks of CRT and BlackCrit, the artists first described anti-Blackness based on white people's perception of Black bodies and Black suffering, with the understanding that racism and contempt for the Black body were the root of the problem at HWIs. In short, artists recognized that race and racism are mundane, but effectively provided counterstories to resist the racism and anti-Blackness they

encountered at HWIs. This ultimately allowed artists to provide a theorization, or proclamation

of their Blackness that created space for Black liberatory reimaginations of Black life.

Name	Definition of anti-Blackness
William Grant Still	Anything that has to do with Blackness, you're against it. So like the people, the people's thoughts, their culture, music, food, all of it. I think I'd mostly just think of that.
Jay Electronica	Racism against African American people, just thinking we are whatever you may think we are without having that proof or interaction with said person to make you feel that way about them. It's just like you have this preconceived notion about what a Black person is going to do and you apply that to all of us. It's like white privilege and all the shit that we have to face that a lot of other races don't have to.
Inspectah Deck	When you're treated like you either get the good treatment or the bad treatment. You get the specialized treatment because "oh, he's the [impressive] Black guy in the class," or you get the "oh, he's the [disappointing] Black guy in the class." Either way, it's anti-Blackness Either way, it's anti-Blackness. I'm being treated different because I'm black and because you want to either boost me up or you want to push me down. It's unfair. I'm not dumb, I'm hard working as always.
Pimp C	A systematic design that is like pushed forward, and catalyzed by all these different outside forces, if you will, that does not make life easy for the Black…things are set up in a certain way to not make Black people feel comfortable. To not help them succeed. To not make them feel welcome.
J. Cole	Anti-Blackness is, "What sport do you play?" Or, "Didn't I see you on the field the other night?" Or something like that…That's the only time I'm acknowledged by a white person.
Nas	When you're hindering me from feeding my family. You're taking money. You're preventing me from moving forward to better myself or earn more money.
Bob Marley	Anti-Blackness is... I mean, America? European civilization. I mean I guess anybody who's not white. Even Black people, I don't know there's a forum of hate based on appearance. Because we hate ourselves for how we look, we're told to hate ourselves and then we're told by the white people.
Black Thought	Anything that's institutionalized as being able to limit or push out any diversity or the presence of black people.
Kendrick Lamar	When a white person doesn't like a Black person based off their skin…just have a hate for Black people in general.
Talib Kweli	Refusal of the Black mind, period. The Black experience, period. The Black culture, period, and only expressed in the most pasty-assed way possible, is the only thing that's acceptable. That's not acceptable at all. Anti-Blackness to me is the refusal of accepting truth, and being absorbed by the generic default of what we are forced to believe in.
Jay-Z	Anti-Blackness is not being so lazy that you feel like you can build an economy based on the backs of people who had languages, and religions, and families, and culture, and heritage, and not ripping that away from them. Anti-Blackness is like what it must feel like to be white in America.
Tupac	Any negative energy manifested solely based off the purpose, solely based off the fact that someone is African American.

Kanye in ' 04	Feeling like you're not in control of your body.

Figure 5.1 Participants' definitions of anti-Blackness

For example, on the track "Keep Dreaming," Black Thought says, "Power napping, thrill of zombies, walking lifeless black bodies. Result? I found darkness's door on too many chances….Deemed a bad seed from the womb, they call me ovarian cancer." Black Thought makes the claim that even from conception, his Black body is viewed as a disease and unworthy of life. Bob Marley takes it a step further on the track "Polaroids" when he conveys that he has "been reading between the world & me, how being white is more of a state of mind & the way you think & being Black is feeling like you ain't got a right to own your body." Bob Marley explained in detail during a focus group session that he received inspiration for these lyrics by reading Ta-Nehisi Coates's book *Between the World and Me*, in which the author described a white woman bumping into his son as they were walking down the street:

> [Ta-Nehisi Coates] was telling a story about how he was with his kid and they're living in Brooklyn, and they were walking down the street, and a white woman bumped his kid and the kid falls down. So as a father, you protecting to your kid, but at the same time, he was like, "if I step to her and try to protect my son, I'm looked at like this gorilla or this aggressor or this monster." He says he stepped back to make sure his kid was cool, and then a white man stepped in and was like, "yo, you got problem with this white woman?" The white woman bumped his kid, and the white man is still trying to come at him with even more, and he can't do anything, because he's gonna be looked at as an angry Black man. It's like, the white woman's mindset was so entrenched in white supremacy, that it was like ... and she may have not even been conscious of it, maybe completely unconscious or subconscious. But it was like, they have the mentality of saying, "I can bump into you, and you shouldn't be mad at me for bumping into him." And we have the mentality of, "I can't protect my own son because I may be looked at as somebody the police may be threatened by, and now they're gonna kill me or put me in jail just for protecting my son." We don't even feel like we can own our own bodies, and they feel like they have ownership of our own bodies, even today. It's not slavery, but the mentality is still entrenched in everybody in this. When I read that in *Between the World and Me*, that changed my perspective on a lot, what [Ta-Nehisi Coates] talks about is just like being white is feeling like you have authority over your own body and other people's bodies. We feel like, as Black people, we don't have authority over our own bodies sometimes. We are subject to the police when they pull us over. I can't ... no matter how

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he talks to me, I can't defend myself, I can't protect myself, I can't look at him no kinda way, because to protect myself, I have to take that shit.

Moreover, Bob Marley's lyrics connect with J. Cole's words on the track "I'm Coming Home" when he expresses that at HWIs, he's "not considered an individual but another number." Black male collegians recognize how they are perceived by society at large and how that same perception trickles down into HWIs. To counteract these narratives, the Black male collegians in this study found creative and effective ways to describe Blackness.

Black is not a monolith (Jay-Z on "Do I Hate Myself?")

In the album, artists described "Blackness" as a fluid and multi-layered concept that proclaimed a sense of pride. Below are a few definitions of Blackness described in the album.

Blackness is resilient and produces agency. Album reviewer Dr. Raphael Travis, Associate Professor of Social Work at Texas State University, clearly articulates the notion of resilience expressed in this album. He says that

> threats to both the body and mind are also themes throughout the album reflecting the physical toll of death and suffering due to excessive force, incarceration, and past enslavement, as well as mental health challenges from toxic stress, traumatic experiences, low-expectations, learned helplessness, and exploitive conditions. But amid all of this is hope, encouragement, pride, resilience, and the celebration of a battle we know we can win and a new version of freedom that has yet to be fully articulated but is coming into focus.

Artists articulated that Blackness entails the sense of urgency needed to look back long enough to garner the strength to push forward. In essence, the artists' embodiment of their Blackness required the fortitude to maintain resilience despite the systematic oppressive forces they face at HWIs. For example, on the track "The Time Has Come," Jay Electronica raps that "I wake up in the morning thinking what would it take, I made a bunch of mistakes, but I'm in touch with the greats." He is describing the resiliency that it takes to be Black at an HWI and the vulnerability and honesty needed to realize that, although he is not perfect, he is not only connected to

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illustrious and prominent Black figures from ancient and recent history but also to great Black

people from his own ancestral lineage. Jay-Z describes how this verse resonated with him:

> So what that means to me is like [Jay Electronica is] giving you the whole scenario. The uncertainty, the pain, the trauma, and he knows he doesn't know exactly where he's headed yet or where he's gonna end up, but he knows what he's' tapped into. And I think that is so important. I think it is so important for Black males to hear period that yes, you're gonna fuck up just like everybody else does. You made a bunch of mistakes, but what you're tapped into is gonna get you over. The pain in your experiences and the things that you have gone through, and the ups and downs that you had to face didn't change the fact that you're still that guy. That situation didn't break him and I felt like he had a way of delivering that verse in that way. Where he's saying, "Yeah, I was hurt and I was done wrong, but it didn't break my pride. It didn't break who I was. I still got something to do, I still got more to say. I still got more to do in this life."

This sentiment was also conveyed on the track "Heard a Lot of No's" by Bob Marley: "Heard a

lot of nos to learn all I know, Hit a lot of lows to learn I don't know, A lot ain't go how it's

supposed to but that's how it go." Bob Marley recognizes that conditions at HWIs are not, nor

have ever been, created for the success of Black male collegians (or people of color), so he is not

surprised by the unexpected and knows exactly what he is up against. But another element of

Blackness described in Bob Marley's verse is about overcoming the fear of failure, facing

rejection, and staying grounded through the process, particularly at HWIs:

> That's been my experience being afraid of failing, being afraid of being rejected. But then actually facing that fear and being rejected helped me learn everything I needed to learn. Uncovering whatever was behind that door showed me a lot. And then at the same time, they say the more you know, more grief you see, the more grief you feel, and with them lows you learn. Yeah, you learn a lot more than other people because you're willing to face the things that people don't. But the lows gonna remind you like, "Nigga you still don't know shit." You think you know what you know, but you don't know. So kind of keeping me in place, I think being aware of.... Understanding that I'm growing all that I can, I'm doing all that I can to grow, and I'm always looking at progressing and getting better and bouncing back…just keeping me right where I need to be.

Ultimately, the artists' message is that the resiliency of Blackness produces agency. This is

described in 'lyrics from "The Time Has Come" by Talib Kweli: "I manifest my excellence,

can't wait on what I might do." Talib Kweli recognizes that resiliency only goes as far as the

agency that he uses, regardless of whether freedom may be restrictive for Black male collegians.

As William Grant Still describes in his definition of freedom,

> When I think of freedom, I think of the lack of restraint or the lack of boundaries, being able to chart your path, choose your path, whether it be for your good or not. You have the ability to choose, so like agency. Does it exist for me? Will it ever exist for me? Well, I think it depends on the context. So I might say I'm free to do these things, but in a certain context, being Black in Oklahoma and in America, it's only so much freedom that I'm going to have.

In short, Talib Kweli and William Grant Still understand that certain situations and certain places restrict their agency, but they must continue being resilient in using their agency cautiously and intentionally. Moreover, in the track "Guard Ya Brilliance," Nas states that "I used to let these people's opinions become a part of me… Largely affected, hardly receptive, I learned to shape my own future I architected." This is, in essence, the process of agency.

   Blackness is Royalty. The artists also proclaim in the album that their Blackness is royalty, or comes from a lineage of Black kings and queens. For example, in the track "So Independent," Nas says he is

> *walking with these burdens on my back bitch*
> *Chip on my shoulder it ain't a snack mix*
> *Think you superior ain't gon fact trip*
> *And follow me if you seein me up in saks fifth*
> *I'm feelin like royalty in this black skin*
> *I'm feelin like royalty in this black skin*
> *All these conditions to keep me trapped in*
> *Ain't gon change it I'm supposed to be in this black skin*

Nas provides a sense of pride regarding his Blackness and takes back ownership of his body, claiming that he is "supposed to be in this black skin" and that there is nothing white people can do about it. Nas mentioned in his interview that he did not "give a fuck about what [white people] had to think about him…and there nothing [white people] can do or say to fucking change [his mind]." Jay-Z reflected on this verse:

[Nas's] cadence and the way that he delivered this shit was so powerful it made me proud to be in my black skin. That's important. You know what I mean? It is important for me to wake up and feel like that…this was hands down one of the hardest songs on the project...I'm grateful to be aligned with these niggas, like that's how I felt after I heard that in its entirety. "I'm supposed to be in this black skin." Nigga, what? Fucking right. It just makes me proud to be black, bro. It's like our new Negro national anthem, like "So Independent." we don't need you all for shit. We don't need you all's standards, your purview, your opinion, we don't need none of that shit, because all that shit ever did was try to sit us down, and shut us up, but we're so independent. We're not just independent, my nigga, we're so ... it's almost too much. We are so independent, it just makes me feel proud, bro.

In "Freedom's Opus," Kanye in '04 makes a similar claim:

I ain't asking you for your education, I'll be glad to take it
This is greatness meets dedication, victory when I spit so I always taste it
I 'ont speak up in class this space never felt safe
Or maybe because I never cared from the first day…
But when I make it I can't wait to see your face,
I just had to stunt, I'm sorry for the wait
Being Black is a super power and I 'ont need a cape.

Kanye in '04 conveys that being Black involves possessing super powers that white people not only lack but envy, which contributes to their contempt for the Black body. In essence, artists are disrupting anti-Blackness by counter-proclaiming that Blackness is greatness.

Blackness is Nonconforming. In the track "So Independent," Bob Marley, declares of HWIs that "I don't fit in they box, non conforming appearance, they don't teach what we cherish, shit is so esoteric." He explicitly claims that he does not fit HWI's view of his Blackness and even critiques the HWI for because its curriculum ignores subjects that matter to Black people. The critique of the erasure of Blackness will be described later in this section. Bob Marley explains that

I think conformity and the code-switching allowed me to realize how much... I guess disdain is a good word for it, I have for conforming and for code-switching and for feeling like, I have to be anything else for anybody else. Matter of fact, that may connect some dots because I hate feeling like I need to be something for somebody else. That's what makes me angry. That got under my skin. I think that realization in myself of like,

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how passionate I am about being who I am and being able to let my wings fly regardless of who's around in the wingspan.

In the lyrics of the track "Vent Session," Nas makes a similar claim: "They say I'm going too deep and still I dive in, avoiding my extinction like the Mayans like damn that." In other words, even though white society tells Nas that he is violating his "proper" boundaries, he does not hear the naysayers; he continues to believe in himself and do what he wants to do. Nas recognizes both that HWIs erase the history of Black and Brown folx and that it is his responsibility not to conform to the standards of the institution but instead to shed light on the people of color who changed the trajectory of civilization, particularly in the United State.

In the album, Black male collegians express their definitions of anti-Blackness and their ways of counteracting these definitions with reaffirming constructions of Blackness. Album reviewer Thandi Sulé, Associate Professor of Higher Education at Oakland University, points out that

> With its naming of anti-Blackness, The Space Program has an inherent critical consciousness motif. However, the compilation is not still. It embodies movement— generative movement from dialogue to introspection to a call to action….This body of work is about questioning, naming and making something happen. Nevertheless, the ontological relegation of Black people outside the paradigm of humanity induces trauma.

Trauma is discussed later, in the section of this chapter that addresses the second research question. But the process of creating the album involves movement from dialogue to introspection. The artists' dialog about the anti-Black constraints that white people place on their Black bodies leads to introspection that counteracts those constraints though the artists' definitions of Blackness. In the next section, I discuss the ways in which artists critique anti-Blackness at HWIs and issue a call to action.

Fugitivity and Escapism. According to album reviewer Dr. John Broome, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Mary Washington, "The Space Program Collective

provides unapologetic truths about the historic and contemporary whitewashing and erasure of Black culture, and deep-rooted Anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and institutional racism in America, and our educational institutions." In essence, the artists are well aware of HWIs' blatant disregard for and devaluation of Black life. This is a theme that emerges repeatedly throughout the album.

Charles Mills (1997), in *The Racial Contract,* makes the argument that race is the foundation of the United States' sociopolitical infrastructure, positing an ontology in which white people are regarded as human and non-whites are treated as objects, or property. This racial contract, in essence, enables a society in which white people can thrive socially, politically, and financially in ways that are unavailable to Black people. As mentioned in the literature review, Wilder (2013) states that the "academy never stood apart from American slavery—in fact, it stood beside the church and state as the third pillar of a civilization built on bondage" (p. 11). I would argue that Mills's "racial contract" is null and void in the eyes of the artists in this study, as they strategically condemn HWIs' aesthetics, denounce their erasure of Black history, and critique the (white and Black) faculty, staff and administrators who claim to serve at HWIs.

Harvey and Moten (2013), in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, argue that critical scholars and academics who identify with the undercommons are "wary of critique [of the institution], weary of it, and at the same time dedicated to the collectivity of its future, the collectivity that may come to be its future. The undercommons in some ways tries to escape from critique and its degradation as university-consciousness and self-consciousness about university-consciousness" (p. 38). The undercommons is a meeting space for people with marginalized ways of knowing that are often devalued by the university, but who, when uplifted

and mobilized, can spark revolutionary change regarding what "public education" means and how to achieve liberation for working-class Black people, Native people, and other people of color. The Black male collegians in this study, I would argue, embody this idea of the undercommons, particularly in their work generating the album, because they find creative, effective, and intentional ways to disrupt anti-Blackness, "for they do not come to pay their debts, to repair what has been broken, [or] to fix what has come undone" (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 6), but to tear down the institution completely and build something new. In essence, the Black male collegians who participated in this study are critical scholars who are weary of critiques, but who recognize the power of collectivity through the process of creating the album. However, before we discuss how the album lyrics serve to tear down the institution, it is important for me to elaborate on the artists' comparison of HWIs to prisons.

Structure. J. Cole, on the track "I'm Coming Home," explicitly tells his mother via voicemail that "For years, since I was in grade school you been telling me that college, college is the place that people go to and later become rich but what if I told you it wasn't any different from a prison? My advisor is my warden, and my professors are the guards." J. Cole likens the institution to a prison, implying that he believes he is not in a position to thrive and succeed in college, but to be policed and monitored by his advisors and professors. J. Cole discussed these lyrics during our one-on-one interview.

> J. Cole: It means like in a prison, the warden basically is the one who guides everything. He's the one that's over everything. Once you go to college, your advisor is the one who guides you, leads you, in the right areas where you want to go. Just such as a warden. My professors, which are the people that I see the most, you have different ones, it's kind of like guards in a way. You have different guards on different days. As you move up, you notice you have different teachers, and if you do something in prison you'll have different guards, but you see different guards all the time.

> Me: Like you see different teachers?

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J. Cole: Right. I feel like I'm in a prison here because I'm not free. Anytime I feel like I have to adjust myself to feel comfortable, how can I say I'm free? There's been times when I don't even want to talk like myself because everybody around me isn't talking like that, or I'm told I need to ... You know what I mean? Do something, and not even just per manners. I've been in situations where I've changed my whole voice. I just feel I'm trapped. I feel trapped here. It's like no matter where I go, I'm going to see a white face. How can I expect that white face to understand what I'm going through? I can't express myself to that white face about that white face, so it's like every day I've got to come in, put on a mask, and at the end of the day you still don't feel at peace. I sleep here, I sleep at a historically white institution, so I go to sleep not at peace. I'm still here.

Inspectah Deck makes a similar comparison on the track "Write (Right) About Freedom" when he says "overcrowded prison with not enough scholarships, a witch hunt they can't admit." This reflects Harney & Moten's (2013) claim that

The university, then, is not the opposite of the prison, since they are both involved in their way with the reduction and command of the social individual. And indeed, under the circumstances, more universities and fewer prisons would, it has to be concluded, mean the memory of the war was being further lost, and living unconquered, conquered labor abandoned to its lowdown fate. (p. 42)

Although Inspectah Deck is critiquing the privatized prison-industrial complex, there is a critique of HWIs within these lines as well, as Black males experience the "overcrowded-ness" of racism, microaggressions, and white supremacy, with not enough financial aid to cover their tuition.

Tearing Down/Disrupting the Institution. In the infamous quote by author James Baldwin in *The Negro in American Culture,* Baldwin (1961) writes that "To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious, is to be in a rage almost all the time" (p. 205). Cornel West (2001) makes the argument that an intense love lies beneath Black people's rage, because such rage represents an encounter with the racist structures, such as HWIs, that impose violence on Black Bodies. In other words, if the Black male collegians in this study did not love their Blackness, their rage would not exist. Moreover, Black rage is "best understood as an affective dialectic between communal affinity and jarring encounters with injustice" (McCann, 2013, p. 411). Throughout the album lyrics, artists conveyed their righteous indignation and rage toward

HWIs that ultimately constituted a metaphorical and realistic tearing down of the institution. As

album reviewer Carlie Carpio, Founder of Holistically Dope, states, "[The Space Program] is a

beautiful representation of the minds, heart, and talent out there working to break down and

rebuild these systems of [in]equity." For example, in the track "Runnin' For My Life," the lyrics

clearly articulates the ways in which the speaker will tear down the institution.

> U denied me rights?
> U denied me life?
> Dear slave master
> U gotta die tonight
> No matter what it takes
> I'm willing to die for it
> Rather be dead than be oppressed by some white boys
> Ima end it all
> Ima free my dogs
> Ima free my moms
> Ima free us all
> Ima end the whole system
> Kill the owner & who wi' him
> Odds against me go against em
> Whether right or wrong decision
> I don' know
> Who I am
> All my life
> I been lied to
> I go super Mario & bust the school-to-prison pipe loose
> Military, prison, sports or work a couple drive-thrus
> Fuck an Uncle Sam dog I don't even like u
> Single mama working three jobs, taking night school
> Still she make it happen for her family, that's a life mood
> U the type to justify the shit we get enslaved by
> I should smack u now but clearly all of us ain't raised right
> Stole the gun they shot me with & now I got it raised high
> House nigga asked me why I kill him? "Bitch to save lives!"
> They been taking funding from the schools
> They been funding private prisons, unashamed of what they do
> I could be like them & try to runaway but I don't move
> Either we gon tear this system down or we gon die too nigga!

Bob Marley expresses his rage toward HWIs (and society at large) by clearly articulating that he

is willing to die to tear down the institution. In fact, I think that this is the sole purpose of the

verse, even though he does not provide clear directions for how to do it. This verse suggests that

we have organized as Black people before, but to no avail. In my interview with Bob Marley, he

indicated that this verse reflected his own voice and his own feelings. He expressed his rage

toward HWIs (and society at large) by believing violence may be our only option. This reflects

Moten and Harney's (2013) claim that "the work of Blackness is inseparable from the violence

of Blackness. Violence is where technique and beauty come back, though they never left" (p.

50). Bob Marley's lyrics clearly express this inseparable relationship between Blackness and

violence. Bob Marley expressed his thoughts about how his lyrics may be perceived during our

one-on-one interview.

> Yeah. If they [white people] got a problem with that, that says a lot about them. If you got an issue with me not wanting to be impressed by you, if somebody says, "I would rather be dead than be impressed by [Bob Marley]," I'd be like, "I respect that, I fuck with that." You give me that's personal to you. I have no issue with people not wanting to be impressed by me. That's how you should feel. If you have a problem with someone saying they don't wanna be impressed by you.... And I think white people will have a problem with that. There are white people out there who have an issue with stuff like that, and that speaks volumes.

Tupac reflects on Bob Marley's lyrics on "Runnin' for My Life" as well during our one-on-one

interview:

> Yeah, "Running for My Life" was definitely the one for me. The line "dear slave master, you gotta die tonight." It don't get no realer than that shit right there. It don't have to be elaborate, it don't.... There are people out there that don't realize how big of a fucking fire storm that's brewing. Especially with Black men, cause they don't open up. All that's doing is just bottling it up, bottling it up, bottling it up. And, some people really know that feeling, that they feel like pressure is being applied on their neck, and they want this shit to stop. And, so, that's just it. That's it. It was probably the realest shit. It's the closest you could get.... It provokes a feeling of anger, resentment, and bitterness that I'm really holding on to. I know that I'm not supposed to be feeling this way hard behind this shit, but that's just how that shit is. And that's why I like that, cause that's just how I feel.

Although most of the lyrics discussed white faculty, staff, administrators, and students, Jay-Z

provided a critique of Black faculty and staff on the track "Run Nigga Run" when he raps

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You the worst kinda nigga
the type that'll live they life for the whites in the picture
despising the inner struggle that it took to provide you refuse to remember
ran to the river
saw a brother wit line out
you an Uncle Tom now let me find out
I'm the spook by the door with a K on the floor nigga you pay rent but it's my house
and I'm running it
you don't want na nigga none of it
you say pipe down, I'm equipped with the sticks, heavy clips, now ya lips got a gun in it
hot boy, wit a oven mitt, King Black to your government 12 gauge to your legacy
say hi to your punishment,
reap and sow, your memory lays six feet below
even though, some will fall, spring will pop boy these clips ain't seasonal
swear this flow artisanal
live where you can't even go.

In the words of album reviewer Thandi Sulé, in these lines, Jay-Z warns "us of *traps* from fraudulent Negroes, self-hating Negroes, trifling Negroes that can thwart their agenda to get free." Moreover, Jay-Z indicates that he is prepared to call out Black professors who are unwilling to help Black students in need of guidance and support. In the interview, Jay-Z discussed this in more detail.

> Why are we keeping up to some kind of standard, my nigga? Our fucking lineage is regal. We're literally the sons and daughters of the architect of earth, my nigga. We taught mathematics, my nigga. We taught geometry, we taught these things like we were showing the rest of the world what it meant. We can compete with the universe. I can stand outside in the sun all fucking day unbothered. Do you understand what I'm saying? Everybody can't do that, that's not an everybody thing. That does make me feel special. The worst kind of niggas is the ones that flush all that shit down the toilet. All of your natural God-given lineage, all of that wealth inside of you, you forfeit that shit to make white people comfortable. Fuck that, bro. Really? Yeah. I'm just not with that shit, bro. That's where that energy came from, I don't like that shit. Especially, and I'll be careful with my verbiage, the attitude of where that song came from, if whoever that song is intended for hears that song, I want the first thing they hear me say, it's not that you're a fuck boy, it's not that you're weak, it's not that you're shallow minded, you're the worst kind of nigga. You are Stephen at Django. You're the worst kind of nigga. You are somebody who had to scratch, and fight to get where you are, just so you can see somebody that comes from a similar plight, scratch, and fight, and you can kick them down the fucking ledge instead of reaching your hand over, and saying, "Bro, let me help you figure out how…." For somebody to pull that away from you, it makes me angry.

That's where the frustration even in the bars came in. I'm shooting shit up because you should have ... you could have, it is your duty to [help].... If you have found a way to maneuver through the bullshit that we have to go through, it is your duty to reach towards these brothers that are trying to help themselves and help them find a way and not be nearly as difficult.

Talib Kweli, on the same track "Run Nigga Run," discusses his ways of dismantling the institution.

> All I had was a pen and pad that red book,
> mess around in my town get yo head took,
> I ain't talking about bullets,
> I ain't talking about guns,
> they looking to steal my truth, claiming I owe 'em one.
> Snatching and taking my voice,
> corrupted my focus of choice,
> how do you balance ya evil?
> Back to the pad that I bleed through
> all of ya moves I see through
> This ignorance never can keep us
> Snatching my culture like leeches
> Rejected the hatred you feed us

In this passage, Talib Kweli implies that he uses his voice as an artist to document his truth through writing, similar to authors and critical scholars who write about Black history in an effort to maintain its existence. In essence, Talib Kweli is conveying that, to preserve his Black culture, it is important for him to write about the evils that Black people have endured.

One noticeable element in the dissertation album is the dismantling of education and Black history in Oklahoma. For example, in the track "Curriculum of the Mind," Jay Electronica describes the effect of the Oklahoma Memorial Bombing[14] on him, his family, and his close friends and expresses his condemnation of the bomber, Timothy McVeigh:

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[14] The Oklahoma City bombing occurred on April 19, 1995, when a truck packed with explosives was detonated outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, leaving 168 people dead and hundreds more injured. The blast was set off by anti-government militant Timothy McVeigh, who in 2001 was executed for his crimes. His co-conspirator, Terry Nichols, was sentenced to life in prison.

Martyrs get crucified dogs get euthanized
And we have no idea what those chemicals could do inside
The body. But we're still allowed to choose how they die
But who am I honestly being hypocritical
Cuz when McVeigh died I was all about that shit for sho
Cuz I know people that survived that blast, scars in they head and 20 years of time has passed
He was lucky none of the parents had found his ass
As the sand passed through this hour glass
Man I can still see the tv play the tower blast
but you couldn't hold us down unless your name was gravity
the strength in people is revealed after tragedy
that's something that 'm sad to see but I guess 'm glad to see
It baffles me how any other time we at each other's throats
Soon as shit hit the fan y'all tweet about fuckin hope

Jay Electronica says he was "hypocritical" because he did not care whether McVeigh died or was hurt by someone, because McVeigh hurt and killed people that he loved. Jay Electronica also brings up an interesting point in this line: "It baffles me how any other time we at each other's throats, soon as shit hit the fan y'all tweet about fucking hope." In other words, white people do not typically unite with Black people until something affects them directly. This is a prime example of interest-convergence, as described in chapter 2.

Another Oklahoma example of disruption within HWIs is discussed on the track "Keep Dreamin." Black Thought states, "My lil cousin failed all year and still passed.... Oklahoma, this is how our children get left behind. Institutionalized with glorified diplomas. Just to be STONED, STRUNG UP, AND CRUCIFIED!" In essence, Black Thought is making the argument that his cousin passed his classes and got his diploma, yet the school has failed him because he is not only unprepared for the real world, but has not been provided the opportunity to engage with Black history at his school. Regardless of the degree, he is still looked at as inferior and unhuman.

The notion of the erasure of Black History is expressed in the track "Heard a Lot of

No's" by Talib Kweli.

> In my home state
> defacing education
> taking money from the future with no hesitation
> this is focused degradation
> bright minds lose illumination
> darkness
> hatred they can't part with
> limiting my growth cuz my skin seems to darken
> shoot us in the streets and demand to be pardoned
> turn my pain into scholarships or dead by the hollow tips
> hungry for the truth but instead I swallow this
> ingested this infection of trying to escape me
> snatching up culture then trying to erase me
> deep deuce district and never been the same
> we forgetting bout the history, we just got the name, now it's me they wanna change,
> now it's me they wanna change

Talib Kweli connects education to the eradication of the history of the Deep Deuce District,

which was the space where Zelia Breaux's Aldridge Theater was located, as discussed in chapter

2. Talib Kweli is angry because he was not told the truth about his history, particularly as an

Oklahoma native.

On the track "Polaroids," Bob Marley describes how, as a 24-year-old college graduate,

he first learned about the Greenwood district of Tulsa, where the Tulsa Race Massacre occurred

in 1921 (as described in chapter 2):

> I was looking at these Polaroids in books I got these loans for
> I ain't know bout black wall street til I was 24
> But they ain't gotta tell the truth u feel it in ya core
> How u even ask me why do I feel paranoid?
> I'm looking at these Polaroids in books I got these loans for
> Picture what u want, yo it's still a white border
> If u want the playing field level u gotta fight for it
> But be careful they'll arrest u or take ya life for it.

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In Tupac's interview, he reflected on hearing Bob Marley record this passage in the studio. Until then, Tupac had not been aware of the "Black Wall Street,"[15] and learning about it motivated him to write his lyrics on the track "Guard Ya Brilliance."

> Tupac: It's crazy 'cause I didn't find out about Black Wall Street until I was in the project.
>
> Me: In the project?
>
> Tupac: In the project. That's what I'm saying, you learn shit.
>
> Me: So, how'd you learn it?
>
> Tupac: I think it was [Bob Marley's hook on] Polaroids…. When I heard that, I'm like what is he talking about? So, I went and got some insight on that and found out about the town that was filled with black entrepreneurs. Yeah. So, I honestly feel like it was a blessing and especially for us it wasn't too much popping off at that time, so for that to be going on, that was a big thing. They came, and when I say they, white people came and they stole it from us. They ripped it, they destroyed the mother fucker. And, that was only a step. I'm not going to say... I feel as if as history progresses, I feel like this shit gets less and less and less, but the fact that it still remains.... It went from tearing it down to us sitting.... We're not drinking out of white water fountains, we're not.... It was just for me, it was just a step in our painful history. A step, might I add, that I feel like don't get enough attention being shown on it. It was a step in our painful history.

Ultimately, Tupac recorded his verse on "Guard Ya Brilliance":

> we were taught under oppression
> but Greenwood was a blessing
> our counterparts had tore it down and murder was a step in
> directions for supremacy displayed in my lost and painful history
> school houses them teachers wasn't teaching things
> omitting things, guess talkin bout shit could never fix the things or never mend a thing.

The artists in this study theorized and disrupted anti-Blackness by defining anti-Blackness, defining Blackness, and dismantling HWIs through their explicit, transparent, and righteous indignation and rage. One theme that arose was the lack of Black history in the K-12 and college

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[15] "Black Wall Street" was another name for the Greenwood district of Tulsa because it was filled with prominent African-American businesses before they were burned and torn down by white supremacists during the 1921Tulsa Race Massacre in 1921.

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curriculum, but reflecting on this ultimately led some of the artists to research their history for themselves.

Research Question 2: How do Black male collegians at HWIs make meaning and narratively express their understandings of freedom in a Hip-Hop album?

Bettina Love (2019), in her book *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*, claims that Black people experience not only the everyday trauma of trying to survive but also the

> historical trauma that has been passed down from [our] ancestors…[for] we cannot heal without addressing [our] ancestors' trauma and sacrifices, and then [our] own. Thus healing must be intergenerational, and healing is different for different people. Dark folx [i.e. Black people] heal in ways that are unrecognizable to [w]hite folx because [w]hiteness is why we are in the trauma in the first place…. Additionally, while trauma is passed down, so must wisdom be passed down from one generation to the next. (pp. 157-158)

Love's words are essential to understanding the artists in this study, because they make meaning and narratively express their understandings of freedom through the trauma that they have experienced and continue to experience (both at HWIs and society at large), as well as through the generational trauma that has been passed down through their family lineage. It is particularly inspiring that they also provide wisdom through lyrics that express how they cope with their trauma in both positive and problematic ways, which produces their perceptions of freedom (see figure 5.2).

Ultimately, through discussing their trauma, they also provide productive ways to reimagine life in a world without anti-Blackness, which for some is a struggle even to imagine. In this section, I will provide examples of how they discuss and cope with their trauma in connection to HWIs, how they define freedom (and whether they believe that it is possible), and

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how they reimagine life. These sections will articulate the epistemological ways in which artists

understand or conceptualize freedom.

Name	Understandings of Freedom
William Grant Still	When I think of freedom, I think of the lack of restraint or the lack of boundaries, being able to chart your path, choose your path, whether it be for good or not. You have the ability to choose, so like agency. Does it exist for me? Will it ever exist for me? Well, I think it depends on the context. So I might say I'm free to do these things, but in a certain context being Black in Oklahoma and in America, it's only so much freedom that I'm going to have.
Jay Electronica	It's financial freedom. Being able to support yourself and not having to worry about anything like eating, sleeping, like paying the bills, shit like that. Once you don't have to worry about that, then you can do the things that you want to do instead of just having to focus on what you need to do to survive. I think that's, sadly, in America that's where freedom comes in is being able to support yourself financially. I don't think it's just America though. I think it's just most prevalent here in the capitalist society.
Inspector Deck	It's gotta be a mental thing because we'll never be physically free in this world we're living in. I'm more of an optimistic guy, but you have to be realistic too at the same time. I'm 37 years old, I'll be 38 at the middle of this year. I'm not going to see freedom physically. I'm not going to see an outright version of freedom. The only way I can be free is to be able to express myself, and to give back to my culture, and to mentally not have these restraints that the institutions around me, whether it's politics or economics or anything that has to do with even education, even a family, all the intuitions. Being restrained from these things and mentally feeling like I'm able to do what I need to do for me, for my family, for my culture, and have this kind of wave of things.
Pimp C	You can have different levels of freedom in this country as a Black man, but unfortunately because of where we sit in this country, most of them involve wealth.
J. Cole	Man, I feel like my definition of freedom, it's hard because I can't even imagine a world with freedom. A world of freedom for me would be being in my community and be able to say I have a relationship with the police in my community is something that's real big on me. I would really want to be able to say when I see a white police officer, I don't get nervous and my heart don't stop.
Nas	Freedom is definitely a state of mind. Perception and perspective is everything.
Bob Marley	Being aware. Because I don't think we could ever truly be free, I don't think we're meant to be free, but I think being aware allows you to maneuver in a system that you're meant to maneuver in. Freedom is not what freedom is for us. I think freedom for us is understanding. I think because we're in an interconnected system, I don't think we're as good for anything for us to just act on our own accordance and not have anything else in mind. I don't think that's ever a good thing for anything. I think understanding where we fit, where we can move, how we can move, in a natural way, not in a way that's told by.... I don't think that way can be told by other men. I think that's something that has to be found between the person and the system. To me, I think freedom is understanding.
Black Thought	But if you have knowledge, financial literacy, and the ability to have a organized institution or a city totally ran by Black economics, that's freedom. Black economics is freedom.

Kendrick Lamar	My definition of freedom would be… I would say peace. Freedom to me would be peace. After a certain age you just never really have peace anymore. You have times where you're happy and enjoying things but peace you never just have peace, school, I'm worried about a bunch of money, pay my bill, grades, I go home, have to worry about my parents messing up my schedule. So peace would be my freedom.
Talib Kweli	I feel like freedom to me is the ability to do what makes me happy, and to be able to sustain myself through that happiness, and not having to work with a jerk or an asshole for the rest of my life. Not have to having a boss that's telling me I need to do it this way, I need to do that way. That's freedom to me. Being able to fully express myself and my culture, however I choose it, and not to be dictated by someone else's standards of normal, or regular. I want to be free from that, because I feel like that's been my whole life.
Jay-Z	I believe freedom is the ability to live life according to how you see fit, and I do believe that's possible.
Tupac	I honestly don't… I couldn't tell you what freedom is. I could… the closet thing I could get to it is an ocean. I feel as if there's no restriction on it. It goes as far as it wants to go. I don't feel like that will ever exist for a Black man. I don't feel like a Black man could ever go as far as he really wanted to go. I feel like no matter what level they get to, there will always be something that stops them, 'cause we live in white America. I don't think there will ever be a place for a Black male.
Kanye in '04	The older I get, I do believe that freedom isn't free. For me personally, freedom is the only thing I can find some day with salvation and your mental health. Spiritually is how you're going to get free, because you can be rich as fuck and you still won't be free. You can be white as fuck and rich as fuck and you still won't be free. I think that's some personal mental health type joint. That's what freedom is to me.

Figure 5.2 Understandings of Freedom

Coping with Trauma. In the album, many artists indicated mixed feelings about pursuing

education while leaving families back home or leaving poverty. Several artists felt guilty about

leaving home and expressed the duality of struggling and owning their power of self-discovery

while away from what they know and feel comfortable with. For example, in the track "I'm

Coming Home," J. Cole states that "I'm here at this historically white institution, with no

solutions to the situations that's suffocating you back home. You all I got, trust me I'm telling

you I'm better off back home." In the track "Brotherly Love," he expressed a similar sentiment:

> Where I from niggas pick up a mic, run a ball, shoot a ball and shoot guns, or hit the
> block, all to support they families. I'm from poverty in the inner city. Do you know what
> it's like to come from a public school receiving the least, when students and teachers
> deserve more? Nigga, the only thing I was told is this the place where successful people
> go, I'm starting to wonder if this college shit even for me. I drink bottle after bottle
> because for those few hours I'm numb I can't feel the pain. I get high because that's the

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only time my mind is free from the fucking confusion that's given to me on this predominately white campus. Imagine walking around campus with a hoodie and headphones and every white person ask if you the university's running back. Do you know what it's like to not be able to afford books for classes, or the talk that professors give? And the first line that come out they mouth is college isn't for everybody and then they follow up with it's okay to drop a class or even leave and come back. But that's the thing nigga, if I leave I ain't got shit to go back to.

J. Cole explains the trauma of coming from poverty and although he is trying to persevere through it, the everyday trauma of being stereotyped and being told it is okay to drop a class is exhausting. J. Cole knows that if he goes back home, he has nothing to go back to, but he also wonders what other option he has. This is related to two of Inspectah Deck's lyrics on the tracks "Everyday is a Funeral" and "Curriculum of the Mind. On "Everyday is a Funeral," Inspectah Deck asks, "But what happens when the streets make you feel included more than the institution?" This recalls his "Curriculum of the Mind" lyrics:

> you may die in one and the other you're just hoping to survive
> one will leave you broke while the other will leave you broken and in debt
> one is a violent space for black and brown bodies while the other is a violent space for black and brown bodies
> you will be told you belong in one and shown you don't belong in the other
> as a Black man, I'm just trying to decide if I should stay in college or go back to poverty
> they both made me accustomed to the thoughts and feelings of struggling and hopelessness
> but at least in poverty I learned how to survive in the real world
> Lord, I'm just trying to survive, I have questions for the answers
> Lord, I'm just trying to survive, Lord, I'm just trying to survive

Insepctah Deck clearly articulates that both HWIs and poverty are violent spaces for Black and Brown bodies, but he believes that it is better for him to go back to poverty because he was given to the tools to survive in that world. Album reviewer Roderick Wallace, a university administrator at Eastern Michigan University and an audio producer, states that "Black students in poverty are taught that college is the way out, but can be just as oppressive and even more

socially limiting as the neighborhoods and social consequences they grew up in." This clearly

embodies Inspectah Deck's perspective on staying in college.

In the track "Curriculum of the Mind," Bob Marley states that "Mental disorders &

Mickey Deez orders, shit we dealing with, sometimes innocent, ignorance, we ignore it." This

line suggests that, as Black male collegians, we are aware that our trauma causes emotional

damage, and yet we ignore it. Ahmad Washington (2018) claims that

> the counseling profession stands at a pivotal crucible in relation to how it supports Black males who face a spectrum of dehumanizing policies, laws, and behaviors, everything from invalidating microaggressions to the most egregious forms of physical and psychological trauma. Effectively serving Black males demands that counseling professionals nonjudgmentally comprehend the myriad forms of oppression Black males must habitually confront and traverse. (p. 9)

Even though university professors and administrators encourage Black males to seek counseling,

many do not because they are afraid to open up to someone whom they do not know or who

does not look like them (Washington, 2015; 2018). Inspectah Deck, who is working toward a

master's degree in counseling, discusses his reasons for becoming a counselor:

> When I think about the position I'm in, which is going to be a therapist, to be a counselor, I keep thinking about how can I help my culture be free. It's all from a mental aspect. How can I go back and help kids who dealt with shit I dealt with in my community? That type of thing. Help them get this freedom and this mental freedom from a younger age, so they're able to go out and experience things differently as they get older and not be trapped and try to do it when you get older. I'm 37, I'm still trying to figure shit out because of all the experiences and things I've had to deal with. Some of them I couldn't avoid. Some I probably could have, but most of them I couldn't. And because of those things I've been trapped by these experiences, and these traumas, and these things.

The notion of feeling trapped in one's own thoughts and not seeking help is prevalent in Talib

Kweli's lyrics on "Do I Hate Myself?"

> I'm running from me, so I'm running this beat
> rummaging streets with abundance of heat
> am I living a lie, wondering why, we live and we die, and never be living at all
> hating each other we fall, taking no blame in it all
> why do we run from emotions, is it deeper than all the oceans…

I ask myself this question
tried to connect with heaven, must be a bad reception, our minds some deadly weapons
create the world we step in
still despise reflections, still despise perfection, still despise correction
but really ask these questions, no really ask these questions
 do you love within? do you love within?

Tupac has a similar story on "Do I Hate Myself?"

I fadeaway droppin the crown while I consume the crown
fuck a therapist nigga this liquor knows to hold me down
brace up for another round
drink until the bottle shouts you have had enough fuck it tho im back to pouring up
knowing I have class
doubts set on mind knowing damn well I couldnt pass and its sad cause if I dont im prolly
bound to return to this neighborhood and go
flipping w my niggas smokin' halfs…
throughout the years in the need to switch gears cause if I don't the shit is wraps and I
don't wanna sell the shit that got my people trapped
but yet 'm trapped in my mentality, I'm trapped in my mentality"

As you can see, both Talib Kweli and Tupac find ways to cope with their trauma, showing

introspection and vulnerability but also running from their emotions by refusing to seek help, or

turning to drugs and alcohol to resolve the pain, with the understanding that they are trapped in

their mentality. The lyrics of both artists also bring up the question of whether they love

themselves.

As mentioned earlier, Love (2019) described that trauma for Black people is generational.

Jay-Z's lyrics on "Worse than Nigga" clearly articulate this notion.

They [white people] found a way to take the worst thing encountered in our history and
rebranded it 13, in amendments, the pain we see and say is because trauma can travel
through your DNA. And I'm hurting nigga, how you put me in a cage when I'm a person
nigga? I'm the product of your rage and I'm certain nigga, you worse than nigga.

This trauma is, in fact, generational, as Black Thought describes in a conversation with his young

cousin on "Keep Dreamin."

How early we fall into REM... so when a teacher asked what he [his cousin] wants to be
When he grows up... he just says "alive"…

He never knew the cost of living would be so high.
But as soon as he learns as early as age 8, he may never see age 9...
See... these professional vision killers put interest on our dreams, all un-subsidized.
Black Thought is articulating that, even at a young age, Black children are traumatized because

they know they may be killed by law enforcement and never get to fulfill their dreams. In

essence, the society they live in is a dream killer, and children are left hoping to live through

another day. These artists' testimonies show that Black male collegians and their families are

damaged and leave one wondering whether there is a safe place for them to learn and evolve.

Understandings of Freedom. The artists in the study exemplified the significance of

sociogenic marronage. As mentioned in chapter 2, sociogenic marronage refers to the

"revolutionary process of naming and attaining the individual and collective agency, non-

sovereignty, liberation, constitutionalism, and the cultivation of a community that aligns civil

society with political society" (Roberts, 2015, p. 11). Although the artists provided polarized

conceptualizations of freedom on the album, the collective knowledge produced in the album

created agency in which artists encouraged one another, regardless of whether they believed

freedom existed or was a mere illusion. This notion will be explained in more detailed during the

section below titled "Reimagination of Black Life and Collection Knowledge Production," but

for now, it will suffice for me to provide a few examples of what the artists discussed in relation

to freedom.

In the track "Write (Right) About Freedom," Inspectah Deck says,

I said I wasn't going to write about freedom anymore
Because I can never get back what I lost in the fire
Songs of survival
Songs of freedom
Repetitive rhythm…
Black man
Listen to me
Your freedom isn't free
Fuck this!

Inspectah Deck explains the back story and inspiration behind this poem.

> The first lyric I wrote was, "Because I could never get back what I lost in a fire." So, we met for the first time as a group [first listening session] on the 29th of September. My father passed away on the 28th, that Friday. September 28th. So I came to the group Saturday. My father's funeral was like two weeks from then, so I went home. And I think we had about two weeks before we needed to bring some lyrics in. So I just got back from my dad's funeral, giving a eulogy, and I'm sitting there in the kitchen, my mom's in the room. I'm sitting there with my laptop open, and the first line I wrote was, "Because I can never get back what I lost in a fire." That's the first thing that hit me. So, people don't know my story is, when I was one and a half, I was in a fire. It was at my aunt's house. My dad had came and got me from my mom's house and took me over there to kinda watch me, 'cause they weren't living together yet. So, he went to take a bath, and the fire happened. And my aunt, one of his sisters, she grabbed everyone and ran. Well she left me, my dad was still in the tub and she left her four year old son. So my dad gets out, puts his clothes on, it's fire so he runs downstairs thinking everybody's out. Well, me and my older cousin who was four at the time, he was up there with me. My dad runs back in the building and he pulls me out. But he don't know who he got, right, so he bumps and knocks me over and he picks me up and he's looking for the next one like who would be my cousin. He couldn't find him so he ran down, 'cause he was actually in the hospital for a week after that with burns and smoke inhalation. So anyway, he wants to go back up but they don't let 'im. And my cousin is found in the closet, with the dog and he died. So, you fast forward to today. My father died in a fire. He died in a fire in his apartment. So, it was kinda like this retrospective shit. So the first lyric I wrote for this whole project was, "Because I can never get back what I lost in a fire." Because once it's gone, it's gone. Once fire touches it, it's never the same again. My father was never the same after not being able to go back and save his nephew. That trauma was like embedded and linked to a lot of his drug use and his alcohol use and a lot of shit that really messed up my family in the future, because he couldn't get over not being able to save his nephew. But he saved me. But his demise wound up being the same way. He wound up dying from smoke inhalation, from not being able to get out of a room that caught on fire. And then thought about our history, and how they can't give back what they've done to us. Like once you do it, it's there. You can't tell me to stop talking about slavery, 'cause you did it. You can't get me to stop talking about civil rights and not being able to drink from certain fountains and killing our leaders and police brutality and [Terence] Crutcher and Trayvon Martin. You can't tell us to forget about it. You burned that shit. So I can never get back what I lost in a fire. It never comes back the same. You can only replace it and you can't make it the way it was before.

As a result of this trauma, Inspectah Deck does not believe freedom is free for Black males. This is also prevalent in the track "Me Against the World" in Tupac's line "I don't feel that freedom's gifted, you say I'm trippin', view the statistics, every nigga that I know knows somebody locked

up in prison, collect calls and them visits, ain't shit crazy?" Tupac is trapped by mental trauma, and based on the experiences he has had in his living environment, and at his HWI, he does not believe freedom exist. Another example is Black Thought's poem on "Keep Dreamin." "A tragic comedy. How we so free? How we so free and still so demonized? With no ALIBI, VICTIMIZED cause PREJUDICE is so NORMALIZED." This is related to the notion of being trapped by mental trauma, as expressed by, as expressed by J. Cole on "Mentor 2 Mentee" and Tupac on "Do I Hate Myself?"

On the other hand, some participants believe that freedom exists, although to a limited extent, and they expressed that their own agency was the determining factor in their freedom. For example, Jay-Z states on "Polaroids" that "

I'm seeking freedom, inspired [Black] literature and now I read it
the past is where you keep it, but the future's what you fearful that my people breeding,
you will reap what you have sewn but you refuse to teach it, professor this egregious."

In short, Jay-Z is not only seeking freedom and inspired by Black literature to help him attain freedom, but recognizes that he plays a role in becoming free.

Jay-Z, Bob Marley, and Talib Kweli discuss freedom on the track "Freedom's Opus."
Jay-Z states that

if freedom is a state of mind
then I'm sovereign in my vibe hater you could never take it/
Got a crown on my mental
found a way to treasure all the trash that I been through
new Negro spirit on a fire instrumental
I'm doing what I want, at best you doing what you can at worst you doing what you get
to
I didn't make excuses I just made a way to glory
couldn't pen in the beginning I'm finishing the story
and the ending is in honoring the legacy before me
who inspired all my writings, my convictions, and recordings.

Likewise, Bob Marley says

Somebody once said in this world it ain't nothing free
I, used to believe 'em now I tell 'em look at me
I can observe the hate
I can observe a place
Where the puzzle u grew up in say u don't deserve a place
Out here worried bout all of what we can do in outer space
But we in the mirror & we don't know who behind the face
I been tryna draw what's hard to do if I don't trace
Because to an extent we all can choose our own fate

Talib Kweli reflects a similar sentiment:

I'm escaping just wanna be free from all of it
scribbling in my pad ducking hearing them hollow clips
illuminate the night sky
my cultures something beautiful it just takes the right eyes
seeing past the struggle that this world tryna place on us
still heading towards the finish line, check the pace on us.
Matter fact observe the happy face on us
cant tarnish a smile that seen tragedy,
risin' from the mud in the waters heavy and staggering
I graduated and elevated my mental state
still keeping my Black skin something that you seem to hate.
I won't debate you, accelerate my feet and let your own demons face you.
I'm not impressed by this limit that you give my freedom
I made a better me and I'm glad to meet him.

All three artists (Jay-Z, Bob Marley, and Talib Kweli) discuss the importance of coupling their

agency with their resilience in an effort to attain freedom, for although they know it is limited,

they believe freedom in fact does exist.

Reimagination of Black Life and Collective Knowledge Production. Love (2016) argues

that the fifth element of Hip-Hop, knowledge of self, should be at the center of Hip-Hip

scholarship, because the stories of Black folx reflect collective identity politics. Love (2016)

claims that Hip-Hop scholarship that

> centers on the fifth element, knowledge of self, is central to generating learning
> experiences [for youth]…[and] the act of resisting, defining one's self, and fighting for
> justice creates communal and empowering experiences, which are necessary for the
> emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being of people of color. It is in the fight
> and in knowledge of self that freedom is found. (pp. 416 & 418)

These sentiments of knowledge of self and knowledge production are reflected by album reviewer Ruth Nicole Brown, an associate professor in education and women's and gender studies at the University of Illinois, who says that

> The Space Program lives as a bold reimagination of collective knowledge production, integral to our people's daily survival. A brilliant choreopoetic full telling of Black men's experiences in, with, and about educational institutions, this project addresses Black study, feelings, history, mental health, cultural foundations, relationships, art, and friendships in context of critique and critical embrace.

In short, both Love and Brown emphasize the importance of these artists' self-knowledge and collective knowledge production in creating empowerment, providing hope, and working through generational trauma in an effort to be free. Moreover, according to album reviewer Tryon Woods, an associate professor of crime and justice studies at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, these artists are both "independent and collective… [and are] committed to developing an ethical 'person-oriented' struggle with history's weight on the present." Furthermore, the artists in this study are creating a pedagogy of liberation and love for Black life.

For example, in the track "Colored People Time (CPT)," Black Thought reimagines a world where Black people thrive in America and have never been slaves.

> What if...what if...James Baldwin never wrote
> "GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN"?
> Well go tell it anyway. Of this oh so gorgeous scene
> A sea of millions of black families brought to Jamestown; AH YES!
> Arriving in an ocean of magnificent cruise ships named after Jesus
> HALLELUJAH!... IT'S COLORED PEOPLE TIME!
> No little slave shacks outside the cotton field for Massa to visit
> Racism isn't a concept and Paper Bag Games never existed
> Bigots were never deputized so there's no injustice in the justice system
> There's no such thing as being "woke"
> Cause the pain was never deep enough to keep us asleep! Amen
> God is Good, our own people would never trade us like stocked commodity

And YES LAWD, beauty always looked like little black girls
With kinky hair that was painted dark skin-ded
Our adolescent stages didn't become accustomed to criminal court cases.
America's heroes looked just like us so we never shunned education.
In another time, Congregation...
The world praised our greatness...and so did we.

This lyric by Black Thought cleverly and effectively reimagines the meaning of "Colored People Time," or "CPT." This phrase, well known in the Black community, typically means that Black people often arrive late to meetings or functions and, as a result, are usually unprepared for any given situation. In essence, it is a satirical way of stating that Black people are rarely on time. In this lyric, Black thought not only reimagines a world without violence being enacted on Black bodies, but he reaffirms, as album reviewer Thandi Sulé points out, that "CPT isn't about being late. It's about being ready. And getting ready begins with imagining the Black experience devoid of enslavement, colonialism and imperialism."

On the track "Me Against the World," Bob Marley imagines a Black experience devoid of anti-Blackness.

Sometimes I think about a world where anti-Blackness never happened
But the reality we live in that shit be hard to imagine. They think we got a gun if my seatbelt in the car's unfastened
So before I reach inside of the glove compartment I ask him
What if he ain't treat me different than that old white man
If they wasn't so careless about shortening a niggas life span
if I could walk anywhere that I wanted with my hoodie on
& when u call me black
Nobody ever took it wrong…
What if I knew my history like u knew yours
What if the truth always prevailed regardless of who won the war
This type of world & this idea ain't never crossed ya mind I'm sure
U lost cuz u scared I be lost cuz I explore.

Bob Marley, discussed how hard it was for him to write through his trauma, particularly as he tried to reimagine a world without anti-Blackness.

It was hard for me to dig deep and find that... You [just] don't wanna go there. I don't wanna feel that vulnerability when I feel lesser, and that's a lot. Even now I feel it. So I didn't want to but I think that was the hardest part for me, and that's why I feel so much anxiety starting this with like, "I wanna go to that place I went to last time." And I understand that it's a process and there's a lot of unknowns in that process so it could be scary. But that was the hardest part for me was going back to that place, and going back to those traumas and trying identify with them. Especially the version I talked about, the world without anti-Blackness. It was like, why would I even spend the brain power thinking about that shit? Why would I even spend the time thinking this is.... And it made me think of like [enslaved Black people] when they were out on those sweltering hot days, and I thought about what if slavery didn't happen. Imagine how pissed off they would be, like why would I even fucking think about that?

Bob Marley reflects the words of bell hooks in her book *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003): Hope "empowers us to continue our work for justice even as the forces of injustice may gain greater power for a time" (p. xiv). hooks's words recall this passage from Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Heart* (1998):

> [It is] imperative that we maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite. On this level, the struggle for hope means the denunciation, in no uncertain terms, of all abuses, schemes, and omissions. As we denounce them, we awaken in others and ourselves the need, and also the taste, for hope. (p. 107)

Bob Marley, in essence, reflects the maintenance of hope that Freire writes about, despite the harsh realities of living in white America. These sentiments are reflected in other songs that express freedom, hope, and the reimagination of Black life. As mentioned earlier, the artists in this album created a pedagogy of collective knowledge production to effectively discuss the importance of sharing wisdom with other Black males who will have similar anti-Black experiences, particularly at HWIs.

For example, in "Runnin' for My Life," Jay Electronica says "and if he gave you the blueprint it's because he's supposed to share it, equally yoked and I don't bear it alone." The "he" here represents another Black male who has endured something difficult and is therefore charged with the effort to "each one, reach one, teach one, a tradition of critical thought and

collective ethos," as album reviewer Tryon Woods points out. This sentiment reflects lyrics on

"Do I Hate Myself?" by Jay-Z: "I love you enough to tell the truth about it, to be well read you

need some proof around it, I see stale bread, that mean the lute abounding, protect your neck or

get a noose around it." In essence, Jay-Z suggests that he loves Black people enough to give

them the ugly truth about life, and that he wants to "Guard Ya Brilliance" (another track on the

album). Ultimately, he hopes that "when [he] dies, [his] legacy is carried through the [Black]

people."

But the artists recognize that reimagining Black life and striving for freedom requires

sacrifice, which often takes a toll on their bodies. For example, on the track "Polaroids," Black

Thought says, "these conditioned memories, I mean pyrrhic victories, I mean missionary misery

to a breech delivery, I mean an existence of contradictory. Thank you to all these enemies."

These lines suggest that, although he will continue to fight to attain freedom, the achievement

will come at a substantial cost. This relates to Nas's "Polaroids" lyrics, in which he states that

although he continues to seek freedom, he is "losing fuel, but [he] got drive but think this is what

we go to school to do." In short, seeking freedom can be exhausting.

Ultimately, the artists understand that the education they receive at HWIs is limited at

best, and that, as Black people, they must create their own educational journey if they are to

understand the history of their forebears and their own liberatory power. Bob Marley reflects this

sentiment clearly on the track "Do It on Our Own."

> Straight like that from this lil dot that's on the map
> Where I'm from it felt we was caught up in a trap
> Where they answer all ya questions with a nah because u Black
> So we went & find our own then they started getting mad
> We gon have to do it on our own tho

This is also expressed in J. Cole's poem on the track "Fuck You AmeriKKKa," in which he talks

directly to white supremacists and then encourages Black students to learn their history on their

own

> Fuck you AmeriKKKa,
> one time for my ancestors
> And fuck you again for me,
> It took chains and whips for you to incarcerate their bodies but their minds and souls
> were still free
> Single parent households, no father in the home
> No jobs to provide, so the only thing I got is the block to survive
> Fuck you for psychologically still trying to make me your slave, I'm not your point guard
> or your running back.
> Fuck you for manipulating Dr. King's dream by ending segregation, putting us in the
> same schools giving us equality when you know damn well we needed equity
> The 13 amendment freed us physically, don't even get me started on how y'all fucked us
> with jim crow. And Willie Lynch mentally raped my people
> Keep the body take the mind, was the quote that y'all applied and still apply to this day.
> My generation physically free but mentally we still fucked up from them situations that
> you caused 300 years ago.
> My people built them historically white institutions, so fuck who you name them after,
> Fuck you white supremacist, I share blood with builders and the laborers who built them
> institutions.
> And you, yeah you listening, no matter how hard this shit get don't quit. I know it's hard,
> but think about our ancestors who died trying to educate themselves.
> Every time you have a thought that you don't belong, think about our ancestors who built
> them institutions brick by brick. How could you not belong in a place that you built?
> I challenge you to learn our history because they will never teach it to us, we are doctors,
> lawyers, astronauts we belong on surfaces way more valuable than courts and fields but
> GOLD.
> and the more you know about where you come from the more you are able to navigate
> where you go.

The artists in this study emphasize the importance of collective knowledge production and

coalition work, because they have the collective consciousness to recognize that reimagining

Black life means facing trauma that they may not want to endure, and putting their lives on the

line for future generations, when they may not necessarily see the benefits. In the words of album

reviewer Ruth Nicole Brown, "this political assembly of saucy flows, diverse cadences, and

inclusive palimpsestic perspectives congeals and reverbs from Oklahoma to wherever [people]

are, circulating galaxies far and reaching the people near, which is a new way of measuring

credibility, doubly trustworthy. It's being heard as all together and singular at the same time."

This is, furthermore, the idea of collective knowledge production.

Critique of the Dissertation Album

The artists theorized, disrupted, and constructed definitions of freedom through their

lyrics on the album. And yet their process of interacting with one another in the studio and

constructing their narratives reflected notions of heteropatriarchy, and, at times, homophobia. In

addition, as the artists focused on expressing their perspectives, they disclosed their trauma in

ways that sometimes were oppressive to Black women and queer and gender-nonconforming

Black folx. For example, during my one-on-one interview with William Grant Still, I posed the

question, "Overall, what were your thoughts about the process of the album?" His reply:

> Leading up to it I was very anxious because one, I'm not a Hip-Hop person by any
> means. I know Jesus music and classical and that's about it. And also I knew that it was
> going to be all Black men and I tend to feel quite uncomfortable in situations like that
> because I do not present masculinity in the way that's generally presented in those
> spaces. So places like the barber shop are places where I'm usually on edge. They tend to
> be hyper-masculine and they tend to be anti-gay. I know I'm a quiet person and I do not
> go out of my way to talk to people or to meet them, so I have some ownership in it as
> well. But I think also people, going through the process and people started seeing me
> perform or hear things, it was like, "He's different, but he's really good." But yeah, there
> was just a difference. Even the way that people greeted me to shake my hand was
> different. I think that the album in general was very heteronormative, and I didn't
> necessarily find a way on a large scale to address that, and I also didn't really have
> solutions either. You know, this album was based on our experiences so if you don't have
> any experiences that are non-heteronormative then you can't really write about it. [But]
> maybe there were some other ways to get people to think outside of [their experience]...
> and not necessarily even to think outside of their experience but maybe to even just recall
> experiences that they had that maybe they didn't even realize, because they essentially
> rapped about their experiences, which for the most part seemed to be heteronormative
> because that's how they identify. But thinking about interactions they had with people
> who are not, who don't fit the heteronormative mold, because they've had those
> experiences or they've read about them, but it wasn't a priority for them. I think I would
> have liked more organization, and it's not that you are unorganized, but it's that you were
> being a researcher so you were letting things happen. And also I would have stepped up

but because I don't really have a relationship with the people that it could have been misconstrued and it could have gone really bad. I didn't want to overstep my boundaries.

Me: What would you say to someone that believes freedom is the most important thing to attain for someone, and that's being a priority over discussing issues of sexism or homophobia or queerness? What would you say to someone who's like my freedom is more important than discussing the issues. This is my truth, this is my story, and for me to attain freedom at the expense of other people, what would you say to someone like that?

William Grant Still: I mean, I'm by and large a non-confrontational person. So if you say that, I'm not going to immediately have a response but what I will do is ask you some questions about your beliefs and try to figure out why you believe that, and then after that I'll decide how I'm going to engage with you. I mean my thoughts about a person like that is that you're selfish, and what is freedom if you're the only person who has it? Do you not want freedom enough to have other people also experience it? I think that, yeah, I would even say it's inhumane. It doesn't show humanity. What if when Harriet Tubman ran away, she was just like, "Well, I'm free, fuck them other niggers." What does that say about you as a person, how you feel about your fellow humans?

After this response, I asked William Grant Still, "On a problematic scale of 1 to 10, where does this process fit for you?" He said,

I would say 6 to 7. No one has ever said anything or no one has called [the artists] out on problematic stuff. So when we were in the studio one time recording somebody said something and was like, "no homo," and I was like "oh, shit. In 2018, we're still talking about 'no homo.' Okay." So I think it wasn't above the surface all the time but that's how I interact with people. I feel like what's on the inside comes out. Just because it don't come out every time that don't mean it's not there. I think that this [project] is important work so I'd probably do it again. I may not be as passive as I was. But I think that like I said, if you wasn't doing this I probably wouldn't have been there. So although I was uncomfortable, I did feel safe because I knew if it ever got to something that was absolutely ridiculous or absolutely asinine that you would just take care of it. I think also [the album project] did a lot of good for the people that were involved. So I do think that is important, and I do think that ... yeah, I think it's important, so I'd do it again.

Me: So for someone [like me] who identifies as a straight, cis-gender male and this album is supposed to encompass multiple identities for Black men, how would someone approach an album in the future like that? What has to change, what has to happen for that to be a part of the narrative?

William Grant Still: I think it has to be intentional from the beginning. You might have wanted it to be that, but being a researcher you just kind of have to let it happen. I think that it is heteronormative because that's what they know, and no one has challenged them

and no one has said, "Hey, let's make this an inclusive process. Here are some ways that you can do that. Here are some things to think about or some things to read." People had already began to formulate what they felt the album should be, what it was going to be, so it was a little bit too late in the process. And I didn't necessarily have a solid recommendation at that point to be able to combat the heteronormativity.

Likewise, Bob Marley provided some critiques regarding the heteronormative space and narrative constructed in the process of creating the album:

I think talking about intersectionality within the LGBT community and masculinity could have been addressed better. I don't have much experience with that so I can't really speak much to it other than the toxicity of the masculinity about shit like that. The project to me was us authentically giving our stories so that people can authentically gain for their own stories. So I'd love to see a more intersexual analysis. But then I also understand that experience as Black men are shaped in ways that leads to these stories. On one hand, it's not our fault, but on the other hand, we still got to be conscious of that.

During a final wrap-up session, all artists discussed elements of the album as we listened to each track. The question of what we missed in the album came up again, and William Grant Still was less timid than he had been at the beginning of the project. He said to the group,

I think we missed an opportunity to talk about gender and sexuality. There are lots of queer people who are experiencing things just because they're queer and they're Black. They are dying every day. Especially trans women, Black trans women are being murdered every day. I think we missed an opportunity to connect with that part of the Black community. Someone else said it, if all of us aren't free, then none of us are free. I think collectively we know of someone of that [identity]. Whether it's through older cousins, female cousins who hang out with them, or just through experiences. I had high school friends who I'm still friends with today who actually thank me for not turning my head and not walking away during that time which was 20 years ago now. Being like ... treating them the same as I treated everybody. I kind of got blown away by that because I didn't think about I was treating them anything special. To them, they saw the special, but I was really just treating them how I treat everyone. I think we've all had experiences or known of experiences that I could've easily wrote to just from knowing of it or experiencing it. I think the Black love and gender sexuality, we did miss on that. I think we got stuck in our own experiences. I think that's where it happened at. We got so stuck in our own experiences ... So everything on here is our own experiences. We didn't get caught up in some of this other stuff just because. We were ... during the group speaking from our perspective and our experiences. We got so focused on that, it really took away from us thinking outside of that. I know for me, personally, I was really focused on my experiences with anti-Blackness, with freedom. I didn't even think about those around me. We did miss that.

William Grant Still provides an excellent critique for me as a researcher. During the project, I deliberately let conversations evolve organically, particularly in the studio, but William Grant Still's comments made me realize that my focus on providing observations on how artists theorized Blackness, particularly through the use of BlackCrit, was also rooted in heteronormative ways. As opposed to focusing on the constructions of Blackness, perhaps a more intentional research question would have been how Black male collegians theorized or constructed their masculinities. I believe that this approach would have allowed me to explore deeper issues and stories regarding the construction of manhood and masculinities that connected participants' stories to issues of anti-Blackness, colonialism, and their understandings of freedom. This could have been done effectively by drawing upon queer theory or queer crit, which also originates from the lineage of CRT. Essentially, queer crit would have enabled me to "expand critical race theory by centering gender and sexuality and its forms of oppression, hetero- and cisnormativity, trans*phobia, and homophobia, alongside its analysis of race and racism" (Blockett, 2017, p. 804). As mentioned in chapter 2, the theorization of masculinities takes us away from a restrictive binary approach to studying masculinity and moves us to a broader discourse regarding gender expression and norms (Dancy, 2012; Travers, 2018). Employing queer crit would have allowed me not only to explore the intersections of gender and race within higher education, but to give attention to Black males who do not identify as heterosexual. In the context of this album, ignoring intersectional issues of sex and sexuality could be perceived as the silencing, denial, and erasure of Black queer and gener-nonconfroming folx and, especially, Black women (Blockett, 2017). In conclusion, I recognize the limited scope or lens of the album and believe that more work needs to be done to view Blackness and freedom in ways that are inclusive of all Black folx.

Chapter 6: Implications, Recommendations & Future Research

For sure I'm like in this. Like I'm really in this because I know how big this is, this is for my daughter right here, not just that, but for my kids' kids. This study that you're doing right now could do something for the culture and I ain't talking about no mixtape and you get all the sharings, no, like what you gon reap is for opening the door for everybody. This is a big deal bro, and I think stuff like this happens when you have people that line up with the same energy that want to have something great come and they're all passionate. Don't think we're up here trying to talk to be cool. Nigga I'm passionate because this is something that involves us. We ain't talking about some bullshit Christopher Columbus that ain't true. We're talking about something that's real, that people don't shed light on, so I don't think the resources are not there. I think the internet is free, you got mics, you got chords, you know videographers, you know DJs, all that shit, you can put some shit together. Bro, since I left here, I've made three songs at my house and I don't even rap. I want that shit. I want it so bad as far as for you to get the shit and passed through, I want them to see the light so bad, that I will come here no matter if a storm is coming, if that bitch come, we gon sit here and get this information in bro because I want it just as bad as you want it. You get what I'm saying? And I don't think that there should even be a question on that, you got what you want, you got what you need, it's just literally getting the best plan, that's the part, that's like how do you get them to understand it? That's the part. (Black Thought)

This study has significance in several different ways. First, it provided an opportunity for Black male collegians to share counterstories, through a Hip-Hop album, regarding their anti-Black experiences at the historically white institutions (HWIs) they attended. Other than Carson's (2017) rap album dissertation on his doctoral experiences at his HWI, no previous studies have examined the collective experiences of Black male collegians through a Hip-Hop album. Although the amount of research on Black male collegians in U.S. higher education has increased dramatically over the last decade, most of the published literature focuses on the "deficit" perspective that views Black males' underachievement as being caused by something they *lack* – sufficient college preparation, financial resources, and so forth. Moreover, much of the literature is framed through the lens of the researcher, not the actual Black men being studied. My study, on the other hand, gives voice to Black male collegians' authentic stories, told from their own perspectives, but through the creation of a Hip-Hop album. Second, I explored participants' personal stories and experiences using a critical qualitative methodology that

incorporated narrative inquiry, which provides deeper insight into their experiences as Black male collegians at an HWI, while also maintaining narrative outside of research, in an effort to maintain a sacred and political trust (Hendry, 2007) with artists, as mentioned in Chapter 3. More specifically, this study identified how Black male collegians theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness, how they make meaning of the concept of freedom, and how they reimagine life despite the anti-Black experiences they encounter at HWIs. Third, this study questioned HWIs' responsibility and commitment to Black male collegians, in order to disrupt anti-Black polices that both currently and historically have prevented Black male collegians from attaining success at HWIs. In other words, this study disrupts the dominant narrative that asks what is wrong with Black male collegians; instead, it asks what resources have intentionally been withheld from Black male students and what HWIs should do differently to support these students. Last, and most importantly, this study intentionally disrupts the silencing of Black males and provides a counternarrative showing that Black male collegians and their definitions of Blackness are not monolithic. Through counter-storytelling, Black male collegians in this project had the opportunity to be heard and to express their real, lived experiences in higher education. The findings revealed that the HWI environment is uniquely challenging for Black male collegians, decreasing their likelihood of persisting to graduation.

A qualitative methodology employing a combination of theoretical frameworks, as well as Hip-Hop elements such as album reviews and listening sessions, provided the means for analyzing co-researchers' stories. To analyze how the dominant discourses about race, Blackness, class, and gender affect people of color, particularly Black male collegians, this study used two theoretical frameworks and one conceptual framework: Critical Race Theory, Black Critical Theory, and marronage.

This study has several important implications for HWIs and their students. Black male collegians considering attending an HWI should become as familiar as possible with the institution before enrolling, learning specifically about the faculty, the staff, the culture, and other Black male collegians' experiences, to determine whether the institution's beliefs and values align with their own upbringing as well as their hopes and expectations for their college experience. It is thus recommended that Black males considering enrolling at an HWI try to understand what labels will be attached to their attendance and anticipate how to disentangle themselves from them. The artists express deep concerns about the institutional environment, specifically regarding who is valued and protected, and who is not. They also express a feeling of pressure to perform for approval, yet they recognize that they will never be validated in a space that does violence and harm to them.

Implications & Recommendations

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this dissertation did not seek to determine whether creating a Hip-Hop album would serve as an intervention that would increase the retention or graduation rates of Black male collegians. Instead, the goal of the study was to shed light on how Black male collegians view themselves in relation to HWIs, how they and their bodies are perceived and socialized at HWIs, and how they cope with the anti-Black experiences that they face on these college campuses. The artists make the argument that succeeding holistically at HWIs is a continuous struggle; as a result of this struggle, many believe that freedom does not exist. This research study provides evidence that Hip-Hop is a revolutionary social justice tool and epistemological framework that allows students to think critically about their experiences at college and in society. Creating, reimagining, and disrupting anti-Blackness generated a counter-intellectual and fugitive space that "center[s] African ways of knowing and being in the

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world…[with]…a substantive and unapologetic critique of settler colonial logics predicated on anti-Blackness" (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018). This process was centered in heteronormative and patriarchal ways, yet the studio sessions, listening sessions, and discussions about the album also created a space wherein Black male collegians could unlearn the ways in which their manhood and masculinities could ostracize, silence, and harm Black and Brown folx who do not identify as cisgender, heterosexual males. Nevertheless, there is more work to be done regarding the role of manhood and masculinities in how Black male collegians' perform and articulate their experiences.

Although more work should be undertaken to shed light on masculinities' influence, this project ultimately is a call to action and a warning to HWIs. Black male collegians are tired of the labels given to them by HWIs, and this album reflects the importance of listening to their voices. In my role as a researcher, I placed the artists' voices at the center of the study and intentionally avoided interpreting them. In essence, I stood alongside them as a co-researcher. Adopting a similar stance would be beneficial to HWIs; it would help them stop silencing the voices of Black and Brown students. Black male collegians are well aware of racial injustice in our society, from the killings of unarmed Black men, women, and children to the common assumption among white classmates and faculty that Black males are in college only due to affirmative action or athletics. These negative assumptions about Black students' "right" to attend college are all the more specious in light of recently disclosed scandals involving mainly white parents who, for large sums, purchased higher test scores or phony athletic accomplishments to ensure their children's admission to selective universities (Eligon & Burch, 2019; Medina, Benner & Taylor, 2019). Below are a few recommendations for actions that

HWIs should take to help Black male collegians (and all Black students) feel a sense of belonging at college and succeed both academically and emotionally.

Recognize Hip-Hop Scholarship as Scholarly. Hip-Hop scholarship, pedagogies, and praxis constitute a critical area of study that disrupts systems of oppression affecting Black and Brown humanity. Hip-Hop culture is Black culture, and there are prevalent scholars who center their work (even within their departments) around Hip-Hop. Hip-Hop scholars channel a love of Black culture, and the folx that engage in discourse that speak to the ontology of Blackness. My scholarship contributes to this body of scholarship, which is pivotal in reshaping how Black and Brown students, in this case Black male collegians, see themselves represented in the literature. This dissertation album is a reflection of many experiences that Black male collegians may or will encounter at HWIs, and being able to access both relevant literature *and* musical content opens a door that could potentially revolutionize the academy. Hip-Hop scholarship must not remain at the margins anymore. It cannot be merely an elective course or be perceived as something that is "just fun to study." Hip-Hop scholarship, I would argue, is more critical and engaging than is implied in most courses and departments that teach it. Hip-Hop scholarship should be supported in ways that help students understand their identity and enhance their ability to cope with the everyday trauma that they encounter at HWIs. Hip-Hop scholarship is dynamic and innovative, and it allows the imagination of Black male collegians (and all Black students) to wrestle with their experiences while engaging with literature, art, history, social movements, and music. One way that Hip-Hop scholars can help students articulate their experience is by working with them to create Hip-Hop albums or Eps (extended-play recordings).

Hire Hip-Hop Scholars and Activists. In our wrap-up listening session, Bob Marley said,

> I think it's using Hip-Hop in our education and not using it by bringing people in and trying to teach them. But hiring Black professors who *live* Hip-Hop. Hiring professors of the races which they're teaching. It's more than just about representation for these students, because we're talking about these people being our mentor. People who look like us so that we relate to them. So bringing people who look like your students and embracing what your students want, as opposed to how the education system says you need to conform to what we have in store for you. I think that needs to be changed to, "We will conform what the students want to do or what they're interested in."

Bob Marley's point is that institutions should hire scholars who embody and live Hip-Hop, rather than merely teaching about it. Although he claims that representation is key, he also recognizes that representation is not the only important factor in teaching Hip-Hop. Institutions that recognize Hip-Hop as scholarly should invest in scholars who represent Black and Brown folx but also will be fully connect with and support students at HWIs. In my opinion, HWIs that wish to engage Black students should allocate funds to hire Hip-Hop scholars and activists as interdisciplinary faculty members who work across multiple departments or disciplines. Although it is essential that some of these positions be full-time, permanent, tenure-track faculty positions, other kinds of positions also would be beneficial, such as adjunct professors, visiting lecturers, activists-in-residence, and artists-in-residence. In addition, not all Hip-Hop scholars have "proper" academic credentials, such as a doctoral degree, so I recommend that HWIs develop flexible hiring guidelines that recognize qualifications other than the traditional Ph.D. After all, many positions have been created to benefit the interests of white faculty, staff, and students; the same should be done for Black students.

Create Recording Studio Spaces on Campus. Students coping with trauma should, of course, receive professional mental health services, such as counseling. But after completing my project, I have come to recognize the recording studio space as another form of therapy. The studio is a place where individuals can relieve stress and make sense of their experiences at

HWIs. During my one-on-one interviews, I specifically asked artists about the significance of the

studio spaces. Here are a few responses.

> J. Cole: We created a space where we all could be vulnerable. There were times in the studio where working might not have worked out. We thought we were going to hop on the mic at a certain time, but it ended up turning into a long conversation about us talking about our experiences. It was crazy because it all lined up. We all had been through the same thing, so it was so crazy to see everybody being so vulnerable and open about it. A lot of times it wasn't like work, this was like therapy for us all.

> Pimp C: Man, it felt like a ... honestly it felt like a vessel. It just felt like a moment in time. You know, you talk about space, and you think about the capsules that NASA sends up. And you know, it's your moment to go. Or whoever is in the capsule, it's their moment to go and do research, they're going to the International Space Station, or we're sending a camera to Mars. Whatever. That's exactly how I felt about occupying that space. Because it's like, there's Sunday or whatever day that we were there, we were taking that time to step outside of our ordinary lives, and we're coming together to put these stories together, and tell these stories. And I mean, I literally felt like that's, perhaps on another planet too, to keep with the narrative ... But I mean, that's literally what it felt like. We're in this amazing studio in the ACM, downtown Oklahoma City, Thunder Games are going on across the street, hysterical outside, people trying to park, you know what I mean? But when you open those doors man, you hit that second floor, that fourth floor ... Like, it's peace. But it's also, "This is our space to tell the story." And then when you walk outside it's obviously not un-peaceful when you got out there, but you know you go outside it's just like it hits you again. That like, "Okay, wow. I'm stepping away from this project for another week." Or two weeks, or whatever. So yeah, the space, the allegory of Space Program, and like the vessel of the studio, I mean I just relate to that a lot.

> Tupac: We were able to be together and watch the whole thing come alive. And not to mention, being in there, it honestly helps as a rapper being in there cause you have somebody giving feedback like "yeah bro, that sounds nice" or "do it again, say it like this.." You know, just.... They put a whole lot of tweaks and stuff on it. Yeah, just bonding. I feel like we were just there to bond. Cause, it wasn't like we were forced to do this or nothing, it's not like we were doing this shit by someone else's will. Just being in that space, spending our time together, it was dope.

> Jay-Z: You know Tesla's big electric ball. It was harnessing all of that creativity. I think that was the significance of that space. Wherever the fucking Justice League meets up, that's what the fuck that was. All of our plans to dominate, and take shit over, all of that power, all of that shit is what that place was for. There was no excuse not to be creative when you walked into this place. Do you know what I mean? You come in like, "I know Talib Kweli is killing shit. I know Bob Marley is killing shit. I know Jay Electronica is killing shit. I know Nas is killing shit." It felt like a place where you could artistically be free. That's what that felt like. One word to describe the space is emancipated.

Jay Electronica: It's an academic space as well as a music space, so I felt like that was perfect for what we were doing. Also being able to have multiple studios going at once and being able to get back and forth between them was really dope and something I hadn't really experienced yet. Having to be up here recording and then go down here, it made you feel like you were a professional for a day or two.

Inspectah Deck: The studio is a great space and it's the backdrop to what we were creating. When you look around you, it was nothing but black faces. Even though it was a lot of side conversations, they enhanced the way we were going in that booth and performing. We all got in the mindset.

Each artist discussed the vulnerability, creativity, and support he received from the studio space—not only to create the album, but also to create memorable experiences connected to the content of the album. This space, moreover, was a counter-intellectual and fugitive space for Black male collegians. The studio space allowed them to reimagine and harness their frustration with society in a healthy way. Furthermore, artists were able to be their authentic selves, something that is often difficult to do at HWIs. HWIs' investment in studios spaces would not only provide a sense of belonging for Black students but also allow them to engage in therapeutic ways of coping with trauma, which ultimately could help them stay in school. I would argue that these studio spaces should be directed and administered by Black and Brown folx who understand the concept of space in relation to bodies, the construction of society's gender hierarchies, and the ways that gender and sexuality are performed in public spaces (Bulter; 1990; 1993; 1995; Love, 2016; Stallings, 2013). In short, these spaces should be administered intentionally to make sure they are not oppressive to Black women, queer men, and gender-nonconforming folx.

Create Curriculum and Formulate Syllabi with and for Black students. Inspectah Deck, during our wrap-up listening session, conveyed the notion that this album is a blueprint for white educators.

I think [this album] is a blue print. Looking at it from a professor aspect. If you're in school trying to push a message, a certain message like what we pushed, I think you've got a curriculum, when you have an outline of what you can use to teach your Black male, female, people of color. A strong message. I mean, you can write so much stuff to this shit. You can literally build a whole semester around the album. Make it a one song a week as part of your curriculum. I think it's going to change things. It's so deep and so dense that if people really dive into what we're saying, they'll find a value in what we're saying and how it can be used to benefit. What we're trying do is we're trying to push the needle. You can't push the needle sometimes being polite and sometimes being politically correct. Sometimes you have to put it in their face and from the white aspect of it, a lot of them are not gonna like it because it's too real. They don't wanna hear us talk about our trauma. They don't wanna hear us talk about how we have it challenging. They don't wanna know that it's not a thing of the past. It's still today and so they don't wanna hear it. They wanna shun that shit. They want you to say, "Well I felt like this and I felt like that."

Inspectah Deck is expressing to faculty, staff, and administrators that a curriculum could be easily created around this Hip-Hop album. I would take it a step further and say that faculty should work with students to choose what should be included in curriculum. Teaching outdated material or material that does not necessarily connect with Black students' experiences clearly would negate the purpose. The methods that the artists and I used in creating the album could be applied in the classroom between faculty and students.

Future Research

My hope is that this research will revolutionize the minds of Black students and scholars to think of ways of conducting ethical research in nontraditional ways that speak to our lived experiences. Although students need to understand the foundations of traditional white research paradigms, I maintain that we also need to start creating our own methodological frameworks. During my dissertation project, I leaned upon the traditional methodological ways of doing research but incorporated Hip-Hop elements to make up for the limitations of narrative inquiry. I believe that this research study will provide future Hip-Hop scholars with the language and tools they need to create their own methodological frameworks rooted in epistemological ways that

embody Hip-Hop. My work reimagines what research could and should look like, in an effort to make it more accessible to the Black and Brown folx who need to hear, see, and feel it the most. This type of grounded, Hip-Hop scholarship may continue to change the academy's perspective on Hip-Hop scholarship.

As I mentioned in Chapter 5, future work involving the creation of Hip-Hop dissertation albums could address issues of masculinity and provide space for Black women to discuss their experiences at HWIs. Such work might reveal differences between Black women and Black men in the ways that they express their experiences regarding anti-Blackness at HWIs.

I was not able to address every meaningful subject that arose during the study; for example, sampling techniques and their connection to preserving Black music; identity in connection to the delivery of lyrics in the studio; and the significance of studio spaces. These are all important topics that address current themes in higher education, such as identity development, the sustaining of Black literature and music in Black Studies departments, and safe spaces on campus. This reflects the dissertation album's interdisciplinarity and relevance in many functional and academic departments at HWIs.

In my opinion, the album portion of an album dissertation can stand on its own merits; it need not require a written component, and I hope that, in the future, Hip-Hop scholars will not have to provide both. Indeed, I hope that the work of dissertation albums or projects will reflect the same significance as journal articles, book chapters, and edited books. I argue that Hip-Hop scholarship, such as this project, is as vital as other forms of literature in the academy. Like most successful published research that is submitted for tenure and promotion portfolios, my project followed ethical standards, was well thought out, and incorporated both historical and personal elements and perspectives.

Conclusion

Curriculum of the Mind is a dissertation Hip-Hop album that explores how Black male collegians at HWIs theorize and disrupt anti-Blackness in an effort to take flight or become free. The album is unapologetically Black, raw, and authentic, and it speaks the language of the artists. It is more than a critique of HWIs. It is a road map of self-discovering and reflection, informed by trauma, and coupled with anger and rage thrown back at the HWIs. Institutions of higher learning must responsibility for the historical killing, both physical and emotional, that they have perpetuated on Black students. Through their delivery and cadences, Black male collegians in this study captured the essence of Hip-Hop and communicated their experiences and their anger in ways that could not be expressed in writing alone. This dissertation album reflects the importance of listening to our students' voices, their rhythms, and their beats. Album reviewer Ashley Korpela, an administrator at the University of Oklahoma, points out that "As white educators we must ask ourselves 'how do we perpetuate this system? What message are we giving when we ask them to choose between trauma, that of giving up yourself for the institution, or living a life in a system that disregards you and actively harms you?' For me, this album reinforces that we must broaden what it means to be an academic." As I conclude, I believe that these artists, with the incorporation of Hip-Hop, are helping educators understand that being an academic is not one-dimensional. Yet the question remains: Will HWIs continue to ignore the voices and experiences of Black students? If they do, Hip-Hop will continue to respond.

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Glossary of Hip-Hop Terms

Album	A collection of audio recordings issued as a single item on CD, record, audio tape or another medium. It is also called an *LP (Long Play)* because it's typically consists of more than eight songs. Albums can be mixtapes, specifically if they are issued free of charge.
Audio Engineer	Works with the technical aspects of sound during the processes of recording, mixing, mastering and reproduction. Audio engineers often assist record producers and musicians to help give their work the sound they are hoping to achieve.
B-Boying/B-girling*	The prototypical form of Hip-Hop dance.
Beat	The creation of a sound recording and a musical composition of a song.
DJing*	Playing and manipulating vinyl records through a variety of techniques on two turntables and a mixer instrument.
Emceeing/Rapping*	Speaking with rhyme, cadences, and Black stylistic features over Hip-Hop instrumentals.
EP (Extended Play)	A musical recording that contains more tracks than a single (or single song), but typically has a maximum of seven songs.
Graffiti*	Legal and illegal visual art through spray paint and custom modified markers. May also be called *tagging*.
Hip-Hop Culture	An ontoepistemolgical and multifaceted, mechanism that is grounded in self-determination, resistance, and the enduring fight for Black and Brown freedom, through the elements of Black culture, defined by Black and Brown people.
Hip-Hop Elements*	Emceeing, DJing, B-Boying/B-girling, Graffiti Writing & Self-Knowledge
Mixtape	A self-produced or independently released album issued free of charge to gain publicity or avoid possible copyright infringement. Could also be defined as a homemade compilation of music onto a cassette tape, CD, or digital playlist.
Producer	An individual that may co-write, arrange songs or a beat, and/or coach the singer or musician in the studio.
Sampling*	Practiced by which a DJ or Hip-Hop music producer takes any part of previously recorded material and uses it to create new music in a new context and composition (Schloss, 2004).
Studio	A specialized facility/social space for sound recording, mixing, and audio production of instrumental or vocal musical performances, spoken words, and other sounds.

*Definitions derived from Petchauer's (2009) *Framing and Reviewing Hip-Hop Educational Research.*

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Expedited Review – AP01

Date: October 23, 2018 **IRB#:** 9914

Principal Investigator: Stevie Darnell Treshay Johnson

Approval Date: 10/23/2018

Expiration Date: 09/30/2019

Study Title: A BlackCrit, Narrative Inquiry, Hip-Hop Album on anti-Blackness & Freedom for Black Male Collegians at historically white institutions.

Expedited Category: 6 & 7

Collection/Use of PHI: No

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:
- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Obtain informed consent and research privacy authorization using the currently approved, stamped forms and retain all original, signed forms, if applicable.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications.
- Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related per IRB policy.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Promptly submit continuing review documents to the IRB upon notification approximately 60 days prior to the expiration date indicated above.
- Submit a final closure report at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Lara Mayeux

Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Permission to recruit letter

RE: Director of Trio Student Support Services
        Director of Multicultural Center:
        Director of Office of Inclusion:
        Director of Residence Life

To Whom It May Concern:

The University of Oklahoma Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies: Adult and Higher Education will be conducting a study concerning Black male collegians lived experiences through Hip Hop, at Historically White Institutions, specifically pertaining to anti-Blackness & freedom. Your campus has been identified as a Historically White Institution with Black Males. Would you be willing to send a recruitment email on our behalf? If so, we appreciate your cooperation and we have ensured the safety of testing through proper channels. If there are any questions I can answer, feel free to contact me at the information below. Please respond by January 12, 2019.

Thank you

Stevie Johnson
Primary Research Conductor
Doctorate Student
University of Oklahoma
903-445-2667
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Dr. Derek Houston, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Adult and Higher Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education
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405-325-1518 (office)

IRB NUMBER: 9914
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 10/23/2018

A BlackCrit, Narrative Inquiry, Hip-Hop Album on Anti-Blackness & Freedom for Black Male Collegians at historically white institutions
Questionnaire

Full Name _____   **Date** _____

Hometown _____   **Age** _____

Parent/Family Income (excluding yourself) (Circle One):

5,000-10,000   10,000-25,000   25,000-50,000   50,000-75,000   75,000-125,000   >125,000

Parental Status (Circle One):

Married   Separated   Divorced   Remarried   Single

Mother Highest Level of Post-Secondary Education Attainment (Circle One):

High School Technical Associate Bachelor   Master   Doctoral Other _____

Father Highest Level of Post-Secondary Education Attainment (Circle One):

High School Technical Associate Bachelor   Master   Doctoral Other _____

Participant Highest Level of Post-Secondary Education Attainment (Circle One):

High School Technical Associate Bachelor   Master   Doctoral Other _____

College Institution(s) Attended _____

Year(s)/Semester(s) Attended _____

Major(s) during college(s) attended) _____

Graduation Date or Projected Date (if applicable) _____

What do you identify as? (Circle One):

Currently Enrolled College Student   Stop Out College Attendee   College Graduate

If a college attendee, what were the reasons for not finishing?

_____

What do you identify as? (Circle All that Apply):

1.Rapper/MC 2. Artist   3. Activist 4. Disc Jockey 5. Producer 6. B-Boy 7. Poet 8. Scholar   9. "Hip Hop" Head
10. Entrepreneur 11. Audio Engineer 12. Photographer 13. Videographer 14. Web Designer 15. Campus Student Leader
16. Graphic Designer 17. Historian

Personal questions:

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. Where did you attend school growing up?
3. What experiences do you believe molded you into the person that you are today?
4. How would you define who you are?

College Life:

5. Where did you attend college? And what was your reasoning for attending?
6. What were your thoughts/feelings about attending college?
7. What is your definition/theorization of anti-Blackness?
8. What experiences are connected to how you theorize what anti-Blackness is? Provide some examples if possible?
9. What is your definition of freedom? And how do you process narratively articulating what this means to you?
10. Do you believe true freedom exist? Why or why not?

Album:

11. Overall, what were your thoughts about the process of the album? What did you enjoy/dislike? What were your thoughts going into the album?
12. What did you gain from this experience?
13. Let's discuss your lyrics in particular? How did you approach telling your story, your truth, in the album? How did you tap into these anti-Black experiences through your lyrics?
14. Was the process hard? Did you leave anything out that you wanted to discuss?
15. What would you say was the purpose of the studio space?
16. Is there anyone within the group who's artifacts or interactions resonated with you the most? If so, what or who?
17. On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate the album? Is there anything that you believed was missing from the album (content wise)?
18. What's your favorite song, verse, and hook off the album, and why?
19. Any questions for me?
20. Anything else you want to say?
21. Thank you!

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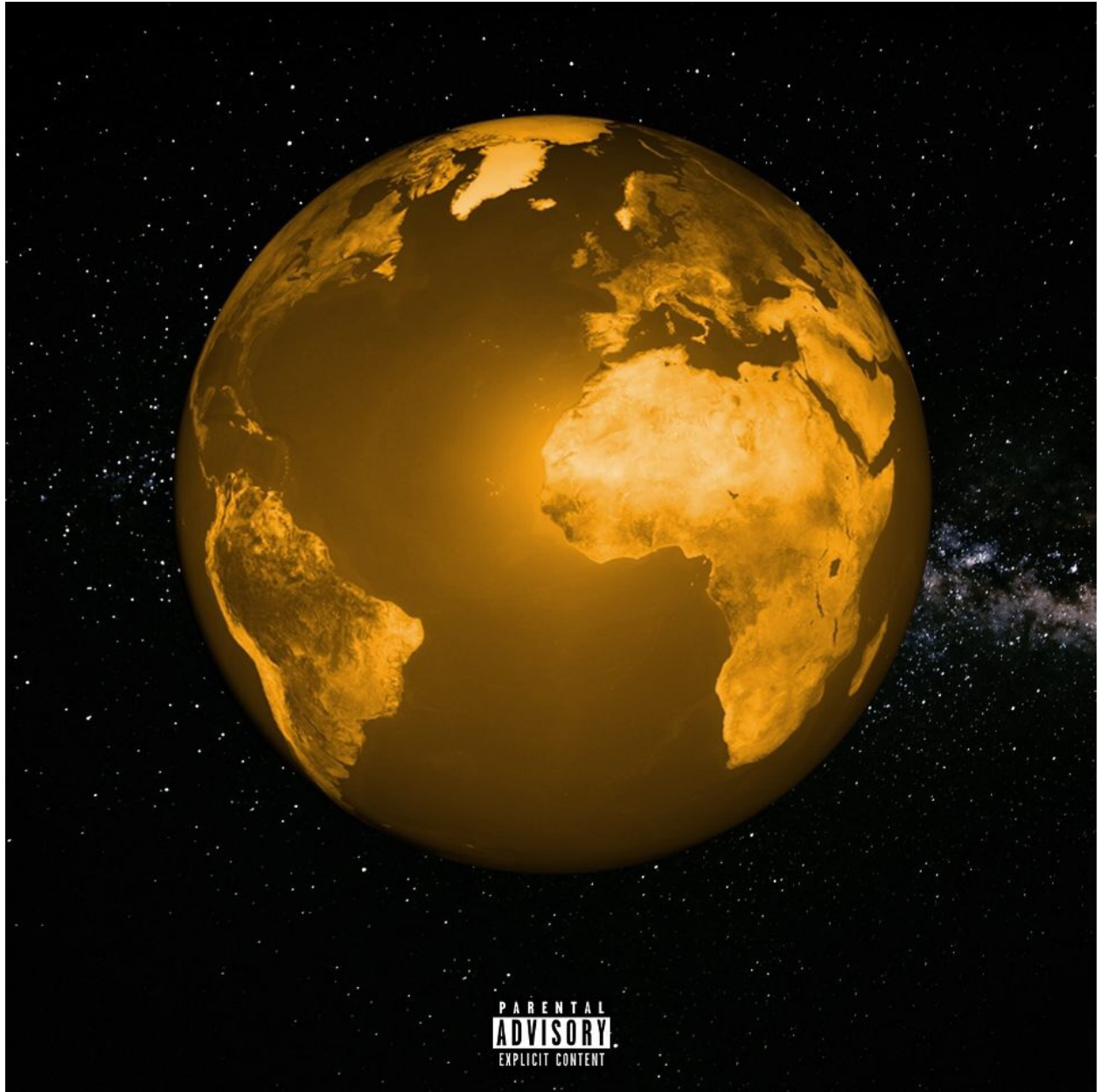
Curriculum of the Mind Tracklist:

1. **I'M COMING HOME**
2. **WRITE (RIGHT) ABOUT FREEDOM**
3. **THE TIME HAS COME**
4. **COLORED PEOPLE TIME**
5. **SO INDEPENDENT**
6. **RUNNIN' FOR MY LIFE**
7. **RUN N**** RUN**
8. **BROTHERLY LOVE (Interlude)**
9. **CURRICULUM OF THE MIND**
10. **DO I HATE MYSELF?**
11. **HEARD A LOT OF NO'S**
12. **EVERYDAY IS A FUNERAL**
13. **VENT SESSION**
14. **DO IT ON OUR OWN**
15. **WORSE THAN N*****
16. **KEEP DREAMIN'**
17. **MENTOR 2 MENTEE (Interlude)**
18. **POLAROIDS**
19. **COLLATERAL DAMAGE**
20. **GUARD YA BRILLIANCE**
21. **CONTEMPLATION (Interlude)**
22. **ME AGAINST THE WORLD**
23. **F*** YOU AMERIKKKA (Interlude)**
24. **FREEDOM'S OPUS**
25. **THE DIALETIC OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS (Outro)**